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**SPEECH BY MR YEO CHEOW TONG, MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND
MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT,
AT THE LAUNCHING CEREMONY OF THE SENIOR CITIZENS' DAY
CARNIVAL AT TOA PAYOH SPORTS COMPLEX
ON SUNDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 1991 AT 11.00 AM**

I am pleased to be with you today to launch the Senior Citizens' Day Carnival. Today we celebrate Senior Citizens' Day, a day set aside each year to pay tribute to all our senior citizens.

The Carnival today provides senior citizens with a wide range of activities. These include games like petanque and gateball and game stalls, handicraft stalls and food stalls. A special attraction today is the presence of organisations like the Central Provident Fund, the police, banks, insurance companies, travel agents and pharmacies which have set up booths here. They are here to let you know the many options that are open to senior citizens.

The elderly have several common worries. First is the need to keep fit and healthy. Secondly, senior citizens want to be financially secure. Thirdly, there is a concern among the elderly that they are helped when they fall sick or are less able to help themselves.

Keeping fit and healthy in old age requires personal effort and attention. You need to exercise and eat appropriately. Attending regular health checks will also help to alert you to early warning signs and therefore to seek early treatment.

To have financial security senior citizens must prepare early for their old age. There are banks and financial institutions which can offer you advice on how to manage your

funds. Another approach is to consider buying annuities for old age. Unlike life insurance policies, annuities on payment of a lump sum premium will ensure a steady monthly income until death. This will help assure the elderly financial independence.

An increasing problem for the elderly is the issue of being looked after when one is sick or otherwise unable to look after oneself. Naturally the family must be the first source of support for the elderly.

However, where family support is not available, an alternative is for the elderly to help one another. They can help those who are not so able. Studies show that over 92 per cent of elderly are in the fit and healthy group. The elderly should develop a network of friends so they can offer mutual help when any member is in distress.

My Ministry is looking into starting pilot mutual help projects in some senior citizens' clubs. There will be an activity section for the able aged to exercise and keep mentally fit. There will be another section for the frail aged to participate in some rehabilitative activities. Members who are fit will be encouraged to look after those who are less so. They could also visit those who are ill or temporarily unable to go to the club.

Our senior citizens upon retirement have the time, the experience and knowledge to help others. By joining mutual help group to help others when they are well, they would be assured that when they fall ill there will be others to help them. I hope this concept of mutual help will grow in Singapore.

Finally I wish to thank the organisers and all participating organisations who have contributed their time and effort to make today's Carnival possible. It is my pleasure to declare the Senior Citizens' Day Carnival open.

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