

# Private firms urged to help the needy

BY JOY FANG

**T**HE private sector plays a key role in community efforts to reach out to those in need, said Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean yesterday.

He urged more **corporate** organisations to come forward and undertake meaningful causes, because such companies “add resources, creativity and new channels for reaching out to those in need of assistance”.

As guest of honour, he spoke at the New Moon Big Walk, where he also launched the Seniors’ Healthcare Fund.

It is a partnership between local brand New Moon and the North East Community Development Council (CDC).

The fund, made up of a \$100,000 donation by New Moon and matched dollar-for-dollar by the CDC, will help low-income senior citizens from the North East district who cannot afford to foot their health-care bills.

It will also be used to provide support to families who have difficulties paying for day-rehabilitation services – such as physiotherapy for their parents – and non-standard treatments, such as the latest medical **procedures** or drugs.



**BIG WALK:** Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean (with white cap), mayor of North East District Teo Ser Luck (with black cap), and actresses Jeanette Aw and Fann Wong at the New Moon Big Walk yesterday. (PHOTO: THE STRAITS TIMES)

The money will be evenly allocated to the 17 welfare committees of the constituencies in the district and is available for senior Singapore citizens or permanent residents above the age of 50. The average monthly household income of applicants should not exceed \$500.

Mr Teo said while Singapore had 217,400 elderly people aged 65 and above in 1997, forming 7 per cent of the population, the number is expected to rise to nearly 800,000 by 2030, forming 18.4 per cent of the population.

“So, we really do need to put in place schemes to help our **needy** residents, and to make sure that their health-care needs, particularly, are taken care of,” he said.

Besides setting up the fund, New Moon also donated 400,000 bowls of rice worth \$85,000 to the needy. It had pledged to give 100 bowls of rice for every participant registered for its Big Walk. Over 3,800 people signed up for the 5km walk.

Mr Teo Ser Luck, the mayor of North East CDC, said that support for the needy needs to come from all fronts.

“With a greying population, this is really something we should think about, as far as the many helping hands on the ground are concerned,” he said.

“National policy can cover (their needs) to a certain extent but, on the ground, we still have to cover some of the gaps.”

The mayor hopes that the private sector, government agencies like CDCs and senior citizens’ families will come together to help support senior citizens.

He added that, over time, more money will be added to the fund as more people chip in to raise funds to help the needy **seniors**.

He explained that the fund is ready to match, dollar for dollar, the contributions of any company or organisation.

“If somebody comes forward with a million, we’ll match it.”

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## HELPDESK 我的字典

**Corporate:** 企业的 qǐ yè de

**Procedures:** 手续 shǒu xù

**Needy:** 贫困的 pín kùn de

**Seniors:**  
老年公民 lǎo nián gōng mǐn