

## ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER OF CHARITIES FOR 2004

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### REGISTERED CHARITIES

The Charities Act provides the legal and regulatory framework for charities in Singapore. Every organisation established exclusively for charitable purposes (other than those exempted) must apply for registration with the Commissioner of Charities. Charitable purposes include the relief of poverty, the advancement of education or religion and other purposes beneficial to the community.

In 2004, 96 charities were registered and 8 were deregistered. This brings the total number of registered charities in Singapore to 1,747 as at 31 December 2004. Charities set up for the advancement of religion still formed the majority at 53%. *Appendix 1* shows the breakdown of the registered charities by charitable purposes.

As at 31 December 2003, more than half of the 1,659 registered charities had annual income (including donations and Government grants) of less than \$250,000. Of these, 292 registered charities had income of \$50,000 or below. 47 large charities had income exceeding \$10 million and received more than 80% of the \$5 billion of total income of all registered charities. *Appendix 2* shows the distribution of registered charities by annual income for the year 2003.

### COMMISSIONER'S ORDERS

Under the Charities Act, the Commissioner may issue orders to facilitate the proper administration of charities and to authorise transactions which are in the interests of charities.

In 2004, the Commission granted an order under Section 30(1) to authorise the trustees of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church to sell the Church's property and use the proceeds to redeem its existing bank loan.

## **FUND-RAISING APPEALS FOR FOREIGN CHARITABLE PURPOSES**

Any organisation that wishes to conduct or participate in any fund-raising appeal for foreign charitable purposes must apply for a permit from the Commissioner of Charities. A total of 34 permits were issued in 2004, mostly for humanitarian causes such as construction of schools and orphanages, and community development projects for the less fortunate in Cambodia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and other countries. A few of the appeals were to raise funds for victims of natural disasters such as earthquakes and the recent Tsunami.

## **FIELD VISITS**

The Commissioner of Charities conducts field visits to charities each year to gain a better understanding of how they operate and their capacity to comply with the prescribed regulations. In 2004, the Commissioner visited 9 charities and gave encouragement and advice on how to meet the regulatory requirements and ensure that funds and assets were properly accounted for.

## **DEVELOPMENTS IN 2004**

As a continuation of efforts to assist the public, the Commissioner of Charities' website was improved to make it more informative and user-friendly. More information on topics such as registration and administration of charities were placed on the website for users' easy reference. The section on frequently asked questions were categorised so that users would be able to find answers to such questions easily. To encourage users to self-help, more standard forms such as the Annual Return of A Registered Charity are now downloadable from the website.

## **PLANS FOR 2005**

The Commissioner of Charities seeks to partner charities in achieving their objectives while complying with the Act through field visits and website education. We shall continue to work closely with other regulatory agencies and the Ministry of Finance to further enhance charity governance and promote best practices among charities.

## APPENDIX 1

<b>NUMBER OF REGISTERED CHARITIES</b>				
<b>Charitable Objectives</b>	<b>As at 31 Dec 2003</b>	<b>Registered in 2004</b>	<b>Deregistered in 2004</b>	<b>As at 31 Dec 2004</b>
Relief of Poverty	14	0	0	14 (1%)
Mixed activities	189	5	1	193 (11%)
Advancement of education	199	20	3	216 (12%)
Purposes beneficial to the community	349	45	2	392 (23%)
Advancement of religion	908	26	2	932 (53%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1659</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1747 (100%)</b>

**Distribution of registered charities by annual income for the year 2003**

