

Interview ^{with} Mayor Teo Ho Pin

Bulletin: Actually the concept of Community Development Council (CDC) was not totally new. I remember we used to have two Mayors who were Mayor Eugene Yap and Mayor Ow Chin Hock. But now, we have Five CDCs headed by full time Mayors. They oversee the needs of the residents in their respective district. It is therefore very important for us to understand what CDC is all about. Can you please enlighten us on what CDC is and what is the difference between a CDC and a Town Council. Could you also explain to us the difference between the CDC and grassroots organisations?

Mayor: PM Goh mooted the idea of CDCs in 1996 to create opportunities for the more successful and able Singaporeans to help the less able by serving the Community where they live, work and grow up. The CDC's primary role is community bonding - to encourage the strengthening of community bonds, nurture civic-mindedness and responsibility.



and methods of communication and relating to one another are different. Naturally, different methods of governing and policies suitable for the needs of the given population are needed.

Mayors of different countries have different scope of work and responsibilities. As such, it is not possible to compare them like to like.

Bulletin: How do you envisage CDC can help the lives of people in Singapore? What are the objectives of a CDC? What are the help services and outreach activities in your CDC?

Mayor: Our focus is the social development of the community and we have 3 key directions mapped out for North West CDC over the next 5 years - i.e. Helping the Community (to reach out to the needy), Bonding the Community (to promote social cohesion) and Connecting the Community (to provide more accessible services). Our help services and outreach activities are as follows:

Helping the Community

- * Public Assistance Schemes (long-term)
- * Short-term financial assistance
- * Food rations and Food vouchers
- * Job-matching service (Job Connect & Career Development)
- * Financial Assistance for Needy Students

Bonding the Community

- * CDC's 8 Signature Projects (i.e. North West CDC Arts Fest 2002, Big Walk, Mass Swim, Parenting Conference, First Aid Telematch, Arts Exhibition, 'Use IT in your Life' and CDC Road shows)
- * Racial Harmony Programme
- * Good Neighbours Month
- * IT Programme (e.g. refurbished PCs for the needy programme named as 'U Can Own IT' and the National IT Literacy Programme)
- * Volunteer Movement (CDC Volunteers, e-Ambassador Programme, Community Befrienders Programme)

Connecting the Community

- * Partnership with voluntary welfare organizations, grassroots organizations, schools, project partners and the Town Councils.
- * Community Centres / Club
- * Cohesion Magazines (every 2 months) & CDC publications e.g. map cum directory of services



Unlike Citizens' Consultative Committees and Residents' Committees, the CDCs have the task of furthering social objectives through activities and programmes on a district-level (encompassing divisions and zones). Citizens' Consultative Committees handle social matters relating to their respective divisions and the Residents' Committees handle social matters relating to their respective zones. One thing commonly shared by the CDCs, Citizens Consultative Committees and Residents Committees is that all of them come under the umbrella of People's Association. Town Councils handle the maintenance of common property within the HDB estates. They are responsible for the physical improvements of their respective towns.

Although the focus and day-to-day responsibility of each organization differs, the CDCs do not work independently either. For better outreach and effectiveness, the CDCs do work closely with the Citizens Consultative Committees, Residents Committees and various other organizations like the Town Councils to bring about a better social environment for residents.

Bulletin: There are about 10 million people in London, 20 million in New York and they all have one mayor each. Our population is 4 million, why do we need as many as 5 mayors?

Mayor: Well, that comparison is just simply based on numbers. The profile, nature and needs of people are different everywhere around the world and a governing concept that may work well in one country may not necessarily work just as well in another. Our traditions, way of life

