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Dec 31, 2004

Here's what you can do to help

SINGAPOREANS want to help in times of tragedy and have shown a spirit of voluntarism and compassion time and again that is 'precious and valuable', Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said yesterday. He had these suggestions for how people can help now and in the coming months:

- **GIVE CASH:** In the immediate term, giving money is the most practical assistance people can render, said both Mr Lee and Acting Community Development, Youth and Sports Minister Vivian Balakrishnan. The Red Cross is leading the effort and so are many other voluntary welfare organisations.

For example, mosques today are collecting money for the Red Cross and offering prayers for earthquake victims. Such gestures are to be welcomed.

Already, there are bottlenecks in terms of dropping off supplies. So, it is best to focus on cash first, said Dr Balakrishnan.

And those going to help in affected areas on their own must be fully equipped to do so or will end up being a hindrance rather than a help.

- **VOLUNTEER:** As the needs in affected areas become clearer in the coming days and weeks, be a volunteer.

Locally, you can help to pack or sort supplies. Those with special skills, especially doctors and nurses, should be prepared to extend a helping hand.

Abroad, the National Youth Council and Singapore International Foundation will focus on helping affected communities in their rebuilding efforts.

How? Sign up at the National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre.

It will match you with the relevant organisations.

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• **WHEN SCHOOL REOPENS:** Students will be involved in raising funds and packing goods. This will be a real-life experience in the Community Involvement Programme for students to take the initiative and contribute in a meaningful way to the national effort, said Mr Lee.

• **FOR THOSE IN NEED:** As for families and those who need help, the Community Development Councils and Citizens' Consultative Committees are working out how best to help families with members missing or unaccounted for, who need help.

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