

Donations to charity dip 6% to \$970m

Despite last year's drop, figure has been on the rise over past decade

By PRISCILLA GOY

SINGAPOREANS gave less to charity last year than in the previous year, when the total amount donated hit a 14-year record high.

The sum of tax-deductible donations to charity last year hit \$970 million, about 6 per cent less than the \$1.031 billion in 2012, said the Commissioner of Charities (COC) annual report released yesterday.

But the sum last year still exceeded the \$896 million in 2011.

Generally, the figures have been rising over the past decade, "reflecting the public's increasing support for local charitable causes over the years", said the COC, Mr Low Puk Yeong.

The sum given to the education sector saw the largest drop – about 21 per cent to \$325.8 million last year. It had been "exceptionally high" in 2012 due to one-off do-

nations, said the COC's office. For instance, Indonesian tycoon Stephen Riady gave \$25 million to National University of Singapore.

But this sector still benefited the most last year, receiving 33.6 per cent of the amount collected.

The rest went mostly to the social service and health sectors, which together accounted for about half the amount raised.

The size of corporate donations, which made up about two-thirds of the total, fell by 8 per cent, while that of individuals' contributions fell by 1 per cent.

Singapore Children's Society executive director Alfred Tan said the decrease in the amount of cor-



The size of corporate donations fell by 8 per cent last year, while that of individuals' contributions fell by 1 per cent. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

porate donations could be due to companies not giving regularly, or charities not engaging companies enough in explaining how the donation dollar is used.

But he also pointed out that companies may not necessarily be giving less to charity. "Some companies prefer to organise their own corporate social responsibility programmes, such as home makeovers, and the money may go directly to the beneficiary instead of going to a charity."

The COC's office said it will improve public awareness on informed giving, and increase accountability, such as by giving transparency ratings to charities.

Mr Low said: "Donors are no longer just going by the objects and programmes of the charities, but also how well-governed and transparent they are. Charities need to be both effective and accountable. We will focus our attention on this area and hope that more individuals and corporations will step forward to support charitable causes."

✉ goyshiyl@sph.com.sg