



Prime Minister
Singapore

14 July 2008

Dear *Mrs Ong*,

1. I was shocked and deeply saddened when I received news this morning that Dr Ong Chit Chung had passed away suddenly. I had just had lunch with him a fortnight ago, to bounce off some ideas for my National Day Rally speech, and found him as committed and engaged in his work as a Member of Parliament as ever. My fellow Ministers and MPs are equally stunned and dismayed by the news. Some had played golf with him just on Sunday, and recall how Chit Chung was his usual jovial self, bringing cheer to those around him. We all find it hard to accept this loss.

2. We grieve over the passing of a valuable son of Singapore who made many contributions in his 20 years as an MP. Chit Chung was first elected in 1988 as MP for Bukit Batok, and remained in this ward when Bukit Batok became part of first Bukit Timah GRC, and then Jurong GRC. He worked hard to improve the lives of the residents under his care. He was an effective organiser and brought in many professionals and businessmen to contribute and help run the town council.

3. One important project was the Bukit Batok Community Club. Chit Chung helped raised funds to build it in 1992 and again in 1995 for its upgrading. Another yearly project was the fund raising for the Citizens' Consultative Committee (CCC) Community Development and Welfare Fund which provided financial assistance and free meals to needy students and residents in Bukit Batok.

4. Chit Chung was a strong believer in efforts to promote inter-racial harmony in Singapore. He was close to the Malay ground in his constituency and set up a Malay Family Service Centre to provide counselling, tuition and other programmes to help Malay residents. He even appointed "*penghulus*" from among the Malay residents, in an effort to revive the kampong spirit.

5. Chit Chung's diligence and sincerity drew him close to the voters of Bukit Batok. He remained their MP through five terms – three of them contested, which he won. In the last contested election in 2001, his Jurong GRC polled nearly 80% of votes cast. Chit Chung was a strong member of a strong PAP team, which scored a decisive and important victory which had national significance.

6. Chit Chung held deep convictions as a PAP stalwart and fought hard for what he believed in. During elections, he was an indispensable member of the PAP team. Not only did he campaign hard in his own constituency, but he mobilised his branch to help other candidates print and distribute materials, often working round the clock. He was totally dependable. After elections, Chit Chung would mentor the new MPs, showing them the ropes and helping them to settle in.

7. Chit Chung has served the country well in Government and Parliament. He was appointed Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs and Labour from 1991 to 1993. He was the Deputy Government Whip from 1994 to 2002. He was appointed the Chairman of two Government Parliamentary Committees (GPCs): for Education, and for Defence and Foreign Affairs. As a back-bencher, he spoke often and passionately on a wide range of issues, especially those close to his heart – education, or help for the socially disadvantaged. He empathised with the poor and had a strong desire to uplift them.

8. Chit Chung also had clear views on defence. He staunchly advocated a strong defence force and whole-heartedly supported National Service. This is perhaps not surprising: he had done his PhD on Operation Matador, the failed British plan to defend Malaya against a Japanese invasion in World War II, and published a book on this, to his great satisfaction. I remember the pride with which he showed me around the Battlebox at Fort Canning, which he had played a leading role in restoring. But he was not a hardline hawk; he was also active in efforts to help improve Singapore's relations with our neighbours, using his position as GPC Chairman to good effect.

9. I will remember Chit Chung as a steadfast comrade who held true to his values and beliefs and spoke frankly because he cared. I also remember him as a family man with a loving wife constantly at his side and children they were obviously proud of. Chit Chung leaves behind many friends who will mourn his sudden loss. But he lived a full life, made significant contributions to the party and to Singapore, and had ample reason to be satisfied in what he had accomplished. My wife and I sincerely hope that these fond memories of Chit Chung will bring you strength and solace in your bereavement.

*With sincere condolences to you and
your family,*

*Yours sincerely
Lettie Ong*

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