

# PRESS RELEASE

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**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE,  
MR WEE KIM WEE, AT THE LAUNCHING OF THE COMMUNITY CHEST  
FUND-RAISING CAMPAIGN 1986, AT THE ISTANA  
ON SATURDAY, 16 NOVEMBER 1985 AT 11.00 AM**

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We are assembled here this morning to launch the Community Chest's fund-raising campaign 1986 and I am pleased to see such a good turnout. Your presence here is testimony of the big support the Chest had received for this year.

Dr Ee Peng Liang has warned that fund-raising is not going to be easy at this time, but with your continuing staunch support I am optimistic the target of \$11 million can be attained.

The Community Chest, it seems to me, needs no further introduction to the people of Singapore. Thanks to the news media it is now accepted as a centralised fund-raising body dedicated to help the needy, the handicapped and the less fortunate among our citizens.

What needs to be done, however, is for the Chest to cast its "net" as far and wide as possible. It is here the Chest needs your help. Without public-spirited people like you coming forward year-after-year this part of the Chest's operation will not succeed.

Every dollar you help to bring in during this campaign is going to make 56,000 less fortunate Singaporeans get a better and more comfortable living.

The task we face will become more difficult with each passing year, with the Chest needing more money to meet the increasing number of members. It is, therefore, incumbent upon each component of the Community Chest to use every dollar to its fullest potential.

There was a time when the word "chest" was linked to dashing tough pirates, who would bury their chests of treasure in remote places. When a chest was found and the lid was thrown open, women would swoon at the sight of the contents. We used to see a lot of this in the silent movie days.

But, Dr Ee Peng Liang and his band of helpers are no pirates. They don't rob; they appeal, even beg to "fill up the chest. I would liken them to Robin Hood and his Merry Men. Legend has given Robin Hood a reputation for altruistic acts, as a friend of the poor and others in need. That, happily, is where the resemblance ends. For unlike Robin Hood, who had to exact and fund his largesse by forcible means, Dr Ee Peng Liang, his officers and helpers beg from the rich and the not-so-rich to give to the poor. Their success is a measure of how, as a whole, civilization and society has progressed from a crass and selfish one to one where concern and consideration for others are now a universal phenomenon.

Dr Ee is Singapore's modern-day Robin Hood and you are part of his merry band. When I mentioned this a few days ago someone pointed out that he looks more like Friar Tuck! Well, Robin Hood or Friar Tuck aside, Dr Ee Peng Liang and his band of Community Chest helpers are today as well-known to Singaporeans as the heroes of Sherwood Forest.

Not because of his size that Dr Ee is so well-known. It is more what he does for his 56,000 less fortunate compatriots that has earned for him the hearts of Singaporeans.

I'll take a couple more minutes of your valuable time, if I may, to relate a recent incident to show how well he is respected by fellow Singaporeans.

A few months ago Dr Ee's car needed a thorough general servicing. He had to leave it at a service station. He could have taken a lift in his son's car to work or go by taxi. But, he chose to take a bus instead so as to get a "feel" of how the average Singaporean was coping with public transport.

When he boarded the bus along East Coast Road there was a sudden hissing and whispering among those in the front seats. Dr Ee overheard one passenger say very audibly, "That is Dr Ee Peng Liang, the President of the Community Chest. What is he doing riding in a bus to work?" The other passenger suggested, "Poor chap. Maybe his business is in a bad shape or on the rocks!" Before Peng Liang had time to recover from the amusing surprise the bus conductor had moved down to where he was. Having been reminded by his family to get his bus fare ready, Peng Liang proffered the exact fare to the conductor. To his greater amusement and surprise the conductor handed him a ticket and said, "The fare has been paid by a passenger up front. You don't have to pay."

Recounting this little incident to me Peng Liang mused, "The good Samaritan must have felt I was down and out, took pity on me and paid my fare!"

I told Peng Liang I would not go along with his assumption. I would like to believe that the good Samaritan had paid the fare to show his respect and love for a fellow Singaporean who, the good Samaritan knew, had selflessly and consistently sacrificed time, effort and money to help his less fortunate compatriots.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is this sort of love and respect that money cannot buy. Dr Ee Peng Liang has earned it. To many in Singapore the Community Chest and Dr Ee Peng Liang are synonymous.

Having known him for more than 30 years I know that if I put a dollar into his pocket it will go straight to the Community Chest.

As this is the first time I am undertaking the job of launching the Community Chest fund-raising campaign, may I ask you, please, to give Dr Ee and the Community Chest your fullest support.

You and I will have the satisfaction of knowing that 56,000 less fortunate Singaporeans will benefit from your combined efforts. They have you to thank for the funds that the Community Chest has raised over the past year. I would like to congratulate and thank all those who are receiving the Community Chest Awards today.

Now I have great pleasure in declaring the start of the Community Chest 1986 fund-raising campaign.

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