

# PRESS RELEASE

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86-YNH-37

Release No.: 25/DEC  
05-2/86/12/12

SPEECH BY DR YEO NING HONG, MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS  
AND INFORMATION AND SECOND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE,  
AT THE OPENING OF THE MARINA X'MAS CHEER 1986  
AT MARINA SQUARE ON FRIDAY, 12 DECEMBER 1986 AT 8.00 PM

I am happy to be here this evening to join you in your Marina X'mas Cheer to raise funds for the Fengshan Community Centre.

Three years ago, a group of visitors from a newly industrialised country visited the community centre in my constituency. They were surprised to see the many recreational facilities and activities available to the public. They asked about the fees. Most of the activities were free, or at a very nominal fee, we told them. They asked how that was possible. We explained that the community centre was built largely with funds raised by community leaders who are volunteers. They were even more surprised when we told them that practically every constituency in Singapore had its own community centre. In some cases, more than one community centre. Needless to say, the visitors do not have the same extensive network of community centres in their country.

Today there are 127 community centres in Singapore, half of them modern community centres, with a wide spectrum of recreational facilities, from squash and badminton, all the way to computer clubs and music rooms. These community centres came about because community leaders are committed to raising the quality of life for Singaporeans. They have worked untiringly at different functions and in different

ways to raise funds so that everyone of their constituency can have a community centre that is able to meet the growing needs of their constituents. Every community leader contributes to the effort, each in his own different way. The end result is a modern community centre, ably run and well used by residents. No doubt these community centres provide a deep sense of satisfaction to the community leaders for they can with well-deserved pride point to their contribution to building up a better Singapore.

Singapore can be grateful to community leaders like those in Fengshan and in other constituencies who actively raise funds to build and then run their own community centres. The effort that has gone into organising this mammoth Marina X'mas Cheer is evidence of the quality of community leaders that we have today. Much thought and planning has gone into this fair. Such community leaders bear testimony to the spirit that must become the cornerstone of our society, namely those who can must do more to help improve the lives of their fellow citizens. The community leaders in Fengshan and in the other constituencies have done that. I hope they will be shining examples for other professionals to follow.

Another area that Singapore can also be proud of is the growing participation by the private sector in community activities. We saw examples of this earlier this year in our National Day Celebrations. Companies came forward in large numbers to join in our celebrations. One company sponsored a national song; another presented a national logo. Yet others organised forums or sent in their contingents for our National Day Parade. Such participation has continued throughout the year. All this participation and sponsorship is the more remarkable, considering that we are still in the process of getting out of a recession. It clearly demonstrates that as Singapore matures, our corporate citizens too are responsive to their responsibilities of good corporate citizens.

Over the past year, our workers have made sacrifices in wage restraints to help our companies regain their competitive edge. Government too in many different ways has helped to reduce costs and to help companies overcome the recession. It is therefore particularly gratifying to see private sector participating in community projects, which will benefit our workers as well as our population at large. Building a community centre and running it well has over the years evolved into a tripartite activity. Government provides the finances for the basic facilities; community leaders come forward with commitment and dedication to raise funds; and corporate citizens step forward to sponsor and support such efforts. The end result is a healthy, happier and more cohesive society with all citizens benefiting from this spirit of caring and sharing. Such tripartite co-operation is the key to our success as we move towards building a Nation of Excellence.

In conclusion, I wish the community leaders of Fengshan every success in their fund raising and in the building of their community centre.

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