

Care hub to be built with funds raised from ESM Goh book

Some of \$5.6m proceeds from part two of his biography will go to social mobility research

Goh Yan Han

An integrated community care hub in Marine Parade will be built, with funds raised from the launch of the second volume of Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong's biography.

It is slated for completion in 2024 and will link the upcoming Marine Parade MRT station with the Marine Parade Community Building that houses the community club and library.

A new foundation has also been set up to fund academic research on income inequality and social mobility, tapping the more than \$5.6 million that was raised from over 100 individuals.

Mr Goh announced these two programmes yesterday at the virtual book launch fund-raiser of *Standing Tall: The Goh Chok Tong Years*.

The first volume of his biography, *Tall Order*, launched in November 2018, raised \$2 million for EduGrow, a programme that supports low-income families in Marine Parade, and the Mediacorp Enable Fund that empowers persons with disabilities.

Mr Goh said the second book was planned to be launched in May this year, but was postponed due to Covid-19 developments.

Standing Tall is written by former *Straits Times* news editor Peh Shing Huei, now a partner at content agency The Nutgraf, and published by World Scientific.

The new community hub will be located in a 4,000 sq m underground space that was created in the process of building the Thomson-East Coast Line, said Mr Goh.

It will bring together community partners to support vulnerable residents and house commercial partners with inclusive hiring practices. For example, it will have a drop-in centre for youth and a clubhouse facility for caregivers.

The Ministry of Social and Family Development will pilot the hub.

Addressing the donors attending the launch, Mr Goh said: "All of us can play a part in supporting the Government to make Singapore a better and fairer society. We can be big-hearted, like all of you here. We can initiate or support programmes to reduce inequality and improve social mobility."

The new Social Mobility Foundation will come under the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKYSPP), where Mr Goh is chairman of the governing board. He will also chair the foundation.

He said: "The foundation will fund academic research on income inequality, social mobility, inclusiveness and the dynamics of a fair and just society. This research... must lead to new policy insights and actionable recommendations."

LKYSPP dean Danny Quah, who will lead the research at the foundation, said that extreme inequality runs the risk of social immobility, which erodes the fabric of society and reduces social cohesion.

Said Prof Quah: "Without social cohesion, those who are currently deprived will feel there is no space for them going forward. They will be permanently excluded from the well-being that society promises."

"This is a desperate situation that many nations in the world are facing. We ourselves here have challenges that we need to take on, that we need to confront and that indeed is what the foundation has been set up to do."

Mr Goh noted that Singapore has come a long way since 1965 and the standard of living has gone up.

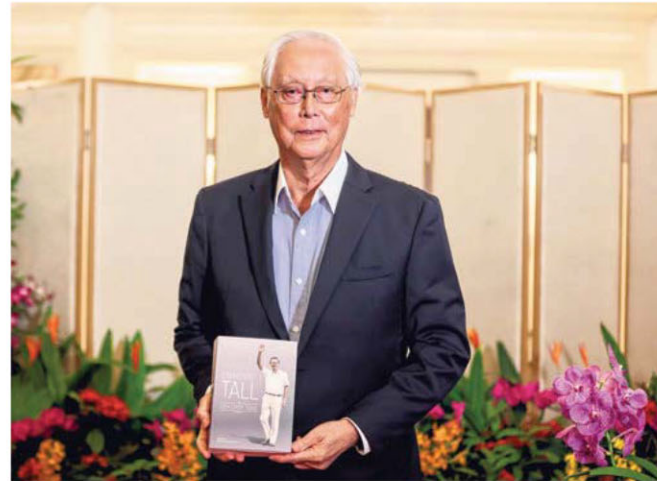
"But so has income inequality. This is the inevitable consequence of meritocracy, free market competition and globalisation," he said. "In such an eco-system, some people will do better than others. Over time, unless the Government intervenes, the population will settle into different layers like grains of sand of different sizes in a beaker."

He added: "We must find ways to help people wherever they are to move up. Singapore cannot be a society where the winners take all. It must be a society of hope where there is the constant churn of social mobility."

He noted that the Government

tioned about the dangers of travelling down the road of a welfare state. He said: "Redistribution must be supported by policies and programmes that reward effort, develop human capital, and increase social mobility."

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Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong with the second volume of his biography, *Standing Tall: The Goh Chok Tong Years*, at the virtual book launch fund-raiser yesterday. PHOTO: MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION