

SINGAPORE

Transport Minister shaves cancer survivor's head to raise awareness



Hedy Yang

May 03, 2021 06:00 am



When Terry Goh was diagnosed with stage 2 Burkitt lymphoma in April 2016 at the age of seven, just three months after he started primary school, his mother was scared and did not know what to do.

Burkitt lymphoma is a type of fast-growing cancer.

Luckily, a volunteer from the Children's Cancer Foundation (CCF) approached Madam Irene Lim after Terry's diagnosis and helped support the family.

The housewife, 45, said: "We had financial problems and we were worried if he would be cured... It was an (emotional) roller coaster for me."

Madam Lim, who also has a 10-year-old daughter, was especially thankful that CCF's counsellors visited her son's school to explain his condition to his classmates and teachers before Terry returned to school.

Terry, who will be taking his PSLE this year, is considered to be fully recovered. Yesterday, the childhood cancer survivor attended the launch of the annual CCF's Hair for Hope campaign that was streamed live from Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery in Upper Thomson.



Transport Minister Ong Ye Kung (left) with Terry Goh (right) and his mother Irene Lim, after shaving Terry's head. PHOTO: FACEBOOK/ONG YE KUNG

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Minister for Transport Ong Ye Kung shaved off Terry's hair to kick off the campaign, which hopes to raise awareness and funds for childhood cancer through the symbolic gesture.

Mr Ong said: "I cannot imagine what the children are going through and how they feel. All I can say is they are so brave, and I admire their resilience and courage. We can all do our part - big or small - to show our support for them."

Started in 2003, the campaign was cancelled last year but will operate in a digital format this year because of the Covid-19 pandemic. This year's volunteer shavees will register online and have their heads shaved at their own arrangement.

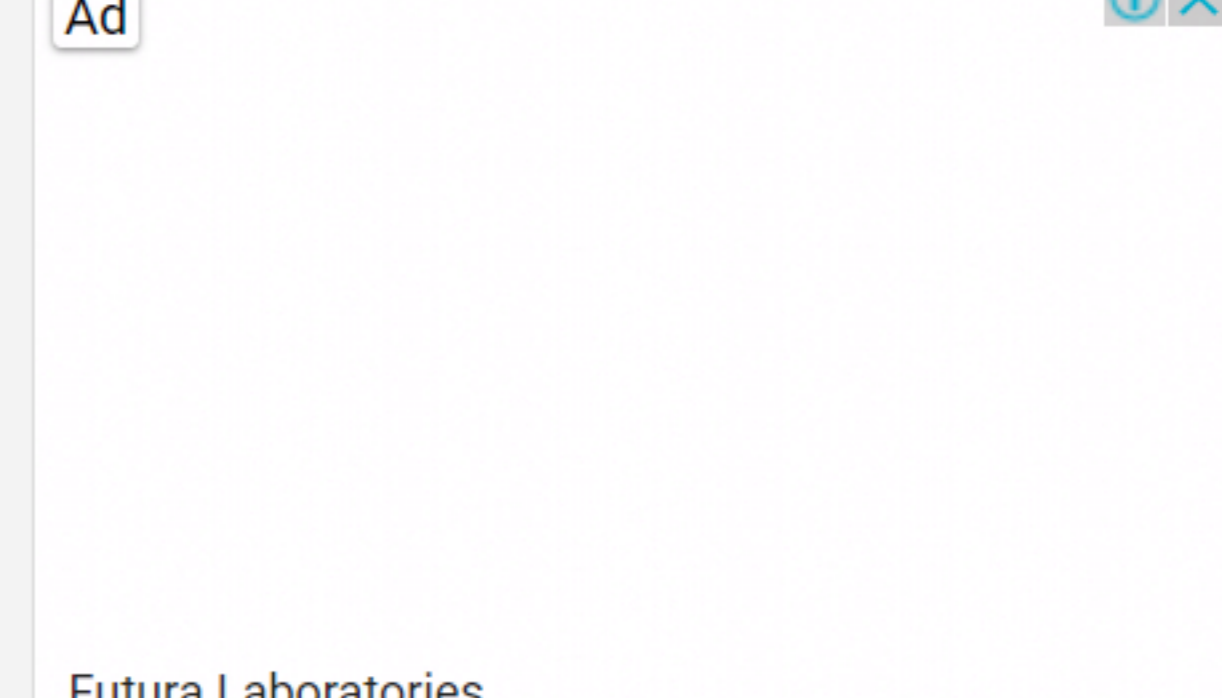
The foundation, which helped 510 families last year, hopes to attract 1,500 shavees and raise \$1.5 million this year.

Mr Ho Cheng Huat, CCF's chairman, said: "When children lose their hair, some get laughed at while others receive unkind remarks because they look different. This is why each and every bald head is so important to us. Everyone who shaves is an advocate for children with cancer."

Terry, who shaved for the second year, said: "I am shaving today to tell other children with cancer it is okay to be bald, especially for those who are scared that they will be laughed at."

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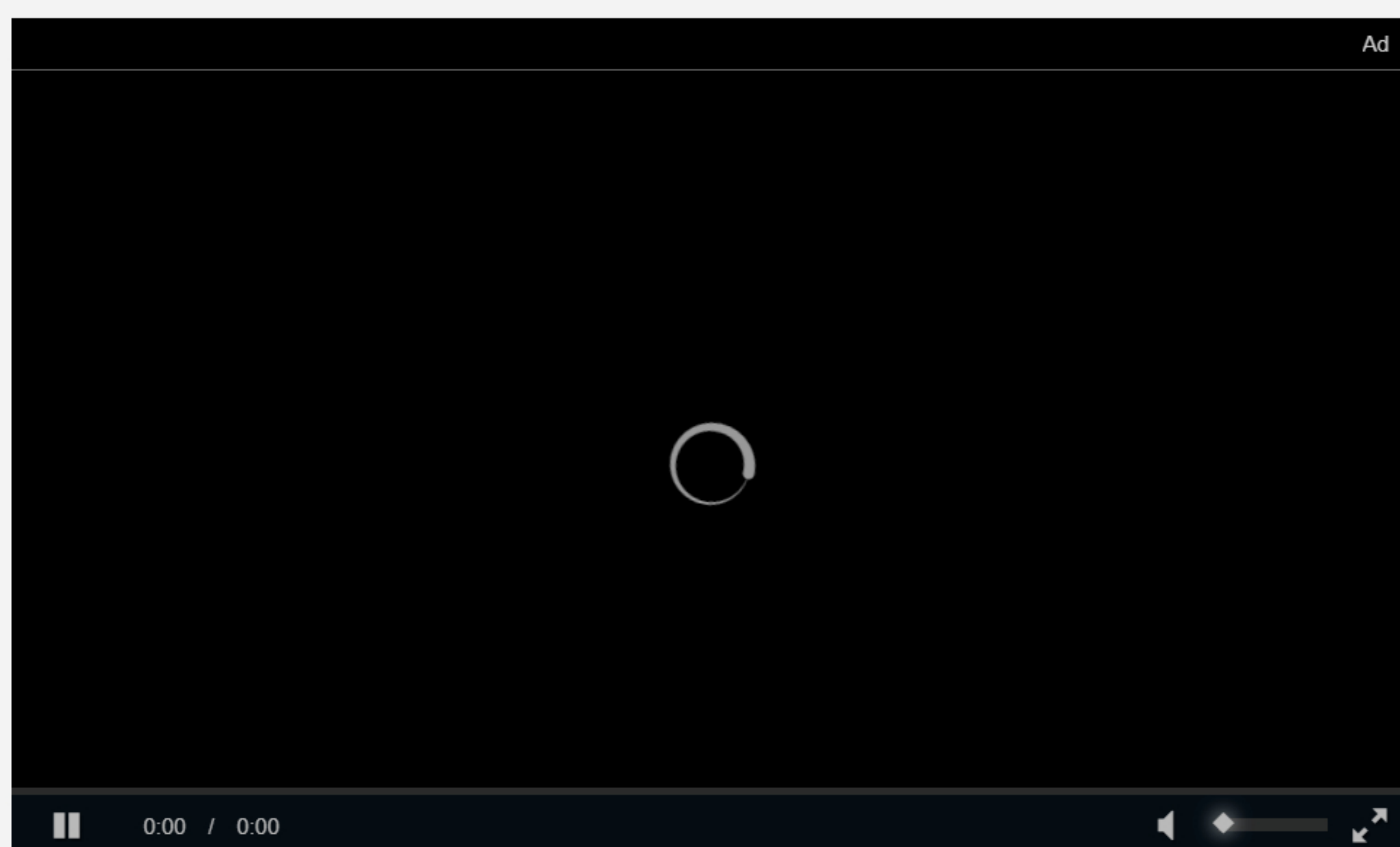
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