

■ Taking Care of OTHERS

This section highlights the incredible work being done in the FPMT organization aimed at taking care of others.

ANIMAL LIBERATION

10 MILLION LIVES FOR THE GURU



From left: Amitabha Buddhist Centre buys five to six different types of shellfish to liberate regularly for the long lives of their teachers. Photo by Jackie Tan. Fred Cheong (right in brown shirt) has helped to liberate 100 million animals over 11 years. Photo by Jackie Tan.

By Ven. Tenzin Tsultrim

On July 20, 2011 Amitabha Buddhist Centre (ABC) in Singapore accomplished its mission of liberating 10 million animals, all dedicated so that Lama Zopa Rinpoche would return to perfect health. Started by Fred Cheong on April 25 – just days after Rinpoche manifested a stroke – this massive animal liberation was done on behalf of ABC with all FPMT centers invited to join the effort. By the end of May, 10 other FPMT centers had chipped in for the cause.

Fred has been ABC's animal liberation champion since 2000 when he started the practice on a large scale for the health and life of one of his gurus, Geshe Lama Konchog. The number of lives liberated by Fred and ABC crossed the 100 million mark in May 2008.

With 11 years of practice, animal liberation at ABC follows a well-rehearsed procedure. The practice is scheduled every second Sunday of the month, although the pace had to be picked up to quickly hit the target of 10 million liberations for Rinpoche. Sea creatures – predominantly five to six types of shellfish and occasionally large fish – were purchased live from wholesalers for liberation during the three months it took to reach the goal.

A team of volunteers faithfully helps Fred conduct these ongoing missions. The shellfish are loaded up on a truck and are driven around the block where ABC is located

at least three times, giving the sea creatures the benefit of having circumambulated the many holy objects inside ABC's seven-story building. The animal liberation prayers are done according to the practice given in *Essential Buddhist Prayers, Vol. 2: An FPMT Prayer Book*, together with the many mantras advised by Rinpoche. Bottles, and sometimes buckets, of water are blessed by those doing the practice who recite the mantras and blow on the water. The water is poured over the animals just before they are released into the sea. Quite often the animals are brought out to sea on a boat. Sometimes they are released at the beach.

Most of us at ABC who regularly support animal liberation through our donations are on Fred's text messaging list, which is used to update us on the latest progress. This was sent on July 20: "Liberating 4,000 kilograms of seashells now. Estimated 700,000 animals now. With this liberation, we will hit 10 million animals for the swift recovery of Kyabje Zopa Rinpoche and Lama Lhundrup. Thanks so much for your support all this while." ♦

Regular animal liberation is an ongoing project at ABC. You can support their efforts online: www.fpmtabc.org/donation-1.php

Essential Buddhist Prayers, Vol. 2: An FPMT Prayer Book, which contains the animal liberation practice, can be ordered from the Foundation Store: <http://.shop.fpmt.org>