

Work starts on new hospital in Sengkang

By **ONG CHOR HAO**

ongch@sph.com.sg

WORK has started on what will be the largest single hospital development to date – Sengkang General and Community Hospitals, which will add 1,400 new beds when completed in 2018.

The hospital complex, which broke ground yesterday, is one of the four acute hospitals that will be built between 2020 and 2030 under the Health Ministry's Healthcare 2020 Masterplan. Up to 12 more polyclinics will also be built as part of that plan.

Yesterday, on the sidelines of the groundbreaking ceremony, Health Minister Gan Kim Yong was quoted as saying that while the exact locations have not been confirmed, one possible site for one of the acute hospitals could be Woodlands.

Considerations will include changes in demographics over the next few years and disease patterns to see what is relevant and important, Mr Gan said.

Calling 2020 "still some time to go", Mr Gan added that it is important to remain flexible.

Sengkang General and Community Hospitals is located next to Cheng Lim LRT station and is a short distance from Sengkang MRT station. It will have a 1,000-bed general hospital and a 400-bed community hospital housed within the complex, which sits on a 6.9 ha plot.

Included in those 1,400 beds are 200 "swing beds" that can be used for either hospital.

The Sengkang integrated hospital development will open in phases from 2018, and both hospitals will be fully operational by the end of that year.

"The co-location of a community hospital with an acute hospital will allow patients who require long-term but less intensive care to be transferred seamlessly from the acute hospital to the adjacent community hospital," Mr Gan said in his speech.

He added that the new hospitals will improve access to healthcare services for residents in the north-east, especially in Sengkang, Punggol, Hougang and Pasir Ris.

Besides the young growing population in the north-east, the integrated

Sengkang hospital development will also serve older communities from areas such as Hougang and Ang Mo Kio, Mr Gan said.

Managed by Sengkang Health under the umbrella of SingHealth, Sengkang General and Community Hospitals is the latest healthcare facility in the north-east of Singapore.

Others include the Brighthill Evergreen nursing home at Punggol East that officially opened on Saturday, and the new Punggol Polyclinic that will be completed in 2017.

Patients from the Sengkang hospital development can be referred to polyclinics and general practitioners (GPs) in the community to manage their chronic conditions, if the right protocols are in place.

Mr Gan noted that Sengkang Health has already been reaching out to GPs in the area.

Christopher Cheng, pro-tem chief executive officer at SingHealth, added: "We will ensure that when needed, there will be direct access to comprehensive tertiary care from SingHealth's interlinked network of physicians for our patients from Sengkang."



Coming soon: The Sengkang General and Community Hospitals will have a 1,000-bed general hospital and a 400-bed community hospital housed within the complex, which sits on a 6.9 ha plot. PHOTO: SINGHEALTH