

# New hospital in east can ease baby boomer crush

## Construction of Jurong hospital will also speed up as costs have fallen

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Another hospital in the east will need to be developed in about 10 years' time when the baby boomers cross into their 70s.

This will ease the burden on Changi General Hospital (CGH), whose emergency department is one of the busiest, possibly because of an overflow of pa-

tients from other hospitals, said Health Minister Khaw Boon Wan yesterday.

He reiterated this need for an additional hospital at the National Heart Centre's 10th anniversary celebrations, a day after he spoke about it at a nursing awards ceremony.

"What we should try to avoid is another hospital becoming like Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) in five to eight years' time," he told reporters.

TTSH has the busiest emergency department here.

The opening of the Khoo Teck Puat Hospital in Yishun in 2010 may take some pressure off TTSH and, in turn, re-

lieve CGH of its overflow problem.

Even so, with Pasir Ris, Punggol and Sengkang growing in the next 10 years, CGH will not be able to cope with the number of residents in these areas.

While the new hospital is still being considered, construction of Jurong General Hospital, originally scheduled to be completed in 2015, will speed up now that construction costs have fallen, said Mr Khaw.

Other medical facilities – the Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School and the new Singapore General Hospital Pathology building in College Road – are also expected to open next year

and in 2011 respectively.

"These projects are our commitment to building capacity and raising capabilities. These are long-term commitments. The economic downturn will not stop us," he said.

The slowdown has given rise to other opportunities too, said the minister, like making a mid-career switch to the medical sector. There is a demand for people to fill nursing roles. He said the Government will ramp up recruitment and train more staff during this period.

He also told Singaporeans not to worry about health-care costs in these gloomy times. Most people have sufficient savings in their Medisave – now at a total of \$40 billion and growing at \$2 billion a year. "These are giant umbrellas for the rainy days," he said.

Medisave and endowment funds for the poor and the elderly, Medifund and Eldercare Fund have a combined reserve exceeding \$42 billion.

This is 14 times Singapore's annual operating health expenditure of about \$3 billion, said Mr Khaw.

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