

# *Singapore Government*

## ***MEDIA RELEASE***

Media Division, Ministry of Information and the Arts, 140 Hill Street #02-02 MITA Building  
Singapore 179369. Tel: 837 9666

---

---

### **EMBARGO INSTRUCTIONS**

The attached press release/speech is **EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY**.  
Please check against delivery.  
For assistance call 837 9666

---

---

SPRInter 4.0, Singapore's Press Releases on the Internet, is located at:  
<http://www.gov.sg/sprinter/>

---

---

**TO BE EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY**  
**PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

**SPEECH BY MR LIM HNG KIANG, MINISTER FOR HEALTH  
AND SECOND MINISTER FOR FINANCE, AT THE  
OFFICIAL OPENING OF REN CI HOSPITAL & MEDICARE  
CENTRE'S PAVILION WARDS (MOULMEIN)  
ON SUNDAY 3 SEP 2000 AT 3.00 PM**

Venerable Shi Mingyi,  
Distinguished Guests, Colleagues,  
Ladies & Gentlemen,

National Archives of Singapore

### **Introduction**

I am pleased to be with you this afternoon to officiate at the opening of the Ren Ci Hospital & Medicare Centre's Pavilion Wards.

2 When we think of old age, two popular images come to mind. For some, retirement and old age means a time to enjoy the fruits of their labour, relax and do the things they had always wanted to do. On the other hand, for

some, old age means frailty, dependency, loneliness and poor health.

3 The reality lies in between. The majority of our elderly do enjoy an active healthy retirement. Maybe not quite the golden age, just decently comfortable. But for 8% of our elderly population, they require step-down care of differing levels of intensity, of which 3% will require institutional step-down care and 5% will require community-based step-down care.

4 The needs of elderly who need medical attention or step-down care will change over time. A range of health services is therefore necessary to cater to these needs. My Ministry has worked with the Voluntary Welfare Organisations (or VWOs) and the private sector to provide a comprehensive range of services to meet the changing needs of the elderly. The services range from community hospitals to nursing homes, to day rehabilitation centres, home medical and home nursing services.

5 We have also taken the very important step of integrating these services to provide a continuum of services, to allow a seamless transfer of the elderly to the most appropriate service they require.

6 In July this year, I announced a Framework of Integrated Health Services for the Elderly to assist service providers to streamline and improve the quality and accessibility to health care services for the elderly.

7 The government has also set up the Eldercare Fund to provide for the funding of eldercare services. Funds will be built up from budget surpluses, and only interest income will be used. This measure will result in the future generation of working persons not being unduly taxed to subsidise step-down

care of the elderly. Prime Minister has announced at his National Day Rally Speech that the Eldercare Fund is targeted to be \$2.5b by 2010, which will give us some \$100m in interest income to fund step-down facilities. \$200m has already been injected into this fund, and another \$300m will be injected this year.

### **Implementation of the Framework for Integrated Health Services for the Elderly**

8 My Ministry has begun to implement the Framework. The professional leadership role of the regional hospital is being built up and extended to the rest of the providers. The geriatricians in the regional hospitals will ensure that Community Hospitals will be able to cope with subacute patients, apart from patients requiring rehabilitation and respite care, which they are currently doing.

9 Similarly, guidelines to upgrade the level of professional care in nursing homes, day rehabilitation centres, home medical and home nursing care will be drawn up over the next few months. We will also assist those nursing homes which are interested in providing the full range of step-down services to build up their capabilities. Auditing parameters to ensure a higher level of care will be drawn up.

### **Example of Ren Ci**

10 The implementation of the Framework cannot be done by the Ministry of Health alone. We need the partnership of the VWOs and the private sector. The opening of Ren Ci Hospital & Medicare Centre is an excellent example of how community organisations can work hand-in-hand with the Government to

provide a range of health care services to meet the needs of the elderly.

11 Ren Ci Hospital started in September 1994 by running the 174 bedded chronic sick hospital at the premises of Woodbridge Hospital. Today that facility is re-named Ren Ci (Hougang).

12 In September 1997, Ren Ci started the Day Care Centre in Hougang with a capacity for 50 users. Early this year, Ren Ci Domiciliary Care was initiated to provide home medical and nursing services to 100 elderly living in the Woodlands/Yishun area.

13 Today, we are here to officially open the 150 bedded chronic sick hospital and the 120 bedded nursing home renovated from the pavilion wards of the old Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

14 In the meantime, we are working with Ren Ci to develop a 200 bedded community hospital at Block E of the old Tan Tock Seng Hospital. This is targeted to be ready in July 2001.

National Archives of Singapore

15 When all these facilities are in place, Ren Ci will be able to provide a seamless and integrated range of step down and continuing care services. This in essence is what the Framework strives to achieve.

### **Other Supporting Programmes**

16 Besides integrating the services, we must also steadily expand the capacity of our nursing homes to meet the needs of our ageing population:

- (a) The opening of Ren Ci Hospital & Medicare Centre's

pavilion wards today will provide us with an additional 270 nursing and chronic sick beds.

- (b) Another 7 VWO-run nursing homes are in the process of being built. This will give us an additional 1,400 nursing home beds over the next 4 years.
- (c) We are also increasing the provision of nursing home beds by private nursing home operators. The first tender announcement of the Toa Payoh site was made on 26 July 2000. Altogether another 15 sites or so will be offered over the next 6-7 years to meet our requirement of nursing home beds.

### **Conclusion**

17 We are confident that we can successfully implement the Framework of Integrated Health Services for the Elderly. We are setting aside the funds to subvent these services. By 2010 we would be able to ensure good quality care is available for our elderly population. The extra touch, however, would come from our VWOs and the volunteers. No government plan can replace the empathy, compassion and care that our VWOs and our volunteers bring to this partnership. This is the unique feature of our elderly and continuing care strategy, and a critical factor for its success. Thank you for your commitment and keep up the good work.

18 On this note, it is my pleasure to officially declare open Ren Ci Hospital & Medicare Centre's Pavilion Wards.

\*\*\*\*\*

# National Archives of Singapore