

In response to President Tony Tan Keng Yam's address on Friday, two ministries and the PMO yesterday set out their plans to build a caring society. **LINETTE HENG** (linheng@sph.com.sg) looks at the details



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Making S'pore a more caring society

1 MINISTRY OF HEALTH (MOH) MORE CONVENIENT, ACCESSIBLE HEALTHCARE

MOH will continue to invest in improving the health of Singaporeans and enhancing accessibility, affordability, quality and sustainability of healthcare, said Minister for Health Gan Kim Yong.

In the past few years, MOH has increased the capacity of the healthcare system in line with the Healthcare 2020 Master Plan.

To deal with the ageing population, more than 10,000 beds will be added in acute hospitals, community hospitals, and nursing homes, and more than 7,000 places will be added to community care, home care, and palliative home care by 2020.

To make healthcare more convenient and accessible, MOH aims to achieve a "One Singaporean, One Family Doctor" vision.

This means each person will have long-term partnerships with a regular family doctor who is familiar with his

or her needs.

MOH will also build on its six regional health systems – each one anchored by a public hospital – to smoothen the transition between hospitals, long-term care facilities and patients' homes.

After the introduction of Medishield Life last year, MOH will work on developing a standardised private Integrated Shield Plan.

MOH will also invest in raising the quality of healthcare professionals. For instance, the Singapore Institute of Technology will launch local allied health degree training programmes in Academic Year 2016.

MOH will continue to recruit and retain healthcare workers and enhance efforts to raise productivity and cut down on manpower.

They will also invest in the development of telehealth and robotics.

Mr Gan said: "Our plans will enable Singaporeans to stay healthy and active throughout their lives.

"We will have access to high quality care and those of us who need support and assistance will receive them."

2 MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT (MSF) SOCIAL POLICIES MUST EVOLVE

The social needs of Singaporeans and their families are becoming more complex as the demographics, economics and family structures change.

As a result, social policies, services and societal culture must evolve, said Minister for Social and Family Development Tan Chuan-jin.

For stronger marriages and families, MSF will provide greater support for couples to strengthen their marriages, and offer evidence-based parenting programmes in schools and the community.

These will include marriage preparation and support programmes for young couples and Singaporeans marrying foreigners.

To ensure a good start for the young, the Early Childhood Development Agency will increase the number of childcare spaces, particularly in areas with more young chil-

dren. By 2017, there will be one childcare place for every two children.

There will also be more quality and affordable options through its anchor operator and partner operator schemes.

The network of 24 Social Service Offices across Singapore as well as the first phase of the Social Service Net has been completed.

The Social Service Net is an information sharing and case management system that will link MSF with other government and voluntary welfare organisations.

This ensures that Singaporeans with complex social support needs get more holistic and integrated help.

MSF will provide more assistance in early intervention, education, training and employment, helping people with disabilities maximise their potential at different stages of their lives. Their caregivers will also receive greater support.

The Government will review legislations, policies and services to better protect the elderly who are subject to abuse, neglect or self-neglect.

3 NATIONAL POPULATION AND TALENT DIVISION (NPTD), PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE SOCIAL SUPPORT FOR PARENTHOOD

In the last two years, citizen marriages and births were among their highest levels in more than a decade.

To strengthen support for marriage and parenthood, there were enhanced housing and childcare policies, but the need for broader societal support must also be recognised.

The NPTD will partner people-sector organisations who share their family focus to cultivate stronger social support for marriage and parenthood.

The number of seniors in Singapore is projected to double to 900,000 by 2030.

Even as it encourages marriage and parenthood, the NPTD will ensure a carefully calibrated number of new citizens to keep the citizen population stable.

"We will strike a careful balance, so that Singaporeans do not feel crowded out, and we can meet the needs of our ageing citizen population and workforce.

"We have slowed the growth of our foreign workforce substantially, and as a result, our total population growth rate last year was the slowest in more than a decade," said Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean, who is also the Minister-in-charge of the NPTD.