

**Speech by Dr Balaji Sadasivan, Minister Of State (Health & Environment) at the ground breaking ceremony of Pacific Healthcare Nursing Home (Bukit Merah) on Wednesday, 11 December 2002 at 9.45 AM**

I am pleased to be here at the Ground Breaking ceremony of Pacific Healthcare Nursing Home. This ceremony marks another milestone in Pacific Healthcare Holding's corporate history.



**Pacific Healthcare Holdings Pte Ltd**

Pacific Healthcare was formed in January 2001 by a group of healthcare professionals. Today, it has more than 60 health professionals working in Singapore and Hong Kong, providing a diverse range of services that include general medical, dental and medical specialist care, health screening and wellness programmes.

With the successful tender of this plot of land and its plan for a 300-bedded nursing home, Pacific Healthcare has ventured into yet another arena of health service, that is, care for the elderly. This nursing home is expected to be completed by early 2004. To ensure that the services in this nursing home are accessible to the public, more than half of the beds will be dormitory beds. The setting up of this nursing home underlines Pacific Healthcare's commitment to community service and is part of its plan to provide comprehensive medical and nursing care for the elderly.



**Challenges posed by ageing population**

We all know that with advancing age, there is increased prospect of disability. Disability can lead to activities such as bathing, having meals and moving around being more difficult and strenuous to accomplish, and the elderly depending on others for assistance. The disabled

elderly will need the assistance of family members or friends, or the services provided by government or private organisations.

Hence, our ageing population has impact on, and poses challenges to our government, the non-government and private sectors, society, families and individuals. It affects various aspects of government policies, including health, housing and employment. The elderly have changing needs and the government must respond accordingly to the changes. We can also expect the needs of future generations of older Singaporeans to be different from the current generation.



### **Greater private sector participation**

To meet these challenges, my Ministry has started various initiatives such as the Framework for Integrated Health Services for the Elderly and several funding schemes. We work with other Ministries and organisations, such as the Ministry of Community Development and Sports, Ministry of Manpower and National Council of Social Services, to improve services for the elderly. But there is scope for greater private sector participation in the provision of residential and community services to the elderly either directly or through joint ventures and innovative alliances with VWO providers.

At the seminar and dialogue session with service providers in November this year, the Minister for Health announced that fifteen sites had been set aside for the development of private nursing homes, including this site at Bukit Merah. The aim is to increase the provision of nursing home beds by the private sector from the current 25% to 40%. To create a more level playing field between VWO and private nursing home operators, subsidy for nursing home care will be extended to the private sector for patients who meet the means-test requirements for subsidy. Payouts from ElderShield and IDAPE can also be used to help defray expenses in private nursing homes.

Whilst the Ministry of Health (MOH) is planning more nursing homes in anticipation of the increasing number of elderly who will be disabled and need nursing home care, we are mindful of the need to ensure that there is appropriate utilisation of nursing home beds. As with MOH-funded VWO nursing homes, private nursing homes receiving subsidy from the Ministry will have to abide by MOH's terms and conditions of service delivery and be

subjected to on-site checks on their standard of care and service provision.

### **Paradigm shift**

Nursing home care has often been thought of as being long-term and even for life. A family with a disabled elderly may be relieved to find a placement for him or her in a nursing home. Sadly, some families do not even visit their elderly relatives once they are placed in the nursing homes. There are also families who are reluctant to bring their relatives home after they have improved functionally and are fit for discharge.

We want a paradigm shift to keep the elderly in the community and for them to use nursing home service as a last resort. The elderly should aim to be independent and active. But should they become disabled, they should remain with their families as far as possible, since this is where they are most comfortable and can continue to be part of the family unit. My Ministry will work to further enhance services available in the community to help families manage their disabled elderly in their homes. Their families should give them the necessary support as much as they can.



### **Conclusion**

Pacific Healthcare's vision is to create a Healthcare Company with a reputation for excellence, professionalism and service quality equal to the best globally. It aims to provide its patients with the highest level of medical care possible and to serve and meet their needs with care and compassion. I am confident that it will uphold its mission and core values in delivering its services to the elderly.

Thank you.