

THE BIG STORY

BTO projects in Farrer Park honour area's sport history

Around 1,600 new Housing Board flats will be built on a 10ha site in Farrer Park. The Build-To-Order projects will be launched for sale within three years. In a nod to the area's sporting heritage, about 20 per cent of the site will comprise open spaces for sports and recreational uses, including a central green space. **A1**

WORLD

No deal yet for civilians to leave Mariupol plant

Ukraine has denied reaching an agreement with Russia on evacuating civilians from a steel plant in the southern city of Mariupol, and said the United Nations should be the "initiator and guarantor" of any such deal. Russia had said it would open a corridor for civilians to leave the huge Azovstal steel plant. **A11**



Fishing boats conducting a search operation for missing people aboard the Kazu 1 sightseeing boat, that went missing a day earlier. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WORLD

Probe starts into missing Japan tour boat after 11 confirmed dead

Investigators from Japan's Transport Safety Board have begun inquiries into what caused a tour boat to disappear off the Shiretoko

Peninsula on Hokkaido island, with the confirmed death toll from Saturday's incident rising to 11. Search efforts intensified to find the Kazu 1 vessel, which was carrying 24 passengers when it left harbour for a sightseeing trip. **A13**

SINGAPORE

Centre to study dementia development in Asians

The Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine at Nanyang Technological University has launched a centre to study the changes in the brains of Asians before dementia sets in as well as find new strategies to predict and delay its progression. In Singapore, one in 10 people aged 60 and above lives with the condition. **B2**

SPORT

New Lions coach is already feeling the heat

New Lions coach Takayuki Nishigaya arrives in Singapore next month but is already under pressure. He has little time to prepare for the June 8-14 Asian Cup qualifiers, and he also faces scepticism about his coaching credentials and whether he is the right man to replace his Japanese compatriot Tatsuma Yoshida. **B18**

SINGAPORE

Burden should not rest on public to screen links

The Central Provident Fund's recent SMS sent many Singaporeans into a frenzy, wondering if it was a scam. It had included a link to the CareShield Life website. While it turns out that the CPF SMS is legitimate, it may be asking too much of the public, especially the elderly, to screen such links. **B7**



ST PHOTO: FELINE LIM

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New NTU research centre to study how dementia develops in Asians

It will explore new strategies to predict and delay the progression of the syndrome

Joyce Teo
Senior Health Correspondent

The Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine at Nanyang Technological University (NTU) has launched a centre to study the changes in the brains of Asians before dementia sets in as well as find new strategies that can one day predict and delay the progression of the syndrome.

It is thus targeting people with suspected cognitive decline as well as mild cognitive impairment (MCI).

Singapore's director of medical services Kenneth Mak, the guest of honour at the launch of the Dementia Research Centre (Singapore), or DRCS, said that the centre aims to develop and validate novel biomarkers and new interventions for dementia in Asians. In Singapore, one in 10 people aged 60 and above lives with the condition.

Associate Professor Mak also said the Ministry of Health adopts a multipronged approach to de-

mentia care, which includes raising awareness, enhancing care capacity and capability in the community and hospitals, and supporting caregivers of people living with it.

NTU president Subra Suresh said DRCS will offer new avenues for developing a better understanding of neurodegenerative diseases.

Associate Professor Nagendran Kandiah, director of DRCS, said: "The challenge with treating dementia is that if it is not picked up early, you miss the boat. Once you lose brain cells, there is nothing we can do to reverse that."

Crucially, the centre aims to shed light on "Asian dementia" because of the biological factors unique to the Asian brain that increase the prevalence of dementia.

For instance, Asian patients are three times more likely than Caucasians to suffer from cerebral small vessel disease, which is a narrowing of the small blood vessels in the brain that then appear as white matter lesions. They can put one at increased risk of dementia and more rapid cognitive decline.

Prof Kandiah also said that the



Clinical research coordinator Koh Chen Ling, 25, extracting blood from homemaker Cecilia Chew Seit Yin, 64, a participant of the dementia study at Dementia Research Centre (Singapore).
ST PHOTO: GIN TAY

prevalence of the APOE4 gene and the amyloid-beta gene, which are associated with Alzheimer's disease, is much lower in Asian patients, though in many interna-

tional trials, the APOE4 gene is an inclusion criterion.

Research done by the DRCS has shown that in Asians, small vessel disease results in more brain

shrinkage among those who do not have the APOE4 gene, which shows that novel strategies may be needed to manage Asian patients with dementia, he said.

Furthermore, one in three Asian patients has the tau protein in his brain, known to be a risk factor for dementia, but no evidence of any amyloid-beta protein.

Prof Kandiah, who was previously with the National Neuroscience Institute, said the dementia research centre has already recruited 67 out of 1,500 patients targeted for a five-year study.

One of them is his patient, Ms Lena Wong, who is nearing 70 and keen to contribute to the efforts to delay the onset of dementia in people like her, who have mild cognitive impairment.

Her forgetfulness became obvious to her more than a decade ago. A few years ago, it reached a point when she would go shopping, pay and then leave without groceries.

At the research centre, participants will go through a cognitive assessment that will include state-of-the-art blood tests to find brain proteins, specifically amyloid and tau, as well as a brain scan to look for brain shrinkage and the presence of white matter lesions. They will receive a free report eight weeks after their visit, which they can use for a discussion with their doctors.

joyceteo@sph.com.sg

