Upcoming medical school breaks ground

By NISHA RAMCHANDANI

THE Lee Kong Chian (LKC) School of Medicine, a joint venture between Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and Imperial College London, will leverage on its proximity to Tan Tock Seng Hospital and other nearby healthcare facilities to foster hands-on learning.

The upcoming medical school held its groundbreaking ceremony yesterday at its Novena Campus on Mandalay Road, the site where a hostel for medical students was built in 1924.

The building, which is to become the school's headquarters, will be equipped with teaching facilities and state-of-the-art audio and video technology by the time it welcomes its first intake in August next year. A new high-rise Clinical Sciences building, which will come on-stream in 2015, will also be located at the Novena Campus.

The campus is to be a dual-one, with a third facility – the Experimental Medicine Building at NTU's Yunnan Garden Campus – slated for completion in 2015. This will be located within NTU's biomedical-engineering cluster to enable tie-ups between researchers and students from the LKC School of Medicine and NTU's School of Biological Sciences.

Speaking at the groundbreaking ceremony yesterday afternoon, Minister for Health Gan Kim Yong highlighted the rising demand for healthcare given a growing and rapidly ageing population in Singapore.

By 2030, about 20 per cent of Singaporeans are expected to be above the age of 65.

"Beyond training enough doctors to meet our needs, our medical schools must also train doctors equipped with the skills to care for us in an ever-evolving healthcare landscape," Mr Gan said.

In his speech, Minister for Education Heng Swee Keat said: "The curriculum will be delivered using a wide range of methods, including e-learning modules, simulations, lectures, seminars, webinars and apprenticeships, as well as problem-based and team-based learning.

"These modes of learning will provide them with ample opportunity to rehearse procedures and hone their history-taking and clinical examination skills in true-to-life settings."

The LKC School of Medicine's primary clinical partner is the National Healthcare Group, which has a network of primary healthcare polyclinics, acute care hospitals and national speciality centres.

"We emphasise on partnership with the community to improve healthcare delivery in Singapore," added Lim Chuan Poh, the school's Pro-Tem Governing Board chairman.

Aside from contributing to Singapore's healthcare sector by training doctors, the school is also looking to advance medical research.

It will offer a five-year undergraduate degree to a pioneer batch of 50 students from next year, which will be ramped up to a cohort of 150 by 2018.

The LKC School of Medicine also aims to have a faculty of about 70 by 2018, founding dean Stephen Smith said.

Core funding will come from the Ministry of Education, while the Lee Foundation has made a gift of $150 million.

State-of-the-art: A new high-rise Clinical Sciences building, which will come on-stream in 2015, will also be located at the Novena Campus.