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# THE STRAITS TIMES

## Gold! Shanti races into history books for Singapore

Kimberly Kwek

HANGZHOU - Shanti Pereira ended Singapore's 49-year wait for a gold medal in track and field at the Asian Games as she won the women's 200m crown on Monday. Singapore's sprint queen crossed the line at the Hangzhou Olympic Sports Centre Stadium in 23.03 seconds, ahead of China's Li Yuting (23.28sec) and defending champion Edidiong Ofohime Odiong (23.48sec). The Bahraini's compatriot Salwa Eid Naser was disqualified for a false start, adding to the tension of the night. Speaking on live television seconds after her race, Pereira, 27, said: "I wasn't really affected by the false start. It happens and we prepare for it... I was just focused on my execution from start to finish, how I came off the blocks and down the straight."

"When I saw I was ahead, I just ran for it." On the significance of the moment, she smiled and added: "I'll probably be crying my eyes out later." The Republic's last Asiad gold in athletics came from Chee Swee Lee, who was the 400m champion at the 1974 Teheran Games. She also claimed a silver and bronze in the relays that year. Before her, Ng Liang Chiang, in the men's 110m hurdles at the 1951 Games in New Delhi, was the country's only other gold medallist. Pereira's gold is her second medal in Hangzhou. Last Saturday, she clinched silver in the 100m for Singapore's first athletics medal at the quadrennial Games since that same 1974 edition. With her contribution, Singapore have bagged three gold, five silver and four bronze medals in China. At the 2018 Games in Indonesia, the contingent managed a tally of 4-4-14. It completes a stunning year for



Shanti Pereira hugging her parents Clarence and Jeet Pereira after winning the 200m final at the Asian Games on Monday. Her gold is her second medal in Hangzhou, after she clinched silver in the 100m final last Saturday. ST PHOTO: MARK CHEONG

Pereira, who has notched many milestones, including winning the 100m and 200m titles at the SEA Games and Asian Athletics Championships, as well as meeting the Paris 2024 Olympic qualifying

mark in the 200m. Her feats are just the latest in what has been a golden period for Singapore sports. Among those who have redefined what is possible for the next

generation of local athletes is swimmer Joseph Schooling, who clinched a historic gold at the 2016 Rio Olympics when he claimed the 100m butterfly crown. In 2021, Loh Kean Yew became

the first Singaporean to win the badminton world championships. kimkwek@sph.com.sg SEE SPORT • B13-16

## MOH adds nearly 500 beds to ease crunch; more expected by year end

They include 120 at acute and community hospitals, and over 350 at nursing homes

Judith Tan Correspondent

The Ministry of Health (MOH) has added close to 500 beds to alleviate the bed crunch, and is on track to open around 800 more by the year end. The nearly 500 beds comprise 30 at acute hospitals, 90 at community hospitals, 20 at Mobile Inpatient Care @ Home and over 350 at nursing homes. This was announced by Health

Minister Ong Ye Kung at the opening of the Tan Tock Seng Hospital-Integrated Care Hub (TTSH-ICH) on Monday. He said the public healthcare system has been under quite a bit of stress after the Covid-19 pandemic, and it was partly due to the delay in infrastructure development and a rise in the number of patients at hospitals for other illnesses in the wake of Covid-19. In April, patients who needed hospitalisation were waiting longer to get beds due to the high volume

of both Covid-19 and non-Covid-19 patients. The ministry said then that the median wait time went up from five hours to 7.2 hours. "We have been exploring ways to add beds to our healthcare capacity by the end of this year. I announced earlier that we intend to find space in existing hospitals to add more acute beds, and open more community hospital beds, Mobile Inpatient Care @ Home, transitional care facilities, as well as nursing homes," Mr Ong said. The additional capacity of about 1,300 beds is equivalent to 1½ regional hospitals when it is realised by the end of the year, he added. MOH will continue to monitor both the infrastructure develop-

ment and manpower inflows to ensure that they increase in tandem. In the long term, there are major infrastructure projects such as the Eastern Integrated Health Campus and the redevelopment of Alexandra Hospital, which will be completed towards the end of the decade, and the Woodlands Health Campus that will start in phases from the end of 2023. "But these are major developments that take many years. In the short term, we still need to do something," Mr Ong said. He added that with the opening of TTSH-ICH, "we take another step forward in addressing the tight bed situation of the public healthcare system".

The new hub, which is part of the 17ha HealthCity Novena development in central Singapore, offers various step-down care services, including palliative care. When fully completed, it will have over 600 beds, 300 of which are dedicated to the rehabilitation of stroke patients and the elderly. It is located next to the main TTSH building, and they are connected by a link bridge. By November, Dover Park Hospice will also move into ICH to better provide end-of-life care for its patients. Mr Ong said: "By having hospice services co-located with rehabilitation services, it paves the way for us to pilot new palliative care models.

We hope that by integrating rehabilitation into palliative care, we can enrich the quality of life for those with serious illnesses and maximise healing and comfort for patients and also their families." The hub has home-fit training rooms - for patients and caregivers to gain confidence in daily routines and become fit to go home - and a living resource studio, both designed to look like a home instead of a hospital ward. This will help both patients and their caregivers transition better from hospital to home, said ICH clinical director Lee Liang Tee. He added that ICH is also looking at taking in dementia patients and the elderly with frailty in the near future. juditht@sph.com.sg

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