

HOME INFOCUS



Pharmacists at the Communicable Disease Centre, which had its own pharmacy. They have been transferred to the new National Centre for Infectious Diseases, which is near the old compound of the CDC.



The Communicable Disease Centre's ward 76 where patients with human immunodeficiency virus or HIV were treated. The CDC saw its first HIV patient in 1986 and Singapore's first baby with HIV was born there.



Security guards Fazel Yunus (seated) and Yacob Ahmad (standing) man the main guard post of the Communicable Disease Centre. The guards have been transferred to the new facility.



Patient volunteer Tee Choon Ann makes handicraft items at the Communicable Disease Centre's Patient Care Centre. This centre has been renamed NCID Cares in the new facility.



Nurses pack up the nursing station near the cabin rooms used by Sars patients. During the Sars outbreak in 2003, there was a shortage of isolation rooms in Tan Tock Seng Hospital and 80 cabin rooms were built using containers to isolate Sars patients.



An aerial view of the sprawling compound of the Communicable Disease Centre. The CDC ceased operations last Thursday and will be demolished. It has been replaced by the National Centre for Infectious Diseases (left of the black building), a new 330-bed facility. The land that the CDC occupied has been zoned for residential use, according to the Urban Redevelopment Authority. ST PHOTOS: NEO XIAOBIN

Farewell, Black Lion of Moulmein

Shutters come down on facility that sheltered infectious disease patients for 105 years



Neo Xiaobin Executive Photojournalist



The famous "or sai" (black lion in Hokkien) emblem at the main entrance. Tan Tock Seng Hospital's website says that some have speculated that the black lion keeps a watchful eye and acts as a guardian and protector of the compound.

From smallpox, plague, diphtheria, thyroid, cholera and malaria in the early 1900s, to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), Nipah virus, severe acute respiratory syndrome (Sars) and the threats of a flu pandemic in recent years, the Communicable Disease Centre (CDC) has been through them all.

After being at the forefront of fighting major infectious diseases in Singapore for more than a century, the gates of the old compound located in Moulmein Road finally closed as operations ceased last Thursday.

Built in Balestier Road in 1907, it was first named the Government Infectious Disease Camp and served as a quarantine camp.

In 1913, it moved to the site in Moulmein Road.

It went through several name changes such as Infectious Disease Hospital and Middleton Hospital, before it was renamed Communicable Disease Centre after the merger of Middleton Hospital and Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) in 1985.

However, it is perhaps better known among older Singaporeans and cab drivers as "or sai", which means "black lion" in Hokkien. A black lion emblem guards the centre's main entrance, and has be-

come synonymous with the place, which cared for patients with HIV, dengue, skin problems like psoriasis, and tuberculosis.

For principal medical social worker Ho Lai Peng, 49, who had worked at the CDC since 1991, one of the things she will miss most about the place is its greenery.

"I often joke that I work in a garden," she laughs.

A sanctuary of sorts, rambutan, mango, duku langsung and other old trees can be found on the wide expanse of land. Wildlife such as roosters, civet cats and even snakes also appear on the compound occasionally.

The CDC, which will be demolished, sits on a 9.65ha plot of land that has been zoned for residential purposes, according to a plan by the Urban Redevelopment Authority. It has been replaced by the Na-

tional Centre for Infectious Diseases (NCID), a new 330-bed facility situated across from TTSH, which is progressively ramping up its operations from this month.

The specialist clinic started operations on Nov 26, offering outpatient infectious disease services.

From next month, NCID will open its public health and clinical laboratories as well as a mass screening centre, operating theatres, intensive care units and isolation wards.

It is expected to be fully operational by the middle of next year.

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SCAN TO WATCH
Staff share their favourite memories of the CDC.



- 1907** Year the Government Infectious Disease Camp was built. It served as a quarantine camp.
- 1913** Year it moved to the site in Moulmein Road.
- 1985** Year it was renamed Communicable Disease Centre.



Far left: The reflection of the greenery seen against the window of a Sars isolation room. Rambutan, mango, duku langsung and other old trees can be found in the compound. Left: A nurse prepares medication for patients in the negative pressure wards, where airflow is controlled in a way that prevents contamination of hospital wards.