

# Shorter trip, improved care for retiree nearer home

Her travel time for a check-up is halved, and she can now better manage her condition

**Goh Yan Han**  
Political Correspondent

It now takes about half the time it used to for Madam Low Hong Eng, 67, to head for a routine diabetes check-up.

The newly launched Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) Ang Mo Kio Specialist Centre in Ang Mo Kio Avenue 8 is closer to her Hougang

home than the hospital in Novena. The centre, launched yesterday, will bring specialist care to the heartland.

The trip for the check-up, which used to be up to 50 minutes depending on traffic conditions, now takes about 25 minutes for Madam Low and her husband Lim Jit Suan, 73, her main caregiver. He accompanies her on all visits to the hospital or clinics.

At the Ang Mo Kio centre, the

clinical diabetes educators advise Madam Low, a retiree who did administrative work previously, on the types of food that are good for her as well as those to avoid, said Mr Lim, a retired bank associate.

He added: "They also showed us new equipment that is hooked to her arm and, with a meter, she could see her sugar level any time. This enabled her to monitor her diet and food consumption carefully."

The clinical diabetes educators at the centre are trained specially in diabetes care as well as patient education. This makes it possible for patients to better manage

their condition with fewer consultations – from perhaps more than eight yearly hospital visits to three to five visits to the Ang Mo Kio centre, said TTSH.

The centre also has a community eye clinic, which allows for faster appointments, and a portable audiometry system that provides quicker access to testing, detection and intervention for hearing issues.

The new centre also allows for direct referrals from general practitioners (GPs) to the services offered at the facility.

Dr Lim Kim Show, a GP at Life Family Clinic in Ang Mo Kio, has

referred his patients to the centre for integrated musculoskeletal therapy services – needed for conditions such as carpal tunnel syndrome or osteoarthritis knee pain.

"Getting early intervention for such conditions makes a big difference in patients' recovery. This direct referral process can cut down waiting time by more than a month, which means they get treatment that much faster," he added. The waiting time is now two to three weeks.

GPs can also make direct referrals to the endoscopy team at the centre, which has facilities for basic diagnostic procedures like gastroscopy that require day surgery.

The centre will also offer better social care. TTSH's community health team will work with the neighbourhood Silver Generation Office, the outreach arm of the Agency for Integrated Care, to identify and reach out to residents in need and plan community-based programmes such as wellness or health coaching.

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SMRT group chief executive Neo Kian Hong (left) will be succeeded by Mr Ngien Hoon Ping on Aug 1.

## Ex-LTA CEO Ngien Hoon Ping to helm SMRT

**Christopher Tan**  
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SMRT group chief executive Neo Kian Hong is stepping down after just four years at the helm of the transport company, making his tenure shorter than that of his predecessor Desmond Kuek, who stayed for about six years.

Former Land Transport Authority (LTA) chief Ngien Hoon Ping, 52, will succeed Mr Neo, 57, who was hired to replace Mr Kuek in August 2018 after what SMRT said was "a global search".

Mr Ngien left LTA in 2020 to head FairPrice Group's supply chain business. He will join the SMRT board from May 1 and take over the helm on Aug 1, the company announced yesterday.

Mr Neo will stay on as adviser until Oct 31.

The surprise turn of events has been in the rumour mill as early as December, but may have been in the planning earlier than that.

Neither Mr Neo nor Mr Ngien was contactable for comment.

Like most of SMRT's previous helmsmen, Mr Ngien was from the military. He was director of joint operations in the Singapore Armed Forces between 2010 and 2013, and a brigadier-general.

SMRT chairman Seah Moon Ming said Mr Ngien is well placed to lead SMRT forward in an era of disruption with his experience at LTA and FairPrice Group.

An engineer by training, Mr Ngien led LTA from 2016 to 2020 and oversaw infrastructure projects such as the Thomson-East Coast Line and Lornie Highway.

Expressing appreciation for Mr Neo's service, Mr Seah said: "He oversaw a deepening of rail engineering capabilities and consistent delivery of high rail reliability."

Mr Neo was Singapore's seventh chief of defence force, and served as permanent secretary in the education and defence ministries.

Sources said Mr Neo was more task-oriented, while his predecessor was people-centred. There was also tension between Mr Neo and Mr Seah, and staff were often "caught in between", they added.

Mr Neo's tenure had also been blemished by several safety-related incidents, including a technical officer who died at Bishan depot in 2020 when a 5kg metal piece hit him, and a technician who died last year when a bus fell on him after a jack gave way.

Despite a vast improvement in the rail system in recent years, a massive breakdown in October 2020 left more than 6,700 passengers stranded on trains across three MRT lines for up to three hours and affected about 123,000 commuters. It was traced to material faults and human error.

The Straits Times had previously reported on a spate of resignations in SMRT over recent years, which included senior engineers Chia Chun Wah, a senior vice-president of maintenance and engineering, and Mario Favais, who headed Singapore Rail Engineering.

An SMRT insider, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said staff are hopeful that the leadership change will see railway professionals get more recognition and leadership positions. "Hopefully, this will be a new beginning for SMRT."

Dr David Leong, managing director of human resource advisory and search firm PeopleWorldwide Consulting, said: "Mr Ngien's former role as head of LTA will be his biggest advantage as he is fully cognisant of the challenges, gaps, troubling issues and compliance matters facing SMRT."

He noted that Mr Kuek had previously mentioned "deep-seated cultural issues" of human error or failure in SMRT, which Mr Neo publicly said do not exist.

Dr Leong said: "Mr Neo may have been too quick to dismiss Mr Kuek's assertion."

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## Services at new specialist centre

### DIABETES CARE

Specially trained clinical diabetes educators will carry out various aspects of diabetes care and patient education, reducing the number of yearly visits required.

### EYE CARE

The community eye clinic will manage chronic conditions such as blurring of vision, redness and suspected glaucoma, a condition where high fluid pressure in the eyeball damages the optic nerve, which can lead to blindness.

The team can also conduct visual acuity and eye diagnostic tests.

### CARE OF HEARING ISSUES

The centre will offer specialist and basic hearing examinations as well as hearing aid interventions. A portable audiometry system will allow for better access to testing, resulting in faster detection and intervention of hearing issues.

### INTEGRATED MUSCULOSKELETAL THERAPY SERVICES

Patients with conditions such as carpal tunnel syndrome – which causes pain and numbness in the wrist – and osteoarthritis knee pain can be referred by general practitioners to therapists at the centre, instead of seeing a hospital specialist before being referred.

### DAY SURGERY CENTRE

Operating suites and a recovery room are available. Patients can undergo basic diagnostic endoscopic procedures such as a colonoscopy, which is used to detect changes or abnormalities in the large intestine and rectum, or a gastroscopy, which looks inside the oesophagus, stomach and first part of the small intestine.



Above: The pharmacy and patient waiting area at the Tan Tock Seng Hospital Ang Mo Kio Specialist Centre.



Left: The centre's eye diagnostic service room. The community eye clinic will manage chronic conditions and conduct visual acuity and eye diagnostic tests. ST PHOTOS: GAVIN FOO



Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (middle) at the official opening of the Tan Tock Seng Hospital Ang Mo Kio Specialist Centre. With him are (from left) Tan Tock Seng Hospital and Central Health Medical Board chairman Chin Jing Jih, Senior Minister of State for Health Koh Poh Koon, National Healthcare Group chairman Tan Tee How and TTSH and Central Health CEO Eugene Fidelis Soh.



STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

# 33 years and 2 months' jail, caning for man who raped his daughters

**Selina Lum**  
Senior Law Correspondent

A man who sexually abused four of his five daughters over a 14-year period, raping three of them, was sentenced to a jail term of 33 years and two months, and given 24 strokes of the cane, yesterday.

In sentencing the 45-year-old man, High Court judge Tan Siong Thye said this was one of the worst cases of rape and sexual assault, and that the man's actions are "deeply horrific and horrendously reprehensible".

"The accused destroyed the cherished values of the victims' sanctuary and turned their home into a living hell," Justice Tan said in a nearly 70-page judgment.

"He had caused unimaginable

misery and untold torment to them for several years."

The man began sexually assaulting his oldest daughter in 2004 when she was six or seven years old, extending his abuse to his other daughters over the years.

Only the youngest of the five girls was spared.

His crimes were uncovered in November 2018 when one daughter finally made a police report, accompanied by an older sister.

The girl, now 16, is the youngest of the four abused girls.

The man, a freelance instructor for children's adventure camps, also has two sons. He cannot be named to protect the identity of his children.

Last week, he pleaded guilty to seven charges for offences committed against his fourth daughter when she was aged 12 to 13.

## ALIVING HELL

**The accused destroyed the cherished values of the victims' sanctuary and turned their home into a living hell. He had caused unimaginable misery and untold torment to them for several years.**



**JUSTICE TAN SIONG THYE**, in a nearly 70-page judgment.

The charges comprise three for aggravated rape, one for aggravated sexual assault by penetration, two for aggravated outrage of modesty and one for ill-treatment of a child. Another 26 charges were taken into consideration during sentencing.

The man's use of sexual grooming and threats to satisfy his sexual perversion were factors that justified severe punishment, the judge said.

When the girl was in Primary 5, the man showed her a pornographic video, which he claimed involved a girl her age having sex with her father. In 2018, the man threatened to stop her from schooling if she did not have sex with him every month.

Justice Tan also considered the sexual offences committed against the three other abused girls. The number and nature of these charges reinforce the need for specific deterrence, he said.

He noted that after the two girls left the flat to make a police report, the man went to three police stations to look for them.

When he could not find them, he searched online for ways to pass a

lie detector test.

Justice Tan noted that in 2015, one daughter reported the man to the police, but he told his wife to persuade the girl to lie to the police.

"He managed to get away with the sexual offences in 2015, and he hoped he could do the same in 2018. The accused was prepared to lie to the police and maintained his innocence until recently when... he realised the avalanche of evidence against him."

The man's guilty plea did not warrant a sentencing discount as it did not appear to be motivated by genuine remorse, said the judge.

He also considered the charges against the man for physically abusing his wife and three children.

The man caned his wife on the arm in 2007, stepped on the back of one daughter in 2012, kicked another daughter in the stomach in 2014 and punched his younger son in the eye in 2016.

"These charges, when seen in totality, paint a disturbing and tragic picture of the physical domination the accused enjoyed over the rest of his family," said the judge.

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