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Title : Pathlight School to get new S\$33m home next year
By :
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SINGAPORE : The Pathlight School for children with autism will get a new S\$33 million home next year.

With the additional space, enrolment will also increase.

Pathlight's students will get a bigger campus, thanks in part to a S\$2 million donation from the Ngee Ann Kongsi.

The money will go towards a new three-storey pre-vocational training block.

The Ministry of Education had earlier earmarked S\$26 million for the development of the new campus.

Other fundraising efforts by the Autism Resource Centre and Pathlight attracted about S\$7.5 million in donations.

Senior Minister of State for Education Grace Fu, who paid a visit to the school, noted that more can be done for special needs children.

Pathlight School started in 2004 with only about 40 students. That number has now increased to over 400 students, aged between 6 and 18.

At the new campus at Ang Mo Kio Avenue 10 there is room for up to 600 students as well as vocational and pre-vocational training facilities, and a new IT school.

The Autism Resource Centre will also move into the same site.

There will also be space to train up to 2,000 family caregivers and other professionals, like therapists and teachers from mainstream schools.

Linda Kho, Principal, Pathlight School, said: "The more the professionals in the community understand about autism, the more the community will learn to accept and have them integrated into society for their employment in future."

Pathlight can also expand the scope of its early intervention programmes.

MP Denise Phua, who is the President of the Autism Resource Centre, said: "Early intervention is actually very critical because the earlier we start with intervention, the better the outcomes will be for them, as they move along to pre-school, primary school, secondary school and even the workplace."

Pathlight hopes the new campus, which opens next March, will develop into a regional centre for autism.

At the same event, reporters sought Ms Grace Fu's views on when Singapore would have a full woman Cabinet minister.

She said Singapore should trust Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong to "make the right decision", when the time is right.

"As a woman, I would very much like to see a full (woman) Cabinet minister being appointed, but at the same time we shouldn't do that just to satisfy some gender requirement or race

requirement.

"I much prefer personally to do it at a steady pace when the PM is comfortable with my ability. But at the same time, I think there are other women, potential women candidates who can fill that role." - CNA/ms/ir

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