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A leg up after knee transplants

Parkway East Hospital is aiming to sponsor five cases of total knee replacements by Sept 30 this year. One beneficiary is now fit enough to look for a job. **Top Stories A3**



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New Wellness page for readers

Everyone wants to extract more mileage from time and efforts spent to get toned and fit. But what really works and what actually hampers progress? **Wellness A7**

Najib rolls out special incentives for Forest City

ISKANDAR PUTERI, JOHOR

A DUTY-FREE zone status and other incentives were announced yesterday by Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak for the Forest City four-island project in the Strait of Johor with the aim of spurring business activities, local and foreign media reported.

One sweetener targets qualified companies or firms with Iskandar Development Region (IDR) status involved in tourism and Mice, education and healthcare, which would enjoy tax breaks if they set up shop in the mixed-use green development.

This is likely to be the largest in South-east Asia on completion, reported the Business Wire.

Mice – which means meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions – is a type of tourism which can spin off benefits for many sectors of the economy.

Forest City, a joint multi-billion-dollar eco-city project by China's Country Garden Holdings and Johor's Esplanade Danga 88, is within the IDR.

Tax incentives would also be granted to Green Developers and Green Development Manager, and there would no restrictions on company equity for foreign investors claiming



SMART AND GREEN: A potential buyer (right) with a sales representative eyeing a model of Forest City. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

corporate incentives, said Mr Najib.

The announcements were made in Iskandar Puteri at a grand ceremony for the official opening of the project by the Sultan of Johor.

"These packages are designed to ensure the success of the Forest City project based on its masterplan and target of becoming a smart and green city," the Bernama news agency quoted Mr Najib as saying.

He expressed hope that the incentives would be able to help contribute RM175 billion (\$59 billion) in foreign direct investments by 2035.

He said the city is expected

to create 220,000 jobs for Malaysians in high-value sectors such as finance and e-commerce in the next 20 years.

The project, which began in 2013 and is about three times the size of Sentosa, is the first overseas venture of Country Garden.

Among the upcoming amenities in the city, which will likely take 30 years to complete, is its first duty-free shopping mall.

It is scheduled to open at the end of this year on Island 1.

Condominiums and high-rise coastal residences in Island 1 are already open to the public for previews and bookings.

Meanwhile, Singapore's Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources has reiterated concern that land reclamation work for some Malaysian projects in the Strait of Johor has begun without the needed studies on potential environmental impacts.

The ministry did not name Forest City when it raised the issue again last month but it revealed that Singapore is analysing the environmental impact assessments report provided by Malaysia for the project.

The project's reclamation work near Tuas was suspended in June 2014 but Malaysia restarted it in January last year.

AGENCIES

Guide on handling raw fish may be ready this month

BY CAROLYN KHEW

GUIDELINES on how ready-to-eat raw fish should be handled and prepared could be ready as early as the end of this month.

They are being put together by a group formed last December by the Food Standards Committee, managed by the Singapore Manufacturing Federation Standards Development Organisation (SMF-SDO).

The latter manages the development, promotion and implementation of standards and represents local industries in in-

ternational standardisation efforts.

The move to produce the guidelines comes after demand for freshwater and saltwater fish, as well as ready-to-eat sushi and sashimi, was hit by Group B Streptococcus (GBS) cases.

Figures released last year showed that about 150 GBS cases last year were linked to an aggressive strain of bacteria known as Type III GBS Sequence Type 283. There were 355 cases of GBS infections and two deaths last year.

An SMF-SDO spokesman

said: "The committee's work will contribute to restoring consumers' confidence in the consumption of ready-to-eat raw fish."

There is currently no standardised way to handle and prepare ready-to-eat raw fish to prevent cross-contamination and bacterial growth across the food supply chain, he added.

This includes the transport, distribution, storage, handling, display and service of raw fish.

Businesses such as seafood manufacturer Fassler Gourmet, which sells many products including salmon, cod fish and tuna, have had their trade affected by the GBS cases.

During the Christmas period, sales fell by about 20 per cent compared with the year before, with only 100 platters sold, said Fassler chief executive Mellissa Chen.

"Even though the GBS scare was linked to freshwater fish, there was a perception that saltwater fish like salmon was affected too."

The entities working on the guidelines include the Consumers Association of Singapore, food manufacturers, distributors, retailers and regulators.

The guidelines will eventually be part of a technical refer-

ence – a document that sets out standards for industry adoption – and is scheduled to be ready by the end of the year. To promote awareness of the technical reference, a launch event and workshops will be held.

Said infectious diseases specialist Hsu Li Yang: "It is probably worth having such guidelines, simply to restore consumer confidence."

"If consumers equate compliance with the guidelines to achieving similar standards of hygiene and safety, then I think it would be a positive thing for the industry."

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