

MOH to bring forward recruitment plans

More jobs for those who get retrenched; fund for mid-career conversions also

CHEN HUIFEN

AMID expectations of more layoffs this year, the Ministry of Health (MOH) is bringing forward plans to recruit 6,200 workers in the public health sector and opening up more options for those making a mid-career switch to the industry.

In his speech at the official opening of the Queens-town Polyclinic yesterday, Health Minister Khaw Boon Wan said that his ministry had originally intended to expand its pool of doctors, nurses, pharmacists and allied health professionals by 40 per cent, or 4,700 jobs, by 2012.

"We have decided to bring forward this plan as fast as what the labour market can support," he added.

"The political will is there, the budget is there. What is missing are people with appropriate skills. We will accelerate and intensify recruitment."

Another 1,500 workers are needed to man new capacity at the upcoming Khoo Teck Puat Hospital and the Jurong General Hospital.

The former is opening in Yishun next year, while the Jurong facility will open in 2015.

Of the total of 6,200 jobs to be filled, 4,500 are required within the next two years.

The positions range from nurses and pharmacists to counter staff, ac-

counting personnel and telephone operators.

MOH has also set aside a budget to fund about 250 mid-career conversions. It is working with the Workforce Development Agency (WDA) to extend the conversion programmes beyond nursing.

This means that retrenched workers from other sectors can look forward to jobs like therapists, radiographers, pharmacy technicians and healthcare assistants.

If the demand for the conversion programmes is greater than expected, MOH is prepared to support more, Mr Khaw said. There will also be 250 local and overseas scholarships for students interested in vari-

ous allied health disciplines.

"We are monitoring the situation closely and, if necessary, will launch other initiatives to help Singaporeans cope with these trying times," he added.

Singapore is bracing for a tough year ahead as its real economy starts to feel the impact of a weakening economic situation worldwide. Late last year, DBS slashed some 900 staff from its workforce, while Neptune Orient Lines has announced job cuts of about 1,000 workers worldwide.

In recent days, a series of global layoffs were announced by several IT and electronics giants, including Lenovo, Sony and Seagate.



Mr Khaw: Political will, budget available. What's missing are people with the appropriate skills.