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PHB well-positioned to tap new opportunities

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PANTAI Holdings Bhd's (PHB) ground-breaking ceremony for its Pantai Medical Centre's (PMC) new hospital block augurs well for its future. PHB's executive chairman Mokhzani Mahathir said the company's profit is expected to increase in line with the economy. For the past 18 months, the private hospital recorded a significant drop in the number of clients as more corporate organisations seem to prefer public hospitals. About 70 per cent of PHB's turnover come from its hospital operations and support services. At the ceremony on Wednesday, Mokhzani said the company hopes to be in a position to seize the opportunities available in healthcare services and as such it needs to improve and expand its existing facilities. When completed by the end of the year, the new development will help realise the group's objective to turn PMC into a one-stop, self-sufficient health care provider. The proposed 8-storey twin tower building will house the hospital's maternity and paediatric wards, a women's & children resource centre and surgery and general medical facilities. Plans are also in place for the refurbishing and redevelopment of the existing buildings to expand on its outpatient clinic facilities, day care surgery facilities, an integrated rehabilitation centre and other outpatient facilities. Apart from the Pantai Medical Centre, which is the group's flagship hospital, the group also has substantial equity and manages four hospitals - the Pantai Klang Specialist Medical Centre, the Pantai Cheras Medical Centre, the Hospital Pantai Putri Ipoh and the Hospital Pantai Mutiara in Penang. The five hospitals have 1,100 beds and over 180 specialists representing all the major medical and surgical disciplines including general surgery, anaesthesiology, cardiology, obstetrics and gynaecology, urology and paediatrics among others. Apart from its hospital operations divisions, the group's healthcare support services division has activities in two medical institutions, a clinical laboratory, hi-tech clinical waste disposal services and telemedicine. A third division meanwhile manages the group's interest in finance and investments. PHB, formerly known as Hospital Pantai Bhd, also seem to have made strategic investments in two companies - Tongkah Holdings Bhd and PhileoLand Bhd - which are also involved in healthcare services, property development and financial services. PHB had recently proposed to acquire 16.78 per cent and 21.49 per cent respectively in Tongkah and PhileoLand. The company seemed to have decided to concentrate on strengthening its existing businesses whilst sourcing new businesses to complement its existing ones after aborting plans on a restructuring due to the economic downturn. The proposed restructuring scheme with Tongkah Holdings Bhd involved PHB relinquishing its healthcare assets and business and at the same time acquiring a stockbroking and finance company, which will transform the company core activities from that of healthcare services to financial

services.

The decision to focus on becoming one of the country's largest integrated medical service providers, has led PHB to increasingly upgrade its services in order to be one of the premier private care-givers in the country.

One area where PHB is in the fore-front is in the provision of telemedicine facilities. A comprehensive telemedicine unit will be part of Pantai Medical Centre's new building.

The unit, which will include equipment costing RM1.5 million, is expected to enhance the Government plans in making the Multimedia Super Corridor a success.

Pantai Medical Centre's other branch hospitals - Klang, Cheras, Penang, and Ipoh - will also have telemedicine links with headquarters at the Bangsar hospital.

The unit also houses the telemedicine hub linked to other local hospitals and hospitals in the US including the John Hopkins Medical Centre, Duke University Hospital, Cleveland Clinic and to the Massachusetts General Hospital.

The group has also signed a memorandum of understanding with the Australian Cranio Facial Unit in Adelaide, Australia and Worldcare Health Care Malaysia to develop the Pantai Medical Centre Cranio Facial Telemedicine Project.

Under this collaboration, an integrated team of multi-disciplinary medical specialists and the use of information technology will provide services in identifying and managing the problems of patients with cleft lip, palate and associated anomalies.