

TAKING HEART

Upcoming Shaw Tower set to house various social service agencies

The tie-up with NCSS aligns with Shaw Foundation Hong Kong's philanthropic efforts. **BY LINDSAY WONG**

THE upcoming Shaw Tower is set to house various social service agencies when its redevelopment is completed in mid-2026. The development's community spaces will focus on mental wellness, as well as the arts and heritage.

The is also establishing its own non-governmental organisation (NGO) to run programmes for beneficiaries at the property.

Raymond Chan, chairman of Shaw Foundation Hong Kong, said at Shaw Tower's topping-out ceremony on Tuesday (Jul 29): "In our commitment to giving back to the community, we are collaborating with the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) in dedicating space for social service agencies in Singapore such as Montfort Care."

The effort comes under the Community and Sports Facilities Scheme by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA). This scheme allows developers additional floor space of up to 2,000 square metres or 10 per cent of the maximum allowable floor area for the site – whichever is lower – for community use.

The agencies will not pay rent to Shaw Towers Realty, the owner of Shaw Tower, but instead pay a service fee – in accordance with URA's requirements.

"This supports the broader push to integrate community facilities into commercial develop-



The redevelopment of Shaw Tower, located in the Central Business District, is scheduled to be completed in mid-2026. PHOTO: SHAW TOWERS REALTY

ments, supporting non-profit community service providers," Chan added.

Shaw Tower, located in Beach Road and the Central Business District, will have 435,000 square feet (sq ft) of Grade A office space. It will also house community-centric facilities, including a multi-purpose

hall, which will take up 21,500 sq ft.

Highlighting mental wellness

In an exclusive interview with *The Business Times*, Alfred Yeung, general manager of Shaw Towers Realty, said the tie-up with NCSS aligns with Shaw Foundation Hong Kong's philanthropic efforts, with

the dedicated spaces focusing on mental wellness.

"This is highly appropriate in this kind of commercial environment, with office workers in the neighbourhood. It will serve not only the building's users, but also (those) within the larger radius," he added.

NCSS noted that Shaw Foundation Hong Kong first approached it in 2021 for the collaboration. NCSS then took the lead in turning the space into an integrated social services hub, which is "a collaborative effort by the sector to create a seamless and comprehensive support system in caregivers' service journey", it said.

Besides Montfort Care, which serves vulnerable children, families and seniors, Shaw Tower will also house mental health charity Brahm Centre and Children-At-Risk-Empowerment Association, which helps at-risk youths. Montfort Care will take the lead in co-creating the one-stop support hub for caregivers.

"Beyond caregiver support, the hub will feature integrated mental health services and arts and heritage programmes, developed in collaboration with Shaw Foundation (Hong Kong)," NCSS added.

This initiative is part of NCSS' plans to develop three themed social service hubs across Singapore, alongside JiaYou Centre at Chinatown Point and an upcoming site at City Square Mall.

New NGO

Yeung said that Shaw Foundation Hong Kong will be establishing its own NGO called Shaw Studios – with the first part of the name standing for "Shaw, Heritage, Arts and Wellness" – to serve various beneficiary groups. However, it will focus on early childhood and new mothers.

The NGO will "run and devise programmes linking arts, music and heritage with mental wellness", he said. Operations of the NGO will start in 2027 – six to nine months after Shaw Tower's redevelopment is completed.

Shaw Towers Realty sits under Shaw Foundation Hong Kong. Lease is the project and development manager in Shaw Tower's current phase, and will become the property manager at the operational phase.

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The planned ban has left authentic ondel-ondel performers and makers torn about the preservation of their culture and the plight of the buskers. PHOTO: AFP

Puppet ban in Indonesian capital threatens buskers

IN THE sweltering streets of Jakarta, buskers carry towering, hollow puppets and pass around a bucket for donations. Now, they fear becoming outlaws.

City authorities say they will crack down on use of the sacred ondel-ondel puppets, which can stand as tall as a truck, and they are drafting legislation to remove what they view as a street nuisance.

Performances featuring the puppets – originally used by Jakarta's Betawi people to ward off evil spirits – will be allowed only at set events.

The ban could leave many ondel-ondel buskers in Jakarta without a job.

"I am confused and anxious. I fear getting raided or even arrested. But what can I do? I need money to eat," Adi Sutisna, a 26-year-old Jakarta native who works as an ondel-ondel busker, told AFP.

Adi, who only graduated from elementary school, has been working as an ondel-ondel busker for seven years, earning US\$7 on a good day to provide for his wife and five-year-old daughter.

Ondel-ondel is the pride of the native Jakarta tribe, the Betawi people.

Traditional performances were accompanied by instruments for festive and celebratory events, including weddings, circumcisions, and welcome ceremonies for honourable guests.

Cyril Raoul Hakim, spokesman for Jakarta governor Pramono Anung, told AFP the ban was still

being drafted with "the preservation of Betawi culture" in mind and it would be put to legislators soon.

"We hope it will be passed not too long from now," he said.

Over time, ondel-ondel have been increasingly used by buskers who sway the puppets to music from loudspeakers, seeking money on the roadside, at traffic lights, and in the alleyways of Jakarta's densely populated neighbourhoods.

The city administration has long wanted to ban ondel-ondel busking, arguing that the practice sullies the dignity of the cultural icon.

Bureaucrats believe roadside busking undermines the puppets' cultural significance.

But many Jakartans rely on the entertainment to bring in much-needed cash.

According to government data, the number of people living below the poverty line in metropolitan Jakarta – a megalopolis of 11 million people – was up from 362,000 in 2019 to 449,000 as of September 2024.

The Central Statistics Bureau says the poverty line in Indonesia in 2025 is just over one dollar a day.

"The ondel-ondel is heavy; it is very hot inside," said Adi.

"But I do it anyway because if I don't, my wife and my kid won't be able to eat."

The planned ban has left authentic ondel-ondel performers and makers torn about the preser-

vation of their culture and the plight of the buskers.

Performers such as Fadillah Akbar believe the cultural symbol must be revered, and should not be used to beg for money.

"The problem is that they beg on the street – that's a disturbance, and it bothers my soul," the 33-year-old ondel-ondel artist said.

He believes ondel-ondel must come in pairs, a woman and a man, and be accompanied by traditional live music instead of a recorded song playing on loudspeakers.

"Of course, I feel bad for the buskers, especially since I know many of them, but it is a cultural icon whose dignity must be upheld," he said.

The head of Jakarta's public order agency, Satriadi Gunawan, said ondel-ondel busking disturbed road users with loudspeakers and requests for money.

"In Betawi culture, upholding ondel-ondel's dignity is important, and now it is often used to beg for money," he said.

But some historians disagree, saying limiting the puppet presence on Jakarta's streets could hurt efforts to keep the dwindling tradition alive.

"Banning ondel-ondel busking in the name of culture signifies their lack of understanding for tradition," said Jakarta-based historian JJ Rizal.

"It proves that not only does the city government not understand culture, but it also endangers the preservation of art," AFP

Michael Jackson's dirty sock sells for over 7,688 euros in France

A SINGLE glittery sock that late pop superstar Michael Jackson wore during a concert in France in the 1990s sold for more than 7,688 euros (S\$11,430) on Wednesday (Jul 30), a French auctioneer said.

A technician found the used sock discarded near Jackson's dressing room after the concert in the southern city of Nimes in July 1997, auctioneer Aurore Illy told AFP.

The self-styled "King of Pop" wore white athletic socks adorned with rhinestones during his *HISTORY World Tour* in 1997, according to specialist website interencheres.com.

Jackson can be seen wearing them in clips of him performing his hit *Billie Jean*.

Decades later, the off-white item of clothing is covered in stains, and the rhinestones adorning it have yellowed with age, in a picture posted on the website.

"It really is an exceptional object – even a cult one for Michael Jackson fans," Illy said.

The sock, initially valued at 3,000 to 4,000 euros, sold for 7,688 euros at the Nimes auction house.

A Macau gaming resort in 2009 paid US\$350,000 for a glittery glove Jackson wore when he performed his first "moonwalk" dance in 1983.

A hat he wore just before that performance sold for more than US\$80,000 in Paris in 2023.

Jackson died of a fatal overdose in 2009 aged 50.

He still has a huge fan base, despite child molestation accusations against him during his lifetime and after his death, which he and his estate have denied.

AFP

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