

# Healthcare in Brunei Darussalam: Brunei General Hospital (Part I)



Brunei General Hospital

In the aftermath of the Second World War, much of Brunei town was destroyed with most buildings either heavily damaged or completely destroyed. With the destruction of the Hospital Kajang, temporary hospitals had to be used to provide healthcare to the residents (*Healthcare in Brunei Darussalam: Temporary Hospitals. BIMJ 2012; 8;115*) during the rebuilding of Pekan Brunei.

Prior to the war, a plan was already in place to build a new hospital in the Belait district to replace the smaller hospital and to reduce the reliance on the British Malayan Petroleum Company (BMPC) owned hospital. This plan was used to build a replacement hospital in Pekan Brunei, the Brunei General Hospital (BGH). However, due in part to the problem of locating a suitable site and problems with construction materials, there was a delay with the construction. The site chosen for the BGH was formerly a rubber plantation and residential area, including the temporary hospital that was used after the war. The BGH was built in the centre of Pekan Brunei not far from where the destroyed Hospital Kajang was located in the lot now occupied by the Brunei Syariah Court opposite the Royal

Regalia building (previously Churchill Memorial). The hospital was ready for use in March 1951 and was officially opened by Al-Marhum Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, the 28<sup>th</sup> Sultan of Brunei Darussalam. The design of the hospital resembled cottage hospitals that were widely seen during this time, especially within the British Commonwealth.

In the aftermath of the war and rebuilding, there was increasing demand on the healthcare system and as a result, the BGH was rapidly constructed. The structures were built of Situform, a mixture consisting of cement and a foaming agent. Situfoam was widely used at that time for constructions due to insulating effects and also weight but required time to set and harden. The 1954 Annual Report stated that *'..cracks appeared in the walls all over the hospital and repairs were necessary from time to time resulting in an untidy appearance. Frequent distempering and painting were required to preserve a general aspect of cleanliness and smartness.'* Despite this, BGH was an important part in the history of Brunei Darussalam's Healthcare.