

# Bugis hawkker centre to get \$10m facelift

BY TAN WEIZHEN

ALBERT Centre, the 30-year-old hawkker centre in the Bugis area, will undergo a \$10.4 million makeover over the next 16 months.

The centre will be repainted and re-designed for better ventilation. Its seating capacity and its toilets will also be improved.

This month, just less than half the original 380 stalls – 170 of them – moved into a temporary centre just across from Rochor Centre.

The cost of the \$1.25 million temporary site was borne by these 170 hawkkers, who each paid between \$5,000 and \$9,800. Those who did not pay up have taken a break, retired or moved to other hawkker centres.

Albert Centre is the latest hawkker centre to be upgraded under the National Environment Agency's Hawker Centres Upgrading Programme, which began in

2001 and will take another two years to complete.

Fourteen other centres are being renovated, and another 40 are up next.

The temporary centre was opened yesterday by Jalan Besar GRC MPs Lee Boon Yang, who is the Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts, and Denise Phua.

Some hawkkers who spoke to The Straits Times said business at the temporary centre was still slow because few customers knew about the move.

A *you tiao* seller, who wanted to be known only as Ms Tan, said her daily takings had dropped from \$120 to \$70.

But Dr Lee assured the hawkkers that what they paid to be sited temporarily would eventually be worth it because if hawkker centres are not upgraded, they would become more run-down and customers would patronise other food places.