



An artist's impression of BreadTalk's international headquarters at Paya Lebar iPark. The 10-storey building, which should be ready in 18 months, will provide support for the group's aggressive expansion efforts. PHOTO: BREADTALK

BreadTalk to open an outlet a month

By MELISSA TAN

BAKERY chain BreadTalk is opening about one outlet a month in Thailand as part of an ambitious expansion strategy, chairman George Quek said yesterday.

Its rapid expansion should see the chain with 30 to 50 stores in the country within the next three years, and 80 stores by 2016. The stores will include Food Republic, another of the group's brands.

At present, the group has 17 outlets in Thailand, comprising its BreadTalk stores, Toast Box coffee and toast chain and Din Tai Fung dim sum restaurants. The Thai operations are part of the group's wide reach of more than 400 stores in 16 countries across seven brands.

Mr Quek was speaking after the ground-breaking ceremony yesterday for BreadTalk's \$64.1 million international headquarters at Paya Lebar iPark near Tai Seng MRT station.

The group said in a statement that the event marked a milestone since the opening of BreadTalk's first office in Hougang Central 11 years ago with just eight staff.

The 10-storey building designed by Singapore architect Tan Kay Ngee should be ready in 18 months and would "provide the essential support required to accelerate the group's global expansion drive".

Mr Lee Yi Shyan, Minister of State for Trade and Industry and National Development, said at the ceremony that the headquarters would "be a production and logistics hub to support not just Singapore's operations but also the company's aggressive globalisation plans".

He also said the building would "effectively double BreadTalk's existing capacity for expansion".

The international headquarters will house BreadTalk's main office and retail, research, training, logistics and central kitchen facilities, while a retail area will showcase and test new concepts.

The central kitchen will make frozen dough and noodles for the group's businesses, which also include Japanese noodle restaurant RamenPlay, The Iceing Room and Carl's Jr China.

"BreadTalk buns will taste exactly the same across all outlets when desired, or taste exactly as it is needed for a specific market. In this way, BreadTalk could ensure consistency and quality across all its outlets," Mr Lee said.