Restructuring of the University Sector

In May, the government accepted in principle the recommendations of the Committee to Review the University Sector and Graduate Manpower Planning chaired by Minister of State for Education, Dr Ng Eng Hen, to restructure the university sector.

The proposed expansion of our university sector will provide places for one in four students of each Primary One cohort by 2010, up from about one in five at present.

This expansion will be achieved through the transformation of the National University of Singapore (NUS) into a multi-campus university, the expansion of the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) into a comprehensive university, and the continued expansion of the Singapore Management University (SMU) as a business and management university.

NTU set up the School of Humanities & Social Sciences in 2003, with the intention of admitting its first intake in July 2004. The two other new schools – the School of Physical Sciences and School of Design & Media – will be started in 2004, and take in its first students in 2005.

In tandem with the restructuring of the university sector, MOE has worked out a Quality Assurance Framework for NUS, NTU and SMU. Under the Quality Assurance Framework (QAFU), MOE set up an external panel to validate the universities’ self-assessment against their institutional goals and performance targets. The panel will conduct an on-site validation of each of the three universities once every three years to validate the university’s self-assessment report, and to assess the university’s strengths and areas for improvement.

With NUS, NTU and SMU forming the bedrock of university education in Singapore, the government has also agreed in principle to allow the establishment of a small number of good quality private universities. The presence of such private institutions will increase choices and spur Singapore universities to greater heights through healthy competition.