Schools, art centres will bring 16,000 students, artists into the area

By Khushwant Singh

THE new city campus of the Singapore Management University will breathe new life into the already bustling commercial environment in the Bras Basah Road area when completed next June, Minister for Education Tharman Shanmugaratnam said yesterday.

At a topping-out ceremony to signify the completion of structural works of the campus, he said that its presence there would also complement the nearby banking and business district.

"The campus will afford students the opportunity to interact with the business community at its doorstep. The business community, in turn, will have the opportunity to tap the university's vast database of knowledge and intellect, in the form of its teaching faculty, student body, research resources and its offerings of executive education and customised courses."

Mr Tharman saw the topping-out ceremony as a big step forward for the Civic District.

He said: "The district is already home to the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and the numerous private educational institutions, and will be welcoming LaSalle-SIA College of the Arts, the refurbished Singapore History Museum and the new National Library, making it a truly vibrant district."

The schools and arts-related establishments in the area are expected to bring in some 16,000 students and artists into the district.

The new SMU campus alone can accommodate more than 6,000 undergraduates and 2,000 graduate students. Enrolment at its present Bukit Timah campus is about 3,000.

In his speech, SMU chairman Ho Kwon Ping said that work at the campus is "on schedule and on budget."

"We paid much attention to detail in the preservation of our 'natural heritage' — most of the existing trees have been carefully transplanted and protected during the construction phase, and will eventually be replanted to form the overarching landscape of this campus," he said.

The campus will comprise six separate buildings housing the School of Accountancy, the Lee Kong Chian School of Business, School of Economics and Social Services and School of Information Systems, a library and an administration block.

Underground walkways will link the various parts of the campus with the existing historical, cultural and business surroundings.

Students and the public can use the underground walkways to the Art Museum MRT station when completed in 2006.

A key element of the new campus is to ensure that the public isn't denied the greenery that has become Bras Basah's hallmark.

A major attraction would be the Campus Green, an area measuring 60m by 200m with cafes and other student and public "hangouts" under a canopy of trees.