How Bras Basah got back its groove

The Singapore Management University has restored the historic Bras Basah area's pre-eminence as a centre for education

By Chan Seet Fun

Sitting on a parcel of prime land that used to be Bras Basah Park, SMU's $426 million, 4.5 hectare, purpose-built city campus is in tune with a more liberal environment. There are no perimeter fences. No imposing "main gate". Instead, students stream in from all directions, some with branded coffee in hand, probably purchased from the shops and cafes that are dotted across campus.

The five main school buildings housing the library and the four schools — the Lee Kong Chian School of Business, the School of Accountancy, the School of Economics and Social Sciences and the School of Information Systems — are all linked by an air-conditioned underground walkway, much like the one that links City Hall MRT station with Suntec City and the Esplanade. By the end of the year, the 25m swimming pool for staff and students will be ready.

Living near the university does not mean renting high-priced accommodation better suited to executive budgets. By July, three HDB blocks between nearby Prinsep Street and Short Street will be converted into hostels. Once the Education Ministry-funded renovations are complete, there will be enough air-conditioned rooms to house up to 274 students.

That means some students will never have to leave the city. What a life!

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