SMU considers old govt buildings for city hostel

PLANS to provide residential facilities to Singapore Management University (SMU) students near its new campus are certainly underway, but the accommodation won’t be ready until next year at the earliest, said SMU president Professor Howard Hunter.

Today reported yesterday that the Government would be providing SMU with several old Housing Development Board (HDB) blocks to develop hostels near its new city campus. Prof Hunter, 58, said yesterday: “It’s not just HDB buildings we’re looking at, but also some other old buildings which the Government owns.”

SMU will have 3,600 students for the coming academic year. It plans to increase that number to 6,000 in about five years’ time. While the goal is to provide housing for all its foreign students, the hostels will be open to local students as well.

Meanwhile, the keys to the 4.5ha, $426-million Bras Basah campus were officially handed over to SMU by main building contractor Obayashi Corporation yesterday evening. SMU chancellor Dr Richard Hu, its chairman Ho Kwon Ping, Prof Hunter and Provost Tan Chin Tiong together took the symbolic first steps into the campus during a ceremony yesterday. An appreciation dinner was also held for all those connected with the project.

Prof Hunter called SMU’s new home the “university of life”, as students would be immersed in an urban setting near Singapore’s business and financial centres. “Great cities like London, New York and Paris have universities within the city; SMU is privileged to be the one for Singapore,” he said. The campus boasts learning laboratories, drama and music studios, a fitness centre and an underground 800m-long air-conditioned linkway. — Lee U-Wen