Singapore to boost education hub status

Up to 10 specialised schools may be housed here in next 5 years: PM Lee

By OH BOON PING

SINGAPORE is looking to house up to 10 specialised institutions over the next five years, a move that will enhance its role as an education hub for both local and foreign students, said Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

"Some will partner our polytechnics to offer specialised degrees in applied and creative disciplines... and these changes will help create a whole new thriving industry of tertiary education, catering to both Singaporeans and foreigners alike," he added. Mr Lee was speaking at the official opening yesterday of the Singapore Management University (SMU) city campus in Bras Basah.

In his speech, he also reviewed some of the recent developments in the local education scene. These include the new degree courses that SIM University has started for working adults and the University of New South Wales' new branch campus, which will open here next year.

In addition, niche institutions such as the University of Nevada, Las Vegas — which offers hospitality programmes — and computer animation and technology school DigiPen Institute of Technology "will soon offer undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in their specialised fields", Mr Lee pointed out.

This comes even as many changes are underway in the university education sector, with a wider range of courses and electives being offered to students.

Moreover, "we are also creating new paths to university education, so that it is not just a single route but many pathways to success with every opportunity provided for students to excel and rise to the top".

The government said that this will help foster a dynamic and vibrant university landscape that encourages learning and experimentation. In this regard, Mr Lee commended SMU for its innovative approach towards education as seen by its broad-based curriculum which includes training in skills like leadership, communication, and creativity.

Moreover, he noted that SMU's admission criteria — which evaluate applicants based on a wide range of abilities and interests — may have also resulted in its students being more ready to speak up and more confident in putting across their ideas.

With SMU joining other schools such as the LaSalle-SIA College in that area, "we can expect more than 16,000 students in the city... (and) I am confident that activities and events will increase, turning the entire Bras Basah-Bugis area into a lively arts, culture and learning centre," Mr Lee said.