SMU Residences @ Prinsep opens for students to enjoy living in city
By Farah Abdul Rahim, Channel NewsAsia

SINGAPORE: University students can now live and study in the city.

The Singapore Management University's (SMU) new city hostel has opened its doors after a $13 million makeover - and the campus is just a 7-minute walk away.

And there are plans to set up more of such hostels to accommodate 2,000 students over the next few years.

Staying at SMU's new Residences @ Prinsep means more than just savings in transport costs for 22-year-old Filipino student Jose Paolo.

"Living in the hostel will actually save me a lot of time compared to living in Loyang which takes me about one hour to go to school. Here, it's just 7 minutes," says Jose Paolo, a final year student at SMU.

He is also looking forward to the excitement of living in the heart of the city.

"If you want to watch a movie at midnight, you don't have to worry about catching the last train or bus home or taking a really expensive cab ride home. So, I can go for a movie or going for a couple of drinks with my friends or supper. The area where the hostel is, has many places to go for supper. There's 'tau huay' down the road, prata, the famous chicken rice," says Paolo.

A room will cost about $100 per week and the hostel can accommodate some 261 students in 48 apartments.

Each apartment comes with a kitchen, dining area and is equipped with a refrigerator and microwave oven.

And they are all fully air-conditioned.

There is even an apartment to cater to disabled students.

The hostel's first housemaster Timothy Hsi has just moved in with his family, and he is looking forward to city-living.

"For the longest time, this area has been a historic district, with old schools St. Joseph's and CHIJ. They were here but they moved out. Now, we are moving back in, and the experience will be tremendous for all the people around here. Being youths, they will bring a lot of energy and to this district," says housemaster Hsi, SMU Residences @ Prinsep.

Since its launch two months ago, more than half of the rooms have been taken up and the university expects full occupancy in January when more international students arrive.

The three blocks used to be old HDB flats and were retrofitted earlier this year. - CNA /Is