100 more infocomm scholarships worth $30m

Awards doubled to ensure nation has skilled manpower to stay competitive

BY CHUA HIAN HOU

THE Government is doubling the number of infocomm scholarships it awards to ensure Singapore has the skilled manpower it needs to maintain its position as a business location of choice.

It is also opening up all the scholarships to foreign students, and will allow recipients to study at top overseas universities as well.

Announcing the extra 100 scholarships, worth $30 million, yesterday, Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts Lee Boon Yang stressed that "in addition to next-generation infrastructure, the availability of skilled infocomm manpower is also critical for Singapore to maintain our competitive advantage".

Manpower and the new Internet broadband network are key pillars of the Government’s iN2015 masterplan, which aims to transform Singapore into an “intelligent nation and global city powered by infocomm” by 2015.

In this vision, technology is a way of life, helping Singaporeans exploit new economic opportunities and enhancing the nation’s competitiveness.

Dr Lee said Singapore’s infocomm sector has done well, growing an estimated 6 to 8 per cent last year and generating about $37 billion in revenue. Employment in the sector also rose from 108,000 in 2004 to 111,400 last year.

This year, 3,000 new jobs are expected to be created for infocomm professionals, many in higher-value areas like research and development, digital media and consulting.

The new scholarships boost the 90 worth $9 million offered by the National Infocomm Scholarship (NIS) programme, launched in 2004. The larger cash injection is to fund overseas scholarships, which cost more than local undergraduate studies.

The NIS scheme, administered by the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA), has awarded 32 scholarships — 12 in 2004 and 20 last year — to Singaporeans and permanent residents for studies at local universities. The NIS scheme will now end in 2010 instead of its original 2008.

The new scholarships include up to 40 positions for a special fast-track Singapore Management University-Carnegie Mellon University programme.

This programme allows NIS scholarship holders to obtain an SMU bachelor’s degree and Carnegie Mellon master’s degree in as little as four years of full-time study, instead of the usual five.

The scholarship programme is one of three manpower development initiatives by the IDA.

It has also set up infocomm clubs in schools, and co-funded training programmes for both infocomm and non-infocomm workers.

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