Specialised schools to come here: PM Lee

DIPLOMA students keen on degrees from specialised institutions may not have to study at polytechnics partnering such institutes, much less go overseas.

The schools are coming here.

Up to 10 specialised institutions are expected to be set up over the next five years, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said on Friday at the official opening of the Singapore Management University’s city campus.

The variety of institutions will create a “whole new thriving industry of tertiary education” catering to locals and foreigners, he said.

The move also ensures a good mix of graduates in selected applied and creative disciplines to meet Singapore’s diverse manpower needs, said PM Lee, who first mooted more options for polytechnic graduates in his National Day Rally speech.

Already, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas and the Digipen Institute of Technology will be offering hospitality and 3D animation and games development degrees respectively at campuses here in the next two years.

However, the focus on Friday night was on the $450-million SMU campus, which was lit with pyrotechnics during its opening ceremony.

Mr Lee and SMU Board of Trustees chairman Ho Kwon Ping underlined the importance of the Bras Basah campus to the Republic’s plans to make the civic district a lively, youth-centric arts, culture and learning centre.

Moving forward, the university intends to increase the number of students who receive scholarships.

It has about 90 financial aid recipients and, the number for all types of scholarships will increase to one in nine for its coming intake, estimated to be a cohort of over 1,200 students.

The latest major donation is from the Goh Foundation, which is sponsoring 120 one-year scholarships worth $10,000, the first time it is giving to a university.

SMU’s endowment now stands at almost $500 million dollars, said SMU president Howard Hunter.

— DERRICK A PAULO