

**1,000 more university places for S'poreans this year: Education Minister**

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There will be 14,000 university places for Singaporeans this year, 1,000 more than the 13,000 places in 2012, said Education Minister Heng Swee Keat.

SINGAPORE: There will be 14,000 university places for Singaporeans this year, 1,000 more than the 13,000 places in 2012.

Education Minister Heng Swee Keat said that in a Facebook post on Friday as he congratulated the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) on attaining its autonomous university status.

The additional places come from an expansion of the university sector, with the bulk coming from SIT and the new full-time degree programmes at UniSIM.

Mr Heng said: "Each year, we raise the proportion of each cohort who are admitted to our publicly-funded university degree programmes.

"This year, by providing up to 14,000 places, 30 per cent of our students can be admitted to publicly-funded degree programmes. This is double than in 1990, and the highest number ever.

"We had originally aimed to reach this level by 2015, so we are a year ahead of schedule."

The government had previously said that by 2020, 40 per cent of each school-going cohort will be able to have a university education.

Mr Heng said that it is not just about numbers.

"Even as we create more places, we want our students to be able to meet the rigours of the programmes, and at the same time, to make the best use of opportunities as our economy grows and becomes more diverse.

"We are increasing the diversity of our higher education landscape, with new institutions, programmes and teaching approaches.

"We have a whole range of offerings across many disciplines, from engineering to business, from technology and design to the liberal arts, from the theoretical to the applied.

"SIT and UniSIM's new full-time degree programmes are the latest addition to our university offerings, and will integrate classroom learning and application in structured work attachments to better prepare students who enjoy hands-on learning for the challenging careers ahead in the working world," he added.

Mr Heng said that the government will make sure that Singaporeans who have qualified for a place in institutes of higher learning will be able to access a post-secondary education even if their families have financial difficulties.

Earlier this month, he had announced that bursaries for Singaporeans from the lower- and middle-income households will be enhanced to reach out to more students.

Mr Heng said: "About 120,000 Singaporean students stand to benefit from the enhanced bursaries.

"In some cases, like in ITE, the bursaries will more than cover the fees, and have enough to provide for some daily expenses.

"In others, the bursaries can cover up to 80 per cent of polytechnic fees for students from lower income groups."