Singapore’s third medical school to reserve 80% of places for locals

SINGAPORE — At least 80 per cent of the total of 150 places available at Singapore’s third medical school will be set aside for local students when it is up and running.

Nanyang Technological University, which on Friday inked an agreement with London’s Imperial College to set up the school, said it will keep the ratio of faculty to students at 1:7, similar to that at the National University of Singapore’s Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine.

A temporary governing board, headed by Agency for Science, Technology and Research chairman Lim Chuan Poh, will guide the establishment of the school. It will oversee issues such as recruitment, the curriculum and the physical infrastructure.

Students will commute between the NTU campus and its clinical campus near Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

Mr Lim said: “The curriculum itself is ready. I mean, Imperial College has been doing this, but they have to adapt this to Singapore’s context.”

He added: “One important part of that is how that dovetails with their kind of clinical opportunities and the kind of clinical arrangements that we have in Singapore.”

Professor Martyn Partridge, who has been appointed senior vice-dean of the Imperial College London-NTU Medical School, said the medical school has to make sure that the standards of students here are absolutely equivalent to those in London.

Classes will start in 2013, with the school taking in 50 students for the first batch.

Professor Stephen Smith, who is the principal of Imperial College’s Faculty of Medicine, has been appointed founding dean at the Imperial College London-NTU Medical School.

Tourist arrivals continue to grow

SINGAPORE — The island-state received 947,000 visitors in September — 18.4 per cent more compared to the same month a year ago.

It was also the highest number of arrivals received in the month of September and marked the 10th consecutive month of record visitor arrivals, said the Singapore Tourism Board (STB).

The STB attributed the performance to the Formula One Grand Prix and the draw of the many entertainment events under the Grand Prix Season Singapore 2010.

Visitor days were estimated at 3.8 million, a year-on-year growth of 17.5 per cent.

Visitors from Indonesia, Malaysia, Australia, China and India accounted for almost 60 per cent of total visitor arrivals.

Crowds have been turning up for free used textbooks up for grabs at NTUC FairPrice’s annual distribution of the textbooks.

A new spin on old textbooks

NTUC FairPrice revamps book donation drive

SINGAPORE — NTUC FairPrice has rebranded its used textbooks donation project to get community organisations and private entities to help in the distribution and collection of books.

The “Used Textbooks Project” had been an annual affair for the past 27 years.

Since it started in 1983, the project had collected about 1.8 million textbooks for over 137,000 needy students, many of whom were avid readers.

But starting this year, NTUC FairPrice hopes to go beyond just textbook distribution.

At Friday’s launch, which NTUC secretary-general Lim Swee Say attended, FairPrice introduced the project’s new name — FairPrice Share-A-Textbook Project.

They will get corporations and community organisations to promote the project and get their own employees to collect and distribute the books. This is so that more people would get involved and not just give and forget.

Hewlett-Packard signed up for the project this year. Four secondary schools — Chua Chu Kang, Changkat Changi, Shuqun and Yio Chu Kang — are also involved.

Mr Seah Kian Peng, NTUC FairPrice’s chief executive officer, said: “We want to engage as many partners, whether it’s schools ... corporations or the public. So this is a way of deepening our involvement and providing a platform for all parties to come on board this project.”

The Ministry of Education, Young PAP and Young NTUC are also participating.

Mr Seah said the organisers expect to collect over 200,000 textbooks this year.

More prohibitions on trade with North Korea and Iran

SINGAPORE — The Republic will tighten controls on strategic trade with North Korea and Iran from Monday.

Singapore Customs said this is part of the country’s affirmation of its counter-proliferation commitment.

The agency said the revisions are timely in light of the recent increasing global attention on curbing illicit diversions of strategic controlled goods and technology to sanctioned countries and rogue entities.

At present, the prohibitions to the two countries include arms or related materials, certain vacuum systems and pumps, compressors and gas blowers, as well as luxury goods such as cigars, wines, spirits and plasma televisions.

In the revised list, Singapore Customs said there will be new prohibitions on any arms as defined by the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, and related materials.

Singapore’s trade with North Korea and Iran accounted for less than 0.4 per cent of the total trade value of $747 billion last year.

The goods transacted with the two countries include commodities as well as agricultural, tobacco and consumer products.