

Asian boom sparks demand for S'pore lawyers

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ROBUST economic growth in Asia is creating international demand for Singapore-trained lawyers, mainly in the finance and corporate law sectors — because they are bilingual and understand regional legal structures.

More law graduates here have been courted by international legal firms with regional practices over the last two to three years.

Said Professor Tan Cheng Han, Dean of the Faculty of Law at the National University of Singapore: "The commercial and finance areas are moving as far as Singapore lawyers are concerned because the regional economies are doing very well.

"There are a lot of transactions going on in Indonesia and China, often involving foreign investment, and you do need lawyers to structure these things," he added.

Firms specifically want Singapore lawyers because they have a good background in regional legal issues.

Prof Tan added: "We have tailor-made our whole curriculum to build in the international and comparative perspective, so that the Singapore lawyer has a much greater understanding of the laws of the region and the laws beyond Singapore."

While the pie is big enough for all lawyers, experts say, Singapore lawyers can do more to stay competitive.

Law Society president Philip Jeyaretnam said: "It's not enough to be practising in your own particular field.

"You have to have a sense of what law is like in a civil jurisdiction. You have to also be prepared to travel, be prepared to get out there to compete with lawyers regionally and internationally."

There are about 3,500 law practitioners in Singapore. — Channel NewsAsia