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ASIAN LEADER OF THE YEAR

Singapore
55 from 25 countries win dual law degrees

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THE second batch of students from the dual-degree programme offered by the New York University and the National University of Singapore graduated last night at a ceremony at the Asian Civilisations Museum.

A total of 55 students from 25 countries across six continents, including France, India and Kenya, took part in the 10-month programme.

The course, called NYU@NUS was launched in May 2007, to allow students from around the world to earn Master of Laws (LLM) degrees from both an American institution and an Asian law school.

Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security S. Jayakumar, who was the guest of honour at the ceremony, described the programme as being part of a thriving global ecosystem in Singapore.

'Despite the worldwide economic turmoil, opportunities still remain for lawyers. Law firms in Singapore have reported an increase in insolvency, corporate restructuring, arbitration and dispute resolution work,' he said.

He also spoke about opportunities which are available in Singapore, noting that six foreign law firms got the green light last year to practise here from this year.

Singapore's geographical advantages also makes it conducive to become a neutral arbitration venue of choice. And when the renovation of Maxwell Chambers at City Hall is ready in July, it will become an arbitration hearing facility.

The Government will also strengthen the training and qualifications for admission to the Singapore Bar, continuing legal education for lawyers, and is looking into working out a corporate practice exam that will allow foreign lawyers to practise Singapore law in corporate areas.

One of three local graduates, Mr Alvin Chen, 33, who was the director of representation and law reforms at the Singapore Law Society before he joined the programme, said he valued the course for its rigour and multicultural nature.

'We looked at law from a very different perspective. For example, in a course on law and the death penalty, we looked at it from a sociological perspective. It's very different from how we view the death penalty usually. We got a deeper understanding and different dimension in terms of thinking outside the box,' he said.

Another student, Ms Sumiti Yadava, 24, from India, said the course provided a 'holistic view of the East and West'.

She also appreciated the friends she had made during the course.

'Now I've got friendships and professional links throughout the world. If my boss wants an opinion on law in Chile, I have friends I can ask,' said Ms Yadava who, before beginning the course here, graduated from the Nalsar University of Law in Hyderabad.

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