SINGAPORE: The global competition for talent has become more intense in recent years, with companies in the Middle East proving to be increasingly aggressive.

Soaring oil prices in recent years have fuelled strong economic growth in the Middle East and with more companies expanding their operations, the global hunt for talent has also intensified.

Many of these recruiters are casting their eye on graduates in Singapore, and it is not just MBA students who are being snapped up by Middle Eastern firms.

Kuwait-based Alghanim Industries, for instance, said that due to the small global pool of MBA graduates, it has had to cast its net wider and recruit bachelor's degree holders who make up the bulk of over 3,000 new employees at the company each year.

Zafar Momin, executive vice president, Alghanim Industries, said: "If we're ahead of the curve and ahead of our needs, we'd have a talented pool of staff to lead our operations in this part of the world."

Singapore Management University (SMU) said firms from the Middle East are offering more internship opportunities for its students.

Observers said Singapore students have an edge over their Asian counterparts because of their language abilities and the high quality of education here.

Kelvin Choon, an SMU student, said: "Most of us do have a lot of international experience. This gives us a very global perspective, which I believe is critical to succeed in a career overseas."

Declan O'Sullivan, director of Kerry Consulting, said: "This entire recruitment process is really driven by economic growth. It probably has a bigger effect on the international recruitment market than one might expect, simply because the Middle East itself doesn't produce a large number of qualified professionals, particularly in finance."

Industry watchers said with the slowdown in the US economy, the traditionally strong hiring demand from the US and United Kingdom has dipped in recent months, giving more space for others - like Middle Eastern companies - to make their move.

- CNA/so