

Firms still hiring lawyers, says Shanmugam

SINGAPORE: Entry requirements for the legal sector may have been relaxed, but law students should not have "sleepless nights with regards to employability", Law Minister K Shanmugam said on Friday.

The shortage of lawyers here "is not going to disappear overnight", even though it has eased due to the downturn, he said.

And after opening the Singapore Management University (SMU) School of Law internship fair — with 28 firms taking part — Mr Shanmugam told reporters, "They're continuing to hire, albeit not the same way as in the past, but they're all here."

His assessment was backed by a report, also released on Friday, by recruitment firm Robert Walters. The sector "enjoyed healthy demand during 2008 due to the added regulatory requirements placed on organisations, and we expect this demand to continue into 2009", it said.

Robert Walters recruitment manager Christina Ng added that the decision to allow six foreign law firms to practice here was another boost. Her firm has seen "entire teams being moved in recent months, with employment packages at existing law firms becoming increasingly competitive".

Minimum annual salaries in litigation and dispute resolution have risen the most: From \$48,000 to \$50,000 for lawyers with a year's experience, and from \$90,000 to \$95,000 for those with at least four years' experience.

Earlier, during a dialogue with 120 SMU law students, Mr Shanmugam fielded a range of questions — some of which were off-the-record for the media — including tips on being a litigator and what law subjects to study.

