

Indian law firm sets up S'pore office

By **UMA SHANKARI**

INDIAN law firm Nishith Desai Associates has set up an office in Singapore, the first Indian law firm to do so.

The firm, which specialises in research-based legal and tax counselling, also has a presence in Mumbai and Bangalore in India and Palo Alto, in California's Silicon Valley.

Vijay Sambamurthi, who heads the Singapore branch, said that the firm is the first Indian firm to be registered as a foreign law firm with the Office of the Attorney General here.

"We aim to be the Indian law firm of choice for all Singaporean and regional businesses considering entering the Indian market," he said. He hopes that the Singapore office will in the longer run become a hub for the Asia-Pacific region.

His firm, he said, has seen a significant increase in India-Singapore deals in recent times. Two trends especially stand out.

Mr Sambamurthi said that more Singaporean investments are flowing into Indian companies and infrastructure projects, and more Indian companies are looking at Singapore as a suitable market for listing their securities.

The Singapore branch has been operational since October 1 this year, and aims to help Singaporean

companies venturing into India negotiate some of the legal hurdles, as well as advise Indian companies coming into Singapore, including those that might want to list on the Singapore Exchange.

So far, the firm has been representing some Temasek-linked companies such as SingTel and DBS Bank, as well as several other Sin-

gaporean and multinational companies with business interests in India.

Mr Sambamurthi expects to carve out a niche by focusing on Indian law, with which the firm's lawyers are familiar. There are currently two lawyers here, including him. More lawyers from India will be rotated through the Singapore branch, he said.

NEWS ROUNDUP

Tasty Singapore brand initiative

TWENTY local food and beverage firms including Tee Yih Jia and Kong Guan have signed up to carry the "Tasty Singapore" brand mark on their export products, so as to promote the quality and safety of locally produced foods.

This is part of a branding initiative by IE Singapore, the Singapore Food Manufacturers' Association and the Singapore Manufacturers' Federation that aims to provide a collective identity for local F&B firms venturing abroad.

They are hoping to sign up 40 companies

by the end of next year.

Wine for Asia exhibition

THIS year's Wine for Asia exhibition, which showcases some 10,000 wine labels and 50,000 bottles from all over the world, is now on at the Singapore Expo.

Apart from labels from traditional wine producers, wines from countries such as Bulgaria, China and Ireland are also available for sampling at the three-day show, which will be open to the public on Saturday.

