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Lawyers' association to cement ties further

Organisation holds its inaugural meeting in Berlin

THINGS are coming full circle for German lawyer Axel Reeg.

Almost 20 years ago, in 1981 — “long before student exchange programmes between Singapore and Germany became formalised” — he spent four months at the National University of Singapore’s law faculty, where Professor S. Jayakumar was dean and Mr Walter Woon was then a tutor.

Today, Dr Reeg, 41, is among those spearheading a German-Singapore Lawyers’ Association, and both Prof Jayakumar, the Foreign Affairs Minister, and Prof Woon, Singapore’s Ambassador to Germany, were in Berlin when the association held its inaugural meeting in the city on Thursday.

“Yes, it is very pleasant to know that ties built so many years ago can have this effect today,” he said, noting that such an association, which will be open to lawyers from both countries, would help to further bilateral relations.

The association is the first of its kind in Singapore, although Germany has had similar bilateral tie-ups with other countries, including China, Thailand and Korea, for many years. The German-British lawyers’ association celebrates its 30th anniversary this year.

Dr Reeg, who runs a law partnership called Reeg Rechtsanwälte, is a Singapore permanent resident. He is married to a Singapore architect and city planner, and spends time equally in Singapore and Germany.

Mr Thomas Weidlich, 34, and a corporate lawyer working in Singapore law firm Rajah and Tann, is another key player in the new association, which has yet to be registered in Singapore.

“We want to attract prominent Singapore lawyers to join,” he said, adding

that they also hoped to get interest from those in the judicial sector and the attorney-general’s chambers.

The association has managed to attract interest from some 50 German lawyers so far, said Mr Reeg.

He hopes also to draw upon the 20-odd German lawyers working in Singapore, as well as 65 Germans who have been to Singapore since 1979 as exchange students, under a programme first started by Prof Jayakumar with Gottingen University when he was law dean.

An inaugural conference will be held in Singapore in November, to ride on the German-Singapore Business Forum which is slotted for Nov 13.

“We received many good ideas and suggestions from Prof Woon and Prof Jayakumar, which I’m very grateful for,” said Dr Reeg.

Those interested in the association can contact Dr Reeg at reeg.ma@t-online.de, or Mr Weidlich at thomas.weidlich@sg.rajahtann.com.

— CHUA LEE HOONG