

# Youngsters set for a major feat

A team of SMU and LSE students is organising an investment banking conference in September that focuses on the strengths of Asia's corporate financial industry, reports **LEE U-WEN**

**F**OR students, by students: That's how an inaugural investment banking conference this September is positioning itself. It will be the largest such student-led event in Asia which focuses on the strengths of the corporate financial industry in the region.

And putting it all together is a team of youngsters from the Singapore Management University (SMU) and the London School of Economics and Political Science in the UK, all of whom have a personal interest in pursuing a career in the financial services industry upon graduation.

While there are still two months to go before the Asia Investment Banking Conference (AIBC) 2009 kicks off, the organisers say that speakers from many well-known corporations have already committed themselves to lending their expertise and sharing their experiences.

Delivering the event's two keynote addresses will be Nomura's head of Asia-Pacific Investment Banking Glenn Schiffman and Temasek Holdings' managing director of investment Rohit Sipahimalani.

Other organisations that will be represented include UBS, Citigroup, Goldman Sachs, Credit Suisse, Bain & Company and JPMorgan. *The Business Times* associate editor Vikram Khanna will also be participating as a moderator in one of the many workshops.

A total of about 350 participants are expected over the two-day event, coming from 40 top universities globally, including Oxford and Cambridge in the UK, Wharton, Harvard and Princeton in the United States, China's Beijing University and Japan's Waseda University.

The two co-chairpersons of the conference, Marcus Aw from LSE and Eng Pingni from SMU, said such opportunities to network and listen to the insights of these senior industry professionals are few and far between.

"Similar conferences by professional groups often charge amounts that may not be affordable to the average student," they told BT in an interview. "The AIBC aims to make up for this shortfall, putting students from all over the world in close contact with the most senior bankers in Asia."

The growing Asian markets and emerging economies have presented opportunities for both local and foreign companies to engage in significant local and cross-

border merger and acquisition (M&A) and capital-raising initiatives, they said.

And with the conference taking place amid the current global economic downturn, the organisers feel there is much scope "to examine the opportunities that exist in this distressed market" – and understand what the outlook for different industries would be.

With Asia remaining an emerging market with vast potential to develop further, the conference also aims to examine the outlook for M&A and capital-raising activities in China, India and South-east Asia.

But organising such a large-scale event has not come without its challenges.

Marcus and Pingni said that one of the biggest hurdles that they had to overcome was getting in touch with the most senior professionals all over Asia, and convincing them that their idea was "one worth supporting and thus worth the time and expense incurred to fly into Singapore".

Their efforts are slowly but surely paying off. Registration numbers are healthy, and everyone from both institutions is busy juggling schoolwork, internships and committee duties as they gear up for the big day.

Marcus and Pingni said that the event would allow participants to increase their overall general knowledge about the corporate financial industry before they take the plunge and apply for a job there in future.

"It's an opportunity to network and interact with some of the most seasoned professionals in Asia . . . and it also shows one's deep interest in the finance sector, which is important when seeking to enter the industry at its most junior level," they said.

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– Co-chairpersons of the Asia Investment Banking Conference 2009

**The AIBC will be held on Sept 23 and 24 at the Singapore Management University campus at Victoria Street. Registration closes on Aug 14 and costs \$100 per person. For more details, visit [www.lsesmu-aibc.com](http://www.lsesmu-aibc.com)**

