

Singapore Business News**Singapore begins operations as ASEAN's first international patent search, examination authority**

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Starting Sep 1, businesses and inventors will be able to apply for patent protection in multiple markets via Singapore, which is taking steps to increase the capabilities of its local IP businesses and workforce.

SINGAPORE: Local and global businesses and inventors will from Tuesday (Sep 1) be able to fast track their applications for patent protection in multiple markets via Singapore. This comes as the Republic kicks off operations as ASEAN's first International Patent Search and Examination Authority under the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT).

In a press release on Monday, the Intellectual Property Office of Singapore (IPOS) said that Singapore is the fifth in Asia - after China, India, Japan and Korea - to join a group of 19 IP offices worldwide that have been appointed as International Authorities for the PCT.



File photo of buildings at Raffles Place. (Photo: Calvin Oh)

IPOS also said that patent applicants from Brunei, Japan, Mexico, Laos and Vietnam will be the first to gain access to Singapore's new service offerings as an International Searching Authority and International Preliminary Examining Authority in the coming months. These arrangements were set out under bilateral agreements signed recently at IP Week @SG 2015, said IPOS.

According to the authority, Singapore is a "choice PCT application destination" because of its quick office turnaround time of around 60 days for most cases, as compared to two to three years of waiting time for similar responses from other IP offices. Patent applicants could also enjoy rebates of up to 75 per cent when applying through IPOS.

"Singapore has made steady progress since our appointment as an International Authority in patent search and examination last year," said Mr Ng Kok Wan, executive director of IPOS-International. "Working with IP offices across the world and WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization), we are able to offer businesses and inventors quicker and more affordable access to the global patent system. This is yet another step towards building a creative and innovative Singapore with IP."

PROFESSIONALISING SINGAPORE'S IP WORKFORCE

Also conducted during IP Week was the signing of three Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), between the IP Academy and leading universities and IP organisations. According to IPOS, these aim to professionalise the IP workforce in Singapore, which is estimated to comprise more than 100,000 people.

"This MOU is a milestone arrangement for SIT," said Professor Loh Han Tong, vice-provost at the Singapore Institute of Technology, which has agreed to work with the academy to provide IP management skills training for local companies. "With Singapore aspiring to be a global IP hub in Asia, SIT is pleased to play a critical role in building the IP capabilities of SMEs. SIT's Enterprise and Innovation Hub will be a one-stop centre for students to manage industry projects and collaborations."

According to IP Academy's executive director, Ms Chiam Lu-Lin, such tie-ups will see it "leverage the strengths and best practices of leading universities and IP organisations, to enrich the programmes and initiatives offered to the IP workforce".