

Singapore joins WTO research programme

A LEADING Singaporean academic has become the first person to represent the Republic as a World Trade Organisation (WTO) chair.

Associate Professor Michael Ewing-Chow, 41, of the National University of Singapore's law faculty joins 14 other chairs on the global programme.

It is the first time Singapore has taken part in the programme, which promotes trade research.

Prof Ewing-Chow's appointment to the four-year position comes as free trade faces challenges such as the economic slowdown and rising pressure on many nations to introduce protectionist policies.

But it underscores Singapore's faith in a strong, rules-based system, said Ambassador-at-Large Tommy Koh on Tuesday.

Being given a place on the chairs programme will give the Republic a regular forum for discussions in the region.

Academic institutions taking part receive support in areas like research and course preparation.

An event was held at the Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel on Tuesday to mark Prof Ewing-Chow's appointment. It featured a discussion on challenges facing the WTO.

These include the slow pace of



Prof Ewing-Chow is one of 15 chairs.

the Doha Round of global talks that began in 2001, with the aim of lowering trade barriers.

"Despite almost 10 years of hard negotiations, the Doha Round remains at an impasse," said Professor Koh, who was

guest of honour at the event.

"Questions have naturally been raised over the future of the multi-lateral trading system," he said, adding: "Singapore believes that a strong, rules-based, global trading system is still the best paradigm for continued growth and prosperity for all economies, both developed and developing."

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