

NEWSLETTER

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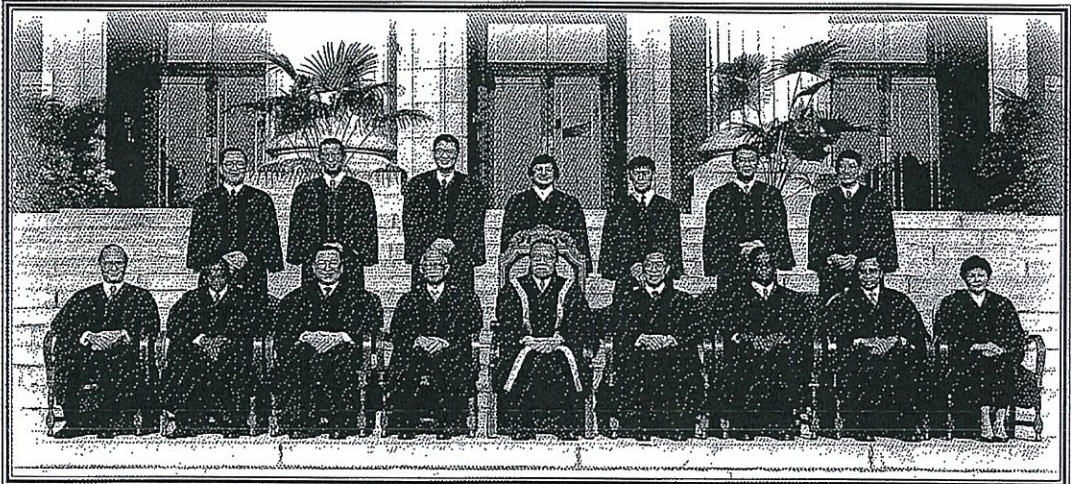
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2001 OPENING OF THE *Legal Year 2001*



STANDING FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:
TAY YONG KWANG JC, CHAN SENG ONN JC, TAN LEE MENG J, JUDITH PRAKASH J, CHOO HAN TECK JC,
LEE SEIU KIN JC, WOO BIH LI JC.

SEATED FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:
KAN TING CHIU J, G PANNIRSELVAM J, LAI KEW CHAI J, L P THEAN JA, YONG PUNG HOW CJ, CHAO HICK TIN JA,
S RAJENDRAN J, M P H RUBIN J, LAI SIU CHIU J.

The opening of the Legal Year 2001 by the Honourable the Chief Justice Yong Pung How was held at the City Hall Chamber on Saturday, 6 January 2001. It was well attended by all Judges and Judicial Commissioners of the Supreme Court, legal service officers and members of the legal profession.

The Honourable Attorney-General Mr Chan Sek Keong began the proceedings with his customary speech, followed by Mr R Palakrishnan, President of the Law Society of Singapore. Both of them renewed their pledges of support, as well as the support of the Legal Service and the Bar respectively, to the Judiciary. In the Chief Justice's Response, his Honour gave an overview of the latest technological initiatives introduced by the Singapore Judiciary. His Honour also announced the 2 new Senior Counsel appointed for the year.

We bring you the full text of all 3 speeches in the following pages.

The Honourable Attorney-General's Speech



THE HONOURABLE ATTORNEY-GENERAL
MR. CHAN SEK KEONG

"...it is incumbent upon all of us present here... to preserve the integrity and efficiency of the justice system as a precious legacy for future Singaporeans."

MAY IT PLEASE YOU, CHIEF JUSTICE, JUDGES OF APPEAL, JUDGES AND JUDICIAL COMMISSIONERS OF THE SUPREME COURT.

Over the last 10 years, you, Chief Justice, have transformed the Judiciary into an institution befitting a first world economy. It is a remarkable performance, achieved with the co-operation and support of your judicial colleagues, the Singapore Legal Service, the legal profession and the law academia, and made possible by generous financial and technical assistance from the Government.

Singapore has thrived as a regional manufacturing and services hub for global companies doing business in Asia. In the new global environment, the state of our laws and legal infrastructure is more than a domestic concern. Legal systems are under constant scrutiny by global investors and have to measure up to their standards of acceptability. For such investors, the presence of a stable legal order in which there is law and order and an efficient legal system is paramount. They need to be assured that their rights and interests will receive adequate protection by predictable rules of law and a transparent legal process. During and after the Asian financial crisis, the availability of effective insolvency laws was regarded as a key element of an acceptable legal system. We were able to withstand such scrutiny on account of the timely changes made to the legal system and infrastructure. This crisis highlighted the need for our legal institutions to anticipate and respond to future developments. In this connection, we in the Attorney-General's Chambers have identified an extensive list of subjects in all areas of law for further study and reform. We will work with the legal policy unit of the Ministry of Law to ensure that we have a sound legal framework.

The large presence of global law firms in Singapore has established Singapore as a legal services hub in the region. Singapore law firms should work with them to entrench this position. We have leaders at the Bar with the vision and drive to venture outside the limitations of a small domestic constituency.

For some time now our large law firms have acquired new management expertise and re-organised their practices. They have moved into new areas of legal work and are able to provide competitive legal services in the regional markets. They have succeeded in enhancing their legal expertise in many areas of international banking and financial work despite the constraints of the financial markets. They are in the forefront of the legal profession in venturing into the global legal services market.

We have also in place certain policies to train competent lawyers to support the legal system. These policies are well known. The first policy, which has been in force for some time, requires the National University of Singapore to apply rigorous academic standards both in admitting students to its four-year law degree course and in awarding classed Honours degrees.

The second policy, which applies only to Singaporeans who choose to study law overseas in order to practise law in Singapore, requires that they obtain a Second Class Upper law degree, or better, from selected overseas law schools before they become eligible for admission to the Bar.

I think it is fair to say that the success of the first policy has been demonstrated by the results. This policy has consistently produced high quality and forward-looking lawyers for the legal services sector. Our best law firms, which are also the largest and the most internationally-oriented, have made their mark and gained professional recognition for top class legal services under the leadership of NUS law graduates. The second policy has only been recently implemented. It is premature to assess its impact on the state of the legal services sector. But, given its high academic requirements, it is likely to be another source of top quality lawyers. It may be worth noting that the majority of the recent Justices' Law Clerks are drawn from this source.

The third policy seeks to impart to Singapore lawyers professional skills in what has been described as "first-tier" legal work through joint law ventures and formal law alliances with global law firms. They will have the opportunity to acquire transactional experience and participate in cutting-edge legal work in international financial transactions that are the preserve of the top global law firms. These arrangements will bring other benefits as well, such as cross-fertilisation of legal ideas and cultures and mastery of knowledge-management skills. The domestic legal services sector will have reached the pinnacle of excellence when it is able to originate innovative and cutting-edge legal work from here.

This development is both exciting and apprehensive for the legal profession. Exciting for those engaged in these collaborative arrangements and apprehensive for all others not so engaged. We have reasons for optimism. Our law firms, especially the large firms, have positioned themselves to meet future changes and challenges. The policies in place ensure a regular flow of legal talent, intellectually equipped to take on legal work of the highest complexity, and in the fullness of time to fill the highest legal and judicial positions in government.

But for now, it is incumbent upon all of us present here, following the leadership of the Judiciary, to preserve the integrity and efficiency of the justice system as a precious legacy for future Singaporeans. To this end, my fellow officers and I pledge our full support for the Judiciary in this endeavour. We also wish you, Chief Justice, Judges of Appeal, Judges and Judicial Commissioners, the President of the Law Society and all present in spirit and substance continuing good health and happiness.