

1-2018

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Singapore Management University

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Citation

Singapore Management University. Justice Chao Hick Tin and Mr V. K. Rajah named Distinguished Fellows at SMU School of Law. (2018). 1-3. SMU Press Releases.

Available at: http://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/oh_pressrelease/138

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Media Release

Justice Chao Hick Tin and Mr VK Rajah named Distinguished Fellows at SMU School of Law

Students and faculty to benefit from their expertise, knowledge and experience

Singapore, 19 January 2018 (Friday) – Well-respected Senior Judge Chao Hick Tin and former Judge and Attorney-General Mr VK Rajah SC, will bring their extensive legal experience to the Singapore Management University (SMU) as Distinguished Fellows (卓越院士) in the SMU School of Law.

Having both served as Judge of Appeal and Attorney-General, Justice Chao and Mr Rajah are both eminent luminaries of the legal profession and judiciary in Singapore. The appointments provide SMU faculty and students access to their expertise, knowledge and experience.

As Distinguished Fellows at SMU School of Law, they will hold informal talks with students and faculty during their two-year appointment effective from November 2017. Mr Rajah has also taken on Chairmanship at the SMU School of Law Advisory Board (新大法学院咨询理事会) from July 2017 for an initial term of two years.

SMU School of Law Dean, Associate Professor Goh Yihan (吴亦涵), said, "It is a huge honour for SMU to be associated with Justice Chao and Mr Rajah. Both of them have served in the highest position of judiciary and have played a crucial role in the development of Singapore's legal and judiciary landscape. The exceptional opportunity to learn from them and tap their collective wisdom will benefit our law faculty and students immensely."

Both Justice Chao and Mr Rajah have recently retired from public service after an illustrious career. In September 2017, a rare valedictory reference – a formal sitting of a full bench of Supreme Court judges to mark events of special significance – was conducted to honour Justice Chao and thank him for his contributions to the country and to mark his retirement after 50 years of public service. (Justice Chao was subsequently appointed Senior Judge in the Court of Appeal in December 2017 and has begun his new term on 5 January 2018.) Mr Rajah was also lauded upon his retirement in January 2017 – Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong paid tribute to him in a valedictory letter thanking him for his outstanding contributions to Singapore's jurisprudence.

About Justice Chao Hick Tin (赵锡棨)

Justice Chao began his career in the Public Service as a State Counsel in the Attorney-General's Chambers in 1967 and rose to the position of Senior State Counsel in 1979. He was appointed Judicial Commissioner in 1987 and elevated to a High Court Judge in 1990. He was subsequently appointed a Judge of Appeal in 1999. From 1993 to 1999, he served as the President of the Industrial Arbitration Court and was the Chairman of the Singapore Mediation Centre from June 2003 to May 2006. He was also the President of the ASEAN Law Association from Dec 2003 to November 2006.

Between 2006 and 2008, Justice Chao was the Attorney-General of Singapore. In 2008, he returned to the Supreme Court as a Judge of Appeal and Vice-President of the Court of Appeal, a position he has held until his retirement in September 2017. He was appointed as a Senior Judge in the Court of Appeal in December 2017 and began his three-year term on 5 January 2018.

Justice Chao's judicial career spans nearly 30 years. With this new appointment, he would have been reappointed to the Court of Appeal an unprecedented six times after reaching the normal retirement age of 65. He is also the only judge to have worked under four Chief Justices.

He has safeguarded and defended Singapore's interests on the international stage for two decades, making great contributions in this regard. In 1968, three years after the separation of Singapore from Malaysia, Justice Chao, who was just 25 years old at the time, attended a UN Conference on the Law of Treaties. At the meeting, he endorsed and reaffirmed the position uttered by the Malaysian representative that the Malaysia-Singapore water agreement 'could not be terminated or suspended for any political reason' and placed that understanding on record.

Justice Chao also took part in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea negotiations between 1974 and 1982, and was part of the team who successfully argued before the International Court of Justice at The Hague that Pedra Branca belongs to Singapore.

In the National Day Awards of 2008, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (Darjah Utama Bakti Cemerlang) for his special contributions to the Pedra Branca dispute case.

About Mr VK Rajah (维克拉惹)

Mr Rajah was a one of Singapore's leading commercial lawyers prior to entering public service. He was among the first batch of Senior Counsel appointed in 1997, and led one of Singapore's largest law firms. In 2004, after 20 years of practice, he was appointed a Judicial Commissioner, and within the year a Supreme Court Judge. Three years later, he became a Judge of Appeal, a position he held until 2014.

During his term on the Supreme Court Bench, he contributed prolifically to Singapore's jurisprudence, and many of his judgments have shaped the development of Singapore law.

Beyond the courtroom, he helmed committees, which have enhanced the administration of justice and the vibrancy of Singapore's legal profession. These include the Committee to Develop the Singapore Legal Sector, which comprehensively reviewed the entire legal services sector and made bold and important recommendations, including liberalising Singapore's legal services, and building up Singapore's exportable legal services in the areas of mediation and arbitration.

This Committee also proposed to develop Singapore as a centre of legal education, and enhance post-graduate and professional training. One result was the Singapore Institute of Legal Education, an umbrella institution overseeing vocational training and continuing education for the legal fraternity. In 2013, Mr Rajah also chaired the 4th Committee on the Supply of Lawyers.

Beyond legal education, Mr Rajah actively promoted the use of Singapore law in the region. In 2004, he chaired a Working Committee to study this and went on to head the newly-formed standing International Promotion of Singapore Committee, whose initiatives have helped raise the profile of Singapore law beyond our shores. As Attorney-General from June 2014 to January 2017, he implemented strategic measures to strengthen and equip the Attorney-General's Chambers,

including setting up an AGC Academy to raise professional standards across the various divisions in the Chambers. He retired from public service in January 2017.

Mr Rajah is presently on the Board of Directors of the Monetary Authority of Singapore, and is a member of the Essex Court Chambers Duxton (Singapore Group Practice).

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About Singapore Management University

Singapore Management University (SMU) is internationally recognised for its world-class research and distinguished teaching. Established in 2000, SMU's mission is to generate leading-edge research with global impact and produce broad-based, creative and entrepreneurial leaders for the knowledge-based economy. SMU education is known for its highly interactive, collaborative and project-based approach to learning, and for its technologically enabled pedagogy of seminar-style teaching in small class sizes.

Comprised of six schools specialising in Accountancy, Business, Economics, Information Systems, Law and Social Sciences, it offers a wide range of bachelors', masters' and PhD degree programmes and is home to about 10,000 students. With an emphasis on generating relevant multi-disciplinary research that addresses Asian issues, and being Singapore's only university in the city, SMU enjoys strategic linkages with business, government and the wider community through its research institutes, centres and labs. www.smu.edu.sg

About SMU School of Law

SMU School of Law proudly welcomed its first cohort of 116 students in August 2007. Taught by a dynamic faculty with postgraduate degrees from renowned universities, the School aims to nurture its students to become excellent lawyers who will contribute significantly to society. Trained with the ability to contextualise legal expertise and to think across disciplines and geographical borders coupled with SMU's interactive pedagogy, SMU's law graduates are confident articulate and analytically agile.

The SMU School of Law offers a four-year full-time Bachelor of Laws programme, a five-year double-degree programme which combines law with Accountancy, Business, Economics, Information Systems or Social Sciences, and a Master of Laws programme. The School has also launched a full-time graduate programme, the Juris Doctor Programme which can be completed within three years, and in some cases, accelerated for completion within two years. www.law.smu.edu.sg

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