

AGC PAYS TRIBUTE TO LATE ATTORNEY-GENERAL TAN BOON TEIK

Attorney-General Sundaresh Menon and all officers and staff of the Attorney-General's Chambers are deeply saddened by the passing of Mr Tan Boon Teik, the former Attorney-General of Singapore, on 10 March 2012, and we extend our deepest condolences to Mrs Tan Sook Yee and her family.

2 The late Mr Tan graduated from University College London with an Honours degree in law in 1951. In 1953, he received his Masters of Laws degree from the same university. He was the Rockefeller Fellow at the University of London Institute from 1961 to 1962. He was a Barrister-at-Law in England at the Middle Temple. He was also an Advocate and Solicitor in Malaysia and Singapore.

3 Mr Tan Boon Teik served as the Acting Attorney-General from 1 February 1967 to 31 December 1968 and as the Attorney-General of Singapore from 1 January 1969 to 30 April 1992. He was the longest serving Attorney-General of Singapore post-independence and was succeeded by Mr Chan Sek Keong when he retired in 1992.

4 Mr Tan held office as the Attorney-General for 25 years, during a crucial period in Singapore's history in the years after independence. During that period, the seeds were sown for an uncompromising law and order framework.

5 During his tenure, Mr Tan played a pivotal role in shaping the legal landscape of Singapore and upholding the rule of law which has underpinned much of Singapore's success. The first reprint of the Constitution was prepared under Mr Tan's leadership. Two revised editions of our legislation were produced first in 1970 and then 1985, both during Mr Tan's watch. He also helped steer the formation of the Singapore Academy of Law, which brought together the various branches of the legal profession (including the members of the Bench, private practitioners, Legal Service officers, and faculty members of the local law schools) under one umbrella organisation.

6 Mr Tan also served as the Government's lead counsel in many landmark cases, including the Nanyang Siang Pau case in 1971, the judicial review application by the Asian Wall Street Journal in 1985 and the seminal case of *Lee Mau Seng v MHA*, which concerned the Internal Security Act. This was in addition to numerous legal opinions rendered by him personally on important issues of constitutional and administrative law. As the Public Prosecutor, Mr Tan also successfully oversaw the prosecution in the *Gemini Chit Fund* case in the 1970s, which involved the loss of an estimated \$50 million suffered by some 40,000 victims who had been promised high returns on their investments. On the international law front, Mr Tan chaired a meeting to review extradition arrangements among Commonwealth countries.

7 Well known for his strong personality in legal circles and the exacting standards he demanded of lawyers in Chambers, many old staffers also recall Mr Tan's gentler side, especially towards his office attendants. He also made the time to share his perspectives and knowledge with his legal officers, often offering views on the broader issues of the day.

8 Another of his legacies to the Singapore legal system was the establishment of the Singapore International Arbitration Centre of which he was the founding Chairman. Mr Tan recognised the growing importance of arbitration as a means of dispute resolution and advocated Singapore's accession to the New York Convention and promoted arbitration extensively in Singapore and abroad. Mr Tan also served as the Chairman of the Insurance Corporation of Singapore and of the Singapore Petroleum Corporation.

9 Despite his heavy responsibilities as the Public Prosecutor and the Government's principal legal officer, Mr Tan found time to devote himself to the arts. A skilled pianist himself, Mr Tan Boon Teik was the founding Chairman of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra and steered the orchestra for many years.

10 The Attorney-General's Chambers acknowledge with gratitude Mr Tan's stewardship of the Chambers for 25 years. Without question, he was a dominant figure in the modern history of the Chambers.

QUOTES IN TRIBUTE TO THE LATE FORMER ATTORNEY-GENERAL TAN BOON TEIK

"Mr Tan was a dominant figure in the Singapore legal landscape during my early years as a lawyer. I got to know him much better in the last couple of years. Two things strike me about him and his legacy. He presided over Chambers for 25 years and left an enormous mark on the professionalism and commitment of our officers. Second, I was struck when I got to know him better by how kind and thoughtful he was. We have lost a wonderful public lawyer."

~ Attorney-General Sundaresh Menon S.C.

"He was a good boss - very demanding but always gave due recognition for good work done. I had twenty interesting and challenging years working with him."

~ Justice Chao Hick Tin, Judge of Appeal and Vice-President of Court of Appeal

[Note: Justice Chao served in the Attorney-General's Chambers from 1967 to 1987 and was Head of Civil Division before he left for the bench in 1987. Justice Chao was appointed as Attorney-General from 11 April 2006 to 10 April 2008 before returning to the Supreme Court.]

“He demanded high standards of all his officers. While stern and at times intimidating for young legal officers, he was a fair boss, rewarding those whom he noted had worked hard or executed a job well.”

~ Owi Beng Ki, Deputy Parliamentary Counsel, Attorney-General Chambers

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