

CJ's Speech at Ceremony for the Admission of the New Senior Counsel

The following is the address by the Hon Chief Justice Mr Andrew Kwok-nang Li at the Ceremony for the Admission of the New Senior Counsel today (April 26):

On behalf of all my colleagues on the Bench, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all of you to this year's ceremony for the appointment of Senior Counsel.

We would like to extend to you Mr Bharwaney, Mr Lee, Ms Draycott, Mr Houghton and Mr Lam our sincere and heartiest congratulations on your achieving the rank of Senior Counsel.

The Bar is a tough profession and the journey to success is an arduous one. Apart from ability, strong determination and firm commitment are required. Through years of hard work, you have achieved this eminent rank. Your appointments are hard earned and well deserved. As Senior Counsel, the work you will be undertaking and the responsibilities involved will be much more demanding and onerous. I am confident that you will rise to meet these new challenges successfully.

Throughout your career, each of you must have enjoyed great encouragement and loyal support from your family who had to make allowances and sacrifices. Your family's devotion and loyalty must have played a crucial part in your success. Today, they must be very happy and they have every justification to be extremely proud of you. To them, we also wish to extend our warmest congratulations.

In this connection, the adage, appropriately adapted for modern times, that behind every successful person is a good, proud and supportive spouse is plainly true. For men, whether the further elaboration of this saying, that behind every successful man is a pleasantly surprised mother-in-law, is also true may be subject to debate.

The experience and expertise of the new silks cover many areas of practice: criminal, personal injuries, construction, company, commercial and judicial review. These appointments will add strength to the Senior Bar.

There were 14 applications this year and the success rate was about 35%. If one excludes the successful applicant from the Department of Justice, the success rate was about 30%.

With four appointments this year from the practising Bar, the total number of practising Senior Counsel stands at 84, representing about 8% of the total size of the Bar.

The rank of Senior Counsel is a badge of honour and a mark of distinction. It commands a status at the top of the legal profession which is well recognised and respected by the profession, the courts and the community. Senior Counsel, as leaders of the profession, have a crucial role to play in maintaining the highest professional standards and in shaping the future of the Bar.

As to the maintenance of the highest professional standards, it must be strongly emphasised that the advocate plays a pivotal role in our courts. The administration of justice depends to a large extent on the confidence which judges at all levels of court could repose in the competence and integrity of the advocates appearing before them. Whilst fearless in advancing their client's cause, advocates must discharge in full their duties to the court. The discharge of these duties is of fundamental importance to the fair administration of justice. Senior Counsel have the responsibility of setting the highest standards in this regard.

As to shaping the future of the Bar, the Bar will continue to face many interesting challenges in the years ahead. In particular, these include coping with the implementation of Civil Justice Reform, adapting to alternative dispute resolution methods including mediation, improving and enhancing the standards of entrants and practitioners, considering the relaxation of rules against advertising, enforcing ethical standards and ensuring access to legal advice and justice to all. As leaders of the Bar, Senior Counsel have a responsibility to ensure that these challenges are successfully met by the Bar.

In a world of rapid change, the challenge for the leaders and members of the Bar is to manage change in a forward looking and dynamic way, whilst at the same time remaining faithful and holding steadfast to its essential values and ideals as an honourable profession, with its deep commitment to the rule of law and to ensuring justice for all citizens in an open and free society.

With these remarks, on behalf of the Bench, I wish the five of you every happiness and success in your careers as Senior Counsel.

Ends/Saturday, April 26, 2008
Issued at HKT 11:30

NNNN