

CJ's address at Ceremony for the Admission of the New Senior Counsel (with photos)

Secretary for Justice, Chairman of the Bar, President of the Law Society, fellow judges, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a privilege and a pleasure to welcome you all to this important ceremony, marking the admission to the rank of Senior Counsel of Ms Catrina Lam, Ms Priscilia Lam and Mr Timothy Parker.

To each of our appointees, I extend my warmest congratulations. Today is the culmination of years of rigorous practice, professional growth, and steadfast dedication to the law. But while this moment may be viewed as a culmination, it is equally a commencement – a threshold to the responsibilities and expectations that come with the rank of Senior Counsel.

The conferment of silk is not merely an individual honour. It is a public recognition of excellence in advocacy, depth of legal learning, and the highest standards of integrity and conduct. In our common law tradition, which underpins the legal system in Hong Kong, the role of Senior Counsel carries great weight and significance. It is a rank that signifies leadership at the Bar, and a visible commitment to the values that sustain our system of justice.

The rank of Senior Counsel is, of course, grounded in the law. It is conferred by the Chief Justice under statute, following extensive consultation with the Chairman of the Bar, the President of the Law Society, and the senior Judiciary. The process is deliberate and exacting, as it must be, for it serves the public interest above all. The legal community and the wider society are entitled to know that those who bear the distinction of Senior Counsel do so not only on account of their technical ability, but also because they embody the finest traditions of the profession.

It is precisely because of these traditions that the responsibilities of Senior Counsel are so considerable. First and foremost among them is the duty to maintain the highest standards of advocacy, professional integrity, and independence. In an adversarial system, courts rely on the skill and honesty of counsel to present cases with clarity, fairness and a deep respect for the law. Senior Counsel, by their very presence in court, shape the tone and quality of proceedings and must serve as exemplars to the junior Bar.

Beyond the courtroom, Senior Counsel are expected to play an active and constructive role in the life of the Bar – mentoring junior members, contributing to legal education, and upholding the independence of the legal profession. They are also expected to serve the public, whether through public appointments, law reform initiatives, or, in due course, judicial service.

Indeed, our legal framework contemplates that some of those who ascend to the rank of Senior Counsel may in time be called to join the Bench. The qualities that make one a leader at the Bar – independence of mind, sound judgment, fairness, and intellectual rigour – are also those that form the foundation of good judging. In that sense, the appointment to silk is not merely about past achievement; it is an investment in the future strength of the Judiciary and the rule of law in Hong Kong.

As the best of our juniors take silk, they do so not only as individuals of great accomplishment, but as custodians of the finest traditions of the legal profession that are larger than themselves. The strength of any legal system depends not only on the soundness of its laws and institutions, but also on the quality and character of those who practise within it. Today's appointments strengthen our confidence in the future of the profession.

On this happy occasion, we must of course acknowledge the support given to our new silks by their families, friends, and colleagues. Their success is not achieved in isolation. It is fitting that their loved ones are present to celebrate this occasion, for they too have contributed in no small measure to the journeys culminating here this morning.

It would also be remiss not to acknowledge the important role played by instructing solicitors in the professional journeys of today's appointees. The trust and collaboration of those who have briefed our new Senior Counsel – often repeatedly and in the most demanding of cases – have enabled them to refine their advocacy, develop their legal thinking, and demonstrate the very qualities for which they are recognised today. The professional partnerships forged between counsel and those who instruct them are a vital part of the fabric of the legal profession, and today's appointments reflect that shared endeavour.

For any profession to continue to flourish, those entrusted with its guidance must possess a clear and forward-looking vision for its development, shaped by an appreciation of the needs and expectations of the society it exists to serve. They must be prepared to confront and overcome the strains and tensions that may arise from narrow or sectional interests, which are often preoccupied with short-term concerns. Senior Counsel, as the natural leaders of their branch of the legal profession, bear a particular responsibility to support this endeavour, so that the profession as a whole may continue to discharge its public function and command the respect of the community it serves.

Now let me say a few words about our appointees.

Ms Catrina Lam is a highly regarded barrister with a broad commercial practice, encompassing complex disputes, domestic and international arbitration, competition law, and regulatory matters. She also has significant experience in administrative and constitutional law. Ms Lam is known for her clarity of thought, technical excellence, and strong courtroom advocacy.

Ms Priscilia Lam is a highly respected criminal advocate, known for her diligent and fearless advocacy on both sides of the courtroom. She is recognised for her integrity, professionalism, and balanced judgment, whether acting for the prosecution or the

defence. Her substantial contribution to the criminal Bar makes her elevation to silk richly deserved.

Mr Timothy Parker has long been regarded as one of the Bar's busiest juniors in the field of public and constitutional law. His sharp legal mind, calm authority, and principled approach have earned him the respect of judges and peers alike.

To each of our new silks, I reiterate: the rank you now hold is not only a privilege, but also a solemn call to service. You are now leaders of the Bar. You bear a particular responsibility not only to serve as highly capable and dependable advocates in court, but also to uphold the rule of law and to safeguard the proper administration of justice. You are expected to speak with courage and conviction where the rule of law is threatened, to maintain the highest standards of professional conduct and integrity, both inside and outside the courtroom, and to uphold the traditions of discipline and courtesy which underpin the profession. No less importantly, you must be vigilant in defending the right of every individual to unimpeded access to the courts. These are not abstract ideals, but living principles that underpin the public's trust in our legal system, both within Hong Kong and beyond.

The courts, the legal profession, and the public will look to you for your expertise, your example, and your commitment to upholding the values that define the rule of law in our society. I have every confidence that you will rise to these challenges, as your predecessors have done, and that you will meet these expectations with the same commitment and excellence that have brought you to this day.

On behalf of the Judiciary and the wider legal community, I offer you my congratulations and wish you every success and fulfilment in your careers as Senior Counsel.

Thank you.

Ends/Saturday, June 7, 2025
Issued at HKT 11:52



The ceremonial proceedings for the admission of the newly appointed Senior Counsel took place at the Court of Final Appeal today (June 7). Photo shows Chief Justice Andrew Cheung, Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal (second right), with the newly appointed Senior Counsel Ms Catrina Lam (second left), Ms Priscilia Lam (first right) and Mr Timothy Parker (first left).



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