

## Speech of the Chief Justice

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The following is the address by the Hon Chief Justice Andrew Kwok-nang Li at the Ceremony for the Admission of the New Senior Counsel today (April 23):

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

We would like to extend to you, Mr Clayton, Mr Chan, Mr King, Mr Pow, Mr Pilbrow and Mr McWalters, our sincere and heartiest congratulations on your achieving the rank of Senior Counsel.

The Bar is a tough profession and requires strong determination and total commitment for success. Your appointments are well deserved, having been earned through years of hard and dedicated work. This marks the end of a stage in your professional career and the beginning of an exciting stage. It is important to recognise it as such. In this new stage, the work you will be undertaking and the responsibilities involved will be more challenging and demanding. As with all legal professionals, including judges, the striving for excellence should never cease. I am confident that you will continue to develop so as to realise your full professional potential.

Throughout your career, each of you must have enjoyed great encouragement and unstinting 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.

During the period of nearly eight years since 1 July, 1997, 37 appointments to the rank of Senior Counsel have been made, including the six appointments this year. For this year, there was a total of 13 applications. This was less than the 17 applications for the 2004 exercise and the 19 applications for the 2003 exercise. With six appointments this year, the success rate was about 46% (compared to about 30% last year with five appointments).

The experience and expertise of the six new silks appointed this year extend over a wide range and include the following areas: criminal, arbitration and construction, defamation, property and matrimonial. These appointments would add depth and strength to the senior Bar.

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 could repose in the competence and integrity of the advocates appearing before them. While fearless in advancing their client's cause, advocates must discharge in full their duties to the court.

For advocates, the rank of Senior Counsel is a badge of honour. It commands a status at the top of the legal profession which is well respected by the profession, by the courts and by the community. It must be appreciated that it is not only a recognition of past achievements but much more importantly, it carries challenging responsibilities for the future.

You must discharge these responsibilities to the fullest. You must maintain the highest professional standards of integrity and competence. Having regard to the large pool of junior counsel many of whom are relatively inexperienced, setting a good example would be of critical importance in maintaining the quality and reputation of the Bar. You have to carry on the Bar's strong and well respected commitment to uphold the rule of law. You must play your part in the Bar's affairs and in assisting pupils and young practitioners. And you must make time available for community service when called on.

The legal profession is and must remain an honourable profession. We live in a fast changing world. In a sea of rapid change, it is all the more important that the legal profession led by its leaders should hold steadfast to its enduring values and ideals, values and ideals that ensure justice for all citizens in a free society.

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

Ends/Saturday, April 23, 2005

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