

## 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 (May 15):

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 Wong, Mr Kwok, Mr Ng, Mr Chow and Mr Duncan, our sincere and heartiest congratulations on your achieving the rank of Senior Counsel.

The Bar is an arduous profession and to succeed, strong determination and total commitment is required. Through years of hard and dedicated work, you have achieved this eminent rank. Your appointments are hard earned and well deserved. This marks the end of a stage in your professional life's journey and the beginning of a new and 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 demanding and onerous. The striving for professional 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.

As with last year, there was a robust number of applications this year. The total number was 17 (compared to 19 last year). With five appointments, the success rate this year was about 30% (compared to about 32% last year with six appointments).

The experience and expertise of the five new silks appointed this year cover a wide range in both the civil and criminal fields, and these appointments would add depth and strength to the senior Bar. These appointments again demonstrate that the Bar is a truly meritocratic profession. Men and women achieve success and rise to the top at the Bar because they have, and are recognised by their professional peers to have, the integrity, the ability and the dedication. And it is fundamental in the public interest that this must always remain so.

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, by the courts and by the community. But it is fundamental to appreciate that it is not only a recognition of past achievements. Much more importantly, the status carries challenging responsibilities for the future. You must discharge these responsibilities to the fullest. You have to lead by example by setting the highest professional standards of

integrity and competence. You have to carry on the Bar's strong commitment to uphold the rule of law, a commitment which must be regarded by all as an invaluable community asset. You must play your full part in the Bar's affairs and do all you can to assist pupils and young practitioners. And you must make time available for community service when called on.

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. Judges expect and have a right to expect that submissions made by advocates relating to law and the evidence are well considered and are justified by the authorities and the evidence.

The legal profession is and must remain an honourable profession. We live in a fast changing world, with globalisation and speedy advances in information technology. And our own community is going through momentous times. In a sea of such rapid changes and developments, 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, I wish the five of you every happiness and success in your careers as Senior Counsel.

Ends/Saturday, May 15, 2004

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