

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Singapore Academy of Law and Law Society connect at first-ever virtual get-together

Force Majeure raises close to \$65,000 for charity

Singapore, 9 December 2020 – Some 250 members of the legal profession logged online on the evening of 2 December to demonstrate that COVID-19 has not dented the profession’s solidarity and camaraderie. The virtual get-together, titled “Force Majeure”, was also attended by leaders of the organising bodies: the Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, in his capacity as President, Singapore Academy of Law (“SAL”) and Mr Gregory Vijayendran SC, President of The Law Society of Singapore. The duo departed from the norm of speeches, choosing to instead engage in a candid chat on the pandemic’s impact on the profession.

Describing the challenges of working from home, Chief Justice Menon said, “The first thing I noticed was the complete breakdown of any segregation between the personal and professional spaces. I found myself turning on my computer first thing in the morning and leaving it on till very late in the day. I somehow felt that I never disconnected from being on duty even when we weren’t on duty.”

Looking to the future, Chief Justice Menon added, “I hope the profession will be able to go back to the things we cherish, like human interaction and contact. I feel terribly sad for young people, who have lost a window of mentorship, which depends on, to a significant degree, the ability to talk to their superiors. They still do the work but miss out on a lot of the soft learning that is so valuable. I hope this can be part of our reality again before long.”

Said Mr Vijayendran, “The COVID-19 pandemic and its well documented adverse effects have been analysed legally as ‘force majeure’ events, resulting in certain contractual rights and obligations being suspended or ended. In tongue-in-cheek fashion, SAL and Law Society termed the event Force Majeure to show that our meeting and greeting one another is neither suspended nor ended, even if the external

environment could prove torrid or horrid. It is truly uplifting that the legal fraternity joined hands and hearts together in a show of authentic and symbolic solidarity despite our shared sense of loss suffered with society by the multifarious adverse impact of the pandemic.”

He continued, “I hope that this meaningful event will be a harbinger of hope for the strong spirit of unity and charity continuing long after the pandemic becomes a footnote of history. Indeed, this event demonstrates compassion in deed and not only in words. The generous giving by members of the legal profession to two worthy causes helping the vulnerable and new vulnerable is apt, timely and caring during the SG Cares Giving Week.”

Force Majeure also raised close to \$65,000 for two charities: the Yellow Ribbon Fund (“YRF”) – STAR (“Skills Training Assistance to Restart”) Bursary for the rehabilitation and education of ex-offenders, and the Law Society Pro Bono Services’ Harry Elias SC CLAS Fellowship Fund to further render pro bono criminal legal aid to vulnerable groups.

ENDS

Media Contacts

Singapore Academy of Law

Ashutosh Ravikrishnan

Assistant Manager

Corporate Communications

Singapore Academy of Law

Tel: 6332 5371 / 8498 7507

Email: ashutosh_ravikrishnan@sal.org.sg

Foo Kim Leng

Assistant Director

Corporate Communications

Singapore Academy of Law

Tel: 6332 5365

Email: foo_kim_leng@sal.org.sg

Law Society of Singapore

Goh Wan Cheng

Director

Membership & Communications

The Law Society of Singapore

Tel: 6530 0246 / 9658 0080

Email: communications@lawsoc.org.sg

About the Singapore Academy of Law

SAL is a promotion and development agency for Singapore's legal industry. Our vision is to make Singapore the legal hub of Asia. SAL works with our stakeholders to set new precedents of excellence in Singapore law through developing thought leadership, world-class infrastructure and legal solutions. Our mandates are to build up the intellectual capital of the legal profession by enhancing legal knowledge, raise the international profile of Singapore law, promote Singapore as a centre for dispute resolution, and improve the standards and efficiency of legal practice through continuing professional development and the use of technology. As a body established by statute, SAL also undertakes statutory functions such as stakeholding services and appointment of Senior Counsel, Commissioners for Oaths and Notaries Public. More information can be found at www.sal.org.sg.

About The Law Society of Singapore

Established in 1967, the Law Society of Singapore is a body established under the Legal Profession Act. It carries out various statutory functions prescribed under the Legal Profession Act, including maintaining and improving the standards of conduct and learning of the legal profession in Singapore, the facilitation of the acquisition of legal knowledge by members of the legal profession, and protecting and assisting the public in all matters ancillary or incidental to the law.

About the Yellow Ribbon Fund-SAL STAR Bursary

The YRF-SAL STAR Bursary, started in 2014, has to date benefited 38 ex-offenders who received financial help through the bursary. In all, the bursary has disbursed more than \$300,000. Between 2021 and 2023, 15 new ex-offenders will benefit from the fund: seven pursuing undergraduate studies and eight taking on diplomas. Courses undertaken by YRF-SAL STAR bursary recipients covered subjects as diverse as law, business studies, sociology and chemical engineering.

About The Harry Elias SC CLAS Fellowship Fund

The Harry Elias SC CLAS Fellowship Fund was established to honour the life and legacy of former Law Society President, Mr Harry Elias SC, and to continue his visionary work rendering pro bono criminal legal aid to the needy and vulnerable in Singapore. Proceeds will go towards expenses arising from the CLAS Fellowship, a group of young, passionate lawyers doing pro bono criminal defence work as a full time calling. Donations qualify for 250% tax deduction and dollar matching under the Tote Board's Enhanced Fundraising Programme.