

**CITATION FOR DR WEE CHONG JIN
BY THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL, MR TAN BOON TEIK**

For the better part of three decades which span a period of momentous changes in the history of our nation, Dr Wee Chong Jin's selfless contributions to the administration of justice have been instrumental in moulding a legal system which we can all be proud of.

Dr Wee was born in Penang on 28 September 1917 and received his early education at Penang Free School. He went on to read law at St John's College of Cambridge University from 1936, graduating with a B.A. (Honours) in 1938 and also winning the coveted McMahon Prize at St John's College. He was called to the English Bar by the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple in 1939.

In 1940, Dr Wee was admitted as an advocate and solicitor of the Straits Settlements in Penang. He commenced practice at the Singapore Bar in 1941, where he gained experience in criminal, civil and conveyancing practice.

When Dr Wee was appointed to the Bench of the Singapore Supreme Court in 1957 as a Puisne Judge, he was only 39 years old and also the first local member of the Singapore Bar to be so appointed. Dr Wee again had the distinct honour of being the first Asian to be appointed Chief Justice of the State of Singapore on 5 January 1963. By the time he retired in September 1990, Dr Wee had served as Chief Justice for 27 years. He was then the longest serving Chief Justice of the Commonwealth.

As its head, Dr Wee led and guided the Judiciary through a period which saw many political, economic and other changes in Singapore's history, including the independence of the nation in 1965. There can be no question that the sound foundations of the Rule of Law in Singapore have been strengthened by the Judiciary under the leadership of Dr Wee. Also, during his long tenure, Dr Wee delivered many landmark judgments. These decisions, spanning as they do the entire spectrum of the law, have helped to lay a firm foundation for the development of Singapore's jurisprudence.

Dr Wee's accomplishments and contributions were not confined to the courts and the administration of justice. In addition to his judicial duties, he also played an important role in the shaping of the development of Singapore's Constitution. Dr Wee presided over the Constitutional Commission which was formed shortly after Singapore's independence. Its main

purpose was to consider and recommend measures to be included in our Constitution for the protection of racial and religious minorities; in particular, to ensure that differentiating measures do not inadvertently find its way into our legislation. Thereafter he became the first Chairman of the Presidential Council for Minority Rights when it was constituted in 1973. He remained Chairman of the Council until July 1991.

During his tenure as Chief Justice, Dr Wee was also the President of the Legal Service Commission, and he was responsible for the upholding of high standards and the proper functioning and administration of the government legal service, a duty which he discharged most ably.

Members of the Singapore Academy of Law owe Dr Wee a special debt of gratitude. His inspiration and untiring efforts led to the establishment of this institution, of which he was the first President.

In recognition of his contributions as the Chief Justice of Singapore during momentous phases of the Republic's constitutional development, and for maintaining the rule of law throughout these years, the University of Oxford conferred upon Dr Wee the Honorary Degree of Civil Law in 1987.

After his retirement, in recognition of his years of service to the judicial system which lasted over a period of 27 years, Dr Wee was awarded the Distinguished Service Order in 1991.

The honour that is bestowed upon Dr Wee today is the acknowledgement by the Singapore Academy of Law of his accomplishments and valuable contributions to the nation, the administration of justice, and the legal profession.

Mr President, may I now present Dr Wee Chong Jin, Honorary Member and Fellow of life of the Singapore Academy of Law.