



## **Welcome Address – Litigation Conference 2026**

### **Speech by President of The Law Society of Singapore Professor Tan Cheng Han SC**

1. Minister for Law, Mr Edwin Tong, SC;  
Judge of Appeal, Justice Ang Cheng Hock;  
Judges of the Supreme Court and the Singapore International Commercial Court;  
Mr Eusuff Ali, Chair of the Litigation Conference 2026 Organizing Committee and members of the Committee;  
Distinguished Guests;  
Ladies and Gentlemen
2. On behalf of the Law Society of Singapore, I warmly welcome you to the 2026 Litigation Conference. This conference is one of the key professional development events organized annually by the Society. It represents the Society's commitment to continuing education in the area of dispute resolution. As such, I am pleased to see so many of you here. It is indicative of a vibrant legal profession that is both humble and self-aware of the need to develop; that the goal of honing our skills and knowledge as litigators never comes to an end.
3. Even as this year's conference represents continuity in the quest for excellence as a profession, it takes place in a year that marks a historic milestone, namely the 200th Anniversary of the Second Charter of Justice which marked the beginning of Singapore's modern legal system and the introduction of English Law. Notwithstanding the aims of the Charter, its reach in the early decades was patchy for reasons of language, culture and resources. Many disputes were not settled through the formal legal system but through private ordering based on customary practices and centred on community leaders and even secret societies. For an example of how custom remained important, a judge in a dispute in the 1880s on a promissory note ordered by consent that if the claimant went to the temple at Pitt Street and swore according to Chinese custom by cutting off the head of a cockerel and burning joss sticks, he would have judgment, if not

judgement would go to the defendants. The court interpreter was tasked to accompany the parties but the agreement fell through because of the objections of the priest of the temple.

4. We have come a long way since then with a world class judiciary, legal profession and law schools. Singapore also benefits from an enlightened Ministry of Law responsible for sound legal policy and a good vision for the future. While the legal profession will no doubt face challenges in the future, as we have in the past, a strong foundation has been laid that I have no doubt we and those that come after us will continue to strengthen.
5. One aspect I would like to see more of is greater collaboration between opposing counsel in the administration of justice. Ultimately, even as we advance our clients' cases robustly as we must, we do so as officers of the court with the overriding objective of ensuring that justice is done. To this end, I have always thought it unhelpful that some members of the profession approach it too much with a combatant's mindset rather than in the spirit of working together, albeit from different perspectives, to help the court arrive at an optimal solution. It is my hope that as a profession our relations with our learned friends and our juniors may be informed by ever greater courtesy and cooperation, which can also only help disputes practice become more sustainable.
6. On this note, I wish all of you a fruitful conference and wish also to convey my grateful thanks to Eusuff and members of the organizing committee for all the hard work and non-billable hours they have put in to make this conference a success for each and every one of you.
7. Thank you.