

**CITATION FOR THE HONOURABLE SENIOR JUDGE JUSTICE ANDREW
PHANG BOON LEONG**

35th Anniversary Dinner of the Singapore Academy of Law

22 November 2023

- 1 Today, we honour Justice Andrew Phang who, in an illustrious career spanning four decades, has made immeasurable contributions to the development of Singapore law and her legal system and, through that, advanced the cause of justice in Singapore.

- 2 Justice Andrew Phang was born in 1957, the eldest son of Mr Phang Sing Eng and Ms Peggy Loo Poh Cheng, his beloved late parents. After graduating from Anglo-Chinese School in 1975, he completed National Service before proceeding to read law at the National University of Singapore (“NUS”). In 1982, he graduated from NUS with First Class Honours and was the top student of his Bachelor of Laws cohort. In the following year, he pursued his postgraduate studies at Harvard Law School, obtaining a Master of Laws and a Doctorate in Juridical Sciences in 1984 and 1988 respectively.

- 3 Justice Phang’s early career was devoted to legal academia. He joined the NUS Faculty of Law after his graduation in 1982, leaving for a short while to pursue his postgraduate studies, but returning in 1985 to NUS where he remained until 2000. During his tenure in NUS, he was appointed a full Professor of Law (in 1999) and awarded the Outstanding University Researcher Award. In 2000, Justice Phang joined the newly founded Singapore Management University (“SMU”) as a Professor of Law, soon assuming the Chair of the Department of Law at the SMU Business School. During his time at NUS and SMU, Justice Phang acquired a towering reputation as one of Singapore’s finest academic lawyers who was well known for his prodigious output. He authored several landmark works, including his comprehensive socio-historical study entitled *The Development of Singapore Law*¹ as well as a Singapore and Malaysian edition

¹ Andrew Phang Boon Leong, *The Development of Singapore Law: Historical and Socio-Legal Perspectives* (Butterworths, 1990).

of *Cheshire, Fifoot and Furmston's Law of Contract*,² a leading treatise on contract law. In 2004, Justice Phang was appointed Senior Counsel. He was one of the first two academic lawyers in Singapore to be conferred this distinction, in recognition of what former Chief Justice Yong Pung How described as “his outstanding contributions to legal knowledge”.³

4 After two decades in academia, Justice Phang embarked on the second phase of his career. On 3 January 2005, Justice Phang was appointed a Judicial Commissioner of the Supreme Court. In slightly over a year, he was appointed first as a Judge of the High Court (in December 2005) and later as a Judge of Appeal (in February 2006) at the remarkable age of 48. Justice Phang was, and still remains, the youngest appointee to that office. In September 2017, Justice Phang was appointed the Vice-President of the Court of Appeal, a position in which he served until his retirement from the Bench in December 2022. Over the course of a judicial career spanning 18 years, Justice Phang authored nearly 400 judgments spanning the gamut from seminal decisions in the law of contract to *loci classici* on civil procedure and family law which were reported not only in the Singapore Law Reports but also in international law reports and cited by apex courts across the Commonwealth. He continues to contribute to Singapore and the legal profession as a Senior Judge of the Supreme Court and the Distinguished Term Professor of Law at the Yong Pung How School of Law at SMU.

5 Throughout his career in both academia and the Judiciary, the great passion of Justice Phang's professional life has been Singapore law. Specifically, in his words, it has been the development of a “legal system that is sensitive to (and reflective of) the needs and circumstances of the nation concerned and its people”.⁴ In contributing to that development, Justice Phang has served not just the legal community, but also our nation. Across his 260 publications and nearly 400 judgments, this *leitmotif* of autochthony shone through. But the motivation has never been autochthony for its own sake, but to search for a law and legal system that could best serve Singapore and live

² Andrew Phang Boon Leong, *Cheshire, Fifoot and Furmston's Law of Contract* (Butterworths Asia, 1994).

³ Yong Pung How, Chief Justice of Singapore, speech at the Opening of Legal Year 2004 at para 20.

⁴ Andrew Phang Boon Leong, *From Foundation to Legacy: The Second Charter of Justice* (Academy Publishing, 2006) at p 52.

up to the ideals of our founding as a nation that always seeks the welfare of her people in a “more just and equal society”.⁵

6 In August 2022, as a fitting capstone to a long and distinguished career in service to the nation, Justice Phang was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal (*Pingat Jasa Gemilang*) by Her Excellency President Halimah Yacob, for his contributions to legal scholarship and the Judiciary. Today, the Singapore Academy of Law also acknowledges Justice Phang’s invaluable contributions to the Singapore legal system and our nation and bestows upon him the title of Honorary Member for Life and Fellow for Life. This is only the eighth time that this honour has been extended, and Justice Phang joins a list that includes Singapore’s founding Prime Minister, the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew.

7 The Senate and members of the Academy present Justice Andrew Phang Boon Leong, Honorary Member for Life and Fellow for Life of the Singapore Academy of Law.

⁵ Proclamation of Singapore (9 August 1965).