

SJ's address at Ceremony for the Admission of the New Senior Counsel (English only)

The following is the address by the Secretary for Justice, Ms Teresa Cheng, SC, at the Ceremony for the Admission of the New Senior Counsel today (June 22):

Chief Justice, Members of the Judiciary, Chairman of the Bar, President of the Law Society, Fellow Members of the Legal Profession, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Department of Justice (DoJ), I wish to extend the heartiest and warmest congratulations to the four counsel taking silk today. Such well-deserved recognition is not only a testimony to their professionalism, but also an inspiration to all young barristers.

The call to the inner bar is unquestionably an immense honour. Yet, the rank of Senior Counsel also carries with it onerous burdens. All will justifiably have higher expectation on their work and advocacy given their eminent standing. The two-letter post-nominal is held in high regard as they must use their advocacy skills and professional knowledge to discharge their overriding duty to the Court conscientiously in a way conducive to the public interest and in the pursuit of justice.

Outside the courtroom, the public will equally count on Senior Counsel's readiness to uphold the rule of law, which must not just be referred to but practiced. The public will look to them for defending against any misguided attacks on our legal and judicial systems.

In a stark contrast to last year, all new silks appointed today have a predominantly civil practice. Yet, one may still find diversity among the four of them. Particularly, I am pleased to note the gender parity. Whilst this year is not one that has the highest number of female silks appointed, it is the first year ever that one sees the same number of male and female counsel taking silk – a perfect symmetry of the Yin and Yang.

Another form of diversity is manifested in their different career paths. Some were called to the Hong Kong Bar early in their careers, while the others were "late converts". In 2013, Lord Sumption had an interesting debate with Professor Graham Virgo of the University of Cambridge on the motion of "Those who wish to practise law should not study law at university". If we are to have a debate on "Those who wish to take silk should not begin their careers as barristers", we will have a win-win situation. Today, we have solid proof that one can be successful at the Bar in either way and the result is a tie of 2 to 2.

Perhaps yet another form of diversity and symmetry can be found in the

fact that two of them are practising in chambers in Admiralty to the east of this CFA building and the other two to the west in Central. Whichever side they are on, I trust they consider themselves fortunate that chambers have not yet followed the lead of some international law firms in moving to Quarry Bay!

Against this background for inclusiveness, it would be customary for me to briefly introduce each of our new silks and share with you some anecdotes that they may or may not wish me to tell.

Ms Eva Sit Yat-wah

Eva is well known for her robust and persuasive advocacy skills which command immense respect among her peers. She is a quick thinker and advocate while on her feet in court.

DoJ had the benefit of Eva's advice on various cases, including those involving Basic Law issues. Most notably, she represented the HKSAR Government in the landmark case of *Vallejos v Commissioner of Registration* (2013) concerning the right of abode of foreign domestic helpers, as a junior to Lord Pannick QC and Anderson Chow SC (as his Lordship then was).

Apart from constitutional matters, Eva also has expertise in environmental law, mastering the technical intricacies in matters such as the construction of a third runway for the airport, municipal waste incinerator near Shek Kwu Chau, and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge.

While ladies, and indeed gentlemen, at the Bar struggle with keeping fit in view of the long working hours, intense stress and lack of exercise, Eva seems to have her secret tricks in staying fit and slim. She is also known for her good fashion sense and must be pleased to have a new piece of silk garment added to her wardrobe.

Mr Jenkin Suen

Jenkin has always been a high achiever in terms of academic credentials, as evidenced by his impressive collection of 16 scholarships and prizes. After seeing the light and switched from the solicitor branch of the profession to the Bar, Jenkin has established a broad civil practice. He also represented the Government in some high profile judicial review cases including the well-known Legislative Council oath taking cases.

Behind every successful man, there stands a woman. Jenkin is lucky to have three fervent supporters, his loving wife and two daughters. To Jenkin, they are weighty in the important decisions in his life.

He chose Oxford rather than Harvard for his master's degree because his "dream girl", now his wife Anny, was going to study for an LL.M. in London. They share the same interest and later on studied together for the part-time programme of Master of Arts in Literary and Cultural Studies at the University of Hong Kong. Apparently with Anny's help in taking notes for him in all the courses, Jenkin managed to complete the degree with distinction.

Ms Rachel Lam Yan-kay

Rachel, acclaimed as an eloquent, passionate and yet calm advocate, has a solid practice in commercial matters, including insolvency, company and securities laws.

Apart from building up a strong legal practice, Rachel is a respectable role model for giving back to society. She has taken up public duties, including serving as a member of the Competition Commission. Amid her busy schedule as a highly sought-after junior, Rachel has gone beyond making charitable donations by devoting considerable time and efforts to a number of charitable organisations.

She is a board member of Viva Network (Hong Kong) Limited and Invenio Foundation Limited, which are charities dedicated to eradicating children poverty and abuse, and empowering them through education.

Mr Laurence Li Lu-jen

Laurence is widely recognised as an expert in financial law. He joined the Securities and Futures Commission in 1999 where he took part in the drafting of the Securities and Futures Ordinance.

With this background, after he joined the Bar in 2006, he continues to focus on financial, banking, commercial, company and securities laws.

In addition to a successful legal practice, Laurence has been active in serving the community, with a remarkable list of public appointments. As the Chairman of the Financial Services Development Council, he is a strong supporter for the development of Fintech, and I hope, very soon, of LawTech too. He is well-deservedly hailed by the media as the "King of Public Offices".

With a reputation beyond Hong Kong, Laurence has served as a Judge at the Regulatory Tribunal of the Qatar Financial Centre since 2011.

Laurence is also involved in philanthropic and community endeavours, such as being the convenor of the "305 Group", an organisation gathering young professionals to make suggestions for current issues; as well as a member of the Governing Team of "Light Be Social Realty", an NGO matching kindhearted landlord and families in need for flat with lower-than-market-rent.

My Lords and my Ladies, before I finish, I must extend my congratulations to the families of the new silks, who have no doubt given unwavering support and encouragement to them, without which they would not have reached the pinnacle of their careers today. This is a day of joy and pride for all of them.

On this note, it remains for me to wish the new silks every success in their practice at the inner Bar.