APPOINTMENT OF SENIOR COUNSEL

New career milestone for ‘Singapore’s leading arbitrator’

He mentored one and recruited the other. Now, all three legal eagles have been given the highest accolade in the profession.

Former judicial commissioner Sundaresh Menon, his former pupil Lee Eng Beng and ex-subordinate Tho Shen Yi were among six new Senior Counsel appointed yesterday.

The others are Mr Cavinder Bull and Mr Hri Kumar Nair from Drew & Napier and Dr Jeffrey Pinsker, a law lecturer at the National University of Singapore.

Senior Counsel are Singapore’s equivalent of the Queen’s Counsel in the British legal system and are often those with the highest standing in the profession, an extensive knowledge of the law and outstanding ability as advocates.

Singapore introduced the appointment of Senior Counsel in 1997. There are now 54 of them.

Mr Menon, a senior partner at Rajah & Tann, is well known in the field of commercial arbitration and was recognised as “unquestionably Singapore’s leading arbitrator” in various law journals in 2005 and 2006. He served a year on the Bench in the High Court and presided over several high-profile cases, including the civil suit brought on by the National Kidney Foundation against its former chief T.T. Durai and three former board members.

Mr Menon said his experience on the bench had given him an insight of “what works and what does not work” in judges’ minds.

“The challenge for me now is to put these lessons into practice,” he said.

The appointment was also especially poignant for Mr Thio and Mr Lee, who both thanked Mr Menon for his guidance.

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Mr Thio, TSMP Law Corporation’s joint managing director, saw the appointment as a chance to set an example to younger lawyers.

Leading by example is also how Chief Justice Chan Sek Keong described the role of the Senior Counsel.

CJ Chan said that in the past, the selection committee focused on advocacy skills, legal knowledge and professional integrity as the main qualifying criteria.

In future, they will also consider the lawyer’s contribution to the law in the form of academic teaching, writing, research and committee work for the various law institutions, said the CJ.

Chong Chee Kin