

NEW NUS FELLOWSHIP

Lawyer's friend gives \$1m in his name

Law school to match funds from unnamed donor towards M. Amaladass Fellowship

By K. C. VIJAYAN
LAW CORRESPONDENT

A LITTLE-KNOWN lawyer, who ran his own small firm and died suddenly last December, will have a fellowship in the National University of Singapore's Law Faculty named after him.

A close friend of Mr M. Amaladass, who died at the age of 73 from a heart attack, has donated \$1 million to the school, which Law Faculty dean Tan Cheng Han said will be matched by another \$1 million.

Professor Tan said the M. Amaladass Fellowship will be used to support the appointment of an associate professor at the law school.

The lecturer should preferably be someone who specialises in criminal law, which was one of Mr Amaladass' main areas of practice during his almost 30 years in the profession.

"It's also appropriate given he was a former police officer," said Prof Tan.

Mr Amaladass started out as a police constable in 1958 and worked his way up the ranks and retired as an Assistant Superintendent at the age of 45. He went on to become a lawyer for 28 years.

The anonymous donor to the M. Amaladass Fellowship, a retired businessman and former lawyer, said he had known Mr Amaladass for 30 years and was also his tennis buddy.

Responding by e-mail through Prof Tan, he said the move was "in memory of a friend".

"It's also to show future lawyers that even though you may be an ordinary practitioner doing work without handling famous cases, as long as you lead a good life, be upright in your dealings with people and be a principled man, people will still remember you and appreciate what you stand for," he added.

The donor also pointed out that Mr Amaladass had no children who would have done something to commemorate his life. "I found him to be very reliable, a principled man, full of humility. I admired his perseverance in going about to achieve his goals that he set for himself, whether as a police officer or lawyer."

Prof Tan said it was rare for a non-family member to donate a sum of money to commemorate someone who had died.

In the last few years, he said, it has happened only one other time.

"A faculty member from the law school (who also wishes to remain anonymous) will be donating a sum of money to establish a law prize in the name of the late Justice Lai Kew Chai."

Mr Amaladass ran into a bad patch four years before he died when his wife T. Sivakolunthu, also a lawyer, disappeared after more than \$700,000 was reported missing from the law firm he ran.

Ms Sivakolunthu, 46, whom he married late in life, wrote a last letter to him while she was on the run. Among other things, it said: "I've destroyed you, I've destroyed myself, this is the end."

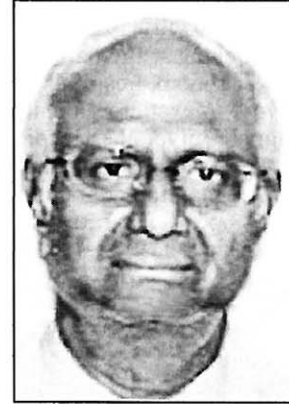
The letter was handed to police who are still looking for her.

The donor said Mr Amaladass handled this setback in his life "with magnanimity and grace". "Notwithstanding the injustice his wife had done to him, he never had a harsh word for her and, in fact, once when he had a meal with his friends, he pointed out that scones were his wife's favourite food. Such generosity of spirit after what she had done."

Lawyers lauded the fellowship, which is due to be launched later this month.

"His life and the road he took are lessons from which the young can learn," said lawyer Mark Goh. "It's sad that, at just about the time when he was about to pick up his life and vocation again, he lost it all too suddenly."

Senior Counsel Sant Singh, who had known Mr Amaladass for more than 40 years, said: "He took his practice of law very seriously and did his best. People remember you by the little things you do and not how much money you make in life. The donation of such a sum by a close friend obviously speaks volumes."



Mr Amaladass retired from the police force at age 45 and went on to become a lawyer for 28 years. He died of a heart attack last year.