

Write on local law, CJ tells academics

He points to tension between need to write on S'pore law and need to write for world renown

► By Melissa Sim

LAW academics in Singapore are writing more about foreign law than Singapore law and this may not be a desirable situation, said Chief Justice Chan Sek Keong yesterday.

Speaking at the 50th anniversary gala dinner of the law faculty of the National University of Singapore, he said Supreme Court judges have referred to, and adopted, academic writings in their judgments, especially on difficult points of law.

But there is a "current tension between the need for academics to write on Singapore law for local consumption and the need to write for international recognition", he said.

A study of *The Malaya Law Review* and the *Singapore Journal Of Legal Studies* has shown that from 1959 to 1979, the number of articles on foreign law exceeded those on local law. For the next 20 years – from 1980 to 1999 – the trend was reversed. However, since 2000, the situation has reverted to show a bias in favour of foreign legal developments.

The CJ said that law academics must write on and about Singapore law because the NUS law faculty is a national law school with a mission to produce graduates for national needs. "If you wish to influ-



CHIEF JUSTICE CHAN SEK KEONG says that Supreme Court judges here have referred to, and adopted, academic writings in their judgments, especially on difficult points of law, but not enough papers are written on Singapore law.

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ence the judiciary in the development of our law and legal system, they must generate the arguments and the ideas for us."

He said it was necessary to "strike a proper balance between personal and national interests".

NUS law dean Tan Cheng Han told *The Sunday Times* that the faculty had not forgotten its duty to the local community. Books written by the faculty, he noted, have a very strong local element.

But he added that the trend towards writing about foreign law

may be due to the idea that "education is an international business".

There is a need to compete with other law schools and enhance the school's international profile.

Agreeing with CJ Chan, NUS law professor and former MP Chin Tet Yung said: "There's a need for Singapore jurisprudence to develop and we need our local academics to concentrate on developing it."

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