

## Book Launch: Constitutional Interpretation in Singapore



The book *Constitutional Interpretation in Singapore: Theory and Practice*, edited by Assistant Professor Dr Jaclyn Neo was launched at NUS Law on 26 July 2016. The book arose from a conference on constitutional interpretation held in 2015.

The book touches on the recent growth of constitutional cases in Singapore. It examines the underpinnings of Singapore's constitutional system, explores how Singapore courts have dealt with issues related to rights and power, and sets developments in Singapore in the wider context of new thinking and constitutional developments worldwide. It argues that Singapore is witnessing a shift in legal and political culture as both judges and citizens display an increasing willingness to engage with constitutional ideas and norms.

The former Chief Justice Chan Sek Keong was the Guest-of-Honour at the launch. Speaking to more than 50 people, Justice Chan touched on current themes in constitutional law in his speech such as the basic structure doctrine and the balance of power among the legislature, executive, and judiciary. Justice Chan also shared interesting insights into the origins of the Singapore Constitution, and recounted his engagement with constitutional law from the perspective of his former roles as Attorney-General and Chief Justice of Singapore.

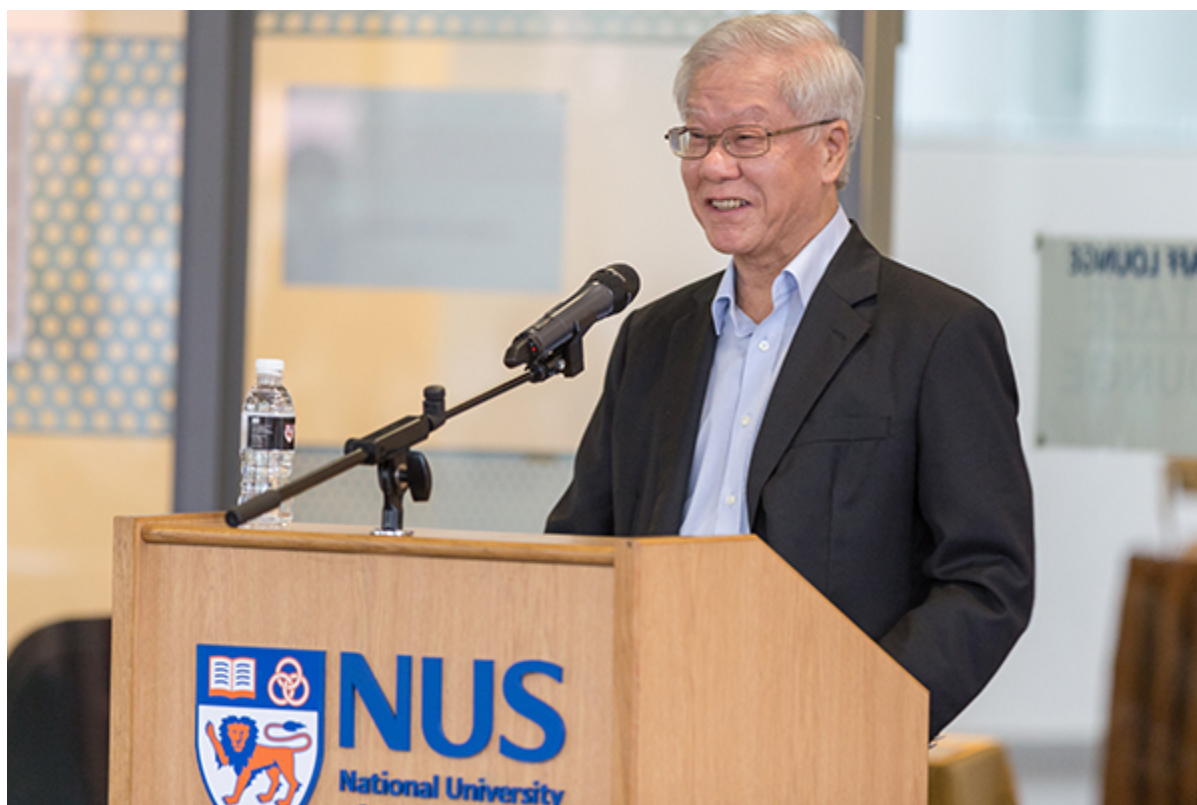
The book launch also featured an engaging panel discussion by Mr Peter Low from Peter

Low LLC, Associate Professor Maartje de Visser from Singapore Management University (SMU), and Mr Ramasamy Nachiappan, an Assistant Registrar at the Supreme Court of Singapore, with Assistant Professor Dr Jaclyn Neo and Adjunct Professor Dr Kevin Tan as moderators.

Associate Professor Maartje de Visser expressed hope that constitutional law in Singapore would continue to develop positive trends, and called for further research into how other branches of government as well as civil society interpret the constitution to provide an even more holistic perspective on constitutional interpretation.

Mr Low offered a practitioner's view on the value of having a tome on constitutional interpretation, calling it a "chili padi" of a book. Mr Nachiappan identified three major themes in the book that could be relevant for judicial work – the identification of trends in constitutional law, the thoughtful critique of certain fundamental principles and ideas in constitutional law, and lastly, the conflict between certain constitutional principles and suggestions on how to achieve a via media among these struggles.

The book is available from Routledge [here](#).



*Former Chief Justice Chan Sek Keong addresses the audience at the launch.*



*From left to right: Mr Peter Low, Mr Ramasamy Nachiappan, Associate Professor Dan Puchniak (Director, Centre for Asian Legal Studies), Professor Simon Chesterman (Dean of NUS Law), Justice Chan Sek Keong, Assistant Professor Dr Jaclyn Neo, Associate Professor Maartje de Visser and Adjunct Professor Dr Kevin Tan.*



*Some of the contributing authors present were (from left to right): Adjunct Professor Dr Kevin Tan, Professor Andrew Harding (NUS Law), Assistant Professor Dr Jaclyn Neo, Assistant Professor Jack Tsen-Ta Lee (SMU), Assistant Professor Swati Jhaveri (NUS Law), Associate Professor Dr David Tan (Vice Dean of Academic Affairs, NUS Law), and Associate Professor Eugene Tan (SMU).*