Introduction

In the history of the Republic of Singapore, Chief Justice Menon stands with the first rank of its most distinguished judges. He has made outstanding contributions to the development of Singapore’s legal system.

Let me say a little about his career to date.

As President Tan Eng Chye noted, the Chief Justice is already one of us. Mr Menon, as he then was, graduated from NUS with a first-class law degree in 1986. He began his legal career with Shook Lin & Bok, and by 1990, at the ripe old age of 27, he was already a partner at the firm. (A star was already rising in Singapore’s legal firmament.)

Two years later, Mr Menon co-founded WongPartnership, now one of Singapore’s elite law firms. He went on in 1995 to help build what quickly became another elite firm, Rajah and Tann. In 2003, he moved to the prominent international law firm, Jones Day. He was later to return to Rajah and Tann, where he became managing partner in 2009.

By this time, Mr Menon’s career progression resembled not so much a rising star as a meteor, such was its speed. But his time in private practice was coming to an end. In 2010, aged just 48, he became our 6th Attorney-General. By 2012, the Honourable Sundaresh Menon was a
Justice of the Supreme Court. A few months after that, he became, and remains, our Chief Justice.

It is an extraordinary story. And throughout, it is a story of leadership.

**Contributions**

What makes this story of leadership important? The answer lies in the difference it has made to the lives of others, and more generally to the life of this nation. As Attorney-General, Mr Menon implemented important advances in our rules of criminal procedure, and especially in the law governing disclosure of evidence to defendants. As Chief Justice and President of the Singapore Academy of Law, he has introduced ambitious new training programmes for our practitioners. As part of the Steering Committee for the Legal Education Curriculum Reform project, he has initiated major reforms in undergraduate and postgraduate legal education, reforms that will most significantly enhance the skill-sets of our future lawyers. By these means, the Chief Justice has championed the cause of making Singapore a leading provider of legal services, not just to Singaporeans but to the world.

Leadership, whether by a profession or a nation, can only be truly successful when it is founded in excellence. That is, of course, part of the point of the legal education reforms that we are undergoing now. But the same holds true of leadership by an individual. The standing of the Chief Justice, both within and outside Singapore, is built upon his fundamental skills as a lawyer.

As a practitioner, Mr Menon was a noted expert across multiple fields, including commercial litigation, insolvency, and construction law. He was also an internationally-recognised arbitrator, in demand both at home and abroad. Indeed, his prominence was reflected in 2012 when he was appointed to the Governing Board of the International Council for Commercial Arbitration, which is based at the Peace Palace in the Hague.

As a judge, his judgments have helped to shape Singapore’s private law into what is probably now the purest common-law jurisdiction in the world, a jurisdiction that is increasingly important overseas.

**Recognition**

Unsurprisingly, NUS is not the first to acknowledge such a distinguished career. Chief Justice Menon is an elected member of the American Law Institute, and an Honorary Bencher of the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple in England. He is recognised across the world as a legal giant.

As President noted, in 2019, he was conferred the Special Recognition Award by the Geneva-based Negotiation and Conflict Management Group, for his contributions to improving and modernising the civil justice system in Singapore and in strengthening Singapore’s position as a leading centre for international commercial dispute resolution.

More recently, in 2022 he was conferred an Honorary Doctorate in Laws by the University of Western Australia, for his services to the law.

**Conclusion**

And that last honour brings us neatly to today’s ceremony. Today, we honour not an office, not just a great judge, but a man. A man who has demonstrated exemplary service through leadership. A man who has predicated that leadership upon excellence. And a man who has led with a commitment to justice and to the rule of law.
Chancellor, in recognition of his outstanding service to the practice and adjudication of law in Singapore, may it please you to confer on Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws.