



SPEECH BY
YANG BERHORMAT AWANG HAJI AHMAD
BIN PEHIN ORANG KAYA LAILA SETIA BAKTI DI-RAJA DATO LAILA
UTAMA HAJI AWANG ISA
ATTORNEY GENERAL
ON THE OPENING OF THE LEGAL YEAR
31ST MARCH 2022

My Lord Chief Justice Dato Seri Paduka Steven Chong,

Yang Berhormat Pehin Orang Kaya Laila Setia Bakti DiRaja Dato Laila Utama Haji Awang Isa bin Pehin Datu Perdana Manteri Dato Laila Utama Haji Awang Ibrahim,

Special Adviser to His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan Negara Brunei Darussalam and the Minister in the Prime Minister's Office,

Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Awang Haji Abdul Mokti bin Haji Mohd Daud, Minister at the Prime Minister's Office,

Yang Amat Arif Chief Syar'ie Judge,

Honourable Justices, Judges,

Excellencies,

(My Learned Friend) President of the Law Society,

Members of the Bar,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

INTRODUCTION

My Lord,

1. It is with great pleasure that I am able to address Your Lordship and my fellow members of the legal fraternity once more on this important occasion. Things certainly look vastly different from previous opening of the legal year ceremonies with the majority of attendees viewing the ceremony online and only a handful of us here in person.
2. It has been, without a doubt, an unbelievably challenging time for us all; It seems that before we were able to catch our breath from the second wave, the country was once again brought into turbulence with daily Covid-19 cases reaching unprecedented numbers due to the Omicron variant.

3. I am proud to say that during this time the AGC remained steadfast in its mission, providing crucial legal support where required – such as for the procurement of the vaccines and anti-viral oral therapy and providing critical amendments to the law to forward national policy and local developments.

4. In addition to this, the AGC also managed to accomplish much towards its own internal growth and development which, if Your Lordship will recall, was one of the key priorities I had set last year (in addition to the fostering and maintaining of good working relationships). I hope to give Your Lordship a flavour of what has transpired since.

PROMOTIONS/CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

My Lord,

5. In my address last year, I emphasised that an organisation is only as good as the people who live and work in it. To this end, the AGC has embarked on various initiatives designed to develop and bring out the best of its work force.

6. To begin with, 15 AGC officers were promoted to senior positions across a variety of roles marking a significant milestone in career development and succession planning within the AGC. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate, once again, our officers on their promotions. Your promotion means that you have shown a high level of competence, hard work, dedication and importantly, leadership qualities. I hope that you feel proud of your achievements and that this will, in turn, be a source of motivation and positivity for everyone in Chambers.

7. Career development will continue to be a priority for the AGC with a Competency Framework now in place and is one of two strategic focus areas in our 3 year Strategic Plan – the other focus area being the adoption of legal technology.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

8. Living in a pandemic has meant that we have all had to find novel solutions for novel problems and it has become ever-evident that technology is the way forward. We have thus accustomed ourselves to the new norm of using various online platforms for a wide variety of purposes whether it be participating in online training, meetings or ceremonies such as today. It is imperative therefore, that we keep up with the times and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of our legal services through the use of IT.
9. The adoption of technology by the AGC will primarily involve two major projects – EDMS and LEDO. Firstly, the Electronic Document and Case Management System (EDMS) will digitise the current manual processes of all AGC Divisions and implement paperless workflow management, allowing for transparent process and accessible information with all documents related to any matter referred to the AGC available in a single centralised location.
10. Talks between AGC and the vendor have also begun for the second project – the Legislative Electronic Drafting and Online System (“LEDO”) which will allow legislative drafting, revision of laws and publication processes to be in one single system.

11. This is but just the beginning and a small window into what I hope will be more developments to come in our ongoing effort to achieve excellence.

OTHER

12. Besides our internal work, Chambers also remained dedicated to its work with other ministries and government departments such as: -

- a. introducing major amendments to our laws to give effect to our national policy, including amendments to the Constitution of Brunei Darussalam, the Succession and Regency Proclamation, 1959; the Old Age and Disability Pensions Act and its regulations and the Minor Offences Act as well as introducing new laws such as the International Finance Corporations Order, 2021 and the Animal (Diseases and Quarantine) Order, 2021. A notable amendment of public interest being the Penal Code (Amendment) Order, 2021 which was drafted by the Attorney General's Chambers as part of the Government of His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan's initiative to strengthen the laws to stem the proliferation of cases affecting key services, especially in light of the increasing number of cable theft offences over the past years.

- b. collaborating with the Prime Minister's Office, to develop a Draft Legislation Database (DLD) which is a platform to share updates of the status of drafts legislations with our instructing ministries and government departments. I hope the ministries and departments will find the database useful to keep track of their drafts and assist them to make the necessary planning.

- c. Providing training to law enforcement agencies such as Royal Brunei Armed Forces, Royal Brunei Police Force, Royal Customs and Excise Department, Department of Immigration and National Registration, Anti-Corruption Bureau and Narcotics Control Bureau on areas of legal matters ranging from enforcement powers in Brunei Darussalam waters and powers of investigations as well as the investigation process and court procedures such as preserving evidence; preparation of documents during investigations; statement recording; preliminary inquiries and trial preparation; and
- d. on-going discussions between the Judiciary, AGC and the Law Society to develop a pupillage framework to improve the standard and quality of pupillage training.

13. It has been no mean feat for all those involved to continue to perform at our highest ability during such trying times. We can only hope that we are reaching the light at the end of the tunnel and meanwhile, continue doing our part to keep the wheels of justice turning and I thank all my officers and staff in the AGC for their dedication and support.

CONGRATULATIONS

14. Before I conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to express on behalf of the Chambers, our heartiest congratulations to:

- (a) The Honourable Justice Muhammed Faisal bin Pehin Datu Juragan Laila Diraja Colonel (Rtd) Dato Seri Pahlawan Haji Kefli on his appointment as Judicial Commissioner of the Supreme Court;
- (b) Honourable Judge Radin Safiee bin Radin Mas Basiuni and Honourable Judge Pengiran Masni binti Pengiran Haji Bahar on their appointment as Judge of the Intermediate Court;
- (c) Dayangku Hajah Norismayanti binti Pengiran Haji Ismail on her appointment as Chief Magistrate;
- (d) Hajah Hazarena binti Pehin Orang Kaya Setia Jaya Dato Paduka Haji Hurairah on her appointment as Deputy Chief Registrar of the Supreme Court

- (b) Dayang Hajah Noor Amalina binti Dato Paduka Haji Alaihuddin and Dayang Kamaliah Fadhilah binti Haji Ibrahim on their appointment as Senior Registrars of the Supreme Court;
- (c) Pengiran Hazirah binti Pengiran Mohd Yusof and Dayang Hajah Ervy Sufitriana binti Haji Abdul Rahman on their appointment as Senior Magistrate; and
- (d) Awg Hj Mansur bin Dato Paduka Dr Haji Latif on his appointment as the President of the Law Society Council as well as the appointment of the new members to the Law Society Council.

CONCLUSION

15. This brings me to the end of my address, My Lord. I shall conclude by extending my good wishes to Your Lordship, Honourable Judges, the legal fraternity and everyone present, a happy, safe and successful 2022.

Thank you.