

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

A Very Good Morning To All.

May it please Your Honours

Yang Amat Arif Dato Seri Paduka Steven Chong, Honourable Chief Justice;

Yang Amat Arif / Yang Berhormat Pehin Orang Kaya Paduka Seri Utama Dato Paduka Seri Setia Haji Awang Salim bin Haji Besar, Chief Syarie Judge;

Yang Mulia Dato Seri Paduka Awang Haji Sufian bin Haji Sabtu, Deputy Minister (Security and Law) at the Prime Minister's Office;

Honourable Judicial Commissioners;

Yang Mulia Solicitor General;

Yang Mulia President of the Law Society of Brunei Darussalam;

Members of the Law Society of Brunei Darussalam and the legal fraternity;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Alhamdulillah, with the blessings of Allah Subhanahu Wata'ala we are able to gather here today to observe an important legal tradition, reaffirm our collective commitment to uphold the rule of law and to serve the public with honour and integrity.

Throughout my career, I have sat in this audience, listening attentively to the profound words of Chief Justices, Attorney Generals, and presidents of the Law Society. I admired their wisdom, their ability to inspire, and the responsibility they carried. Never did I imagine that one day, I would address this distinguished audience as Attorney General. It is both a humbling honour and a solemn duty, and I am privileged to lead a strong organisation rooted in justice, excellence, and unwavering dedication to public service.

I have had some time away from Chambers to serve His Majesty's Government in other capacities. This experience has allowed me to gain fresh perspectives and insights, which I now bring back to Chambers to further strengthen our delivery of legal service, and thereby support the Judiciary in the administration of justice, amongst others.

### **Rule of Law**

At the heart of any thriving nation lies a steadfast commitment to the rule of law. It is the foundation of trust, justice and progress. This principle is inherently aligned with His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam's vision for a public service defined by integrity, accountability, and adherence to

laws and regulations pursuant to his *titah* at the 30<sup>th</sup> Hari Perkhdimatan Awam in 2023.

In 2024 significant strides were made to strengthen our legal framework. The Legal Drafting Division facilitated amendments to key legislations, which includes amongst others amendments to Employee Trust Act, the Employment Act and the introduction of law that will regulate and protect personal data. . .

Complementing these efforts, the Law Revision Orders Nos. 1 to 7 has incorporated 30 revised legislations into the Revised Edition of the Laws of Brunei. which ensures our laws remain up to date, and relevant, covering areas such as cybersecurity, workplace safety, and financial oversight

However, the value of these laws lies not only in their drafting but in their enforcement. For laws to achieve their purpose, they must be consistently and fairly upheld — a responsibility shared by law enforcement, public servants, and society at large. Strengthened enforcement measures and robust prosecution processes are critical to safeguarding justice, deterring misconduct, and maintaining public confidence in our institutions.

### **Enforcement and Prosecution**

Prosecution plays a pivotal role in upholding the rule of law. Recent cases demonstrate our continuous commitment to combatting misconduct, even within public service.

Such as the recent convictions of enforcement officers who have abused their public position for their own advantage. In one case a former Assistant Narcotics

Officer divulged sensitive information to further his interests. Whilst in another separate case a former Chief Senior Immigration Officer accepted valuable items on several occasions from individuals connected to his official duties. Such actions not only betray the trust placed on them as a public servant but also risks eroding public confidence in the institutions that protect and serve the public.

Further is the recent Court of Appeal decision, whereby the aggregate sentence of 9 years' imprisonment with 3 strokes of whipping imposed on a relief teacher for special needs children was upheld. In a rather challenging trial involving the use of basic sign language, anatomical dolls, photos and drawings; the special child victim was able to give convincing evidence for the Court to convict the appellant. The conviction, upheld by the Court of Appeal, has set a precedent for how the courts evaluate evidence from victims with disabilities. It further emphasises the importance of ensuring that justice is accessible to all, regardless of their physical or verbal limitations.

These cases demonstrate a common thread: they represent a betrayal of trust, whether within families, public institutions or society at large. From the exploitation of a vulnerable child to the misuse of public office for personal gain, these acts if left unchecked or unaccounted for, risks not only in eroding confidence in the institutions that should provide security and stability, but also the integrity of the rule of law. In this regard, the officers of the Criminal Justice Division in carrying out their duties as Deputy Public Prosecutors and Prosecuting Officers stand equipped and ready to hold those who undermine the law accountable.

Consistent and impartial enforcement does more than safeguard justice; it establishes confidence and stability essential for economic growth.

As highlighted in His Majesty's *titah* during the New Year's address, enhancing efforts to attract more high-quality and impactful Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to the country is a critical priority for the Government. This vision reflects not only the aspirations of our leadership but also the collective responsibility of every institution to support the nation's economic growth and resilience.

It is important to send a clear message to businesses and investors: this is a nation where investments are safeguarded, and operations can flourish free from the threat of corruption or instability.

### **Contributions Across Chambers**

From developing sound legal policies to safeguarding commercial agreements and upholding prosecutorial integrity, Chambers remain steadfast in its commitment to supporting Brunei Darussalam's vision for economic resilience and development, which extends across all Divisions of Chambers.

The Civil Division has played a significant role in providing comprehensive legal support to His Majesty's Government. In the past year, the Division has been instrumental in facilitating agreements that align with Wawasan 2035 for a "A *Dynamic and Sustainable Economy*". Advising and negotiating on 22 Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) and 157 contracts, which includes high value and complex legal issues. The Division has supported strategic investments and transformative technologies that not only to address domestic needs but also create opportunities for FDI, driving long-term value for the nation.

Our commitment to the rule of law is not merely limited to domestic rule of law, but international rule of law is just as important, by maintaining relations through exchange of information and best practices with our counterparts and international organisations and ensuring our advice is consistent with international law as well.

In that regard the International Affairs Division (IAD) continues to strengthen Brunei's alignment with global and regional standards through advising and negotiating on memorandum of understanding for cooperation, to international treaties and agreements, in particular trade agreements such as its involvement in the United Kingdom Accession Protocol to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP); and the Second Protocol to amend the Agreement Establishing the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA). Through these efforts, we can showcase Brunei Darussalam as a stable and attractive hub for investment and economic collaboration.

Further, as Secretariat to the Mutual Legal Assistance, the Communications and Strategy Division serves as focal point for Chambers processing requests from external jurisdictions. As the research arm for Chambers, the Division will ensure that we will be ready to address future and current challenges.

Simultaneously, the Intellectual Property Office of Brunei Darussalam (BrulPO) has been at the forefront of initiatives to strengthen our intellectual property ecosystem, through its many activities and awareness programmes at both domestic and international level. The recent launch of the patent examiner apprenticeship programme early this year, as part of BrulPO's efforts to establish its own local patent examination unit, underscores our commitment to build local expertise in this very important area, as well as align ourselves with initiatives to

realise the Sustainable Development Goals. With tailored support from the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the programme aims to equip apprentice patent examiners with specialised training and reinforce our commitment to incentivise innovation and the protect intellectual property.

### **Capacity Building and Training**

As we move forward, Chambers recognise that investing in the development and training of our officers is not only a cornerstone of upholding the rule of law but also vital to realising its vision of providing excellence in legal service. As in preceding years, Chambers have participated in various training programmes and workshops, focusing on areas such as international law, legislative drafting, intellectual property and prosecution.

I am also proud to share a milestone achievement for Chambers where one of our officers was selected to speak as a panelist at the 11th International Association of Prosecutors Regional Conference in Hong Kong last year. This marks the first time an officer from Chambers has been invited to represent Brunei Darussalam in such a capacity, underscoring the caliber and dedication of our legal professionals.

Through specialised training programs and collaborative efforts with international institutions, Chambers is committed to nurturing a highly capable and adaptable workforce in a dynamic legal landscape.

### **Youth as the Future**

While we continue our commitment to nurturing a highly capable and adaptable workforce within our organisation, it is imperative also to ensure the continued growth and development of the next generation of lawyers to guarantee the rule of law is upheld for years to come. Reflecting on the future of our beloved nation, I am reminded of the adage, *“Alone we move faster, but together we move further.”* As such, the legal fraternity must fulfil our individual roles and responsibilities in upholding the rule of law while remaining aware of and appreciating the contributions of others toward this common goal.

To this end, I extend my congratulations and gratitude to the Judiciary, the Prime Minister’s Office, the Ministry of Education, the Law Society, UNISSA, the Brunei Darussalam Arbitration Centre, and all other stakeholders for their ongoing efforts to nurture the next generation of legal professionals. Your initiatives not only help shape aspiring lawyers but also provide opportunities for current practitioners to enhance their skills and competencies, ensuring preparedness to address both foreseeable and unforeseen challenges.

Moving forward, I would like to continue and strengthen collaboration with stakeholders in fortifying the foundation of our legal system through knowledge-sharing and skill development initiatives.

### **Acknowledgment**

As I draw my remarks to a close, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the officers and staff of AGC for their unwavering commitment, integrity and perseverance in

fulfilling our shared mission. Though we may be small in numbers, but with our commitment to deliver excellence in legal service, I am confident that we will remain dedicated in our mission to support the Government's priorities and further realisation of Wawasan 2035.

On behalf of all the officers in Chambers, I would like to congratulate your Lordship for the Judiciary's initiatives and achievements for the past year, my Chambers remain committed to support you to ensure that justice is delivered fairly and efficiently.

Lastly, please allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate Yang Mulia Haji Muhammad Zainidi bin Haji Abdul Hamid for his election as the new President of the Law Society. A role he is no stranger to, having served in previous years. I am certain that your dedication and experience will steer the Law Society toward new achievements and promoting excellence within our legal community.

I wish Your Lordship, members of the legal fraternity and everyone present the very best for 2025.

May Allah Subhanahu Wata'ala guide us and protect us in our endeavours and grant us continued success.

وَبِاللهِ التَّوْفِيقُ وَالهُدَىٰ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

Thank you

