

# Law centre renamed after E.W. Barker

The Centre for Law and Business at the National University of Singapore's Law Faculty was officially renamed yesterday after one of Singapore's finest legal minds.

The EW Barker Centre for Law and Business honours pioneer law minister Eddie William Barker, who helped draft the Separation documents that secured Singapore's independence.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, in launching the centre, said it was a fitting tribute to Mr Barker, who died in 2001. The EW Barker Bursary was also launched to help poor law undergraduates at NUS.

Mr Lee said globalisation and technology are changing how business is done. It is thus critical for Singapore's laws and lawyers to stay up to date, and help maintain the nation's competitive edge, he said.

Also, the centre should engage businesses, policymakers and others to come up with fresh ideas to ensure that Singapore remains a preferred place for arbitration and dispute resolution, he added.

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# S'pore law and lawyers must keep up to date: PM

Laws cannot remain static as world changes, he says at launch of EW Barker law centre

Charissa Yong  
Political Correspondent

To maintain its competitive edge, Singapore needs to keep its law and lawyers up to date, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said yesterday.

It has so far distinguished itself from rivals because its legal system is respected and admired at home and abroad, Mr Lee noted.

But Singapore's laws cannot be static because globalisation and technology are changing how business is done, he said at the launch of the EW Barker Centre for Law and Business.

"Up to date, effective but not onerous regulation has become a new source of economic competitive-

ness," he told members of the Barker family and about 100 members of the legal fraternity.

The commercial law research centre, known previously as the Centre for Law and Business, is under the National University of Singapore's law faculty.

Set up in 2014, it was renamed after Singapore's first law minister E. W. Barker, who held the portfolio from 1964 to 1988. Mr Barker died in 2001, aged 80, after two months in intensive care following colon surgery.

Yesterday's event also marked the 60th anniversary of the NUS law faculty.

In his speech, Mr Lee cited the technological changes that would require new laws.

One is e-commerce, which crosses national borders and needs sound frameworks for enforcement and taxation.

Also, clear rules and effective safeguards are needed in other areas, such as cyber security and intellectual property protection.

Emerging technology like artificial intelligence will need innovative regulation as well.

Think tanks like the EW Barker Centre can help by researching, organising conferences and teaching, Mr Lee said.

Its outcomes should be practical, aimed at improving the lives of Singaporeans and foster Singapore's development.

The PM also called on the centre to work with businesses, policymakers, legal practitioners here and in the region to produce fresh ideas and policy recommendations.

Through this, Singapore can continue to be a preferred location for

arbitration and dispute resolution for businesses in Asia, he said.

Mr Lee also paid tribute to the late minister's contributions in establishing the rule of law in Singapore.

He drafted documents that were the legal basis of Singapore's independence: The Separation Agreement, the Amendment Bill for Malaysia's Constitution and the Proclamation of Singapore.

"Fifty years later, none of the provisions in the documents has ever been disputed or challenged, not even fundamental provisions such as the guarantee of the Water Agreements," Mr Lee said.

"Singaporeans owe a profound debt of gratitude to the draughtsman of their independence, Mr Barker," he added.

Mr Barker also had a keen political sense, Mr Lee said, citing two cases.

One is Singapore's "Stop at Two"



Singapore's first law minister E.W. Barker had a keen political sense, said Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.  
ST FILE PHOTO

stalls sometimes even receive Michelin stars," he added, to laughter.

He urged the centre to learn from the late minister's practical nature, saying: "By combining legal know-how with political instincts and a human touch, Mr Barker came up with practical solutions and contributed to creating and building a prosperous Singapore."

Mr Barker's wife Gloria, 87, and their four children were at the event. Senior counsel Deborah Barker, a managing partner at Withers Khattar Wong and an NUS alumna, said that helping the young and those in need were close to her father's heart.

The centre, with \$21 million, raised from 11 donors and a matching government grant, will expand its manpower and scope of activities.

The E. W. Barker Bursary was also launched yesterday to help needy undergraduate law students at NUS. It is supported by a fund of more than \$300,000 from five donors in the legal fraternity and a matching grant from the Government. Two bursaries of \$6,000 each will initially be given each year.

Citing a 1967 speech by her father, Ms Barker too encouraged the centre to "express the social, political and economic realities that we face today globally and help to develop solutions that are practical and reasonable".

charyong@sph.com.sg



Above: Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong receiving the book *E.W. Barker: The People's Minister* from Mrs Gloria Barker after the launch of the EW Barker Centre for Law and Business.

Left: PM Lee and NUS law dean Simon Chesterman taking a selfie with students. ST PHOTOS: KEVIN LIM

## A PRACTICAL MAN

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PRIME MINISTER LEE HSIEN LOONG, urging the centre to learn from the late minister's practical nature.

## Institutes named for pioneer leaders, former presidents

The seeds of the EW Barker Centre for Law and Business' new name were sown six years ago, National University of Singapore law dean Simon Chesterman said yesterday.

Formerly known as the Centre for Law and Business, the NUS legal

think-tank was renamed for Singapore's first and longest-serving law minister, Mr E.W. Barker.

Professor Chesterman said that six years ago, he was involved in early discussions about a biography of Mr Barker.

The law faculty helped with some research for the book, which was written by former *Straits Times* journalist Susan Sim and launched last year.

But Prof Chesterman wanted to do more "to ensure that not only would Mr Barker's story be told and his name remembered, but that his legacy would carry on into the future".

The dean approached the late minister's wife, Mrs Gloria Barker, for permission to use his name.

While she was pleased that NUS wanted to honour her husband, she was adamant that it should not be a token move.

"The centre... had to be something that would really make a difference to Singapore and the region," recounted Prof Chesterman. "As that was our aim also, we agreed and the campaign began."

Eleven donors and a matching grant from the Government raised a total of \$21 million to set up an endowment fund to support the centre.

The centre will focus on areas where law and business intersect, such as company law, competition law, intellectual property protection and taxation.

In recent years, several other aca-

dem institutions have been named after Singapore's pioneer leaders and former presidents.

These institutions include:

- The Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, a postgraduate school under NUS that focuses on public policy and was named for Singapore's first prime minister.
- The Lee Kuan Yew Centre for Innovative Cities, a think-tank at the Singapore University of Technology and Design which looks at urban planning.
- The S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, a graduate school in Nanyang Technological University named for Singapore's first foreign minister.
- The Goh Keng Swee Command and Staff College, a training

institute of the Singapore Armed Forces named for the former deputy prime minister and defence minister.

- The Iseas-Yusof Ishak Institute, formerly known as the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies and renamed for Singapore's first president.
- The Devan Nair Institute for Employment and Employability, the continuing education centre named after Singapore's third president.
- The Ong Teng Cheong Labour Leadership Institute, an NTUC labour education and training centre named after Singapore's fifth president.

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