

Singapore's laws must evolve to keep up with globalisation and technology

# S'pore needs to keep its laws up to date: PM Lee

✔ **CHARISSA YONG, THE STRAITS TIMES**

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 E.W. Barker Centre for Law and Business.

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

## ANNIVERSARY

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 E.W. 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.

Mr Lee 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.

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