

# Tommy Koh honoured for contributions to international law

Singapore's Ambassador-at-Large Tommy Koh yesterday received the inaugural Mochtar Kusumaatmadja Award, which acknowledges prominent academics and practitioners who have contributed significantly to the field of international law.

Named after the former Indonesian law and foreign affairs minister, the award is a joint initiative of the country's Foreign Ministry and Padjadjaran University. Professor Koh, 79, received it at a ceremony in Gedung Merdeka, a historical Art Deco building.

Prof Koh served as president of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (Unclos) in 1981 and 1982, and is currently chairman of the board of governors

of the Centre for International Law at National University of Singapore.

In his speech at yesterday's ceremony, Indonesia's Deputy Foreign Minister H. Abdurrahman Mohammad Fachir paid tribute to Prof Koh for playing a "pivotal role" in negotiations on Unclos.

Prof Koh said he was proud to be the first recipient of the award, adding that he was humbled and honoured that his old friend, Professor Mochtar, was at the ceremony.

Prof Mochtar, 88, was Indonesia's law and human rights minister from 1973 to 1978, and foreign minister in 1978. He also played an important role in Unclos, in the terms of its reference to archipelagic states around the world.

The award is one of many honours that have been bestowed on Prof Koh, who has also been recognised for his role in environmental diplomacy.

When asked if he had any message for the youth of Singapore and Indonesia, Prof Koh spoke about the importance of the rule of law, which he said created a level playing field for both small and big countries.

He added: "We smaller countries must insist that big countries abide by international law, that they must settle their dispute peacefully in accordance to the laws."

**Wahyudi Soeriaatmadja**



Professor Tommy Koh receiving the award from Indonesia's Deputy Foreign Minister H. Abdurrahman Mohammad Fachir, in Bandung, West Java yesterday. PHOTO: MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS/ SINGAPORE EMBASSY IN JAKARTA