

**SPEECH BY PROFESSOR TAN ENG CHYE
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**NUS COMMENCEMENT 2018, MAIN CEREMONY
THURSDAY, 12 JULY 2018, NUS UNIVERSITY CULTURAL CENTRE**

President of the Republic of Singapore and NUS Chancellor Madam Halimah Yacob
Justices
NUS Pro-Chancellors
NUS Chairman and Trustees
The Honourable Justice Chao Hick Tin
Graduates, Parents, Friends
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

1 Good afternoon, and my warmest congratulations to the Class of 2018! It is a privilege and a joy to join you today for this very special Main Ceremony.

2 Commencement is one of the most colourful and celebratory events on the University's calendar. The NUS community takes great pride and pleasure in celebrating this event's rich and distinctive history. It is also a fitting occasion to recognise that our journeys of growth and discovery would not have been possible without the support and commitment of loved ones, mentors and peers.

3 At its heart, Commencement marks a rite of passage. At this important milestone, we celebrate not only the remarkable accomplishments of our exceptional men and women; more importantly, with this highly symbolic ceremony, we are entrusting our graduates to lead our community and nation to even greater heights.

4 As our latest graduates, we ask that you continually strive to put forth your best effort in whatever you do; even more importantly, we ask that you should also, always, have a higher goal of seeking to serve others.

5 The Faculty of Law has a long and distinguished lineage. When the inaugural cohort of students were admitted in 1957, among those matriculated included former Chief Justice and NUS Honorary Graduate Dr Chan Sek Keong, Ambassador-at-Large Professor Tommy Koh, and Emeritus Professor Koh Kheng Lian. These luminaries went on to achieve great impact not only in the legal profession, but helped shaped the development and progress of our nation as one based on justice and equality, and built on the foundations of law and order.

6 Over the years, the Faculty of Law has produced outstanding individuals who have made impressive, and inspiring contributions across a wide range of fields, both nationally and globally. Many have made their mark not only in law, but in government, business, arts and culture, and even in the exciting world of start-ups and entrepreneurship. These distinguished individuals and their accomplishments reflect how the Faculty has nurtured diversity of talent, ignited passion, and promoted a spirit of dedicated service to the wider community.

7 The conferment of an NUS law degree is therefore a highly prestigious milestone, and distinctly advantageous to opening new and exciting pathways for advancement and growth. But I would like to suggest that it might be prudent, or even judicious, to differentiate between

prestige bestowed at the onset, and the greater journey that lies ahead, that will lead to the achievement of desired impact and outcomes.

8 I would suggest, that to achieve distinctive impact in your field of endeavour, it will be necessary not only to draw on your legal training, but also to nurture other important attributes, such as curiosity, creativity, empathy and a firm determination. You will also need to constantly seek out new knowledge, to enlarge and enrich your understanding, and to discover new and different ways of doing things.

9 This afternoon, NUS is truly privileged to have with us an exceptional individual who embodies these qualities of personal excellence and absolute integrity, and who has accomplished a remarkable record of contributing in manifold ways, over a long career, to public and community service.

10 Justice Chao Hick Tin has served Singapore, and the legal profession, with great distinction for more than 50 years. Over that long period, he served under all four Chief Justices in post-independent Singapore, and in some of the highest legal offices, including as Attorney-General, High Court judge, and Judge of Appeal on the Supreme Court.

11 Justice Chao's impact on the development, promotion, and application of the law also extended into the international arena. His expertise in international law, as well as his resolute spirit of public service, was called upon in landmark agreements and treaties that secured and promoted Singapore's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and commercial interests. These included the Water Agreements with Malaysia, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and the Pedra Branca case, which came before the International Court of Justice.

12 Justice Chao is widely known not only for his sharp legal mind, but also for his personal qualities of graciousness and modesty. Many in the legal profession can relate experiences of how Justice Chao treated all who appeared before him with consideration and kindness.

13 Notwithstanding his busy legal career, Justice Chao also served in the Volunteer Constabulary for 20 years, becoming its first volunteer commander in 1981.

14 For his unwavering service and dedication, and for his exceptional contributions, NUS is proud to have the opportunity to honour Justice Chao Hick Tin with an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree.

15 As a legal pioneer, Justice Chao was both witness and contributor to Singapore's astonishing transformation from a Third World to a thriving global city. During that period, the legal landscape in Singapore also evolved rapidly. We became more global in perspective, and our legal services grew considerably in range and sophistication.

16 But the environment is not static: new waves of change are coming, including greater global competition, and the emergence of powerful new technologies such as fintech, artificial intelligence and data analytics. These changes are expected to greatly impact our economy, including important sectors such as legal services.

17 To ride these waves of change, new generations of graduates will need to continually develop their legal expertise, and also engage in regular cycles of acquiring and assimilating new knowledge and skills, which could sometimes be beyond the legal realm. Resolve and resilience will be critical in overcoming challenges, and in adapting to change.

18 The potential dividends of a positive change attitude are immense. Active learners will gain for themselves a lifetime's worth of opportunity to discover new interests and abilities, and harness their skills and talents to deliver creative and unique impact in novel and different

settings. We may not be able to reach the inspiring peaks of Justice Chao's career, but we can certainly aspire to walk in his footsteps!

19 NUS has carefully considered the changes going on in Singapore, and across the world. We recognise that, as an institution, we too, need to embrace change and new opportunities. We have therefore, embarked on a bold direction of making lifelong learning a core tenet of NUS' programmes and approach. Some such changes have been announced, with many more to follow.

20 We are working to re-imagine undergraduate and post-graduate learning and education, and expand possibilities and opportunities for students, alumni and the public. We want to encourage a lifetime of productivity, based on a habit of lifelong learning. NUS is evolving, from an institution associated with a specific time and place in your life, to become a lifelong partner in your continuous journey of growth and discovery.

21 Commencement used to be thought of as marking a distinctive phase of one's life. Perhaps it is more useful now to think of it as a transition from one type of learning experience to another. To step out into the wider world is to begin new learning chapters, each with distinctive possibilities.

22 In that spirit, I wish each of you many fulfilling and inspiring chapters ahead. I hope that with each learning experience, you will gain an ever stronger spirit of service and community, and look for opportunities to help others discover and fulfil their potential.

23 My heartiest congratulations once again to the Class of 2018!