



PM: School lawyers of tomorrow in many fields

Encourage more cross-disciplinary learning to keep up with changing law practice, he says

Ng Huiwen

Singapore's law schools need to produce lawyers who are prepared for the demands of a new working environment marked by disruption and new technologies, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said yesterday.

Speaking at the official opening of the Singapore Management University's (SMU) new law school building, Mr Lee said the way law is being practised will change in the future, and more cross-disciplinary learning should be encouraged.

He said the Government will be supporting the bigger law firms to venture into new areas of legal practice while helping the smaller ones raise their productivity and deliver better services to clients.

Mr Lee said the SMU School of Law, Singapore's second law school, was set up in 2007 not just to increase the number of law graduates. "We wanted a law school that would provide a rigorous legal education, coupled with exposure to other disciplines, such as business, economics, accountancy, social sciences or information systems."

He added: "We hoped that the graduates will be more versatile, able to apply their knowledge of the law in many different fields, and to contribute to our economy."

He was speaking to some 800 guests at the school's function hall, where future convocation and commencement ceremonies can now be held in-house for up to 1,400 people.

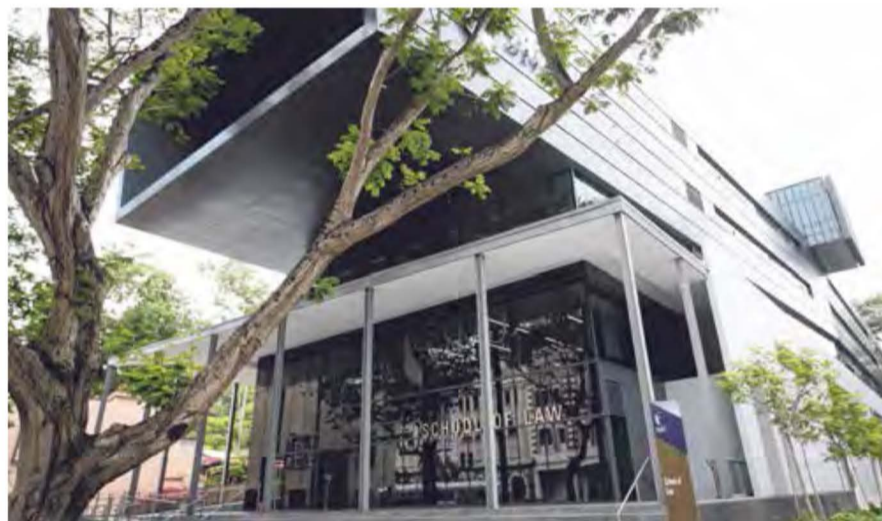
Mr Lee later toured the new 23,000 sq m School of Law building, located at the junction of Armenian Street and Stamford Road. The building was completed last December at a cost of \$165 million.

Previously, law students and faculty members shared facilities across the road with SMU's accountancy and business schools.

The building features the Kwa Geok Choo Law Library. Madam Kwa, a lawyer, was one of the founders of Lee & Lee, one of Singapore's oldest firms. Madam Kwa, who died in 2010, is PM Lee's mother.

SMU chairman Ho Kwon Ping, in his speech, said the 2,200 sq m Kwa Geok Choo Law Library will be "at the heart of legal education and scholarship in Singapore".

He added: "Universities around



the world are known for their iconic libraries, and this one is strategically placed at the high point of the site next to Stamford Green."

The three-storey library, which can seat more than 500 people, will focus on developing special collections in commercial law, dispute resolution and Asean law, among other areas.

Mr Ho also said students can now better prepare for law competitions with the new David Marshall Moot Court, which simulates a courtroom or arbitration chamber.

Said third-year law student Shriram Jayakumar, 24: "Now with the

proper infrastructure in place, more students will be motivated to go further, knowing that the school is behind us."

Mr Jayakumar is part of a five-man team from SMU which will be representing Singapore at the Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition in Washington next month.

In addition, a new pro bono centre in the law school will allow legal clinics conducted by volunteer lawyers and assisted by SMU law undergraduates to be held weekly.

Previously, legal clinics were held fortnightly at the school's ad-

ministration building.

SMU's law school dean Yeo Tiong Min said that the centre "sensitises law students to social justice issues" and allows them to "appreciate and integrate academic work with real-life experience".

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Above: PM Lee outside the Kwa Geok Choo Law Library in SMU yesterday with SMU chairman Ho Kwon Ping and Mrs Lee (blocked). Mr Ho's wife Claire Chiang is with SMU president Arnoud De Meyer and SMU pro-chancellor Lim Chee Onn and Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon.

Middle left: The new building of SMU's School of Law.

Bottom left: Inside the Kwa Geok Choo Law Library. ST PHOTOS: MARK CHEONG, ONG WEE JIN