

Final, as delivered

**SMU Commencement for Class of 2023**

**Opening Ceremony**

**SMU Hall, 25 July 2023**

**Citation for conferring Honorary Doctorate on Mr J Y Pillay**

**Read by SMU Chairman Mr Piyush Gupta**

Singapore Management University wishes to confer upon Mr J Y Pillay the degree of Doctor of Laws (honoris causa), in recognition of his exceptional contributions to public service, business, and education.

Mr Pillay is one of Singapore's most distinguished leaders, and his contributions to Singapore's development are immeasurable.

Born and schooled in Malaya, he completed his tertiary education at the University of London's Imperial College of Science and Technology, where he obtained a bachelor's degree in engineering with first-class honours in 1956. After working in the United Kingdom and Malaya for a few years, he came to Singapore to work at the Ministry of Finance in 1961. For the next three decades, he worked alongside Singapore's pioneer leaders, shaping many of the country's eminent institutions.

Mr Pillay is one of Singapore's pioneers who helped build the economy after the separation from Malaysia. He served in the administrative service of the Government of Singapore and was Permanent Secretary of the ministries of finance, defence, and national development. Mr Pillay was the Chairman of the Presidential Council of Advisers (CPA) and was also the Chairman of the Singapore Exchange from 1999 to 2010. He served as Managing Director of the Monetary Authority of Singapore and the Government of Singapore Investment Corporation.

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Among his many achievements, one of the most significant was developing Singapore's national carrier, Singapore Airlines, into a world-class company. During his time as Chairman, from 1972 to 1996, SIA went from a small company with 12 aircraft to a world-class carrier with a network in 41 countries. In 1978, Singapore Airlines ordered 19 Boeings for US\$900 million. The deal was called "the sale of the century" by the US press. Mr Pillay also became the Chairman of the Development Bank of Singapore (DBS) in 1979. By 1984 the bank's after-tax profits had almost tripled.

After his retirement from the civil service in March 1995 he served as the high commissioner to Britain and the ambassador to Ireland until 1999. Mr Pillay oversaw the creation of the Singapore Exchange in 1999 from the merger of the Stock Exchange of Singapore and the Singapore International Monetary Exchange.

Mr Pillay has also managed and led many government-linked companies such as Temasek Holdings, Government Investment Corporation of Singapore, Neptune Orient Lines and Singapore Technologies Holdings. He has been widely recognized for his contributions to business, and his expertise in finance and investment has been instrumental in shaping Singapore's economy.

Mr Pillay has been described as "equal to the best brains in America" by Mr Lee Kuan Yew and as a "civil servant able to stand up to his Prime Minister" by Mr Goh Chok Tong.

In addition, Mr Pillay's contributions to education are equally impressive. He has been a passionate advocate for education throughout his career and made significant contributions to the development of higher education institutions in Singapore. Mr J Y Pillay was Chancellor of SMU from 2015 to 2019. As

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Chancellor, he took an active interest in SMU's development, and often engaged trustees, management, faculty, and students.

He presided at all of SMU's significant events, including Convocation and Commencement, where he invariably had words of encouragement for student leaders, student performers and graduands. As a Member of SMU during the same period, he, together with his fellow Members, occupied a key role in SMU's overall governance structure. Members receive annual updates about the University and participate in the Annual General Meetings. Members also hold the authority to approve any changes to SMU's Constitution.

Mr Pillay's contributions to public service, business, and education have been recognised with numerous awards and honours. He was awarded the Order of Nila Utama (First Class), one of Singapore's most prestigious National Day Awards on 9 August 2012. And in August 2019, he was awarded the Order of Temasek (With Distinction), Singapore's highest civilian honour.

Throughout his career, Mr Pillay has been widely respected for his integrity, intelligence, and dedication to public service. He has demonstrated a deep commitment to Singapore's development, and his vision and leadership have been instrumental in shaping the country's success.

In recognition of his exceptional achievements and service to the nation, Singapore Management University is proud to confer upon Mr J Y Pillay the degree of Doctor of Laws (honoris causa). His exemplary career and contributions to public service, business, and education serve as an inspiration to us all, and we are most honoured to recognise him in this way.

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