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SMU Commencement for Class of 2023
Opening Ceremony
SMU Hall, 25 July 2023
Speech by SMU Chairman Mr Piyush Gupta

Guest-of-Honour, The Honourable Justice Judith Prakash

Chancellor of Singapore Management University, Mr Lim Chee Onn;

Pro-Chancellor, Mr Eddie Teo;

Former Chancellor of SMU and Honorary Degree Recipient, Mr J Y Pillay;

Members of the Board of Trustees;

SMU President, Professor Lily Kong;

Faculty, staff, and the Class of 2023;

Parents and guests,

And anyone else I may have left out in the whole wide world!

Welcome to SMU Commencement 2023.

Today marks a significant milestone in our lives – including mine, by the way, as this my first SMU Commencement – as we gather here to celebrate the achievements of the Class of 2023 and celebrate the incredible journey you have undertaken at SMU. As the Chairman of this esteemed institution, it is both an honour and a privilege to stand before you today.

I must also acknowledge the parents who have been able to join us. As a parent, I know that the success of your progeny is as much yours as it is theirs.

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But most of all, I must congratulate all of our graduates. Today is not just a time for celebration, but a time for reflection as well. Take a moment to reflect on the incredible transformation you have undergone during your time at SMU.

You have worked tirelessly, overcoming challenges, and embracing opportunities, all in pursuit of knowledge and personal growth. You have grown in immeasurable ways. Today, as you stand on the threshold of a new chapter in your lives, I encourage you to always embrace integrity, excellence and a passion for lifelong learning, and make a positive impact in whichever field you have chosen to build your career.

It is my great pleasure to introduce our distinguished Guest-of-Honour, Justice Judith Prakash, a true exemplar of excellence and integrity in the legal field.

Justice Prakash graduated from the University of Singapore in 1974 and was admitted as an advocate and solicitor in Singapore the following year.

Thereafter she was in private practice until 1992. Starting as a shipping lawyer, she subsequently practised commercial law in the areas of banking and finance and company law. She joined the Supreme Court as Judicial Commissioner in 1992 and became a High Court Judge in 1995.

She was awarded the Public Service Medal in 2005 and the Ministry of Education Gold Award for Service to Education in 2014. She was the first woman to be appointed a permanent judge of the Singapore Court of Appeal, in 2016, and was inducted into the Singapore Women's Hall of Fame in the same year.

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In 2017, she was appointed Judge of the Dubai International Financial Centre Courts where she served on a part-time basis for three years to hearing appeal cases.

Until 2022, Justice Prakash was the Lead Judge for arbitration matters. She has sat on many cases involving arbitration issues, both at first instance and on appeal, and is one of the Supreme Court's specialist arbitration judges. Many of her judgments, particularly on arbitration and commercial law, have been influential both domestically and internationally.

Justice Prakash has previously served on the Advisory Board of the Yong Pung How School of Law; and she delivered the Herbert Smith Freehills–SMU Asian Arbitration Lecture in 2019.

Justice Prakash has made significant contributions to the Singaporean judiciary and has been a trailblazer in upholding justice and the rule of law. Her remarkable achievements and unwavering commitment to justice make her an inspiration to us all. We are truly honoured to have her grace this momentous occasion and share her wisdom with us.

Graduates, as you embark on your respective journeys, I implore you to ponder on Justice Prakash's example. Success is not measured solely by your accomplishments or the wealth you accumulate. It lies in the positive impact you make on the lives of others and the communities you serve. Each and every one of you possesses unique talents and abilities that can shape the world for the better. Embrace your individuality, harness your strengths, and let your dreams soar.

In conclusion, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to the Class of 2023 – and to the faculty, friends and family members who have supported

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you. You have not only earned a degree, but you have also gained invaluable experiences and forged relationships that will last a lifetime. As you step out into the world, be courageous, be compassionate, and always be true to yourselves.

Now, please join me in extending a warm welcome to our Guest of Honour, Justice Judith Prakash, who will impart her wisdom and inspire us with her remarkable journey. Thank you, and may your futures be filled with purpose, success, and fulfilment.

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