

**ASEAN LAW ASSOCIATION (ALA)  
JUDICIAL COOPERATION PROGRAMME  
AND  
ALA GOLF TOURNAMENT SINGAPORE 2006**

**ADDRESS BY  
CHIEF JUSTICE CHAN SEK KEONG**

**GUEST-OF-HONOUR  
AT THE WELCOME DINNER  
12 AUGUST 2006, ORCHARD PARADE HOTEL**

Attorney-General Chao Hick Tin, President of the ALA,

Tun Mohamed Dzaidin Hj Abdullah, immediate past  
President of the ALA and retired Chief Justice of Malaysia,

Chief Justice Artemio V. Panganiban of the Philippines,

Attorney-General Dato Seri Paduka Hj Kifrawi bin  
Dato Paduka Hj Kifli of Brunei Darussalam,

Justice Dato' Hashim Yusoff bin Dato' Haji Yusoff  
of the Federal Court of Malaysia,

Justice Charus Paungmanee, Presiding Justice of the  
Supreme Court of Thailand,

Mrs Marianna Sutadi, Vice Chief Justice of Indonesia,

ALA Golf Captain, Justice Dato' James Foong Cheng Yuen of Malaysia,

Judges and other Distinguished Guests,

I wish to thank the President of ALA, Attorney-General Chao Hick Tin for inviting me to this wonderful gathering of old friends, fellow judges and lawyers from ASEAN countries. Singapore is indeed fortunate to have AG Chao succeed me as Attorney-General and also to hold the current chairmanship of ALA. I am sure he will do Singapore proud by leading ALA to greater success during his short tenure.

2 A golf tournament is obviously an excellent way to promote fellowship and foster interaction and co-operation among ASEAN judges and lawyers. I am sure that golf has been one of the highlights of every ALA General Assembly. I recall attending the ALA General Assembly in 1980 when I learnt that the function of the leader of each delegation was to promote fellowship and goodwill, not only at the conference hall, but also on the golf course. In this respect, AG Chao is handicapped by his not having a golfer's handicap. But I am told that he is most happy to make up for it by serving as an honorary caddy, if required.

3 Like AG Chao, I don't play golf and so we have no understanding whatsoever of the passion that impels avid golfers to forever seek the perfect game, sometimes thousands of miles away from home to play at classic golf courses. I am also told that golf is a very self-directed game, in that a golfer does not compete with another golfer, but with himself. I suppose that is why golfers, who blame fate for every untoward event in their lives, feel personally responsible when they make a hole in one. I am also told that golf provides a good testing ground in civility and good manners. In primitive society, when

native tribes beat the ground with clubs and yell, it is called witchcraft; in civilised society it is called golf.

4 So much by way of introduction. I am indeed honoured by the presence of so many eminent judges and lawyers tonight and in your making this special effort to come to Singapore for this golf tournament. So, I wish to thank you Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban, Tun Mohamed Dzaiddin, Vice Chief Justice Mrs Marianna Sutadi and Presiding Justice Charus Paungmanee for being here tonight. I would also like to extend my personal congratulations to Justice Dato' Hashim Yusoff on his recent appointment as a member of the Federal Court of Malaysia – the highest court in Malaysia. I am also pleased to see my good friend, AG Dato Kifrawi of Brunei Darussalam, with whom I had a long and rewarding working relationship when I was AG of Singapore.

5 My association with ALA goes back to 1980 when, as a practising corporate lawyer, I presented a paper on “Domestic and Off-Shore Financing and Syndicated Loans” at the first ALA General Assembly held at Manila in November 1980. That was the height of my achievement in the annals of ALA. After that, it was all down-hill. Fortunately, Singapore had more dedicated members in the likes of my classmate, T.P.B. Menon, who is a former President of ALA and former President of the Law Society of Singapore, and of course, AG Chao and Justice Lee Seiu Kin to fly the flag for Singapore. There are, of course, many other Singapore lawyers who have kept up the spirit of ALA, and I hope they will forgive me if I am not able to name them tonight.

6 ALA has remained relevant to the judicial and legal communities of ASEAN for some 26 years. ALA provides the glue that binds its members together. Its value and accomplishments should not be under-estimated. ASEAN countries have as many legal systems as there are in the world – having inherited the legal traditions of England, France, the Netherlands, Spain and the United States. It is therefore all the more important that ALA continues to play a key role in forging mutual understanding and facilitating exchanges in the legal field. But, on a more serious note, I think that ALA should seek to play a greater role on the sidelines of the ASEAN Ministers for Justice and Attorneys-General’s Meetings. AG Dato Kifrawi and I have attended many such meetings, but so far we have not seen any substantial input or suggestions from ALA for consideration by the Ministerial Meetings. I believe ALA has an important role to play in keeping the Ministerial Meetings abreast of legal developments in ASEAN that merit their attention. For example, the harmonisation of commercial laws in ASEAN will be relevant in promoting the future ASEAN Common Market. Similarly, ALA might be able to play an important role in establishing some kind of federation of lawyers in ASEAN so that they could develop pan-ASEAN partnerships and alliances among ASEAN law firms.

7 When I learnt of the request from the ALA Standing Committee on Judicial Cooperation for Singapore to host a visit to the new Supreme Court Building and a briefing on the Judiciary’s case management and court technology systems, I immediately agreed. I had not realised then that this programme would become the inaugural ALA Judicial Cooperation

Programme. I hope my fellow judges and other colleagues who attended the Programme this afternoon found it to be time well spent.

8 To conclude my short address, I must not omit to mention the ASEAN tradition of singing at the end of any conference or meeting has spread even to conferences of Prosecutors General of ASEAN and China hosted by the Chinese Supreme Procuratorate, a rather recent and unexpected endorsement of the ASEAN sing-song spirit. For this we must give credit to the Filipino prosecutors who gave our Chinese hosts no chance to demur. On this topic, I am told that the Malaysians have achieved a breakthrough in Manila last year when they resurrected a clone of Elvis Presley. The Indonesians, not to be outdone, have produced their own Elvis clone in Hanoi this year. Singapore lawyers as usual are struggling to find their own idol, and the best they have come up with, to my knowledge, is a book written by my wife's cousin, who was a lawyer, called "Elvis is well and alive in Katong".

9 Though I shall not be joining you on the golf course tomorrow, I wish the golfers from Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and not forgetting Singapore, many hours of enjoyment of beating the ground with clubs and yelling, hopefully, "hole in one". Thank you.