

S'PORE GETS 6 NEW  
SENIOR COUNSEL

# YOUNG SENIORS



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**M**R HRI Kumar never really aspired to be a lawyer when he was a young boy.

But when he came to one of life's crossroads, he chose to read law instead of medicine.

That decision many years back paid off for him yesterday.

The law firm partner and Member of Parliament was appointed to the esteemed rank of senior counsel, together with five other lawyers.

The six new senior counsel appointed yesterday brings the total number here to 51.

Mr Kumar, 41, said with a grin: "I wanted to be a race-car driver and a professional footballer. Once, I wanted to be a bus conductor because it seemed like they had an important job."

In junior college, he read the three sciences - physics, chemistry and biology - and considered studying medicine, but eventually decided that it was not for him.

One of the reasons was because he didn't really enjoy dissecting animals in biology class. More than that, he said: "I didn't feel like it was going to be my calling. The subject didn't really inspire me."

It helped that one of his brothers, who is 10 years older than him, was already a lawyer.

So Mr Kumar went on to read law at the National University of Singapore.

## HUMBLING

On his appointment, Mr Kumar said: "I'm very honoured, and it's also humbling. Now, much more will be expected of me. It's a great challenge."

Chief Justice Chan Sek Keong announced the appointments at the opening of the legal year.

Being appointed is a mark of eminence within the legal profession, "an accolade given to those who possess outstanding ability as advocates, extensive knowledge of the law and the highest professional standing".

Another senior counsel appointed yesterday was Mr Cavinder Bull who, with Mr Kumar, is a partner in Drew & Napier.

The firm, headed by Mr Davinder Singh, now has the most number of senior counsel, with seven among their ranks.

Mr Bull read law in Oxford and graduated with first-class honours.

Just 39, he is among the youngest appointed. Only in "exceptional cases" are lawyers below the age of 40 appointed to senior counsel.

The youngest ever was Mr Alvin Yeo, at 37. Mr Davinder Singh and Justice VK Rajah, who were in the first batch of



*The former Chief Justice told me to go do as much and as many different types of work; to get as broad and as deep an experience as possible, so that I can be a better lawyer.*

- Mr Cavinder Bull, 39

appointments in 1997, were 39 at that time.

Mr Bull, who went to Harvard on a Lee Kuan Yew scholarship to do a Masters in Law, said: "I chose to go into law because I wanted to make a difference."

"Making senior counsel sort of reminds me of that. It's the senior counsel who are involved with the most important cases and who also deal with the most significant legal issues of our day."

So what keeps him going?

He said: "I think that if you look for it, instead of being pre-occupied with the workload, there are many moments when you are making a difference in people's lives."

Mr Bull had worked for a year as a Justice Law Clerk to the then Chief Justice Yong Pung How, before practising law.

Mr Bull's mother, who was a primary school teacher, raised him and his two elder sisters single-handedly after their father died when he was 15 months old.

She is now 75 and lives with his family.

He said: "When I told her about being appointed, she reminded me that God has always been good to me."

**The six newly appointed senior counsel are:**

- Dr Jeffrey Dan Pinsler, 53, law professor
- Mr Sundaresh Menon, 45, senior partner in Rajah & Tann
- Mr Hri Kumar Nair, 41, partner in Drew & Napier
- Mr Thio Shen Yi, 40, joint managing partner in TSMP
- Mr Cavinder Bull, 39, partner in Drew & Napier
- Mr Lee Eng Beng, 40, partner in Rajah & Tann

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**"There are a lot of pressures on a lawyer. But the most important thing is to remember that we are officers of the court and we have to do what is right. And sometimes, doing what is right may not be what the client wants. The most important rule is not to lose that moral compass.**

- Mr Hri Kumar, 41