

## National Young Lawyers and Pupils Committee Conference 2023

Date: 10-12 February 2023

Location: DoubleTree Resort by Hilton Penang, Penang, Malaysia

### Conference Report

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#### The Conference

1. The National Young Lawyers and Pupils Committee (“**NYLPC**”) Conference 2023 (“**Conference**”), themed “Thriving in 2033: Mastering the Unknown”, was organised by the NYLPC of the Malaysian Bar. It took place between 10 and 12 February 2023 in Penang, Malaysia. We attended the Conference as representatives of the Young Barristers’ Committee (“**YBC**”) of the Hong Kong Bar Association.
2. On the first day of the Conference a Welcoming Social with the Penang Bar with dinner provided in the evening was held. Unfortunately we could not attend this event because of our flight schedule.

#### *Conference sessions on 11 February 2023*

3. We joined the Conference from its official opening in the morning of 11 February 2023. Following the Welcoming Remarks, the Launch of the Conference and the Opening Speech, we listened to the Keynote Address from Y.B. Ramkarpal Singh, Deputy Minister at the Prime Minister’s Department (Law and Institutional Reform). He spoke about the significant changes that the legal profession would likely encounter in the next decade, particularly in response to technological advancements and societal shifts. He emphasised the need for adaptability and continuous learning to ensure that the profession remains relevant and effective.
4. Session 1, “The End of Lawyers? Redefining the Legal Profession”, easily engaged all the audience in the room. The session explored the potential impact of automation and artificial intelligence on the legal profession. The speakers challenged the attendees to rethink the role of lawyers in a future where many traditional tasks could be automated. This session provoked much reflection amongst us, as it raised important questions about how Hong Kong lawyers might prepare for similar challenges which may arise in our own practice.
5. Session 2, “Evolution of Advocacy: Perspectives from the Bench and Bar”, was notable where members of the judiciary and senior dispute resolution practitioners discussed the evolution of courtroom and written advocacy. The panel explored how advocacy is changing in light of technological advances,

including the rise of virtual hearings. This session provided valuable insights on how legal practitioners in Hong Kong could adapt to these changes, especially as remote hearings become more commonplace.

6. Sessions 3 to 5 were divided into two parts and participants were at liberty to choose which session to attend. Sessions 3A and 3B were respectively themed “What Does the Future Hold for Conveyancing Practice in Malaysia?” and “Business Development and Personal Branding towards 2033”. Sessions 4A and 4B were respectively themed the “Adjudication: Paving the Way Forward for Construction Disputes in Malaysia: and “The Growing Importance of Environmental, Social and Governance Regulatory Requirement for Businesses”. Sessions 5A and 5B were respectively themed “The Future of Divorce, Collaborative Practice, Prenuptials and Other Means of Resolution” and “Managing Talents: Retaining Young Lawyers & ‘Quite Quitting’”.
7. We each attended a combination of different sessions in accordance with our interests and then shared our experience afterwards. Amongst all the informative sessions, Session 3B which is on business development left us the strongest impression. This session delved into the challenges of personal branding for lawyers in the digital age. The speakers discussed strategies for navigating the often rigid rules surrounding publicity in the legal profession while leveraging social media and other digital tools to build a reputation. We agreed this session was particularly relevant to younger lawyers in Hong Kong, who face similar challenges in balancing modern marketing practices with the tradition.
8. This day ended with Session 6, “Making Tax Law Practice Accessible”, where a panel of young tax lawyers shared their insights in relation to the challenges in practising tax law, how tax practice should be shaped, and the future of tax practice. We found the session informative and accessible to lawyers who do not specialise in the area of tax law.

#### *Conference sessions on 12 February 2023*

9. This day began with Session 7, namely “The Future of Malaysia’s Capital Market in the Light of Current Trends”. The speakers referred to the launch on the third capital market masterplan launched by the Securities Commission in Malaysia and discussed on the potential shape of Malaysia’s capital market in 2033. We appreciated how the panel discussion combined the elements of review and forecast and the session was not difficult to follow although we participated as overseas delegates.

10. Session 8 themed “Emerging Trends in Arbitration” was thought-provoking. The panel discussed the growing role of arbitration in resolving cross-border disputes and the latest trends in cost management, digitalization, and diversity in arbitrator appointments. The session also explored how young practitioners can capitalise on opportunities in this field. This session was of particular interest to us, given the increasing importance of arbitration in Hong Kong’s legal landscape.
11. In the same vein, Session 9 (and the final session) themed “Practising Law Differently: A Look at Alternate Models” addressed alternative structures for law firms, such as multidisciplinary practices and limited liability partnerships. The session highlighted how other jurisdictions are exploring these models, which may be worth considering in Hong Kong as the legal profession continues to evolve. The discussion also touched on the potential for lawyers to practice independently of traditional firms, which could open new avenues for young practitioners in Hong Kong.
12. The Conference concluded with Closing Remarks from the organiser NYLPC, where satisfaction with the discussion and ideas shared over the conference sessions was expressed. The importance of continued dialogue and collaboration among young lawyers across borders was also stressed by the organiser.

#### *Networking with professionals from other jurisdictions*

13. Outside of the conference sessions, we had ample opportunities to network with the young lawyers from Malaysia and other jurisdictions. In particular, we introduced ourselves to the NYLPC Committee Members, inclusive of their then Co-Chairpersons New Sin Yew and Sarah Yong Li Hsien.
14. Sin Yew and Sarah together with their colleagues were very welcoming. Not only did they show us around the booths outside the conference rooms during the coffee breaks, but they also took us to dinners in the evenings. We certainly had a good time with them and the good food around Penang.
15. While we were in Penang, we mentioned the possibility of the YBC hosting a similar conference in Hong Kong. Our fellow young lawyers in Malaysia all expressed their interest and support. Such networking opportunities did allow us to build invaluable connections with our counterparts in Malaysia and pave the way for future collaboration and mutual support.

#### **Significance**

##### *Insights into the future of legal practice*

16. The conference sessions provided us with an understanding of the upcoming changes to the legal profession, particularly in terms of technology and practice models. These insights are crucial for us as lawyers who must adapt to remain competitive in a rapidly evolving global legal market. The discussion on personal branding and business development also stimulated us to brainstorm what we as Young Barristers in Hong Kong may do taking into account the modern practices while also adhering to our Code of Conduct.

*Ideas on a conference organised by and for the young lawyers*

17. As mentioned above, we had the idea of hosting the very first conference of the YBC in Hong Kong when we attended the Conference, and we were deeply impressed by how the NYLPC managed to host the Conference in a seamless and professional way. This, together with the topics discussed at the Conference, inspired us a lot when we were later planning for the inaugural YBC Conference in 2023 and our second YBC Conference in 2024.

*Foundations for future cross-border collaboration*

18. Ever since we attended the Conference, we have maintained regular communications and an amicable relationship with the NYLPC. In particular, Sin Yew together with two of his colleagues joined us at the inaugural YBC Conference as delegates. Subsequently, one of the said delegates, Kee Hui Yee, was invited as one of our panel speakers at the YBC Conference 2024 in her capacity of the Co-Chair of the NYLPC, and she was supported by her colleagues in Malaysia who joined us as delegates as well. The said conference was officially supported by the Malaysian Bar. Hui Yee and the NYLPC have been keen on working with the YBC and we are optimistic about more collaboration opportunities afterwards.
19. As we have also met speakers from Singapore at the Conference, such encounters gave us more reason to invite them to attend our own events and to collaborate with us in an official capacity. For example, the Law Society of Singapore nominated speakers to attend the YBC Conferences in two consecutive years, itself also being a supporting organisation of our own conference in 2024.

**Conclusion**

20. Attending the NYLPC Conference 2023 was a highly enriching experience for us all. The insights gained from the sessions made us reflect on our own practice and the connections made with the fellow young lawyers contributed to the

continued engagement between us as part of the YBC and the NYLPC as well as other professional bodies.

21. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the Hong Kong Bar Association for the subsidies and support. We believe that the insights and connections gained from attending the Conference would remain beneficial to ourselves and the wider communities.

Date: 18 February 2025

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