

# Simplify books to make law easier for the layman, says CJ

► **K.C. Vijayan**

LAW CORRESPONDENT

CHIEF Justice Chan Sek Keong yesterday called for simplified law books to be published as one way to make the law easily understandable to people who rely on and need to use the law.

Addressing a forum organised by law students on the issue of public access to the law, among other things, he noted steps were already in place like a government website where all written judgments were available.

But while some very general legal principles could be easily understood, the content of these decisions needs to be readily understood and one way is for the Singapore Academy of Law to look into publishing books that explain it in simple terms.

CJ Chan also said it was important that the public be able to access justice easily.

The Law Society's pro bono scheme, which provides lawyers to those who cannot afford it, received high praise from the chief for making justice available to the people.

The forum, held at the Supreme Court Auditorium, is the first to be organised here by the London-based UK Singapore Law Students Society.

One of the topics discussed was the perennial problem of retaining lawyers, especially the young ones.

CJ Chan had a suggestion: "Pay them well. Greed works most of the time for the majority, even a large majority, of the people in affluent societies."

On the forum's agenda was also the issue of whether law-

yers can be trusted.

In his speech, CJ Chan came out strongly to defend the reputation of Singapore lawyers, which has taken a battering after a spate of past cases in which attorneys disappeared with large sums of their clients' money.

"The facts do not suggest any loss of confidence in the legal profession," he said. "On the contrary, our large and medium law firms are generally held in high regard in Singapore and the region. If we cannot trust our own lawyers, what other lawyers can we trust?"

He noted that the errant lawyers came from a very small proportion of lawyers in small law firms where the professional and ethical lapses occurred.

But CJ Chan warned against being complacent and called for continued vigilance to prevent any erosion of public confidence in the Bar.

Senior Counsel and Member of Parliament Indranee Rajah, who was one of five forum panelists, stressed the vital role of mentors or pupil masters in setting new lawyers on the right path.

"Most important is the person you learn from – not just the legal knowledge but the sense of values and integrity that is imparted to you," she said.

---

Post your comments online at  
[www.straitstimes.com](http://www.straitstimes.com)