

Award Ceremony

Malaysian Bar Lifetime Achievement Award 2022



G T S Sidhu
(posthumously awarded)

2 Sept 2022 (Friday) | 3:30 pm to 5:30 pm

Raja Aziz Addruse Auditorium
Level 2, Wisma Badan Peguam Malaysia
2 Leboh Pasar Besar, 50050 Kuala Lumpur

Foreword by the President

G T S Sidhu wore many hats during his illustrious lifetime. Clerk, teacher, hockey enthusiast, magistrate, lawyer, LAWASIA president from 1987 to 1989 – G T S Sidhu, or “Tara”, as he was fondly known to his colleagues at the Bar, was also President of the Malaysian Bar during our country’s modernisation era in the early days of the 1980s, where he led the first of many marches – among many other significant actions, for justice, equality, and the rule of law – in which the Malaysian Bar would continue to embark on, for today and for tomorrow.

Towards the end of his lifetime, his passion towards the Bar remained unwavering, despite his failing health. He was a gentle giant of the law who was fair and approachable, a leader whom Members of the Bar was never disappointed with whenever his assistance was sought.

A pillar of strength throughout his lifetime to his family and also to the Bar, G T S Sidhu is a testament to the ideals of perseverance, courage, and determination. The Malaysian Bar is proud to commemorate a luminary as exemplary as him with the humblest honour we can bestow for his life’s work, from which we continue to draw strength and wisdom.

Karen Cheah Yee Lynn
President
Malaysian Bar



Message by the Chairperson



Established to celebrate current or former Members of the Malaysian Bar who have demonstrated leadership, dedication, and exemplary service, in addition to making outstanding and significant contributions to the Malaysian Bar, the Malaysian Bar Lifetime Achievement Award (“MBLAA”) has honoured leading figures of the legal profession such as Raja Aziz Addruse (posthumously), Peter Mooney, Mahadev Shankar, Dr Radhakrishna Ramani (posthumously), Karpal Singh s/o Ram Singh (posthumously), V C George, Param Cumaraswamy, Cecil Rajendra, and most recently P G Lim (posthumously) and Ambiga Sreenevasan.

This year, another outstanding figure takes his place among them, and he is none other than G T S Sidhu. During his Presidency from 1980 to 1982, he led close to 200 lawyers to Parliament to distribute memoranda to protest the Government’s proposed amendments to the Societies Act 1966 that would increase control over the activities of societies registered in Malaysia, as well as other amendments to the Federal Constitution. His stand against such incursions into public liberty and abuses of the law is courageous, commendable and consonant with the ideals that we all aspire to achieve as a modern, contemporary society. And as a proponent and active member of LAWASIA, he spearheaded the region’s collaborative development in advancing the legal profession towards international standards. Subsequent to being LAWASIA’s President in 1987, he continued to sit in its council as one in only seven in the region at any one time.

G T S Sidhu left us before his work could be completed, but it is to his memory and esteem that many since have continued his mission, building on his remarkable achievements for the good of all. Today, we recognise his enduring spirit that stood firm in the face of trials and tribulations, come what may. It is to his spirit that we are proud to honour G T S Sidhu with the Malaysian Bar Lifetime Achievement Award 2022.

M Ramachelvam
Chairperson
Malaysian Bar Lifetime Achievement Award Selection Committee

Award Ceremony

Malaysian Bar Lifetime Achievement Award 2022

Programme

- 15:30 Registration and High Tea
- 16:00 Welcoming Remarks by
Karen Cheah Yee Lynn, *President, Malaysian Bar*
- 16:15 Overview of the Malaysian Bar Lifetime Achievement Award by
M Ramachelvam, *Chairperson, Malaysian Bar Lifetime Achievement Award Selection Committee*
- 16:30 Video presentation
- 16:40 Citation for 2022 MBLAA recipient,
the late G T S Sidhu, by
Cyrus Das, *past President of the Malaysian Bar (1997-1999)*
- 17:00 Presentation of award to representative of G T S Sidhu
- 17:15 End

Past Recipients of the Malaysian Bar Lifetime Achievement Award

The Bar Council instituted the Malaysian Bar Lifetime Achievement Award (“MBLAA”) in 2011 as a form of recognition of and appreciation for outstanding Members of the Malaysian Bar who have demonstrated particular dedication and exemplary lifetime service, and made invaluable and outstanding contributions, to the Bar.



Raja Aziz Addruse
(posthumously) (2012)
10 Mar 2012



Peter Mooney (2013)
16 Mar 2013



Mahadev Shankar (2014)
15 Mar 2014



Dr Radhakrishna Ramani
(posthumously) (2015)
14 Mar 2015



Karpal Singh s/o Ram Singh
(posthumously) (2016)
19 Mar 2016



V C George (2017)
18 Mar 2017



Param Cumaraswamy (2018)
17 Mar 2018



Cecil Rajendra (2019)
16 Mar 2019



P G Lim (posthumously) (2020)
10 Dec 2021



Ambiga Sreenevasan (2021)
10 Dec 2021

Citation for

G T S Sidhu Malaysian Bar Lifetime Achievement Award 2022

by Cyrus Das
Past President of the Malaysian Bar (1997–1999)



The recipient of the Malaysian Bar Lifetime Achievement Award for 2022 is the late G T S Sidhu, or more commonly known as “Tara”.

I am deeply honoured to be asked to prepare and deliver the citation for G T S Sidhu. It is demonstrably clear that G T S was a towering figure who stood for the values that this award celebrates.

G T S joined the legal profession in 1955 / 1956 in Singapore, and thereafter, when he returned to Malaya in 1961, remained a faithful Member of the Bar for several decades, until his passing in 1993. He served as the President of the Malaysian Bar from 1980 to 1982.



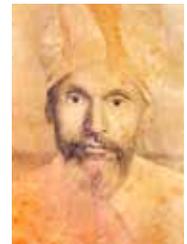
Photo of a young G T S, sent to Maureen Sergeant.

Early Life



A young G T S with his sports trophies. He was a keen rugby, football and hockey player, and played for the state of Negeri Sembilan.

G T S was born on 14 Oct 1924 in Jelebu, Negeri Sembilan as the only son and eldest child of Ganda Singh and Tej Kaur. He completed his schooling at King George V School, Seremban. As a young man, G T S was active in sports and represented the state of Negeri Sembilan in both hockey and football.



G T S's father, Ganda Singh. He served as a police officer for 23 years 9 months with the Federated Malay States Police, based in Jelebu, Negeri Sembilan.

He joined the Malayan branch of the Indian National Army after the death of his father in 1941, and was captured by the British at the end of the Japanese Occupation and interned at Changi Gaol (today Changi Prison) for six months.

G T S did not start out as a lawyer — he began his working life as a clerk at a post office and subsequently embarked on a career in teaching where he taught mathematics at St Paul's Institution, Seremban.

He met his wife-to-be, Maureen Sergeant, in Rasah Camp, Seremban where her father was based at.

In 1953, G T S decided to further his tertiary education in the United Kingdom. He proceeded to read law at Lincoln's Inn, London, through the financial support of Mahima Singh (later, Dato') — his mentor, benefactor, and family friend.

Legal Practice and Role in the Bar Council

In 1955, G T S moved to Singapore after qualifying as a barrister in the United Kingdom. He began his legal career as a magistrate and formed a family with Maureen (whom he married) that same year. The couple was blessed with three children: Americk, Paul, and Carolyne.

After having served several years as a magistrate, G T S entered private practice in 1959 and proceeded to join Murphy & Dunbar, a law firm in Singapore. He proved to be an outstanding lawyer and was promoted to manage a new branch of the firm in Kuala Lumpur, a mere two years later in 1961. He returned to Malaya with his family and settled in Kuala Lumpur permanently. In 1966, G T S entered into a partnership with the late Khoo Eng Chin, establishing their legal practice, Khoo & Sidhu.

In 1968, G T S was elected to the Bar Council. He took an active role in assisting to organise the first LAWASIA¹ conference held outside of Australia. At the time, this conference was the largest international conference ever to be organised and held in Malaysia.



G T S as a soldier of the Indian National Army during World War 2.



G T S as a student in London, 1954.



G T S (seated fourth from left) with the rest of the staff of the Criminal District and Magistrates' Court, Singapore, 1958.

He served as Bar Council member from 1968 to 1993, and as Vice-President of the Malaysian Bar from 1978 to 1979, and 1979 to 1980.

LAWASIA

LAWASIA Conference, 1968

The Bar Council – with assistance and support given by both the Bar and its Singaporean counterpart, judges, and the Malaysian Government – was given the honour of organising the LAWASIA conference, which was held on 1 to 3 July 1968, in Kuala Lumpur.²

G T S was part of the Conference Working Committee, which also composed of individuals such as P G Lim and Justice Dato' A Hamid. G T S notably assisted greatly, alongside the Secretary of the Conference Working Committee, K A Menon, in procuring funds for this conference. He and K A Menon embarked on a fund-raising tour to locations like Ipoh, Taiping, Penang, Seremban, Melaka, and Kuala Lumpur. The fund-raising tour was greatly successful.

LAWASIA Roles and Presidency (1987–1989)

G T S assumed the role of Councillor for Malaysia in 1975. In 1979, he was elected Chair of the Family Law & Family Rights Section, and his capacity as such was linked to the increase of Malaysian members during this period.

In 1983, G T S became Vice President of LAWASIA, and in 1987, its ninth



G T S at the 10th LAWASIA Conference, 1987, Kuala Lumpur.

President. During his presidency, he was instrumental in setting up a number of LAWASIA sections; and established an Asian Commission for Justice, serving as its Chair, and giving substance to his commitment to the rule of law and human rights.³

Highlights of G T S's Presidency of the Malaysian Bar

National Language in Courts

During G T S's term as President of the Malaysian Bar from 1980 to 1982, the Malaysian Government began to require the use of Bahasa Malaysia in all legal proceedings. This resulted in proposed amendments to the Legal Profession Act 1976 to require those seeking admission as advocates and solicitors of the High Court of Malaya after 1 Jan 1984 to pass a test in Bahasa Malaysia, as well as the mandatory use of Bahasa Malaysia in the Courts.

Under G T S's helm, the Malaysian Bar engaged with the Courts and proposed that these amendments should not come into force until at least 1 Jan 1982, so that Members of the Bar could have more time to increase their knowledge of and proficiency in, the national language.



Members of Bar Council 1980/81. G T S is flanked by (seated, third from right) Vice-President, S Subramanian and immediate past President, Abdullah A Rahman.

In aiding Members with the transition from the use of English to Bahasa Malaysia, a special committee consisting of representatives from the Malaysian Bar, University of Malaya, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, the Attorney General's Chambers, and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (National University of Malaysia), was formed.⁴

Lawyers' March: Amendments Made to the Societies Act 1966 and the Federal Constitution

In 1981, the Government proposed amendments to the Societies Act 1966 ("Societies Act"). In response to that, the Malaysian Bar called for two Extraordinary General Meetings ("EGMs") to discuss these amendments due to concerns that they would result in increased control over the activities of societies registered in Malaysia, as well as amendments to the Federal Constitution.

On 7 Apr 1981, more than 200 lawyers sporting black armbands gathered at Parliament House. It was drizzling that day, yet these lawyers were undeterred and pressed ahead with their concerted protest. Their objective was to distribute two memoranda protesting the amendments to the Societies Act and the Federal Constitution, which were to be debated by the Dewan Rakyat the next day.

Led by G T S, approximately 50 lawyers managed to get as far as the entrance of Parliament House, but were subsequently asked to leave. G T S, among a few other lawyers, managed to enter Parliament and distributed the memoranda to the Members of Parliament in the lobby. The then-Home Minister, Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie, refused to accept the memoranda handed over



The Honourable the Prime Minister,
Prime Minister's Department,
Jalan Dato Onn,
Kuala Lumpur.

Dear Prime Minister,

Re: Proposed Amendments to the Societies Act
and the Constitution

Enclosed please find two Memoranda by the Bar Council relating to the above Proposed Amendments to the Societies Act and the Constitution.

It is very much regretted that the Proposed Amendments are being taken through Parliament in such a hurry that members of the public have no adequate time to discuss or present their views on these amendments.

The Amendments being of a very far reaching nature, it would therefore be advisable to delay passing the Proposed Amendments to enable all societies and members of the public fully to present their views.

The Amendments to the Societies Act in my view are against Article 10 of the Constitution which relates to fundamental liberties of Free Speech and Association.

The Amendments to the Constitution particularly to Article 150 are of a very far reaching nature in that the road to dictatorship is made free from all restrictions for after declaring an emergency, it is not necessary now ever to call Parliament and as such the Country could be governed by Ordinances promulgated by the Executive under Proclamation of Emergency or by decree. Indeed Parliament could be abolished by Proclamation under the new provisions.

In addition to the above relating both to the Societies Act and the Constitution there are Proposed Amendments to oust the Jurisdiction of the High Court which is against the principle of separation of powers which is a basic structure of our Constitution.

In view of the above and what is contained in the attached Memoranda, it is hoped that you will see your way not to permit the Proposed Amendments to become law. In any case it is hoped that the matter would be delayed so that the Proposed Amendments could be debated in public.

Yours faithfully,
Spd: G.T.S. Sidhu
President,
BAR COUNCIL.

The Bar Council letter to then-Prime Minister, Dato' Hussein Onn, protesting the amendments to the Societies Act and the Constitution.

by G T S, and all the lawyers were escorted out of the building. Unflinching in the face of adversity, the lawyers continued to hand out the memoranda to drivers of passing cars until evening.

The following year, on 8 June 1982, 42 lawyers who were involved in the march to Parliament were charged for unlawful assembly. However, the charge did not dampen their mood. The atmosphere in the courtroom was reported to be boisterous and upbeat.

Subsequently, the lawyers were found guilty, admonished, and discharged under section 173A(ii)(a) of the Criminal Procedure Code.⁵

New Bar Council Secretariat Building

G T S served as the Chairman of the Bar Council Building Sub-Committee from 1986 to 1990. Under his chairmanship, the Sub-Committee entered into an agreement to purchase Wisma Batik (later known as Wisma Kraftangan), located at No 5, Jalan Tun Perak, Kuala Lumpur, to house the Bar Council Secretariat. The two-storey building was located very close to the rear of the gate of the Old High Court building.



G T S officially opening the Bar Council building on Jalan Tun Perak, 12 Sept 1987. Looking on are Param Cumaraswamy and Peter Mooney.

The new Secretariat building was officiated by G T S, in his capacities as the Sub-Committee's Chairman, and President of LAWASIA, in a modest ceremony, on 12 Sept 1987.

1988 Judicial Crisis

The 1988 Judicial Crisis was an event that shook the Malaysian legal and judicial landscape, and the nation as a whole. G T S served as part of the Bar Council legal team, and was a member of the Bar Council Standing Committee for the Independence of the Judiciary, following two EGMs in June and July 1988, in response to the widespread demands for action with regard to the judicial crisis.

This Standing Committee also jointly organised a seminar on the independence of the Judiciary, together with the Advocates Association of Sarawak and the Sabah Law Association (today known as Sabah Law Society), and of which G T S was also a member of the organising committee. The two-day seminar held on 4 and 5 Nov 1988, which was aimed at keeping up the momentum on the issue of independence of the Judiciary, was immensely popular, drawing more than 400 participants despite it being organised in short notice.

Later Life

In 1989, G T S joined his eldest son Americk's legal practice – named G T S & Americk Sidhu. He continued to practise despite suffering from ill health and a heart condition. Under the watchful eyes of his son, Dr Paul Sidhu, G T S sought treatment at Brompton Chest Hospital, United Kingdom, and took a well-deserved one-year break before resuming practice again. On 20 Nov 1993, G T S passed away at the age of 69.



G T S and Maureen with their granddaughters, Analiese (left) and Gabriella (right), 1985.

The Bar Council, in its letter to his widow, Maureen, on his passing in 1993, said:

“Many times when we were perplexed, he (GTS) would call to aid a Punjabi saying and dissolve us into laughter while showing us the way. He taught us what belief was and how to stand firm in the face of the most powerful of onslaughts from the high and mighty.

The benefit of his years of experience at the Bar and in the Council was always generously available even to the newest member of the Bar.”

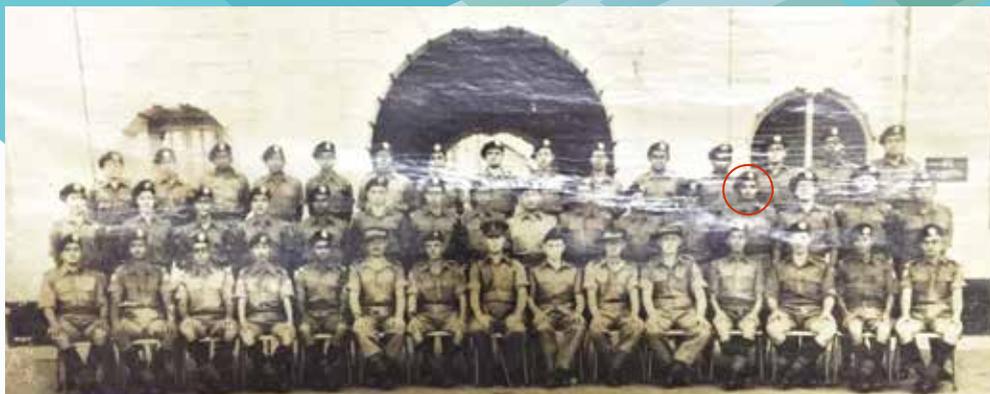


G T S and Maureen with their first son, Americk in 1957, Katong, Singapore.

Today, we are proud to recognise the remarkable work and effort contributed to the Malaysian Bar by G T S Sidhu, and to pay tribute to the man himself – an unassuming stalwart of the Bar, a doggedly determined person, a meticulous worker, and a staunch defender of human rights who tried his best to preserve and safeguard democracy and the rule of law in Malaysia. We are honoured to present to the family of G T S Sidhu, this lifetime achievement award.

Endnotes

- ¹ During its early years, LAWASIA was the acronym for the Law Association of Asia and the Western Pacific. Today, it is known as The Law Association for Asia and the Pacific.
- ² The inaugural LAWASIA conference was held in Canberra, Australia, on 10 Aug 1966, during which LAWASIA was founded through adoption of its Constitution.
- ³ “Mr GTS Sidhu (MALAYSIA), President | 1987–1989”, Our History, LAWASIA website, lawasia.asn.au/history.
- ⁴ “GTS Sidhu (1980–1982)”, *Torchbearers: The Bar’s Passage of Justice (1947 to 2021)*, bit.ly/3P3wNAY.
- ⁵ “History of the Malaysian Bar: The Early Beginnings of the Bar Council and the Struggles of the Bar”, Malaysian Bar website, bit.ly/3pMKU3j.



G T S was a member of the Singapore Cadet Corps. He stands at the centre row, fourth from right.



G T S (second from left) with Choor Singh (second from right) in 1954.



G T S with the President of India, Giani Zail Singh, at the LAWASIA Conference in Delhi, India, 9 Oct 1985.



G T S with dignitaries at the dinner during the LAWASIA conference in Kuala Lumpur, 1 July 1968: Tan Sri Justice Mohamed Suffhan Hashim (later, Tun) (standing, second from left), and former Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman (seated, second from left). The rest of the attendees at table are YM Raja Aziz Addruse (seated, far left); Tan Sri Justice Suffhan's spouse, Toh Puan Bunny (seated next to Tunku Abdul Rahman); and Maureen Sidhu, next to G T S.



G T S and Maureen's wedding was attended by G T S's friends from the Singapore legal community, 1955. Among them, Francis Seow (standing behind G T S), who would become Solicitor-General of Singapore and later, opposition politician; and Justice Choor Singh (last row, third from left).



G T S with lawyers outside the Lake Club, Kuala Lumpur, shortly before the march to Parliament.



G T S (second from left) at the Human Rights Seminar to Commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 9 and 10 Dec 1989. The seminar was declared open by former Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman (middle). Pictured are (left to right): Vice-President of the Malaysian Bar ("MB"), S Theivanthiran; President of MB, YM Raja Aziz Addruse; former (3rd) Prime Minister, Tun Hussein Onn; and Param Cumaraswamy.



The inaugural Bench & Bar Sports Meet (between the Malayan side and its Singaporean counterpart) took place in Kuala Lumpur on 5 and 6 Apr 1969. The overall winner was the Malayan Bench and Bar. Pictured here are G T S representing the Malayan side, and Singapore represented by its Chief Justice, the Honourable Mr Justice, Wee Chong Jin.



G T S and Maureen greet then-President of the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos, and his wife, Imelda.



BAR COUNCIL MALAYSIA

Wisma Badan Peguam Malaysia
2 Leboh Pasar Besar, 50050 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
T +603-2050 2050
council@malaysianbar.org.my
www.malaysianbar.org.my