



Retired Singapore Police Force assistant superintendent Rajoo Ravindran, 59, is among 11 students who graduated on Tuesday from the Singapore University of Social Sciences' Juris Doctor law programme. Mr Rajoo, the oldest in his class, will start work as a trainee at Peter Ong Law Corporation tomorrow. ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

Following his dream: From officer of the law to law graduate at 59

Amelia Teng
Education Correspondent

He may be 59, but Mr Rajoo Ravindran has no plans to retire just yet. Instead, this month, he will be starting a new job as a trainee at a law firm.

The father of two was among 11 students who graduated on Tuesday from the Singapore University of Social Sciences' (SUSS) Juris Doctor (JD) law programme.

The graduates, pioneers of a programme for students who already have degrees, have all secured practice training contracts with law firms.

On average, they attained a cumulative grade point average of 3.81 out of five.

SUSS' law school, Singapore's third and newest, was set up in 2016 to address a shortage of lawyers in criminal and family law in Singapore.

Mr Rajoo, the oldest in his class – where the average age of students is 40 – has been dreaming of joining the profession for a long time.

He became a police officer in 1978, after completing his O levels.

Mr Rajoo rose through the ranks, spending 29 years in the Police Intelligence Department.

He retired in February as a trainer in the department, holding the rank of assistant superintendent.

"I've been involved in solving many major crimes... I always enjoyed the process of working with people – complainants, witnesses, suspects and accused persons – to uncover the truth," said Mr Rajoo.

He said he received greater satisfaction when an accused person changed for the better.

"Some even visited me at the police station after having served their sentences in prison, to express their gratitude."

Mr Rajoo would usually set aside time to talk to them and offer them advice, hoping that they would not re-offend.

"I believe that rehabilitation starts from the police station, not in prison," he said.

With encouragement from a friend who practises criminal law, Mr Rajoo took up a part-time law degree in 2002 with the University of London, offered by the Singapore Institute of Commerce.

He completed the programme, but continued serving in the police force to receive his full pension.

Still, he held on to his dream of becoming a lawyer, and when SUSS set up the law programme, he immediately applied.

"It wasn't easy working and studying part-time. It took three traits – commitment, discipline and being willing to make sacrifices," said Mr Rajoo, who completed his degree with second-class honours.

The JD programme for those who already have a first degree can be completed within four to six years, while the Bachelor of Laws programme for those without degrees can take 4½ to six years.

Mr Rajoo had classes in the evenings twice a week, with weekends set aside for assignments.

Last year, he missed out on a semester of classes as he had to recover from major knee surgery.

"I went through recordings of lec-

tures, and I had very good classmates who shared notes with me so I could do my assignments at home," he said.

His daughter, 29, and son, 34, also got married in the past three years.

"I had to do what I had to do as a father and still balance work and studying. If you want something, you have to go for it and get it done."

Mr Rajoo will start work as a trainee at Peter Ong Law Corporation tomorrow, a firm well known for its expertise in criminal law.

"My mind was already set. Law isn't something I wanted today or even yesterday, but something I have wanted for a very long time."

"I didn't want to miss out on this opportunity," he said.

"My aim is to learn as much as possible from senior lawyers and gain new skills and knowledge. I want to serve the people and community at large."

In a speech to mark the completion of the programme, Ms Indranee Rajah, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, said the objectives set out for the third law school have begun to bear fruit through the first batch of graduates.

Addressing the graduates, Ms Indranee, who is also Second Minister for Finance and National Development, added: "You also serve a much higher calling. As specialists in criminal and family law, you will regularly be called upon to be the voice of those who need help."

"I encourage each one of you to not only be good professionals, but also to be lawyers of the highest integrity and compassion."

ateng@sph.com.sg

Weather

SINGAPORE

24/34°C

THUNDERY SHOWERS



in the afternoon

OUTLOOK

Monday
Afternoon thundery showers.

Tuesday:
Afternoon thundery showers.

AIR QUALITY

PSI 36-58 (Moderate)
24-hour reading as of 7pm yesterday

	
Rise 6.58am	Rise 5.19am
Set 7.00pm	Set 5.43pm

TIDES

Today: 3.33am (1.3m), 9.22am (3.0m), 4.03pm (0.5m), 10.52pm (2.9m).

Tomorrow: 4.20am (1.4m), 10.01am (3.2m), 4.45pm (0.2m), 11.50pm (3.0m).