

ASIAN LEGAL BUSINESS

CSR LIST 2015

THE LIST

ALLEN & GLEDHILL

AMARCHAND MANGALDAS

BAE, KIM & LEE

HOGAN LOVELLS

KING & WOOD MALLESONS

MAYER BROWN JSM

OLSWANG

ORRICK, HERRINGTON
& SUTCLIFFE

RHTLAW TAYLOR WESSING

WONGPARTNERSHIP

ASIAN LEGAL BUSINESS' INAUGURAL CSR LIST, APART FROM SPOTLIGHTING 10 LAW FIRMS IN ASIA DOING NOTABLE WORK IN THAT SPHERE, ALSO HIGHLIGHTS HOW IMPORTANT CSR IS BECOMING TO THE LEGAL INDUSTRY IN THE REGION. BY **RANAJIT DAM**

Law firms in Asia today aim for the highest global standards in a number of areas: client service and satisfaction, attracting and retaining talent and firm and practice management, among others. And another area they've started to look seriously at is corporate social responsibility (CSR). Firms now are not only keen to give back to the society, but they find that it can have benefits too. "I would say that law firms today are beginning to see how CSR and the success of their firms go hand-in-hand," says Jayaprakash Jagateesan, COO of RHTLaw Taylor Wessing. "It is no longer a 'nice to have' but an integral function of a law firm."

Indeed, RHTLaw offers an example of how the different initiatives law firms are undertaking in this regard. The firm late last year set up the RHT Rajan Menon Foundation, named after its senior partner, through which it will channel all its CSR efforts. The

RHTLaw TaylorWessing celebrates

THE LITTLE RED DOT

As our nation's 8th largest law firm, we are thrilled to celebrate the Singapore spirit of resilience and our collective sense of identity. Like our island nation, we have grown from strength to strength. As a firm based in Singapore, we offer clients access to a network of over 1050 legal professionals across 24 offices in Asia, the Middle East and Europe via our membership with Taylor Wessing group. Our ASEAN Plus Group is made up of leading firms in eight countries, offering clients access to more than 750 lawyers in the ASEAN region and beyond.

So to show our appreciation for our fellow Singaporeans, we are pleased to kick off a year-long community engagement program.

> Engaging our Community

Free Legal Clinics in the heart lands of Singapore. Provide Pro-Bono services to charities and non-profit organisations to navigate legal and regulatory issues.

> Helping our Youth

Education fund for underprivileged Singaporean school children.

> Embracing ASEAN

Overseas missions to embark on poverty alleviation projects.

To mark SG50, RHTLaw Taylor Wessing is also pleased to announce the launch of the

RHT Rajan Menon Foundation

Named after our founding father and Senior Partner, Rajan Menon, the Foundation acts as a vehicle through which the RHT Group of Companies contributes to its charitable endeavours.

Through this Foundation, we hope to play our part as a responsible corporate citizen and give back to the community. Capitalising on our ASEAN presence, we hope to spread the reach of our Foundation across ASEAN and eventually to the rest of Asia.

The Foundation has the following goals:

- > To support environmental conservation efforts.
- > To support the educational pursuits of underprivileged children.
- > Offer assistance to disadvantaged groups.

Together let's celebrate Singapore and this island nation we call home!



foundation will continue to work with its beneficiaries and partners like the National University of Singapore, Children's Cancer Foundation, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Singapore Road Safety Council and play an active role in education, health, environment and community initiatives.

The foundation has three goals, says Jagateesan: To support environmental conservation efforts, to support the educational pursuits of underprivileged children, and to offer assistance to disadvantaged groups. "We are also engaging with our community by offering free legal clinics in the heart lands of Singapore. We will also provide pro bono services to charities and non-profit organisations to navigate legal and regulatory issues," he says. "People make an organisation and we strive to meet our people's needs to our best abilities. We also have plans to grant days-off to staff whose CSR activities fall on a weekday. As for education, we are initiating an education fund for underprivileged Singapore school children."

Other initiatives include The Association



"WE REALISE THAT WHAT WE ARE DOING IS NOTHING MORE THAN A DROP IN THE OCEAN BUT IF THE DROP WAS NOT THERE, THE OCEAN WILL BE MISSING SOMETHING."

Jayaprakash Jagateesan,
RHTLaw Taylor Wessing

of Criminal Lawyers of Singapore (ACLS) said up by the late Subhas Anandan, veteran Singapore criminal lawyer and one

of the firm's founding partners. Another bursary and scholarship has been set up in Anandan's name for the firm's staff and their children.

Jagateesan says the firm's attitude towards CSR comes from a fundamental principle that it believes in. "This belief is that a firm that does good in the community will do good as an organisation as well," he says. "We have a responsibility to the community that we belong to. Our people's diligence and dedication in their work have driven the firm to new heights and we unanimously share the belief that it is our duty to inculcate the spirit of generosity among our people. Years ahead, we want to not only be recognised for being a great law firm, but also remembered for the good we have done. I am happy to say that the leaders and staff of the firm are role models with many of them sitting on boards of charities and helping out as volunteers in their personal capacity."

According to Jagateesan, the firm believes that CSR starts at the grassroots. "Keeping our people engaged and inspiring them to do

good in the community will ensure that our CSR plans flourish in the future," he says. "We are also not just looking at Singapore. With our ASEAN Plus Group strategy firmly in place, we have mission trips planned to the ASEAN region this year where poverty alleviation will be our primary aim. We realise that what we are doing is nothing more than a drop in the ocean but if the drop was not there, the ocean will be missing something."

South Korea's Bae, Kim and Lee (BKL) is another firm that takes its corporate social responsibility quite seriously, with initiatives like assistance for asylum seekers, support for NGOs helping the settlement of North Korean defectors, and the introduction of an advocacy system for handicapped people. BKL set up its Pro Bono Committee in 2002, established a public interest foundation named Dongcheon in 2009. In 2012, it introduced the concept of Law Firm Social Responsibility (LSR), and has been encouraging its professionals to perform pro bono activities in a more active manner after revising its regulations on pro bono work in 2013. LSR "has its roots in Article 1(1) of the Attorney-At-Law Act, which states that: '[T]he mission of any attorney-at-law shall be to defend fundamental human rights and realize social justice,'" says Won Hee Cho, partner at BKL. "Pro bono activities based on LSR do not only contribute to providing assistance for the underprivileged members of our society, but also serve as a momentum to promote a positive competition among law firms and reinforce awareness on pro bono activities performed by domestic law firms."




"PRO BONO ACTIVITIES... DO NOT ONLY CONTRIBUTE TO PROVIDING ASSISTANCE FOR THE UNDERPRIVILEGED MEMBERS OF OUR SOCIETY, BUT ALSO SERVE AS A MOMENTUM TO PROMOTE A POSITIVE COMPETITION AMONG LAW FIRMS AND REINFORCE AWARENESS ON PRO BONO ACTIVITIES PERFORMED BY DOMESTIC LAW FIRMS."

Won Hee Cho, Bae, Kim & Lee


By reinforcing LSR, a law firm can "create a healthy and friendly working environment in which its members feel pride; improve public awareness of law firms; and have an affirmative effect in recruiting outstanding professionals as it can be recognized as a

law firm carrying out its social responsibility," says Cho. He adds that BKL's Pro Bono Committee is operated "in a very systematic and organised manner, which has become a role model among its fellow law firms." The committee currently has six sub-committees – for refugees, international migrants, North Korea and North Korean settlers, handicapped persons, social enterprise, and women and youth – and five support teams, namely planning team, external cooperation team, membership team, accounting team, and promotion team. "The Pro Bono Committee and its sub-committees hold a meeting on a monthly basis and do their best to promote pro bono activities through a competition in good faith by sharing the information on the activities performed in each field and encouraging each other," says Cho.

Additionally, with financial support provided by BKL, the committee is taking the initiative in providing public interest legal services and performing voluntary services and social activities in an "efficient and systematic manner" through Dongcheon, the first public interest foundation established by BKL, and Dasom, BKL's volunteer group, according to Cho.

Since late last year, BKL has also started a project to publish a series of books in the field of public interest law in Korea. The first book, "Public Interest Foundation System", is scheduled to be published around June 2015, and books focusing on refugees, international migrants, and physically challenged persons will be published every six months, says Cho. 

BAE, KIM & LEE will make steady progress to make the world a better place to live together

 Established a public interest committee in 2002, Established Dongcheon Foundation in 2009
Refugees | International Migrants | Social Enterprises | Persons with Disabilities | North Korea, North Korean Settlers | Women, Youth

