

# High Court 22 NOV 1991 hearing into 3-generation dispute ends

By Serene Lim

THE High Court hearing into the complicated three-generation dispute involving the estates of banker Lee Wee Nam and his elder brother, Lee Wee Kheng, ended yesterday after two weeks.

Justice Chao Hick Tin reserved judgment till a later date.

Lawyers say the case, described in court as a "long-drawn battle", does not end with the court's judgment which would lead, instead, to other related matters being heard in chambers.

At least 10 different suits have been filed against various members of the extended family in the 18 years it took for the case to come before the High Court.

The case dates back to the 1960s when first, Wee Kheng, then Wee Nam, died within two years of each other.

In 1973, Wee Kheng's descendants filed suit against their half-brothers and subsequently, against Wee Nam's estate. The two actions were then consolidated into one.

All three parties are represented by Queen's Counsel.

The plaintiffs allege that after Wee Kheng's death, Wee Nam — and after his death, his trustees — misappropriated shares which were registered in his name, but to which Wee Kheng had an interest.

The total sum is not known.

The case took an unexpected turn the last two days when two solicitors handling the case were asked to testify with regard to correspondence between themselves some seven years ago.

The dispute, whether the sum of \$1 million, reached in agreement between the plaintiffs and Wee Nam's estate in April 1984, was the final figure. The plaintiffs' solicitor, Mr B. Mohan Singh, said it was not.

The agreement was that the plaintiffs would give up their

rights to four lots of shares which they said they were entitled to from Wee Kheng's nine out of 21 shares in Wee Kee Kongs, which started off as a partnership between Wee Kheng, Wee Nam and their youngest brother, Wee Kiat.

Mr Mohan Singh said the figure was arrived at based on the plaintiffs' (60 per cent) entitlement to Wee Kheng's (nine out of 21) shares in the partnership. Wee Nam's share was eight lots, with the remaining four lots belonging to the Siew Teck Tng Chye Kee, a trust fund set up by their father in 1918 for the purpose of ancestor worship. Wee Kiat's estate had no share in it, as his widow had signed a deed of release in 1940 relinquishing all interest.

Mr Mohan Singh said the plaintiffs' share extended to the other four shares belonging to the trust fund.

Mr Ching Chiak Yong, solicitor for Wee Nam's estate, said the \$1 million was a final settlement, and the plaintiffs were barred from further claims. Both solicitors were then called to give evidence in court.

Over the years, the case has passed from one solicitor to another, three of whom have died. The plaintiffs are Wee Kheng's son by his first wife, an adopted son, and their respective families, all of whom live in Thailand. The defendants are Wee Kheng's sons by his third and fourth wives, and two of Wee Nam's sons. All live in Singapore.

The parties are also asking that a sum of \$300,000 — plus interest — which has been held in the name of another law firm, Rodyk & Davidson, since 1984, be released and transferred to Wee Swee Teow & Company, solicitors for Wee Kheng's estate.

The money was to have been held by Rodyk & Davidson until the Receiver for the partnership presented his bill. This has not been done. Rodyk & Davidson is no longer involved in the case.