

**GROUND-BREAKING CEREMONY
FOR THE NEW STATE COURTS COMPLEX
Wednesday 28 May 2014**

WELCOME ADDRESS BY PRESIDING JUDGE SEE KEE OON

The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon,
The Honourable Attorney-General Steven Chong SC,
Judges of Appeal and Judges of the Supreme Court
Solicitor-General Mr Lionel Yee SC
President of the Law Society Mr Lok Vi Ming SC
Distinguished guests and fellow colleagues,

1. Thank you for joining us in this ground-breaking ceremony for the new State Courts Complex. This event marks a major milestone for the State Courts of Singapore. The current State Courts building, affectionately called the 'Octagon' by our architectural consultants, has been a significant landmark in our Central Business District since the 1970s. Most of us remember it as the Subordinate Courts from not too long ago.
2. Before construction of the Octagon, the Subordinate Courts operated out of various locations. The Criminal District and Magistrates' Courts were located in South Bridge Road, between North Canal Road and Upper Pickering Street; the Traffic Courts were housed in the former Sepoy Lines Police Station in Outram; while the Civil District Courts operated out of the Old Parliament building and the Supreme Court building at St. Andrew's Road.
3. The Octagon was conceived to locate all the courts together. Construction began in 1973, and work was completed in 1975. The building was designed to house 26 courtrooms over an area of

30,600sqm. However, by the 1980s, more courtrooms had to be added. Starting in 1986, additional smaller courtrooms were created to meet the demands of an increasing caseload. By 1993, there were 40 courtrooms and 28 hearing chambers.

4. Through the years, the Courts have made various improvements and enhancements to the building interior and its facilities. It is now nearly 40 years old. It has served us well over the past decades, but it is unlikely that the existing structure will be able to support the long-term demands on the Courts. It is imperative that we continue to build on our reputation as an efficient, effective and responsive judiciary which has the capacity to adapt to the changes and expectations of our populace and the world. The necessary infrastructure has to be in place to meet the evolving and increasing demands for court services.
5. Based on the development options presented by CPG Consultants, my predecessor CDJ (now JC) Tan Siong Thye and his team determined that the construction of a new building would be most cost-effective, as it would cause the least disruption to court operations and take the shortest time to complete, when compared to extensively retrofitting the Octagon. Hence rather than opting for an expensive and time-consuming overhaul, we decided to embark on building a new Complex.
6. We are currently planning for over 60 courtrooms and over 50 hearing chambers in the new State Courts Complex. This reflects our projected

future needs, representing a substantial increase from the 40 courtrooms and 28 hearing chambers we currently have in the Octagon.

7. The Honourable the Chief Justice will elaborate further in his Welcome Address on the distinctive design features of the new Complex, which was conceived by Serie+Multiply Consultants Pte Ltd. It suffices for me to note that the new Complex has many new user-focused features and innovations that court staff and users can look forward to.
8. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to everyone who has worked hard and contributed so much to making this project closer to becoming a reality. We are also deeply grateful for the kind understanding and patience of our neighbours in this vicinity and we appreciate their bearing with the inconvenience that the construction work will bring.
9. The new State Courts Complex is a hugely challenging project but an immensely exciting and meaningful one. As we mark the groundbreaking ceremony today, I am confident that our efforts to serve society better will be recognised by future generations, as we continue to strive each day to inspire public trust and confidence in the Courts. Thank you.