

**SPEECH BY MS INDRANEE RAJAH,  
SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR LAW AND EDUCATION,  
GRASSROOTS ADVISER FOR TANJONG PAGAR GROS,  
AT THE LAUNCH OF LAW AWARENESS WEEK @ CDC**

Ms Denise Phua, Host Mayor, Central Singapore District;

Dr Teo Ho Pin, Chairman of the Mayors' Committee and Mayor, North West District;

Mr Mohamad Maliki Osman, Mayor, South East District;

Ms Low Yen Ling, Mayor, South West District;

Grassroots Advisers;

Mr Thio Shen Yi, Senior Counsel, President of the Law Society of Singapore;

Mr Ang Hak Seng, BBM, Chief Executive Director, People's Association;

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you all to the Launch of

Law Awareness Week @ CDC.

**Enhancing Access to Justice through Community Legal Clinics**

1. Eight years ago, the Ministry of Law supported the Law Society in establishing the first Community Legal Clinics at the North West District and South East District.
2. These clinics were set up to provide free basic legal guidance to those in the community who needed it. With the success of these two clinics, the other CDCs saw the benefit in having such legal clinics in their own districts as well.
3. So it was heartening to see the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Law Society and the Mayor's Committee for the Community Legal Pro Bono Services Network initiative last September.
4. Some 10 months have since passed and the partnership between the Law Society and the five CDCs has grown from strength to strength. There are now legal clinics in every CDC in Singapore, held almost every day of the week. Since September last

year, more than 60 law firms and 280 volunteer lawyers have come on board to provide free legal advice at the various community legal clinics.

5. With their help, we are progressively serving more residents – an increase from an average of 600 applicants per quarter before the MOU, to more than 630 applicants in the first quarter of 2015. The Network expansion has brought much needed information and services to the residents.

6. This year's Law Awareness Week stands testament to this spirit of collaboration and to the joint commitment of the five CDCs and the Law Society in promoting access to justice in Singapore.

### **Promoting Law Awareness**

7. But while having access to basic legal advice is beneficial, it is just as important for the man on the street to have a basic awareness of the law as this helps strengthen access to justice.

8. Knowing what the law is, how and why it matters to them, and what to do when faced with a legal issue or problem, gives the individual greater confidence in handling legal issues that may arise. I am confident that Law Awareness Week will help us build such an understanding of the law in our community.

9. While previous Law Awareness events were held in only one location, the events planned for this year's Law Awareness Week are unprecedented in their scope and reach. The talks scheduled to take place over the coming week will cover a variety of topics that are relevant to the individual. Some cover new areas, such as protection from harassment.

10. These talks will also be hosted at multiple convenient locations within the CDCs – at Community Centres and other such venues. This is a deliberate move, aimed at allowing members of the public to attend the Law Awareness talks on weekdays after work or after dinner, and at convenient times during the weekend.

11. Some 3,000 residents are expected to attend and benefit from the various events in terms of their level of understanding and awareness of legal issues. I understand that due to overwhelming interest, many follow up events and talks will take place in the CDCs in subsequent weeks.

12. I want to thank the legal fraternity for their enthusiastic participation, which made the events this week possible. I am glad to see practicing lawyers as well as law students volunteering their time and knowledge to serve the community.

13. I am sure that Law Awareness Week is only the beginning, and that the Law Society will continue working with the CDCs and community partners to expand the Community Legal Clinic network through partnerships with relevant community organisations. I hope this ecosystem of pro bono legal services will continue to grow stronger and wider, and the Government will do its best to support and encourage this growth.

### **Conclusion**

14. In closing, I would like to thank all the volunteers who have given their time and expertise to improve the legal knowledge of the community. Thank you for your commitment and belief in access to justice. This year's Law Awareness Week is but a milestone in what will hopefully be a long and fruitful relationship, bringing pro bono legal assistance and legal awareness island-wide.