

Q4 start for centre that helps self-represented litigants

By **GRACE LEONG**

THE Community Justice Centre, which will provide legal and social aid to litigants who wish to represent themselves in the Subordinate Courts, is expected to start operations by this fourth quarter.

The centre, to be housed at the Subordinate Courts, aims to help self-represented litigants understand legal jargon and rules, present their case, cross-examine witnesses properly and effectively, and understand judicial rulings in their cases.

"Without assistance to navigate the legal and judicial process, it is possible that some within this group may be disadvantaged," a Subordinate Courts spokesperson said. "They may feel that they were not given a fair hearing or were unjustly deprived of their rights."

Services to be offered include legal clinics, referral services to existing programmes, and other support services to help self-represented litigants prepare court documents and applications.

Also needed are volunteer lawyers who would offer legal advice at the legal clinics, and volunteers of the Lay Assistance Scheme who would attend court with the self-represented litigants.

"People involved in cases before the courts are understandably anxious and concerned; the indigent liti-

gants-in-person need help in pursuing their matters, or in dealing with moving on with their lives. Volunteers play a crucial role in making sure that these court users not only obtain justice, but can make use of the fruits of justice in their lives," said Chief District Judge of the Subordinate

Courts Tan Siong Thye.

The Ministry of Law will also provide training on the operations and services of the Legal Aid Bureau in support of the CJC's services and programmes.

The centre, which has Chief Justice Chan Sek Keong as its patron, is a community partnership be-

tween the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, Ministry of Law, Subordinate Courts, Tan Chin Tuan Foundation and the Law Society of Singapore.

In its initial years, seed funding for the centre will be provided by Tan Chin Tuan Foundation.