

TODAY-SATURDAY 2 MARCH 2013

Community Justice Centre to help unrepresented litigants

SINGAPORE – The Community Justice Centre (CJC), a one-stop centre providing unrepresented litigants help with legal procedures, as well as in social services, was officially opened yesterday.

Incorporated last December, the independent charity was established to help unrepresented litigants — a group that is expected to grow as the population becomes better educated — understand legal jargon and procedures, or learn how to cross-examine witnesses properly, as well as to make available support in their personal difficulties, say, in finances.

“Without assistance, (these litigants) may be placed at a disadvantage if they are unable to effectively participate in court proceedings.

Mr Jimmy Tse
COMMUNITY JUSTICE
CENTRE DIRECTOR

For instance, CJC volunteers will attend hearings with such litigants to help them fill up forms and explain the stages in the justice process.

For those who need social assistance, the CJC will refer them to relevant services run by the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) and voluntary welfare organisations, among others.

CJC Director Jimmy Tse said: “Without assistance, (these litigants) may be placed at a disadvantage if they are unable to effectively participate in court proceedings. Similarly, with the burden of emotional distress

or underlying social concerns, they may not be able to focus on the legal issues at hand.”

According to the Subordinate Courts, more than one-third of accused persons in criminal cases are unrepresented, while nearly all cases in the Family Courts did not involve lawyers.

The CJC was set up in partnership with the Ministry of Law, MSF, the Subordinate Courts, the Law Society, and the Tan Chin Tuan Foundation.

The foundation will provide S\$250,000 annually to the CJC, for its first three years. **AMIR HUSSAIN**