

**Opening Remarks by
Professor Arnoud De Meyer, SMU President
at the Opening Ceremony of the
SMU School of Law building
on Wednesday 15 March 2017**

Guest of Honour, Prime Minister

Lee Hsien Loong;

The Honourable the Chief Justice

Sundaresh Menon;

SMU Pro-Chancellor, Mr Lim Chee Onn;

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education,

Ms Chan Lai Fung;

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen;

A very good morning to all of you.

The opening of the new School of Law building today marks a highly significant step towards fulfilling SMU's Vision 2025. Standing as a prominent landmark at the heart of the Bras Basah precinct, the new building not only further integrates our University into the city, it also deepens our relationship with the community.

The building respects the urban fabric of the Civic District and builds upon the porosity of the SMU city campus to further promote community engagement. For example, a 24/7 public pedestrian access is being provided between Armenian Street and Stamford Green, playing a major role in linking up Fort Canning Park with this part of the city. Along this route, members of the public are able to catch glimpses of student activities and lessons in progress. Additionally, the civic plaza at Armenian Street, blending with existing trees and providing street furniture, becomes a potential focal point for future street events, which will add vitality to this area.

The design of the building is deliberately contemporary in expression, while integrating with the architecture in the historical district in which it stands. The dramatic 9-metre cantilever makes a bold statement whilst the glass dome of the Kwa Geok Choo Law Library, which is reminiscent of a pearl, blends with the lush surroundings and glows softly into the night. Students and faculty will enjoy a panoramic view of Fort Canning and the city, from within, as well as from the roof terrace.

The building itself represents a real engineering achievement. Constructed on the slopes of the historic Fort Canning Hill, on a site encompassing heritage trees, and with several municipal and conservation buildings, and the Fort Canning Tunnel close by – it was imperative that its design and construction were handled with the utmost integrity, sensitivity, skill and care.

Yet it was also important to make the most of this precious land. In this respect, the Architect has designed the building to achieve optimal gross plot ratio, while adhering to building height constraints.

At this juncture, let me commend the project team, including our contractors, consultants and architects, for their professionalism and dedication towards this endeavour. Not only have they ensured the timely completion of this stunning building, they have also achieved the highest level of quality and safety in the process.

With many innovative ‘green’ features and technologies being integrated into the building design, the School of Law building joins the rest of SMU’s city campus to achieve the Singapore Building and Construction Authority’s Green Mark Platinum certification.

The building houses a variety of social and informal flexible learning spaces, including a 24/7 Learning Commons, which allow learning to take place virtually anywhere and anytime.

This Function Hall boasts flexible seating capacity of up to 1,400, and it is fitted with infrastructure that allows it to be used in different configurations and for different purposes. I am pleased that we shall be able to host future convocation and commencement ceremonies right here, on home ground.

In closing, I would like to thank the School of Law alumni, stakeholders in the legal community, and donors of SMU for their support towards various initiatives, such as professorships and lecture series, scholarships, bursaries, prizes, and our moot training programme.



In particular, we are grateful to the Ngee Ann Kongsı for being a lead donor of the Kwa Geok Choo Law Library Endowment Fund. To date, as many as 36 outstanding law students have been awarded the Kwa Geok Choo Scholarships and the Kwa Geok Choo Top Law Student Award. These awards will continue to inspire and motivate many cohorts of law students in the years to come.

Once again, a big thank you and we look forward to your continued support.