

PRESS RELEASE BY PARLIAMENT OF SINGAPORE

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT TO BE HELD AT PARLIAMENT HOUSE AND THE ARTS HOUSE

The proceedings for the Opening of the First Session of the Fourteenth Parliament of Singapore on 24 August 2020 will be held across two locations, namely Parliament House and The Arts House. This is the first time that an Opening of Parliament will be held in more than one location. As stated in a President's Proclamation dated 14 August 2020, The Arts House is one of the appointed places that Parliament may be held under continuity arrangements as set out in the Constitution (See "Background").

2 Beyond Members of Parliament (MPs), guests are traditionally invited to be present as observers of proceedings of the Opening of Parliament. The proceedings include the taking of Oaths and making of Affirmations by all MPs, as well as the President delivering her Address for the Opening of Parliament. Other than Parliament Secretariat staff, there will also be additional support personnel deployed for the day's operations.

3 In light of the ongoing COVID-19 situation in Singapore and the safe distancing measures that have to be implemented, Speaker Tan Chuan-Jin has decided that the proceedings on 24 August will take place across the two locations as an added precaution. The Arts House was chosen due to factors including its proximity to Parliament House and sufficient seating capacity for proceedings with safe distancing measures.

4 MPs, guests and staff will be spread across both locations on 24 August. MPs will be taking their Oaths and making their Affirmations from the Chamber in their respective location. Madam Halimah Yacob will deliver her President's Address from the Chamber in Parliament House. At each location, there will be simultaneous screening of proceedings at the other location.

5 Safe distancing measures will be implemented at both locations. To further reduce mingling, there will be no Speaker's Reception after the President's Address at either location.

6 As Sittings after 24 August will be attended by MPs only, without invited guests, Parliament expects such Sittings to resume at Parliament House only. Safe distancing measures will continue to be observed at these regular Sittings. Nonetheless, Parliament will continue to closely monitor the ongoing COVID-19 situation in Singapore and keep abreast of advisories to see if further precautionary measures are needed for forthcoming Sittings.

Background

7 Article 64A(1) and (2) of the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore permits arrangements (called "continuity arrangements") to be made for Parliament and its committees to sit, meet and despatch business with MPs being present at 2 or more places appointed under Article 64(2) and in contemporaneous communication with one another.

8 The powers, immunities and privileges of Parliament will also be extended to apply to these continuity arrangements.

9 In the President's Proclamation dated 14 August 2020, the President has appointed the following additional places at which the First Session of the Fourteenth Parliament may be held from 24 August 2020 to 20 November 2020 (both dates inclusive): (i) The Arts House, (ii) NTUC Centre, (iii) The Treasury and (iv) Civil Service College.

10 These appointed places have been found suitable for Parliament and its committees to sit, meet and despatch business should continuity arrangements be activated. The places were selected after considering factors including accessibility, seating capacity and ready availability of facilities and amenities such as restrooms and refreshment rooms.

Office of the Clerk of Parliament
21 August 2020