

**MEDIA STATEMENT  
THURSDAY, 25 JULY 2013**

**CLARIFICATION OF THE CORONER'S INQUIRY PROCESS**

1. There have been some comments online and in the media which appear to have misunderstood the Coroner's Inquiry process. These comments were made in reference to the Coroner's Inquiry regarding the death of Changi Prison inmate Mr Dinesh Raman Chinniah.
2. Under the Coroners Act, the Coroner is required to hold an inquiry into any death that occurs while in official custody – for instance, where an inmate dies in prison. The purpose of such an inquiry is to inquire into the cause of and circumstances connected with the death. Such inquiry would usually focus upon matters such as the identity of the deceased, and how, when and where he came by his death.
3. However, section 39 of the Coroners Act also provides that where any person is charged with an offence under Chapter XVI of the Penal Code (which includes causing hurt, culpable homicide or murder) in relation to an act which caused or could have caused the death of the deceased, the Coroner shall await the conclusion of such criminal proceedings.
4. Consequently, where a finding has been made in criminal proceedings as to the cause of and the circumstances connected with the death, the Coroner has a discretion to discontinue the proceedings before him if he determines that there is no longer a need for an inquiry to take place to determine the cause of and circumstances connected with the death. This discretion conferred on the Coroner by section 39 of the Coroners Act ensures that while all unnatural deaths are investigated and looked into, there is no multiplicity of proceedings that would be a drain on the state's resources.
5. There is no provision in law to mandate that an inquiry should take place before criminal proceedings, or vice versa. It is not uncommon for inquiries to be adjourned or discontinued, where the AGC commences criminal prosecution in respect of the death caused. The Coroner will then consider the findings made at the conclusion of such criminal proceedings, and determine if there is still a need for an inquiry to proceed. The Prosecution does not have powers under the law to compel the Coroner to adjourn or discontinue an inquiry.