

1. OUR PROGRESS

Supreme Court

- *Rules of Court 2021* and *Singapore International Commercial Court Rules 2021* came into effect in Apr 2022. The *Supreme Court Practice Directions 2021* were issued and the *Courts (Civil and Criminal Justice) Reform Act 2021* came into effect.
- The Judiciary's *Commercial Practice Panel* was established to identify and consider adopting best practices in commercial litigation that are suited to resolving the various types of commercial disputes, as well as identify emerging trends, developments and likely challenges.



Family Justice Courts

- *Family Neutral Evaluation (FNE)* pilot to complement mediation to resolve contested issues involving maintenance and division of matrimonial assets without a contested hearing. Initial results have been very promising, with all cases resulting in consent orders that have been or are about to be finalised.
- Collaborated with Law Society and Singapore Academy of Law to develop the *Family Therapeutic Justice Certification Programme* to equip lawyers with inter-disciplinary knowledge and skillsets needed to practise in a landscape oriented towards therapeutic justice.



State Courts

- *Guidebook for Accused in Person* is now available in the four official languages.
- Implemented the *Early Engagement of Youth Under 21* initiative to better address the needs of young offenders from first mention until sentencing.
- Working with Law Society to develop costs guidelines for civil proceedings in the District Courts.



Singapore Academy of Law

- Established subsidiary LawNet Technology Services to develop bold and innovative products to better serve needs of its members.
- Launching a new online series of law reports to highlight selected judgments from the State Courts, Family Courts and Youth Courts.



Singapore International Commercial Court

- Legislative changes to clarify the SICC's jurisdiction to deal with cross border corporate insolvency, restructuring and dissolution matters came into effect on 1 Oct 2022.
- Continued contributions to the development of a transnational system of commercial justice through membership and participation in the Standing International Forum of Commercial Courts.



2. REFLECTIONS

Impact on the Profession

- The practice of law is a calling to participate in the administration of justice. The values of honesty, integrity and service that define the legal profession must never change.
- The practice of law and its values must be transmitted through sustained mentorship.
- Innovative solutions to deal with fundamental shift in the basic modalities of how and where we work should be found so that an optimal balance can be struck.
- To address concerns relating to ethics and professional standards, a team comprising representatives from the Bench and Bar will collaborate to develop a strategy aimed at re-establishing the moral centre and the values of the legal profession for existing practitioners and new entrants to the profession.



Reimagining the Landscape

- Globalisation and technology are reshaping the emerging legal landscape.
- There will be a need for lawyers who are familiar with and able to deal with issues such as technology, big data, artificial intelligence and privacy.
- A Working Group comprising various stakeholders in the legal industry was formed in 2021 to conduct a holistic review of our legal education system. Their work is underway.
- The Singapore Judicial College, which was set up in 2015 to serve as the central institute for higher judicial learning, will look at issues such as leadership, judge-craft, legal knowledge, research, pedagogy and systems to equip the Judiciary to meet future challenges.



Access to Justice

- Access to justice must be the core of our justice system. In the global context of rising inflation and sharpening inequality, we must ensure that justice is accessible to those in our community at risk of being shut out. The rule of law is supported by public trust in our institutions.
- The task will require a multi-pronged approach:
 - (i) Public legal aid e.g. Legal Aid Bureau, Public Defender's Office
 - (ii) Private forms of legal aid e.g. Law Society's Pro Bono Services Office and Criminal Legal Aid Scheme
 - (iii) Initiatives to develop the Judiciary's Access to Justice Framework to better serve court users
- Revamp the way digital tools are used to improve access to justice such as use of chatbots and by enhancing e-services.
- Improve other aspects of access to justice:
 - (i) Use of plain language in our communications, rules and directions
 - (ii) Make available guides in print and video media prepared with lay users in mind
 - (iii) Development of service hubs at each Court and service centres located in the community to enable users to easily access our services

