

JUDICIARY TIMES

Judiciary opens
2017 Legal Year with
Local and Overseas
Guests

The Family Justice
Courts Workplan 2017 -
Access to Family Justice:
Anchoring Deeper,
Extending Wider

Chief Justice Menon
announces 10 key
Initiatives at State
Courts Workplan 2017



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UPCOMING EVENTS

JUDICIARY OPENS 2017 LEGAL YEAR WITH LOCAL AND OVERSEAS GUESTS

The Opening of Legal Year, an important event in the judicial calendar, was held on 9 January. About 600 local and overseas guests from the legal fraternity and academia attended this significant event where The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon set out the direction and highlighted the various initiatives that the Judiciary would be undertaking this year.

This year, Supreme Court extended the invitation to Junior College students and students in the Integrated Programme to widen their knowledge and expose them to the various initiatives, opportunities, and challenges facing the legal industry.

Following the Opening of the Legal Year ceremony, the Judiciary and the legal fraternity hosted a dinner at the Istana. The event was graced by His Excellency, the President of Singapore, Dr Tony Tan and Mrs Tan.



JUDGES AND INTERNATIONAL JUDGES ATTEND SICC 2017

Judges and International Judges came together at the Singapore International Commercial Court (SICC) Conference 2017 on 10 and 11 January. The conference - the third since its inception - is an annual event convened to review the work of the SICC, and to set further strategic goals for its development. It ended with a closing dinner at the Empress on 10 January.

A highlight for SICC was the launch of the SICC Procedural Guide by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon at the Opening of Legal Year. The SICC Procedural Guide was borne out of the suggestion made during last year's conference to draw up an official guide on the procedures of the SICC, including the applicable legislation, Rules of Court, and practice directions. The SICC registrars wrote the guide with a view of providing the reader with a quick and simple means to understand the subject. Moving forward, there were a number of initiatives to develop the SICC, including plans for its promotion and its further development as a court of choice for the international business communities.



THE FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS WORKPLAN 2017

Access to Family Justice: Anchoring Deeper, Extending Wider

The Family Justice Courts (FJC) will be refining processes, widening their schemes, enhancing standards for family practice and conducting research on the effectiveness of various child-centric initiatives on parents and children to help troubled families and youths.

Speaking at the FJC's Workplan Seminar held on 20 February 2017 at the Supreme Court, Judicial Commissioner Valerie Thean, Presiding Judge of the FJC (PJ FJC), emphasised the Courts' role in meeting the various needs of dysfunctional families embroiled in legal disputes. PJ FJC highlighted the need to ensure access to justice for families and to ready family justice for the future.

Access to Justice for Families

The child remains at the heart of family justice:

- Child Inclusive Dispute Resolution programme attained 80% resolution rate;
- Widening the Parenting Coordination scheme with the involvement of parenting coordinators from the social science fields;
- Embarking on a longitudinal research with NIE;
- Reducing conflict throughout the family justice process;
- Extending the Individual Docketing System to further enhance Court processes; and

- A new Family Protection Centre and an electronic case management system for Personal Protection and Maintenance cases or Integrated Family Application Management System (iFAMS) will be launched in the latter half of the year.

Readying Justice for the Future

- Collaboration with law profession on amendments to the Professional Conduct Rules and Best Practice Guide for Family Law Practitioners; and
- Singapore will be hosting the 2020 World Congress Family Law and Children's Rights.

CHIEF JUSTICE ANNOUNCES 10 KEY INITIATIVES AT STATE COURTS WORKPLAN 2017

Ten key initiatives were announced by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon at the State Courts Workplan 2017 on 17 March. Themed "Advancing Justice, Expanding the Possibilities", the initiatives encapsulate the State Courts' quest to constantly improve and innovate their court processes and services to enhance access to justice for all who need to seek legal redress.

In his speech, the Chief Justice highlighted three drivers that underpin the 10 key initiatives that were announced, and they are:

- Providing affordable, accessible and effective court processes
- Collaborating with stakeholders to improve substantive outcomes
- Supporting litigants and improving service excellence

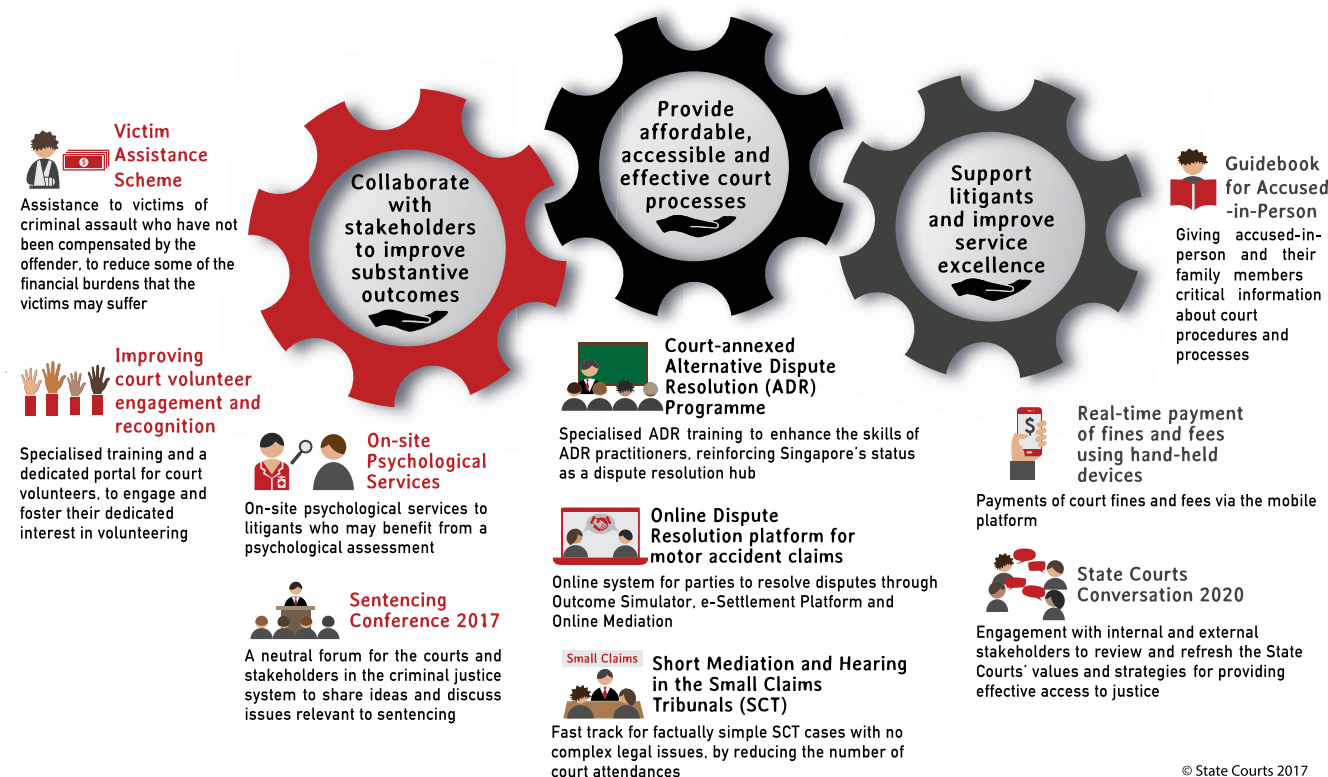
To make processes for simple claims more affordable, accessible and effective, the new "Short Mediation and Hearing" process has been introduced at the Small Claims Tribunals (SCT) which will allow cases that are factually

simple with no complex legal issues to be fast tracked. Similarly, the "Online Dispute Resolution Platform" will be developed for motorists involved in traffic accidents to resolve their disputes quickly, more efficiently, and at a lower cost, without having to meet physically. This platform comprises three components – the Outcome Simulator, e-Settlement Platform, and Online Mediation, which will be rolled out in two phases. The Outcome Simulator that will help parties to decide on their best course of action based on the likely outcomes, will be developed first.

Apart from improving the processes for litigants, a scheme has been introduced to assist victims of criminal assault. Under the "Victim Assistance Scheme", victims can now seek reimbursement of their medical fees incurred as a result of physical injuries sustained from the assault. The scheme applies to victims of assault where the offender is convicted of an offence under Sections 323 or 324 of the Penal Code and has not received any compensation from the offender.

The infographic below provides a snapshot of the 10 initiatives announced at the Workplan 2017.

ADVANCING JUSTICE, EXPANDING THE POSSIBILITIES STATE COURTS WORKPLAN 2017





JUDICIAL INSOLVENCY NETWORK MEMBERS MEET FOR THE FIRST TIME

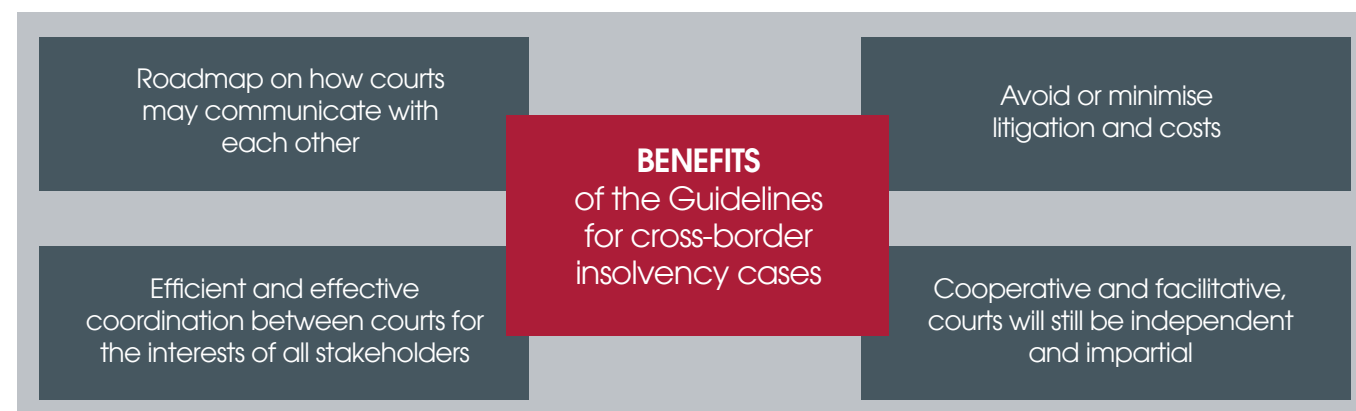
Insolvency judges from several jurisdictions who are part of the recently formed Judicial Insolvency Network (JIN) met for the first time in Singapore on October 2016.

The JIN provides a platform for sustained and continuous engagement among judges from various insolvency courts, allowing them to come together to share experiences, exchange ideas, identify areas for judicial cooperation, and develop best practices. The JIN members who attended the meeting include judges from Australia (Federal Court and New South Wales), the British Virgin Islands, Canada (Ontario), the Cayman Islands, Delaware, England & Wales, Singapore, and the Southern District of New York.

At the meeting, the JIN members agreed on a set of guidelines that lay down a common framework on how courts in different jurisdictions can and should communicate and coordinate with each other in cross-border insolvency matters. This will help the courts to coordinate how the cases in each jurisdiction should proceed so that issues are heard in the most logical

and efficient way and to avoid conflicting orders. The guidelines also provide a structure for joint hearings, enabling two or more courts to thereby simultaneously record evidence and hear arguments. Prior to this development, communication between courts involved in parallel insolvency proceedings were carried out on an ad-hoc basis and there was great uncertainty over whether and how courts may communicate with each other when faced with cross-border insolvency cases.

Five months since the inaugural meeting, four jurisdictions – Singapore, Delaware, Bermuda, and the Southern District of New York – have adopted the guidelines. Several of the other jurisdictions have also indicated that they will be doing so in the near future. The establishment of the JIN and the development of the guidelines were first mooted by the Chief Justice in early 2016. Over the past year, the Supreme Court has worked to make concrete these plans by reaching out to like-minded commercial courts around the world. Progress has been very promising. It is hoped that, before long, the guidelines will circle the globe and the membership of the JIN will continue to expand.



SUPREME COURT HOSTS INAUGURAL LUNCH FOR INSOLVENCY SECTOR STAKEHOLDERS

The Supreme Court of Singapore hosted an inaugural lunch on 23 February for various groups of stakeholders in the insolvency sector.

The event was attended by 40 guests from the judiciary, local and international law firms, the Law Society of Singapore, the Insolvency Practitioners Association of Singapore Limited (IPAS), the Ministry of Law, the Insolvency & Public Trustee's Office, the Monetary Authority of Singapore, the Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority, the Singapore Exchange Limited, the National University of Singapore, and the Singapore Management University.

The aim of the lunch was to bring together the different stakeholder groups and provide a platform for the discussion of new initiatives and issues concerning the insolvency sector. With the success of this inaugural lunch for the sector, plans have been made for such a lunch to be held approximately once every six months, with the different stakeholder groups taking turns to host. The next lunch will be organised by the Law Society of Singapore. It is hoped that this will be the start of a tradition that will allow for the forging of stronger ties, better communication, and greater collaboration within the insolvency sector.

Mr Gregory Vijayendran, President of Law Society, described the event as a significant step forward in the right direction for the insolvency community. Noting that the collaborative efforts prior to such an initiative had principally involved only the lawyers, accountants and bankers, Mr Vijayendran welcomed the move of the judiciary to join in and engage the different stakeholders. He expressed the hope that such a lunch will become a tradition that will continue for years to come.

Mr Seshadri Rajagopalan, President of IPAS, agreed that this initiative is a very important step for the insolvency and restructuring community, which provides the right and timely impetus for the community's progress moving forward.





EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME LAUNCHED FOR COURT AND TRIBUNAL ADMINISTRATORS

During the State Courts Workplan 2016, it was announced that a contextualised executive leadership programme will be developed for the administrative service that supports the courts, tribunals and other quasi-legal services centres. The main aim of this initiative was to develop a customised leadership programme that will promote excellence in court leadership, governance and management of the court services and at the same time, equip court and tribunal administrators with key interdisciplinary leadership skills to help them become effective leaders and achieve high performance.

The Programme was developed over the course of a year, and jointly organised by the State Courts and the National University of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKY School). The inaugural

run of the Executive Leadership Programme for Court and Tribunal Administrators that was held from 16 to 20 January was well received by the 30 participants who attended the Programme. It attracted judges, senior registrars, and court and tribunal administrators from different parts of the world, including Australia, Cameroon, Marshall Islands, Myanmar, Serbia, and the United Arab Emirates. Justice reform specialists from the World Bank, members of local government agencies and judges and court administrators from the Singapore courts also attended the Programme.

The intensive five-day programme was conducted by distinguished academics from the LKY School, as well as senior management members of the State Courts. To provide deeper insights into a broad range of complex issues governing the management of courts and tribunals, the key topics covered ranged from the Changing Legal Landscape, Leadership and Strategic Planning, to Managing Court Resources and Measuring Court Performance. It also included practical sessions such as discussion of contextualised case studies that were specifically developed for this Programme and a learning journey to the Singapore Prison Service. Through the small group discussions, the Programme also provided an opportunity for the participants and the teaching faculty to network and share their own practical experiences.

The second run of the Programme is scheduled to be held in February 2018. More information on the Programme will be available in mid 2017.

A joint programme
between the State
Courts and the Lee
Kuan Yew School of
Public Policy, National
University of Singapore

STATE COURTS LAUNCH IFCE STATE COURTS OF SINGAPORE MODEL

The State Courts are a founding member of the International Consortium for Court Excellence. This Consortium was formed together with three other organisations – the Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration, the National Center for State Courts, and the Federal Judicial Center. In 2010, the Consortium developed a holistic self-assessment tool known as the **International Framework for Court Excellence (IFCE)** which was designed to help courts and tribunals to improve their performance through a continuous improvement process.

Apart from using the IFCE, the State Courts are also actively involved in promoting the use of this court excellence framework to other foreign judiciaries. Through this experience and also due to the changes to the operating environment, the State Courts considered modifying the IFCE. The aim was to develop a Model that would best assist the State Courts to assess their performance in terms of court excellence in the current operating environment in Singapore as well as capture the State Courts' experience. The work on this project started in 2016.

On 16 January 2017, in conjunction with the inaugural run of the Executive Leadership Programme for Court and

Tribunal Administrators, the State Courts launched the **International Framework for Court Excellence State Courts of Singapore Model - a Practical Guide for Sustainable Court Excellence**.

The IFCE State Courts of Singapore Model builds on the solid base that was developed by the Consortium, and incorporates new concepts that may not have been considered at the time that the IFCE was developed, such as alternative dispute resolution, ethics, risk management and business continuity plans.

It also incorporates concepts that the State Courts have consistently embraced as part of their policies and strategies. For example, there is a greater emphasis on developing judicial officers and court administrators, or "Court Workforce", as referred to in the IFCE State Courts of Singapore Model. New criteria statements were also included that capture aspects of best practices in terms of people development.

This publication contains illustrative examples and tools, and is a valuable resource for current and future judicial officers, and court and tribunal administrators, both locally and overseas.



LAW SOCIETY AND THE FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS INTRODUCE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT RULES AND A BEST PRACTICES GUIDE FOR FAMILY LAW PRACTITIONERS

The Law Society of Singapore (Law Society) and the FJC have introduced proposed amendments to the Legal Profession (Professional Conduct) Rules 2015 (PCR 2015) in the context of family proceedings, as well as the introduction of a "Best Practices Guide for Family Law Practitioners" which would set out best practice guidelines for legal practitioners conducting family proceedings in Singapore.

The proposed amendments to the PCR 2015 relate specifically to the practice of family law, and will provide family law practitioners with a useful set of principles to guide them in their practice. This is particularly relevant and important given that the practice of family law often presents some of the most difficult ethical issues

which confront lawyers, given the sometimes divergent interests of their clients and the children involved in the proceedings.

The proposed *Best Practices Guide for Family Law Practitioners* is intended to provide a useful and practical guide for family law practitioners in their dealings with the FJC, clients, fellow practitioners, and litigants-in-person. It also seeks to provide illustrations and case examples that practitioners may come across.

The Law Society and the FJC conducted sought feedback from members of the profession on these proposals in February and March 2017, with such feedback currently being considered.



Parents in a high-conflict divorce involving prolonged litigation often have difficulty cooperating with one another. They cannot resolve even the smallest of issues after the final court orders are made. The children, meanwhile, are caught in the middle and may suffer developmental harm due to mental stress.

Recognising that the next big step after any divorce is to execute the court orders, especially parenting and access orders, the FJC saw a need for a skilled professional to support and help parents be co-parents. Parents caught in marital conflict need to be aware of its impact on their children, learn how to communicate, and gain better problem solving skills. Doing these will allow them to resolve parenting and access disagreements without resorting to the Courts. The Parenting Coordination scheme was therefore designed to meet this need.

Parenting Coordination is an emerging Alternative Dispute Resolution process for parents. It incorporates perspectives, practices, and skill sets from the legal, mental health, mediation, and education fields. It borrows from all these disciplines in the course of the Parenting Coordination process and is designed to mitigate the significant and harmful impact on children when the parents are locked in a hostile and prolonged conflict with each other. The process originated in the United States, where it has proven itself useful and beneficial for parents. Other countries like Hong Kong have piloted it as well.

The Parenting Coordinator (PC) is essentially an educator, a facilitator, a coach, and a mediator all rolled into one. They teach parents joint parenting and its benefits, help parents communicate better, encourage the father and the mother, find ways of helping them be self-sufficient and proactive, and try to resolve parental disputes or disagreements through consensus. In the future, when there is legislation in place for the scheme, the PC would also act as arbitrator. They can make certain decisions within the scope of authority given by the court order. In this way, the PC minimises the need for parents to

regularly return to the court for new orders, among other things. The ultimate goal is to have the parents be able to co-parent and be able to resolve conflict on their own.

In Singapore, the Court appoints a PC to assist parents in the implementation of parenting orders, including the child access arrangements. The scope of the PC's role largely depends on the Court Order, but typically relates to:

- I. Minor changes to parenting time/access schedules or conditions including vacation, holidays, and temporary variation from the existing parenting plan;
- II. Transitions/exchanges of the children including date, time, place, means of transportation and transporter;
- III. Communication between the parents about the children including telephone, fax, e-mail, notes in schoolbags, etc.; and
- IV. Communication by a parent with the children including telephone, cellphone, and e-mail when they are not in that parent's care.

A PC is appointed for a period of between six months to two years, giving parents time to learn how to work together as co-parents.

There are currently 24 lawyers involved in Parenting Coordination in Singapore. They were trained by a Parenting Coordination expert in February 2016. The intention is to expand the scheme to include the involvement of social science professionals. A second Parenting Coordination training programme is tentatively scheduled in the latter half of this year.

The fees for the PC scheme are premised on the fact that the respective professionals can charge their private sector market rate. However, the FJC is working with other government agencies to explore if lower or subsidised fees are possible to make the scheme more affordable, and consequently more accessible.





Left to right: Presiding Judge of the State Courts Justice See Kee Oon, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, and Deputy Presiding Judge of the State Courts Jennifer Marie signing the Superstructure beam.

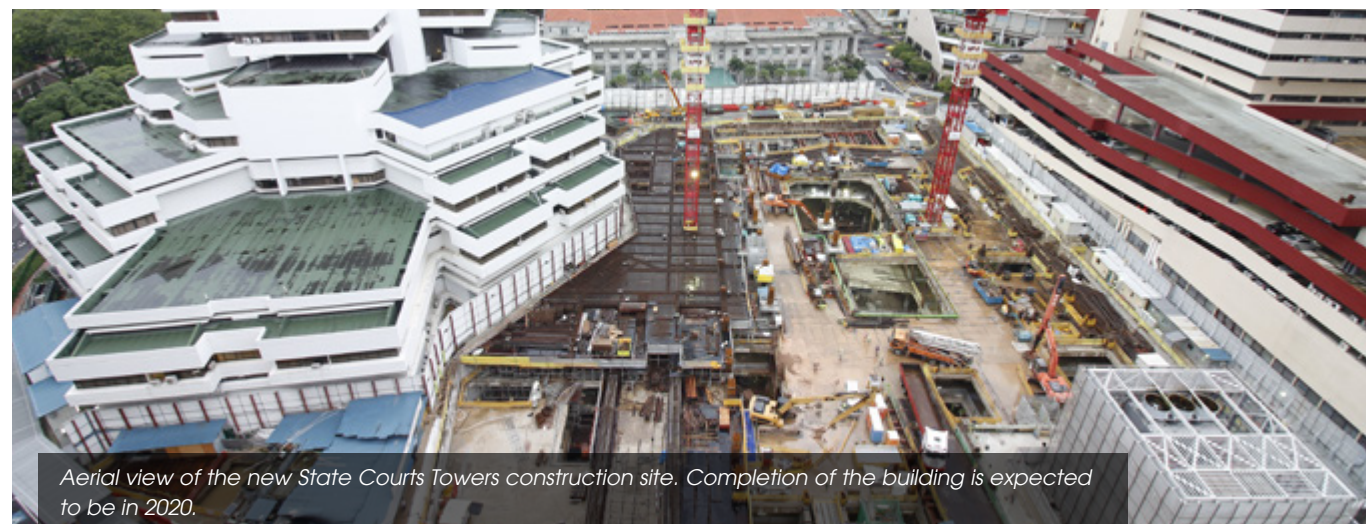
STATE COURTS ONE STEP CLOSER TO NEW TOWERS

With the launch of the superstructure on 17 March, the State Courts are one step closer to the completion of the new State Courts Towers. The launch of the superstructure was officiated by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, which marked a significant milestone with the commencement of construction from above ground level.

The Towers are slated to be operational in 2020 and will house more than 60 courtrooms, over 50 hearing chambers, and supporting service functions. The two towers will be connected by a series of link bridges that will enable controlled circulation of court users and staff of the State Courts. Designed to be eco-friendly, the towers will feature naturally ventilated corridors and will use solar power panels. Court users can also look forward to improved service counters, designed specifically to provide centralised services.

The State Courts handle 90% of Singapore's caseload which equates to more than 300,000 cases per year, with the number of cases expected to increase as the Singapore population grows. While the current State Courts Building has served the courts well, the existing structure is facing challenges in supporting the long-term demands on the courts.

With the increase in the State Courts' jurisdiction and caseload over the years, and the introduction of new functions to better serve court users, the current building is well beyond its original capacity. The new State Courts Towers will provide the necessary capacity to meet future needs and lend support towards an efficient, effective and responsive judiciary.



Aerial view of the new State Courts Towers construction site. Completion of the building is expected to be in 2020.

MONETARY AUTHORITY OF SINGAPORE BRIEFS JUDICIARY ON FINTECH

The Office of Public Affairs arranged for the Monetary Authority of Singapore to brief the Judiciary on the developments in Fintech or financial technology. The talk, titled "The Fintech Story: The Ecosystem, Trends and future of Fintech" looked at how technology has opened up a world of possibilities with new business models. Justice Lee Sei Kin delivered the opening remarks at the session where about 100 guests from the Supreme Court, State Courts, Family Justice Courts, Ministry of Law, Singapore Academy of Law, and the Monetary Authority of Singapore attended.



THE JUDICIARY VISITS GOVTECH HIVE

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and 25 judges visited the team at GovTech Hive where they were introduced to GovTech's in-house design, engineering and data science capabilities, and how to attract talent with the right workplace culture.



Last year, the Judiciary launched the "Courts of the future" taskforce to identify technological opportunities that will support the strategic direction of the Judiciary over the medium to long term. Their visit to GovTech Hive helped them understand existing capabilities within the government service. Unlike a centralised department, the programme uses "squads" with 7 to 8 cross-functional technology specialists that build a product together.



Daniel Lim, Data Scientist, shared how they developed similar solutions, after which a discussion was raised on using artificial intelligence to grant bails. The Judiciary thoroughly enjoyed the interactive tour while engaging with the technology specialists.

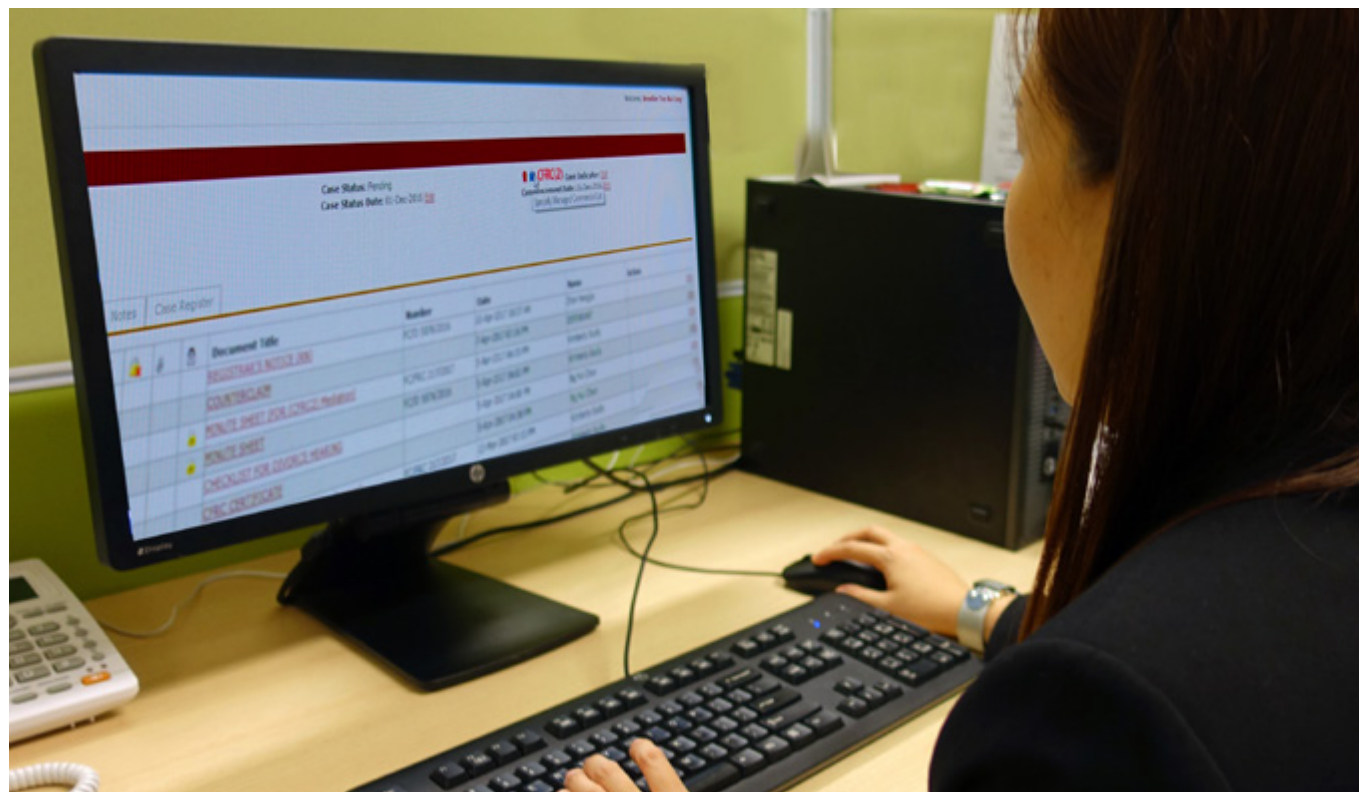


THE FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS EXTEND INDIVIDUAL DOCKETING SYSTEM TO FURTHER ENHANCE COURT PROCESSES

In tandem with the unique approach Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon stated at the opening of the FJC in October 2014, the FJC commenced docketing for selected categories of cases to enable judges to be more familiar with the diverse issues that the parties may be facing. This approach allows judges to manage the case from start to end, thereby ensuring better outcomes for parties who may have multiple applications and proceedings in court. The approach also helped in expediting the disposal of cases as the judge would lead the pace of the case and control the timelines based on the complexity of the case. This has resulted in faster clearance of cases pending before the Court, with a reported increase in the number of divorce cases disposed of (including ancillaries) within the same year it was filed from 46% in 2012 to 74% in 2016¹. Meanwhile, cases that proceeded onto contested Ancillary Matters hearing saw a drop².

In the second half of 2017, docketing of cases will be extended to a broader scope of cases. This move continues the original mandate for ensuring better outcomes of cases and the faster conduct of proceedings through robust case management, and fair resolution of family disputes before a single judge who has consummate understanding of each case.

With a view to bringing a case to final disposition in a holistic, just, and expeditious manner, each docket judge will rely on our rules. In particular, the judge led rules in Rule 22 of the Family Justice Rules to manage the assigned case by early identification and narrowing of issues in dispute, ascertaining the degree of difficulty or complexity of the issues, minimising unnecessary interlocutory steps, exploring options for early alternative dispute resolution, and facilitate the expeditious hearing and disposal of the case where necessary.



¹ For cases disposed of in the same year, the average time taken for divorce cases to be granted Interim Judgement has been reduced by a quarter, from 68.6 days (more than 2 months) in 2012 to 53.1 days (less than 2 months) in 2016. The average time taken for Final Judgement to be granted has also reduced by a quarter from 155.2 days (5.2 months) in 2012 to 114.6 days (3.8 months) in 2016.

² A comparison of the 2012 and 2014 cohorts of cases also indicates a drop in the cases that proceeded onto contested Ancillary Matters (AM). In 2012, 524 AM cases were contested out of 6,275 cases filed. In the 2014 cohort, only 429 AMs were contested out of 6,019 divorces.



THE FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS AND NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION COLLABORATE ON RESEARCH ON OUTCOMES OF COUNSELLING AND MEDIATION AT FAMILY DISPUTE RESOLUTION DIVISION

The FJC and the National Institute of Education (NIE) are collaborating on a longitudinal research to explore the outcomes of 300 families that undergo Counselling and Mediation at the Family Dispute Resolution (FDR) Division of the FJC on divorce and ancillary matters.

The Counselling and Mediation at the FDR Division has seen over 4,500 families since it was formalised in 2012 as a mandatory programme for all divorcing couples with children under the age of 21. This provides an opportunity for families to avert an adversarial trial process which is often detrimental to the post-divorce parental relationship. The programme helps divorcing parents re-direct the adversarial focus on the marital conflict toward a collaborative child-focused parenting future.

The programme has seen an encouraging trend of reaching resolution on children's issues for at least 80% of its cases.

This study will measure the impact of the FDR's child-centric approach on both parents and children over the course of one year. Over 1,000 parents and children are expected to be followed up at various points for a one-year period after they have received the Court's Counselling and Mediation. This will allow the FDR to better understand the changes in parental conflict,

parent-children relationships, and most importantly, the children's wellbeing.

The findings from this research will inform and provide both the community and policy makers with greater insight into understanding the multifaceted needs of these children in their care. The findings will also improve programmes and policies to better mitigate the deleterious impact of divorce and separation on children and their families in Singapore.

The programme has seen an encouraging trend of reaching resolution on children's issues for at least 80% of its cases.

STATE COURTS LAUNCH TWO PUBLICATIONS

The State Courts launched two publications on 22 February, during a ceremony which was officiated by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon. The first publication is the third edition of the *Practitioners' Library – Assessment of Damages: Personal Injuries and Fatal Accidents*, and the second is the *Electronic Motor Accident Guide* (eMAG). These publications will give lawyers and litigants indications of the factors that the courts may consider when adjudicating their matters, thereby allowing them to evaluate their legal positions and the options available to them.

For civil litigation practitioners, the *Practitioners' Library – Assessment of Damages: Personal Injuries and Fatal Accidents*, also commonly referred to as the Blue Book, serves as a reference text for assessing the amount of damages that the court may award in cases involving personal injuries and death. The latest edition contains an updated collection of awards made by the Supreme Court and State Courts, and it sets out the important principles for the various types of losses and the amounts of damages awarded where injury or death has occurred. In addition, substantial developments in the law are explored and covered in considerable detail. The reported cases provide baselines and scales of damages

that judges may consider in arriving at appropriate awards of damages whilst ensuring a level of consistency across similar cases. The Blue Book is also used by practitioners and members of the insurance industry to negotiate and expedite the settlement of accident cases without the need to subject accident victims to the stress of litigation.

The eMAG is the State Courts' first e-book, where users have the convenience of performing functions such as keyword searches, bookmarking and highlighting, so that they can retrieve the information that they are seeking more quickly and easily. For motorists, the eMAG provides a useful and easy-to-understand mobile guide on what they could do if they are involved in a motor accident. Commonly encountered motor accident scenarios involving motorists, pedestrians, cyclists and passengers, are depicted through graphical illustrations, and the e-book also provides an indication of the liability outcome for each scenario based on actual awards given in locally decided cases.

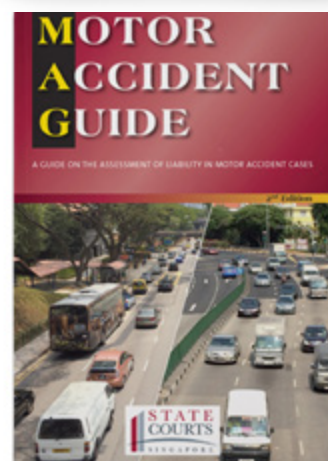
The third edition of the Blue Book can be purchased at S\$374.50 from LexisNexis. The eMAG can be purchased from Google Play Books at S\$7.78.



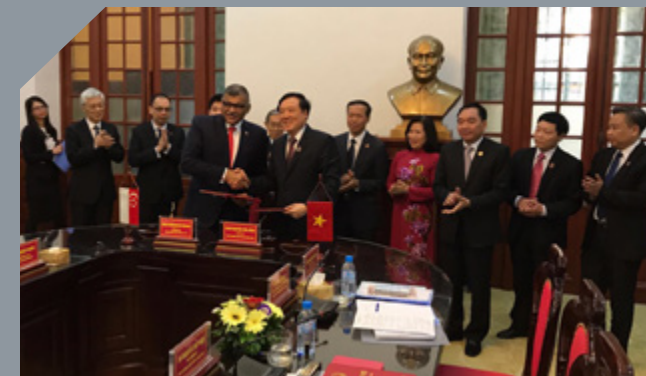
Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon (fifth from left) and the Presiding Judge of the State Courts Justice See Kee Oon (sixth from left) with Ms Gaythri Raman, Managing Director of LexisNexis Southeast Asia (third from left), and the contributors of the Blue Book.



Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon (middle) and the Presiding Judge of the State Courts Justice See Kee Oon (second from left) with the contributors of the eMAG.



SUPREME COURT OF SINGAPORE AND VIETNAM SUPREME PEOPLE'S COURT SIGN MOU OF JUDICIAL COOPERATION



Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon together with officials from the Supreme Court of Singapore and the Singapore Embassy in Vietnam, met with Chief Justice Nguyen Hoa Binh of the Vietnam Supreme People's Court, Deputy Chief Justice Nguyen Thuy Hien, Judges of the Vietnam Supreme People's Court, and officials from the Vietnam Supreme People's Court to discuss and sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of judicial cooperation between Vietnam and Singapore courts. The MoU focuses on cooperation in four areas: application of information technology in court operations, international commercial dispute settlement, judicial training, and increasing efficiency in court management.

NEW ZEALAND ATTORNEY GENERAL VISITS THE SUPREME COURT



New Zealand Attorney General Hon Christopher Finlayson QC and his four-person delegation went on a two-day visit to Singapore from 27 to 28 February in a trip coordinated by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). The delegation called on Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, Attorney General Lucien Wong, and Minister for Communications and Information Dr Yaacob Ibrahim. Supreme Court's Office of Public Affairs brought the delegation on a tour around the Supreme Court following their courtesy call on the Chief Justice. Hon Finlayson, had a fruitful session with Chief Justice Menon, and the delegation expressed their admiration for the architecture of the Supreme Court building.

SUPREME COURT OF QUEENSLAND JUSTICE VISITS SUPREME COURT OF SINGAPORE



Justice A I Philippides of the Supreme Court of Queensland visited the Supreme Court of Singapore on 26 January where she met Justice Steven Chong. She was also brought on a tour of the current and previous Supreme Court buildings during her visit.

23 GUANGDONG, CHINA JUDGES VISIT STATE COURTS



Twenty-three Judges from the Guangdong Province of the People's Republic of China visited the State Courts on 24 February as part of a study visit programme to Singapore. Deputy Presiding Judge of the State Courts and Registrar, Ms Jennifer Marie, delivered a lecture on case management systems that are used in the State Courts.

The Guangdong delegation was led by the President of the Dongguan Intermediate People's Court, Mr Wang Haiqing, and comprised a wide representation of judges from 18 different courts that are used in the State Courts.

NOTABLE VISITS

COMMERCIAL COURT OF MALAWI
DELEGATION LEARN ABOUT TECHNOLOGY
SINGAPORE COURTS USE

A three-member delegation from the High Court of Malawi visited the State Courts on 9 February. The delegation was led by Justice John Katsala from the Commercial Division of the High Court of Malawi to learn about the technology that Singapore Courts use in aiding case management.

They were received by Deputy Presiding Judge of the State Courts and Registrar, Ms Jennifer Marie, and hosted by District Judge Victor Yeo, Principal Director of the Strategic Planning and Technology Division.

AUSTRALIAN COMPANY STATE TRUSTEES
LIMITED LEARNS SINGAPORE'S
GUARDIANSHIP SYSTEM AT THE FJC

A delegation from the State Trustees Limited, Victoria, Australia, led by the CEO, Mr Craig Dent learned about Singapore's guardianship system, including the Vulnerable Adults Act, the Courts' approach to dealing with offences committed by deputies in the course of their duties (particularly in elder abuse cases), and case studies of successful interventions during their visit to the FJC on 15 March.

The delegation was hosted by District Judge Collin Tan from the Family Division of the FJC.

TURKISH MINISTRY OF JUSTICE DELEGATES
VISIT THE FJC

On 16 February, a three-person delegation from the Turkish Ministry of Justice headed by Deputy Undersecretary of the Turkish Ministry of Justice Mr Musa Heybet, visited the FJC to learn more about family mediation.

District Judge Wong Sheng Kwai and Deputy Director (Legal & Registry), Ms Lim Lee Kian from the FDR Division of the FJC hosted the delegation.

VISIT TO THE SUPREME COURT OF
VICTORIA

Ms Clara Goh, Deputy Chief Executive of Supreme Court made a presentation on Supreme Court's service excellence journey and courts of the future project at the Innovation and Excellence in Courts Conference organised by the Supreme Court of Victoria from 27-28 March in Melbourne. The conference was attended by 170 delegates from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Singapore, and topics covered included court technology, leadership and the International Framework for Court Excellence.

WHAT'S NEW?

WHAT'S
NEW?SALARY-RELATED
CLAIMS CAN
NOW BE FILED AT
THE STATE COURTS

With the launch of the new Employment Claims Tribunals (ECT) on 1 April, employees and employers can now file their statutory and contractual salary-related claims at the State Courts.

Apart from taking over the Ministry of Manpower, Labour Court's function of hearing statutory salary-related disputes under the Employment Act, Retirement and Re-employment Act and the Child Development Co-savings Act, the ECT will hear contractual salary-related claims concerning workers at all salary levels, including those who do not come under the Employment Act, such as professionals, managers and executives (PMEs) earning more than S\$4,500 per month. This will bridge a current gap for this group of persons, whose only course of action prior to the establishment of the ECT would be through the Civil Courts.

Before filing an employment claim at the ECT, all disputes must first go through mediation at the Tripartite Alliance for Dispute Management (TADM) to try and resolve the matter amicably. If the mediation is unsuccessful, parties will then be given a claim referral certificate to file a claim at the ECT which will be heard by legally qualified Tribunal Magistrates.

Similar to the Small Claims Tribunals, the ECT is designed to be procedurally simple and without legal representation so that the employment disputes can be resolved in an affordable and expeditious manner. The ECT claim limits are \$20,000 or up to \$30,000 if it has undergone mediation assisted by the unions.

With the establishment of the ECT and TADM, more employees now have access to an effective and affordable dispute resolution forum to resolve their employment-related disputes.

COMMUNITY JUSTICE CENTRE
ESTABLISHED SATELLITE OFFICE AT
SUPREME COURT

The Supreme Court collaborated with the Community Justice Centre (CJC) to establish a satellite office at the Supreme Court. This will offer advice and assistance on preparatory work for trials to persons involved in bankruptcy proceedings. Moreover, volunteers are at hand to provide emotional support. To benefit more persons, the satellite CJC may consider expanding its scope beyond bankruptcy proceedings in the future.

ACCUSED PERSONS CAN NOW ACCESS THEIR CASE FILES ONLINE

The Integrated Criminal Case Filing and Management System (ICMS) is a comprehensive case management system developed by the State Courts that allows the proceedings in the criminal, regulatory, Youth and Coroner's Courts to be tracked and conducted electronically from the moment a case is filed until the verdict is given and sentence is effected.

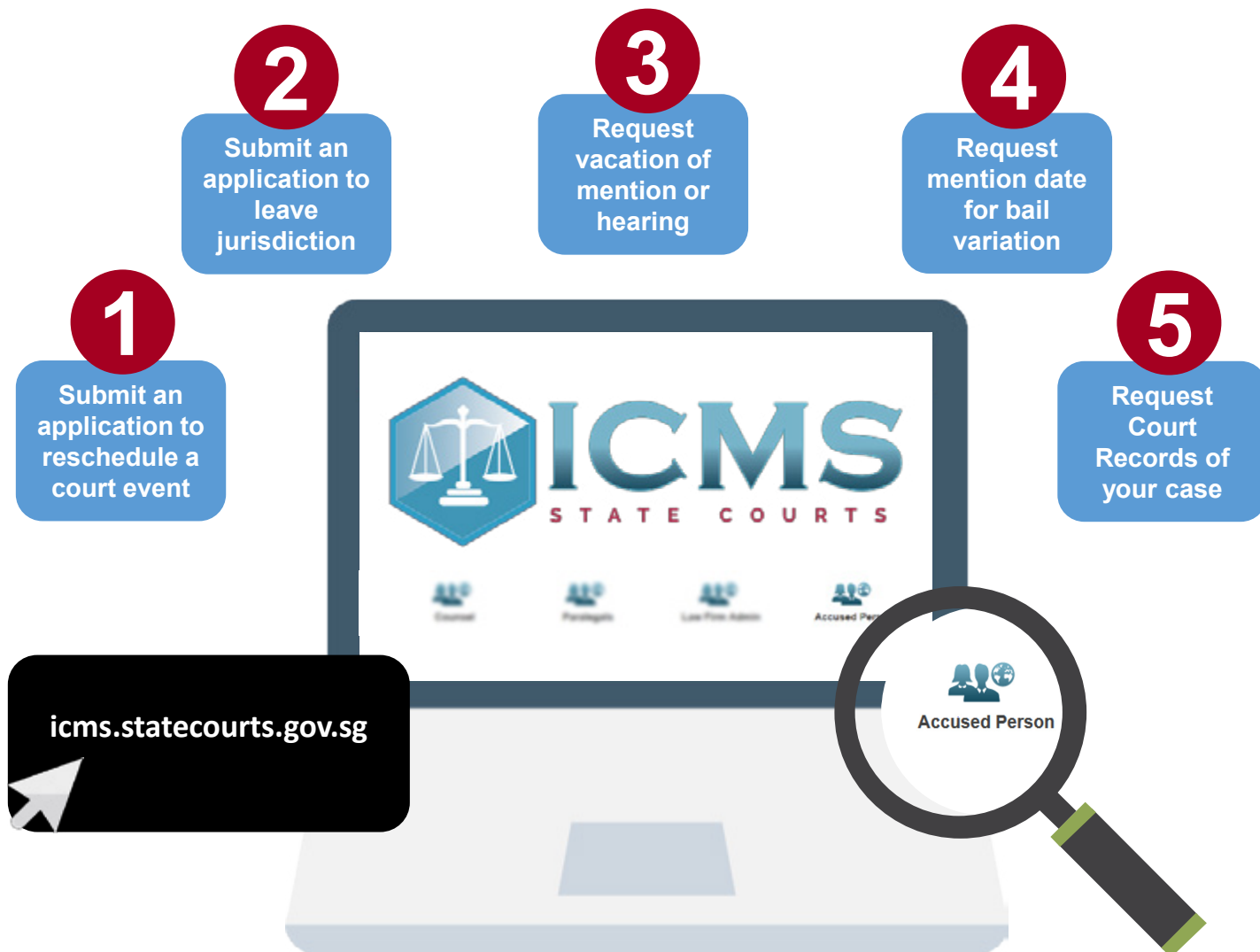
When the first phase of this paperless system was launched in 2015, only the prosecution, investigating agencies and law firms were given access to case files on the ICMS and they could file documents and make applications. With further enhancement to the system in 2016, self-represented accused persons are now able to access their electronic case files online with the use of their SingPass account. In addition, they will be able to file documents and make certain

applications and requests at any time of the day, without making a trip to the State Courts. Prior to this, self-represented accused persons could only do this by going down to the State Courts.

Accused persons who are represented by lawyers can view their case files and applications filed, but would not be able to file applications or upload documents for their cases as their lawyers would continue to file the same on their behalf in ICMS.

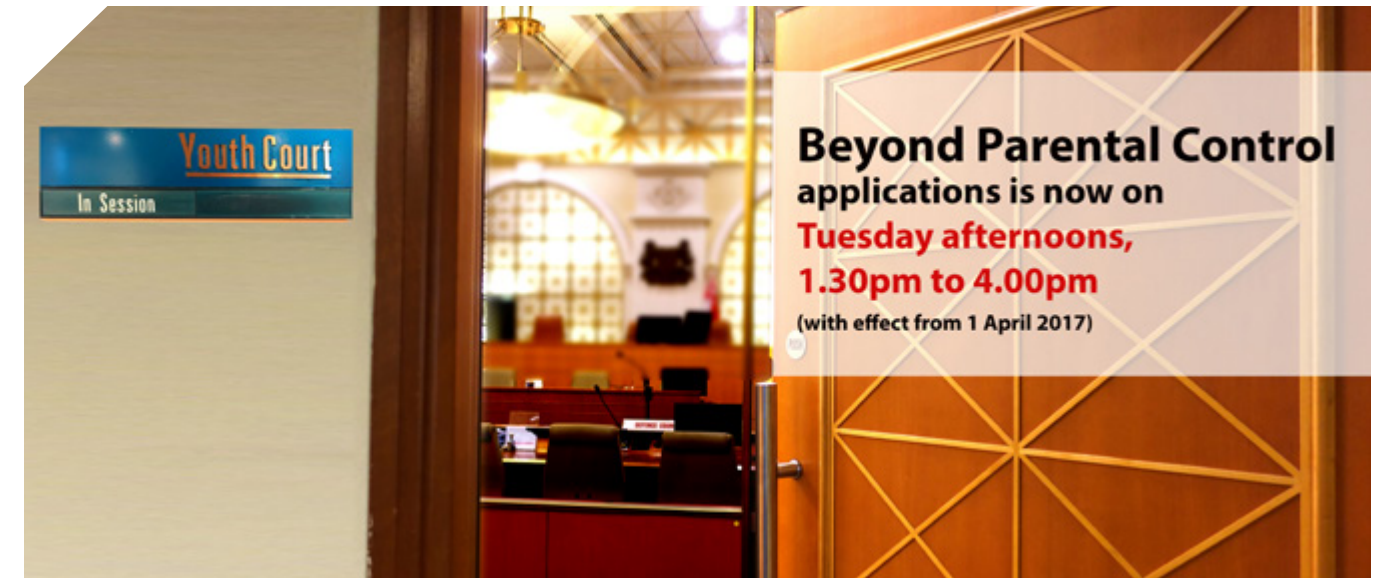
This enhancement to the ICMS provides accused persons with convenient and timely access to their case information and keeps them updated on the status of their cases.

For more information, please visit: bit.ly/ICMSinfo



YOUTH COURTS UPDATE

The FJC announced that Beyond Parental Control (BPC) applications will be moved to Tuesday from 1.30 to 4.00pm starting 1 April. Previously, applications were scheduled on Fridays, 2.00 to 4.00pm.



UPCOMING EVENTS



1 June 2017 (Thursday) • 9am - 5pm • State Courts

The State Courts' annual "A Day in Court: A Seminar for Student Leaders" will be held on 1 June. Specially tailored to introduce Secondary 3 students to the various aspects of the Singapore justice system, the participants will learn about the criminal justice system and the restorative justice model adopted by the courts for cases involving youth. They will also learn about how certain community disputes, such as those between neighbours, can be resolved amicably without seeking the court's intervention.

Student leaders are well-placed to influence their peers positively. With the knowledge gained from the seminar, they can share with their peers what they learned about the courts, as well as crimes generally committed by youth offenders and the consequences to them, their families, and society at large. In addition, the seminar will expose them to the alternative means of resolving disputes that they may encounter in their daily lives.

The seminar is part of the State Courts' outreach efforts to enhance the community's understanding of their work and to foster good community spirit.



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