

# JUDICIARY TIMES



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Launch of "Conversations  
with the Community"

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Court Volunteers Recognised for Their  
Role in Enhancing Access to Justice

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## HIGHLIGHTS

# Launch of “Conversations with the Community”

On 21 September, the Singapore Courts (SG Courts) launched the inaugural session of the “Conversations with the Community” series at the Singapore Management University. Over 200 guests attended the event.

The keynote speaker for the first session was The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon. He delivered an Opening Address, titled “The Role of the Courts in Our Society — Safeguarding Society”, which was designed to raise awareness about the Courts as independent and impartial organs of state that interpret laws, apply them and adjudicate cases.

In his speech, Chief Justice Menon highlighted two core principles — judicial courage and judicial modesty — that the Courts need to be guided by in discharging their adjudicative role. He also recognised that the Courts do not work alone in safeguarding society; instead, the different branches of government are co-equal partners in the shared endeavour to advance society’s best interests.

Beyond the Courts’ traditional adjudicative role, Chief Justice Menon outlined the second kind of role that the Courts play in safeguarding society. That is their increasingly important systemic role as institutions charged with the responsibility of administering the



▲ Chief Justice Menon delivering the Opening Address.



▲ Chief Justice Menon emphasised the importance of a user-centric court system that advances access to justice.

system of justice. The broader conception of the Courts’ role flows from the recognition that their true mission as a Court is to ensure the fair and efficient administration of justice. He added that SG Courts are working to discharge this systemic role by building a user-centric court system that meets the needs of the public and advances access to justice.

The “Conversations with the Community” is a series of seven conversations in 2023 and 2024 that will bring together leaders from the judiciary, academia, legal and other sectors to engage on issues of topical interest that involve the community. Jointly hosted by SG Courts and Law Faculties of the National University of Singapore, Singapore University of Social Sciences and Singapore Management University, these conversations are set out to convey judicial perspectives, raise awareness and encourage dialogue on prevailing issues that are at the intersection of law, community and society. The Judiciary seeks to connect more closely with the community by convening these sessions at the law schools.



▲ Chief Justice Menon elaborated on the role of the Courts in our society.



▲ An audience member raising a question to Chief Justice Menon.



▲ The “Conversations with the Community” series brings together leaders from the judiciary, academia, legal and other sectors to engage on issues of topical interest that involve the community.

The second “Conversations with the Community” session was held on 16 November at Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) with over 100 participants that included members of the Judiciary and stakeholders of the family justice system. Justice Debbie Ong, the keynote speaker at the session, focused on the resolution of disputes in families through Therapeutic Justice (TJ). The session emphasised how a TJ system puts in place the essential legal structure and resources that will ensure therapeutic, helpful effects for the family, and how the Family Courts should be a place for problem-solving and resolution, rather than a battlefield. Deputy Presiding Judge of the Family Justice Courts, Chia Wee Kiat led the discussion with a panel comprising Justice Ong, Prof Leong Wai Kum (SUSS), Dr Sudha Nair (Executive Director, PAVE), and Ms Wong Kai Yun (Co-chair, Family Law Practice Committee). They provided deeper insights into TJ through their experiences and practices.



▲ Justice Ong delivering the Keynote Speech.



Scan to watch the video for Session 1

[go.gov.sg/apd5kg](https://go.gov.sg/apd5kg)



Scan to watch the video for Session 2

[go.gov.sg/00yxt5](https://go.gov.sg/00yxt5)

## Court Volunteers Recognised for Their Role in Enhancing Access to Justice

On 17 November, the Singapore Courts recognised the sterling contributions, time and dedication of court volunteers who support the work of the Courts at the Judiciary Volunteers Appreciation Lunch held at Raffles Town Club.

Mr Jason Dendroff received the Legal Assistance for Capital Offences (LASCO) Long Service Award, which recognises lawyers who have served 25 years or more, representing accused persons charged with capital offences at trial and on appeal. He was emplaced on the LASCO panel as an Assistant Counsel in 1997 after being called to the Bar in 1995. In 2017, he was appointed as a Lead Counsel.

Three outstanding court volunteers from the State Courts received awards for their outstanding commitment and support to pro bono work. They are Mr Melvin Loh Guo Wei (Advocate and Solicitor Category Award recipient), who started volunteering as an undergraduate, and continues to do so as a law lecturer today; Mr Ram Narain Dubey (Open Category Award recipient), a certified e-mediator, a lifelong learning advocate for whom age is no barrier; and Mr Ivan Tang Wu Hwan (Student Category Award recipient), a law undergraduate who actively volunteers with the Aid-in-Person Project. Twelve volunteers also received Long Service Awards for their dedicated service to the Courts.

The awards were conferred by Chief Justice Menon. In Chief Justice Menon’s welcome address to the court volunteers, he said: “I thank each and every one of you for so generously dedicating your time, energies and expertise to supporting this aspect of the work of the Judiciary. It is especially gratifying that you do so not

in pursuit of any material reward or publicity, but just because of your desire to do the right thing. There is no purer motive than this and we are deeply grateful. Your contributions make a real impact on the lives of our court users and you play a critical role in enhancing the delivery of justice in our legal system.”



▲ Mr Jason Dendroff, LASCO Long Service Award recipient, receiving the award from Chief Justice Menon.



▲ Outstanding Court Volunteers Award recipients (from left): Mr Melvin Loh Guo Wei, Mr Ram Narain Dubey and Mr Ivan Tang Wu Hwan with Chief Justice Menon.



Scan to watch highlights from the event

[go.gov.sg/jva23](https://go.gov.sg/jva23)

▼ Long Service Award recipients.



## Singapore and Indonesia Sign Memorandum of Understanding to Promote Bilateral Judicial Cooperation

The Supreme Court of Singapore and Supreme Court of Indonesia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for judicial cooperation on 7 November. The MOU was signed during a visit by Chief Justice Menon and a delegation from the Supreme Court of Singapore to the Supreme Court of Indonesia from 6 to 8 November 2023.

The MOU, signed by Chief Justice Menon and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Indonesia, Prof Dr Muhammad Syarifuddin, marks a milestone in the bilateral collaboration between the two judiciaries and is a testament to the strong ties between Singapore and Indonesia. The MOU identifies four specific areas for collaboration: namely, cross-border commercial law; international commercial courts and international commercial dispute resolution; the International Consortium for Court Excellence and International Framework for Court Excellence; and judicial education and training.

During the visit, Chief Justice Menon held a bilateral meeting with Chief Justice Prof Dr Muhammad Syarifuddin. The two Chief Justices discussed the different avenues of strategic interest for collaboration



▲ Chief Justice Menon at a fireside chat with Indonesian judges and judicial training participants.

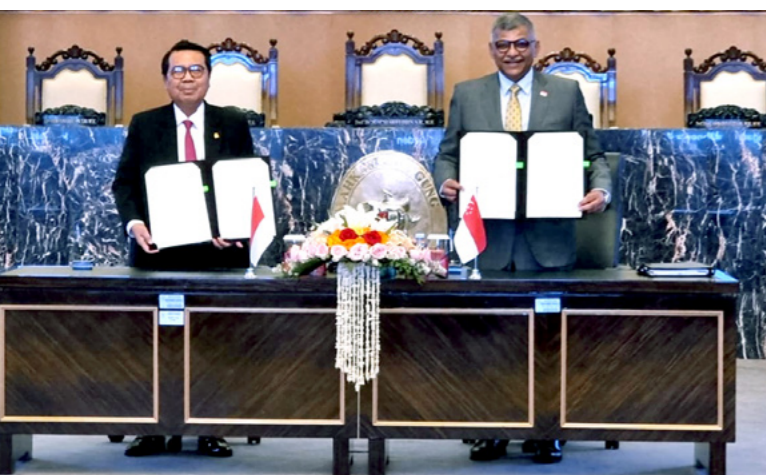
between the two judiciaries, such as cooperation in cross-border insolvency and restructuring, matters relating to international commercial courts, and judicial training and exchanges.

Chief Justice Menon also paid a visit to the Judicial Training Centre in Bogor and engaged in a fireside chat with Indonesian judges and judicial training participants, along with Justice Lee Seiu Kin, Justice Pang Khang Chau and Justice Syamsul Maarif of the Supreme Court of Indonesia.

“

The MOU is a landmark instrument, which lays a firm foundation for the judiciaries of Indonesia and Singapore to deepen and strengthen our bilateral cooperation in areas including international commercial disputes, court excellence, and judicial education and training. The MOU will open up many avenues for collaboration, and pave the way to an enduring and vibrant partnership between our two judiciaries in the years to come.”

Chief Justice Menon



▲ The MOU was signed by Chief Justice Menon and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Indonesia, Prof Dr Muhammad Syarifuddin.

## Singapore's Chief Justice Menon Makes Major Contributions as President of the ASEAN Law Association

Chief Justice Menon relinquished his post as President of the ASEAN Law Association (ALA) at the 14<sup>th</sup> General Assembly that was held from 19 to 21 October in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

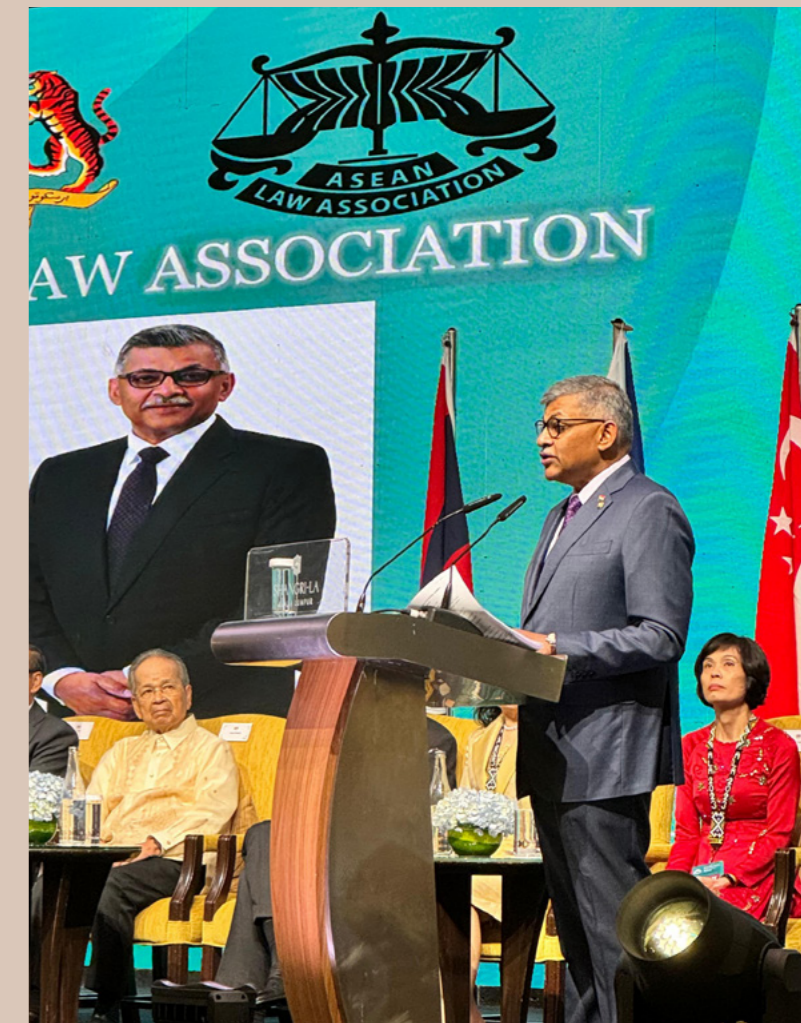
Chief Justice Menon was elected ALA President in July 2018 at the 13<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, and had sought to enhance the relevance of ALA within the ASEAN community and strengthen ALA's links with ASEAN. Some of these efforts included the submission of four concept notes to the ASEAN Secretariat in 2019, which along with an updated concept note on an ASEAN protocol for communication with non-disputing states on issues of treaty interpretation, have been placed before the ASEAN Senior Law Officials.

The ASEAN Secretariat has also explored a series of capacity-building programmes with ALA, including training on investor-state dispute settlement mechanisms which is slated to take place in Jakarta in 2024.

Another area of focus was facilitating the formation of an ALA National Committee in the Lao PDR in order to complete the membership of ALA (which currently only represents nine ASEAN states). Positive feedback from Lao counterparts raised the possibility that the ALA membership will be made complete in the near future.

Chief Justice Menon also holds the vision that the induction of young blood into ALA was key to its effectiveness and enduring utility to the ASEAN community. Two signature projects were established — Virtual Training Marketplace which matches attachments and training opportunities offered by law firms in ASEAN to young lawyers across the region; and ASEAN Moot which will become the primary outreach mechanism for ALA to introduce and expose law students to ASEAN legal instruments and legal issues.

ALA, a non-governmental organisation, is a regional law association that is committed to helping promote peace and prosperity in ASEAN through legal cooperation and the advancement of the rule of law.



▲ Chief Justice Menon delivering his address at the 14<sup>th</sup> ALA General Assembly.



Scan to read Chief Justice Menon's address

[go.gov.sg/ala](https://go.gov.sg/ala)

## Council of ASEAN Chief Justices Reflect on Milestones and Achievements over the Past 10 Years, and Chart Strategic Agenda



▲ ASEAN Chief Justices at the inaugural CACJ Retreat.

The Council of ASEAN Chief Justices (CACJ) held its inaugural retreat on 20 October to reaffirm the ASEAN Judiciaries' strategic and cohesive approach towards deepening judicial cooperation and upholding the Rule of Law in ASEAN. It was hosted by the Malaysian Judiciary and held alongside the 14<sup>th</sup> General Assembly and ASEAN Law Conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The CACJ has made significant strides to facilitate collaboration within ASEAN since its conception in 2013. It endorsed frameworks such as the *Draft Model Rule on Service of Civil Processes* and the *Enhanced Common Procedure*, which establishes a non-binding protocol for arranging mediation in cross-border disputes involving children.

The CACJ also endorsed codes and standards such as the *Model Principles of Judicial Conduct*, and acknowledged the *International Framework for Court Excellence*, a self-assessment tool that the ASEAN Judiciaries can voluntarily adopt to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement. These have strengthened the Rule of Law in the ASEAN region by facilitating cooperation and capacity building.

The CACJ, which was accredited as an entity associated with ASEAN in January 2017, will convene a Retreat once every decade to reflect on its milestones and achievements, and chart the CACJ's strategic agenda for the next 10 years.

CACJ continues to mature as a forum for judicial cooperation in ASEAN.

### About the CACJ

The CACJ traces its origins to the ASEAN Chief Justices Meeting that was first hosted by Singapore's Chief Justice Menon on 23 August 2013. Renamed CACJ, the meeting has since been held annually, and it provides a regular forum for the Chief Justices to discuss and exchange views on common issues facing their judiciaries.

The CACJ also serves as a platform to build mutual trust and understanding among the ASEAN Judiciaries. It facilitates judicial collaboration to enhance economic growth and development within the ASEAN region.

## Singapore-China International Commercial Dispute Resolution Conference 2023 — Keynote Address by Justice Philip Jeyaretnam

On 20 October, Justice Philip Jeyaretnam delivered the keynote address titled "Appropriate Dispute Resolution for Transnational Projects in the Asian Context" at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Singapore-China International Commercial Dispute Resolution Conference 2023. The conference, attended by about 300 delegates, about half travelling from China, was co-organised by the Ministry of Law, Singapore, the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade and the International Commercial Dispute Prevention and Settlement Organisation.

The conference was a demonstration of the close cooperation between Singapore and China in finding

optimal solutions for international commercial dispute resolution. Justice Jeyaretnam highlighted the Memorandum of Understanding signed between China's Supreme People's Court and the Supreme Court of Singapore, which provides a framework for the Singapore International Commercial Court and the China International Commercial Court to collaborate and share information.



Scan to read the keynote address

[go.gov.sg/f2qrb8](https://go.gov.sg/f2qrb8)

## Singapore Chamber of Maritime Arbitration Introduces a New Model Clause

On 16 November, the Singapore Chamber of Maritime Arbitration (SCMA) introduced a new model clause that designates the Singapore International Commercial Court (SICC) as the supervisory court to hear International Arbitration Act (IAA)-related applications at a launch event attended by Justice Steven Chong, Justice of the Court of Appeal and Justice Philip Jeyaretnam, President of the SICC.

Building on the joint successes of both institutions in ensuring efficient and effective resolution of arbitration-based maritime and international trade disputes, and in view that a vast majority of SCMA cases continue to be seated in Singapore, SCMA has introduced a jurisdiction model clause where parties designate the SICC as the supervisory court to hear IAA-related applications.

The collaboration between SCMA and SICC is expected to further enhance Singapore's position as a leading hub for maritime and international trade arbitrations. Users of the SCMA arbitration rules will benefit from the quick turnaround of applications, as observed from the SICC judgments that have been released, as well as from the costs awards that are more reflective of actual costs involved in such applications by the successful party.

Justice Jeyaretnam said, "The SICC is a trusted neutral forum for international commercial dispute resolution. It exercises supervisory jurisdiction over international arbitration seated in Singapore. I commend SCMA for its introduction and promotion of a jurisdictional model clause combining SCMA arbitration with SICC as the supervisory court."

## Singapore Academy of Law's Personal Injury Webinar Series

The Court Dispute Resolution Cluster (CDRC) of the State Courts participated in a two-part webinar series on personal injuries organised by the Singapore Academy of Law (SAL).

The first webinar, held on 13 September, was titled "Work Injury Claims: Claims under the Common Law and the Work Injury Compensation Act (WICA)" and attended by SAL members. District Judge Julian Chin and Assistant Commissioner R Manoj from the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) spoke on the differences in the law and procedure between claims filed under the common law in the Courts and under WICA in the MOM, as well as the factors the injured employee

should consider in deciding where to file his or her claim. This was followed by a question-and-answer session, where District Judge Koh Juay Kherng joined the speakers to form a panel.

The second webinar, titled "Personal Injury Claims: Recent Developments in the Law and Procedure", was held on 16 November and attended by SAL members. District Judges Joseph Yeo and Sheik Umar spoke on the recent developments in the law and procedure which have impacted the practice of personal injury claims, with a focus on the High Court judgment in *Salmizan Bin Abdullah v Crapper Ian Anthony* [2023] SGHC 75, the effect of the new Rules of Court 2021, and the changes to the CDRC case conference process. District Judges Carolyn Woo and Julian Chin then joined the speakers as panellists for a question-and-answer session.

▼ The speakers of the webinar on Work Injury Claims (clockwise from top left): Assistant Commissioner R Manoj, and District Judges Julian Chin and Koh Juay Kherng.



▼ The speakers of the webinar on Personal Injury Claims (clockwise from top left): District Judges Julian Chin, Sheik Umar, Joseph Yeo and Carolyn Woo.



## KEY MILESTONES

- **2013**  
A Call Centre was set up at the then Subordinate Courts to answer queries on criminal matters, civil matters, divorce and maintenance matters previously handled by the various registries. The establishment of the Call Centre was aimed at providing a centralised point of contact for court users.
- **2014**  
The Call Centre took over queries on Community Courts and Tribunals matters as well.
- **2017**  
It implemented an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system which merged the State Courts public numbers into a single number — 6-JUSTICE (6587 8423). Similarly, an IVR call flow for the Family Justice Courts hotlines was developed for the Call Centre to manage queries related to divorce, maintenance and protection order services. This facilitated more efficient call routing, thus reduced waiting times and allowed court users to receive dedicated and appropriate assistance more quickly.
- **2018**  
The Call Centre explored telecommuting to allow officers to manage queries received through the Courts' public lines seamlessly while working remotely. This initiative strengthened business contingency capabilities and provided support for work-life harmony for officers.
- **2019**  
Live chat services were piloted for officers to assist court users with personalised quick replies to common queries while freeing up their time to handle more complex queries.
- **2020**  
Initiatives like telecommuting and live chat services proved to be useful when COVID-19 struck. The Call Centre ramped up its services and resources very quickly, minimising disruption to service operations at a time when queries surged many folds because of uncertainties.
- **2023**  
The Judiciary Call Centre is fully integrated and serves court users from all three courts. 6-JUSTICE (6587 8423) is now the general enquiry number for SG Courts.



▲ Officers from the integrated Call Centre providing seamless assistance to court users.

## Judiciary Call Centre Celebrates a Decade of Serving Court Users

The Judiciary Call Centre celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 26 September. The event was graced by Ms Juthika Ramanathan, Chief Executive (Office of the Chief Justice) of SG Courts.

The Judiciary Call Centre will continue to innovate and transform to improve its efficiency and service standards, and enhance court users' access to justice.



▲ Staff celebrating the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Judiciary Call Centre.

## Pro Bono SG and CCTC Host Insightful Webinar on CDRT Process



On 30 August, Pro Bono SG held a webinar titled “Decoding CDRT — A Journey through the CDRT Process” to raise awareness of Community Disputes Resolution Tribunals (CDRT) proceedings amongst lawyers volunteering with Pro Bono SG’s Community Legal Clinics (CLC). At the CLC, volunteer-lawyers provide free basic legal advice on a one-to-one basis for 20 minutes, on issues spanning civil, criminal and family law. As legal representation is generally not allowed in the CDRT, CLC volunteer-lawyers may not be fully familiar with CDRT proceedings and how best to advise parties involved in such disputes.

The webinar was moderated by Ms Joan Lim-Casanova (Partner, K&L Gates Straits Law LLC), with District Judges Winston Man and Soh Weiqi from the Community Courts and Tribunals Cluster (CCTC) serving as panellists together with Mr Raj Joshua Thomas (Partner, Wee Swee Teow LLP and Nominated Member of Parliament). The 90-minute webinar covered various aspects of CDRT proceedings, such as the statutory definition of “neighbour”, the judge-led simplified process, the types of evidence that are typically submitted, evidential assessment by the tribunal, and the importance of mediation in resolving neighbour disputes. The webinar was very well received by more than 300 participants, with 99 per cent of them rating it as “Excellent” or “Good” overall.

The webinar is part of an on-going collaboration between Pro Bono SG and CCTC to help train CLC volunteer-lawyers on the functions of the specialist courts and tribunals in the CCTC. The CCTC will continue to leverage CLC’s reach and unique position in the community to enhance access to justice.

▲ The panellists (from left): Ms Joan Lim-Casanova, District Judges Winston Man and Soh Weiqi, and Mr Raj Joshua Thomas.



## Family Justice @ Heartlands Roadshow at Buona Vista Community Club

On 19 August, the Family Justice Courts (FJC) held their fifth Family Justice @ Heartlands (FJ@H) roadshow at the Buona Vista Community Club.

The FJ@H initiative is a collaboration with the Law Society of Singapore, the Ministry of Social and Family Development, and the People’s Association to equip, educate and empower citizens in family law, therapeutic social support and services.

The roadshow at the Buona Vista Community Club was warmly received by about 250 members of public, who were keen to hear about legal issues in Probate and Administration, Mental Capacity and

Lasting Power of Attorney which were addressed by representatives from the Law Society of Singapore and the Office of the Public Guardian. Representatives from FJC spoke on the new Probate eService as well as Registry services available.

FJC’s other partners from Pro Bono SG, My Legacy, and Agency for Integrated Care were also on hand to share the services provided by them.

▼ Minister Chan Chun Sing (sixth from left) showing his support for the event.



## Fifth Registrar's Engagement Series with the Family Bar

Registrar of the Family Justice Courts (FJC), Kenneth Yap, conducted his annual engagement with the Family Bar in November. This is the fifth Registrar's Engagement with the Family Bar which started in 2019. The engagement seeks to obtain feedback from members of the Family Bar on their concerns and to take the opportunity to share some of FJC's current and upcoming initiatives.

FJC held three engagement sessions with the Family Bar; the first two sessions were held virtually while the third session was held in person. Over 50 lawyers attended the sessions.

The focus of this year's engagement was on the substantive and procedural access to justice for litigants. The Judicial Officers from FJC updated the Family Bar on the upcoming introduction of Therapeutic Justice Triage tools. Registrar also sought the Family Bar's views on their concerns regarding

the introduction of the new Family Justice Rules. The sharing and discussions yielded a range of ideas and suggestions for future exploration. The Family Bar also had their queries addressed by the Registrar and District Judges.

To further address concerns by the Bar, FJC will be holding a seminar on the new Rules in January 2024 to allow for greater engagement with the Family Bar.



## NOTABLE VISITS

## Beijing and Shanghai Lawyers Visit the Singapore International Commercial Court

With the increasing confidence that a Singapore International Commercial Court (SICC) judgment be given effect in civil law jurisdictions such as China, two delegations of lawyers from Beijing and Shanghai visited the SICC separately to find out more about the SICC and its differentiating factors from other dispute resolution options.

The Shanghai and Beijing lawyers who visited on 24 October and 27 October respectively, were given insights of the growing potential of the SICC as a neutral venue to resolve cross-border commercial

disputes. The two delegations were particularly interested in the unique features of the SICC such as foreign representation and how an SICC judgment could be recognised and enforced in China.



## Judiciary National Day Awards Investiture 2023

The Judiciary National Day Awards Investiture 2023 was held on 9 November to honour officers who received this year's National Day Awards, National Awards (COVID-19) and COVID-19 Resilience Medals.

The National Day Awards pay tribute to officers for their service to the nation. A total of 29 recipients from the Singapore Courts and the Judicial Service Commission Secretariat received the National Day honours in six award categories this year.

The National Awards (COVID-19) and the COVID-19 Resilience Medals were presented to individuals and teams who had made significant contributions in Singapore's fight against COVID-19. A total of 21 recipients from the Singapore Courts received the National Day honours in the fight against COVID-19 in five award categories this year.

### NATIONAL DAY AWARD RECIPIENTS

#### MERITORIOUS SERVICE MEDAL Supreme Court

- Justice Chan Seng Onn (nominated by Ministry of Manpower)

#### PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION MEDAL (SILVER) Family Justice Courts

- Ms Jen Koh  
Deputy Registrar

#### Supreme Court

- Ms Chong Chin Chin  
Senior Assistant Registrar

#### Singapore Courts

- Ms Wee Puay Hwa (Venetia)  
Director, Human Resource Management, Corporate Services

#### PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION MEDAL (BRONZE) State Courts

- Ms Dora Tay Joo Ling  
District Judge

#### Family Justice Courts

- Mr Chiah Chi Pin Daniel  
Deputy Director, Family Protection and Support

#### COMMENDATION MEDAL Singapore Courts

- Ms Tan Siew Hoon  
Assistant Director, Language Resources, Infrastructure and Court Resources
- Mr Tay Kai Boon  
Senior Assistant Director, Service Excellence, Communications and Service Excellence
- Mr Seah Chin Chye (David)  
Assistant Director, Criminal Courts

#### EFFICIENCY MEDAL State Courts

- Mr Muhammad Akram Bin Amat Tugiman  
Manager, Office of the Registrar / Bailiff
- Ms Yap Wee Loo Carol  
Manager, Judge's Chambers, Corporate Services

#### LONG SERVICE MEDAL Singapore Courts

- Mr Tan Wui Teck (Dexter)  
Director, Revenue Management and Procurement, Finance and Procurement
- Ms Goh Cheng Hsien  
Deputy Director, Revenue Management, Finance and Procurement
- Mr Phoon Wing Oon (Jason)  
Senior Language Executive, Infrastructure and Court Resources
- Ms Wong Yin Ling  
Deputy Head Interpreter, Chinese Section, Infrastructure and Court Resources
- Ms Goh Ah Peng (Lynn)  
Manager, Procurement, Finance and Procurement
- Ms Haryati Bte Sungit  
PA to Chief Communications Officer, Corporate Services
- Ms Wong Loo Seng  
Assistant Manager, Human Resource Management, Corporate Services

#### Supreme Court

- Ms Chang Siew Teen  
Director, Registry (Operations)
- Mr Azhar Bin Johari  
Court Orderly, Corporate Services
- Ms Da'ahliah Binte Samsuri  
Secretary, Corporate Services
- Mr Ishak Bin Ali  
Court Orderly, Corporate Services

#### State Courts

- Mr Ow Yong Tuck Leong  
District Judge
- Mr Ha Yeong Sheng  
Senior Director, Legal, Community Courts and Tribunals
- Ms Ling Feng Yong Carol  
District Judge
- Mr Loh Yew Hock  
Deputy Director, Data Analytics and Research, Strategic Planning and Technology
- Ms Rita Anthony  
Assistant Director, Court Dispute Resolution
- Mr Eswaran s/o Balasubrahaniam  
Senior Executive, Office of the Registrar / Bailiff

#### Judicial Service Commission Secretariat

- Mr Mohammad Joffri Bin Kassim  
Office Services Officer



NATIONAL AWARDS (COVID-19) AND COVID-19 RESILIENCE MEDAL RECIPIENTS

**PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION MEDAL (SILVER)  
(COVID-19) AND COVID-19 RESILIENCE MEDAL**

**Supreme Court**

- Ms Cheng Pei Feng  
Senior Assistant Registrar
- Mr Lee Yeow Wee (David)  
Senior Assistant Registrar

**State Courts**

- Ms Jasbendar Kaur d/o Resham Singh  
District Judge
- Ms Chee Min Ping  
District Judge

**Family Justice Courts**

- Mr Soh Wen Yan (Darryl)  
District Judge
- Ms Tan Shin Yi  
District Judge

**PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION MEDAL (BRONZE)  
(COVID-19) AND COVID-19 RESILIENCE MEDAL**

**State Courts**

- Mr Liu Junhao (Ethan)  
(Currently with Ministry of Health [MOH])

**COMMENDATION MEDAL (COVID-19) AND  
COVID-19 RESILIENCE MEDAL**

**State Courts**

- Ms Lum Baoling, Georgina  
District Judge
- Mr Peter Lo  
District Judge
- Ms Lau Qiuyu  
District Judge

**THE PUBLIC SERVICE MEDAL (COVID-19) AND  
COVID-19 RESILIENCE MEDAL**

**Supreme Court**

- Justice Kannan Ramesh  
Judge of the Appellate Division for his role as  
Member of COVID-19 Contractual Relief and  
Simplified Insolvency Programme
- Mr Tan Ken Hwee  
Chief Transformation and Innovation Officer for his work  
in the TechLaw.Fest Organising Committee (nominated  
by Singapore Academy of Law)

**COVID-19 RESILIENCE MEDAL**

**Singapore Courts**

- Ms Tan Ling Ling (Jasmine)  
Senior Assistant Director, Internal Audit
- Ms Wu Limin  
Assistant Director, Internal Audit
- Mr Chan Yee Loong Noah  
Assistant Director, Strategic Communications  
(nominated by MOH)

**Supreme Court**

- Mr Phang Hsiao Chung  
Deputy Registrar
- Ms Ng Teng Teng, Cornie  
Senior Assistant Registrar
- Ms Chong Chin Chin  
Senior Assistant Registrar

**State Courts**

- Ms Tan Bee Neo, Melissa  
District Judge
- Mr Chow Phone Ee (Aston)  
Manager, Strategic Planning and Organisational  
Development, Strategic Planning and Technology

**Family Justice Courts**

- Mr Tan Kok Keong Kelvin  
SPRD, Family Justice Courts  
(currently with MOH)



# Media Briefing on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in the Singapore Courts



▲ Justice Aedit Abdullah sharing on SG Courts' collaboration with American legal AI start-up Harvey.

On 26 September, the Singapore Courts (SG Courts) conducted a briefing session for the local mainstream media at the Supreme Court, focusing on the integration of generative artificial intelligence (AI) within the justice system. This initiative comes in response to the increasing number of self-represented persons (SRPs) in the courts each year. The adoption of generative AI aims to offer an alternative form of legal assistance to those unable to afford traditional legal representation, thereby enhancing their understanding of legal procedures and facilitating greater access to justice.

Access to Justice (A2J) Programme Director Mohammed Jalees opened the media briefing by outlining the evolving understanding of the Judiciary's role as an increasingly important systemic role and the development of its A2J Framework. For the second segment, Chief Transformation and Innovation Officer (CTIO) Tan Ken Hwee updated the various initiatives that SG Courts have implemented to meet the needs of court users as well as ongoing efforts to study how generative AI could help the legal industry. Justice Aedit Abdullah, Judge in charge

of transformation and innovation in the Judiciary, wrapped up the media briefing by touching on the Judiciary's recent collaboration with American legal AI start-up Harvey, where a two-year Memorandum of Understanding was signed between SG Courts and Harvey to develop a generative AI programme to guide SRPs through the legal processes in the Small Claims Tribunals.



▲ CTIO sharing SG Courts' initiatives to meet the needs of court users.

## DBS, Singapore Courts and National Council of Social Service Unveil Four Winners from “Hackathon for a Better World 2023”

The “Hackathon for a Better World 2023”, co-organised by the Singapore Courts (SG Courts), DBS, and the National Council of Social Service (NCSS), announced its four winning teams on 17 October.

The event, which focused on building a more mentally-resilient society, saw 27 teams participate, with one of SG Courts’ teams winning the “Most Feasible” Award. The project, MindMatters, is an online feedback platform that allows employees to anonymously discuss mental well-being issues and track the actions taken in response.

Other winning projects included an AI-powered Microsoft Outlook plug-in (“Most Innovative” Award) from Rajah & Tann LLP to facilitate feedback and guidance for junior lawyers, an app called Therapal (“Most Life-changing” Award) from the Legal Aid Bureau to help professionals assess and address mental health issues in their clients, and a project from DBS called ChatR! (“Most Human-centred” Award)



▲ A winning team presenting their project at the awards presentation and solutions showcase.

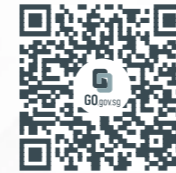
aimed at strengthening communication between parents and children through having mailboxes, and engaging and posting cards at home.

The four winning teams received their prizes from Justice Aedit Abdullah, Ms Tan Li San (CEO, NCSS) and Mr Lam Chee Kin (Group Head, Legal Compliance and Secretariat, DBS).

▼ The four winning teams and their project presentations.



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## Behind the Scenes with Assistant Registrars in the Employment Claims Tribunals



LEON TAN



SARAH CHIANG

Assistant Registrars  
Employment Claims Tribunals  
State Courts

The Employment Claims Tribunals (ECT) deal with employment related claims such as non-payment of salary and wrongful dismissal. In this issue, we chat with Assistant Registrars (AR) Leon Tan and Sarah Chiang.

Leon joined the Community Courts and Tribunals Cluster (CCTC) in January 2021 and was appointed as an AR in the Small Claims Tribunals (SCT) and ECT. Outside of work, he teaches part-time as an adjunct lecturer in Temasek Polytechnic's (TP) Diploma in Legal Executive Studies and mentors students from TP's Diploma of Law and Management. During his free time, Leon indulges in his

hobbies such as reading books on fiction or theology, cooking, and studying about and collecting mechanical watches.

Sarah has been with the CCTC since October 2019, and is also appointed as an AR and Tribunal Magistrate with the SCT. She finds much fulfilment in resolving disputes holistically between parties at an early stage of the proceeding by ascertaining each party's concerns and interests, which may involve non-case-related considerations. Outside work, she enjoys running and competing with her dog in agility competitions.

### What are your responsibilities?

**L:** My primary responsibilities are threefold. The first is to try to facilitate a settlement between the parties. The second is, where settlement is not possible, to conduct pre-trial proceedings, which are also known as Case Management Conferences (CMCs), effectively using appropriate directions tailored to meet the needs of the case to ensure that it proceeds to trial

expeditiously. This may at times involve dispensing relevant legal information to self-represented persons (SRPs) to better enable their access to justice. The third is to dispose interlocutory applications (for example, applications filed at any stage of the proceedings where determination of the same does not involve the final disposal of the parties' rights) in a timely manner through the application of law.

**S:** As an AR with the ECT, I conduct CMCs at the ECT. I am mindful that these SRPs may not have attended any court proceeding in their life. Hence, it is an important part of my role to explain the ECT process and procedure to these parties so that they know what to expect and be better placed to prepare and present their claim/defence at trial. During a CMC, I also facilitate settlement discussions between parties. If parties are willing to settle without proceeding to trial, I will grant an Order of Tribunal recording the terms of settlement, which concludes the matter. If parties are unable to settle, I would give directions to parties on how to prepare their documents for trial, which includes submitting their witness statements and documentary evidence. I also brief parties to comply with any other procedural requirements.

### Describe a typical day at work.

**L:** Apart from presiding over CMCs, a typical day for me involves preparing for CMCs by checking through the parties' filings, identifying potential issues, making notes and conducting legal research where necessary.

**S:** On any given day, I deal with a handful of fresh CMCs. I prepare my cases by going through all case documents submitted by parties. I also make my own notes to highlight issues in each case. These may include whether the claim is within ECT's jurisdiction, was the claim properly filed by and against the correct party, and if all relevant and essential case documents have been submitted.

### Are there any misconceptions about the work you do?

**L:** One misconception sometimes held by SRPs is that they assume that the AR will adjudicate on the merits of a claim at the CMC stage. To address this, I will always provide an overview of the litigation process in the ECT at the first CMC so that SRPs better understand the different stages of litigation.

**S:** There are some parties who may come to the CMC with the expectation that as the AR, I could decide on the claim based on what they have stated at the CMC. I therefore explain to them the purpose of the CMC and my role as an AR. This is to address any misconception they may have. I have also encountered cases where wrongful dismissal claims were filed in the ECT but the claimants had not referred to the Tripartite Guidelines on Wrongful Dismissal. I will explain to the parties that the Employment Claims Act requires the ECT to consider those Guidelines when deciding any claim involving

a wrongful dismissal dispute. In appropriate cases, I suggest to the parties to go through the Guidelines in detail and seek legal advice, if necessary.

### What are some of the challenges that you face?

**L:** As legal representation is not allowed in the ECT, one challenge that I face is that SRPs are sometimes unable to identify and/or appreciate the issues (legal or otherwise) at hand. Hence, I have to be proactive in identifying issues and be able to explain them in a way that is understood by lay individuals. Another challenge that arises is that parties can at times get emotional either due to being anxious about the proceedings and/or upset by hearing from or seeing the opposing party. In such situations, while exhibiting empathy and patience, I would also adopt a calm but firm posture towards the parties to control the proceedings and de-escalate the tension.

**S:** When parties feel strongly about their case and emotions run high during the CMC, I maintain my composure to be in control of the proceedings and urge parties to remain calm.

### What are the critical qualities an AR should have?

**L:** Following from the above, for one to be an AR in the ECT, I believe one must have strong critical thinking skills, a good measure of patience and the ability to be firm and calm at the same time.

**S:** I believe that an AR should display empathy and understanding, and be patient with any party who may be emotional during the CMC when stating one's case yet be careful to maintain neutrality and not take sides with either party. We must always ensure that the CMC is conducted fairly and objectively. An AR should also be a people person, have good communication skills and be able to relate to parties who come from diverse backgrounds and all walks of life.

### What keeps you going?

**L:** What keeps me going is not just my passion for judicial work, but the knowledge that my work and role contributes towards making justice accessible in Singapore.

**S:** Seeing first-hand the weight lifted off the parties' shoulders when they reach a settlement. Even if parties may not be able to restore their previous employment relationship, I am glad to have played a part in helping them to find closure and move on with their lives.

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