

# JUDICIARY TIMES



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## HIGHLIGHTS

# State Courts Towers Officially Opens

They say it’s “better late than never”. The State Courts Towers was officially opened on 14 July, an event meant to be held two years earlier but rescheduled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Graced by Guest-of-Honour, former President Halimah Yacob, the milestone event was hosted by The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and witnessed by guests, including Minister Edwin Tong, Justices of the Supreme Court, senior members of government and legal community as well as key stakeholders that supported the design and construction of the Towers.

In his opening address, the Chief Justice said that the opening of the State Courts Towers in December 2019 marked a significant milestone to improve the delivery of justice and ensure accessibility to people in Singapore. This proved to be critical during the pandemic, when it was imperative for courts around the world to maintain access to justice despite physical access to the courts being restricted.

### Designed to Serve the Community

The State Courts Towers are equipped with facilities to handle the increasing workload of the State Courts and better serve court users. The courtrooms are outfitted with video-conferencing facilities for counsel, parties and witnesses to appear remotely. Special assistance is also available for court users with hearing and visual impairments with assistive listening systems and way



▲ Former President Halimah Yacob with senior management of the State Courts

finding capabilities incorporated in courtrooms and the Towers. All courtrooms come with platform lifts and low height service counters to facilitate access for those with mobility impairments.

Court users are also able to better connect with the available avenues for assistance. The HELP Centre at basement one hosts the Community Justice Centre, the Public Defender’s Office and Pro Bono SG. These services share a single front desk, which guides court users to the appropriate provider of legal and other aid, in both civil and criminal matters.

Presiding Judge of the State Courts, Justice Vincent Hoong, anchored this milestone further in his speech, “The one constant in the State Courts that will never change is our mission to ensure access to quality justice for all. In fulfilling this mission, we will ensure that the judiciary remains an institution worthy of the trust that our people have reposed in it.”



▲ Former President Halimah Yacob officially opens the State Courts Towers together with Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and Presiding Judge of the State Courts, Justice Vincent Hoong

## The State Courts Towers in Numbers



**178** metres high — the tallest government building in Singapore to date



**39** link bridges connecting the Court Tower and Office Tower



**53** Courtrooms



**54** Hearing chambers



**60** Solar panels installed on the roof

## From State Courts building to State Courts Towers

- **2011** An open design competition was launched for the construction of a new Subordinate Courts complex.
- **2013** The Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore conferred the Subordinate Courts Building conservation status.
- **2014** The Subordinate Courts were renamed the State Courts.
- **2019** The State Courts moved into the State Courts Towers, which retains the address of 1 Havelock Square.
- **2023** President Halimah Yacob officially opened the State Courts Towers.



▲ Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon delivering his speech

## Admission of Advocates and Solicitors — Mass Call 2023

A total of 432 newly minted Advocates and Solicitors were called to the Bar over three sessions at the Supreme Court auditorium on 21 and 22 August. This is the first time Mass Call is held in a fully physical format since 2019.

### Lawyering in the Age of AI

In his address at the first session of Mass Call 2023, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon outlined the impact of generative artificial intelligence (AI) on legal systems on two main aspects – (i) new legal tools; and (ii) new legal issues arising from generative AI.

Beyond legal practice, Chief Justice Menon touched on the likelihood of how these tools will play a key part in the efforts of the Singapore Courts to enhance access to justice, given the steady rise in the number of self-represented persons who navigate the justice system each year. Chief Justice Menon also shared how lawyers should respond to these significant shifts in the legal landscape arising from developments in AI and other emerging digital tools.

At the same session, President of the Law Society of Singapore, Mr Jason Chan, emphasised the

importance of upholding the Bar’s standards of ethical conduct and professional responsibility. He highlighted the embracement of a mindset of creativity, curiosity and constant learning from the beginning of one’s law career. Rather than legal knowledge alone, it is innovative solutions that will be the hallmark of legal practice for the current generation of lawyers.

Justices of the Court of Appeal, Justice Judith Prakash and Justice Tay Yong Kwang presided over the second and third sessions of Mass Call 2023.



▲ Applicants take a photo at the photo wall with their family and friends, the first time Mass Call has allowed guests in the hearing since the COVID-19 pandemic



Scan QR code for the Chief Justice’s speech

[go.gov.sg/mc23](https://go.gov.sg/mc23)

## Enhancing Accessibility for Probate Grant Applications

On 12 April, the Family Justice Courts (FJC) launched a new online service at the Family Justice @ Heartlands (FJ@H) event at One Punggol to assist self-represented persons to file their applications for a Grant of Probate.

The Probate eService provides a step-by-step guided process for an eligible named sole executor to prepare and submit the required documents to the FJC.

In line with the Judiciary’s vision in enhancing access to justice, the eService allows applicants to file applications online without the need to engage multiple touchpoints from different public agencies.

The launch is held in conjunction with the FJ@H initiative, an ongoing outreach effort to educate

citizens on family law and the availability of therapeutic social support and services. The session at One Punggol is the fourth in the series since its inception in 2020, with the latest held at Buona Vista Community Club in August.

“

We have simplified procedural steps and leveraged technology to facilitate direct online filing, which we hope will provide a more positive experience for self-represented persons tending to the affairs of their loved ones.”

Justice Debbie Ong  
Presiding Judge of the Family Justice Courts

### Key features



#### Eligibility

- Only available for sole executors who meet certain criteria, such as being above 21 years old, being a non-Muslim, and where the deceased has an estate value of ≤\$2 million.



#### Documents

- Allows users to pre-populate form fields using MyInfo and retrieve the deceased’s death information from available government records.



#### Process

- Guides applicants to prepare the required documents and subsequent filing in Court.



#### Accessibility

- Allows users to submit the documents electronically without a Service Bureau.
- Allows users to make payments of court fees and receive notices from the Court.

▼ Sharing session with members of the public at the launch



## Students Attend “A Day in Court” Seminar

The State Courts held their ‘A Day in Court’ (ADIC) student seminar for secondary school students on 4 July. A total of 125 secondary school students from 32 schools attended the seminar. The half-day programme also included group activities as well as an exclusive fireside chat and a Q&A session with district judges.

An annual outreach programme, ADIC provides the participating students a brief overview of Singapore’s criminal justice system, and aims to offer them a better understanding of the Singapore Judiciary, and the work undertaken by the State Courts.

Since its inception in 2014, ADIC has traditionally been a full-day physical event. After a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ADIC was held as a half-day virtual event in 2022. New content was also introduced to better align with the evolving consumption habits and social environment of youths.

ADIC 2023 was conducted in person, with a focus on harassment and cyberbullying matters that may help develop student leaders as champions against such unreasonable and intimidating behaviour.

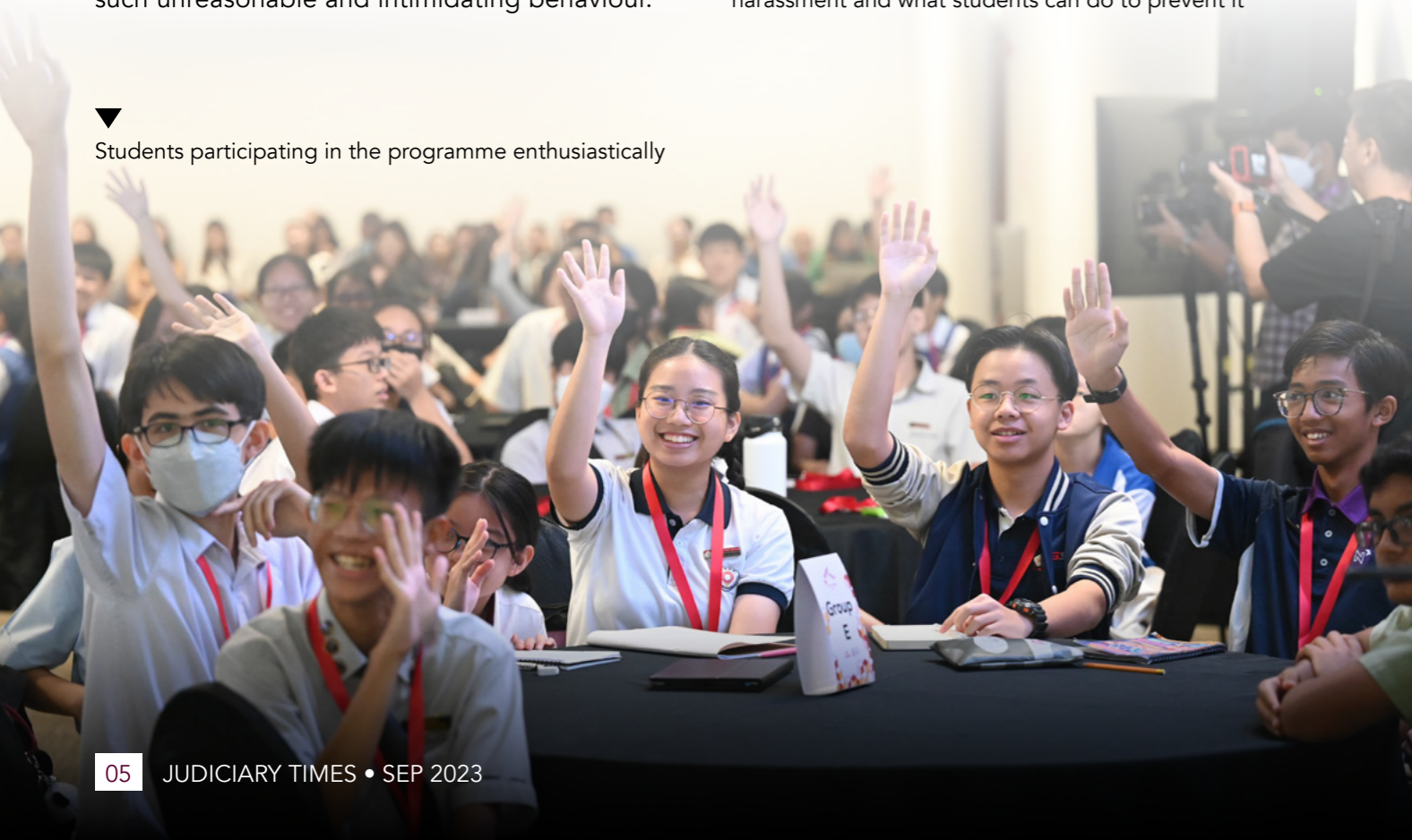


▲ Students working on various roleplay discussions



▲ Senior Court Counsellor Samantha Sim presenting on harassment and what students can do to prevent it

▼ Students participating in the programme enthusiastically



## Asynchronous Pre-Trial Conferences for Criminal Cases

The mode of conducting hearings continues to be a significant focal point for innovation. As part of the Singapore Courts’ continuing efforts to streamline proceedings and reduce the attendance of parties, the asynchronous hearing of crime pre-trial case conferences and criminal case disclosure conferences commenced on 12 June.

These asynchronous hearings involve the receipt of parties’ updates and requests for directions as well as the issuance of directions and fixing of matters on the Integrated Case Management System (ICMS) e-platform.

The introduction of asynchronous hearings has resulted in valuable time and resource savings for parties and the courts. Feedback from key stakeholders, including the Attorney-General’s Chambers and Criminal Defence Bar, will continue to be sought to refine and streamline processes.

### What is an asynchronous hearing?

Asynchronous describes events that do not occur at the same time. In this case, it describes the situation where parties to the legal action will not be required to appear before judge at the same time, or where the judge will issue orders and directions without requiring the applicant to appear before them.



## FJC All-In 2023



The Family Justice Courts (FJC) held its annual FJC All-In event on 31 July. The event was attended by FJC staff and invited guests from the Judiciary.

In her opening remarks, Presiding Judge of the FJC, Justice Debbie Ong was heartened to see that many of the efforts and initiatives arising from the FJC Workplan announced in March, were already in motion. These included furthering Therapeutic Justice (TJ) in a multi-disciplinary environment, facilitating court processes, and building capacity to better deliver justice.

Registrar Kenneth Yap shared the key priorities moving forward and what the upcoming revised organisational structure would mean for FJC. This was followed by sharing from the Judicial Heads-Designate of the Specialist Courts and Principal Director-Designate of the TJ Transformation Office on the exciting work ahead.

Two videos were played to amplify the sharing — the first on Women's Charter (Family Violence and Other Matters) (Amendment) Bill which provides amendments to better protect against family violence which provides amendments to better protect against family violence, and other purposes; and the second on Family Justice Reform Act, which introduces reforms to make family proceedings

simpler and more efficient, as well as facilitate more sustainable maintenance outcomes.

The event concluded with remarks by Deputy Presiding Judge Chia Wee Kiat. Using the analogy of a Ferrari and the FJC Bus, Mr Chia said that the FJC Bus was a better metaphor to describe what FJC staff members want to be. Unlike the fanciful Ferrari, the FJC Bus can take everyone on this important milestone journey and it leaves no one behind — the FJC is after all a family, for families.



Mr Chia shared that the FJC could expect to face challenges that will test its resolve, cohesiveness and ability to adapt. However, just as FJC has risen to many similar challenges in the past, there was no reason why it cannot be done again.

## Singapore Courts Give Back to Society



▲ Volunteers having a fun and meaningful day at Changi Beach Park



▲ Staff performing at the charity concert at the State Courts



▲ SHINE's booth at the Supreme Court

Be it an indoor or outdoor activity, the Singapore Courts found various ways to give back to society.

### Beach Cleaning

The annual beach clean-up was organised on 9 June to raise community awareness on environmental issues in support of World Environment Day on 5 June. Forty staff volunteers picked up trash strewn in and around Area C of Changi Beach Park. Volunteers also shared their thoughts on how everyone can play a part to help preserve the environment through more mindful daily activities.

### Read for Books

The Singapore Courts supported the annual "Read for Books" charity book drive in July to share the gift of reading with the less privileged, which saw a total of 405 staff participating to raise 40 books.

Staff coordinated group reading sessions and collectively log their reading hours to raise books for the beneficiaries — WondeRead, KidsREAD and Ready to READ @ NLB. A mass reading session was also held via Zoom on 28 July.

### National Day Charity Carnival

The National Day Charity Carnival (NDCC) was held over two weeks, beginning with online sales and culminating in a physical carnival at each Court over three consecutive days from 1 August.

Funds raised at the NDCC were funnelled to the Singapore Court's adopted charity — SHINE Children and Youth Services (SHINE), a charity that empowers children, youth and their families to reach their potential. In the lead up to NDCC, information about SHINE were shared with staff to raise awareness about their beneficiaries. SHINE was also invited to set up a booth at the carnivals for staff to learn more about them.

One of the highlights was the charity concert held on 3 August at the State Courts, which gave staff the opportunity to showcase their talents through song and dance performances. There was also a special guitar solo performance from Mr Damian Chan, a beneficiary from SHINE.

More than \$56,000 were raised through sales of items at the carnivals and charity concert tickets as well as direct donations.

## Bahrain and Singapore Courts Strengthen Bilateral Ties

The Supreme Judicial Council of the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Supreme Court of Singapore are exploring a collaboration framework to support Bahrain in establishing an international commercial court for the resolution of transnational commercial disputes. Termed the Bahrain International Commercial Court (BICC), it will be based principally on the model of the Singapore International Commercial Court (SICC).

The collaboration arose from an October 2022 visit led by H.E. Chief Justice S.H. Khaled bin Ali Al Khalifa to the Supreme Court of Singapore, to better understand Singapore's experience in building an international dispute resolution hub. The two Chief Justices exchanged views on the growing importance of international dispute resolution centres and cross-jurisdictional coordination, as well as on the establishment of the BICC.

During a visit to Bahrain from 8 to 9 May, Chief Justice Menon called on His Royal Highness Crown Prince Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Chief Justice Khaled bin Ali and H. E. Nawaf bin Mohamed Al-Moawda, Minister of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Endowments.

### Advancing a Common Aspiration

Chief Justice Khaled bin Ali and Chief Justice Menon signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Cooperation and a Memorandum of Guidance (MOG) on the Enforcement of Money Judgments. The MOU and MOG are the first signed between the Supreme Judicial Council of Bahrain and the Supreme Court of Singapore.

Chief Justice Khaled bin Ali affirmed that this unprecedented collaboration between Bahrain and Singapore to support the establishment of the BICC reflects the Bahrain judiciary's excellent relationship with the Singapore judiciary and advances a common aspiration of both judiciaries



to develop and promote efficient dispute resolution mechanisms for transnational disputes.

On the second day of his visit, Chief Justice Menon delivered a lecture, addressing the rise, role and features of the transnational system of commercial justice and explaining the central place of international commercial courts within the system.



▲ Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon called on His Royal Highness Crown Prince Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa during the visit to Bahrain in May (Photo credit: Courtesy of Bahrain Courts)



Scan to read Chief Justice Menon's Lecture

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

## Singapore and France Sign Two MOUs to Promote Bilateral Judicial Cooperation



▲ Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon signing the MOU for Judicial Cooperation

On 12 May, the judiciaries of Singapore and France signed two Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) to promote bilateral judicial cooperation.

The MOU for Judicial Cooperation signed by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and Mr Christophe Soulard, First President of the Court of Cassation of the French Republic affirms both courts' commitment to exchange experiences and information, promote regular consultations and participate at conferences or seminars on matters of common interest.

The MOU on Advancing Cooperation in Judicial Education and Research was signed by Ms Juthika Ramanathan, Chief Executive (Office of the Chief Justice) for the Singapore Judicial College and Ms Nathalie Roret, Director of the French National School for the Judiciary. This MOU aims to enhance cooperation in areas such as judicial training and programmes, the conduct of joint research, and the exchange of materials, information and experience on topics of interest. The MOU also aims to facilitate mutual study visits and attachments.

During the visit, Chief Justice Menon also addressed the third Annual France-Singapore Symposium on Law and Business, which was co-organised by the

French Embassy in Singapore and the Singapore Academy of Law.

This year's Symposium centred on legal technology, with policy and legal experts from France and Singapore discussing topics such as artificial intelligence, data protection, and policy coordination and cooperation between France and Singapore on technology more broadly.

“

The MOUs will promote collaboration and cooperation between our courts in judicial education and training, as well as judicial dialogue and exchanges on important areas such as the reform of our justice systems, the use of technology, and current and emerging trends in dispute resolution.”

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon



▲ Ms Nathalie Roret (left) and Ms Juthika Ramanathan signing the MOU on Advancing Cooperation in Judicial Education and Research



Scan to read Chief Justice Menon's Speech

[go.gov.sg/2kw41m](https://go.gov.sg/2kw41m)



▲ Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon (third from left) and the Presiding Judge of the State Courts, Justice Vincent Hoong (fourth from left) with the Singapore delegation at the JDRN meeting in New York City

## Global Network of Judiciaries Meet in NYC to Advance the Adoption of Judicial Dispute Resolution Process

The International Judicial Dispute Resolution Network (JDRN), which includes the Judiciary of Singapore as one of the founding members and secretariat, convened on 22 and 23 May in New York City for its second meeting.

Hosted by the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, the two-day meeting served as a platform for member judiciaries to share their common experiences and exchange ideas and expertise on leveraging the Judicial Dispute Resolution (JDR) process to break

down barriers to justice; promote the delivery of fair, proportionate and timely justice; and achieve better outcomes for parties.

The JDRN brings together judiciaries to advance the adoption of the JDR process around the world to enhance the administration and delivery of justice. Since the inaugural meeting in Singapore in 2022, the founding members of the JDRN have actively reached out to fellow judiciaries to create broader awareness of the JDRN, and to expand their network. The JDRN has also developed

the Best Practice Guide for the Establishment, Implementation and Promotion of the Judicial Dispute Resolution Process, which serves as the benchmark for the development and practice of the JDR process in jurisdictions which are keen to institutionalise it in their judicial systems.

The JDRN is now working on developing Practice Guides on Early Neutral Evaluation and Mediation - two key Court ADR modalities widely and successfully employed within their respective judicial systems such as in the State Courts of Singapore.

## Singapore Judiciary Signs MOUs with India and Hosts Inaugural Roundtable

On 7 September, the judiciaries of Singapore and India signed two Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) to promote bilateral judicial cooperation.

The two MOUs affirm the common cause of promoting access to justice and collaboration in judicial education and research between Singapore and India. The scope of collaboration

covers judicial education and training, leveraging technology to enhance access to justice, as well as promoting multilateral fora for judicial engagement.

The signing of the two MOUs at the Supreme Court of Singapore was witnessed by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon of Singapore and Chief Justice Dhananjaya Yashwant Chandrachud of India.

The Indian delegation comprising Chief Justice Chandrachud and judges were on an official visit to Singapore for the inaugural Singapore-India Judicial Roundtable, which will be held annually following the signing of the MOUs. These meetings will serve as a platform to exchange knowledge, discuss mutual areas of interest, and advance collaboration and cooperation between the two judiciaries.

▼ Mr Shri Atul Madhukar Kurhekar, Secretary General, Supreme Court of India shakes hands with Ms Juthika Ramanthan, Chief Executive, Office of the Chief Justice, after the MOU signing while the two Chief Justices look on



## Strengthening Singapore's Position as a Global Intangible Assets and IP Hub



In March, Justice Dedar Singh Gill was officially appointed to serve as a member of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) Advisory Board of Judges for the 2023-2024 term. This is the first time a sitting Intellectual Property (IP) Judge of the Supreme Court of Singapore has been invited by the WIPO to serve on its Advisory Board of Judges.

As a specialised agency of the United Nations with 193 member states, the WIPO is dedicated to developing a well-balanced, effective and accessible global IP ecosystem that promotes the protection of IP while safeguarding the public interest. Justice Gill joins eight other distinguished judges from across the globe to serve on the new Advisory Board of Judges, which provides guidance

and direction to WIPO's work with judiciaries to ensure its work serves the needs of judges across diverse judicial systems and traditions.

In today's fast-changing world driven by innovation and



▲ Justice Dedar Singh Gill speaking at the National Judicial Colloquium in the Philippines

entrepreneurship, the role of the judiciaries and IP judges within the IP ecosystems has become increasingly important. Together with Singapore's robust IP framework and legal infrastructure, Justice Gill's membership in the Advisory Board of Judges will further strengthen Singapore's position as a global intangible assets and IP hub, and promote the nation's IP jurisprudence.

Shortly after his appointment, Justice Gill was invited by WIPO to speak at the National Judicial Colloquium in the Philippines on 17 and 18 August. He shared his insights based on the perspective from Singapore on three topics: (i) fast track procedures on IP disputes (ii) trademark principles and/or infringement and (iii) online copyright infringement.

## Developments on the International Insolvency Front



▲ Justice Kannan Ramesh (far left) and Justice Aedit Abdullah (far right) at the fourth Conference of the Judicial Insolvency Network in Amsterdam with Judges from Australia, Bahrain, Brazil, Canada England and Wales and India

June was a busy month in the international insolvency sphere where a significant appointment and two important conferences took place.

Justice Kannan Ramesh was appointed as the seventh President of the International Insolvency Institute (III) with effect from 12 June 2023 at the III's 23rd Annual Conference in Amsterdam on 10 and 11 June. Justice Ramesh is the first Asian and the first Judge to be appointed to the top post in the III.

Justice Ramesh has been a member of the III since 2006 and,

until most recently, one of its Vice Presidents. Established in 2000, the III is a non-profit, limited-member organisation dedicated to advancing and promoting insolvency as a respected discipline in the international field. The III's membership is drawn from the most senior and respected insolvency practitioners, judges and academics in the world.

Alongside the III's Annual Conference, the fourth Conference of the Judicial Insolvency Network (JIN) was held in Amsterdam on 9 June. The JIN is a network of insolvency judges from across the world, constituted to provide judicial

thought leadership, to develop best practices, and to facilitate court-to-court communication and cooperation amongst national courts in cross-border insolvency and restructuring matters.

Justice Kannan Ramesh and Justice Aedit Abdullah represented Singapore as founding members of the JIN, and a team from the Supreme Court Registry serves on the Secretariat to the JIN.

The III's 24th Annual Conference and the fifth Conference of the JIN will be held jointly in Singapore in June 2024.



## Seventh Joint Judicial Conference



Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon led a delegation to the seventh Joint Judicial Conference (JJC) in Malaysia from 20 to 22 July, the first time the meeting was

held in person since the onset of the pandemic.

Themed "Criminal Justice System in ASEAN: Moving Towards A

More Compassionate Society", the conference saw the judiciaries of Brunei, Malaysia and Singapore come together to engage in meaningful discourse, exchange best practices, and develop a shared understanding on issues of mutual interest affecting the ASEAN region.

In his opening address, Chief Justice Menon said that the JJC has become a valuable platform for the judiciaries to share ideas and views on important topics of mutual interest since its inception in 2011. He recognised the foundational role of criminal justice in the justice systems and societies, hence underscoring its significance as a conference theme.

## Justice Abdullah Speaks at 14th Lujiazui Forum "Pujiang Night Talk" International Symposium

The Supreme Court of Singapore was invited to speak at the 14th Lujiazui Forum "Pujiang Night Talk" International Symposium held on 9 June. The theme of the Symposium was "Financial Openness and Cooperation and the Rule of Law Guarantee".

Justice Aedit Abdullah represented the Supreme Court of Singapore as a speaker. He spoke on areas including the need to uphold the rule of law vis-a-vis the liberalisation of financial markets, the role of the courts in fostering a stable financial system underpinning the broader economy.



The Symposium was held in conjunction with the annual Lujiazui Forum, a high-level

global discussion platform for the development of international financial cooperation.

## Seminar on Collaborative Contracting in the Delivery of Construction Projects: The International Experience

On 17 April, the Singapore International Commercial Court (SICC) hosted an event that explored the benefits and challenges of collaborative contracting in the construction industry, drawing on international experiences.

Held at the Viewing Gallery of the Supreme Court, panellists included President of the SICC, Justice Philip Jeyaretnam, as well as experts from various fields, including construction law, project management, and dispute resolution. They shared their insights on the importance



of collaboration in construction projects, the role of contracts in facilitating collaboration, and the challenges that arise in implementing collaborative

contracting. The event provided a valuable platform for industry professionals to exchange ideas and best practices on collaborative contracting.

## Supreme Court of Singapore and Administrative Court of Thailand Workshop on Digital Transformation and Organisation Management



Under the auspices of the Singapore-Thailand Civil Service Exchange

Programme, the Supreme Court of Singapore and the Administrative

Courts of Thailand held its annual workshop on 24 July.

Deputy Presiding Judge of the State Courts, Christopher Tan opened the session with a welcome remark. Chief Transformation and Innovation Officer Mr Tan Ken Hwee conducted the workshop along the theme of "Digital Transformation and the Future of Organisation Management". Ms Radaphat Chongthammakun, Director of Strategic Management Bureau, Office of the Administrative Courts of Thailand, facilitated the session.

### Visit by Chief Justice of Rwanda

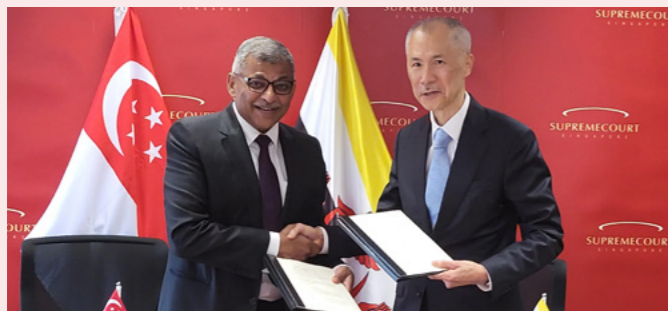
The Supreme Court of Singapore and Rwanda Supreme Court held their first in-person Bilateral Meeting between the Chief Justices in August.

Chief Justice of Rwanda, Dr Faustin Ntezilyayo, led a delegation to the Singapore Courts and other agencies from 16 to 18 August. In 2021, the Singapore and Rwanda Supreme Courts signed agreements to enhance judicial cooperation and enforce money judgments. Through the pandemic, the two judiciaries actively pursued collaborations in judicial cooperation, towards the common cause of access to justice and judicial excellence.



▲ Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and Dr Faustin Ntezilyayo at the Supreme Court

### Visit by Chief Justice of Brunei Darussalam



▲ Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and Chief Justice Dato Seri Paduka Steven Chong at the Supreme Court

Chief Justice Dato Seri Paduka Steven Chong led a delegation from the Supreme Court of Brunei Darussalam to the Singapore Courts on 17 and 18 July for the first in-person Bilateral Meeting between the Chief Justices.

Highlights of this high-level visit included the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding to promote bilateral judicial cooperation between the Singapore and Brunei judiciaries, including in areas of dispute avoidance and resolution.

### SICC Hosts Visitors of the Inaugural Singapore International Arbitration Centre Visitors Programme

On 5 April, the Singapore International Commercial Court (SICC) welcomed senior members of international law firms who were part of the inaugural Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC) Visitors Programme.

The visitors had the opportunity to learn about the structure and jurisdiction of the SICC, with presentations by the President of the SICC, Justice Philip Jeyaretnam. They also engaged with members of the Singapore Bench.



▲ Participants at one of the courtrooms in Supreme Court

The event provided a valuable platform for the visitors to engage with the Singapore Judiciary and gain a deeper understanding of the SICC's role in resolving international commercial disputes.

## Staff and Partner Recognised at the Public Sector Transformation Awards



▲ FJC receives the Service Delivery Excellence Award with other collaborator agencies

Singapore Courts were recognised at the Public Transformation Awards Ceremony on 5 July, winning in three award categories.

#### Bridging the Digital Divide

Family Justice Courts (FJC) received the Service Delivery Excellence Award that recognises exemplary agency-level initiatives that have demonstrated citizen-centricity, service innovativeness and a total organisational approach to service delivery, leading to improved service outcomes.

FJC worked with ServiceSG, a first-stop, WOG integrated physical service concierge to more than 500 services from 22 agencies, to extend the enforcement of maintenance orders at ServiceSG Centre Tampines Hub and ServiceSG Centre One Punggol. FJC officers support ServiceSG on complex enquiries and escalated cases encountered at their centres, helping less-tech savvy and vulnerable citizens to access court services.

#### Partnering for Better Access to Justice

Community Justice Centre (CJC) received the Star Partner Award, which recognises exemplary citizens and entities who have demonstrated a strong spirit of partnership with the nominating public agency, or as strong advocates for national initiatives.

CJC has been providing all forms of support (legal, information and social) to members of the public who require assistance in matters relating to the Courts.

It collaborates with the Courts and other agencies to provide easy access to justice, especially for those who are not financially well off. It looks at holistic solutions to help members of public who will have, or have or had any kind of interactions with the Court.

#### Advocate for Life-Long Learning

Mr Yong Jin Hong from the State Courts, was awarded the Exemplary SkillsFuture @ Public Service Award, which acknowledges his spirit of continuous learning and skills upgrading.

Mr Yong is a practitioner and advocate for learning. He attended various courses such as an intensive 6-month Data Champions Bootcamp programme and the Robotic Process Automation course to strengthen his knowledge on data science. The knowledge and skillsets learnt enabled him to perform his role more professionally.

#### Winners at a glance

The Service Delivery Excellence Award  
Family Justice Courts

Star Partner Award  
Community Justice Centre

Exemplary SkillsFuture @ Public Service Award  
Mr Yong Jin Hong, State Courts

## Case Study of Substituted Service via the Singpass app Inbox

On 1 September 2022, the Singapore Courts (SG Courts) introduced an additional electronic method of effecting substituted service of court documents for civil proceedings on the e-Litigation platform.

Law firm subscribers can select the additional 'eService' option on e-Litigation to send secure notifications to recipients via the Singpass app Inbox. Since the launch, the SG Courts have seen a steady uptake in the use of this mode of electronic means of substituted service in bringing court documents to the intended recipient's attention.

### The Case of the Missing Debtor

A case in mid-late 2022 shows how the Singpass suite of services can be used to reliably serve documents on an individual who may have been evading service. The case involved a creditor who had filed an Originating Application (Creditor's Bankruptcy Application) (the "OA") against a debtor who was difficult to locate.

Despite multiple attempts to personally serve the debtor with a Statutory Demand in April 2022, the creditor's law firm (through its process server) was unsuccessful in locating the debtor. The process server eventually posted the Statutory Demand at the front door of the debtor's address on in May 2022.

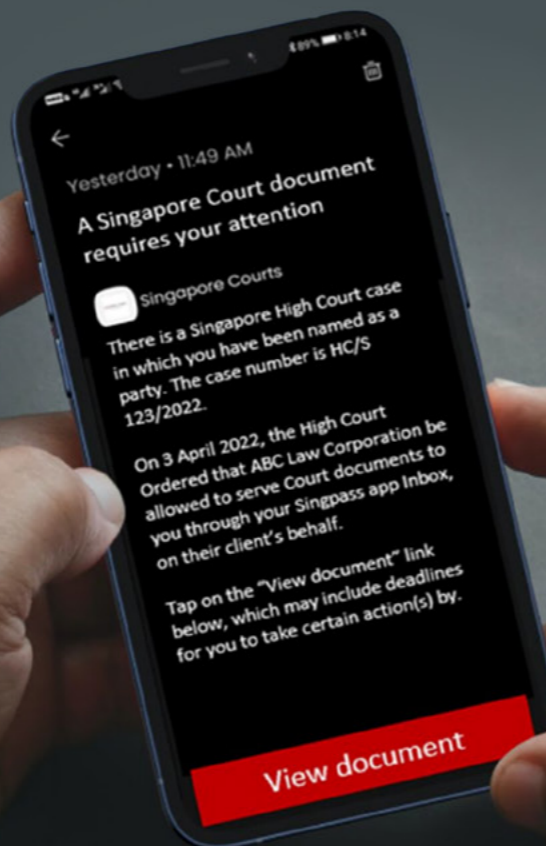
In September 2022, the creditor's solicitors made two failed attempts at personal service of the OA on the debtor. The creditor's solicitors then filed an affidavit in support of a Summons for Substituted Service, detailing various attempts to reach the debtor via known contacts, email addresses, mobile numbers, and social media platforms. All these attempts had failed, and the creditor decided to utilise the newly introduced method of substituted service: to serve the debtor the court documents via his Singpass app Inbox.

The creditor had the debtor's NRIC number and argued that only the debtor should be able to log into his Singpass app to access its contents and details. The court allowed the creditor's request, but with certain conditions.

In December 2022, within four days of the electronic service of the court documents via the Singpass app Inbox, the debtor showed up physically at the Service Bureau (Supreme Court) and filed a request for "re-fixing/ vacation of hearing dates".

This case demonstrates the effectiveness of leveraging technology to improve the efficiency of legal proceedings. The use of the Singpass app Inbox has been especially useful in cases where individuals may be evading service or are legitimately difficult to locate (e.g. due to change of address).

By using the Singpass app Inbox, claimants have been able to securely, cost-effectively, and discreetly serve the defendants with court documents and ensure that the legal proceedings could proceed as intended.



## SG Courts' Video — Serving the Community



The Singapore Courts' latest video highlights the Judiciary's role in ensuring equal and continuous access to justice for all and emphasises the commitment to uphold the highest standards of integrity, independence and transparency.

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## Behind the Scenes with A2J Workgroup Officers



**MOHAMMED JALEES**  
Director  
A2J Programme Office

The Access to Justice (A2J) Programme Office was established earlier this year to drive the Singapore Courts' transformation into a more outward-facing and user-centric institution, with a committed focus on securing access to justice.

In addition to the core team, an A2J Workgroup was formed in January where more than 25 officers across the three Courts signed up to work on pilot projects. In this issue, we chat with Mohammed Jalees, Maxine Wong and Sangeeta Devi Defi Raj from the Workgroup.



**MAXINE WONG**  
Judicial Associate  
Community Courts and Tribunals  
State Courts

### What's your role in the A2J Workgroup?

**J:** I am the Chairman of the A2J Workgroup. I created it as a way to spur ground-up, officer-led efforts for Access to Justice across the three courts, and to complement the work of the A2J Programme Office which I lead.

**M:** I am part of a team of volunteers who assist Jalees in a series of projects that each tackle an issue that involves access to justice. All the projects are running concurrently and each deal with a specific pain point of court users. The goal is to continually innovate and improve our systems to have better access to justice.

**S:** My role is to research on court processes. I find out public pain points and make recommendations for improvements. I also set timeline to work on pilot projects, track their results and plan for long-term operationalisation of successful pilot projects.

### What projects are you involved in?

**J:** We have identified more than 20 projects and we have kicked off about 10 of them this year. I am involved in all of them as a coach, advisor and support officer!

**M:** I am currently involved in two projects — the first focuses on equipping and assisting Frontline Service Officers (FSO) at the State Courts Service Hub with

tools and resources to aid court users who need help in filing their claims at the various courts and tribunals. The other project focuses on helping court users navigate the system and processes when filing a Magistrate's Complaint by giving them resources on the pre-filing and filing procedures as well as possible outcomes.

**S:** I am working on a project for the Night Court to streamline the process and enhance the end-to-end experience for users.

### What motivates you to drive Access to Justice?

**J:** I joined the Public Service 17 years ago to contribute in making people's lives better. This mission holds even more dear when it is about Access to Justice, where people seek a fair hearing for the wrongs they may have encountered. I am motivated to do my best for people who find it difficult to access the justice system, through adopting a user-centric perspective.

**M:** As a lawyer, I personally believe that legal processes and aid should be easily accessible for all especially since it is a constitutional right that all persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law. I also believe in the Judiciary's quest to enhance access to justice for every citizen.

**S:** I feel happy when I see that my work makes a positive impact on court users, who are able to understand and access our services easily.

### What are some valuable skills or lessons that you have learnt?

**J:** I am impressed with the entire mechanism of the courts, and the dedication of our judges and court administrators. Each day, I learn how the justice system works, new legal terms and nuances, and best of all, make new friends from all levels of the organisation.

**M:** Through on the ground pilot testing, I have learnt to analyse the pain points of court users more effectively. When working on policies and trying to innovate to improve systems, it is valuable to understand what is happening on the ground daily in order to better zone in on the issues faced by court users as well as our own officers when providing aid to court users.

**S:** I have learnt that it's important to use plain language to explain court processes. Court users will be able to better understand the information without reaching out to our various contact points for elaboration.

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

**J:** What I am most excited to share is the value of understanding court users and their "service journeys" through our system, and how we should be able to speak with court users to discover their pain points, create new solutions through low resolution prototypes, do user testing and implement innovations. These are relatively new ways of working in our Judiciary, but I believe that over time, more officers will be attuned to this way of thinking and doing. This will enable us to move towards adopting a "service provider" role, as an institution discharged with delivering justice.

**M:** The current resources and systems have gone through years of refining to better aid court users and help them navigate court processes more effectively. The challenge is to further improve on existing resources and systems while working around the limitations that we have. This requires a lot of creativity and out-of-the box thinking. Whilst there will never be a perfect system, it is encouraging to see many stakeholders who are dedicated to continuous innovation as they believe in the importance of access to justice.

**S:** We reach out to the court users to find out their pain points through surveys so that we could fine tune and enhance further for the betterment of all court users. However, this is challenging because not everyone is willing to share and provide their feedback on our processes.

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