

JUDICIARY TIMES

Opening of
Legal Year 2018:
Towards a Future-
Ready Legal Sector

Twelve Key Initiatives
Announced At
State Courts
Workplan 2018

The Family Justice
Courts Workplan 2018:
In the Next Phase



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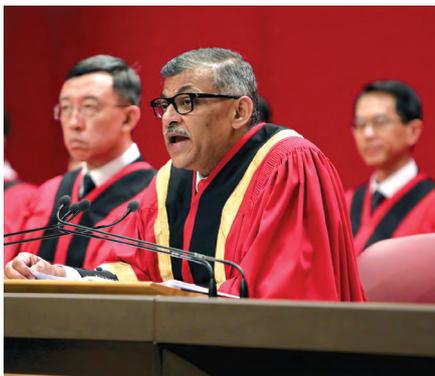
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OPENING OF LEGAL YEAR 2018: TOWARDS A FUTURE - READY LEGAL SECTOR



The Opening of the Legal Year on 8 January was marked by the traditional ceremony that took place in the morning at the Supreme Court Auditorium, followed by the Judiciary Dinner held at the Istana.

After Attorney-General Lucien Wong and Mr Gregory Vijayendran, President of the Law Society, gave their speeches, The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon delivered his response outlining the key developments and work done by the Courts in the past year, in areas such as enhancing access to justice and strengthening international partnerships.

Chief Justice also highlighted the challenges ahead for the legal fraternity and the courts, which included the potential disruptive force of technology and the need to raise the professional standards of lawyers, and what had been done to address and turn them into opportunities for the legal community as a whole. The Ceremony was also attended by the newly-appointed International Judges, as well as the Chief Justice of Indonesia and Malaysia.

A snapshot of Chief Justice's response is presented on the following page:

Opening of the Legal Year 2018 Response by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon

Enhancing access to justice

- Explore possibility of "low bono" model of Family Law Assistance Scheme to help those in "sandwich class"
- Real-time reporting for Court of Appeal cases from February 2018
- Employment Claims Tribunals for affordable and expeditious dispute resolution
- Community Justice and Tribunals System allows online management of small claims

Strengthening International Partnerships

- More memoranda of cooperation with judicial networks regionally and globally and participation in international forums
- Establishment of an Annual Singapore-China Judicial Roundtable
- Chief Justice to assume Presidency of ASEAN Law Association for a 3-year term
- Launch of ABL's publication - Recognition & Enforcement of Foreign Judgments in Asia

Innovation and Technology

- Courts of the Future Taskforce – IT initiatives to develop self-help solutions for litigants, for an efficient and effective justice system, and to adopt intelligent use of data
- TechLaw.Fest 2018 - First time technology law and legal tech communities are brought together
- LawNet Community - First online nexus for all things law-related – to be launched soon
- Future Law Innovation Programme (FLIP) - to assist law firms in innovating new ways of delivering legal services - well received by law firms

Raising Professional Standards

- Charting course in legal education to develop resilient and competent law graduates for modern legal practice.
- Multi-disciplinary training for family law practitioners
- LIFTED - Scheme to help lawyers plan their professional development - now part of SkillsFuture
- Specialist accreditation scheme to be extended to maritime and shipping lawyers

The Judiciary Dinner was held at the Istana on the same evening of the Ceremony. For the first time, Her Excellency President Halimah Yacob and Mr Mohamed Abdullah Alhabshee graced the Judiciary Dinner as the Guests-of-Honour of the event. Hosted by Chief Justice and Mrs Menon, the Dinner was well attended by the Judiciary and invited guests from all walks of the legal community.



JUDGES AND INTERNATIONAL JUDGES ATTEND SICC 2018



Judges and International Judges (IJs) came together at the Singapore International Commercial Court (SICC) Conference 2018 on 9 and 10 January. The conference – the fourth since its inception – is an annual event convened to review the work of the SICC, and to set further strategic goals for its development.

A highlight for the SICC was the appointment of four new IJs to the SICC Bench and the re-appointment of eleven IJs who would be serving a second term. The four new IJs are highly respected jurists, not just in their home jurisdictions, but internationally as well. They are:

- I. Justice Robert French, retired immediate past Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia
- II. Justice Beverly McLachlin PC, retired immediate past Chief Justice of Canada
- III. Justice Lord Neuberger of Abbotsbury, retired immediate past President of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom
- IV. Justice Sir Jeremy Cooke, former Judge-in-charge of the Commercial Court of England and Wales

The Supreme Court of Judicature (Amendment) Bill was passed in Parliament on 9 January, the first day of the Conference. The Bill clarified that the SICC has the same jurisdiction as the High Court to hear proceedings relating to international commercial arbitration under the International Arbitration Act. It also removed the pre-action certification procedure. These changes are expected to come into force later this year.

The conference also highlighted how the Supreme Court and the SICC have strengthened judicial ties with a number of foreign courts in 2017 through signing various Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) relating to judicial cooperation and Memoranda of Guidance (MOG) on the enforcement of money judgments. The conference concluded with a dinner on 9 January and with much to look forward to this year as the SICC continues to strengthen its premise as an effective, trusted neutral destination for international dispute resolution.

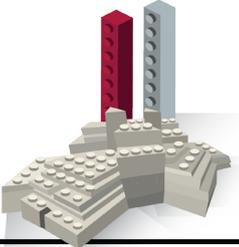
TWELVE KEY INITIATIVES ANNOUNCED AT STATE COURTS WORKPLAN 2018



Presiding Judge of the State Courts, Justice See Kee On, announced 12 key initiatives at the State Courts Workplan 2018 on 9 March. The theme this year was “Shaping Tomorrow’s Justice”, which reflects State Courts’ continuous quest to prepare and be ready for the opportunities and challenges presented by the changing landscape and environment that they operate in. Three broad themes underpinned the initiatives:

- Staying responsive in an evolving landscape
- Refining court processes
- Enhancing user experience

They comprise different strategies that streamline and synergise court processes, as well as build upon the foundation of addressing the needs of the people they serve.



SHAPING TOMORROW'S JUSTICE

STATE COURTS WORKPLAN 2018



STAYING RESPONSIVE IN AN EVOLVING LANDSCAPE

Pre-action protocols for town council prosecutions

Two pre-action protocols for non-payment of service and conservancy charges and breaches of town council by-laws, providing a framework for town councils to negotiate and engage with an offender, before initiating criminal proceedings as a last resort



REFINING COURT PROCESSES

“Documents-only” civil trials and assessments of damages

An efficient, cost-effective and time saving option for litigants to conduct their civil trials and assessment of damages hearings with documents only



ENHANCING USER EXPERIENCE

i-connect

A business centre with meeting and self-service facilities for court users which also serves as a test-bed for a similar set-up in the new State Courts Towers; also houses the family-connect @ State Courts set up to assist families of offenders facing imprisonment terms



ENHANCING USER EXPERIENCE

Practitioner’s Guide to Assessment of Damages in Defamation Actions

The first local publication which tracks all the defamation awards made in the Supreme Court and State Courts from 2006 for lawyers, litigants and the Courts to use as reference



ENHANCING USER EXPERIENCE

FRIENDS Engaging and Supporting (FRENs) scheme

A befriender programme that links offenders sentenced to imprisonment terms of less than 12 months with volunteers who will accompany the offenders in their rehabilitation journey



ENHANCING USER EXPERIENCE

Pre-action protocol for defamation actions

A pre-action framework to guide parties on the conduct of their defamation suits



ENHANCING USER EXPERIENCE

Additional dispute resolution tool – Conciliation

Another alternative dispute resolution tool to help parties reach an optimal solution for their disputes through facilitation by a Judge-conciliator



ENHANCING USER EXPERIENCE

Consolidated management of volunteer mediators

Centralised management of State Courts’ volunteer mediators to enhance parity in terms of the volunteers’ contributions, fulfilment requirements, awards and recognition



ENHANCING USER EXPERIENCE

Speech Transcription System

An instant transcription system that recognises human voice and transcribes speech and oral evidence into text in real time, allowing parties and the Courts to conduct their cases in a more effective and expeditious manner



ENHANCING USER EXPERIENCE

Facilitating early resolution of criminal cases through Alternative Dispute Resolution

Extending judge-led-mediation and neutral evaluation to minor regulatory offences that involve straightforward and less complex issues of law to facilitate an early resolution of such cases



ENHANCING USER EXPERIENCE

Capacity-building for Judicial Officers and Court Administrators

A structured framework to enhance Judges’ bench skills and to develop their adaptiveness, and initiatives to develop the skill sets and enhance the professional development of Court Administrators



ENHANCING USER EXPERIENCE

Streamlining Magistrate’s Complaint process

A one-stop centre for Magistrate’s Complaints for the complainant to have a holistic view of the options and support available for dealing with his complaint, and an interactive online self-assessment tool to guide potential complainants in assessing if the Magistrate’s Complaint process is the appropriate forum to address their grievances

THE FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS WORKPLAN 2018: IN THE NEXT PHASE



The Family Justice Courts (FJC) held its fourth Annual Workplan event, since its inception, on 28 February at the Supreme Court Auditorium. This year also marks the first FJC Workplan event under Justice Debbie Ong who took over from Justice Valerie Thean as the Presiding Judge of the FJC (PJFJC) on 1 October 2017.

More than 300 attendees comprising guests from Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), Ministry of Law (MinLaw), Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC), Supreme Court, State Courts, law firms and Family Service Centres as well as FJC staff turned up for the event. Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon was the Guest-of-Honour for the event.

The Workplan commenced with the annual workplan speech delivered by Justice Ong. In the speech, Justice Ong laid out the FJC's priorities and plans for the next phase of family justice in Singapore. Justice Ong began her speech by highlighting the unique challenges of family justice in which the presence of children necessitates that the Court adopts a less adversarial approach in conflict resolution.

To meet FJC's unique challenges in the next phase, Justice Ong shared that an inter-agency committee to Review and Enhance Reforms in the Family Justice System (RERF) was established late last year in which she co-chairs with the Permanent Secretaries of MinLaw and MSF. The committee will build on previous work to further strengthen the family justice system.

A key priority which Justice Ong highlighted was the simplification of the Family Justice Rules and processes, especially targeted at how elderly and vulnerable litigants may be further assisted. This entailed looking into the design of suitable court processes, information technology systems and physical infrastructure to meet the needs of this vulnerable segment of users. Other initiatives in the pipeline which Justice Ong mentioned include an online dispute resolution (ODR) system, a Family Law Assistance Scheme (FLAS), Family Law Practitioner Accreditation and training for family judges. She concluded her speech by recognising the passion and commitment shown by the FJC staff, the family bar and community agency-partners.

After the tea reception, the external guests took their leave while FJC staff returned to the auditorium for a dialogue session with Chief Justice and Justice Ong, moderated by Deputy Presiding Judge and Registrar, Mr Chia Wee Kiat. It was a lively and engaging session which staff participated enthusiastically, taking this rare opportunity to seek Chief Justice's views on matters related to family justice. One of the key takeaways from the dialogue was Chief Justice's vision of family justice:

“My vision for family justice would be that we have come to be seen as a place where we help write better futures because we bring that understanding, that compassion and sympathy that love for the people and work that we are doing.”

INTERNATIONAL COURT AND TRIBUNAL ADMINISTRATORS ATTEND THE EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME



The second run of the Executive Leadership Programme for court and tribunal administrators was held from 26 February to 2 March. Jointly organised by the State Courts and the National University of Singapore Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKY School), a total of 33 participants, comprising judges, senior registrars, and court and tribunal administrators from Australia, India, Kenya, Myanmar, Saint Lucia, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Singapore attended the extensive five-day programme.

Distinguished academics from the LKY School as well as senior management members of the State Courts delivered lectures on a broad range of topics – aimed at promoting excellence in court leadership, governance and management of court services, equipping the participants with key inter-disciplinary leadership skills to help them become effective leaders and achieve high performance in the work they do.

A learning journey to the State Courts also provided the opportunity for participants to gain a deeper insight into processes and services in the State Courts. Participants even got a glimpse of the Night Court operations, which involve regulatory offences.



Some of the programme's key themes included ethics and core values, organisational culture, learning and collaboration, and technology. Like its inaugural run, the programme was well-received by the participants.

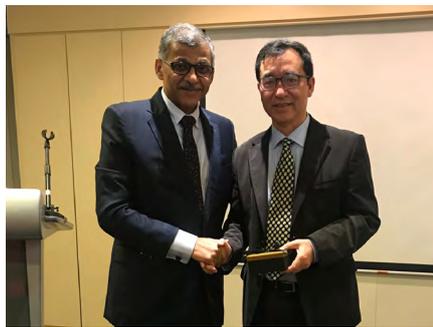
More information on the next run of the Executive Leadership Programme will be available later this year.

IT DEVELOPMENTS AND ITS IMPACT ON LAW



The “IT Developments and its Impact on Law” talk was conducted on 6 March at the Supreme Court.

The two-hour session, presented by Professor Robert Deng Huijie from the Singapore Management University (SMU) and Mr Yeong Zee Kin, Deputy Commissioner, Personal Data Protection Centre (PDPC), was attended by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, Judges and Judicial Officers from the Supreme Court and State Courts.



The talk centred on the latest developments in IT, including smart contract, how bitcoin and blockchain technology work and its related cybersecurity implications. The talk ended with a panel discussion that attempted to shed light on the legal implication of blockchain technologies and its legal significance by identifying the legal fields it will disrupt.

SMU SCHOOL OF LAW HOSTS LUNCH FOR SUPREME COURT BENCH



The Singapore Management University (SMU) School of Law hosted lunch on 14 March for members of the Supreme Court Bench to engage legal academia on prevailing legal issues and the administration of justice.

Dean, Goh Yihan, delivered a short welcome address before the commencement of lunch.

This is the 2nd luncheon, following the inaugural run hosted by Supreme Court in 2017. SMU and the Supreme Court take turns to host the event. The event was attended by a total of 49 guests from SMU and the Supreme Court.



VOLUNTEER MEDIATORS ATTEND TRAINING PROGRAMME



Volunteer Mediators from the State Courts attended a training workshop on “Handling Impasse” on 6 December 2017.

Conducted by the State Courts Centre for Dispute Resolution (SCCDR), the half-day workshop covered the essential skills and knowledge for effective mediation. District Judge David Lim also delivered a presentation on the causes of impasse and the techniques on managing and overcoming them to achieve a resolution without conflict.

Participants also had the opportunity to engage with Judge Mediators who shared on some of the challenges Volunteer Mediators face when mediating cases at SCCDR and the Small Claims Tribunals (SCT).

In line with State Courts’ commitment to provide continual development pathways for Volunteer Mediators, the SCCDR will conduct more training programmes in June and November this year.

TRAINING FOR NEWLY RECRUITED VOLUNTEER SUPPORT PERSONS



On 24 March, the Family Justice Courts (FJC) and State Courts jointly conducted training for newly recruited volunteers of the Vulnerable Witness Support (VWS) Programme. There were a total of eight Volunteer Support Persons (VSP) and staff from Singapore Children’s Society (SCS) who attended the training. The training covered key concepts of family violence dynamics, court proceedings for Personal Protection Order (PPO) and essential skills as support persons.

The VWS Programme in the FJC is a partnership with the SCS and State Courts to provide non-evidential emotional support to vulnerable litigants and witnesses who have to give their evidence in a Personal Protection Hearing against their perpetrator(s). Victims and/or children who have experienced or witnessed family violence may experience anxiety, fear and even re-traumatisation when giving evidence in court. The VSP provides a supportive relationship by accompanying the vulnerable litigant or witness throughout the hearing process. He or she is a source of information on court procedures and will help the vulnerable person manage the stress which may arise from the court proceeding.

STATE COURTS INTRODUCES DOCUMENTS-ONLY PROCESS FOR CIVIL CASES



The State Courts launched a pilot programme for Documents-Only Trials and Assessments of Damages (DOTA) on 11 December 2017.

DOTA provides an alternative mode of litigation that is cost-effective and time-efficient, particularly for low-value disputes where the costs of a trial or assessment in the usual way would be disproportionate to the claim amount.

Litigants may opt for a DOTA in either of these circumstances:

- (a) Their dispute centres on interpretation of documents, or may be determined entirely on legal submissions and contemporaneous documents
- (b) Cross-examination of witnesses is unnecessary (e.g. where no disputes of fact exist) or impossible (e.g. where the witnesses cannot be found)

To maximise cost savings, DOTA should be considered at the earliest opportunity. This could be at the first Case Management Conference or Pre-Trial Conference stage (for trial cases), or at the first status conference after a Notice of Appointment for Assessment of Damages is filed (for assessment cases).

Parties will be directed by the judge hearing the conference to file the necessary documents. This includes a Case Overview, which states the agreed and disputed issues. Thereafter, the Court will render judgment unless the judge directs that oral submissions be made.

The DOTA was announced as one of the State Courts Workplan 2018 initiatives on 9 March.

STATE COURTS LAUNCH PHASE 2 OF THE CJTS

The second phase of the State Courts' Community Justice and Tribunals System (CJTS) was launched on 5 February. All neighbour dispute claims at the Community Disputes Resolution Tribunals (CDRT) will now have to be filed online via the CJTS.

The CJTS is an e-filing and case management system for cases dealt with by the Community Justice and Tribunals Division (CJTD). First launched in July 2017, featuring the online filing of claims at Small Claims Tribunals (SCT), the CJTS not only makes it convenient for users to file a claim online, but provides them with an array of e-services.

In addition to e-services such as e-Negotiation, e-Payment and e-Orders that were introduced in Phase 1, the CJTS now includes e-Mediation as an additional dispute resolution option, as well as the convenience and practicality of an online search function – Case Search.

The new e-Mediation function allows parties in dispute to book a court mediator to mediate in a secure instant messaging online environment without going to Court or the mediation centre. E-Mediation via the CJTS allows for the convenient flow of proposals, sharing



eAssessment



eNegotiation



eMediation



Case search

of documents and private communication. If parties agree to settle, they may then apply for an online consent order.

Through the CJTS, anyone can check if there is a pending claim or order against them by using Case Search. The Case Search can also be used to look for cases filed against suppliers at the SCT or neighbours at the CDRT. This helps parties to make an informed choice before entering into a contract with a particular supplier of goods, services or landlord.

In the next phase, the CJTS will be enhanced for the online filing of employment claims, so that more members of public can benefit from the online features.

THE JUDICIARY GIVES BACK TO SOCIETY



The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Committees from the three Courts organised their first CSR activities for the year.

At the Kreta Ayer Senior Activity Centre on 27 February, 60 volunteers from State Courts celebrated the 12th day of the Lunar New Year with 72 elderly residents. The residents were served a lunch bento set and were also treated to an entertaining programme by State Courts volunteers that included a sing-a-long and an appearance by the “God of Wealth”, who showered them with well wishes and “gold coins”. Each resident also received two mandarin oranges and a red packet that were specially packed for them.



In their second collaboration with Food From The Heart (FFTH), a total of 37 staff from the Supreme Court and the Family Justice Courts volunteered their time with single elderly folks living in one-room rental flats around the Kallang Bahru area, on 20 March. Staff volunteers were paired up with the elderly and each pair was given an \$80 FairPrice voucher to do grocery shopping at a nearby supermarket.

After grocery shopping, the staff volunteers accompanied the elderly back to their homes. The event ended on a good note, with the staff volunteers engaging in meaningful interactions with the elderly. It was definitely an enriching experience for all.



NOTABLE VISITS

THE ABU DHABI JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT VISITS SINGAPORE COURTS



The Undersecretary of the Abu Dhabi Judicial Department, His Excellency Mr Justice Yousef Al Abri, led a delegation to visit the Family Justice Courts (FJC), Supreme Court and State Courts from 15 to 18 January.

The delegation visited the FJC on 15 January and was welcomed by Deputy Presiding Judge and Registrar of the FJC, Mr Chia Wee Kiat. Principal District Judge Muhammad Hidhir Abdul Majid gave the delegates an overview of the FJC, including the Youth Courts' processes and how it deals with young persons and families. A tour of the Youth Courts concluded their visit to the FJC.



On 16 January, the delegates visited the Supreme Court, where they were given an introduction to the Singapore Judicial College and an overview of the eLitigation and case management systems deployed at the Supreme Court. Assistant Registrar Jay Lee delivered a presentation to the delegates, who were keen to learn about the legal system of Singapore and the Supreme Court's experience in setting up an efficient and effective case management system.



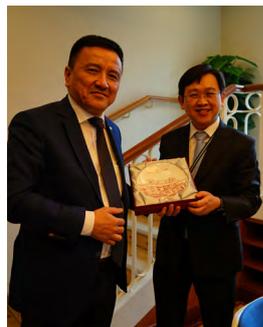
At State Courts on 18 January, the delegates were received by Deputy Presiding Judge and Registrar of the State Courts, Ms Jennifer Marie. The delegates, who were interested in the use of technology in the Courts, were given an introduction to the Community Justice and Tribunals System. This was followed by a good exchange on a range of issues on technology and court administration.

CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN LEADS DELEGATION TO VISIT SINGAPORE COURTS



His Excellency Zhakip Assanov, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan led a delegation to visit the Supreme Court, State Courts and the Family Justice Courts (FJC) from 27 to 28 February.

His Excellency called on Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon at the Supreme Court on 27 February, where he shared about the issues faced by the courts in Kazakhstan, as well as the development of the Astana International Financial Centre. The delegation was also introduced to the Singapore International Commercial Court, court technologies used in the Supreme Court, as well as the case management system.



On 28 February at State Courts, the delegates were received by Presiding Judge of the State Courts, Justice See Kee Oon, and Deputy Presiding Judge and Registrar, Ms Jennifer Marie. State Courts presented on the International Framework for Court Excellence (IFCE) and the IFCE State Courts of Singapore Model. Other initiatives, including the Night Courts and the work of the Community Justice and Tribunals Division were also discussed.

The delegates also visited the FJC on 28 February to learn about the FJC's structure and the services provided, and in particular to understand the work done by Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS). Deputy Presiding Judge and Registrar of the FJC, Mr Chia Wee Kiat, District Judge Kevin Ng and Director of CAPS, Ms Sophia Ang were also engaged in an active question and answer session before the visit concluded.

CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF KENYA LEADS DELEGATION TO VISIT SUPREME COURT AND STATE COURTS



The Honourable Chief Justice David Maraga of the Supreme Court of Kenya led a delegation, who were also participants in the Executive Leadership Programme for court and tribunal administrators, to visit the Supreme Court on 5 March and State Courts on 6 March.

At the Supreme Court, the delegation was received by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon. They also heard from Senior Assistant Registrar Ms Cornie Ng and Chief Information Officer Mr Santhanam Srinivasan, on the case management system and IT deployed by the Supreme Court.



At the State Courts, the delegates were received by Presiding Judge of the State Courts, Justice See Kee Oon, and Deputy Presiding Judge and Registrar, Ms Jennifer Marie.

Their visit provided the opportunity for both the Supreme Court and State Courts to share about alternative dispute resolution and the use of technology by the courts and legal community.

DISTINGUISHED JUDGE FROM JAPAN VISITS SUPREME COURT AND STATE COURTS



Judge Yoji Kawakatsu visited Singapore from 22 January to 20 February as a Distinguished Judicial Visitor at the National University of Singapore Faculty of Law Centre for Asian Legal Studies (CALS).

He visited the Supreme Court on 2 February, where he was introduced to the legal, operational and business development aspects of the Singapore International Commercial Court (SICC) by Assistant Registrar Cheng Pei Feng and Senior Director (Business Development), Mr Laurence Wong. Aside from that, Judge Kawakatsu also sat in a SICC hearing presided by Justice Vivian Ramsey.



He visited the State Courts on 8 February, where he was given an introduction to the use of court-annexed alternative dispute resolution. He also shared with the State Courts about his experience in the District Courts of Japan.

DELEGATION FROM NONTHABURI JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT (THAILAND) VISITS THE FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS



Judge Watchira Kositwattanukul led a delegation of associate judges from the Nonthaburi Juvenile and Family Court to visit the FJC on 10 January. The delegation was briefed on the overview of the FJC by District Judge Eugene Tay, with highlights about the roles, function and structure of Youth Courts. The FJC had also invited the Probation and Community Rehabilitation Service (PCRS) and Rehabilitation and Protection Group (RPG) from the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) to share about the post-trial programmes and activities for the young offenders.

NOTABLE VISITS

JUDICIAL ATTACHMENT FROM THE COURTS OF JUSTICE OF THAILAND



Two judicial officers and a judicial legal officer from the Courts of Justice of Thailand were attached to the State Courts from 5 to 16 March this year. They underwent a two-week comprehensive programme that included observing court and tribunal proceedings in the various justice divisions. The State Courts have been hosting attachments for judges and court administrators from the Courts of Justice of Thailand every year since 2014.

MS KEIKO IMAZATO FROM THE JAPAN CENTRAL AUTHORITY VISITS THE FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS



The FJC welcomed Ms Keiko Imazato from the Japan Central Authority on 17 January. District Judge Wong Sheng Kwai shared with Ms Imazato about Singapore's experience and the FJC's involvement and works done for the 1980 Hague Convention. Ms Imazato also sat in for observations in chambers to understand how mediation is conducted by judges in the FJC on a yearly basis since 2014.

STUDY VISIT TO THE HONG KONG JUDICIARY



Ms Juthika Ramanathan, Chief Executive (CE, Office of the Chief Justice), Supreme Court, led a seven-member delegation on a study visit to the Hong Kong Judiciary from 8 to 9 March. The delegation consisted of Supreme Court and State Courts officers.

During the visit, the delegation visited the Court of Final Appeal, the High Court and the West Kowloon Law Courts Building where they were hosted by Hong Kong Judiciary Administrator Miss Emma Lau and her team.

Over the course of two days, the delegation had fruitful exchanges with their Hong Kong counterparts on areas of common interest ranging from court administration, courtroom design, courtroom infrastructure and technology, court services, resource management, and public outreach efforts.

While there, CE and the delegation also met The Honourable Chief Justice Geoffrey Ma, Chief Justice of the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal.



FAMILY-CONNECT @ STATE COURTS LAUNCHED TO SUPPORT FAMILIES OF OFFENDERS



Recognising that offenders who are sentenced to prison often leave behind family members who face anxiety, stress, as well as financial and social difficulties, the State Courts and Singapore After-Care Association (SACA) have collaborated to launch the family-connect @ State Courts on 29 January.

Supporting and keeping the family unit intact is the key purpose of this initiative. At the family-connect @ State Courts, basic information on prison life, processes to help allay concerns and support services are readily available to family members through SACA volunteers who are stationed there.

Immediate support services such as referrals for financial assistance, or to social agencies for support and care for the young or elderly are also available. In appropriate cases, SACA will also provide follow-up action and intervention beyond the first consultation.

The family-connect @ State Courts initiative hopes to minimise the negative impact of imprisonment on the offender's family, as well as to provide the offender with a safe haven to return to upon release, and to consequently reduce recidivism rates.

The services offered at family-connect @ State Courts are available from 10am to 2pm every Monday and Wednesday at i-Connect, Level 1 State Courts.

i-Connect

Launched in January to meet the increasing demand for self-help and informational services for court users, the i-Connect is a business centre equipped with meeting pods, internet kiosks and scanning, printing, and photocopying services.

NEW GUIDEBOOK FOR NEIGHBOUR DISPUTE CLAIMS

State Courts launched "A Guide to Neighbour Dispute Claims" on 7 March.

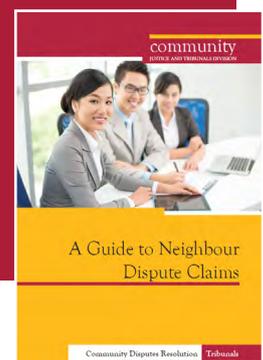
The book provides essential information on filing a claim at the Community Disputes Resolution Tribunals (CDRT) and serves as a practical guide to navigating CDRT proceedings.

Through easy to understand infographics and case studies, parties may refer to the guidebook to find out more about the steps they can take, and the possible outcomes of their claim.

The guidebook is available at all CJTD counters. A soft copy can also be obtained at www.statecourts.gov.sg

"A Guide to Neighbour Dispute Claims" includes:

- An overview of the CDRT
- Things to note before filing a claim
- How to file a claim or a reply
- How to enforce a CDRT order in event of a breach
- Case summaries
- Court Fees
- Frequently asked questions



CHANGES TO MANDATORY PARENTING PROGRAMME



From 21 January, parents with at least one child below 21 years of age and who do not have an agreement on the divorce and all the ancillary matters, are required to attend the Mandatory Parenting Programme (MPP) by the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF). The MPP is a consultation for parents before they file a divorce application with the Family Justice Courts.

SUPREME COURT ATTAINS SQC STAR WITH PEOPLE AND SERVICE NICHE



The Supreme Court attained the Singapore Quality Class (SQC) Star with People and Service niche on 31 December 2017.

The Business Excellence (BE) initiative helps organisations enhance their management systems and processes to deliver superior performance. It is based on a robust BE Framework, which is a globally benchmarked developmental tool for organisational excellence.

The SQC Star certification, coupled with the People and Service niche, is an affirmation of Supreme Court's strong commitment towards promoting continuous improvement in its organisational excellence journey.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION FOR THE STATE COURTS CONVERSATION 2020 (SC2020) PROJECT

On 2 March, **The State Courts Conversation 2020 (SC2020)** received special recognition under the Best Change Management Strategies category of the HRM Awards 2018.

The SC2020 is a multi-year change management project that involves internal and external engagement with State Courts' staff, stakeholders and public sector leaders in the justice eco-system, to understand their needs and to serve them better.

The HRM Award is an affirmation for State Courts' tireless effort in engaging their staff and stakeholders to co-create a better State Courts.



UPCOMING EVENTS



A DAY IN COURT
A Seminar for Student Leaders
31 May 2018 (Thursday)
9.00am - 5.30pm
State Courts

The State Courts' annual **A Day in Court** seminar for Student Leaders will be held on 31 May.

The special one-day programme will introduce aspects of the Singapore Justice System to Secondary 3 school students and equip them with valuable skills they can use in and out of the classroom.

Participants will learn about the criminal justice system and the restorative justice model adopted by the Courts for cases involving youth. They will also discover how certain community disputes, such as those between neighbours, can be amicably resolved without seeking the Court's intervention.

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.

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH JUSTICES' LAW CLERKS

Justices' Law Clerks (JLCs) are outstanding law graduates who assist the Supreme Court Judges over a two-year programme that is supervised by the Chief Justice. They carry out legal research for cases that go before the High Court and the Court of Appeal. The JLC Programme was first introduced in 1991 by then-Chief Justice Yong Pung How.

In this issue, we interviewed Tan Ee Kuan and Hairul Hakkim, JLCs from the Supreme Court, and find out more about what they do.



(Left to Right : Ee Kuan and Hairul joined the Supreme Court in January 2017.)

What did you do before you joined the Supreme Court?

Ee Kuan & Hairul: We were both Deputy Public Prosecutors in the Criminal Justice Division of the Attorney-General's Chambers.

What do you do as a JLC?

Ee Kuan & Hairul: Our work principally involves drafting bench memorandums, undertaking legal research, and providing hearing-related assistance to the Judges of the Supreme Court on both civil and criminal matters.

Describe a typical work day at Court.

Ee Kuan: If I'm not attending hearings, I spend much of the day reading and drafting for the cases I've been assigned to assist in. On a court day, I take notes of the evidence or submissions, observe how counsel advance their clients' cases and think of what I would say or do if I were in their positions. I also discuss the case as it unfolds with the Judge during breaks.

Hairul: I don't really have a typical work day in office. On those days when I am not attending court for hearings, I can be doing one of many things, ranging from reading submissions, legal research, drafting bench memorandums and other pieces of assigned work, discussion with Judges and attending committee meetings.

What challenges do you face?

Ee Kuan: Every case is a reminder of how much more there is to know and learn!

Hairul: No two cases are the same. The cases we see are also getting increasingly complex and voluminous. We often have to burn the midnight oil and work on weekends.

The best part about my job is...

Ee Kuan: The privilege of engaging with the Judges, one-on-one, on the often complex factual and legal issues that arise in cases, a process from which I have learnt a great deal.

Hairul: The opportunity to interact and work directly with our Judges, who represent some of the very best legal minds I have met.

Do you have any interesting anecdotes to share?

Ee Kuan: I have the habit of accidentally knocking over cups of water with my court gown while I am attending hearings in open court!

Hairul: During the first few months after I had started working in the Supreme Court, there was once when I accidentally locked myself in a court room. I had to call my Judge's Private Secretary to rescue me as the door could only be opened from the outside.

What are you most proud of accomplishing in this job?

Ee Kuan: Pushing myself to give all that I can for each case I am assigned to assist in.

Hairul: Giving my level best in my work and the generous compliments from the Judges I have worked with.

What motivates you?

Ee Kuan: The importance of the work, the opportunity of contributing to the dispensation of justice ... but actually, I think my main motivation is more personal. The Judges I have worked for have spent much time on me and set tremendous examples. I find myself striving to do my best for them in return, and to meet the standards they show are attainable.

Hairul: The opportunity I have to do my part in ensuring that the ends of justice are in the right place. It is also very intellectually rewarding to supplement the assistance from counsel.

If there is one lesson you can highlight that you have learned from your time as a JLC, what would that be?

Ee Kuan: The importance of all the facts in a case, especially in trials. Often the facts which may seem peripheral are vital, because they go towards the key facts in issue. The entire case may turn on just a few of these facts which seem unimportant at the outset.

Hairul: The importance of being human; whilst the law is important, I have learnt that ultimately we are deciding on matters that involve human beings and the law cannot be divorced from that reality.

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