

JUDICIARY TIMES



LAUNCH OF THE
STATE COURTS
HERITAGE GALLERY

TECHNOLOGY AND
THE CHANGING FACE
OF JUSTICE

FAMILY JUSTICE -
"IT TAKES A
GLOBAL VILLAGE"

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"The State Courts Heritage Gallery chronicles our history and provides the opportunity to commemorate our past and appreciate our present. While we preserve our heritage in this gallery, we will continue our transformation journey to deliver quality justice and serve society"

Presiding Judge of the State Courts,
Justice See Kee Oon



LAUNCH OF THE STATE COURTS HERITAGE GALLERY

In conjunction with the Singapore Bicentennial celebrations, the State Courts Heritage Gallery was launched on 19 November by The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon. Over 100 guests, including past heads of the State Courts, Mr Michael Khoo, SC, Mr Richard Magnus and Justice Tan Siong Thye attended the event.

In his opening address, Presiding Judge of the State Courts, Justice See Kee Oon said that the Heritage Gallery seeks to facilitate a better understanding of the contributions made by the State Courts, in ensuring access to justice and upholding the rule of law.

Located on level 1 of the State Courts Towers, the Heritage Gallery is thematically arranged and designed to provide a seamless historical walk-through of the State Courts' transformation journey. It is organised into three zones that take visitors through the rich history and progress of the State Courts since the founding of modern Singapore in 1819, highlighting the major reforms introduced over the years to improve the administration of justice.

The majority of the exhibits use interactive, technology-enabled features. These include a digital display of 15 high-profile cases heard in the State Courts over the last four decades, and a multi-user interactive table that chronicles the locations of the past and present courthouses, highlighting some of their architectural features.

One of the key highlights is the Heritage Courtroom, which is a mock-up of a courtroom in the old State Courts Building with video displays that re-enact three criminal cases that were heard at different points in history. Visitors will not only get the opportunity to experience the different aspects of the criminal trial process, but also discover the evolution of courtroom technology and how it has made the delivery of justice more effective and efficient.

State Courts' judges and staff were behind the conceptualisation of the Heritage Gallery and curation of all the exhibits. In addition to selecting significant and unique artefacts that represent the period under review, careful consideration of the user experience had also guided the content curation process to cater to the varied interests of different user groups - legal practitioners, students and members of the public.

The State Courts Heritage Gallery is open to the public during the official operating hours of the State Courts.



TECHNOLOGY AND THE CHANGING FACE OF JUSTICE

On 14 November, The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon delivered a keynote lecture at the Negotiation and Conflict Management Group (NCMG) Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Conference 2019 in Nigeria. At the same time, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon was conferred the Special Recognition Award 2019 at the NCMG Peace Awards Dinner for his contributions in promoting access to justice through the development of ADR.

In his lecture, the Chief Justice painted a vision of the changing face of justice, which is being reshaped in a fundamental way by the unprecedented capabilities of technology. Technology offers an opportunity not merely to effect incremental improvements to the legal processes but to rethink our core beliefs and assumptions about what justice requires and, consequently, reimagine the design of our justice system. Carefully managed and harnessed, technology and the suite of available dispute resolution methods will not only enhance access to justice, but also secure outcomes that will help narrow the divisions within society and build peace of a real and lasting kind.

The Chief Justice spoke about the *justice gap*, which is the disparity between the legal needs of low-income persons and the resources available to meet those needs. The *justice gap* has three principal dimensions: (a) a *physical gap*, which concerns the physical distance between persons and the institutions of justice; (b) a *resource gap*, which refers to the potentially prohibitive cost of legal services; and (c) a *literacy gap*, which concerns the lack of legal literacy.

Technology has the potential to close, and not merely bridge, all three dimensions of the *justice gap*. For example, mobile online platforms can connect users to courtrooms and court processes without the need for users to be physically present in court. Online courts can also remove the need for litigants to convene simultaneously at the same time and place for hearings. In this manner, technology can help overcome the *physical gap*.

In relation to the *resource gap*, the proliferation and increasing sophistication and affordability of digital tools such as chatbots and automated document drafting and management systems will in time democratise the market for legal services.

At the same time, technology can also narrow the *literacy gap* by facilitating access to legal information and connecting sources of legal help to those who require it.

Some may question whether the integration of technology into the justice system will exacerbate the digital divide, which is the disparity between those who are in a position to access and operate technology, and those who are not. But this critique may be overstated. The explosive growth in internet penetration has already significantly narrowed the digital divide, and this trend looks set to continue given ongoing efforts to bring technology to unreached peoples. Nevertheless, as long as the digital divide does exist, some traditional, face-to-face methods of access should be retained. Yet others may doubt whether online courts are capable of providing a quality of justice comparable to that offered by conventional courtrooms and their processes. But this critique is founded on an unproven assumption that conventional processes deliver more accurate or more just outcomes than technology-assisted ones, and more critically, fails to recognise that the problem of scarcity - of which the *justice gap* is a species - means that our justice system cannot afford to examine all disputes with the same degree of exactitude and rigour.

The rising costs of litigation and limited judicial resources call for the adoption of a user-centric approach that focuses on affordability, efficiency, accessibility, flexibility and effectiveness. These qualities should be governed by two overarching values. First, proportionality - so that the nature, complexity and cost of the processes and solutions of the legal system bear a suitable relation to the nature, complexity and size of the legal problems before it. Second, peacebuilding - because the preservation of ties furthers the pursuit of peace, which is the object of justice.

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"We must continue to leverage technology to open more doors to justice, while retaining conventional means of access for those for whom technology remains foreign."

"Technology has the potential to empower the disadvantaged and less well-off by offering them a pathway towards the quick, affordable and just resolution of their legal problems."

FAMILY JUSTICE - "IT TAKES A GLOBAL VILLAGE"

The Family Justice Practice Forum 2019 was held on 2 October at the Supreme Court Auditorium. Jointly organised by the Family Justice Courts (FJC) and the Ministry of Social and Family Development with the support of the Syariah Court and Law Society of Singapore, it brought together international and local experts from the legal, psychological and social science sectors to articulate the challenges and dream of solutions as a global village to holistically support families in distress. The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon graced the event, with Presiding Judge of the FJC, Justice Debbie Ong, opening the Forum and Dr Robert Emery delivering the Keynote Address.

Justice Ong spoke on the Forum's theme "It takes a global village" and emphasised three things that the community must continue to do. First, they needed to communicate and learn from each other, as legal remedies alone cannot provide the full therapeutic justice. Second, with the mission in mind, communities must support one another in their work. Justice Ong pointed out how counselling had been successfully integrated formally into the family justice system with support from the entire community. Finally, she said that it was imperative for the community to press on with the good work in the hope that the family justice system continues to evolve and shape good and responsible behaviour for affected families.

Noting that the family justice system has undergone much reform in the past five years with positive results, Justice Ong announced the findings of the FJC-MinLaw Court Users Survey 2018/19 and said the overall perception of the reform to the system is positive. The survey showed that 83 per cent of lawyers and 82 per cent of court users surveyed had a positive overall perception of the reforms, based on their experience with the Courts. The FJC also announced the launch of three new modules in iFAMS - an electronic case management system to facilitate various types of applications - in an effort to leverage technology to increase access to justice for court users.



The three modules are:

- The Mental Capacity Act (MCA) module, which will allow the more common types of MCA cases to be filed using a simplified track. Approximately 60 to 80 per cent of the deputies' powers sought in the current applications will be covered by this simplified track.
- The iFAMS Remote Show Payment module which will allow Respondents in Maintenance Enforcement cases to show proof of payment online via iFAMS instead of physically going to court to do so. The module was rolled out for a six-month pilot in October.
- The iFAMS "Offer to Resolve" module which aims to facilitate resolution of maintenance disputes. Through this module, which was piloted on 2 October, parties may make and accept offers via iFAMS for fresh applications for child and/or spousal maintenance and variation of such maintenance orders, before parties attend mediation at FJC.

Over 350 family practitioners comprising lawyers, policy makers, mental health professionals and social workers attended the Forum.

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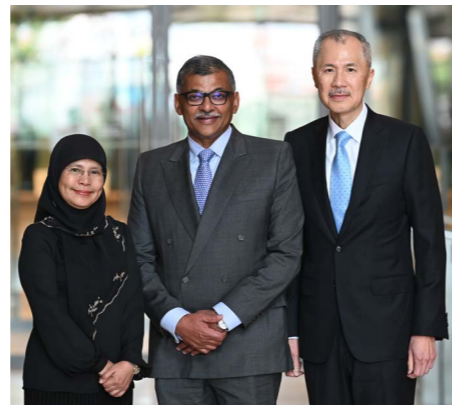
Technology is a particularly effective agent for the delivery of proportionate and targeted solutions. Technology can seamlessly integrate adjudication with the equally important processes of dispute containment and avoidance, which are particularly effective for addressing legal problems that do not appear before the justice system. Those problems are generally not complex though they are urgent, and are therefore particularly amenable to resolution by quick, simple and affordable processes that promote peaceful settlement. In this manner, our justice system can promote not merely the restoration but the sustenance of real and lasting peace in society.

The ADR and the Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) movements have already prompted the reconstruction of justice systems according to the model of a "sequential multi-door courthouse", where each dispute is advanced progressively through three broad stages of *evaluation, facilitation and adjudication*.

By reshaping our justice processes through technology and ADR, our justice system can deliver accessible and proportionate justice that aims to build peace. In so doing, we would be acting to reduce the volume of unmet legal needs in society and thereby helping to tilt an unequal society closer toward equilibrium.

JOINT JUDICIAL CONFERENCE

The 5th Joint Judicial Conference (JJC) was hosted by the Supreme Court of Singapore on 13 September. Since its inception in 2011, the JJC has provided the judiciaries of Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Singapore, a valuable platform to discuss developments in various aspects of the law and in judicial administration. Attended by the Chief Justices of Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Singapore, the 5th JJC comprised panel discussions in the areas of Tort, Contract and Intellectual Property Law, looking particularly at how our regional jurisdictions have departed from the English Common Law in these areas and exploring opportunities for harmonising our commercial laws. The judiciaries also shared their experiences in strengthening judicial administration through innovation and other initiatives. A total of 65 judges and judicial officers from the participating countries attended the JJC.



MASS CALL 2019: BECOMING A PROFESSION OF LEARNERS

A total of 529 newly appointed advocates and solicitors were called to the Bar over three Mass Call sessions, which took place over 27 and 28 August at the Supreme Court Auditorium. The first session was presided over by The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon; and the subsequent sessions by Judge of Appeal, Justice Tay Yong Kwang and Justice Belinda Ang.

The Chief Justice delivered a speech titled "A Profession of Learners", where he exhorted the freshly minted lawyers to "reskill and relearn", as they "accept and adapt to a new reality" in a time when "technology is already beginning to displace lawyers from areas of practices". Chief Justice outlined four qualities that learners of the future ought to possess: first, to be agile learners, with the willingness to learn and unlearn; second, to expand their learning to fields beyond the law; third, to learn together and from one another with generosity and humility; and finally, to develop their soft skills even as they pursue knowledge and technical excellence. In the same vein, the President of the Law Society of Singapore, Gregory Vijayendran, SC, also urged them to "stay curious" in his speech.

Read the Chief Justice's full speech here:
go.gov.sg/masscall2019speech

"So learn with passion and conviction. Learn not only about the law, but also about the world. Learn from your peers and challenge each other's assumptions. And reflect frequently on what and how you are learning. In this age of change, we can only remain a "learned profession" by becoming a profession of learners"



BEYOND ADJUDICATION - STATE COURTS IMPART LEGAL KNOWLEDGE TO ENRICH THE COMMUNITY



On 4 November, as part of their continuing efforts to contribute to legal scholarship and academic jurisprudence, as well as to impart legal knowledge to non-lawyers and members of the public, the State Courts launched two publications authored by their judges, and signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with the law schools of three universities in Singapore - National University of Singapore (NUS), Singapore Management University (SMU), and Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS).

The publications launched were the "Practitioners' Guide on Damages Awarded for Defamation Cases in Singapore" and the "Law and Practice of Tribunals in Singapore", both of which are the first of their kind in Singapore.

The MOUs with the law schools of NUS, SMU and SUSS give law students the opportunity to experience judicial work and gain a practical insight into the operation of the judicial system. At the end of the Programme, the students would have acquired a different perspective of legal work and their legal studies, through personalised interaction with judges, working on actual cases and experiencing them through the eyes of a sitting judge. They would also have gained a deeper understanding of the criminal justice process, which would help them in deciding if they wish to pursue a career in criminal litigation.



About the publications

► *The Practitioners' Guide on Damages Awarded for Defamation Cases in Singapore* features awards for defamation cases filed in the Singapore Courts between 2006 and 2017, and contains case summaries that set out the factors considered by the Courts in arriving at different awards of damages as well as the outcome of appeals. In addition, it outlines the general principles of defamation law, and the State Courts' pre-action protocol for defamation actions that took effect in September 2018 to encourage pre-action settlements.

With this publication, potential litigants and their lawyers will have realistic and measured expectations of the likely awards of damages should they succeed in their defamation suits while practitioners and judges will have a ready reference when dealing with comparable defamation cases. The publication also serves as a primer on the law of defamation to anyone with an interest in this area of the law.

► *The Law and Practice of Tribunals in Singapore* explains the nature of tribunals, sets out the basic laws and principles that should govern tribunal hearings, and lists best practices in managing and operating a tribunal. The contents of this publication are set in the context of tribunals whose primary function is the determination of disputes - administrative tribunals, tribunals hearing civil claims and professional disciplinary tribunals.

The publication draws from the State Courts' experience in managing their tribunals for small claims, community disputes and employment claims. As there are limited existing resources to guide tribunal members who may not have legal training, it will be a valuable resource for tribunal members hearing cases, those managing or who are in the process of creating a tribunal, as well as laypersons who are curious about how tribunals function.

Both publications can be purchased at S\$64.20 each from Academy Publishing www.sal-e.org.sg.

"The core duty of the Courts is the delivery and promotion of just outcomes. Enhancing access to justice is key to achieving this, and the State Courts' judges have been proactively contributing to this mission. The publications launched today and the MOUs signed with the law schools demonstrate the State Courts' commitment to broadening and deepening the education of the legal fraternity, court users and law students."

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon

COUNCIL OF ASEAN CHIEF JUSTICES WORKING AND STUDY GROUP MEETINGS



meeting discussed and agreed on a plan to enhance the content on the AJP and to keep it current. As a one-stop portal to learn about the legal and judicial systems of the AMS, the AJP was found to be useful.

Justice Lee Seiu Kin also chaired the CACJ Study Group on the Future Work of the CACJ. The participants deliberated and agreed on the Model Principles of Judicial Conduct.

In preparation for the 7th Council of ASEAN Chief Justices (CACJ) Meeting, CACJ Singapore organised three CACJ Working and Study Group Meetings from 25 to 26 September at the Supreme Court. These meetings were attended by representatives from the ten ASEAN Member States (AMS).

The CACJ Working Group on the ASEAN Judiciaries Portal (AJP) was chaired by Justice Lee Seiu Kin. The Singapore team provided an update on the progress of the AJP project and the system enhancements. The

The CACJ Working Group on Cross-Border Disputes Involving Children co-chaired by Justice Debbie Ong, Presiding Judge of the Family Justice Courts and Justice Angelene Mary W. Quimpo-Sale, Associate Justice of the Philippines Court of Appeals discussed and agreed on the following:

- (i) enhancements to the existing common procedure for dealing with cross-border disputes involving children and the template to capture the country profiles from the respective ASEAN judiciaries;
- (ii) a proposed Code of Ethics setting minimum standards of conduct for mediators who mediate cross-border disputes involving children; and
- (iii) the possibility of holding the 3rd ASEAN Family Judges Forum together with the 2020 Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH) Judicial Roundtable tentatively in July 2020.

The points of discussions and proposals would be tabled at the 7th CACJ Meeting for approval and adoption.

3RD INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING



of increasingly complex family issues and the rise of globalisation that require therapeutic and multi-disciplinary solutions. Distinguished experts and leading-thinkers in the field of family justice, including judges, academics, and social science experts were invited to join the IAC. The papers that were presented at this meeting, as well as the ensuing discussions, focused on the direction and vision for family justice in Singapore and how to achieve better therapeutic outcomes. The topics discussed included sharpening the vision of family justice, enhancing the judge-led process, training and engagement of family law practitioners and the role of social science. Later that day, The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, chair of the IAC, held a working dinner with IAC members. He outlined his vision for family justice and invited IAC members to share their views.

The International Advisory Council (IAC) of the Family Justice Courts (FJC) held its third meeting on 1 October at the Supreme Court to further discuss developments in family justice and family law practice, in order to position the FJC at the forefront of family court practice. The IAC was established on 1 April 2016 to provide a platform for comparative learning in recognition

The IAC members also participated as speakers and moderators in FJC's annual Family Justice Practice Forum held on 2 October. They provided the attending local family justice community with fresh perspectives and insights into family justice from their respective jurisdictions.

2019 INTERNATIONAL ODR FORUM

District Judges Siva Shanmugam and Joseph Yeo represented the State Courts at the 2019 International Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) Forum in Williamsburg, Virginia, USA, from 28 to 30 October. They delivered a presentation titled "Resolving Disputes Online" that focussed on the State Courts' Community Justice and Tribunals System, and plans for a new online dispute resolution system that will benefit parties involved in motor accident claims.

The forum was hosted by the US National Center for State Courts, in collaboration with the National Centre for Technology and Dispute Resolution. It included a diverse range of international speakers from judiciaries, academic institutions, and Information Technology companies, who shared their experiences and valuable perspectives on online dispute resolution.



TRI-COURT TRAINING WORKSHOP FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS



"I found it very creative, informative and interesting."

Mr Karnkumar Panday,
Hindi Interpreter

The Singapore Courts conducted the inaugural Tri-court Training Workshop for freelance foreign language interpreters on 23 August. Held at the State Courts, more than 35 freelance interpreters attended the workshop, which covered topics on court processes, ethics and professional conduct.

Through interactive methods such as scenario based learning, the workshop provided the tips and tools to equip its participants with the required skills and knowledge to interpret in court efficiently, effectively and confidently.

Freelance foreign language interpreters are engaged to provide court interpretation for non-vernacular languages such as Hindi or Tagalog, when the need arises. The workshop ensures that foreign language interpreters are familiar with court processes and procedures, and that the high standards of court interpretation are maintained in the Singapore Courts.

TRANSFORMATION WEEK

In the spirit of Public Sector Transformation, the Supreme Court and Family Justice Courts held their inaugural Transformation Week from 19 to 23 August. The programme was organised by the Innovation and Digitalisation Committee (IDC) to encourage innovation among officers by:

- a. *educating* them on the possibilities presented by technology;
- b. *equipping* them with skills to make use of said technology; and
- c. *inspiring* them by showing how other agencies have embraced innovation.

The week-long programme included presentations and sharing by various government agencies, private organisations and staff from both Courts. In addition to the introduction of new digital tools to enhance productivity, the officers also learned new concepts, such as blockchains and distributed ledger technology, agile development processes, user-centric design, data analytics, artificial intelligence and machine learning.



The Courts also launched initiatives such as the Innovation Hour, the newly revamped Staff Suggestion Scheme and announced the formation of IDC's Horizon Scanning Group. In his closing remarks, Chief Transformation and Innovation Officer Tan Ken Hwee gave an overview of the recent developments in the Office of Transformation and Innovation and said: "Change is hard, but we should see this as a challenge and an opportunity to make things better for everyone".

ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

The Judiciary continues to regularly engage the legal fraternity and key stakeholders to network and exchange valuable insights on prevailing legal issues. These included luncheons with the Singapore Management University School of Law on 13 March, and the National University of Singapore Faculty of Law on 9 October.

Besides the academia, members of the Judiciary were present at annual events - the Tripartite Lunch with the Attorney-General's Chambers and the Law Society of Singapore on 26 April, and the dinner with the Senior Counsel Forum on 4 October.



Photo courtesy of NUS

JUDICIARY HONOURS COURT VOLUNTEERS AT ANNUAL APPRECIATION DINNER

Thirteen Court Volunteers were lauded for their sterling contributions to the various pro bono committees and initiatives of the Judiciary at the Judiciary Volunteers Appreciation Dinner on 11 October at the Marina Mandarin. For the first time, Long Service Awards were presented to volunteers of the Legal Assistance Scheme for Capital Offences (LASCO) who had contributed tangibly and significantly.

Award Recipients :

LASCO Long Service Award - conferred by the Supreme Court

- (i) Mr Ram Goswami
- (ii) Mr N K Rajarh
- (iii) Mr Peter Cuthbert Low
- (iv) Mr Suppiah s/o Pakrisamy (presented posthumously)
- (v) Mr Syed Hassan Bin Syed Esa Almenoar
- (vi) Mr Mohamed Muzammil Bin Mohamed
- (vii) Mr Singa Retnam

Outstanding Court Volunteer Award - conferred by the State Courts

- (viii) Mr Tan Lam Siong (Advocate & Solicitor Category)
- (ix) Ms Jasmine Mah (Open Category)
- (x) Mr Wong Weitao (Student Category)

Long Service Award - conferred by the Family Justice Courts

- (xi) Mrs Chia Swee Tin (15 years)
- (xii) Mr Lim Sing Lip, Philip (10 years)
- (xiii) Mr Chew Yew Kuen, Michael (10 years)



Over 300 Court Volunteers and judiciary staff attended the annual event, which was hosted by The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon.

In his opening remarks, the Chief Justice said: "Volunteers are key to the success of our various initiatives to assist and guide the public as they navigate the legal process, which for most of them will be unfamiliar and daunting. We are therefore heartened and greatly encouraged by your enthusiasm and by the steady and robust number of you who have graciously come forward to help us in our mission".

BICENTENNIAL LEGAL HERITAGE TRAIL

In commemoration of the Singapore Bicentennial, the Supreme Court, in collaboration with the National Gallery Singapore (NGS) and Temasek Polytechnic, conducted the Legal Heritage Trail from 9 to 13 September. Led by docents from NGS and students from Temasek Polytechnic's Law & Management programme, the free guided trails covered two significant landmarks in the Judiciary's heritage - National Gallery Singapore (the former Supreme Court) and the current Supreme Court building.

Singapore's colonial administration to the independent and modern Judiciary we have today. Covering wide-ranging trivia from the architecture of the buildings, inherited traditions such as wigs and robes, to the advancement of court technology and processes, visitors were enriched by the knowledgeable docents and enthusiastic students during the one-hour tour. For many, the highlight of the day was visiting an actual courtroom and admiring the breath-taking view at the Viewing Gallery of the new Supreme Court.



"Very informative programme and very friendly guides :)"
Desmond Toh

"Enjoyed the tour. Guides were very informative."
Nadia Armita

More than 350 visitors embarked on the journey as they traversed the hallways of justice past and present; tracing the transformation of our judicial system from the days of

As we approach the end of Singapore's Bicentennial, we invite you to reflect on our journey from Singapore to Singaporean. Scan this QR code to witness the evolution of Singapore's Judiciary.



THE JUDICIARY CARES

The Singapore Courts organised numerous corporate social responsibility activities this year. These included fundraisers in support of various charities and special events to reach out to the less privileged members of society.

The Supreme Court held its fundraiser bazaar in September and raised more than \$20,000 for its adopted charity - Food from the Heart (FFTH). The three Courts raised a combined total of nearly \$90,000 in support of various charity organisations through their respective bazaars, held in August and September.



In collaboration with FFTH, 33 staff volunteers from the Supreme Court and the Family Justice Courts (FJC) accompanied the elderly FFTH beneficiaries on a special grocery-shopping trip on 16 October. The Courts sponsored the NTUC vouchers and were happy to give their time to such meaningful activities. Staff from the Supreme Court and FJC also participated in a FFTH toy bazaar in November, where in addition to purchasing toys and book vouchers for about 3,000 underprivileged children, they penned meaningful messages and specially wrapped the items before presenting them to the children.

Toys were also just some of the items that the State Courts collected through a donation drive that they organised in collaboration with the Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore (MINDS). Over three days in October, 129 boxes of items including clothing, books, and shoes were collected and donated to the MINDS thrift shops. Clients with intellectual disabilities operate these shops which serve as a valuable avenue to develop vocational skills amongst others.

Friend of MINDS Silver Award

On 12 October at the MINDS' fourth Volunteer and Donor Appreciation Day, the Judiciary Recreation Club was conferred the Friend of MINDS Silver Award. The award recognises the spirit of philanthropy and volunteerism amongst the staff of the Singapore Courts and their partnership with MINDS. Since 2017, the Judiciary has organised special events in collaboration with MINDS and raised close to \$32,000 in support of their cause.

Friend of MINDS Silver Award (Donor category)



"Every year in October, CPAS dedicates the month as World Cerebral Palsy Month. In this month, we hope to raise awareness of the condition. Today's outing is hence a wonderful conclusion to the World Cerebral Palsy Month events."

Ms Latha Kutty,
Executive Director of CPAS

Every year, the Judiciary reaches out to the less privileged members of society through the Judiciary Cares event. On 1 November, more than 60 volunteers comprising Judges and Court Administrators from the Supreme Court, State Courts and FJC accompanied some 40 beneficiaries and their caregivers from the Cerebral Palsy Alliance Singapore (CPAS) to River Safari for a day of fun activities. The event, led by Presiding Judge of the State Courts, Justice See Kee Oon and Presiding Judge of the FJC, Justice Debbie Ong, raised a total of \$27,221 through staff donations.



INTRODUCING STATE COURTS TOWERS TO STAKEHOLDERS

Refer to pg 14 for more details on the relocation of the State Courts

From June to November, the State Courts, as part of their preparations for the move into their new premises, organised a series of engagement programmes with their key stakeholders, including lawyers, volunteer mediators and law enforcement agencies.

Special preview tours were conducted to familiarise the stakeholders with the key facilities, such as the Central Registry, Bail Centre, Tribunal Hearing Chambers and Mentions Courtrooms in the State Courts Towers. Dialogue sessions were also held to provide the opportunity for the State Courts to gather feedback on their proposed work processes and new initiatives that would be implemented.

On 16 December, the State Courts commenced full operations in the State Courts Towers.

FJC ALL IN 2019: BACK TO THE FUTURE

On 8 August, staff from the Family Justice Courts (FJC) gathered at the Supreme Court auditorium for *FJC All In 2019*, themed "Back to the Future", to take stock of the past and plan for the future. The event, which is conducted on an annual basis, provides an opportunity for the FJC to review and transform existing processes and procedures to better meet the needs of court users of the future.

Presiding Judge, Justice Debbie Ong, opened the event by sharing the progress that FJC had made since its establishment. This included the introduction of the individual docketing system, the judge-led approach, robust case management, simplified track for divorces, and FJC's multidisciplinary approach. Justice Ong further shared that moving forward, FJC would be focusing on implementing the recommendations of the Committee to Review and Enhance Reforms in the Family Justice System (or RERF as it is commonly known) once they are accepted.

FJC's design thinking consultants shared their findings on the FJC court user journey, which was conducted over several months through court observation, interviews, surveys, and staff design workshops. Registrar, FJC, Mr Kenneth Yap touched on the importance of being future-ready in respect of People, Processes and Premises. Staff also got a sneak preview of FJC's future premises - the Octagon.



NCS Pte Ltd presented the possibilities of new technologies such as robotic process automation, facial recognition, and the use of concierge robots, which will inspire staff to contribute initiatives for Workplan 2020.

Walking through *Project Gallery*, where potential projects and initiatives for the new Octagon premises were displayed, gave staff an insight into the future of FJC. Their feedback would help the project leads fine-tune some of the initiatives. Staff were also given a glimpse of the ongoing work to improve future court user journeys.

Deputy Presiding Judge, Mr Chia Wee Kiat, thanked all for their enthusiastic participation at the event. Drawing parallels from the touching and inspiring story of Teddy Stallard, he emphasised the importance that all in FJC play in the lives of court users and encouraged everyone to remain steadfast in the FJC mission. Overall, the mood was uplifting as staff gathered for an open discussion to take FJC to the next lap.

16 - 17 Aug 2019 Attachment of Myanmar Judicial Officials to the Family Justice Courts

The Family Justice Courts (FJC) hosted Daw Khin Myo Myo Su Kyaw and U Naing Lin from the Supreme Court of the Union (SCU) of Myanmar from 16 to 17 August. The attachment was part of the Singapore-Myanmar Integrated Legal Exchange (SMILE) MOU between Ministry of Law and SCU. The Myanmar judicial officers were given an overview of FJC before observing court proceedings and chamber hearings to better understand how mediation is conducted in the FJC.

26 Aug 2019 Visit by a Member of Penang State Exco and Delegation

The FJC hosted a visit by a five-member delegation led by the Penang State Exco for Women and Family Development, Gender Inclusiveness and Non-Islamic Religious Affairs, Ms Chong Eng on 26 August. The FJC, together with the Singapore Syariah Court, provided an overview of Family Law in Singapore including the family law governing Muslims.



28 Aug 2019 Third Singapore-China Legal and Judicial Roundtable



The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon led a 13-member delegation of judges and officers from the Supreme Court and the Ministry of Law to Beijing, China for the Third Singapore-China Legal and Judicial Roundtable (Third Roundtable) on 28 August.

Co-chaired by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and Chief Justice Zhou Qiang of the Supreme People's Court of China, the Third Roundtable discussed four topics relating to the development of an international commercial trial system under the context of the "Belt and Road" Initiative framework, application of reference cases, judges' training and issues on cross-border insolvency. Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and Chief Justice Zhou Qiang also signed a Memorandum of

Understanding on Advancing Continuing Judicial Education on the sidelines of the roundtable.

During his two-day visit, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon also met Prosecutor General of the Supreme People's Procuratorate His Excellency Zhang Jun and delivered a lecture, titled "*The Settlement of International Commercial Disputes: Alternative Dispute Resolution, Commercial Courts, and the Convergence of Commercial Laws*", at the National Judges College in Beijing.

11 Sep 2019 Visit by Delegates from Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service, United Kingdom

The Chief Executive, Ms Susan Acland-Hood and, Change Director, Mr Richard Goodman, of Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service visited the FJC and State Courts on 11 September to learn about the adoption of court technology. They were introduced to case management systems such as the Integrated Family Application Management System, State Courts' Community Justice and Tribunals System and e-Litigation, which are used in the Singapore Courts. They also discussed procedural reforms and the judge-led approach in FJC, and exchanged ideas on the integration of technology in the legal system at the State Courts.



12 Sep 2019 Visit by Inner Temple



The Treasurer of the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple, The Right Honourable Lord Hughes of Ombersley, and the Sub-Treasurer, Mr Greg Dorey CVO visited the Supreme Court on 12 September. The guests called on Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and were brought on a tour around the Supreme Court.

NOTABLE VISITS

WHAT'S NEW?

16 - 17 Sep 2019 Chief Justice's Visit to Vietnam

The Supreme Court of Singapore and the Supreme People's Court of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SPC) signed a Court-to-Court Communications Memorandum ("Memorandum") during Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon's visit to Hanoi from 16 to 17 September. The Memorandum seeks to enable and facilitate direct communication and coordination between the two courts in cross-border commercial, property and family cases that are connected. The Memorandum follows the 2017 Memorandum of Understanding for Cooperation and it marks the strengthening of bilateral judicial cooperation between both judiciaries.



Prior to the signing of the Memorandum, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon made courtesy calls on Permanent Deputy Prime Minister Truong Hoa Binh, Chairperson of National Assembly, Madam Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan, Chief Justice Nguyen Hoa Binh, and the President of the Vietnam Lawyers Association, Dr Nguyen Van Quyen. During these meetings, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon reaffirmed the warm and long-standing relations between the two judiciaries and held substantive and wide-ranging discussions on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest, including the training of Vietnamese mediators.

During his two-day visit in Hanoi, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon also delivered a lecture at the Vietnam Court Academy, titled "The Singapore Convention on Mediation and the Coming of a New Age".

17 Sep 2019 Visit By Judicial Delegates from the Civil Court of Thailand

On 17 September, judicial officials and senior court administrators from the Civil Court of Thailand, led by Deputy Chief Judge of the Civil Court, Mr Pucharus Varapongpisan, visited the State Courts. Deputy Presiding Judge and Registrar of the State Courts, Ms Jennifer Marie, and District Judge Wong Peck received the delegation. The programme included a brief tour of the State Courts, followed by presentations on Singapore's civil procedures and the use of technology in the courts.



16 Oct 2019 Third International Seminar on Market-orientated Bankruptcy Law Reform



Justice Ang Cheng Hock attended the Third International Seminar on Market-orientated Bankruptcy Law Reform, in Shenzhen, China, on 16 October. During the event, Justice Ang delivered a speech, titled "the Singapore Experience: Reforming our Insolvency and Restructuring Regime" and joined other distinguished judges from Hong Kong and China at the panel session.

Photo courtesy of Shenzhen Third International Seminar on Market-orientated Bankruptcy Law Reform

21 Oct 2019 SJC Judiciary-Wide Induction Programme - Learning Journey

On 21 October, foreign judicial officials from various countries, including Brunei, India, Myanmar, Namibia and South Korea, visited the State Courts on a learning journey, which was part of the Singapore Judicial College's judiciary-wide induction programme. The induction programme was designed to provide an immersive experience for the participants to gain insights into the judicial philosophy and workings of Singapore. Deputy Presiding Judge and Registrar of the State Courts, Ms Jennifer Marie, and District Judge Ow Yong Tuck Leong received the delegation. During the State Courts' tour, the visitors were given a brief introduction of the work done and the types of cases handled. The delegates also visited the Supreme Court and Family Justice Courts (FJC) as part of their learning journey on the same day.



21 Oct - 8 Nov 2019 Brunei Judicial Officers' Attachment Programme



Three judges from Brunei were on an attachment programme to the Supreme Court and FJC from 21 October to 8 November. They were assigned Judge Mentors and "buddies". Apart from sit-ins and observing cases from the High Court and the FJC, they also took part in the Singapore Judicial College's judiciary-wide induction programme.

AUDIO RECORDING REQUEST SERVICES

With effect from 15 October, parties may apply for audio recordings of High Court hearings in open court trials via the electronic litigation system (eLitigation).

The release of the recordings (in the form of a DVD-Rom) will be subject to:

- (a) approval by the Judge;
- (b) the giving of the prescribed undertakings as to the use of the audio recordings; and
- (c) payment of the appropriate fees and charges by the requesting party to the service provider.



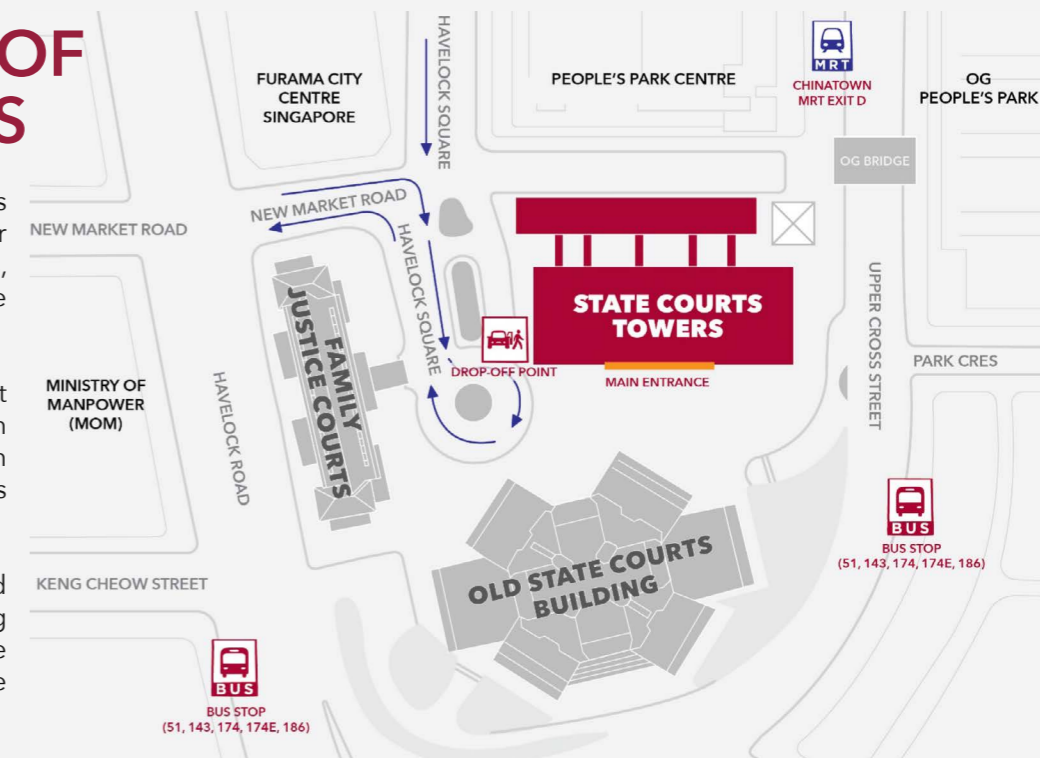
Scan the QR for more information on the application process and details of the application forms.

RELOCATION OF STATE COURTS

On 16 December, the State Courts commenced full operations in their new premises - State Courts Towers, which is adjacent to the old State Courts Building.

The vehicle drop-off point is at Havelock Square, while pedestrian and wheelchair access to the main entrance is from both Upper Cross Street and Havelock Square.

The State Courts Towers is fitted with 53 courtrooms and 54 hearing chambers. Facilities that are available to court users and members of the public include:



Facility	Location
State Courts Heritage Gallery	Level 1
Business Centre	Level 2
HELP Centre	Level B1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pro Bono Services • Community Justice Centre • MSF Probation Intake Office 	Level B1
Library (services commence on 2 January 2020)	Level B1

The address and contact details of the State Courts remain unchanged and are as follows:

Address : 1 Havelock Square Singapore 059724
 Telephone: 6 JUSTICE (65) 6587 8423
 1800 JUSTICE (1800 587 8423)
 Email : contact@statecourts.gov.sg



Scan the QR for the location of Courtrooms, Hearing Chambers and other facilities

THREE NEW MODULES IN THE INTEGRATED FAMILY APPLICATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The integrated Family Application Management System (iFAMS) is a comprehensive end-to-end system for family protection and maintenance order cases brought before the Family Justice Courts (FJC). iFAMS covers electronic case filing, tracking, workflow routing, case hearing and generation of electronic letters, Court Orders and statistical reports.

Mental Capacity Act (MCA) Module

The MCA module will make it simpler and more affordable for family members or caregivers to apply for deputyship powers. It will allow the more common types of MCA cases to be filed using a simplified track. Approximately 60 to 80 per cent of the powers sought in the current applications received by the Courts will be covered under this simplified track.

The majority of the deputyship applications are uncontested and are made by the family members, next-of-kin and caregivers of the person alleged to lack mental capacity (P). The powers granted under this simplified track are the more commonly sought ones i.e. to withdraw monies from P's bank account to pay for P's expenses; to act for P in relation to CPF matters; and to decide on the rental of P's property. Since the iFAMS MCA Module was launched (the medical report filing Module came online on 5 August and the application filing Module came online on 16 September), a total of 32 applications have been filed.

Prior to the introduction of this simplified track, applicants were required to file an application using the originating summons procedure, which would require the submission of several documents (Originating Summons, supporting affidavit, doctor's affidavit, and written consent of the relevant persons, if applicable) using the e-Litigation system. Now applicants are able to file their applications, at a cost of \$40, via an online application form, and subsequently receive their order directly via email within three weeks of filing (provided the application is complete in terms of the information and documents provided). Clear and customised step-by-step instructions within the Module are also in place to help applicants navigate the new application process. As the simplified track also reduces the number of documents needed during application, the cost of applying online is also lower.

Offer to Resolve Module

The Module aims to facilitate the expeditious and economical resolution of maintenance disputes. Through this Module, parties (Complainant and Respondent) may make and accept offers via iFAMS for fresh applications for child and/or spousal maintenance and variation of such maintenance orders.

Currently, when an application under the above-mentioned sections is made, the parties will return to FJC typically about three weeks later for mediation at the Maintenance Mediation Chambers (MMC).

Mediation is often the very first occasion in which parties start communicating on the issue in dispute. With the Offer

to Resolve Module, as soon as the application is filed, the Complainant may send an offer to the Respondent through this Module informing that he/she is willing to resolve the issue without proceeding further, if the Respondent accepts his/her offer.

Parties may choose to accept an offer, or make a counter-offer. Each party may make up to three offers for now, whether it is an offer or counter-offer. In the event that the parties do not set timelines, the Module by default would allow for offers to be accepted up to three days before the date of the mediation. The offers made cannot be disclosed to the hearing judge if the matter is not settled and proceeds to hearing. If the judge's order is similar to the offer(s) made, the party who rejected the offer(s) and caused the matter to proceed to a trial, may be ordered to pay the other party's legal costs.

A SingPass account and a valid email address for receiving notifications and offers will be required of each party. A copy of all offers made and received by each party in PDF format will accompany each email notification of the same, thus allowing parties to retain records of the offers exchanged between them. Where there is an acceptance of an offer, a draft agreement will be generated automatically and emailed to parties.

If there is a settlement, on the appointed mediation date, the parties will confirm their agreement with the MMC mediator, and may proceed for a recording of a consent order before the Duty Judge if that is so desired.

If the parties fail to come to a settlement, and the mediation proceeds as scheduled, the mediator may refer to the parties' exchanges of offers to determine if an offer was made or when it was made, subject to parties' consent. Should the matter proceed for a hearing, the hearing judge will not have access to the exchanges of offers made on the Offer to Resolve Module.

Remote Show Payment Module

The Module will allow Respondents in Maintenance Enforcement cases to show proof of payment online via iFAMS instead of physically coming to Court to do so. The Respondent can use a smartphone or other smart devices to capture the image of the document and submit it to FJC through this Module on the iFAMS by the deadline stated in the Court Order. Such a move will also avoid the need for the Respondent to take a leave of absence and in so doing refrain from inconveniencing the Respondent's employer.

FJC will be rolling out the function of this Module in phases. The six-month pilot, rolled out in October, will cover the following types of cases:

- Respondents who are unable to attend court for valid reasons e.g. outstation work commitments.
- Respondents of first time show payment cases. This will also include cases where consent orders are made after parties come to agreement after mediation.

SMALL CLAIMS TRIBUNALS TO ACCEPT HIGHER VALUE CLAIMS

From 1 November, parties can file a claim of up to \$20,000 at the State Courts' Small Claims Tribunals (SCT). This limit can be extended to \$30,000 with the written consent of both parties. The increased claim limit is one of the amendments made to the SCT Act to provide greater access to justice.

KEY AMENDMENTS SMALL CLAIMS TRIBUNALS ACT

Expansion in Jurisdiction

Increased Claim Limit
Parties may file a claim of up to \$20,000.

Increased Limitation Period
File a claim within 2 years.

File Unfair Practice Hire-purchase Claims
As defined under the Consumer Protection (Fair Trading) Act.

Enhancement of Current Processes

More Case Management Options

Attend Mandatory Mediation
Parties may be directed to attend mediation at the Community Mediation Centre.

Reconsideration/ Rehearing of Cases
The District Court may order a case to be reheard by the same or a different Tribunal Magistrate

Order for Delivery of Vacant Possession
The SCT may order a tenant who has not paid rent to vacate the property.

Costs Order
The SCT may order a party to pay the other party's costs for the proceedings.

AWARDS & ACCOLADES

NATIONAL DAY AWARDS 2019

The National Day Award Investiture (NDAI) Ceremony was held on 23 October, to honour staff members who received the National Day Awards for the year. The National Day Awards recognise various forms of merit and service to Singapore. This year, 18 recipients from the Supreme Court, State Courts and Family Justice Courts, received the National Day honours in four award categories.

Award Recipients

Public Administration Medal (Silver)

Supreme Court

Cornie Ng, Senior Assistant Registrar

State Courts

Wong Peck, District Judge
Luke Tan Loke Yong, District Judge

Commendation Medal

Family Justice Courts

Faridah Binte Atan,
Senior Maintenance Mediator (Mediation & FDR)

State Courts

Chua Hwee Sien Sharon,
Senior Assistant Director (Court Services Directorate)

Efficiency Medal

Supreme Court

Tan Eng Hwee Andy, Assistant Director
(Enforcement & Civil Matters, LD)

State Courts

Nisa d/o Raja Sekaran, Senior Executive
(Learning & Knowledge Development)

Long Service Medal

Supreme Court

Jasvier Kaur D/O Najar Singh, Case Officer (Civil Matters, LD)

State Courts

Toh Yung Cheong, District Judge
Ronald Gwee, District Judge

Low Meng Huat, Senior Assistant Director
(Court Services Directorate)

Prasakthi d/o Allagoo, Assistant Director
(Court Services Directorate)

Juliet Fenendeas, Senior Language Executive
(Court Services Directorate)

Nor Artiyangseh Binte Jibani, Senior Language Executive
(Court Services Directorate)

Salina Binte Sinain, Senior Language Executive
(Court Services Directorate)

Family Justice Courts

Kevin Ng, District Judge
Toh Wee San, District Judge
Irnawati Binte Akub, Senior Executive (MAP)

Congratulations to all award recipients.



BEHIND THE SCENES WITH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY OFFICERS



Chee Kok Keong
Applications Consultant,
Computer and Information
Services Directorate



Wong Hong Chew
Application Services Manager,
Information Technology
Department



Jenny Gwee
Senior Applications Consultant,
Computer and Information
Services Directorate

Information Technology (IT) is closely aligned with the objectives of a modern-day Judiciary. It is, in many ways, the answer to how justice can be made more accessible. In the Singapore Courts, **Information Technology Officers** are at the forefront of technological advancement. Their day-to-day responsibilities go beyond ensuring that the Courts are safe from cybersecurity threats and that all operational systems are in order. They work closely with the Judiciary's stakeholders, and come up with innovative IT solutions to advance the effective administration of justice.

In this issue, we interviewed **Kok Keong (KK)**, who joined the Supreme Court in 2015, **Hong Chew (HC)**, who joined the State Courts in 2010, and **Jenny Gwee (JG)**, who joined the Family Justice Courts this year. Read on to find out more about the work they do.

What is a typical work day for you?

KK: My main responsibility is to ensure that all systems, including the Centralised Display Management System and eLitigation (eLit) system that are under my care, are meeting our users' needs. I also keep track of various projects and work on system enhancements or issues, as well as budgeting and managing contracts.

HC: I lead the teams working on the various IT systems that support the operations of the different divisions at the State Courts. These systems include the Integrated Case Management System (ICMS), Sentencing Information and Research Repository, Finance Management System and Customer Relationship Management System. In addition to ensuring that these systems are performing well, I also enhance them to better serve users and improve the efficiency of court operations.

JG: I manage multiple projects and spend most of my time ensuring that the requirements and timelines of each project are met. I am often in meetings with the project team or an end-user in moving the projects towards completion. In addition to working closely with the team, some of my other responsibilities include budget monitoring. I am also the problem solver for my team, so that my members can focus on his/her core tasks.

What project(s) are you most proud of and why?

KK: The eLit Technology Refresh project. I am proud of the fact that we managed to perform a major overhaul to the system that had been in use for nearly seven years. I was the project manager who was there from the start to the end, and over the course of the project, the team and I had to come up with solutions to system issues, such as slow speed, accessibility and downtime, and make the necessary improvements. The journey towards completion was arduous, especially having to work late nights, the weekends and even through a public holiday. It was all worth it though, after receiving positive feedback from users.

HC: I am most proud of delivering the first phase of ICMS for State Courts within 16 months and the entire system of four phases within two years and 10 months. The ICMS' electronic workflow that we developed facilitates the entire criminal case process from the moment a criminal case is filed to its conclusion. The ICMS has won awards and its benefits are praised by court users and other stakeholders.

JG: The integrated Family Application Management System (iFAMS), which helps families resolve their disputes early and amicably through a seamless and synergistic family justice system. It streamlines court processes and procedures, allowing families to navigate the court system with minimal costs. I am proud to be part of this initiative and to be able to contribute towards the goal of enhancing the family justice system.

What are some of the challenges that you face?

KK: Managing people's expectations at all levels. In project management, one of the most critical expectations we have to manage is timeline. This is particularly so when it involves different parties. However, when the inevitable happens, we need to engage them constantly to assure them that we are working hard to resolve the issues.

HC: One of the challenges is change management. When working on a project, we have to go beyond the

software and think about how changes or new methods will be perceived, and even come up with ways to implement these changes smoothly. For example, we had to work closely with some of our stakeholders, who might be more familiar and comfortable with hardcopy documents to make the switch from paper and pen to keyboard and screen, to file cases into ICMS.

JG: As I came from the private sector, naturally I found that a few things were done differently. For example, in my previous organisation, we only reviewed the systems' user access rights annually, whereas here, we conduct the review on a monthly basis. Having gone through the audit exercise with my team, I was able to appreciate the importance of conducting monthly reviews because we are supporting systems that have a nation-wide impact. While it is important to carry out our due diligence, I feel that the manual process could be automated. I have been challenging my team to think of how we could simplify processes like these.

What would you think are the critical qualities that an IT officer should have?

JG: User-centric thinking and a continuous focus on the end-users' needs. With these, everything else will come together very well. I learnt this late in my career and have since chosen to be more user-centric. This change in mindset has led to more innovative ideas and solutions. An IT officer should be a change advocate and be ready for the digital transformation that our nation is working towards.

HC: Besides having proficient IT skills and always keeping abreast with developments in technology, an IT officer needs to be able to pick up domain knowledge and be able to adapt to the pace and steep learning curve in the Judiciary.

What do you like about your job?

KK: I appreciate the knowledge I have gained about the Singapore judicial system. Working in the Supreme Court has definitely piqued my interest in legal issues and cases that are reported in the media. I am also more aware of the existing laws in place, and I like the fact that I am able to learn about things beyond my field of study.

HC: I get a great sense of satisfaction knowing that I have played a part and contributed towards improved court processes, and seeing how users benefit from them. I also appreciate the opportunities to discover new technological trends and try out new ways to enhance existing processes.

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