

# ONE JUDICIARY

Annual  
Report  
**2019**

STATE COURTS,  
SINGAPORE

SUPREME COURT,  
SINGAPORE

FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS,  
SINGAPORE



## CHIEF JUSTICE'S FOREWORD



2019 was a significant year both for our nation, which celebrated its bicentennial, and for the Judiciary, which saw the State Courts move into the new State Courts Towers in December 2019 after some four decades in the iconic Octagon building. The 173m tall State Courts Towers is not only a striking new landmark but also a purpose-built institution that is fully equipped to meet the legal needs of an evolving society. Technology is pervasive throughout the Towers, which are outfitted with digital recording facilities, e-information kiosks and video-link facilities. New platforms and systems such as the Central Registry and Resource Management System will promote the efficient administration of cases. In many ways, the State Courts Towers is emblematic of the Judiciary's commitment to use technology and innovation to enhance access to justice and deliver better outcomes for its users.

Across the Judiciary, a range of other new technology-driven solutions were planned, piloted and implemented in 2019. Interpreters will now be able to provide their services remotely using video conferencing in criminal pre-trial proceedings. Court users will be able to download documents approved for inspection electronically without having to visit court premises. The Authentic Court Orders system allows selected court orders to be retrieved online without cost; and work is well underway on the development of an automated speech-to-text transcription system that will offer reasonably accurate and affordable real-time transcripts to parties and the court. In the near future, an online dispute resolution platform for motor accident claims heard in the State Courts will promote the amicable resolution of these disputes. In all these ways, technology will help to bridge the gap between our courts and their users by increasing the accessibility and affordability of court services, while also conserving limited judicial resources.

In 2019, work continued apace on the procedural reforms of our civil, criminal and family justice regimes. The new Rules of Court proposed by the Civil Justice Commission are slated for implementation in 2020 and will streamline and expedite our disposal of civil disputes. In view of the growing caseload of the

Court of Appeal, the new Appellate Division of the High Court was established last year and is expected to become operational in the second half of 2020. The Criminal Procedure Rules Committee also commenced its work to codify and streamline criminal procedure and practice, and the Committee to Review and Enhance Reforms in the Family Justice System submitted a set of recommendations on how principles of therapeutic justice may be infused into our system of family justice to achieve better outcomes for distressed families. Collectively, these reforms will offer us a suite of procedural rules that are better suited for the fast-paced and fast-evolving society that the courts serve today.

On the international front, we strengthened our relations with counterparts in other jurisdictions through a series of key engagements and collaborations. We continued to contribute actively to the ASEAN Law Association and the Council of ASEAN Chief Justices, helping to form a working group to consider a new ASEAN Protocol for Communication with Non-Disputing States on Issues of Treaty Interpretation, and to further populate the ASEAN Judiciaries Portal to showcase the laws of ASEAN Member States. At the 3rd Singapore-China Legal and Judicial Roundtable in August 2019, I signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Advancing Continuing Judicial Education with Chief Justice Zhou Qiang of the Supreme People's Court of the People's Republic of China, and in parallel with this the Singapore Judicial College is partnering with the National Judges College to publish a set of case authorities relevant to the Belt and Road Initiative.

As we enter the new decade, it is timely to examine our preparedness to meet the challenges it will bring. Together with my colleagues on the Supreme Court bench, I recently concluded a series of focus group discussions involving participants from various segments of our profession to discuss this very issue. These discussions revealed a broad consensus that a new evolution of legal services is at hand, brought about principally by the twin forces of globalisation and technology. These forces are not only reshaping our long-held assumptions on the nature of legal services but are also placing increasing pressure on various

time-honoured practices within the legal community, ranging from the way in which we educate and train aspiring lawyers to the role and function of the courts within a more complex and diverse society.

Out of these challenges, the COVID-19 situation has undoubtedly been one of the most difficult and urgent to have beset us, certainly within the span of most of our lifetimes. COVID-19 has affected not only the entire legal profession but also virtually every sector and industry, and indeed the global economy as a whole. It has compelled us, at short notice, to conceive of ways to overcome the need for physical convergence, to promote economy and efficiency in dispute management, and to utilise technology to its full potential. Perhaps more than anything else, it has normalised the idea that disputes can be resolved remotely without compromising fairness and accuracy. The spread of COVID-19 is a sobering reminder of just how quickly our justice system may be called upon to evolve in response to the vagaries of an unpredictable global environment. But it is the same spirit of resilience, pragmatism and inventiveness that we have mustered in these difficult times that will also take us into the future. I therefore urge us to hold fast to this same spirit and philosophy as we overcome the challenge of COVID-19 and enter the new decade together.

**Sundaresh Menon**  
Chief Justice  
Supreme Court of Singapore

## THE JUDICIARY OF SINGAPORE AT A GLANCE

The **Judiciary** is one of the three Organs of State, together with the **Executive** and the **Legislature**.



### JUDICIARY

interprets the laws and is a system of courts that upholds the law and ensures justice is accessible to all.



### EXECUTIVE

or the Government, includes the Elected President, the Cabinet and the Attorney-General, and exercises powers according to the law.



### LEGISLATURE

comprises the President and Parliament and is the legislative authority responsible for enacting legislation.

The Judiciary is made up of the Supreme Court, State Courts and the Family Justice Courts. The Honourable the Chief Justice is the head of the Judiciary, who also oversees the Supreme Court.

#### CHIEF JUSTICE



The Supreme Court Bench consists of the Chief Justice, Judges of Appeal, Judges, Senior Judges, International Judges and Judicial Commissioners. The Supreme Court Registry is headed by the Registrar, who is assisted by the Deputy Registrar, Senior Assistant Registrars and Assistant Registrars who perform judicial functions.

#### PRESIDING JUDGE



The State Courts are headed by the Presiding Judge of the State Courts, who is assisted by the Deputy Presiding Judge and Registrar. District Judges and Magistrates preside over the District Courts and Magistrates' Courts respectively, and may hold concurrent appointments as Deputy Registrars, Coroners, Tribunal Judges and Magistrates.

#### PRESIDING JUDGE



The Family Justice Courts are headed by the Presiding Judge of the Family Justice Courts, and consist of Judges of the High Court (Family Division), as well as Judicial Officers of the Family Court holding the appointment of District Judges and Magistrates, and may concurrently be appointed as Assistant Registrars, together with Court Family Specialist and Court Administrators.



### COURT OF APPEAL

Generally hears civil and criminal appeals from the High Court



### HIGH COURT

Hears different types of cases including but not limited to the following:

- Civil cases where the value of the claim exceeds \$250,000.
- Criminal cases where offences are punishable with death or imprisonment for a term which exceeds 10 years.
- Civil and criminal appeals from State Courts.
- Admiralty matters.
- Company winding-up and other insolvency-related proceedings.
- Bankruptcy proceedings.
- Applications for the admission of advocates and solicitors.
- Judicial review and public law related cases.
- Tribunal appeals.



### SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL COMMERCIAL COURT (SICC)

- Actions which are international and commercial in nature, in accordance with section 18D(1) of the Supreme Court of Judicature Act.
- Proceedings relating to international commercial arbitration, in accordance with section 18D(2) of the Supreme Court of Judicature Act.
- These include cases commenced in the SICC as well as cases transferred from the High Court to the SICC.



### DISTRICT COURTS

- Hear civil cases where the value of the claim is between \$60,000 and \$250,000, or up to \$500,000 for road traffic accident claims or claims for personal injuries arising out of industrial accidents.
- Hear criminal cases where the maximum imprisonment term does not exceed 10 years or which are punishable with a fine only.



### MAGISTRATES' COURTS

- Hear civil cases involving claims not exceeding \$60,000.
- Hear criminal cases where the maximum imprisonment term does not exceed 5 years or which are punishable with a fine only.



### CORONERS' COURTS

- Conduct inquiries into sudden or unnatural deaths or where the cause of death is unknown.



### SMALL CLAIMS TRIBUNALS

- Hear claims not exceeding \$20,000, or \$30,000 if both parties consent in writing, for disputes arising from a contract for the sale of goods, provision of services, an unfair practice relating to a hire-purchase agreement, a tort in respect of damage caused to property, certain statutory claims, or a contract relating to a lease of residential premises not exceeding 2 years.



### COMMUNITY DISPUTES RESOLUTION TRIBUNALS

- Hear disputes between neighbours concerning the tort of interference with enjoyment or use of place of residence.



### EMPLOYMENT CLAIMS TRIBUNALS

- Hear salary-related claims and wrongful dismissal claims not exceeding \$20,000, or \$30,000 for tripartite-mediated disputes.



### HIGH COURT (FAMILY DIVISION)

- Exercises original jurisdiction and hears appeals against the decisions of the Family Courts and the Youth Courts in family proceedings.
- Hears ancillary matters in family proceedings involving assets of \$5 million or more.
- Hears probate matters where the value of the deceased's estate is more than \$5 million or if the case involves the resealing of a foreign grant.



### FAMILY COURTS

- Divorce-related proceedings
- Guardianship proceedings
- Adoption proceedings
- Protection from family violence
- Provision of maintenance matters
- Mental capacity cases
- Probate cases
- Vulnerable adults' cases



### YOUTH COURTS

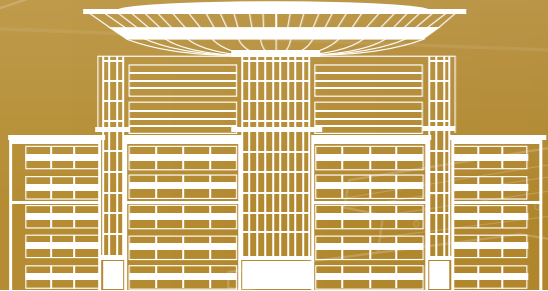
Cases under the Children and Young Persons Act, i.e. Youth Arrest, Beyond Parental and Care Protection cases.



### MEDIATION & COUNSELLING

All cases coming before the Courts will be managed pro-actively by judges from the start and where necessary, the Courts can direct that parties undergo counselling and mediation to try and reach amicable resolution of their disputes instead of proceeding with adjudication.

To navigate the One Judiciary Annual Report, click the icons below



## SUPREME COURT

REIMAGINING THE FUTURE OF OUR COURTS



## STATE COURTS

A TRUSTED AND FORWARD-LOOKING JUDICIARY



## FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS

EVERY OUTCOME, A WAY FORWARD



# REIMAGINING THE FUTURE OF OUR COURTS

# SUPREME COURT

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VISION

A Leading, Trusted Judiciary. Ready for Tomorrow.

MISSION

Accessible Justice that commands trust, respect and confidence

OUR VALUES

Fairness | Accessibility | Independence, Integrity, Impartiality | Responsiveness

## REIMAGINING THE FUTURE OF OUR COURTS

### TECHNOLOGY

Technology has been shown to substantially improve court processes and will continue to accomplish much more in enhancing access to justice. A number of initiatives were implemented in 2019, where processes were streamlined to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.



#### Enhancement of eLitigation for inspection of court documents

From February 2019, Supreme Court enhanced the process for inspection of court documents by automating the retrieval of approved documents. This allows requestors to download the approved documents anytime, anywhere, thus saving time and providing greater convenience to them.



#### Remote interpreting

Remote interpreting (RI) was implemented in criminal Pre-Trial Conferences (PTCs) and criminal case disclosure conferences (CCDCs) on 28 May 2019. With RI, interpreters can tap on video-conferencing technologies without being physically present in court for PTCs and CCDCs. This saves time and frees up manpower in the interpreters' section to work on other urgent assignments. RI may be progressively introduced to other types of hearings in the Supreme Court.



#### Availability of audio recordings of High Court trials

To improve transparency in court proceedings, the Supreme Court started releasing audio recordings of High Court hearings (in open court trials) to parties to the proceedings on a pilot basis from 15 October 2019. The release of the audio recordings is subject to the approval of the Judge, the giving of the prescribed undertakings on the use of the audio recordings, and the payment of the appropriate fees and charges by the applicant.



#### Authentic Court Orders

In an effort to innovate and streamline court processes, the Office of Transformation and Innovation (OTI) has developed and launched the Authentic Court Orders (ACO) system which obviates the need for parties to obtain certified true copies when asked to produce court orders to foreign courts or government agencies. Parties can show a photocopy, email, or even a fax a screenshot of an ACO to any relying party. The relying party can verify the authenticity of the order by retrieving a validated copy of the same order directly from the official ACO website. The service is free of charge.

### EMPOWERING AND EDUCATING COURT USERS

The redesign of our justice system is essential to meet our society's evolving justice needs. To build a justice system that is fair and inspires public confidence, we should strive to facilitate the public's equal access to the justice system and assist individuals in knowing their rights and remedies under the law. We are investing in tools to help litigants find low or no cost solutions to their legal problems. We are also exploring the possibility of offering a suite of assistive services to empower and educate court users. With the publication of written judgments and grounds of decisions on our website, the public can have better insight on how judges deliberate on cases.

We also educate court users through engagement and outreach. In November 2019 and January 2020, the State Courts and the Supreme Court launched their respective Judicial Heritage Galleries. The galleries, which are open to members of the public, highlight the history and work of the Judiciary.



## REIMAGINING THE FUTURE OF OUR COURTS

### WIDER SUITE OF DISPUTE RESOLUTION METHODS



Singapore is increasingly gaining recognition for its status as a global dispute resolution hub. Apart from litigation, alternative dispute resolution (ADR) and online dispute resolution (ODR) options are increasingly popular. With ADR and ODR, when a dispute arises, litigants can assess their options before pursuing litigation. Through technology, processes are automated and litigants can make use of questionnaires, customised decision trees and triage software to diagnose their problems and provide a preliminary assessment of their merits.

For example, the ODR platform for motor accident cases will, when ready, have an outcome simulator which will allow parties to obtain information regarding potential award ranges for personal injuries, and facilitate early settlement where possible.

Both ADR and ODR minimise costs and save time through simplified processes.



### OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS IN JUSTICE REFORMS



#### Civil Justice Reforms

The new Appellate Division of the High Court was introduced through Constitutional and legislative amendments in 2019, to help address the growing caseload of the Court of Appeal. The Appellate Division is expected to come into operation in the second half of 2020. Another significant development will be the implementation of the new Rules of Court proposed by the Civil Justice Commission.



#### Criminal Justice Reforms

The Criminal Procedure Rules Committee established by the Criminal Justice Reform Act comprises representatives from the Judiciary, the Bar and the Government. The Committee has commenced work on codifying and streamlining the rules on procedure and practice in our criminal courts. The Committee's initial contributions are expected to be promulgated in the second half of 2020.



# THE SUPREME COURT BENCH



## THE SUPREME COURT BENCH

OUR JUDGES  
AS OF 31 JANUARY 2020



**CHIEF JUSTICE**  
Sundaresh Menon

## JUDGES OF APPEAL



**Justice**  
Andrew Phang



**Justice**  
Judith Prakash



**Justice**  
Tay Yong Kwang



**Justice**  
Steven Chong

# THE SUPREME COURT BENCH

OUR JUDGES

## OUR JUDGES

AS OF 31 JANUARY 2020

**Justice**  
Choo Han Teck



**Justice**  
Belinda Ang



**Justice**  
Vinodh Coomaraswamy



**Justice**  
Tan Siong Thye



**Justice**  
Woo Bih Li



**Justice**  
Lee Seiu Kin



**Justice**  
See Kee Oon



**Justice**  
Chua Lee Ming



**Justice**  
Chan Seng Onn



**Justice**  
Quentin Loh



**Justice**  
Kannan Ramesh



**Justice**  
Valerie Thean



## THE SUPREME COURT BENCH

OUR JUDGES

### OUR JUDGES

AS OF 31 JANUARY 2020

**Justice**  
Hoo Sheau Peng



**Justice**  
Debbie Ong



**Justice**  
Audrey Lim



**Justice**  
Ang Cheng Hock



**Justice**  
Aedit Abdullah



**Justice**  
Pang Khang Chau



**Justice**  
Vincent Hoong



# THE SUPREME COURT BENCH

OUR JUDGES

## OUR JUDGES AS OF 31 JANUARY 2020



**Judicial Commissioner**  
Tan Puay Boon



**Judicial Commissioner**  
Mavis Chionh



**Justice**  
Chao Hick Tin



**Justice**  
Andrew Ang



**Judicial Commissioner**  
Dedar Singh Gill



**Judicial Commissioner**  
S. Mohan



**Justice**  
Tan Lee Meng



**Justice**  
Lai Siu Chiu

# THE SUPREME COURT BENCH

INTERNATIONAL JUDGES

## INTERNATIONAL JUDGES

AS OF 31 JANUARY 2020

**Justice**  
Carolyn Berger



**Justice**  
Patricia Bergin



**Justice**  
Dominique T. Hascher



**Justice**  
Dyson Heydon AC QC



**Justice**  
Sir Jeremy Cooke



**Justice**  
Sir Henry Bernard Eder



**Justice Lord**  
Jonathan Hugh Mance



**Justice**  
Beverley McLachlin PC



**Justice**  
Robert French



**Justice**  
Roger Giles



**Justice Lord**  
Neuberger of Abbotsbury



**Justice**  
Sir Vivian Ramsey



**THE SUPREME COURT BENCH**

INTERNATIONAL JUDGES

**INTERNATIONAL JUDGES**

AS OF 31 JANUARY 2020

**Justice**  
Anselmo Reyes



**Justice**  
Sir Bernard Rix



**Justice**  
Yasuhei Taniguchi



**Justice**  
Simon Thorley QC



**Justice**  
Arjan Kumar Sikri

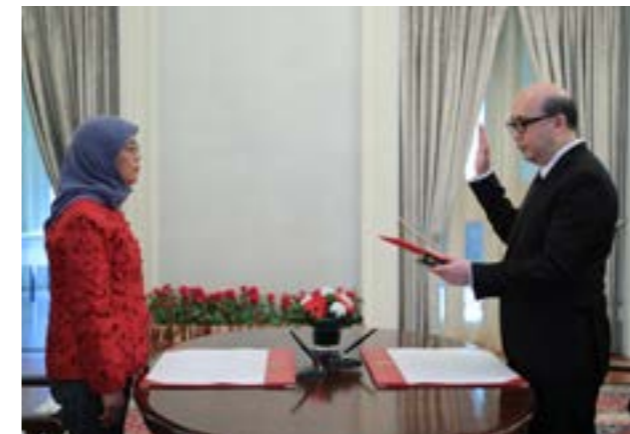


**Justice**  
Douglas Samuel Jones AO

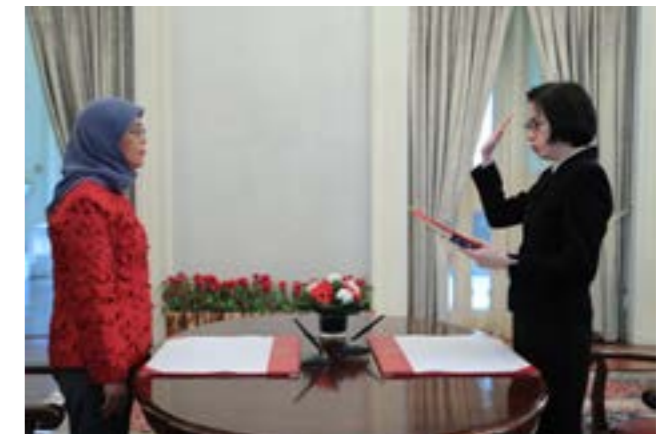
**APPOINTMENT/REAPPOINTMENT**

2019 saw extensive local and international developments to the Supreme Court. The Bench, equipped with diverse judicial experience and expertise, is committed to fulfil our vision of a leading and trusted judiciary, ready for tomorrow. In recent years, the Supreme Court judges have been appointed as Judges or Judicial Commissioners of courts in other jurisdictions. This raises Singapore's international standing and reputation as a legal and judicial centre.

**Appointment of High Court Judges**



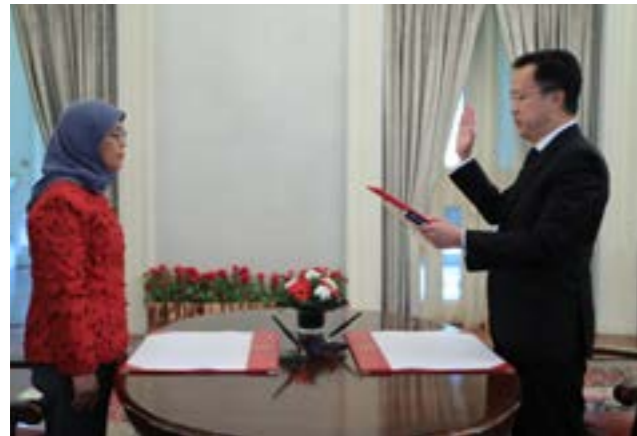
**Justice Pang Khang Chau** was elevated to a High Court Judge with effect from 1 August 2019. He was first appointed Judicial Commissioner of the Supreme Court in August 2016. He joined the Legal Service in 1995 as a State Counsel in the Civil Division of the Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC) where he acted as counsel for the government in various legal proceedings. He held various key appointments in the Ministry of Law and AGC, such as the Director-General of the International Affairs Division of AGC, before his appointment as a Judicial Commissioner.



**Justice Audrey Lim** was elevated to a High Court Judge with effect from 1 August 2019. She was first appointed Judicial Commissioner of the Supreme Court in August 2016. Before her appointment as a Judicial Commissioner, she was the Deputy Chief Legislative Counsel in the AGC. Since joining the Legal Service in 1994, she had served in various postings at the Supreme Court, State Courts and the AGC. Justice Lim is also a member of the Board of the Singapore Mediation Centre, and sits on various committees such as the Rules of Court Working Party, Family Justice Rules Working Party, Singapore International Commercial Court Rules Working Party and Law Reform Committee of the Singapore Academy of Law (SAL).

## THE SUPREME COURT BENCH

### APPOINTMENT/REAPPOINTMENT



**Justice Ang Cheng Hock** was elevated to a High Court Judge with effect from 1 August 2019. Prior to his appointment as a Judicial Commissioner of the Supreme Court in May 2018, he was a senior partner in Messrs Allen & Gledhill, and a member of its Litigation and Dispute Resolution department. Outside his judicial duties, Justice Ang is the Vice-Chairman of the Professional Affairs Committee and the Chairperson of the Professional Values Chapter, both under the SAL. He is also a Board Member of the Singapore Institute of Legal Education as well as a member of the Supreme Court's Civil Justice Commission and the Ministry of Law's Civil Justice Review Committee. He was appointed Senior Counsel in 2009.



**Justice Vincent Hoong** was elevated to a High Court Judge with effect from 3 January 2020, from his previous appointment as a Judicial Commissioner of the Supreme Court since 10 April 2019. He joined the Legal Service in 1984 and held various positions in the Judiciary, Legal Service and Public Service. Before his appointment as a Judicial Commissioner, he was Registrar of the Supreme Court from April 2015 to April 2019.

### Reappointment of High Court Judges



**Justice Tan Siong Thye** was reappointed as a High Court Judge for a further term of two years with effect from 22 June 2019. He was first appointed Judicial Commissioner of the Supreme Court in October 2013 and was elevated to a High Court Judge in July 2014. Subsequently in February 2015, he assumed the appointment as Singapore's first Deputy Attorney-General for a three-year term, before returning as a High Court Judge in April 2017. Justice Tan is currently the Chairman of the Expert Panel of the Pro Bono Centre at the Singapore Management University.



**Justice Woo Bih Li** was reappointed as a High Court Judge for a further term of two years with effect from 31 December 2019. He was first appointed Judicial Commissioner of the Supreme Court in May 2000 and was elevated to a High Court Judge in January 2003. Before his appointment as a Judicial Commissioner, he was in private practice. He was appointed Senior Counsel in 1997.

### Appointment of Judicial Commissioner



**Judicial Commissioner S. Mohan** was appointed Judicial Commissioner of the Supreme Court for a period of two years with effect from 3 January 2020. He specialises in maritime, shipping and international trade disputes and was among the first select group of legal practitioners to be accredited as Senior Accredited Specialist in Maritime and Shipping law in 2019 by the SAL. He is on the panel of arbitrators of the Singapore Chamber of Maritime Arbitration and is also a Fellow of The Singapore Institute of Arbitrators.

### Appointment of High Court Judge to other Judiciary



**Justice Kannan Ramesh** was appointed Judicial Commissioner of the Supreme Court of Brunei Darussalam and was sworn-in by His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddin Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam on 7 October 2019. As Judicial Commissioner of the Supreme Court of Brunei Darussalam, Justice Ramesh will spend up to one month in Brunei each year to read, hear and write judgments on primarily commercial cases and certain civil cases. The appointment is for a period of two years in the first instance.

This appointment is a testament to the strong relations between the two courts, and will further strengthen the judicial cooperation between both judiciaries.

### Appointment of International Judges



**Justice Arjan Kumar Sikri** was appointed International Judge of Singapore International Commercial Court from 1 August 2019 to 4 January 2021.

Justice Sikri was a former Judge of the Supreme Court of India from April 2013 to March 2019. He was appointed Judge of the High Court of Delhi in July 1999 and served as the Acting Chief Justice of Delhi High Court from October 2011 before being elevated to the Chief Justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court in September 2012. He was subsequently appointed a Judge at the Supreme Court of India in April 2013. He is currently a Visiting Professor in two National Law Schools in India and conducts arbitration and mediation sessions. He was selected as one of the 50 most influential persons in Intellectual Property in the world by Managing Intellectual Property Association (MIPA) in 2007.



**Justice Douglas Samuel Jones AO** was appointed International Judge of the Singapore International Commercial Court from 1 November 2019 to 4 January 2021.

Justice Jones joined Clayton Utz as a Partner and Head of the firm's Construction group in 1993. He headed their International Arbitration and Private International Law group in 1995 and their National Major Projects Group in 2000. He became a full time independent International Arbitrator upon his retirement from Clayton Utz in 2014, and is highly regarded particularly in construction disputes. This was attested by Chambers Asia Pacific, who had recognised him as the leading Asia Pacific Arbitrator for construction disputes. In 2018, he was identified as one of the 10 most highly regarded arbitration practitioners in London and a leader in construction disputes.

# ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

## ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AS OF 31 JANUARY 2020

### SUPREME COURT REGISTRY



The Supreme Court Registry is headed by the Registrar of the Supreme Court. The Registrar oversees the Registry's judicial functions in the Supreme Court, and ensures the timely and efficient disposal of cases.

#### REGISTRAR

Ms Teh Hwee Hwee



The Registrar is assisted by the Deputy Registrar, Senior Assistant Registrars and Assistant Registrars, who perform judicial functions in the Supreme Court.

#### DEPUTY REGISTRAR

*Divisional Registrar (Singapore International Commercial Court)*  
Mr Phang Hsiao Chung

### SENIOR ASSISTANT REGISTRARS



Ms Cornie Ng Teng Teng

*Divisional Registrar (High Court)*



Mr Edwin San Ong Kyar



Ms Chong Chin Chin

*Divisional Registrar (Court of Appeal)*



Ms Cheng Pei Feng



Mr David Lee Yeow Wee



## ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

### ASSISTANT REGISTRARS



Mr James Elisha Lee Han Leong



Ms Janice Wong Shi Hui  
*Deputy Divisional Registrar  
(Court of Appeal)*



Mr Paul Chan Wei Sern  
*Deputy Divisional Registrar  
(Court of Appeal)*



Ms Una Khng  
*Deputy Divisional Registrar  
(Singapore International Commercial Court)*



Ms Jacqueline Lee Siew Hui



Ms Wong Baochen



Mr Bryan Fang Hao Wen



Mr Scott Tan Chun Wen



Mr Justin Yeo Rong Wei  
*Deputy Divisional Registrar  
(Court of Appeal)*



Ms Gan Kam Yui



Ms Karen Tan Teck Ping



Mr Kenneth Choo Wing Kong



Mr James Low Yunhui



Mr Paul Tan Wei Chean



Mr Elton Tan Xue Yang



Mr Jonathan Ng Pang Ern



Ms Crystal Tan Huijing  
*Deputy Divisional Registrar  
(Singapore International Commercial Court)*



Mr Colin Seow Fu Hong  
*Deputy Divisional Registrar  
(Court of Appeal)*



Ms Carol Liew Lin Lin  
*Deputy Divisional Registrar  
(Singapore International Commercial Court)*



Ms Jean Chan Lay Koon



Mr Navin Anand



Ms Zeslene Mao Huijing



Mr Kenneth Wang Ye



Ms Eunice Chan Swee Ern



Mr Ramu Miyapan



Mr Jay Lee Yuxian



Ms Lim Sai Nei



Ms Li Yuen Ting



Mr Reuben Ong Zhihao



Ms Alison See Ying Xiu



Ms Beverly Lim Kai Li

## ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

### JUDICIARY ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATIONS

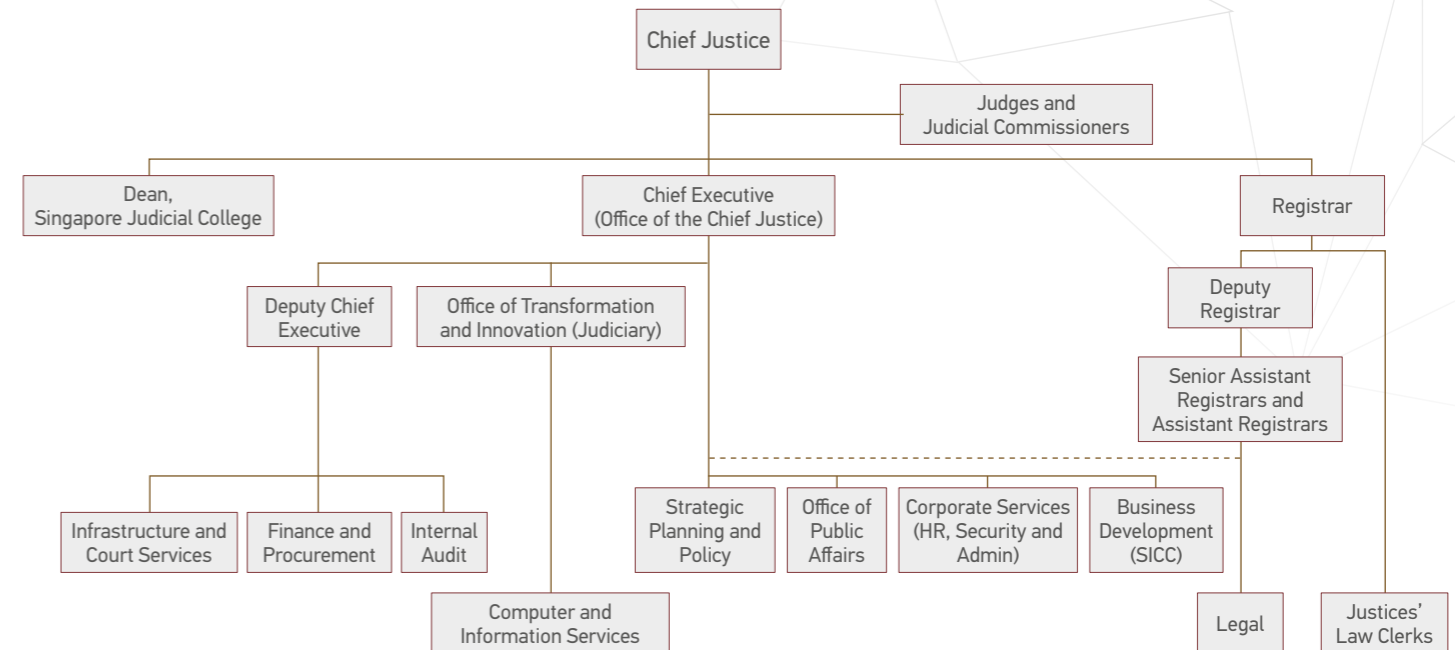


**CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF JUSTICE**  
Ms Juthika Ramanathan

The Chief Executive oversees the administration and operations of the Supreme Court, ensuring the efficient running of the court and provision of effective services to court users.

The Chief Executive is supported by the Deputy Chief Executive, the Chief Transformation and Innovation Officer and a team of Directors with specialised functions and roles.

## ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AS OF 31 JANUARY 2020



#### Infrastructure and Court Services

Strategises the use of resources and services that best support the hearing process, and includes the Infrastructure Section, Court Reporting Services Section and Interpreters Section.

#### Finance and Procurement Directorate

Promotes proper stewardship of the Supreme Court's financial resources, through the implementation of frameworks that promote financial prudence, value-for-money practices and financial accountability.

#### Internal Audit

Promotes governance and enables a disciplined approach to evaluating the adequacy of controls, so as to bring about improved internal processes, compliance with government operating procedures and effective risk management practices.

#### Office of Transformation and Innovation

Coordinates and drives transformative change throughout the entire Judiciary, including centralising initiatives within the Judiciary to achieve consistency and enable scaling, and devising new and innovative approaches to the Judiciary's work. Oversees the Computer and Information Services Directorate.

#### Computer and Information Services Directorate

Ensures the Supreme Court is at the forefront of new IT trends and developments; anticipates and implements IT solutions for the organisation while safeguarding the Supreme Court's IT assets from cyber-security threats.

#### Strategic Planning and Policy Directorate

Advances the Supreme Court's position as a thought leader in court excellence through policy formulation, strategic external engagement, organisational development and performance management.

#### Office of Public Affairs

Oversees the planning and execution of public engagement and communication efforts to position the Supreme Court as a forward-thinking and outward-looking organisation with effective public service delivery.

#### Corporate Services

Oversees the Supreme Court's Human Resources, Security, Record Management and Admin functions as well as the Library.

#### Business Development (SICC)

Promotes awareness and usage of the Singapore International Commercial Court (SICC) among legal and business professionals both regionally and internationally, through various marketing and communication platforms and initiatives.

#### Legal Directorate

Responsible for inter alia the management and efficient disposal of all civil and criminal cases filed in the High Court, the SICC and the Court of Appeal in accordance with the applicable legislation, rules and practice directions. Also oversees the inspection and supply of court records and documents, enforcement actions, caseload and judicial statistics and other hearing support and resource management matters relating to court hearings.



[From left to right]  
**Jack Lim**, Director (Infrastructure and Court Services) / **Teo Li Min**, Director (Legal) / **Dexter Tan**, Director (Finance) / **Shirlynn Loo**, Director (Strategic Planning and Policy) / **Laurence Wong**, Senior Director (Business Development), Singapore International Commercial Court / **Tan Ken Hwee**, Chief Transformation and Innovation Officer (Judiciary) / **Juthika Ramanathan**, Chief Executive / **Clara Goh**, Deputy Chief Executive / **Theresa Yeo**, Director (Corporate Services) / **Ho Shee Yan**, Chief Internal Auditor / **Brian Lai**, Chief Technology Officer / **Julie Sim**, Director (Office of Public Affairs) / **Santhanam Srinivasan**, Chief Information Officer

# CONSTITUTION AND JURISDICTION

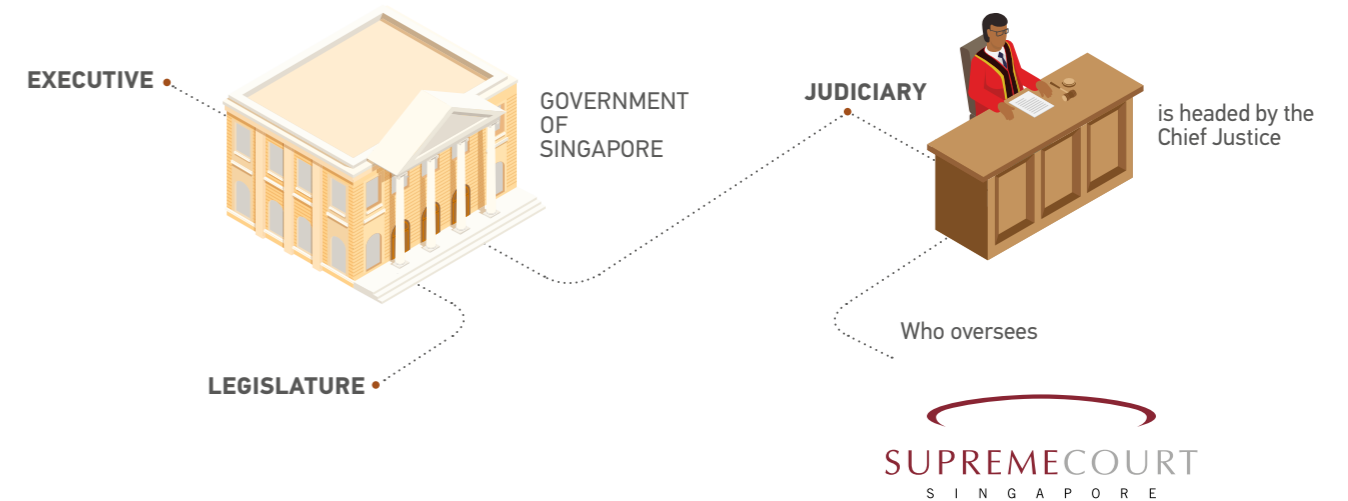


## CONSTITUTION AND JURISDICTION

### OUR ROLE

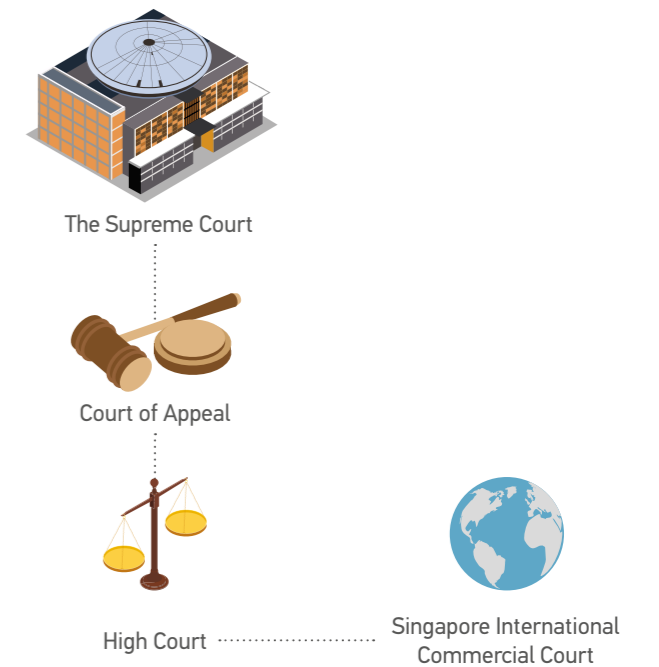
The Judiciary is one of the three branches of government, alongside Executive and Legislature. Under Article 93 of the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore, judicial power in Singapore is vested in the Supreme Court and in such state courts as may be provided for by any written law for the time being in force.

Headed by the Chief Justice, the Judiciary is a system of courts that upholds the law and ensures justice is accessible to all. The Chief Justice is appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister.



### STRUCTURE OF THE SUPREME COURT

The Supreme Court, comprising the Court of Appeal and the High Court, hears both civil and criminal matters. The Singapore International Commercial Court (SICC), which hears international commercial disputes, is a division of the High Court. The Supreme Court Bench consists of the Chief Justice, Judges of Appeal, Judges, Senior Judges, International Judges and Judicial Commissioners. Justices' Law Clerks, who work directly under the charge of the Chief Justice, assist the Judiciary by carrying out research on the law, particularly for appeals before the Court of Appeal.



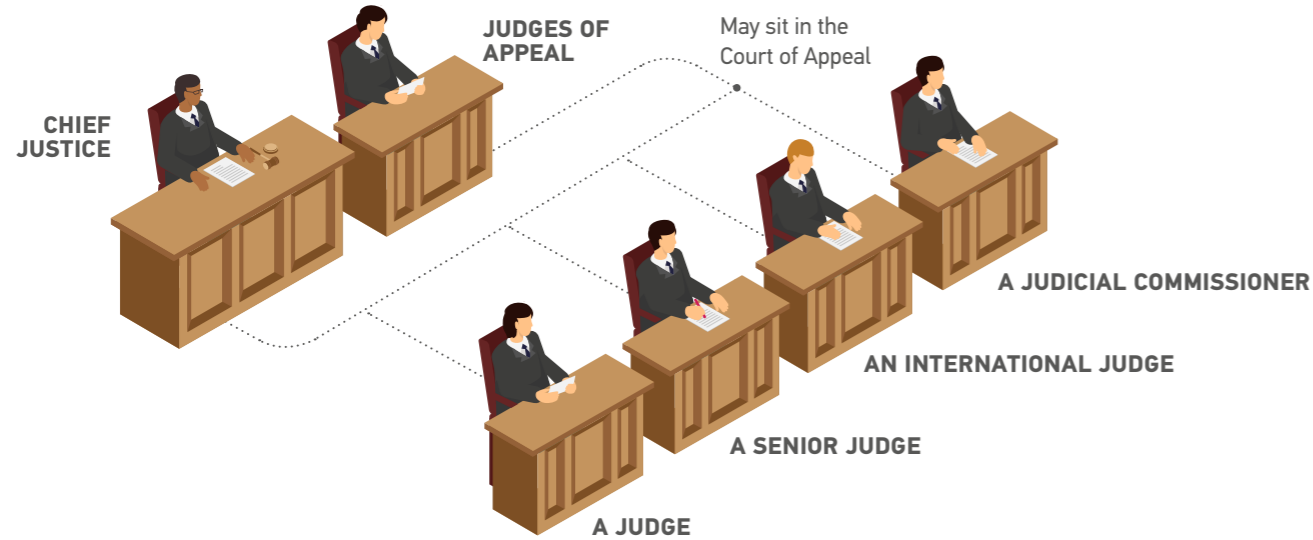
## CONSTITUTION AND JURISDICTION

### COURT OF APPEAL

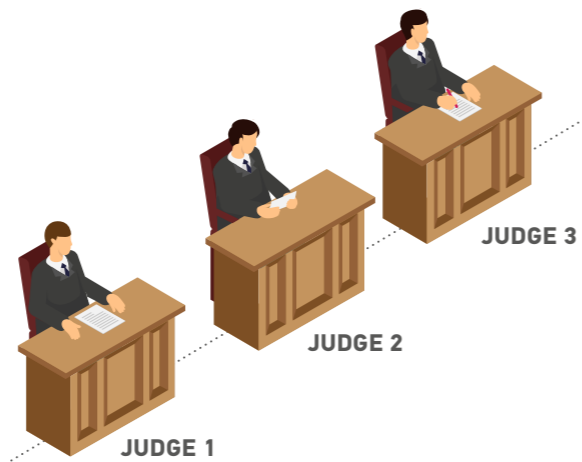
The Court of Appeal generally hears appeals against the decisions of the High Court in both civil and criminal matters. Since 8 April 1994, when the system of appeals to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council was abolished, it became Singapore's final court of appeal.

The Chief Justice sits in the Court of Appeal together with the Judges of Appeal. A Judge, Senior Judge, International

Judge and Judicial Commissioner may sit in the Court of Appeal as such occasion as the Chief Justice requires. An International Judge may sit in the Court of Appeal against a judgment or order of the SICC on such occasion as the Chief Justice requires. The Court of Appeal is presided over by the Chief Justice, and in his absence, a Judge of the Supreme Court or a person appointed by the Chief Justice to preside where the Court of Appeal does not include any Judge of the Supreme Court.



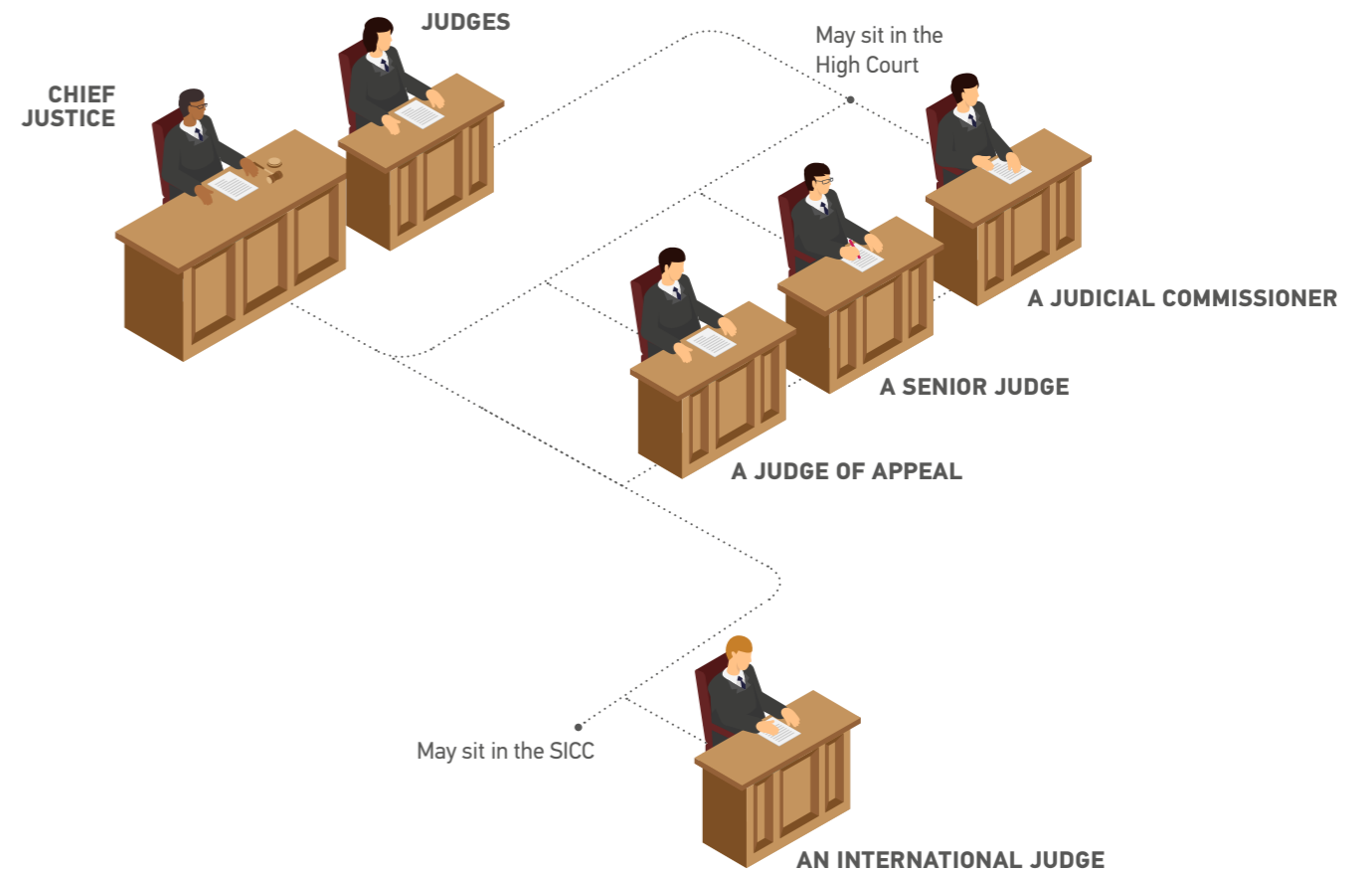
The Court of Appeal is usually made up of three judges. However, certain appeals may be heard by only two judges, including those against interlocutory orders. If necessary, the Court of Appeal may comprise five or more uneven number of judges.



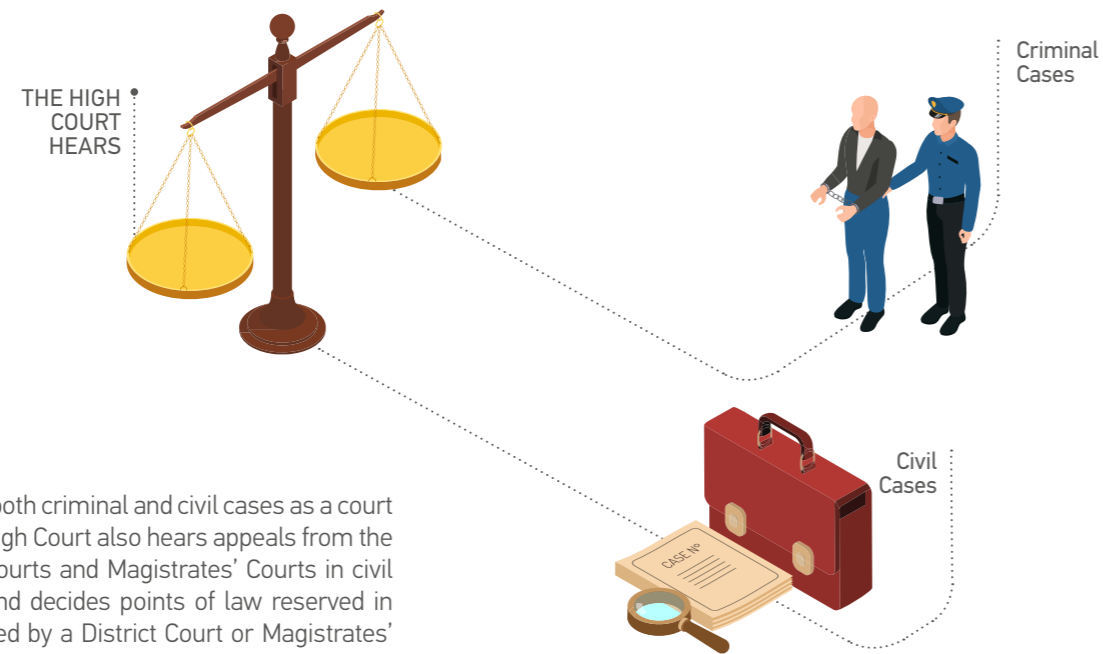
### HIGH COURT

The High Court consists of the Chief Justice and the Judges of the High Court. A Judge of Appeal may sit in the High Court on such occasion as the Chief Justice requires. A Senior Judge or Judicial Commissioner may also sit in the High Court on such occasion as the Chief Justice requires. An International Judge may sit in the SICC on such occasion as the Chief Justice requires.

Proceedings in the High Court are heard before a single judge, unless otherwise provided by any written law. The High Court may also appoint one or more persons with expertise in the subject matter of the proceedings to assist the court.



## CONSTITUTION AND JURISDICTION



### HIGH COURT

The High Court hears both criminal and civil cases as a court of first instance. The High Court also hears appeals from the decisions of District Courts and Magistrates' Courts in civil and criminal cases, and decides points of law reserved in special cases submitted by a District Court or Magistrates' Court. In addition, the High Court has general supervisory and revisionary jurisdiction over all courts in any civil or criminal matter.

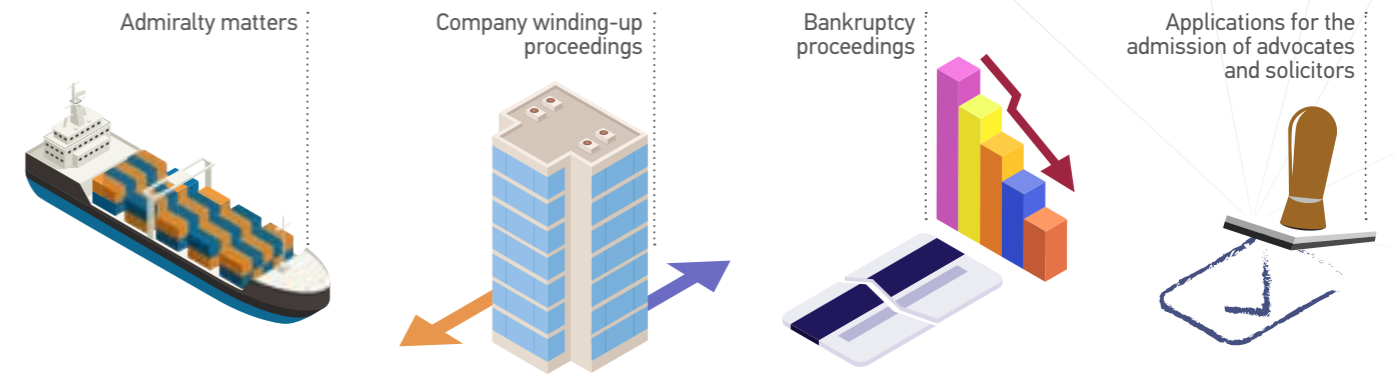
With a few limited exceptions, the High Court has jurisdiction to hear and try any action where the defendant is served with a writ or other originating process in Singapore, or outside Singapore in the circumstances authorised by the Rules of Court, or where the defendant submits to the jurisdiction of the High Court. Generally, except in probate matters, a civil case must be commenced in the High Court if the value of

the claim exceeds \$250,000. In addition, ancillary matters in family proceedings involving assets of S\$5,000,000 or more are also heard in the High Court. In criminal cases, the High Court generally tries cases where the offences are punishable with death or imprisonment for a term which exceeds 10 years.

Cases commenced in the High Court:



The following matters are also exclusively heard by the High Court:



### SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL COMMERCIAL COURT (SICC)

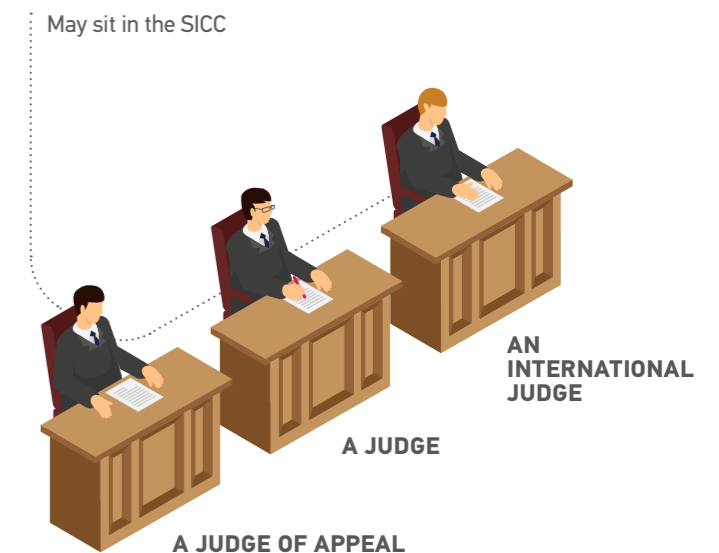
The SICC is a division of the High Court designed to deal with transnational commercial disputes. It was set up as an alternative to international arbitration that provides an internationally-accepted framework for the resolution of international commercial disputes based on substantive principles of international commercial law and international best practices.

The SICC may also hear cases which are transferred from the High Court. SICC proceedings may be heard by either one or three judges. Appeals from the SICC will be heard by the Court of Appeal.

The SICC has the jurisdiction to hear and try an action if:

- the claim in the action is of an international and commercial nature;
- the parties to the action have submitted to SICC's jurisdiction under a written jurisdiction agreement; and
- the parties to the action do not seek any relief in the form of, or connected with, a prerogative order (including a mandatory order, a prohibiting order, a quashing order or an order for review of detention).

The SICC also has jurisdiction to hear any proceedings relating to international commercial arbitration that are commenced by way of any originating process, and that the Singapore High Court may hear under the International Arbitration Act (Cap. 143A).



## EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



## EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

### ANNUAL JUDICIARY EVENTS

7 January 2019  
Supreme Court

#### Opening of the Legal Year Ceremony

An annual signature event in the judicial calendar, the Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon opened the Legal Year 2019 at the Supreme Court auditorium. More than 500 distinguished guests from the legal fraternity and academia attended the Opening of Legal Year Ceremony. Chief Justice provided an overview of the progress the Judiciary had made in strengthening our dispute resolution frameworks and promoting the rule of law in Singapore and beyond, as well as set out directions for the new year.



**EVENT HIGHLIGHTS**

ANNUAL JUDICIARY EVENTS

7 January 2019  
The Istana

**Opening of the Legal Year Judiciary Dinner**

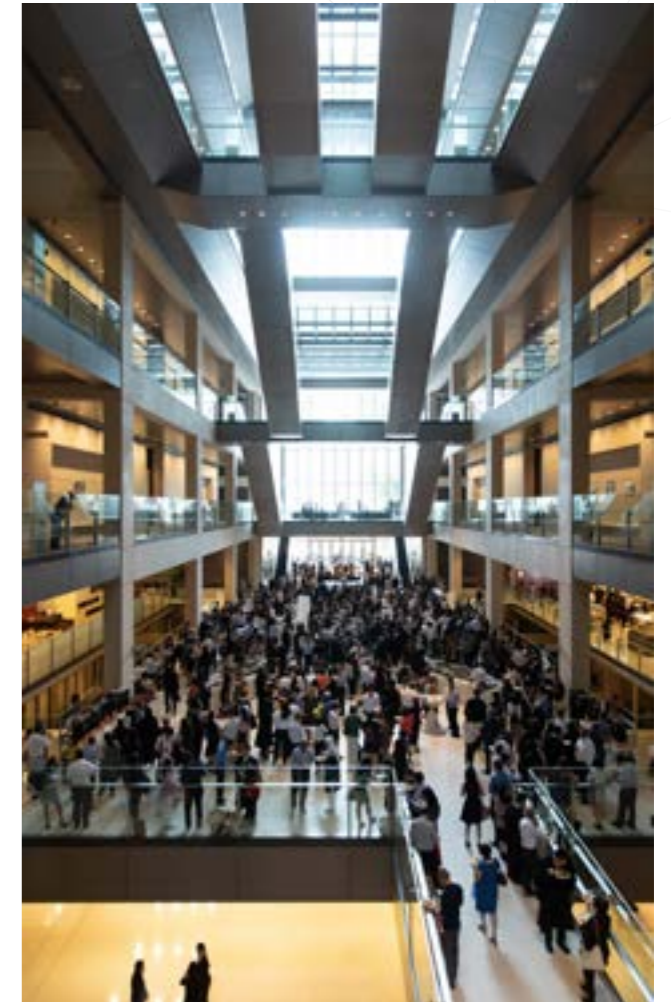
A Judiciary Dinner, hosted by the Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and Mrs Menon for the local and overseas guests from the Judiciary and legal fraternity, was held at the Istana following the ceremonial Opening of the Legal Year proceedings. The dinner was graced by Her Excellency President Halimah Yacob and Mr Mohamed Abdullah Alhabshee.



27 to 28 August 2019  
Supreme Court

**Admission of Advocates and Solicitors**

The annual event held over three sessions at the Supreme Court Auditorium saw 529 newly appointed advocates and solicitors admitted to the Singapore Bar. The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon delivered a speech titled "A Profession of Learners", where he exhorted the freshly minted lawyers to reskill and relearn in this technological age, where "technology is already beginning to displace lawyers from areas of practices".



**EVENT HIGHLIGHTS**

**STRENGTHENING REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS**

**STRENGTHENING REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS**

8-9 January 2019  
Supreme Court

**Singapore International Commercial Court Conference**

The annual Singapore International Commercial Court (SICC) Conference returned for its fifth edition, where the Judiciary and the International Judges reviewed the work of the SICC and set goals for its development. The participants discussed issues that ranged from IT developments to the SICC New Rules, as well as explored emerging trends in the International commercial courts arena around the world and potential collaborative opportunities with other courts.



28-30 May 2019  
Supreme Court

**5<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Judicial Colloquium**

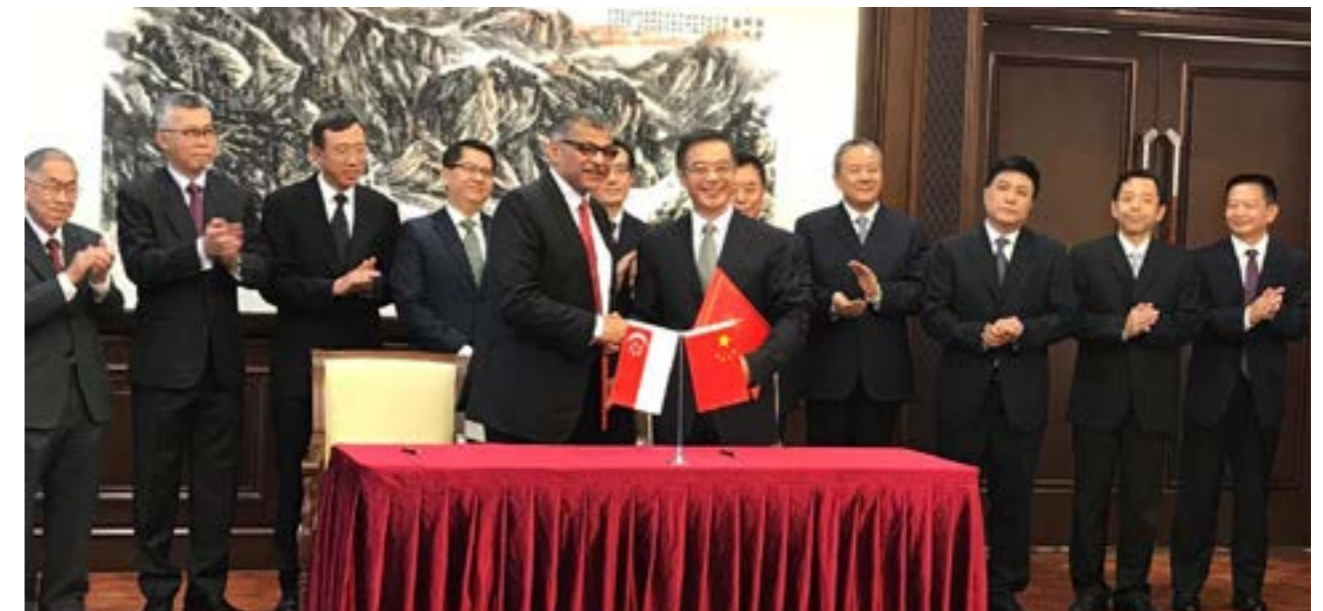
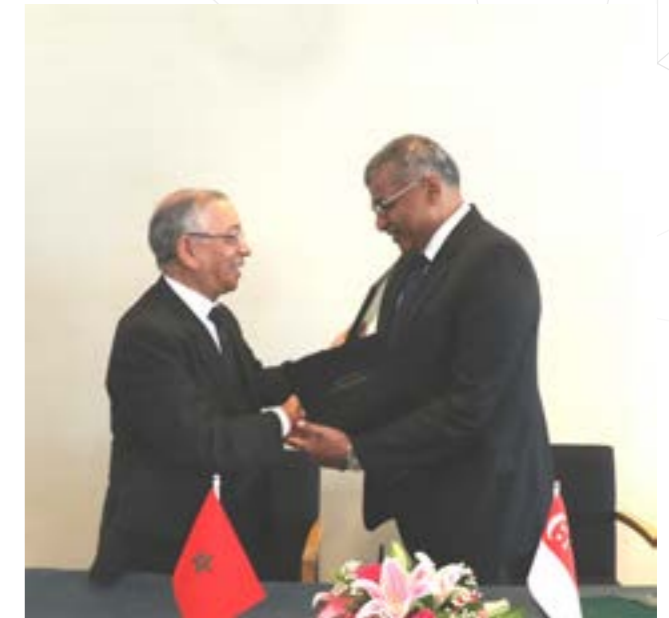
The Supreme Court of Singapore organised the biennial Colloquium, attended by the Chief Justices and Judges from the apex courts of Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, New Zealand and Singapore. The Colloquium culminated in frank, open and rich discussions on issues centred on court administration and recent development in the law of contract and equitable compensation, as well as current issues in Public and International Law.



9 July 2019  
Supreme Court

**Supreme Court of Singapore signs Memorandum of Understanding with Supreme Council of the Judicial Power of Morocco**

His Excellency the Chief Justice of Morocco, and President Delegate of the Supreme Council of the Judicial Power, Mostafa Faress called on The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon. For the first time, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for cooperation on judicial exchange and training was inked between Supreme Court of Singapore and a North African state.



28 August 2019  
The Supreme People's Court of The People's Republic of China

**Third Singapore-China Legal and Judicial Roundtable**

The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon led a 13-member delegation comprising judges and officers from the Supreme Court of Singapore and the Ministry of Law to Beijing, China for the Third Singapore-China Legal and Judicial Roundtable. Co-chaired by the Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and President and Chief Justice of the Supreme People's

Court of the People's Republic of China, His Excellency Zhou Qiang, the Third Roundtable discussed topics relating to the development of an international commercial trial system under the context of the "Belt and Road" framework, application of reference cases under the "Belt and Road" Initiative (BRI) Framework, judges' training and issues on cross-border insolvency. Both Chief Justices also signed an MoU on Advancing Continuing Judicial Education on the sidelines of the roundtable.



**EVENT HIGHLIGHTS**

**STRENGTHENING REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS**



12-13 September 2019  
*Supreme Court*

**5<sup>th</sup> Joint Judicial Conference**

The Supreme Court of Singapore played host to the fifth run of the Joint Judicial Conference (JJC) last year, which typically is rotated between the Judiciaries of Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Singapore. The Chief Justices, as well as judges and judicial officers from the three participating Judiciaries attended the JJC. Ideas on the experiences in strengthening judicial administration

through innovation and other initiatives were exchanged. There were also fruitful panel discussions in the areas of Tort, Contract and Intellectual Property Law, particularly how our regional jurisdictions have departed from the English Common Law in these areas and exploring opportunities for harmonising our commercial laws.



[From left]  
The Right Honourable Chief Justice Tan Sri Tengku Maimun binti Tuan Mat, Chief Justice of Malaysia, The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, Chief Justice of Singapore, The Right Honourable Chief Justice Dato Seri Paduka Steven Chong Wan Oon, Chief Justice of Brunei Darussalam



16-17 September 2019  
*Supreme People's Court of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam*

**Supreme Court of Singapore and Supreme People's Court of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam sign Court-to-Court Communications Memorandum**

The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon led a delegation to Hanoi, Vietnam. A Court-to-Court Communications Memorandum, which seeks to enable and facilitate direct communication and coordination in cross-border commercial, property and family cases that are connected, was signed between the Supreme Court of Singapore and the Supreme People's Court of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.



**EVENT HIGHLIGHTS**

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

**STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

17 April 2019  
Supreme Court

**Luncheon with the SMU School of Law**

The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon hosted the 3rd run of the luncheon for the Singapore Management University (SMU) School of Law at the Supreme Court. The lunch provided an opportunity for the Judiciary and the Academia to network over lunch on prevailing legal issues.



26 April 2019  
Asian Civilisation Museum

**Tripartite Luncheon**

Over 100 guests from the judiciary, the Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC), and the Law Society of Singapore attended the Tripartite Luncheon hosted by the AGC. The Lunch provided a platform for networking and an engaging discussion between members of the Bench and the various stakeholder groups.



4 October 2019  
Xi Yan Restaurant

**Senior Counsel Forum Dinner**

To strengthen ties between the Supreme Court and the Senior Counsel Forum, the Supreme Court and Senior Counsel Forum takes turn to host this annual dinner and

this year, it was hosted by the Senior Counsel Forum at Xi Yan Restaurant at Maxwell Chambers.

9 October 2019  
NUS Faculty of Law

**Luncheon with the NUS Faculty of Law**

The National University of Singapore (NUS) Faculty of Law hosted the annual luncheon for the Judiciary at their campus this year. The annual event is an ongoing effort

for the Judiciary to engage members of the academia on developments in the legal landscape.



**EVENT HIGHLIGHTS**

VISITS BY OVERSEAS DIGNITARIES TO THE SUPREME COURT

**VISITS BY OVERSEAS DIGNITARIES TO THE SUPREME COURT**

**His Excellency Kakhramon Shakirov**

*Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the Republic of Singapore  
24 January 2019*



**His Excellency Dr Usen Suleimen**

*Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the Republic of Singapore  
12 February 2019*



**His Excellency Xiong Xuanguo**

*Vice Minister of Justice  
People's Republic of China  
9 May 2019*



**The Honourable Chief Justice Bryan Skyes**

*Chief Justice of Jamaica  
21 February 2019*



**Mr Mohammad Shafiu Alam**

*Bangladesh Cabinet Secretary  
7 June 2019*



*Mr Shafiu Alam, Bangladesh Cabinet Secretary (5th from right) with his 11-member delegation comprising officials from the People's Republic of Bangladesh and officials from the Bangladesh High Commission in Singapore, and Chief Information Officer of Supreme Court of Singapore, Mr Santhanam Srinivasan (6th from right)*

**The Honourable Mr Justice Kamal Kumar**

*Acting Chief Justice of Republic of Fiji  
8 August 2019*



**The Honourable Mr Justice Vui Clarence Nelson**

*Acting Chief Justice of Samoa  
8 August 2019*



**His Excellency Seyed Ali Reza Avaei**

*Minister of Justice  
Islamic Republic of Iran  
8 August 2019*



**The Honourable Justice Dr Aimé Muyoboke Karimunda**

*President of The Court of Appeal of Rwanda  
8 August 2019*



**The Right Honourable Lord Hughes of Ombersley**

*Treasurer of the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple  
12 September 2019*



## BICENTENNIAL LEGAL HERITAGE TRAIL



## BICENTENNIAL LEGAL HERITAGE TRAIL



### BICENTENNIAL LEGAL HERITAGE TRAIL

"From Singapore to Singaporean" - the tagline for the Singapore Bicentennial celebrations. The Supreme Court of Singapore participated in Singapore's Bicentennial celebrations through a collaboration with National Gallery Singapore (NGS) and Temasek Polytechnic (TP) to conduct a series of free guided trails for members of the public from 9 to 13 September 2019.

Led by docents from NGS and Law & Management students from TP's School of Business, the trails covered two significant landmarks of the Judiciary's heritage - the NGS (also the former Supreme Court) and the current Supreme Court building. The one-hour tour began at NGS and ended at the current Supreme Court building. This was exceptionally meaningful as members of public witnessed the rich history of the old and new Supreme Court buildings.

The tours received overwhelming response, with more than 360 visitors embarking on this interesting and amazing journey as they traversed the hallways of justice past and present; tracing the transformation of our judicial system from the days of 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, mysteries of the Judiciary were unearthed and members of the public brought home knowledge and information they have never known before.



# PERFORMANCE AND STATISTICS



## PERFORMANCE AND STATISTICS

### WAITING PERIODS

The Supreme Court sets targets for waiting periods in various court processes as part of its commitment to provide quality public service and we endeavour to achieve at least 90% compliance with all targets set. In 2019, all the set targets were achieved.

#### Original Civil Jurisdiction

##### *Trials in Suits*

**8 weeks**  
from the date of setting down

##### *Originating Summons (OS)*

- (i) Inter partes  
**6 weeks**  
from the date of filing of the OS
- (ii) Ex parte  
**3 weeks**  
from the date of filing of the OS

##### *Bankruptcy OS*

**6 weeks**  
from the date of filing of the OS

##### *Company Winding-Up OS*

**4 weeks**  
from the date of filing of the OS



#### *Summons (SUM)*

- (i) Applications for summary judgment pursuant to Order 14 of the Rules of Court  
**5 weeks**  
from the date of filing of the SUM (statutory minimum period)
- (ii) All other summonses  
**3 weeks**  
from the date of filing of the SUM

#### *Bankruptcy SUM (Applications for discharge)*

**4 weeks**  
from the date of filing of the SUM

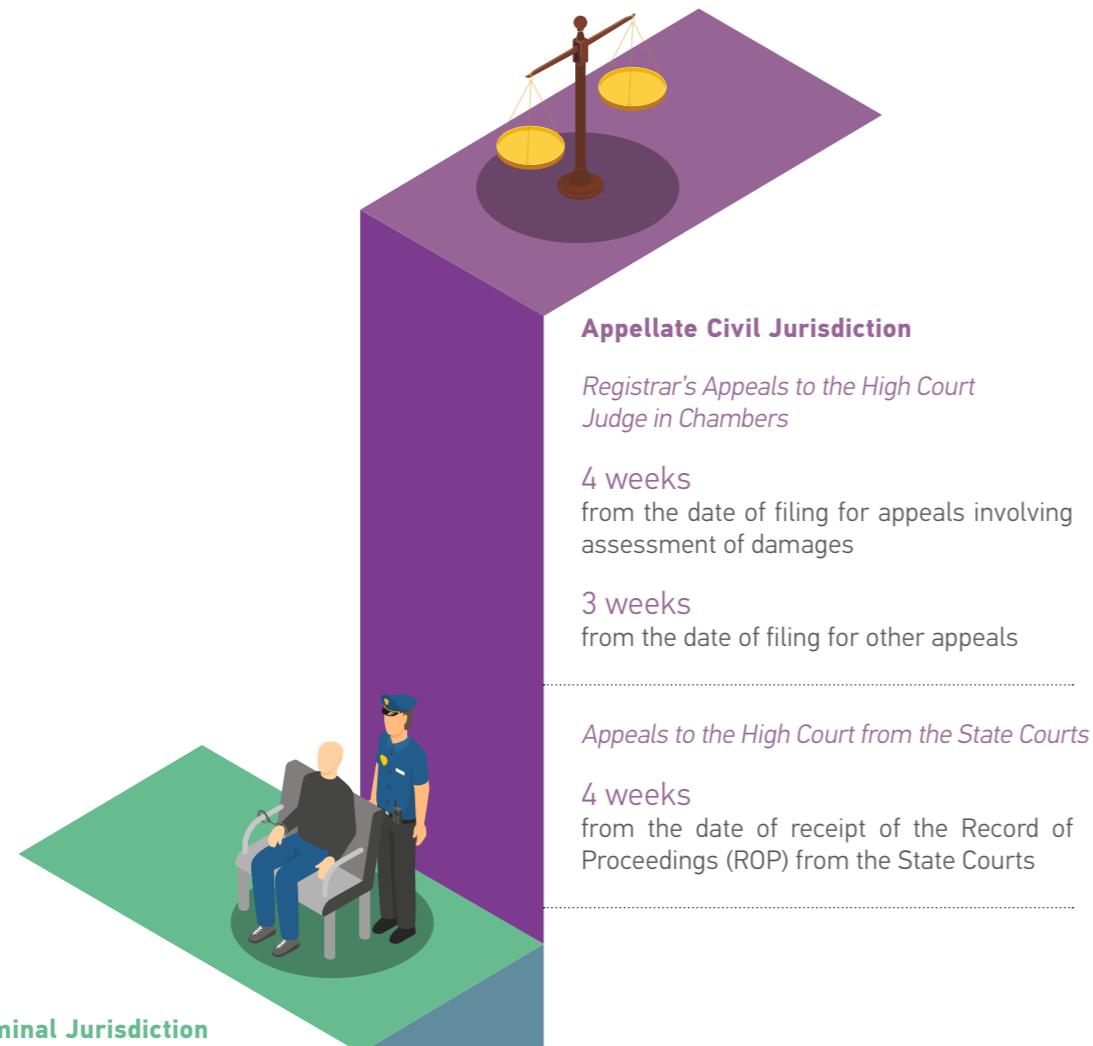


#### Original Criminal Jurisdiction

##### *Trials of Criminal Cases*

**6 weeks**  
from the date of the final Criminal Case Disclosure Conference or Pre-trial Conference before trial (whichever is later)

**PERFORMANCE AND STATISTICS**



**Appellate Criminal Jurisdiction**

*Appeals to the High Court from the State Courts*

12 weeks  
from the date of receipt of the ROP from the State Courts

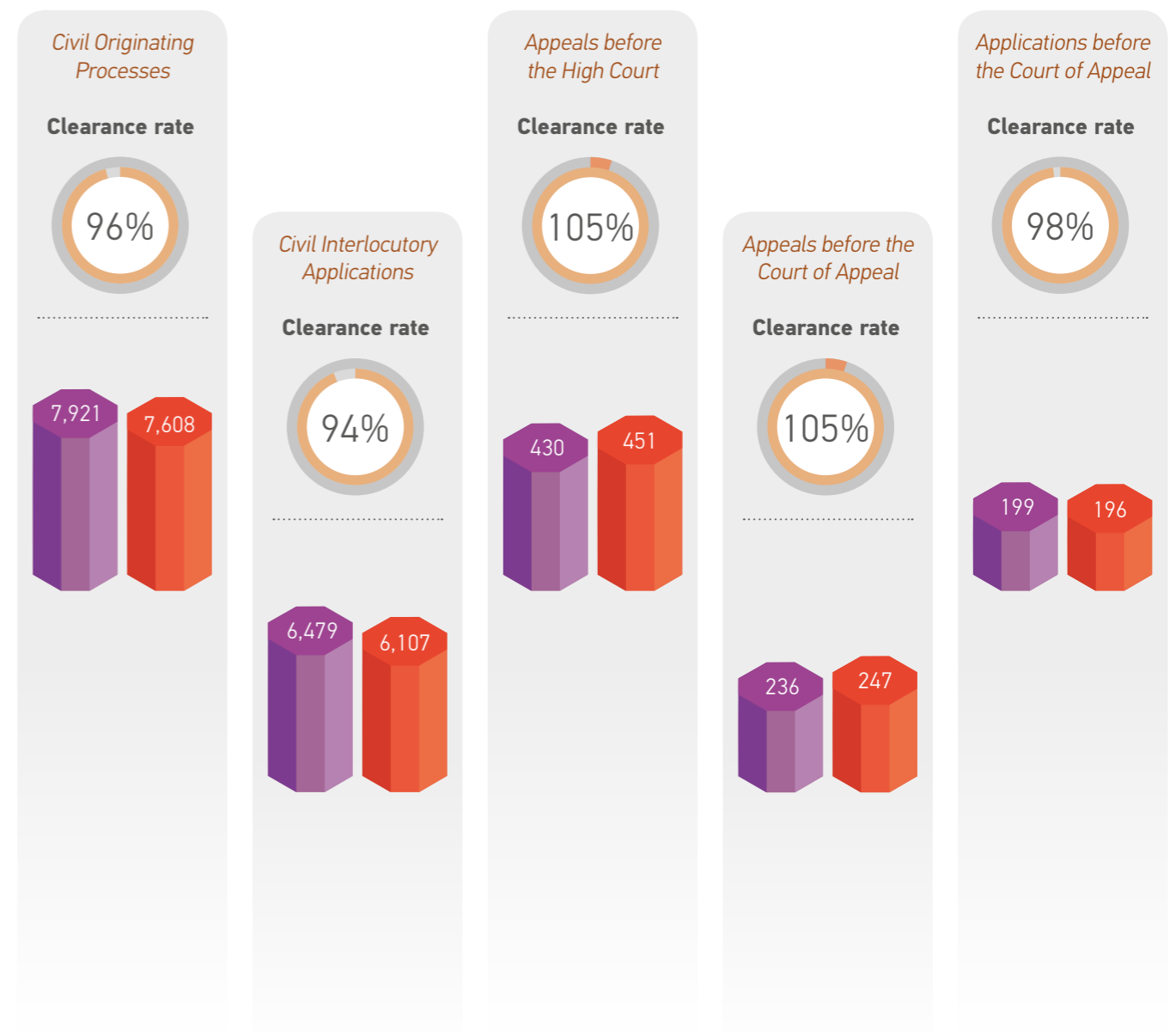
**WORKLOAD STATISTICS**

The Supreme Court received 15,702 new civil and criminal matters in 2019. 15,041 matters were disposed of in the same corresponding period. The clearance rate for all civil and criminal matters for 2019 was 96%.

The following table shows the breakdown of the filing and disposal and clearance rates of the civil and criminal proceedings for 2019.

- No. of cases filed
- No. of cases disposed of

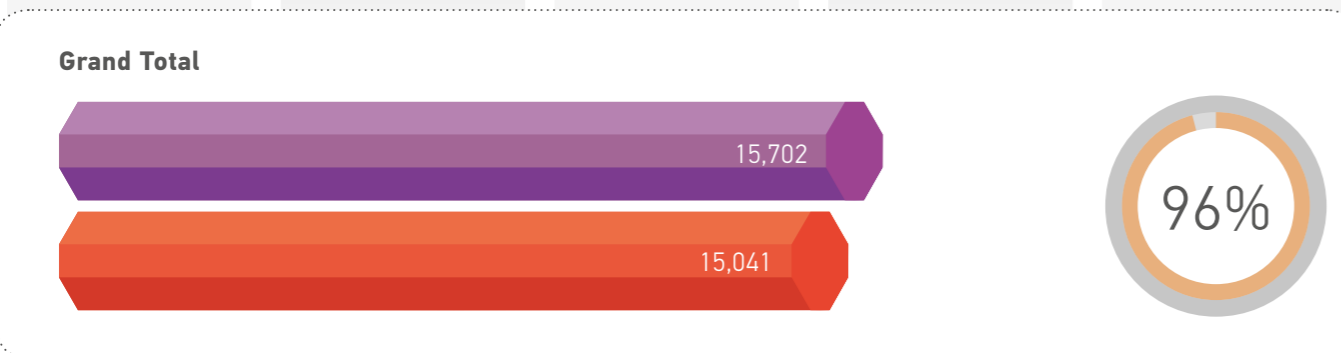
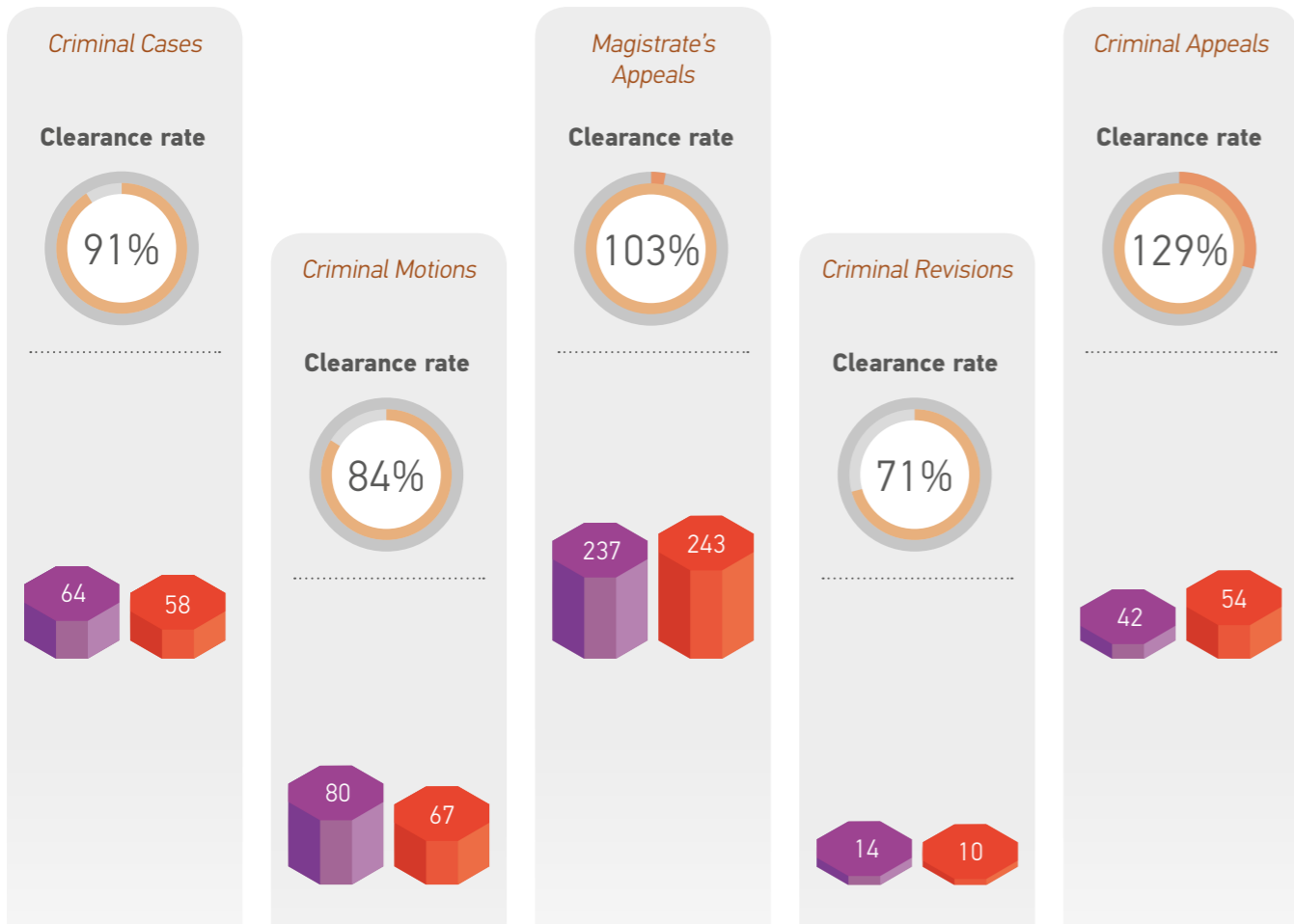
Civil Jurisdiction:



## PERFORMANCE AND STATISTICS

- No. of cases filed
- No. of cases disposed of

### Criminal Jurisdiction



\* Based on the information compiled as at 17 January 2020.



## A TRUSTED AND FORWARD-LOOKING JUDICIARY



**VISION**

A trusted and forward-looking  
Judiciary that delivers justice

**MISSION**

To administer justice with quality  
judgments, timely and effective dispute  
resolution, and excellent court services

**VALUES**

**F**airness  
**A**ccessibility  
**I**ndependence, Integrity, Impartiality  
**R**esponsiveness

**QUALITIES OF A TRUSTED AND  
FORWARD-LOOKING JUDICIARY**

Optimal outcomes  
Fair process  
Timely decisions  
Innovative  
Transparent

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDING JUDGE OF THE STATE COURTS



In 2019, the State Courts marked an important chapter with our move to the new State Courts Towers. We will always look back fondly at the 44 years we have spent in the “Octagon”, but we also look forward to a new beginning in the new building, where there are 53 courtrooms and 54 hearing chambers, as well as public facilities such as a Business Centre, Library and a Help Centre. There are also plans to establish a coworking space in collaboration with the Singapore Academy of Law for lawyers and tech companies. With these new physical spaces and facilities, I am confident that the State Courts will scale new heights in our continuing quest to enhance access to justice and the quality of justice delivered to our court users.

### **Access to Justice – Enhancing Access to Legal Advice and Services**

In February 2019, we piloted a collaboration with the Singapore Prison Service (SPS) and the Community Justice Centre (CJC) to enable unrepresented inmates serving imprisonment terms for drug-related offences to gain access to legal advice before filing their appeals against sentences. Identified inmates will be assisted by the SPS to access their case documents online so that documents can be given to the volunteer lawyer assigned by the CJC for assessment, before a video-link consultation is arranged. Inmates will be able to obtain legal advice on whether they have reasonable grounds for appeal, before deciding whether to go ahead to file an appeal.

In May 2019, we launched the CJTD Friend Scheme, where illiterate, elderly or foreign litigants-in-person can apply for a CJTD Friend to assist them in their tribunal proceedings. Assistance may take the form of preparation and filing of documents, taking notes during proceedings, interpretation or simply providing emotional and moral support. We hope that this will make the court process less daunting and opaque for our court users.

In November 2019, we launched two publications – *Practitioners’ Guide on Damages Awarded for Defamation Cases in Singapore* and *Law and Practice of Tribunals in Singapore* – in line with our efforts to enhance access to justice by providing more information about the principles and practices in these areas of law. We also signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with our three local law schools, to give law students an opportunity to experience judicial work and gain a practical insight into the operation of the judicial system.

### **Access to Justice – Economical Resolution of Disputes**

On 1 November 2019, the Small Claims Tribunals (Amendment) Act 2018 came into effect, expanding the categories of cases that come under the Small Claims Tribunals’ (SCT) jurisdiction and enhancing the SCT’s powers to manage and resolve cases. The claim limit and limitation period for filing an SCT claim have been increased, and the SCT can now direct parties to attend mandatory mediation. These changes will allow more cases to come under the SCT and be resolved in a faster and more cost-effective manner.

### **Quality of Justice – Focusing on Reparation and Restoration**

In March 2019, we put in place a framework, Project Restore, to educate and refer disputants to out-of-court alternative resolution (ADR) processes. Parties in suitable cases at the pre-filing or case management stage are referred to out-of-court ADR providers to encourage an early resolution of the conflict. This initiative has enabled us to work with the community and other stakeholders to provide a more comprehensive service to court users.

In July 2019, we rolled out the pilot for the Early Engagement of Offenders below 21 years (EE21) scheme, aimed at tackling the problem of youth offending upstream. The demands of justice in a youth-offending context are met not only by punishment, but also by tackling the root of the problem to help ensure that the offending does not recur. Youth offending can often be prevented by upstream efforts to address socio-environmental factors that may motivate them to break away from the vicious circle of criminal behaviour, and this is exactly what the EE21 scheme seeks to do. The scheme puts suitable youths in touch with various stakeholders, such as the New Life Community Services, Sports SG, Ministry of Education, Hope House and GEM New Start Centre, to work on issues such as strengthening family relationships, improving communication within the family and generally supporting and empowering them to change their lives for the better.

### **New Beginnings and Technologies**

In May 2019, the State Courts received the OpenGov Recognition of Excellence 2019 for the Intelligent Court Transcription System (iCTS), a proof-of-concept undertaken in collaboration with A\*STAR’s Institute for Infocomm Research. The iCTS provides real-time transcription by instantly transcribing oral evidence in court proceedings, without the use of court reporters or transcribers. It is trained in court-specific vocabulary and domain-specific terms, such as medical terms for coroner’s cases. Piloted for use in two courtrooms, we will further explore the use of real-time transcription to reduce the time and costs

involved in providing court transcripts to parties, enabling court proceedings to move along more efficiently.

In June 2019, we consolidated our two criminal case management systems, the Regulatory Offences Case Management System and the Integrated Criminal Case Filing and Management System, bringing together all criminal cases under the Integrated Case Management System. This single electronic platform is accessible by all parties in the criminal justice system and provides a more streamlined process to manage cases during court proceedings, especially for cases involving multiple agencies.

### **Remembering our History**

In November 2019, we launched the State Courts Heritage Gallery in the State Courts Towers to pay tribute to the many contributions made by the State Courts in upholding the rule of law and ensuring access to justice. The Gallery also showcases our transformative journey through the years. It is a fitting reminder of our rich history even as we begin a new era in the new courthouse.

### **Justice Statement and Strategic Plan 2020-2025**

The State Courts launched a refreshed Justice Statement in 2020 to emphasise our vision of being a trusted and forward-looking Judiciary. We also formulated our Strategic Plan for 2020-2025 after several rounds of feedback-gathering and deliberation. The strategic thrusts contained in the plan outline the areas that the State Courts will focus on in the coming years in order to fulfil our mission.

### **Conclusion**

The State Courts ended the year in a new working environment. We will continue to remain true to our vision as a trusted and forward-looking Judiciary and look forward to the exciting possibilities for our work in the new State Courts Towers. We remain grateful to The Honourable the Chief Justice for his support and guidance through the years, and we look forward to forging fresh pathways towards justice under his visionary leadership.

**See Kee Oon**  
Presiding Judge  
State Courts, Singapore

**ORGANISATIONAL CHART**

as at March 2020



PRESIDING JUDGE



DEPUTY PRESIDING JUDGE

PRESIDING JUDGE'S OFFICE

PRINCIPAL DISTRICT JUDGES

Criminal Justice Division

PRINCIPAL DISTRICT JUDGE

Community Justice & Tribunals Division

PRINCIPAL DISTRICT JUDGE

Civil Justice Division

PRINCIPAL DISTRICT JUDGE

Centre for Dispute Resolution

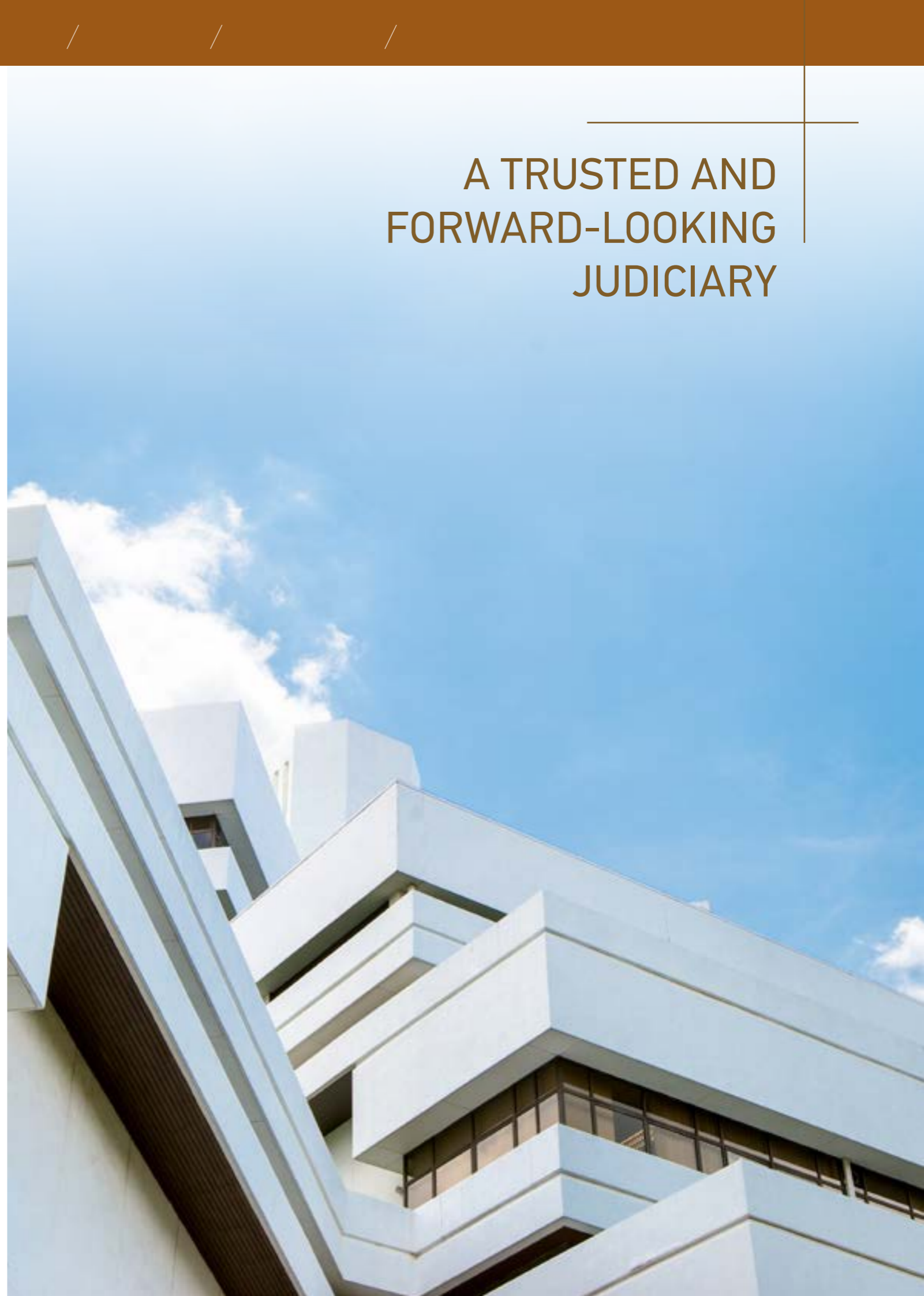
REGISTRAR

Corporate Services Division

PRINCIPAL DIRECTOR

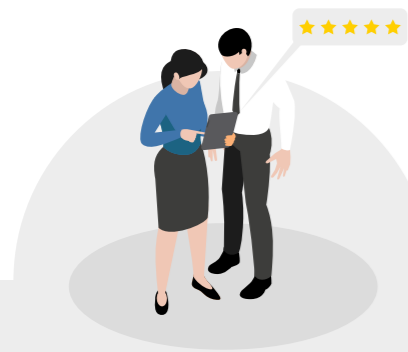
Strategic Planning & Technology Division

A TRUSTED AND FORWARD-LOOKING JUDICIARY



## A TRUSTED AND FORWARD-LOOKING JUDICIARY

### WORKPLAN 2019 INITIATIVES



#### DELIVERING EXCELLENT COURT SERVICES

##### Centre for Specialist Services

A one-stop multi-disciplinary facility for the provision of counselling and psychological services to court users across all justice divisions. Centralising the management of the various programmes for providing specialist assistance and support to groups of court users will streamline processes and optimise resource use.

##### Intelligent Court Transcription System (iCTS)

A real-time transcription system that utilises deep neural networks, language modelling and natural language processing, which is trained in court-specific vocabulary as well as domain-specific terms, such as medical terms for coroner's cases and engineering terms for industrial accident cases.

##### Civil Online Toolkit

An online resource that will provide information on civil court processes and procedures, which are currently contained in disparate resources including brochures, the State Courts website, the Justice@State Courts mobile application and the Community Justice Centre website.



#### ENHANCING COURT PROCESSES

##### Early Engagement of Offenders Below 21 Years

A programme that targets the rehabilitation of youthful offenders at an early stage in the proceedings, which works with eligible youthful offenders four weeks after the first mention to conceptualise an engagement plan – formal education, vocational training, financial assistance and dealing with underlying family or social issues – and thereafter monitor progress and provide support.

##### Project Restore: Court-initiated Use of Restorative Practices for Dispute Resolution

A dispute restoration programme that brings alternative dispute resolution services out of court, to parties, where appropriate cases will be referred to community partners who are trained to employ restorative practices to restore and heal relationships. At the initial stage, Project Restore will apply to neighbour disputes and selected criminal offences with a relational element.



#### ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE

##### CLICKS: Coworking Space at the State Courts Towers in collaboration with the Singapore Academy of Law (SAL)

A collaboration with the SAL to set up a coworking space within the new State Courts Towers to connect pro bono minded legal practitioners, technologists and start-ups with the core intention to promote pro bono work, drive legal innovation and entrepreneurship and to prepare the legal community to be future-ready.

##### Publications

The publication of two practitioners' guides, which detail the guiding principles, procedures and practices concerning the judge-driven case management strategy of the State Courts Centre for Dispute Resolution and the conduct of tribunal hearings.

##### The Future of Managing Personal Injury Claims

Exploring a collaboration with the SAL to conduct a conference focussing particularly on how technology impacts the future management and determination of personal injury claims.



#### TRANSFORMING CAPABILITIES

##### Data Science Strategy

Replacing the Statistics and Analysis Section, the Data Analytics and Research Department will place increased emphasis on data analytics and harness data to enable the State Courts to gain relevant and actionable insights to transform the Courts' processes and service delivery.

##### Developing a Digital Workforce

Consists of a two-pronged strategy to equip the State Courts' workforce with digital skills and enhance knowledge of digital technology, and to provide resources to apply the skills learnt so as to expose officers to nascent technologies and their applications to enhance work and processes in a creative and engaging way.

##### Transformation @ State Courts

"Transformation @ SC" will seek to create the impetus for achieving meaningful transformational changes in the organisation where efforts would be undertaken to promote and reward transformation projects, and to make organisational excellence resources and tools more widely accessible.

## A TRUSTED AND FORWARD-LOOKING JUDICIARY

### ENHANCEMENTS TO SMALL CLAIMS TRIBUNALS

On 1 November 2019, the Small Claims Tribunals (Amendment) Act 2018 (the "Act") came into operation. The Act expanded the Small Claims Tribunals' (SCT) jurisdiction as well as enhanced its powers to manage and resolve cases.

Some of the key enhancements to the SCT are set out below.



#### Expansion of SCT's Jurisdiction

##### Increased claim limit

The SCT can now hear claims of up to \$20,000 by default, and up to \$30,000 with the consent of parties. Previously, the SCT could only hear claims of up to \$10,000 by default, and up to \$20,000 with the consent of parties.

##### Increased limitation period

The limitation period for filing an SCT claim has doubled from one year to two years. A party can now file a claim within two years after the date on which a cause of action accrues. The new limitation period will give parties more time to negotiate and settle their disputes amicably, whilst

ensuring that there remains enough time for them to file their claims should settlement discussions fall through.

##### New category of claims

The SCT can now hear claims under hire-purchase agreements if they relate to an unfair practice defined under the Consumer Protection (Fair Trading) Act.

#### Enhanced Processes

##### Mandatory mediation

The SCT can now direct parties to attend mandatory mediation at the Community Mediation Centre or before any mediator. This is in line with the SCT's objective to promote and facilitate an early settlement of disputes.

##### Reconsideration/Rehearing of cases

Parties who wish to appeal against a decision of the SCT must seek leave from a District Court to appeal. The District Court may, if it refuses leave to appeal, nonetheless send the case back to the same Tribunal Magistrate for reconsideration or order the case to be reheard by a different Tribunal Magistrate. This gives the District Court greater flexibility to ensure that justice is done in each individual case.

##### Power to order costs

The SCT can now order a party to pay the other party's costs of the proceedings.

The enhancements to the SCT's jurisdiction, powers and processes strengthen access to justice for the public by allowing the SCT to hear more claims, and to achieve just outcomes in a quicker and more cost-effective manner.

### PROJECT RESTORE

Project Restore is a court-initiated programme that provides a systematic framework to educate and refer disputants to out-of-court alternative dispute resolution processes. It introduces the concept of restorative justice to court users and leads to the transformation of people, relationships and communities by tapping on resources outside the court structure, collaborating with the community and stakeholders, and innovating processes with a view to providing holistic solutions for court users.

The key objective of Project Restore is to encourage the pre-filing resolution of disputes and maintenance of community harmony. At the pre-filing or case

management stage, suitable cases will be identified and referred to the programme. The referral is considered successful when the participants manage to resolve their disputes or narrow their differences outside the Courts.

Project Restore is aligned with the State Courts' commitment to enhance court users' access to justice as it provides a holistic approach towards dispute resolution. The State Courts aim to expand the initiative to cover a wider range of cases and will also work with their partner organisations to share with other stakeholders the benefits of restorative process and invite them to come on board as volunteers.

### EARLY ENGAGEMENT OF OFFENDERS BELOW 21 YEARS

For reasons that range from time needed for further investigations, to apply for legal aid or to make representations, the process from the moment a youthful offender is charged to when he is sentenced can, at times, take six to nine months. It has been found that during this period, these youthful offenders are often unengaged and tend to be early school drop-outs.

The Early Engagement of Offenders Below 21 Years Old (EE21) initiative is a programme which seeks to take the Courts' rehabilitative efforts towards youthful offenders upstream; before they are sentenced. This reinforces the Courts' sentencing policy which is geared towards the rehabilitation of such youthful offenders and helping them to become good and useful citizens.

Participation in the EE21 is voluntary and information will be provided to suitable youthful offenders during their first court mention. Those interested in the programme can contact the Centre for Specialist Services (CSS). The CSS will assess their needs, make the relevant referrals to partner organisations, such as the Ministry of Education, Sports Singapore and New Life Community Services, and oversee their progress until their cases conclude. A progress and closing summary form will be submitted to the Court before sentencing.

The needs of the youths will be assessed holistically. Such needs include the needs of their next-of-kin as these play a

part in the outcome of the youths' rehabilitation. The areas that will be looked into include:

1. Constructive engagement
2. Family relationships
3. Temporary housing needs
4. Financial assistance

The EE21 piloted on 8 July 2019. It is hoped that keeping the youths engaged and bringing rehabilitation upstream would help prevent them from being led further astray. Helping them mend their ways while they wait for their cases to be concluded would also bring about a more sustained rehabilitation.



## A TRUSTED AND FORWARD-LOOKING JUDICIARY

### THE CJTD FRIEND SCHEME



The CJTD Friend Scheme aims to empower litigants-in-person (LIPs) in their conduct of their tribunal proceedings.

Under the pilot launched in May 2019, disadvantaged LIPs such as the illiterate, elderly and foreign workers may apply for a CJTD Friend to assist them in their tribunal proceedings. For example, a CJTD Friend may help an LIP prepare and file documents for the tribunal proceedings, provide emotional and moral support, take notes or locate documents during the proceedings, as well as interpret spoken communications and/or written documents in the proceedings.

A CJTD Friend could be a family member, friend or a volunteer from the Community Justice Centre (CJC), a pro bono agency or other entity. There are, however, some restrictions. For instance, the CJTD Friend cannot be an advocate or solicitor, a named witness in the proceedings

by a party to a dispute or have a direct or indirect interest in the outcome of a claim in the dispute.

Application for a CJTD Friend is free and is to be made through the Community Justice and Tribunals System or by manually filing Form 99 of the State Courts Practice Directions. The application is subject to the approval of the tribunal or the Registrar. In deciding the application, the tribunal or the Registrar shall consider any objections by the opposing party to the presence of the CJTD Friend.

All approved CJTD Friends must sign a prescribed undertaking and declaration before they start rendering any assistance. CJTD Friends shall not, among other things, receive any remuneration or reward for their services, provide legal advice, address the tribunal or divulge any information about the tribunal proceedings to any third party.

At any time during the proceedings, a tribunal or the Registrar may stop or restrict the participation of a CJTD Friend if the administration of justice is believed to be impeded.

The pilot has been well-received by litigants. As at 31 December 2019, there were a total of 80 case management conferences assisted by CJC volunteers in Employment Claims Tribunals cases.

### BEYOND ADJUDICATION – STATE COURTS IMPART LEGAL KNOWLEDGE TO ENRICH COMMUNITY



On 4 November 2019, the State Courts launched two publications authored by their judges, and signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with the law schools of the National University of Singapore, Singapore Management University, and Singapore University of Social Sciences.

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 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.

The publications and the MOUs are part of the State Courts' continuing efforts to contribute to legal scholarship and academic jurisprudence, and to impart legal knowledge to non-lawyers and members of the public.

#### 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.

“

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

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## A TRUSTED AND FORWARD-LOOKING JUDICIARY

### LAUNCH OF STATE COURTS HERITAGE GALLERY

The State Courts Heritage Gallery was launched on 19 November 2019 by The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon.

Located on level 1 of the new State Courts Towers, 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. It is organised into three zones to 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.

One of the key highlights is the Heritage Courtroom, which is a mock-up of a courtroom in the former 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.

The majority of the exhibits are interactive and technology-enabled. They 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, and explains their architectural features.

The launch event, held in conjunction with the Singapore Bicentennial celebrations, brought together more than 100 guests, including past heads of the State Courts – Mr Michael Khoo, SC, Mr Richard Magnus and Justice Tan Siong Thye – and former State Courts staff, to celebrate the history of the State Courts.



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



### COMPLETION OF STATE COURTS TOWERS

The State Courts Towers was completed in 2019. Judges and staff of the State Courts moved progressively into the new premises from end October, and operations in the new building commenced in phases from 9 December. The relocation was completed on 13 December and the new courthouse was fully operational on 16 December.

The new two-tower courthouse stands at 178m high, and features an open-frame design that symbolises the transparency, fairness and accessibility of the Singapore Judiciary. Fitted with 53 courtrooms and 54 hearing chambers, the courthouse is equipped with improved facilities to handle the increasing workload of the State Courts and better serve court users.

To mark the historic move to the new premises, Presiding Judge of the State Courts, Justice See Kee Oon, and Deputy Presiding Judge, Jennifer Marie, led judges and staff in a march to the new State Courts Towers on 13 December 2019. This began the new chapter of the State Courts' judicial excellence journey.

#### FACILITIES

- Business Centre
- Cafe
- Heritage Gallery
- Library
- Multi-purpose hall
- Roof garden
- Sky terraces
- Theatre

#### BUILDING FEATURES

39 link bridges connecting the Office and Court Towers

35 storeys

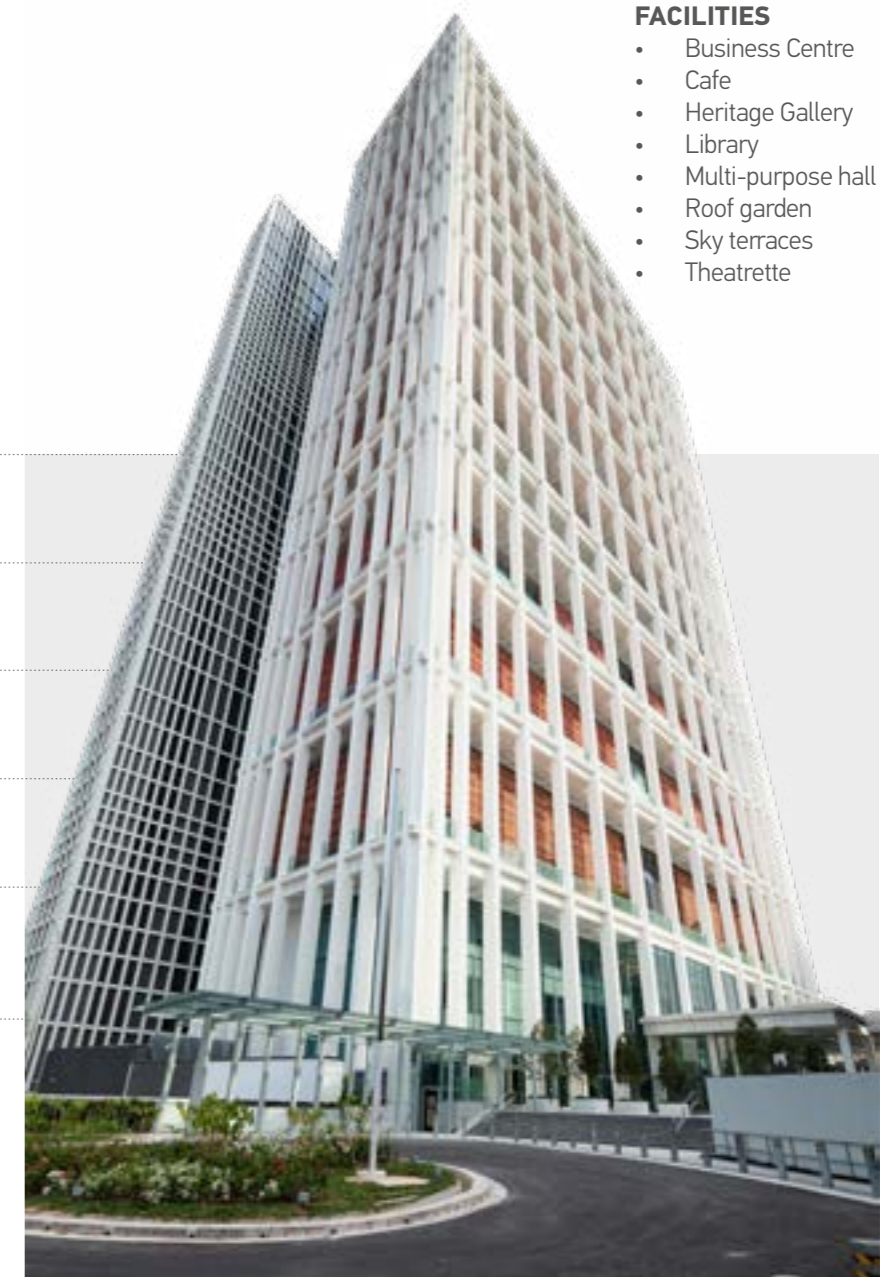
54 hearing chambers

53 courtrooms

3 basement levels

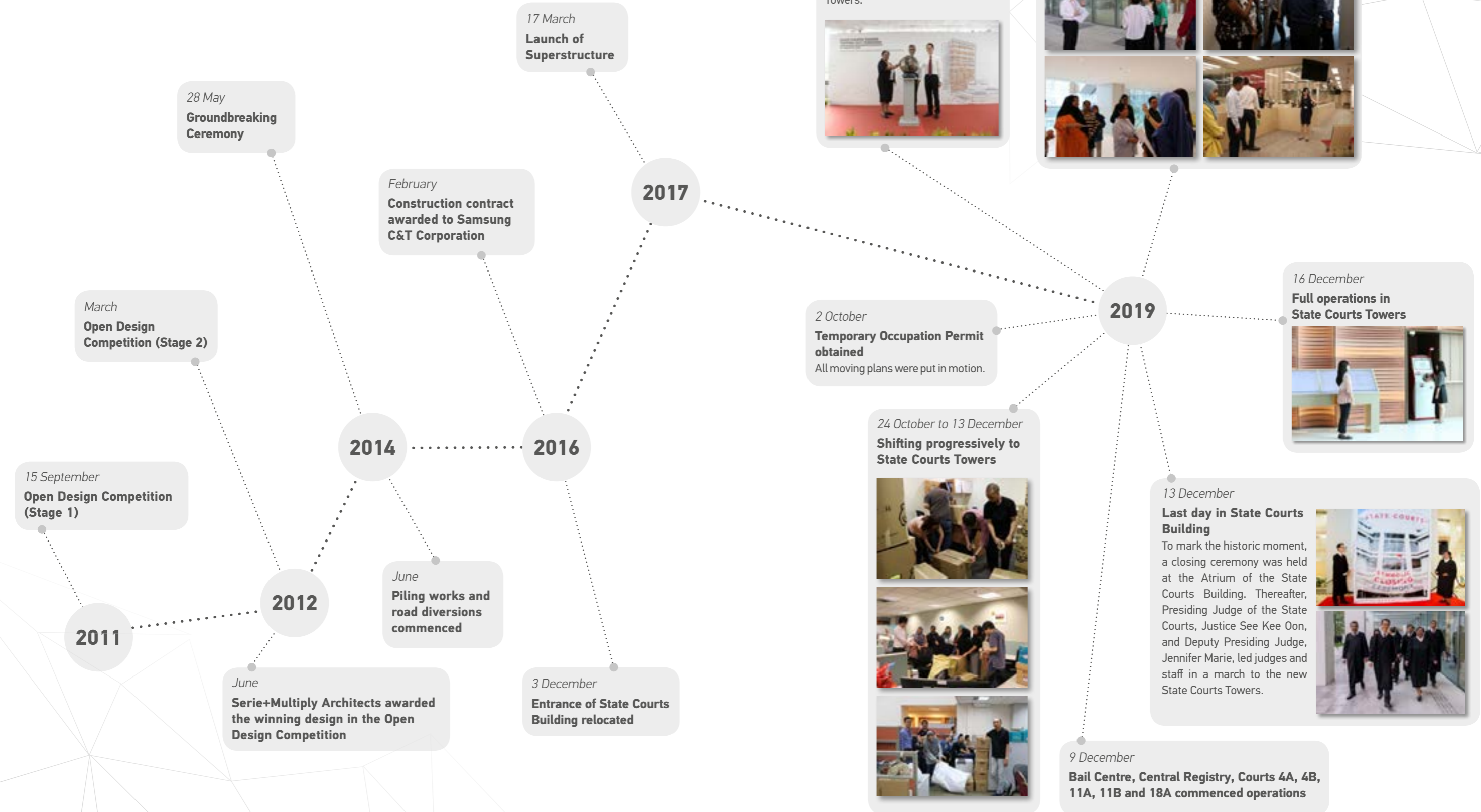
Gross Floor Area  
113,000sqm

178m tall  
the tallest government building in Singapore



# A TRUSTED AND FORWARD-LOOKING JUDICIARY

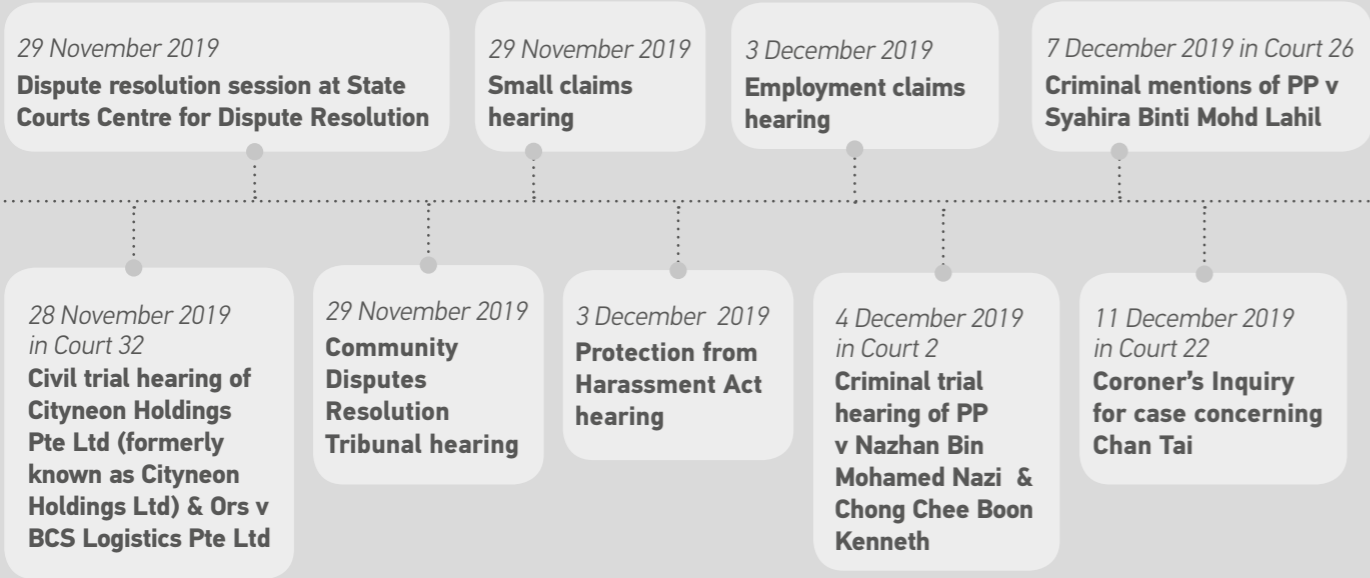
## From Design to Completion





## A TRUSTED AND FORWARD-LOOKING JUDICIARY

### Last Cases Heard in State Courts Building



### CHARTING FORWARD

The relocation to the State Courts Towers in 2019 offered the opportunity to reflect and review the previous strategic plans to ensure that the State Courts continue to deliver justice for all who seek it, and maintain a high level of public trust and confidence.

The strategic plan review was guided by the broader societal trends and driving forces that shape the types of cases which would come before the Courts and impact how the State Courts administer justice effectively. It took into account developments in the legal landscape, as well as the imperative to transform the way the State Courts deliver justice in an environment where technology plays an increasingly important role.

At the heart of the strategic plan were the strategic thrusts, outlining the directions and goals that the State Courts would need to focus on in the next few years to address the strategic challenges that had been identified, and in turn fulfil and realise the State Courts' mission and vision. The review involved extensive engagement with State Courts' staff, from senior management to court administrators on the front line. The consultation process culminated in the Strategic Plan 2020 to 2025, which represents the collective ideals of all staff members and a blueprint for attaining the State Courts' vision of being a trusted and forward-looking Judiciary that delivers justice.

In addition to the Strategic Plan 2020 to 2025, the consultation led to a refreshed Justice Statement that reaffirms the State Courts' commitment to their vision. The refreshed Justice Statement would be launched in January 2020.



INSPIRING PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

## INSPIRING PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

### CASELOAD PROFILE

#### CRIMINAL JUSTICE DIVISION

##### Criminal and Departmental/Statutory Board

	2018	2019
<b>Criminal Justice Division Total</b>	<b>303,487</b>	<b>196,647</b>
Criminal Charge <sup>1</sup>	57,249	48,448
Departmental/Statutory Board Charge and Summons	181,839	85,035
Traffic Charge and Summons	60,230	58,973
<b>Other</b>		
Coroner's Court Case	4,106	4,125
Magistrate's Complaint <sup>2</sup>	63	66

#### CIVIL JUSTICE DIVISION

##### Originating Process

	2018	2019
<b>Civil Justice Division Total</b>	<b>41,530</b>	<b>39,047</b>
Writ of Summons <sup>3</sup>	25,971	24,028
Originating Summons	671	633
<b>Interlocutory Application</b>	<b>13,055</b>	<b>12,796</b>
Summons <sup>4</sup>	9,007	8,459
Summons for Directions (Order 25/37)	3,875	4,163
Summary Judgment (Order 14)	173	174
<b>Other</b>		
Taxation	106	95
Assessment of Damages	1,727	1,495

#### COMMUNITY JUSTICE AND TRIBUNALS DIVISION

##### Community Disputes Resolution Tribunals (CDRT)

	2018	2019
<b>Community Justice and Tribunals Division Total</b>	<b>14,047</b>	<b>14,260</b>
CDRT Claim	108	108
<b>Employment Claims Tribunals (ECT)</b>		
ECT Claim <sup>5</sup>	915	1,301
<b>Magistrate's Complaint<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>1,785</b>	<b>1,753</b>
<b>Protection from Harassment Act</b>		
Originating Summons - Application for Protection Order/ Non-publication Order	150	171
<b>Small Claims Tribunals (SCT)</b>		
SCT Claim	11,089	10,927
<b>Total</b>	<b>359,064</b>	<b>249,954</b>

##### Notes:

- Includes District Arrest Charges, Magistrates' Arrest Charges and other types of charges.
- Non-relational Magistrate's Complaints are counted under the Criminal Justice Division. Relational Magistrate's Complaints are counted under the Community Justice and Tribunals Division.
- Excludes Summons for Directions (Order 25/37).
- Excludes Summons for Directions (Order 25/37).
- Wrongful Dismissal Claims commenced filing at Employment Claims Tribunals on 1 April 2019.

### OTHER CASELOAD PROFILE

#### CENTRE FOR DISPUTE RESOLUTION<sup>1</sup>

##### Civil

	2018	2019
<b>Centre for Dispute Resolution Total</b>	<b>6,897</b>	<b>7,068</b>
Writ of Summons, Originating Summons	6,601	6,814
<b>Community</b>		
Originating Summons - Application for Protection Order/ Non-publication Order, CDRT Claim, Magistrate's Complaint	296	254

##### Notes:

- Refers to fresh cases handled by the Centre for Dispute Resolution in the respective years.

## INSPIRING PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

### CLEARANCE RATE<sup>1</sup>



#### Notes:

1. Clearance rate is the number of cases disposed expressed as a percentage of the number of cases filed in the same year. The clearance rate can exceed 100% as those disposed of are not necessarily a subset of the filings in that year.

## SIGNIFICANT CASES: CRIMINAL JUSTICE DIVISION

### Abuse of Domestic Helper PP v Chia Yun Ling and Tay Wee Kiat

Chia Yun Ling and Tay Wee Kiat were charged and convicted for abusing their 31-year-old domestic helper from Myanmar; having been convicted and sentenced earlier for abusing another Indonesian domestic helper whose employment overlapped with the victim.

During the trial, evidence was tendered on the various forms of abuse that the couple had inflicted on the victim over a period of 11 months. These included, amongst other things, slapping, caning and kicking the victim, restricting her use of the toilet, and forcing her to eat her own vomit. The Court convicted the couple on a number of charges under s 323 of the Penal Code, s 13A(1)(a) of the Miscellaneous Offences (Public Order and Nuisance) Act, and s 22(1)(a) of the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act.

The Court sentenced Chia to a total of 47 months' imprisonment and imposed a fine of \$4,000. She was also ordered to pay a compensation of \$6,500 to the victim. Tay was sentenced to a total of 24 months' imprisonment, with a compensation of \$3,000 to be paid to the victim.

### Cheating in O-Level Exams PP v Tan Jia Yan

This is a case arising from a sophisticated operation in which members of a tuition centre assisted six students, aged 17 to 20 years old, to cheat in their 2016 GCE O-Level examinations. Tan Jia Yan was one of the tuition teachers involved.

Tan pleaded guilty to 27 charges of abetment by engaging in a conspiracy to cheat under s 417 read with s 109 of the Penal Code. She had attended several examinations together with the six students as a private candidate, with a concealed camera phone affixed to her clothes. Once the examinations started, Tan used *FaceTime*, a phone application that enables video calls to be made, to provide her accomplices (who were based at another location) with a live feed to the papers she was attempting. Her accomplices would then attempt to answer the questions and read out the answers to the six students, who would receive these answers via the mobile phones and Bluetooth devices attached on them. Tan and her accomplices assisted the students to cheat in 26 incidents over five examination sessions. Tan had received remuneration from the tuition centre by way of monthly salary and also for providing lodging to the students.

The Court reasoned that Tan's acts had struck at the heart of the values of meritocracy, which are sacrosanct to the education system in Singapore. The sentence imposed would therefore have to be one that would rectify the wrong and sufficiently deter those who would seek to profit by similar means. Tan was accordingly sentenced to a total of 36 months' imprisonment.

### Attempting Paid Sex with Minor PP v Andy Kow Yong Wen

Andy Kow Yong Wen, a 40-year old man, got acquainted with a 16-year-old girl via *Locanto*, a web-based classifieds network. The victim had advertised her sexual services (save for sexual intercourse) on *Locanto*. In the course of

their communications, Kow was made aware that the victim was 16 years old. He had indicated to the victim that he was interested in her services and he was willing to be her "sugar daddy". He had also asked her if she was willing to have sexual intercourse with him for \$500. However, the victim did not agree to his proposition.

Following several requests by Kow, the victim agreed to meet him. Kow drove her to Alexandra Road, where she was scheduled to have her tuition. During the car ride, Kow asked the victim if she was willing to have sex with him for \$500. The victim did not respond to Kow. Instead of dropping the victim off at her destination, Kow made a detour and drove into a basement carpark. There, Kow kissed the victim and digitally penetrated her vagina. After that, he asked the victim if she had money to eat. Although the victim said she had, he gave her \$50.

Kow was charged under s 376B(1) read with s 511(1) of the Penal Code for attempting to have paid sex with a minor – the first prosecution of its kind in Singapore. The Court found Kow guilty after the trial and convicted him of the charge. In sentencing Kow, the Court emphasised the need to protect minors from being exploited by the corrupt influence and behaviour of adult predators. The Court explained that the law exists to prohibit, without exception, such attempts and propositions, regardless of whether the minors had actively attracted the attention of the predators.

Kow was accordingly sentenced to three months' imprisonment.

### Hiring a Hitman on the Dark Web PP v Allen Vincent Hui Kim Seng

Allen Vincent Hui Kim Seng pleaded guilty to one count of abetment by instigation to commit murder under s 302 read with s 115 of the Penal Code. Hui had used the Dark Web to hire a hitman to murder the boyfriend of his ex-girlfriend.

Hui, who was married, had started an extramarital relationship with his ex-girlfriend in April 2016. When Hui's ex-girlfriend realised that he had no intention to leave his wife, she ended their relationship in February 2018 and subsequently started dating the victim in April 2018. Out of jealousy, Hui accessed a website known as "Camorra Hitmen" on the Dark Web to "deal with" the victim. Hui first requested that the victim's right hand be cut off, then requested that acid be poured on the victim's face, before eventually conveying that he wanted the victim killed in a staged car accident on 22 May 2018. In the process, Hui transferred bitcoins worth a few thousand dollars in total into his "Camorra Hitmen" account to facilitate the hit. Hui was arrested on 17 May 2018 and was ordered to cancel the hit and withdraw all bitcoins from his "Camorra Hitmen" account.

In sentencing Hui, the Court took into consideration Hui's cold-bloodedness, high level of sophistication, and high degree of planning and deliberation. The Court reasoned that the sentence imposed on Hui must be one that accurately reflected his culpability and society's opprobrium towards the crime.

Hui was accordingly sentenced to five years' imprisonment.

## INSPIRING PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

### Coroner's Inquiry into the Demise of Mohamad Fadli Bin Mohd Saleh

On 6 November 2018, Mohamad Fadli Bin Mohd Saleh, an Auxilliary Police Officer with SATS Security Services Pte Ltd, consumed a bento set which was prepared by Spize Restaurant. On the same night, Fadli displayed symptoms in gastroenteritis such as vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain and fever. Despite seeking treatment from a private General Practitioner, there was no improvement in his symptoms. Fadli became unresponsive and was conveyed to Sengkang General Hospital's Emergency Department.

Upon hospitalisation, Fadli was resuscitated and intubated. He developed multi-organ failure including hypoxic ischaemic encephalopathy, acute kidney injury and liver injury. He passed away on 14 November 2018 and his cause of death was ascertained to be sepsis and multi-organ failure following acute gastroenteritis.

At the Coroner's Inquiry, the Court heard that there was an unusually severe outbreak of salmonellosis involving a high number of hospitalised cases amongst relatively young individuals, including Fadli. Investigations

uncovered several alarming lapses in the food-handling and preparation methods, which directly contributed to the outbreak of acute gastroenteritis. Strains of Salmonella were found on environmental surfaces of the restaurant, cooked bento sets and various raw food items. The Court also heard that faecal matter was detected in ready-to-eat food and kitchen tools like the chopping board and knife. Additionally, seven out of 34 food handlers had not been registered with the National Environment Agency and had not attended the basic food hygiene course.

Following the incident, the Singapore Food Agency (SFA) cancelled the food establishment licence of the Spize Restaurant outlet at River Valley Road. Additionally, the SFA stepped up its inspections of food establishments to ensure compliance with food safety regulations.

The Coroner found that there was no basis to suspect foul play, and that the death was an unfortunate misadventure, albeit from a natural cause.

### Coroner's Inquiry into the Demise of Yuen Ingebor Nee Santjer

Yuen Ingebor Nee Santjer was pronounced dead following a Total Knee Replacement surgery at Mount Elizabeth Hospital. An autopsy report certified the cause of death as multi-organ failure following haemorrhage from a transected left popliteal artery and vein following the surgery.

At the Coroner's Inquiry, the Court heard that the surgery was performed on 1 November 2016, and the surgeon had reviewed Yuen on two occasions after the procedure. On 2 November 2016, the surgeon left for an overseas conference without making any cover arrangements. Later that night, Yuen complained of numbness on her left leg and that her limb was cold. Other doctors attended to her. Subsequently, an emergency operation was performed and she was transferred to the Intensive Care Unit for close monitoring. On 7 November 2016, Yuen passed away.

The Coroner found that Yuen's popliteal artery and vein had been completely transected during the surgery,

leading to subsequent multi-organ failure and death. However, the Coroner made no finding as to liability, as the purpose of a Coroner's Inquiry is not to make a determination of guilt or negligence.

The Coroner concluded that there was no basis to support foul play but noted that the clinical documentation was less than ideal. The surgeon had not made contemporaneous notes relating to his neurovascular examination of Yuen, and the nurses' notes had been brief and/or inaccurate. The Coroner recommended introducing a policy to mandate that a physician delivering primary care to a post-surgery patient make cover arrangements when he/she is going to be unavailable. The Coroner also recommended that observation charts could be introduced to enhance a physician's ability to document and track key observations, so that the physician and other clinicians may be alerted to an abnormal reading.

## SIGNIFICANT CASES: CIVIL JUSTICE DIVISION

### Appointment of Single Joint Experts in the Context of the Simplified Process under Order 108 of the Rules of Court

#### Lee Song Yam v Hafizah Binte Abdul Rahman

The defendant applied to disqualify a single joint expert (SJE), a medical doctor who had previously been appointed by the Court in respect of the plaintiff's claim for personal injuries. The defendant alleged that the SJE lacked independence and impartiality. The District Judge dismissed the application, finding no basis for making any finding of lack of independence and impartiality.

As the SJE is an integral part of the simplified process for small value civil cases ("the Simplified Process"), the District Judge outlined the underlying principles and key features of the simplified process. The governing principle of the Simplified Process is proportionality, which implies simplicity of procedure. In this vein, the Simplified Process features upfront disclosure of documents together with early and robust case management. The primary aim is to facilitate early resolution of the dispute. Interlocutory applications are curtailed. Alternative dispute resolution is employed where appropriate. For cases that require adjudication, the trial is simplified.

This simplicity in procedure is reiterated in the mandatory use of SJE when parties wish to introduce expert evidence at the trial or assessment of damages hearing. For each specified field of expertise, there shall be only one expert. The concept of the SJE is also featured in the proposed draft new Rules of Court, which refers to the use of one common expert by parties.

The SJE is a parties' expert and the appointment of the SJE is by the agreement of the parties. Where the parties cannot agree on the expert to be appointed, the Court is empowered to make an order appointing the expert. The District Judge noted that the appointment of an SJE is entirely within the discretion of the Court, taking into consideration all the circumstances of the case. The Court will appoint the expert who is in the best position to assist the Court on the facts of the relevant case.

### Distinction between Commissions and Discretionary Bonuses

#### Siah Chee Ming v Acecom Technologies Pte Ltd

The plaintiff was employed by the defendant as its Vice-President of Business Development. The plaintiff claimed for the sum of S\$118,152.50 for commissions and other benefits under a letter of appointment (LOA) entered into between the plaintiff and defendant. The LOA entitled the plaintiff to commissions based on the quarterly gross profits achieved.

The plaintiff claimed that he was entitled to the commissions claimed because the relevant gross profit figures were

met. The defendant argued, among other things, that commissions would only be payable to the plaintiff for sales achieved as a result of the plaintiff's own personal efforts and work as opposed to that arising from external factors. As the exponential profits earned by the defendant was due to a flood in Thailand that led to an increase in the sale price, it had nothing to do with the personal efforts of the plaintiff. The District Judge rejected the defendant's argument, reasoning that this was not borne out by the LOA. The plaintiff worked with a sales team. The District Judge questioned how one would measure the extent to which the gross profits were achieved by the plaintiff's own personal efforts and work, rather than the efforts of the sales team or external factors such as the flood in Thailand or improvements in the economy.

The agreement between the parties was an agreement for a commission to be paid if certain targets were achieved, rather than an agreement for a discretionary bonus where the employer had full discretion to decide on the bonus to be paid to the employee. The District Judge found no reason to read into the LOA the additional words required to support the defendant's interpretation. The plaintiff's claim for commissions was therefore allowed.

The defendant's appeal to the High Court was dismissed.

### MCST's Liability for Damage Caused to Cars Parked on its Grounds from the Falling of a Tree

#### Loh Ngai Seng v The Management Corporation Strata Title Plan No. 0581 (Pandan Valley Condominium)

Several cars were parked in the open carpark of a condominium when a tree fell and damaged the cars. It had rained the night before. The Management Corporation (MC) was sued on the basis that it had failed to take adequate measures to ensure that the trees did not pose any reasonably foreseeable danger or did not fall and cause damage to property.

The District Judge held that the MC was to be judged based on its knowledge of the likelihood of harm against the standard of care of a reasonably competent property management agency. In determining what this standard of care should be, the District Judge noted that industry standards or practices would be a relevant factor.

The appointed single joint expert, a certified arborist, identified three contributing factors that could have caused the tree to fall: (a) environmental factors; (b) force of gravity caused by tree leaning; and (c) restricted growing space that prevented the lateral spread of structural roots, which weakened the "internal root structure".

The District Judge noted that clearly, the MC could not be faulted for environmental factors.

## INSPIRING PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

On the second contributing factor, the District Judge found that it could not be established that the tree was leaning before it fell. There was therefore no evidence to show that the MC ought to have known that the tree needed pruning.

As for the third contributing factor, the evidence showed that there was no visible tree rot or water logging near the

vicinity of the tree. Therefore, nothing could have alerted the MC to the possibility that the tree had a weakened internal root structural issue. There was also no evidence to show that hiring a tree expert to do periodic tree risk assessment was the industry norm that the MC should have followed.

Accordingly, the claim made against the MC was dismissed.

### SIGNIFICANT CASES: COMMUNITY JUSTICE AND TRIBUNALS DIVISION

#### Wrongful Dismissal

##### Tan Yan Zhi v Bakery Artisan Original Pte Ltd

This is the first wrongful dismissal claim decided at the Employment Claims Tribunals.

The claimant was a pregnant employee dismissed without notice on the ground of misconduct. She sued her employer for wrongful dismissal, alleging that the real motivation behind her dismissal was her employer's desire to avoid paying her maternity benefits. She sought compensation of five months' salary.

The Tribunal saw no reason to conclude that the dismissal was motivated by a desire to deprive the claimant of her maternity benefits. However, as her contractual breaches did not amount to misconduct that would warrant dismissal without notice, the employer had failed to prove that the dismissal was with just cause or excuse. Accordingly, the Tribunal held that the claimant was wrongfully dismissed.

In determining the compensation award, the Tribunal considered the "loss of income" and "harm caused" components prescribed under the Employment Claims Regulations. Each limb allowed a maximum award of three months' salary.

For "loss of income", the Tribunal noted that the claimant had been unable to find a job since her dismissal but had received an extra month's salary to cover her loss of pay. The Tribunal thus awarded two months' salary for this limb.

For "harm caused", the Tribunal weighed the fact that the claimant would have qualified for 12 weeks' maternity leave if she had continued working against the fact that, but for her pregnancy, the employer could have terminated her with one month's notice. On balance, two months' salary was found to be a just base award. Under the Regulations, this was adjustable by up to 50 per cent with aggravating or mitigating factors. The Tribunal considered the claimant's frequent lateness for work as a mitigating factor, and reduced the base award by half a month, to 1 ½ months' salary.

The claimant was thus awarded a total of 3 ½ months' salary as compensation.

#### Use of Laser to Hurt Occupier

##### Yen Teck Foo v Mervin Eng Kok Huan

The plaintiff complained of unreasonable interference by the respondent, his neighbour, on 20 separate incidents between 2017 and 2019. The incidents primarily focused on noise, heat production to cause discomfort and pain, and emissions of throbbing sensations.

The plaintiff sought damages of \$20,000 and, among other things, injunctions against the respondent to:

- stop using a laser weapon to cast laser beams to inflict pain and injury to occupants in his unit; and
- stop deploying high power machines to emit sensations and columns of hot air to occupants in his unit.

The plaintiff provided evidence of digital temperature meter readings showing rises in temperature, claiming the respondent's machine had emitted descending hot air. He also tendered thermal images showing glowing red hues. The plaintiff and his witnesses gave evidence of sensations of pain and heat. Sound recordings were tendered for the noise complaints.

The respondent did not dispute the plaintiff's recordings. However, he denied owning any machine or being the cause of any noise, heat, pain and/or discomfort to the plaintiff and the occupants of the plaintiff's unit.

Even though the recordings were not disputed, the Community Disputes Resolution Tribunal found that the plaintiff was unable to prove that the source of the emissions was from the respondent's unit. Accordingly, the Tribunal dismissed the claim.

#### Harassment, Statutory Interpretation of "by any means"

##### Yeo Swee Kheng v Supreme Builders Pte Ltd

The applicant sought a protection order to prohibit the respondent from sending any representatives, including debt collectors, to her residence. The respondent argued that there was no harassment and it was not the right party to be sued.

The key legal issue was whether a protection order could be made prohibiting a respondent from sending representatives, such as debt collectors, to carry out acts of harassment.

The District Court noted that s 3 and 4 of the Protection from Harassment Act (POHA) prohibited the causing of harassment "by any means". Law Minister K Shanmugam, in his Second Reading speech for the Bill, stated that certain POHA offences were "medium-neutral", and caught acts in the physical and online worlds. However, the Bill was silent on whether someone could contravene the POHA if he used another person or entity as the "means" of carrying out harassment.

The Court saw no objection in principle for the "means" to be another person or entity, the key to such liability being that the respondent retained control over the actions of that representative. If a respondent could show that he had lost control of his representative, or that the representative had

acted beyond his remit, the chain of liability would have been broken. To hold otherwise would have led to an untenable result – where creditors could switch between debt collectors whenever a protection order was issued against one of them, requiring debtors to take out applications against new debt collectors, *ad infinitum*.

On the facts, the Court found that there was harassment to the applicant under s 4 of the POHA that was likely to continue. The Court considered it just and equitable to make a protection order prohibiting the respondent from sending any representatives, including debt collectors, to the applicant's residence.

### SIGNIFICANT CASES: STATE COURTS CENTRE FOR DISPUTE RESOLUTION (SCCDR)

#### Suit involving a Claim for Damages in Tort

In this case, the defendant was engaged to carry out construction works on the roofing of a shop, which was adjoining the plaintiff company's shop. In the course of carrying out the construction works, the defendant's worker trespassed onto the plaintiff company's roof and fell through the roofing and false ceiling. Rain water subsequently seeped through the hole in the roof, causing extensive damage to the plaintiff company's premises and goods. In addition, the damaged roofing contained asbestos which was now exposed, presenting a health hazard to the plaintiff company's staff and customers. The plaintiff had to secure alternative storage facilities, thereby incurring costs for the rental of the additional facilities, transport costs and the handling charges.

The plaintiff company sued the defendant in tort for damages. Complications arose when the sole director and shareholder of the plaintiff company suddenly passed away in the course of litigation. The recovery and sorting out of the plaintiff company's records and accounts became a major issue, as the executor of the deceased director's estate was not familiar with the business and its records and accounts. If the case had proceeded for a full trial, much time and expense would have to be incurred.

Ultimately, the case was amicably resolved through mediation by a District Judge at the SCCDR. The plaintiff company was able to recover a sum close to full compensation from the defendant's insurers. Both parties were able to save legal costs and time.

#### Suit involving a Neighbour with Mental Issues

The applicant took out an application for a protection order against his neighbour under s 13 of the Protection from Harassment Act. His complaint was that the respondent had on numerous occasions made noise outside his unit by opening an umbrella near his door and then walking past

his unit with loud footsteps. These actions were repeated multiple times throughout the day, causing fear and disturbance to the applicant's young children. In addition, the respondent often swept rubbish and water along the drain towards the applicant's unit.

Relations between the parties were extremely acrimonious as their disputes had been ongoing for a decade. Earlier attempts to resolve the matter at the Community Mediation Centre had failed as the respondent had chosen not to participate in those proceedings.

The respondent, however, attended the mediation session facilitated by a District Judge at the SCCDR. She opposed the application for a protection order and explained that her behaviour was a series of defensive measures which she had adopted out of fear for her personal safety following a previous physical scuffle with the applicant. The respondent also listed her grievances against the applicant.

During the mediation session, the applicant had the opportunity to see things from the respondent's perspective, and better understand her motivations. He also witnessed some of the respondent's behavioural quirks which she exhibited when she was under stress during the mediation session.

Under the guidance of the District Judge, the applicant engaged in separate discussions with a close family member of the respondent who had accompanied her to the SCCDR to provide emotional support. Through mediation, the applicant accepted that the respondent had mental issues which was a primary contributing factor for her behaviour. He eventually withdrew his application as he recognised that litigation would not assist him in resolving the dispute and might instead aggravate the respondent's mental condition. A better option would be to grant the respondent's family some time to seek treatment for her mental condition which might improve with time.

## INSPIRING PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

### Suit involving a Negligence Claim for Personal Injury

The plaintiff had a fall in the defendant's shop and suffered injuries. She sued the defendant for negligence on the basis that they had failed to take reasonable care to ensure that their customers would be reasonably safe in using their premises. In particular, the plaintiff argued that there was an unusual feature of the defendant's premises that exposed her to a risk of injury.

Both parties came before a Judge at the SCCDR for a non-binding neutral evaluation on liability and the quantum of damages. The shop was situated in a building which had been designated by the National Heritage Board as a

national monument. The defendant denied that they had been negligent and it was part of the defence's case that the particular feature was inherent within the building structure and that it was hence not subject to alteration without prior written permission from the authorities. The plaintiff responded by arguing that there remained other measures that the defendant could and ought to have installed to ensure the safety of their customers.

The case raised interesting legal issues as it involved building features which were quite unique and rarely encountered. The parties eventually arrived at a mutually amicable settlement by following the neutral evaluation on liability and the quantum of damages given by the Judge.

## SERVICE TRANSFORMATION@STATE COURTS



In 2019, the Singapore public service launched a new Public Service Transformation campaign – "Transformation starts with an I.D.E.A." where "I.D.E.A" stands for "Innovate. Digitalise. Engage. Adapt & Skill Up". The State Courts heeded the call and embarked on process transformation reviews – studying best practices, fundamentally redesigning processes, developing and piloting new ways of delivering service and upgrading service competencies.

### Establishment of a dedicated department focused on service delivery

The Service Excellence Directorate (SED) was formally established on 1 May 2019. The SED brought together the service policy function and the management of public-facing service delivery touchpoints under a single department.

With this integration, the State Courts would be able to adopt a whole-of-organisation perspective in defining their overall service policies and strategies, align service standards, design targeted solutions to meet court users' needs, and collaborate with internal and external stakeholders to improve the service experience of court users.

### Consolidation of registry and frontline counter services

To improve court users' experience and enhance their access to justice, the State Courts consolidated their common registry functions such as the filing of fresh appeals/ petition of appeals, applications for court records and process services, and their related frontline counter services into the Central Registry in May 2019. In the process, more than 70 common back-end and frontline work processes were reviewed and streamlined, and the organisation saw substantial savings of more than 24,000 customer hours and 1,000 manpower hours. One key result was the significant reduction in the average waiting time for the filing of Magistrate's Complaints - from two hours to 30 minutes.

### One-stop services

The successful reorganisation of the registry functions and frontline counter services paved the way for the smooth commencement of operations in the new State Courts Towers. In the new courthouse, the Central Registry serves as a one-stop service centre for general enquiries, filing of matters such as Magistrate's Complaints and fresh appeals, and application for court records. Related services such as Bailiff Appointments and Further Inquiry sessions for Magistrate's Complaints are also integrated within the ambit of the service area. With this, court users need not have to go to different registries if they have different matters. In addition, there is a Business Centre that is equipped with facilities for court users to file their claims and submit their applications online. If they need assistance, Service Ambassadors are on site to guide them. These Service Ambassadors are experienced staff who are equipped with knowledge of the various court processes to assist court users.

## AWARDS



### NACM/CITOC Award 2019, Digital Courts: Courts to Citizens Category

On 25 July 2019, the State Courts' Community Justice and Tribunals System (CJTS) was conferred the National Association of Court Management (NACM)/Court Information Technology Officers Consortium (CITOC) Award 2019 under the Digital Courts: Courts to Citizen Category at the NACM Annual Conference in Las Vegas.

The CJTS is a comprehensive case management system with an online dispute resolution (ODR) function to assist litigants-in-person in filing and settling their disputes online without going to Court. It is designed to make it easy for court users to use without the assistance of a legal professional or service bureau. The features of the CJTS include: e-Filing, e-Assessment, e-Negotiation (self-help ODR), e-Mediation, quantum suggestion and case search.

The NACM/CITOC Awards recognise innovation and excellence in the use of information technology for both NACM and CITOC members.



### OpenGov Recognition of Excellence 2019 for the Intelligent Court Transcription System

On 16 May 2019, the State Courts received the OpenGov Recognition of Excellence 2019 for their Intelligent Court Transcription System which enables real-time AI (artificial intelligence) transcribing, at the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Singapore OpenGov Leadership Forum.

The Recognition of Excellence award recognises government agencies that have achieved excellence in using ICT (Information and Communication Technology), often working behind the scenes to make the government smarter, more agile, more efficient and more transparent.

The Intelligent Court Transcription System will be able to transcribe English oral evidence in court hearings in real time, allowing Judges and parties to review oral testimonies in Court immediately. Its AI is trained in court-specific vocabulary and other domain-specific terms, such as legal and medical terms for Coroner's Inquiries. When implemented, the live transcription of oral evidence in court proceedings can be viewed via a projection screen or on computer monitors in the courtrooms and hearing chambers.


## INSPIRING PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

### INTERNATIONAL PROFILE

In 2019, the Singapore Judiciary and its legal system continued to be recognised internationally as being among the best in the world.

Across research studies conducted by reputable think tanks and international organisations to measure country or economy performance, Singapore has continued to achieve high scores and rankings in areas related to the Judiciary and rule of law.

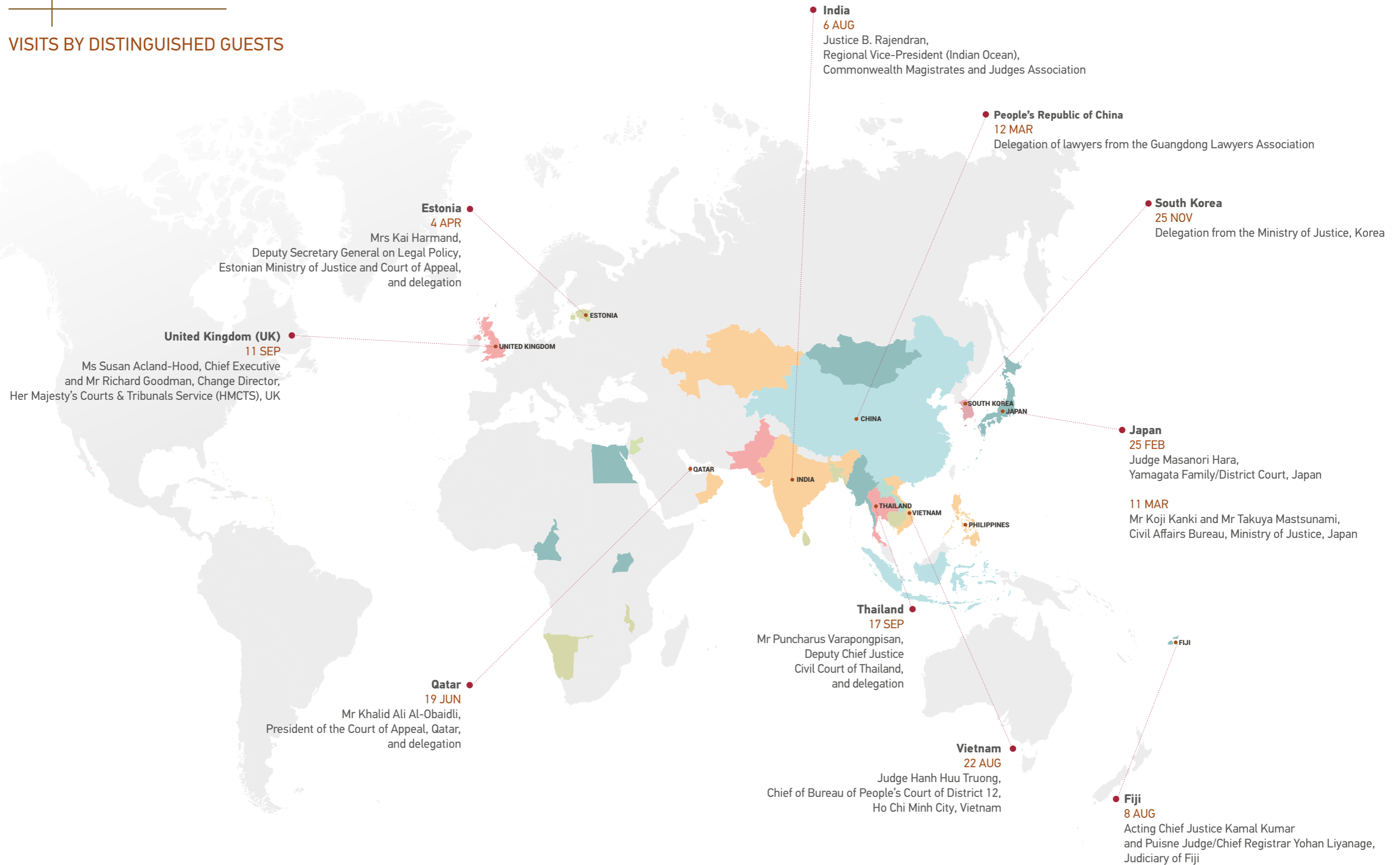
Singapore was ranked within the top 10 countries for most indicators and these results are a testament to the high quality of justice dispensed by the Singapore Judiciary.

	RANK	SCORE
 <p><b>World Economic Forum – Global Competitiveness Report 2019</b> (scores range from 0 to 100)</p> <p>Efficiency of Legal Framework in Settling Disputes <b>1 out of 141</b> Judicial Independence <b>14 out of 141</b> Property Rights <b>3 out of 141</b> Intellectual Property Protection <b>2 out of 141</b></p>		<b>86.59</b> <b>77.44</b> <b>89.44</b> <b>89.34</b>
 <p><b>International Institute for Management Development – World Competitiveness Yearbook 2019</b> (scores range from 0 to 10)</p> <p>Legal and Regulatory Framework <b>1 out of 63</b> Justice <b>10 out of 63</b></p>		<b>8.27</b> <b>8.16</b>
 <p><b>World Justice Project – Rule of Law Index 2019</b> (scores range from 0 to 1)</p> <p>Rule of Law (overall, main index) <b>13 out of 126</b> Civil Justice (sub-factor) <b>5 out of 126</b> Criminal Justice (sub-factor) <b>6 out of 126</b></p>		<b>0.80</b> <b>0.83</b> <b>0.78</b>

	RANK	SCORE
 <p><b>The World Bank – Doing Business 2020</b> (scores range from 0 to 100)</p> <p>Enforcing Contracts <b>1 out of 190</b></p>		<b>84.53</b>
 <p><b>Heritage Foundation – 2019 Index of Economic Freedom</b> (scores range from 0 to 100)</p> <p>Rule of Law: Property Rights <b>1 out of 185</b> Rule of Law: Judicial Effectiveness <b>1 out of 185</b> Rule of Law: Government Integrity <b>2 out of 185</b></p>		<b>97.40</b> <b>92.40</b> <b>95.10</b>
 <p><b>Fraser Institute – Economic Freedom of the World: 2019 Annual Report</b> (scores range from 0 to 10)</p> <p>Legal System and Property Rights <b>7 out of 162</b></p>		<b>8.22</b>
 <p><b>The World Bank – Worldwide Governance Indicators 2019</b> (scores range from -2.5 to 2.5)</p> <p>Rule of Law <b>7 out of 209</b></p>		<b>1.84</b>

## INSPIRING PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

### VISITS BY DISTINGUISHED GUESTS





### TRAINING IN COURT AND TRIBUNAL ADMINISTRATION

The Executive Leadership Programme (ELP) for Court and Tribunal Administrators was conducted from 18 to 22 February 2019. A total of 36 participants comprising judges, senior registrars, and court and tribunal administrators from Fiji, Jamaica, Kenya, Myanmar, Tanzania, Thailand and Singapore attended the five-day programme.

Jointly organised by the State Courts and the National University of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, the ELP is the only executive programme catered specifically to court administrators in Asia. In addition to lectures conducted by teaching faculty from the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy and senior management of the State Courts, Judge of Appeal, Justice Steven Chong,

provided insights and shared his experiences in ethics and values in the public service during the panel discussion. Other panellists included the Presiding Judge of the State Courts, Justice See Kee Oon, and Mr David Ma, former Director of the Institute of Public Administration and Management, Civil Service College.

The practical sessions and in-depth case studies that were specifically designed for the programme were useful in addressing the current challenges and circumstances participants face when leading courts and tribunals. The participants also reflected on how the ELP gave them the opportunity to learn from and interact with trainers, judges and court administrators from around the world.



OUR PEOPLE

## OUR PEOPLE

### CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND UPSKILLING

The State Courts recognise that continuous learning and upskilling are key to empowering their judges and staff to deliver quality justice to the people of Singapore. They place great emphasis on training and equipping their judges and staff with the know-how and skills needed to be responsive to the challenges and opportunities in the evolving environment that they operate in. In line with the Smart Nation objective to build a digital and data literate workforce by 2023, several learning and development strategies were introduced in 2019.



#### PROMOTING AN E-LEARNING CULTURE

A concept plan on developing an e-learning culture in the State Courts was drawn up to allow more opportunities for staff to acquire and enhance their digital skills through the LEARN app, which is an e-learning platform for public officers developed by the Singapore Civil Service College. As part of their efforts to develop a digital-ready workforce, the State Courts also implemented the “eLearn2gether” initiative to give staff two hours per month, during the normal working hours, to embark on e-learning. From August to December 2019, all Judges and Court Administrators completed an online curriculum on Cyber Security and Data Science using the LEARN app.



#### DEVELOPING COMPETENCIES IN DATA SCIENCE

The State Courts had also developed a Data Science Competency Framework and Training Roadmap and put in place a series of data science capability development programmes. In June 2019, a learning workshop titled *Have Fun with Data* was organised. Guest speakers from GovTech Singapore and data visualisation company, Tableau, gave practical examples of the applications of data analytics and visualisation in the public and private sectors. District Judge Toh Yung Cheong, Principal Director of the Strategic Planning and Technology Division, also presented on the usefulness of Microsoft Excel and Power BI as a data visualisation tool to analyse data.



#### FIRESIDE CHATS

The Fireside Chat series was launched in 2015 to provide Judges and Court Administrators with the opportunity to have an open discussion with and to learn from current and past leaders in the public sector about social, economic, and leadership and management issues.

In 2019, Mr Bilahari Kausikan, former Ambassador-at-Large and Policy Advisor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ms Teoh Zsin Woon, Deputy Secretary (Transformation), Public Service Division, were invited to the State Courts. Mr Bilahari provided valuable insights on international affairs, and leadership and governance, while Ms Teoh shared leadership insights from her past experience in leading public sector transformation in various agencies.



### ENABLING WORK-LIFE HARMONY



#### BLUE SKY FRIDAY

The State Courts value their staff and aim to provide an environment where staff can harmonise work and personal commitments. In 2017, the State Courts introduced quarterly Eat-With-Your-Family Days when staff could leave office at 5pm on the last Friday of every school term to enable them to spend time with their loved ones. In 2019, this was enhanced through the “Blue Sky Friday” initiative. Staff are allowed to leave the office early on “Blue Sky Friday” at 5pm, to spend quality time with their families, friends or to pursue their interests.

#### MY FAMILY DAY@STATE COURTS

In support of “My Family Weekend 2019”, which is an initiative by Families for Life to encourage extended families to spend quality time together, reconnect and bond, the State Courts organised “My Family Day@State Courts” on 6 September 2019. The participants – mainly children of staff members – were treated to a host of exciting activities. There was a Games Room or “arcade” that featured family-friendly games such as bowling,



basketball and cans shooting. In the Arts & Crafts room, the participants unleashed their creativity by making personalised linen bags and photo frames. There was also a photo booth for them to capture their day in the State Courts in a tangible form. Those who were curious about the ins and outs of court proceedings had the opportunity to observe live court hearings. The activities culminated in a family-bonding event where the participants showcased their talents through song and dance items.

## OUR PEOPLE

### AWARDS TO STATE COURTS STAFF

#### RECOGNISING OUR STAFF

The Manager of the Year Award (MYA) and Court Administrator of the Year Award (CAYA) were the pinnacle internal awards that recognised outstanding Court Administrators for their contributions to the State Courts. As part of the State Courts' continuous efforts to encourage and motivate officers to strive for excellence, a holistic and comprehensive review of the State Courts' internal awards was conducted. Arising from the review, a new tier-based award known as the Outstanding CA Award

(based on seniority of the officers) was introduced in 2019 to replace the MYA and CAYA. In line with this change, the Team of the Year Award was also renamed Outstanding Team Award. In addition, a new individual award known as the Exemplary Judicial Officer (JOP) Award was introduced to recognise Judges for their contributions in a non-judicial capacity. A new award known as the Going-the-Extra-Mile (for colleagues) Award was also introduced to recognise staff who have gone the extra mile to help their colleagues.



#### NATIONAL DAY AWARDS

The National Day Awards recognise various forms of merit and service to Singapore. In 2019, State Courts staff members received awards in various categories.

##### Public Administration Medal (Silver)

District Judge Wong Peck  
District Judge Luke Tan

##### Commendation Medal

Ms Sharon Chua

##### Efficiency Medal

Ms Nisa d/o Raja Sekaran

##### Long Service Medal

District Judge Toh Yung Cheong  
District Judge Ronald Gwee  
Mr Low Meng Huat  
Ms Prasakthi d/o Allagoo  
Ms Juliet Fenendees  
Ms Nor Artiyangseh Binte Jibani  
Ms Salina Binte Sinain



#### STATE COURTS AWARDS

The annual State Courts Awards recognise the commitment and outstanding contributions of staff members to the organisation.

##### Exemplary JO Award

District Judge Adam Nakhoda  
District Judge Carolyn Woo  
District Judge Josephine Kang

##### Outstanding CA Award (Diamond)

Ms Toh Meng Cheng  
Ms Belinda Chng  
Mr Muhammad Akram Bin Amat Tugiman  
Ms Sountharavalli d/o Mudhlie  
Ms Looi Siew Yuen

##### Outstanding CA Award (Platinum)

Ms Halija Kurdi  
Ms Sayidhatunnisa Binte Syed Eussof

##### Outstanding CA Award (Gold)

Kasumawati Binte Rifaie

##### Outstanding Team Award

Advancing Thought Leadership in Judicial Dispute Resolution  
intelligent Court Transcription System  
ROMS2 (ROMS Enhancement and Integration with ICMS)



### A TRIBUTE TO JUSTICE SEE KEE OON

Judges and Court Administrators bade a warm farewell to Justice See Kee Oon, who stepped down as Presiding Judge of the State Courts on 1 April 2020.

Justice See joined the Singapore Legal Service in 1991 and was appointed as a Deputy Registrar and Magistrate in the then Subordinate Courts. He served as a Justices'

Law Clerk in the Supreme Court from 1995 and returned to the Subordinate Courts in 1997 as a District Judge. In 2007, he joined the Ministry of Law and headed the Insolvency and Public Trustee's Office. In 2009, he returned to the Subordinate Courts as a District Judge and subsequently headed the Criminal Justice Division as Senior District Judge.



On 1 October 2013, Justice See was appointed Chief District Judge of the Subordinate Courts.



When the Subordinate Courts were renamed as "State Courts" in 2014, Justice See became the first Presiding Judge of the State Courts (PJSC).

OUR PEOPLE



The State Courts are committed to ensuring access to justice and providing excellent court services. To this end, Justice See had led the State Courts through several organisational changes. Most notably, two new justice divisions were created in 2015 – the Community Justice and Tribunals Division to oversee community and relational dispute matters, and the State Courts Centre for Dispute Resolution to provide an integrated and holistic approach to dispute resolution in the State Courts. In 2018, the State Courts Centre for Specialist Services was set up to provide comprehensive counselling and psychological services for court users.

During Justice See's term as PJSC, the State Courts developed and implemented several major IT systems such as the Integrated Case Management System and the Community Justice and Tribunals System. These IT systems had won the State Courts numerous accolades for transforming the State Courts' case and resource management processes from being predominantly paper-based to an integrated and paperless system, accessible by multiple users simultaneously, 24/7, remotely.

Under Justice See's sterling leadership, the State Courts had organised several international programmes such as the Court Excellence and Judicial Cooperation Forum 2014, Sentencing Conferences 2014 and 2017, and International Conference on Court Excellence 2016 to bring together judiciaries worldwide to share best practices and learn from one another. In 2016, the State Courts developed the Executive Leadership Programme for Court and Tribunal Administrators together with the National University of Singapore Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy. This programme is one of the few around the world that is customised and contextualised for court and tribunal administrators. These efforts to reach out to the local and international judicial and legal communities have established the State Courts as a judicial learning hub in the region.



On top of his duties and responsibilities as PJSC, Justice See continued to take on a substantial hearing load. One of the most significant cases that he had presided over at the State Courts was the case involving the leaders of the City Harvest Church. This was one of the highest-profile and longest-running criminal cases in Singapore's history. The trial took 142 days, involved more than 40 prosecutors and defence lawyers, including eight senior counsel, and more than 10,000 documents and exhibits, culminating in a 300-page judgment.

Justice See's immense contributions to the State Courts have left an indelible mark on everyone. Judges and staff of the State Courts will continue his legacy of taking the organisation to greater heights.

Justice See had most capably led the State Courts to attain many achievements. One of the most significant and tangible achievements would be the State Courts' move to the State Courts Towers. He saw the project from conception to fruition, and ensured that the delivery of services to court users continued seamlessly during the transition from the previous building to the new courthouse.



“...Justice See has accomplished in substance what the renaming of the Subordinate Courts as the State Courts in 2014 sought to do in form – namely, to burnish the standing and dignity of the State Courts in the eyes of the community. I thank and congratulate Justice See for his outstanding service.”

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon  
31 March 2020

## OUR PEOPLE

STATE COURTS WELCOME  
JUSTICE VINCENT HOONG

On 1 April 2020, Justice Vincent Hoong was appointed Presiding Judge of the State Courts.

Justice Hoong is not new to the State Courts. He joined the Singapore Legal Service in 1984 and was posted to the then Subordinate Courts as a Magistrate. In 1986, he held the appointment of Assistant Registrar in the Supreme Court before returning to the Subordinate Courts in 1990 as a District Judge.

From September 1997 to May 2001, Justice Hoong managed the Singapore Land Registry of the Ministry of Law. Thereafter, he was seconded to the Singapore Land Authority (SLA) as its Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Legal Officer. In May 2009, he was appointed as the SLA's Chief Executive. During his tenure at the SLA, he held

concurrent appointments as the Registrar of Titles & Deeds and Controller of Residential Property from May 2000 to 31 March 2015, and as the Commissioner of Lands from August 2002 to April 2009.

In April 2015, Justice Hoong was appointed Registrar of the Supreme Court. During his term as Registrar, Justice Hoong helped steer many of the Supreme Court's reforms and initiatives, such as the management of cases in the High Court and appeals in the Court of Appeal, as well as improvements to the practice and procedures in corporate insolvency and restructuring cases.

On 10 April 2019, Justice Hoong was appointed as a Judicial Commissioner of the Supreme Court, and on 3 January 2020, he was appointed as a Supreme Court Judge.

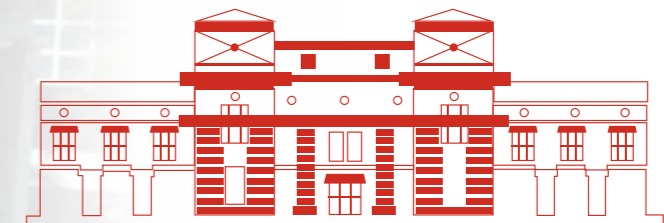


Justice Hoong impressed me deeply with his vision, his tremendous work ethic, his integrity and sound judgment, as well as his ability to inspire the trust and loyalty of his officers. I especially value his commitment to the ethos and values of the Singapore Public Service, and I know that he will give his very best to infuse these values deep into the culture of the State Courts, as he searches for new ways to bring this institution forward.

**Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon**  
31 March 2020







EVERY OUTCOME,  
A WAY FORWARD

# FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS

**VISION** Justice that protects, empowers, restores.

**MISSION** Making justice accessible to families and youth through effective counselling, mediation and adjudication.

**VALUES** Every case, with fairness  
Every outcome, a way forward  
Every individual, with respect.

**ABOUT OUR LOGO**

The Family Justice Courts logo is a symbolic representation of shelter within the visual frame of a traditional courthouse. The outer maroon roof encapsulates the vision of the Family Justice Courts to be a source of justice that protects, empowers and restores individuals from troubled families. The inner roof reflects the commitment of those working within to build a vibrant, inclusive and cohesive community. An elegant typeface emphasises our aspiration to remain a modern and relevant, yet sturdy custodian of the rule of law.



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### YEAR IN REVIEW

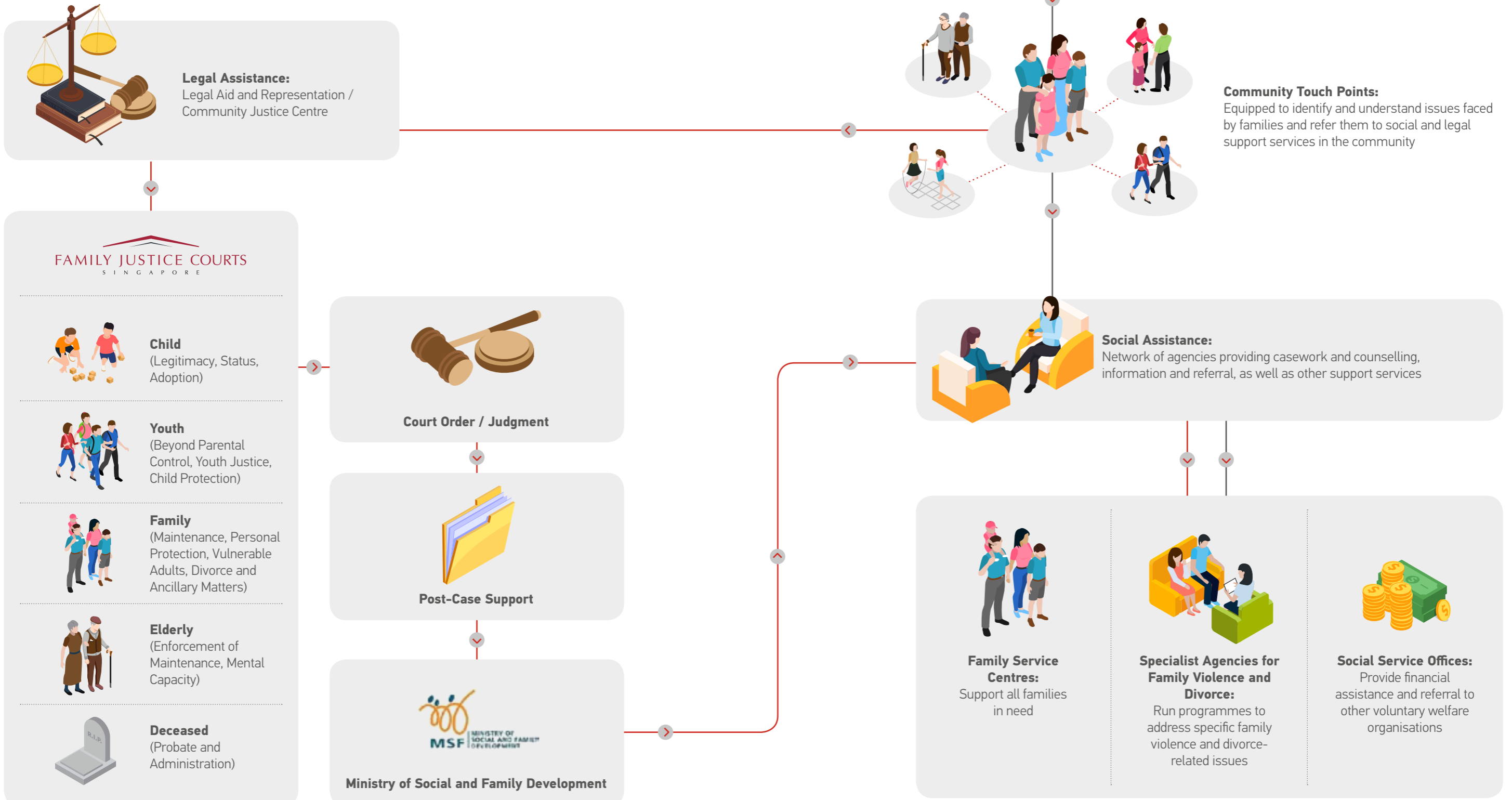
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# OUR FAMILY JUSTICE COMMUNITY

The "Family Justice Courts" is the collective name for the Family Division of the High Court, the Family Courts and the Youth Courts. The mission of the Family Justice Courts and our partners is to provide access to justice and support for families and youth in distress.

This info-graphic shows how every member of the family, young or old, obtains support through our family justice system.



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDING JUDGE OF THE FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS



### Every Outcome, A Way Forward

The theme for the Family Justice Courts' (FJC) annual report is "Every Outcome, A Way Forward", taken from FJC's 2019 Workplan theme.

For the past five years, FJC has been pursuing reforms for the family justice system with the aim of delivering therapeutic and restorative justice to families. The purely adversarial system grates against the FJC's aims to assist family members resolve disputes in an amicable way, and to enable parents to co-parent their children after divorce. Efforts were made over the years to move the system to a 'less adversarial' one. Three years after major reforms were made to the family justice system in 2014, a review was made of these reforms by the Committee to **Review and Enhance Reforms** in the **Family Justice System** (RERF).

The recommendations of the RERF Committee have been accepted. The FJC has begun working with the Ministry of Law (MinLaw) and the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) to strengthen early support for families at risk of breakdown. FJC has also collaborated with other legal and social sector partners to implement the various enhancements.

The Mandatory Parenting Programme by MSF assists parties to appreciate the full impact of divorce, conflict and litigation on the children. We have also produced a series of informative collaterals – namely a brochure, leaflet and video clips – related to the divorce process for those who are contemplating divorce or undergoing divorce proceedings. The collaterals are complemented by on-going public talks on divorce organised jointly by FJC and Law Society Pro Bono Services.

High quality interventions and support for families are available within and outside of the courts. These include assistance from the FJC's Counselling and Psychological Services, external Voluntary Welfare Organisations, Divorce Support Specialist Agencies and Family Service Centres. FJC aspires to work cooperatively and effectively

with these agencies so that all resources are efficiently coordinated and accessible to families. The FJC also works with the Community Justice Centre to provide information to support court users.

An important and major workplan following from the RERF recommendations is the redesign of the Family Justice Rules (FJR). The FJR will be simplified, and will be more user-friendly. It will be divided into separate sets of rules for Divorce and for Probate matters. The rules will also enhance the powers of the court using the judge-led approach in the just and expeditious disposal of cases. These amendments will enable family proceedings to be more navigable for all court users (and hence more 'accessible' too).

A family judge's role involves work of 'specialist' nature, for she must work within a multi-disciplinary environment as well as adopt a judge-led approach in the court proceedings. A specialist training curriculum has been built for family judges in the FJC. Training programmes organised in 2019 involved a network of trainers from the legal, medical and social science disciplines. The inaugural Family Judges' Learning Week was held in July 2019, a specially curated programme that spanned both legal and non-legal, social science topics, as well as skills-based training.

In March 2019, the FJC jointly organised a Family Mediation Symposium with The Hague Conference on Private International Law which brought together judges, lawyers, Central Authorities, and academics from different jurisdictions to share and discuss issues, challenges and best practices in mediating family disputes. FJC also held its third International Advisory Council (IAC) meeting and the Family Justice Practice Forum in October 2019. The Forum included speakers from the IAC. The Forum closed with a highly entertaining yet robust and scholarly "Debate" involving experts in the legal and social science fields.

In leveraging technology to further enhance the family justice system, FJC launched iFAMS (Integrated Family

Application Management System), an electronic case management system to facilitate various types of applications, in July 2017. In 2019, three additional modules were introduced. The Mental Capacity Act Module enables applications for deputyship powers in common, less complex cases, making them simpler and more affordable for family members or caregivers. The Offer to Resolve Module allows parties to extend and accept offers through iFAMS in fresh applications for child or spousal maintenance, as well as other variations of such maintenance orders. The Remote Show Payment Module allows Respondents in Maintenance Enforcement cases to show proof of payment online instead of requiring their physical attendance in the Court.

Finally, FJC has set up a Process Transformation Committee and embarked on Phase 2 of its design thinking initiative in anticipation of its move to the former State Courts building (affectionately known as the Octagon) in 2023. These initiatives aim to simplify and digitalise court processes as far as possible, to improve service quality and convenience for court users.

Family work involves emotionally-charged issues – working in such a space can be deeply meaningful but immensely challenging as well. I would like to express my deep appreciation to all my colleagues in FJC, the Family Bar and our community agency-partners, for their commitment, determination and courage in helping families to problem-solve and reach a positive future.

**Debbie Ong**  
Presiding Judge  
Family Justice Courts, Singapore

# OVERVIEW OF THE FAMILY JUSTICE SYSTEM

## THE FAMILY JUSTICE SYSTEM

The Family Justice Courts (FJC) are established pursuant to the Family Justice Act which was passed by Parliament on 4 August 2014. The Family Justice Act was enacted based on the recommendations of the Committee for Family Justice which was formed in 2013 to review how Singapore's family justice system may be reformed to address the needs of youth and families in distress.

The FJC is a restructure of our court system to better serve litigants. By bringing together all family-related work under a specialised body of courts, we are able to frame disputes from the perspective of families and the individuals within. This is in contrast to other types of cases which are traditionally dealt with in an adversarial manner. In addition, we are able to provide a suite of family-specific services, enhance processes and identify relevant training programmes that develop family-specific skills in judges, lawyers and other family practitioners.

The "Family Justice Courts" is the collective name for a body of courts which comprise the Family Division of the High Court, the Family Courts and the Youth Courts. These Courts are administered by the Presiding Judge of the FJC. The FJC will hear the full suite of family-related cases including all divorce and related matters, family violence and vulnerable adults cases, adoption and guardianship cases, Youth Courts cases, applications for deputyship under the Mental Capacity Act, and probate and succession matters.

The FJC deals with cases involving the following legislations:

- Administration of Muslim Law Act (Cap. 3)
- Adoption of Children Act (Cap. 4)
- Children and Young Persons Act (Cap. 38)
- Family Justice Act 2014 (Act 27 of 2014)
- Guardianship of Infants Act (Cap. 122)
- Inheritance (Family Provision) Act (Cap. 138)
- International Child Abduction Act (Cap. 143C)
- Intestate Succession Act (Cap. 146)
- Legitimacy Act (Cap. 162)
- Maintenance of Parents Act (Cap. 167B)
- Maintenance Orders (Reciprocal Enforcement) Act (Cap. 169)
- Mental Capacity Act (Cap. 177A)
- Mental Health (Care and Treatment) Act (Cap. 178A)
- Probate and Administration Act (Cap. 251)
- Status of Children (Assisted Reproduction Technology) Act 2013 (Act 16 of 2013)
- Supreme Court of Judicature Act (Cap. 322)
- Vulnerable Adults Act 2018
- Voluntary Sterilization Act (Cap. 347)
- Wills Act (Cap. 352)
- Women's Charter (Cap. 353)

The FJC is a fundamental restructure of our court system, creating a separate and specialist body of courts to manage the full suite of family related disputes.



### High Court (Family Division)

The Family Division of the High Court exercises original jurisdiction over cases where the gross value of the assets exceed \$5 million and hears appeals against the decisions of the Family Courts and the Youth Courts in family proceedings.



### Family Courts

The Family Courts hear all family proceedings except cases under the Children and Young Persons Act, which are heard by the Youth Courts.

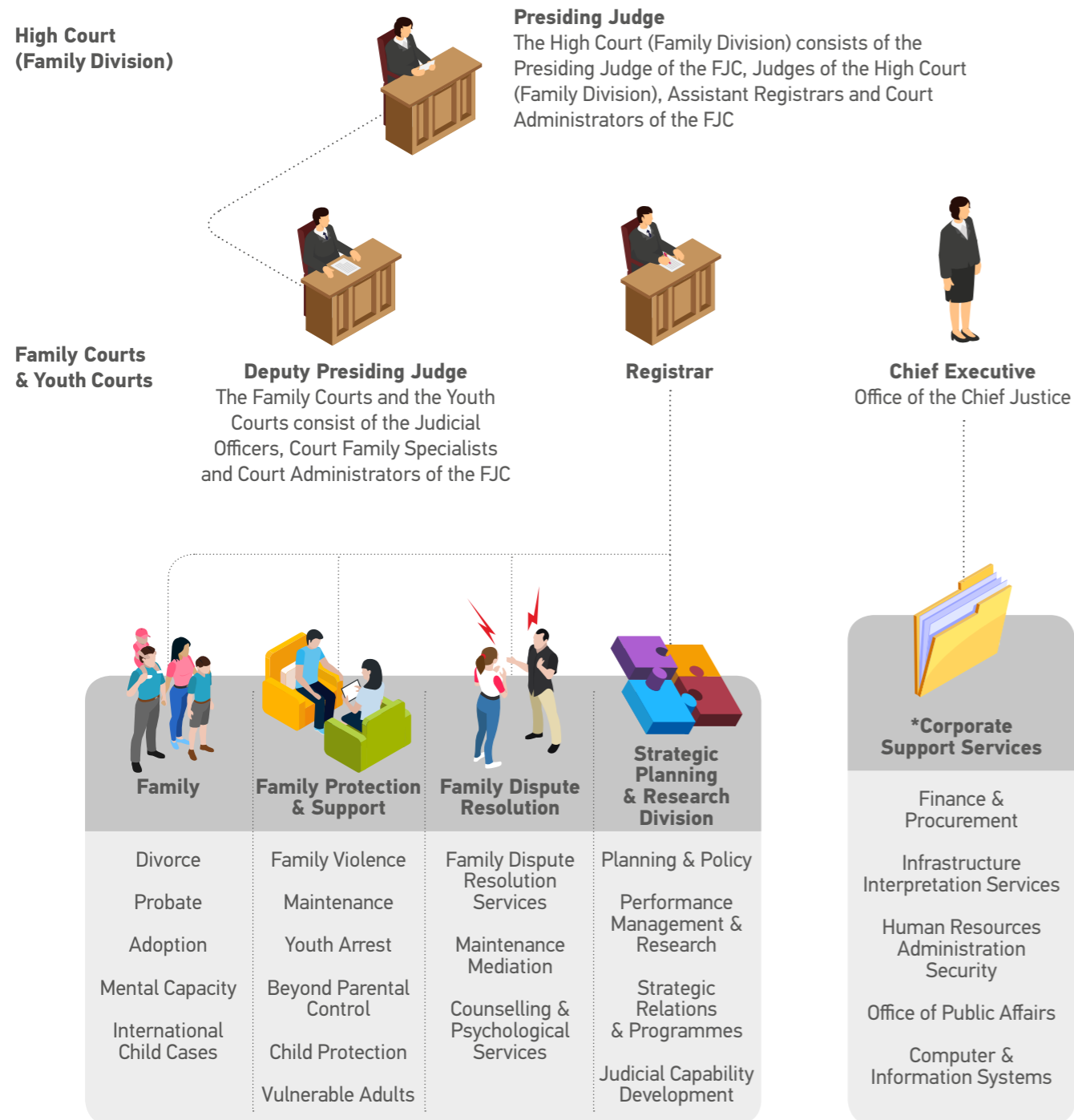


### Youth Courts

The Youth Courts hear cases under the Children and Young Persons Act.

# OVERVIEW OF FAMILY JUSTICE SYSTEM

## ORGANISATION CHART



\* Integrated Corporate Support Services with the Supreme Court.

## HIGH COURT (FAMILY DIVISION)



Left to Right: Justice **Debbie Ong**, Presiding Judge of the FJC, Judicial Commissioner **Tan Puay Boon**



1. **Ms Jen Koh**, Deputy Registrar & Head (High Court Family Division),
2. **Mr Kevin Ng**, District Judge & Head (Family Dispute Resolution Division),
3. **Mr Kenneth Yap**, Registrar of the FJC,
4. **Ms Juthika Ramanathan**, Chief Executive (Office of the Chief Justice),
5. Justice **Debbie Ong**, Presiding Judge of the FJC,
6. **Mr Chia Wee Kiat**, Deputy Presiding Judge of the FJC,
7. **Mr Muhammad Hidhir Abdul Majid**, Principal District Judge, Head (Family Protection & Support Division) & Principal Director (Strategic Planning & Research Division),
8. **Ms Toh Wee San**, District Judge & Head (Family Division), and
9. **Ms Clara Goh**, Deputy Chief Executive (Office of the Chief Justice)

## ENHANCING ACCESS TO JUSTICE



## DEVELOPING THE LAW AND PROCESS INNOVATIONS IN THE FJC

### LAW REFORM

A key focus of FJC is the reforms of laws that impact families and youth.

#### A. Review and Enhance Reforms in the Family Justice System Committee

An inter-agency committee to Review and Enhance Reforms in the Family Justice System (RERF) was formed in November 2017. It built on the work of the Committee for Family Justice, which had culminated in the enactment of the Family Justice Act and the establishment of the Family Justice Courts (FJC) on 1 October 2014.

The RERF Committee was co-chaired by Presiding Judge of the FJC Justice Debbie Ong, then-Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Law (MinLaw) Mr Ng How Yue, and Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) Mr Chew Hock Yong. Other members of the Committee were:

- Professor Leslie Chew, S.C., Dean, School of Law, Singapore University of Social Sciences;
- Justice Vincent Hoong, Judge, Supreme Court;
- Dr Sudha Nair, Executive Director, Promoting Alternatives to Violence;
- Mr Sim Gim Guan, Chief Executive Officer, National Council of Social Service ;
- Mr Alfred Tan, Chief Executive Officer, Singapore Children's Society; and
- Ms Michelle Woodworth, Co-chairperson of the Family Law Practice Committee, The Law Society of Singapore.

The RERF Committee released its recommendations in September 2019, with the aim to further strengthen the family justice system by incorporating principles of therapeutic and restorative justice in the resolution of family disputes. This included promoting the use of multi-disciplinary approaches and processes (e.g. counselling, mediation and conciliation) to resolve family disputes outside the court, which would minimise the need for families to undergo litigation. The emphasis was on healing relationships and re-opening communication channels between family members caught in acrimonious disputes, to achieve more sustained and positive family outcomes. MinLaw and MSF had accepted all the recommendations proposed by the Committee. The Ministries also held a consultation from 20 September to 1 November 2019 on the Committee's recommendations. Overall, feedback was supportive of the RERF Committee's recommendations.

The three key areas of recommendations are summarised below.

#### 1. More upstream pre-divorce support for couples

- Enhance existing Mandatory Parenting Programme for divorcing parties with children under the age of 21
- Provide easy access to divorce-related information and services on a consolidated online platform
- Encourage counselling and mediation before parties file for divorce
- Strengthen capabilities of social sector professionals providing divorce support, to better assist divorcing parties

#### 2. Enhancements to the family justice system to achieve better family outcomes

- Enhance the judge-led approach for the just, expeditious and economical disposal of proceedings
- Simplify the Family Justice Rules (FJR), which will result in simpler procedures, more timely processes and increased affordability
- Broaden the enforcement regime for child access orders to promote compliance
- Facilitate access to more affordable legal services in order to enhance access to justice
- Certify and accredit family law practitioners

#### 3. More protection for persons without mental capacity and more support for their caregivers

- Simplify the deputyship application process to make it simpler and more affordable for caregivers who require deputyship powers
- Provide training and support for appointed and prospective deputies to better understand their role and obligations
- Facilitate use of counselling and mediation for dispute resolution and better support deputies who may face caregiver stress
- Enhance the Office of the Public Guardian's (OPG) supervision of deputies so that appropriate intervention can be rendered for cases facing challenges
- Build up capabilities of professionals in the social sector to better support caregivers of those who have lost mental capacity

## ENHANCING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

### B. Amendments to the Protection from Harassment Act

Protection from Harassment Act (POHA) was first enacted in 2014, and legislated the protection of persons against harassment, unlawful stalking, and false statements of facts. The most recent amendments to POHA were passed in Parliament on 7 May 2019 by way of the Protection of Harassment (Amendment) Bill 2019 (the Bill).

The most recent amendments to POHA deal with the following broad areas - (1) making it easier and faster to obtain the reliefs sought under POHA; (2) strengthening the protection for victims; (3) enhancing reliefs for victims of falsehoods and undesirable online behaviour; and (4) the transfer of POHA matters to other courts.

#### 1. Easier and faster to obtain relief

To provide victims a “one-stop solution”<sup>1</sup> to receive holistic relief, the Bill establishes the Protection from Harassment Court (PHC), a specialised court that will have oversight over all criminal and civil matters under POHA. To effectively manage proceedings, the PHC will adopt simplified procedures and expedited timelines.

#### 2. Strengthening protection for victims

For applications relating to protection orders or expedited protection orders, the Bill introduces certain deeming provisions whereby if a respondent has been convicted of certain hurt-related offences, some of the conditions required for the grant of such protection orders will be deemed to be satisfied.<sup>2</sup> The Bill also amends the scope of reliefs to provide some parity with the personal protection regime under the Women’s Charter.<sup>3</sup> For instance, the Bill now provides for a domestic exclusion orders as part of protection orders under POHA.<sup>4</sup> The Bill also expands the types of relief available, including a mandatory treatment order requiring a respondent to undergo psychiatric treatment for a period not exceeding 36 months<sup>5</sup>, as well as empowering the Court to refer a matter to the police for investigation if an expedited protection order is issued.<sup>6</sup>

#### 3. Enhancing reliefs for victims of falsehoods and undesirable online behaviour

The most significant amendment in the Bill in enhancing the protection of victims of falsehoods and undesirable online behaviour is the introduction of the offence of ‘doxxing’. Doxxing involves the publication of a victim’s personal details in order to harass, threaten or facilitate violence against the victim. The Bill introduces a wide range of orders the court can make to protect such victims.

This includes a Stop Publication Order, Correction Order, Disabling Order, and corresponding interim orders to provide victims with urgent relief given how quickly such statements can go viral.

#### 4. Commencement or transfer of POHA proceedings from PHC

As noted above, the Bill establishes the PHC as being a one-stop specialised court to hear and administer all POHA-related cases. In this regard, the Bill provides, as a default position, that all applications under POHA must, in the first instance, be commenced in the PHC.<sup>7</sup> However, the Bill also provides that in certain circumstances, a POHA application may:

- (a) with leave of the relevant court, be commenced in the first instance either in a Magistrate’s Court, District Court, Family Court, or the High Court if there are any related proceedings which are pending in those courts;<sup>8</sup> or
- (b) be transferred by the PHC from the PHC to either of the aforementioned courts if there are any related proceedings which are pending in those courts.<sup>9</sup>

For completeness, the Bill correspondingly allows the aforementioned courts to transfer a POHA application to the PHC if there is sufficient reason to do so.<sup>10</sup>

#### Timelines<sup>11</sup>

The commencement of the new amendments will be in stages. The initial stage of commencement will relate to the establishment of the relevant offences under the POHA, and will take place in January 2020. The provisions relating to the transfer of POHA-related proceedings to the Family Court is scheduled to commence in August 2020.

### C. Amendments to the Children and Young Persons Act

The Children and Young Persons (Amendment) Bill was passed in Parliament on 4 September 2019 to provide better protection and rehabilitation for children and youths. Key amendments affecting the Youth Courts include:

#### 1. Care and protection

- Raising the age limit for children and young persons (CYPs) in need of care and protection from below 16 years to below 18 years<sup>12</sup>.
- Introduction of the Enhanced Care and Protection orders allowing CYPs to be committed to the care of a fit person determined by the Director-General or a protector until 21 years of age<sup>13</sup>.
- Expanding the types of orders the Court may make for CYPs in need of care and protection, including enabling the Director-General, a protector or the care-giver of the CYPs to make certain decisions affecting the CYP<sup>14</sup>.

#### 2. Family Guidance Orders

- “Beyond Parental Control Order” will be renamed “Family Guidance Order” (FGO)<sup>15</sup>, with the age limit to be retained at below 16 years<sup>16</sup>.
- CYPs and parents or guardians of CYPs are required to complete a family programme before a FGO is applied for and granted<sup>17</sup>.
- Expanding the types of orders the Court may make for CYPs in need of guidance<sup>18</sup>.

#### 3. Rehabilitation of youth offenders

- Raising the age limit for youth offenders from below 16 to below 18 years<sup>19</sup>.
- Expanding the circumstances in which the Court may sentence a youth offender to reformatory training<sup>20</sup>.
- Related amendments to the Registration of Criminals Act such that youth offenders who successfully complete certain Youth Court orders may declare they do not have a criminal record<sup>21</sup>.

#### 4. Other amendments

- Enabling the Court to order a person to remove the publication or stop the broadcast of information or picture:
  - of a CYP who had been or is arrested or had been or is the subject of investigations under the Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA) etc.<sup>22</sup>; or
  - relating to proceedings involving CYPs<sup>23</sup>.

#### Timelines<sup>24</sup>

- Amendments relating to care and protection, family guidance orders and certain other amendments relating to rehabilitation are targeted to take effect in mid-2020.
- The rest of the amendments, including raising the age limit for youth offenders are targeted to take effect in 2022.

### FAMILY JUSTICE RULES

The FJC is in a position to review and adapt procedural rules for family proceedings to cater to its unique nature. The Family Justice Rules (FJR) have undergone three rounds of key amendments in the year 2019.

The amendments to the FJR in 2019 can be broadly categorised as follows:

1. Amendments arising from changes to primary legislation;
2. Amendments arising from case law; and
3. Procedural amendments.

<sup>1</sup> MinLaw Press Release dated 1 April 2019 (“Press Release”) at paragraph 7

<sup>2</sup> Clause 16 of the Bill / Section 12(2A) POHA

<sup>3</sup> Press Release at paragraph 10

<sup>4</sup> Clause 16 of the Bill / Section 12(2C) POHA

<sup>5</sup> Clause 19 of the Bill / Section 13B POHA

<sup>6</sup> Clause 18 of the Bill / Section 13A POHA

<sup>7</sup> Clause 20(8) Bill / Section 16I(1) POHA

<sup>8</sup> Clause 20(8) Bill / Section 16I(2) POHA

<sup>9</sup> Clause 20(8) Bill / Section 16J(3) POHA

<sup>10</sup> Clause 20(8) Bill / Sections 16J(1) and 16J(2) POHA

<sup>11</sup> Information on timelines as provided by the MinLaw

<sup>12</sup> Section 2(1)

<sup>13</sup> Sections 49B(2)(a) and 49C(2)

<sup>14</sup> Sections 49A(1)(b)(ii) and (c)(ii), 49A(2), 49A(3), 49(4), 49(B)(2)(b), 49C(2) and 49D(2)

<sup>15</sup> Section 50

<sup>16</sup> Section 50(19)

<sup>17</sup> Section 50(1)(b)

<sup>18</sup> Section 50(4)

<sup>19</sup> Section 2(1)

<sup>20</sup> Section 44(1)(k)

<sup>21</sup> Clause 73 of the Bill

<sup>22</sup> Section 84A

<sup>23</sup> Section 84B

<sup>24</sup> Information on timelines is provided by MSF

## ENHANCING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

### 1. Consequential amendments arising from primary legislative changes – unmeritorious and vexatious proceedings and litigants

In 2018, section 74 of the Supreme Court of Judicature Act was amended and section 73A to section 73D were introduced to give the Court the following powers to address unmeritorious and vexatious proceedings and litigants:

- a) Sections 73A to 73D – The Court may make different types of civil restraint orders to address varying degrees of proceedings commenced by a litigant that are unmeritorious or vexatious. This would stay existing proceedings, or prevent the litigant from making further applications in an existing suit or in a specific court, unless leave is granted by the Court.
- b) Section 74 – Providing that vexatious litigants (who are subject to similar restraint orders made on the application of the Attorney General) will only be allowed

to bring an appeal from the High Court to the Court of Appeal if leave is granted by the High Court or Court of Appeal.

Parts 16A and 16B of the FJR (r. 286A to r. 286K) were accordingly introduced to support the provisions for restraint orders. The new rules, which mirror O. 112 and O. 113 of the Rules of Court (ROC), set out the procedure for litigants who are the subject of restraint orders to commence applications to vary these orders, or for leave to commence an action that is subject to restraint.

The forms of restraint orders, and clarification of the consequences of commencing proceedings without leave in breach of these orders are also provided for.

### 2. Consequential amendments arising from case law – leave provisions in applications for financial relief after a foreign divorce or nullity

Under Chapter 4A of the Women's Charter, the Court may grant applications for financial relief after a foreign divorce or nullity. Such applications take place in two stages: the application for leave (section 121D) and the substantive application (section 121F). Currently, both applications are heard on an *inter partes* basis.

In the recent decision of *UFN v UFM* [2019] SGCA 54, the Court of Appeal observed that serious consideration should be given to amending r. 40 to provide that applications for

leave under section 121D be heard on an *ex partes* basis. This would reduce the duplication of costs, evidence and delay caused by requiring substantive *inter partes* hearings for hearing both the applications for leave and substantive relief.

FJR Rule 40 was therefore amended to prescribe that applications for leave under section 121D are heard *ex parte*, and to delete references to such an application being heard *inter partes*.

### 3. Procedural amendments – proceedings under the Mental Capacity Act (MCA), the admission of further evidence in appeals and the recording of consent orders

First introduced in June 2018, r. 176A provides for uncontested applications under the MCA to be made for certain specified matters, such as consent for medical or dental treatment on behalf of a person lacking mental capacity (P). It provided a simple application process for the spouse or close relatives of P. The 2019 amendments made to r. 176A expand its scope to benefit more patients lacking capacity by:

- a) decreasing the age limit of P from 21 to 18; and
- b) increasing the classes of relatives who can make such applications for P, to include grandchildren and siblings of P's parents, should they be at least 21 years old. Previously, it was only limited to P's spouse, parents as well as children or siblings who were at least 21 years old.

Rule 831(2) (which mirrored amendments to O. 55D, r. 11(1) of the ROC) was amended to provide that in all appeals, no further evidence (other than evidence on matters occurring after the decision) shall be admitted except on special grounds. Prior to this, r. 831(2) only extended this restriction to appeals from a trial or substantive hearing. This amendment ensures a consistent approach in the admission of further evidence in all appeals.

Rule 670A (which mirrored amendments to O. 42, r. 1A of the ROC) was introduced to provide that the court may now record consent orders without parties or lawyers being physically present. This will help to reduce the number of court attendances by parties, and also encourage them to consider the possibility of an amicable settlement early on.

## CASE SUMMARIES HIGHLIGHTS 2019

The Court of Appeal and the High Court issued a total of 22 judgments that provided clarification and guidance on different aspects of family law and procedures. Here are some of the highlights:

### A. Division of Matrimonial Assets

- **Ancillary powers of court to order financial relief consequential on foreign matrimonial proceeding (*UFN v UFM* [2019] SGCA 54)**

This appeal was the first case considered by the Court of Appeal relating to Chapter 4A in Part X of the Women's Charter. Chapter 4A provides *inter alia* the court with powers to divide matrimonial assets where the parties to a marriage had been legally separated by judicial or other proceedings under the law of a foreign country recognised as valid in Singapore.

At the time of the hearing, the Appellant Husband was residing in Singapore and the Respondent Wife and three children were residing in Indonesia.

The Wife filed for divorce in Indonesia and their District Court ordered that the parties were legally divorced from 5 June 2013. The Husband was ordered to pay monthly maintenance for the three children but the Wife's application for marital attachment to the community property was refused. The purpose of such attachment was to free the assets and was a prelude to the division of assets.

On 21 October 2016, the Wife applied under section 121D of the Women's Charter to commence Chapter 4A proceedings for the division of a property in Singapore, which she jointly owned with the Husband (the Singapore Property). This application was dismissed on 2 May 2017. The Wife appealed and tried to adduce further evidence in the appeal but was dismissed by the Court of Appeal. The Husband also appealed and alleged *inter alia* that the Singapore Courts had no jurisdiction and the pre-nuptial

agreement was governed by the Indonesian law and the Singapore Property was part of the pre-nuptial agreement.

The first stage for an application for financial relief under Chapter 4A was to obtain leave of the Court by showing that there was a foreign divorce, annulment or judicial separation that was entitled to be recognised as valid in Singapore under Singapore law.

Once leave was obtained, the second stage was to show that Singapore Courts have jurisdiction under section 121C of the Women's Charter to grant relief. Thereafter, the applicant must show that he or she had substantial ground i.e. that it would be *prima facie* appropriate for the Singapore Courts to grant relief having regard to section 121F of the Women's Charter.

The Court of Appeal found that although parties had a pre-nuptial agreement, the said agreement did not cover the Singapore Property, which was held by the parties as joint tenants. It pointed out that the Wife, as joint tenant of the Singapore Property, may be entitled to apply for sale and partition of the property and seek half of the sale proceeds, which could be less costly for her than seeking a share of the property. The Court of Appeal also agreed with the High Court that the Wife would have difficulty enforcing Indonesian Court Orders against the Husband in Singapore. As such, the Husband's appeal was dismissed and the Court of Appeal held that Singapore Courts did have jurisdiction to grant the financial relief sought by the Wife.

- **Lottery winnings constitute matrimonial assets and were presumed to be contributed by both parties equally (for direct contribution) unless intention was shown to solely benefit self (*BOI v BOJ* [2019] SGCA 30)**

The Husband received lottery winnings of S\$1,200,000 in 2002 (during the course of parties' marriage).

The Court of Appeal held that as the lottery winnings were received during the marriage they *prima facie* constituted a "matrimonial asset" within the meaning of section 112(10) (b) of the Women's Charter. Further, lottery winnings were not part of the exclusion under section 112(10) of the Women's Charter, within the meaning of "gift" or "inheritance".

It was held that if the Husband had purchased the ticket for the family with the accompanying intention that the family as a whole should benefit, then he should not be regarded as being the sole contributor of the lottery winnings to the

pool of matrimonial assets. This approach was entirely consistent with the concept of marriage as an equal co-operative partnership of efforts. The lottery winnings were also found to be for the spouses' mutual benefit as the Husband deposited the winnings into the parties' joint account and utilised winnings to repay mortgage loans for the matrimonial home. Thus, this was a strong (albeit not conclusive) indication that he had purchased the winning lottery ticket with the intention of benefitting the family instead of merely himself alone.

As such, the lottery earnings were attributed to each spouse equally in terms of their respective financial contributions.

## ENHANCING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

### B. Gifts

- Contributions by the one spouse to the asset before it was gifted to the recipient spouse could be taken into account for the gift to be considered a matrimonial asset (*UEQ v UEP* [2019] SGCA 45)

The parties' were married in May 2003. The issue of division of matrimonial assets were determined by the Family Court and the Husband appealed to the High Court in relation to the division of matrimonial assets and in particular, with regard to some 80,000 shares.

The Husband worked in his family business, a supermarket chain and the Wife had substantively worked for the supermarket from the time shortly after the marriage until November 2012. The Husband's father first gave the Husband 20,000 shares in the supermarket before the marriage in 1999 and then 60,000 shares during the marriage in November 2012. The Husband claimed that these 80,000 shares should not be considered matrimonial assets for division.

The Court of Appeal held that different treatment should be given to the 20,000 shares and the 60,000 shares as they were given at different times. It agreed with the High Court that the 20,000 shares were substantially improved by the Wife during the marriage as the Wife learnt about the accounting practices of the family business in end 2003

### C. Probate

- Monies intended as gifts by deceased were unenforceable as there was no intention to create legal relations (*Ong Wui Teck v Ong Wui Swoon & Anor* [2019] SGCA 61)

The Appellant was the eldest son and sole executor and trustee of the Will and acting as the personal representative of the Deceased's Estate. There were two Respondents: the First Respondent was the Deceased's daughter and the Second Respondent was the Deceased's son (the Respondents).

The Appellant sought the recovery of certain sums of money allegedly owed to the Estate by the Respondents and two other siblings. The Respondents made counterclaims against the Estate for *inter alia*, S\$20,000 which was allegedly promised to each of them by the Deceased.

The Respondents claimed that the Deceased promised them S\$20,000 each as repayment for debts that the Deceased acknowledged that she owed to each of them. The basis for the debt were the monthly allowances that the Respondents had given to the Deceased when she was alive. Additionally, the First Respondent also expanded effort in looking after the Deceased.

The Court of Appeal held that claims for repayment made against Deceased persons should be supported by compelling evidence, as the Deceased would be unable to

when the business only consisted of a convenience store. Thereafter, when the main branch opened in early 2004, the Wife started contributing to the business operations in both the main branch and the convenience store. There had been an increase in share value by end 2012, compared to the time of the family business' incorporation in 1999.

At the time when the Wife was contributing to the supermarket, the Husband had already owned the 20,000 shares which had been substantially improved by the Wife. As for the 60,000 shares given in November 2012, the Court of Appeal agreed with the Husband that these shares were gifts from his father. At the time the 60,000 shares were gifted to the Husband, the Wife had stopped working for the supermarket. Thus, the contribution by the Wife in relation to these shares were therefore "past contribution" and were not included in the matrimonial pool.

Therefore, the 20,000 shares were correctly included as matrimonial assets whereas the 60,000 shares were regarded as a gift from the Husband's father.

rebut such claims especially since the Deceased did not include this in her Will. The burden fell on the Respondents to adduce compelling evidence to show that there was in fact a valid and binding debt owed to them by the Deceased. However, no evidence was produced by the Respondents to show that the Deceased promised to give them S\$20,000 each.

Apart from the requirements of offer, acceptance and consideration, there had to be an intention to create legal relations in order for a binding and enforceable agreement to arise. The Court of Appeal went on to state that where the arrangement was made in the domestic or social context, there was a (rebuttable) presumption that the parties did not intend for legal consequences to follow *i.e.* that there was no intention to create legal relations. Thus, the First Respondent's bare assertion that she would be habitually reimbursed by the Deceased was found to be insufficient evidence of a binding and enforceable agreement to displace the presumption that there was an intention to create legal relations.

In addition, it was found that the Respondents referred to the S\$20,000 payments as 'allowances' for the Deceased

which indicated that they intended for these to be gratuitous payments.

With all the above factors considered, the Court of Appeal found that the S\$20,000 promised by the Deceased to

### D. Maintenance

- Self-induced material change in circumstance did not constitute a change in circumstance (*Leong Yim Leng v Moey Park Moon* [2019] SGHC 26)

In an order of court on 28 January 2013, it was ordered by High Court that the monthly maintenance that the Husband paid to the Wife was S\$4,000 a month.

Sometime in 2015, the Husband filed for a variation for a reduction in maintenance payable for the Wife as he claimed that he was no longer employed by the previous employer "S" due to the Wife's alleged harassment. The Husband's application was dismissed by the Court and the Husband did not appeal against that decision.

Subsequently in 2018, the Husband applied to the Court to reduce the maintenance by reason that he had changed jobs and was earning significantly lesser than his previous job at "M". The Husband also informed the Court that he was now remarried.

The Husband alleged that he had to leave his employment at "M" because of the Wife's harassment. The Court found that the Husband had enough time to consider whether alternative employment was available before he tendered his resignation to "M". The Husband was also capable and successful at his job at "M", earning a high income of more

### E. Guardianship of Infants Act

- A grand-aunt who is not a court appointed guardian under the Guardianship of Infants Act does not have *locus standi* under section 5 of the Guardianship of Infants Act (GIA) (*UMF v UMG* [2018] SGHCF 2)

This case raised the important question of how the law of guardianship should be applied to the biological parents and non-parents and how the appropriate balance of authority could be preserved between both groups of adults.

The Appellant was the grand-aunt of a four-year-old boy and had been taking care of the child since he was seven days old on 3 August 2014 (after the Father handed the son to the grand-aunt). The son was the third of five children that the parents had.

On 4 August 2014, the Father signed a "Letter of Guardianship" drafted by the grand-aunt which gave the grand-aunt "full rights of guardianship, including authorize medical treatment of any necessary nature, sign documents of any type, obtain lodging and do all things that a parent and/or legal guardian may do". On 5 August 2014, the Mother asked for the grand-aunt to return the child and the following day the Father did the same. However, the grand-aunt refused to return the child and the child continued to be in the grand-aunt's care until

each of the two Respondents were intended to be gifts and therefore unenforceable as there was no intention to create legal relations. Thus, the lower Court's decision to grant the Respondents the S\$20,000 was reversed and the S\$20,000 was returned to the Estate.

than \$400,000 a year. Accordingly, it seemed unlikely that he would simply resign from "M" without making suitable alternative plans unless he had an ulterior motive for his resignation. In the circumstances, the Court held that it seemed likely that the Husband had left "M" so as to obtain a pretext to pay less maintenance.

The Court also found that the Husband had previously failed to make full disclosure of his assets during the ancillary hearing. Overall, the Court was of the view that the Husband had been economical with the truth and his credibility was thus affected.

The Court also found that the Husband was not credible in respect of his financial situation throughout the proceedings in 2015 about his job at "S". Cumulatively, the Court found that the Husband's resignation from his previous job at "M" was self-induced. Further, it was also found that the Husband's income earning capacity was not as dire as he wanted the Court to believe. Hence, the Court again dismissed his application to reduce maintenance for the Wife.

12 August 2017 when he was handed over to the Mother on the understanding that the child would be returned to the grand-aunt on the same day.

When the Mother failed to return the child to the grand-aunt's care on 12 August 2017, the grand-aunt filed an application for custody and care and control of the child. The Family Court dismissed the grand-aunt's application and on the sole ground that the grand-aunt had no *locus standi* to make an application under section 5 of the GIA as the grand-aunt was neither a 'parent' nor a court appointed guardian under the GIA.

The High Court agreed with the Family Court and held that the parents were the only adults with parental rights with respect to and parental responsibility of their child without any Court Order. The *locus standi* requirements in section 5 of the GIA serve the child's welfare by allowing parents to raise the child without unnecessary and unmeritorious interference from third parties aside from cases of child abuse and neglect where the Director of Social Welfare



## ENHANCING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

or the Child Protector may seek an order of care and protection under the Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA) to remove a child from the custody of unfit parents.

The Court went further to state that the threshold for invoking the Court’s wardship jurisdiction must necessarily be a high one so as to preserve the balance of authority between the parents, court-appointed guardians and other interested adults.

In this case, it was not alleged that the child would be in need of protection and his biological parents, who were seeking his return, were fit to care for him, and there was nothing that indicated that his welfare would be harmed if he were placed in their care. Thus, this was not an appropriate case for the court to exercise its wardship jurisdiction and as such, the Court dismissed the grand-aunt’s appeal and the child was gradually returned to the parents with the grand-aunt having access to the child up to 31 December 2019.

### IMPROVING ACCESS FOR COURT USERS

To meet the future needs of family justice, the FJC is actively harnessing technology and design ideas to improve the user experience and make family justice accessible to all. At the end of last year, the integrated Family Applications Management System (iFAMS) which was launched in 2017 came up with three new modules.

#### Mental Capacity Act (Simplified Track)

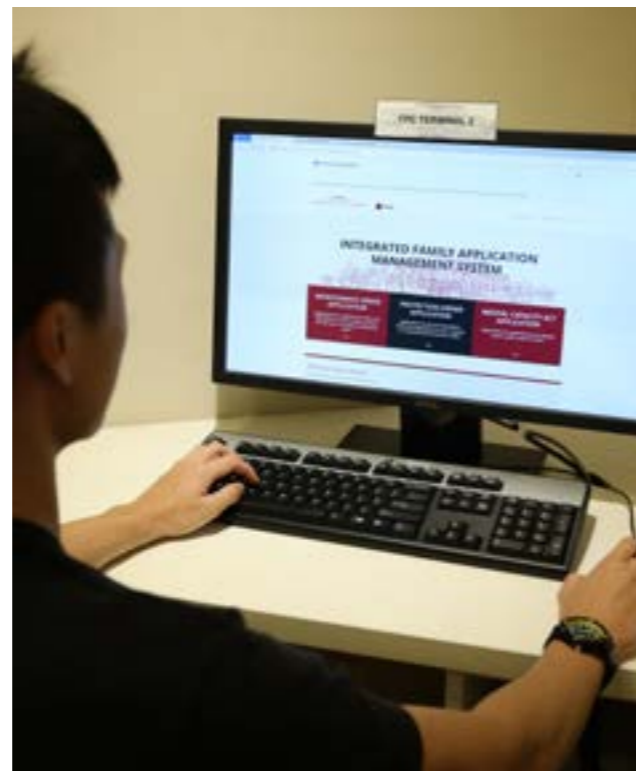
The simplified application process for MCA was first introduced in the middle of 2018 in the electronic filing system, iFAMS, to allow applicants to apply for MCA orders (the initiative). The initiative simplifies the process and makes it more accessible and affordable for citizens to apply for deputyships for persons who lack mental capacity.

In October, phase 2 of the initiative was launched to allow applicants to apply for longer term orders, as compared to phase 1 which was restricted to urgent short term orders. Phase 2 of the initiative essentially allows the applicant to apply for a wider range of powers but the withdrawal limit is capped at \$60,000 from the bank accounts of the persons lacking mental capacity provided that applicants satisfy certain conditions. Applicants need only provide information over the web portal, without the need to file formal court documents. The requisite medical report may also be conveniently filed by the doctor in the same portal. The application fee is \$40, as compared to more than \$100 in the normal cases. Since the launch of the initiative, we have received more than 100 applications.

#### Online Show Payment For Enforcement Of Maintenance Arrears

iFAMS was further enhanced to allow respondents to show proof of their payments via the system, instead of physically attending Court to do so. Launched in October, the enhancement enables such respondents, if allowed by the Court to do so, to submit their proof of payments via iFAMS, either in PDF or in JPEG format, using any electronic device, including a smartphone.

Upon submission, the document will be verified by a Court officer and if it is in order, the respondent will be excused from Court attendance. If otherwise, he/she will have to attend Court to explain the failure to make payment.



#### Offer to Resolve

To facilitate the expeditious and economical resolution of maintenance disputes, the FJC commenced a voluntary “Offer to Resolve” pilot, where parties may make and accept offers via iFAMS for applications commenced under sections 69 and 72 of the Women’s Charter. These pertain to fresh applications for child and/or spousal maintenance, and variation of such maintenance orders.

As soon as the application is filed, the Complainant may send an offer to the Respondent on this system informing

that he/she is willing to resolve it without proceeding further, if the Respondent accepts his/her offer. Where a Complainant has not made an offer, a Respondent may nonetheless initiate an offer.

A copy of all offers made and received by each party in PDF format accompanies each email notification of the same, thus allowing parties to retain records of the offers

exchanged between them. Where an offer is accepted, a draft agreement will be generated and emailed to parties. On the appointed mediation date, the parties will confirm their agreement with the mediator, and proceed for a recording of a consent order before the Duty Judge if this is so desired by them. If there is no resolution over the system or at mediation, the application proceeds to trial.

## STRENGTHENING OUR INTEGRATED SUPPORT NETWORK

The Courts come into the frame of family life at a critical juncture. While each case has its unique complexities, the FJC’s approach is to seek to use the moment to protect the vulnerable, empower individuals to resolve their disputes with a sustainable outcome, and to restore viable relationships. Yet we do not do this alone. Working with our partners, we hope to provide holistic, multi-disciplinary support to families and youths in distress, to prevent escalation of the disputes as early as possible, and after court resolution, to support them in finding new pathways ahead. Our network comprises:



## ENHANCING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

### IN THE COMMUNITY



#### On-site Psychiatrist Programme

The FJC is a key service touch-point for families seeking legal intervention in times of intense emotional, physical or psychological distress. To assist court users with vulnerabilities or undiagnosed mental health concerns, the On-site Psychological Services (OSPS) is an initiative by the FJC, State Courts and Institute of Mental Health (IMH) that allows court users to be assessed by IMH psychiatrists. In order to provide psychiatric assessment expediently, the psychiatrist is stationed at the State Courts on a weekly basis. OSPS serves as an aid in early detection and is an important conduit to connect court users to early mental health assessment and follow-up interventions. One court user reaped the benefits of OSPS when the on-site psychiatrist provided prompt feedback and advice on his mental health condition. With the psychiatrist's encouragement and assistance, the court user was thereafter accompanied by a family member to IMH's Emergency department to receive expedited treatment. In 2019, a total of 18 court users from the FJC benefited from the OSPS. 92% of them who were diagnosed with mental health disorder by the on-site psychiatrist followed up with restructured hospitals for further interventions.

#### Stop Order

In proceedings under the Women's Charter, the Guardianship of Infants Act or the International Child Abduction Act, a Court may grant an Order or Injunction restraining one or both parent(s) or any other party from taking the child out of Singapore, without an Order of Court or the consent of the other or both parent(s)/parties. On 1 January 2019, the FJC implemented a new Paragraph 10A and Form 190A of the Practice Directions (PD), which sets out the procedure for parties to serve such Orders or Injunctions on the Immigration and Checkpoint Authority (ICA).

Under the new PD, any parent and/or party who has been granted these Orders or Injunctions, and who intends to seek assistance from ICA to stop the child from being removed from Singapore, must file an undertaking in the prescribed Form 190A with the FJC, prior to notifying ICA. The undertaking further requires the parent or party to inform ICA if the Order or Injunction subsequently ceases to have effect, is varied or consent is given by the relevant party for the other to take the child/children out of Singapore if the Order or Injunction so permits. With the implementation of the new PD, a parent or party is able enlist the assistance of ICA in stopping the other parent or party from any abduction of the child out of Singapore. This helps to enhance the protection of children against any trauma and long-term negative effects of sudden separation from the care parent and international child abduction.

#### Community Justice Centre Programmes

The FJC collaborates with the Community Justice Centre (CJC) to provide social and legal support to needy court users. At the CJC, interim and immediate financial assistance and food ration are available for court users in dire straits e.g. a mother seeking maintenance from her ex-spouse and does not have any money left for her children. When people attempt to access the courts, they can encounter economic, structural, and institutional barriers, such as actual and the costs of legal services. In Singapore, there is a significant portion of persons with a legal problem who face these challenges. The CJC's 'Friends-of-Litigants-in-Person' programme (also known as FLiP) engages trained volunteers who are able to provide emotional and relevant practical support to such litigants during their court sessions.

A great majority of LiPs faced procedural difficulties. The CJC further supports the FJC through its University Court Friends initiative where law students are deployed to various registry to render procedural support to the courts and its users.

Costs and affordability of legal representation has often been mentioned as relevant reason for self-representation in Singapore. Recently, the CJC has launched its Self-Help eWeb and with it, an automated court documents assembly system that can help LiPs effectively prepare and generate certain court documents for submission to the courts. Users who wish to be a deputy for a loved one may now use the free-to-use system to apply to be one.



#### Divorce and You Talks/Video

*About Family Justice: Divorce in Singapore – What you need to know*, is an initiative by the FJC in collaboration with Law Society Pro Bono Services (LSPBS), CJC and the Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS), to help individuals who are contemplating divorce or going through divorce. The initiative comprises an on-going public talk on divorce (Talk) as well as a series of complementary collaterals on the divorce process.

*Entitled Divorce and You*, the free Talk covers the divorce process and procedure as well as offer information on the help services available to litigants at various stages. A total of eight public talks have been conducted since July 2018, reaching out to over 200 persons. LSPBS has also brought the Talk to the heartlands as part of the Law Awareness Week@ CDC 2019. Three Talks were held and they were attended by a total of 91 participants.

The FJC, in partnership with SUSS, has produced a leaflet, brochure and a series of informational video clips on the divorce process as resource material for attendees at the Talks and court users in general. The hardcopy leaflet and brochure are being distributed at the FJC's divorce registry, at LSPBS's island-wide legal clinics and at CJC's Help Services Centres and LInKS office. The English brochure and leaflet, together with vernacular versions of the brochure, are also available for download from the FJC's and CJC's website. The informational video on the divorce process is available on the FJC's website and Supreme Court's YouTube Channel.

## BUILDING COMPETENCIES



### THE FAMILY JUSTICE PRACTICE FORUM 2019 - IT TAKES A GLOBAL VILLAGE



The Family Justice Practice Forum 2019 - *It takes a Global Village* was held on 2 October at the Supreme Court Auditorium. Jointly organised by the FJC and the Ministry of Social and Family Development, 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 with the aim of supporting distressed families and children towards recovery and a fresh start. The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon graced the event, the Honourable Justice Debbie Ong, Presiding Judge of the FJC opened the Forum and Dr Robert Emery, renowned psychologist and member of our International Advisory Council on Family Justice, delivered the keynote address.

Dr Emery spoke about how family justice systems can help address the needs of children when families breakdown. He highlighted that children from distressed families are no different from those from intact families – they all require love and support from both parents. On a more basic

level, children need the opportunity to be children, develop physically, intellectually and socially, without having to worry too much about adult concerns. Recognising that family breakdown makes it more challenging for parents to meet these needs, family justice systems must be less adversarial. This in turn calls for judges to redefine their role of purely adjudicating to one that supports and encourages alternative dispute resolution. This year's Forum also featured the inaugural "Great Family Debate" on the role of social science in family law. The debate pit two illustrious teams comprising legal and social science professionals, presided over by an international panel of experts. The discussion was animated, enriching and was well received.

The Forum was attended by over 300 participants, comprising family lawyers, policy makers, mental health professionals and social workers across the family justice eco-system. Encouraging everyone to look ahead with optimism, Justice Ong in her opening address said, *"We should have hope and optimism that the human spirit can achieve wonderful things, such as healing from the pain of divorce and finding strength to repair relationships, and making sacrifices for the sake of the children. Relationships are dynamic and the children keep growing and maturing - they can have good relationships with both parents over time, when the most difficult divorce period is over. We can support them to reach well-balanced healthy views."*



## BUILDING COMPETENCIES

### FAMILY CONFERENCE 2019 - SUPPORTING, HEALING & RECONSTRUCTING



photo credit: Singapore Law Society

The second Family Conference was brought together by the Family Law Practice Committee, Probate Practice and Succession Planning Committee and the Muslim Law Practice Committee of the Law Society of Singapore. Expanding on the theme of 'Supporting, Healing and Reconstructing', experts and professionals were invited to speak on a range of diverse and important issues, including safety in relationships, parental alienation, estate planning, mental capacity issues, mental health issues in practice, comparative review on jurisdictional issues in the FJC and Syariah Court, and practical knowledge like improving court craft skills.

The Presiding Judge of the FJC, Justice Debbie Ong, was invited to be the keynote speaker for the second Family Conference. In her speech, she called on family lawyers to do all they could to equip themselves with the right skills in order to assist their clients who are going through divorce to see beyond their own needs or anger.

To that end, Justice Ong suggested some useful starting points. First, *Love the Law*. Her Honour shared that family law is rich in doctrinal issues and has much legal and inter-disciplinary jurisprudence as well as international law. Second, *Good Advocacy*. Highlighting the important role of lawyers, good advocacy would assist the Court and thus help parties to reach an outcome expeditiously. Third, *Good Decorum and Etiquette*. Her Honour highlighted that the way parties conduct themselves has an impact on the parties' respect for court orders and proceedings. Accordingly, senior lawyers must nurture younger lawyers in this aspect. Reflecting on the impact on the lives of litigants, Her Honour added that family lawyers could be the hand that pulls a drowning family member to safety.

In line with the theme of the Conference, Justice Ong went on to point out that family practice today has features that are supporting, healing, and reconstructing. In the area of divorce and children, where the child's

welfare is paramount and where harmonious resolution is the ultimate aim, the simplified divorce track should be the natural path. The core features of the simplified divorce track include mediation and agreements, with less or no adversarial litigation, and practices, which are multidisciplinary and judge-led. In her speech, Justice Ong also touched on the Mental Capacity Act (MCA), which not only aims for simplified processes for deputyship to support family members trying to care for elderly persons, but also ensures safeguards to protect against potential abuse by deputies of vulnerable adults.

In concluding her keynote address, Justice Ong reiterated that the practice of family law was not easy and that the FJC would be conducting focused group discussions with lawyers to better understand their challenges and obtain their feedback. Echoing her speech made at the FJC Workplan Seminar 2018, Justice Ong emphasised that "Today is a new day" regardless of the challenges that all family law practitioners face. The Family Conference 2019 was strongly supported by the FJC with many of its judges fielded as moderators and speakers for diverse topics such as therapeutic justice, mental capacity, enforcement of Syariah Court Orders in the FJC, and Youth Court issues. Delegates also had the opportunity to network with fellow practitioners, other distinguished panellists as well as speakers to exchange insights and knowledge for their practice.



photo credit: Singapore Law Society

### INAUGURAL FAMILY JUDGES' LEARNING WEEK



The FJC held its inaugural family judges' Learning Week from 15 to 19 July. The objective was to set aside an intensive training week for family judges, dedicated to learning and building up core knowledge and competencies to be effective and efficient family judges, as part of a specialised family judges' curriculum.

The programme for Learning Week was specially curated to reflect the unique and multi-disciplinary nature of family judges' work. The programme covered both legal and non-law social science topics, as well as skills-based training. Justice Quentin Loh gave an interesting, enlightening and entertaining session on judicial temperament and communications in court. Other trainers invited were experts in their respective fields as well, such as expert child psychiatrists Prof Daniel Fung and A/Prof Mary Daniel, child developmental psychologist Dr Yang Phey Hong, MSF psychologist Ms Jennifer Teoh, family sociologists Prof Stella Quah and Dr Mathew Mathews, and legal experts Prof Leong Wai Kum and Prof Tang Hang Wu.

These specialist trainers covered topics such as: changing "family" norms; the "child's best interests" principle from the perspective of social science; factors impacting a child's development and needs at different developmental stages; common child outcomes related to various types of adverse experience; challenges, skills and techniques in interviewing children; how to prepare for the interview and the types of questions to ask; judge-led case management; why some marriages work and some fail and what couples go through in divorce therapy; and judicial awareness and self-care.

In addition to Presiding Judge Debbie Ong, Judicial Commissioner Tan Puay Boon and the FJC Judicial Officers, Justice of Appeal Judith Prakash and Justice Pang Khang Chau also attended and participated in selected sessions, along with the estimated 35 to 40 participants.

### A CLINICAL CONSULTATION BY DR ROBIN DEUTSCH

The FJC's Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS) provides counselling to divorcing families with minor children during mediation so that parents can develop parenting plans that are beneficial for their children. At times, CAPS works with parents who are in high conflict and where children are resisting or refusing contact with a particular parent.

As part of the continual equipping of Court Family Specialists to intervene effectively in high conflict family cases, Dr Robin Deutsch conducted a 3-hour clinical consultation with CAPS on 3 October.

Dr Deutsch is a member of the FJC's International Advisory Council that comprises international experts in family law and social sciences. Dr Robin Deutsch is a professor at the Center of Excellence for Children, Families, and the Law (CECFL) at William James College, and until recently an Associate Clinical Professor of Psychology at Harvard Medical School. Dr Deutsch is renowned for her work in Parenting Coordination, parenting and child development, and complex issues related to family conflict, including children resisting contact with a parent, attachment, abuse and neglect, and trauma. Dr Deutsch presented on theories on risk assessment, conceptualisation of trauma, and therapeutic strategies needed to support these high conflict families.

Utilising a case study method, Dr Deutsch provided useful insights and practical guidance on working with child's resistance to parent contact.

In addressing the team about intervention for cases that present contact refusal concerns, Dr Deutsch highlighted the importance of timely interventions to remove any distorted beliefs in the child and the parents before they become entrenched with time. As part of the effective intervention, communication and collaboration amongst the various professionals working with the family are critical for a more effective outcome. This minimise the unintended effect of clinicians taking sides with one member of family against the other. Interventions must also be tailored to the nature and severity of problem in each individual family.

In concluding her consultation, Dr Deutsch brought the theories to life when she applied the assessment framework to the presented case study, thus enriching the learning of the team.

## BUILDING COMPETENCIES

### TRAINING PROGRAMMES

The FJC has embarked on programmes and training to increase understanding and build competencies both within the organisation as well as in the community.

#### WITHIN FJC

Date	Topic	Speakers/Organisation
5 March	Bizsafe Level 1	Bond International Pte Ltd
15 & 16 April	Bizsafe Level 2	Bond International Pte Ltd
7 June	Social Learning Visit	Gracehaven and IMH
June & December	Influencing and Diffusing Skills for Difficult Customers	NTUC Learning Hub
	Mindfulness for Resilience at Work	Civil Service College
15 - 19 July	Judges Learning Week	Prof Daniel Fung and A/Prof Mary Daniel, expert child psychiatrists; Dr Yang Phey Hong, child developmental psychologist; Ms Jennifer Teoh, MSF psychologist; Prof Stella Quah and Dr Mathew Mathews, family sociologists; and Prof Leong Wai Kum and Prof Tang Hang Wu, legal experts
July to December	Cyber Security Modules	Civil Service College – LEARN app
19 – 23 August	Transformation Week	Various government organisations and private agencies
3 October	Clinical Consultation	Dr Robin Deutsch Professor at the Center of Excellence for Children, Families, and the Law (CECFL) at William James College, and Associate Clinical Professor of Psychology at Harvard Medical School
18 November	IM8 course on IT Security	Deloitte & Touche
27 November	Bizsafel Level 3	Bond International Pte Ltd
November to February 2020	Executive Certificate in Legal Skills	Temasek Polytechnic
3 & 5 December	Learning Day 2019 – Exploring Technologies	Nanyang Polytechnic
4 December	Financial Literacy Workshop	Ms Chauwei Yak, Founding Partner and Mr Ted Low, Partner, GAO Group

### LEARNING JOURNEYS AND OUTREACH PROGRAMMES

The FJC conducts various outreach programmes to engage community agencies and Institutes of Higher Learning to share about various court services to support families undergoing court proceedings.

Date	Organisation
9 & 16 January, 13 & 20 February, & 3 March	Dialogue Engagements with Family Service Centres
7 March	Visit by National University of Singapore Social Work Department
11 June	Visit by Singapore Police Force Honorary Volunteer Special Constabulary (School) Officers
1 July	Visit by Singapore Academy of Law interns
7 August	Learning Journey by Discipline Masters from the North 2 Cluster, Ministry of Education
15 October	Visit by Singapore University of Social Sciences S R Nathan School of Human Development
5 November	Visit by Singapore Police Force Honorary Volunteer Special Constabulary (School) Officers
23 January, 13 March, 24 April, 16 July, 20 August, 11 October, & 13 November	Guest speaker on "Management of Family Violence: Introduction" course at Social Service Institute



# EXTENDING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS



## THE INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING



The International Advisory Council (IAC) of the FJC held its 3rd Meeting on 1 October at the Supreme Court to further ongoing discussions on developments in family justice and family law practice, in order to situate 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 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 therefore invited to join the IAC. The papers that were presented at this 3rd 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, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, the 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 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 on family justice from their respective jurisdictions in the various plenary sessions.

## EXTENDING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

### 2ND ASEAN FAMILY JUDGES FORUM

The 2nd ASEAN Family Judges Forum (AFJF) was held on 28 March at the Supreme Court of Singapore. The Forum was organised and co-ordinated by the Secretariat of the Council of ASEAN Chief Justices (CACJ) Working Group on Cross-Border Disputes Involving Children. Drawing on trainers, materials and resources from the FJC, as well as the assistance of the Singapore Mediation Centre, the one-day programme provided intensive training to judges and court administrators on mediation of cross-border disputes involving children. Participants were introduced to mediation as part of a multi-disciplinary suite of dispute resolution mechanisms available to judicial systems for national and cross-border family disputes. The training included role-plays, commentaries and demonstrations. Overall, the participants' feedback to the training was very positive.



### FAMILY MEDIATION SYMPOSIUM



The FJC and The Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH) jointly organised the Family Mediation Symposium that was held on 29 March at the Supreme Court of Singapore. The Symposium brought together over 130 foreign and local judges, lawyers, Central Authorities, and academics from 19 jurisdictions to share and discuss issues and challenges in mediating family disputes both in a domestic and in a cross-border context.

Symposium participants were warmly welcomed by Justice Debbie Ong, Presiding Judge of the FJC and Justice Judith Prakash, Judge of Appeal of the Supreme Court of Singapore delivered an insightful keynote address on importance, benefits and challenges of family mediation. Dr Gérardine Goh Escolar, First Secretary of the HCCH closed the Symposium.

The Symposium sought to raise awareness on The Hague 1980, 1996 and 2007 Conventions in Asia and it

provided a regional forum for the exchange of information, experiences and practices of participating jurisdictions in mediating family disputes. Topics discussed at the Symposium included pre-action mediation and court-annexed mediation from Singapore, Australia and Japan's perspectives, mediating cultural conflicts and high conflict family disputes, as well as recognising and enforcing cross-border mediation agreements in family matters.

Symposium participants were enriched by the stimulating presentations by both local and international speakers. They also engaged in open discussions with both the speakers and among themselves to exchange perspectives on the diverse challenges in leveraging mediation to resolve family disputes. In so doing, the Symposium achieved its goals of furthering mutual understanding between the jurisdictions, whilst reaffirming the community's common pursuit of protecting the welfare of the child.

### THE CACJ WORKING GROUP ON CROSS-BORDER DISPUTES INVOLVING CHILDREN



The Working Group on Cross-border Disputes Involving Children met on 26 September at the Supreme Court of Singapore. The meeting discussed and agreed on having 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. The meeting also deliberated on the proposed Code of Ethics setting minimum standards of conduct for mediators who mediate cross-border disputes involving children.

## EXTENDING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS







### REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION

The FJC attended and participated in a number of regional and international events.

#### OVERSEAS CONFERENCES / ATTACHMENTS

Date	Title of Event	Participant(s)
2 – 4 April	Singapore and Myanmar Courts on Court-Annexed Mediation; Myanmar Supreme Court of the Union; Mandalay, Myanmar	Ms Yarni Loi (District Judge) and Ms Carrie Chan (District Judge)
29 May – 1 June	56th Conference: "The Future of Family Justice: International Innovations"; Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC); Toronto, Canada	Mr Azmin Jailani (District Judge), Ms Lim Lee Kian (Director, Mediation and Family Dispute Resolution Registry) and Ms Jaslyn Ng (Senior Assistant Director, Counselling and Psychological Services)
22 – 26 June	Judicial Peer Support Programme; Judicial College of Victoria; Melbourne, Australia	Mr Chia Wee Kiat (Deputy Presiding Judge)
21 – 27 July	36th International Congress on Law and Mental Health; International Academy of Law and Mental Health; Rome, Italy	Ms Yarni Loi (District Judge) and Ms Hazel Yang (Senior Assistant Director, Counselling and Psychological Services)
28 – 31 July	82nd Annual Conference; National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges; Orlando; USA	Ms Wendy Yu (District Judge)
15 – 17 August	6th Annual Conference- "Ethics – Duties and Dilemmas in Family Law"; Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC) – Australian Chapter; Sydney, Australia	Ms Adriene Cheong (District Judge)
19 – 21 August	30th Annual National Adult Protective Services Association Conference and 1st National "Bridges to Justice" Conference; Denver, USA	Ms Jayanthi Manohar (Court Family Specialist, Counselling and Psychological Services)
19 – 21 September	Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC) and American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML) 2019 Conference on Advanced Issues in Child Custody: Evaluation, Litigation, and Settlement; San Diego, USA	Mr Kenneth Yap (Registrar) and Ms Jean Quek (Senior Court Family Specialist, Counselling and Psychological Services)
	International Organisation for Judicial Training (IOJT) Conference; International Organisation for Judicial Training (IOJT); Capetown, South Africa	Mr Muhammad Hidir Abdul Majid (Principal District Judge)
31 October – 2 November	Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC) 2019 Fall Conference on Integrating Research into Practice and Policy: The Impact on Families and Children; Pittsburgh, USA	Ms Kuck Xuanling (Senior Court Family Specialist, Counselling and Psychological Services)

#### OVERSEAS GUESTS

14 January	The Honourable Justice Sarah Derrington, President of the Australian Law Reform Commission and The Honourable Michelle May AM QC; Australia	
15 February	Judges from the Supreme Court of Thailand, and Court Administrator from the Office of Judiciary of Thailand	
26 February	Judge Masanori Hara from the Yamagata District Court; Japan	
13 – 15 March	[Singapore-Myanmar Integrated Legal Exchange Attachment] Ms Theint Theint Htwe, Assistant Director of Law and Procedure Department, Office of the Union Judiciary Supervision, The Union Supreme Court of Myanmar	
19 March	A delegation from the Japan Adult Guardianship Law Corporate Association	
28 March	Judge Tomoko Sawamura and Judge Hideaki Yamagishi from the Supreme Court of Japan	
26 August	Ms Chong Eng, Penang State Exco for Women and Family Development, Gender Inclusiveness and Non-Islamic Religious Affair and delegation; Malaysia	
16 – 17 October	[Singapore-Myanmar Integrated Legal Exchange Attachment] Judge Ms Daw Khin Myo Myo Su Kyaw and Mr U Naing Lin, The Union Supreme Court of Myanmar	
11 September	Ms Susan Acland-Hood, Chief Executive and Mr Richard Goodman, Change Director, of Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service; United Kingdom	
29 October – 01 November	Chief Magistrate / Intermediate Court Judge Pengiran Masni Pengiran Haji Bahar, Intermediate Court Judge Muhammed Faisal bin PDJLDDSP Hj Kefti and Senior Registrar Of Supreme Court Dk Hjh Norismayanti Binti Pg Hj Ismail; Brunei Darussalam	
21 October	Judicial Officials from various countries, including India, Myanmar, Namibia and South Korea	
03 December	Mr Yohan Liyanage, Chief Registrar & Secretary of the Judicial Services Commission and Mr Shahin Rafique Ali, Acting Director and Business Operations Manager of the Legal Aid Commission; Fiji	
16 – 19 December	[Singapore-Myanmar Integrated Legal Exchange Attachment] Mr U Ne Myo Aung and Ms Daw Su Thet Ngon, Deputy Township Judges, The Union Supreme Court of Myanmar	

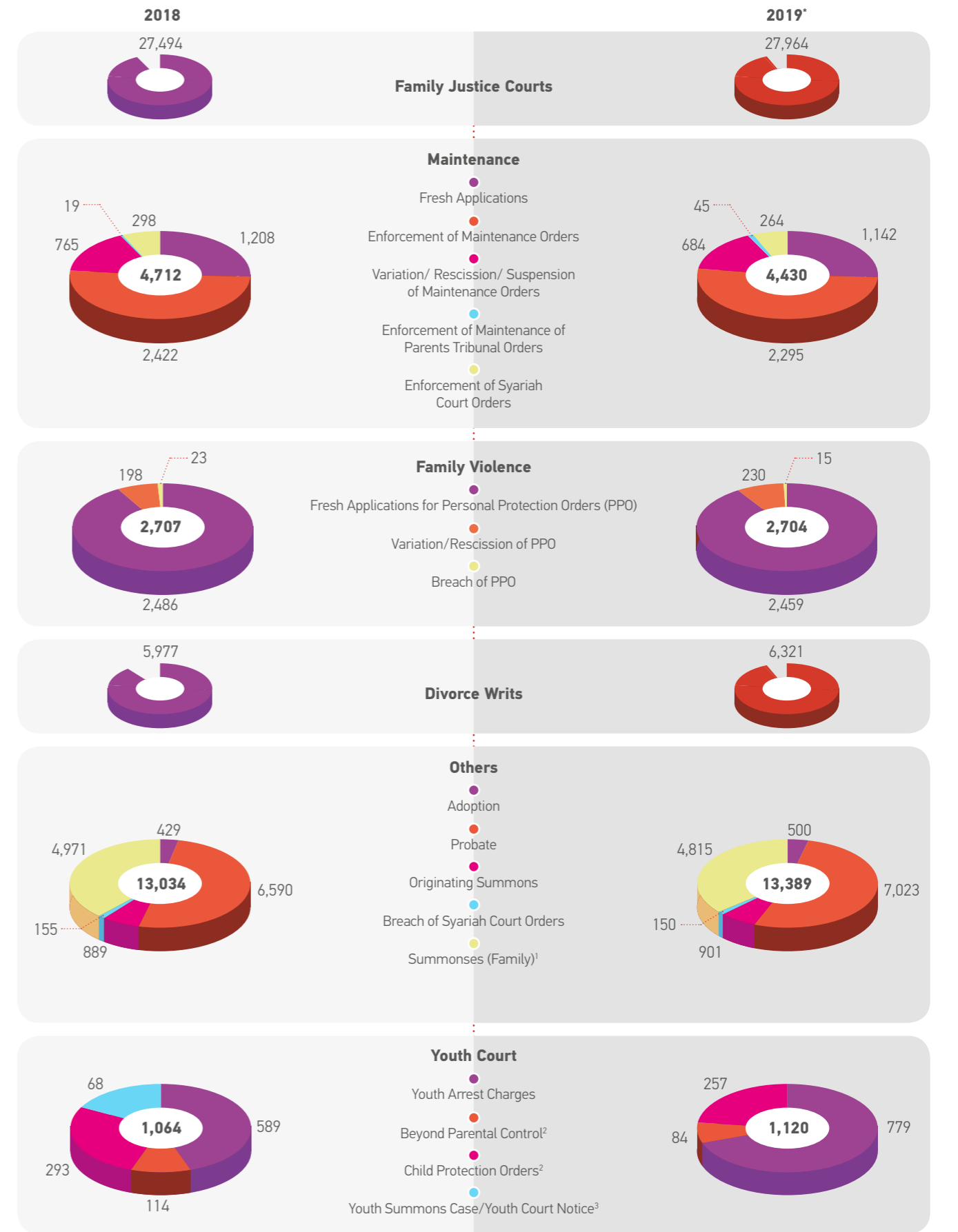


# YEAR IN REVIEW



## CASE LOAD STATISTICS

The FJC handled a total of 27,964 cases in 2019. There is an increase of about 2% of cases compared to 2018. Divorce, Maintenance and Probate cases made up more than half of the total caseload handled by the FJC.



<sup>(\*)</sup> Figures for 2019 are subjected to revision

<sup>1</sup> Includes Divorce, Originating Summons (Family), Probate and Adoption Summonses

<sup>2</sup> Refer to number of youths

<sup>3</sup> Formerly refers to Police Summonses/Summonses & Tickets, and Other Charges



# ONE JUDICIARY EFFORTS IN ...

## ENGAGING COURT VOLUNTEERS

The Judiciary is supported by a dedicated pool of volunteers comprising members of the Bar, professionals and individuals from diverse backgrounds, and students. Be it providing pro bono legal advice to an accused, mediating disputes between neighbours or couples, or explaining court processes to those not familiar with the Courts, each court volunteer, in his own way and with his expertise, helps the Courts deliver accessible justice to all.

The Judiciary organises an annual appreciation event to recognise the court volunteers' services and contributions in the administration of justice. At this event, outstanding court

volunteers are lauded for their sterling contributions, commitment and dedication to pro bono work. Long service court volunteers are also honoured for their dedication to serving court users.

On 11 October 2019, over 300 court volunteers and judiciary staff attended the annual Judiciary Volunteers Appreciation Dinner hosted by The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon at the Marina Mandarin. For the first time, Long Service Awards were presented to volunteers who had contributed to the Legal Assistance Scheme for Capital Offences (LASCO) scheme for more than 25 years. In total, three Outstanding Court Volunteer Awards and 10 Long Service Awards were presented.

## OUTSTANDING COURT VOLUNTEER AWARDS



**Advocate & Solicitor Category**  
Mr Tan Lam Siong



**Open Category**  
Ms Jasmine Mah



**Student Category**  
Mr Wong Weitao

## LONG SERVICE AWARDS

### LASCO Long Service Award:

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

### 15 years' service:

- Mrs Chia Swee Tin

### 10 years' service:

- Mr Lim Sing Lip, Philip
- Mr Chew Yew Kuen, Michael



LIFE-LONG LEARNING



Regular training and timely updates on the Courts' developments are important in order for the court volunteers to assist court users effectively. In 2019, the State Courts conducted two half-day training sessions for their volunteer mediators. The first session explored how a mediator could effectively deal with intrapersonal conflicts that may pose as stumbling blocks to the resolution of a dispute while the second session explored ways in which mediators could play a proactive role in helping parties resolve their disputes.



The Family Justice Courts also held a workshop titled "Inviting Self-awareness and Self-care in the Workplace" for their volunteers and mediators for maintenance cases. The workshop leveraged reflexive activities to encourage self-awareness of personal values, and discussed instances where values interplay with the ongoing dynamics of a mediation process. It also explored the connection between the personal and professional self to help the mediators manage difficult emotions that may surface during mediation sessions.



Besides learning from the practical and real-life examples shared by the speakers, the training sessions provided the opportunity for the court volunteers to interact with one another and with the representatives from the Courts, thereby strengthening their camaraderie which paves the way for greater access to justice for court users.

## GIVING BACK TO SOCIETY

The Judiciary organised numerous corporate social responsibility activities to reach out to the less privileged members of society.

### 11 JANUARY FOOD FOR GOOD

Food for Good was an initiative to encourage people to give back to society. Comprising a refrigerator for vegetables and fruits, and a shelf for canned and dry food, the food station at the State Courts was for everyone, including court users and the general public. Food for Good promotes the reduction of food waste and is meant to be self-sustainable through giving by the community to the community.



### 07 FEBRUARY LUNAR NEW YEAR WITH THE ELDERLY

Staff members of the State Courts celebrated the third day of the Lunar New Year with the elderly at the Jalan Kukoh Senior Activity Centre.

### 24 APRIL SACA CHARITY FILM SCREENING

State Courts staff lent their support to the Singapore After-Care Association's (SACA) charity film screening of *Marvel's Avengers: Endgame*.

### 29 APRIL BOOK NOOK

The Book Nook was set up at the State Courts to keep children who are accompanying their adult relatives to Court occupied. Based on a collaborative community effort, anyone could contribute books that would be suitable for children under the age of 10. Children could also take the books home to share with others.

### 14 JUNE PUBLIC SERVICE CARES

Four State Courts staff members volunteered as Silver Generation Ambassador (SGA) Buddies in support of Public Service Cares, an initiative introduced to encourage the culture of volunteerism among public officers. They accompanied the SGAs on their home visits and interacted with the elderly who lived alone, offering company, as well as helping to communicate the relevant policies and support that are available to them.

### 14 JULY SACA'S FAMILY DAY

State Courts staff volunteers and their family members participated in SACA's Family Day, which was held in Sentosa. They helped the participants create meaningful designs that reflected their family bond, values and love on tote bags.



### 25 JULY READ FOR BOOKS

In line with the National Reading Movement 2019, the State Courts organised the Read for Books charity drive to share the gift of reading with the less privileged. For every 10 individuals who read for 15 minutes, a book was donated to selected beneficiaries. The drive concluded with a total reading time of 3,135 minutes and 20 books contributed to the meaningful cause.



14 / 16 / 05  
AUGUST / AUGUST / SEPTEMBER

### FUND-RAISING CARNIVAL

The Judiciary organised the National Day Carnival 2019 and raised a combined total of nearly \$90,000 for SACA and Food from the Heart (FFTH).



### 06 SEPTEMBER VOLUNTEERING AS A FAMILY

As part of State Courts' Family Day, staff members and their families volunteered in a beach clean-up at East Coast Park and distributed stationery packs to children in the Henderson estate.



### 16 OCTOBER SHOPPING WITH THE ELDERLY

Staff volunteers accompanied elderly beneficiaries of FFTH on a special grocery-shopping trip. The Courts sponsored the NTUC vouchers and got to spend time with the elderly, interacting and helping them shop for their daily needs.



### 12 OCTOBER FRIEND OF MOVEMENT AWARD

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

### 21 - 23 OCTOBER DONATION DRIVE

The State Courts organised a donation drive in support of MINDS. Items such as toys, clothing, books and shoes were collected and placed on sale at MINDS thrift shops, which are managed by its beneficiaries, to provide a valuable avenue for them to develop vocational skills and other capabilities.

### 01 NOVEMBER JUDICIARY CARES

Volunteers from the Judiciary accompanied some 40 beneficiaries and their caregivers from the Cerebral Palsy Alliance Singapore to River Safari. The event raised a total of \$27,221 through staff donations.



### 08 NOVEMBER

### FFTH TOY BAZAAR

Toys and book vouchers were purchased for about 3,000 underprivileged children for the FFTH Toy Bazaar. The items were specially wrapped too!



SUPREMECOURT  
S I N G A P O R E



STATE  
COURTS  
S I N G A P O R E



FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS  
S I N G A P O R E