ANNUAL REPORT 2024

FAIRness in FOCUS

SG Courts

A trusted Judiciary • Ready for tomorrow

VISION

A trusted Judiciary • Ready for tomorrow

CORE VALUES

Fairness

We treat everyone and every case with fairness.

Accessibility

We enhance access to justice.

Integrity

We do the right thing, without fear or favour, affection or ill-will.

Respect

We treat everyone with respect and dignity.

SG Courts

CONTENTS

ABOUT THE SINGAPORE JUDICIARY

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

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

ORGANS OF STATE

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

EXECUTIVE
Includes the Elected President, the Cabinet and the Attorney-General, and exercises powers according to the law.

LEGISLATURE
Comprises the Parliament and is the legislative authority responsible for enacting legislation.

SUPREME COURT SINGAPORE

The Supreme Court is headed by the **Chief Justice**. The Supreme Court consists of the Supreme Court Bench, Supreme Court Registry and Singapore Judicial College, and is supported by the Judicial Administration team. It hears both civil and criminal cases and is made up of the Court of Appeal and the High Court, which includes the Singapore International Commercial Court.

HIGH COURT
Comprises the General Division and the Appellate Division of the High Court.

COURT OF APPEAL
- Hears all criminal appeals against decisions made by the General Division of the High Court in the exercise of its original criminal jurisdiction.
- Hears prescribed categories of civil appeals and appeals that are to be made to the Court of Appeal under written law.

APPELLATE DIVISION
Hears all civil appeals that are not allocated to the Court of Appeal under the Sixth Schedule to the Supreme Court of Judicature Act. It also hears any civil appeals or other processes that any written law provides is to be heard by the Appellate Division.

GENERAL DIVISION
Exercises original and appellate jurisdiction in civil and criminal cases. It also exercises revisionary jurisdiction over the State Courts in criminal cases. It hears cases in the first instance as well as cases on appeal from the State Courts. Types of cases heard by the General Division include:

- Civil cases where the value of the claim exceeds $250,000
- Criminal cases where offences are punishable with death or an imprisonment term exceeding 10 years
- Admiralty matters
- Company winding-up and other insolvency-related proceedings
- Bankruptcy proceedings
- Applications for the admission of advocates and solicitors

Appeals arising from a decision of the General Division in civil matters will be allocated between the Appellate Division and the Court of Appeal in accordance with the statutory framework set out in the Supreme Court of Judicature Act.

SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL COMMERCIAL COURT (SICC)
- Hears and tries actions which are international and commercial in nature, in accordance with Section 18D(1) of the Supreme Court of Judicature Act.
- Hears and tries proceedings relating to international commercial arbitration, in accordance with Section 18D(2) of the Supreme Court of Judicature Act.
- Includes cases commenced in the SICC or transferred from the General Division to the SICC.

STATE COURTS SINGAPORE

The State Courts are headed by the **Presiding Judge of the State Courts**, who is assisted by the Deputy Presiding Judge, Principal District Judges, Registrar and senior court administrators. 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 Tribunal Magistrates.

DISTRICT COURTS
- Hear civil cases with claims of more than $60,000 and up to $250,000 in value, or up to $500,000 for claims for road traffic accidents or personal injuries from 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 five 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 (if both parties consent in writing) $30,000 for disputes involving a contract for the sale of goods or 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 two years.

COMMUNITY DISPUTES RESOLUTION TRIBUNALS
Hear disputes between neighbours involving unreasonable interference with the enjoyment or use of places of residence.

EMPLOYMENT CLAIMS TRIBUNALS
Hear salary-related claims and wrongful dismissal claims not exceeding $20,000 or (for tripartite-mediated disputes) $30,000.

PROTECTION FROM HARASSMENT COURT
Hears matters arising out of harassment, stalking and related anti-social behaviour, as well as false statements of fact.

FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS SINGAPORE

The Family Justice Courts are headed by the **Presiding Judge of the Family Justice Courts**. They hear family cases and deal with the care and treatment of young persons, operating based on the principles of therapeutic justice.

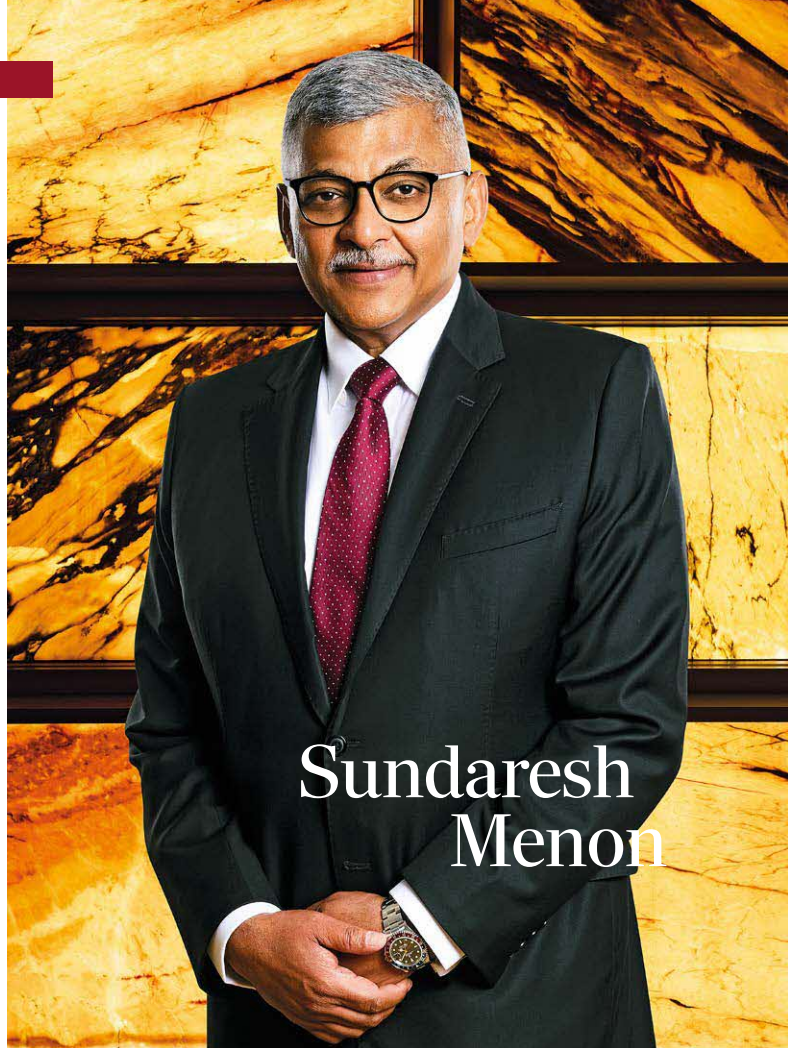
HIGH COURT (FAMILY DIVISION)
- Exercises original jurisdiction and hears appeals against the decisions of the Family Courts and the Youth Courts in family proceedings.
- Hears ancillary matters in family proceedings involving assets of $5 million or more.
- Hears probate matters where the value of the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

FAMILY COURTS
- Divorce
- Probate and administration
- Maintenance
- Protection against family violence
- Deputyship
- Adoption
- Protection for vulnerable adults
- Guardianship
- International child abduction

YOUTH COURTS
Cases under the Children and Young Persons Act, i.e. Family Guidance, Youth Arrest, Care and Protection.

MEDIATION & COUNSELLING
All cases coming before the Courts are managed proactively by judges from the start. Where necessary, the Courts can direct that parties undergo counselling and mediation to try and reach an amicable resolution of the dispute instead of proceeding with adjudication.

CHIEF JUSTICE'S FOREWORD



At the Opening of the Legal Year 2024, I observed that we find ourselves in times of change, shaped by the headwinds of economic and technological disruption and declining trust in public institutions. In the face of change, the judiciary plays an important role as a stabilising force in society through our commitment to upholding and advancing the rule of law. This commitment finds expression not only in the fair and impartial adjudication of all disputes that come before the courts, but more fundamentally, through our sustained and systemic efforts to enhance the administration of justice.

Over the past year, our efforts have centred on three main themes: reforming our procedural architecture, pursuing user-centric design, and deepening international judicial engagement.

The Singapore Courts implemented procedural reforms across our civil, criminal and family justice systems. An Express Track scheme was established in the General Division of the High Court to expedite the resolution of certain civil matters capable of being heard within four days of trial. We operationalised an enhanced victim compensation regime that systematises the making of compensation orders in criminal proceedings and facilitates the participation of victims. The new Family Justice Rules 2024 effected significant changes, including streamlined procedures and a more robust judge-led approach, and these were augmented by the Family Justice Courts' new Therapeutic Justice Model and its framework for differentiated case management. Taken together, these reforms ensure that our procedures are calibrated to the needs of each dispute and advance the paramount objective of securing access to justice.

To complement these procedural changes, we established more user-centric and inclusive systems and processes. Our collaboration with legal technology start-up Harvey has enabled us to harness artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities in the Small Claims Tribunals. Self-represented persons can now obtain automated translations of claims notices and may in time benefit from AI-assisted case presentation and document summarisation. We further invested in infrastructural improvements to achieve a common baseline of facilities across all courtrooms, including accessibility tools such as assistive listening systems and accessible witness stands.

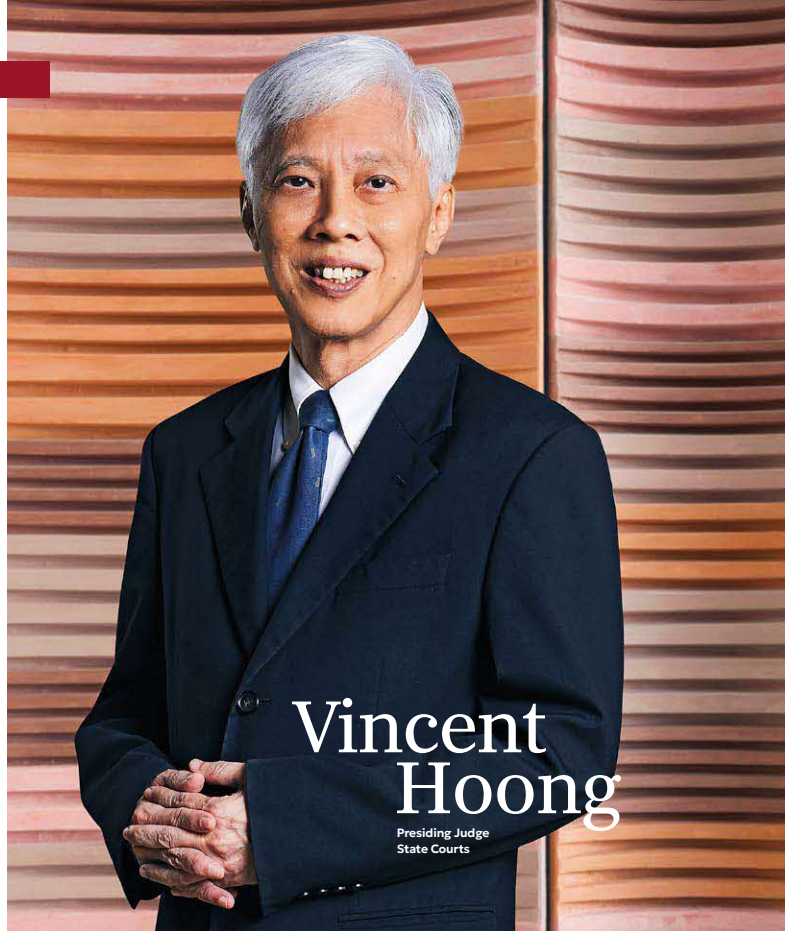
Beyond enhancing our institutional hardware, we undertook initiatives to cultivate a more user-centric and outward-looking organisational culture. The Access to Justice (A2J) Programme Office held its first 'A2J Day' to showcase ground-up A2J projects that were initiated by officers across the Singapore Courts, while the 'Conversations with the Community' dialogue sessions broadened our engagement with diverse segments of society, fostering a better understanding of the role and work of the courts.

Finally, we deepened our judicial engagements with our foreign counterparts. Substantive dialogues took place through Judicial Roundtables with China, France and India and other forums such as the Standing International Forum of Commercial Courts. We hosted the International Association for Court Administration Conference 2024, which brought together 250 judges and senior court administrators from over 40 jurisdictions for timely discussions on judicial excellence and public trust. Within the region, we organised the inaugural meeting of ASEAN Insolvency Judges, and this paved the way for the establishment of a Standing Meeting of ASEAN Insolvency Judges. This is a crucial development that will promote closer regional collaboration on cross-border insolvency matters.

We also strengthened our partnerships by pursuing initiatives of mutual interest. Our collaboration with the Kingdom of Bahrain on developing the Bahrain International Commercial Court (BICC) reached a new milestone with the establishment of the International Committee of the Singapore International Commercial Court, which will be empowered to hear appeals and related proceedings from courts in prescribed foreign jurisdictions such as the BICC. In the sphere of judicial education, which has emerged as another area of vital interest, the Singapore Judicial College forged partnerships with foreign judiciaries and training institutes to develop innovative programmes — such as the Masterclass Programme for Commercial Judges in Asia and the Brunei-Singapore Webinar for Junior Judicial Officers.

The initiatives we undertook in 2024 reflect our unwavering commitment to enhancing both the administration of justice and access to justice. At the same time, these efforts have begun to shape a renewed vision of the rule of law that is more holistic, inclusive and outward-looking. This evolution demonstrates our recognition that the Singapore Courts must be responsive to society's changing needs even as we remain anchored in enduring principles. Only then can we continue to serve as a trusted and stabilising force that secures justice for all in these times of change.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDING JUDGE OF THE STATE COURTS



2024 was another productive year for the State Courts. Amidst the headwinds of disruptive technology, geopolitical tensions and an evolving legal landscape, we made significant strides in our mission to deliver accessible justice through quality judgments, appropriate dispute resolution and innovative court services.

Administering Timely and Quality Justice

The State Courts' commitment to administer timely and quality justice was reflected on multiple fronts. Our combined clearance rate rose from 98% in 2023 to 102%, while our combined disposition rate remained at a robust 92%. In terms of waiting periods for the fixing of hearings, we achieved our targets in 91% of our cases compared to 88% in 2023.

We also affirmed our commitment to open justice through a continued emphasis on well-reasoned written decisions. The number of criminal judgments and grounds of decision issued increased by 6% compared to 2023. A noteworthy 24 decisions by our Judicial Officers were published in the Singapore Law Reports.

Professional development remained a key focus. We piloted roundtable sessions to facilitate in-depth review and discussion of landmark judgments. In addition, we supported the Singapore Judicial College's programme to attach Judicial Officers to the High Court. Under that initiative, two of our District Judges were mentored by High Court judges over six months.

Introducing Innovative Court Services

Beyond discharging our adjudicative duties with excellence, the State Courts also embraced our systematic role to develop and operate an accessible justice system. This may be seen in three areas.

First, we leveraged technology to simplify and streamline court processes. A prime example is the launch of complimentary translation services, driven by generative artificial intelligence (AI), for case documents in Small Claims Tribunals (SCT) proceedings. In addition, we revamped the online filing process for Magistrate's Complaints to enable court users to file such complaints seamlessly using one digital form — FormSG.

Second, we expanded our resources to further educate court users on their legal rights and court processes. A bail pamphlet was developed to provide key information to potential bailors to assist them to decide whether and how to post bail. We are also partnering with the Community Justice Centre to publish the third edition of the *Guidebook for Accused in Person*, which will provide updated coverage of legal rights and procedures for accused persons.

Third, recognising the importance of addressing the causes which lead litigants to court, we created the Community Resource Navigator. This is a list of community resources to address four key needs: mental health support, financial assistance, employment support and legal aid. We are presently distributing it to Night Courts users who may require community assistance.

Employing Appropriate Dispute Resolution Tools

In addition, the State Courts further shaped our dispute resolution processes to fit the disputes at hand. We worked with the Ministry of Law on legislative amendments to enhance the Community Disputes Resolution Tribunals' powers and to introduce processes to support upstream amicable dispute resolution efforts for community disputes. We also enhanced the victim compensation regime through collaborative efforts with various stakeholders.

To strengthen our alternative dispute resolution capabilities, 30 of our Judicial Officers underwent mediation training at the Singapore Mediation Centre. We are also preparing to publish a book to encourage wider adoption of the Court Alternative Dispute Resolution strategies employed by the Court Dispute Resolution Cluster.

International Engagement

Finally, we maintained a strong international presence through active engagement with our foreign counterparts. Several of our Judicial Officers spoke at international conferences, sharing our experience in diverse fields. These ranged from tackling online scams to designing dispute resolution methods with self-represented persons in mind. We also organised numerous study trips to learn from international best practices in areas such as the management of sexual offence cases and courtroom technologies.

Looking Ahead

Our accomplishments in 2024 attest to our ability to adapt to shifting societal needs and technological advancements whilst maintaining our core mission to deliver accessible justice. Moving forward, we are exploring new initiatives to advance this mission. These include a generative AI-driven summarisation tool for SCT cases, and the use of application walkthroughs to assist court users to complete and file documents.

My officers and I reaffirm our commitment to build a future-ready justice system that serves both the current and anticipated needs of our society. We will capitalise on the momentum gained in 2024, to ensure our justice system remains responsive, efficient and accessible to all.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDING JUDGE OF THE FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS

The Family Justice Courts (FJC) began 2024 with resolute purpose. We not only marked our 10th year since the FJC's establishment, but also ushered in a new era for family justice: one defined by a broader integration of therapeutic justice (TJ) into our processes, system-wide transformation, and deeper partnerships with the many stakeholders of our family justice system. The FJC's achievements in 2024 bear testament to our commitment and tireless efforts to increase access to justice, and to guide those in distress on their journey of resolution and recovery.

A New Home for a New Chapter

The most visible transformation of the FJC in 2024 was our move to our new home, which we fondly refer to as 'The Octagon', in November 2024. Our move to our new premises enabled us to consolidate all of the FJC's registries and hearing spaces under one roof.

Beyond a sheer increase in capacity, our move allowed us to introduce tangible design features that reflect the FJC's ethos. Through the integration of purpose-built facilities such as quiet rooms for both children and adults, vulnerable witness rooms and video-conferencing facilities, in a layout designed to de-escalate conflict and reduce stress for court users, the FJC enhanced our capability to provide more accessible services, aligned with the principles of TJ, to families in need.

Codifying Reform

The year also saw the implementation of new Family Justice Rules (collectively, 'FJR 2024'), which came into operation on 15 October 2024. The FJR 2024, coupled with its accompanying Practice Directions, marked a generational shift in how family proceedings are commenced and managed. Consolidated into four clear volumes comprising the Family Justice (General) Rules 2024, the Family Justice (Probate and Other Matters) Rules 2024, the Family Justice (Protection from Harassment) Rules 2024 and the Family Justice (Criminal Proceedings in Youth Courts) Rules 2024, the FJR 2024 now features a significantly reduced number of provisions, ordered in an intuitive manner mimicking the life cycle of a case.

Apart from nomenclature changes to simplify legal terms and language used in the Rules, the FJR 2024 also introduced a single mode of commencement for most proceedings under the Family Justice (General) Rules 2024, and expanded the simplified track for divorce proceedings to include judicial separation proceedings and cases where only ancillary proceedings are contested. Notably, the implementation of the FJR 2024 also saw the digitisation of commonly used forms, with guided form fields to facilitate the preparation of court documents.

Celebrating a Decade with a Vision for the Future

Our 10th anniversary provided an opportunity not only for celebration, but also reflection and recommitment. On 21 October 2024, the FJC celebrated our 10th anniversary at The Octagon, marking the FJC's decade of achievements alongside our stakeholders. This milestone event was marked by the launch of the TJ Model, and unveiling of the TJ symbol and tagline, by the Honourable the Chief Justice. The TJ Model was co-created with our partners in the family justice system through a series of consultations and engagement sessions, during which we gathered valuable feedback to develop a framework that both reflects shared understanding and addresses stakeholders' needs. The TJ Model, complemented by the introduction of corresponding TJ Practice Directions, provides a unifying framework across the entire spectrum of family justice, from the guiding objectives and definition of participants' roles in court proceedings, to how we manage proceedings, deepen our competencies and collaborate across disciplines.

The TJ Model affirms our commitment to being holistic and forward-looking in every aspect of our work. Whether through setting important guiding principles for cases before the court, or charting multi-disciplinary triage and case assignment processes, the TJ Model ensures that therapeutic outcomes are not incidental but intentional.

Strengthening Partnerships at Home and Abroad

2024 was also a significant year for the FJC's work with our partners and stakeholders. We deepened our partnerships with social service agencies (SSAs) through two dedicated consultations on TJ, drawing participation from 68 SSA representatives. A 'KOPI TIME' webinar on Women's Charter amendments was organised to engage over 100 stakeholders in a dialogue on new types of protective orders. At the Singapore Family Therapy Conference, our staff from Counselling and Psychological Services gave a presentation on 'Using IPScope for High Conflict

Families at the FJC', sharing how systemic approaches are being integrated into our counselling frameworks to enhance services for divorcing parents.

On the legal front, we held three dialogue sessions with over 200 members of the Family Bar to walk through key legislative changes including the enforcement of Child Access Orders, Family Violence amendments and the new Maintenance Enforcement Process, ahead of their implementation. These forums facilitated rich exchanges and enhanced legal practitioner readiness, ensuring that implementation challenges were surfaced and solutions co-created.

On the international relations front, we formalised our first-ever Memorandum of Understanding with the Hong Kong Judiciary in respect of the administration of family justice — encompassing case management, use of technology, training, development of family law and procedures, and family mediation. Through collaborative efforts with members of the Council of ASEAN Chief Justices Working Group on Cross-border Disputes Involving Children, we also successfully adopted a Procedure for Administrative Verification of Court Orders. The Procedure streamlines the resolution of disputes over authenticity of foreign court orders in cross-border disputes involving children. These partnerships signal our shared aspiration to enhance family justice outcomes across jurisdictions.

Investing in Capability and Compassion

At the heart of the FJC's work is our strong team of Judicial Officers and Court Administrators. In 2024, we conducted 24 focused internal training sessions on upcoming legislative reforms. Together with the Singapore Judicial College, we also organised the FJC Learning Week 2024 to equip our Judicial Officers with TJ-informed best practices in judicial decision-making. Through these sessions, we not only build legal expertise among our people, but cultivate the sensitivity and discernment that the practice of family justice demands.

Closing Reflections and Looking Ahead

As we close this milestone year, I am deeply grateful to our Judicial Officers and Court Administrators for their devotion to work with families in need. I am also grateful to the Family Bar, and our partners and volunteers, who are deeply committed to this shared mission. Every court order drafted, vulnerable witness protected and parent-child relationship preserved is a testament to their resolve and care. The FJC was founded on the belief that family proceedings are unique, and that healing can take place despite the breakdown of family relationships. In 2024, we reaffirmed that belief not only in words but through our initiatives and partnerships. We will carry this momentum forward, so that for every person who steps in our courts, family law becomes not just a means of dispute resolution, but the start of a better future.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2024

A MILESTONE YEAR FOR THE FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon; Minister for Social and Family Development and then-Second Minister for Health, Mr Masagos Zulkifli (middle); and then-Minister of State for Law and Transport, Mr Murali Pillai SC (right), were given a courtroom tour at the new Family Justice Courts building.

10th Anniversary

The Family Justice Courts (FJC) celebrated their 10th anniversary on 21 October 2024, at an event graced by the Minister for Social and Family Development and then-Second Minister for Health, Mr Masagos Zulkifli; and then-Minister of State for Law and Transport, Mr Murali Pillai SC.

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon delivering the opening address.

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon delivered the opening address, reflecting on the transformation of the family justice system over the past decade. He noted how the new set of Family Justice Rules — which came into effect on 15 October 2024 — has strengthened the judge-led approach, and paid tribute to the FJC's many stakeholders and partners for their steadfast support.

In her address, the Presiding Judge of the FJC, Justice Teh Hwee Hwee, described the FJC's move to its new premises at The Octagon as a symbol of growth and a tangible representation of the spirit of transformation that underpins the Courts' work. She envisages the therapeutic justice model to continue to grow and mature, with the FJC looking to improve it further with feedback from stakeholders.

Move to The Octagon

Following its 10th anniversary celebrations, the FJC marked another significant milestone with its relocation to The Octagon on 25 November 2024. With the move, the FJC's operations — previously split between Havelock Square and Maxwell Road — have been consolidated into a single, purpose-built facility nearly three times larger than the former premises.

The Information Counter of the new FJC building.

In addition to 25 courtrooms and 52 chambers, the FJC also includes thoughtfully designed spaces that embody the FJC's commitment to therapeutic justice. These include child-friendly interview rooms, quiet rooms equipped with sensory tools for distressed court users, and vulnerable witness rooms for remote testimony. The Octagon — which derives its name from its octagonal architecture — also provides video conferencing facilities for remote hearings, ensuring accessibility for all court users. This enhanced infrastructure strengthens the FJC's ability to deliver therapeutic justice and provide more accessible services to families in need.

Quiet rooms allow distressed court users to calm themselves down without needing staff intervention.

The new premises feature 25 courtrooms and 52 chambers.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2024

The Supreme Court Bench marked the Opening of the Legal Year 2024 with a customary group photo at Parliament Green.

Opening of the Legal Year 2024

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon opened the legal year by announcing several initiatives to strengthen the Courts' systemic function and support the sustained vitality of the legal profession, in response to the evolving changes and challenges in today's legal landscape.

Close to 400 members of the legal community attended the Opening of the Legal Year 2024, which was held on 8 January 2024 at the Supreme Court auditorium. Chief Justice Menon, Attorney-General Mr Lucien Wong SC and President of the Law Society, Ms Lisa Sam Hui Min, delivered their customary speeches.

In his response, Chief Justice Menon stressed that while the Courts' function is adjudicative at one level, there is a second key function, termed the Courts' systemic task of developing and operating a system of administering justice that is accessible to all. These roles are distinct, but complementary, and both must be fulfilled to secure public trust in the justice system and safeguard the rule of law.

In tandem with efforts to enhance access to justice, Chief Justice Menon highlighted some of the key initiatives the Singapore Judiciary has implemented, or will be implementing, to promote the systemic role of the Courts, which include:

- a shared vision under One Judiciary;
- the introduction of relevant Civil Justice and Family Justice programmes; and
- the enhancement of judicial training and education.

In view of the rapid advancement of technology, in particular, the capabilities of generative artificial intelligence, he outlined the considerations affecting the legal profession. He also spoke about the continuing efforts to not only prepare the legal profession for these developments, but also to safeguard the profession's long-term vitality and nurture the next generation of lawyers.

In closing, Chief Justice Menon was heartened at the considerable alignment between the Bench, Bar and the Legal Service as they navigate a challenging future together, united as the profession honoured to be entrusted with the privilege of administering justice in Singapore.

SICC CONFERENCE 2024

The 10th edition of the Singapore International Commercial Court (SICC) Conference was held on 9 and 10 January 2024. Themed "Dispute Resolution in the Singapore International Commercial Court: New Horizons", it explored several emerging areas for the SICC, such as alternative dispute resolution for complex disputes, and the SICC's jurisdiction to hear cross-border corporate insolvency, restructuring and dissolution proceedings.

The two-day Conference was attended by the Supreme Court Bench, SICC International Judges, senior management of the Singapore Courts and the Supreme Court Registry.

The sessions also included a deep dive into intellectual property disputes in the SICC, as well as the role the SICC may play in Investor-State dispute settlement, alongside discussions on third-party litigation funding and the litigation funding and an introduction to emerging technologies relating to artificial intelligence and linguistics. The Conference brought together about 100 participants, including the Supreme Court Bench, SICC International Judges, senior management of the Singapore Courts and the Supreme Court Registry. Their presence underscored the importance of the SICC as a forum for international commercial dispute resolution.

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon delivering the opening address.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2024

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon presided over the first session of Mass Call 2024.

Mass Call 2024

436 newly appointed Advocates and Solicitors were called to the Bar at Mass Call 2024, held over three sessions at the Supreme Court auditorium on 19 and 20 August 2024. Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon presided over the first session, while Judges of the Court of Appeal, Justices Tay Yong Kwang and Steven Chong presided over the second and third sessions respectively. In his address, he mentioned the growing acceptance of artificial intelligence (AI), and the responsibilities of being a member of an honourable profession. He also highlighted the paradigm shift in lawyering resulting from AI and its implications on the practice of law, namely, the introduction and effective application of new tools; and alternative ways to train and develop junior lawyers.

The Chief Justice also underscored the commitment of the legal profession to serving the public good, which is ingrained in the revised declaration of Advocates and Solicitors. This recommendation by the Ethics and Professional Standards Committee was inaugurated at Mass Call 2024. He reiterated the significance of pro bono work, describing it as one of the finest traditions of the Bar, where such work can fuel and sustain the sense of idealism and commitment to serving justice for those who have chosen to study and practice law. He concluded his address by likening the practice of law to running a marathon, which demands unwavering perseverance and resilience. He assured the new lawyers that this would be well worth their efforts, given the great fulfilment and purpose enjoyed by those who stay the course.

Applicants making their declaration.

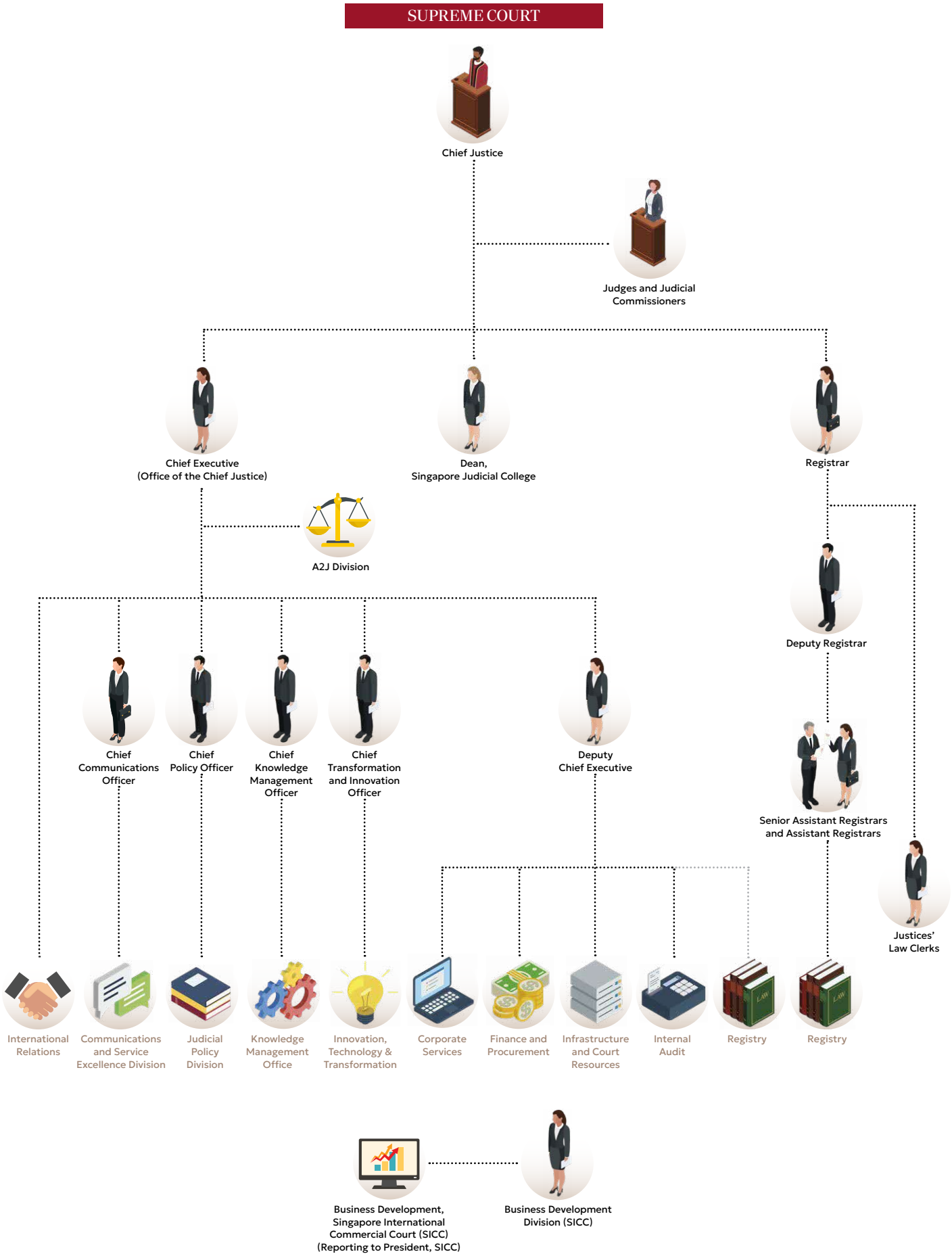
Applicants celebrating a new milestone with family and friends.

OUR PEOPLE

DEMONSTRATING
INTEGRITY,
PROFESSIONALISM
AND A FORWARD-THINKING
MINDSET, THOSE WHO
COLLECTIVELY MAKE UP
THE SINGAPORE JUDICIARY
EMBODY THE MISSION
TO ENSURE PROPER
ADMINISTRATION
OF JUSTICE.

OUR PEOPLE

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE (AS OF 1 APRIL 2025)



OUR PEOPLE

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE (AS OF 1 APRIL 2025)

STATE COURTS

Presiding Judge

Chief Executive
Judiciary Administration

Principal District Judges

Registrar

Senior Deputy Registrars

Criminal Courts

Civil Courts

Court Dispute Resolution

Community Courts & Tribunals

Strategic Planning & Technology

Office of the Registrar

FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS

Presiding Judge

Chief Executive
Judiciary
Administration

Deputy Presiding Judge

Registrar

Principal District Judges

Senior Judicial Heads/
Judicial Heads

Deputy Registrar

District Judges /
Magistrates /
Assistant Registrars

Therapeutic Justice Transformation Office

Office of the Registrar

Family Protection & Support Division

Strategic Planning and Research Division

Family Dispute Resolution Division

Family Division

OUR PEOPLE

THE SUPREME COURT BENCH (AS OF 1 APRIL 2025)

CHIEF JUSTICE

1. Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon

JUSTICES OF THE COURT OF APPEAL

2. Justice Tay Yong Kwang
3. Justice Steven Chong
4. Justice Belinda Ang

JUDGES OF THE APPELLATE DIVISION

5. Justice Woo Bih Li
6. Justice Kannan Ramesh
7. Justice Debbie Ong
8. Justice See Kee Oon
   Justice See is also the President of the Industrial Arbitration Court.

JUSTICES OF THE HIGH COURT

1. Justice Choo Han Teck
2. Justice Vinodh Coomaraswamy
3. Justice Chua Lee Ming
4. Justice Valerie Thean
5. Justice Hoo Sheau Peng
6. Justice Aidan Xu
7. Justice Pang Khang Chau

OUR PEOPLE

THE SUPREME COURT BENCH (AS OF 1 APRIL 2025)

JUSTICES OF THE HIGH COURT

1. Justice Audrey Lim
2. Justice Vincent Hoong
   Justice Hoong is also the Presiding Judge of the State Courts.
3. Justice Dedar Singh Gill
4. Justice Mavis Chionh
5. Justice S. Mohan
6. Justice Andre Maniam
7. Justice Philip Jeyaretnam
   Justice Jeyaretnam is also the President of the Singapore International Commercial Court.

JUSTICES OF THE HIGH COURT

1. Justice Kwek Mean Luck
2. Justice Hri Kumar Nair
3. Justice Teh Hwee Hwee
   Justice Teh is also the Presiding Judge of the Family Justice Courts.

JUDICIAL COMMISSIONERS

4. Judicial Commissioner Alex Wong
5. Judicial Commissioner Christopher Tan
6. Judicial Commissioner Kristy Tan
7. Judicial Commissioner Mohamed Faizal
8. Judicial Commissioner Sushil Sukumaran Nair

OUR PEOPLE

THE SUPREME COURT BENCH (AS OF 1 APRIL 2025)

SENIOR JUDGES

1. Senior Judge Andrew Phang
2. Senior Judge Judith Prakash
3. Senior Judge Lee Seiu Kin
4. Senior Judge Chan Seng Onn
5. Senior Judge Tan Siong Thye

JUDICIARY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (AS OF 15 APRIL 2025)

1. **Ms Juthika Ramanathan**
   Chief Executive,
   Office of the Chief Justice
2. **Professor Natalie Skead**
   Dean, Singapore Judicial College
3. **Mrs Clara Goh**
   Deputy Chief Executive
4. **Ms Jill Tan**
   Registrar, Supreme Court
5. **Mr Edwin San**
   Registrar, State Courts
6. **Mr Kenneth Yap**
   Registrar, Family Justice Courts
7. **Mr Clement Seah**
   Chief Knowledge Management Officer
8. **Mr James Leong**
   Chief Policy Officer
9. **Mr Tan Ken Hwee**
   Chief Transformation and Innovation Officer
10. **Mr Justin Yeo**
    Executive Director,
    Singapore Judicial College
11. **Ms Theresa Yeo**
    Senior Director, Corporate Services
12. **Ms Cher Ming Hui**
    Senior Director, Finance and Procurement
13. **Ms Papinder Kaur**
    Senior Director, Infrastructure and Court Resources
14. **Mr Toh Kon Sing**
    Ministry Family Chief Information Officer
15. **Ms Ang Siok Hui**
    Chief Communications Officer

OUR PEOPLE

SUPREME COURT REGISTRY SENIOR MANAGEMENT (AS OF 1 APRIL 2025)

1. **Ms Jill Tan**
   Registrar
2. **Mr Teo Guan Siew**
   Deputy Registrar
3. **Ms Ng Teng Teng, Cornie**
   Senior Assistant Registrar
   Ms Ng is also the Divisional Registrar for the General Division of the High Court (Civil)
4. **Ms Cheng Pei Feng**
   Senior Assistant Registrar
   Ms Cheng is also the Divisional Registrar for the General Division of the High Court (Crime)
5. **Ms Chong Chin Chin**
   Senior Assistant Registrar
   Ms Chong is also the Divisional Registrar for the Court of Appeal and Appellate Division of the High Court
6. **Mr Lee Yeow Wee, David**
   Senior Assistant Registrar
   Mr Lee is also the Divisional Registrar for the General Division of the High Court (Civil)
7. **Ms Crystal Tan Huiling**
   Assistant Registrar
   Ms Tan is also the Divisional Registrar for the Singapore International Commercial Court

STATE COURTS SENIOR MANAGEMENT (AS OF 1 APRIL 2025)

1. **Justice Vincent Hoong**
   Presiding Judge
2. **Mr Edwin San**
   Registrar
3. **Mr Toh Han Li**
   Principal District Judge,
   Criminal Courts (Group B)
4. **Mr James Leong**
   Principal District Judge,
   Civil Courts
5. **Mr Tan Boon Heng**
   Principal District Judge,
   Court Dispute Resolution
6. **Ms Lee Lit Cheng**
   Principal District Judge,
   Criminal Courts (Group A)
7. **Mr Toh Yung Cheong**
   Principal District Judge,
   Strategic Planning and Technology

Not in photo:

Ms Thian Yee Sze
Principal District Judge,
Community Courts and Tribunals

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FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM (AS OF 1 APRIL 2025)

1. **Justice Teh Hwee Hwee**
   Presiding Judge
2. **Mr Chia Wee Kiat**
   Deputy Presiding Judge
3. **Mr Kenneth Yap**
   Registrar
4. **Mr Phang Hsiao Chung**
   Principal District Judge, Family Protection and Support / Assistant Registrar
5. **Mr Muhammad Hidhir Abdul Majid**
   Principal District Judge, Family Protection and Support / Assistant Registrar
6. **Mr Kow Keng Siong**
   District Judge / Assistant Registrar / Senior Judicial Head, Maintenance & Enforcement Court
7. **Mr Kevin Ng**
   District Judge / Assistant Registrar / Senior Judicial Head, Family Dispute Resolution
8. **Ms Toh Wee San**
   District Judge / Assistant Registrar / Senior Judicial Head, Family 2
9. **Ms Jen Koh**
   District Judge / Deputy Registrar / Senior Judicial Head, Family 1

INTERNATIONAL JUDGES (AS OF 1 APRIL 2025)

1. Justice Roger Giles
2. Justice Dominique T. Hascher
3. Justice Sir Vivian Arthur Ramsey
4. Justice Anselmo Reyes
5. Justice Sir Bernard Rix
6. Justice Simon Thorley, KC
7. Justice Sir Henry Bernard Eder
8. Justice Robert French
9. Justice Beverley McLachlin PC
10. Justice Lord Neuberger of Abbotsbury
11. Justice Lord Jonathan Hugh Mance
12. Justice Arjan Kumar Sikri
13. Justice Douglas Samuel Jones AO
14. Justice Yuko Miyazaki
15. Justice Christopher Scott Sontchi
16. Justice Thomas Bathurst AC, KC
17. Justice Zhang Yongjian
18. Justice James Allsop
19. Justice James Michael Peck
20. Justice David Wolfe Rivkin
21. Justice Peter Meier-Beck
22. Justice Lady Mary Howarth Arden
23. Justice Anthony James Besanko, KC
24. Justice Anthony Meagher

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

MAKING JUSTICE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL, AND REMOVING BARRIERS THAT STAND IN THE WAY OF PEOPLE'S RIGHTS, IS A NECESSARY CONDITION FOR A FAIR AND EQUAL SOCIETY.

A trusted Judiciary • Ready for tomorrow

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

INITIATIVES BY THE ACCESS TO JUSTICE DIVISION

Since its inception in April 2023, the Access to Justice Division (A2JD), formerly known as the Access to Justice Programme Office, has been driving the Judiciary's transformation into a more outward-facing and user-centric institution. Access to justice (A2J) lies at the heart of this effort, enhancing both public trust in, and the trustworthiness of, the Judiciary.

In 2024, the A2JD pursued a two-pronged strategy: developing meaningful ground-up initiatives and cultivating a community of officers committed to advancing A2J. The A2JD has been able to fulfil its purpose through projects undertaken both by its dedicated workgroups and by the Division itself. These efforts not only improved the experience of court users but also encouraged shifts in mindset and practice among judicial officers and court administrators.

A2J Workgroups

Six A2J workgroups, comprising 33 officers from across the Judiciary, undertook projects in 2024 to address the needs of court users. Their initiatives ranged from helping vulnerable users navigate court premises to creating a bail pamphlet that explained the criteria and conditions for posting bail. These projects reflected the creativity and dedication of officers committed to easing A2J, and their outcomes were showcased at A2J Demo Day on 12 September 2024.

The A2J Demo Day showcased the ideas and initiatives of the six A2J workgroups formed across the Judiciary.

Implementing A2J Projects

The A2JD introduced initiatives that make it easier for court users to understand and navigate court processes. Five instructional videos were produced to guide users through common processes. Queue kiosks were also relocated to the State Courts' HELP Centre as part of a redesigned user journey, which now includes a dedicated waiting area, floor decals and life-sized standees to guide users to the appropriate service points. These enhancements have made the HELP Centre more accessible and intuitive, allowing court users to get help with greater ease.

Awareness of A2J Efforts

To raise awareness and celebrate the contributions of officers, the A2JD organised events such as A2J Fiesta and A2J Day. These platforms not only showcased completed initiatives but also recognised the efforts of those who contributed to them.

The refreshed HELP Centre at the State Courts, designed to improve user experience.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon graced A2J Day 2024, held on 2 October 2024.

Sharing Our Experience

The impact of the A2JD's work extended beyond Singapore. In 2024, its Director, Mr Mohammed Jaleesudeen Jalal, presented the Courts' A2J initiatives to visiting delegations from Uganda, New Zealand and Brunei, and at international platforms such as the International Association for Court Administration Conference in Singapore.

A2J Kick Off Townhall

On 17 July 2024, judicial officers and court administrators gathered for the A2J Kick Off Townhall, themed "I am the Court User Experience". The event invited officers to reflect on the experience they envisage for court users and to renew their collective commitment to delivering excellent court services.

As the first in a series of A2J events designed to bring the concept of access to justice to life, the Townhall underscored that every officer, regardless of role, has a part to play in ensuring court users can access justice with confidence and dignity. Guest speaker Senior Judge (SJ) Tan Siong Thye — a long-time advocate of customer-centricity — shared how, during his tenure as Chief District Judge of the then-Subordinate Courts, he championed initiatives to improve user experience.

In his address, SJ Tan highlighted the Judiciary's dedication to fairness, accessibility and integrity, and stressed the importance of leadership, empathy and continuous improvement, alongside the use of technology to enhance service delivery. "The task of enhancing access to justice is the solemn responsibility of everyone in the Judiciary," he said, emphasising that this responsibility extends from front-line service officers to registry staff, judicial officers and even those in supporting roles such as human resources, finance and technology.

A2J Fiesta allowed court officers to better understand access to justice efforts.

The session concluded with a lively question-and-answer segment, where SJ Tan shared his personal motivations for service excellence and offered practical advice to officers facing challenges in their work. Complementing the event, the Human Resources Department launched its Digital Learning Campaign 2024, which introduced a series of service-related e-learning modules aligned with the theme of enhancing court user experience.

Senior Judge Tan Siong Thye shared that everyone in the Judiciary has a responsibility in enhancing access to justice.

Officers were reminded that the task of enhancing access to justice was a shared responsibility.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Implementation of the Enhanced Victim Compensation Regime

The enhanced victim compensation regime (eVCR), implemented under the amended section 359 of the Criminal Procedure Code 2010, came into operation on 1 August 2024. The eVCR requires the court, upon convicting an offender, to consider whether a compensation order should be made to the victim, the victim's representatives, or the victim's dependants (collectively known as the Compensation Claimant).

Compensation Claimants must be notified of the proceedings, unless they cannot be identified or contacted, and are entitled to adduce evidence and make submissions. They may also participate directly in proceedings where compensation is being considered. In determining whether to make an order, and the appropriate quantum, the Courts must take into account the offender's means and may require disclosure of financial circumstances. Where no compensation order is made, the Courts must provide reasons.

The eVCR marks a significant step forward in ensuring that victims of crime, and where appropriate their representatives or dependants, are fairly compensated for the harm caused, in the interests of justice.

Enhancing Access to Justice Through Innovation

In 2024, the Singapore Courts continued to strengthen its systems and digital services to ensure they remain responsive to evolving legal frameworks. Enhancements were made to the Simplified Track Divorce e-Service, Probate e-Service and the Practising Certificate Renewal System, while digital processes were updated to align with the Family Justice Rules 2024. Work also commenced on the "Future Case Management System" project.

Refinements to appeal procedures and the new Express Track make court processes clearer, faster, and more efficient, ensuring timely resolution of appeals and short trials.

AMENDMENTS TO THE RULES OF COURT 2021

Refinements to the Appeal Procedures [Rules of Court (Amendment) Rules 2024]

As part of ongoing efforts to refine procedures, Orders 18 and 19 of the Rules of Court 2021, concerning appeal procedures, were amended on 1 February 2024. These amendments refined appeal procedures in three key aspects:

1. The amendments provide greater clarity on when the timeline for filing an appeal or an application for permission to appeal begins, by specifying the events that trigger its computation. This helps parties avoid filing appeals prematurely or out of time.
2. A new 30-day long-stop date was also introduced, allowing substantive issues to progress to the appeal phase even as costs before the lower court are being determined.
3. The amendments empower respondents to take active steps to either apply to proceed with an appeal, or strike out an appeal in cases where the appellant does not apply to proceed with the appeal. The amendments ensure that appeals are prosecuted without undue delay.

Together, these refinements promote access to justice by providing clearer, more efficient procedures and facilitating the timely resolution of appeals.

Express Track [Rules of Court (Amendment No. 2) Rules 2024]

The Express Track was introduced on 1 July 2024 in the General Division of the High Court with the introduction of Order 46A of the Rules of Court 2021. Operated as an opt-in scheme, it was designed for matters involving disputes of fact unsuitable for disposal by Originating Applications or summary judgment, but which can be resolved within up to four days of trial.

The initiative enhances access to justice by providing a template of clear rules to promote the expeditious resolution of compact trials. Through a suite of expedited pre-trial procedures, the Express Track allows suitable short trials to be fixed for hearing within nine months.

> "
>
> **Four days:**
> The maximum trial length under the Express Track

A new system allows court users to conveniently obtain queue numbers for selected services and hearings across all three Courts.

New Judiciary Queue Management System

The new Judiciary Queue Management System (JQMS) provides queue numbers for selected services and hearings across all three Courts.Commissioned in July 2024, the JQMS replaced two earlier systems and is fully integrated with the Judiciary's case management platforms. It allows lawyers, litigants, and other court users to conveniently obtain queue numbers for selected services and hearings across all three Courts. The JQMS kiosks feature a large, easy-to-read touchscreen and can be found on the ground floor of each court building and in the various registries. The new system has considered user feedback and features a user-friendly layout with multi-language functionality and an accessibility mode for wheelchair users.

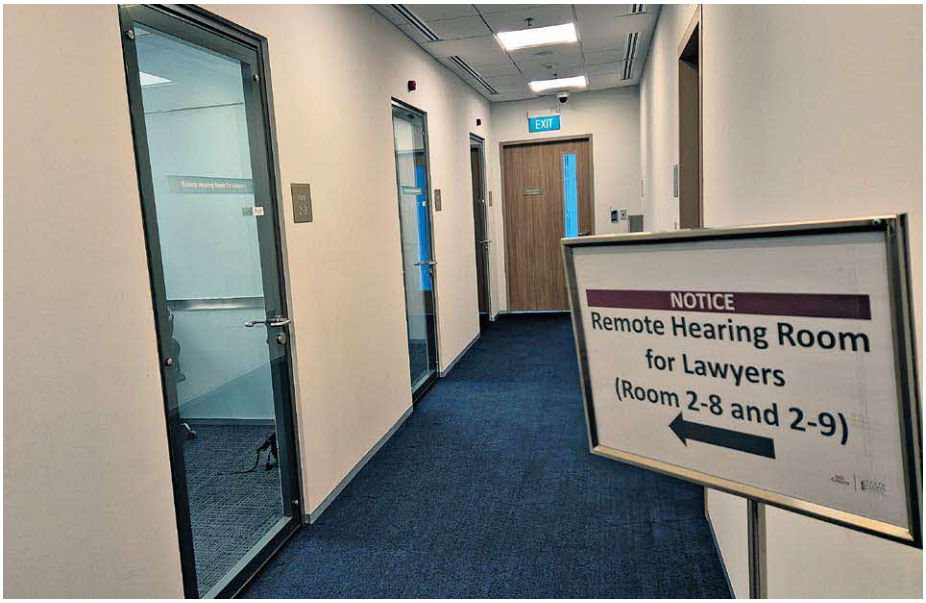
Upgrades to Courtroom Facilities

A review of baseline courtroom facilities has standardised accessibility and functionality features across the three Courts. Enhancements include upgraded audio and recording systems, improved evidence presentation tools, and expanded video conferencing capabilities. All courtrooms are now equipped with assistive listening systems and accessible witness stands to accommodate individuals with hearing and mobility impairments. These enhancements support an inclusive environment that promotes open and accessible justice for all court users.

Dedicated Rooms for Remote Court Hearings

Lawyers can use dedicated rooms for virtual hearings, available at both the Supreme Court and State Courts.

Dedicated rooms for virtual hearings have been made available for lawyers at the Supreme Court and State Courts, and extended to the Family Justice Courts in April 2025. No prior registration is required, though users are asked to scan the QR code provided in each room to help monitor usage. These facilities, developed in response to feedback, reflect the continued value of remote hearings.



Lawyers can use dedicated rooms for virtual hearings across all three Courts.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Introduction of Costs Guidelines for District Court Cases

The State Courts introduced comprehensive costs guidelines for District Court cases with effect from 13 September 2024. These guidelines provide general indications on the quantum and methodology of party-and-party costs in specified types of District Court proceedings.

The guidelines cover trials, originating applications, and appeals, with detailed cost ranges for different case types. While serving as a reference point, the Court retains discretion to adjust costs based on the circumstances of each case, ensuring fairness and proportionality in costs awards.

The guidelines are implemented through a new Practice Direction 107A, bringing greater clarity and predictability to District Court costs and helping practitioners and court users manage litigation expenses more effectively.

Streamlined Application Process for State Courts Civil Transcripts

From 16 October 2024, the State Courts simplified the process for civil hearing transcript applications by integrating it into the eLitigation platform. This replaced the manual submission of "Hearings Transcription Request Forms" to vendors.

Parties can now submit transcript requests directly through eLitigation, in line with other court applications. The integration streamlines the application process and provides a consistent user experience. It also removes the need for separate communication with transcription vendors.

Small Claims Tribunals Digitised Defects Schedule

Self-represented persons (SRPs) often face difficulties in presenting their cases in a structured and compelling manner, particularly when the dispute involves multiple defects. Their evidence is often haphazardly uploaded onto the Community Justice and Tribunals System, with no apparent correlation to the disputed issues and no clear breakdown of the claim. This leads to unnecessary time and resources expended by SRPs and the tribunal in understanding the claim or defence.

The Small Claims Tribunals Digitised Defects Schedule, launched on 28 March 2024, addresses this by enabling:

- SRPs to quantify their claim and provide a breakdown of the same at the earliest opportunity, i.e. at the point of filing of the claim.
- A guided identification of the evidence.
- Matching between the disputed item and evidence.
- An immediate comparison between the claim and defence;
- An organised way to refer to the disputed items and evidence during tribunal proceedings.

> "By providing a structured framework for identifying items in dispute, the checklist facilitates clearer communication between parties and reduces the need for protracted hearings.

Justice Vincent Hoong
Presiding Judge of the State Courts, speaking at the Small Claims Tribunals 40th Anniversary Symposium.

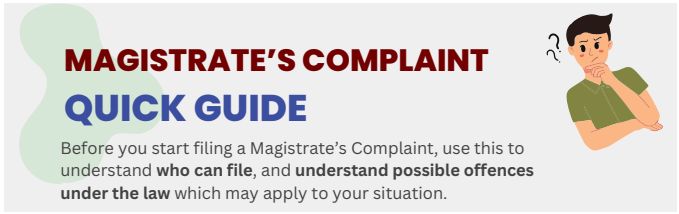
SRPs are now equipped to put forward their positions in a clear, streamlined and structured manner, and the tribunal is better placed to focus on the relevant issues and supporting evidence for an efficient handling of the matter, be it resolution by way of settlement or determination at trial. The initiative received the Chief Justice's Innovation Award 2024.

Community Disputes Resolution (Amendment) Act Passed in November 2024

On 15 November 2024, Parliament passed the Community Disputes Resolution (Amendment) Act 2024, enhancing the Community Disputes Management Framework in three ways:

1. Strengthening the community mediation framework, requiring disputing neighbours to attend mediation at the Community Mediation Centre.
2. Establishing a Community Relations Unit with investigatory and enforcement powers to intervene in neighbour disputes.
3. Enhancing the powers and processes of the Community Disputes Resolution Tribunals for faster, more effective case management.

The State Courts' Community Courts and Tribunals Cluster worked with the Ministry of Law, Ministry of National Development, and Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth on the legislation, and will operationalise the enhancements to the Community Disputes Resolution Tribunals by Q4 2025.



MagComp Online

Launched in November 2024, Magistrate's Complaint (MagComp) Online allows self-represented persons to file applications on one digital form, accessible with their Singpass, instead of having to toggle between three separate interfaces. This saves significant time for court users, who can reference an accompanying infographic to check their eligibility to file a Magistrate's Complaint.

The project team, comprising judicial officers and registry officers from the State Courts' Community Courts and Tribunals Cluster as well as officers from the Innovation, Technology and Transformation Division and the Access to Justice Division (formerly known as the Access to Justice Programme Office), tapped on Singpass' capability and convenience and the public's familiarity with the FormSG interface to revamp and enhance user experience.

The infographic can be found at https://go.gov.sg/magcomp-quickguide

Guide on the Use of Generative AI Tools

In light of the prevalence of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, SG Courts published the "Guide on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence Tools by Court Users", which took effect on 1 October 2024. It sets out general principles and guidelines for the use of generative AI, noting that the Court maintains a neutral stance on the use of such tools. The guidelines remind users that:

- They are fully responsible for the content in all court documents.
- They are required to ensure that all AI-generated output in court documents is accurate, relevant and does not infringe intellectual property rights.
- Generative AI tools should not be used to fabricate or tamper with evidence.

The guide also establishes clear accountability measures. For instance, the Court may require the user to file an affidavit to state that generative AI tools were used in the preparation of court documents and declare that the court documents are in compliance with the guide. If there is non-compliance with the guide, the Court may, among other things, order costs against the court user, disregard submitted materials, and if the court user is a lawyer, take disciplinary action against the lawyer.

Asynchronous Hearings of Pre-Trial Conferences and Criminal Case Disclosure Conferences for Expanded Scope of Cases

From 15 July 2024, the scope of cases eligible for asynchronous hearings of pre-trial conferences (PTCs) and criminal case disclosure conferences (CCDCs) was expanded to include matters involving co-accused persons and prosecutions brought by 19 regulatory agencies. The expansion follows a 2024 survey of defence counsel, public defenders and prosecuting officers, which found that over 91% of respondents were in favour of retaining such hearings. Respondents agreed that the asynchronous mode reduced the time spent attending PTCs and CCDCs without compromising the quality of updates, and allowed parties to manage cases more efficiently and effectively. Asynchronous hearings of PTCs and CCDCs were adopted in criminal cases as a pilot programme in June 2023.

> "More than **90%** of respondents were in favour of asynchronous hearings of pre-trial conferences and criminal case disclosure conferences.

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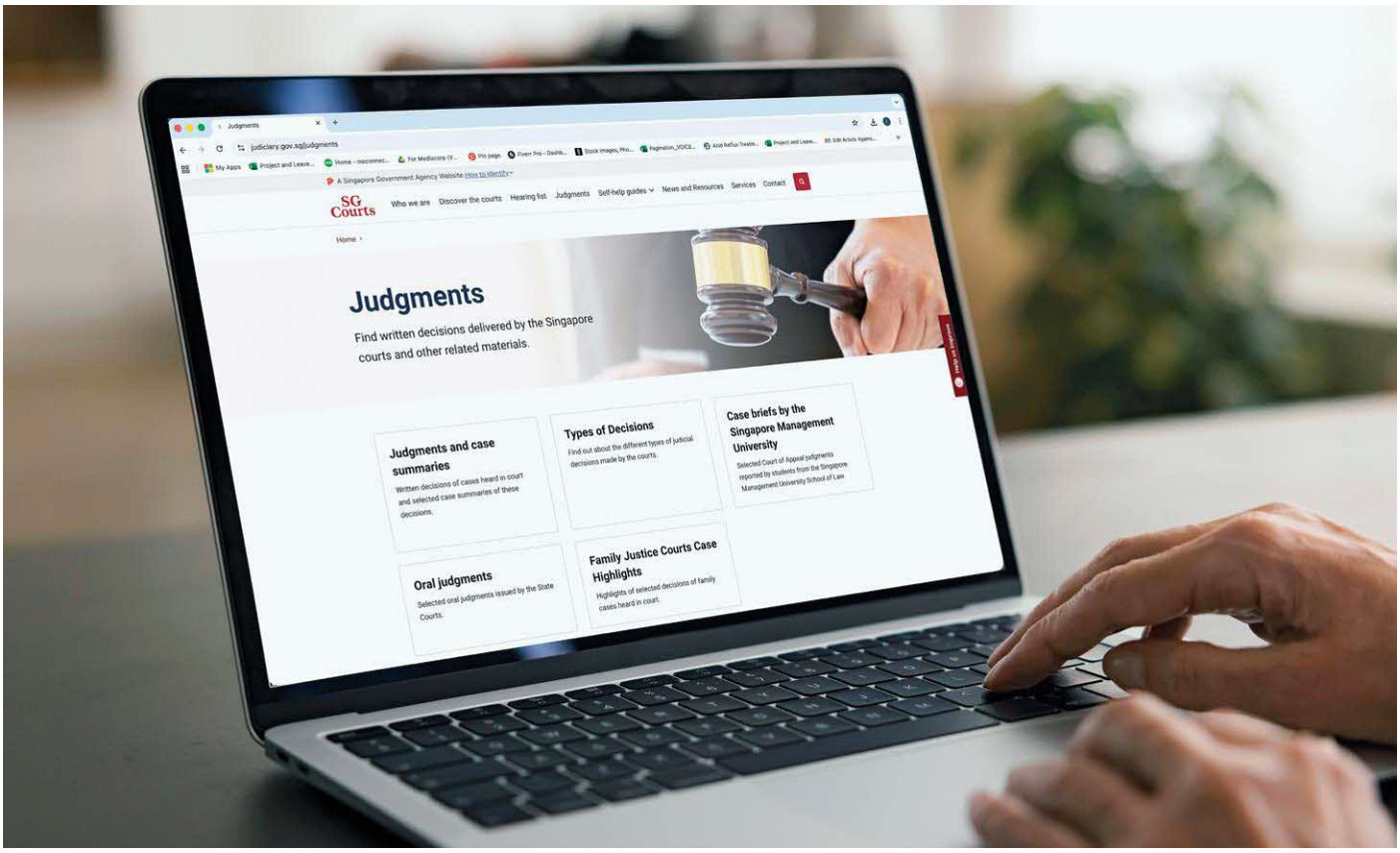


Oral judgments posted online help users understand the Court's decisions.

Publication of Selected Oral Judgments on the SG Courts Website

Selected oral judgments issued by the State Courts that are of public interest are published on the SG Courts website, where they will be available for 12 weeks from the date of posting. These oral judgments are strictly to help understand the Court's decisions, and are not to be cited as authoritative court precedents. Alerts about the release of these oral judgments are available through the SG Courts WhatsApp channel. Since the initiative began, four oral judgments have been published between September and December 2024. This initiative is a collaboration between the Office of the Registrar, the Criminal Courts cluster and the Communications and Service Excellence Division.

Pamphlet for Potential Bailors

Potential bailors can now make a more informed decision about whether to stand as a bailor, thanks to a new pamphlet introduced by the State Courts' Office of the Registrar and the the Access to Justice Division (formerly known as the Access to Justice Programme Office). The pamphlet, which is accessible online and in hard copy at various locations within the State Courts, also provides clear information on how to post bail. The pamphlet is expected to reduce the waiting time for potential bailors and the time spent by the accused in custody, as potential bailors are likely to be more prepared for their applications to stand as bailor.

Remote Assessment of Damages Hearings

The State Courts have continued to find ways to use video link in court proceedings to facilitate the appearance of parties and/or witnesses via video conference, with parties' consent. From 2023 to 2024, there were 17 cases in which medical experts testified remotely at Assessment of Damages hearings. It is expected that there will be more cases where parties apply for medical experts to testify remotely at Assessment of Damages hearings as this allows the medical experts greater flexibility and makes it easier for parties to secure hearing dates when medical experts are required to testify.

Use of the Motor Accident Claims Online

The Motor Accident Claims Online (MACO) is an online motor accident claims simulator, jointly developed by the State Courts and the Singapore Academy of Law. Both the liability simulator and quantum simulator have been actively used since their launch in October 2020 and April 2021, respectively.

From 2022 to 2024

Liability simulator recorded
21,118
individual simulations

Quantum simulator recorded
21,797
individual simulations

Timely Intervention for Domestic Violence Cases

New measures were implemented by the State Courts on 1 August 2024 to address domestic violence cases. These provide enhanced support for victims and timely interventions for accused persons. For example, enhanced bail conditions in such cases can limit the accused's contact with the victim while the case is pending, particularly in cases of a breached personal protection order, a repeat offender, or where there is a high risk of reoffending against the same victim. In such cases, the accused may be required to secure alternative accommodation and would have to promptly update the Court on any change of address.

Domestic violence cases are referred to the Centre for Specialist Services (CSS) for a Community Court Conference (CCC). This conference allows psychologists, social workers and counsellors to:

- Assess the accused's risk factors.
- Evaluate the family's capacity to support the accused in receiving interventions.
- Conduct safety planning for the victim.
- Coordinate with relevant community agencies for support services.

The CSS also monitors the progress of the case until sentencing and notifies the sentencing judge if a post-sentencing CCC might be necessary. These proactive measures demonstrate the commitment of the Singapore Courts to effectively address domestic violence, ensuring the safety and wellbeing of victims while holding perpetrators accountable.

A hybrid arrangement was used to accommodate a large-scale interpleader trial that spanned three months, involving 81 solicitors and 33 clients.

Visitors to the HELP Centre at the State Courts now enjoy shorter waiting times and a smoother experience.

Interconnected Configurable Courtrooms for Large Hybrid Hearings

To accommodate a large-scale interpleader trial spanning three months (1 July to 27 September 2024), the Supreme Court implemented an innovative hybrid courtroom setup. The trial involved five cases, 20 competing parties, four intervenors, and saw the participation of about 81 solicitors and 33 clients.

Three courtrooms were interconnected via Zoom Webinar, with Court 4B serving as the main venue and Courts 4E and 4F functioning as secondary courtrooms. This arrangement allowed parties to attend both physically and virtually. Parties took turns in the main courtroom for witness cross-examination, while the secondary courtrooms were reconfigured into a classroom-style layout with tables facing large screens for optimal viewing. Lawyers in the secondary courtrooms were also able to raise their views seamlessly during proceedings.

Feedback from the legal community was highly positive, noting that this hybrid arrangement enhanced efficiency and convenience. It was particularly effective for the interpleader trial, where witnesses varied in relevance across the different parties.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

New Family Justice Rules 2024 Implemented

With the operationalisation of the new Family Justice Rules (FJR) 2024 on 15 October 2024, the Family Justice Courts (FJC) introduced a six-month transitional learning phase, during which a more lenient approach was adopted towards non-compliance with the new rules. This included granting extensions of time for procedural requirements and providing fee waivers or refunds where appropriate, giving lawyers and litigants adequate time to adapt to the changes.

The FJC conducted comprehensive briefing sessions to help lawyers navigate the new rules, guiding them through the complete lifecycle of a case, from originating processes to appeals. In addition, the FJC held five technical training sessions to familiarise lawyers with the enhanced eLitigation system. Key officers, both judicial and operational, have also been assigned to review and address feedback from users following the implementation of FJR 2024.

Implementation of Legislative Reforms

In 2024, the FJC undertook significant efforts to implement several crucial legislative reforms aimed at strengthening family justice in Singapore. A key milestone was the implementation of the Women's Charter (Amendment) Act 2022, which introduced Divorce by Mutual Agreement as a sixth fact for establishing irretrievable breakdown of marriage.

Working closely with the Ministry of Social and Family Development, the FJC developed comprehensive guidelines and introduced Form 271 in the Family Justice Courts Practice Directions (FJCPD) to ensure parties carefully consider reconciliation and arrangements for financial and child matters.

The new Family Justice Rules (FJR) 2024 were operationalised on 15 October 2024.

The FJC also made substantial progress in implementing the Adoption of Children Act 2022. This reform introduced crucial measures to eliminate unethical adoption practices, ensure better homes for children and break cycles of abuse and neglect. New procedural frameworks were established, including the introduction of Form 57A in the FJCPD and new originating application tracks in eLitigation, to streamline the adoption process while maintaining robust safeguards for all parties involved.

Other significant reforms implemented by the FJC include enhanced Protection from Harassment Act proceedings in family courts, expanded provisions under the Women's Charter for family violence protection, improved enforcement mechanisms for child access orders and a new maintenance enforcement process, which enhanced the enforcement regime to better assist maintenance payees in obtaining their entitled payments.

THERAPEUTIC JUSTICE

THROUGH THE LENS OF THERAPEUTIC JUSTICE, THE LEGAL SYSTEM EPITOMISES AN ETHOS OF CARE IN HELPING FAMILIES HEAL AND MOVE FORWARD.

THERAPEUTIC JUSTICE

LAUNCH OF THE THERAPEUTIC JUSTICE MODEL

The Family Justice Courts Learning Week 2024 focused on adjudicative competencies in the context of Therapeutic Justice.

On 21 October 2024, the Family Justice Courts (FJC) marked their 10th anniversary with the launch of the Therapeutic Justice (TJ) Model at their new building, the Octagon. The event was graced by Minister for Social and Family Development and then-Second Minister for Health, Mr Masagos Zulkifli, and then-Minister of State for Law and Transport, Mr Murali Pillai SC, and featured the unveiling of the TJ symbol and tagline by The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and Deputy Presiding Judge of the FJC, Mr Chia Wee Kiat.

The TJ Model provides a framework for all participants in the family justice system to better serve families and children. Its core principle is to help families accept the past while moving towards their best possible future. The model emphasises cooperation over conflict, timely and enduring solutions, and the primacy of children's interests. Lawyers are expected to support this ethos by educating clients on TJ practices, reducing acrimony, and facilitating compromise.

Under the TJ framework, cases begin with a Joint Triage Checklist, giving the court a preliminary overview. Parties may then be directed to attend a TJ Cooperative Conference (TJCC), where a mediation judge explains expected conduct, identifies key issues, and directs therapeutic interventions if required. For cases involving children, counselling with a Court Family Specialist follows the TJCC.

The model operates on two tracks. The standard track provides case management by Assistant Registrars until cases are ready for mediation or hearing, with subsequent management by a single judge. The teams track assigns cases early to a multi-disciplinary team comprising a mediation judge and Court Family Specialist, offering tailored approaches and therapeutic support from the outset.

Throughout, parties are expected to pursue amicable resolution, communicate respectfully, file only necessary applications with concise affidavits, and shield children from parental acrimony and court processes.

Therapeutic Justice in Action

The FJC Learning Week 2024 shone a spotlight on cultivating adjudicative competencies in the context of TJ. Jointly designed by the Singapore Judicial College and the FJC, the five-day curriculum focused on:

- Imparting TJ-informed best practices for adjudicative functions.
- Applying the practices to enhance TJ outcomes.
- Analysing the impact of adopting TJ on inspiring trust in the Judiciary.

Family Justice Courts

Therapeutic Justice Model (TJ Model)

THERAPEUTIC JUSTICE
New Day, New Hope

Therapeutic Justice (TJ) at the FJC is about helping families accept the past and move towards their best possible future. It involves a judge-led process where parties and their lawyers, along with other professionals, work together to find timely and enduring solutions to the family's disagreements, within the framework of the law.

TJ Objectives

- **Resolve family issues amicably,** and out of court where possible.
- **Reduce acrimony and conflict** during court proceedings.
- **Resolve underlying issues** in the interests of the family, putting the welfare of the children first.
- Treat one another with **respect, attention, empathy, and support.**
- **Move towards the future** and be enabled to resolve future issues amicably out of court.

Court Process

Parties who resolve all their issues out of court may apply to obtain final orders for divorce and related ancillary matters (AMs) through the **Full Simplified Track.**

The process below is for cases filed under the **Partial Simplified/Non-Simplified Track*.**

Triage Process

- **Joint Triage Checklist (JTC)** – A simple questionnaire that parties are to answer together (although single submissions are accepted). This provides the court with a preliminary view of the case.
- **TJ Cooperative Conference (TJCC)** – If scheduled, this is the first substantive court event attended by parties and their lawyers. The TJCC mediation judge will explain the expected conduct of the parties, identify and narrow down key issues, discuss proposals and assign the next court event. If there are minor children, counselling with a Court Family Specialist (CFS) will take place after the TJCC.

Tracks

Standard Track

- Cases are managed by case management Assistant Registrars until they are ready for mediation or hearing.
- A CFS may be present during the court process.
- At a later stage, cases may be managed by a single judge until conclusion.

Teams Track (One Family, One Team)

- Cases are assigned at an early stage to be managed by a multi-disciplinary Team (mediation judge, hearing judge and CFS) until the conclusion of the case.
- The Team tailors the approach for each case, depending on the family's needs. Court resources will only be applied when required.
- Family members receive therapeutic support as early as possible.

The Roles of Parties and Lawyers

- Parties are to cooperate to find timely and enduring solutions to the family's issues. They should prioritise the children (if any), focus on shared interests and the future. This involves being willing to compromise in the spirit of give and take to carry out court orders.
- Lawyers are to educate their clients on the practice of TJ, help their clients reduce acrimony, and assist to find common ground and solutions for better outcomes.

Do's

Make genuine attempts to resolve issues amicably, such as making reasonable proposals at mediation.

Use respectful and constructive language in letters, court documents, and courtroom communications.

File only necessary applications, concise affidavits, and relevant evidence.

Take all steps to protect children from parents' acrimony and exposure to court proceedings.

Don'ts

Refuse to participate meaningfully in mediation or make unreasonable or extreme proposals at mediation.

Use inflammatory and provocative language that heightens tensions in letters, court documents, and courtroom communications.

File unnecessary applications/affidavits/evidence that serve to heighten tensions, delay proceedings and increase costs.

Expose the children to legal documents and force them to take sides; ask them to write documents to support a parent; record/photograph them for court proceedings.

* Partial Simplified/Non-Simplified Track refers to cases where parties disagree on the divorce and/or ancillary matters.

TRUST AND TRUST-WORTHINESS

TIMELY RESOLUTION OF CASES IS A HALLMARK OF EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT COURT OPERATIONS, INSTILLING TRUST IN THE JUDICIARY AND CONFIDENCE IN THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE JUDICIARY.

TRUST AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

SUPREME COURT'S WAITING PERIODS

The Supreme Court sets targets for waiting periods for the hearing of various matters as part of its commitment to providing quality public service, and we endeavour to achieve at least 90% compliance with all targets set.

In 2024, all targets set for the entire year were achieved, and the key targets are set out below.

TYPE OF PROCEEDINGS	TARGET
GENERAL DIVISION OF THE HIGH COURT	
CASE CONFERENCES	
Originating Claim (OC) or Originating Application (OA) served in Singapore	**8 weeks** after the date of filing
OC or OA served out of Singapore	**12 weeks** after the date of filing
ORIGINAL CIVIL JURISDICTION	
Trial of OC	**8 weeks** after the date of setting down
Bankrupty OA (i) Application for bankruptcy order (ii) Other OA	 **6 weeks** after the date of filing; and **2 weeks** after the date of filing
Companies Winding-up OA	**4 weeks** after the date of filing
OTHER APPLICATIONS BEFORE JUDGE/REGISTRAR	
OA without notice:	**3 weeks** after the date of filing
Summons involving applications for summary judgment pursuant to Order 9, Rule 17 of the Rules of Court 2021, striking out pursuant to Order 9, Rule 16 of the Rules of Court 2021, or a challenge to jurisdiction pursuant to Order 9, Rule 7 of the Rules of Court 2021	**6 weeks** after the date of filing
Any other summons	**3 weeks** after the date of filing
Bankruptcy summons involving application for discharge	**4 weeks** after the date of filing
Any other bankruptcy summons	**2 weeks** after the date of filing
Assessment of bill of costs	**3 weeks** after the date of filing
Assessment of damages	**5 weeks** after the date of filing
Examination of enforcement respondent	**3 weeks** after the date of filing of the request for appointment of examination

TRUST AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

SUPREME COURT'S WAITING PERIODS

TYPE OF PROCEEDINGS	TARGET
GENERAL DIVISION OF THE HIGH COURT	
APPELLATE CIVIL JURISDICTION	
Registrar's Appeals from the General Division of the High Court	**3 weeks** after the date of filing of written submissions
Appeals in civil matters from the State Courts' District Courts	**4 weeks** after the date of receipt of the appeal papers from the State Courts
Appeals in civil matters from the State Courts' Small Claims Tribunals	**4 weeks** after the date of receipt of the Record of Proceedings (ROP) from the State Courts
CRIMINAL JURISDICTION	
Pre-trial Conference (PTC) in Criminal Case	**12 weeks** after the date the accused is first charged in the State Courts
Trial of Criminal Case	**6 weeks** after the date of the final Criminal Case Disclosure Conference or PTC before trial (whichever is later)
Magistrate's Appeals from the State Courts	**12 weeks** after the date of receipt of the ROP from the State Courts
COURT OF APPEAL AND APPELLATE DIVISION OF THE HIGH COURT	
APPELLATE CIVIL JURISDICTION	
Civil appeal in the Court of Appeal or the Appellate Division of the High Court	**19 to 22 weeks** after the date of notification that the ROP is ready for collection
APPELLATE CRIMINAL JURISDICTION	
Criminal appeal in the Court of Appeal	**15 weeks** after the date of last confirmation of the ROP

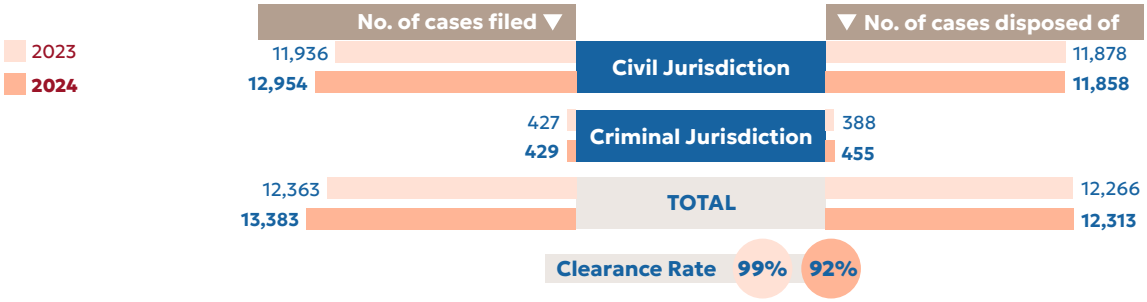
TRUST AND TRUSTWORTHINESS
STATISTICS

One of the indicators by which the SG Courts' performance is measured is clearance rate, which is the number of cases disposed of in a year expressed as a percentage of the number of cases filed in the same year. The clearance rate can exceed 100%, as the cases disposed of in any year are not a subset of the cases filed in that year.

Supreme Court's Workload

The Supreme Court received a total of 13,383 new cases in 2024. A total of 12,313 cases were disposed of in the same period. The clearance rate in 2024 for all civil and criminal matters was 92%, down by 7% from 2023.

The following table shows a comparison of the filing and disposal numbers and clearance rates for civil and criminal proceedings between 2023 and 2024.



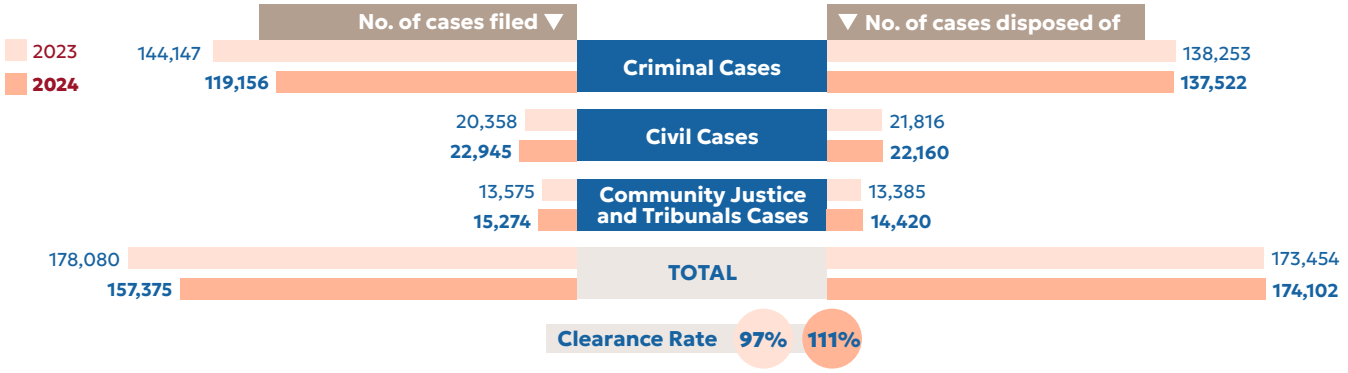
	No. of cases filed		No. of cases disposed of		Clearance rate
	2023	**2024**	2023	**2024**	**2024**
Civil Jurisdiction	11,936	12,954	11,878	11,858	
Civil Originating Processes	7,336	8,562	7,334	7,549	88%
Civil Interlocutory Applications	3,895	3,795	3,860	3,683	97%
Appeals before the General Division of the High Court	316	257	307	258	100%
Appeals before the Appellate Division of the High Court	138	97	123	131	135%
Applications before the Appellate Division of the High Court	113	86	112	88	102%
Appeals before the Court of Appeal	56	86	67	70	81%
Applications before the Court of Appeal	82	71	75	79	111%
Criminal Jurisdiction	427	429	388	455	
Criminal Cases	63	71	57	73	103%
Criminal Motions before the General Division of the High Court	98	74	93	86	116%
Magistrate's Appeals	185	191	173	201	105%
Criminal Revisions	9	16	7	16	100%
Criminal Appeals	21	24	17	24	100%
Criminal Motions and References before the Court of Appeal	51	53	41	55	104%
Total	**12,363**	**13,383**	**12,266**	**12,313**	**92%**

TRUST AND TRUSTWORTHINESS
STATISTICS

State Courts' Workload

The State Courts received a total of 157,375 new cases in 2024. A total of 174,102 cases were disposed of in the same period. The clearance rate in 2024 for all criminal, civil and Community Justice and Tribunals matters was 111%, up by 14% from 2023.

The following shows a comparison of the filing and disposal numbers and clearance rates for criminal, civil and Community Justice and Tribunals proceedings between 2023 and 2024.



	No. of cases filed		No. of cases disposed of	
	2023	**2024**	2023	**2024**
Criminal Cases	**144,147**	**119,156**	**138,253**	**137,522**
Criminal Charges[1]	29,559	32,716		
Departmental or Statutory Board Charges and Summonses	70,693	61,352		
Traffic Charges and Summonses	38,821	20,067		
Coroner's Court Cases	5,066	5,017		
Magistrate's Complaints[2]	8	4		
Civil Cases	**20,358**	**22,945**	**21,816**	**22,160**
Originating Processes	11,740	14,416		
Writs of Summons/ Originating Claims[3]	11,311	14,032		
Originating Summonses/Originating Applications[4]	429	384		
Interlocutory Applications	7,222	7,160		
Others	1,396	1,369		
Taxation	72	35		
Assessment of Damages	1,324	1,334		
Community Justice and Tribunals Cases	**13,575**	**15,274**	**13,385**	**14,420**
Community Disputes Resolution Tribunals (CDRT) Claims	182	212		
Employment Claims Tribunals (ECT) Claims	1,216	1,212		
Magistrate's Complaints	1,327	1,395		
Protection from Harassment Court (PHC) Cases	562	684		
Small Claims Tribunals (SCT) Claims	10,288	11,771		
TOTAL	**178,080**	**157,375**	**173,454**	**174,102**

Other Caseload Profile

Court Dispute Resolution[5]	**3,391**	**3,930**
(Civil) Writs of Summons/Originating Claims, Originating Summonses/Originating Applications	3,070	3,500
(Community) PHC Cases, CDRT Claims, Magistrate's Complaints	321	430

1 Includes District arrest charges, Magistrates' arrest charges and other types of charges.
2 Non-relational Magistrate's Complaints are counted as criminal cases. Relational Magistrate's Complaints are counted as Community Justice and Tribunals cases.
3 Writ of Summons is called Originating Claim under the Rules of Court (ROC) 2021. The change in terminology took effect on 1 April 2022.
4 Originating Summons is called Originating Application under ROC 2021. The change in terminology took effect on 1 April 2022.
5 Refers to fresh cases handled by the Court Dispute Resolution cluster.

TRUST AND TRUSTWORTHINESS
STATISTICS

Family Justice Courts' Workload

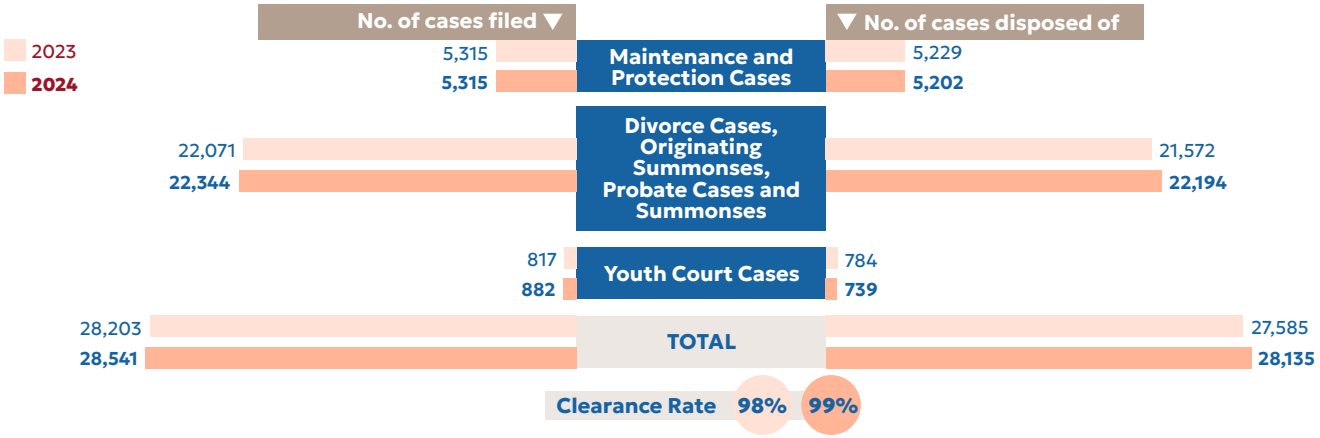
The Family Justice Courts handled 28,541 cases in 2024, up by 1.2% from 2023. Divorce, maintenance and probate cases made up more than half of the total caseload.

The following shows a comparison of the filing and disposal numbers and clearance rates for family proceedings between 2023 and 2024.

New cases: **28,541**

Cases disposed: **28,135**

Clearance rate: **99%**



	No. of cases filed		No. of cases disposed of	
	2023	**2024**	2023	**2024**
Maintenance and Protection Cases	5,315	5,315	5,229	5,202
Divorce Cases, Originating Summonses, Probate Cases and Summonses	22,071	22,344	21,572	22,194
Youth Court Cases	817	882	784	739
TOTAL	**28,203**	**28,541**	**27,585**	**28,135**

Singapore Judicial College's Programmes and Training Placements

The Singapore Judicial College fulfilled its learning and development mandate in 2024 through 70 programmes that translated to 2,289 training placements for local judges and international participants.

Year	Programmes	Training Placements
2024	**70**	**2,289**
2023	61	2,293

TRUST AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

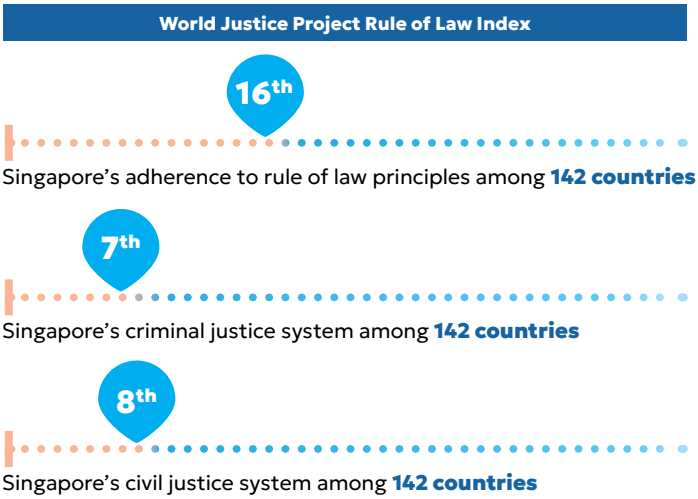
International Rankings

In 2024, the Singapore Judiciary and legal system continued to be recognised internationally as among the best in the world. Across multiple global rule of law rankings and assessments by reputable think tanks and international organisations, Singapore consistently achieved high scores.

One such ranking, the International Institute for Management Development (IMD) World Competitiveness Yearbook 2024, ranked Singapore 5th among 67 economies for fairness in the administration of justice. This marked a strong rebound from 17th place in 2023, underscoring Singapore's continued commitment to judicial excellence and reinforcing its standing among the world's top jurisdictions.

Source: International Institute for Management Development World Competitiveness Yearbook

Singapore's judicial system also recorded a strong showing in the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index 2024, which placed the Republic 16th among 142 countries. Its ranking in civil justice (8th) and criminal justice (7th) were especially notable. These rankings, alongside Singapore's inclusion in the inaugural World Bank Business Ready Report 2024, reflect our continued commitment to maintaining an efficient and trustworthy judicial system.



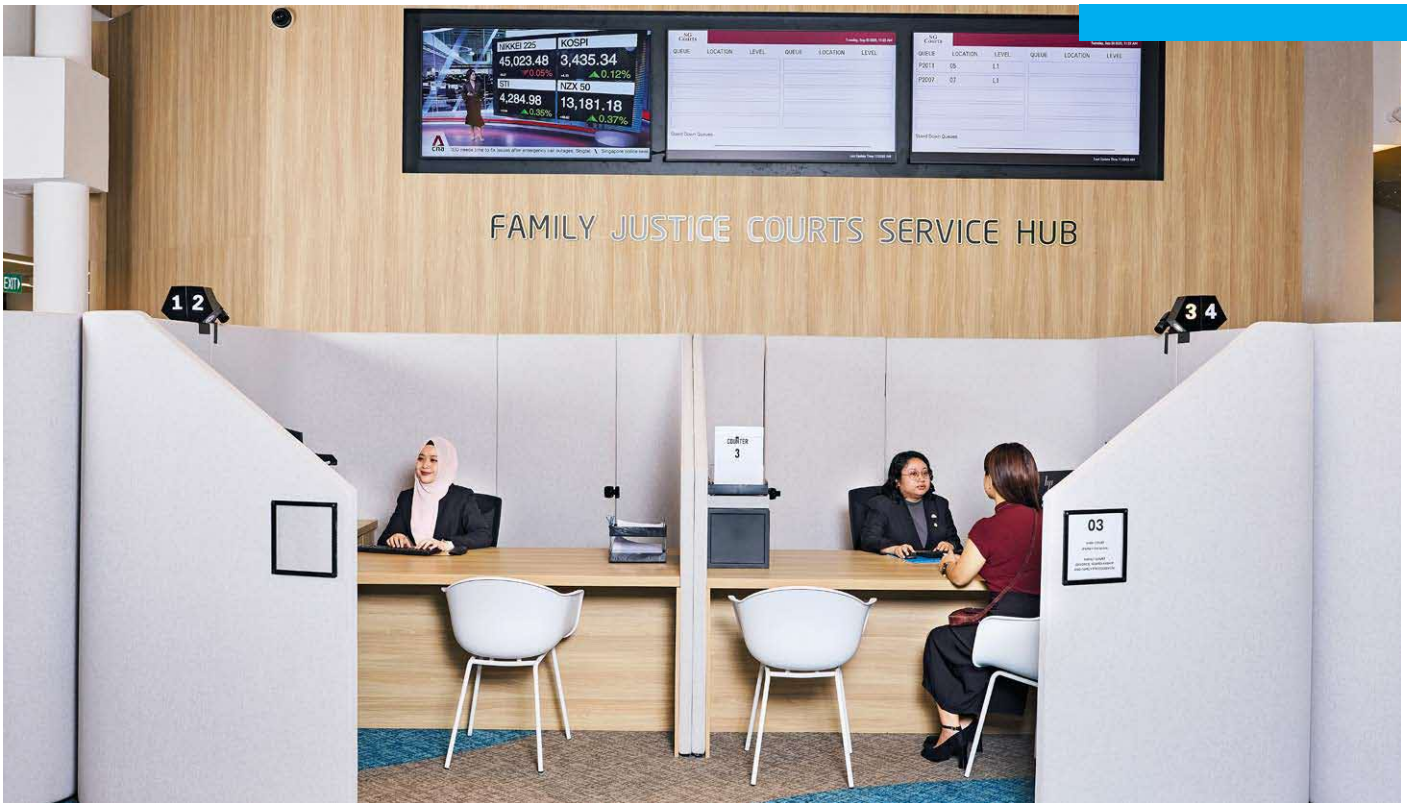
Source: World Justice Project Rule of Law Index 2024

Fast-Track Arbitration and Insolvency Appeals

The timely resolution of urgent appeals is vital to sustaining trust and confidence in our Judiciary.

To achieve this, the Supreme Court Registry introduced dedicated workflows to expedite hearings in arbitration and insolvency matters. Under these workflows, eligible appeals are closely monitored and actively managed, with the Registry issuing bespoke directions to accelerate the filing of appeal documents. The bespoke directions typically stipulate a much shorter timeframe for filing appeal documents, compared to the general three-month timeframe that is given to parties in other types of appeals. They ensure that fast-tracked arbitration and insolvency appeals are ready for hearing as early as possible.

TRUST AND TRUSTWORTHINESS



Oversight Assurance Control Needs

The Judiciary's Audit Committee assessed the adequacy and effectiveness of the Judiciary's risk management and internal control systems. This included an update of the Judiciary's Risk Register, the definition of Risk Appetite, and the development of Key Risk Indicators for each key risk. Various audits were also carried out by the Internal Audit Division in areas such as payment processing and fee collection. The Committee met three times during the year to review audit results and ensured that all findings were followed up and resolved.

Advisory work was also carried out in three areas: improving the Enterprise Risk Management framework, ensuring technology controls compliance, and strengthening risk management practices. In the area of business resiliency, the Internal Audit Team's advisory work improved efficiency in Information Security and Data Management. Incorporating ISO risk management processes has enhanced the maturity of practices, while IT oversight through log reviews and feedback has strengthened controls and clarified responsibilities.

Engaging people remains a critical part of effective internal control. Sharing sessions were conducted to reinforce the right tone for good practices and corporate governance. Together, process improvements and people-focused initiatives have provided greater assurance that control needs are met.

Inaugural One Judiciary IFCE Self-Assessment

The International Framework for Court Excellence (IFCE), developed by the International Consortium for Court Excellence (ICCE), is used by courts striving for continuous improvement to conduct regular self-assessments and identify areas for development.

In January–February 2024, SG Courts conducted its first whole-of-judiciary IFCE self-assessment and achieved a very good score. This reflected well-defined approaches, with evidence of refinement through learning, innovation and improvement which are well-integrated with organisational needs.

Our experience was shared with the international community during the 2024 International Association for Court Administration Conference in Singapore, and through the ICCE Newsletter in December 2024.

Building Trust Through Enhanced User Experience

Significant improvements were made in 2024 to the Community Justice and Tribunals System (CJTS), including the introduction of the Electronic Defects Schedule for Small Claims. This feature helps parties organise and present evidence more effectively. Working with Harvey.AI, automated translations of Small Claims notices were also enabled. This enhancement supports self-represented parties who prefer to read documents in an official language other than English, thereby improving access to justice and enhancing user experience.

TRUST AND TRUSTWORTHINESS
SIGNIFICANT CASES FROM THE SUPREME COURT

Several significant judgments were released by the Supreme Court (comprising the General Division of the High Court, the Singapore International Commercial Court (SICC), the Appellate Division of the High Court and the Court of Appeal) in 2024. These include:

Asiana Airlines, Inc v Gate Gourmet Korea Co, Ltd and others **[2024] SGCA(I) 8**

This appeal arose from two anti-suit injunctions granted by the SICC to restrain Asiana Airlines, Inc (Asiana) from pursuing Korean court proceedings in breach of arbitration agreements in a catering agreement and a joint venture agreement.

The Court of Appeal upheld the anti-suit injunctions restraining Asiana's claims against Gate Gourmet Korea Co, Ltd under the catering agreement and against Gate Gourmet Switzerland GmbH under the joint venture agreement. However, it set aside the anti-suit injunction insofar as it restrained claims against two directors of the Gate Gourmet Group, who were not parties to either arbitration agreement.

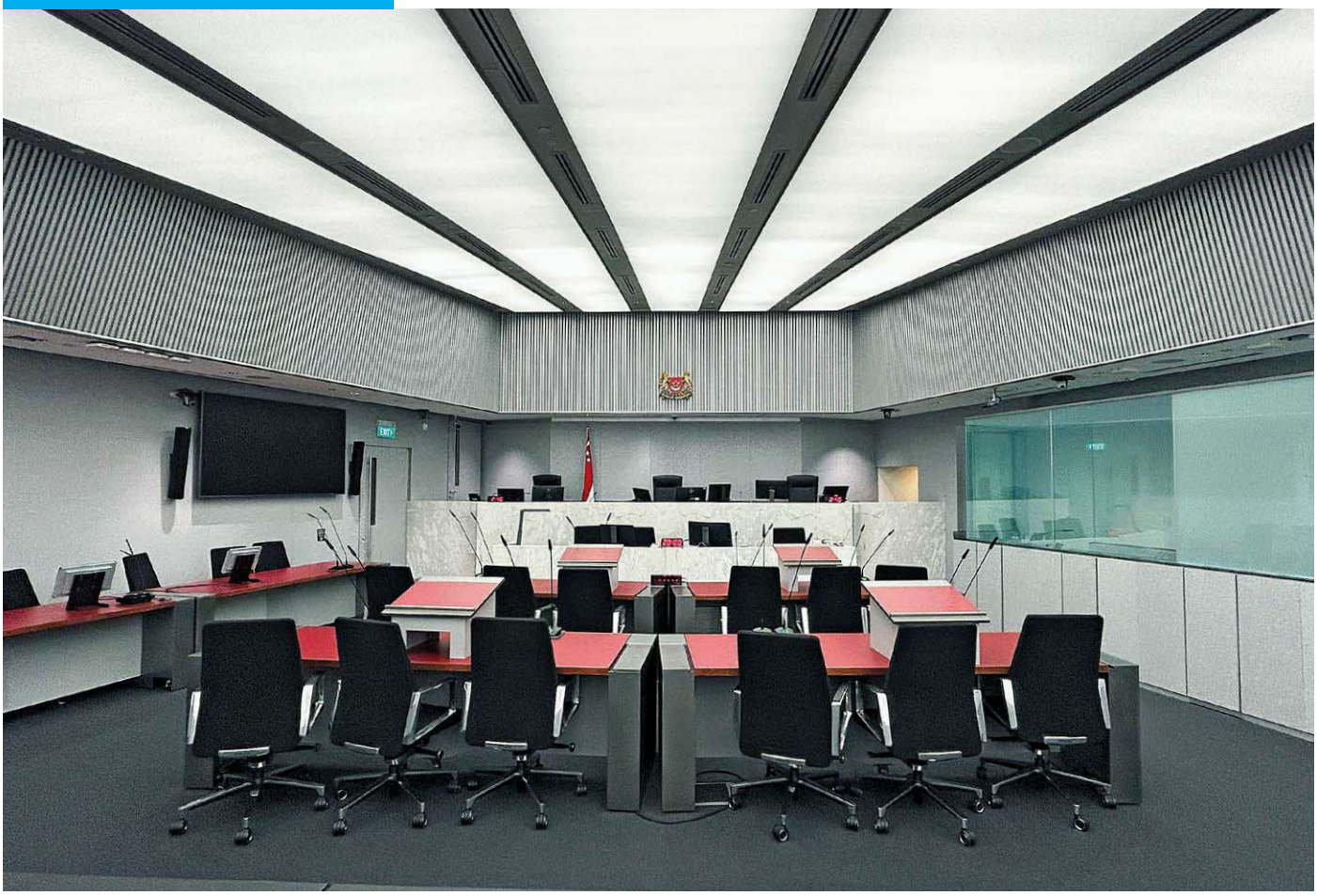
The Court laid down principles for when an anti-suit injunction may extend to non-parties. Granting of anti-suit injunctions against non-parties may be justified where the clause was intended to bind the non-party, or where suing the non-party is used as a device to sidestep the clause such that the foreign proceedings are vexatious and oppressive as between the contracting parties. On the facts, that threshold was not met in respect of the directors.

Arbiters Inc Law Corp v Arokiasamy Steven Joseph and another **[2024] SGHC(A) 37**

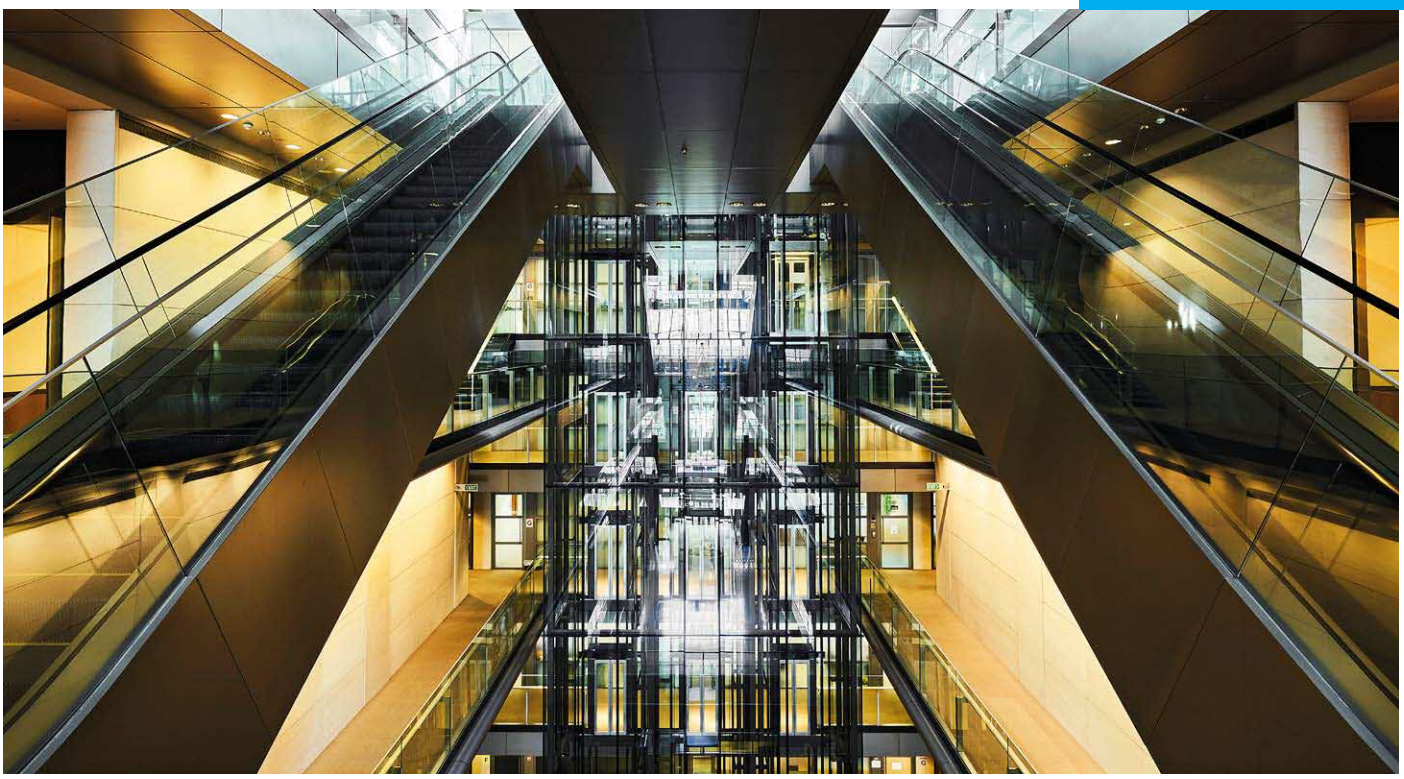
This appeal concerned a law firm's bid to enforce two letters of engagement as contentious business agreements under the Legal Profession Act 1966 (2020 Rev Ed) and to recover fees from former clients.

The Appellate Division affirmed the Court's broad supervisory role over legal costs even where a client has agreed to a fee agreement. Agreements may be declared void where terms are unfair or unreasonable and where billing amounts to overcharging.

The Court held that the letters were contentious business agreements in principle but void on the facts because the fees claimed were plainly excessive relative to the fee estimate and would have deprived the clients of their settlement proceeds. The Court expressed grave concerns over counsel's conduct and directed counsel be referred to the Law Society.



TRUST AND TRUSTWORTHINESS
SIGNIFICANT CASES FROM THE SUPREME COURT



Thangarajan Elanchezhian v Public Prosecutor **[2024] SGHC 306**

This was a Magistrate's Appeal against conviction and sentence for outrage of modesty arising from incidents on a public bus involving a 16- year-old victim. The District Judge had convicted the appellant and imposed six months' imprisonment.

The Chief Justice dismissed the appeal, finding no basis to disturb the factual findings or the application of the sentencing framework. The Court accepted the victim's cogent and consistent account, rejected the appellant's claim of accidental contact, and upheld the six months' sentence.

The Chief Justice held that the court should take on a more active supervisory role in managing the giving of evidence by complainants of sexual offences, and set out a framework for assessing the permissibility of lines of questioning directed at a complainant. The Court emphasised careful and controlled cross examination of complainants given the heightened sensitivities when such evidence is received. The Court must closely supervise and assess the questioning for relevance and propriety, and questions that rely on harmful stereotypes should generally be prohibited.

Re No Va Land Investment Group Corp **[2024] SGHC(I) 17**

This was the SICC's first application for a cross-border pre-pack scheme, and one of the first reasoned decisions of the SICC since its jurisdiction was expanded to include insolvency matters.

This case concerned a pre-pack scheme of arrangement for a Vietnam incorporated property developer with Singapore listed convertible bonds.

The SICC sanctioned the scheme and explained its approach to pre-pack restructurings under the Insolvency, Restructuring and Dissolution Act 2018 (2020 Rev Ed), including disclosure standards, creditor notice, and the need to assess the scheme within a coherent class structure and a reliable evidential record.

Reliance Infrastructure Limited v Shanghai Electric Group Co Ltd **[2024] SGHC(I) 3**

This was an application to set aside a US-denominated arbitral award arising from a power project. Reliance Infrastructure Limited (Reliance) alleged that a 2008 guarantee letter and the arbitration agreement within it were forged, or alternatively that the signatory lacked authority.

The SICC dismissed the application. It held that Reliance had waived its jurisdictional objections under Art 16(2) of the Model Law by defending the arbitration without squarely pleading forgery or want of authority, and by failing to raise these points at the earliest opportunity. In any event, the Court found the forgery case unpersuasive on the evidence and concluded that the signatory had ostensible authority. The Court permitted limited cross-examination on fresh evidence and, given serious public allegations of forgery, lifted an earlier sealing order so the judgment could be published unredacted.

This decision was upheld on appeal in Reliance Infrastructure Ltd v Shanghai Electric Group Co Ltd [2024] SGCA(I) 10.

TRUST AND TRUSTWORTHINESS
SIGNIFICANT CASES FROM THE STATE COURTS

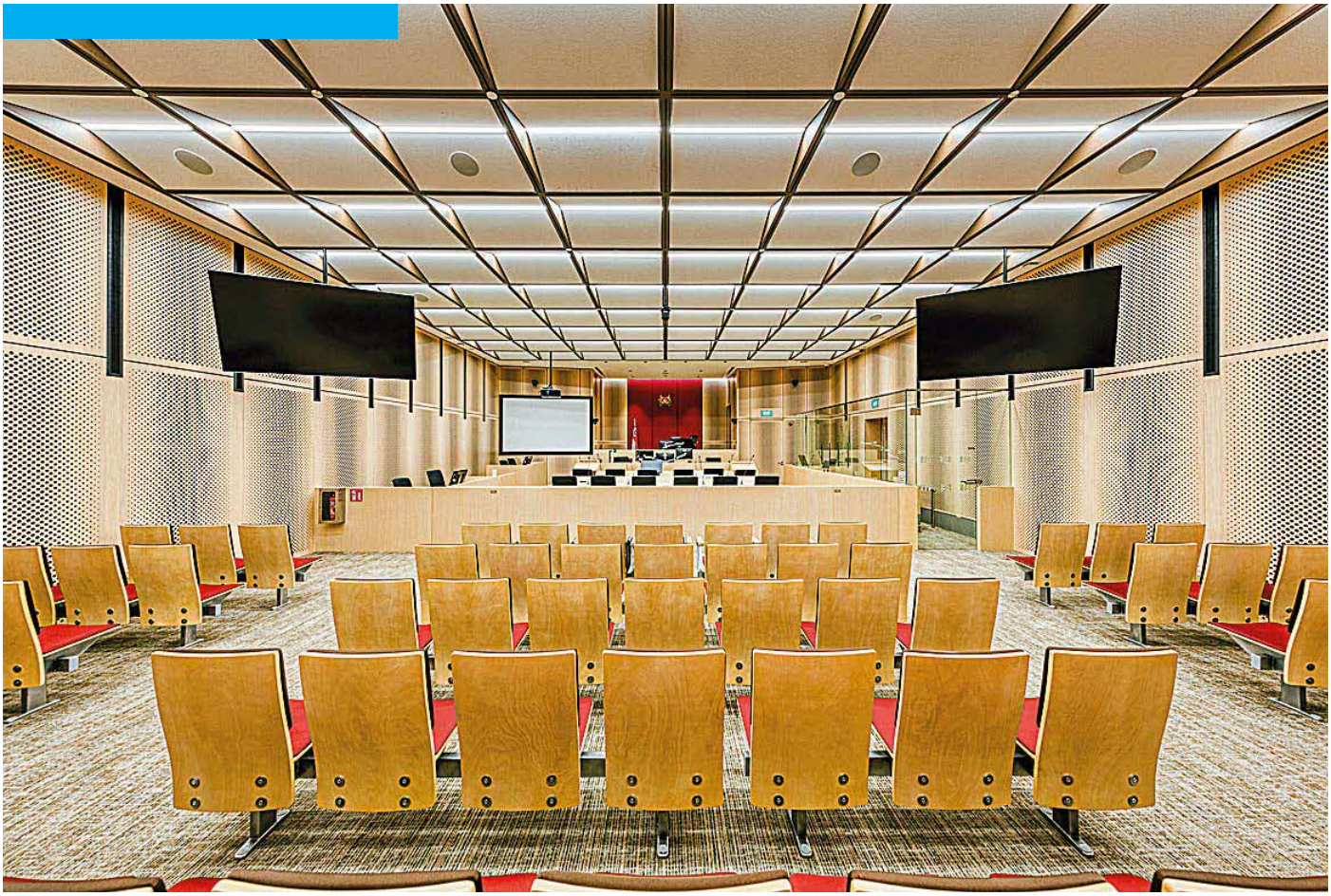
Criminal Cases

***Public Prosecutor v Randy Rosigit* [2024] 4 SLR 1586**

Mr Randy Rosigit pleaded guilty to one charge of possessing child abuse material under s 377BK(1) punishable under s 377BK(2) of the Penal Code and consented to two additional charges being taken into consideration for the purpose of sentencing (one similar charge of accessing child abuse material, and one charge under s 30(1) of the Films Act for possession of 119 obscene films). In 2020, he used a web browser that anonymised users' web traffic and found a search engine from which he could access websites containing child abuse material. He paid Bitcoin for full access to the website (although he did not gain full access). Subsequently in 2021, he joined a Telegram chat group where pornography (including child abuse material) was shared. He downloaded two still images showing fully nude girls who appeared below 14 years of age and six videos showing young girls engaging in various sexual acts. The District Judge sentenced him to six weeks' imprisonment on the proceeded charge.

On appeal by the Prosecution, a three-judge coram of the High Court set out a new five-step sentencing framework for the offence of possession of child abuse material, following the framework in ***Logachev Vladislav v Public Prosecutor* [2018] 4 SLR 609**. Under the first step, the court identified the level of harm caused by the offence and the offender's culpability. Relevant harm factors included the age of the child, the quantity of child abuse materials, the exposure of private body parts, and the type of media. The court also ranked four levels of harm based on the nature of the child abuse materials and acts involved. The culpability factors included planning, preparation, premeditation and sophistication, attempts to conceal the offence, group participation, duration and the offender's motive. At the second and third steps, the court identified the applicable indicative sentencing range and the appropriate starting point within that range. At the fourth step, the court made adjustments to the starting point to take into account offender-specific aggravating and mitigating factors. Where an offender had been convicted of multiple charges, the court considered, at the fifth step, the need to make further adjustments to take into account the totality principle.

The High Court considered that the present offence was at the lower end of moderate harm and the high end of low culpability. While the net quantity of child abuse material possessed was low, they depicted acts at a high level of harm, including not just still images but long videos, including very young, identifiable victims. As for culpability, he searched for the material on the dark web and paid Bitcoin for access to the material. He was a member of a network where child abuse material was shared. There was evidence of an escalation in offending over a fairly long period. His sentence was enhanced to eight months' imprisonment.



***Seah Ming Yang Daryle v Public Prosecutor* [2024] 4 SLR 1561; [2024] SGHC 152**

Mr Seah Ming Yang Daryle pleaded guilty to three charges under the Road Traffic Act 1961, including a charge for driving a motor van without holding a Class 3 licence. The District Judge sentenced him to four weeks' imprisonment and 18 months' disqualification from all classes of driving licences, based on the framework laid out by the High Court in ***Public Prosecutor v Rizuwan bin Rohmat* [2024] 3 SLR 694** (*Rizuwan*). He appealed against the sentence imposed, primarily arguing against the *Rizuwan* framework and proposing various alternative frameworks that the Court should take reference from instead.

A three-judge coram of the High Court set out the appropriate sentencing framework for the offence of driving a motor vehicle without a valid licence under s 35(1) of the Road Traffic Act. It affirmed the position in *Rizuwan* that a custodial term should be imposed to deter potential offenders. However, it revised the benchmark sentence for archetypal cases (involving a first-time offender who had never held a valid driving licence and where no accident took place) to two weeks' imprisonment and disqualification from all classes of driving licences for a period of two years. This was broadly consistent with the usual tariff of four to eight weeks' imprisonment for the offence of driving while under disqualification, which merited harsher punishment because it applied to repeat offenders who had been persistent in disregarding the law by driving whilst under disqualification despite having committed a previous traffic offence warranting disqualification. The High Court also affirmed the non-exhaustive list of factors in *Rizuwan* that a court could consider in calibrating the sentence in each case:

a. The offender's reason for driving;
b. The offender's manner and length of driving;
c. The consequences that arose from the offender's driving;
d. Whether there were other occupants in the offender's vehicle;
e. The offender's conduct after the offence had been committed;
f. The presence of driving-related antecedents; and
g. Whether other driving-related charges were taken into consideration.

The appeal was allowed in part. The imprisonment term was reduced to three weeks, after applying the new benchmark sentence, with adjustments based on consideration of the various aggravating and mitigating factors, as well as the totality principle. The disqualification remained at 18 months as there was no appeal against the order of disqualification.

Chang Peng Hong Clarence v Public Prosecutor **[2024] 2 SLR 722**

In the present case, the Court of Appeal gave guidance on the imposition of penalties under s 13 of the Prevention of Corruption Act (PCA), as well as the calibration of imprisonment in default of paying the penalties.

Mr Chang Peng Hong Clarence (Mr Chang) claimed trial to 20 charges under the PCA for allegedly receiving gratification, as an inducement for furthering the business interest of the giver's company with his company. The District Judge convicted him of all charges. In relation to the penalty order, she imposed a single penalty order of $6,220,095, in default 28 months' imprisonment. This single penalty order reflected the total amount involved in all the charges.

On appeal to the High Court, the High Court upheld the conviction for 19 charges and acquitted Mr Chang of one charge. In relation to penalty orders, the Prosecution submitted that penalty orders under s 13(1) of the PCA should be imposed in respect of each charge, and that the District Judge erred in imposing a single penalty order. The High Court judge rejected the Prosecution's submission and instead substituted the single penalty order with three penalty orders. He also adjusted the in-default imprisonment terms for the three penalty orders proportionately based on the relative amount of gratification. The total penalty ordered was $5,877,595, in default of which Mr Chang was ordered to serve a term of 2,129 days' (or about 70.96 months') imprisonment.

Following the decision by the High Court, Mr Chang was granted leave to file a criminal reference to the Court of Appeal to consider the following question:

"Under Section 13(1) of the [PCA], can a sentencing judge impose more than one penalty when an accused person has been convicted of two or more offences for the acceptance of gratification in contravention of the PCA?"

The Court of Appeal's answer to the question was that the sentencing judge could and must impose more than one penalty when an accused person has been convicted of two or more offences for the acceptance of gratification in contravention of the PCA, and that the judge must impose one penalty for each charge on which the accused person was convicted. This was because the legislative purpose of s 13(1) of the PCA was to prevent corrupt recipients from retaining their ill-gotten gains. Mr Chang's interpretation of s 13 of the PCA would mean that there would only be one global penalty order, with a maximum in-default imprisonment term of 30 months, whatever the total amount of gratification received by the offender. This might create a perverse effect of incentivising an offender who received a substantial amount of gratification to opt to serve the in-default imprisonment term rather than disgorge the value of gratification. Such an interpretation would not accord with the Parliamentary intent in enacting s 13 of the PCA.

The Court of Appeal further set out the framework for calibrating the period of in-default imprisonment for failure to pay the amount stated in a penalty order in a case with more than one charge as follows. The court was to use a daily value of $1,000 for each day of the in-default imprisonment, while ensuring that the individual in-default imprisonment terms comply with the statutory limitation for each charge. Thereafter, the court must ensure that the aggregate of the in-default imprisonment terms, together with the terms of imprisonment already imposed as punishment for the offences, complied with the statutory limitation on the overall imprisonment term at one trial (i.e., 20 years' imprisonment for the District Court). If there were charges taken into consideration (TIC charges) involving the receipt of gratification, the court should add the amounts in the TIC charges to the amounts in one or more of the charges that the offender was convicted on. Finally, utilising the totality principle and bearing in mind that in-default imprisonment terms run consecutively, the court should consider whether the aggregate of the in-default imprisonment terms would be sufficient to disincentivise the offender from non-payment of the total penalty. The Court of Appeal therefore issued 19 penalty orders totalling $5,877,595, with an aggregate in-default imprisonment term of 120 months (adjusted downwards to avoid exceeding the overall statutory limit of 20 years' imprisonment in the District Court).

Civil Cases

Longitude 101 Pte. Ltd. v Navinea Kanapathy Pillai and another matter **[2024] SGDC 47**

The case involved claims by Longitude 101 Pte. Ltd. (Longitude) against its former Head of Finance and sole director, Ms Navinea Kanapathy Pillai, for alleged misappropriation of funds, breach of confidentiality, and failure to return company property. Ms Pillai counterclaimed against Longitude and Mr Haeusler Thomas (Longitude's sole shareholder) for wrongful dismissal due to her pregnancy and conspiracy.

The Court dismissed all of Longitude's claims, finding that Ms Pillai did not misappropriate the $100,500 in question as she had paid the money to Mr Haeusler as dividends after withdrawing it from the bank. While Ms Pillai breached the obligation to return company property between April and August 2021, Longitude failed to prove any quantifiable loss. The Court also found no evidence of breach of confidentiality obligations.

The Court granted Ms Pillai's counterclaim, finding that she was wrongfully dismissed due to her pregnancy in violation of section 84(1)(b) of the Employment Act 1968. The Court determined that Longitude and Mr Haeusler (who was found to be a de facto director) had conspired to cause damage to Ms Pillai through the unlawful dismissal. Ms Pillai was awarded $122,123.93 in damages.

TRUST AND TRUSTWORTHINESS
SIGNIFICANT CASES FROM THE STATE COURTS

***Competition and Consumer Commission of Singapore and another v Nail Palace (BPP) Pte. Ltd. and another matter* [2024] SGDC 215**

The case involved contempt of court proceedings brought by the Competition and Consumer Commission of Singapore (CCCS) against Nail Palace (BPP) Pte Ltd, Nail Palace (SM) Pte Ltd, and their managing director Mr. Kaiden Cheng for breaching court orders. The orders required the companies to publish details of declarations and injunctions against them in four major newspapers and notify all consumers in writing about these declarations and injunctions before entering into contracts. These orders stemmed from earlier findings that the companies had engaged in unfair practices regarding fungal treatment packages.

The Court found that the respondents had deliberately breached the orders by making the newspaper publications illegible (condensing a 66-page judgment into one page), failing to translate publications in non-English newspapers, and implementing an incomplete and inconsistent consumer notification system. The Court rejected the respondents' arguments that they had substantially complied with the orders and that any breaches were unintentional or resulted from employee error.

The Court found all respondents guilty of contempt of court, fining each company S$15,000 and sentencing Mr. Cheng to four months' imprisonment. In imposing these severe penalties, the Court emphasised the deliberate and persistent nature of the breaches, the respondents' flagrant disregard for court orders from September 2022 to 2024, and the substantial prejudice caused to public interest that could not be remedied by fines alone. The Court noted that the breaches undermined important consumer protection measures, making this an appropriate case for a custodial sentence.

***Martin Piper v Singapore Kindness Movement* [2024] SGDC 292**

This case involved a claim under the Personal Data Protection Act 2012 (PDPA) by Mr Martin Piper against the Singapore Kindness Movement (SKM) regarding the disclosure of his personal data. Mr Piper had complained to SKM about a person named Ms Carol Loi and her alleged involvement with a Telegram group that he claimed promoted discriminatory content. SKM subsequently disclosed Piper's identity to Ms Loi while investigating the complaint.

The Court dismissed Mr Piper's claim, finding that SKM had not contravened the PDPA. The Court determined that Mr Piper was deemed to have consented to the disclosure of his identity when he voluntarily provided his personal data to SKM for the purpose of investigating his complaint. The Court found it reasonable for SKM to disclose his identity during the investigation, especially since Mr Piper had not requested anonymity.

The Court also found that Mr Piper failed to establish that he suffered any loss or damage directly resulting from SKM's disclosure of his personal data, as required under section 48O of the PDPA. While Piper claimed emotional distress from subsequent events (including a harassment claim filed by Ms Loi and death threats he received), the Court determined these were not directly caused by SKM's disclosure of his identity.

Coroner's Inquiries

Coroner's Inquiry No: CI-005240-2023-TA
(Michael Ong Wee Siong)

This was an inquiry into the death of a 21-year-old male, Mr Michael Ong Wee Siong (Mr Ong), following a road traffic accident. Mr Ong had engaged an illegal carpooling service on the Telegram application, in a chat group known as "Telegram SG Hitch Singapore" (Telegram Hitch). The Telegram Hitch chat group worked in the following way: a potential customer would ask in the chat if there was anyone who could pick them up, or potential drivers would post in the chat that they were willing to provide driving services. The potential customer and potential driver could then negotiate privately. The carpooling service being offered by the drivers was for payment and the prices were usually much cheaper than private hire cars. However, the vehicles being used for such carpooling services were not classified as public service vehicles under the Second Schedule to the Road Traffic Act.

Mr Ong was picked up in a van providing such a carpooling service. The van was driven by an 18-year-old male who was taking driving lessons at the time of the accident, but did not possess a valid Class 3 driving licence or a provisional driving licence. As he did not possess any valid driving licence, he also did not possess the necessary private hire car driver's vocational licence to drive the car, which was essentially used as a private hire vehicle. There was consequently no valid policy of insurance covering passengers in the vehicle in the event of an accident. The driver had borrowed the van, which belonged to an events management company he was working for, from an employee of the company to whom the van was entrusted. The driver had received a job on Telegram Hitch to pick up Mr Ong. He was driving from Kembangan to Boon Lay along PIE (Tuas) when the accident occurred, likely as the driver was trying to overtake a lorry. The van collided with the right rear side of the lorry. The momentum of the collision launched the van into the air and propelled it past the lorry, coming back down to the road surface, overturned. Mr Ong sustained severe traumatic injuries and succumbed to those injuries at the scene. He was pronounced dead after he was extricated from the van. The cause of death was stated to be neck injury.

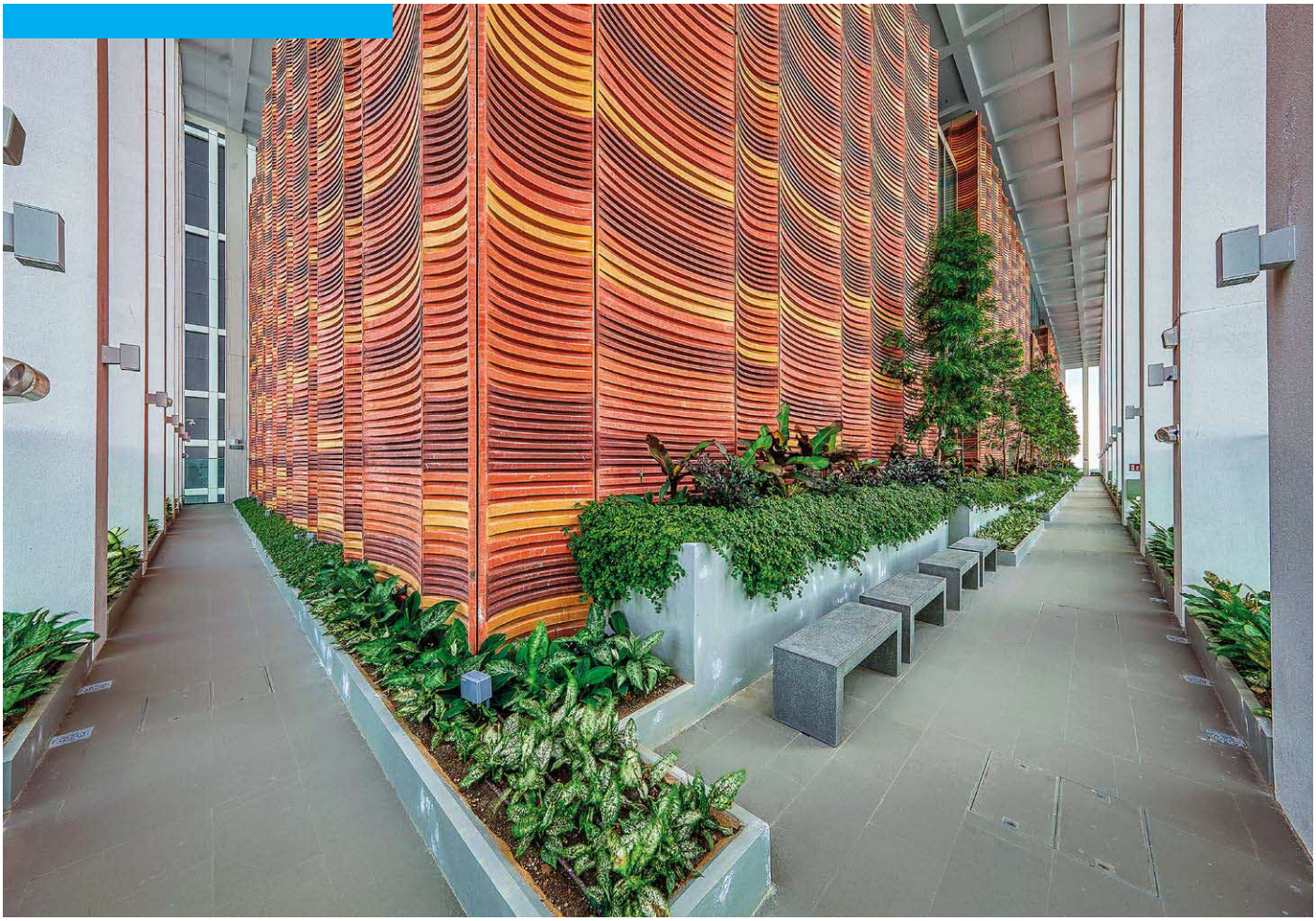
The State Coroner returned a finding of death due to a road traffic accident. He highlighted the inherent dangers of using carpooling services such as those offered on Telegram Hitch, as passengers might be paired with unlicenced and/or inexperienced drivers, escalating the possibility of an accident. In addition, if a passenger was injured or killed following an accident, there might be issues with whether the vehicle's insurance covered the passenger's injuries or death. The State Coroner stated that passengers should avoid using such carpooling services and instead use public transport, taxis, or private hire vehicles for their transportation needs.

Coroner's Inquiry No: CI-004192-2023-DG *(Chew Jia Tian)*

This was an inquiry into the death of a 33-year-old female, Ms Chew Jia Tian (Ms Chew). Ms Chew was an avid intermediate level kayaker, who had attained a Two Star Proficiency Award in 2011 and attended a "3-star course" in Desaru in 2023. On the day of the incident, she was on a group kayaking trip from Tanjong Beach, Sentosa, to Lazarus Island. To do so, the kayakers had to navigate through the Buran Channel off the Southern tip of Sentosa, where there were some blue barrels that were part of Flotation Security Barriers (FSBs). The area was susceptible to strong current, amplified due to a funnelling effect caused by a large body of water flowing through the narrow channel between the islands. Ms Chew had kayaked in the seas off Tanjong Beach several times before the incident. On one previous occasion, when she kayaked in this location with her sister, she was affected by the strong currents and her kayak was pushed against the blue barrels of the FSBs. Her sister had called for assistance from the Police Coast Guard.

It appeared that the kayakers anticipated that there might be rough waters during at least part of their trip on this occasion. One of them suggested using his fibreglass kayak, instead of Ms Chew's foldable kayak, as the former were better suited for rougher conditions. Prior to the trip, Ms Chew had also purchased a personal flotation device (PFD). The PFD was designed to be worn with the side straps attached and tightened and with the crotch strap secured. In particular, the longer rear portion of the crotch strap was designed to be placed between the user's legs and clipped to the female clip attached to the shorter front portion of the crotch strap. Failure to secure the crotch strap gave rise to the risk that the PFD could slip off a user if the user raised his/her hands after falling into the water. Crotch straps might, however, cause discomfort or abrasions to a kayaker. In the present case, the crotch strap was not used and was tucked into the rear and front pockets of the PFD.

On the day in question, the sea was rough and the current was strong. When Ms Chew and a fellow kayaker (Mr Lee) reached the Sentosa Beacon near the FSBs, Mr Lee's kayak capsized. Ms Chew rushed to his assistance and grabbed hold of the toggle rope tied to the rear of his kayak whilst holding onto his overturned kayak. She then tried to paddle away from the FSBs, but could not overcome the current. Mr Lee decided to go under the blue barrels and emerged on the other side of the FSBs. However, Ms Chew's kayak subsequently also capsized possibly due to rough sea conditions and/or an impact against the blue barrels. This caused Ms Chew to exit from its cockpit whilst submerged, and the PFD slipped off her. Her capsized kayak and the PFD with the side straps secured were found. Ms Chew's body was eventually found off Pasir Panjang Terminal after three days of search and rescue efforts.



The State Coroner returned a finding of death by drowning, after Ms Chew's kayak capsized and the PFD slipped off her because the crotch strap had not been secured. He highlighted that there were inherent risks in some activities that we took part in and enjoyed. In the context of kayaking in the seas around Singapore, the State Coroner stated that appropriate precautions could be taken to minimise the risks, including not paddling in areas that are prohibited, understanding the sea state and tidal and current conditions, ensuring that appropriate safety equipment was used, and ensuring that PFDs were secured in the manner intended by the manufacturer.

Community Courts and Tribunals Cases

***Loh Eng Keong v Chan Moi @ Chan Yuet Cum* [2024] SGPHC 28**

This case arose from Protection from Harassment Court (PHC) proceedings and dealt with the important issue as to whether evidence of alleged threats made during a mediation session conducted pursuant to the Community Mediation Centres Act 1997 (CMCA) could be admissible as evidence in PHC proceedings.

The claimant and respondent were neighbours. Sometime in 2022, an incident involving the respondent's dog sparked a conflict between the parties, leading to police involvement and subsequent community mediation. The mediation session was held on 3 September 2022 at the Community Mediation Centre. At the mediation, the respondent allegedly threatened to kill the claimant's three children in front of the mediator and the community police officers. The claimant then filed for a protection order (PO) some 15 months later in November 2023, seeking, amongst others, for the respondent to not harm or threaten the claimant's family.

At the trial, the claimant sought to call the mediator and two community police officers to testify that the respondent had indeed threatened to kill the claimant's children. This line of inquiry was met with a preliminary objection by the respondent, who argued that the admissibility of such evidence was prohibited by section 19(3) of the CMCA. The PHC dismissed this objection in view of section 19(5)(b) read with s 20(c) of the CMCA. Section 19(5)(b) provides that section 19(3) does not apply to evidence given in proceedings instituted with respect to conduct in connection with which a disclosure has been made under section 20(c). In turn, section 20(c) provides that a mediator may disclose information obtained in connection with the administration or execution of the CMCA if there are reasonable grounds to believe that disclosure is necessary to prevent or minimise the danger of injury to any person or damage to any property.

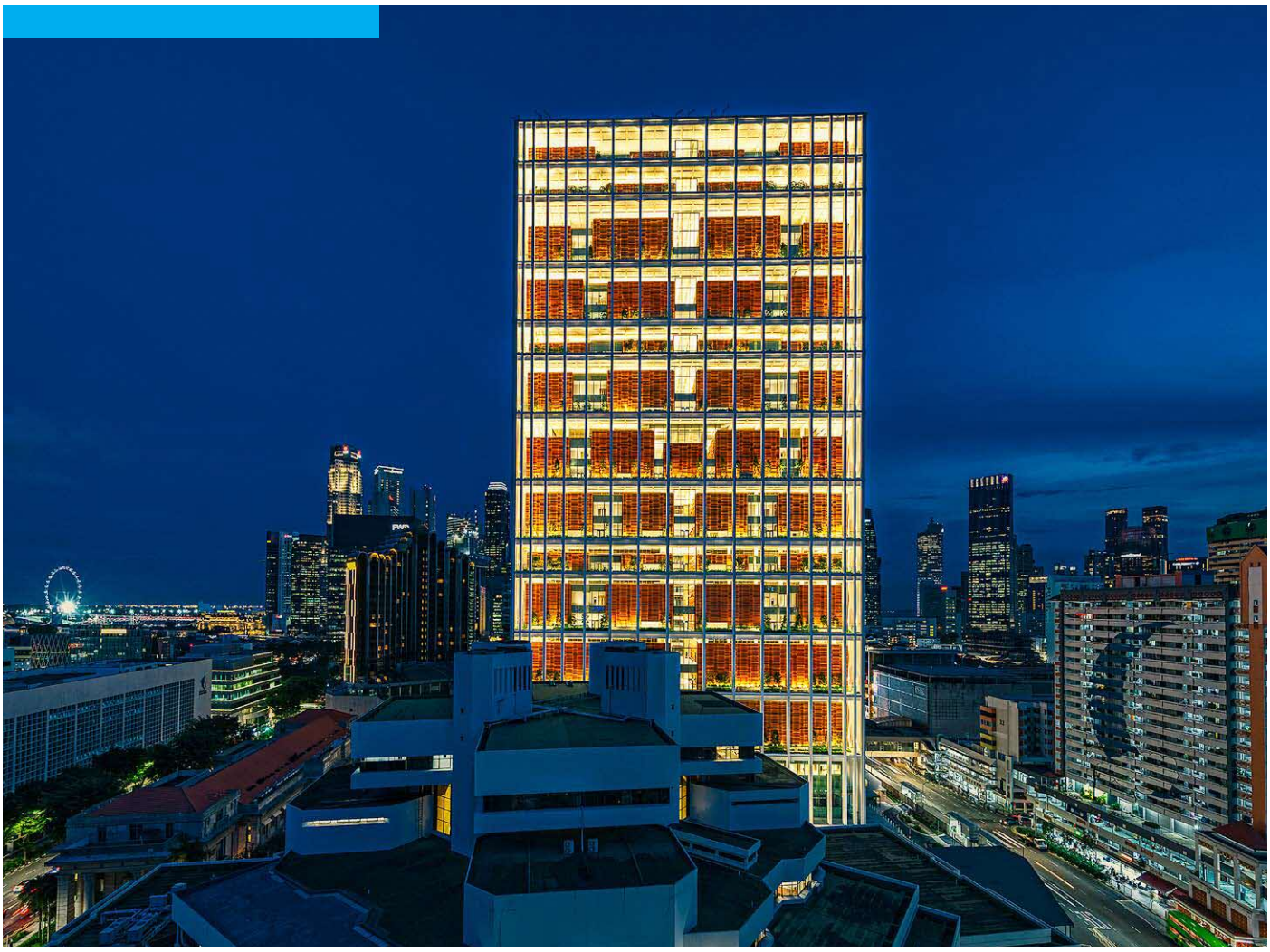
On the facts, the PHC accepted that a threat to kill the children of the counterparty to the mediation is ample ground to believe that disclosure is necessary to prevent danger of injury to any person. Further, given that the threat was uttered at a mediation session, this would constitute information obtained in connection with the administration or execution of the CMCA under section 20. To hold otherwise would effectively give parties carte blanche to wantonly threaten each other during mediation with no avenue to prove it in court. Accordingly, the PHC admitted the evidence of the mediator who testified that the respondent had threatened to kill the claimant's children.

Notwithstanding, the PHC considered that there was no need to eventually decide on the issue of whether the respondent uttered the supposed threat. Insofar as the threat was concerned, the PHC observed that nearly 15 months had elapsed between the time the respondent supposedly uttered the threatening words and the time the claimant filed the claim. After the claim was filed, a further seven months had passed without much incident even in the absence of an expedited PO. As the claimant had not established that the respondent was likely to commit another contravention, the PO was denied.

***JCQ v JCR* [2024] SGCDT 1**

The respondent filed two applications, one in relation to a consent order that required him to comply with certain restrictions regarding his use of common areas (the consent order), and another concerning a special direction granted by a Deputy Registrar (DR) directing the respondent to comply with the consent order (the SD). In both applications, the respondent prayed for the consent order and the SD to be set aside, or in the alternative, for an extension of time to file an appeal against the same. Counsel for both parties agreed that the tribunal presided over the two applications qua tribunal judge of the Community Disputes Resolution Tribunal (CDRT).

This case is significant for the CDRT as it addressed issues relating to the proper procedure for a party seeking to overturn the consent order and whether CDRT has the jurisdiction and/or power to set aside the consent order. Further, the case dealt with questions on whether an appeal against the SD granted by the DR lies to the tribunal judge or the General Division of the High Court, and whether CDRT has the power to grant an extension of time to file an application for permission to appeal under section 26(2) of the Community Disputes Resolution Act 2015 (CDRA).



In respect of the consent order, the tribunal noted the distinction between a contractual consent order and uncontested consent order and found that the consent order in question was a contractual consent order. In order to set aside a contractual consent order, fresh proceedings would need to be commenced, and not through an application filed in the existing set of proceedings. In any event, the CDRT does not have the jurisdiction and/or power to grant a setting aside of the consent order, as the CDRA does not confer any express power on the CDRT for such purposes. The detailed powers of the tribunal and the Registrar prescribed in the CDRT Rules do not include the power to set aside a consent order.

In respect of the SD, section 6(2) of the CDRA provides that any court (at first instance or on appeal) may make a special direction if the conditions therein are satisfied. A registrar or deputy registrar of the State Courts has the jurisdiction and power to grant a special direction under section 6(2) of the CDRA and pursuant to order 32 rule 9 of the Rules of Court 2014. On the facts, there was no doubt that the DR was empowered to grant the SD under section 6(2). Section 26(1)(c) specifically provides that an appeal against a decision, a direction or an order of a tribunal made under section 6(2) of the CDRA lies to the General Division of the High Court. While rule 15(1) of the CDRT Rules states that an "appeal is to lie to a tribunal judge from any judgment, order or direction of the Registrar", this rule is inapplicable in the present case in light of the express provision in section 26(1)(c) of the CDRA. Provisions in primary legislation trump those in subsidiary legislation, and hence, the provisions in the CDRT Rules would need to be read subject to the provisions in the main Act. There is no room for an alternative relief in the form of an application filed in the CDRT to set aside the special direction as that flies in the face of Parliament's intention as to how such recourse or remedy is to be obtained.

Finally, the tribunal held that order 3 rule 4 of the Rules of Court 2014 empowers the CDRT to extend the time period for the filing of the application for permission to appeal under section 26(2) after the expiration of the 14-day period stipulated in rule 16(2) of the CDRT Rules. Rule 4 of the CDRT Rules also provides the CDRT with broad powers to make orders or directions as the tribunal or the Registrar thinks necessary or appropriate for the purpose of facilitating the fair and expedient determination of any matter in a tribunal, and this includes the power to grant an extension of time if to do so facilitates the fair determination of the matter. Nonetheless on the facts, the tribunal declined to grant an extension of time due to the extraordinary delay of three years, lack of good reasons for the delay, absence of merit in the proposed appeal, and potential prejudice to the claimant.

Accordingly, the tribunal dismissed both applications in their entirety and ordered costs to be paid by the respondent.

***Rani v SPJ Helping Hands Pte Ltd* [2024] SGECT 279**

This case is noteworthy for the Employment Claims Tribunal (ECT) as it addressed the effect of non-compliance with section 31(5) of the Employment Act 1968 (EA), which prohibits salary deductions for the recovery of loans from exceeding one-quarter of an employee's monthly salary.

The claim against the respondent comprised three heads: the first was for unpaid salary; the second was to recover allegedly unauthorised deductions; and the third was for additional salary for work done on a rest day. Only the second claim, relating to alleged unauthorised deductions amounting to $4,000, was disputed. Over the course of eight months, the respondent had made monthly deductions of $500 from the claimant's salary. All eight deductions breached section 31(5) of the EA as they exceeded 25% of the claimant's monthly salary of approximately $1,500. The question arose as to the specific effect of these breaches, and two possible answers emerged. The first possible answer was that the claimant would only be entitled to the return of her salary that was deducted in excess of the one-quarter cap prescribed by section 31(5). The other possible answer was that the claimant should be entitled to the full return of the eight $500 deductions.

Taking a purposive interpretation of section 31(5), the tribunal preferred the latter answer. It explained that this answer accorded better with the general purpose of Part 3 of the EA, which is to protect an employee's most sacred of rights to receive pay for their labours. Sections 20 to 25 secured the employee's interest in timely payment while sections 26 to 32 secured the employee's interest in full payment, without unlawful or unauthorised deductions. The answer also accorded better with the specific purpose of section 31(5), which, within the framework of legally permissible deductions, seeks to ensure that employees are not overburdened with deductions, and still have enough salary to bring home. This specific objective is also served by sections 29(1), 30(2), 31(3) and 32(1), which cap the maximum allowable deductions in other contexts.

Having regard to the fundamental importance served by Part 3 of the EA, the tribunal held that the onus lay strictly on employers to ensure their compliance therewith. It was not tolerable to allow employers to take a rough-and-ready or legally ignorant approach to the obligations created by Part 3 and, by so doing, effectively shift the onus to employees to take steps to enforce those obligations. A failure to comply would therefore taint an entire deduction and deprive the employer of the limited practical advantage conferred by Part 3 to make specified deductions instead of having to initiate legal proceedings for those sums. Applying this reading of section 31(5) to the case before it, the tribunal thus awarded the claimant the full $4,000 sought in respect of the second head of claim.

TRUST AND TRUSTWORTHINESS
SIGNIFICANT CASES FROM THE FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS

Singapore's family justice jurisprudence continued to evolve in 2024, with the courts deepening the application of Therapeutic Justice (TJ) across core areas of practice. From child welfare and access arrangements to the division of assets and enforcement of orders, judges emphasised healing, cooperation, and practical fairness. Notable appellate decisions brought clarity to judicial interviews, post-separation caregiving, and long-term financial obligations, while reaffirming that family litigation should resolve conflict, not entrench it. The cases that follow reflect the year's most significant developments, grouped thematically to highlight the principled and problem-solving approach embodied in therapeutic justice which now defines Singapore's family justice system.

Therapeutic Justice in Action

***WRQ v WRP* [2024] 2 SLR 767**

The Appellate Division highlighted how TJ principles remain relevant even after final orders are made, particularly where parties continue to share obligations for the long term. The case concerned a consent order on ancillary matters granted in 2013, which provided that both parties would continue residing in the matrimonial home until their youngest child turned 21 in 2031. The order specified that upon sale, the balance proceeds would be divided equally between parties after repayment of the outstanding housing loan and other costs, but was silent on who would bear responsibility for the mortgage instalments during the 18-year interim.

A decade later, disagreements arose between the parties over whether the matrimonial home should be sold before their youngest child turned 21 and whether the wife ought to contribute to household expenses and monthly mortgage payments. The District Judge ordered immediate sale and equal sharing of mortgage payments from 20 October 2023. On appeal, the High Court reversed the order for immediate sale and ordered that the husband would bear sole responsibility for the mortgage instalments. The husband was granted permission to appeal to the Appellate Division solely on the mortgage issue.

In allowing the appeal, the Appellate Division emphasised that while finality in ancillary orders is critical, an order may be needed where a consent order's silence on an issue threatens its workability. The Court opened its judgment by affirming that "such harmonious resolution of issues reached by agreement ... is aligned with the endeavours of a therapeutic justice system," which aims to help parties move forward without adopting adversarial stances. In line with this, the Court clarified how courts should address issues not explicitly covered by divorce consent orders. The Court distinguished

this situation from cases where parties seek to vary explicit terms of a consent order. Where an order is silent on an issue that affects its workability – in this case, responsibility for mortgage payments over an 18-year period – the court may make an order under section 112(4) of the Women's Charter to supplement rather than vary the original agreement. This approach preserves the finality of explicit terms while ensuring long-term arrangements remain workable.

The Court emphasised that in determining whether to make a variation order under section 112(4) of the Women's Charter, it is relevant to consider the parties' knowledge and intentions at the time of the original order regarding the matter on which the consent order is silent. Considerations include what the parties had agreed on (but which was not included as a term in the consent order) or what they had intended with regard to the matter in question. However, this is not an application of strict contractual interpretation principles.

Examining the evidence, including text messages between the parties, the Court found that they had not applied their minds to the mortgage issue at the time of the consent order. Instead, they had simply continued with the status quo where both were making equal contributions from their CPF accounts. Based on these circumstances, the Court ordered that the wife should bear half the mortgage repayments from 20 October 2023 onwards through reimbursing the husband from her eventual share of the sale proceeds.

Giving Effect to the Voice of the Child

***WKM v WKN* [2024] 1 SLR 158**

The importance of TJ in family proceedings was brought into sharp focus in the Court of Appeal's landmark decision, which provided comprehensive guidance on judicial interviews and confidential child welfare reports.

The case involved divorced parents of an 11-year-old daughter (at the time of appeal). Under a 2017 consent order, they had joint custody with care and control to the father and liberal access to the mother. In November 2021, the mother filed police reports alleging abuse by the father and his mother's helper, retained the child after an access visit, and sought care and control. The District Judge declined to interview the child and relied on three child welfare reports, ultimately ordering that the father retain care and control. On appeal, after conducting a brief judicial interview, the High Court judge reversed care and control to the mother based largely on the child's expressed preferences.

The case reached the Court of Appeal after the Appellate Division granted leave on two questions of public importance: guidance on the judicial interview process and its role alongside other information sources; and the significance and weight to be accorded to confidential child welfare reports prepared by professionals.

The Court affirmed that TJ underlies Singapore's entire approach to family disputes. Under TJ, parties are not adversaries but co-parents who must continue their parental responsibilities after divorce. The Court emphasised that children should not be subjected to parental pressure or bear the burden of responsibility for decisions ultimately reached.

The Court provided detailed guidance on judicial interviews, now also called "Judge and Child" sessions, which reflect a two-way conversation between the judge and the child. Not only does the Judge and Child session enable the court to listen to the children's views and concerns, but the process also assures the children that there is a neutral and authoritative person who is concerned about their welfare and who prioritises their best interests above all else. This process is part of TJ. Whether to conduct such interviews depends on factors including: the child's age and maturity; parental relationships and concerns about alienation; the child's wellbeing; the nature and stage of proceedings; and availability of other relevant material like professional reports. Interviews may be conducted by the judge alone or jointly with a court family specialist from FJC's Counselling and Psychological Services.

The Court stressed that judges should avoid reproducing children's direct statements about care preferences, as children should not feel responsible for choosing between parents. On confidential child welfare reports, the Court held that maintaining their confidentiality was crucial to protect children's interests. These reports enable professionals to provide candid observations and recommendations without risk of exacerbating parental conflict or compromising ongoing investigations. While judges may rely on these reports, references in judgments must be made appropriately to preserve confidentiality.

Applying these principles, the Court emphasised that a child's views expressed during a judicial interview should be considered alongside other available evidence, particularly welfare reports. The child's views ought to have been balanced against the contents of updated welfare reports. This was especially important given the level of conflict and instability surrounding the child in the previous two years, where the de facto care of the child had been shifting between the parties. Noting concerns that the child's answers in the judicial interview were strongly influenced by the mother, the Court directed updated reports to gain a fuller understanding of the situation. Having considered these reports, the Court observed that the mother had conducted a campaign to damage the child's relationship with the father through unfounded allegations and alienating behaviour. In the Court's view, it was in the best interests of the child for her to be given an opportunity to heal and rebuild her relationship with the father without any interference from the mother. The Court thus ordered a phased approach: initially suspending the mother's access for four weeks, followed by potential monitored video calls and supervised access, subject to progress in counselling and co-parenting.

The judgment emphasises that judicial interviews and welfare reports are not mere procedural tools, but part of a TJ system aimed at protecting children's interests while helping families move forward constructively.

Calibrating Access and Parenting Orders

2024 also saw the courts clarify how access arrangements should evolve in a way that remains true to the child's needs, while preserving stability and ensuring safety.

***DDN v DDO* [2024] SGHC(A) 2**

The Appellate Division dismissed a father's appeal against the High Court's decision to reduce his access to his children and took the opportunity to restate the legal framework for varying access orders under section 128 of the Women's Charter. Notably, the Court situated its analysis within the framework of TJ. It stressed that TJ calls for cooperative parenting and a problem-solving mindset. Parties are expected to "exercise grace and flexibility" and not treat access as tools to control or hurt the other spouse.

The Court reaffirmed that family relationships are dynamic, and courts must be responsive to the changing needs of growing children. At the same time, it warned against over-frequent applications for variation, which can destabilise children and prolong conflict. In this case, the father had consistently failed to exercise overnight and overseas access, and had exposed the children to troubling influences, including conversations with friends who had encouraged inappropriate sexual conduct with minors. While the Court stopped short of imposing supervised access, it endorsed the High Court's reduction of the father's access, agreeing that the circumstances surrounding the father's failure to exercise access and the evidence on his promiscuous behaviour, taken in totality, gave cause for the reduction of access. It reminded all parents that meaningful parenting involves "spending meaningful time with the child, creating positive memories which endure even into adulthood."

***WOZ v WOY* [2024] SGHCF 11**

The High Court addressed a father's appeal concerning access arrangements to his 11-year-old daughter. Under the existing court order, the mother was required to bring their daughter to the ground floor lift lobby of their residence for access. The father complained these arrangements had become unworkable, as his daughter would often stay only briefly before returning to her mother's flat, and even during longer visits would remain unresponsive, quietly doing homework.

While acknowledging the father's understandable disappointment, the judge declined to revise the arrangements, emphasising that with the child approaching 12 years old, she was at a sufficiently mature age to evaluate how a parent-child relationship should develop. The Court observed that relationship building requires time, effort and patience, and is not amenable to judicial commands. Rather than imposing new arrangements, the Court allowed the current schedule to continue but granted the father liberty to apply for changes after three months, creating space for the relationship to potentially develop organically.

Together, these decisions affirm that access is not a technical entitlement but a relational process. Courts will support and calibrate that process where necessary, but only where the evidence shows a clear need to do so, and only in ways that serve the child's welfare, not the parent's grievance.

Dividing the Matrimonial Pie

The law governing the division of matrimonial assets was further clarified in 2024, with courts refining how established approaches are applied across diverse marital contexts. Two decisions spanning classification of marital roles and the operative dates for identifying the asset pool demonstrated the Court's continuing effort to ensure just outcomes.

***DBA v DBB* [2024] 1 SLR 459**

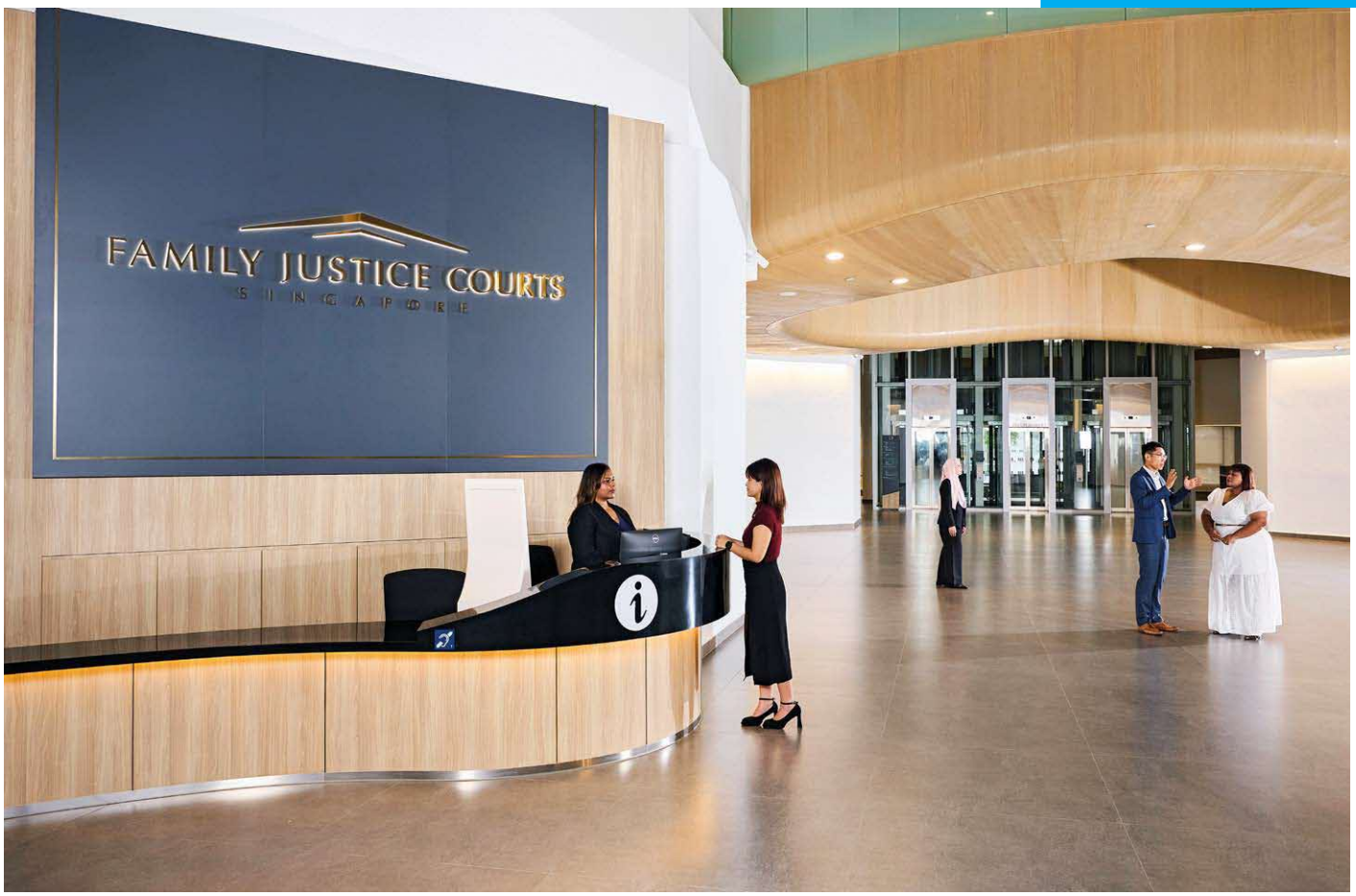
The Appellate Division's decision in this matter provided important clarification on the classification of marriages as singleincome or dual-income for asset division purposes. The case involved a 31-year marriage where, although the wife had worked throughout, her employment was largely part-time or intermittent, allowing her to be the primary homemaker while the husband was the primary breadwinner.

The Court emphasised that the focus should be on the primary roles carried out by parties in the marriage, noting that a large disparity in income between spouses does not itself make a marriage single-income. Following ***TNL v TNK* [2017] 1 SLR 609** (*TNL*), which recognised that homemakers might work part-time or intermittently, the Court classified this as a single-income marriage. While cases applying the *TNL* approach tend toward equal division, the Court stressed there is no immutable rule requiring equal division. Here, the Court awarded 60% to the husband, recognising both his role in generating income and his not insignificant non-financial contributions at home, particularly after leaving full-time employment in 2016.

***WOS v WOT* [2024] 1 SLR 437**

The Appellate Division provided important clarification on how separation affects matrimonial asset division. The case involved spouses who had lived apart for about half of their 20-year marriage before obtaining interim judgment. The Court reaffirmed that the date of interim judgment remains by default the appropriate operative date for identifying matrimonial assets, with departures allowed only for cogent reasons. The Court emphasised that the "ordinary factual concomitants of a failed marriage" cannot justify deviation from this default position, as this would lead to unnecessary complications and require courts to conduct forensic examinations of intimate marriage relationships.

The Court rejected the suggestion that the three "indicia" from earlier cases (no matrimonial home, no consortium vitae, and no conjugal rights) should serve as a general test for determining the operative date. While these explain why interim judgment signifies the end of marriage for practical purposes, adopting them as a general test would severely dilute the default position, as they would almost always be satisfied in cases where divorce is granted after three years' separation. However, while separation did not justify departing from the interim judgment date for asset



identification, it remained relevant for the determination of the division proportions. The Court found that the significant period of separation had inevitably reduced the wife's indirect contributions compared to a homemaker maintaining a shared home, and this, combined with the fact that the bulk of the sizeable pool was acquired post-separation, justified revising the division ratio from 60:40 to 70:30 in the husband's favour.

Enforcing Cooperation

***TTZ v TTY* [2024] SGHCF 46**

The High Court provided important guidance on enforcing access orders where a teenage child refuses contact. The case concerned a father's application to lift the suspension of a committal order against the mother, who was alleged to have failed to facilitate access on 38 occasions between 2017 and 2021. The father alleged 25 new breaches of her obligation to exercise "all reasonable effort[s]" to compel their 14-year-old son to comply with access terms.

The Court undertook a detailed analysis of each alleged breach. Of the 25 instances, on seven occasions the child was present but refused to leave with the father. CCTV footage revealed antagonistic interactions where the father made caustic remarks about the mother's home and confronted the child about past events. On ten occasions, access failed because the father was not on time, arriving between 15 minutes to six hours late, yet demanding the child appear within five or ten minutes. The remaining instances involved genuine miscommunications or situations where the child was upset by previous interactions. The Court found that while the mother had a positive duty to act in good faith to facilitate access, the father did not prove beyond reasonable doubt that the mother did not take "all reasonable steps that a caring and determined parent, acting with a view to facilitating the other parent's access and anxious to procure the court-ordered outcome, would have taken." A court order to exercise all reasonable efforts is not a stipulation for a guarantee that the court-ordered outcome would indeed materialise.

Importantly, the Court held that a child's refusal to attend access does not excuse a parent from their obligation to exercise all reasonable efforts to facilitate access. In cases where a parent is influencing a child not to return to the other parent, the court is prepared to find that such influence is evidence of an intention not to comply with access orders. Finally, the Court concluded with the observation that the objectives of TJ include a focus on the resolution of the parties' underlying issues in the long-term interests of the family and the children, putting the welfare of the children first.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

BY FORGING RELATIONSHIPS WITH JUDICIARIES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS NEAR AND FAR, WE EXPAND OUR REACH TO FURTHER ENHANCE THE ADMINISTRATION AND DELIVERY OF JUSTICE.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

Engagements with the Bar

SG Courts raised awareness of various reforms through their continued engagement with the Bar, in forums such as the Law Society of Singapore's Litigation Conference, dialogue sessions with the Law Society of Singapore's Civil Practice Committee, and meetings of the Commercial Practice Panel's Users' Committees (such as the Arbitration and the Intellectual Property Court Users' Committees).

DEVELOPMENTS AT THE SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL COMMERCIAL COURT (SICC)

SICC Users' Council Meeting

Following the inaugural SICC Users' Council meeting in 2023, a SICC Users' Council meeting was held on 4 October 2024. The SICC Users' Council meeting is a useful platform to engage key stakeholders in the dispute resolution landscape, and its members include representatives from other dispute resolution institutions, practitioners, in-house counsel and representative legal organisations. The agenda for the 2024 edition of the meeting included updates on the collaboration with Bahrain, the SICC Conference 2025, the publication by the Singapore Academy of Law's Academy Publishing, "Charting New Waters: The Singapore International Commercial Court After Ten Years", as well as discussions with the members on finer points of practice and procedure in the SICC.

Development of Model Clauses with the SMC

The SICC developed model clauses with the Singapore Mediation Centre (SMC) that serve to position the SICC as the final step in the SMC's Integrated Appropriate Dispute Resolution Framework (INTEGRAF). This development was complemented by the publication of an SICC user guide on alternative dispute resolution.

Establishment of the International Committee of the SICC

The SICC Registry worked on the establishment of the International Committee of the SICC (International Committee), which will hear prescribed appeals from certain foreign jurisdictions, the first of which is Bahrain, following the successful signing of a bilateral treaty between Singapore and Bahrain in 2024. As part of the collaboration with Bahrain, the SICC is working closely with the Council for International Dispute Resolution of the Kingdom of Bahrain on establishment of the Bahrain International Commercial Court (BICC) which will be modelled principally on the SICC. Appeals from the BICC may be heard by the International Committee.

Reporting of Significant SICC and CoA Decisions in ICCA Yearbook

In 2024, the SICC Registry continued its collaboration with the International Council for Commercial Arbitration (ICCA) Publications Editorial Team to publish an annual Compendium of Significant Court of Appeal and SICC decisions on International Arbitration in the ICCA Yearbook Commercial Arbitration. Each Compendium sets out, for each case, the significant and/or novel points of law in the case, a brief summary of the case, and the decision in the case. The Compendium by the SICC Registry was accepted for publication by the ICCA Publications Editorial Team and included in the 2024 edition of the ICCA Yearbook Commercial Arbitration.

Publication of SICC and CoA Decisions on British and Irish Legal Information Institute Website

In March 2024, the British and Irish Legal Information Institute (BAILII) launched on its website a new database featuring judgments of the SICC and the Court of Appeal (when hearing appeals from decisions of the SICC). The new database was introduced after negotiations between the SICC Registry and BAILII on the terms for the creation and maintenance of the database. The SICC landing page on BAILII may be found at: https://www.bailii.org/sg/cases/SICC/.

Members of the Singapore delegation meeting with the Bahraini Minister of Finance and members of the Council for International Dispute Resolution.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

Volunteer Capacity Building – Understanding PHC

As part of an on-going collaboration between Pro Bono SG and the Community Courts and Tribunals Cluster (CCTC), a webinar titled "Understanding the Protection from Harassment Court (PHC)" was held on 16 May 2024. It aimed to raise awareness of the different proceedings in the PHC amongst lawyers volunteering with Pro Bono SG's Community Legal Clinics and equip them with the knowledge needed to effectively assist self-represented persons who make up the bulk of litigants in simplified proceedings in the PHC.

District Judges Dora Tay and Bryan Ong from the CCTC were panellists at the webinar, which provided an overview of the two types of proceedings governing disputes involving allegations of harassment or relating to false statements (simplified and standard proceedings), including the remedies available and some of the challenges typically faced by parties. The webinar was well received by the 1,030 participants with 99% of them rating it as "Excellent" or "Good" overall.

A webinar aimed to raise awareness of the different proceedings in the Protection from Harassment Court amongst volunteers.

Cultivating Strategic Partnerships: Engaging Our Stakeholders

In 2024, the Family Justice Courts (FJC) significantly strengthened their partnerships within the family justice ecosystem through strategic engagement initiatives. Working closely with Social Service Agencies (SSAs), the FJC, supported by its Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS), conducted two consultation sessions on Therapeutic Justice (TJ) implementation. These sessions drew strong participation from 68 SSA representatives, who expressed keen interest in supporting the FJC's TJ initiatives.

The partnership momentum continued with the successful delivery of "KOPI TIME," a webinar focusing on amendments to the Women's Charter (Family Violence and Other Matters) (Amendment) Bill, which attracted 111 participants and fostered dynamic discussions on new protective orders.

Further extending its collaborative reach, CAPS showcased its expertise at the Singapore Family Therapy Conference, presenting to 300 practitioners on "Using IPScope for High Conflict Families at the FJC". This presentation highlighted the application of IPScope, a systemic therapeutic approach, in enhancing counselling services for divorcing parents.

Further, the Registrar, supported by the Strategic Planning and Research Division and a panel of FJC Judges including Senior Judicial Head Kow Keng Siong and District Judges Suzanne Chin, Kathryn Thong, and Azmin Jailani, conducted three dialogue sessions with the Family Bar in November and December 2024. These sessions attracted 200 lawyers and focused on significant legislative amendments, including the Enforcement of Child Access Orders, Family Violence amendments, and the new Maintenance Enforcement Process.

The year's engagement initiatives fostered active participation from stakeholders across both virtual and physical platforms, creating valuable channels for feedback and strengthening the collaborative framework essential for delivering effective family justice services. These sustained partnerships have enhanced stakeholders' understanding of FJC's work while establishing robust channels for continuous improvement and innovation in family justice delivery.

Case Forum with National Judges College

The Singapore Judicial College (SJC) collaborated with the National Judges College (NJC) of the People's Republic of China on various engagements in 2024, including co-organising a Case Forum on intellectual property law in October and hosting an NJC study visit in November.

SJC hosted a delegation from National Judges College in November 2024.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

The Masterclass brought together 70 judges from 16 jurisdictions, including eminent international commercial judges and experts, for deep dives into five key areas of commercial law.

Masterclass Programme for Commercial Judges in Asia

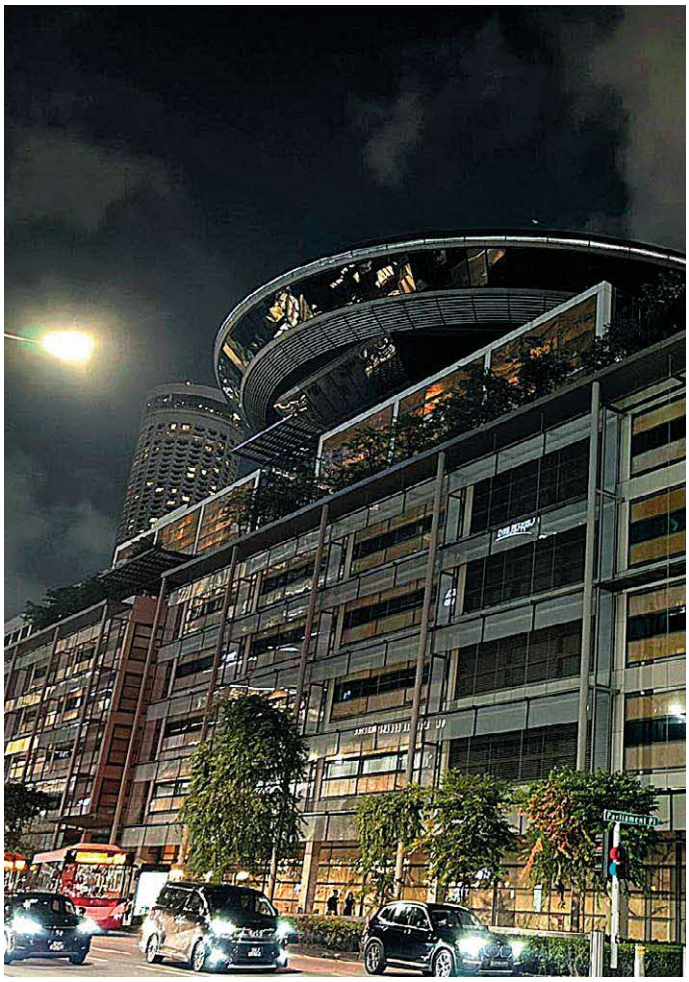
The SJC worked with Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and a team of Supreme Court judges to develop and deliver the Masterclass in Bogor, Indonesia, which Chief Justice Menon described in his opening address as "a historic gathering". Held over four days, the Masterclass brought together 70 judges from 16 jurisdictions for deep dives into five key areas of commercial law. It created a collaborative environment for participants to foster international networks and knowledge exchange. Course highlights included discussions on the use of courtroom technology as well as a "design thinking / legal hackathon" workshop.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Joint Fire Drill

In November 2024, Building Infrastructure (State Courts) conducted a fire drill with the Prisons and Police teams to familiarise them with evacuation routes within the State Courts.

A fire drill conducted at the State Courts in November 2024.



A simulated building-wide power outage, conducted as part of Exercise SG Ready.

Exercise SG Ready

In February 2024, SG Courts took part in Exercise SG Ready, organised by the Ministry of Defence. The exercise simulated a building-wide power outage, and staff responded according to the planned procedures.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING, TREATY AND ROUNDTABLES

Inaugural Singapore-France Judicial Roundtable

On 31 January 2024, the Supreme Court of Singapore and the Court of Cassation of France convened the inaugural Singapore-France Judicial Roundtable, marking a milestone in the collaboration between the two judiciaries.

Co-chaired by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and First President Christophe Soulard of the Court of Cassation, the Roundtable was attended by judges and officials from both Singapore and France. Discussions focused on the interface between technology and justice systems, with Justice Aidan Xu and then-Justice Goh Yihan of the Supreme Court of Singapore presenting on how technology has been incorporated into court procedures and processes, and on legal issues arising from advances in artificial intelligence.

This Roundtable followed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for judicial cooperation in May 2023, under which the two judiciaries agreed to engage in dialogue and exchanges on key areas such as the use of technology and evolving trends in dispute resolution.

FJC and the Hong Kong Judiciary Sign MOU to Promote Cross-Border Family Justice Cooperation

In a significant development for cross-border family justice cooperation, the Family Justice Courts (FJC) and the Hong Kong Judiciary established a formal partnership through an MOU. The agreement was signed by the Presiding Judge of the FJC and Justice Bebe Chu of the Hong Kong Court of First Instance, with the ceremony witnessed by both Chief Justices at the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal Building.

The Supreme Court of Singapore and the Court of Cassation of France convened the inaugural Singapore-France Judicial Roundtable, marking a milestone in the collaboration between the two judiciaries.

The comprehensive MOU, negotiated by a team led by Registrar Kenneth Yap, encompasses several key areas of collaboration:

- Case management expertise sharing
- Technology integration
- Professional development and training
- Family law development
- Family mediation practices

The FJC and the Hong Kong Judiciary signed a comprehensive MOU to promote cross-border family justice cooperation.

The agreement specifically addresses crucial family justice matters including divorce proceedings, adoption, guardianship, international child abduction, legitimacy, assisted reproduction technology, maintenance orders, and family violence protection.

This partnership represents a significant step forward in strengthening family justice cooperation between Singapore and Hong Kong, promising improved outcomes for families across both jurisdictions.

Singapore and Bahrain Sign Bilateral Treaty on Appeals from the BICC

The Government of Singapore and the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain signed a bilateral Treaty on 20 March 2024 to establish a new Bahrain International Commercial Court (BICC) in Bahrain, and a designated body in Singapore to hear appeals from the BICC.

The features of the collaboration include:

- Cooperation between the SICC and the Supreme Judicial Council of the Kingdom of Bahrain to establish the BICC.
- The SICC to hear appeals from the BICC, which will provide parties with a transnational commercial dispute resolution option.

The collaboration will also provide opportunities for the development of commercial jurisprudence.

The signing of the Treaty marks another milestone since the Singapore and Bahrain judiciaries signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation and Memorandum of Guidance as to the Enforcement of Money Judgments when Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon led a delegation to visit Bahrain in May 2023.

He said, "The signing of the bilateral Treaty between Singapore and Bahrain to establish the BICC marks a significant milestone in our ties with the Bahrain judiciary. This collaboration would not have been possible without the excellent partnership between the Working Groups set up by the respective Singapore and Bahrain teams. I am deeply grateful for their tremendous work on this project, and look forward to the launch of the BICC."

Fourth Judicial Roundtable with Durham Law School

The fourth Judicial Roundtable, co-organised by SG Courts and Durham Law School, was held from 23 to 26 April 2024 at Durham University, United Kingdom. Established in 2016, the Roundtable brought together senior judges from civil and common law jurisdictions (especially Asia), legal academics, and policy experts to discuss topics that intersect with commercial law and dispute resolution, and legal systems more broadly.

The Roundtable had two main themes — technology (comprising three sub-topics: artificial intelligence, data protection and privacy, and truth decay / disinformation) and climate change. It was a hybrid event, with invited judges including Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, and Justice Anselmo Reyes, Justice Philip Jeyaretnam, Justice Hri Kumar Nair and then-Justice Goh Yihan attending the Roundtable in person, and most non-judicial speakers attending virtually. The four-day event saw many interesting and interactive presentations and lively discussions among the delegates.

Chief Justice Menon presenting a token of appreciation to Professor Volker Roeben, Dean, Durham Law School.

Second Annual India-Singapore Judicial Roundtable

On 23 August 2024, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and a delegation from the Supreme Court of Singapore were in New Delhi, India to attend the annual India-Singapore Judicial Roundtable, which serves as a platform for the exchange of knowledge, discussion of mutual areas of interest, and advancement of cooperation and collaboration between the two judiciaries.

The judiciaries of Singapore and India discussed the impact of environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues on the liability of companies and their directors, and the issues arising from the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and AI-generated material.

Justice M. M. Sundresh from the Indian judiciary presented insights on the ESG issues that have emerged because of climate change, and how these have impacted the liability of companies and their

The India-Singapore Judicial Roundtable serves as a platform for the exchange of knowledge, discussion of mutual areas of interest, and advancement of cooperation and collaboration between the two judiciaries.

directors, in the context of insolvency and restructuring. Singapore's response was articulated by Justice See Kee Oon.

SG Courts led the second topic of the Roundtable, which covered legal responsibility for harms caused by AI and the legal status of AI-generated material. Singapore's paper was presented by Justice Philip Jeyaretnam, while Justice A. Muhamed Mustaque offered the Indian judiciary's response.

Chief Justice Menon said, "The annual Roundtable afforded us a valuable platform for discussions on topics of mutual interest, in particular, issues relating to AI and climate change. These are important and timely topics which represent some of the most critical challenges that impact all of humanity today, and which have already given rise to new and often complex legal issues that transcend jurisdictional boundaries."

"The event underscores the ongoing commitment of both Singapore and India to deepen our judicial cooperation and to strengthen the rule of law in an increasingly interconnected world. I look forward to many more of such collaborations between our two judiciaries and I extend my deepest appreciation to Chief Justice Dhananjaya Yashwant Chandrachud for graciously hosting this second roundtable."

8th Singapore-China Legal and Judicial Roundtable

Singapore hosted the eighth Singapore-China Legal and Judicial Roundtable from 14 to 17 October. Co-chaired by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and President and Chief Justice Zhang Jun of the Supreme People's Court (SPC) of the People's Republic of China, the Roundtable addressed topics including proactive case management, conflicts of jurisdiction and coordination of parallel proceedings, artificial intelligence in justice systems, and judicial training.

In his opening remarks, Chief Justice Menon said: "Our judiciaries have enjoyed an extremely warm relationship for many years now. This has mirrored the strong bilateral relations between Singapore and China, which were upgraded last year to an 'All Round High Quality Future Oriented Partnership'. Legal and judicial cooperation has been an important pillar of our close ties, and this cooperation has continued to flourish since we met in Beijing for the seventh edition of the Roundtable."

Speaking on the theme of proactive case management, Chief Justice Menon noted that case management is a key part of the procedural architecture within which courts operate and the overall administration of justice. As caseloads grow in both volume and complexity, courts will need to adopt a more proactive approach. He explained how SG Courts have implemented such an approach at three levels: through the frameworks they operate and apply; through the processes they design and implement; and through the thought and care that their people bring to case management in each matter.

The two Chief Justices also held a bilateral meeting to take stock of progress over the past year and to discuss future plans, including opportunities for collaboration on shared challenges.

The Roundtable is a centrepiece of the close relationship between the Singapore and China judiciaries, and has been hosted alternately by the Supreme Court of Singapore and the SPC since its inception in 2017. It has served as an effective platform for judicial cooperation and for both judiciaries to learn from each other's perspectives and experiences.

This was Chief Justice Zhang's first visit to Singapore in his capacity as President and Chief Justice of the SPC, and the first visit by an SPC delegation since the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon with President and Chief Justice Zhang Jun of the Supreme People's Court of the People's Republic of China.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

High People's Court of Henan Province's visit to the State Courts.

VISITS AND COURTESY CALLS

Visit by Henan High People's Court

On 18 January 2024, a six-member delegation led by Executive Vice President Guo Baozhen, Judge of the High People's Court of Henan Province, visited the State Courts to learn about criminal proceedings. then-Principal District Judge Jill Tan received the delegation, and District Judge Kenneth Chin gave a briefing on various topics of interest.

Visit by the Justice Committee of the UK House of Commons

On 26 February 2024, a five-member delegation led by the then-Chair of the Justice Committee of the UK House of Commons, Sir Robert Neill MP, visited the Supreme Court and State Courts to study best practices in case management and leveraging technology in the adjudication process in Singapore.

Justice Aidan Xu, who is in charge of technology and innovation, led the meeting with the UK delegation. Mr Tan Ken Hwee, Chief Transformation and Innovation Officer, and District Judge Sharmila Sripathy gave briefings on the use of technology in the Courts, case management, and access to justice.

SG Courts Delegation Visits Chinese Courts for Insightful Exchange

From 21 to 23 April 2024, Justice Aidan Xu led a delegation on a visit to the Beijing Intellectual Property Court, Beijing Internet Court, and the Smart Lab Court of the Supreme People's Court (SPC) in China. The delegation learned about the technological advancements and innovative approaches adopted by the Chinese Courts to improve court processes, strengthen data protection, advance courtroom technologies, and incorporate AI in dispute resolution.

A delegation from the Justice Committee of the UK House of Commons, led by then-Chair Sir Robert Neill MP, visited the Supreme Court and the State Courts.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

The Singaporean delegation visited the Beijing Intellectual Property Court, Beijing Internet Court, and the Smart Lab Court of the Supreme People's Court in China.

Justice Xu and SPC Vice President Yang Wanming acknowledged the comprehensive exchange of ideas and insights. The visit underscored both judiciaries' commitment to advancing judicial excellence in court technology, for the greater goal of enhancing access to justice.

Hosting of the Supreme Court of Korea Judicial Policy Research Institute

On 30 April 2024, officers from the Office of the Registrar and the Community Courts and Tribunals Cluster hosted a delegation from the Supreme Court of Korea Judicial Policy Research Institute. The team from the Office of the Registrar gave a presentation on the functions of the Registrar in both civil and criminal cases. The presentation covered the statutory basis of the Registrar and the Registry, as well as how case management within the Registry was carried out in both civil and criminal cases.

The head of the delegation from the Supreme Court of Korea Judicial Policy Research Institute presenting the token of appreciation to Registrar Edwin San.

Hosting of Ugandan Delegation

On 27 May 2024, the Office of the Registrar hosted a delegation led by Dr Flavian Zeija, the principal judge of Uganda. The team from the Office of the Registrar gave a presentation on case management in the State Courts Registry, particularly on how judicial officers managed both civil and criminal cases, and how court records were previously managed before they were transferred to electronic case management systems (ICMS for criminal cases and eLitigation for civil cases).

Deputy Principal District Judge Ong Chin Rhu receiving the token of appreciation from Uganda's head of delegation.

Visit by Delegation from the People's Republic of China

A delegation from the People's Republic of China that included Vice President of the Supreme People's Court, Justice He Xiaorong, visited the State Courts on 20 June 2024 to learn about alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, and how the State Courts handle community disputes. The delegation was briefed by District Judges Joseph Yeo and Winston Man on Court Disputes Resolution in the State Courts, and Management and Resolution of Community Disputes respectively.

A delegation from the People's Republic of China visited the State Courts.

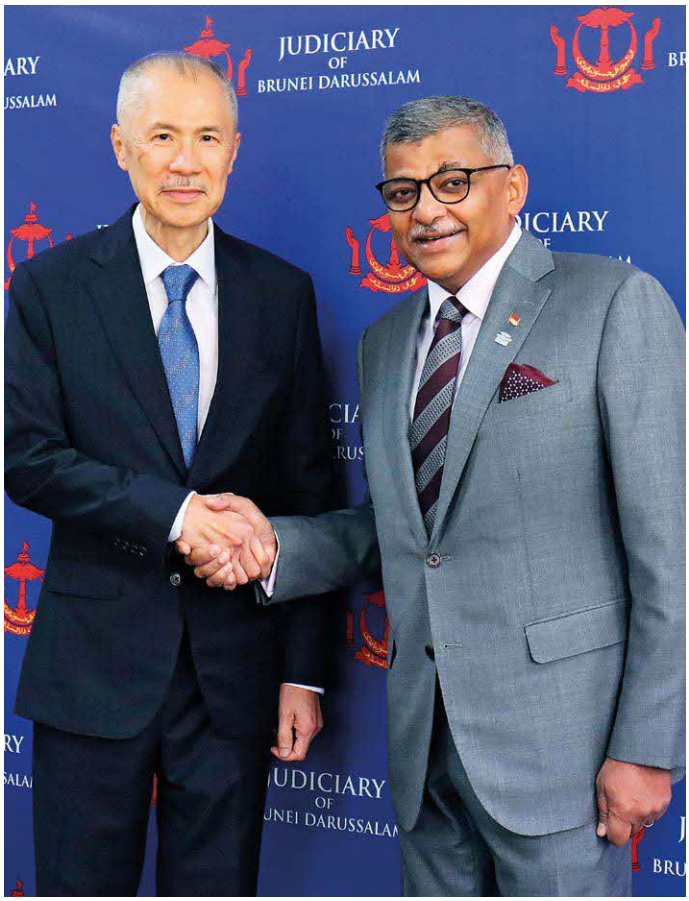
STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

The visit ended with an engaging discussion with then-Principal District Judge Victor Yeo and Principal District Judge Thian Yee Sze. The visit was part of the 4th Singapore-China Social Governance Forum, a key bilateral cooperation platform for Singapore and China to exchange views and share experiences on matters pertaining to social governance.

Visit to the Supreme Court of Brunei Darussalam

Following an MOU signed between Brunei Darussalam and Singapore in 2023 to promote bilateral judicial cooperation between the judiciaries of both countries, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and a delegation from the Supreme Court of Singapore visited Chief Justice of Brunei Darussalam Dato Seri Paduka Steven Chong Wan Oon and members of the Supreme Court of Brunei Darussalam from 3 to 5 July 2024.

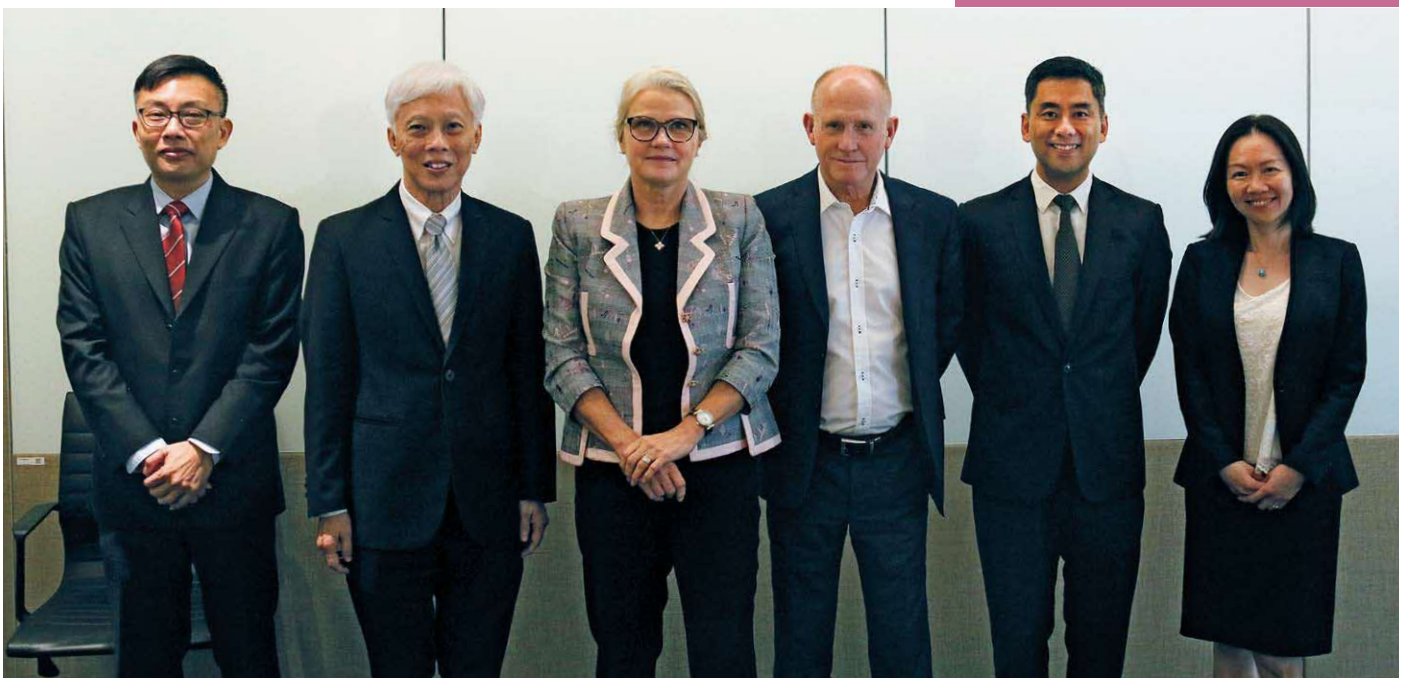
During the visit, the two Chief Justices discussed how judicial cooperation between the Singapore and Brunei judiciaries could be further enhanced. Chief Justice Menon also shared with the Brunei judiciary the Singapore perspective on the role of the judiciary in promoting and supporting economic development on three levels: first, by deciding individual cases in a way that is sensitive to commercial realities and responsive to new developments in the wider operating environment; second, by providing efficient and appropriate dispute resolution mechanisms; and third, by supporting the broader transnational system of commercial justice that provides a sound legal framework for transnational commercial activity.



Chief Justice Menon with Chief Justice Steven Chong Wan Oon of Brunei Darussalam. (Photo: The Supreme Court of Brunei Darussalam)

Chief Justice Menon with Brunei Darussalam's Attorney General, Yang Berhormat Datin Paduka Dayang Hajah Nor Hashimah binti Haji Mohammed Taib. (Photo: Singapore High Commission in Bandar Seri Begawan)

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

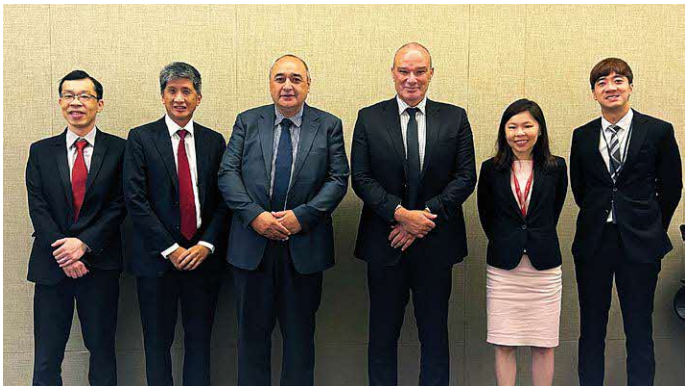


Chief Justice Helen Winkelmann (middle) was given a tour of the courtrooms at State Courts.

Besides meeting members of the Supreme Court of Brunei Darussalam, Chief Justice Menon also met with Brunei Darussalam's Attorney General Yang Berhormat Datin Paduka Dayang Hajah Nor Hashimah binti Haji Mohammed Taib. In addition, Justice Kannan Ramesh, who was part of the Singapore delegation, briefed Bruneian stakeholders and government agencies on Singapore's insolvency and restructuring regime. He spoke about Singapore's experience in reforming and modernising Singapore's legal frameworks for insolvency and restructuring, and in particular on Singapore's adoption of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) Model Law on Cross-Border Insolvency, and on the development of the Judicial Insolvency Network's Guidelines and Modalities.

Visit by Chief Justice of New Zealand

The Right Honourable Helen Winkelmann, Chief Justice of New Zealand, called on Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon on 17 July 2024. During the visit, Chief Justice Winkelmann was given briefings on access to justice, use of technology in courts and an introduction to the Singapore International Commercial Court. Chief Justice Winkelmann also called on Presiding Judge of the State Courts, Justice Vincent Hoong, on 18 July 2024.



A visit to the State Courts by a delegation from the District Court of New Zealand.

Mr Paul Lam, Secretary for Justice, Hong Kong SAR and Chief Justice Menon.

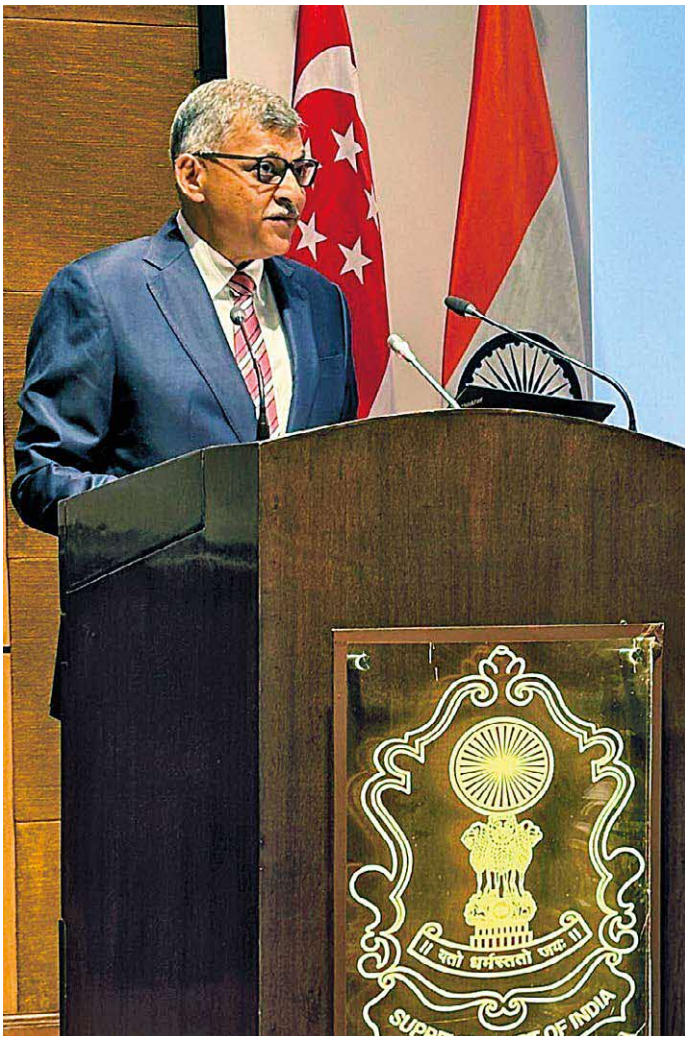
Visit by Secretary of Justice of Hong Kong SAR

Mr Paul Lam, Secretary for Justice, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), called on Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon on 24 July 2024. Chief Justice Menon and Mr Lam discussed issues of mutual interest, including judicial training, court digitalisation and access to justice.

Visit by the District Court of New Zealand to the State Courts

Chief District Court Judge Heemi Taumaunu and District Court Judge David Clark from the District Court of New Zealand visited the State Courts on 1 November 2024. They were received by Principal District Judge Toh Han Li, and District Judges Chee Min Ping and Jonathan Ng.

Through the lively discussions during the visit, both the delegation from New Zealand and the State Courts team learnt more about the case management practices in each other's jurisdictions.



Chief Justice Menon speaking at the inaugural Singapore-India Conference on Technology.

EVENTS WITH PARTNERS

Supreme Court of Singapore and Supreme Court of India Hold Inaugural SG-India Conference on Technology

The Supreme Court of Singapore and the Supreme Court of India organised the inaugural Singapore-India Conference on Technology on 13 and 14 April 2024 in New Delhi, India. The Conference not only brought together judges from the two judiciaries, but it also facilitated dialogues with experts in technology on the growing interface between technology and justice systems.

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon delivered the keynote speech titled "Judicial Responsibility in the Age of Artificial Intelligence". In his speech, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon noted that developments in generative AI have reshaped conversations about what societies and systems of the future will look like, and that the Courts stand on the cusp of seismic shifts that will affect their justice systems. Chief Justice Menon said that the Courts must be guided above all by the goal of preserving and strengthening the rule of law. This goal should guide how judiciaries discharge their traditional adjudicative role and systemic role, which is emerging with rapid and growing significance to ensure that the rule of law is not displaced by the "rule of technology" in this age of AI.

Chief Justice Menon also suggested that the possibility of "AI judges" replacing human judges is a distant, even remote one. He said that given the weight and implications of many of the decisions that judges make, there are aspects of both the process and the outcomes of judging that, at least in certain fields, AI should not replace. However, the role of the human judge needs to evolve. Beyond cultivating technological expertise in using AI tools, judges must remain committed to their professional duties and their ethical responsibilities to exercise judgment in managing both the process and outcomes of judging in each case. The efforts of individual judges should be complemented by systemic initiatives undertaken by the judiciaries. There is an urgent need to develop robust AI governance frameworks and guidelines to regulate the use of AI in litigation and adjudication.

Domain experts in the field of AI and its impact on justice systems were invited to speak at the Conference. Professor Urs Gasser, Dean, School of Social Sciences and Technology, Technical University of Munich, and Dr Richard Susskind, President, Society for Computers and Law, Bristol, UK, shared their views on the likely trajectory of the use of AI in the practice of law, potential blind spots, and important considerations for judiciaries.

Discussion themes that included "AI Assisting the Work of the Courts", "Harnessing AI Technology to Promote Access to Justice" and "Ethical Issues and Risk in the Use of AI" were chosen to generate discussions and new proposals to prepare both judiciaries to deal with issues that will affect the administration of justice.

Fifth Meeting of SIFoCC

The Fifth Meeting of the Standing International Forum of Commercial Courts (SIFoCC) was hosted by Qatar and the Qatar International Court and Dispute Resolution Centre in Doha on 20 and 21 April 2024. The Meeting was held in person at the Qatar University and was also live-streamed (with 2-way interaction) for participants who were unable to attend in person. James Allsop AC, former Chief Justice of the Federal Court of Australia, and an International Judge of the SICC, delivered the keynote address on "The Spirit of the Judicial Task and the Importance of International Judicial Dialogue".

The Fifth Meeting of the Standing International Forum of Commercial Courts.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

In July 2024, the Singapore Judicial College (SJC) worked with New Zealand's Te Kura to facilitate a study trip by a team from the State Courts and the SJC as part of the Work Group on Improving the Judiciary's Management of Sexual Offence Cases.

Key Knowledge Exchanges with Global Partners

The SJC hosted an online knowledge exchange and an in-person Roundtable with École Nationale de la Magistrature (ENM) in May and November 2024 respectively. The meetings focused on strategies for curriculum development, the use of technology in pedagogical innovation and judicial wellbeing. Issues such as the need for learner-centredness and relevance in learning design were explored, as well as responsible experimentation with AI and its role in enhancing learning for judges.

In July 2024, the SJC worked with New Zealand's Te Kura Institute of Judicial Studies to facilitate a study trip by a team from the State Courts and the SJC as part of the Work Group on Improving the Judiciary's Management of Sexual Offence Cases.

In October 2024, the SJC attended a National Judicial College of Australia programme on Managing Sexual Assault Hearings. The course sought to deepen participants' awareness of misconceptions concerning sexual offending and the current empirical evidence relating to those misconceptions, as well as improve their knowledge of the ways in which memory is affected by trauma.

SG Courts and Administrative Court of Thailand Hold Cybersecurity and e-Court Workshop

Under the auspices of the Singapore-Thailand Civil Service Exchange Programme, SG Courts and the Administrative Court of Thailand held their annual workshop on 21 May 2024. Themed "Cybersecurity and e-Court", the virtual workshop saw SG Courts' Ministry Chief Information Officer, Mr Toh Kon Sing, and Judges Chaiphat Thungthong and Chanwit Chaikan from the Rayong Administrative Court share about their respective courts' cybersecurity challenges and mitigation programmes.

State Courts Participate in 24th Online Dispute Resolution Forum

The State Courts were invited to participate in the 24th Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) Forum held in Prague, Czech Republic from 5 to 6 June 2024. Organised by the National Centre for Technology & Dispute Resolution and PRK Partners, this forum brought together leaders and experts in the ODR arena, including scientists, product developers, lawyers, mediators and government officials.

District Judge Jasbendar Kaur delivering her presentation.

Mr Toh Kon Sing (bottom right) conducted the workshop with judges from the Rayong Administrative Court.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

District Judges (DJs) Jasbendar Kaur and Soh Weiqi represented the State Courts at this international forum. As one of the members on the panel that discussed "ODR Around the World", DJ Kaur gave a presentation on "Advancing Access to Justice: The Singapore Experience in Online Community Justice". She spoke on SG Courts' mission to provide accessible justice to all court users through both online and offline channels and how the overall strategy has been to make court processes and the supporting ODR options and case management system for community and relational disputes simpler and user-centric, in order to facilitate the just, expeditious and economical disposal of the cases.

In addition, DJ Kaur shared that SG Courts regularly conduct reviews to refine, improve and enhance court processes, systems and services. One recent development is a Memorandum of Understanding reached with Harvey AI, a generative AI legal services startup, to explore the use of such tools for SG Courts.

Supreme Court Hosts 5th Judiciary Insolvency Network Conference

The Supreme Court hosted the 5th Judicial Insolvency Network (JIN) Conference on 12 and 13 June 2024. The event was attended by 32 regional and international participants.

A number of topics central to the theme of cross-border insolvency and restructuring were discussed, such as a survey of landmark international insolvency judgments in the past three years, focusing on matters that have invoked the JIN Guidelines and Modalities and recent developments in the use of mediation in insolvency matters.

Formed in October 2016, the JIN is a network of insolvency judges from across the world. It serves as a platform for sustained and continuous engagement for the furtherance of the following objectives: to provide judicial thought leadership, develop best practices and facilitate communication and cooperation amongst national courts in cross-border insolvency and restructuring matters. JIN comprises insolvency judges from Australia, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, Canada, the Cayman Islands, England and Wales, Japan, Singapore, South Korea and the United States. Justices Kannan Ramesh and Aidan Xu from Singapore are two of the founding members.

Since the inaugural meeting of the JIN in Singapore in October 2016, the network has continued to promote the adoption of the JIN Guidelines to address the key aspects of and the modalities for communication and cooperation amongst courts, insolvency representatives and other parties involved in cross-border insolvency proceedings. The overarching aim of the JIN Guidelines was the preservation of enterprise value and the reduction of legal costs. To date, 18 jurisdictions around the world have adopted the JIN Guidelines.

The JIN recognised that some judges may prefer, as a prelude to JIN membership, to first observe and experience the JIN's deliberations. Adoption of the JIN Guidelines is not a prerequisite to membership in the JIN and, conversely, a court which does not have representation in the JIN may also adopt the JIN Guidelines. It is in this context that the 5th JIN Conference had worked towards and obtained the attendance of Bahrain, China, India, the Netherlands and a number of Southeast Asian courts. The presence of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand, in particular, signalled a strong foundation for the development of judicial cooperation in cross-border insolvency and restructuring matters in the region.

The attendees of the 5th JIN Conference 2024.

Workshop on Online Scams

At the 41st Cambridge International Symposium on Economic Crime, then-General Manager Chee Min Ping conducted a workshop on online scams. She discussed sentencing guidelines for scams-related offences, which had been published on 21 August 2024, and Singapore's proactive stance in introducing new offences to deter online scams.

Justice Jeyaretnam Addresses Transnational Issue Estoppel at IBA Symposium

At the International Bar Association (IBA) Symposium held on 28 August 2024 in Singapore, Justice Philip Jeyaretnam delivered a thought-provoking keynote speech on "Transnational Issue Estoppel in the Context of International Arbitration".

Justice Jeyaretnam's address tackled the complex issue of transnational issue estoppel — how prior court decisions in different jurisdictions impact the enforceability of arbitral awards. His speech highlighted the challenges faced by national courts in balancing the need for finality in arbitration with the principles of justice and efficiency. He emphasised that the issue of relitigating questions already decided in other jurisdictions not only escalates costs but also risks delaying justice.

Justice Jeyaretnam pointed out that while there is an emerging approach to this issue in Singapore, a global consensus is still evolving. He called for bodies like the UNCITRAL to address these concerns comprehensively. In the meantime, he underscored that it falls to national courts to navigate this complex terrain. His concluding remarks aimed to stimulate further discussion and reflection among delegates on this pressing topic.

The IBA Symposium 2024 was presented by the IBA Asia Pacific Regional Forum and supported by the IBA Arbitration and Litigation Committees, in association with the SICC. Other distinguished speakers at the Symposium included then-Judicial Commissioner Kristy Tan, Justice Anselmo Reyes of the SICC, and Justice Mimmie Chan of the High Court of Hong Kong, who provided valuable insights into various aspects of judicial involvement in arbitration. The event was attended by over 220 delegates from 27 countries.

Justice Philip Jeyaretnam's keynote address not only enriched the symposium but also set the stage for ongoing dialogue and development in international arbitration practices. (Photo: International Bar Association)

Chief Justice Menon Speaks at the International Corrections and Prisons Association Annual Conference

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon delivered an insightful opening address on "The Criminal Justice Ecosystem: Beyond Crime and Punishment" at the International Corrections and Prisons Association Annual Conference 2024 held in Singapore on 4 September 2024.

Hosted by the Singapore Prison Service (SPS), the conference, themed "Enabling Desistance: Beyond Recidivism", brought together professionals from the corrections and justice sectors to examine progressive strategies for rehabilitation and reintegration.

Chief Justice Menon delivering his opening address. (Photo: Singapore Prison Service)

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

In his opening address, Chief Justice Menon expanded the discussion beyond traditional notions of crime and punishment, emphasising a more holistic view of the criminal justice system. The criminal justice ecosystem demonstrates great care for those members of the society who have transgressed, through a shared commitment to their rehabilitation and reintegration. That ecosystem is supported by a community of different stakeholders whose collaboration, at many levels and in many forms, enables the broader system to do its work and to achieve its aims.

He also commended the collective efforts of stakeholders dedicated to rehabilitation and reintegration, illustrating how their initiatives play a crucial role in preventing crime and ensuring societal order and peace. His remarks underscored the significant impact of these collaborative endeavours in achieving core criminal justice objectives.

In addition, Chief Justice Menon highlighted the importance of multi-faceted approaches and the need for continuous innovation in the field. He acknowledged the valuable contributions of the SPS and other partners in pioneering best practices and advancing the dialogue on desistance and recidivism.

Chief Justice Menon Explores Ways to Secure Trust in Arbitration at SIAC Annual India International Arbitration Conferences

On 6 September 2024, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon delivered the keynote address "The Pursuit of Justice: Securing Trust in Arbitration" at the SIAC Annual India International Arbitration Conferences 2024 in Mumbai.

He outlined key trends affecting arbitration, one of which being the decline of trust in public institutions, and suggested two areas to secure trust in arbitration – firstly, to promote access to justice by controlling costs and secondly, to ensure that the values of the legal profession are upheld.

Chief Justice Menon also participated in a fireside chat in Delhi where the second day of the conference was held. The discussion, which was moderated by SIAC Court of Arbitration members, Mr Tejas Karia from Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co, India, and Mr Vijayendra Pratap Singh from AZB & Partners, India, delved into topics such as the use of technology, cross-border judicial cooperation, and the need for codes of conduct in arbitration.

The SIAC Annual International Arbitration Conferences 2024, themed "New Developments and Reforms in International Arbitration: The Best Path Forward", brought together leading practitioners to explore the best practices in arbitration proceedings, discuss recent developments and reforms, and debate key issues, including diversity and the value of investment arbitration.

Third Meeting of the JDRN

The Third Meeting of the International Judicial Dispute Resolution Network (JDRN) was hosted by the Federal Court of Malaysia and convened in Kuala Lumpur from 28 to 29 October 2024. Established in May 2022, the JDRN brings together judiciaries to promote the adoption of the Judicial Dispute Resolution (JDR) process in judicial systems worldwide, with the aim of enhancing the administration of justice.

JDRN meetings provide an important platform for member and observer judiciaries to share experiences, exchange ideas and expertise, and develop standards and best practices. Some 44 delegates from 12 judiciaries—including founding JDRN members, JDRN observers, and invited observer judiciaries and judges—attended the meeting in person at The Westin, Kuala Lumpur, where they enjoyed the warmth and hospitality of the Federal Court of Malaysia. Another 15 delegates from five judiciaries joined remotely via video conferencing.

The Third Meeting of the International Judicial Dispute Resolution Network was convened in Kuala Lumpur from 28 to 29 October 2024. (Photo: Federal Court of Malaysia)

The meeting was opened by the Right Honourable Justice Tan Sri Datuk Amar Abang Iskandar bin Abang Hashim, former President of the Court of Appeal, Federal Court of Malaysia, and Chief Judge Laura Taylor Swain of the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York. All delegations took an active part in the proceedings, which featured informative presentations and rich, layered discussions. Participants exchanged insights on recent efforts to enhance the JDR process in their jurisdictions, as well as upcoming initiatives. There were also robust discussions on draft practice guides relating to access to justice, small claims, and commercial disputes, which are expected to be issued next year.

Membership in the JDRN also grew over the past year. The Judiciary of Ireland, the Judiciary of Northern Ireland, and the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Western District of Washington were officially welcomed as new members at the meeting. The Third Meeting of the JDRN concluded with a memorable Official Closing Dinner hosted by the Right Honourable Tun Tengku Maimun binti Tuan Mat, former Chief Justice of Malaysia. The next JDRN meeting is expected to take place in late 2025 or 2026.

Chief Justice Menon delivering his keynote address at the IACA Conference 2024 where he emphasised the judiciary's expanding role beyond case adjudication, and the critical importance of court administration in building public trust and delivering justice effectively.

IACA President Prof Dr Luis María Palma delivering his welcome remarks where he highlighted judicial trust, integrity, and the fight against disinformation as pillars of effective court administration.

The Singapore Judicial College delegation at the 11th IOJT Conference.

11th International Organisation for Judicial Training (IOJT) Conference

A delegation from the SJC, including Board of Governors Chair, Justice Kwek Mean Luck, attended the 11th IOJT Conference 2024 in South Korea. Dean Natalie Skead and Executive Director Justin Yeo presented a paper entitled "Judicial Education in a Brave New World", while Deputy Executive Director Paul Chan, Director Anita Parkash and Former Executive Director (and member of the Board of Executives of IOJT), Paul Quan participated in panel discussions at the Conference.

SG Courts Host IACA Conference for the First Time

From 11 to 14 November 2024, SG Courts played host to 250 judges and senior court administrators from over 40 countries attending the International Association for Court Administration (IACA) Conference 2024. This was the first time the annual conference, which brings together members of the judiciary from around the globe to exchange insights and perspectives on developments and best practices in judicial and court administration, was held in Singapore.

Under the theme "Building Trust in the Judiciary", the conference delved into critical topics and discussions which ranged from the integration of AI in judicial processes to combating disinformation and its impact on public trust. The event also focused on improving access to justice and achieving excellence in court administration.

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon delivered the keynote address, emphasising the evolving role of judiciaries in building public trust. He highlighted that trust is not only built through adjudicative work but also through the judiciary's broader systemic role, which involves various aspects of court administration and innovation.

The conference showcased Singapore's leadership in judicial innovation, with Mr Tan Ken Hwee, SG Courts' Chief Transformation and Innovation Officer, speaking at a plenary session on AI's impact on the Judiciary. This session, along with others, provided valuable insights into global best practices and emerging trends in court administration.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

The IACA Conference 2024 brought together 250 attendees from over 40 countries in sessions that provided valuable insights into best practices and emerging trends in court administration.

IACA President, Prof Dr Luis María Palma, expressed his honour in holding the conference in Singapore, commending Singapore's experiences and advancements in the field. He emphasised the critical importance of trust in the judiciary and the role of professional court administration in fostering this trust.

Chief Justice Menon concluded, "Trust in our judiciaries is not only built on the courts' adjudicative work in individual cases, but it increasingly rests on our ability to discharge our broader systemic role, which is assuming ever greater importance. This mission involves all parts and all levels of a modern judiciary. From judicial education and judicial policy, to communications and outreach, to technology and innovation, to access to justice — to name just a few of the areas I have touched on — court administrators and court administration are an indispensable part of our people, processes and systems for administering and delivering justice."

ASEAN Insolvency Judges Meeting

The first ASEAN Insolvency Judges Meeting was held on 19 November 2024. Organised by the SG Courts and hosted by the Philippines Judiciary, the meeting brought together insolvency judges from all ASEAN member states to foster a deeper understanding of the insolvency and restructuring frameworks in their respective jurisdictions. It also provided a platform for participants to share their experiences and perspectives on cross-border insolvency matters, paving the way for future collaboration. The Council of ASEAN Chief Justices (CACJ) subsequently approved the establishment of a Standing Meeting of ASEAN Insolvency Judges at its 11th Meeting on 20 November 2024.

ASEAN+ Meeting

The second ASEAN+ Meeting between the CACJ and the judiciaries of the People's Republic of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea was also held on 19 November 2024. Themed "The Use of Court Technology to Enhance Access to Justice", the meeting concluded with a proposal to establish formal collaboration between the CACJ and the three Northeast Asian judiciaries in the area of court technology.

CACJ Meeting

In his opening address at the 11th CACJ Meeting, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon observed that the CACJ had, over the past decade, proven its value in advancing the rule of law and the administration of justice within ASEAN. He noted that ASEAN's diversity—particularly in its legal systems—made judicial cooperation all the more important in addressing the practical challenges arising from this heterogeneity. Chief Justice Menon also highlighted efforts to develop cross-border frameworks, such as the Model Rules on the Service of Civil Processes and on the Taking of Evidence for Foreign Proceedings in Civil or Commercial Matters, and encouraged continued collaboration to strengthen the rule of law in the region.

The CACJ held wide-ranging discussions during the meeting, including:

- Publishing an ASEAN Memorandum of Guidance on how ASEAN judiciaries recognise and enforce foreign money judgments.
- Administrative verification of court orders relating to the care of a child issued by a court of another ASEAN member state.
- A simplified protocol to verify the authenticity of court orders within ASEAN.

The meeting concluded with the signing of the Cebu Declaration by all attending Chief Justices and Heads of Delegations, formalising judicial collaboration among the ASEAN judiciaries.

Justice Kannan Ramesh giving a speech at the First Meeting of ASEAN Insolvency Judges.

Chief Justices and Heads of ASEAN Delegation at the 11th CACJ Meeting.

DEVELOPING OUR CAPABILITIES

AN ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE THAT VALUES CONTINUOUS WORKPLACE LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT ENABLES OUR PEOPLE TO SERVE COURT USERS BETTER.

DEVELOPING OUR CAPABILITIES

The State Courts' Criminal Courts Cluster piloted half-day roundtable discussions with in-depth reviews of several landmark criminal judgments.

Brunei–Singapore Webinar for Junior Judicial Officers

On 24 September 2024, the judiciaries of Brunei and Singapore marked a significant milestone in their bilateral cooperation with the inaugural Brunei–Singapore Webinar for Junior Judicial Officers. Attended by 32 participants from both countries, the webinar focused on essential topics for early-career judicial officers, including courtroom control and communication, decision-making processes, and judgment-writing techniques.

The webinar was the product of the Brunei–Singapore Working Group, established following a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2023 to foster closer ties and knowledge exchange. As the first in a planned series of collaborations, the event underscored both judiciaries' commitment to continuous learning and improvement, and strengthening regional judicial cooperation.

Strategic Collaborations to Drive Technological Advancement

In 2024, the Courts continued to drive technological advancement in the legal industry through strategic collaborations with GovTech, ServiceSG, and the Ministry of Law. These partnerships yielded innovative tools for legal research, data analysis, and document preparation, enhancing the capabilities of legal professionals. In recognition of the importance of staying current with technological change, nearly 150 officers attended generative artificial intelligence (AI) training.

Roundtable on Landmark Criminal Judgments

The State Courts' Criminal Courts Cluster piloted half-day roundtable discussions with in-depth reviews of several landmark criminal judgments, following a practice established in the Supreme Court. Senior judicial officers delivered presentations and led discussions on the implications and practical application of these cases. The roundtable format will be extended to all other clusters in the coming year.

Specialist Judges for Managing Sexual Offences

In July 2024, Justice Vincent Hoong led a delegation from the Supreme Court, the State Courts, and the Singapore Judicial College (SJC) to courts and institutes in Australia and New Zealand to study how sexual offence cases are managed in those jurisdictions. Insights from the visit informed measures subsequently implemented across the Singapore Judiciary to enhance the management of such cases.

From 13 January 2025, all trials involving selected sexual offences in the State Courts will be assigned to a specialist list of experienced and specially trained District Judges. The State Courts are also piloting enhanced pre-trial checklists to strengthen case management, protect complainants, and preserve accused persons' right to a fair trial.

DEVELOPING OUR CAPABILITIES

Refreshing Innovation Culture at the State Courts

The Strategic Planning and Technology Cluster has embarked on a multi-year project to refresh the State Courts' innovation culture. The initiative aims to help judicial officers and court administrators enhance their skills in knowledge-sharing and collaboration. This will enable ideas to be generated more organically and effectively across clusters, ultimately improving access to justice for court users.

An organisation-wide survey and focus group discussions were conducted to identify challenges in ideation. Measures will be rolled out to address these gaps and foster a more collaborative innovation culture across the organisation.

Training and Development at the FJC

In 2024, the Family Justice Courts (FJC) continued to deepen the expertise of its judges and court administrators through comprehensive training programmes. A total of 24 sessions were conducted in anticipation of upcoming legislative amendments relating to the enforcement of child access orders, family violence, and the maintenance enforcement process.

During the FJC Learning Week organised by the SJC in July, judges were equipped with evidence-based techniques for conducting forensic interviews with children, with an emphasis on developmentally appropriate approaches and trauma-informed practices to enhance judicial interactions in court proceedings. Judges were also briefed on community-based therapeutic resources, enabling more informed decisions on appropriate interventions in family cases.

The Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS) enhanced this learning journey through its "CAPSule" seminar series, which comprised four 1.5-hour sessions featuring internal and external speakers on social science topics relevant to family law. Notable among these was Associate Professor Dorcas Quek of Singapore Management University, who spoke on the impact of communication modes on mediation outcomes. Another seminar featured speakers from South Central Community and Pro Bono SG, who introduced the new Transnational Family Care Centre initiative, where community lawyers and social workers collaborate to support foreign individuals and families in Singapore facing challenges such as divorce, immigration, and healthcare.

Learning programmes were enhanced through the use of technology and guided play, among others.

A renewal of leadership at the SJC in 2024 spearheaded structural reorganisation and enhanced its capacity and capabilities.

Growth and Reorganisation of the SJC

In 2024, the SJC saw a renewal of its leadership with the appointment of Dean Natalie Skead, Executive Director Justin Yeo, and Deputy Executive Director Paul Chan. The new leadership team spearheaded a reorganisation of the College's structure, establishing two complementary divisions: the Institute of Judicial Excellence (IJE) for education and the Institute of Judicial Studies (IJS) for research. The IJS' research informs the IJE's education activities, while the IJE's training needs and priorities guide the IJS' research efforts. To further enhance its teaching capacity, the SJC expanded its faculty, drawing on expertise from the Supreme Court Bench, judicial service officers, and subject matter experts.

Strengthening Programme Offerings at the SJC

The SJC sought to strengthen its programme offerings in 2024, focusing on both substance and delivery. Participant input was actively sought to provide multi-dimensional perspectives that informed programme design and implementation.

The year began with the rollout of an augmented Judicial Competency Framework (JCF), comprising 14 competencies with contextualised learning pathways for different career phases. Leveraging the JCF, programme offerings were expanded to include new modules at the 101, 201 and 301 levels, as well as a specialist elective syllabus tailored to the learning needs of each of the Tri-Courts. These initiatives have helped to build adjudicative and systemic competencies, and to promote multi- and inter-disciplinary knowledge acquisition.

Programme delivery was also enhanced through experiential, peer and blended learning approaches. These included interactive methods such as fishbowl discussions, role plays, guided play, conversation circles, and design-thinking workshops, alongside coaching and mentoring. The SJC also began incorporating technology, including generative AI, into instructional materials and discussions.

To refine its programme development, delivery, and feedback processes, the SJC set up multiple channels to gather input from judicial service officers on their learning needs and feedback. The College continues to adapt its programmes in response to evolving requirements and preferences.

DEVELOPING OUR CAPABILITIES

Initiatives such as Technically Speaking are designed to strengthen court interpreters' mastery of technical terminology.

Equipping Court Interpreters with Specialised Knowledge

The Language Resources Department launched "Technically Speaking" in December 2024, an innovative training programme designed to strengthen court interpreters' mastery of technical terminology. The inaugural session, "From the Emergency Room to the Witness Stand", brought together interpreters from across the courts with three distinguished medical professionals.

The session featured comprehensive presentations, interactive Q&A segments, and language-specific breakout discussions that allowed interpreters to address the linguistic challenges of medical terminology. The success of this inaugural programme has prompted plans for future sessions on other technical fields relevant to court proceedings, including banking, forensic pathology, and civil engineering.

This initiative underscores the Judiciary's commitment to enhancing courtroom communication through the continuous professional development of court interpreters.

Strengthening Knowledge Architecture and Culture

Since its establishment in 2021, the Knowledge Management Office has made significant strides in strengthening the Judiciary's knowledge ecosystem and culture. Key milestones include the launch of the first integrated intranet for the Judiciary and Judicial Service Commission, developed in partnership with the Corporate Services and Innovation, Technology and Transformation Divisions; the introduction of a Knowledge Management (KM) Policy providing a clear framework for knowledge creation, sharing and retention; and a collaboration with the Office of Transformation and Innovation to develop Standards of Procedure for the Right Classification of Official Documents, incorporating Judiciary-specific examples for clearer guidance.

In line with the commitment to a culture of excellence in KM, a dipstick survey was conducted to assess the effectiveness of implemented initiatives and identify further opportunities. The

The Judiciary's knowledge management journey was presented at the International Association for Court Administration Conference 2024.

The SJC collaborated with the National Judicial Institute of Canada to deliver two in-person judgment writing programmes.

Judiciary's KM journey was also presented at the International Association for Court Administration Conference 2024 to raise awareness of the importance of knowledge management.

Judgment Writing

In July 2024, the SJC collaborated with the National Judicial Institute of Canada to deliver two in-person judgment writing programmes. The first was an intensive two-day coaching clinic for mid-career judicial officers, building on the College's foundational judgment writing programme. This was followed by a Train-the-Trainer programme aimed at developing advanced skills-based training for the SJC's senior faculty, faculty members, subject matter advisory panels, and "judgementors", through coaching and mentoring.

CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

THE SINGAPORE JUDICIARY ADVOCATES FOR INCLUSIVE JUSTICE BY GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY, AND ADDRESSING RESIDENTS' LEGAL AND BROADER SOCIETAL NEEDS.

CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Conversations with the Community

A seven-part series "Conversations with the Community" concluded on 20 September 2024, with an insightful keynote address by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon.

In his address titled "Reimagining the Rule of Law: A Renewed Conception", Chief Justice Menon reflected on the series' journey, recounting the topics covered in the past six instalments. He remarked that it was fitting for the final instalment to focus on the rule of law as conceived in and for Singapore, as this concept underpins the core mission of the Courts to uphold and strengthen the rule of law.

Chief Justice Menon advocated a refreshed understanding of the rule of law, proposing a more inclusive, outward-looking, and holistic vision. He highlighted the challenges threatening the sustainability of the legal process, such as access to justice and the sustainability of the legal practice itself, while also stressing the importance of addressing emerging global threats affecting humanity.

Launched on 21 September 2023, the "Conversations with the Community" series was jointly organised by the Singapore Judiciary and the law faculties of the National University of Singapore, Singapore Management University and Singapore University of Social Sciences, to bring together leaders from the judiciary, academia, legal and other sectors to discuss issues that concern the community. More than 1,300 attendees had participated in the yearlong initiative, among them educators, public officers, as well as specialists and practitioners in the fields discussed.

These were some of the key themes discussed in the past series:

i. 21 September 2023

Chief Justice Menon was the keynote speaker for the inaugural session of this series. His opening address, titled "The Role of the Courts in our Society – Safeguarding Society", raised awareness about the Courts as independent and impartial organs of state that interpret laws, apply them and adjudicate cases. In his speech, he highlighted two core principles – judicial courage and judicial modesty – that guide the Courts in discharging their adjudicative role and recognised that the Courts do not work alone in safeguarding society. Beyond the Courts' traditional adjudicative role, Chief Justice Menon also outlined the second kind of role that the Courts play in safeguarding society, which is the increasingly systemic role as institutions charged with the responsibility of administering the system of justice. To fulfil this systemic role, the SG Courts are building a user-centric court system designed to serve public needs and advance access to justice.

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon delivering the final address of the Judiciary's Conversations with the Community initiative in September 2024.

ii. 16 November 2023

Justice Debbie Ong was the keynote speaker for the second session, where she focused on the resolution of family disputes through Therapeutic Justice (TJ). The session emphasised how a TJ system puts in place the essential legal structure and resources to ensure therapeutic, helpful effects for the family and how the Family Justice Courts should be a place for problem-solving and resolution rather than a battlefield.

Lively question-and-answer sessions helped participants contextualise and better understand the themes being discussed.

Besides keynote addresses, the series also featured panel discussions that deliberated and debated pressing issues.

iii. 24 January 2024

Presiding Judge of the State Courts Justice Vincent Hoong delivered the third keynote address in the series, titled "Access to Justice – Delivering Quality Justice to the Community", where he spoke about the Courts' role in advancing access to justice in respect of private disputes and the civil justice system. While ensuring access to justice is important to the effective functioning of the criminal justice system, Justice Hoong shared that for the person on the street and the community at-large, their main concern is likely to be how they can seek and obtain justice in their disputes. He also outlined the challenges faced by a self-represented person in accessing and using a traditional system of civil justice, as well as the steps the Judiciary has taken to increase the accessibility of the civil justice system and make it more user-centric.

iv. 27 March 2024

Justice Kannan Ramesh, Judge of the Appellate Division of the High Court, delivered his keynote address titled "Healing Businesses in a New World: Problems, Opportunities and Solutions" in the fourth instalment, focusing on the theme of troubled businesses in an uncertain world. He discussed the challenges of the New World, where people are facing an increasingly fragmented and polarised world, as well as the heightened focus on environmental concerns. He also elaborated on two main models where lessons may be drawn in constructing a suitable restructuring and insolvency (R&I) regime – creditor driven and debtor-in-possession R&I regimes.

Mr Mervyn Cheong (above) was among those recognised at the Judiciary Volunteers Appreciation event.

v. 30 May 2024

Justice Aidan Xu, judge in charge of transformation and innovation at SG Courts, delivered his keynote address titled "Technology as a Bridge to Justice" at the fifth session. He discussed how the Courts have embraced technology to support lawyers and empower members of the public in navigating legal processes. By leveraging technology, it can also facilitate access to justice by allowing self-represented persons (SRPs) to navigate the legal system on their own without having to engage lawyers. Justice Xu outlined the Courts' efforts in exploring the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) to advance their mission of providing access to justice, including the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with Harvey.ai to use AI to assist SRPs in navigating legal processes, starting with small value claims, as well as to assist Small Claims Tribunal magistrates in examining evidence, which can be voluminous.

Recognising Volunteers

The Judiciary Volunteers Appreciation event was held on 27 November 2024. The annual event celebrates the exemplary contributions of court volunteers and honours individuals who have demonstrated unwavering commitment to supporting the Courts and ensuring access to justice.

In recognition of his pro bono work for those charged with capital offences, Mr Mervyn Cheong was conferred the Legal Assistance Scheme for Capital Offences Award. For their outstanding commitment and dedication, two court volunteers received the Outstanding Court Volunteer Award: Mr Lau Kah Hee, a volunteer mediator at the Small Claims Tribunals, received the award under the Advocate and Solicitor Category, while Dr Ronald Paul Ng, a practising doctor who mediates criminal cases at the State Courts, received the award under the Open Category.

CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

A Day in Court for Students

Nearly 180 students from more than 20 secondary schools in Singapore participated in the eighth run of the "A Day in Court" seminar held at the State Courts on 4 July 2024. The annual seminar, which is designed to give Secondary 3 school students a better understanding of the role of the State Courts and the work that they do, focused on the topic of harassment, specifically, cyberbullying on social media.

In addition to the different types of harassment, the students learned more about the avenues to deal with the issue, and how the Courts manage harassment cases. A video depicting an incident of cyberbullying served as a case study for an in-depth group discussion before they learned — from one another and the programme facilitators — how best to respond to similar situations.

The half-day seminar also featured a fireside chat with two district judges. For the first time since the State Courts relocated to their current premises in 2019, a guided tour of a courtroom was also incorporated in the programme to introduce the students to the layout and technology used in a courtroom, the role of the parties in a court proceeding, as well as courtroom etiquette.

The "A Day in Court" seminar is part of the Judiciary's outreach efforts to enhance the community's appreciation of the work and the role of the Courts, and aspects of the justice system. Since the seminar was first organised in 2014, the event themes have been calibrated to align with the evolving interests, consumption habits and social environment of today's youth.

Nearly 180 students from more than 20 secondary schools participated in the eighth run of the "A Day in Court" seminar.

Youth Court Learning Journey

The Family Justice Courts (FJC)'s Youth Court (YC) and Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS) hosted two learning journeys for the community:

- 23 February 2024: 18 Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) students, who were working adults from diverse backgrounds in the public, social and youth sectors, and pursuing their Graduate Diploma in Youth Work, Master in Psychology (Forensics) or Master in Social Work.

- 22 March 2024: 30 Student Welfare Officers (SWOs) from the Ministry of Education. SWOs offer casework support for students-at-risk and their families within the school setting.

SUSS students pursuing social work and psychology were among those who visited the Youth Courts on a learning journey.

The objectives of these learning journeys were to help participants better understand the youth justice system and gain deeper insights into the types of cases managed by the YC. Participants were given a tour of the YC, its registry and the Family Protection Centre, where they learned about procedures for applying for Personal Protection Orders. They also visited the Court of Protection, where they observed proceedings in session.

The programme included an overview of the Children and Young Persons Act, the types of cases in the YC involving youth offenders, children and youths in need of care and protection, and family guidance matters, as well as the role of CAPS in court proceedings. District Judge Amy Tung and CAPS conducted a question-and-answer session, addressing queries from participants. The session also underscored the significant role community partners play in supporting families, children and youths, and in preventing young persons from entering the justice system. The collaboration between educational institutions and the YC highlighted a collective effort to protect and rehabilitate at-risk children and young persons (CYPs).

District Judge Tung emphasised the importance of feedback and insights from schools regarding CYPs, to assist the YC in considering and determining appropriate orders.

Participants appreciated that the learning journeys were informative, insightful, and had broadened their exposure to the youth justice system.

Annual Training for Court Volunteer Mediators

Two training sessions were organised via Zoom for court volunteer mediators in June and November 2024.

"How to Not Botch a Mediation"

Held on 28 June 2024, the session was conducted by Mr David Lim, mediator and mediation trainer with the Singapore Mediation Centre and the Singapore International Mediation Institute. He highlighted key dos and don'ts for mediators to keep sessions efficient, constructive, and on track towards possible settlement. His presentation included case illustrations and strategies for handling parties effectively. A panel discussion followed, moderated by District Judge Julian Chin with panellists District Judge Sheik Umar, District Judge Peter Lo, and court volunteer mediator Mr Melvin Loh. Close to 120 participants attended, with 100% indicating that the session met their expectations and objectives, and 98% saying they could apply what they had learnt.

"Managing the Psychology of Parties at a Mediation"

The second session, held on 29 November 2024, featured Ms Low Lih Jeng, senior consultant at Sage Mediation. She discussed the psychology of parties in mediation and how mediators can help them articulate underlying concerns and needs to move towards resolution. A panel discussion followed, moderated by District Judge Sheik Umar with panellists District Judge Marvin Bay, District Judge Dora Tay, and court volunteer mediator Mr Harold Seet. Close to 120 participants attended, with 98% indicating that the session met their expectations and objectives, and 96% saying they could apply what they had learnt.

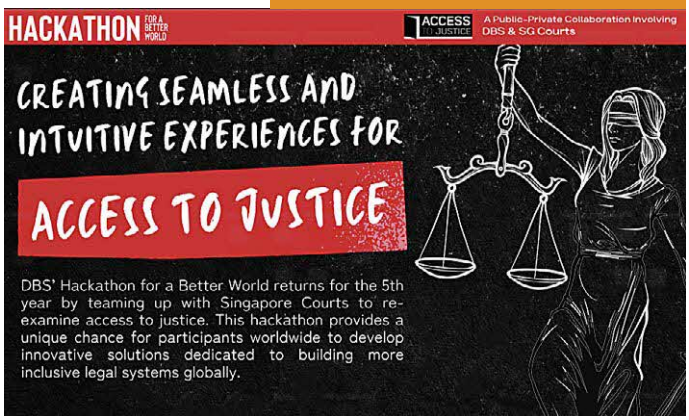
Social Service Agencies Gain Insights on Impact of Amended Family Violence Bill

To improve collaboration with its partners, exchange information and knowledge, smoothen interface issues and enhance mutual understanding, the FJC has held a series of dialogue and sharing sessions with social service agencies (SSAs) since 2019. Branded as KOPI TIME in 2020, the series has become a regular platform for exchange.

On 5 August 2024, the FJC held the 6th KOPI TIME virtually. District Judge Tan Shin Yi updated participants on the Women's Charter (Family Violence and Other Matters) (Amendment) Bill, which will strengthen the protection of survivors and rehabilitation of perpetrators. Through the session, 169 participants from 72 SSAs gained insights on how the changes may impact the families they serve, the operations of the SSAs, and the support that the SSAs could extend to the families.

Hackathon for a Better World 2024

On 1 November 2024, SG Courts and DBS announced the winners of the fifth edition of "Hackathon for a Better World". This year's event, themed "Access to Justice", showcased innovative solutions aimed at strengthening access to justice and fortifying community trust. As Singapore's first "slow-burn hackathon", the event kicked off in July and saw 28 teams from diverse backgrounds, including the legal sector, institutes of higher learning, and public agencies, ideate and prototype technology-driven solutions to enhance social justice across all segments of society.



The fifth edition of Hackathon for a Better World 2024.

Justice Aidan Xu, who oversees transformation and innovation in SG Courts, highlighted how the hackathon entries demonstrated innovative uses of cutting-edge technology, streamlined procedures, and improved human interaction in the justice system.

Mr Lam Chee Kin, Group Head of Legal and Compliance at DBS, emphasised the importance of addressing challenges in an increasingly digitalised world. The Hackathon underscores SG Courts' and DBS's commitment to fostering innovation in the legal sector and improving access to justice, and exemplifies public-private collaboration to address societal issues through technology and creative problem-solving.

The winning projects, each addressing a unique aspect of access to justice, were:

- **Most Innovative: R&T** — Resilient and Thriving, a team from Rajah & Tann Singapore LLP, proposed transforming legal clinics into mobile-friendly digital experiences, offering artificial intelligence-driven consultations and on-the-go assistance. It matches users with advisors and generates transcripts to streamline legal consultations.

- **Most Feasible**: @ShookLin, a team from Shook Lin & Bok LLP proposed a roving mobile legal clinic that will bring legal aid to Singapore's heartlands monthly. Staffed by volunteers, the clinic will provide initial case assessments and connect those needing further assistance with legal professionals.

- **Most Life-changing**: WongP, a team from WongPartnership LLP, proposed an online Q&A platform where users can connect with volunteer lawyers for legal advice. This flexible, asynchronous model allows lawyers to assist conveniently, offering users accessible, quality legal guidance.

- **Most Human-centred**: Team Hack the Law from GovTech/ Ministry of Law proposed a seniors-centric solution that leverages technology to simplify official communication by translating it into preferred dialects, fostering independence. It enhances seniors' ability to manage their affairs while potentially improving government communication.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Lunar New Year Activity with Yong-En Care Centre

On 22 February 2024, SG Courts jointly organised a Lunar New Year activity with Yong-En Care Centre (YECC), a charitable organisation providing care services to support the needs of the elderly, disadvantaged individuals and families in Chinatown and beyond.

The programme sought to bring festive cheer to elderly and disadvantaged members of the Chinatown community. The main celebration took place at the Yong-En Active Hub at Bukit Merah Community Centre, where staff volunteers staged a music performance and invited beneficiaries to sing and dance along. They also organised a quiz with prizes and a karaoke session. Goodie bags were distributed, and the event concluded with a tea buffet.

To reach those unable to attend, another team of staff volunteers prepared and delivered 45 goodie bags to the YECC branch at Jalan Kukoh and the Dementia Day Care Centre at Chinatown Complex, ensuring that festive cheer was shared with elderly individuals across the community.

SG Courts volunteers brought Lunar New Year festive cheer to beneficiaries at the Yong-En Active Hub at Bukit Merah Community Centre.

SG Courts staff with SHINE beneficiaries at Gardens by the Bay.

Gardens by the Bay Outing with SHINE

On 5 June 2024, 28 staff members from SG Courts spent an engaging day at Gardens by the Bay with beneficiaries from SG Courts' adopted charity, SHINE Children & Youth Services (SHINE), which provides social and welfare support to underprivileged children and youth to nurture and develop their competencies and keep them positively engaged.

Beach Clean Up with Boys' Town

SG Courts partnered Boys' Town for their yearly beach clean-up activity on 13 June 2024 at Changi Beach Park. The group works with children and youth from underprivileged backgrounds, helping them to develop skills to become active and responsible members of society.

SG Courts partnered Boys' Town for their yearly beach clean-up activity.

CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Highlights from SG Courts' annual National Day Charity Carnival.

National Day Charity Carnival

SG Courts' annual National Day Charity Carnival began with online sales from 15 July 2024 and culminated in two on-site charity bazaars on 7 August 2024 at the Supreme Court and 14 August 2024 at the State Courts. More than $64,000 was raised for their adopted charity, SHINE. At the on-site bazaars, there were booths set up by SHINE, as well as Boys' Town and the Community Chest. This gave SG Courts staff the opportunity to learn more about these organisations' causes and programmes for underprivileged communities.

Mini Carnival @ SG Courts

On 13 December 2024, SG Courts organised a heartwarming mini carnival at the State Courts, bringing together 35 volunteers and 58 beneficiaries from SHINE. The event, which included children from both the Educational Psychology Services and STAR programmes under SHINE, featured creative art jamming activities, live food stations, and a magic show.

To ensure meaningful interaction with children who have learning disabilities or special educational needs, volunteers underwent special training beforehand. The successful initiative demonstrated SG Courts' commitment to community engagement while providing a fun-filled and creative experience for the young beneficiaries.

An SG Courts volunteer helping a beneficiary from SHINE with his tote bag design.

Members of the Building Infrastructure team with a booth selling pre-loved items.

Promoting BYO Practices and Pre-loved Items

The public sector has been prioritising efforts to reduce single-use items, such as bottled water at meetings and disposables for dine-in meals. In support of this, SG Courts actively encourages staff to "bring your own" (BYO) to cut down on single-use plastics.

On 1 July 2024, the Building Infrastructure team, in collaboration with the Café at State Courts Towers, launched an initiative to stop the use of plastic straws, timed with World Environment Day and promoted through an ECO-Committee email blast.

The team continues to engage committee members on ways to reduce single-use plastics, such as promoting reusable ware and BYO practices for F&B at corporate events. These reminders are also included in event publicity emails to raise awareness and encourage staff to reduce waste and support environmental sustainability.

In addition, the Building Infrastructure team partnered with the ECO-Committee to collect pre-loved items across SG Courts for the National Day Charity Carnival. Incorporating these items into the carnival sale not only supported a good cause but also helped reduce waste and promote reuse.

Deputy Chief Executive Mrs Clara Goh received the award on behalf of SG Courts from then-Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat.

Singapore Courts Conferred Champion of Good Award

SG Courts were recognised as a Champion of Good by the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre (NVPC) at the Company of Good (COG) conferment ceremony on 18 July 2024. Under NVPC's enhanced COG recognition system, organisations were assessed on their progress and impact across Corporate Purpose and five key areas: People, Society, Governance, Environment and Economic. Out of 290 conferred companies, SG Courts were one of only 78 recognised as a Champion of Good—the highest of four tiers of recognition. This honour affirms SG Courts' outstanding contributions and the multiplied impact it has created for its stakeholders. Deputy Chief Executive Mrs Clara Goh received the award on behalf of SG Courts from then-Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat.

Singapore Courts Recognised for Contributions to Charities

In recognition of its support for less privileged communities, SG Courts received the Charity (Bronze) and SHARE (Bronze) awards at the Community Chest Awards (CCA) 2024 on 7 October 2024.

Mr Phang Tsang Wing (right), Director of Human Resource Development, received the awards on behalf of SG Courts.

The CCA celebrates organisations and individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the social service sector. The Charity Award acknowledges those who empower communities in need through donations, fundraising and volunteerism, while the SHARE Award recognises organisations with strong employee participation in the SHARE programme, a monthly giving initiative that channels sustained support to social service agencies.

Learning Journey for JC2 Translation Students

The Language Resources engaged the community through a learning journey for JC2 H2 Translation students in 2024. Through guided facility tours and a mock court session, students gained immersive, hands-on insights into the work of court interpreters and Singapore's judicial system, among other activities, nurturing their interest in court interpretation. Survey results reflected high satisfaction levels for this practical learning experience.

Guided facility tours were one of the features of the learning journey organised for JC2 H2 Translation students.

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