

# CHARTING THE FUTURE TOGETHER

STATE COURTS  
ANNUAL REPORT 2016



ONE  
JUDICIARY  
UPHOLDING OUR VALUES

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ANNUAL REPORT

2016

# SHARED VISION

Inspiring public trust and confidence through an effective and accessible justice system

# MISSION

Serving society with quality judgments, timely dispute resolution and excellent court services

# CORE VALUES

- Fairness
- Accessibility
- Independence, Integrity, Impartiality
- Responsiveness

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## FOREWORD BY THE HONOURABLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE

It gives me great pleasure to present for the very first time, a *One Judiciary* annual report boxed set, which showcases the work of the Supreme Court, the State Courts and the Family Justice Courts sharing a common mission to superintend the administration of justice and make justice accessible to all. Themed “**Upholding Our Values**”, the reports detail the work of the three Courts and their initiatives that are underpinned by the values of fairness, accessibility, independence, integrity and impartiality.

The judiciary will have to respond to an increasingly challenging global and economic climate. We must enhance the quality of our work even as we look to reduce the cost of litigating by simplifying processes where possible. On this front, we have introduced significant changes to our civil and criminal litigation processes. At the Family Justice Courts, a child maintenance matrix, based on actuarial data is also being devised to guide the resolution of cases involving children so that such disputes can be settled quickly and less acrimoniously.

On the international front, we are widening and strengthening our judicial networks. An International Advisory Council which I chair and comprising family judges from various jurisdictions provides the Family Justice Courts with many useful and diverse perspectives that will help us address present and future challenges.

I am also delighted by the success of the first judicial insolvency network conference involving judges from 10 jurisdictions which we hosted in October 2016. The conference resulted in the promulgation of guidelines for court-to-court communication and cooperation protocols. Following the meeting, Singapore and the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware formally implemented the guidelines, with other jurisdictions expected to similarly adopt the guidelines.

Technological advancements will require the legal sector to rethink entire areas of practice. While this will likely prove to be disruptive, we should embrace and welcome the change as technology can potentially improve processes, resulting in greater effectiveness at a lower cost for society. The Courts of the Future Taskforce will make recommendations to get our Courts “future-ready” while the Singapore Academy of Law has launched the Legal Technology Vision to help the legal sector adopt and implement technological changes.



The Supreme Court and State Courts, together with NTU SPIRIT Centre, have embarked on the development of an Intelligent Case Retrieval System. The aim is to have a more effective retrieval of key legal documents in decided cases for road traffic accidents and personal injury matters. Besides making it easier and quicker for legal research to be performed, it will add to the quality of decision making and judgment writing for judges. The technology developed through this platform may even perform other legal functions, such as Case Summarisation and Logic Reasoning. This will lead the way to a more sophisticated legal research, advisory and decision support system in the future.

The judiciary is on the cusp of change and these are exciting times. As we implement changes, we must continue to put the interest of Singaporeans first and ensure that justice is within their reach. I am confident that my colleagues on the Supreme Court Bench as well as the judicial officers and administrators from the State Courts and Family Justice Courts will continue to work hard in ensuring effective access to justice for all. I am deeply grateful for their dedication and commitment to this extremely meaningful cause.

I hope this *One Judiciary* Annual Report will give you a glimpse into the work of the Courts in Singapore. Together, we seek to administer a world class judiciary and make justice accessible for all Singaporeans.



**SUNDARESH MENON**  
Chief Justice  
Supreme Court of Singapore







## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDING JUDGE OF THE STATE COURTS

In 2016, the State Courts continued the process of reflection, horizon-scanning and strategising for our continuing court excellence journey, in anticipation of the tasks and challenges that lie ahead.

### REFLECTION

The results of the Court Users Survey that the State Courts conducted in 2015 were published in March 2016. From the feedback obtained from over 1,800 court users, 96 per cent of the respondents expressed confidence in the fair administration of justice by the State Courts, and agreed that we were efficient in dealing with cases. The results were helpful in affirming areas where the State Courts have done well while identifying possible gaps where we could further improve and provide better quality court services to our court users.

In addition to the Court Users Survey 2015, the State Courts conducted our Organisational Health Survey which took an inside look at how our Judges and Court Administrators felt about working in the State Courts. The Survey showed that our staff felt engaged and respected, and enjoyed a good work-life balance. It is encouraging to note from the survey results that the State Courts fared better than the national norms.

Apart from the good standing that the State Courts enjoy among our court users and our staff, the State Courts received local and international accolades from within and outside Singapore at the PS21 ExCEL Awards 2016, the 2016 GovInsider Innovation Awards and the World Information Technology and Services Alliance (WITSA) Awards.

### HORIZON-SCANNING AND STRATEGISING FOR THE JOURNEY AHEAD

I had, in my address during the State Courts Workplan 2016, identified possible disruptors in the future, namely, a weakened economy that demands more with less, increasing demands on existing staff amidst tight manpower policies and disruptive technologies that could outstrip our ability to keep up.

In order to ready ourselves for the future, I emphasised the need for the State Courts and our staff to cultivate a growth mindset, recognising that intelligence and the ability to cope with setbacks are not fixed but can be trained and developed over time. I also spoke about the need for the State Courts to prioritise organisational health and for our staff to cultivate a prepared mind. To this end, we continued to provide learning and training opportunities for all staff, and to offer a wide range of activities focused on ensuring that our staff remain purpose-driven, committed and energised.

### State Courts' initiatives to further improve access to justice

Over the past year, the State Courts introduced various initiatives to increase access to justice for members of our community. We established our YouTube channel to host informational videos on our processes and procedures that our various justice divisions have produced, and launched the Justice@State Courts mobile app for court users to access information, such as the latest hearing dates, filing procedures, legal aid services and the layout of the courtrooms while on the go. The State Courts implemented the Automated Collection System which comprises self-service interactive kiosks for the payment of court bail,

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDING JUDGE OF THE STATE COURTS

finances and fees, and enables real-time retrieval of payment information and updating of receipt details. In addition, we launched the Small Claims Tribunals (SCT) Online Assessment Assistant which is a simple-to-use step-by-step guide that helps litigants to assess if their claim comes within the SCT's jurisdiction and provides basic information on procedures in the SCT as well as the evidence that they may need to support their claim.

To enhance the community's understanding of our work, we organised the annual "A Day in Court: A Seminar for Student Leaders" in June 2016 and the "State Courts Public Talk 2016: What You Need to Know about Resolving Disputes" in October 2016.

The State Courts also established the Student Representatives Programme where local university law students provide practical support to needy litigants-in-person in community dispute cases by assisting them to complete their court forms and navigate court processes.

### Pre-Sentence Protocol for criminal cases

In 2016, the Community Courts introduced a pre-sentence protocol for suitable criminal cases. Instead of passing sentence immediately upon an offender's conviction, sentencing is deferred and directions are made for the offender to undergo treatment, receive counselling or voluntarily undergo residential or structured programmes in order for him/her to address and resolve the underlying causes of his/her offending.

### Deploying counsellors in mediation sessions

The Community Justice and Tribunals Division initiated the deployment of counsellors and psychologists to assist the Court in the pre-trial

case management of suitable cases that are brought under the Protection from Harassment Act and the Community Disputes Resolution Act. In a similar fashion, the State Courts Centre for Dispute Resolution introduced a new programme in October 2016 in which a counsellor or psychologist partners the mediator in selected cases to help parties address their entrenched conflicts, so as to arrive at more holistic outcomes during the mediation session.

### Raising State Courts' profile internationally and locally

Locally and internationally, the State Courts punched above our weight through various forums. On the international front, the State Courts organised the International Conference on Court Excellence from 28 to 29 January 2016 where about 190 local and international judges and senior court administrators heard from distinguished speakers on a range of topics, including leadership, innovations in court procedures and processes, good court governance and judicial ethics, and delivering court services of the future. From 17 to 18 March 2016, the State Courts co-organised the Global Pound Conference Singapore 2016 which saw more than 400 delegates from over 25 countries discussing how access to justice and the quality of justice around the world in civil and commercial conflicts could be improved through the use of mediation and alternative dispute resolution.

On 23 May 2016, the State Courts delivered a presentation on measuring and managing judicial performance at a knowledge-sharing event that the World Bank organised for the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Justice. The discussion covered data collection, court surveys, and the interface between technology and performance

measurement. From 29 August to 2 September 2016, a team from the State Courts conducted a workshop on the International Framework for Court Excellence (IFCE) for the High Court of Namibia and the Office of the Judiciary to introduce the IFCE to their judiciary and to equip them in using the IFCE self-assessment tool.

On the local front, the State Courts organised the inaugural "Resolving Community Disputes" Seminar on 23 September 2016, in the lead-up to the first and second anniversaries of the Community Disputes Resolution Act and the Protection from Harassment Act respectively. The Seminar was attended by more than 250 participants from government and community stakeholder agencies who are actively involved in resolving disputes within our community.

### Expansion of State Courts' core work

On 1 December 2016, the monetary jurisdictional limit of the State Courts for claims arising from road traffic accidents and personal injuries sustained in industrial accidents was increased to \$500,000 from its previous limit of \$250,000. Claims of between \$250,000 and \$500,000 will, upon commencement in the High Court, be automatically transferred to the State Courts' civil district courts for adjudication. This move is in line with the increasing trend in recent years in which higher value claims in excess of the State Courts' civil monetary jurisdictional limit of \$250,000 are heard in the State Courts, either by transfer from the Supreme Court, or by agreement of the parties.

The Employment Claims Act was passed in Parliament on 15 August 2016 and is expected to come into effect in April 2017. This Act established the Employment Claims Tribunals (ECT) within the State Courts to hear statutory or contractual

salary-related disputes and disputes under the Retirement and Re-employment Act and the Child Development Co-Savings Act. Processes in the ECT will be designed to be simple, expeditious and affordable for the litigant-in-person, with a claim limit of \$20,000. To ensure that parties only turn to the ECT as a last resort and that cases are settled early and amicably as far as possible, all parties are required to undergo mediation before they can bring a claim to the ECT.

## CONCLUSION

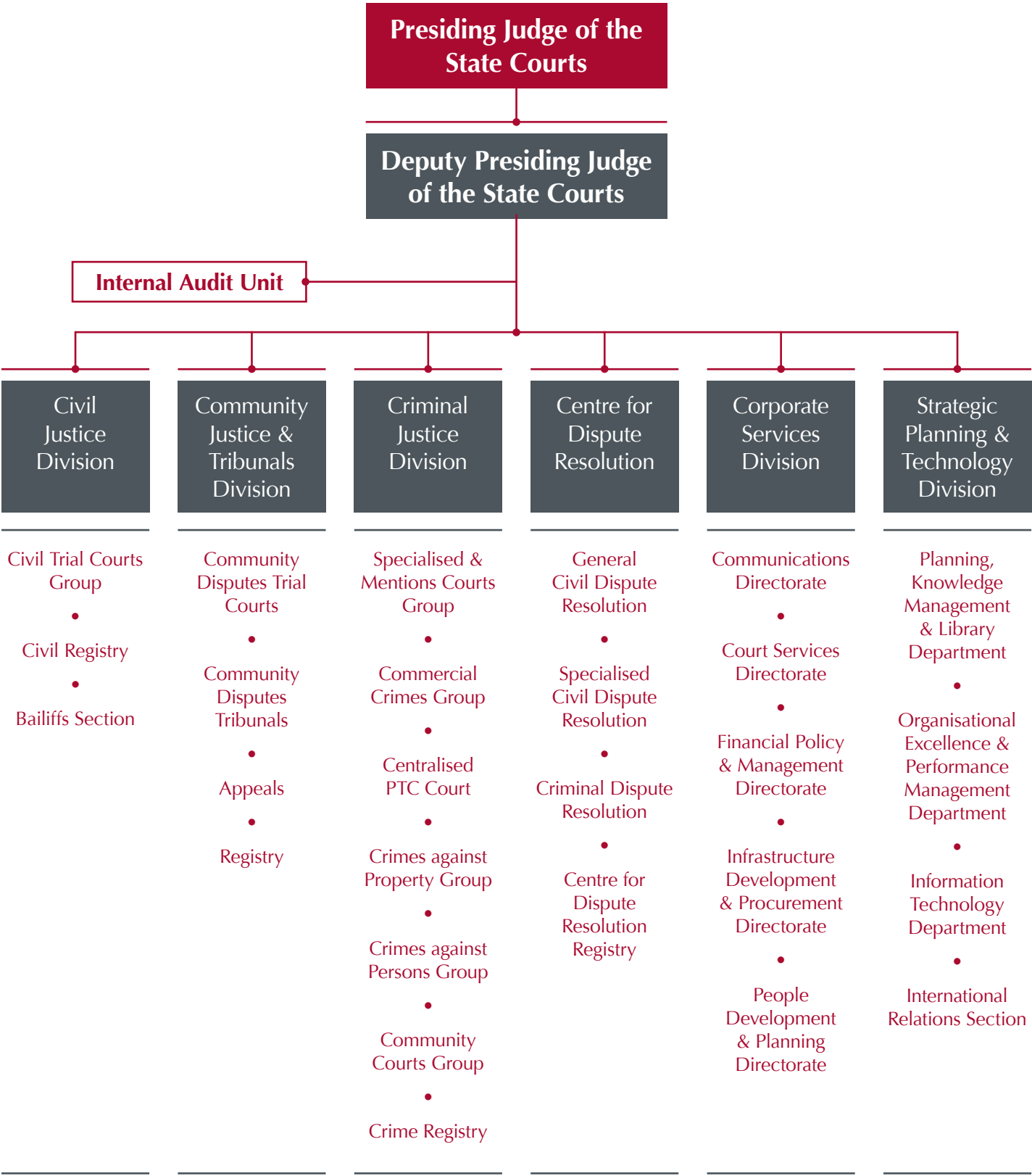
The State Courts are grateful to The Honourable the Chief Justice for the visionary leadership and guidance and encouragement that he has provided us. As we continue to remain sensitive to the needs of our community and chart the future together to forge new horizons, we will remain true to our core values of Fairness, Accessibility, Independence, Integrity, Impartiality and Responsiveness so as to inspire public trust and confidence in the justice system through our work.



SEE KEE OON  
Presiding Judge of the State Courts



ORGANISATION CHART

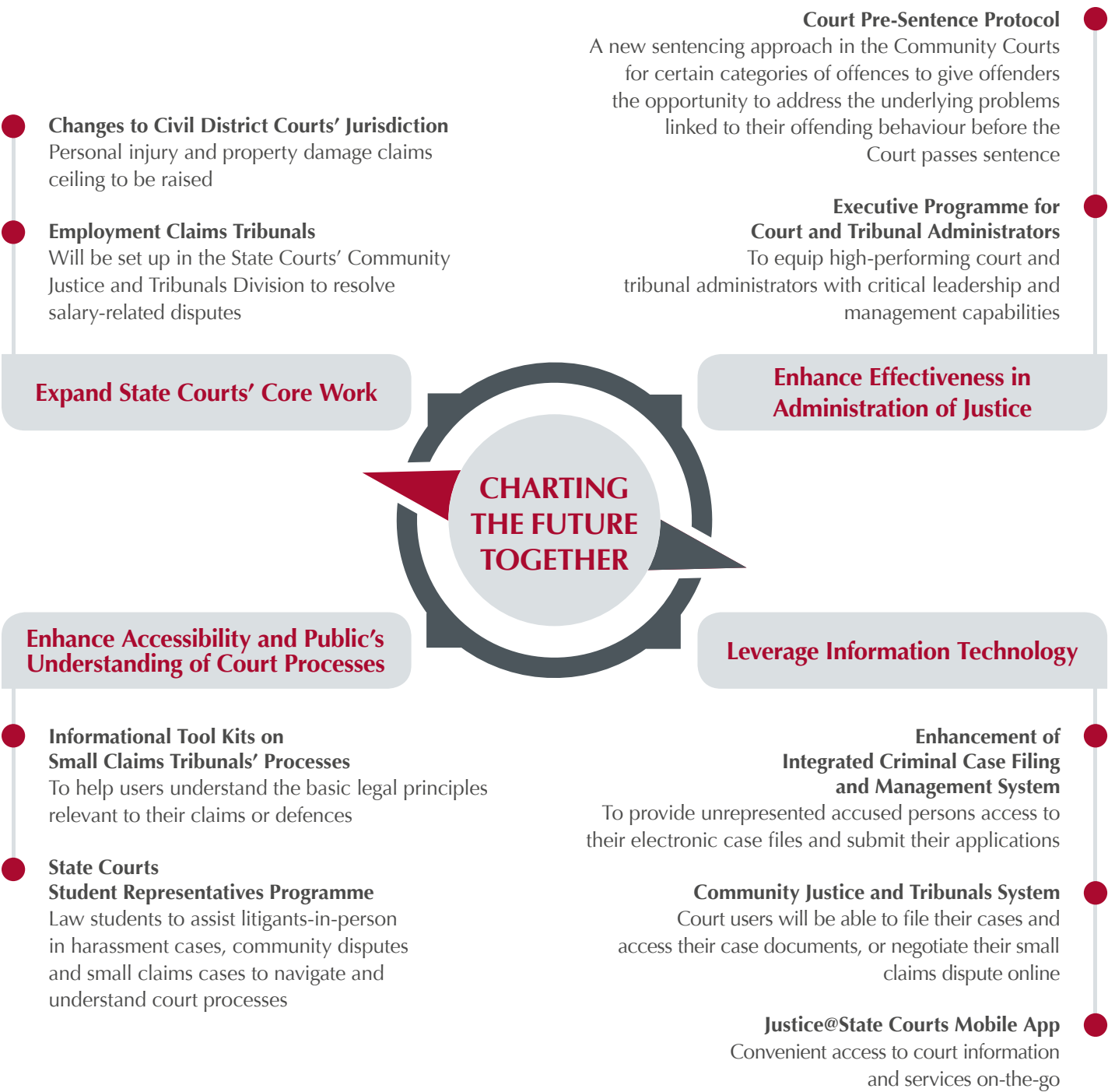


CHARTING  
THE FUTURE  
TOGETHER



# KEY INITIATIVES ANNOUNCED DURING WORKPLAN 2016

The State Courts Workplan 2016 was held on 4 March 2016. The theme of the Workplan was “Charting the Future Together”. The Chief Justice delivered the Keynote Address and highlighted several initiatives that the State Courts would be introducing to ensure access to meaningful and effective justice.



# INCREASE IN STATE COURTS' JURISDICTION FOR CERTAIN CIVIL CLAIMS

On 1 December 2016, the Civil District Court's monetary jurisdictional limit for road traffic accident cases and personal injury claims arising from industrial accidents was increased to \$500,000 from its previous limit of \$250,000.

The Civil District Court's monetary jurisdictional limit was last increased on 1 August 1997 to \$250,000. Since then, the changing economic and legal landscape has made it necessary to consider an increase in this jurisdictional limit, given the increased costs of living and annual inflation over the years, and the higher values of civil claims being litigated.

Over the years, the State Courts have seen a significant number of cases being transferred from the High Court to the State Courts. On average, approximately 30 per cent of the road traffic accident cases and personal injury claims arising from industrial accidents cases filed in the High Court in 2013 and 2014 were transferred to the State Courts. At the same time, when claims for such cases exceed the jurisdiction of the State Courts, parties frequently agree to allow such claims to be heard by the State Courts. This is an affirmation that the State Courts are well-equipped to deal with and adjudicate higher-value road traffic accident cases and personal injury claims arising from industrial accidents.

There is no change to the existing appellate structure for such cases. For example, if a road traffic accident matter for a claim of \$450,000 proceeds to the Assessment for Damages stage, the damages will be assessed by a Deputy Registrar and any appeal against the assessment will go to a District Judge in chambers. A subsequent appeal against the decision of the District Judge will be heard by a High Court Judge in chambers.

## 7 things to know about the increase in State Courts' jurisdiction for certain civil claims

- 1 Increase in jurisdiction from \$250,000 to **\$500,000**
- 2 For claims arising out of **road traffic accidents and personal injuries arising out of industrial accidents**
- 3 Applies to **claims filed from 1 December 2016**
- 4 Parties must still **commence action in High Court**
- 5 Cases will be **automatically transferred** to the State Courts' Civil District Courts
- 6 The **same statutes, Rules of Court and Practice Directions, and hearing and appellate structure that are currently applicable to District Court cases of the same nature apply** after the case is transferred
- 7 After the case is transferred, the **same fees that are currently charged for District Court cases apply**

## ESTABLISHMENT OF EMPLOYMENT CLAIMS TRIBUNALS

The Employment Claims Act (ECA) was passed in Parliament on 15 August 2016. The passing of the ECA establishes the new Employment Claims Tribunals (ECT), which will be set up in the State Courts and presided over by Tribunal Magistrates.

Employment disputes fall largely into two main categories:

- Salary-related disputes which include disputes over non-payment or short payment of salaries, allowances, bonuses, commissions and salary in lieu of notice of termination; and
- Non-salary-related disputes such as unfair dismissals and grievances against the employer.

Currently, the three avenues for resolving salary-related disputes are through the unions, Civil Courts, and the Ministry of Manpower's Labour Court which covers employees and Professionals, Managers and Executives (PMEs) earning up to \$4,500 per month.

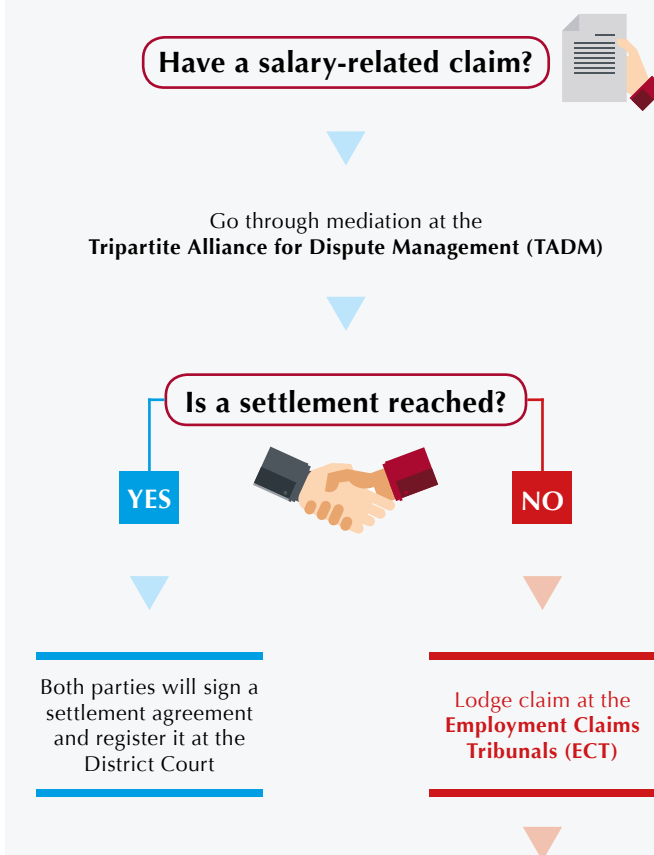
The establishment of the ECT will help more employees resolve more types of salary-related disputes. The ECT will take over the Labour Court's function of hearing statutory salary-related disputes, in addition to hearing contractual salary-related disputes.

The ECT will also be accessible to more employees, as it will cover PMEs earning more than \$4,500 per month.

Legal representation will not be allowed in the ECT. As such, the processes in the ECT will be designed to be simple, expeditious and affordable to ensure that parties can have access to justice for their employment disputes.

### Process for salary-related claims

Starting in April 2017



### Salary-related claims that cannot be settled at the TADM will be heard at the ECT

#### Who can seek help?

- Statutory salary-related claims from all employees covered under the Employment Act, Retirement & Re-employment Act and Child Development Co-Savings Act
- Contractual salary-related claims by all employees\*
- Claims for salary in lieu of notice for all employers

#### Claims limit

- \$20,000, or \$30,000 for those who have gone through mediation with union involvement

NOTE: \*Except domestic workers, public servants and seafarers

Source: MINISTRY OF MANPOWER  
Graphics: STATE COURTS

## ENHANCING ACCESSIBILITY AND THE PUBLIC'S UNDERSTANDING OF COURT PROCESSES

The State Courts have consistently strived to improve accessibility to the court system by enhancing the public's understanding of their court processes.

To further promote self-help among court users and assist them in understanding legal issues and court processes, the State Courts produced new brochures and videos that explain the processes for various matters.

### • Criminal matters

Four videos relating to criminal proceedings that court users commonly seek information on were produced in 2016. The videos are on the Criminal Case Disclosure Conference (CCDC) process, the bail process, filing a Magistrate's Complaint, and applying for criminal court records.

The video on the CCDC process, in particular, is useful for unrepresented accused persons who have to navigate the criminal court proceedings on their own. The animation and graphic illustrations in the video complement the verbal explanations provided by court staff, enabling court users to understand the CCDC process better.



### • Civil matters

The video "Conducting a Civil Trial in Person" was produced to give litigants-in-person insight on the court processes and what to expect during a civil trial. The video provides them with important practical information such as how they should prepare for a trial, the documents they should bring on the day of the trial and the sequence of the trial proceedings.



### • Mediation

A brochure was produced to help litigants-in-person prepare for their mediation sessions by explaining the mediation process and the benefits of mediation. Parties could then be more aware of how they could participate in the mediation session in order to reach an effective resolution to their dispute. To ensure that the information is made available to litigants-in-person in a timely manner, the brochure is sent to those who receive a notice to attend mediation at the State Courts.

The informational brochures and videos are made available to the public on the State Courts website, State Courts YouTube channel, and on the Justice@ State Courts mobile app. Court users can access the information at their convenience even before arriving at the State Courts, and be better prepared for their court matters.



## ENHANCING ACCESSIBILITY AND THE PUBLIC'S UNDERSTANDING OF COURT PROCESSES

### On-the-go access to information with Justice@State Courts mobile app

The Justice@State Courts mobile app, possibly a first-of-its-kind among courts in Asia, is designed and developed to meet court users' need for mobile access to information about the State Courts' services and applications.

App users are able to:

- check the latest hearing dates;
- assess their eligibility to file their claims with the Small Claims Tribunals, through an online assessment assistant in the app;
- book a guided tour of the State Courts or take a virtual tour of the courtrooms; and
- find out other information such as filing procedures and access to legal aid services.

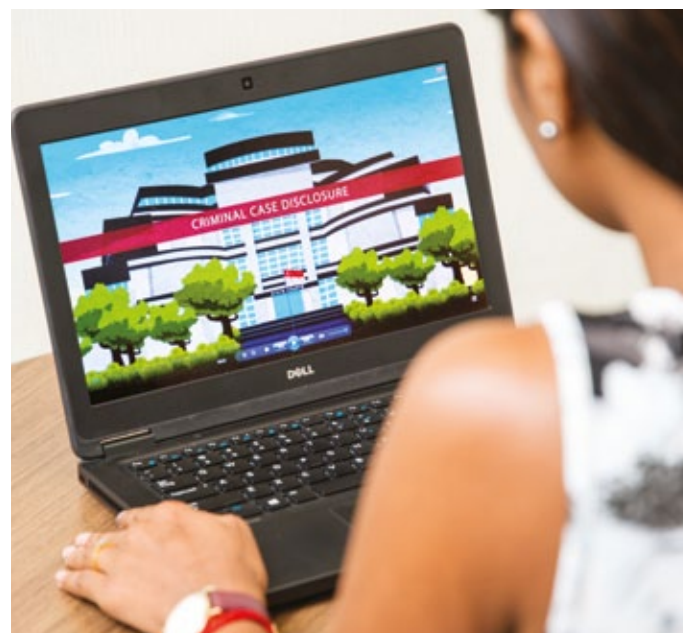
In 2017, court users will also be able to use the app to check the status of their queue numbers obtained for services they are seeking at the State Courts.



### Wider public outreach through State Courts' YouTube channel

The State Courts set up a Facebook page in 2013 to reach out to online citizens and to promote an awareness and understanding of the State Courts' role in the Singapore legal landscape. The State Courts Facebook page also provides court users with updates on the various court processes, procedures and services available.

In April 2016, the State Courts took another step into social media and set up their YouTube channel to host their informational videos. Litigants-in-person who are conducting their own case or persons who wish to learn about the court processes and proceedings can watch the informational videos on the State Courts' official YouTube channel at their convenience.



## UPDATES ON CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW STATE COURTS TOWERS

In February 2016, the State Courts awarded the contract for the construction of the State Courts Towers to Samsung C&T Corporation at a contract sum of approximately S\$450 million. The contract comprises the construction of two connected towers with an estimated gross floor area of 113,000sqm.

After the piling and diaphragm wall works were completed in mid-2016, construction works by Samsung C&T Corporation commenced. With an estimated construction period of about 36 months, the State Courts Towers are slated to be operational from 2020.

To facilitate the construction works of the new State Courts Towers, the entrance of the State Courts Building was relocated from Havelock Square to Upper Cross Street on 3 December 2016. Changes were also made to the vehicular access and pedestrian routes to the State Courts entrance.





# UPDATES ON CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW STATE COURTS TOWERS

## About the State Courts Towers

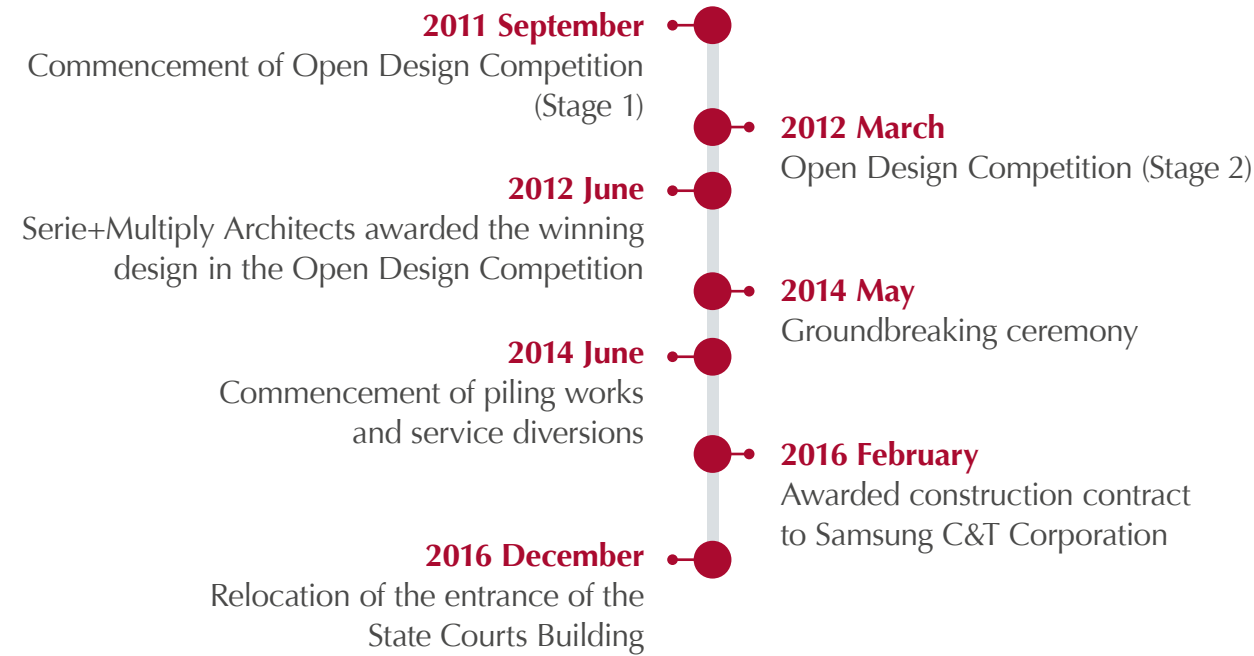
The State Courts Towers will comprise two towers, each about 178m high, with an estimated gross floor area of 113,000sqm. They will be linked by a series of sky bridges that enable the controlled circulation of court visitors and staff of the State Courts.

The Court Tower will comprise the courtrooms, hearing chambers and court support functions, and the Office Tower will house the offices and other support functions.

The two towers are designed to be eco-friendly and will feature naturally-ventilated corridors and high-rise gardens to provide shade from the afternoon sun. The high-rise sky terraces will bring green relief to the built-up city and provide soothing gardens to the users. The towers will also use renewable energy such as solar power panels.



## Timeline for the construction of the State Courts Towers



SERVING  
SOCIETY



# SIGNIFICANT INITIATIVES

## INNOVATING COURT PROCESSES

### New sentencing approach through Court Pre-Sentence Protocol

In 2016, the Court Pre-Sentence Protocol (CPSP) was introduced to provide intensive and sustained monitoring of selected offenders of minor petty offences such as theft and violence within the family context. For such cases, a fair proportion of the offenders face alcohol and other related addictions that tend not to be addressed by incarceration, but rather through various treatment or rehabilitation programmes.

The CPSP adopts a multi-disciplinary approach by partnering stakeholder agencies to address such underlying causes of offending. The stakeholder agencies include the National Addiction Management Service for treatment programmes to address the offenders’ addictions, and the Singapore After-Care Association for community support to the offenders and their families.

One of the key features of the CPSP regime is that the sentencing of the offender is deferred so that he/she can undergo treatment, receive counselling, take medication and/or voluntarily undergo residential or structured programmes offered by voluntary welfare organisations. The Court will monitor the offender’s compliance with the regime for up to six months, and where he/she demonstrates commitment to the CPSP regime and achieves the goals set under the regime, the Court can then consider passing a conditional discharge order. The aim of the conditional discharge is to incentivise the offender to comply with the treatment and rehabilitation programmes he/she has to undergo, and to provide sufficient opportunity for the offender’s behaviour to be reformed.

If a user requires assistance, he/she can use the kiosk’s built-in intercom system and a State Courts staff will respond to him/her.

The first ACS kiosk at the Finance counter on Level 1 was commissioned for use in July 2016. A second kiosk was set up in the Crime Registry.

In future, when operations begin in the new multi-storey State Courts Towers, multiple ACS kiosks will be set up at locations that are convenient for court users so that they would not need to travel across several floors to make payment.

### Increasing effectiveness of court interpretation

The court interpreters’ Induction Programme was enhanced to enable court interpreters to be more effective in helping court users. Under the enhanced Induction Programme, new interpreters go through a comprehensive curriculum in which they undergo on-the-job training to learn about the different court processes and procedures so that they can provide accurate information to court users.

Experienced court interpreters also mentor new officers, and share their experiences through a training video that demonstrates how they may assist court users effectively.

A customised glossary of terms used in court proceedings was also made available to the court interpreters, so that they can provide an accurate interpretation of the terms.

## IMPROVING THE DELIVERY OF COURT SERVICES

### Convenient payment of court bail, fines and fees at self-service kiosks

Court users now have an additional platform to pay their court bail, fines and fees, with the launch of the State Courts Automated Collection System (ACS). The ACS enables court users to conveniently make payments via self-service kiosks, without waiting at a cashier counter. At the ACS kiosk, court users can easily retrieve their records by scanning the QR code on the payment advice or by entering the relevant case reference numbers when prompted. They can then choose to make payment with cash, NETS, credit/debit cards and/or cheques.



Maintain composure.  
Never lose your cool.



Listen intently without  
interrupting during video-link.



Express empathy and display  
resilience when dealing with  
an emotional witness.

SIGNIFICANT INITIATIVES

ENHANCING ACCESS TO JUSTICE  
Providing practical support through the Student Representative Programme

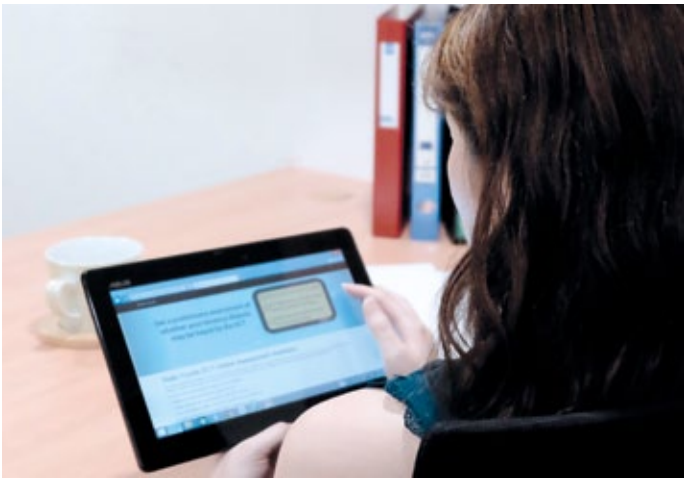
The State Courts Student Representative Programme (SRP) was established to provide practical support to needy litigants-in-person who may not be familiar with the law and court processes. Under the SRP, selected law students from the National University of Singapore and Singapore Management University assist litigants-in-person with community dispute matters in completing court forms and navigating court processes. These student representatives are trained and supervised by faculty members and staff of the State Courts on matters that come under the Protection from Harassment Act, the Community Disputes Resolution Act and the Small Claims Tribunals Act.



Empowering the public through the Small Claims Tribunals  
Online Assessment Assistant

At the Small Claims Tribunals (SCT), one common issue which potential claimants or litigants-in-person often face is not knowing if their claims come within the jurisdiction of the SCT and the next steps they should take. They can also be unsure about the kind of evidence which they need to provide in order to support their claims.

is simple to use, and is in plain English for easy understanding. The SCT Online Assessment Assistant also provides users with basic information on SCT's procedure and the evidence that they may need to prepare in order to submit the claims.



To empower potential claimants and litigants-in-person to overcome this, the State Courts launched the SCT Online Assessment Assistant which allows them to assess the eligibility of their claims on their desktop and mobile devices even before they file their claims with the SCT.

The user will answer a series of questions in order to obtain a brief assessment of whether his/her claim comes within the SCT's jurisdiction. It

Facilitating the early resolution of non-injury motor accident  
and personal injury claims

Significant changes were introduced to the Practice Directions and Pre-Action Protocols for Non-Injury Motor Accident and Personal Injury Claims. This initiative is intended to consolidate and strengthen the measures prescribed by the State Courts to promote the expeditious resolution of such claims, without the need for court proceedings.

More comprehensive and robust measures in pre-writ discovery and negotiation were introduced, together with closer post-writ monitoring and management of the cases. Compliance with the Pre-Action Protocols will facilitate an early resolution of a case and substantial time and costs savings for the parties involved in the case.

Assisting parties in high-conflict relational disputes with trained specialists

Since the launch of the State Courts Centre for Dispute Resolution (SCCDR) on 4 March 2015, a wider range of cases can now be mediated at the SCCDR. Aside from mediating civil disputes as well as cases filed under the Protection from Harassment Act, the SCCDR also handles the mediation of Magistrate's Complaints and cases filed under the Community Disputes Resolution Act.

To better manage the variety of cases, the SCCDR introduced a scheme in October 2016 in which a trained counsellor or psychologist from the Community Court Secretariat will be present at the mediation sessions for selected high conflict relational disputes. The counsellor or psychologist will be able to assist the parties involved to identify and address their entrenched emotional conflicts. The aim is to enable the parties to have a more fruitful mediation session and ultimately reach a more holistic and satisfactory solution to their disputes.





SIGNIFICANT INITIATIVES

Providing support services with the help of Judiciary Volunteers

The Judiciary came together on 1 November 2016 to show its appreciation and recognise the contributions of the Judiciary volunteers, who play an important role in ensuring that every one who needs to access justice before the Courts are able to do so. They provide services ranging from pro bono legal support to schemes that help to demystify court processes.



RAISING AWARENESS OF COURT PROCESSES  
State Courts Public Talk 2016: What You Need to Know about Resolving Disputes

The “State Courts Public Talk 2016: What You Need to Know about Resolving Disputes”, held on 15 October 2016, focused on the dispute resolution options for resolving community and relational disputes. About 200 members of the public attended the talk and heard from speakers from the State Courts on how to file a claim at the Small Claims Tribunals, how to file a Magistrate’s Complaint, how to make an application under the Protection from Harassment Act and Community Disputes Resolution Act and the post-filing processes. The participants also had the opportunity to learn more about the various legal assistance schemes and programmes offered by the Community Justice Centre, the Law Society of Singapore’s Pro Bono Services Office and the Legal Aid Bureau.

Feedback on the talk was very positive, as many participants found the information presented during the talk useful and applicable. Many also agreed that they would recommend others to attend future runs of the public talk.



Resolving Community Disputes Seminar 2016

On 23 September 2016, more than 250 participants from various government and community stakeholder agencies attended the inaugural “Resolving Community Disputes Seminar”.  
  
The speakers and panellists from the Inter-Religious Organisation, National University of Singapore’s Faculty of Law, Singapore Management University’s School of Law, Institute of Mental Health and Forensic Experts Group shared their knowledge and experience on topics that gave the participants deeper insight into the different aspects and developments of resolving community disputes.



Feedback Received from Participants



95%  
>  
of those surveyed indicated that

- The Seminar helped them to reflect on the effectiveness of their agency’s current strategies in resolving community disputes
- The Seminar helped them to think of new strategies that their agency could use to resolve community disputes
- They gained a broader and deeper understanding of the work that other stakeholders are doing to resolve community disputes
- The knowledge that they had gained from the Seminar would enable them to be more effective in resolving community disputes



SIGNIFICANT INITIATIVES

A Day in Court: A Seminar for Student Leaders 2016

On 2 June 2016, 67 student leaders from 34 secondary schools were in the State Courts to attend the annual “A Day in Court: A Seminar for Student Leaders”. The one-day seminar is part of State Courts’ efforts to enhance the community’s understanding of the role of the State Courts in Singapore’s legal landscape. The seminar is organised for student leaders as they are well-placed to influence their peers positively. With the knowledge gained from the seminar, they would be able to share with their peers what they had learnt about the work of the Courts, crimes generally committed by youth offenders and the consequences to them, their families and the society at large, and the benefits of resolving disputes through constructive means.

This year, besides role-playing a Community Court case, the participants took part in a mediation workshop and tried their hands at mediating a dispute between neighbours. Through these activities, they learnt to consider issues from a wider perspective and resolve disputes amicably, and gained an awareness of how they may contribute to building a harmonious society.

The participants expressed that the programme was very enriching as they had the opportunity to get an insider’s view of court hearings and mediation sessions. Many of them also shared that they found the seminar meaningful as it allows them to know more about the Singapore justice system.



KNOWLEDGE-SHARING WITH OTHER JUDICIARIES  
“International Framework for Court Excellence Programme”  
for the High Court of Namibia and the Office of the Judiciary

Three senior staff members of the State Courts visited the High Court of Namibia from 29 August to 2 September 2016 and conducted a workshop on the International Framework for Court Excellence (IFCE). The objective of the workshop, which was conducted in collaboration with the High Court of Namibia and the Office of the Judiciary, was to introduce the IFCE to their judiciary and to equip them in using the IFCE self-assessment tool to seek ways to improve their courts. The participants included the organisations’ leaders, High Court Judges and court administrators.

The State Courts team introduced the participants to the IFCE’s seven areas of court excellence, and guided them on how they may apply the IFCE self-assessment tool to their judiciary. The workshop enabled the High Court of Namibia to recognise the strengths and areas for improvement in their court policies and processes, and empowered them to prioritise suitable improvement plans.



World Bank’s “Follow-the-Sun” event for  
the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Justice

On 23 May 2016, the State Courts delivered a presentation on measuring and managing judicial performance at a knowledge-sharing event organised by the World Bank for the Republic of Turkey Ministry of Justice. The event covered several areas of discussion on data collection, court surveys, and the interface between technology and performance measurement.

The one-day event saw other speakers from the international judiciaries of Australia, Asia, Europe and North America deliver presentations via video-conferencing to the audience based in Ankara, Turkey.

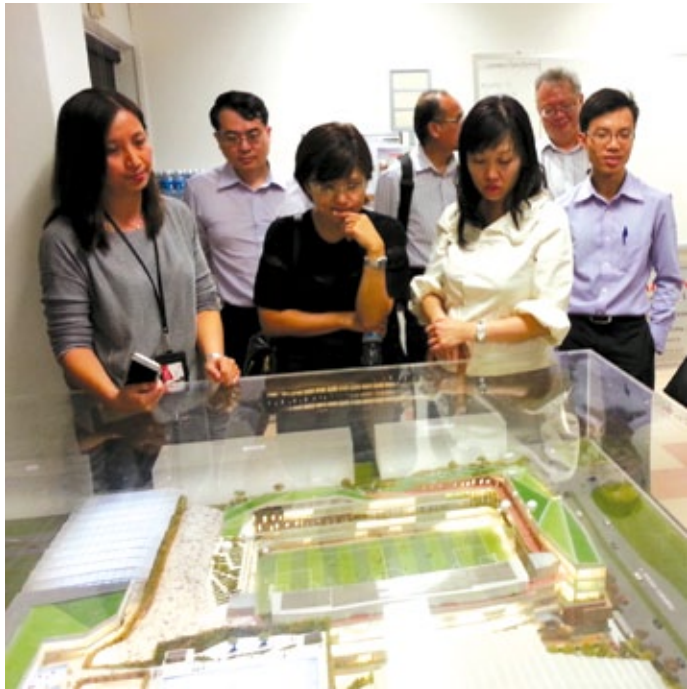


SIGNIFICANT INITIATIVES

SUPPORTING STAFF IN THEIR SERVICE DELIVERY  
Exploring best practices through Service Excellence Week 2016

In conjunction with the Public Service Week in May 2016, the State Courts held their sixth Service Excellence Week, during which activities were organised to explore the best practices in service delivery, applaud staff’s achievements in enhancing court users’ experience and reaffirm the organisation’s commitment towards providing excellent court services.

To mark the beginning of the Service Excellence Week, staff members participated in a lunchtime workshop “Discovering your Service Personality” conducted by the Centre For Organisational Effectiveness. Many found the personality profiling workshop engaging and useful as they were able to discover their personal service strengths and limitations.



Several staff members in supervisory roles visited “Our Tampines Hub” in a service excellence learning journey hosted by the People’s Association. “Our Tampines Hub” is Singapore’s first-ever integrated community and lifestyle hub that offers a comprehensive and diverse range of services, programmes and facilities. The participants learned how the integrated hub developed a first-of-its-kind “Public Service Centre” which provides services offered by multiple public agencies in the same venue, for the convenience of those living and working in the vicinity. Staff involved in frontline functions were invited to participate in a “Service Safari” held at the revamped Housing & Development Board Hub.

Such learning journeys are a regular feature of the State Courts’ Service Excellence Week and are part of the organisation’s effort to learn good service practices and initiatives implemented by other public agencies.



Encouraging innovation through OE Week 2016

The State Courts held their annual Organisational Excellence (OE) Week from 7 November to 11 November 2016, in conjunction with the Public Service for the 21st Century Excellence through Continuous Enterprise and Learning (PS21 ExCEL) Convention 2016. The activities organised during the OE Week 2016 served to reinforce the importance of continual improvement and innovation. During the OE Carnival, staff had the opportunity to visit different booths to learn about their colleagues’ initiatives that had contributed to organisational excellence. Trainers from the National Library Board were also invited to share research techniques that staff could use to develop their ideas.



Facilitating effective risk management

The Internal Audit Unit supports the organisation’s efforts to achieve its strategic objectives by looking into effective risk management. In 2016, the Unit compiled a master list of all the standard operating procedures of the organisation, so that the management can put together a robust framework that appraises and reviews these procedures and the risks they may present. To add rigour to the appraisal process of the framework, the Unit partners the Financial Policy and Management Directorate and the Infrastructure Development and Procurement Directorate to regularly provide practical and holistic advice to the divisions on how they may manage their risks.

Increasing awareness of good procurement practices through the Procurement Portal

In May 2016, the Procurement Portal was launched on the State Courts Intranet. The one-stop resource portal aims to enable staff to efficiently carry out their procurement tasks according to the standards applicable to the public service. The Procurement Portal not only provides staff with the standard procurement template forms and checklists, it also updates staff on key announcements on Whole-of-Government procurement instructions and finance matters.



## SIGNIFICANT INITIATIVES

### Providing opportunities through the Career Development (Postings) Framework

In 2016, the Career Development (Postings) Framework was introduced to provide officers with a varied and long-term career path through exposure to diverse roles and job scopes within the organisation. This enriches their career experience in the State Courts and enhances the organisation's employee value proposition and ultimately, State Courts' positioning as an employer of choice. The framework facilitates a more strategic and structured approach towards career development, by providing a staff member with opportunities for lateral movements at various points of his/her career. This also creates breadth in his/her competencies, thus maximising his/her potential. While the movements are non-mandatory, staff members who are due for posting are encouraged to do so.



### Gaining perspectives through the Fireside Chat Series

The Fireside Chat Series with Public Sector Leaders is in its second year. Four fireside chats were organised in 2016 for the Judges and senior Court Administrators to give them an opportunity to interact with public sector leaders and learn from them some of the best practices in the public service. Two of the fireside chats – with former Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of National Development Mr Benny Lim, and Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs Mr Leo Yip – were also organised for the Judges. The other two sessions – with Ms Ong Toon Hui, Dean & Chief Executive Officer of the Civil Service College, and Mr James Wong, Deputy Secretary (Policy) of the Public Service Division – were organised for the senior Court Administrators.

## GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

In addition to their mission to serve society with quality judgments, timely dispute resolution and excellent court services, the State Courts also embrace social responsibility and actively implement programmes that contribute towards a better society and help the less privileged members of society.

### Inaugural Charity Concert 2016

On 11 August 2016, in conjunction with National Day, the State Courts organised their first-ever Charity Concert to raise funds for the Singapore Cheshire Home. The Charity Concert was graced by Puan Noor Aishah, wife of Singapore's first President Mr Yusof Ishak. She had donated her handicraft work "Flower Beads" to the State Courts for their Charity Auction, which was one of the fund-raising activities.

The Charity Concert showcased an array of song and dance performances, including a skit promoting harmonious community living. Residents of the Singapore Cheshire Home also featured in the concert through a video of the residents' song and orchestral performances. The concert was brought to life entirely by the State Courts' talented pool of Judges and staff, who had spent their lunchtime and after-office hours conceptualising the event and rehearsing the performances.



### Annual Charity Bazaar

On 12 August 2016, the State Courts held their annual charity bazaar, an event which gives the State Courts' staff an opportunity to do their bit for charity by setting up stalls for games, food and a variety of other products. Together with the Charity Concert and Auction, the State Courts raised more than \$50,000, of which \$20,000 was for the Singapore Cheshire Home, while the rest of the proceeds were used to fund the Judiciary Cares activities and other State Courts' corporate social responsibility initiatives.



# GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

## Activities for Singapore Cheshire Home

Apart from the fund-raising activities, the State Courts' Judges and staff visited the residents of the Singapore Cheshire Home on 27 June 2016 to interact with the residents, entertaining them with performances and games. On 27 September 2016, they also brought some of the residents on an excursion to the National Museum.



## Judiciary Cares 2016

The Judiciary Cares is a committee comprising members of the Supreme Court, State Courts and Family Justice Courts to reach out to the needy and less privileged members of society.

a windbreaker, food and toiletries, as well as organised a lunch and carnival of food and games for them. An excursion to the Singapore Zoo was also arranged for some of the residents.

On 1 November 2016, the Judges and staff from the Supreme Court, State Courts and Family Justice Courts visited the Society for the Aged Sick (SAS) in a joint activity to reach out to the needy and less privileged members of society. The one-day visit to the SAS was led by the Chief Justice.



Besides entertaining the residents through songs and dance performances, Judges and staff from the three Courts presented each resident with



INSPIRING  
PUBLIC TRUST  
AND CONFIDENCE



CASELOAD AND STATISTICS

CASELOAD PROFILE	2015	2016 <sup>(p)</sup>
CRIMINAL JUSTICE DIVISION	272,599	260,300
Criminal and Departmental/Statutory Board		
Criminal Charges <sup>1</sup>	57,792	59,300
Departmental/Statutory Board Charges and Summonses	142,348	130,700
Traffic Charges and Summonses	66,545	64,200
Others		
Coroner's Court Cases	4,080	4,100
Magistrate's Complaints	1,834	2,000
CIVIL JUSTICE DIVISION	43,611	42,060
Originating Processes	29,570	28,720
Writs of Summonses (DC & MC)	28,984	28,100
Originating Summonses	586	620
Interlocutory Applications	11,962	11,450
Summonses <sup>2</sup>	8,874	8,200
Summonses for Directions (O.25/37)	2,917	3,100
Summary Judgment (O.14)	171	150
Others		
Taxation	100	190
Assessment of Damages	1,979	1,700

CASELOAD PROFILE	2015	2016 <sup>(p)</sup>
COMMUNITY JUSTICE AND TRIBUNALS DIVISION	11,094	10,490
Protection from Harassment Act (POHA)		
Originating Summonses - Applications for Protection Order (PO)/ Non-Publication Order (NPO)	159	100
Community Disputes Resolution Act (CDRA)		
Community Disputes Resolution Tribunals Claims <sup>3</sup>	27	90
Small Claims Tribunals		
Small Claims Tribunals Claims	10,908	10,300
Total	327,304	312,850

Notes

(p) Projected figures

1. Includes DAC, MAC, PSS, PS & other charges

2. Excludes O.25/37

3. Filing for Community Disputes Resolution Tribunals claims commenced on 1 October 2015

OTHER CASELOAD PROFILE	2015	2016 <sup>(p)</sup>
STATE COURTS CENTRE FOR DISPUTE RESOLUTION <sup>1</sup>	6,439	6,340
Criminal Justice Division cases		
Magistrate's Complaints <sup>2</sup>	373	410
Civil Justice Division cases		
Writs of Summonses (DC & MC), Originating Summonses	6,044	5,900
Community Justice and Tribunals Division cases		
Originating Summonses - Applications for Protection Order (PO)/ Non-Publication Order (NPO), Community Disputes Resolution Tribunals Claims <sup>3</sup>	22	30

Notes

(p) Projected figures

1. Refers to fresh cases handled by the State Courts Centre for Dispute Resolution (SCCDR) in the respective years

2. Mediation at SCCDR for Magistrate's Complaints commenced in May 2015.

3. Mediation at SCCDR for Community Disputes Resolution Tribunals Claims commenced in January 2016.



# SIGNIFICANT CASES: CRIMINAL JUSTICE DIVISION

## Publishing seditious posts online PP v Ai Takagi & Anor

In early 2016, Yang Kaiheng and his wife Ai Takagi, were charged for multiple counts of sedition. Yang and Takagi were charged with deliberately sowing discord between Singaporeans and foreigners through a series of articles on the now-defunct socio-political website The Real Singapore (TRS), which they co-founded with a friend. The articles posted on TRS between October 2013 and February 2015 were alleged to have promoted ill will and hostility between different races or classes in Singapore. Bank statements showed that in less than three years, Yang and Takagi had netted more than half a million dollars in advertising revenue from TRS.

Takagi pleaded guilty to four charges of sedition. She also admitted to another three counts of sedition, and one charge of failing to produce the financial statements on the website’s advertising

revenue to the police, which was taken into consideration for the purposes of sentencing. Takagi was sentenced to 10 months’ imprisonment.

Yang, however, claimed trial, as he claimed that his involvement in the website was minimal. During the trial, the Prosecution asserted that Yang was a key person behind TRS and that he had a hand in almost every aspect of the website’s operations. He also controlled the bulk of the advertising revenue that the socio-political website made. Before the conclusion of the trial, Yang pleaded guilty to six charges of sedition. Two more charges - one of sedition and another of failing to produce financial statements on the site’s advertising earnings to the police - were taken into consideration in sentencing. Yang was eventually sentenced to eight months’ imprisonment.

## Involvement in terrorism financing PP v Rahman Mizanur & Ors

Six radicalised Bangladeshi nationals were the first to be prosecuted and convicted under the Terrorism (Suppression of Financing) Act. The six men pleaded guilty to one or two counts each for providing and/or collecting money for terrorist purposes.

The six were part of a group which called itself the Islamic State in Bangladesh, and were providing or collecting hundreds of dollars to fund terror attacks in Bangladesh. The group had also possessed documents on making weapons and bombs, and

were found to have identified several possible bombing targets in Bangladesh.

The group’s ringleader, Rahman Mizanur, was sentenced to 60 months’ imprisonment. Mamun Leakot Ali, Miah Rubel and Md Jabath Kysar Haje Norul Islam Sowdagar were each sentenced to 30 months’ imprisonment. Zzaman Daulat and Soheli Hawlader Ismail Hawlader were each sentenced to 24 months’ imprisonment.

## Criminal breach of trust by ex-Member of Parliament PP v Phey Yew Kok

Phey Yew Kok, who was a Member of Parliament and a senior union leader at the time of his offending, was originally charged in 1979 with six counts of misusing union funds. He absconded from Singapore and was on the run for over 30 years until he turned himself in at the age of 81 at the Singapore Embassy in Bangkok on 22 June 2015. When he was brought back to Singapore, 28 new charges of committing criminal breach of trust, abetting the fabrication of evidence, abetting the provision of false information to a public servant and misappropriation of more than

\$200,000 in supermarket goods, and absconding while on bail were tendered against him.

Phey eventually pleaded guilty to 12 charges, including committing 10 counts of criminal breach of trust, one count of abetting the fabrication of false evidence to a public servant and one count of failing to attend Court when ordered to by a Judge. The remaining charges were taken into consideration during sentencing. Phey was sentenced to 60 months’ imprisonment.

## Coroner’s Inquiry into the demise of Mohamed Taufik Bin Zahar

On 31 May 2015, Mohamed Taufik Bin Zahar was shot dead after he had successively breached multiple layers of security checks and driven a rented car through a concrete barrier, in an attempt to evade a road block that had been set up to protect the nearby Shangri-La Hotel where a high-level security summit was being held. An autopsy report stated that he had died from a gunshot wound in the head.

During the Coroner’s Inquiry, the Court heard that Taufik and two others had taken drugs prior to meeting up and had planned to evade any road block in their way. As the car ploughed through the security checks, the Police shouted repeated warnings to the trio but the vehicle did not stop. Two Gurkha officers who were stationed beyond the final security barrier opened fire only after Taufik had breached the final check and the car turned towards the Shangri-La Hotel.

The Coroner found that the Gurkha officers who opened fire had seen Taufik violently breach the security checkpoints, and Taufik’s rash conduct in attempting to evade the security checks would have appeared to be an irrational and dangerous act and cast an impression as an act of terrorism. The Coroner stated that Taufik was not a terrorist, but this could not have been discerned from his rash, erratic and impulsive behaviour at the wheel. The Coroner concluded that, in neutralising the perceived threat, the Gurkha officer was acting within the scope of his duties and the fatal shooting of Taufik was an act of lawful killing.



# SIGNIFICANT CASES: CRIMINAL JUSTICE DIVISION

## Coroner’s Inquiry into the demise of Benjamin Lim Jun Hui

Benjamin Lim Jun Hui, a 14-year-old student, was pronounced dead on 26 January 2016 at 4.36pm, after he was found to have fallen from his flat to the ground floor.

That morning, Benjamin had been taken from his school to the police station, to assist in investigations for another case. At about 2.50pm, Benjamin was released into the custody of his mother, and they reached home at about 3.30pm. An hour later, Benjamin was found dead at the foot of his block.

During the Coroner’s Inquiry, it was revealed that prior to his death, a school counsellor had called Benjamin’s mother to suggest that it would be good for Benjamin to consider not participating in an upcoming school camp, given that he might be experiencing some stress from assisting in police investigations. It was apparently then relayed to Benjamin that the school had decided to not let him attend the school camp and instead, he should stay at home for e-learning.

In his findings, the Coroner stated that a phone call had not been the ideal way to communicate the nuances of the message that the school counsellor had been asked to deliver to Benjamin. Instead, she should have spoken directly with him. The Coroner was also satisfied that the evidence showed that the police officers and school staff who spoke with Benjamin had taken active steps to handle Benjamin and the investigations sensitively, given his age and status as a student. The Coroner then found that Benjamin’s fall had been a deliberate act of suicide.

# SIGNIFICANT CASES: CIVIL JUSTICE DIVISION

## Law of Torts – Nuisance, trespass & assault Nasraf Lucas Muzayyin & Anor v Shi Ka Yee

The Plaintiffs and Defendant were neighbours in this case. A rain tree that had been growing in the Defendant’s property for years had branches and leaves that were hanging over and falling into the Plaintiff’s property. The Plaintiffs had obtained permission from the National Parks Board and sought the consent of the Defendant to trim the branches of the tree on the side of the Plaintiffs’ property. The Defendant however, did not respond.

The Plaintiffs subsequently engaged workers who used a truck with a crane to trim the tree branches on the side of the Plaintiffs’ property. While the workers were trimming the branches, the Defendant entered the Plaintiffs’ property, shouted profanities at the first Plaintiff and removed the keys from the truck. This caused the truck to shut down and the worker to be stranded in the crane. In a bid to retrieve the keys back from the Defendant, the first Plaintiff blocked the Defendant’s car from leaving. The Defendant revved the engine and edged her car towards the first Plaintiff, thereafter leaving with the keys.

Police and Civil Defence officers subsequently arrived at the Plaintiffs’ property to rescue the worker. The Plaintiffs then sued the Defendant under the tort of nuisance, trespass and assault.

- Nuisance: The Court held that the tree branches that hung over the Plaintiffs’ property interfered with their use and enjoyment of their property. The interference was unreasonable and was a hazard that was likely to cause and had caused

damage to the property. The Court therefore ordered the Defendant to trim the branches of the tree which hung over the Plaintiffs’ property at the Defendant’s sole expense.

- Trespass: The Court held that the Defendant had entered the Plaintiffs’ property without permission. The evidence showed that the Defendant was aggressive when in the Plaintiffs’ property and had used profanities and threats against the first Plaintiff. Further, it was found that the Defendant had made away with the keys to the truck, leaving the worker stranded in the crane. The Court awarded aggravated damages for trespass against the Defendant, in the sum of \$4,000.
- Assault: The Court also found the Defendant liable for assault. The Defendant, by revving the engine of her car with the first Plaintiff directly in its path, would and could have caused the first Plaintiff to reasonably apprehend the infliction of immediate and unlawful force on him. The Court awarded damages for assault against the Defendant in the sum of \$1,500.

The Defendant’s application for leave to appeal was dismissed by the High Court. The only issue was whether the Plaintiffs were entitled to cut the overhanging branches of the tree when the Defendant had refused consent. The High Court held that the Plaintiffs were entitled to do so as the branches had protruded over to the Plaintiffs’ property and were a threat to their lives and property.



SIGNIFICANT CASES: CIVIL JUSTICE DIVISION

Extraction of judgment – A step or proceeding in the Rules of Court  
Saravanan a/l Subramaniam & Ors v Chua Peng Ho & Anor

The Plaintiff and his wife were involved in a road traffic accident on 15 July 2010, and issued a writ on 7 June 2013 against the Defendants who were the drivers of the other vehicles involved in the accident. The issue of liability was resolved between the parties, and consent interlocutory judgment was recorded on 4 February 2015 but this was not extracted by the Plaintiff until 28 August 2015. Thereafter, nothing was done until a summons for further directions (SFD) was filed on 28 March 2016.

During the SFD hearing, the Defendants raised a preliminary issue that the action was deemed discontinued under Order 21 rule 2(6) of the Rules of Court, as more than a year had passed since the interlocutory judgment was recorded. The Deputy Registrar held that the Plaintiff’s claim was deemed discontinued as the extraction of the interlocutory judgment did not amount to a “step” under Order 21 rule 2(6). The Plaintiff appealed against the Deputy Registrar’s decision.

On appeal, the sole issue before the District Judge was whether the extraction of the interlocutory judgment was a “step or proceeding” that could move the action forward. After a review of Court of Appeal and High Court decisions, the District Judge held that only two elements must be shown in order to qualify as a “step or proceeding” under the provision:

- First, it must be a step which appears from the records maintained by the Court; and
- Second, it must be a step mandated by law.

The District Judge held that the extraction of the interlocutory judgment qualified as a “step”, since the Plaintiff cannot proceed to the assessment of damages stage unless the interlocutory judgment has been extracted. Hence, the matter was not deemed discontinued under Order 21 rule 2(6). The case went on further appeal to the High Court, where the decision of the District Judge was affirmed by the High Court.

SIGNIFICANT CASES: COMMUNITY JUSTICE AND TRIBUNALS DIVISION

Dispute over items placed along common corridor

The Plaintiff and Respondent lived in the same block of Housing & Development Board (HDB) flats, with the Plaintiff living in the flat next to the Respondent’s corner flat. The Respondent had placed a shoe rack, an incense burner, a bicycle and other items under the Plaintiff’s window along the common corridor, and the Plaintiff approached the Town Council for assistance to have the items removed. The Respondent was instructed by a Town Council officer to remove the bicycle, and complied. Both parties informed the Community Disputes Resolution Tribunals (CDRT) that the Town Council officer had not required the Respondent to remove the shoe rack. However, there was no written permission from the Town Council to that effect.

The Plaintiff sought an order for the Respondent to remove all the items under the Plaintiff’s window along the common corridor. The Respondent contended that the Town Council had allowed the shoe rack to be placed under the Plaintiff’s window and that the Respondent would have removed the shoe rack if the Town Council had instructed as such.

The CDRT ordered the Respondent to remove all items that were along the common corridor outside the Plaintiff’s flat, and to pay the Plaintiff’s

disbursements comprising the fees for filing the claim at the CDRT and the fees for conducting a search on the Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore’s website to obtain the Respondent’s name for the purpose of filing the claim.

The CDRT highlighted the following in making the Orders:

- The items placed outside the Plaintiff’s flat unreasonably interfered with the Plaintiff’s enjoyment of their premises. The items also obstructed the Plaintiff from cleaning their windows and surroundings.
- Each flat owner has the right to the space inside the flat but not outside the flat where the common corridor is located. The common corridor falls under the purview of the Town Council. In this case, there is a Town Council By-law that states that no one shall obstruct or cause or permit the obstruction of the lawful use of the common property with any object, fixture or thing.
- The Plaintiff was merely seeking an order for the removal of the shoe rack, and the Respondent was at liberty to keep the shoe rack inside the Respondent’s flat.

Dispute over noise heard from flat

The Plaintiff and Respondent lived in the same block of HDB flats, with the Plaintiff living in the flat directly below the Respondent’s. According to the Plaintiff, the Respondent made excessive noise, purportedly from heavy running, stomping and

thumping, dragging of furniture and dropping of items onto the floor. As the parties could not settle the dispute through mediation, the case proceeded for trial.



# SIGNIFICANT CASES: COMMUNITY JUSTICE AND TRIBUNALS DIVISION

At the end of the trial, the Plaintiff’s claim was dismissed. The Plaintiff had not proven on a balance of probabilities that the noise heard had originated from the Respondent’s flat alone and that it was the Respondent or the Respondent’s family members who had caused the noise intentionally, recklessly or negligently. There was

also no evidence to suggest that the noise was “excessive” in that it exceeded household or lifestyle noise generated through ordinary instances of daily living that can be expected to be tolerated by reasonable persons living in Singapore, and that the noise caused “unreasonable interference” to the Plaintiff’s use or enjoyment of their flat.

## Dispute over harassment by debt collectors

In late 2012, after the ex-employer terminated the Applicant’s employment, the ex-employer repeatedly called and messaged the Applicant demanding that the Applicant return money to the company. The ex-employer stopped this conduct in late 2013.

In November 2014, debt collectors who had been engaged by the ex-employer delivered a letter to the Applicant’s office alleging that the Applicant owed the company a large sum of money. One debt collector called the Applicant five times in two days, threatening to “catch” the Applicant, “place chairs and men” outside the Applicant’s office and if the Applicant sought legal assistance, to “personally go down and find” the Applicant.

Thereafter, on various occasions in November 2014, the debt collectors visited the Applicant’s office and spoke to the Applicant’s employer, visited the Applicant’s home, called the Applicant and the Applicant’s parents-in-law, and sent letters to the Applicant. This was despite being informed by the Applicant’s lawyer that the Applicant did not owe the company any money, that they must stop all acts of intimidation and/or harassment, and that they communicated to the Applicant through the Applicant’s lawyer.

With the consent of all the parties, a Protection Order was issued with the following terms:

- The ex-employer and debt collectors were prohibited from doing the following in relation to the Applicant:
  - (a) Contacting the Applicant, any of the Applicant’s relatives, friends and/or colleagues by communicating with them in any manner including through telephone calls, pasting and/or leaving any document at either the Applicant’s residence or workplace, or the residence of the Applicant’s parents-in-law;
  - (b) Approaching and/or communicating with the Applicant’s family members; and
  - (c) Instructing, arranging for or procuring anybody or any entity to do (a) and/or (b) above.

# RESULTS OF COURT USERS SURVEY 2015

Court Users Surveys are regularly conducted to ascertain the level of confidence in the Courts and the level of satisfaction of the quality of the services rendered to court users. Such feedback is vital for the Courts to remain responsive to their users and environment. This survey has been conducted since 2001 and the latest conducted in 2015 was administered by Forbes Research Pte Ltd.

**1,813** Deputy Public Prosecutors, lawyers, and court users with and without matters in the State Courts participated in the 2015 survey through face-to-face interviews and online questionnaires





# LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL AWARDS

## PUBLIC SERVICE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY EXCELLENCE THROUGH CONTINUOUS ENTERPRISE AND LEARNING (PS21 EXCEL) AWARDS 2016

### Innovation Champion (Gold) Award

In recognition of the key role he played in the development of the State Courts’ Integrated Criminal Case Filing and Management System, Mr Wong Hong Chew (Senior Applications Consultant, Information Technology Department, Strategic Planning and Technology Division) was one of only six officers from across all public agencies to receive the Innovation Champion (Gold) Award at the PS21 ExCEL Awards 2016.

The Innovation Champion Award recognises officers who inject innovation and creativity into their work or who have been pivotal in promoting the ExCEL spirit of continuous learning and

innovation within agencies. The Gold award is the highest personal accolade under the PS21 ExCEL Awards structure.



### Certificates of Merit

Several State Courts staff members and projects also received Certificates of Merit for the following categories at the PS21 ExCEL Awards 2016:

- **Innovation Champion**
  - **Ms Lim Hwei Chen** (Director, Financial Policy and Management Directorate, Corporate Services Division)
  - **Mr Phang Tsang Wing** (Senior Assistant Director, Organisational Excellence Unit, Strategic Planning and Technology Division)
- **Most Innovative Project**
  - Seamless Payment System in State Courts
  - Simplified Civil Processes for Small Value Claims
  - Small Claims Tribunals Online Assessment Assistant

- **Innovative Spotlight**
  - HELP Centre / Community Justice Centre
  - Integrated Criminal Case Filing and Management System

**Small Claims Tribunals (SCT) Online Assessment Assistant**

Get a preliminary assessment of whether your claim may be heard by the SCT

**10 MINUTES** Find out if your dispute can be heard by the SCT

### GovInsider Innovation Awards

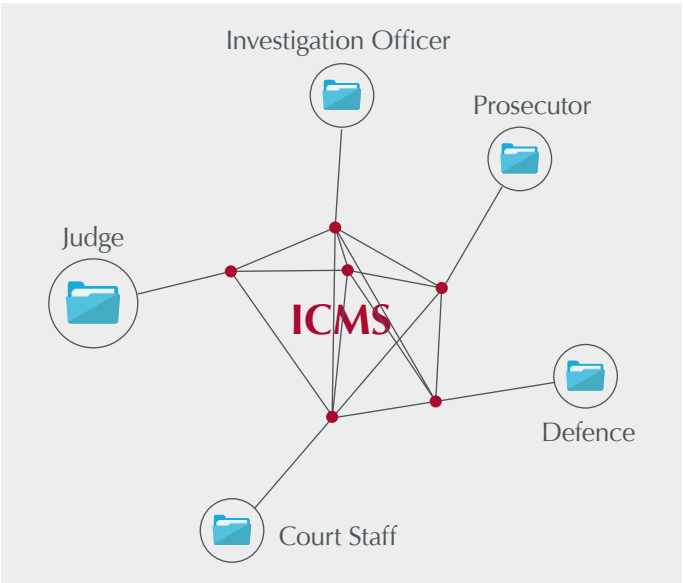
At the 2016 GovInsider Innovation Awards in September, the State Courts’ Seamless Payment System won an award in the “Best Risk” category. The “Best Risk” award category recognises the organisation’s efforts in trying a new approach to deliver service in a novel way. As part of the project, the State Courts developed the automated collection kiosk which accepts multiple modes of payment. It is integrated in real time with the State Courts’ existing finance management system to allow court users to quickly and easily make payment for court bail, fines and fees.



### World Information Technology and Services Alliance (WITSA) Award

At the WITSA Global ICT Excellence Awards in October 2016, the State Courts received a merit award under the “Public Sector Excellence Category” for the Integrated Criminal Case Filing and Management System (ICMS). The ICMS is an online case management system that enables parties to file, retrieve and exchange case information and documents electronically at any time of the day, thereby facilitating greater efficiency for the stakeholders in the criminal justice system.

WITSA is the leading recognised alliance representing the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) industry in the world, and the Global ICT Excellence Awards recognise organisations whose use of Information Technology have demonstrated exceptional achievement in using ICT to benefit societies, governments, organisations and individuals.





## INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON COURT EXCELLENCE 2016

The State Courts organised the International Conference on Court Excellence in Singapore from 28 to 29 January 2016. The theme of the Conference was “Judiciary of the Future” and the Keynote Address entitled “The Aspiration of Excellence” was delivered by The Honourable Chief Justice Marilyn L. Warren AC of the Supreme Court of Victoria.

The two-day Conference brought together about 190 judicial officers, court administrators, policy makers, and experts from related fields from 18 countries to share their perspectives on a range of topics, including court leadership, innovations in court procedures and processes, good governance and judicial ethics and delivering court services of the future. District Judges and senior Court Administrators from the State Courts also spoke on the Integrated Criminal Case Filing and Management System, the simplification of civil processes, and the new State Courts Towers.

A key topic discussed at the Conference was the International Framework for Court Excellence (IFCE). The IFCE was launched in Singapore in 2010 by the International Consortium for Court Excellence, and the State Courts are a founding member of the Consortium. The IFCE is a framework of values, concepts and tools that may be adopted by courts worldwide to assess and improve the quality of justice and court administration. The Conference provided an opportunity to hear from other judiciaries who have been using the IFCE consistently since its launch. The speakers included judicial officers from New South Wales, Australia, the Family Court of Australia and the District Courts of New Zealand, who spoke on their experience in implementing the IFCE, providing inspiration and practical tips on the implementation of the IFCE.

For more information on the Consortium and IFCE, please visit [www.courtexcellence.com](http://www.courtexcellence.com).



## GLOBAL POUND CONFERENCE SINGAPORE 2016



The inaugural Global Pound Conference (GPC) Singapore 2016 was successfully held on 17 and 18 March 2016 at the Supreme Court of Singapore. The GPC Singapore 2016 is the first of the GPC series of conferences that will span more than 38 locations around the world. The GPC series was officially launched by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, Justice Belinda Ang, Chairperson of the Local Organising Committee of the GPC Singapore 2016, Justice See Kee Oon, Presiding Judge of the State Courts, Mr Ng How Yue, Permanent Secretary (Ministry of Law), and Mr Michael McIlwrath, Chair of the GPC Series.

Themed “Shaping the Future of Dispute Resolution & Improving Access to Justice”, the GPC Singapore 2016 saw more than 400 delegates from over 25 countries engaging in discussions on how dispute resolution processes can improve access to justice for civil and commercial conflicts. The delegates represented the different categories of Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) stakeholders, including ADR users, practitioners, educators and advisors. Representatives from various industries such as judiciaries, government agencies, non-government organisations and educational institutions also contributed to the discussions.

The Conference stimulated constructive discussion over various topics surrounding dispute resolution, including cutting-edge topics like “Applying Neurobiology in Dispute Resolution Process”, “Online Dispute Resolution and the Future of Justice”, and “Time and Cost-Saving Measures for Users in International Arbitration”.

The Conference was organised by the Ministry of Law, Singapore Mediation Centre, Singapore International Mediation Institute, Singapore International Mediation Centre, Singapore International Arbitration Centre, Singapore Corporate Counsel Association, the Law Society of Singapore and State Courts.





# OUR INTERNATIONAL PROFILE

In 2016, Singapore scored well in surveys conducted by several reputable international organisations. The results of these surveys are a tribute to the high quality of justice dispensed by the Singapore Judiciary.

## FRASER INSTITUTE

### Economic Freedom of the World Report 2016

The Economic Freedom of the World Report 2016 measures the degree to which the policies and institutions of the countries surveyed are supportive of economic freedom. The 2016 report ranked 159 countries and territories on their degree of economic freedom in five broad areas, one of which was “legal structure and property rights”. The variables measured under this area include:

- Judicial Independence
- Impartial Courts
- Protection of Property Rights

- Military Interference in Rule of Law and Politics
- Integrity of the Legal System
- Legal Enforcement of Contracts
- Regulatory Restrictions on Sale of Real Property
- Reliability of Police
- Business Cost of Crime

In the latest report, Singapore was ranked the first among the Asian countries surveyed and 7<sup>th</sup> among all 159 countries which were surveyed, overtaking Hong Kong and Japan, which ranked 10<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> respectively.

## HERITAGE FOUNDATION AND WALL STREET JOURNAL

### Index of Economic Freedom Report 2016

The Index of Economic Freedom measured 186 economies across 10 indices of economic freedom. High scores (on a 0-to-100 scale, with 100 being the highest score) represent high levels of freedom, that is to say, low levels of government interference in the economy. In 2016, Singapore was ranked the second freest economy, trailing Hong Kong by only 0.8 points.

Singapore also maintained its high score of 90 points for the “property rights” index, signifying that the Courts enforce contracts efficiently. The strong protection of property rights in Singapore has provided a strong foundation for the country’s sustained economic freedom. The report also commended Singapore for having one of the best intellectual property regimes in Asia, and added that its commercial courts function well.

## INSTITUTE FOR MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT (IMD)

### World Competitiveness Yearbook 2016

In June 2016, IMD assessed and ranked 61 economies in the world on their ability to create and maintain the competitiveness of enterprises. One component of their assessment was whether the economy’s legal and regulatory framework encouraged the competitiveness of enterprises. In this aspect, Singapore’s ranking has been consistently high over the last decade.

In 2016, Singapore’s legal framework was once again rated very positively, securing the second position after Hong Kong which took the first place (Table 1).

Another component that was assessed was whether justice had been fairly administered. In this aspect, Singapore was ranked in the 14<sup>th</sup> position. The only other Asian economies ranked in the top 20 were Hong Kong and Japan, which took the second and 16<sup>th</sup> places respectively (Table 2).

Table 1

IMD – Ranking of Singapore’s Legal and Regulatory Framework, 2014 – 2016

The legal and regulatory framework encourages the competitiveness of enterprises		
Year	Ranking of Singapore	Rating (0 = worst, 10 = best)
2014	1	8.16
2015	2	7.86
2016	2	8.21

Table 2

IMD – Ranking of Singapore’s Administration of Justice, 2014 – 2016

Justice is fairly administered		
Year	Ranking of Singapore	Rating (0 = worst, 10 = best)
2014	10	8.47
2015	13	8.07
2016	14	8.03



OUR INTERNATIONAL PROFILE

WORLD BANK GROUP

Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) Report 2016

The WGI project surveyed over 200 countries and territories from 1996 to 2015 for their performance across six indicators of governance, including the Rule of Law indicator, which measures the public confidence level and the degree of abidance to the rules of society. This indicator takes particular notice of the quality of contract enforcement, property rights, the police, and the Courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence.

Singapore has been placed within the top 10 per cent over the past 10 years under the Rule of Law indicator. In the 2016 report, Singapore achieved its best performance in recent years, being ranked 8<sup>th</sup> globally (Table 3).

Table 3

World Bank Group – Worldwide Governance Indicators 2013 – 2015

Rule of Law		
Year	Ranking of Singapore	Score (Maximum 2.5 points)
2013	11	1.75
2014	11	1.89
2015	8	1.88

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM (WEF)

Global Competitiveness Report 2016-2017

The WEF 2016-2017 report ranked 138 countries to present a picture of the competitiveness of their economies. The report evaluated 12 economic pillars, one of which concerned the economies’ institutional framework. Strong institutions are a critical component to an economy, as they protect the rights of the people, and provide stability and confidence for individuals and businesses to engage in economic activities. Under the Institutional Pillar, there are 5 sub-indicators relating to the Judiciary:

- Efficiency of Legal Framework in Settling Disputes

- Efficiency of Legal Framework in Challenging Regulations
- Judicial Independence
- Property Rights
- Intellectual Property Rights

In 2016, Singapore again attained favourable scores and rankings. It stands among the top five global economies, particularly for the efficiency of its legal frameworks in settling disputes, and for protecting property and intellectual property rights. Singapore maintained the first position for its efficient legal framework for dispute resolution, a position which it has held since 2009.

Table 4

WEF – Ranking of Singapore’s Judiciary for the Institutional Pillar, 2014 – 2016

Institutional Pillar (Score of 1 = worst, 7 = best)								
Year	Efficiency of Legal Framework – (i) Settling Disputes (ii) Challenging Regulations		Judicial Independence		Property Rights		Intellectual Property Rights	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
2014	(i) 1 (ii) 21	(i) 6.2 (ii) 4.4	20	5.7	2	6.2	2	6.2
2015	(i) 1 (ii) 10	(i) 6.2 (ii) 5.2	23	5.5	4	6.3	4	6.2
2016	(i) 1 (ii) 11	(i) 6.2 (ii) 5.3	23	5.6	5	6.3	4	6.3



VISITS BY DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

Date	Details
15 Jan	<b>Judge Zhong Jianping</b> and delegation from Guangdong Judicial Group, People’s Republic of China
20 Jan	<b>Judge Kim Hyungdu</b> , Presiding Judge, Seoul High Court, South Korea
25 Feb	<b>The Honourable Chief Justice Dame Janice M. Pereira</b> , Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court, and delegation
5 Apr	<b>Mr Julian Heteyey</b> , Judicial Registrar, Supreme Court of Victoria, Australia
18 May	<b>Mr Li Shao Ping</b> , Vice President, Supreme People’s Court, People’s Republic of China, and delegation
20 May	<b>Ms Ruenvadee Suwanmongkol</b> , Director-General, Legal Execution Department, Ministry of Justice of Thailand, and delegation
26 May	<b>Mr Brian Stevenson</b> , Chief Operating Officer, Court Services Victoria, Australia
27 May	<b>Mr Distat Hotrakitya</b> , Secretary-General, Office of the Council of State, Thailand, and delegation
22 Jun	<b>Senior Judge Nguyen Tri Tue</b> , Supreme People’s Court of Vietnam, and delegation
23 - 24 Jun	<b>Mr Ispanov Saparbekovic</b> , Chief of Department, administrative office of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and delegation
5 Jul	<b>Lady Justice Elsie Thompson</b> , Vice President, African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights, and delegation
8 Jul	<b>Mr Kerry Osborne</b> , Chief Executive Officer, Court Services Victoria, Australia
2 Sep	<b>The Honourable Chief Justice Htun Htun Oo</b> , Supreme Court of the Union, The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, and delegation

*“Thank you very much for your generous information-sharing on your highly developed model of court-annexed mediation.”*

JUDICIAL REGISTRAR JULIAN HETYEY  
Supreme Court of Victoria, Australia,  
5 April 2016

*“The judicial system in Singapore is a model which must be emulated.”*

LADY JUSTICE ELSIE THOMPSON  
Vice President, African Court on Human  
and Peoples’ Rights, 5 July 2016



THE PEOPLE OF  
STATE COURTS



PRESIDING JUDGE AND HEADS OF DIVISION



(Left to Right) Front row:  
Deputy Presiding Judge and Registrar of the State Courts **Jennifer Marie** | Presiding Judge of the State Courts **Justice See Kee Oon**

(Left to Right) Back row:  
Principal Director (Strategic Planning and Technology Division) **Victor Yeo** | Principal District Judge (Civil Justice Division) **Tan Puay Boon** | Principal District Judge (Community Justice and Tribunals Division) **Bala Reddy** | Principal District Judge (Criminal Justice Division) **Ong Hian Sun** | Principal District Judge (State Courts Centre for Dispute Resolution) **James Leong**

LEADERSHIP TEAM



(Left to Right) Front row:  
Principal Director **Victor Yeo** | Principal District Judge **Tan Puay Boon** | Deputy Presiding Judge **Jennifer Marie** | Presiding Judge **Justice See Kee Oon** | Principal District Judge **Bala Reddy** | Principal District Judge **Ong Hian Sun** | Principal District Judge **James Leong**

(Left to Right) Second row:  
**Lim Hwei Chen** | **Dalbir Kaur** | District Judge **Wong Peck** | **Papinder Kaur** | **Geoffrey Lim**

(Left to Right) Third row:  
**Ha Yeong Sheng** | District Judge **Lim Wee Ming** | District Judge **Siva Shanmugam** | District Judge **Soh Tze Bian** | **Andre Tan**



# JUDGES AND COURT ADMINISTRATORS



# STAFF EVENTS HIGHLIGHTS

4 March 2016  
Workplan 2016



8 March 2016  
State Courts Cup -  
Laser Tag Tournament

3 June 2016  
Learning Festival



3 June 2016  
Corporate Retreat



STAFF EVENTS HIGHLIGHTS

25 July 2016  
State Courts Cup –  
Indoor Games



5 November  
2016  
State Courts Cup –  
Bowling Tournament



11 August 2016  
Charity Concert

7 December  
2016  
Ethics Discovery Day



17 October  
2016  
Talks @  
StateCourts Series -  
Dialogue with  
Mr Han Fook Kwang



8 December 2016  
Cohesion Day



1 November  
2016  
Judiciary Cares 2016





# STAFF EVENTS HIGHLIGHTS

## STATE COURTS COHESION DAY 2016

Held on 8 December 2016 at the Singapore Discovery Centre, Cohesion Day 2016 brought State Courts staff together for a memorable time of fun and bonding. The theme of the event was “Connecting All of Us”, and the day’s activities allowed staff to get to know one another better.

The “Crossfire Paintball League” was held in the morning and it required participants to work in teams to complete their mission.

The afternoon session saw the participants working in groups to complete quests in order to collect jigsaw puzzle pieces. When put together, the groups’ pieces formed a large picture collage that celebrated the people of the State Courts.



# NATIONAL DAY, STATE COURTS, AND EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC SERVICE (PS21) AWARDS

## National Day Awards

- Public Administration Medal (Gold)**  
Deputy Presiding Judge Jennifer Marie
- Public Administration Medal (Silver)**  
District Judge Jasvender Kaur d/o Saudagar Singh

- Commendation Medal**  
Ms Supaletchumi d/o Suppiah  
Mdm Yong Khai Ling
- Efficiency Medal**  
Mrs Nornahar Bte Abdul Rahman  
Ms R Thamayanthi

- Long Service Medal**  
Mdm Asmahan Bte Amir  
Mdm Goh Chai Hoon  
Mdm Intan Bte Sani  
District Judge Kamalambigai Ponnampalam  
District Judge Kessler Soh  
District Judge Luke Tan  
Mdm Rokiah Binte Mahdi  
District Judge Salina Bte Ishak  
Mdm Suseela Devi d/o Tangavelu  
District Judge Tan Boon Heng  
District Judge Wong Peck  
District Judge Victor Yeo

## State Courts Awards

- Manager of the Year**  
Mr Pandiyan s/o Vellasami
- New Manager of the Year**  
Ms Noran Farhana Bte Mohammed
- Court Administrator of the Year**  
Ms Jackie Chong Keng Lai  
Ms Huang Caiwei  
Ms Yui Weng Fong
- State Courts Long Service Award**  
Mr Daniel Ang Teck Heng  
District Judge Laura Lau Chin Yui  
District Judge Wong Choon Ning  
Ms Leung Cheng Yee  
Mr Low Meng Huat  
Ms Sekrah Bte Idris  
Ms Thilagavathy Subramaniam  
Ms Vijaya Thavamary Abraham  
District Judge Carolyn Woo Wai-Ling  
District Judge Jasbendar Kaur d/o Resham Singh  
District Judge Lynette Yap Beng Lyn

## Excellence in Public Service Awards

- PS21 Star Service Award**  
Ms Karen Lin  
Mr Ng Tio Yong  
Mr Nadarajoo Sivanandan  
Ms Winnie Thong
- PS21 Star Service Team Award**  
Judiciary Cares committee



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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District Judge Terence Tay  
District Judge Karolyn Gin  
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Presiding Judge of the State Courts

Deputy Presiding Judge Jennifer Marie

Heads of Divisions

## With Warmest Appreciation to

All who have contributed to this publication

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