

**2<sup>nd</sup> MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL JUDICIAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION  
NETWORK (JDRN)**

**Introductory Remarks by the Honourable Justice Vincent Hoong**

**Day 1**

**22 May 2023**

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Chief Judge Swain

Chief Justice Menon

Fellow judges

Ladies and gentlemen

**A. Introduction**

1. A very good morning or evening as the case may be to those of you joining us remotely. My colleagues and I are delighted to join all of you at the Second Meeting of the International Judicial Dispute Resolution Network.
2. Let me preface my remarks by reiterating the Singapore Judiciary’s commitment to delivering fair and effective access to justice. Our Rules of Court<sup>2021</sup> enshrines its underpinning ideals by requiring that all parties conduct their cases in a manner that would achieve the following five ideals:<sup>1</sup>
  - a. Fair access to justice;
  - b. Expeditious proceedings;
  - c. Cost-effectiveness;
  - d. Efficient use of resources; and
  - e. Fair and practical results suited to the needs of the parties.
3. The Rules of Court also imposes on the parties to any proceeding an express duty “to consider amicable resolution of the party’s dispute before the commencement and during the course of any action or appeal”.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Order 3 rule 1 of the ROC 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Order 5 of the ROC 2021.

4. Such proactive judge-led management of cases twinned with the use of a range of Court Dispute Resolution modalities serve to break down barriers to justice and promote the delivery of fair, proportionate and practical justice.
5. This morning, I would like to briefly describe the work of two clusters of judges in our State Courts who are at the forefront of our drive to integrate JDR into our judicial process.
6. These two clusters, namely, the Court Dispute Resolution Cluster (or “CDRC” for short) and the Community Courts and Tribunals Cluster (or “CCTC” for short) have led the way in the use of proactive judge-led management of cases. The judges closely supervise the progress of each case and employ a variety of modalities best suited to resolve the dispute and achieve a just, cost-effective and expeditious disposal of the case.

**B. Overview of the Court Dispute Resolution Cluster**

7. I will first focus on the CDRC’s work.
8. CDRC was established to provide court dispute resolution services for a wide range of matters in the State Courts. These matters essentially fall into the following two categories:
  - a. First, all types of civil claims in negligence such as claims for personal injury and property damage arising out of motor or industrial accidents, medical and professional negligence; and
  - b. Secondly, relational disputes such as harassment and neighbor disputes.
9. For the first category of cases, the CDRC conducts proactive case management of the disputes and apply modalities such as early neutral evaluation, mediation, conciliation and a judge-directed negotiation process to achieve a cost-effective, expeditious and fair outcome with an efficient use of court resources.
10. For the second category of cases, these are referred to the CDRC for mediation by the CCTC judges. The CDRC judges will then lead the dispute resolution process by facilitating discussions between the parties and, where necessary, suggesting possible solutions for the parties’ consideration.
11. These efforts by them have been very successful, with an average settlement rate of 80%.

**C. Overview of the Community Courts and Tribunals Cluster**

12. I now turn to the CCTC, which comprises:

- a. The Small Claims Tribunal;
  - b. The Employment Claims Tribunal;
  - c. The Community Disputes Resolution Tribunal; and
  - d. The Protection from Harassment Court.
13. The low filing fees and ease of procedures have enabled large numbers of self-represented persons. Proceedings are conducted in an informal manner with simplified, judge-led processes to guide the parties as they prepare and present their cases. This approach is enshrined in various pieces of legislation.<sup>3</sup>
  14. The CCTC's aim is to resolve or otherwise adjudicate the disputes without the parties incurring prohibitive costs or suffering inordinate delay.
  15. To do this, CCTC judges at the case management conference or pre-trial conference will speak to both sides together or in private to identify the root causes of their disputes and manage their expectations by giving an evaluation of the merits of the case. The CCTC judges will then try to get the parties to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.

**D. Conclusion**

16. In conclusion, history has shown us that when courts take a backseat and leave parties to dictate the duration and course of proceedings, cases will invariably take a longer time to conclude and consume much more resources, which in turn adversely impacts access to justice. Over the years, Singapore has put in place reforms that significantly reduced the time taken for a case to conclude, and we are continuously looking at ways to improve our system. The number and complexity of cases will only increase and it is therefore crucial for courts to play an active role in the management of cases in order to deliver fair and effective access to justice.
17. In my brief remarks this morning, I have shared how Singapore has adopted and used the JDR process to resolve cases amicably without trial. Over the course of the next two days, my colleagues and I hope to learn from all of you on how your respective jurisdiction has incorporated the JDR process in your judicial system.
18. On this note, my colleagues and I look forward very much to a very productive and successful conference.
19. Thank you very much.

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<sup>3</sup> Rule 28 of the Supreme Court of Judicature (Protection from Harassment) Rules 2021.