

JUDICIARY TIMES



P2

Admission of Advocates and Solicitors — Mass Call 2022

P3

New Global Network of Judiciaries Set Up to Enhance the Administration of Delivery of Justice Around the World

P4

Launch of Panel of Therapeutic Specialists at Family Justice Courts

HIGHLIGHTS

Admission of Advocates and Solicitors — Mass Call 2022 02

New Global Network of Judiciaries Set Up to Enhance the Administration of Delivery of Justice Around the World 03

Launch of Panel of Therapeutic Specialists at Family Justice Courts 04

EVENTS & INITIATIVES

Hackathon for a Better World 2022 05

A Day in Court Student Seminar 06

State Courts Host Annual Training for Court Volunteer Mediators 06

Filing Maintenance Enforcement Applications at the Heartlands 07

FJC All-In 2022: Future In Motion 08

The Singapore Courts Give Back to the Community 09

Technology & Courts of the Future Programme 10

Workshop on Technology and Innovation with the Administrative Court of Thailand 11

The Third China-Asean Justice Forum 11

Forum on Rule of Law in Digital Economy 12

Justice Philip Jeyaretnam speaks at the Oxford Digital Assets Conference 12

Admission of Advocates and Solicitors — Mass Call 2022

A total of 465 newly minted Advocates and Solicitors were called to the Bar over three sessions on 23 and 24 August. Mass Call 2022 was conducted in a hybrid format with all the applicants in attendance at the Supreme Court auditorium, and with guests joining remotely. This follows two years of virtual Mass Calls.

“Your call to the Bar today should be an occasion not only for celebration, but also for reflection on what it means to be a member of this honourable profession.”

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon



▲ Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, delivering his speech at the Mass Call 2022.



▲ Mr Adrian Tan, President of the Law Society of Singapore, delivering his speech at the Mass Call 2022.

Addressing the new lawyers at the first session, The Honourable the Chief Justice Menon said that admission to the Bar was about character first and then about competence. He emphasised that lawyers must conduct themselves honourably and honestly, whether in real or virtual environments, and urged them to remain cognisant of the potential pitfalls of technology, even though it continues to be an indispensable ally in our efforts to maintain the administration of justice amidst the disruptions caused by the pandemic.

Chief Justice Menon also called for constant improvement in honing the three core attributes of honour — integrity, excellence, and service — and said that this required lifelong reflection and hard work.

Mr Adrian Tan, President of the Law Society of Singapore, also made reference to integrity and honesty in his speech. He said that honesty is the quality that has built the reputation of lawyers and is what the public expects of them.

The second and third sessions were presided over by Justices of the Court of Appeal, Justice Andrew Phang and Justice Steven Chong.



▲ Applicants taking their oath at the Mass Call 2022.

Key messages from Chief Justice Menon's speech (Video)
go.gov.sg/mc22vid

Chief Justice Menon's speech
go.gov.sg/mc22

New Global Network of Judiciaries Set Up to Enhance the Administration of Delivery of Justice Around the World



The International Judicial Dispute Resolution Network (JDRN) — which brings together judiciaries to advance the adoption of the JDR process around the world to enhance the administration and delivery of justice — has been established. The network comprises nine judiciaries from Australia, Canada, China, Germany, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The JDRN seeks to promote the early, amicable, cost-effective and fair resolution of court disputes without the need for a trial through

proactive, judge-led management of cases, twinned with the employment of Court Alternative Dispute Resolution modalities. The JDRN provides a platform for judiciaries to share experiences and exchange expertise on leveraging the JDR process to manage their cases effectively to achieve better outcomes for litigants.

The inaugural meeting was opened by The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon of the Supreme Court of Singapore on 18 May, with a total of 40 participants present. Held over two evenings, the founding members exchanged experiences in the JDR process and held discussions on the best practice guide for the implementation and promotion of the JDR process.

The JDR process is an integral part of judicial case management. The State Courts have institutionalised the JDR process to manage and resolve civil, community and relational disputes. About 30 per cent of the civil cases filed in the State Courts fall under the rubric of the JDR process, with more than 80 per cent of cases settled without trial, saving legal costs, time and resources.

The JDRN will develop the following initiatives to promote the adoption of the JDR process in courts around the world:

- Develop and promote a set of standards and best practices to serve as the benchmark for the development and practice of the JDR process in jurisdictions which are keen to institutionalise it in their judicial systems.
- Support efforts in judicial systems that are interested in adopting the JDR process by providing access to knowhow and resources for capacity building and the development of judicial competencies in the JDR process.

In his Opening Address delivered at the inaugural meeting, The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon said:

“I am delighted that we now have, in the JDRN, a platform for the continued development and promotion of JDR practices. Besides serving as a platform for international judicial engagement, the JDRN aims to develop and promote a set of best practice standards that jurisdictions keen to embed JDR in their court systems may adopt. The Best Practice Guide will be a milestone in our journey towards this goal.”



Launch of Panel of Therapeutic Specialists at Family Justice Courts



On 1 July, the Family Justice Courts (FJC) launched the Panel of Therapeutic Specialists (POTS) pilot programme. POTS aims to increase the accessibility of therapeutic specialist services to court users and their families who require mental health-related support, or specialised assessment and intervention during mediation or in the course of legal proceedings.

The POTS panel comprises of qualified mental health and social science professionals from the private sector, and their services will be sought as a voluntary process by the judge through a link or QR code, with the parties' consent.

The development of POTS started in late 2021 where a steering committee headed by the Registrar of FJC started engagement with the College of Psychiatrists, Academy of Medicine, Singapore (COPsych), the Singapore Association for Counselling (SAC) and the Singapore Psychological Society (SPS), to provide a variety of specialised therapeutic services to

families who come through FJC. Senior mental health professionals were invited to volunteer as members of an honorary Therapeutic Advisory Council to develop the criteria and professional requirements for POTS and to oversee its recruitment and selection process.

To qualify for POTS, practitioners must be registered members of COPsych, SAC or SPS. They must have good professional standing in their respective fields and possess relevant experience treating children and families undergoing divorce. Depending on their chosen fields of specialisation, practitioners must also fulfil additional requirements set out by the respective professional bodies.

POTS is part of FJC's efforts to expand therapeutic services available to meet the diverse needs of families undergoing or concluding their legal proceedings in FJC. This is important as families which are involved in court proceedings often face different types of difficulties, and have complex needs and issues underlying the legal disputes.

Hackathon for a Better World 2022



More than 100 participants from diverse backgrounds and professions have come together to find innovative solutions that will better protect consumers and corporates against scams.

This comes under the annual "Hackathon for a Better World", which kicked off on 27 July, and is jointly organised by the Singapore Courts (SG Courts), DBS, and the National Crime Prevention Council. The hackathon, which supports the Singapore Together movement, brings together the Government and the community, as well as the private and public sectors, in citizen-led efforts to build a shared future for Singapore.

Over the next two months, more than 20 teams will "hack" away at one of three problem statements to come up with creative solutions that will enable the public and corporations to reinforce their anti-scam defence.

The participating teams will pitch their ideas before a panel of judges, and the winners will be announced on 21 October.

Hackathon for a Better World was launched by SG Courts and DBS in 2020 as an action-oriented platform for those with a passion to use innovation and law as forces for good to create valuable solutions to thorny issues that society faces.



“

We are delighted to take part in this event once again, to explore creative ways to improve access to justice and solve problems that have significant social impact. With the unprecedented number of scams affecting Singaporeans, it is timely for this year's hackathon to deal with them. Participants also receive valuable training in innovation and transformation processes which they will no doubt benefit from."

Mr Tan Ken Hwee

*Chief Transformation and Innovation Officer,
Singapore Courts*

A Day in Court Student Seminar

On 18 May, about 300 students from 60 secondary schools participated in the "A Day in Court" student seminar. The event was held in a virtual format for the first time and covered an overview of the criminal justice process, including sentencing considerations, harassment, and cyberbullying.

The seminar aims to provide students with a better understanding of the role of the State Courts in the Singapore Judiciary and develop student leaders as champions against harassment and bullying.

The annual event which took a hiatus in the last few years, saw a refreshed format and introduced new content to better align with the evolving consumption habits and social environment of youths. The students experienced a virtual courtroom tour, cross school interactions reviewing a cyberbullying role-play enactment, a fireside chat with District Judge Wong Su Ann, and a candid Q&A segment with the Deputy Presiding Judge and Registrar of the State Courts, Christopher Tan.

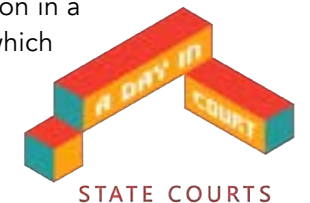
“

I have learnt more about the courts in Singapore and how court matters are resolved as well as more information on harassment."

"I really appreciate the people who have made this seminar possible as I have gained a lot of insight on the judiciary all while having fun. I made some friends from other schools as well."

"I learnt that cases do not always need to be taken to court and can be settled peacefully with both parties agreeing. I also learnt about more ways that harassment can be portrayed. Also through interaction with other schools, I was able to see a situation in a different point of view which was very interesting."

- Feedback from participants



State Courts Host Annual Training for Court Volunteer Mediators

On 10 June, more than 100 Court Volunteer Mediators (CVM) and judicial officers attended the annual training jointly organised by the Court Dispute Resolution Cluster (CDRC), the Community Courts and Tribunals Cluster and the Centre for Specialist Services (CSS).

The virtual session centred on CDRC cases involving psychological and social issues and was presented by Mr Goh Jun Yuan, a senior court counsellor and psychologist with CSS.

Mr Goh shared several notable cases where litigants had acute psychological and social issues and

explained how these cases were addressed. Examples include litigants who have mental health issues such as anxiety, depression and suicidal tendencies or litigants who are socially difficult, such as those who incessantly call and email frontline officers. Mr Goh also highlighted the valuable work of CSS and how they could assist CVMs who encounter litigants with psychological or social issues.

To conclude the session, a panel consisting of District Judge Julian Chin, District Judge Lee Li Choon and CVM Ms Vivienne Sandhu shared their views on the subject, moderated by District Judge Sheik Umar.

Filing Maintenance Enforcement Applications at the Heartlands

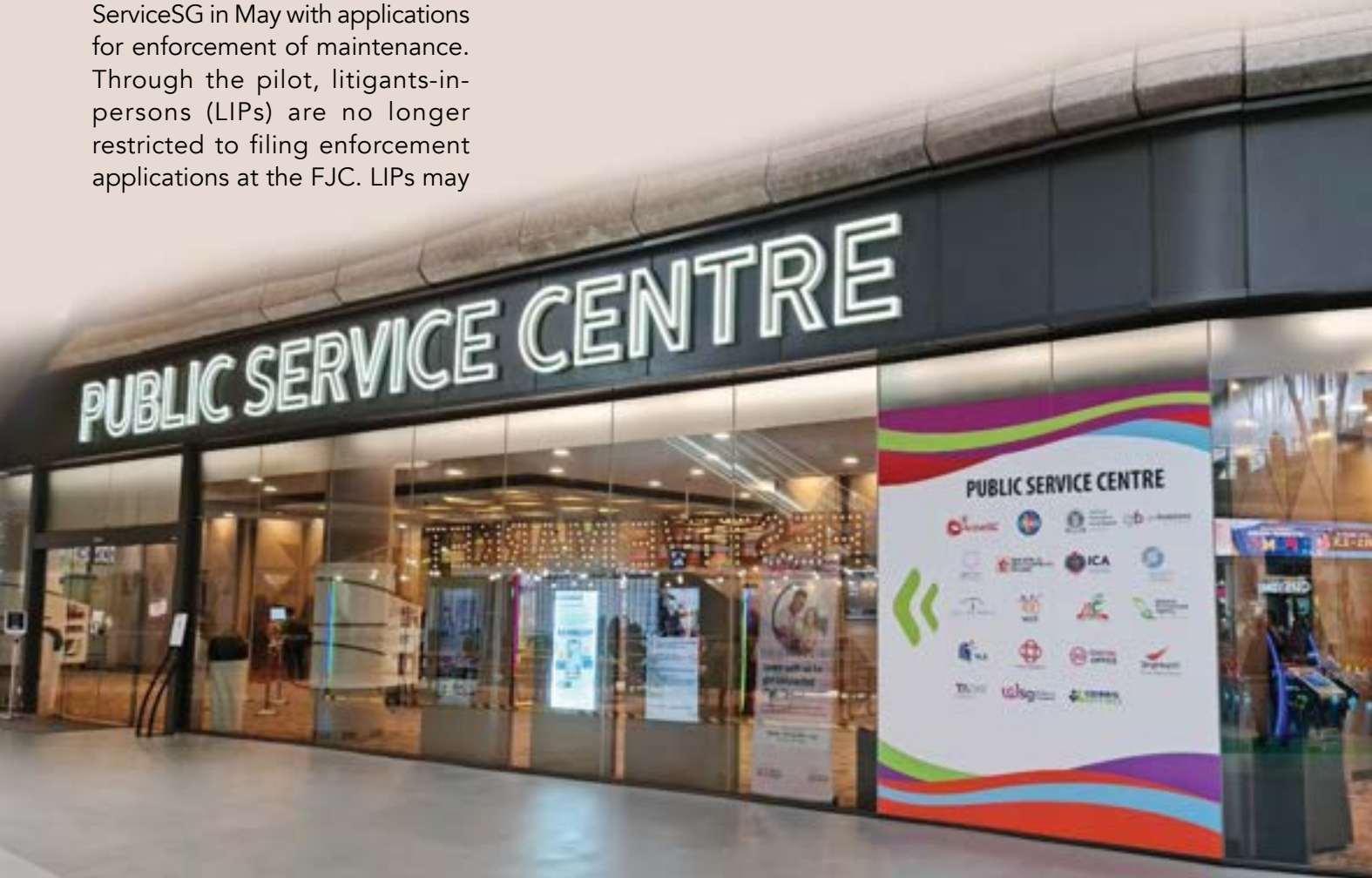
Speaking at the Family Justice Courts (FJC) Workplan 2022 on 18 March, Presiding Judge of the FJC, Justice Debbie Ong announced that FJC has embarked on a collaboration with ServiceSG@ Our Tampines Hub to make frontline court services available at community touchpoints, starting with maintenance enforcement applications under s71 of the Women's Charter. This initiative is part of the larger Family Justice 'Without Walls' programme aimed at enhancing access to justice at the heartlands.

FJC commenced the pilot with ServiceSG in May with applications for enforcement of maintenance. Through the pilot, litigants-in-persons (LIPs) are no longer restricted to filing enforcement applications at the FJC. LIPs may

now access FJC's court services at another venue nearer to their homes with greater convenience. The pilot entails ServiceSG staff assisting applicants with the form filing and completing the application process with FJC's Maintenance Registry, all within the same day.

Previously, while applicants may draft an enforcement application online, they would still need to attend in person to complete the application process. With ServiceSG staff serving as our

community touchpoints, applicants can now be guided to complete the maintenance enforcement process with confidence and ease. Should applicants require assistance to affirm the authenticity and accuracy of their application contents before a duty judge, they may do so through video-conference facilities available at the ServiceSG centre. LIPs may also access other government services all under the same roof. The FJC looks forward to opening more avenues in the heartlands, all for the single goal of enhancing access to justice.



▲ Participants at the FJC All-In 2022: Future In Motion.

FJC All-In 2022: Future In Motion

On 5 August, the Family Justice Courts (FJC) held their annual FJC All-In. The event was attended by the FJC staff, and invited guests from the Judiciary and the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF).

In her opening remarks, Presiding Judge of the FJC, Justice Debbie Ong, shared that many of the initiatives that the FJC hopes to achieve in the future are already in motion, hence the theme for this year's iteration - Future in Motion. They range from initiatives arising from FJC's vision for Therapeutic Justice, to many other initiatives that were announced at the more recent Workplans. Together, these plans will go a long way to help families and court users.

This year's FJC All-In was also special as colleagues from MSF shared their plans and policy directions.

As part of the programme, two videos were shared — the first video titled, "The Possible Future: A Brave New World" featured selected mega trends.

Following the second video which offered a sneak peek into FJC's future premises, participants also had the chance to hear from Registrar Kenneth Yap, on his thoughts on how it would present a unique opportunity to rethink FJC's work processes, work arrangements, and ways to enhance access to justice. Attendees also had the opportunity to discuss improvements to processes and access to justice, which can be done in tandem with the move to the new premises.

In his closing remarks, Deputy Presiding Judge Chia Wee Kiat used the analogy of birds flying in a V-shaped formation and encouraged everyone to endure values of teamwork, kindness towards team members, and to look out for each other in FJC's shared journey. At its core, FJC is a family for families. It is only when all staff are grounded in such values that the organisation can soar higher and fly a greater distance travelling on the thrust of one another.

The Singapore Courts Give Back to the Community

The Singapore Courts continued to reach out to the community as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts.

On 8 June, about 33 volunteers comprising judicial officers and court administrators from the State Courts participated in a beach clean-up at East Coast Park.

In August, staff from all three Courts participated in the annual "Read for Books" charity drive in support of the National Reading Movement and to share the gift of reading with the less privileged. They came together to log their reading hours and coordinated their own group reading sessions in an effort to raise more books for the beneficiaries — WondeRead and Migrant Worker Library. Some also took part in a virtual reading session on 30 August.

A total of 163 staff participated in the drive this year, raising a total of 57 books.



About WondeRead and Migrant Worker Library

WondeRead is an initiative by the National Library Board and Social Service Agencies to provide free reading materials to children aged 7–17 years old from less privileged backgrounds. Migrant Worker Library is an initiative by the Assurance, Care and Engagement Group of Ministry of Manpower to make books freely accessible to migrant workers in Singapore.



Technology & Courts of the Future Programme

After a two-year hiatus, the Singapore Judicial College (SJC)'s Technology and Courts of the Future programme saw 25 participants from international jurisdictions converge in Singapore to participate in the first in-person programme organised under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Singapore Cooperation Programme since the pandemic.

The programme gathered some of the finest minds from the judicial, legal, governmental and technology worlds to share their thinking and experiences, and also to co-create a space to tap on the collective wisdom in envisioning and strategising for the courts of the future through the use of technology.

With SJC Executive Director Paul Quan leading the programme faculty

and expert instruction delivered by Chief Transformation & Innovation Officer Tan Ken Hwee, Principal District Judge Toh Yung Cheong, District Judge Colin Tan, Assistant Registrar Li Yuen Ting, as well as the Communications and Service Excellence Division, the participants were not only told of the technology deployed in SG Courts, these were also shown to them and most importantly, the participants had the opportunity to experience the technology for themselves.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Communications and Information as well as the Home Team Science and Technology Agency, the programme also afforded participants the unique opportunity to step into an immersive world of future technology showcasing holographic telepresence and mixed reality to broaden their

horizons on potential use cases in the courts.

These helped to contextualise the participants when they were back in the classroom analysing problem statements from Botswana, Belize, Brunei, Mongolia as well as Rwanda to craft practical innovative solutions to real-world issues. Justice Gertrude Torkornoo from the Supreme Court of Ghana aptly summed up the programme, "The learning taught me the need to go back to first principles constantly - in the use of this technology, who am I serving? - to those primary questions and getting the right answers so that we can do the right things."

Workshop on Technology and Innovation with the Administrative Court of Thailand



On 26 July, the State Courts conducted a workshop titled “Technology and Innovation: Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic” with the Administrative Court of Thailand.

Mr Charnchai, President, Supreme Administrative Court of Thailand, along with 150 participants from the Administrative Court and the Office of the Administrative Courts, and 100 participants from other Thai agencies including the

Office of the Attorney General, the Lawyers Council Under the Royal Patronage, and the Ministry of Interior, attended the half-day workshop virtually.

In his welcome remarks, Deputy Presiding Judge of the State Courts Christopher Tan highlighted that remote and asynchronous court hearings have become a ubiquitous facet of the suite of court services the State Courts deliver daily. Principal District Judge Toh Yung

Cheong then presented how the State Courts had responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, through harnessing technology and innovation, before Judge Jirasak Seejaicharoen and Judge Ekkanut Jinasen shared on the development of Court Technology in the Administrative Court of Thailand.

This is the fourth video conference workshop that the State Courts have conducted with the Administrative Court of Thailand. The first was held in August 2018 on Civil Case Management and the use of Information Technology. The second was in May 2019, on Court Dispute Resolution in the State Courts. In March 2021, the State Courts shared the third edition of the International Framework for Court Excellence.

The Third China-Asean Justice Forum

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon delivered the opening remarks at the Third China-ASEAN Justice Forum on 20 July. Presiding Judge of the State Courts, Justice Vincent Hoong, delivered a speech titled “Promoting Cross-border Online Litigation to Provide Judicial Assistance for Pandemic Prevention and Control and Economic Recovery”, which highlighted the positive effects of online litigation to offset the restrictions incurred by the pandemic.

Hosted by the Supreme People’s Court of the People’s Republic of China in a hybrid format, the forum which was themed “Establishing a High-Level Judicial

Cooperation Platform to Jointly Build the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road”, saw participants attending in person in Nanning, China, and virtually.



Forum on Rule of Law in Digital Economy



▲ Justice Abdullah delivering his speech at the Forum of Rule of Law in Digital Economy.

On 26 May, Justice Aedit Abdullah, Judge of the High Court and Judge-in-charge of Transformation and Innovation in the Singapore Courts, delivered a speech titled “Innovation and Reform on Litigation Models in the Digital Era” at the Forum of Rule of Law in Digital Economy. He highlighted how the Singapore Judiciary successfully harnessed digitalisation as an enabler for innovation and transformation in its continuous pursuit of enhancing access to justice for all.

Held virtually, the forum was organised by the Supreme People’s Court of the People’s Republic of China to promote cooperation in the area of digital economy.

Justice Philip Jeyaretnam speaks at the Oxford Digital Assets Conference

On 29 June, Justice Philip Jeyaretnam spoke at the Oxford Digital Assets Conference. He highlighted the advantages of blockchain technology and how it brought to the fore the use of ‘smart contracts’, which is a recording of a legal agreement between parties and typically used to automate the execution of some or all of the performance of the agreement, without an intermediary’s involvement.

Justice Jeyaretnam said that despite the technology’s apparent promise of eliminating the need for intermediaries and trusted parties to resolve disputes, in practice, there remains both roles for intermediaries and situations where users need to seek recourse

from the courts and systems of law. He noted that while intermediaries might not be needed, they do make it much more convenient to carry out transactions and to store cryptocurrencies.

Justice Jeyaretnam also described the issues with this technology, and said that there would therefore be the need for a legal relationship between the intermediary and the user — usually a contractual one. Noting that interesting legal issues may arise where the law encounters crypto-coins and digital tokens, Justice Jeyaretnam commented that the pragmatic flexibility of the common law systems is well-suited to adapting and facilitating the exponential growth of blockchain technology.



The Oxford Digital Assets Conference was chaired by Professor Louise Gullifer, the Rouse Ball Professor of English Law at Cambridge, and attended by academics, practising lawyers and business people.

Courtesy Call on CJ by the Ambassador of Switzerland to Singapore



On 27 May, the Ambassador of Switzerland, His Excellency Fabrice Filliez, called on Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon to bid farewell as the Swiss Ambassador to Singapore and Brunei. Chief Justice Menon and Ambassador Filliez affirmed the good relationship between Singapore and Switzerland and the progressive development in legal cooperation between the two countries.

◀ Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and Swiss Ambassador to Singapore Fabrice Filliez at the Courtesy Call held on 27 May 2022.

Visit by Seoul Administrative Court



▲ The Seoul Administrative Court, led by Chief Presiding Judge Jung Sang Gyu at the State Courts.

On 8 June, a delegation led by Judge Jung Sang Gyu, Chief Presiding Judge of the Seoul Administrative Court, visited the Singapore Courts as part of a two-day study trip to learn about courtroom design and courthouse architecture in Singapore. They were received by Chief Executive Juthika Ramanathan. The delegates learned from the officers in the Infrastructure and Court Resources Division about the considerations for court design and master planning, and the technology implemented in the Singapore Courts.

Visit by Justice David Goddard, Judge of the New Zealand Court of Appeal



Justice David Goddard, Judge of the New Zealand Court of Appeal, visited the Singapore Courts from 29 June to 1 July. He learned about the Singapore Courts' strategy and best practices in the deployment of technology in the courtroom and the adjudication process.

◀ Justice David Goddard with Deputy Presiding Judge of Family Justice Courts, Chia Wee Kiat, at the Family Justice Courts.

Visit by the Central Commission for Internal Affairs of Vietnam



▲ The Central Commission for Internal Affairs of Vietnam's visit to the Supreme Court of Singapore.

On 2 August, a delegation led by Mr Nguyen Thanh Hai, Vice Chairman of the Central Commission for Internal Affairs of the Communist Party of Vietnam, visited the Supreme Court as part of a study visit to learn about Singapore's practices in governance. The Singapore Judicial College and Singapore Courts discussed with the delegates topics that included court excellence and benchmarking, and training of judges in the Singapore courts.

Staff Recognised at the Public Sector Transformation Awards



▲ Mr Bala Tharmalinggam receiving the Exemplary SkillsFuture @ Public Service Award, and District Judge Jinny Tan receiving the Service Delivery Excellence Award on behalf of the Divorce eService team.



Mr Balasubramaniam Tharmalinggam from the State Courts, and the Family Justice Courts' (FJC) Divorce eService team were recognised for their excellence at the Public Sector Transformation Awards Ceremony 2022 on 29 July.

Mr Bala was awarded the Exemplary SkillsFuture @ Public Service Award, which acknowledges his spirit of continuous learning and skills upgrading. Mr Bala rose through the ranks and obtained tertiary and post-graduate qualifications in areas such as Economics and Human Resource Management during the course of his career. He then completed a Juris Doctor programme in law from the Singapore University of Social Sciences and applied the legal knowledge and skills acquired to his roles as Assistant Registrar in the

Small Claims Tribunals, and Senior Assistant Director of the Community Courts and Tribunals Cluster.

The FJC's Divorce eService team received the Service Delivery Excellence Award, which recognises agency-level initiatives that have demonstrated citizen-centricity, service innovativeness, and a total organisational approach to service delivery, leading to improved service outcomes. The Divorce eService is an online interactive portal that assists unrepresented litigants to file for divorce on a simplified track, and it reduces the time and expenses required for divorce applications. The portal, which guides litigants step-by-step through the process, also reduces the pain of form-filling by embracing technology, i.e., by importing personal data from MyInfo.

DIVORCE ESERVICE TEAM			
District Judge Darryl Soh	District Judge Jinny Tan	District Judge Michelle Elias Solomon	District Judge Adriene Cheong
Rachel Gan	Foo Juyuan	Clarissa Tan	Siti Nabilah Mohammed
Nurhanim Mohamad Hanip	Azlila Sueb	Vijayarajan Selvaraj	Daniel Setiadi

State Courts Recognised as A Champion of Good 2022

On 1 September, the State Courts were named a Champion of Good by the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre. They were among 112 organisations that were recognised for their exemplary contributions to various social causes and have been multiplying the effect of these efforts by collaborating with their partners and stakeholders.

This is the third time the State Courts have been conferred the award. In addition to serving society through their core functions, the State Courts strive to make a positive impact on the community through implementing meaningful initiatives and organising regular CSR activities.

Every year, the State Courts organise a wide variety of activities — from fundraising for State Courts’ adopted charities and beach clean-ups, to engaging community stakeholders such as Senior Activity Centres and carrying out enriching programmes for their elderly beneficiaries. These initiatives promote the spirit of volunteerism and cultivate the culture of giving back to society.



▲ Deputy Presiding Judge of the State Courts, Christopher Tan receiving the award on behalf of the State Courts from Minister of State for the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, and the Ministry of Trade & Industry.



▲ Members of the State Courts Corporate Social Responsibility Committee with the Champions of Good award.

New Electronic Option to Effect Substituted Service of Court Documents for Civil Proceedings

On 1 September, the Singapore Courts (SG Courts) introduced an additional electronic method to effect substituted service of court documents for civil proceedings on the eLitigation platform.

Subject to obtaining permission from the court, eLitigation subscribers can now opt to send secure notifications to the recipients — for example, defendants or respondents to a

claim or application — through the Singpass app inbox on eLitigation. The recipient will then receive a “push” notification through the Singpass app Inbox in the “For Action” category, informing them of the service of court documents.

This enhancement is part of the SG Courts’ efforts to drive legal transformation and innovation to better serve the needs of court users in today’s digital society.

The SG Courts have progressively leveraged Singpass, including using it as the main authentication mechanism for case management systems, and “Sign with Singpass” to allow users to digitally sign contracts, agreements, and other legal documentation. These initiatives help to further increase efficiency for both the courts and the litigants.

BENEFITS OF THE NEW ELECTRONIC METHOD

Sender

- (i) potential cost savings;
- (ii) enhanced speed of effecting substituted service; and
- (iii) ability to carry out service where the address of the recipient may not be known or may have changed.

Recipient

- (i) a discreet and direct way of being notified electronically of the service of court documents.
- (i) assurance that the documents viewed using the “push” notification through the Singpass app Inbox are authentic.

When attempts at ‘personal service’ of court documents have been unsuccessful, some of the existing methods of substituted service include the posting of court documents on the front door or gate of the recipient’s premises, Advice of Receipt (AR) registered post to the address of the recipient, and electronic means such as email.

SG Courts

ANNUAL REPORT
2021

One Judiciary, Moving Forward

The Singapore Courts Annual Report 2021 encapsulates the work done and achievements of the Supreme Court, the State Courts and the Family Justice Courts over the course of the past year. Under the overarching theme of "One Judiciary, Moving Forward", the report is laid out according to six key focus areas: Access to Justice, Therapeutic Justice, Trust and Confidence, Strengthening Partnerships, Developing our Capability and Connecting with our Community.

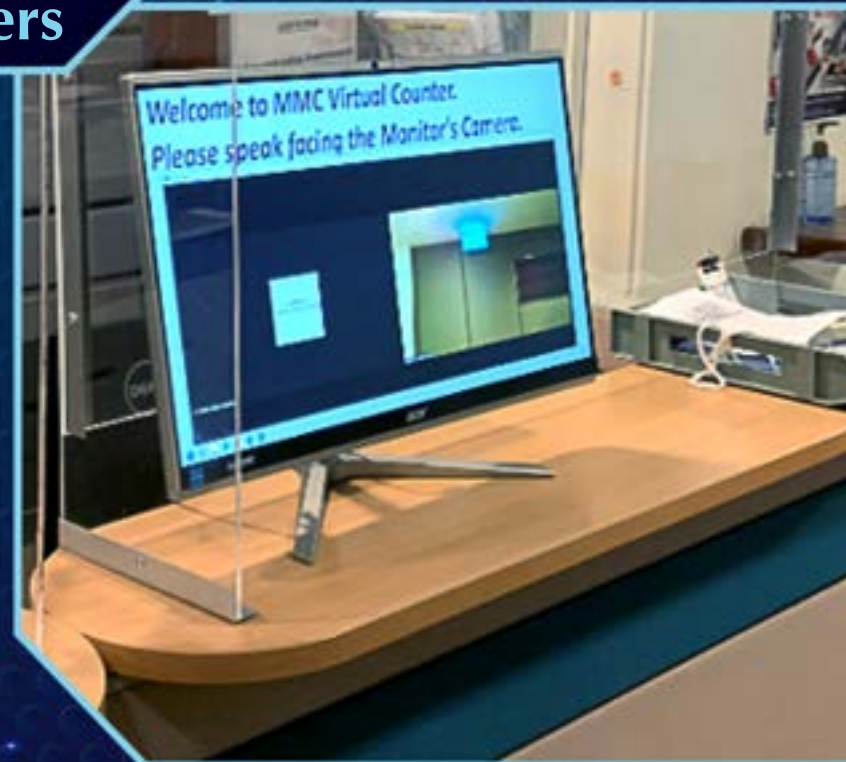
Visit the microsite and access the full report at go.gov.sg/ar2021.



Virtual Registry Counters

The Family Justice Courts (FJC) are piloting the Virtual Registry Counters (VRCs) at the FJC @ Havelock Square. These VRCs allow court users to reach any officer at FJC's Registries and aim to provide a one-stop touchpoint within FJC so that there would be no 'wrong door' problems faced by court users. The VRCs will also allow the registry officers to provide remote assistance and complement existing hybrid work arrangements whilst future-proofing the Registry against the next pandemic.

Should the VRC pilot be successful, VRCs may also be extended to other courts and partner agencies.



Crimsonlogic's Service Bureau Now Open at the State Courts

The Service Bureau is now open at the State Courts, and is co-located in the Business Centre on Level 2.

The operating hours are:

- Mon- Fri: 8:30am to 12:30pm; 2.00pm to 5:00pm
- Sat: 8:30am to 12:30pm

The Service Bureau at Chinatown Point is no longer in operation.

BUSINESS
CENTRE
SERVICE BUREAU

UPCOMING EVENTS

SENTENCING CONFERENCE 2022 CYBER EDITION

Sentencing Frameworks

Instructive | Communicative | Consistent Outcomes

31 October & 1 November 2022



Jointly organised by the Singapore Academy of Law and the State Courts, the Sentencing Conference 2022 will provide the judiciary, prosecution, legal practitioners, academics and other stakeholders in the criminal justice system with an opportunity to discuss the role that sentencing frameworks play in securing principled and consistent outcomes in discrete criminal cases.

Themed "Sentencing Frameworks — Instructive, Communicative and Consistent Outcomes", the two-day conference will open with a keynote address by The Honourable Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon followed by a Special Guest Lecture by Justice Steven Chong, Justice of the Court of Appeal. Attendees can look forward to engaging discussions on topics such as:

- The Evolution of Sentencing in Singapore
- Sentencing of Special Classes of Offenders (such as youths and those afflicted with mental health issues)
- Artificial Intelligence in Criminal Justice

Speakers from the Ministry of Social and Family Development, the Institute of Mental Health and the Singapore Prison Service will also share their views on several of these aspects at separate experiential learning sessions.

The event will be held virtually on 31 October and 1 November.

For more information and to sign up, visit go.gov.sg/sentencingconference2022 or scan the QR code.

Behind the Scenes with Judicial Associates



NIGEL SIM
Judicial Associate
State Courts

Judicial Associates are key figures in the Singapore Courts. While often out of sight, they support Judicial Officers every day in assisting with legal research, case management, and projects. In this issue, we interviewed Nigel Sim (NS) from the State Courts, and Germaine Tan (GT) from the Family Justice Courts (FJC) who collectively have about five years of experience in the Singapore Courts. Read on to find out about what they do.

What are your responsibilities?

GT: As Judicial Associates, our scope of work involves legal research, and assisting Judicial Officers, which include preparing case highlights from released Grounds of Decisions, and in various Court initiatives and legal projects. Currently, my main focus is on revamping the Practice Directions (PD) and court forms relating to family proceedings, to complement the upcoming revision to the Family Justice Rules (FJR).

NS: I assist Judicial Officers in guilty plea mentions, civil and criminal trials, as well as manage the cases heard in the Coroner's Court. I also hold concurrent appointments as an Assistant Registrar and Tribunal Magistrate in the Community Courts and Tribunals Cluster where I see parties at the consultations for their matter, and adjudicate disputes in the Small Claims Tribunals according to the merits and justice of the case through a hearing.

Describe a typical day at work.

NS: When I am rostered to assist in guilty plea mentions which involve accused-in-person, I will do legal research and provide input to the Judicial Officers ahead of the mentions. My research process involves poring through books at the library, including the periodic sentencing alerts and refreshers. I would also consider authorities from the legal databases before meeting the Judicial Officer to discuss my findings. During such discussions, the Judicial Officers will also share their reasons

for their final decision on sentencing, highlighting tips for our learning and edification. I may also sit in for the hearings where it is necessary to do so.

Amongst the Judicial Associates, we also have a collegiate culture and we discuss our thoughts and views on new developments in the law. These discussions happen whenever we need to bounce ideas off each other, or to buttress and tighten our research memos.

GT: On most days, I work independently on reviewing and drafting the FJC PD. This includes going through the current PDs in the Singapore Courts, identifying the common paragraphs for consistency, and revising paragraphs that are specific to FJC. I would discuss with the Judicial Officer on the structure of the PD and liaise with colleagues from various departments on the accuracy of the content.

I am also in the team working on updating and simplifying our current court forms to better aid court users in filling out details required by the Court.

What are some valuable skills or lessons that you have learnt?

GT: I have learnt and experienced first-hand how much time, thought, and groundwork goes into a new initiative or project before it is launched. For example, I was involved in the "Panel of Financial Experts" (POFE) initiative which enables the Court to appoint a financial expert from a selected panel to provide an objective valuation of disputed matrimonial assets in divorce matters. I assisted in preparing the key documents in POFE, and liaised with The Institute of Singapore Chartered Accountants to set up the virtual Memorandum of Understanding signing. I learnt a lot about communication as there were several meetings held with key stakeholders to prepare the key documents and arrange for the signing.

NS: I have learnt much more about the law, but more importantly, important soft skills like dealing with litigants-in-person, case management, and even mediation. I would also say that my analytical skills and critical thinking skills have improved since joining the State Courts. I believe that these skills are valuable anywhere, but more critically in the judiciary.

What are some of the challenges that you face?

NS: There is a constant need to always keep abreast of the latest developments in the law. It is thus heartening that there is an emphasis on this, particularly through the Singapore Courts News Bulletin, and having a strong knowledge management culture within the judiciary. It can also be challenging at times to manage the expectations of court users who are more vocal in expressing their dissatisfaction with our decisions. We try our best to explain our reasons and processes to them. I am therefore very grateful to our Registry colleagues who lend us their fullest support and assistance when required.

GT: One of the challenges I face specific to my current focus is to ensure that there is no contradiction within FJC's rules, PD and forms. This can be challenging as I would need to be aware of any amendments which could affect the content. If I require further guidance or have proposals to share, for example, whether a paragraph in the current FJC PD is outdated or if it should be retained, I check in with the Judicial Officer as and when necessary.

What motivates you?

GT: It is very motivating to know that the materials we have prepared will be used by all family court users soon. My colleagues have worked tirelessly on these materials for the past years, and they have been extremely appreciative and supportive, guiding me along with anything that I needed help with. I hope that our collective work will benefit all court users and enhance access to justice.

NS: I am motivated by my peers and seniors around me. It is especially uplifting when I have people I can turn to for advice and bounce ideas off, as well as camaraderie. The guidance and advice from the judges also enable me to learn more, pushing me to the next level. The opportunity to attend courses, periodic refreshers, as well as keynote speeches and presentations from foreign judiciaries remind me that we have potential, and it is up to us as Judicial Associates to mould and refine it.

Being exposed to the work of other Legal Officers also encourages me to continue learning and upgrading my skills to expand my scope of work.

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