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Singapore Courts Host IACA Conference for the First Time

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

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

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



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

“

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

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

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

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



Scan to read Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon's keynote address

go.gov.sg/cjiaca24



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



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

Family Justice Courts Celebrate 10th Anniversary and Launch Therapeutic Justice Model

The Family Justice Courts (FJC), established on 1 October 2014, celebrated their 10th anniversary on 21 October at the new FJC building. In conjunction with the marking of this significant milestone, the FJC launched the Therapeutic Justice (TJ) Model, which seeks to provide a framework within which all family justice participants can work together to better serve the needs of families and children. The event was graced by the Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for Health, Mr Masagos Zulkifli, and the Minister of State for Law and Transport, Mr Murali Pillai, SC.

to the FJC's stakeholders and partners for their sterling support in the transformation of the family justice system in the past decade.



▲ Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon delivering the opening address.



Scan to read Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon's opening address

go.gov.sg/cjfc10



Scan to read Justice Teh Hwee Hwee's speech

go.gov.sg/pjfc10



Scan to find out more about the Family Justice Courts Therapeutic Justice Model


go.gov.sg/fjctjm

In his opening address, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon outlined the transformation that had taken place in the family justice system over the past decade. He noted that several significant changes, including the strengthening of the judge-led approach, have been introduced in the new set of Family Justice Rules that came into effect on 15 October. He also paid tribute

The Presiding Judge of the FJC, Justice Teh Hwee Hwee, also delivered a speech, where she shared that the FJC's new premises, which would commence operations on 25 November, are symbolic of the FJC's commitment to evolution and growth and a tangible representation of the spirit of transformation that permeates the FJC's work. Justice Teh envisages that the TJ Model will continue to grow and mature, and the FJC is looking forward to improving it with feedback from its stakeholders.

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





THERAPEUTIC JUSTICE
New Day, New Hope

Family Justice Courts Therapeutic Justice Model (TJ Model)

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

TJ Objectives

Resolve family issues amicably, and out of court where possible.

Reduce acrimony and conflict during court proceedings.

Resolve underlying issues in the interests of the family, putting the welfare of the children first.

Treat one another with respect, attention, empathy, and support.

Move towards the future and be enabled to resolve future issues amicably out of court.

Court Process

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

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

Triage Process

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

Tracks

Standard Track

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

Teams Track (One Family, One Team)

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

The Roles of Parties and Lawyers


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

Do's

- Make genuine attempts to resolve issues amicably, such as making reasonable proposals at mediation.
- Use respectful and constructive language in letters, court documents, and courtroom communications.
- File only necessary applications, concise affidavits, and relevant evidence.
- Take all steps to protect children from parents' acrimony and exposure to court proceedings.

Don'ts

- Refuse to participate meaningfully in mediation or make unreasonable or extreme proposals at mediation.
- Use inflammatory and provocative language that heightens tensions in letters, court documents, and courtroom communications.
- File unnecessary applications/affidavits/evidence that serve to heighten tensions, delay proceedings and increase costs.
- Expose the children to legal documents and force them to take sides; ask them to write documents to support a parent; record/photograph them for court proceedings.



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

Singapore International Commercial Court (International Committee) Bill Passed to Enhance Singapore's Offerings as an International Dispute Resolution Hub

The Singapore International Commercial Court (International Committee) Bill was passed in Singapore's Parliament on 12 November.

The Bill establishes an International Committee of the Singapore International Commercial Court (SICC) to hear prescribed civil appeals and related proceedings from prescribed foreign jurisdictions, thereby enhancing Singapore's offerings as an international dispute resolution hub.

The International Committee is a standalone body that is not part of the Singapore Judiciary. The proceedings heard by the International Committee will take place in Singapore, and presided over by foreign judges drawn from the foreign court from which an appeal arises, together with judges from the SICC and Supreme Court of Singapore.

The Bill follows the signing of a bilateral treaty between Singapore and Bahrain on 20 March to collaborate on the establishment of the Bahrain International Commercial Court (BICC), and for Singapore to designate a body to hear appeals from the BICC.

Key Features of the Bill

The key features of the Bill are as follows:



Structure

The International Committee will be established as a standalone body to hear prescribed appeals and related proceedings from prescribed foreign jurisdictions.

Constitution

The members will comprise judges of the SICC and Supreme Court of Singapore, and ad hoc members drawn from the court of the foreign jurisdiction that is referring an appeal to the International Committee.

Jurisdiction

The Minister for Law will be empowered to make regulations in relation to appeals from a foreign court to the International Committee, including prescribing the types of cases that can be appealed to the International Committee from the foreign jurisdiction.

Representation

Singapore advocates and solicitors, foreign lawyers and law experts who have been registered to appear before the SICC, can appear before the International Committee.

Enforcement

A judgment or order of the International Committee will be treated as a judgment or order of the court of that foreign jurisdiction which the appeal arose from.

Finality

A decision of the International Committee is final.

Singapore Judges Join Ceremonial Bench in Bombay High Court



Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, Justice Kannan Ramesh and Justice Andre Maniam in a meeting with Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya, Bombay High Court. (Photos: Consulate-General of the Republic of Singapore in Mumbai)

During the Singapore Courts' visit to India in September, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, Justices Kannan Ramesh and Andre Maniam sat on a Ceremonial Bench in the Bombay High Court, marking the first time that the Bombay High Court's Ceremonial Bench is shared with foreign judges. Chief Justice Menon shared a Ceremonial Bench with Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya and Justices Girish Kulkarni and Firdosh Pooniwalla of the Bombay High Court to hear the petitions regarding the reservation granted to the Maratha community in



Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon with Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya, Bombay High Court.

Maharashtra, while Justices Ramesh and Maniam shared a Ceremonial Bench with Bombay High Court Justices Nitin Jamdar and MM Sathaye, and Justices KR Shriram and Jitendra Jain.

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon Explores Ways to Secure Trust in Arbitration at SIAC Annual India International Arbitration Conferences 2024

On 6 September, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon delivered the keynote address "The Pursuit of Justice: Securing Trust in Arbitration" at the SIAC Annual India International Arbitration Conferences 2024 in Mumbai. He outlined key trends affecting arbitration, one of which being the decline of trust in public institutions, and suggested two areas to secure trust in arbitration – firstly, to promote access to justice by controlling costs and secondly, to ensure that the values of the legal profession are upheld.

Chief Justice Menon also participated in a fireside chat in Delhi where the second day of the conference was held. The discussion, which was moderated by SIAC Court of Arbitration members, Mr Tejas Karia from Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas

& Co, India, and Mr Vijayendra Pratap Singh from AZB & Partners, India, delved into topics such as the use of technology, cross-border judicial cooperation, and the need for codes of conduct in arbitration.

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



Scan to read Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon's keynote address

go.gov.sg/cjsiac24

Singapore and China Judiciaries Exchange Experiences at Eighth Roundtable

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

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

Sharing his insights on the discussion topic "Proactive Case Management", Chief Justice Menon suggested that case management is a key part of the procedural architecture that the courts operate and the overall administration of a judicial system. As the caseload of the courts increase in volume and complexity, they will need to embrace a more proactive role in case management. Chief Justice

Menon elaborated on how the Singapore Courts have sought to implement an approach of proactive case management at three main levels: through the frameworks they operate and apply; through the processes they implement; and through the thought and care that their people bring to the task of case management in each case.

The two Chief Justices also held a bilateral meeting where they took stock of the progress that each court had made in the past year and discussed future plans, including opportunities for the two judiciaries to work together to address similar challenges they encounter.

The Roundtable is the centrepiece of the strong relationship between the Singapore and China judiciaries, and the Supreme Court of Singapore and the SPC have taken turns to host it. Since its inception in 2017, the Roundtable has been an effective platform for judicial cooperation and for both judiciaries to learn



▲ Chief Justice Zhang Jun (first row, fourth from right) and the delegation from China at State Courts with Presiding Judge of the State Courts Justice Vincent Hoong (first row, fifth from left) and Presiding Judge of the Family Justice Courts Justice Teh Hwee Hwee (first row, fourth from left).



▲ Chief Justice Zhang Jun and Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon.

from each other's perspectives and experiences in areas of mutual interest.

The delegation from the SPC included judges Justice Yang Wanming, Vice-President of the SPC, Justice Zhang Yingjie, President of the High People's Court of Yunnan Province, and Ms Zhao Juhua, President of the Intermediate People's Court of Shenzhen. This is Chief Justice Zhang's first visit to Singapore in his capacity as President and Chief Justice of the SPC and the first time the delegation is back in Singapore since the Covid-19 pandemic.

Singapore Courts Strengthen Judicial Collaboration with ASEAN Judiciaries in Regional Meetings

A Singapore delegation led by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon was in Cebu, The Philippines, on 19 and 20 November 2024 to attend a series of meetings with judiciaries in ASEAN.

ASEAN Insolvency Judges Meeting

The First Meeting of ASEAN Insolvency Judges was held on 19 November. Organised by the Singapore Judiciary and hosted by the Philippines Judiciary, the meeting brought together insolvency judges from all ASEAN member states and fostered an understanding of the framework for insolvency and restructuring in the respective ASEAN jurisdictions. It also provided the participants with the opportunity to exchange their experiences and perspectives on dealing with cross-border insolvency matters, paving the way for potential areas for collaboration. A Standing Meeting of ASEAN Insolvency Judges was thereafter approved by the Council of ASEAN Chief Justices (CACJ) at the 11th Meeting of the CACJ on 20 November.



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

ASEAN+ Meeting

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

CACJ Meeting

In his opening address for the 11th CACJ Meeting, Chief Justice Menon said that the CACJ had demonstrated its value in advancing the rule of law and the administration of justice within ASEAN in the last decade. He added that because ASEAN is characterised by diversity, particularly in the legal systems, judicial cooperation is especially crucial in overcoming the practical challenges that can arise from the heterogeneity in the member states' laws and procedures. Chief Justice Menon noted the efforts made to develop cross-border frameworks, e.g. the Model Rules on the Service of Civil Processes and on the Taking of Evidence for Foreign Proceedings in Civil or Commercial Matters, and encouraged continued cooperation to advance the rule of law and the administration of justice within ASEAN.

The CACJ held wide-ranging discussions at the Meeting. The issues discussed included:

1. Publishing an ASEAN Memorandum of Guidance on how ASEAN judiciaries recognise and enforce foreign money judgments;
2. Administrative verification of court orders relating to the care of a child made by a court of another ASEAN member state; and
3. Simplified protocol to verify the authenticity of court orders within ASEAN.

At the close of the Meeting, all attending Chief Justices and Heads of Delegations signed the Cebu Declaration, a document that formalises judicial collaboration among the ASEAN judiciaries.



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

Commercial Judges in Asia Attend Inaugural Masterclass Programme to Deepen Expertise in Commercial Law

The Singapore Judicial College and Judicial Training Centre of the Supreme Court of Indonesia jointly organised the inaugural Masterclass Programme for Commercial Judges in Asia from 9 to 12 September, in Bogor, West Java, Indonesia.

Attended by more than 60 participants from 16 courts and jurisdictions, including Australia, Brunei, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), India, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, People's Republic of China, and Singapore, the Masterclass covered key topics in commercial law, namely technology and law, arbitration, cross-border insolvency, shipping and maritime law, and intellectual property, that are of concern to many judiciaries.

In his keynote address, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon outlined how changes affecting core commercial areas were transforming the realities of commercial law and practice, and offered a vision of convergence between judiciaries across the Asia-Pacific region in key commercial areas. He also highlighted the "unique value proposition" of the Masterclass and its four distinctive features — scope, methodology,

participants, and the network that it aims to establish — that made it an important platform for judicial education and exchange in the Asia-Pacific region.

Chief Justice Prof Dr Muhammad Syarifuddin's welcome address noted that the demands on commercial courts have grown exponentially, driven by the complexities of cross-border trade, international contracts, and global financial systems. He said: "The decisions we make as judges can have far-reaching implications, influencing economic activity and the confidence of international investors in our legal systems".

The faculty for the Masterclass comprised eminent international commercial judges who are experts in their respective fields. The speakers and facilitators included Chief Justice Menon, Justices Aedit Abdullah, Philip Jeyaretnam, Kannan Ramesh, S Mohan, and Dedar Singh Gill from the Supreme Court of Singapore, Justice James Allsop from the Singapore International Commercial Court, Justices I Gusti Agung Sumanatha, Syamsul Marif and Nani Indrawati from Indonesia, Chief Justice (Ret) Geoffrey Ma from Hong Kong SAR, Justice David Goddard from New Zealand, Justice Dai Yiting from China, and Professor Jansen Calamita from the National University of Singapore.



▲ Chief Justice Prof Dr Muhammad Syarifuddin of Indonesia giving the welcome address at the Masterclass Programme for Commercial Judges in Asia.



Scan to read Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon's keynote address

go.gov.sg/9ce85x



Scan to watch video highlights of the Masterclass

go.gov.sg/sjclimc



◀ Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon of Singapore delivering the keynote address at the Masterclass Programme for Commercial Judges in Asia.

Brunei and Singapore Judicial Officers Exchange Knowledge in Inaugural Collaborative Webinar

On 24 September, the judiciaries of Brunei and Singapore marked a significant milestone in their bilateral cooperation with the inaugural Brunei-Singapore Webinar for Junior Judicial Officers.

The webinar, which was attended by 32 participants from both countries, focused on essential topics for early-career judicial officers, to build their judicial competencies in courtroom control and communication, decision-making processes, and judgment writing techniques, amongst others.

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



Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon Discusses Rule of Law at Final Instalment of “Conversations with the Community”

The Singapore Courts (SG Courts) brought their “Conversations with the Community” series to a close on 20 September with an insightful keynote address by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon.

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

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

▼ Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon delivering the keynote address.



▲ Professor Simon Chesterman chairing the question-and-answer session with Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon.

The question-and-answer session, chaired by Professor Simon Chesterman, Vice Provost (Educational Innovation) and David Marshall Professor at the National University of Singapore, received a diverse range of questions from the audience.

The “Conversations with the Community” series was jointly organised by the SG Courts and the law faculties of the National University of Singapore, Singapore Management University, and Singapore University of Social Sciences, to bring together leaders from the judiciary, academia, legal and other sectors to discuss issues that concern the community. The first instalment began on 21 September 2023. In total, more than 1,300 had attended the series. The participants included judges, lawyers, students, educators, public officers, as well as specialists and practitioners in fields related to the topics discussed.

More information about the “Conversations with the Community” series is available [at the SG Courts website](https://www.sgcourts.gov.sg/conversations).



Scan to read Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon's speech

go.gov.sg/cjconvos



Scan to watch videos of the “Conversations with the Community”

go.gov.sg/sgcourtsconvos

Volunteers Shine at Singapore Courts' Appreciation Event

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

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

Long service awards were also presented to five volunteers of the State Courts and Family Justice Courts.

“

We host this event each year to express our deep appreciation for the tremendous contributions of all the volunteers who support the Judiciary's various programmes for litigants and court users. All of you, our court volunteers, through your diverse range of contributions, play an extremely important role in supporting these efforts and making access to justice a reality for the court users that you interact with.”

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon
Supreme Court of Singapore



▲ Mr Mervyn Cheong receiving the LASCO Award from Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon.



▲ Outstanding Court Volunteers Award recipients Mr Lau Kah Hee (left) and Dr Ronald Paul Ng (right) with Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon.



▲ Long Service Award recipients (from left) Mr Loh Guo Wei, Melvin, Mrs Chia Swee Tin and Mr Lim Soon Hock with Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon.

Judicial Commissioner Mohamed Faizal Shares Life Experiences with Youth

On 30 September, Judicial Commissioner Mohamed Faizal Mohamed Abdul Kadir engaged the younger members of the community at the fifth session of the Jauhari Series, organised by Berita Harian (BH) and OMGxBH, BH's young audience platform. The series features BH Jauhari Award winners, which include former President Halimah Yacob, to inspire youth between the ages of 18 and 35.

Judicial Commissioner Mohamed Faizal, who received the BH Jauhari Award in 2020, shared with the participants his meaningful career experiences, what inspired him to join the legal profession, and emphasised the importance of resilience and community support in facing life's challenges.



He also highlighted that contrary to what many believed, the Courts' role is to interpret and apply the law, and not to make or pass laws. He also shared the sentencing principles applied by the Courts and their efforts in enhancing access to justice.



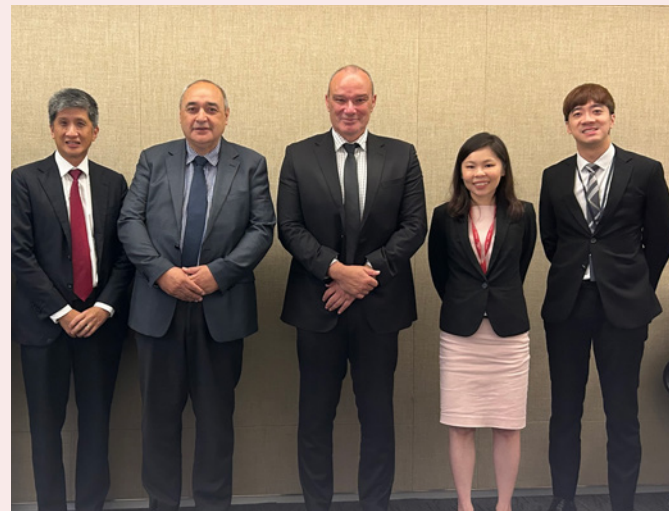
Scan to watch the fireside chat

go.gov.sg/jcmfomgxbh

NOTABLE VISITS

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

Chief District Court Judge Heemi Taumaunu and District Court Judge David Clark from the District Court of New Zealand visited the State Courts on 1 November. They were received by Principal District Judge Toh Han Li, and District Judges Chee Min Ping and Jonathan Ng. Through the lively discussions during the visit, both the delegation from New Zealand and the State Courts team learnt more about the case management practices in each other's jurisdictions.



▲ The delegation from the District Court of New Zealand at the State Courts.

“Hackathon for a Better World 2024” Winners Devise Solutions That Strengthen Access to Justice and Fortify Community Trust

On 1 November, the Singapore Courts (SG Courts) and DBS announced the winners of the fifth edition of “Hackathon for a Better World”. This year's event, themed “Access to Justice”, showcased innovative solutions aimed at strengthening access to justice and fortifying community trust.

As Singapore's first “slow-burn hackathon”, the event kicked off in July and saw 28 teams from diverse backgrounds, including the legal sector, institutes of higher learning, and public agencies, ideate and prototype technology-driven solutions to enhance social justice across all segments of society.

Justice Aidan Xu, who oversees transformation and innovation in the SG Courts, highlighted how the hackathon entries demonstrated innovative uses of cutting-edge technology, streamlined procedures, and improved human interaction in the justice system. Mr Lam Chee Kin, Group Head of Legal and Compliance at DBS, emphasised the importance of addressing challenges in an increasingly digitalised world.

The Hackathon underscores the SG Courts' and DBS's commitment to fostering innovation in the legal sector and improving access to justice, and exemplifies public-private collaboration to address societal issues through technology and creative problem-solving.



▲ The winners of “Hackathon for a Better World” with Justice Aidan Xu (first row, seventh from left). (Photo Credit: DBS)

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

Most Innovative:

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

Most Feasible:

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

Most Life-changing:

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

Most Human-centred:

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

Family Justice Courts Commence Operations in New Premises

On 25 November, the Family Justice Courts (FJC) commenced operations in their new premises at Havelock Square. With this move, all of FJC's services are provided at one location, offering greater convenience for its court users as they no longer have to shuttle between the FJC's former premises at Havelock Road and Maxwell Road to access the services available at these locations.

The new FJC building features dedicated spaces designed to facilitate a therapeutic approach to administering family justice. There are 25 courtrooms and 52 chambers, which are designed to address the specific needs of family-related cases. Video conferencing facilities are available for court users attending remote hearings but who do not have access to an electronic device that supports video conferencing.

The new building also provides child-friendly interview rooms, quiet rooms for distressed adults and children, and vulnerable witness rooms for remote testimony in hearings.

▼
The Information Counter of the new FJC building.



▲ The new FJC building has 25 courtrooms and 52 chambers.



▲ The new FJC building has quiet rooms that are designed for distressed court users to calm themselves down without needing staff intervention.



Singapore Courts Annual Report 2023 Highlights Milestones from Past Year

The Singapore Courts' (SG Courts) Annual report 2023 documents the SG Courts' milestones in 2023, one of which was the Official Opening of the State Courts Towers by then-President Halimah Yacob. Another significant moment was when the three Courts came together as One Judiciary with a common vision — A trusted Judiciary · Ready for tomorrow — as they prepared for challenges ahead,

by enhancing the skillsets of their staff, systems, and processes. Guided by this vision, the SG Courts continued to prioritise their work in three key areas: enhancing judicial capabilities, introducing whole-of-judiciary efforts to transform themselves into a more outward-facing and user-centric organisation, and maintaining their engagement with their counterparts overseas.

STRENGTHENING JUSTICE,
SAFEGUARDING SOCIETY

SG
Courts

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



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SCAN TO FOLLOW SG COURTS ON TIKTOK



SCAN TO FOLLOW SG COURTS ON INSTAGRAM

Singapore Courts Recognised for Their Contributions to Charities

In recognition of their contributions to the less privileged sectors of society, the Singapore Courts (SG Courts) were conferred the Charity (Bronze) award and the SHARE (Bronze) award at the Community Chest Awards (CCA) 2024 on 7 October. The CCA celebrates outstanding contributions from organisations and individuals committed to enhancing the social service sector. The awards

acknowledge those who empower communities in need through generous donations, fundraising efforts, and volunteerism activities. The SHARE recognition also highlights organisations with high employee participation rates in the SHARE programme, a monthly programme that allows individuals and companies to donate to social service agencies.



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

Judiciary Officers Honoured at National Day Awards Investiture

In 2024, 29 officers of the Singapore Courts and Judicial Service Commission Secretariat received the National Day Awards, which pay tribute to individuals for their service to the nation. These officers were honoured at the Judiciary National Day Awards Investiture on 27 November.

NATIONAL DAY AWARD RECIPIENTS

THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION MEDAL (GOLD)

- Mr Chia Wee Kiat
Deputy Presiding Judge of Family Justice Courts

THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION MEDAL (SILVER)

- Ms Ong Luan Tze
Deputy Chief Knowledge Management Officer
- Mr Yeo Swee Teck Joseph
District Judge
- Ms Chang Siew Teen
Director, Registry (Operations), Supreme Court

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION MEDAL (BRONZE)

- Mr Chew Minhai, Edmund
District Judge
- Mr Lee Gek Boon Paul
Deputy Director, Criminal Matters, Registry, Supreme Court

COMMENDATION MEDAL

- Ms Chew Li Noi Daphne
Assistant Director, Family
- Mr Mohammad Khurshed s/o Mohommad Haron
Senior Assistant Director, Outreach and Engagement, Communications and Service Excellence Division
- Ms Subatra d/o Nadarajan
Senior Assistant Director (Career Development & Talent Development), Judicial Service Commission Secretariat

EFFICIENCY MEDAL

- Ms Faridah Binte Abu Bakar
Assistant Manager, Mental Capacity Act, Adoption and Probate, Family Protection & Support
- Mr Johan Bin Jaafar
Manager, Building Infrastructure, Infrastructure and Court Resources Division
- Ms Puvana d/o Ramasamy
Manager, Community Courts and Tribunals Cluster, State Courts

LONG SERVICE MEDAL

- Mr Yap Yew Choh Kenneth
Registrar, Family Justice Courts
- Ms Ng Teng Teng, Cornie
Senior Assistant Registrar, Supreme Court
- Mr Sheik Mustafa Bin Abu Hassan
District Judge
- Ms Wong Li Tein
District Judge
- Ms Arnedha Binte Jasman
Manager, Corporate Services Division
- Ms Crystal Kyla Tan
Senior Executive, Civil Courts Cluster, State Courts
- Ms Kasumawati Binte Rifaie
Assistant Manager, Criminal Courts Cluster, State Courts
- Ms Mariah Binte Amri
Assistant Director, Criminal Courts Cluster, State Courts
- Ms Noor Aini Binte Zumzuri
Manager, Criminal Courts Cluster, State Courts
- Ms Norhafizah Binte Mohamed Said
Manager, Court of Protection, Family Protection & Support
- Ms Norhayanti Binte Sufian
Manager, Maintenance & Enforcement Court, Family Protection & Support
- Ms Rameeza Binte Haja Maideen
Executive, Service Excellence, Communications and Service Excellence Division
- Ms Tan Chye Eng Rosalind
Manager, Mental Capacity Act, Adoption and Probate, Family Protection & Support
- Mr Tan Kian Kee, Andre
Director, Human Resource Management, Corporate Services Division
- Ms Thong Siew Wah Winnie
Assistant Manager, Revenue Management, Finance and Procurement Division
- Ms Yeo Ai Fern
Language Lead, Language Resources, Infrastructure and Court Resources Division
- Mr Zulkarnain Bin Yusoff
Executive, Records Management & Administration, Corporate Services Division

Behind the Scenes with Training Officers in the Judiciary

Singapore Judicial College



JUSTIN YEO

Executive Director



YEO MUI LIN

Senior Assistant Director

Human Resources Development



ELSIE CHEE

Senior Assistant Director



KATY TAY

Senior Assistant Director

The Singapore Courts (SG Courts) place great emphasis on the continuous training and development of their officers to ensure that they remain adaptable, skilled and ready for the future, and that the SG Courts deliver excellent and accessible court services. In this issue, we interviewed four officers from the Singapore Judicial College (SJC), which educates and trains Singapore's judges and judicial officers, and the SG Courts' Human Resources Development (HRD) team, which shapes the learning and development of court administrators (CAs).

About the Singapore Judicial College

The SJC serves at the forefront of judicial education, international thought leadership, and empirical judicial research. It comprises the Institute of Judicial Excellence and the Institute of Judicial Studies. These institutes implement customised programmes rooted in sound pedagogy and research, built upon a scaffolded Judicial Competency Framework. The SJC has also established a strong global presence, advancing judicial education through its thought leadership, signature international programmes, and strategic collaborations with leading international judicial education institutes. Additionally, the SJC spearheads rigorous, multi-method research on a wide array of judicial issues, reinforcing its leadership in judicial education at home and abroad.

About the Human Resources Development team

The HRD team formulates the Total Training Plan (TTP) through comprehensive annual learning needs analyses, which incorporate insights from senior management, divisional, and individual levels, as well as external and internal factors. The TTP allocates Individual Training Budgets to each CA, enabling them to enhance their core and functional competencies. Beyond organising tailored classroom training, HRD champions a digital learning culture, developing extensive e-learning content for flexible, on-demand learning. Initiatives such as the annual Conference for CAs and monthly lunchtime talks further enrich the learning experience.

What are your key responsibilities?

Justin: I provide strategic leadership to develop the SJC into a world-class institute. I lead my team to develop the judicial competencies of the SG Courts' judges and judicial officers to enable them to perform their roles competently, as well as to prepare them for the challenges arising from the increasingly complex environment that they operate in. I also ensure that the SJC delivers internationally, for example, through global representation and partnerships with leading international judicial education institutes. In addition, I teach in SJC programmes.

Mui Lin: I conduct judicial and legal research to support the content development of the SJC's training programmes.

Elsie and Katy: We are responsible for developing and implementing training policies and initiatives for CAs that are aligned with the Judiciary's goals and the public service's directions. This involves strategic planning, programme development, and overseeing the delivery of training initiatives. After rolling out a training programme, we seek feedback from the participants and evaluate the programme's effectiveness.

Are there any misconceptions about the work you do?

Justin: A common misconception is that the SJC focuses solely on training newly appointed judges and judicial officers. In fact, the SJC provides a comprehensive suite of programmes designed to support judges and judicial officers at every stage of their careers, that cover a broad spectrum of areas, including civil, criminal, and family law, judgecraft, allied disciplines, judicial leadership, justice reform, and judicial wellbeing.

Elsie: Many assume the job is solely about conducting training sessions, underestimating its strategic importance and the complexity of its scope. There is a tendency to expect a one-size-fits-all approach to training, overlooking the need for tailored programmes. This role is also often perceived as a cost centre rather than an investment in human capital.

What are some of the challenges that you face?

Justin: Balancing immediate operational demands with long-term strategic goals is a constant challenge. Delivering high-quality programmes, shifting our judge-learners' mindsets and tackling strategic priorities requires judicious juggling. On top of this, expanding

SJC's global presence and staying ahead of global judicial education trends adds layers of complexity.

Mui Lin: Being surrounded by distinguished faculty members and experienced colleagues, I often feel that I have much to learn and thus try to read widely and reflect constantly. Being mindful of maintaining SJC's high standards, I strive to ensure accuracy in my work.

Elsie: Some key challenges include addressing the CAs' diverse learning needs and aligning their training objectives with the Judiciary's goals. Striking a balance between high-quality training and a finite budget can also be a challenge. Encouraging CAs to embrace regular learning and upskilling is another challenge as they have to set aside time from their daily work. To address this, we have introduced incentive schemes to encourage CAs to participate in e-learning programmes in their own time.

Katy: A challenge is to cultivate an enthusiasm for continuous learning and upskilling. We hope our colleagues see this as an investment in their own capabilities and competencies, as the knowledge acquired is theirs to keep, and which will help them remain relevant and ready them for the future.

What keeps you going?

Justin: First and foremost, my amazing teammates who inspire me through their passion and professionalism! Beyond that, the opportunity to shape the future of judicial education, collaborate with international peers, and lead groundbreaking research. Lastly, knowing that our work directly advances justice and strengthens the rule of law spurs me on.

Mui Lin: It has been said that the arc of the moral universe is long and tends towards justice. Knowing that we are all on this journey to advance the cause of justice keeps me going.

Elsie: Observing our officers successfully implement their newly acquired knowledge and hearing their feedback about improved work efficiency give me profound satisfaction. These underscore the tangible impact of our training initiatives on both individual performance and organisational effectiveness.

Katy: What keeps me motivated is the continuous evolution of learning and development in the digital age. It is exciting to be at the forefront of implementing innovative learning solutions, like our e-learning platforms, that allow our colleagues to learn anytime, anywhere.

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