

# JUDICIARY TIMES



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# Opening of the Legal Year 2024: Strengthening the Courts' Systemic Function and Supporting the Sustained Vitality of the Legal Profession

The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon opened the legal year with several initiatives to strengthen the Courts' systemic function and support the sustained vitality of the legal profession in response to the evolving changes and challenges in today's legal landscape. Close to 400 members of the legal fraternity physically attended the Opening of the Legal Year 2024 (OLY 2024), which was held on 8 January at the Supreme Court auditorium.



▲ The Supreme Court Bench taking a group photo at Parliament Green to mark the Opening of the Legal Year 2024.

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

In tandem with efforts to enhance access to justice, Chief Justice Menon highlighted some of the key initiatives the Singapore Judiciary has implemented or will be implementing to promote the systemic role of the Courts, which include (i) a shared vision under One Judiciary; (ii) the introduction of relevant Civil Justice and Family Justice programmes; and (iii) the enhancement of judicial training and education.

With the rapid advancement of technology, in particular the capabilities of generative artificial intelligence, Chief Justice Menon outlined the considerations affecting the legal profession, and spoke about the continuing efforts to not only prepare the legal profession for these developments, but also the appropriate measures to ensure its long-term vitality and nurture the next generation of lawyers. Some of these plans to prepare the legal profession for these developments include the reform of legal education and the strengthening of ethical and professional standards, amongst others.

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

## OPENING OF THE LEGAL YEAR 2024 Response by **Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon** **SG Courts**

### 1. Strengthening the Courts' systemic function

The Courts play an essential role in developing and operating a system of administering justice that is accessible to all. In tandem with efforts to enhance access to justice, the Courts are innovating their systems, processes and hardware, and striving to foster an organisational culture in which their Judges, judicial officers and court administrators are committed to securing the fair and efficient administration of justice for all users. These include:

- A. One Judiciary initiatives**
  - i Unification of the Supreme Court, the State Courts and the Family Justice Courts under the One Judiciary framework, sharing a common vision - A trusted Judiciary. Ready for tomorrow - and core values - Fairness, Accessibility, Integrity and Respect.
  - ii Reorganisation of the Judiciary Administration, with the establishment of the Access to Justice Programme Office and the Judicial Policy Division.
- B. Civil Justice initiatives**
  - i Extension of the simplified process for civil proceedings in Magistrate's Court proceedings to District Court proceedings, where all parties consent. This will help save time and costs and so enhance access to justice.
  - ii Development of costs guidelines for civil cases in the District Courts, to facilitate transparency on likely costs awards.
  - iii Introduction of an express track scheme for civil proceedings to provide a template of clear and identifiable rules to promote the speedy and more expeditious resolution of compact trials.
  - iv Introduction of the Integrated Appropriate Dispute Resolution Framework, a new alternative dispute resolution service by the Singapore Mediation Centre, which will enable parties to apply one or more dispute resolution solutions to different aspects of a dispute.
  - v Development of an artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled tool that will help users in cases before the Small Claims Tribunals, through a Memorandum of Understanding with Harvey, one of the pioneers in law-related AI.
- C. Family Justice initiatives**
  - i Extending touch-points within the community by availing certain family justice services at selected ServiceSG Centres.
  - ii Introduction of the new Family Justice Rules, which will have a simplified structure, simpler terminology, and the more commonly used court forms digitised.
  - iii Introduction of a triage process for fresh divorce applications, and adoption of a therapeutic, problem-solving approach to resolving disputes.
  - iv Establishment of three specialist divisions focusing on vulnerable parties: the Court of Protection, the Maintenance and Enforcement Court and the Youth Court.
- D. Enhancement of judicial training and education**
  - i Establishment of specialist centres and allied education specialists within the Singapore Judicial College, as well as subject-matter advisory panels to periodically review its curriculum.

### 2. Supporting the sustained vitality of the legal profession

The legal profession needs to be future-ready in the face of technological advancements such as the rapidly advancing capabilities of generative AI.

- A. Reform of Legal Education (RLE)**
  - i Legal education will play a vital role to prepare the profession for the future. The Working Group for the RLE had recommended, amongst others, that:
    - Professional ethics and conduct standards be included as part of the mandatory law school curriculum;
    - The law school curriculum be broadened to equip lawyers with sufficient knowledge of substantive civil law concepts to deal with cross-border matters competently, and skills needed to meet client requirements, such as an understanding of fundamental accounting and financial concepts, drafting and communication skills, and technology and data literacy skills;
    - A legal sector competency framework be introduced together with a training roadmap setting out the recommended programmes to enable lawyers to achieve the identified competencies at different stages of their professional careers;
    - Continuing professional development requirements should be harmonised to a 16-point requirement for all practising lawyers; and
    - A Standing Committee comprising representatives from key stakeholders be formed, to ensure that all stakeholders have a voice in how the reforms will be implemented.
  - ii The Singapore Academy of Law's (SAL) plans to support the Working Group's recommendations include:
    - Introduction of the Junior Lawyers Professional Certification Programme to equip young lawyers of less than five years' Post-Qualification Experience with practical skills in either disputes or corporate work, as well as in management and professional ethics; and
    - Increase in the annual credit dollars given to eligible SAL members, from C\$35 to C\$250, and expansion of the list of credit dollar redeemable products and services.
- B. Ethics and professional standards**
  - i To ensure the long-term vitality of the profession and Singapore's standing as an excellent centre for law, ethical and professional standards should be strengthened. The interim report of the Ethics and Professional Standards Committee will include the following proposals:
    - Core values to be distilled, including devising sound aspirational codes to build up good habits and best practices;
    - Ethics education to be a focus beginning in law school; continuing in Part A and Part B of the qualifying process and on through the Continuing Professional Development scheme; and in certification programmes and specialist accreditation schemes; and
    - Introduction of a new Ethics Line, managed by the Law Society, for young lawyers to receive guidance from senior practitioners on ethical issues that they encounter.
  - ii The interim report forms the first layer of spawork. In the Final Report, the Committee will study the changing expectations of the next generation, including the desire for structured mentoring.
- C. Nurturing the next generation of the legal profession**
  - i Law firms must recognise the changing expectations of young lawyers and strive to cultivate environments conducive to high professional standards and to retaining talent within the legal profession.
  - ii Historically, the profession had a strong tradition of apprenticeship. It is essential to bridge the generational gap between junior and senior practitioners for the profession's sustained vitality and renewal.
  - iii On the domestic front, good and conscientious legal minds are required to assist individuals, social entities, businesses and the Government.
  - iv On the international front, the best legal advice should be available to ensure that Singapore thrives as a trusted global node for legal services.



Scan to read Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon's full response

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Scan to watch the highlights of OLY 2024

[go.gov.sg/oly24](https://go.gov.sg/oly24)



▲ Group photo at the FJC Workplan 2024

## Family Justice Courts Workplan 2024: Charting New Horizons in the Next Decade

The Family Justice Courts (FJC) held their 10th annual Workplan event on 18 March. The FJC Workplan 2024, themed “Charting New Horizons in the Next Decade”, was graced by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon as the Guest-of-Honour and attended by staff and invited guests from the Judiciary.

The Presiding Judge of the FJC, Justice Teh Hwee Hwee, began the event by introducing the Workplan’s theme and logo. She shared that they reflect the FJC’s goal of moving forward together

into the future, with the figures in the logo symbolising the families and individuals the FJC serves, its community partners and volunteers, officers in the Government ministries and departments, other stakeholders in the family justice ecosystem, and the FJC. She thanked everyone for their diligence over the last decade to transform the family justice system, which has helped families navigate their disputes and find hope despite the challenges they faced. She urged everyone to keep up their dedication and hard work. Justice Teh also expressed her appreciation for Chief Justice Menon’s leadership and support.

### Further integration of Therapeutic Justice

Justice Teh shared that the next phase of integration of Therapeutic Justice (TJ) in the family justice system will be implemented in stages by the Internal Working Committee that will manage the workstreams to drive the formulation and implementation. To further the cause of TJ, a TJ



◀ FJC Workplan 2024 logo

Consultative Committee chaired by Justice Teh has been set up to provide a platform for engagement to, amongst other things, study best practices and provide support for raising awareness and input on training.

### Key reforms and enhancements to systems, procedure and practice to deliver justice with excellence

The FJC will be working on implementing significant reforms in the second half of 2024. These include adding Divorce by Mutual Agreement as the sixth fact to establish irretrievable breakdown of marriage under the Women’s Charter 1961<sup>1</sup>, and working with the Ministry of Social and Family Development to expand the co-parenting programme that it runs.

Other reforms will also be implemented in phases, with the first phase starting in the later part of 2024 and subsequent phases in 2025. These reforms relate to maintenance enforcement that are outlined in the Family Justice Reform Act 2023<sup>2</sup>, and those relating to family violence in the Women’s Charter (Family Violence and Other Matters) (Amendment) Act 2023.<sup>3</sup>

### Enhancing access to justice and empowering court users in delivering justice with excellence

The FJC has put in place multiple measures to further improve and enhance access to justice. Some of these measures include:

- Simplifying the filing process for self-represented persons who are based outside Singapore by allowing them to appoint proxies located in Singapore to file affidavits and court documents on their behalf.
- Increasing efforts to bring justice more directly to the community, for example, by working with ServiceSG Centres to expand their offerings of curated FJC services.
- Putting together a Case Highlights portal, which includes bite-sized summaries of notable cases, to help court users understand important principles of family law.
- Launching the 2024 edition of the Family Orders Guide which provides court order templates to guide court users to draft bespoke court orders.

### People who excel in the administration of justice

As the FJC, which was established in 2014, enters a new decade, a key priority is to continue investing in people and their professional development and overall wellness to enable them to perform at their highest level. For the Judicial Officers (JOs), the FJC will be working closely with the Singapore Judicial College to add new training offerings, while updating and enhancing existing programmes. For the Court Administrators (CAs), with the establishment of the functional competencies for all CA job families in 2023, the FJC will focus on identifying proficiency gaps in these functional competencies to determine areas for upskilling.

A new committee will also be formed to look into expanding existing programmes that promote the wellness of FJC’s JOs and CAs. This is particularly important, given the increasing work complexities. Adequate time for rest, recharging and re-engaging the mind is therefore crucial for long-term sustainability.

### Coming together under one roof

The FJC will be moving into the retrofitted former State Courts Building in the fourth quarter of 2024. The new courthouse will have 25 courtrooms and 52 hearing chambers, as well as, a unified registry in the central lobby for all FJC matters. With this move into the new premises, all of FJC’s services will be housed under one roof.

During the Workplan event, two videos were screened. The first video provided a snapshot of the FJC’s performance in 2023 while the second video featured how the FJC assists court users in their journey of healing. These were followed by an engaging dialogue session between the participants and Chief Justice Menon and Justice Teh.

<sup>1</sup> (2020 Rev Ed), at s 95.

<sup>2</sup> No 18 of 2023.

<sup>3</sup> Passed by Parliament on 4 July 2023.

## Singapore International Commercial Court Conference 2024

The annual Singapore International Commercial Court (SICC) Conference was held on 9 and 10 January at the Supreme Court.

This year's Conference brought together about 100 participants, comprising the Supreme Court Bench, SICC International Judges, members of the Singapore Courts senior management and the Supreme Court Registry, to discuss and share, among other topics, emerging areas for the SICC, how its expanded jurisdiction in corporate insolvency, restructuring or dissolution might develop in the future, as well as how insolvency proceedings in the SICC might be designed to be more user-centric and to meet the needs of businesses.



▲ Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon delivering the opening address.



▲ Professor Benjamin P. Horton presenting on "World: Climate Change Consequences and the Climate Justice Response".

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



## Singapore Courts Continue "Conversations with the Community"



▲ Justice Vincent Hoong delivering his keynote address.

The third instalment of the Singapore Courts (SG Courts) "Conversations with the Community" series was held on 24 January at the State Courts, with Justice Vincent Hoong, Presiding Judge of the State Courts, delivering his keynote address titled "Access to Justice — Delivering Quality Justice to the Community". About 200 guests attended the event physically, while close to 70 guests participated virtually.

Justice Hoong spoke about the Courts' role in advancing access to justice in respect of private disputes and the civil justice system. While ensuring access to justice is important to the effective functioning of the criminal justice system, Justice Hoong shared that for the person on the street and the community-at-large, their main concern is likely to be how they can seek and obtain justice in their disputes. He said that those faced with "community law" disputes are, for various reasons, less likely to engage lawyers to help them. He added that the proportion of those who choose to present their cases on their own has been on the rise, and commented that this number of self-represented persons is also expected to rise as legal resources continue to increase in accessibility and quality. As such, the civil justice system must be able to thrive in this new paradigm of increasing self-representation.

Justice Hoong also outlined the challenges faced by a self-represented person in accessing and using

a traditional system of civil justice, as well as the steps the SG Courts have taken to increase the accessibility of the civil justice system and make it more user-centric. He shared how the Courts are looking to the future, and their continuing systemic role, particularly to "develop and operate a system for the administration of justice that is accessible to all and meets the needs of all".

At the session, Principal District Judge Thian Yee Sze moderated a panel discussion comprising Associate Professor Helena Whalen-Bridge of the National University of Singapore (NUS), Justice Hoong, Ms Vivienne Lim, Founding Director of Genesis Law Corporation and Board Member of Pro Bono SG, and Assistant Professor Lim How Khang of the Singapore Management University. The panellists shared their experiences, best practices and perspectives on serving the community effectively in their justice journeys.



▲ Principal District Judge Thian Yee Sze (left) moderated a lively panel discussion with Associate Professor Helena Whalen-Bridge, Justice Vincent Hoong, Ms Vivienne Lim, and Assistant Professor Lim How Khang.



Scan to read Justice Vincent Hoong's speech

[go.gov.sg/un7b8r](https://go.gov.sg/un7b8r)



▲ Professor Hans Tjio (left) moderated a panel discussion comprising Mr Manoj Sandrasegara, Mr Lim Lian Hoon, Justice Kannan Ramesh, Mr James Sprayregen, and Mr Harold Foo.

The fourth “Conversations with the Community” session was held on 27 March at the NUS Faculty of Law, with Justice Kannan Ramesh, Judge of the Appellate Division of the High Court, delivering his keynote address titled “Healing Businesses in a New World: Problems, Opportunities and Solutions”.

Justice Ramesh’s address focused on the theme of troubled businesses in an uncertain world. He discussed the challenges of the New World, where people are facing an increasingly fragmented and polarised world, as well as the heightened focus on environmental concerns. He also elaborated on two main models where lessons may be drawn in constructing a suitable restructuring and insolvency (R&I) regime — creditor-driven and debtor-in-possession R&I regimes.

Justice Ramesh also highlighted that balancing protection and potential, risk and reward, is at the heart of this ongoing challenge. We must decide, based on the prevailing global challenges, existing commercial realities and societal needs, where in the spectrum between a creditor-driven and debtor-focused model Singapore should be.

At the session, Professor Hans Tjio of NUS moderated a discussion on the session’s topic with a panel comprising Mr Manoj Sandrasegara, Partner at WongPartnership LLP, Mr Lim Lian Hoon,



▲ Justice Kannan Ramesh delivering his keynote address.

Partner and Managing Director of Alix Partners, Justice Ramesh, Mr James Sprayregen, founder of Kirkland & Ellis’ worldwide Restructuring Group, and Mr Harold Foo, Deputy Director in the Policy Advisory Division of the Ministry of Law.



**Scan to read Justice Kannan Ramesh’s speech**

[go.gov.sg/srswcq](https://go.gov.sg/srswcq)



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

[go.gov.sg/sgcourtsconvos](https://go.gov.sg/sgcourtsconvos)

## The Seventh Singapore-China Legal and Judicial Roundtable



▲ Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon with Chief Justice Zhang Jun of the Supreme People’s Court of the People’s Republic of China.

The seventh Singapore-China Legal and Judicial Roundtable convened in Beijing on 28 November 2023. Co-chaired by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and His Excellency Zhang Jun, President and Chief Justice of the Supreme People’s Court (SPC) of the People’s Republic of China, this Roundtable was especially meaningful for both Chief Justices, given Chief

Justice Zhang’s appointment as President of the SPC in March 2023. The two Chief Justices took the opportunity to deepen the strong bilateral ties between the two judiciaries and expand the scope of judicial cooperation.

A clear testament to the enduring friendship between the two judiciaries are the four Memoranda of Understanding

and one Memorandum of Guidance signed by the Supreme Court of Singapore and the SPC between 2017 and 2023. The two judiciaries also jointly launched a compendium in 2020, in which international commercial cases from both Courts were curated for their relevance to the Belt and Road Initiative. In addition, a Strategic Roadmap on judicial cooperation, which sets out five pillars of partnership to chart the next steps in the bilateral journey, was established in early 2023 to guide the course of future Roundtables.

In his opening remarks, Chief Justice Menon emphasised the significance and status of the Roundtable in the strong relationship between the two judiciaries. In the six years since its inception, the Roundtable has established itself as a valuable platform for judicial cooperation and the exchange of ideas and experiences between the two Courts. Both judiciaries see the Roundtable as a mutually beneficial forum for judicial exchange on topics of considerable interest.

During the four-day trip, Chief Justice Menon also visited the Beijing Internet Court, Beijing Intellectual Property Court, and National Judges College, where he delivered a lecture on “Transnational Commercial Law and the Development of the Modern-day Lex Mercatoria”.

## Inaugural Singapore-France Judicial Roundtable

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

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and First President Christophe Soulard of the Court of Cassation of France co-chaired the Roundtable, which was attended by participating judges and officials from Singapore and France. The Roundtable discussed the interface between technology and justice systems, with presentations on how technology has been incorporated into court procedures and processes, and about legal issues arising from advances in artificial intelligence, by Justice Aedit Abdullah and Justice Goh Yihan of the Supreme Court of Singapore respectively.

The judiciaries of Singapore and France had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for judicial cooperation in May 2023. In the MOU, the two judiciaries agreed to engage in dialogues and exchanges on important areas such as the use of technology, and current and emerging trends in dispute resolution.



▲ The Supreme Court of Singapore and the Court of Cassation of France at the inaugural Singapore-France Judicial Roundtable.

Chief Justice Menon said that he is confident that the Roundtable would become a significant platform for the judiciaries of Singapore and France to

exchange ideas and experiences, and that it would open up many avenues for fruitful collaboration between the two judiciaries.

## Family Justice Courts and Hong Kong Courts Sign MOU to Promote the Efficient Administration of Family Justice

On 15 March, the Family Justice Courts (FJC) and the Hong Kong Courts signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to enhance bilateral judicial cooperation in the administration of family justice.

This is the first MOU signed between the judiciaries of Singapore and Hong Kong concerning the administration of family justice. It will further the exchange of knowledge and experiences, and pave the way for in-depth discussions on matters of common interests. Bilateral initiatives to facilitate access to justice will also be explored.

The signing of the MOU was witnessed by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and Chief Justice Andrew Cheung of the Court of Final Appeal of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR).

▼ (From left): Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon; Justice Teh Hwee Hwee, Judge of the High Court and Presiding Judge of the Family Justice Courts; Madam Justice Bebe Chu, Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court of the HKSAR; Chief Justice Andrew Cheung of the Court of Final Appeal of the HKSAR.

“

The MOU will facilitate further exchange and cooperation between the Judiciary of Singapore and the Judiciary of Hong Kong, and strengthen bilateral ties in the furtherance of access to justice for the families in Singapore and Hong Kong. It is an important milestone in our collaboration with foreign courts in the administration of family justice.”

**Justice Teh Hwee Hwee**  
Presiding Judge of the Family Justice Courts



## Singapore and Bahrain Sign Bilateral Treaty on Appeals from the Bahrain International Commercial Court



▲ The Treaty was signed by Singapore's Minister for Home Affairs and Law, Mr K Shanmugam SC, and Bahrain's Minister of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Waqf, H.E. Mr Nawaf bin Mohamed AlMouada, in a virtual ceremony.

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

### Nature of collaboration

The features of the collaboration include:

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

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

### Major milestone in bilateral ties

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

“

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

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



▲ Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon speaking at the fifth meeting of the SIFoCC.

## Fifth Meeting of the Standing International Forum of Commercial Courts

On 20 and 21 April, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon attended the fifth meeting of the Standing International Forum of Commercial Courts (SIFoCC), which was hosted by Qatar and The Qatar International Court and Dispute Resolution Centre.

Chief Justice Menon delivered an opening address, where he introduced the theme of “Developing the Relationship

between Commercial Courts, Arbitration and Mediation”, and provided a brief outline on how coordination and supervision can be used to address some of the challenges confronting the justice systems. Chief Justice Menon also participated in a roundtable discussion with other judges.

The SIFoCC is a forum that brings together the world's commercial and appellate courts

to facilitate judicial collaboration and cooperation between jurisdictions. It is held once every 18 months, in a different host member jurisdiction, and attended by judges from each member jurisdiction. The meeting comprises a two-day roundtable discussion which elaborates on several key themes and provides an opportunity for judiciaries to build important and lasting relationships.

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



▲ The Chief Justices of Singapore and India in a panel discussion.

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

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

Chief Justice Menon suggested that the possibility of “AI judges” replacing human judges is a distant, even remote one. He said that given the weight and implications of many of the decisions that judges make, there are aspects of both the process and the outcomes of judging that, at least in certain fields, AI should not replace. However, the role of the

human judge needs to evolve. Beyond cultivating technological expertise in using AI tools, judges must remain committed to their professional duties and their ethical responsibilities to exercise judgment in managing both the process and outcomes of judging in each case. The efforts of individual judges should be complemented by systemic initiatives undertaken by the judiciaries. There is an urgent need to develop robust AI governance frameworks and guidelines to regulate the use of AI in litigation and adjudication.

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

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



▲ Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon speaking at the Conference.



**Scan to read Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon's keynote speech**

[go.gov.sg/rkhvzx](https://go.gov.sg/rkhvzx)

## Fourth Judicial Roundtable with Durham Law School



▲ Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon speaking at the Roundtable.

The fourth Judicial Roundtable, co-organised by the Singapore Courts and Durham Law School, was held from 23 to 26 April at Durham University, United Kingdom. Established in 2016, the Roundtable

brought together senior judges from civil and common law jurisdictions (especially Asia), legal academics, and policy experts to discuss topics that intersect with commercial law and dispute resolution, and legal systems more broadly.

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

## Singapore Courts Delegation Visits Chinese Courts for Insightful Exchange

From 21 to 23 April, Justice Aedit Abdullah led a Singapore Courts delegation on a visit to the Beijing Intellectual Property Court, Beijing Internet Court, and the Smart Lab Court of the Supreme People's Court (SPC) in China.

The delegation learned about the technological advancements and innovative approaches adopted by the Chinese Courts to improve court processes, strengthen data protection, advance courtroom technologies, and incorporate artificial intelligence in dispute resolution.

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



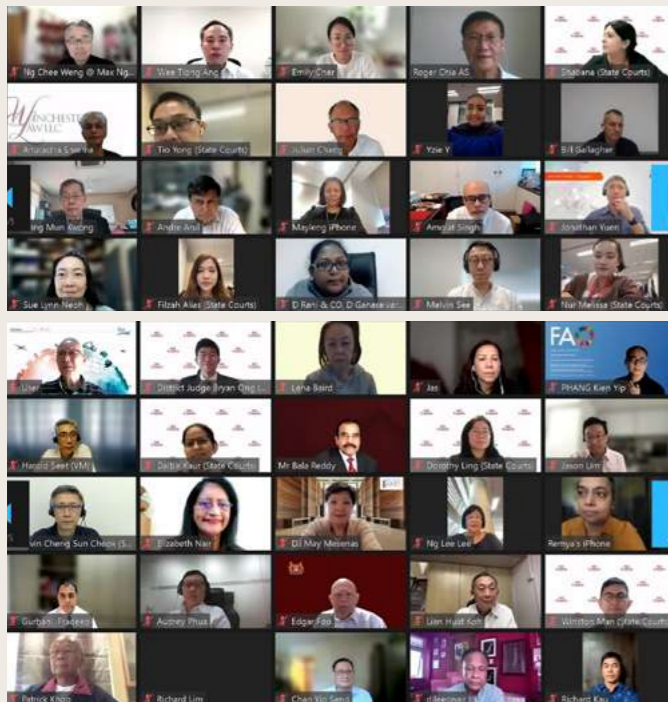
▲ Justice Aedit Abdullah (second from left) and the Singapore Courts delegation at the Beijing Internet Court.



## Training for Court Volunteer Mediators at State Courts

On 1 December 2023, the State Courts' Community Courts and Tribunals Cluster (CCTC) and Court Dispute Resolution Cluster (CDRC) held their second and final mediation training session of the year for their Court Volunteer Mediators (CVMs).

The trainer at this session was Mr Bala Reddy, a former Senior District Judge of the State Courts. In a rough sea of dispute where litigants struggle to keep afloat, if mediators are the rescuers and the mediation process the rescue boats, it is crucial that the rescuers are skilled and their boats well-equipped. To this end, Mr Reddy shared on "Navigating Disputes: Uncovering Perspectives and Crafting Amicable Resolutions". The 130 participants were brought through case studies by a panel comprising District Judges Marvin Bay and Bryan Ong, and moderator District Judge Koh Juay Kherng. From their shared experiences, the participants learned how they can steer seemingly intractable disputes towards a resolution.



◀ The mediation training session on 1 December 2023 was held on Zoom.

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### fast facts about CVMs

- 1 The State Courts currently have a total of 109 CVMs; 54 CVMs mediate dispute cases under the CCTC, and 55 mediate cases under the CDRC.
- 2 CVMs are appointed for a period of three years.
- 3 CVMs comprise lawyers, architects, accountants, medical doctors, counsellors, and Justices of the Peace.
- 4 CVMs at the CCTC mediate claims filed in the Small Claims Tribunal (SCT). At the CDRC, they mediate Magistrate's Complaints and civil disputes which involve claims not exceeding \$60,000.
- 5 In 2023, CVMs mediated 274 SCT claims. For the cases at the CDRC, CVMs settled 72% of Magistrate's Complaints and 100% of civil suits.

## Youth Court Learning Journey: Empowering Stakeholders for Positive Change

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

- On 23 February for 18 Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) students, who were working adults from diverse backgrounds in the public, social and youth sectors, and pursuing their Graduate Diploma in Youth Work, Master in Psychology (Forensics) or Master in Social Work.
- On 22 March, for 30 Student Welfare Officers (SWOs) from the Ministry of Education. SWOs offer casework support for students-at-risk and their families within the school setting.

The objectives of these learning journeys are for the participants to better understand the youth justice system and gain greater insights into the types of cases managed by the YC.

The participants were given a tour of the Youth Court, registry and the Family Protection Centre, where they learned about the procedures for making applications for Personal Protection Orders. They also visited the Court of Protection, where they observed court proceedings.

The participants also learned about the Children and Young Persons Act, the types of cases in the YC involving youth offenders, children/youths in need of care and protection and family



▲ SUSS students who visited the YC on 23 February.



▲ SWOs who visited the YC on 22 March.

guidance, as well as CAPS' roles in court proceedings.

District Judge (DJ) Amy Tung and CAPS held a question-and-answer session and fielded queries from the participants. The session provided an opportunity for the FJC to emphasise the significant role community partners play in supporting families, children and youths, to prevent youths from entering the youth justice system. The synergy between educational institutions and the YC underscored a collective effort to protect or rehabilitate at-risk children and young persons (CYPs).

DJ Tung affirmed the importance of feedback and insights from schools regarding CYPs, to assist the YC in the consideration and determination of order(s) for CYPs.

The participants were appreciative that the learning journeys were informative, insightful and had widened their exposure to the youth justice system.

The YC will continue to host similar learning journeys for educational institutions to promote a better understanding of the youth justice system in Singapore.

## Singapore Courts Give Back to the Community

### SG Cares Giving Week 2023

On 7 December 2023, 30 staff members of the Singapore Courts (SG Courts) visited the Bird Paradise (BP) with student beneficiaries from SHINE Children & Youth Services (SHINE) and their families. This event was organised by the SG Courts, in support of SG Cares Giving Week (SCGW), a key initiative of the national SG Cares movement that is held annually to celebrate the spirit of giving and to encourage giving as part of our way of life. The 90 participants visited aviaries with BP guides who provided insight into the design of the aviaries, helped to spot the animal inhabitants, and shared about animal behaviours.

In addition, the SG Courts donated to SHINE and the Community Chest, which supports critical and underserved programmes catering to mental health, chronic school absenteeism, adults with disabilities, children with special needs, youth-at-risk, as well as families and seniors in need of assistance.

Throughout the SCGW, the SG Courts shared with their staff other volunteer opportunities via their internal channels to amplify the SCGW's message and raise awareness of its programmes.

For their efforts throughout the SCGW 2023, the SG Courts were recognised, for the first time, by the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre as a Gold Partner.



▲ SG Courts volunteers with student beneficiaries from SHINE and their families at Bird Paradise.

### Lunar New Year Activity with Yong-En Care Centre

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

The main event was held at the Yong-En Active Hub at Bukit Merah Community Centre. Staff volunteers prepared a music performance and invited the beneficiaries to sing and dance along. They also engaged the beneficiaries in a quiz with prizes and a karaoke activity. Goodie bags were distributed to the beneficiaries, along with a tea buffet served at the close of the event.

There was also another team of staff volunteers who prepared and delivered 45 goodie bags to the



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

YECC branch at Jalan Kukoh and the Dementia Day Care Centre at Chinatown Complex, to extend the festive cheer to the elderly individuals who could not attend the main event.

### Visit by Henan High People's Court

On 18 January, a six-member delegation led by Executive Vice President Guo Baozhen, Judge of the High People's Court of Henan Province, visited the State Courts to

learn about criminal proceedings. Principal District Judge Jill Tan received the delegation, and District Judge Kenneth Chin gave a briefing on various topics of interest.



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

### Visit by the Justice Committee of the UK House of Commons

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

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



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

### Courtesy Calls

The Ambassador of the Republic of Korea (ROK) to Singapore, His Excellency Hong Jin-Wook, and outgoing British High Commissioner Kara Owen CMG called on Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon on 4 April and 9 April respectively.



▲ Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and His Excellency Hong Jin-Wook at the introductory call held on 4 April.

Chief Justice Menon and Ambassador Hong affirmed the progress made by, and the continuing commitment of the Singapore and ROK judiciaries towards deepening judicial cooperation in specific areas of interest.



▲ Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and outgoing High Commissioner Kara Owen CMG at the farewell call held on 9 April.

Chief Justice Menon and High Commissioner Owen discussed the progress of bilateral judicial relations and people-to-people exchange in the past few years.

## Launch of New Court Audio Services System

The Singapore Courts (SG Courts) implemented a new Court Audio Services system (CAS) in the Supreme Court on 3 December 2023.

The CAS replaces an aging court audio recording system and introduces logging by Speech-to-Text (STT) engine. This marks a significant milestone in the Courts' ongoing effort to enhance court user experience by leveraging technology.

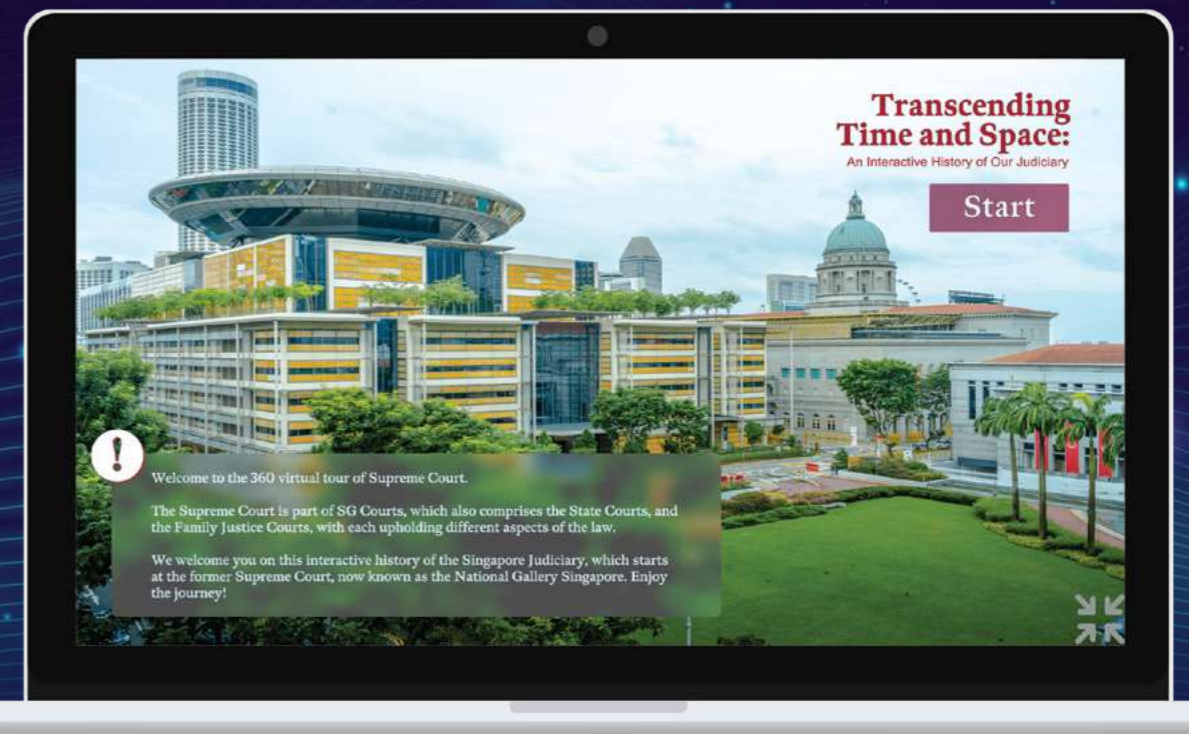
The courtrooms in the Supreme Court are now equipped with a new audio recording player called TheRecordXchange (TRX). It provides greater convenience to parties who wish to obtain the audio recordings of their hearings. After their request is approved by the Court, the requesting parties will receive a secured link to access the audio recordings directly via a website. They no longer have to collect DVDs physically or download any software to listen to the audio recordings.

Besides TRX, log notes in transcript format are generated by an automated artificial intelligence (AI)-driven STT engine called EpiqFAST, which synchronises court audio with the AI transcript. Judges and parties can now easily listen to any part of the court audio by selecting the relevant portion of the AI transcript during or after court proceedings. They would not need to spend as much time and effort as before to take their own notes during hearings. Self-represented persons could also leverage the AI transcript to prepare for their cases, without having to engage a transcription service provider.

The SG Courts will be implementing the CAS in their other Courts.



## Transcending Time and Space: An Interactive History of Our Judiciary



▲ The virtual tour takes viewers through the Supreme Court's history and workings of the justice system.

Keen to learn more about Singapore's judicial history and explore the "old" and current Supreme Court? Join the 360° virtual tour "Transcending Time and Space: An Interactive History of Our Judiciary".

Begin this journey at the "old" Supreme Court, the present day National Gallery Singapore, and embark on an exciting exploration of old courtrooms, hidden tunnels and holding cells. While exploring, canvass artefacts and solve puzzles which will give you deeper insights into the Supreme Court's history and judicial processes. Move on into the current Supreme Court to learn how rich traditions have adapted to modern times. While there, take a glimpse into the courtroom of the future and participate in a quiz!

The virtual tour can be accessed here:  
<https://virtualtour.judiciary.gov.sg/index.html>



**Rediscover the Past:**  
Begin your journey at the former Supreme Court, now the National Gallery Singapore. Discover old courtrooms, uncover hidden tunnels, and peek into holding cells as you unravel the fascinating history of the Singapore judiciary.



**Step into the future:**  
Explore the present-day Supreme Court and witness how rich traditions have adapted to modern times and glimpse into the courtroom of the future.



**Challenge Yourself:**  
Test your knowledge and skills to climb the ranks on the Leader Board.

## Behind the Scenes with Records Management & Admin Department



**VIDYA LAXMI**  
Chief Librarian



**SHEILA THAM**  
Assistant Director



**MOHAMMAD SUFYAN**  
Content & Design Specialist



**SHAKILAH MUTTALIB**  
Senior Executive

The Records Management & Admin Department of the Singapore Courts (SG Courts) seeks to build and uphold a robust records management architecture in the Courts, to capture the Singapore judiciary's records of national and historical significance, and contribute to the preservation of Singapore's national heritage. The Department, which has over 20 officers spanning across three Courts, also provides administrative services to the Judges and staff of the SG Courts, as well as manage the legal libraries in the Supreme Court and State Courts, which are open to the public.

In this issue, we interviewed four officers from the Department.

### What are your key responsibilities?

**Vidya:** I oversee the library teams in the Courts' legal libraries and make sure that our collection of legal databases, periodicals, monographs and other legal publications serve the needs of our users. We will be setting up a library in the new Family Justice Courts building this year, and I am very excited about this.

**Sheila:** I help put in place and maintain an eRegistry system for filing emails and other records for retrieval and archival. Currently, the Singapore Courts are among the pilot agencies involved in the development of an upcoming whole-of-government records management system, and I represent the Courts' interests and contribute towards the drafting of the requirement specifications. Day-to-day mailroom and despatch operations are also under my charge.

**Sufyan:** In overseeing the maintenance and upgrade of the Singapore Courts' digital information architecture, I design and create microsites and customised web pages, as well as make sure that all officers have reliable access to data and content in the intranet, so that they can perform their functions smoothly and efficiently.

**Shakilah:** I assist in the administrative functions in the State Courts, from procuring stationery and printing of name stamps, to managing email groupings and distribution lists. All these would enable our Judges and staff to perform their work smoothly, facilitating better access and delivery of justice to court users.

### Are there any misconceptions about the work you do?

**Vidya:** Many hold the misperception that librarians just shelf books or provide counter service all day. However our work in a legal library also involves the review, evaluation, procurement and provision of accurate, up-to-date and relevant information to our users.

**Sheila:** Records management officers do not just spend their time on filing and archiving records. We are also involved in policy development, compliance management, information governance, preservation, destruction, declassification and release of archival records requested by members of the public.

**Sufyan:** As we are so used to the speed and ease of digital convenience, some users assume that changes in our intranet or website can be done instantaneously. However, these require time to develop, to deliver the optimal solutions that effectively meet our users' needs.

**Shakilah:** As we provide backend support, some colleagues may not be aware of what takes place behind the scenes. For instance, when there are new joiners to the Courts, we make sure that their staff passes are ready on time, email distribution lists are updated promptly, and welcome packs are distributed on their first day to ease their transition into their new workplace.

### What are some of the challenges that you face?

**Vidya:** I came from an entirely a different background (in education) and it was a challenge for me to grasp not just legal jargon, but also the sheer amount of procurement paperwork. Notwithstanding the challenges, I was able to perform my role effectively, as I had good guidance from my supervisors.

**Sheila:** Officers tend to postpone the filing of important records or miss filing them altogether,

due to their busy schedules. This can affect the retrieval of important documents in future, as well as lead to record management compliance issues or loss of records. It is crucial for records to be filed promptly to ensure that they are easily accessible when needed.

**Sufyan:** Some colleagues who are not digitally well versed require patient guidance in areas such as understanding technical terms or navigating new digital tools.

**Shakilah:** Some colleagues may place last-minute requests for office supplies. In such instances, we would advise the departments to plan and provide their requirements to us early.

### What keeps you going?

**Vidya:** I love my job, as I enjoy learning new things and conquering the challenges that come! The satisfaction of knowing that our work contributes to providing access to justice motivates me.

**Sheila:** I enjoy teamwork, especially when my colleagues and I rough it out together and succeed in completing a challenging project. Sometimes I would head to the local art galleries to help me gain alternative perspectives and be inspired with creative ideas which I can apply to my work.

**Sufyan:** I relish the opportunity to analyse and solve technical problems, while being able to support my colleagues quickly and efficiently. This is in line with my personal interest of keeping up to date with different technical advancements.

**Shakilah:** My motivation stems from being able to provide assistance and information to my colleagues. Each day presents new opportunities for growth, discovery, and joy in interacting with my colleagues.

Jointly brought to you by



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