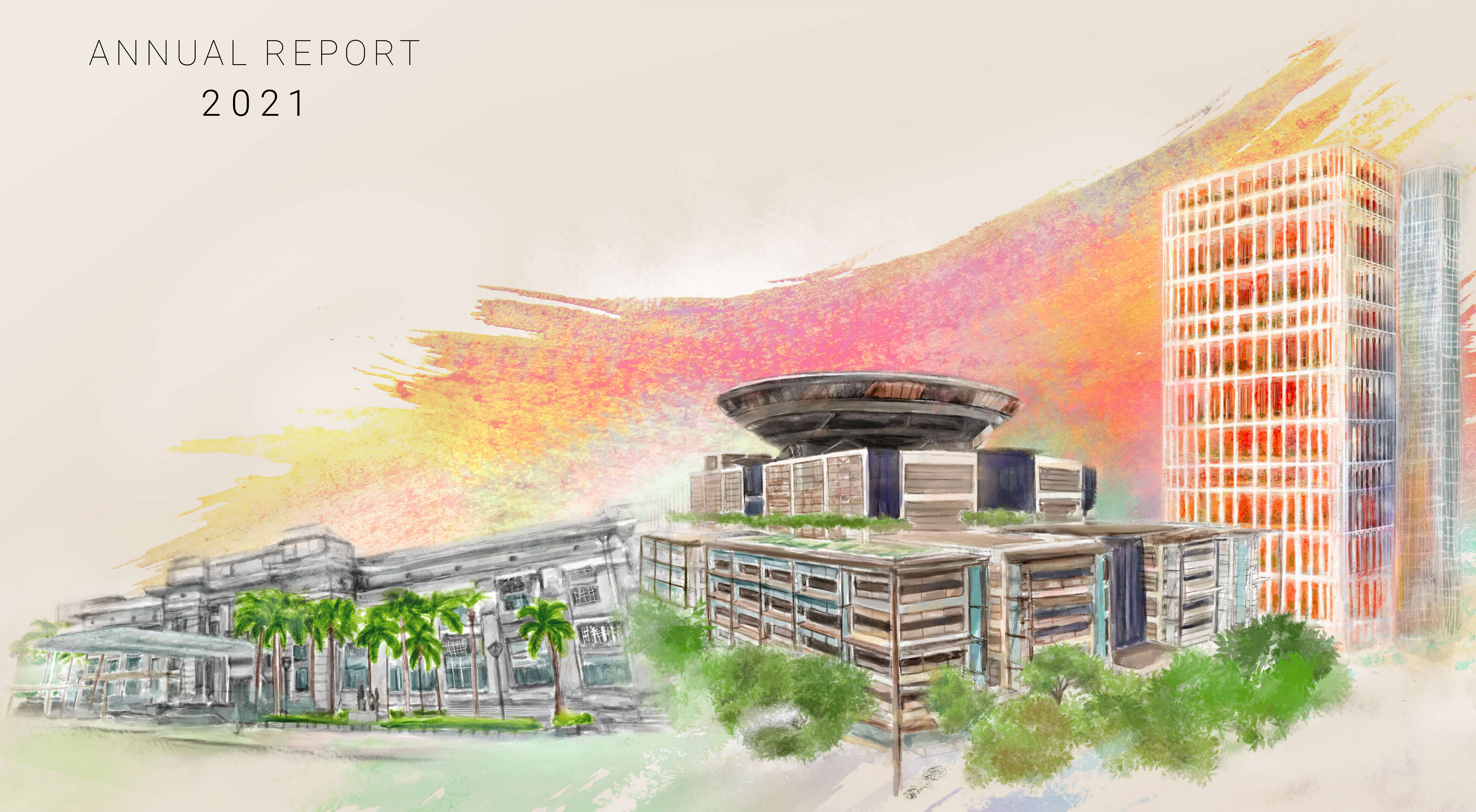


SG Courts

ANNUAL REPORT
2021

One Judiciary, Moving Forward





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ABOUT THE SINGAPORE JUDICIARY

The Judiciary is one of the three Organs of State, together with the Executive and the Legislature.



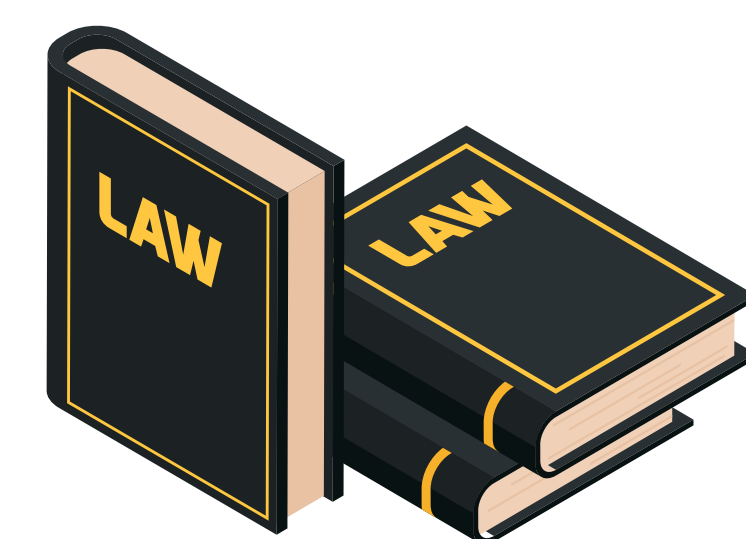
JUDICIARY

interprets the laws and is a system of courts that upholds the law and ensures justice is accessible to all.



EXECUTIVE

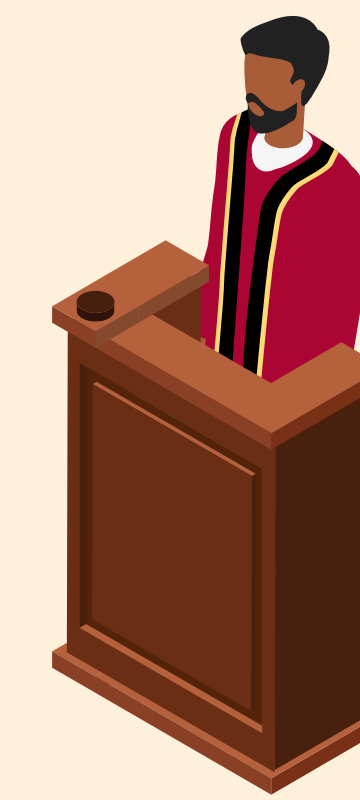
includes the Elected President, the Cabinet and the Attorney-General, and exercises powers according to the law.



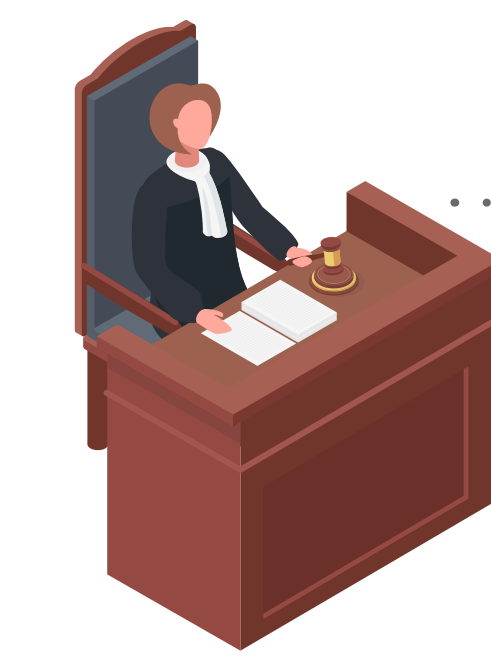
LEGISLATURE

comprises the President and Parliament and is the legislative authority responsible for enacting legislation.

The Judiciary is made up of the Supreme Court, State Courts and the Family Justice Courts. The Honourable the Chief Justice is the head of the Judiciary, who also oversees the Supreme Court.



The **Chief Justice** is supported by the Supreme Court Bench, Supreme Court Registry and Judiciary administration and operations. The Supreme Court also includes the Singapore Judicial College. It hears both civil and criminal cases and is made up of the Court of Appeal and High Court.



HIGH COURT
Comprises the General Division and the Appellate Division of the High Court.



COURT OF APPEAL

- Hears all criminal appeals against decisions made by the General Division of the High Court in the exercise of its original criminal jurisdiction.
- Hears prescribed categories of civil appeals and appeals that are to be made to the Court of Appeal under written law.

Appellate Division

Hears all civil appeals that are not allocated to the Court of Appeal under the Sixth Schedule to the Supreme Court of Judicature Act. It also hears any civil appeals or other processes that any written law provides is to be heard by the Appellate Division.

General Division

Exercises original and appellate jurisdiction in civil and criminal cases. It also exercises revisionary jurisdiction over the State Courts in criminal cases. It hears cases in the first instance as well as cases on appeal from the State Courts. Types of cases heard by the General Division include:

- Civil cases where the value of the claim exceeds \$250,000.
- Criminal cases where offences are punishable with death or an imprisonment term exceeding 10 years.
- Admiralty matters.
- Company winding-up and other insolvency-related proceedings.
- Bankruptcy proceedings.
- Applications for the admission of advocates and solicitors.

Appeals arising from a decision of the General Division in civil matters will be allocated between the Appellate Division and the Court of Appeal in accordance with the statutory framework set out in the Supreme Court of Judicature Act.

Singapore International Commercial Court (SICC)

- Hears and tries actions which are international and commercial in nature, in accordance with section 18D(1) of the Supreme Court of Judicature Act.
- Hears and tries proceedings relating to international commercial arbitration, in accordance with section 18D(2) of the Supreme Court of Judicature Act.
- Includes cases commenced in the SICC or transferred from the General Division to the SICC.

Our People

Access To Justice

Therapeutic Justice

Trust & Confidence

Strengthening Partnerships

Developing Our Capability

Connecting With The Community



The State Courts are headed by the **Presiding Judge of the State Courts**, who is assisted by the Deputy Presiding Judge, Principal District Judges, Registrar and senior court administrators. District Judges and Magistrates preside over the District Courts and Magistrates' Courts respectively, and may hold concurrent appointments as Deputy Registrars, Coroners, Tribunal Judges and Magistrates.



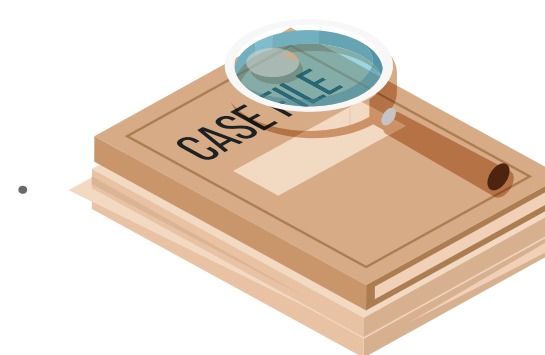
DISTRICT COURTS

- Hear civil cases with claims of more than \$60,000 and up to \$250,000 in value, or up to \$500,000 for claims for road traffic accidents or personal injuries from industrial accidents.
- Hear criminal cases where the maximum imprisonment term does not exceed 10 years or which are punishable with a fine only.



MAGISTRATES' COURTS

- Hear civil cases involving claims not exceeding \$60,000.
- Hear criminal cases where the maximum imprisonment term does not exceed 5 years or which are punishable with a fine only.



CORONERS' COURTS

Conduct inquiries into sudden or unnatural deaths or where the cause of death is unknown.



SMALL CLAIMS TRIBUNALS

Hear claims not exceeding \$20,000, or \$30,000 if both parties consent in writing, for disputes involving a contract for the sale of goods or provision of services, an unfair practice relating to a hire-purchase agreement, a tort in respect of damage caused to property, certain statutory claims, or a contract relating to a lease of residential premises not exceeding 2 years.



COMMUNITY DISPUTES RESOLUTION TRIBUNALS

Hear disputes between neighbours involving unreasonable interferences with the enjoyment or use of places of residence.



EMPLOYMENT CLAIMS TRIBUNALS

Hear salary-related claims and wrongful dismissal claims not exceeding \$20,000, or \$30,000 for tripartite-mediated disputes.

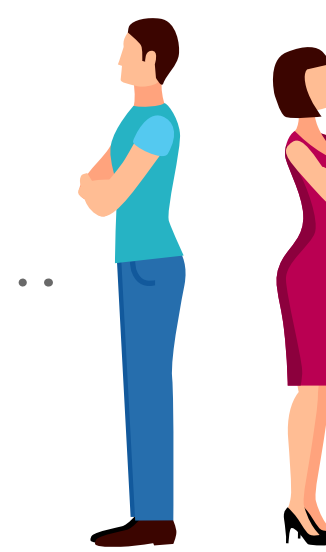


The Family Justice Courts are headed by the **Presiding Judge of the Family Justice Courts**. They hear family cases and deal with the care and treatment of young persons, operating based on the principles of therapeutic justice.



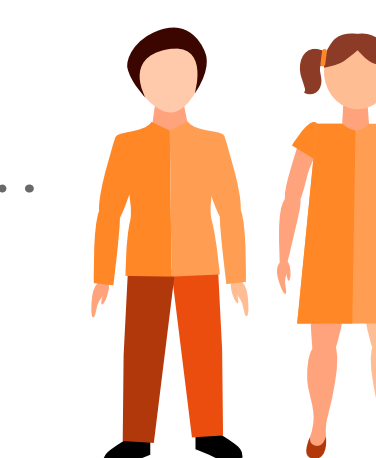
HIGH COURT (FAMILY DIVISION)

- Exercises original jurisdiction and hears appeals against the decisions of the Family Courts and the Youth Courts in family proceedings.
- Hears ancillary matters in family proceedings involving assets of \$5 million or more.
- Hears probate matters where the value of the deceased's estate is more than \$5 million or if the case involves the resealing of a foreign grant.



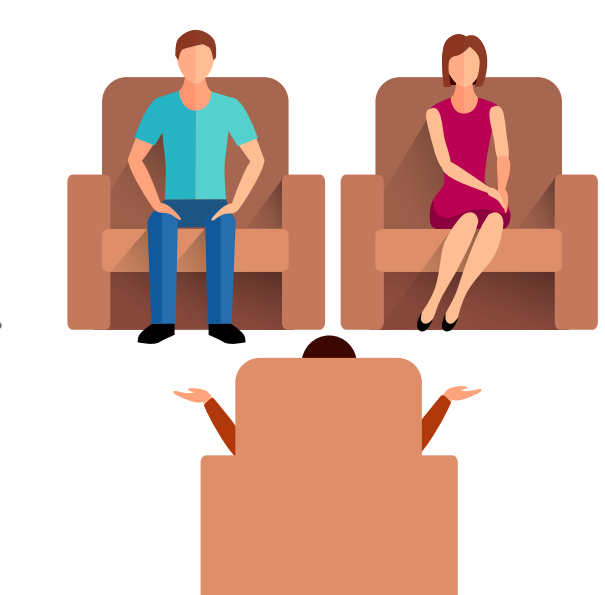
FAMILY COURTS

- Divorce
- Probate and administration
- Maintenance
- Protection against family violence
- Deputyship
- Adoption
- Protection for vulnerable adults
- Guardianship
- International child abduction



YOUTH COURTS

Cases under the Children and Young Persons Act, i.e. Family Guidance, Youth Arrest, Care and Protection.



MEDIATION & COUNSELLING

All cases coming before the Courts are managed proactively by judges from the start. Where necessary, the Courts can direct that parties undergo counselling and mediation to try and reach an amicable resolution of the dispute instead of proceeding with adjudication.



Our People

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CHIEF JUSTICE'S FOREWORD

2021 was, for many, a difficult and unusual time as the COVID-19 pandemic entered its second year. But it was also a full and fruitful period. In 2020, many had still hoped for a return to pre-pandemic life. In 2021, we came to terms with the fact that we would have to learn to live with it.

The Singapore Courts have made significant progress on that front. We continued to leverage on technology to enhance access to justice. Remote hearings and asynchronous case management tools kept lines of communication open and allowed the administration of justice to continue uninterrupted despite the evolving COVID-19 situation. The SG Courts mobile application now allows users to view case files, hearing lists and court calendars on the go, and more features are in the pipeline.

Beyond enhancing access to our courts, we have also made great strides towards equipping users with the necessary knowledge and information to pursue their legal rights more effectively and efficiently. The Motor Accident Claims Online (MACO) outcome simulator generates ballpark estimates of the quantum of expected damages to facilitate settlement negotiations and help users make better-informed decisions. It has since performed over 13,000 outcome simulations. Efforts are also underway to remodel the LawNet platform into a single digital hub for a wider suite of services, including the expansion of materials to include more Asian content, and the ability to subscribe to a digital library which offers access to a variety of titles published by the Singapore Academy of Law.

The transformation of our courts has proceeded apace. The Courts (Civil and Criminal Justice) Reform Act 2021 enacts a number of modernising reforms, such as empowering our courts to deal with a wider range of matters without hearing oral arguments, or to require that parties attempt to resolve disputes amicably where appropriate. The new Rules of Court 2021 and Singapore International Commercial Court (SICC) Rules 2021 likewise demonstrate our firm commitment to modernising the civil justice landscape. Under the latter, a new specialised Technology, Infrastructure and Construction List offers unique case management features which cater specifically to highly complex technical disputes. It enhances the SICC's status as a leading commercial court in the region, if not the world.

In contrast to the traditional adversarial model of civil justice, the Family Justice Courts (FJC) have continued to build on our vision of delivering a more therapeutic model of justice. Given that matrimonial disputes often implicate various underlying non-legal issues, multi-disciplinary teams comprising judicial officers, mediators and counsellors were established to allow for the holistic management of high-conflict divorce cases. In a similar vein, a Panel of Therapeutic Specialists was formed to provide specialised therapeutic services for families in need. Family Neutral Evaluation was piloted as an alternative dispute resolution option for resolving financial disputes quickly and more cost-effectively. Further, a Divorce eService portal was launched to assist self-represented litigants in preparing and filing court papers in uncontested divorce applications.

Over at the State Courts, a specialised Protection from Harassment Court (PHC) was established. The PHC offers a streamlined filing process and provides a one-stop platform for victims of harassment to

seek effective and holistic recourse. Already, some 370 claims have been filed – more than twice the number of harassment claims filed in any year prior. We also piloted the conduct of civil trials entirely over video conference, thus allowing civil trials to proceed uninterrupted where parties or witnesses were unable to attend in person, or where they resided overseas and were unable to travel to Singapore due to pandemic-related travel restrictions. Eight civil trials were conducted entirely remotely in 2021.

Another major development was the restructuring of the Legal Service into the Judicial Service and the reconstituted Legal Service. This will allow for greater specialisation, enabling each Service to develop bespoke personnel management frameworks as well as specialist training and professional development opportunities so as to better equip officers to discharge their duties. I am confident that the establishment of the Judicial Service Commission will prove a significant boon as we grow from strength to strength as One Judiciary.

Moving forward, our corporate administrative functions across the Supreme Court, State Courts and FJC will be further integrated. This will facilitate closer collaboration among our three courts, achieve greater economies of scale, and ensure greater consistency in the implementation of administrative policies and practices.

On the international front, we continued to engage significantly with our foreign counterparts despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. We co-hosted the fifth Singapore-China Legal and Judicial Roundtable, where we concluded a landmark Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation on Information on Foreign Law with the Supreme People's Court of the People's Republic of China. We implemented protocols on court-to-court communication and cooperation in admiralty, shipping and cross-border corporate insolvency matters with the Federal Court of Malaysia, and successfully hosted the third meeting of the Standing International Forum of Commercial Courts. In addition, we established and deepened ties with the Supreme Court of the Republic of Korea and the Supreme Court of Rwanda, and continued to play a leading role in the International Consortium for Court Excellence.

Whereas 2020 will inevitably be remembered as a year of crisis and crisis management, 2021 will go down as a year of renewal and reform. Legal transformation – the transformation of our institutions and processes – has taken centre stage in the face of increasing digitalisation and globalisation. We have continued to bring technological tools into the mainstream of our work and the way we engage with our stakeholders. These are important steps in our drive towards realising our vision of being a Leading, Trusted Judiciary, and harnessing the tremendous potential of technology will surely be among our most significant projects in the years to come.

Sundaresh Menon
Chief Justice
Supreme Court of Singapore

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDING JUDGE OF THE STATE COURTS

What was 2021 like for the State Courts?

It was another challenging year and, in popular parlance, the year of the “new normal”. Fundamental paradigm shifts which were key in allowing the wheels of justice to continue turning during the COVID-19 pandemic have become a core part of what the public expects of the Judiciary in providing access to justice. We must continue to be agile and adaptable to stay relevant and thrive.

What did the State Courts set out to do?

We embarked on three broad initiatives. Firstly, we revised our organisational structure by consolidating the criminal and civil registry functions under a discrete cluster. Secondly, greater focus was placed on both mentorship, with a structured system set up to guide new Judicial Officers (JOs), and exposure, before they begin to hear cases. Thirdly, we ramped up our training initiatives to enhance the continuing development of our officers’ skills and knowledge.

The overarching aim of these initiatives was the ever-present pursuit of dispensing quality justice in a timely manner. It was challenging to achieve this within the evolving reality of the COVID-19 situation, but we persevered.

What did the State Courts accomplish in 2021?

The crime and civil registries were consolidated under the Office of the Registrar, which now serves as the central command post managing both civil and criminal cases seamlessly. This has paved the way for a more coordinated approach to case management, as well as greater collaboration across different court clusters. The restructuring has also allowed JOs in trial courts to focus on judicial work, while junior JOs in registry functions receive greater cross-disciplinary exposure to both criminal and civil work.

Nearly 30 newly-minted JOs underwent mentoring under a structured, hands-on framework. Each mentor-mentee pair spent at least 20 to 30 hours discussing issues related to bench skills and court processes. Mentors not only gave helpful guidance to mentees on judgment writing, but also sat in their hearings to give targeted feedback on open court techniques.

In 2021, 88 training sessions were organised for State Courts officers on critical topics such as forensic analysis of evidence and judgment writing. The State Courts saw a 10% increase in the average number of attendees per training session, and a 68% increase in the average number of training hours per officer per year.

Even though 2021 proved to be busier than 2020, with a 4% increase in filings, we managed to avoid backlog and achieved an overall clearance rate of 110%. We issued more than 2,100 written judgments, including some 370 criminal judgments, 660 civil judgments, 940 tribunal judgments and 140 coroners’ findings.

Our efforts to leverage on technology have been unrelenting. As of September 2021, we had heard over 11,300 civil interlocutory matters, 80 civil trials and 30 assessments of damages via video conference, and conducted over 15,400 hearings asynchronously. Witnesses outside Singapore were permitted to testify by video conference in over 100 civil matters. Even for criminal matters, video conference hearings were extended to “plead guilty” proceedings. Our “Zoom Rooms” hosted over 800 court users in 2021.

Many of the innovations precipitated by COVID-19, such as remote hearings, have become permanent features of the justice system, hardwired by the passage of the Courts (Civil and Criminal Justice) Reform Act.

June 2021 saw the specialist Protection from Harassment Court (PHC) commence operations. The culmination of a collaboration between the State Courts and the Ministry of Law, the PHC provides a simplified, expeditious and affordable process to obtain comprehensive relief from harassment. In the second half of 2021, the filing rate for protection orders and false statement orders increased by some 300% from the pre-PHC filing rates seen in 2018 to 2020, while applications for expedited/interim relief in the same timeframe increased by some 270%. We also streamlined PHC processes so that applications for expedited/interim relief could be heard within three working days of being filed (or one working day, in cases involving violence). In appropriate cases, the PHC may refer the matter for police investigation or refer the respondent for psychiatric assessment, making for a more nuanced and targeted approach to tackling harassment. Moreover, judge-led simplified proceedings mean that cases can be concluded more quickly.

Finally, we continued to build and expand our networks through outreach efforts. We assumed the chair of the International Consortium for Court Excellence, of which we are a founding member. After launching its third edition of the International Framework for Court Excellence (IFCE), the Consortium conducted an inaugural Train-the-Trainer workshop, which was attended by all 10 ASEAN judiciaries. In the latest IFCE self-assessment, we scored at the top end of Band 4 (out of five bands).



We also supported the Hackathon for a Better World 2021, jointly organised by the Singapore Judiciary, the Ministry of Communications and Information, and DBS Bank, by fielding five teams. One of them, Team Voicehackers, clinched the “Most Life-Changing Idea Award”.

What plans do the State Courts have for the future?

The civil justice landscape has been transformed by the new Rules of Court, issued in December 2021 (in preparation for them taking effect in April 2022). We have issued a set of new Practice Directions to complement the new Rules and developed workflows for the new system of civil litigation. The Civil Courts Cluster and Court Dispute Resolution Cluster have been further reorganised to implement the judge-led process of case management.

Much work will also be done towards the operationalisation of the Judicial Service Commission, which was established in January 2022.

2022 promises to be another busy and exciting year. We remain committed to our vision as a trusted and forward-looking Judiciary, and will continue to push the frontiers of justice and build a smarter, future-ready justice system.

Vincent Hoong
Presiding Judge
State Courts

Our People

Access To Justice

Therapeutic Justice

Trust & Confidence

Strengthening
Partnerships

Developing
Our Capability

Connecting With
The Community

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDING JUDGE OF THE FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS

How was 2021 for the Family Justice Courts (FJC)?

2021 was a very busy and fruitful year. It followed our milestone Workplan 2020, titled "Today Is a New Day", where we intentionally adopted Therapeutic Justice (TJ) as a new system of family justice.

A mindset shift is needed because litigation, including family litigation, has traditionally been adversarial in nature. It is backward-looking and focused on assigning blame and insisting on one's rights. TJ requires a whole new mindset involving all users of the family justice system including the parties, judges and lawyers.

So, our theme for Workplan 2021 was "A New Tomorrow". It was a plan to implement all the changes needed to move to this new mindset and carry out the various operational parts of Workplan 2020. This required much hard work.

Apart from that, our caseload increased by 4%, including a 2% increase in the number of divorces. With hard work and dedication, we restored disposition rates to pre-pandemic levels and even increased the proportion of divorces resolved amicably on the simplified track from 60% in 2020 to 63% in 2021.

What were some of the highlights?

A key thrust of TJ is the focus on problem-solving and moving away from litigation that assigns blame. We focused on empowering court users, particularly unrepresented litigants, to better access and navigate the justice system and develop durable solutions for their disputes.

I will highlight four notable initiatives:

- We launched the Divorce eService portal in November 2021. It reduces time and effort for form-filling by populating forms with litigants' personal details from Myinfo. It also guides litigants by converting their details into auto-generated court forms should they file for divorce on the simplified track.
- We mooted the Panel of Therapeutic Specialists in September 2021 to assist parties with complex issues underlying their legal disputes. The Panel comprises private-sector mental health and social science professionals who can serve as an additional avenue for such parties to obtain targeted therapeutic assistance. The initiative is now in its pilot phase.
- We developed Family Justice @ Heartlands in partnership with the Ministry of Social and Family Development and the Law Society of Singapore. It involves webinars that inform interested members of the public about their rights and obligations in family disputes. Two pilot webinars have been held since December 2021, with attendance by grassroots leaders who, as community touchpoints, are well-placed to help residents in need.

- Finally, our Video Bites are a series of instructional videos on Adoption, Access, Guardianship, Maintenance, Probate and Mental Capacity Act proceedings. They are freely accessible on the Singapore Courts' YouTube channel and website.

Were there any challenges?

Definitely! Family practice has grown in complexity.

- We have disputes that transcend multiple areas of law, including property and trusts, restitution and unjust enrichment, as well as third-party claims to matrimonial assets.
- We encounter cases that require perspectives from other disciplines including social science (especially for children's issues) and financial accounting (especially for novel and complex classes of matrimonial assets to be divided on divorce).
- Other cases engage issues of social and public policy, such as when a father in a same-sex relationship applied to adopt his child who had been conceived through surrogacy and later also applied for his partner to be appointed as the child's guardian.
- Finally, family disputes are globalised today. We see increasing applications for children to relocate to another country, and for financial relief following a foreign divorce.

We have taken the opportunity at this milestone point in our development to fortify the capacities and capabilities of our judges and lawyers, who are the TJ "software".

Our ongoing training for family judges includes my periodic Huddles with colleagues and the Group Supervision Scheme overseen by our Chief Mentor. We also held a Learning Week in 2021, where we heard from social science experts and international thought leaders on the FJC Advisory and Research Council.

For family lawyers, we developed the Family Therapeutic Justice Certification Programme together with the Law Society of Singapore's Family Law Practice Committee and the Singapore Academy of Law. This programme assists lawyers to build new capabilities to practise effectively in a TJ-oriented family justice system.

These efforts have improved the quality of jurisprudence and advocacy in the family courts. I am grateful for the support of both the Bench and the Bar for this achievement.

Describe 2021 for the FJC in five words.

"Committed to a clear vision". Workplan 2020 had set out a bold and clear vision, but it required huge changes and tremendous work.



So, 2021 involved a deep conviction and commitment towards that vision. The hard work of all my colleagues reflected that.

What can we look forward to in 2022 and beyond?

As illustrated by our Workplan 2022 theme, "Let's Go!", we will continue to implement and translate our ideas into real-world solutions.

These solutions fall into three broad categories:

- Creating a multi-disciplinary environment to further TJ by tackling the social, psychological and other challenges that underlie family disputes.
- Fortifying judges' and lawyers' capacities and capabilities to handle family disputes of growing complexity.
- Strengthening and facilitating court processes, settlement and enforcement. For example, we are working with the Public Service Centre to bring services such as filing applications to community touchpoints in the heartlands.

We are planting the seeds for a family justice system that supports families to find a positive way forward. I am confident that by helping families, staying patient and working hard, our labour will bear fruit.

Debbie Ong
Presiding Judge
Family Justice Courts

Our People

Access To Justice

Therapeutic Justice

Trust & Confidence

Strengthening Partnerships

Developing Our Capability

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HIGHLIGHTS OF 2021

11 JANUARY

Opening of the Legal Year

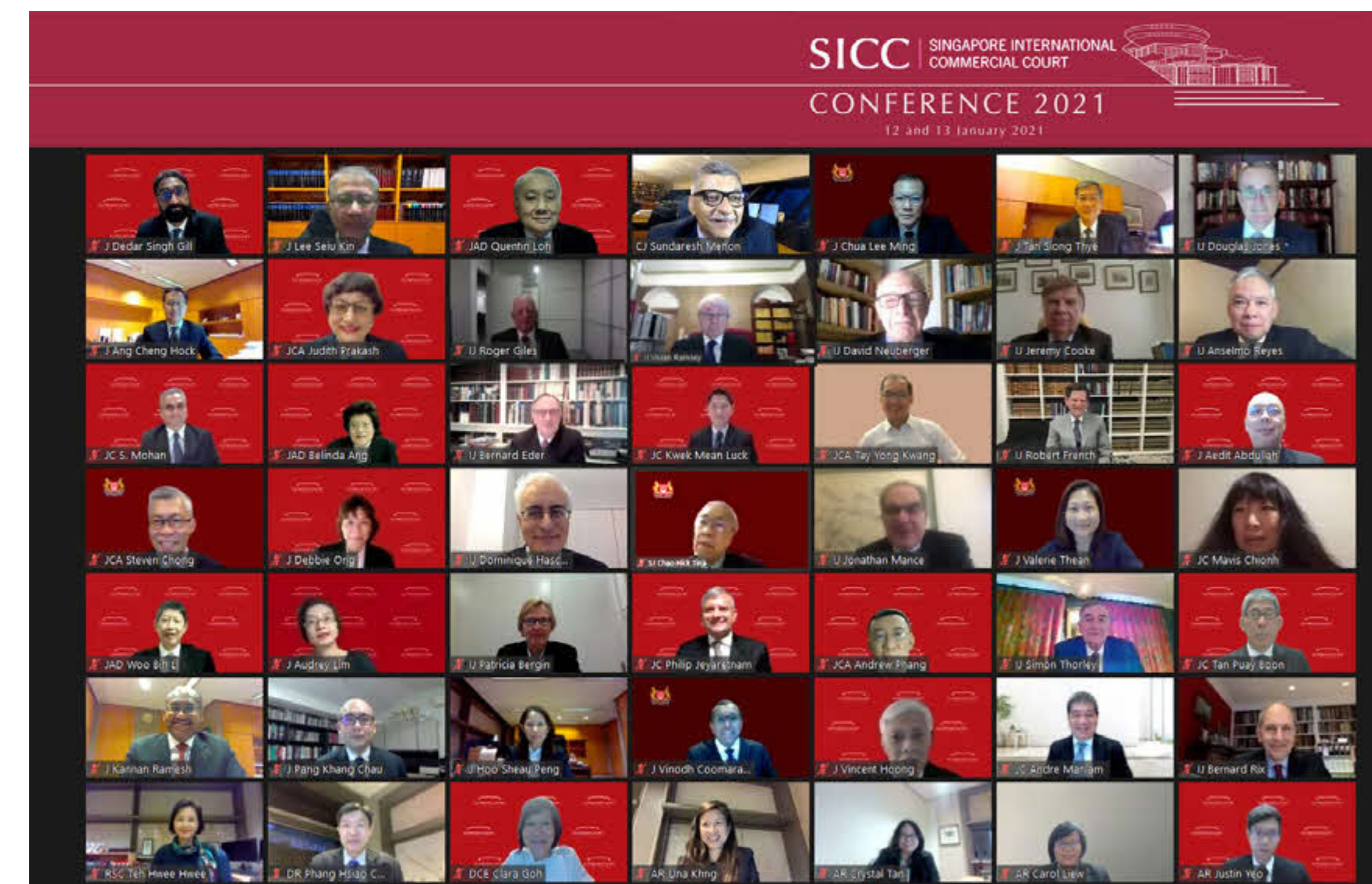
For the first time, this annual event was streamed live from the State Courts' Havelock Hall to about 1,000 participants on Zoom.



12 AND 13 JANUARY

Singapore International Commercial Court Conference

The Singapore Bench and International Judges of the Singapore International Commercial Court (SICC) came together virtually to discuss and assess legal developments, as well as chart the course for the year ahead. The theme this year was "Transforming Justice in Pursuit of a New Normal".



10 MARCH

Singapore International Commercial Court Symposium

Themed "Trends & Developments in International Commercial Litigation", the live webinar brought together key players in the international commercial dispute resolution landscape. Distinguished local and international speakers engaged in in-depth panel discussions on the new procedural rules of the SICC, emerging trends and opportunities for commercial courts, and other dispute resolution options in a post-pandemic world.

SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL COMMERCIAL COURT SYMPOSIUM 2021
Trends & Developments in International Commercial Litigation
Wednesday, 10 March 2021 | 8.45 am – 6.00 pm Singapore time (SGT +8) | Virtual event

Don't miss the opportunity to hear from our distinguished speakers

Visit <https://www.siccsymposium2021.sg/>

or scan the QR Code to find out more.
Early bird rates are valid until 31 January 2021, 11.59pm Singapore time (GMT +8). Group rates for registrations of 10 or more participants are available.

ACCREDITED CPD ACTIVITY	No. of Public CPD Points	3.5
	Practice Area	Contemporary issues in legal practice
	Training Level	General

Organised by:
SUPREMECOURT
SINGAPORE

1 JUNE

Protection from Harassment Court in Session

A new specialised court was established in the State Courts to hear all criminal and civil matters under the Protection from Harassment Act.



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HIGHLIGHTS OF 2021

23 AND 24 AUGUST

Mass Call

A total of 457 newly minted Advocates and Solicitors were called to the Bar virtually this year. In Chief Justice Menon's speech titled "The Legal Profession Amidst the Pandemic: Change and Continuity", he said the pandemic had brought the use of technological tools into the mainstream of many legal tasks and processes and accelerated the migration of traditional processes to a digital format.



14 SEPTEMBER

Courts (Civil and Criminal Justice) Reform Bill Becomes Law

Legislation designed to transform and future-proof the legal system was passed in Parliament. The Bill will support the digital transformation of the Courts and the implementation of the new Rules of Court, provide a statutory framework for the Attorney-General to intervene in court proceedings, enable courts to grant freestanding interim relief, and harmonise and enhance court processes.



3 NOVEMBER

Judicial Service Commission Gets Approved

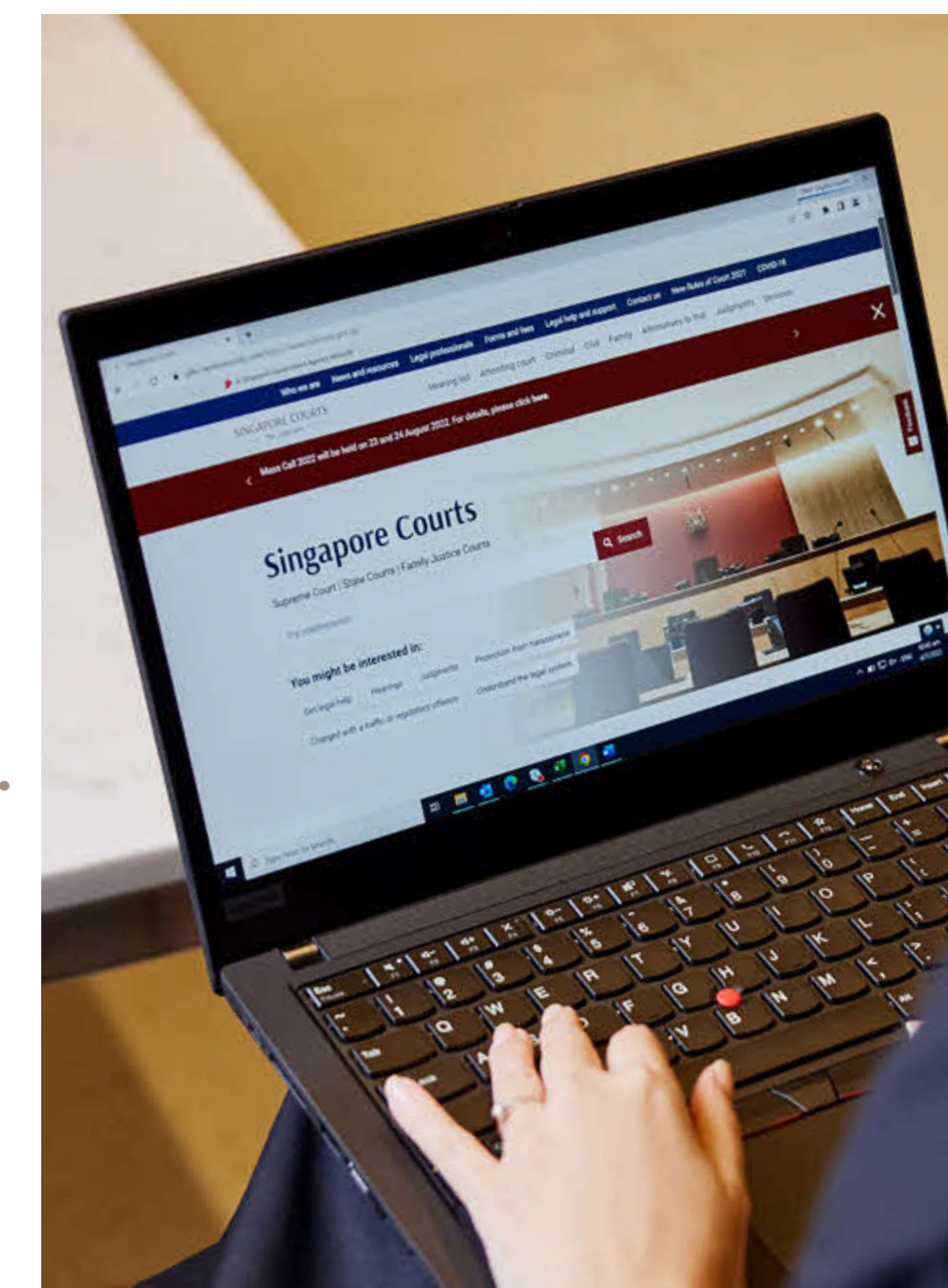
Parliament approved the creation of a new commission that effectively separates the judicial and legal services in Singapore. It comes after six decades under an "integrated" system where a single Legal Service Commission oversaw officers deployed to both the judicial and legal branches. The structural changes aim to put both services on a better footing by allowing them to reap the benefits of greater specialisation and prepare for future challenges.



19 NOVEMBER

SG Courts Website Is Launched

The new website at www.judiciary.gov.sg provides an integrated gateway to information on the Judiciary of Singapore, with information presented in layman's terms to demystify court processes alongside user-friendly and intuitive features.



1 DECEMBER

New Rules of Court Are Gazetted

The Rules of Court 2021 aim to transform the nation's civil litigation process by enhancing the efficiency and speed of adjudication while keeping legal costs reasonable.

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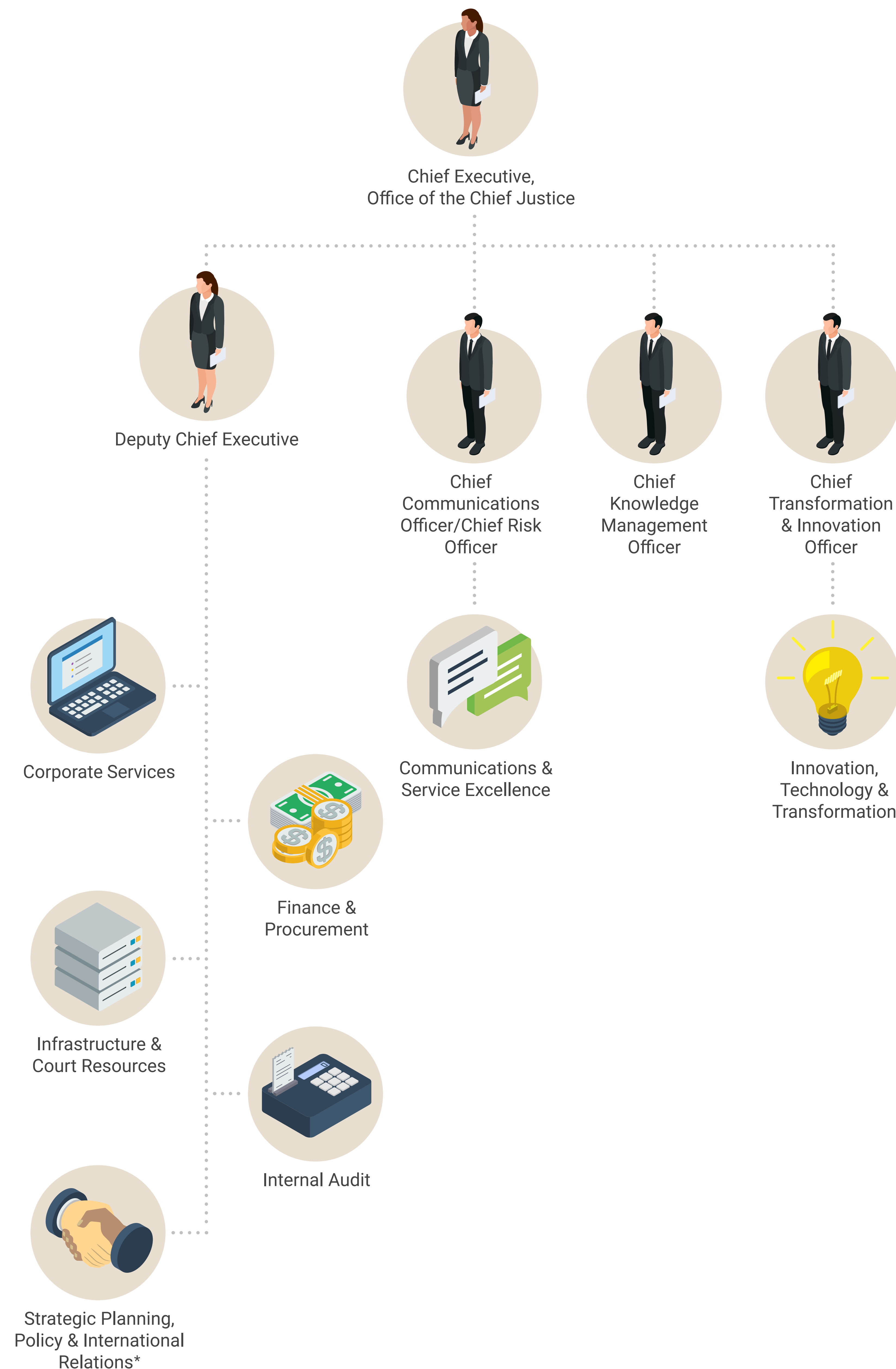
Our People

Demonstrating integrity, dedication and professionalism, those who collectively make up the Singapore Judiciary embody its mission to ensure proper administration of justice.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

(AS OF 1 APRIL 2022)

CORPORATE DIVISIONS



In January 2022, the Judicial Service Commission was established, heralding a wider move to transform the Judiciary to meet the needs of an increasingly complex world. The restructuring underscores our conviction to develop and implement policies to attract the best legal minds, as well as strengthen the Judiciary as an institution entrusted with the administration of justice.

To move forward as 'One Judiciary', an integrated framework is required for the SG Courts' corporate administrative functions. The journey towards One Judiciary began a few years ago with the integration of the FJC and the Supreme Court, and was completed with the integration of the State Courts in April 2022. Headed by Ms Juthika Ramanathan, the integrated divisions make up the key corporate functions across the three Courts.

Communications & Service Excellence

Oversees the planning and execution of public engagement and communication efforts to position the SG Courts as a forward-thinking, innovative and trusted judiciary. Equal and continuous access to justice is facilitated through effective public service delivery. It also promotes awareness and usage of the Singapore International Commercial Court among legal and business professionals both regionally and internationally.

Corporate Services

Oversees the SG Courts' human resources, security, record management (for non-court records) and administrative functions as well as the respective libraries at the Supreme Court and State Courts.

Finance & Procurement

Promotes proper stewardship of the SG Courts' financial resources, through the implementation of frameworks that promote financial prudence, value-for-money practices and financial accountability.

Infrastructure & Court Resources

Strategises and optimises the use of resources and services that best support the hearing process and court operations. Includes the Building Infrastructure Department, Court Infrastructure Department and Language Resources Department.

Innovation, Technology & Transformation

Coordinates and drives transformative change, and oversees the acquisition and deployment of technology throughout the Judiciary, including centralising initiatives to achieve consistency and devising new and innovative approaches to the Judiciary's work.

Internal Audit

Promotes governance and enables a disciplined risk-based approach to evaluate the adequacy of implemented internal control systems and risk management practices, and to bring about improved value to internal processes, compliance with government operating procedures and sound corporate governance practices.

Knowledge Management

Advocates knowledge as a strategic asset for the SG Courts and facilitates the sharing of knowledge and best practices across the Judiciary.

Strategic Planning, Policy & International Relations

Advances the Supreme Court's position as a thought leader in court excellence through policy formulation, strategic planning, international engagement, organisational development and performance management.

*Not part of the April 2022 integration exercise

- Access To Justice
- Therapeutic Justice
- Trust & Confidence
- Strengthening Partnerships
- Developing Our Capability
- Connecting With The Community

THE SUPREME COURT BENCH

(AS OF 1 APRIL 2022)



The Supreme Court Bench was photographed at the former Supreme Court Foyer in National Gallery Singapore.

Access To Justice

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CHIEF JUSTICE

- ① **Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon**
Chief Justice Menon was appointed a member of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Governing Body for Dispute Resolution Services on 22 March 2021 by the ICC for a term of two years.

JUSTICES OF THE COURT OF APPEAL

- ② **Justice Andrew Phang**
- ③ **Justice Judith Prakash**
Justice Prakash's appointment as a Justice of the Court of Appeal was extended for a two-year term from 19 December 2021.

- ④ **Justice Tay Yong Kwang**
Justice Tay's appointment as a Justice of the Court of Appeal was extended for a three-year term from 3 September 2021.
- ⑤ **Justice Steven Chong**

JUDGES OF THE APPELLATE DIVISION

- ⑥ **Justice Belinda Ang**
Justice Ang's appointment as Judge of the Appellate Division was extended for a three-year term from 24 April 2021.
- ⑦ **Justice Woo Bih Li**
Justice Woo's appointment as Judge of the Appellate Division was extended for a three-year term from 31 December 2021.

- ⑧ **Justice Quentin Loh**
Justice Loh's appointment as Judge of Appeal of the Supreme Court of Fiji on a part-time basis, to hear cases in an appellate capacity, was extended for three years from 13 August 2021. He is also the President of the Singapore International Commercial Court.

THE SUPREME COURT BENCH

(AS OF 1 APRIL 2022)



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JUSTICES OF THE HIGH COURT

- ① **Justice Choo Han Teck**
Justice Choo's appointment as Judge of the High Court was extended for a two-year term from 21 February 2022.
- ② **Justice Lee Seiu Kin**
Justice Lee's appointment as Judge of the High Court was extended for a two-year term from 30 January 2022.

- ③ **Justice Vinodh Coomaraswamy**
- ④ **Justice Tan Siong Thye**
Justice Tan's appointment as Judge of the High Court was extended for a two-year term from 22 June 2021.

- ⑤ **Justice See Kee Oon**
Justice See is also the President of the Industrial Arbitration Court and sits on the Military Court of Appeal.
- ⑥ **Justice Chua Lee Ming**

- ⑦ **Justice Kannan Ramesh**
Justice Ramesh's appointment as Judicial Commissioner of the Supreme Court of Brunei Darussalam on a part-time basis was extended for two years from 7 October 2021.

THE SUPREME COURT BENCH

(AS OF 1 APRIL 2022)



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JUSTICES OF THE HIGH COURT

① Justice Valerie Thean

② Justice Hoo Sheau Peng

③ Justice Debbie Ong

Justice Ong is also the Presiding Judge of the Family Justice Courts.

④ Justice Aedit Abdullah

⑤ Justice Pang Khang Chau

⑥ Justice Audrey Lim

⑦ Justice Ang Cheng Hock

THE SUPREME COURT BENCH

(AS OF 1 APRIL 2022)



The Supreme Court Bench was photographed at the former Supreme Court Foyer in National Gallery Singapore.

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JUSTICES OF THE HIGH COURT

① **Justice Vincent Hoong**
Justice Hoong's appointment as Judge of the High Court was extended for a three-year term from 12 April 2022. He is also the Presiding Judge of the State Courts.

② **Justice Dedar Singh Gill**

③ **Justice Mavis Chionh**

④ **Justice S. Mohan**
Justice Mohan was appointed Judge of the High Court from 1 November 2021.

⑤ **Justice Andre Maniam**
Justice Maniam was appointed Judge of the High Court from 1 November 2021.

⑥ **Justice Philip Jeyaretnam**
Justice Jeyaretnam was appointed Judge of the High Court from 1 November 2021.

⑦ **Justice Kwek Mean Luck**
Justice Kwek was appointed Judicial Commissioner of the Supreme Court on 4 January 2021 and Judge of the High Court on 1 April 2022.

THE SUPREME COURT BENCH

(AS OF 1 APRIL 2022)



The Supreme Court Bench was photographed at the former Supreme Court Foyer in National Gallery Singapore.

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SENIOR JUDGES

① Justice Chao Hick Tin

② Justice Chan Seng Onn

Justice Chan was appointed Senior Judge of the Supreme Court for a period of two years commencing 5 January 2022.

③ Justice Lai Siu Chiu

Justice Lai was reappointed as a Senior Judge of the Supreme Court for a period of two years commencing 5 January 2022.

④ Justice Andrew Ang

Justice Ang was reappointed as a Senior Judge of the Supreme Court for a period of two years commencing 5 January 2022.

THE CORPORATE HEADS

(AS OF 1 APRIL 2022)



This photo was taken at National Gallery Singapore, with the Supreme Court Wing in the backdrop.

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① Ms Juthika Ramanathan
Chief Executive, Office of the Chief Justice

② Mr Foo Chee Hock
Dean, Singapore Judicial College

③ Ms Clara Goh
Deputy Chief Executive

④ Mr Tan Ken Hwee
Chief Transformation & Innovation Officer

⑤ Mr James Leong
Chief Knowledge Management Officer

⑥ Mr Patrick Nathan
Chief Communications & Risk Management Officer

⑦ Ms Theresa Yeo
Senior Director, Corporate Services

⑧ Ms Cher Ming Hui
Senior Director, Finance & Procurement

⑨ Ms Papinder Kaur
Senior Director, Infrastructure & Court Resources

⑩ Mr Ho Shee Yan
Director, Internal Audit

THE REGISTRY

(AS OF 1 APRIL 2022)



This photo was taken at the atrium on level two of the Supreme Court building, overlooking Parliament Green.

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① Ms Teh Hwee Hwee
Registrar, Supreme Court

② Mr Tan Boon Heng
Registrar-Designate, Supreme Court

③ Mr Kenneth Yap
Registrar, Family Justice Courts

④ Mr Christopher Tan
Deputy Presiding Judge-Designate & Registrar,
State Courts

⑤ Mr Phang Hsiao Chung
Deputy Registrar, Supreme Court
*Mr Phang is also the Divisional Registrar for the
Singapore International Commercial Court.*

⑥ Ms Cornie Ng Teng Teng
Senior Assistant Registrar, Supreme Court
*Ms Ng is also the Divisional Registrar for the
General Division of the High Court.*

⑦ Mr Edwin San Ong Kyar
Senior Assistant Registrar, Supreme Court

⑧ Ms Chong Chin Chin
Senior Assistant Registrar, Supreme Court
*Ms Chong is also the Divisional Registrar for the Court
of Appeal and Appellate Division of the High Court.*

⑨ Ms Cheng Pei Feng
Senior Assistant Registrar, Supreme Court

⑩ Mr David Lee Yeow Wee
Senior Assistant Registrar, Supreme Court

⑪ Ms Ong Chin Rhu
Senior Deputy Registrar, State Courts

⑫ Mr Chiah Kok Khun
Senior Deputy Registrar, State Courts

STATE COURTS SENIOR MANAGEMENT

(AS OF 1 APRIL 2022)



This photo was taken in the State Courts. The terracotta-inspired cladding outside the courtrooms complements the colours and textures of the clay-pitched roofs of the nearby Chinatown shophouses.

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① Justice Vincent Hoong
Presiding Judge

② Ms Jennifer Marie
Deputy Presiding Judge

③ Mr Christopher Tan
Deputy Presiding Judge-Designate & Registrar

④ Mr Toh Han Li
Principal District Judge, Criminal Courts

⑤ Mr Toh Yung Cheong
Principal District Judge, Strategic Planning
& Technology

⑥ Ms Thian Yee Sze
Principal District Judge, Court Dispute Resolution,
Community Courts & Tribunals

⑦ Mr Clement Seah Chi-Ling
Principal District Judge, Civil Courts

⑧ Mr Victor Yeo
Principal District Judge, Criminal Courts

⑨ Ms Jill Tan
Principal District Judge, Corporate Services

⑩ Ms Papinder Kaur
Senior Director, Infrastructure &
Court Resources

FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS SENIOR MANAGEMENT

(AS OF 1 APRIL 2022)



① Justice Debbie Ong
Presiding Judge

② Mr Chia Wee Kiat
Deputy Presiding Judge

③ Mr Kenneth Yap
Registrar

④ Mr Muhammad Hidhir Abdul Majid
Principal District Judge, Principal Director,
Strategic Planning & Research Division and
Head, Family Protection & Support Division

⑤ Ms Toh Wee San
District Judge & Head, Family Division

⑥ Ms Jen Koh
District Judge, Deputy Registrar & Head,
Family Division

NOT IN PHOTO:
Mr Kevin Ng
District Judge & Head, Family Dispute Resolution Division

This photo was taken
outside the Family
Justice Courts building
at Havelock Road.

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INTERNATIONAL JUDGES

(AS OF 1 APRIL 2022)



- ① Justice Carolyn Berger
- ② Justice Patricia Bergin
- ③ Justice Sir Jeremy Cooke
- ④ Justice Sir Henry Bernard Eder
- ⑤ Justice Robert French
- ⑥ Justice Roger Giles
- ⑦ Justice Dominique T. Hascher
- ⑧ Justice Douglas Samuel Jones AO
- ⑨ Justice Lord Jonathan Hugh Mance
- ⑩ Justice Beverley McLachlin PC
- ⑪ Justice Yuko Miyazaki
- ⑫ Justice Lord Neuberger of Abbotsbury
- ⑬ Justice Sir Vivian Ramsey
- ⑭ Justice Anselmo Reyes
- ⑮ Justice Sir Bernard Rix
- ⑯ Justice Arjan Kumar Sikri
- ⑰ Justice Simon Thorley QC

Appointments and Reappointments

Justice Yuko Miyazaki was appointed as an International Judge to the Singapore International Commercial Court (SICC) from 5 January 2022 to 4 January 2024. Justice Miyazaki graduated with a Bachelor of Laws from the University of Tokyo, Japan in 1976, followed by a Master of Laws from Harvard Law School in 1984. She began her legal career in 1979 as the first full-time female lawyer of Nagashima &

Ohno, one of Japan's most prestigious law firms. She left the firm in 1984 to take on the appointment of legal counsel with the World Bank for two years before rejoining Nagashima & Ohno in 1986. She was appointed Partner in 1988, and subsequently Head of Tax Practice Group/Senior Counsel in 2017. In 2018, Justice Miyazaki became the sixth female Justice of the Supreme Court of Japan. She retired in July 2021

and is currently a special advisor with Nagashima Ohno & Tsunematsu (formerly Nagashima & Ohno).

The other 16 International Judges to the SICC were reappointed for a period of three years from 5 January 2021, with the exception of Justice Carolyn Berger whose reappointment would conclude with the conclusion of the case SIC/S 2/2018.

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Access To Justice

Making justice accessible to all, and removing barriers that stand in the way of guaranteeing people's rights, is a necessary condition for a fair and equal society.

THE NEW RULES OF COURT

Marking a Milestone in Our Journey of Improving Civil Justice

2021 was the year in which, after a root-and-branch review of our civil procedural rules, the new and finalised Rules of Court 2021 (ROC 2021) were published and gazetted, marking a major milestone in Singapore's journey towards enhancing our civil justice system and modernising our litigation process.

The ROC 2021 seeks to enhance the civil justice system by simplifying rules, modernising the language, streamlining procedural steps and enabling greater judicial control of the entire litigation process. The ROC 2021 is underpinned by five ideals, namely:



(i) fair access to justice;



(ii) expeditious proceedings;



(iii) cost-effective and proportionate processes;



(iv) efficient use of court resources; and



(v) fair and practical results suited to the needs of the parties.

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The ROC 2021 aims to create a clearer, faster, more cost-efficient and more accessible civil justice process.

It represents a new vision for the civil justice process that is clearer, faster, more cost-efficient and more accessible by those who seek justice in the Courts.

Salient new features of the ROC 2021 include:

- the Single Application Pending Trial mechanism, which allows all pre-trial applications that are necessary to prepare a case for trial to be dealt with in a holistic and disciplined fashion;
- the option for the Court to order affidavits of evidence-in-chief before document production; and
- the use of expert evidence only in situations where such evidence would contribute materially to the determination of an issue in the case which cannot be resolved through other specified means.

Leading up to the implementation of the ROC 2021, the Singapore Judicial College conducted a series of familiarisation sessions featuring general overviews for both judges and court administrators on the new rules, and 'nuts-and-bolts' walk-through exercises. Justice Chua Lee Ming and Justice Ang Cheng Hock, who chair the new Rules of Court

Implementation Team, were the faculty for these sessions, which focused on new features of the civil procedural rules and the main changes they bring to the civil litigation process.

To assist practitioners and court users in navigating the ROC 2021, various collaterals such as short informative digests, a primer video and infographics were published on the SG Courts website.

The standalone Singapore International Commercial Court Rules 2021 (SICC Rules 2021) were also published in 2021. It presents a game-changing set of customised processes for international commercial litigation that incorporates international best practices and facilitates international dispute resolution.

The work of reviewing and refining the ROC 2021 and the SICC Rules 2021 will continue as the Courts, practitioners and users gain experience from their implementation. This represents our commitment in our journey of developing and improving our civil justice system.

THE NEW RULES OF COURT – MARKING A MILESTONE IN OUR JOURNEY OF IMPROVING CIVIL JUSTICE

Ship Arrests Without Leaving Shore

In early January 2021, dark clouds were gathering on the horizon regarding the service of admiralty writs and warrants of arrest on ships. Concerns were raised by the shipping Bar on the potential exposure of lawyers and process servers to COVID-19 through in-person service of documents on board ships. The Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore had also introduced enhanced regulations on COVID-19 for personnel boarding ships, which made it costly and more inconvenient to effect service.

On 22 January 2021, the Rules of Court and Supreme Court Practice Directions were amended to enable the service of warrants of arrest and admiralty writs on the ship agent while prevailing COVID-19 control measures were in force. With these changes, ship arrests and service of admiralty writs could be made without lawyers and process servers leaving shore.

The new procedure providing for the temporary alternative mode of service has been well received by the shipping Bar.

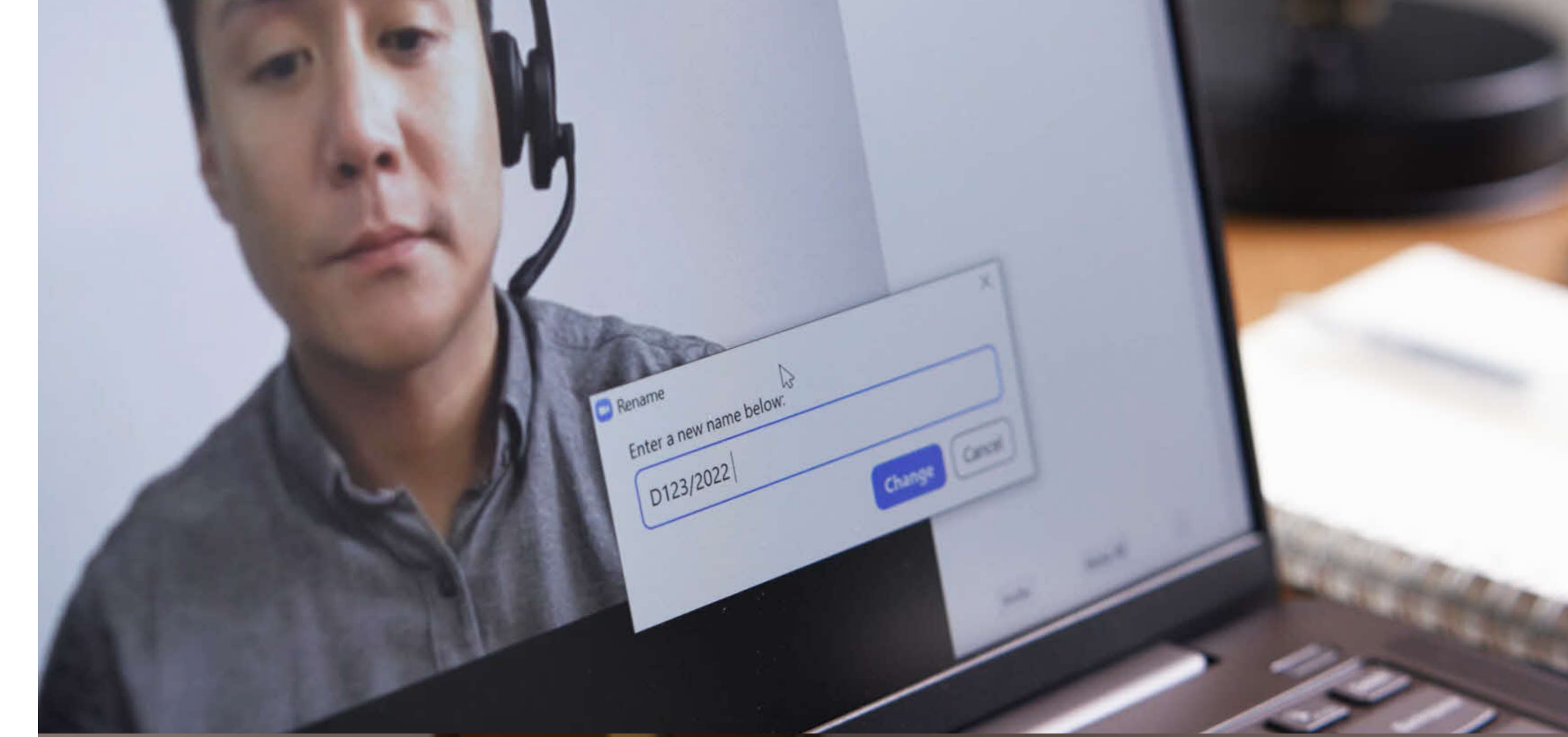
The new procedure providing for the temporary alternative mode of service has been well received by the shipping Bar. It demonstrates the ability of the SG Courts and relevant stakeholders to proactively respond to the needs of the maritime and shipping industry, particularly during extraordinary and challenging times.

Facilitating the Use of Video-Link Testimony

The travel-related COVID-19 restrictions brought to the fore the need for video-link testimony for witnesses who were unable to travel to Singapore to give evidence, so as to ensure continued access to and administration of justice. Multiple initiatives were therefore undertaken throughout 2021 to facilitate such video-link testimonies.

For instance, the Rules of Court (as in force immediately before 1 April 2022) were amended to:

- (a) refine the procedure for applying for the issue of a letter of request to a foreign jurisdiction for evidence to be taken by deposition from a witness located in that jurisdiction; and
- (b) set out a procedure for applying for the issue of a letter of request to a foreign jurisdiction for evidence to be taken by live video or live television link from a witness located in that jurisdiction.



Through video-link testimony, witnesses residing overseas can still give evidence in trials and hearings.

The amendments to the Rules of Court were further coupled with amendments to the Supreme Court Practice Directions to set out the timelines for the making of an application for the issue of a letter of request for the direct taking of evidence. To assist parties, a guide on preparing letters of request for the direct taking of evidence was also produced.

In addition, the Supreme Court Registry collaborated with relevant agencies to obtain, collate and publish information based on official responses from foreign authorities in relation to the taking of evidence by live video or live television link from witnesses in their respective jurisdictions. Discussions were also held with the Law Society of Singapore to explore how the use of video-link testimony could be facilitated and simplified.

Taken together, these efforts ensured that trials and hearings could proceed smoothly even when witnesses were unable to travel to Singapore.

A temporary alternative mode of service was formulated for the shipping Bar in response to the pandemic.



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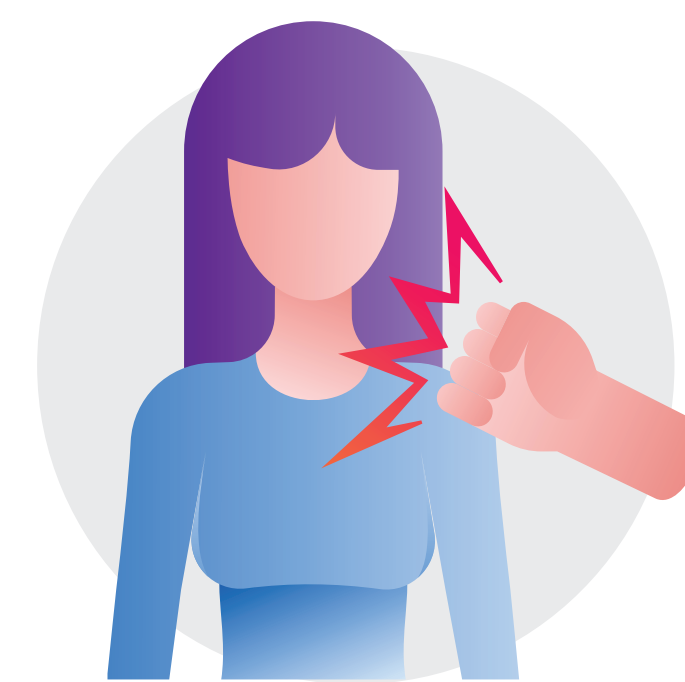
PROTECTION FROM HARASSMENT COURT

Putting victims first for more effective redress

The Protection from Harassment Court (PHC) was established on 1 June 2021 as a specialised Court dedicated to dealing with harassment matters. It has oversight of all criminal and civil cases under the Protection from Harassment Act (POHA) and provides victims of harassment with more effective and holistic recourse.

The establishment of the PHC, along with synergistic amendments to the POHA, brought about several improvements to our judicial regime to provide more effective redress against acts of harassment. Chief among these was the adoption of simplified processes for applications for Protection Orders (POs) and orders relating to falsehoods. Under the simplified track, litigants can file claims online through the State Courts' Community Justice and Tribunals System without having to travel to filing bureaux.

Other improvements to enhance protection for victims were also made through amendments to the POHA on 1 June 2021:



- (a) Where a respondent has been convicted of any POHA- or hurt-related offence against the victim, the requirement for the victim to show that a POHA provision has been contravened before his or her application for a PO is granted will be deemed satisfied. This simplifies the PO application process for the victim.



- (b) PHC judges who grant Expedited Protection Orders (EPOs) are required to consider whether a criminal investigation is warranted and if so, to refer the case to the police for investigation. This removes the need for the victim to separately file a Magistrate's Complaint to seek the Court's directions for the police to investigate into the alleged harassment act.



- (c) Where a PO is made, the PHC may make a Mandatory Treatment Order (MTO) requiring the respondent to undergo psychiatric treatment. As the MTO would be made where the PHC has reasonable grounds to believe that the respondent's psychiatric condition was a contributing factor to the contravention which led to the PO, the MTO would address the issue at source.



- (d) The seriousness of breaching a PO or EPO has been underscored through making such breaches arrestable offences in certain scenarios, such as where hurt is caused.



- (e) The protection that POs and EPOs could give to persons related to the victim has been extended. To better protect victims residing in the same residence as the harasser, it has also been made clear that domestic exclusion orders can be granted as part of a PO.



Using the State Courts' Community Justice and Tribunals System, victims of harassment can simply file their claims online instead of having to file documents in person.

A group of specialist judicial officers and court administrators hears and deals with cases filed in the PHC, to facilitate efficient and fair resolution of such disputes.

The establishment of the PHC has improved access to justice for litigants. This can be seen from an increase of over 300% in the average number of POHA applications per month from June to December 2021, compared with the average from January to May 2021 before the PHC was set up.

With the experience and knowledge gained from the first year of the PHC's operations, the State Courts will continue working with relevant stakeholders to enhance the regime for protection for victims of harassment.

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REMOTE HEARINGS

As a Bridge to Justice

Despite the challenges and uncertainty brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, about 90% of all criminal and civil non-trial matters, as well as more than 60% of civil trials, were heard (either fully or partially) through video conferencing technology in 2021. This ensured continued access to justice through remote hearings.

The Courts have used the Zoom platform since the Circuit Breaker in 2020, and no additional fees were charged for lawyers or litigants using it. Each hearing was preceded by a video conference notice issued to the lawyers or self-represented litigants, which provided them with details on how to join the Zoom hearing. The notice also offered instructions on how to use Zoom as well as links to online resources about the technology. Written guides and answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) continued to be made available on the Courts' website, which provided litigants with information and assistance regarding technical and operational matters.

90% of criminal and civil non-trial matters, and more than 60% of civil trials, were heard through video conferencing technology in 2021.

In some cases, litigants were able to use video conferencing facilities at the Supreme Court building to attend a remote hearing. This ensured that users without suitable devices could access remote hearings.

Self-represented litigants and witnesses who were unable to come to Singapore owing to travel limitations, or who could not physically attend court due to pandemic-related movement restrictions, were accommodated through the use of video conferencing for their hearings. Interpretation services were also provided remotely to ensure that non-English speakers could participate.

Remote hearings of interlocutory applications and other procedural matters resulted in improved case management efficiency. This reduced the cost of litigation because lawyers and litigants did not need to physically attend court for shorter hearings, which would otherwise have incurred additional time and expense of travelling to court.

Civil Trials

Following a successful pilot in 2020, where a motor accident claim was brought before the Civil Trial Courts and conducted entirely by video conference with all the parties involved, 68 civil trials were conducted remotely in 2021, of which eight were entirely via video conference.



Increased reliance on remote hearings has allowed trials to continue uninterrupted and helped bridge the justice gap.

This initiative allowed civil trials to proceed uninterrupted when parties were unable to attend a physical hearing for pandemic-related reasons, which might have otherwise resulted in the postponement of trial dates or prevented trial dates from being fixed altogether. Remote hearings proved to be particularly useful for industrial accident trials, as many of the plaintiffs were residing overseas and unable to travel to Singapore due to travel restrictions. Remote hearings were also useful for parties who could not attend court physically because they were under quarantine.

The State Courts have received positive feedback on the use of video conferencing for the conduct of civil trials. In line with the principle of open justice, these remote trials are broadcast in the courtroom.



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FAMILY JUSTICE @ HEARTLANDS

The Family Justice @ Heartlands initiative is aimed at developing a comprehensive strategic programme to enhance access to justice through a sustainable outreach model that informs interested members of the public about their rights and responsibilities.

In December 2021, the Family Justice Courts (FJC) in partnership with the Ministry of Social and Family Development and the Law Society of Singapore conducted its inaugural Family Justice @ Heartlands Pilot Webinar. The Registrar of the FJC, Mr Kenneth Yap, chaired the session. It was attended by 85 grassroots leaders, who were educated on family law issues, court processes and available support resources.

Looking ahead, the FJC will be organising similar webinars involving members of the public in 2022.



JOIN US AT THE 1ST WEBINAR FOR
**FAMILY JUSTICE
@ HEARTLANDS**
TO LEARN MORE ABOUT DIVORCE,
GUARDIANSHIP & MAINTENANCE MATTERS

Date: Sat, 11 Dec 2021
Time: 10am to 12pm
Venue: Zoom
(Link will be sent nearer to date)

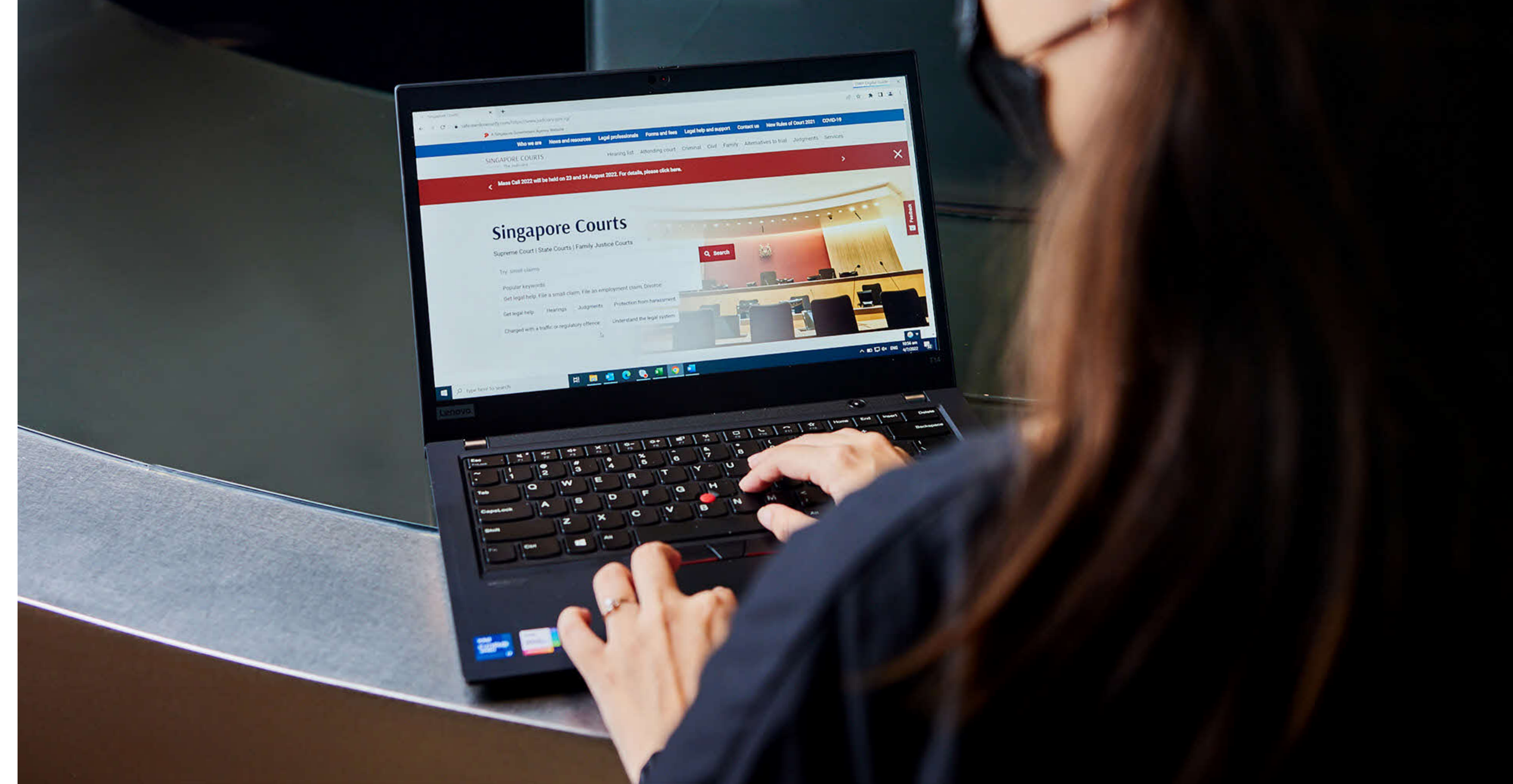
SCAN HERE!



To register, scan the QR code
or visit <https://go.gov.sg/fjh1>
Limited vacancies available!



In collaboration with:
Family Justice Courts



The SG Courts website was launched in November 2021, after months of beta testing and user feedback.

LAUNCH OF THE SG COURTS WEBSITE

The new SG Courts website (www.judiciary.gov.sg) is now the official website of the Singapore Judiciary. It replaces the individual websites of the Supreme Court, State Courts and Family Justice Courts, and provides a single online point of entry to the Judiciary so that users no longer have to identify the particular court they wish to interact with.

Using simplified English and a user-friendly interface, the website provides a consolidated gateway to information on the Judiciary. This includes an explanation of the differences between criminal, civil and family law; access to court forms and e-services such as verifying the authenticity of court orders; daily hearing lists and guidelines on attending court; and other useful resources to help litigants prepare for court matters and seek legal aid or advice.

The beta version of the website was launched on 1 February 2021. Feedback from stakeholders and users, including lawyers and members of the public, was incorporated to further improve the functionality and features of the website, which was officially launched in November 2021.

Using simplified English and a user-friendly interface, the website provides a consolidated gateway to information on the Judiciary.

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TRANSITIONING TO ONLINE COURT SERVICES

Launch of the Motor Accident Claims Online

The Motor Accident Claims Online (MACO) is a freely accessible online motor accident claims simulator that allows anyone to get a quick, non-binding assessment of who is liable and how much compensation is payable for any personal injuries suffered in a motor accident. Jointly developed by the State Courts and the Singapore Academy of Law, MACO comprises two modules: a liability simulator and a quantum simulator that were launched in October 2020 and April 2021, respectively.

Both modules feature step-by-step questionnaires that have been programmed in accordance with current laws and case precedents. The liability simulator assesses who might be “at fault” for a motor accident, and the percentage of liability that a party is likely to bear. The quantum simulator, on the other hand, assesses what compensation might be awarded for injuries resulting from the motor accident. These assessments, which are only estimates and have no legal effect, would ideally facilitate settlements between parties without having to resort to legal proceedings, saving them both time and money. Significant court resources would also be freed up, given that motor accident claims make up a sizeable proportion of all cases heard in the State Courts.

MACO usage statistics have been extremely encouraging. From launch up till 31 May 2022, the liability simulator recorded 6,654 individual simulations while the quantum simulator recorded 7,080 individual simulations, for a total of 13,734 individual simulations.

To ensure that the information provided by MACO remains up to date, a team in the State Courts is charged with overseeing the platform. This includes carrying out regular reviews in response to developments in the law and feedback, and exploring potential updates to improve MACO.

**From launch up till 31 May 2022,
MACO recorded 13,734
individual simulations.**

MACO users can avail themselves of the liability simulator and/or the quantum simulator.

Divorce eService

The Divorce eService is an online portal designed to facilitate the preparation and filing of court papers for divorces filed on the simplified track. It aims to alleviate the pain of form filing, reduce the time needed, as well as minimise delays and unnecessary expenses in the preparation of divorce court papers.

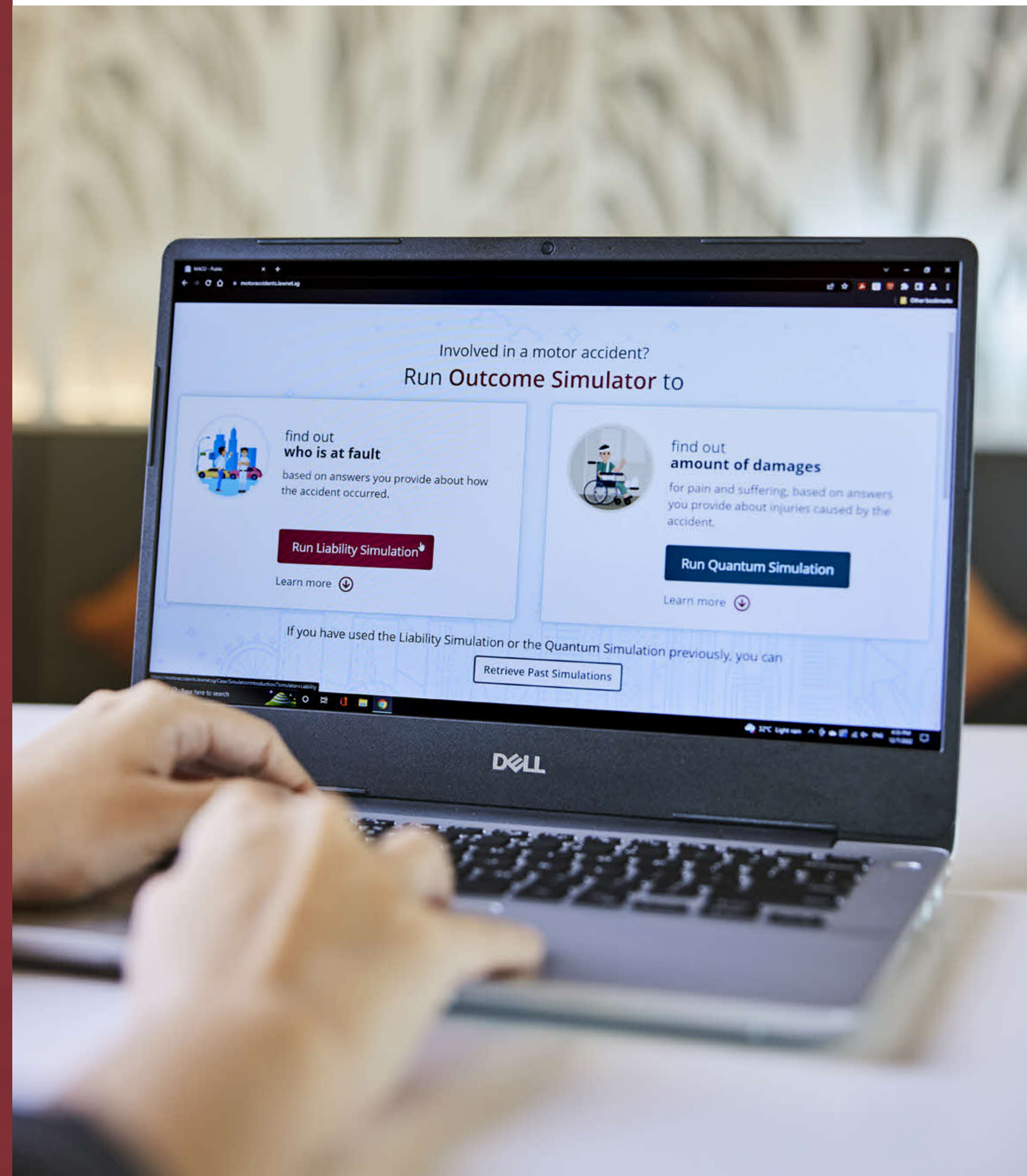
The portal features an option for applicants to automatically populate court forms with available data from Myinfo. Users are guided step-by-step through the form-filling process, with templates for commonly used court orders, digital signing of applicable court papers with Singpass, and facilitation of online payment of court fees. The portal also encourages dispute resolution by facilitating discussions and negotiations between spouses on the terms of the divorce before the commencement of proceedings. If unrepresented litigants decide to engage a lawyer, the eService allows for a seamless handover of editable court forms to the lawyer.

While the portal is currently unavailable for parties intending to file divorces on the normal track, they can nevertheless make use of the eService’s dispute resolution feature. Parties can also use the form generation feature, but they can only receive a copy of the court forms through a lawyer. This caveat ensures that applicants receive the requisite legal advice on the sufficiency and propriety of their court papers prior to filing.

Digital Repository for Case Highlights

To improve parties’ access to knowledge about family law, including rights and remedies, the Family Justice Courts produced a digital repository of Case Highlights, which comprise bite-sized summaries of notable family law decisions. Accessible through the SG Courts website, the Case Highlights assist unrepresented litigants when they conduct their own cases and are also useful to Counsel in their family law work.

There are currently 70 Case Highlights on the website, and more of such decisions will be added.



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HELPING COURT USERS UNDERSTAND JUDICIAL PROCESSES

Guides and Videos for Court Users

To promote access to justice for all, the Family Justice Courts (FJC) produced brochures and videos on the Care and Protection Order and the Family Guidance Order, with visuals and simple language to better explain to lay persons what these are and their application processes.

The Language Services team in the FJC also produced a handbook to help court users, especially litigants in person, understand the role interpreters play in legal proceedings at the FJC and how to request for an interpreter's services. This handbook has been translated into

all three official vernacular languages. In addition, the team assisted to translate and subtitle the Mediation and Counselling brochure and video, respectively, in the three official vernacular languages.

As part of its digital and information outreach initiative, the FJC produced six bite-sized instructional videos relating to Adoption, Access, Guardianship, Maintenance, Probate and Mental Capacity Act proceedings. Hosted on the SG Courts' YouTube channel and website, and with subtitles for better comprehension, the videos provide guidance to court users on these key areas of law and their processes.



The FJC's handbook on interpretation services for court users is available in all four official languages.

This resource is useful for litigants in person who may find it difficult to navigate court processes on their own.

The State Courts published the second edition of its Guidebook for Accused-in-Persons in collaboration with the Community Justice Centre. It incorporates revisions from the recent amendments to the criminal procedure regime, and the services available in the new State Courts Towers. The book was made available online and translated into the vernacular languages.

The SG Courts also worked together to produce a Guide on Court Reporting to give journalists a good basic understanding of the Courts and their processes.

Translation of Glossary of Court and Legal Terms

In an effort to connect with the wider community, the FJC's Language Services team compiled and consolidated a "Translation of Glossary of Terms Commonly Used in FJC" and "Regional Differences in Interpretation Terms" for sharing with stakeholders. This undertaking reflects the FJC's desire to remain an active participant of the community, striving towards a common goal. After all, as the saying goes, "No man is an island."

Lay persons can pick up brochures on the Care and Protection Order and the Family Guidance Order at the FJC, or watch videos online, to learn more about them.

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ANNUAL REPORT 2021



ENHANCING COURT TOOLS AND FACILITIES

Intelligent Case Retrieval System

The Intelligent Case Retrieval System (ICRS) allows users to easily identify, locate and retrieve past cases where the Court had awarded damages for personal injuries. An intuitive user interface guides users with no prior medical knowledge to explore and retrieve relevant cases based on the nature or location of the injury. Monetary awards for various personal injuries are presented clearly through graphic visualisations and case summaries.

There are several advantages of ICRS over the hard-copy reference book, *Practitioners' Library for Assessment of Damages for Personal Injury*. For example, ICRS' advanced search engine and efficient filter functions allow users to easily retrieve relevant cases. In addition, ICRS' database is continuously updated with the most recent cases.

Currently available on LawNet, ICRS is a useful tool for legal professionals who are providing legal advice or preparing legal submissions for personal injury cases.



The new shielding in criminal courtrooms is not only functional but also saves time.

Shielding Measures in Criminal Courtrooms in the Supreme Court Building

Most criminal trials are conducted physically, with the accused in the dock of the courtroom. Shielding is necessary to prevent the witness from seeing the accused, as per section 281A of the Criminal Procedure Code.

Shielding had previously been set up manually by maintenance workers, but many workers were quarantined during the pandemic. Inspired by the switchable glass in the windows of Light Rail Transit trains, the team explored with the supplier and architect to create this innovative and permanent solution for criminal courtrooms, as a way of overcoming the lack of manpower brought by the pandemic.

A key benefit of this measure is that court hearings can proceed without disruption. It was also found to generate time savings of about 10 minutes per hearing.

The ICRS provides graphic visualisations and concise summaries of personal injury cases.



Wireless technology allows court users to present evidence by simply scanning a QR code, or to view an exhibit either on the courtroom's large display or on their individual devices.

Wireless Evidence Display in Courtrooms

The new courtrooms allow counsels to "Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)" to perform app-free, dongle-free evidence presentation. Counsels can BYOD and present evidence via wireless technology by a scan of QR code. The new courtrooms also allow counsels, witnesses and court staff to view an exhibit that is presented on their own devices via wireless network streaming.

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LAUNCH OF A SPECIALISED TECHNOLOGY, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONSTRUCTION LIST

Resolving Complex Disputes in the Singapore International Commercial Court

In August 2021, the Singapore International Commercial Court (SICC) launched the Technology, Infrastructure and Construction List (TIC List), a specialised list for the SICC designed to cater to the resolution of complex disputes, such as technology-related disputes and disputes relating to large infrastructure and construction projects. The TIC List was established under Part XXIV of the SICC Practice Directions, and subsequently constituted under Order 28 of the SICC Rules 2021 upon the entry into force of the SICC Rules 2021 on 1 April 2022.

The TIC List offers several unique features which make it particularly well-suited to the management and resolution of complex disputes. Cases placed in the TIC List are heard by a specialised panel of local and international judges internationally renowned for their experience in the management of technically and factually complex disputes. It also offers specialised case management features specifically designed to facilitate the efficient disposal of technically complex disputes. These include unique provisions relating to the management of expert evidence, document disclosure, the presentation of cases and submissions, as well as wide and flexible powers to facilitate recourse to alternative dispute resolution mechanisms that could help contain or downsize the dispute.

Another feature of the TIC List is the availability of voluntary protocols which parties may agree to apply to cases placed in this list. For example, the Simplified Adjudication Process Protocol allows parties to carve out smaller-value claims to which a simplified process of adjudication would apply, thus streamlining the resolution of the dispute as a whole. Meanwhile, the Pre-Action Protocol facilitates frank and early exchange of information between the parties.

The establishment of the TIC List enhances the SICC's position as a forum of choice for the resolution of complex infrastructure and technology-related disputes. It represents yet another milestone in the development of the SICC as a prime destination for international commercial dispute resolution.

The TIC List offers several unique features which make it particularly well-suited to the management and resolution of complex disputes.

The establishment of the TIC List represents yet another milestone in the evolution of the SICC, located within the Supreme Court.



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Through the lens of therapeutic justice, the legal system epitomises an ethos of care in helping families heal and move forward.

CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT OF THE ADVISORY AND RESEARCH COUNCIL



The FJC is ramping up efforts to bolster the adoption of therapeutic justice in family law.

The Family Justice Courts (FJC) established the Advisory and Research Council (ARC) on Therapeutic Justice on 1 July 2020. Comprising leading international Therapeutic Justice (TJ) experts, the ARC was formed to assist in the FJC's efforts to adopt and advance a TJ approach to family justice and practice.

ARC members have been instrumental in shaping the FJC's TJ narrative. One key initiative they helped design was the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) Pilot, which was initiated in September 2020. High-needs and high-conflict cases were identified and triaged at an early stage of the court proceedings and assigned to MDTs, each consisting of Judges,

Judge-Mediators, Court Family Specialists and Case Managers who dealt with these cases using a problem-solving and non-adversarial approach. A total of 25 cases were assigned to the Pilot, which will conclude in 2022.

In 2021, the ARC provided guidance in compiling relevant TJ reading materials for local law schools. It also provided training to FJC Judges and family law practitioners on TJ methods, practices and techniques.

The ARC will continue to work closely with the FJC to operationalise TJ more fully in the family justice system.



FNE seeks to help parties undergoing divorce proceedings reach a consensual settlement of their disputed financial matters.

FAMILY NEUTRAL EVALUATION

In October 2021, the FJC launched the Family Neutral Evaluation (FNE) pilot to increase the suite of alternative dispute resolution options available for parties undergoing divorce proceedings in court.

Under the pilot, FNE is voluntary and offered for suitable cases where the issues in dispute relate to financial ancillary matters such as maintenance and the division of matrimonial assets. A neutral Evaluator provides divorcing parties with a non-binding indication of the likely outcomes should the matters proceed for adjudication. This evaluation serves as a basis for parties to achieve a consensual settlement of their disputed financial matters. Evaluators are drawn from the FJC's pool of judges (serving and retired) in the Family Dispute Resolution Division.

A review will be conducted when the pilot concludes at the end of 2022 to assess its effectiveness, with a view to include FNE as a permanent dispute resolution alternative in the FJC.

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REFRAMING TEACHING AND LEARNING

Family Therapeutic Justice Certification Programme

Following the recommendations of the Review and Enhance Reforms in the Family Justice System (RERF) Committee, a working group comprising representatives from the Singapore Academy of Law, the Family Justice Courts (FJC) and the Law Society of Singapore's Family Law Practice Committee collaborated to conceptualise a voluntary certification programme for family law practitioners. Known as the Family Therapeutic Justice Certification Programme, it aims to equip them with relevant multi-disciplinary specialist skillsets.

A total of 40 family law practitioners attended and completed the first run of the programme, which was conducted by the Singapore Academy of Law in October/November 2021. The second run is projected to take place in the fourth quarter of 2022.

Conversation Circles on Therapeutic Justice

As part of the revamped curriculum for its Judiciary-Wide Induction Programme, the Singapore Judicial College introduced 'Conversation Circles' to encourage the sharing of judicial perspectives on why judges do the work they do. Some of these sessions focused on Therapeutic Justice (TJ). The Presiding Judge of the FJC, Justice Debbie Ong, engaged in Conversation Circles with newly-appointed judges and shared the FJC's perspective on what TJ is, why the role of FJC judges encompasses practising TJ, and the practical implications of TJ in action.

The FJC is engaging in efforts to advance therapeutic justice among family law practitioners and newly-appointed judges.



A programme involving the FJC-ISCA Panel of Financial Experts was piloted in 2021.

DELIVERING THERAPEUTIC JUSTICE IN MATRIMONIAL MATTERS

In December 2020, the FJC signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Institute of Singapore Chartered Accountants (ISCA) to form a Panel of Financial Experts made up of ISCA members who will provide neutral valuation reports in Family Court proceedings. A pilot programme was launched in 2021 and has since concluded. Revisions were made to the key documents and workflows for implementation with a view of relaunching the scheme.

The scheme seeks to promote resolution amongst parties in a non-adversarial manner and save costs for all involved, so that they can find a financially sustainable way forward. Such neutral valuation reports will facilitate and enable a more amicable resolution of matrimonial issues, which is core to the delivery of TJ.

This scheme was neatly summarised in the case of *VZD v VZE* [2022] SGFC 1, where the Court highlighted that a financial expert would assist the Court and the Parties by providing an equitable and objective valuation of the matrimonial assets under contest, thereby allowing justice to be administered more effectively and efficiently.

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RAISING AWARENESS OF THERAPEUTIC JUSTICE



District Judge Lim Choi Ming was featured in a Yahoo! News clip about the FJC.

Media Pitch to Yahoo!

As part of the Courts' efforts to demystify the Judiciary and provide insights on the inner workings of the Courts, the former Office of Public Affairs (OPA) of the Supreme Court and the Family Justice Courts (FJC) worked with Yahoo! News Singapore on a story about the role of Judge-Mediators in resolving marital and familial disputes.

District Judge (DJ) Lim Choi Ming took the news crew on a journey inside the FJC, where she talked about her mediation work to help parties reach an amicable solution and avoid bitter court battles, and how this is integral to the concept of Therapeutic Justice (TJ). She candidly shared the types of cases that affected her the most, her observations on the trends in FJC cases, and how her work affected her views on marriage.

For instance, DJ Lim recalled a case involving a young couple who had filed for protection orders against each other and called on their family members to testify. Through mediation, she was able to diffuse the tension and persuaded the couple to work on their marriage with their parents' help. This experience was deeply moving for DJ Lim because she realised that the Family Court can be a place where healing happens, instead of merely dispensing the law. DJ Lim noted that a wise judge once told her, "You can have a bad marriage, but you can have a good divorce."

Emily's Day in the Family Justice Courts

Coming to court can be an intimidating and overwhelming experience for children. To help young court users better understand the possible situations they may encounter or hear about in a Family Court proceeding, the FJC produced a children's video titled "Emily's Day in the Family Justice Courts".

In the animated video, little Emily visits the FJC with her parents who are filing for divorce. Emily is guided by Renee, a Court Family Specialist, who shows her around and assures Emily that she can safely share her feelings, needs and wishes in court to alleviate her stress and fear.

This is a free resource that family lawyers and parents may wish to tap on to prepare children who need to attend court at the FJC.



A YouTube video produced by the FJC shows a young character, Emily, being shown around the premises.



Brochures on therapeutic justice are available in all four official languages for members of the public.

Translation of Collaterals in Vernacular Languages

In her FJC's Work Plan speech in 2020, Justice Debbie Ong introduced a renewed vision of family justice guided by the principles of TJ. She highlighted that family cases are special in nature and require a different case-management approach, where concerned parties must keep an open mind and work together to cultivate the best solutions for the benefit of all family members.

In line with this new approach, the former OPA produced a brochure and video on TJ in English and our three official vernacular languages for court users' awareness. Subsequently, the language team was also roped in to provide subtitles for the video in the three official vernacular languages.

These translated works enable the FJC's TJ vision to reach out to a wider audience and facilitate court users to better understand the TJ approach and manage their cases in the FJC for positive outcomes.

Trust & Confidence

Just and timely resolution of cases is a hallmark of effective and efficient court operations, instilling trust and confidence in the Judiciary.

STATISTICS

Supreme Court's Waiting Periods

The Supreme Court sets targets for **waiting periods** in various court processes as part of its commitment to provide quality public service, and endeavours to achieve at least 90% compliance with all targets set.

In 2021, all the following set targets were achieved.

In 2021, all the set targets for waiting periods were achieved.

ORIGINAL CIVIL JURISDICTION

Trials in Suits

8 weeks from the date of setting down

Originating Summons (OS)

- (i) **Inter partes**
6 weeks from the date of filing of the OS
- (ii) **Ex parte**
3 weeks from the date of filing of the OS

Bankruptcy OS

6 weeks from the date of filing of the OS

Company Winding-Up OS

4 weeks from the date of filing of the OS

Summons (SUM)

- (i) **Applications for summary judgment pursuant to Order 14 of the Rules of Court**
5 weeks from the date of filing of the SUM (statutory minimum period)
- (ii) **All other applications**
3 weeks from the date of filing of the SUM

Bankruptcy SUM (Applications for discharge)

4 weeks from the date of filing of the SUM

APPELLATE CIVIL JURISDICTION

Registrar's Appeals to the General Division of the High Court Judge in Chambers

- **4 weeks** from the date of filing for appeals involving assessment of damages
- **3 weeks** from the date of filing for other appeals

Appeals to the General Division of the High Court from the State Courts

4 weeks from the date of receipt of the Record of Proceedings (ROP) from the State Courts

ORIGINAL CRIMINAL JURISDICTION

Trials of Criminal Cases

6 weeks from the date of the final Criminal Case Disclosure Conference or Pre-trial Conference (whichever is later)

APPELLATE CRIMINAL JURISDICTION

Appeals to the General Division of the High Court from the State Courts

12 weeks from the date of receipt of the ROP from the State Courts

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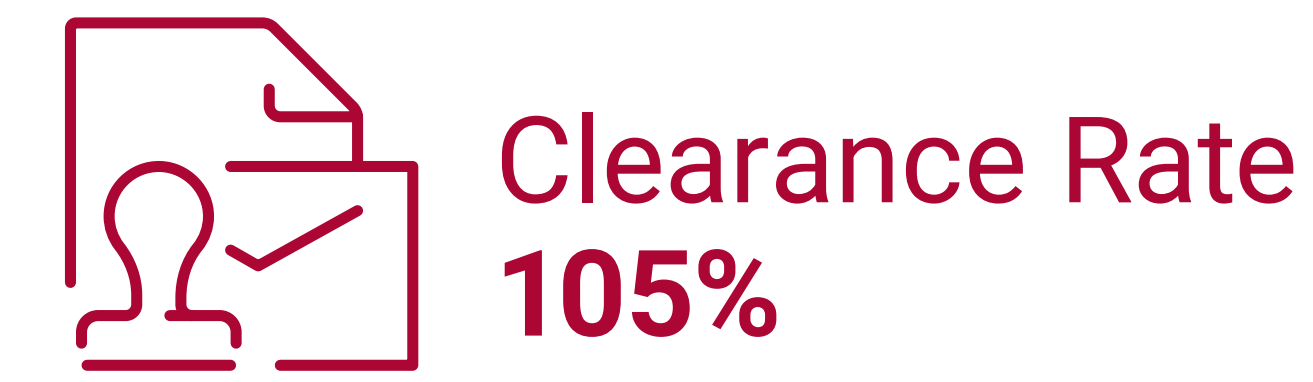
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STATISTICS

Supreme Court's Workload Statistics

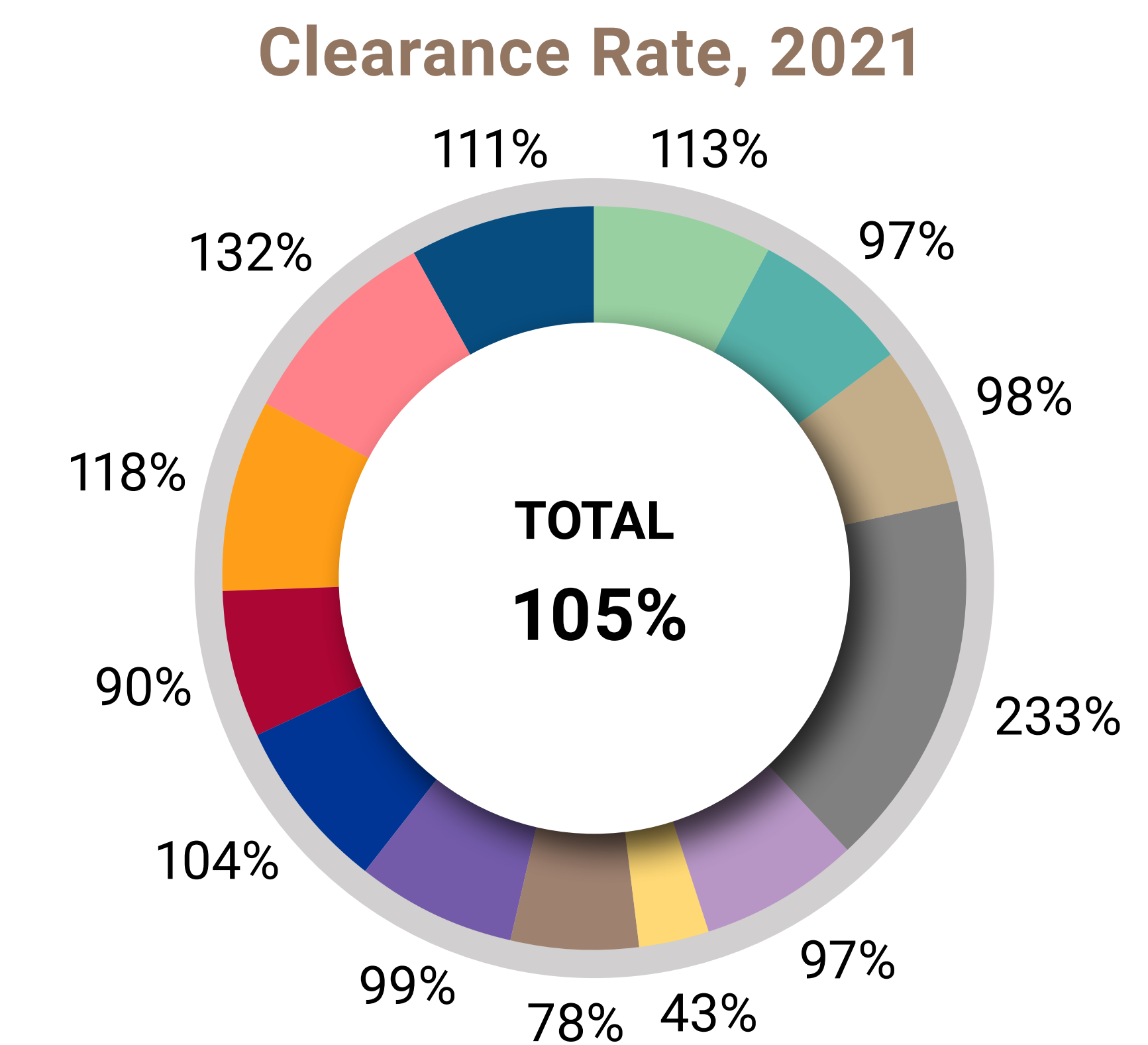
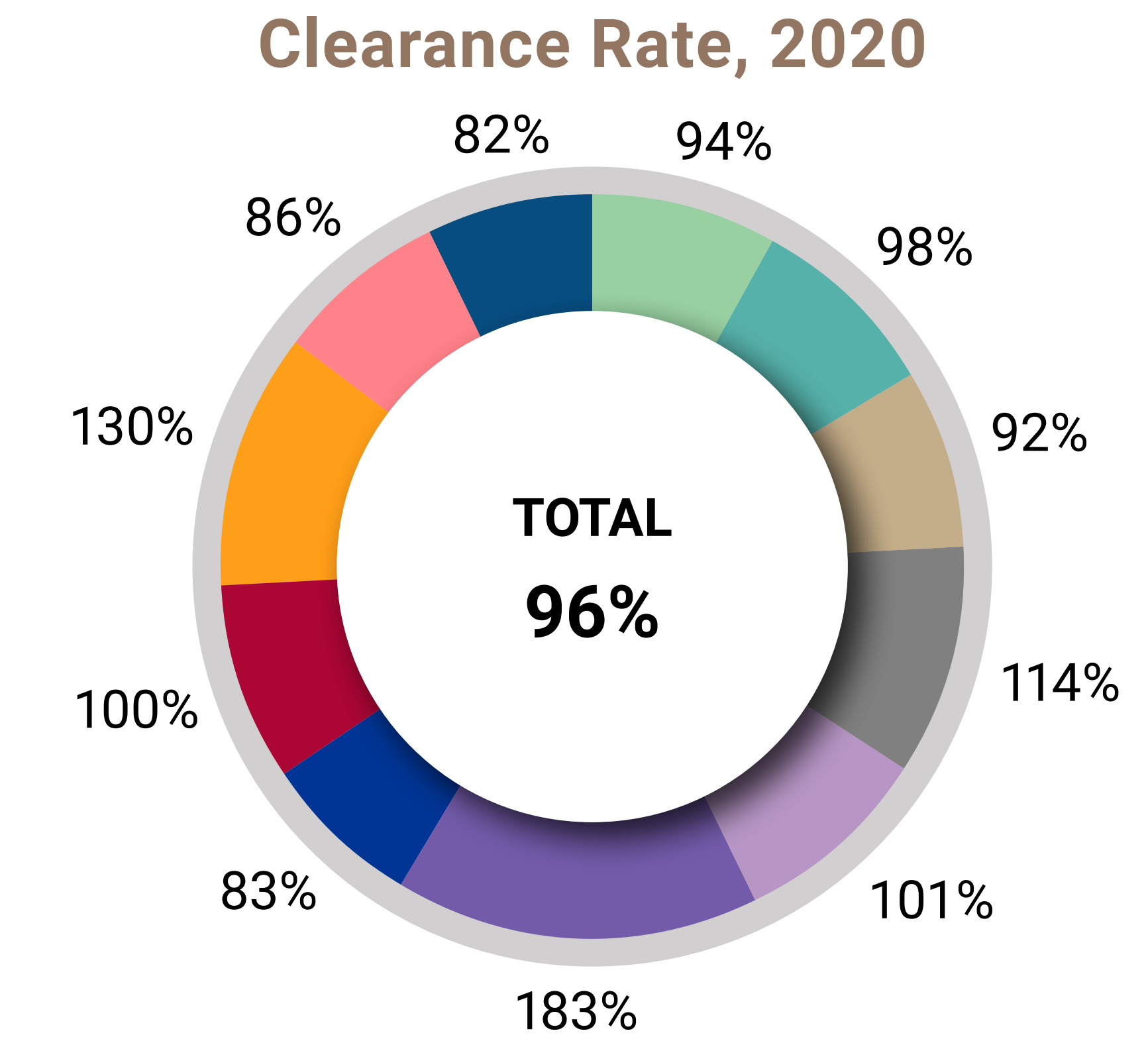


Among other indicators, the SG Courts' performance is measured by clearance rate, which is the number of cases disposed of expressed as a percentage of the number of cases filed in the same year. The clearance rate can exceed 100% as those disposed of are not necessarily a subset of the filings in that year.

In 2021, the Supreme Court received 14,026 new civil and criminal matters and disposed of 14,710 matters. The clearance rate for all civil and criminal matters was 105%, up by 9% from 2020.

The following shows a comparison of the filing and disposal numbers and clearance rates for civil and criminal proceedings between 2020 and 2021.

	No. of cases filed		No. of cases disposed of	
	2020	2021	2020	2021
Civil Jurisdiction				
Civil Originating Processes	6,839	6,716	6,420	7,587
Civil Interlocutory Applications	5,743	5,956	5,633	5,791
Appeals before the General Division of the High Court	410	421	377	412
Appeals before the Court of Appeal	213	72	243	168
Applications before the Court of Appeal	183	132	185	128
Appeals before the Appellate Division of the High Court	-	138	-	59
Applications before the Appellate Division of the High Court	-	103	-	80
Criminal Jurisdiction				
Criminal Cases	40	69	73	68
Criminal Motions before the General Division of the High Court	83	116	69	121
Magistrate's Appeals	236	226	235	203
Criminal Revisions	10	11	13	13
Criminal Appeals	44	31	38	41
Criminal Motions before the Court of Appeal	38	35	31	39
Total	13,839	14,026	13,317	14,710



- Civil Jurisdiction**
- Civil Originating Processes
 - Civil Interlocutory Applications
 - Appeals before the General Division of the High Court
 - Appeals before the Court of Appeal
 - Applications before the Court of Appeal
 - Appeals before the Appellate Division of the High Court
 - Applications before the Appellate Division of the High Court
- Criminal Jurisdiction**
- Criminal Cases
 - Criminal Motions before the General Division of the High Court
 - Magistrate's Appeals
 - Criminal Revisions
 - Criminal Appeals
 - Criminal Motions before the Court of Appeal

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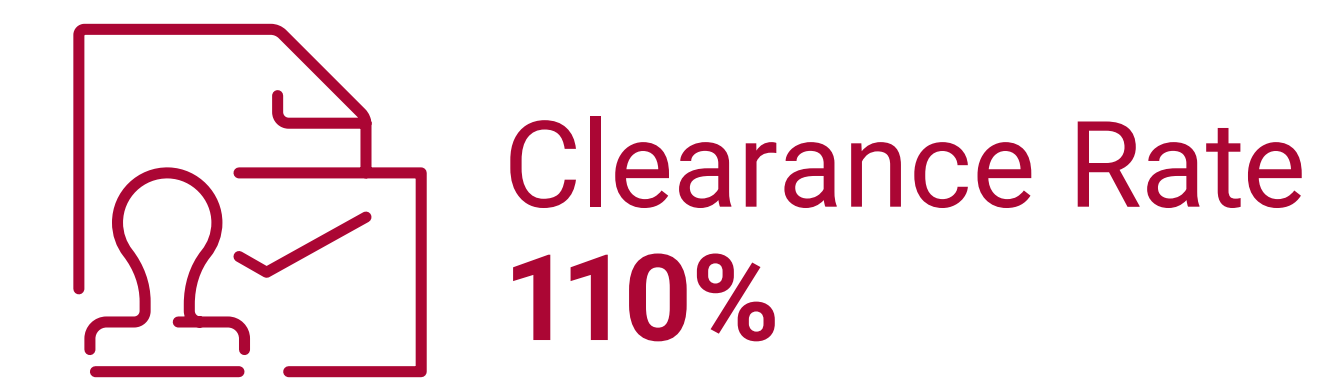
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State Courts' Workload Statistics



In 2021, the State Courts received 190,966 new civil and criminal matters and disposed of 210,733 matters. The clearance rate for all civil and criminal matters was 110%, up by 2% from 2020.

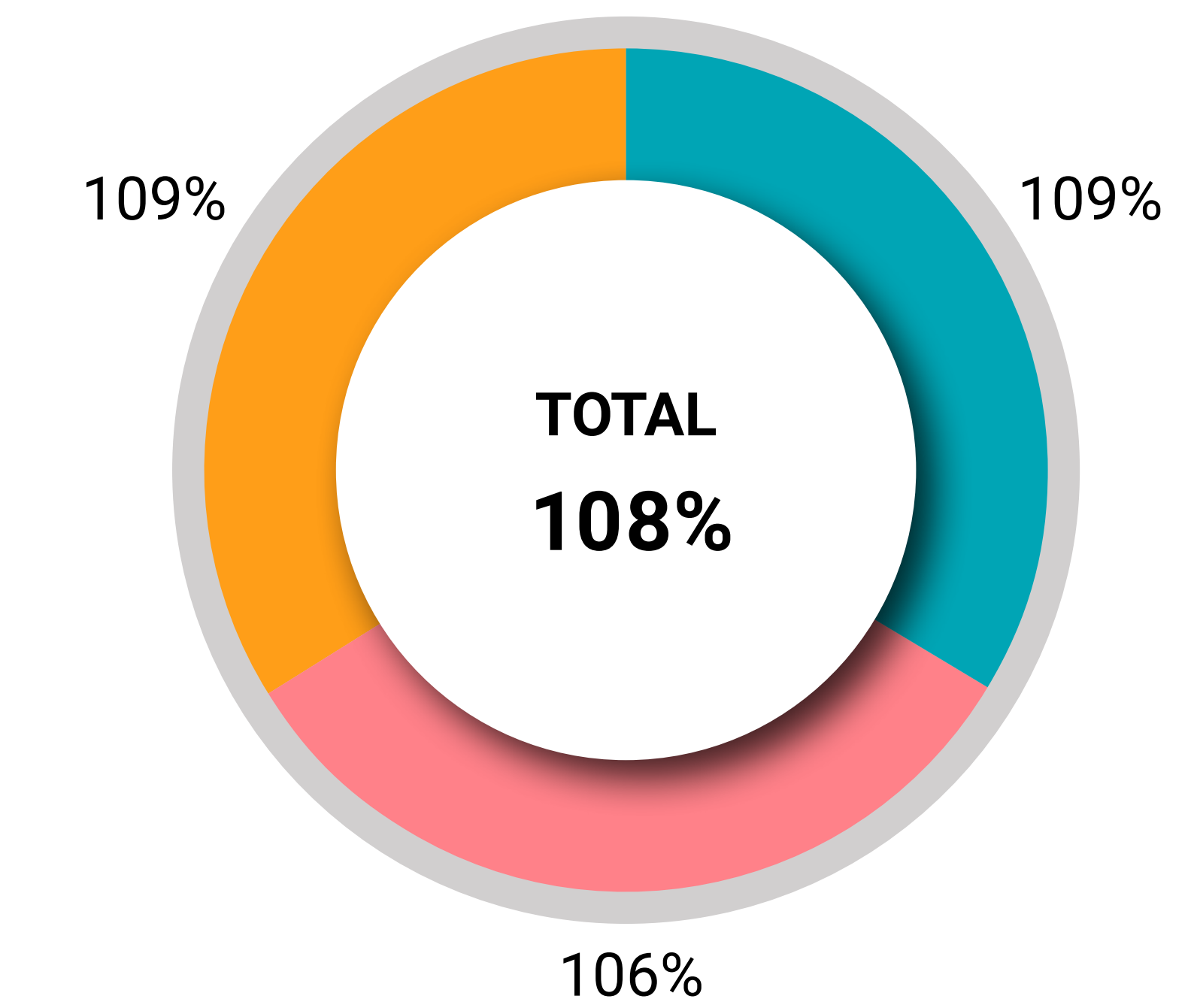
The following shows a comparison of the filing and disposal numbers and clearance rates for civil and criminal proceedings between 2020 and 2021.

	No. of cases filed		No. of cases disposed of	
	2020	2021	2020	2021
Criminal Cases	143,728	149,515	156,129	166,162
Criminal Charge ¹	38,324	38,986	-	-
Departmental or Statutory Board Charge and Summons	53,188	68,326	-	-
Traffic Charge and Summons	47,982	37,455	-	-
Coroner's Court Case	4,219	4,745	-	-
Magistrate's Complaint ²	15	3	-	-
Civil Cases	31,189	29,115	33,193	31,571
Originating Process	18,831	16,205	-	-
Writ of Summons	18,282	15,408	-	-
Originating Summons	549	797	-	-
Interlocutory Application	10,720	11,120	-	-
Summons ³	7,028	7,128	-	-
Summons for Directions (Order 25 or 37)	3,552	3,887	-	-
Summary Judgment (Order 14)	140	105	-	-
Others	-	-	-	-
Taxation	102	97	-	-
Assessment of Damages	1,536	1,693	-	-
Community Justice and Tribunals Cases	12,099	12,336	13,135	13,000
Community Disputes Resolution Tribunals (CDRT) Claim	211	237	-	-
Employment Claims Tribunals (ECT) Claim	1,453	997	-	-
Magistrate's Complaint	1,380	1,388	-	-
Protection from Harassment Court (PHC) Case	153	434	-	-
Small Claims Tribunals (SCT) Claim	8,902	9,280	-	-
Total	187,016	190,966	202,457	210,733

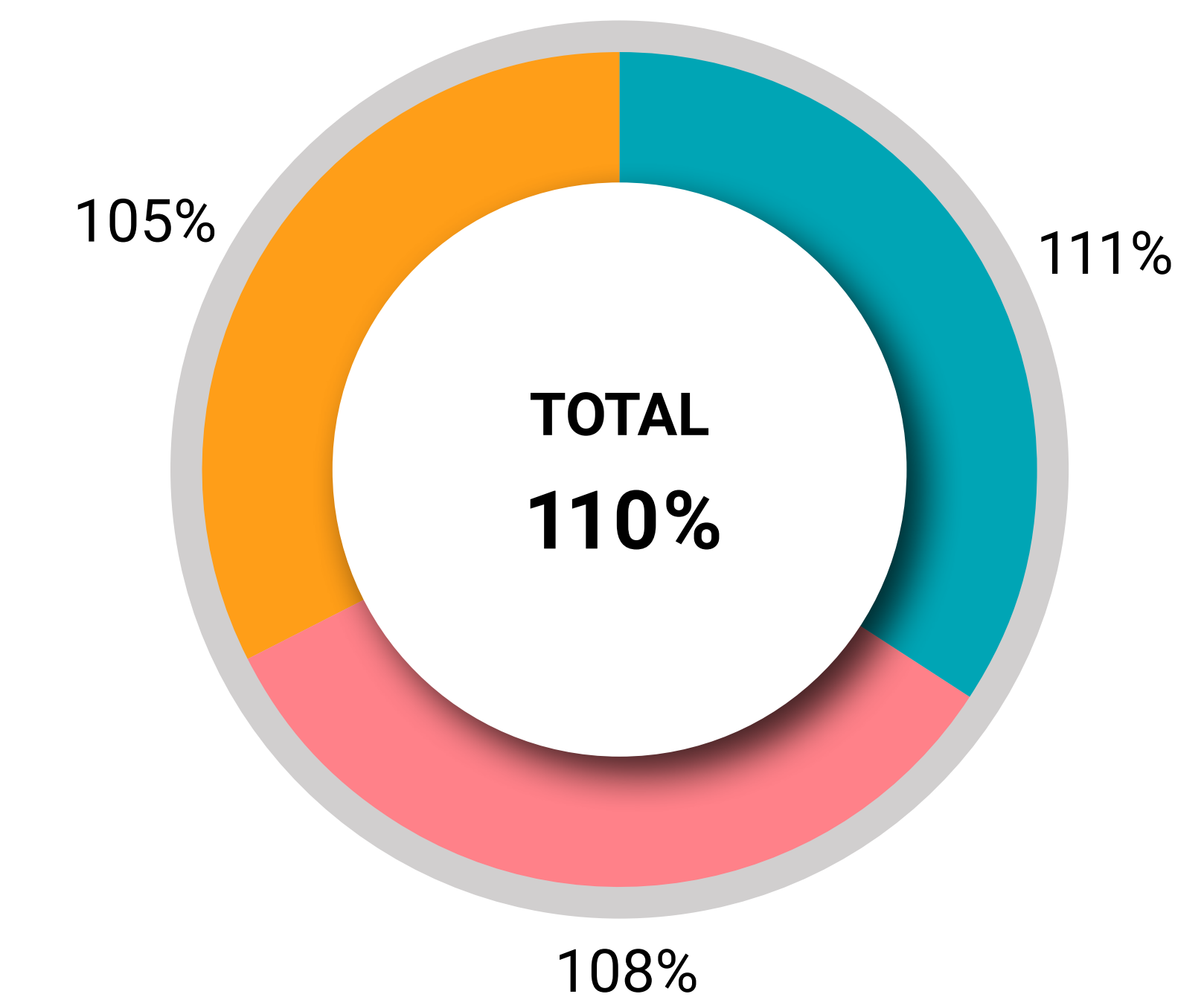
OTHER CASELOAD PROFILE

Court Dispute Resolution⁴	5,434	4,994	-	-
(Civil) Writ of Summons, Originating Summons	5,085	4,476	-	-
(Community) PHC Case, CDRT Claim, Magistrate's Complaint	349	518	-	-

Clearance Rate, 2020



Clearance Rate, 2021



- Criminal Cases
- Civil Cases
- Community Justice and Tribunals Cases

Notes:

- ¹ Includes District arrest charges, Magistrates' arrest charges and other types of charges.
- ² Non-relational Magistrate's Complaints are counted as criminal cases. Relational Magistrate's Complaints are counted as Community Justice and Tribunals cases.
- ³ Excludes Summons for Directions (Order 25 or 37).
- ⁴ Refers to fresh cases handled by the Court Dispute Resolution cluster in the respective years.

Our People

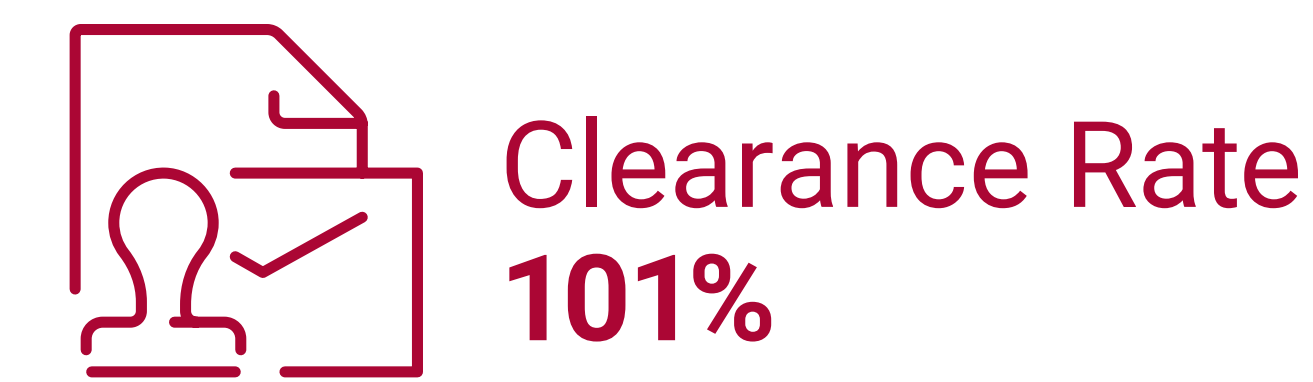
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STATISTICS

Family Justice Courts' Workload Statistics



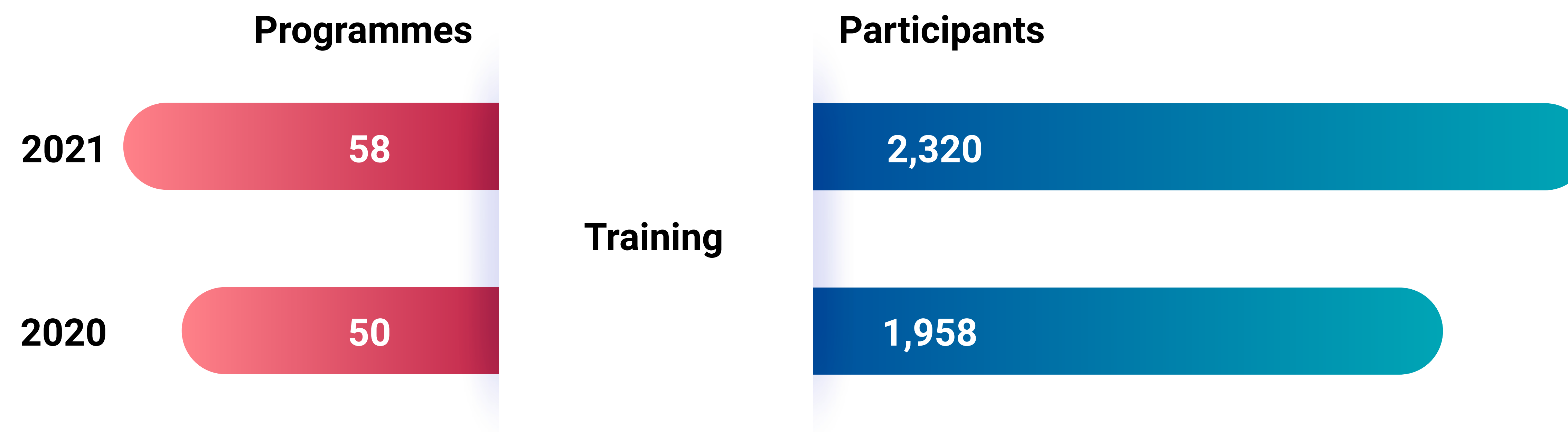
In 2021, the Family Justice Courts handled 26,560 cases, up by 4.3% from 2020. Divorce, Maintenance and Probate cases made up more than half of the total caseload.

	No. of cases filed		No. of cases disposed of	
	2020	2021	2020	2021
Maintenance & Family Violence	5,654	4,971	5,478	5,434
Divorce, Originating Summons, Probate & Summons	18,682	20,390	18,495	20,360
Youth Court	1,140	1,199	958	1,106
Total	25,476	26,560	24,931	26,900

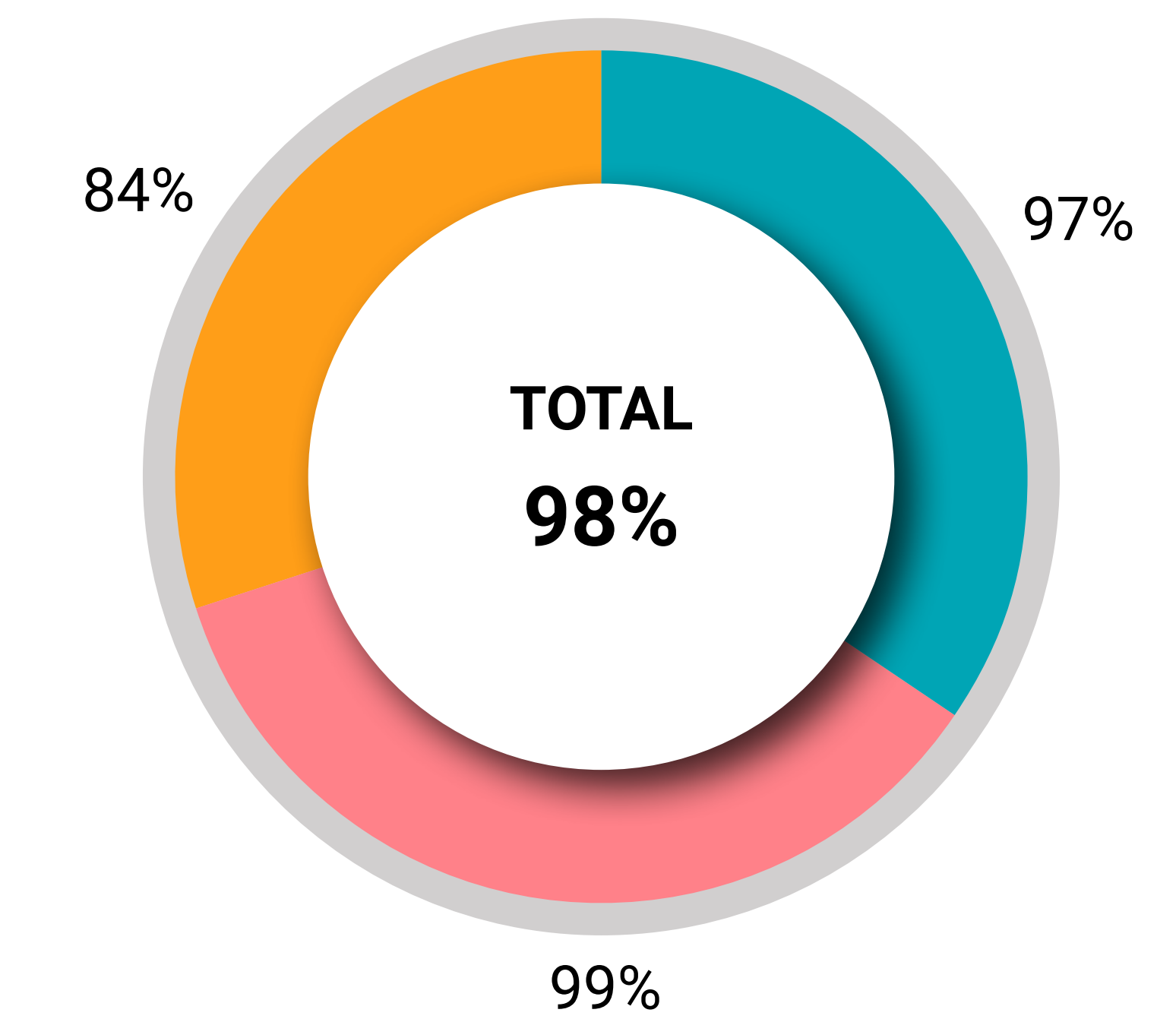
Singapore Judicial College's Programmes and Participants

To ensure the SG Courts feature best-in-class judges, the Singapore Judicial College (SJC) continued to fortify the Bench with more and better-quality training in 2021. It developed a Judiciary Competency Framework to drive training and development in competencies that are necessary at different stages of a judge's career. Following a swift and successful pivot to online training, the SJC also improved its delivery of interactive and immersive online programmes including virtual drafting classes and asynchronous role-play exercises, which were traditionally thought possible only in a physical classroom.

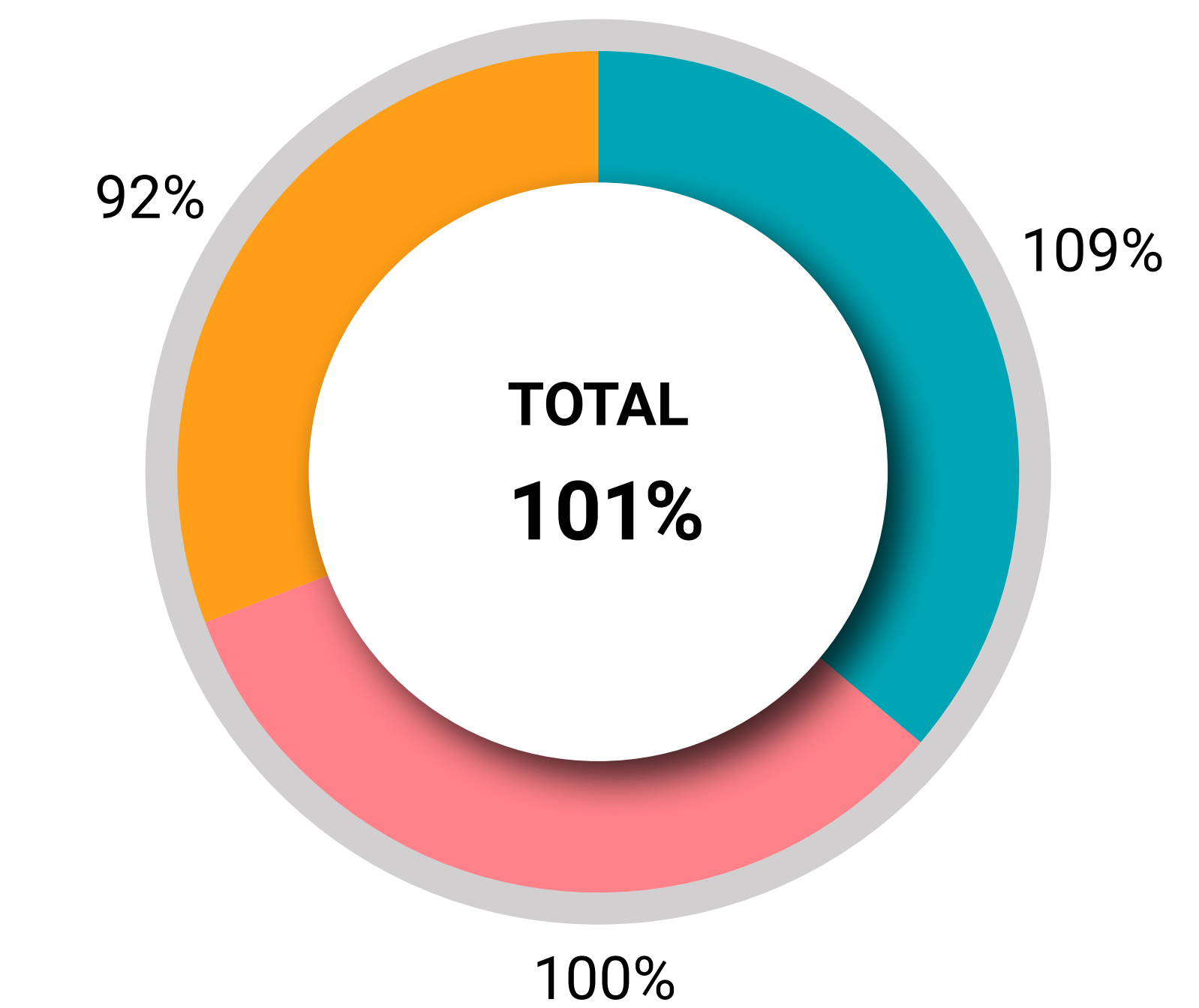
In 2021, the SJC conducted a total of 58 training programmes for 2,320 judiciary participants. This was more than the 50 programmes for 1,958 participants in 2020.



Clearance Rate, 2020



Clearance Rate, 2021



- Maintenance & Family Violence
- Divorce, Originating Summons, Probate & Summons
- Youth Court

The Singapore Judicial College continued to fortify the Bench with more and better-quality training in 2021.

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INTERNATIONAL RANKINGS

Based on global rule-of-law rankings by reputable think tanks and international organisations, the Singapore Judiciary and legal system remained among the best in the world in 2021. Singapore maintained high scores across multiple annual surveys and research studies, ranking within or close to the top 10 for most indicators. This exemplary performance is a recognition of the high quality of justice dispensed by the Singapore Judiciary.



International Institute for Management Development – World Competitiveness Yearbook 2021

Justice: Fairness in Administration of Justice
Legal and Regulatory Framework

RANK

8 out of 64
1 out of 64



Fraser Institute – Economic Freedom of the World: 2021 Annual Report

Legal System and Property Rights

RANK

10 out of 165

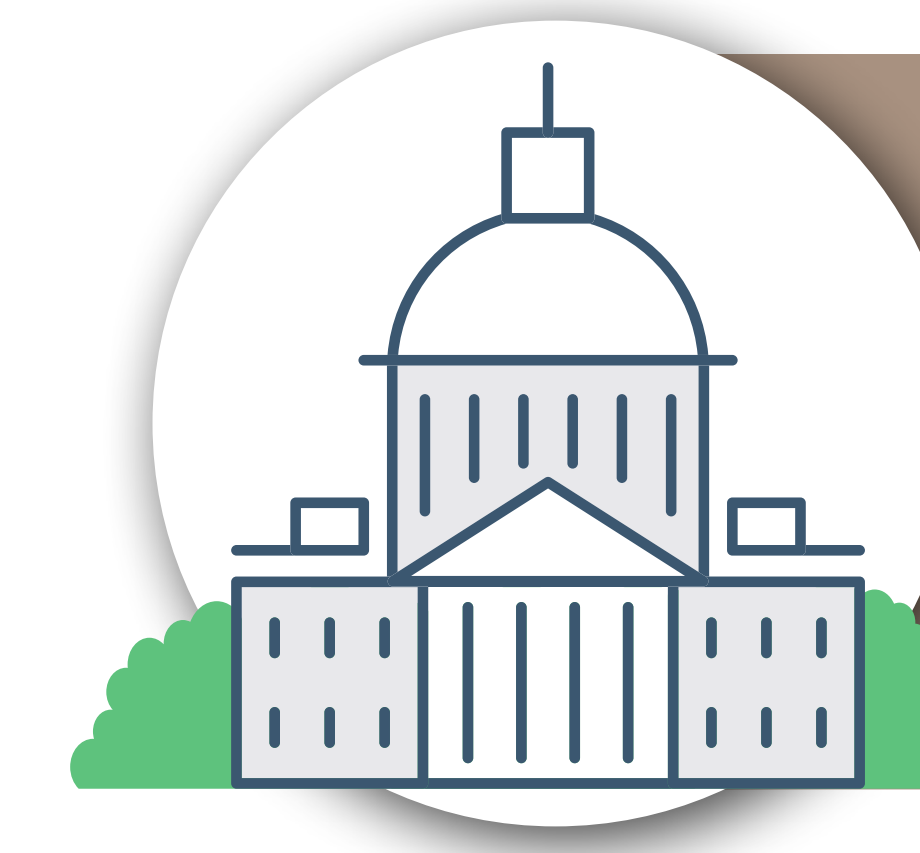


World Justice Project – Rule of Law Index 2021

Overall
Civil Justice
Criminal Justice

RANK

17 out of 139
8 out of 139
7 out of 139



World Bank – Worldwide Governance Indicators 2021

Rule of Law

RANK

4 out of 209



The word cloud (above) shows the different types of internal audit projects delivered in 2021.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Good corporate governance is essential for effective and efficient running of court operations. Within the Supreme Court and Family Justice Courts (FJC), the Audit Committee (AC) met regularly throughout 2021 to oversee and guide sound implementation of internal controls, leading to greater trust and confidence in the justice system.

The AC provided a layer of management oversight to ensure compliance with relevant Government Instruction Manuals and regulatory requirements. Despite the pandemic, regular AC meetings were

held to steer proper use of government resources (including funds), information and systems.

Continuous compliance with regulatory requirements at both the virtual and physical workplace was also assured through the AC's oversight controls. Various internal audit projects were carried out to address the risk of ineffective controls for policies and procedures developed prior to COVID-19. These projects aligned and improved the relevancy of processes and procedures, information system security controls, as well as enterprise risk management and business continuity management practices governing virtual and hybrid work arrangements.

The Chief Risk Officer, who reports to the AC, is tasked to work with all the directorates on enterprise risk management for the Supreme Court and FJC. The Executive Committee identifies, assesses and maps the various enterprise risks faced by the courts into an Enterprise Risk Register, which is then reviewed and approved by the AC. As new directorates are established and external factors (especially the COVID-19 pandemic) impact the courts, both risk severity and enterprise risks will change with each review. Following the introduction of enterprise risk management within the State Courts in September 2021, the State Courts will also align their efforts towards an integrated framework with the Supreme Court and FJC.

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SIGNIFICANT CASES FROM THE SUPREME COURT

Clarification on the Application of Issue Estoppel Arising from Foreign Judgments

*Merck Sharp & Dohme Corp (formerly known as Merck & Co, Inc)
v Merck KGaA (formerly known as E Merck)*

The predecessors of the appellant and respondent entered into an agreement to govern their use of the name “Merck” in various jurisdictions. They subsequently became embroiled in litigation around the world, including England. The English courts handed down three decisions which were in the respondent’s favour.

The respondent then commenced proceedings in Singapore for trademark infringement, passing off and breach of contract. In respect of its contractual claim, the respondent applied for summary judgment. It also applied for preliminary determinations to be made under O 14 r 12 of the Rules of Court (2014 Rev Ed) in respect of legal issues decided by the English courts. The High Court dismissed the summary judgment application but allowed the two O 14 r 12 applications, and the Court of Appeal affirmed this decision.

In arriving at its decision, the apex court clarified the application of issue estoppel to foreign judgments. It made three noteworthy points. First, foreign judgments are capable of giving rise to issue estoppel. Where there are multiple competing foreign judgments, the foreign judgment that is the first in time should be recognised for the purposes of creating an estoppel. However, where there is an inconsistent prior or subsequent local judgment between the same parties, the foreign judgment should not be recognised. Second, for a foreign judgment to give rise to issue estoppel, not only the foreign judgment as a whole but also the decision on the specific issue that is said to be the subject matter of the estoppel must be final and conclusive under the law of the foreign judgment’s originating jurisdiction. Finally, issue estoppel does not apply to a foreign (or even local) judgment on a “pure” question of law that does not directly affect the parties’ rights, liabilities or legal relationship.

Challenges to Correction Directions Issued Under the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act

*The Online Citizen Pte Ltd v Attorney-General and another
appeal and other matters*

The Online Citizen Pte Ltd (TOC) and the Singapore Democratic Party (SDP) were issued correction directions under the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act 2019 (Act 18 of 2019) (POFMA), requiring them to insert correction notices in certain articles and Facebook posts that they had published online. TOC and SDP then applied to set aside these correction directions.

The Court of Appeal first considered the constitutionality of POFMA and correction directions thereunder. A statement in respect of which a correction direction is issued continues to enjoy constitutional protection under Article 14(1)(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore (1985 Rev Ed, 1999 Reprint) until it is judicially determined to be a false statement of fact. However, the issuance of a correction direction does not curtail the communicator’s Article 14(1)(a) right to freedom of speech; and even if it does, any such restriction is justifiable under Article 14(2)(a).

In determining whether such a direction can be set aside under ss 17(5)(a) and/or 17(5)(b) of POFMA, a five-step analytical framework applies. The court must:

- (i) ascertain the meaning the Minister intended to place on the statement identified in the direction;
- (ii) determine whether the subject material made or contained that statement;
- (iii) determine objectively whether the statement was a “statement of fact” as defined in s 2(2)(a) of POFMA;
- (iv) determine objectively whether the statement was “false” in the sense explained in s 2(2)(b) of POFMA; and
- (v) consider whether the statement was communicated in Singapore, as required under s 10(1)(a) of POFMA.



The burden of proof in setting-aside applications lies on the recipient of the direction, who must show a *prima facie* case of reasonable suspicion that one or more of the grounds for setting-aside under ss 17(5)(a) and/or 17(5)(b) is satisfied.

Applying these principles, the Court of Appeal allowed SDP’s appeal in part but dismissed TOC’s appeal. There was no basis to set aside the correction directions issued to either party, save in relation to one statement made by SDP which had not been communicated in Singapore.

Limitation Periods for Unjust Enrichment Founded Upon Contract

United Petroleum Trading Ltd v Trafigura Pte Ltd

The appellant alleged that three sums of money were paid to the respondent as initial margin pursuant to an agreement under which the respondent had agreed to trade futures contracts for gasoline on the appellant’s behalf. The appellant sought recovery of the first two sums paid on 25 and 30 September 2013 on the basis of, among others, total failure of consideration. The appellant commenced the suit on 16 October 2019, more than six years after the payments had been received by the respondent. The respondent sought to strike out the claims for those two sums on the basis that they were time-barred. It was common ground between the parties that the claims were founded upon a contract and were thus subject to a six-year limitation period.

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The Appellate Division of the High Court held that the cause of action only accrues when all three requirements for such claim are satisfied, namely (a) enrichment of the defendant; (b) at the expense of the plaintiff; and (c) the presence of an unjust factor. Where the claim rests on the grounds of a total failure of consideration, the cause of action cannot be said to have accrued until the failure of consideration has occurred. Although a failure of consideration may coincide with the date that moneys were received in some cases, that was not so in the present case.

The Court found that the pleadings failed to show that the accrual of the cause of action had occurred within the limitation period. The Court thus struck out the appellant's claim for the two sums paid.

Equal Protection in the Scheduling of Executions*Syed Suhail bin Syed Zin v Attorney-General*

The applicant was convicted and sentenced to the mandatory death penalty for trafficking in not less than 38.84g of diamorphine. His appeal against conviction and sentence was dismissed, and his petition for clemency was denied. He was then scheduled to be executed on 18 September 2020. Shortly before this, he applied for leave to commence judicial review proceedings against the decision to schedule his execution on 18 September 2020 on the basis that this was ahead of other prisoners who had been sentenced to death earlier than he had been. This, the applicant argued, was in violation of Article 12 of the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore (1985 Rev Ed, 1999 Reprint). The application for leave was granted by the Court of Appeal in *Syed Suhail bin Syed Zin v Attorney-General* [2021] 1 SLR 809, and the applicant was allowed to commence judicial review.

In these proceedings, the applicant's most noteworthy argument was advanced with reference to two persons who had been convicted and sentenced to death before him, Datchinamurthy a/l Kataiah and Rahimi bin Mehrzad, but whose executions had still not been scheduled. Using them as comparators, the applicant argued that his

right to equal treatment under Article 12(1) had been violated. If the applicant was "equally situated" with these two individuals, there could have been a violation of Article 12(1). However, the High Court examined the positions of Datchinamurthy and Rahimi and found that there were legitimate reasons for their executions being held in abeyance. The Attorney-General's Chambers explained that their cases were being reviewed in light of the Court of Appeal's decision in *Gobi a/l Avedian v AG* [2020] 2 SLR 883, and, as such, there was a possibility that their cases might be reopened on their merits. By contrast, no such possibility existed in respect of the applicant's case. They were, therefore, not equally situated and Article 12(1) had not been violated.

**Commencement of Administrative Proceedings
Not a Repudiatory Breach of Arbitration Agreement***CLQ v CLR*

The plaintiff was the Government of a country, which the Singapore International Commercial Court referred to in its judgment as "Ruritania". The defendant was a developer. The defendant brought arbitration proceedings against the plaintiff for damages arising out of a joint venture agreement (JVA). The plaintiff challenged the jurisdiction of the arbitral tribunal on the basis that the defendant had repudiated the arbitration agreement within the JVA by bringing court proceedings. Several months after the JVA had been signed, and before the preliminary steps in the performance of the JVA had been completed, the defendant brought proceedings in the Ruritanian courts against three of the plaintiff's ministries (the Ruritanian Proceedings). The proceedings were to compel the ministries to register a joint venture company and sign a lease, both of which were preliminary steps in the JVA.

The Court found that, objectively, the defendant's actions did not evince clear intention to repudiate the arbitration agreement. The Ruritanian Proceedings were limited to obtaining administrative relief that would support the preliminary steps required for the performance of the JVA. This was clear from the backdrop to the

Ruritanian Proceedings, the papers filed therein, the relief sought and the statements made by parties during proceedings.

The Court also found that the arbitration agreement was a valuable protective mechanism for both parties, and thus it was unlikely that either party would choose to abandon it during the formative stages of the JVA's performance. Furthermore, the Court found that it would be contradictory to treat the defendant as disavowing the arbitration agreement when the purpose of its commencement of the Ruritanian Proceedings was to jumpstart the JVA.

Finally, the Court also observed that the English and Singapore approaches to determining whether there had been a repudiation of an arbitration agreement, although different, would lead to the same result.



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SIGNIFICANT CASES FROM THE STATE COURTS

CRIMINAL

PP v Glynn Benjamin

This is the first case in which an accused person claimed trial to charges under the COVID-19 (Temporary Measures) Act 2020 for failing to wear a mask while not in his ordinary place of residence.

Benjamin Glynn was charged with two counts under Regulation 3A(1)(a) of the COVID-19 (Temporary Measures) (Control Order) Regulations 2020, punishable under section 34(7)(a) of the COVID-19 (Temporary Measures) Act 2020, for failing to wear a mask on an MRT train and outside the vicinity of the State Courts respectively. He was also charged under section 209(b) of the Penal Code for causing annoyance to the public, and under section 6(1)(a) of the Protection from Harassment Act for using threatening words towards two police officers.

During the trial, Glynn argued that he was a “living man” and above Singapore’s laws and that he had not entered into any commercial contract to subject himself to the regulations requiring him to wear a mask. The Court rejected Glynn’s defence and found that he was completely misguided in his beliefs. The Court explained that the COVID-19 (Temporary Measures) Act 2020 is part of Singapore’s law and would apply to anyone who sets foot here. The Court further observed that Glynn knew very well that the regulations were in force and held that it was not open to him to say that he is above the law. With regard to the charges under the Penal Code and the Protection from Harassment Act, the Court held that the prosecution had proven them beyond a reasonable doubt based on the evidence adduced at the trial. The Court convicted Glynn on all four charges.

In sentencing Glynn, the Court stated that in view of the public interest and public health and safety, and the continued defiance demonstrated by Glynn, a deterrent sentence was warranted. Glynn was sentenced to six weeks’ imprisonment.

PP v Zareena Begum d/o P A M Basheer Ahamed

This is the first case involving injury to the groin area of a male victim in which the sentencing approach for offences under section 326 of

the Penal Code as laid down by the General Division of the High Court was applied.

Zareena claimed trial to a charge of voluntarily causing grievous hurt under section 326 of the Penal Code by pouring hot water over her boyfriend’s groin area, resulting in the victim suffering second- and third-degree burns over 12% of his body. The victim was hospitalised for 26 days and given 39 days of medical leave. During this period, he was unable to engage in his normal pursuits. His injuries also led to permanent scarring.

Zareena and the victim’s relationship was tumultuous during which the victim had promised to divorce his wife and marry Zareena, a divorcee, but it did not materialise. The victim testified that he was asleep on the sofa at Zareena’s place when he was awoken by pain on his groin and lap after Zareena poured boiling water on him. It appeared that Zareena was upset over certain messages the victim had received on his handphone from a female with whom she suspected the victim was having an affair. Zareena claimed, however, that the incident happened in the kitchen where hot water in a mug she was holding accidentally spilled onto the victim’s groin area when he pulled her arm.

The District Judge accepted the victim’s evidence, which was corroborated by objective medical evidence, and found that Zareena was not a credible witness. Zareena was convicted accordingly and sentenced to four years’ imprisonment.

On appeal to the General Division of the High Court, both the conviction and sentence were affirmed by Justice Vincent Hoong. He observed that the objective evidence clearly stated that the victim was injured in the manner he had testified.

CORONER’S INQUIRY

Coroner’s Inquiry into the Demise of an Infant

A 21-day-old infant was pronounced dead on 19 November 2020 at 5.18am at KK Women’s and Children’s Hospital after he was discovered



unresponsive in his bedroom at about 4am. The infant had been sleeping in the nanny’s arms, who was asleep too.

An autopsy could not ascertain the cause of death, although Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and Asphyxia could not be ruled out. On 19 November 2020 at about 1am, the nanny was carrying the infant after having fed him as he was showing discomfort. She alternated between various positions to get him to fall asleep. At some point, she sat on her bed leaning against the wall behind with the infant in her arms. He was held against her chest with his face resting on her shoulder. She eventually dozed off and was only woken up when the infant’s mother entered the room at about 4am. The nanny then placed the infant in the baby cot. The infant’s mother proceeded to check on the infant and found him unresponsive. He was immediately rushed to hospital.

As the circumstances surrounding the infant’s demise were inconclusive, the Coroner entered an open verdict. She noted that this was another case of poor sleep practices which may have led to the infant’s death and remarked that cases have shown that an infant who falls asleep in a prone position is more likely to fall victim to accidental suffocation. She further opined that parents and caregivers must bear in mind that fatigue can set in as they care for an infant through the night, and it is best not to cradle the infant in their arms for long periods of time and risk having the baby falling asleep in an unsafe position when the caregiver dozes off even briefly.

CIVIL

Chua Eng Kok (Cai Rongguo) v Douglas Chew Kai Pi [2021] SGDC 159

This case concerns an application made by a defendant to give evidence over Zoom from China as opposed to making a physical

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appearance in court. It is one of the first published decisions on the application of State Courts Practice Direction No. 52A (PD 52A), which provides a process for parties to seek permission for a witness outside Singapore to give evidence by live video link. Such applications are to be made by way of an inter partes summons with a supporting affidavit. The party making the application is to satisfy the court that the relevant legislation in the foreign country or territory from which the witness is giving evidence has been complied with.

The court dismissed the application having regard to section 62A(2) of the Evidence Act. The court considered that the defendant failed to provide cogent reasons as to why he was unable to give evidence in Singapore. The defendant deposed that he would have to be quarantined upon his return to China, but the court found that this went towards inconvenience and not inability to attend court. Furthermore, parties were notified of the hearing schedule three months in advance. There would be ample time for the defendant to purchase air tickets and organise his affairs upon his return to China. While Zoom would allow the court to observe the witness' demeanour, the court accepted that Zoom was limited to facial expressions and it was important that the defendant be fully observable which would only be possible with physical attendance at the hearing. The defendant also failed to comply with PD 52A in failing to adduce advice given by a foreign lawyer "qualified to advise on the laws of the relevant foreign country or territory".

Liew Wei Yen Ashley v Soh Rui Yong [2021] SGDC 206

This is a defamation suit instituted by the plaintiff, Ashley Liew, against the defendant, Soh Rui Yong, for damages arising out of defamatory statements made in five posts on the latter's blog as well as Facebook and Instagram accounts. Soh is the first Singaporean male marathoner to win back-to-back SEA Games titles. Liew is the first Singaporean to receive the prestigious Pierre de Coubertin World Fair Play trophy awarded by the International Fair Play Committee. Soh's statements alleged that Liew had not slowed down at the 2015 SEA Games marathon, challenging the very act that led to Liew receiving the said trophy and the Special Award for Sportsmanship by the Singapore National Olympic Council.

The case attracted extensive publicity not just because it involved two famous personalities in Singapore, but also because Soh had continued to post on social media during the trial in what he called the "battle for

the truth". His act of publicising the dispute while court proceedings were still ongoing was found by the trial Court to justify the award of substantial damages, including aggravated damages, to Liew. The Court found Soh's portrayal of Liew through his continued online posts to have exacerbated the harm caused to Liew. As a result, Liew was awarded \$180,000 in damages, the highest known award in a defamation suit commenced in the State Courts.

On appeal by Soh, the High Court upheld the trial Court's decision that Soh had not proved his defence of justification as well as the award given by the trial Court.

COMMUNITY COURTS AND TRIBUNALS

Tan Siow Yun (Chen Xiaoyun) v Bioskin Holdings Pte Ltd

This case is noteworthy for the Employment Claims Tribunal's (ECT) assessment on the impact of the claimant's no-pay leave (NPL) on the length of her probation and notice periods.

By parties' agreement, the claimant was placed on NPL while she was still under probation, partly due to COVID-19 restrictions. The claimant received a dismissal letter from the respondent with one month's notice while on NPL. Her ECT claims included, firstly, one month's salary in lieu of notice of termination (SILON) and secondly, salary for the period she was on NPL during the notice period.

The claimant's claim for SILON hinged on whether her NPL would count towards her probation period. If so, the applicable notice period for her dismissal would have been two months (as a non-probationer) instead of one, and she would be entitled to her first claim. While the claimant's employment contract was silent on the issue, the ECT reasoned that the purpose of probationary periods is to give parties sufficient opportunity to interact with each other to assess suitability for a longer-term relationship. Since this could not meaningfully happen while the claimant was on NPL, the parties would not have intended, contractually, for NPL to count towards the claimant's probation period. The ECT thus dismissed the first claim.

As for her second claim, the claimant argued that her NPL was cancelled upon her receipt of the dismissal letter. The ECT, however,

found no basis for this, both in law and under the employment contract, and similarly dismissed the claim. The ECT also observed that, unlike probation periods, the purpose of notice periods is to allow one party to exit an otherwise indefinite contract, with advance warning given to the other party. Since the parties had agreed to the claimant being on NPL, such purpose was not affected.

Zheng Ximeng v Ker Choo Choo Marilyn

This is the first case in which damages were awarded by the Protection from Harassment Court (PHC).

The claimant's complaints of harassment had arisen from the parties' tenancy dispute and consequent proceedings in the Small Claims Tribunal (SCT). In its decision, the PHC found that the respondent had contravened sections 3, 4 and 7 of the Protection from Harassment Act 2014 and granted the claimant's application for a Protection Order under the Act. The PHC noted, in particular, that the respondent had:

- (a) threatened to write to the claimant's employer if he did not pay the rent allegedly owed to the respondent;
- (b) called the claimant various names such as "robber", "big liar crook" and "bandit" during the SCT proceedings; and
- (c) sent the claimant numerous messages refusing to acknowledge the SCT's decision (allowing the claimant's claim in part), insinuating that the claimant had bribed the SCT Magistrate and wishing retribution upon the claimant.

In his claim for damages, the claimant submitted a psychiatric report stating that the respondent's actions had caused him heightened anxiety and affected his sleep, and that he was diagnosed as having Major Depressive Disorder (single episode, mild with anxious distress). In its assessment, the PHC found on a balance of probabilities that the cumulative effects of the respondent's actions had caused the claimant worry, anxiety and harassment, ultimately leading to his episode of depression. As regards quantum, the PHC categorised the claimant's psychiatric condition as "minor" and referred to the *Guidelines for the Assessment of General Damages in Personal Injury Cases* (Academy Publishing, 2010) for the suggested range for damages. After making the appropriate adjustments, the PHC awarded the claimant \$1,200 as damages for his psychiatric injury. The claimant's claim for his psychiatrist's bill and disbursements for the psychiatric report was also allowed.

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SIGNIFICANT CASES FROM THE FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS

THERAPEUTIC JUSTICE

Parental responsibility is a personal responsibility. Court proceedings must be the last resort for resolving parenting matters. For the welfare of their children, parents must compromise and strive to be bigger, wiser and kinder in their mutual dealings (*VDX v VDY and another appeal* [2021] SGHCF 2).

In *VDX v VDY*, following the parties' divorce, the Mother was granted care and control of the child while the Father was granted access. The parties co-parented successfully for several years. After the child turned 13 years of age and joined a different school, disputes arose over when the Father should return the child after the end-of-year holidays and how the child should spend dinnertime on the eve of Chinese New Year.

The Family Court observed that dinner on the eve of Chinese New Year was of cultural significance to the family. It ordered that the child have an early dinner with the Mother and then a late dinner with the Father. It also ordered the Father to return the child to the Mother by 10am on 1 January after the end-of-year holidays.

The High Court affirmed these orders. It observed that the parties had co-parented amicably for years in a shared spirit of give-and-take. By contrast, the matters in dispute here were minor and involved at most a few hours or days in a year. The child's welfare would not be significantly affected however these matters were resolved. But the child's welfare would be significantly affected by the conflict between the parents. If each parent carried out the arrangements with the intent to ruin the time that the other parent had with the child, the child's welfare would be undermined. If each parent carried out the arrangements in a supportive and cooperative spirit, the child's welfare would be promoted.



The High Court reminded family law practitioners to be aware of the ways that they could influence parenting disputes, including the language used in correspondence and the mindset they brought to the proceedings. Through collaborative problem-solving of their clients' parenting matters, counsel can facilitate the delivery of therapeutic justice.

DIVISION OF MATRIMONIAL ASSETS

A court may draw an adverse inference against a party for failing to provide full and frank disclosure of the matrimonial assets. This is done by including the value of that concealed asset in the matrimonial pool (i.e., the valuation approach), or by ordering a higher proportion of the known assets to be given to the other party (i.e., the uplift approach). Apart from such adverse inferences, an asset that a party contends is not part of the matrimonial pool may nevertheless be found to be a matrimonial asset (*TOF v TOE* [2021] 2 SLR 976). Regardless, an adverse inference is drawn not to punish but only to further a fair and equitable distribution of assets by disgorging the benefits from improper concealment of assets (*CHT v CHU* [2021] SGCA 38).

In *TOF v TOE*, the Court of Appeal held that the Husband had been unforthcoming with his assets. He claimed that he did not own any foreign company when there had been transfers between the parties' joint account and that company's corporate account. He submitted that another company he owned in Singapore had a value far more modest than what he had told the Wife in prior related proceedings. Furthermore, he offered no explanation on some \$5.2 million that he had withdrawn from the parties' joint account. Adverse inferences in respect of these assets were thus justified. As the values of these assets could be ascertained, the adverse inferences were given effect to by adding the values of these assets to the matrimonial pool.

In *CHT v CHU*, the Court of Appeal similarly held that the Husband had been unforthcoming with his assets. He had transferred securities to his mother and had failed to disclose insurance policies of substantial value. But the Court drew an adverse inference against the Husband only in respect of the insurance policies and not the securities. It explained that the value of the securities had been duly disclosed, even if they had been transferred to the Husband's mother. They could therefore be divided between the parties without drawing an adverse inference against the Husband in respect of them.

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SIGNIFICANT CASES FROM THE FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS

RELOCATION OF CHILD

When a globalised family breaks down, the parties' desired countries of residence may differ. A lack of connection to Singapore is a strong factor in favour of the relocation of the child (*VJM v VJL and another appeal* [2021] 5 SLR 1233).

In *VJM v VJL*, the parties married in the United States (US). The Father is British while the Mother is American. The Mother moved to Singapore to join the Father in 2013, and their child, who holds both American and British citizenships, was born in 2017. Upon their divorce, the Mother applied to relocate with the child to the US while the Father contended that the child should remain in Singapore, which was "a safe country, and a great place to live and to raise a child".

The Family Court granted the application for relocation, and the High Court affirmed this decision. The High Court observed that neither party held permanent residency in Singapore and that the family had neither roots nor permanent immigration status in Singapore. This lack of connection with Singapore was a strong factor in favour of the relocation. Although the relocation would produce some loss in the Father-child relationship, good access arrangements, both physical and virtual, could mitigate the loss of time and relationship with the left-behind parent.

CARE AND CONTROL, AND ACCESS

Cooperative and shared parenting is generally accepted to be in a child's welfare. Practically, however, determining the living arrangements that would support the maximum involvement of both parents in the child's life may be difficult. Singapore law adopts the legal constructs of "custody", "care and control" and "access" to support families that have broken down. "Custody" refers to the decision-making responsibility in major aspects of the child's life and does not directly depend on having physical time with the child. "Care and control" involves physical interaction, caregiving and residence

with the child, as well as decision-making responsibility over day-to-day matters. Although it is common that one parent is granted sole care and control of a child while the other parent has access to the child, in appropriate cases, the court may grant both parents shared care and control if this is feasible and best serves the child's welfare (*VJM v VJL and another appeal* [2021] 5 SLR 1233).

In *VJM v VJL*, besides allowing the Mother to relocate with the child to the US, the Family Court granted the Mother sole care and control of the child while the Father was granted access. Dissatisfied with this decision, the Father filed an appeal and sought an order of "shared care and control". He claimed that the psychological effects of granting the Mother sole care and control caused her to treat him as "less of a parent".

The High Court declined to order "shared care and control". It held that doing away with the concepts of "care and control" and "access", and calling any arrangement in which a child spends some time with both parents "shared care and control", did not fit into the current law. If the concepts of "sole care and control" and "access" caused the negative psychological effects alleged by the Father, the roots of any such potential effects had to be addressed by legislative reform.

The High Court emphasised that both parents are equal parents with equal parental responsibility, and that such equality is upheld through the legal concept of "joint custody". Joint custody requires each parent to recognise and respect the other's joint and equal role in supporting, guiding and making major decisions for their child. This assures the child that both parents will continue to be equally present and important in his or her life. It is erroneous and unhelpful for the parent with sole care and control to view himself or herself as a more important parent or to undermine the other parent's involvement in their child's life. A truly strong parent is one who actively supports a child in having a close relationship with the other parent and does not allow the child to suffer a "conflict of loyalty" of being caught between two parents jealous of each other's relationship with him or her.



SETTING ASIDE OF FINAL JUDGMENT OF DIVORCE

A final judgment of divorce dissolves a marriage and brings the status of the parties as a married couple to a permanent and unsalvageable end (*VQB v VQC* [2021] SGHCF 5).

In *VQB v VQC*, the parties had consented to an interim judgment of divorce (IJ) on the simplified track, where the grounds of divorce and all ancillary matters had been agreed upon. Nine months later, the IJ was made final and a final judgment of divorce (FJ) was granted by the Family Court. Subsequently, the Wife applied to set aside the FJ and the entire divorce proceedings, alleging that she had been under duress when she consented to the IJ.

The Family Court declined to set aside the FJ, finding that the Wife had not been under duress when she consented to the IJ. It also suggested that were the IJ set aside, the FJ would automatically be set aside.

The High Court affirmed this decision, observing that the Wife had simply changed her mind about the divorce when her lover spurned her. It added, however, that an FJ dissolves a marriage permanently and cannot be set aside. By contrast, an IJ is a mere interim order that the court can refuse to finalise. The only way for a divorced couple to return to marriage is to remarry, in accordance with the requisite legal formalities of registration and solemnisation. The law prescribes a minimum three-month period between the IJ and FJ, for due diligence to be carried out, to ensure that all is in order before an IJ is finalised.

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By forging relationships with judiciaries and other stakeholders near and far, we expand our reach to further uphold the rule of law.

SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL COMMERCIAL COURT SYMPOSIUM 2021

Trends & Developments in International Commercial Litigation

The Singapore International Commercial Court (SICC) Symposium 2021 was organised to increase awareness of the SICC among the international legal and business community.

In the light of the COVID-19 situation, the Symposium was held as a live webinar on 10 March 2021.

A landmark event, the Symposium brought together key players in the international commercial dispute resolution sphere, with about 300 local and foreign delegates including those from Australia, Germany, India, Jamaica, Malaysia, the People's Republic of China, South Korea, Uganda, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States of America in attendance.

The Path Forward for International Commercial Courts

The theme was "Trends & Developments in International Commercial Litigation". In his opening address, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon spoke about the likely dispute hotspots in the post-pandemic landscape, the expected impact of the pandemic on the ways in which commercial parties manage disputes, and the value proposition offered by international commercial courts.

The Symposium featured distinguished speakers from both Singapore and abroad, who comprised Judges and legal luminaries in the field of international commercial litigation. They shared their views and perspectives during the panel discussions, covering topics such as the development and key features of the SICC Rules 2021, emerging trends and opportunities for international commercial



Due to the COVID-19 situation, the SICC Symposium 2021 was held as a live webinar instead of a physical event.

courts, dispute resolution options in a post-pandemic world (including in the area of commercial and infrastructure disputes), the enforceability of court judgments, and the role of commercial courts in cross-border insolvency disputes. The delegates also had the opportunity to establish connections in a virtual networking lounge.

About 300 local and foreign delegates were in attendance at the landmark event.

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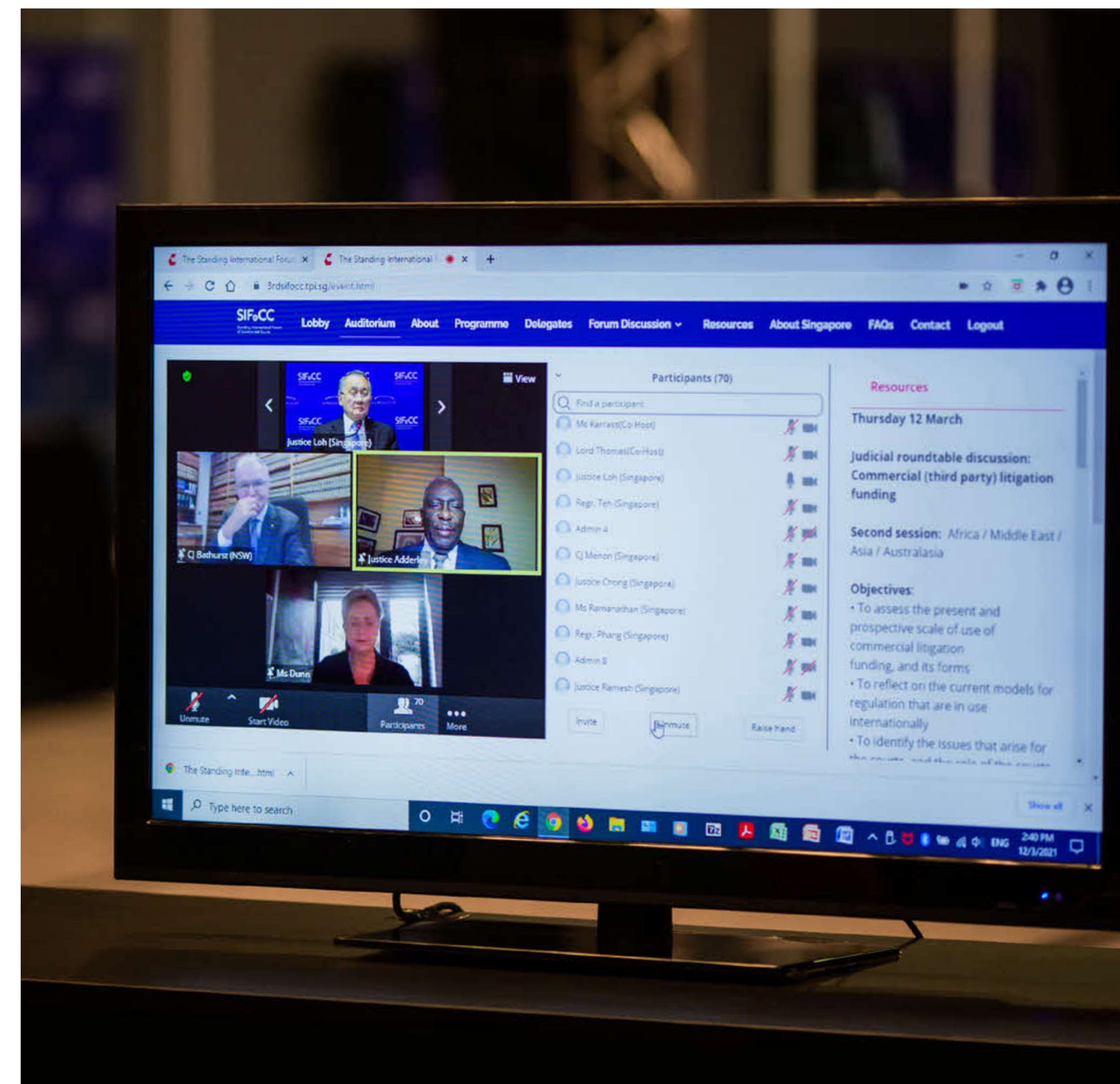
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THIRD MEETING OF THE STANDING INTERNATIONAL FORUM OF COMMERCIAL COURTS

Singapore Takes Over Hosting Duties

The Supreme Court hosted the third meeting of the Standing International Forum of Commercial Courts (SIFoCC) on 11 and 12 March 2021.

SIFoCC, which was established in 2017, brings together commercial courts from around the world, and is aligned with global efforts to support the rule of law as well as promote best practices in commercial dispute resolution. It was first mooted by Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd, the former Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales. This led to the inaugural SIFoCC meeting in London in May 2017. The second SIFoCC meeting was hosted by the United States of America and took place in September 2018 in New York.



While Singapore delegates including Justice Quentin Loh (left), President of the Singapore International Commercial Court, convened at the Supreme Court in compliance with safe management measures, others joined remotely from around the world (above).

Affirming the Importance of Cooperation

The third SIFoCC meeting, which was initially scheduled to take place in Singapore in March 2020, was conducted virtually for the first time with Chief Justices, Judges and senior judicial representatives participating remotely from around the world. Minister Indraneel Rajah SC delivered the opening remarks, while Minister Edwin Tong SC spoke



Chief Justice Menon said it was a “privilege” to host the occasion and referred to the SIFoCC as an “invaluable” forum.

about third-party litigation funding. Other topics that were discussed included the use of technology and artificial intelligence, how to best meet the needs of court users, and the future role of the world’s commercial courts.

Pre-recorded contributions and materials from guest speakers were made available on an online platform, which was jointly developed by the Supreme Court team and the SIFoCC Secretariat. The platform also featured a chat-style forum that allowed meeting participants to share ideas and experiences on topics concerning arbitration, cross-border insolvency and technological developments in member courts.

The event was a success with over 35 jurisdictions represented at the most senior level.

Australia will host the fourth SIFoCC meeting, which is scheduled to take place in Sydney in October 2022.

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MEMORANDA WITH OTHER COURTS

Agreements with the Supreme Courts of Rwanda and China

Bilateral relations remained a strategic focus of the Supreme Court in 2021. In April 2021, the Supreme Court entered into a Memorandum of Understanding for Judicial Cooperation, and a Memorandum of Guidance as to Enforcement of Money Judgements, with the Supreme Court of Rwanda, further elevating the excellent bilateral judicial relations between Singapore and Rwanda.

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon observed after the virtual signing ceremony that these memoranda demonstrated the resolve of the two nations to further develop our legal and judicial expertise as we continue to learn, improve and adapt to the post-pandemic environment. Following the signing of the memoranda, the two parties jointly organised a virtual discussion forum on court technology on 22 November 2021. The forum was the first in a series of collaborative activities, focusing on capability development.

Another milestone was achieved on 3 December 2021, when the Supreme Court entered into a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation on Information on Foreign Law with the Supreme People's Court of the People's Republic of China. This memorandum establishes a bilateral mechanism for the referral of questions on foreign law between the two courts, and will enhance the accuracy of judicial decisions and the efficiency of civil and commercial proceedings involving the application of Singapore or Chinese law.

The memorandum is the first of its kind signed between the Supreme People's Court and a foreign court. It reflects our courts' shared commitment to strengthening bilateral judicial cooperation in the sphere of international commercial dispute resolution.



The Supreme Court signed Memoranda of Understanding with its Rwandan and Chinese counterparts in April 2021 (left) and December 2021 (above), respectively.

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COMMUNICATION AND COOPERATION WITH THE FEDERAL COURT OF MALAYSIA

The Supreme Court has implemented two protocols with effect from 23 July 2021 to facilitate communication and cooperation with the Federal Court of Malaysia in proceedings concerning selected matters:

- (i) the Protocol on Court-to-Court Communication and Cooperation between Malaysia and Singapore in Related Admiralty and Shipping Matters; and
- (ii) the Protocol on Court-to-Court Communication and Cooperation between Malaysia and Singapore in Cross-Border Corporate Insolvency Matters.

The protocol on admiralty and shipping matters applies to related proceedings commenced in Malaysia and Singapore that involve a claim (or claims) coming within the admiralty jurisdiction of either Court, involve the arrest of the same vessel, or arise out of the same casualty and involve parties to an existing limitation action.

The protocol on cross-border corporate insolvency matters applies to related proceedings commenced in Malaysia and Singapore that relate to insolvency, or the adjustment of debt, of corporations (including winding up, judicial management, schemes of arrangement, or such similar processes as are available in Malaysia and Singapore).

Across the Causeway

Either Court may initiate a request for court-to-court communication under the abovementioned protocols, with the other Court responding directly to the request. Parties before each Court will be notified of each request for court-to-court communication. However, they will not be permitted to participate unless the Courts agree in writing to allow their participation. The confidentiality of documents or information exchanged under either protocol will be maintained.

Although the protocols are not intended to create any legally enforceable rights or binding obligations on either Court, the

establishment of a suitable framework based on these protocols helps facilitate the efficient and timely coordination and administration of cross-border cases, enhancing judicial efficacy and reducing costs for businesses. The protocols also reflect the commitment to support and advance judicial cooperation between Malaysia and Singapore.

The establishment of a suitable framework based on these protocols helps facilitate the efficient and timely coordination and administration of cross-border cases.



The two protocols are indicative of the strong bilateral relations between the judiciaries of Malaysia (left) and Singapore (above).

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DEEPENING PARTNERSHIPS WITH GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Specialised Work with the Singapore Prison Service

In 2020, the State Courts and the Singapore Prison Service (SPS) piloted a cross-learning programme to share knowledge and updates in the psychology and criminology fields, as well as on matters related to the professional practice of forensic psychologists. This collaboration remained active in 2021.

Staff in the State Courts Centre for Specialist Services (CSS), who are trained in specialised fields such as social work, counselling and psychology, held monthly discussions with officers in the SPS' Psychological and Correctional Rehabilitation Division to learn more from one another. The sessions covered topics such as Vicarious Trauma, Tech-facilitated Sexual Offending and the Psychological Resilience Framework. Notable cases were discussed, with a focus on the interventions provided to offenders once they are in the court system as well as when they are incarcerated.

Besides advancing the assessment skills of CSS staff, the cross-learning platform also equipped them with additional knowledge to serve court users better, including family members of the offenders. For example, the staff learned what kind of information is relevant to provide to the families, and how to assure them that their loved ones are receiving help in prison. Short cross-attachment stints at the State Courts and SPS were introduced as well.

This initiative has facilitated the exchange of insights and best practices, and allowed participants to gain a deeper understanding of their respective roles and the impact they have on offenders and their families. In the coming year, the State Courts are planning more collaborative efforts with other SPS units that manage aftercare for offenders.

Monthly discussions between State Courts and SPS staff facilitated the exchange of insights and best practices in the fields of psychology and criminology.

Family Violence Taskforce and Working Group

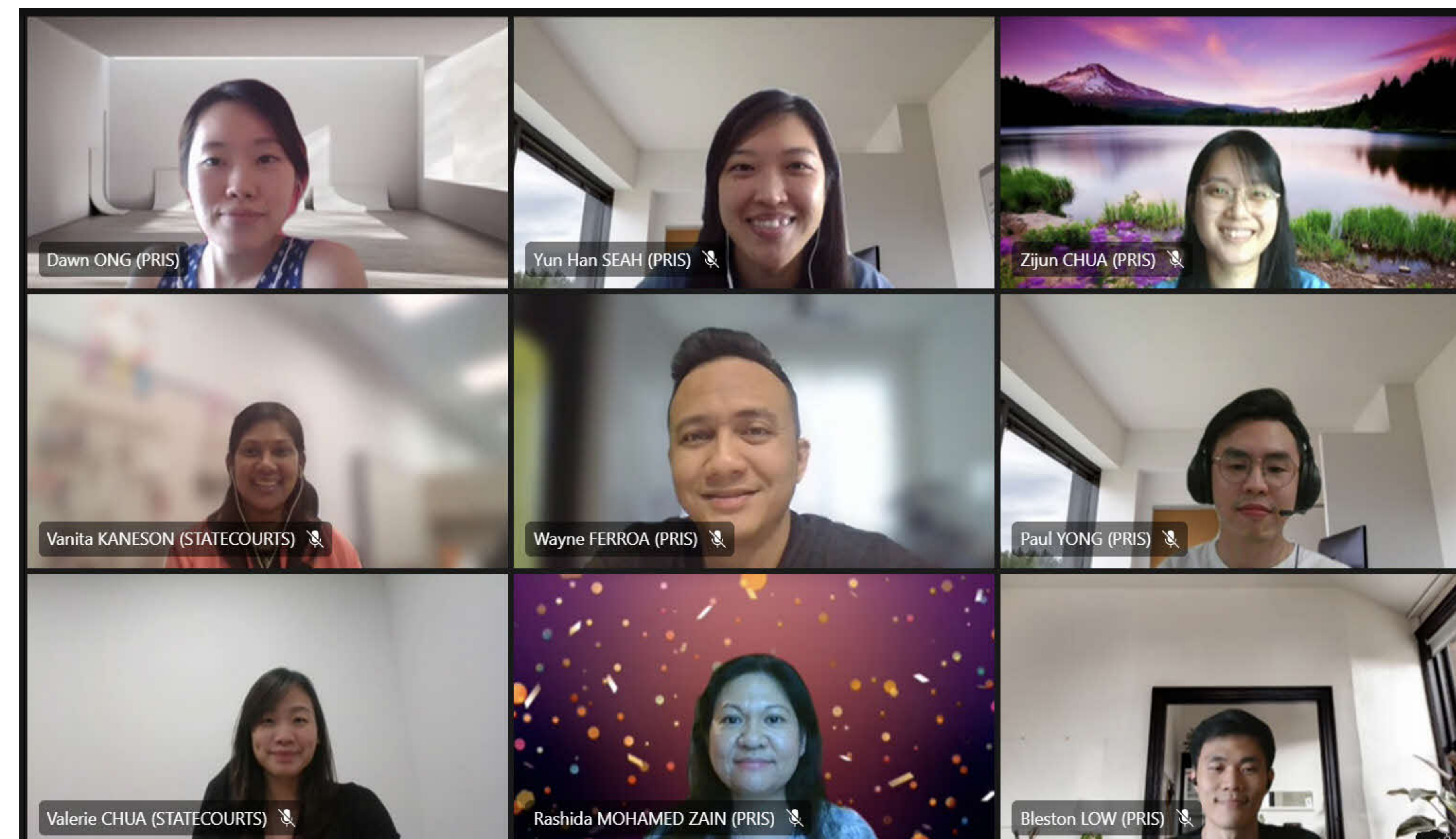
The multi-stakeholder Taskforce on Family Violence was set up in February 2020 to better understand the family violence landscape in Singapore, identify areas for improvement and make recommendations to tackle the issue. Co-chaired by Minister of State for Social and Family Development & Home Affairs, Ms Sun Xueling, and Minister of State for Home Affairs & National Development, Associate Professor Dr Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim, the Taskforce comprises 21 members from social service agencies, non-governmental organisations, the Courts, hospitals and government agencies. Ms Sophia Ang, Senior Director, Counselling and Psychological Services, Family Justice Courts (FJC), represents the FJC on the Taskforce.

Over the span of one-and-a-half years, the Taskforce analysed family violence-related data and engaged a range of stakeholders who work directly with family violence survivors and perpetrators. Based on findings from the data and the feedback provided by community partners, the Taskforce released a report in September 2021 containing 16 recommendations to improve immediate support for victims,

The Taskforce on Family Violence released a report in September 2021 containing 16 recommendations to improve support for victims.

enhance protection for them, prevent violence from recurring, and raise awareness of early warning signs. Among the recommendations were empowering the FJC to make additional types of orders; and strengthening the rehabilitation regime for perpetrators, including through mandatory counselling.

The FJC is also represented in the multi-stakeholder Family Violence Working Group, which will be looking to operationalise some of the Taskforce's recommendations.



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DEEPENING PARTNERSHIPS WITH GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Multi-Agency Cooperation
in Maritime Matters

What should happen if a crew member (or members) on board an arrested ship tested positive for COVID-19? This was one of many potential problems that the pandemic threw up regarding ship arrests.

To effectively deal with such a possibility, the Supreme Court Registry, working under the guidance of specialist shipping Judges, approached and consulted the relevant government agencies in charge of port and COVID-19 matters, namely the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore, the Ministry of Health and the National Environment Agency's Port Health Section. A working Protocol was established to set out how the Sheriff's Office would deal with this scenario. Included in the Protocol are detailed steps and the specific agency responsible for each necessary action, from the point the Sheriff's Office is informed of a suspected COVID-19 case on board an arrested vessel until the crew member(s) is cleared.

The working Protocol is a testament to the good working relationship between the agencies working on maritime matters, and to the Supreme Court's ability to meet challenges brought about by the pandemic.

Vetting of Content on Lasting Power of Attorney

In collaboration with the Office of Public Guardian, the FJC Language Services team vetted vernacular content on the making and registering of a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) to ensure a true reflection of source text. The LPA is a legal document that allows a person to voluntarily appoint another person to make decisions and act on his or her behalf if the former loses mental capacity one day. Against the backdrop of Singapore's greying population, where many are literate or fluent only in their mother tongue, having an accurate translation of the vernacular content is important to ensure a full understanding of the information online as well as the details required for form filling.

HACKATHON FOR A
BETTER WORLD 2021

Following the success of the inaugural Hackathon for a Better World in 2020, DBS Bank, the Judiciary and the Ministry of Communications and Information jointly organised a second instalment in 2021. It drew participation from 40 teams with diverse compositions, such as practising lawyers, law students, public officers and DBS employees.

Themed "Designing a Safer, Kinder & Responsible Internet for All", the 2021 competition tackled the issue of online harms, particularly against women and girls, and sought to generate innovative solutions for safer and kinder online spaces in today's digital age. Participants were challenged to "hack" one of three problem statements and adopted a "learn-as-you-hack" format, where they worked on the problem statements over two months through an iterative process.

Four teams, namely Go Women (Singapore Management University), All Shook Up (Shook Lin & Bok LLP), Voicehackers (State Courts) and Pin It Down! (National Arts Council & Others), emerged as overall winners for their innovative solutions.



WINNERS OF HACKATHON FOR A BETTER WORLD 2021

Go Women
(Singapore Management University)

MOST INNOVATIVE IDEA

Equipping female Telegram users with safety and privacy functions whilst deterring non-consensual circulation of their explicit photographs

All Shook Up
(Shook Lin & Bok LLP)

MOST FEASIBLE IDEA

Utilising existing infrastructure to counter the rise of image-based sexual abuse

Voicehackers
(State Courts)

MOST LIFE-CHANGING IDEA

A CyberTogether Hub that fortifies legal and non-legal support to victims through public-private partnerships and spearheads the whole-of-nation fight against cyberbullying through a one-stop platform

Pin It Down!
(National Arts Council & Others)

MOST HUMAN-CENTRED IDEA

A three-pronged approach that empowers loved ones of sexual offenders to share their personal journeys through social media, and a one-stop website with resources from key stakeholders and support groups

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PANEL OF THERAPEUTIC SPECIALISTS



The FJC has teamed up with multiple stakeholders to expand the range and depth of therapeutic services for court users and their families.

First announced in September 2021, the Panel of Therapeutic Specialists (POTS) was conceived with the aim of making therapeutic specialist services more accessible to court users and their families who require mental health-related support, or specialised assessment or intervention during mediation or in legal proceedings.

The Family Justice Courts (FJC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the College of Psychiatrists, Academy of Medicine, Singapore, the Singapore Association for Counselling and the Singapore Psychological Society to set up the POTS.

The POTS, which comprises qualified mental health and social science professionals from the private sector, is part of the FJC's efforts to expand the range and depth of therapeutic services to meet the needs of families undergoing or concluding family proceedings beyond existing public-sector schemes. Through the directions of a Judge or under a voluntary referral process, families may access the panel for paid private-sector services.

A Steering Committee headed by the Registrar of the FJC, Mr Kenneth Yap, oversees the development of this project. A pilot initiative will also commence in 2022.



Feedback was gathered from the Family Bar to obtain suggestions for improvement and better delivery of therapeutic justice.

ENGAGEMENT OF THE FAMILY BAR

To gather feedback and suggestions on opportunities for growth and areas of improvement for the FJC, Registrar Mr Kenneth Yap has been engaging members of the Family Bar through focus group discussions on an annual basis since 2019.

In 2021, there were a total of 67 attendees. With the FJC's renewed vision to be a family court that delivers Therapeutic Justice (TJ), the focus of the 2021 discussions was on gathering feedback from the ground up on TJ in family proceedings. Members of the Family Bar suggested ways to bolster the adoption of TJ in family law. They also provided feedback on other matters, such as how existing processes could be improved and how court proceedings could be conducted post-pandemic.

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REHABILITATING OFFENDERS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

The State Courts have partnered the Centre for Psychotherapy (CFP) to rehabilitate offenders with intellectual disabilities through the Court-Directed Pre-Sentencing Protocol (CPSP).

The CPSP is a multi-agency initiative launched in 2016 to manage offenders in cases where community-based sentencing options are unavailable. Aimed at addressing underlying problems commonly faced by individuals who commit minor offences, the Courts direct offenders to undergo treatment, receive counselling or voluntarily participate in residential or structured programmes, before passing a sentence.

Under this partnership, the State Courts Centre for Specialist Services (CSS) conducts initial interviews with an offender before referral, monitors his or her progress and compliance with therapy, and reviews strategies to prevent reoffending. The CFP provides

counselling and psychotherapy services, and submits reports to the Courts for consideration. Both the CFP and CSS reach out to the offender's family as well, to understand the offender's background, needs and challenges, and to equip them with relevant skills and knowledge to assist the offender's rehabilitation.

On 31 July 2021, the CFP received the Public Service Transformation Star Partner Award for its work with the State Courts. This award recognises exemplary non-government agencies that have demonstrated a strong spirit of partnership with public agencies.

Recognising that such partnerships allow the State Courts to respond more effectively to the needs of court users and guide them in their journey to improve their lives, the State Courts intend to generate greater awareness of this initiative amongst stakeholders so that more can benefit from it.



Under the CPSP, individuals with intellectual disabilities who commit minor offences receive counselling or treatment to address underlying problems and hopefully prevent reoffending.

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOPS FOR ASEAN JUDICIARIES

More than 50 participants comprising judges and court administrators from the 10 ASEAN judiciaries attended the inaugural International Framework for Court Excellence (IFCE) Train-the-Trainer Workshop on 8 and 9 April 2021. The objective of the workshop was to help build a core team within ASEAN member states with IFCE expertise.

The IFCE serves as a guide to court excellence, and reinforces values and aspirations deemed critical to an effective and publicly respected court. It was first developed in 2008 and has since undergone two revisions, the latest of which was launched in 2020.

The April workshop, which was organised by the State Courts, covered theoretical and practical aspects of the IFCE. These included the formation and development of the International Consortium for Court Excellence (ICCE), of which the State Courts are a founding member;

the origins and evolution of the IFCE; and its holistic approach to evaluating court performance and continuous improvement methodology. In addition, the workshop allowed for the exchange of ideas with members of the ICCE Executive Committee.

Prior to that, on 23 March 2021, the State Courts and the Administrative Court of Thailand held a one-day workshop to cover the latest developments in the IFCE and its application to court operations. The State Courts shared updates on the third edition of the IFCE and how it had guided them in overcoming challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Representing Thailand, Judge Siriwan Chullapo of the Supreme Administrative Court, alongside the President of a Chamber of the Central Administrative Court, Judge Ekkanut Jinasen, recounted their implementation of the IFCE in three courts and how various projects had been undertaken to strengthen certain areas under the Framework.



Judge Siriwan Chullapo (centre) led the Thailand delegation at the IFCE workshop from their base in Bangkok, while the State Courts team joined virtually from Singapore.

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JUDICIAL TRAINING ACROSS BORDERS



The SJC joined its Chinese counterpart in co-hosting a special edition of the Case Forum of the SPC Judicial Case Academy in December 2021.

Leveraging technology, the Singapore Judicial College (SJC) successfully bridged the physical divide amid travel restrictions to strengthen its collaborations with partner institutions significantly in 2021.

China as a Key Partner

The SJC's 2021 training calendar was bookended by two signature events in furtherance of the Memorandum of Understanding on Advancing Continuing Judicial Education between the Supreme Court of Singapore and the Supreme People's Court of the People's Republic of China (SPC).

In January, the SJC hosted a joint online seminar with the SPC National Judges College (NJC) to raise awareness of the Chinese commercial legal system, the Belt and Road Initiative, the Chinese International Commercial Court and the Singapore International

Commercial Court (SICC). In attendance were Justice Andrew Phang (Vice-President, Court of Appeal of Singapore), Judges of the Supreme Court of Singapore, International Judges of the SICC, Justice Yang Wanming (Vice-President, SPC) and Mr Sun Xiaoyong (President, NJC). They were joined by over 30 participants from the Supreme Court, State Courts and Family Justice Courts of Singapore, as well as various Chinese courts.

In December, the SJC was invited as the first foreign institution to co-host, together with the NJC, a special edition of the Case Forum of the SPC Judicial Case Academy. The Case Forum centred around discussions of selected cases from *A Compendium of Singapore-China International Commercial Cases Curated for Their Relevance to the Belt and Road Initiative*, a joint publication of the Supreme Court of Singapore and the SPC, led by judges and academics from both countries. Attendees included Justice of the Court of Appeal Steven Chong (Judge in charge of international judicial relations), Justice Ang Cheng Hock (Governor, SJC), Justice Tao Kaiyuan (Vice-President, SPC) and Justice Liu Guixiang (Standing Member of SPC's Adjudication Committee), along with 143 participants from the Singapore and Chinese courts.

The SJC was invited as the first foreign institution to co-host, together with the NJC, a special edition of the Case Forum of the SPC Judicial Case Academy.

Other Training Initiatives in 2021

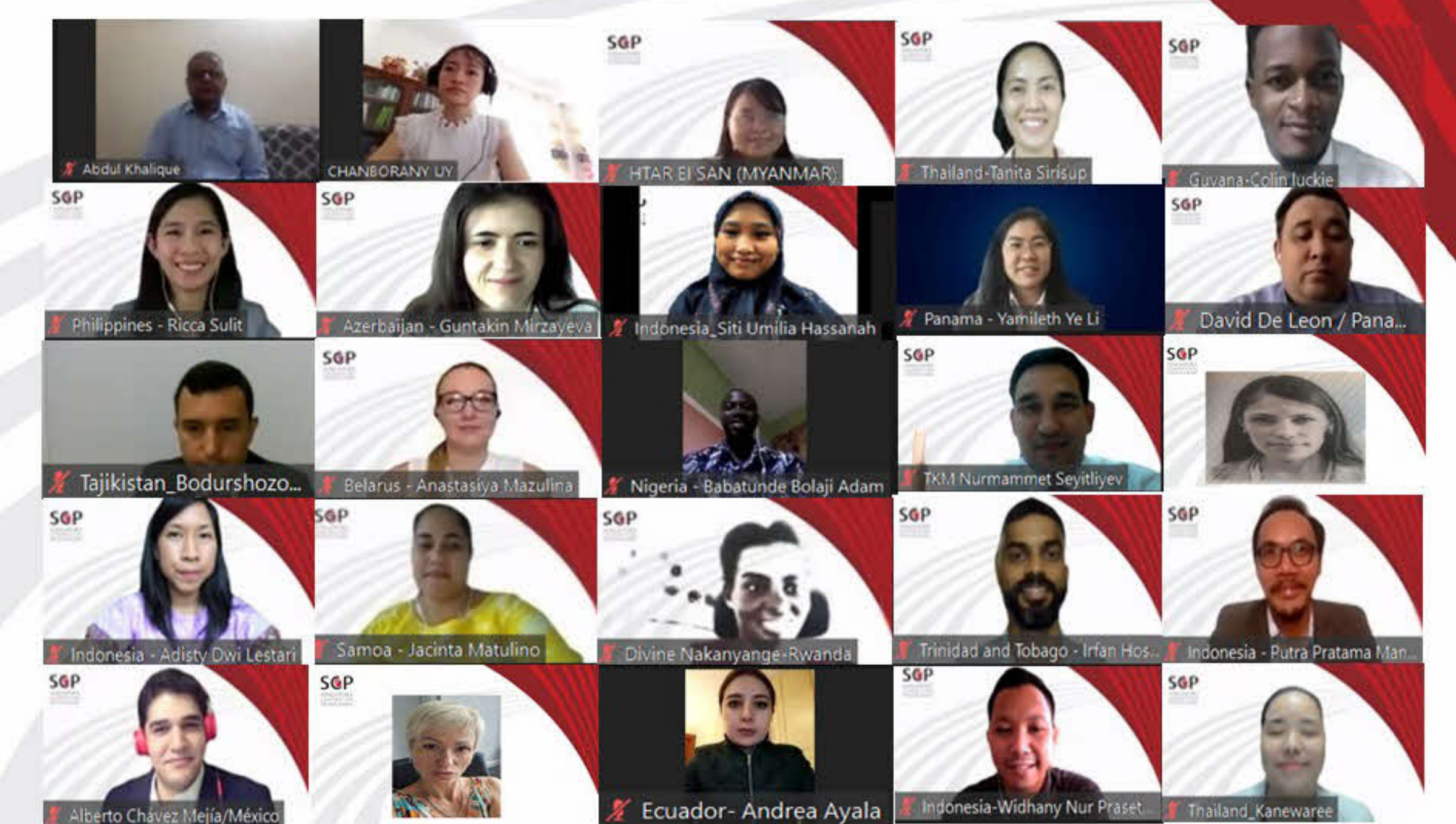
The SJC conducted an International Conference on Pedagogy with the Judicial Research and Training Institute (JRTI) of the Supreme Court of Korea. Subsequently, Mr Foo Chee Hock SC (Dean, SJC) and District Judge Paul Quan (Executive Director, SJC) were invited to speak at the JRTI International Conference on the occasion of its 50th anniversary.

The SJC hosted a joint conference on international commercial law with the Hainan High People's Court in China. It focused on the SICC as well as the Foreign-related Civil and Commercial Courts of Hainan, and their respective cases.

Under the Singapore Cooperation Programme of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore, the SJC ran two online international programmes on court technology and managing international investment treaty commitments. A total of 55 attendees from 29 countries participated in both programmes.



Managing International Investment Treaty Commitments 23 - 26 August 2021



Foreign government officials gained an overview of how international treaty commitments apply to governments during a four-day online course in August 2021.

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Developing Our Capability

An organisational culture that values continuous workplace learning and improvement enables our people to serve court users better.

HARNESSING THE EXPERTISE OF THE REGISTRY

Not only do the SG Courts' dedicated registrars perform judicial work, but they are also influential in developing and implementing strategic initiatives and reforms, speaking at local and international fora, and serving on various disciplinary bodies.

Constant and Mutual Learning

To keep abreast of the latest legal developments, the SG Courts Registry regularly curates and circulates noteworthy case summaries. It also conducts monthly seminars and internal training sessions, for instance, to prepare registrars for the implementation of the new Rules of Court 2021.

In 2021, the Supreme Court Registry launched a Sharing and Support Programme to facilitate the sharing of experiences and feedback among registrars. Each of the three specialised clusters of registrars gathered every quarter to discuss work challenges as well as contemporary legal issues or judicial decisions that contain valuable learning points and/or judicial best practices. An additional cross-cluster session was held to enable sharing between different clusters.

Moreover, several registrars have undergone training as judicial educators and been co-opted into the Singapore Judicial College (SJC) Faculty, where they assist in delivering specialist training for tri-court judicial officers. They also organise regular fireside chats with Supreme Court Judges to hear the Judges' perspectives on judicial best practices and specialised legal topics.

Speaking Engagements and Opportunities

Here are some key speeches and papers delivered by registrars, as well as panels on which they spoke, in 2021:

- 13 January – "Introduction to the Singapore International Commercial Court" (at the Joint Seminar on the Belt and Road Initiative, organised by the SJC and the National Judges College of the People's Republic of China)
- 6 March – "Singapore Convention on Mediation and Its Impact on Practice" (at the Japan Institute for International Arbitration Research and Training webinar series, co-sponsored by Chuo University Research Project on Comparative Law and Culture)

- 10 March – "The New Singapore International Commercial Court Rules: An Overview" (at the SICC Symposium)
- 22 April – Paper summarising the changes to be made by the Rules of Court 2021 (at the Litigation Conference Workshop 2021, organised by the Civil Practice Committee of the Law Society of Singapore)
- 23 July – "The SICC in Action" (at the Joint Conference on International Commercial Law, organised by the SJC and the Hainan High People's Court)
- 14 September – "Promotion of Cross-Border Cooperation in the Region, Including Development of UNCITRAL Model Law on Cross-Border Insolvency" (at the Forum on Asian Insolvency Reform 2021, co-hosted by INSOL International and the World Bank Group)

External Bodies

Disciplinary bodies which Supreme Court registrars serve on include:

- Review Committees and Inquiry Committees constituted under the Legal Profession Act 1966;
- Disciplinary Tribunals constituted under the Medical Registration Act 1997; and
- Copyright Tribunals and the panel of Intellectual Property Adjudicators at the Intellectual Property Office of Singapore.

In some cases, the Registry provides administrative support to these bodies. For example, several Supreme Court registrars serve on the Secretariat of the Disciplinary Tribunals constituted under the Legal Profession Act 1966. Another concurrently serves as the Registrar of the Appeals Board (Land Acquisition).

Supreme Court registrars also contribute to the development of international instruments such as conventions and model laws. As members of the Singapore delegations to working groups of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) and the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH), they have provided technical assistance and substantive inputs on draft instruments.



Learning from one another allows SG Courts staff to gain new knowledge and skills that they can integrate into their work.

PROMOTING SOCIAL SCIENCE IN FAMILY JUSTICE

The Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS) team at the Family Justice Courts (FJC) consists of mental health professionals with specialist training or expertise in the fields of counselling, psychology and social work. Given such diversity, a CAPSule series of webinars was birthed in June 2021 as a platform for CAPS Specialists to engage in co-learning and professional exchange. Court administrators and judicial officers were also invited to join the webinars to broaden their knowledge.

Held every alternate month, the bite-sized webinars covered current social science topics that were curated by different CAPS Specialists and relevant to the FJC's work, such as mental health and theories on family relations and dynamics. Focus was given to practical knowledge that would help participants better support court users.

Six CAPSule webinars have been organised to date, drawing a total of 228 participants within the FJC. Out of these, about 40% were non-CAPS Specialists. Positive feedback was garnered from the participants. For example, after the webinar on dementia, many shared that they would be more mindful and empathetic when interacting with elderly court users, particularly vulnerable adults, and with the elderly in their personal lives.

These affirmations have encouraged CAPS to continue organising CAPSule webinars in 2022.

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INTERNAL TRAINING TURNS DIGITAL

LEARN@Judiciary

Launched on 29 April 2021, LEARN@Judiciary is a dedicated whole-of-Judiciary platform to host, create and share training content, thus paving the way for the integration and sharing of digital learning content and information across all three Courts. There are currently 12 eLearning modules in LEARN@Judiciary, including modules on judgment writing, management of Family Justice Courts (FJC) cases by FJC Counselling and Psychological Services, and information and communications technology (ICT) security policy. The project won the 'One Judiciary Award' category at the inaugural Chief Justice's Awards.

Conference of Court Administrators

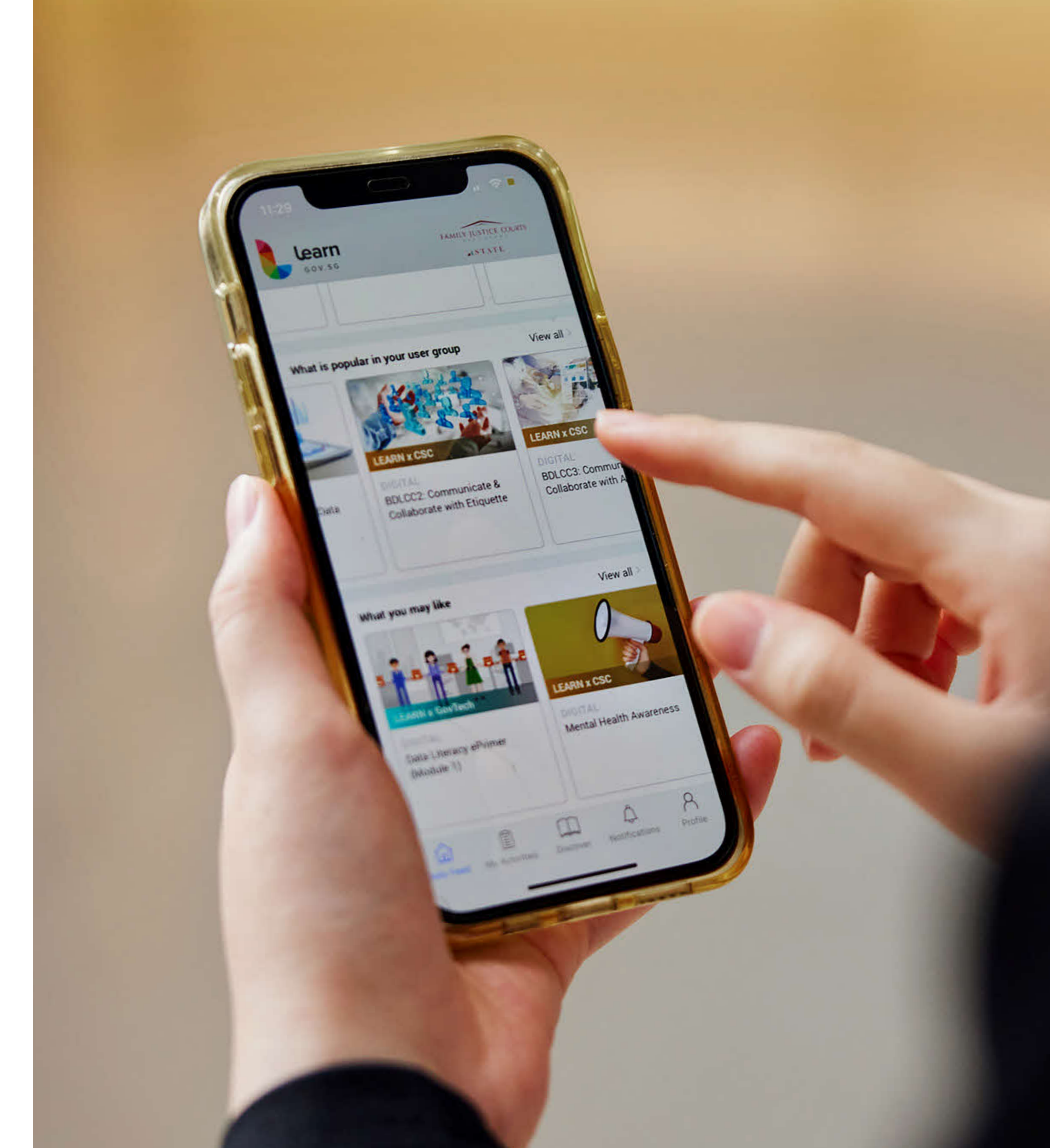
The inaugural Conference of Court Administrators took place over two runs on 7 and 13 December 2021. It brought together 660 court administrators from all three Courts for a one-day virtual learning experience, which was themed "Emerging Stronger for the Future". Participants shared their views on the critical roles they play as court administrators and discussed how the profession could emerge stronger

from the current pandemic. There were pre-recorded talks and live speeches by the likes of Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, Head of Civil Service, Mr Leo Yip, and Barrister Rachel Spearing from the Serjeants' Inn Chambers, London, as well as hands-on workshops.

Reset Day

A Reset Day was conducted on 20 September 2021 to encourage all officers across the Judiciary to "reset" their thinking and mindset in respect of innovation and transformation. It achieved a credible attendance rate of 51% (or 555 out of 1,083 possible attendees).

In his video message, the Chief Justice encouraged everyone to be willing to embrace change and to "make, break and remake". This set the tone for the subsequent series of presentations. There was also a panel discussion where officers posed questions to the senior management of the three Courts on what it takes for the Courts to reset. An e-learning module was launched in conjunction with Reset Day as well.



More eLearning modules will be progressively added to the LEARN@Judiciary platform.



Short training sessions (right) and full-fledged master's programmes (above) are among the courses offered by the SJC.

OFF TO COLLEGE

Besides delivering its mainstay core programmes on judgecraft and bench skills, 2021 saw the Singapore Judicial College (SJC) conduct training for State Courts judges on the forensic analysis of evidence and judgment writing, as a foretaste of structured training under the Judicial Competency Framework. This initiative was led by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon



together with Justice of the Court of Appeal Tay Yong Kwang, Justice Vincent Hoong (Presiding Judge of the State Courts), Justice See Kee Oon (Judge in charge of the General Division of the High Court and SJC Faculty) and Justice Vinodh Coomaraswamy (SJC Senior Faculty). The SJC's signature Judiciary-Wide Induction Programme was also revamped to include judicial perspectives and 'Conversation Circles', so that participants could contextualise the judgecraft and bench skills training they had previously undertaken.

The Master of Laws in Judicial Studies programme, jointly offered by the SJC and Singapore Management University, bore fruit as the inaugural batch of candidates graduated in 2021. Two local candidates from the cohort were subsequently appointed to the SG Courts. Apart from advanced substantive law modules, the programme features advanced judicial learning in judgecraft, leadership, innovation and management, as well as an opportunity to undertake empirical judicial research.

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Connecting With The Community

The Singapore Judiciary advocates for inclusive justice by giving back to the community and addressing residents' legal and broader societal needs.

COURT VOLUNTEERS RECOGNISED FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS

A total of 340 court volunteers were recognised for their support and dedication to the administration of justice in 2021. Among them, 12 received a special honour for their exemplary commitment to pro bono work.

With the annual Judiciary Volunteers Appreciation Dinner dispensed again in 2021 to ensure people's safety and well-being, the Judiciary found another way to express its appreciation to the court volunteers. Each was gifted a four-piece coaster set produced by Highpoint Community Services Association, a thermal glass mug and a message from Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon.

AWARD RECIPIENTS

Legal Assistance Scheme for Capital Offences (LASCO) Award

Mr M Lukshumayeh

Outstanding Court Volunteer Awards

Mr Zechariah Chan (Advocate and Solicitor Category)

Mr Mathavan Devadas (Open Category)

Ms Tan Yean San (Student Category)

Long Service Awards

Mr Krishna S/O Veerappen

Mr Ang Wee Tiong

Mr Deepak Natverlal

Ms Gloria James-Civetta

Mr Melvin See Hsien Huei

Mr Raymond Lam Kuo Wei

Mr Richard Lim Teck Hock

Ms Vivienne Kaur Sandhu

Clockwise from bottom left: Mr Lukshumayeh, Mr Chan, Mr Devadas and Ms Tan posing with their awards.



ANNUAL TRAINING FOR COURT VOLUNTEER MEDIATORS

Every year, the State Courts' Court Dispute Resolution cluster conducts training sessions for Court Volunteer Mediators to ensure that their knowledge and skill sets remain relevant and up to date. Two sessions were held virtually in 2021, on 4 June and 19 November.

Applying Conflict-Coaching Techniques in Mediation

There were 108 participants at the 4 June session. It covered how mediators can use conflict-coaching techniques to help parties clarify their perspectives, set clear and achievable goals for resolving the dispute, and devise actionable plans to attain those goals, thereby ending the dispute amicably. During a panel discussion, participants shared how they had applied the coaching techniques to their cases and how these techniques had helped in the cases before them.

Ethics for Mediators

The session on 19 November, with 111 participants in attendance, focused on the importance of maintaining neutrality and ethical conduct during mediation. A senior consultant from Sage Mediation

explained how to spot red flags and navigate grey areas while upholding one's duty as a peacemaker. Case scenarios were presented, which prompted participants to share their views on fairness and impartiality. They also enthusiastically shared their own experiences during a panel discussion.



Through annual training, Court Volunteer Mediators refresh their knowledge and skills to perform their roles well.

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CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

2021

Despite the challenges brought about by COVID-19, the SG Courts continued to reach out to the community in 2021 as part of our corporate social responsibility efforts.

FEBRUARY



Celebrating Lunar New Year with the Singapore Cheshire Home

The State Courts brought festive cheer to beneficiaries virtually through special performances and games. Festive packs containing oranges and red packets were also prepared by the staff and distributed to the beneficiaries.

MAY

Donation Drive for Singapore Council of Women's Organisations (SCWO)

State Courts staff donated boxes of pre-loved items such as clothes, toys, books and household items to the SCWO, to be put up for sale at its New2U thrift store. Proceeds from the sale of these items went towards SCWO's initiatives, including its Star Shelter for women and victims of family violence.



JUNE

Virtual Befriending Sessions

State Courts staff participated in a series of virtual befriending sessions with senior citizens from Lions Befrienders, Sree Narayana Mission and Yong-en Care Centre. It provided an opportunity to chat and interact with seniors over fun and engaging activities such as quizzes, colouring and craft workshops. Elderly participants could also express their creativity and exercise motor skills.



JULY

Donation Drive for Food from the Heart

In response to a nation-wide appeal by charity Food from the Heart to support its Community Food Pack Programme, which feeds the needy across Singapore, Supreme Court and Family Justice Courts (FJC) staff organised a donation drive. They raised a total of \$8,813 in cash and close to 750 food items such as rice and canned food.



JULY



Read for Books

Participate in the Read for Books charity drive from 30-July 2021. For every 10 people who read for 15 minutes, one book will be donated to selected beneficiaries.

Read for Books 2021 is supported by Scholastic Education International (Singapore) Pte. Ltd, Kinokuniya Bookstores of Singapore Pte. Ltd and Popular Book Co (Pte) Ltd.

Find out more at: go.gov.sg/readforbooks2021 @readingnationsz / #readingnationsz

The above link can be accessed via the below QR code.

Read for Books Charity Drive

All three Courts contributed to this annual book drive, which is organised by the National Library Board to raise awareness and share the gift of reading with the less privileged. 156 participants from the Supreme Court and FJC participated in the initiative. State Courts staff also got involved for the third year running and raised a record 59 books.



Project Filos

The State Courts collaborated with Filos, a not-for-profit social service organisation, to distribute grocery packs containing food and essential items to families in need and elderly residents living alone during the pandemic.

AUGUST



National Day Fundraising Efforts

The State Courts collaborated with the Healthy Start Child Development Centre to contribute essential items to children from less privileged socio-economic backgrounds. Funds raised by the State Courts were used to donate 46 cartons of training pants, 49 cartons of diapers and 160 reusable masks. Masks were purchased from Sew Can We, a social enterprise that supports women from less privileged families who utilise their sewing skills to earn extra income.

The State Courts also raised \$16,018 through the sale of carnival goods and sold four artworks by inmates valued at \$1,484 for their adopted charity, Yellow Ribbon Singapore.



Our People

Access To Justice

Therapeutic Justice

Trust & Confidence

Strengthening
PartnershipsDeveloping
Our Capability

**SG
Courts**


FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS
S I N G A P O R E


SUPREMECOURT
S I N G A P O R E


**STATE
COURTS**
S I N G A P O R E

One Judiciary, Moving Forward

S I N G A P O R E C O U R T S A N N U A L R E P O R T 2 0 2 1