



SUBORDINATE COURTS

ANNUAL REPORT 2004

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PREFACE BY THE HONOURABLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE



**THE HONOURABLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE
YONG PUNG HOW**

It is heartening to note that notwithstanding its significant caseload, the Subordinate Courts have continued to excel and deliver justice of the highest quality. In 2004, the Subordinate Courts dealt with a total caseload of 380,000, which meant that the Senior District Judge and his team of 71 judicial officers each dealt with an average of 5,350 cases. Of these, only 0.05% went on appeal to the High Court.

The sterling work of the Subordinate Courts continues to be acknowledged globally. The World Bank has cited the Subordinate Courts as world class, and the Asian Development Bank recognises them as role models. Besides maintaining Singapore's top rankings in various international surveys for the quality of our justice and legal framework, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes also invited the Subordinate Courts last year to jointly develop a United Nations Toolkit for Judges on Judicial Reform.

Behind this impressive record are many years of effort and innovation in the administration of justice. The judges and officers of the Subordinate Courts can take pride in their achievements, attained through effort and teamwork. While the present success of the Subordinate Courts should certainly be recognised, this does not mean that we have reached the end of the journey. The Subordinate Courts must constantly improve no matter how successful they may be now. Present success is no indicator of future achievement. The Subordinate Courts must strive to find new ways forward. Even if present ways and methods seem adequate, we must nonetheless question and improve upon them. Although performance standards may grow ever higher, and harder to achieve, that cannot be an excuse for aiming low. Standing still in our present successes just makes it easier for others to surpass us.

I commend the Senior District Judge, and his judges and officers for their efforts, which are documented in this Annual Report. I am also confident that they will continue to rise to the challenge of sustaining the excellent work of the Subordinate Courts thereby ensuring that the Subordinate Courts remain at the forefront of judicial achievement in this region and beyond.

YONG PUNG HOW
CHIEF JUSTICE
Republic of Singapore
6 December 2004

THE SENIOR DISTRICT JUDGE'S MESSAGE



**SENIOR DISTRICT JUDGE
RICHARD MAGNUS**

At the Opening of the Legal Year 2004, The Honourable the Chief Justice noted that “If we do not strive to move forward, we will quickly fall behind.” His Honour further noted that “Our fortunes can easily turn against us if we do not keep pushing to raise the threshold of excellence.”

Under The Honourable the Chief Justice’s leadership and guided by the principles set out in our Justice Statement, we have accomplished our mission and fulfilled our task. As evident from this Annual Report, we have continued to raise the threshold of excellence and build on the successes of our recent past.

We are indeed well positioned to enhance public trust and confidence in our judicial system. We hold true to the high standards we set ourselves as the custodians of justice. It is our duty to ourselves, our nation and to posterity, to continually strive to uphold the rule of law through the fair administration of justice. We must and will ensure that these efforts are sustained. This is imperative for the continuing well being of our people.

RICHARD MAGNUS
SENIOR DISTRICT JUDGE
6 December 2004

CONSTITUTION AND GOVERNANCE

“The Subordinate Courts have not only a constitutional duty but also a public role in the administration of justice and the Rule of Law. We are trustees and guardians of the justice system.”

THE HONOURABLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE YONG PUNG HOW

Keynote Address

Tenth Subordinate Courts Workplan 2001 – 2002

28 April 2001

CONSTITUTION AND JURISDICTION

The Constitution of the Republic of Singapore vests judicial power in the Supreme Court and the Subordinate Courts.

CONSTITUTION

The Subordinate Courts are constituted by the Subordinate Courts Act, and comprise the District Courts, the Magistrates' Courts, the Coroner's Court, the Juvenile Court and the Small Claims Tribunals. Certain District Courts and Magistrates' Courts are designated as specialist courts, such as the Criminal Mentions Court, the Commercial Civil and Criminal Courts, the Family Mentions Court, the Family Court, the Traffic Court, the Centralised Sentencing Court, the Filter Court and the Night Courts. The e@dr Centre and the Multi-Door Courthouse are also part of the Subordinate Courts.

The Senior District Judge has overall supervision of all District Judges, Magistrates and staff of the Subordinate Courts. He is assisted by the Forum of Principal District Judges. The Forum comprises the Principal District Judges of the four Justice Divisions namely the Family and Juvenile Justice Division, the Criminal Trial Courts Division, the Civil Justice Division, the Criminal Mentions, Night Courts and Commercial Courts Division, and the Registrar of the Subordinate Courts.

Under the Group Management of Cases (GMC) scheme, the District Judges and Magistrates are divided into groups, each overseen by a Group Manager, who is a District Judge with seniority.

In addition to their judicial duties at the Subordinate Courts, District Judges preside in various Administrative Tribunals including the Military Court of Appeal, Copyright Tribunal, Industrial Arbitration Court, Liquor Licensing Board, Anti-Dumping Tribunal, Income Tax Board of Review, Tenant's Compensation Board, Hotels Licensing Board, Requisition of Resources Board, GST (Goods and Services Tax) Board of Review, Valuation Board of Review, and the Inquiry Committee of the Law Society (for disciplinary proceedings involving advocates and solicitors). District Judges also preside in the Syariah Court as ad hoc Presidents.

JURISDICTION

Criminal Justice

District Courts

In criminal cases, a District Court can try offences where the maximum imprisonment term does not exceed 10 years or which are punishable with a fine only. It can sentence a person to imprisonment for not more than seven years, a fine not exceeding \$10,000 and up to 12 strokes of the cane. Where the law expressly

THE SENIOR DISTRICT JUDGE WITH PRINCIPAL DISTRICT JUDGES

(from left to right)

ACTING PRINCIPAL DISTRICT JUDGE HOO SHEAU PENG

PRINCIPAL DISTRICT JUDGE WONG KEEN ONN

PRINCIPAL DISTRICT JUDGE FRANCIS G REMEDIOS

SENIOR DISTRICT JUDGE RICHARD MAGNUS

REGISTRAR LAU WING YUM

PRINCIPAL DISTRICT JUDGE FOO TUAT YIEN



provides for it, the District Court also has the jurisdiction to try offences and impose sentences which exceed the above limits under various statutes such as the Companies Act , the Misuse of Drugs Act and the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Magistrates' Courts

A Magistrate's Court can try offences where the maximum imprisonment term does not exceed three years or which are punishable with a fine only. It can sentence a person to imprisonment for not more than two years, a fine not exceeding \$2,000 and up to six strokes of the cane. Like the District Courts, the Magistrates' Courts have enhanced sentencing powers where specifically provided by law.

Civil Justice

Civil Trial Courts

The District Courts deal with civil claims not exceeding \$250,000 in value. The District Courts also deal with probate matters where the value of the deceased's estate does not exceed \$3 million. The civil jurisdiction of the Magistrates' Courts is \$60,000.

Small Claims Tribunals

The Small Claims Tribunals hear disputes arising from contracts for the sale of goods or the provision of services, and claims relating to damage to property (excluding property damage arising from motor vehicle accidents) where the amount in dispute does not exceed \$10,000. Where the amount in dispute is over \$10,000 but below \$20,000, the parties to the dispute can agree in writing to have the case heard by the Small Claims Tribunals.

Family and Juvenile Justice

Family Court

The Family Court hears matters such as divorce, custody, maintenance, division of matrimonial property, adoption of children and guardianship of infants. Applications for personal protection orders, expedited personal protection orders as well as domestic exclusion orders are also heard by the Family Court. In addition, the Family Court enforces orders for maintenance made by the High Court and the Tribunal for the Maintenance of Parents.

Juvenile Court

The Juvenile Court tries criminal offences committed by children or young persons, save where the offence is triable only by the High Court, or the child or young person is jointly charged with another person who is above 16 years of age. The Juvenile Court also deals with children who are beyond parental control and those who need care and protection.

Specialised Courts

The Commercial Civil and Criminal Courts

The Commercial Civil and Criminal Courts deal with specialised offences such as financial fraud, money laundering, computer claims and offences relating to intellectual property, corruption, illegal immigration, the employment of illegal foreign workers, special drug offences, outraging of modesty, rape offences and complicated civil cases.

The Criminal Mentions Courts

An accused person is produced at a Criminal Mentions Court when the prosecution is ready to formally charge him, and in any event, not longer than 48 hours after his arrest and remand. There are two Criminal Mentions Courts, one to deal with District Arrest Cases (DACs) and the other with Magistrates' Arrest Cases (MACs).

At the Criminal Mentions Court, the charges are read and explained to the accused persons. Upon the accused persons entering pleas of guilt, the presiding judge will sentence the accused or transfer appropriate cases for sentencing to the Centralised Sentencing Court or to the Senior District Judge's Court. The presiding mentions judge can also deal with applications of the prosecution or the accused persons, including bail applications and applications to detain the accused for further investigations. The presiding judge fixes the cases for pre-trial conference before a Group Manager under the Group Management of Cases scheme.

The Centralised Sentencing Court

The Centralised Sentencing Court sentences accused persons who plead guilty to certain specified categories of offences.

The Night Courts

Two Night Courts deal with summonses issued by various government departments for regulatory and traffic offences. Should an accused person claim trial, a date is fixed by the Night Court and the case is transferred to the Filter Court for trial or pre-trial conference.

The Filter Court

The Filter Court generally deals with Night Court cases where the accused person has claimed trial and other simple criminal cases which require up to a day's trial. It is also a holding court which filters cases to other trial courts.

The Traffic Court

The Traffic Court hears and tries traffic offences. It deals with almost all traffic and traffic related offences from inception to final disposal.

The Coroner's Court

The State Coroner presides over the Coroner's Court. The Coroner's Court holds inquiries in cases where a person dies in a sudden, violent or unnatural manner, or when the cause of death is unknown, as well as in other situations where the law requires an inquiry to be held.

Specialised Centres

The e@dr Centre

The e@dr Centre provides court-based alternative dispute resolution services for parties to explore settlement options with a view to the resolution of their civil disputes without trial. It also provides training in mediation for court staff and volunteer court mediators.

The Multi-Door Courthouse (MDC)

The MDC assists parties in pairing disputes within the jurisdiction of the Subordinate Courts with the most appropriate dispute resolution methods. It also provides information on other services of the Subordinate Courts. The MDC is the first of its kind in the Commonwealth and Asia-Pacific region.

COURT GOVERNANCE

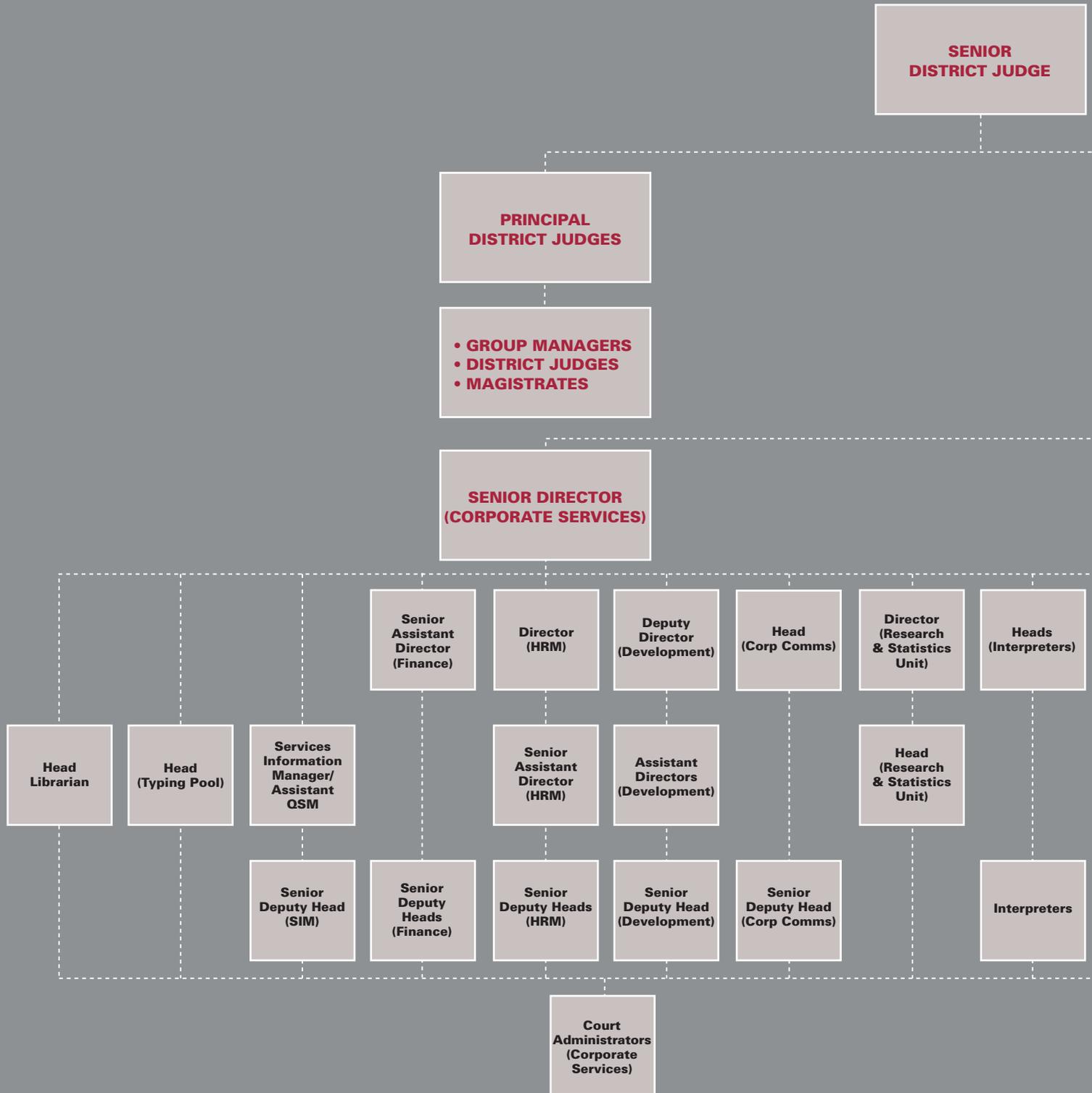
Under the leadership of The Honourable the Chief Justice Yong Pung How and the Senior District Judge Richard Magnus, the Subordinate Courts have been transformed into a world class judiciary through an effective and proactive programme of reform and change. This has resulted in the strengthening of the court governance as the judiciary constantly evolves to meet the changing needs of society in these turbulent and uncertain times.

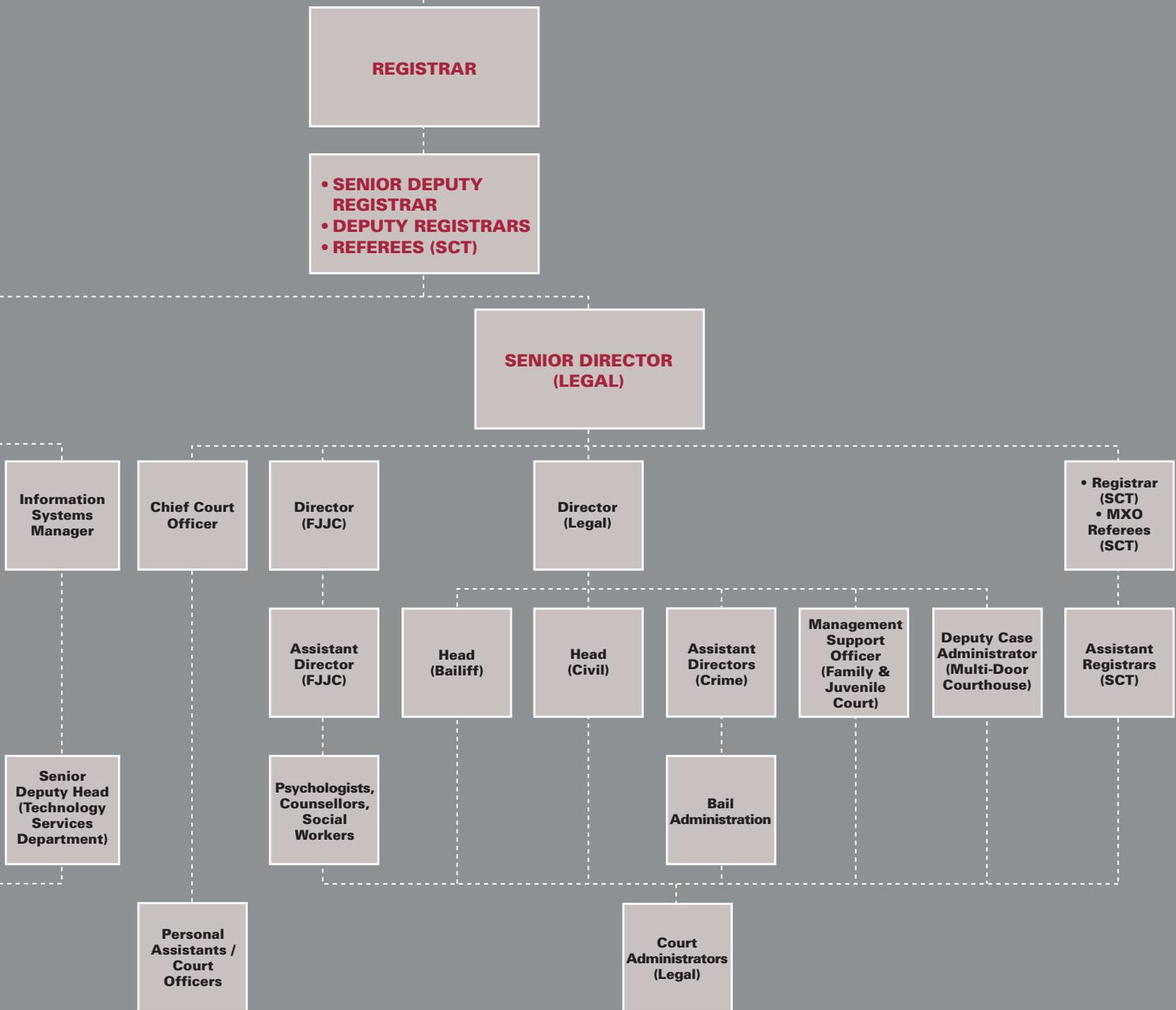
GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The Senior District Judge oversees the formulation and review of the strategic plans of the Subordinate Courts to ensure fair and timely administration of justice. Operational workplans are developed to effect implementation of new initiatives that will ensure the fair administration of justice in the Subordinate Courts. The Senior District Judge has overall responsibility for the day to day operations of the Subordinate Courts. In carrying out these responsibilities, the Senior District Judge is directly accountable to the Chief Justice.

The Senior District Judge is assisted by a core team that includes the Principal District Judges, Group Managers, the Registrar, Principal Director (Corporate Services), Senior Directors and Directors.

ORGANISATION CHART





Other court administrators provide essential para-legal services and corporate support services to enable the effective functioning of the Subordinate Courts. Para-legal services are provided in the various registries dealing with civil, criminal, family, juvenile, small claims and other matters. Corporate support services are provided in matters such as personnel, infrastructure development, corporate communications, human resource development, finance, research and statistics, information technology and court services.

TRILOGY OF COURT GOVERNANCE

The Trilogy of Court Governance was formulated to ensure that there is fair and effective administration of justice in the Subordinate Courts. It comprises the Justice Statement, a set of Core Competencies and the Strategic Framework. Together, they form the guiding principles, values and benchmarks which safeguard the integrity of the Subordinate Courts and preserve the orderly administration of justice.

THE JUSTICE STATEMENT

The Justice Statement defines the mission, values and principles that every judge has pledged to faithfully discharge while holding judicial office in the Subordinate Courts. The philosophy behind the four justice models is also encapsulated in the Justice Statement.

THE JUSTICE STATEMENT

ONE MISSION

- To Administer Justice

TWO OBJECTIVES

- To Uphold the Rule of Law
- To Enhance Access to Justice

THREE GOALS

- To Decide and Resolve Justly
- To Administer Effectively
- To Preserve Public Trust and Confidence

FOUR JUSTICE MODELS

- Criminal Justice – Protecting the Public
- Juvenile Justice – Restorative Justice
- Civil Justice – Effective and Fair Dispute Resolution
- Family Justice – Protecting Family Obligations

FIVE VALUES

- Accessibility
- Expedition and Timeliness
- Equality, Fairness and Integrity
- Independence and Accountability
- Public Trust and Confidence

SIX PRINCIPLES

- To Faithfully Discharge Judicial Duties
- To do Right to All Manner of People
- After the Laws and Usages of the Republic of Singapore
- Without Fear or Favour, Affection or Ill Will
- To the Best of their Ability, and
- To be Faithful and Bear True Allegiance to the Republic of Singapore



Oath taking ceremony of District Judge Aedit Abdullah before the Senior District Judge.



Magistrate Royston Ng taking his oath of office and allegiance.

THE CORE COMPETENCIES

The Subordinate Courts recognise that a set of clearly defined core competencies is vital in ensuring that the judiciary continues to be relevant, progressive and effective in the administration of justice. Judges in the Subordinate Courts have advanced beyond the traditional role of a Judge-Adjudicator to assume the roles of Judge-Administrator, Judge-Reformer, Judge-Mediator and Judge-Educator.

THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Strategic Framework sets out the eight key elements that provide a reference or benchmark for assessing future activities. These broad benchmarks in the Framework cover the desired public perception of the justice system, its fundamentals, access to justice, nature of the judicial process, applicable court governance principles, talent management, performance indicators and continuing education.

ORGANISATIONAL BEST PRACTICES AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

In the pursuit of organisational excellence, the Subordinate Courts have incorporated and institutionalised best practices from around the world. These best practices include the Justice Scorecard system, the Net Economic Value system and Six Sigma. They form the reporting, performance and audit framework for the Subordinate Courts.

SUBORDINATE COURTS BENCH

“I have often said that when ordinary citizens think about the Courts, they are in fact thinking about the Subordinate Courts. Justice administered by these Courts impacts them. I have therefore consistently sent the best Legal Service Officers to these Courts. The quality of their judgments has improved over the years.”

THE HONOURABLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE YONG PUNG HOW

Chief Justice's Response

Opening of The Legal Year 2003

4 January 2003

SUBORDINATE COURTS BENCH

The President of the Republic of Singapore appoints the Senior District Judge, District Judges, Magistrates, Coroners and Referees of the Small Claims Tribunals on the recommendation of The Honourable the Chief Justice. The Registrar and Deputy Registrars who oversee the running of the Civil, Crime and Family Registries of the Subordinate Courts are appointed by The Honourable the Chief Justice. Each District Judge and Magistrate of the Subordinate Courts is also concurrently appointed as Deputy Registrar, Coroner and Referee of the Small Claims Tribunals.

Under the Subordinate Courts Act, a District Judge has to be a qualified person within the meaning of section 2 of the Legal Profession Act for not less than five years. Every person appointed to be or to act as a District Judge shall be ex officio a Magistrate. As for a Magistrate or a Coroner, he has to be a qualified person as defined in section 2 of the Legal Profession Act for not less than one year.

In order to enhance the administration of justice, the Subordinate Courts have successfully institutionalised learning and made continual professional development a cornerstone of its human capital strategy.

To this end, scholarships are offered to judges to pursue postgraduate qualifications as well as attend executive development programmes at prestigious universities in Singapore and overseas.

To ensure that the Subordinate Courts are staffed by the brightest and the best, increasing numbers of talented judicial officers with outstanding academic credentials have also been appointed to the Subordinate Courts Bench in recent years. The current members of the Subordinate Courts Bench who have attained first class honours in their undergraduate/postgraduate studies are:

First Class Undergraduate Law Degrees

Ms Chionh Sze Chyi Mavis	University of Oxford
Ms Valerie Thean Pik Yuen	University of Cambridge
Ms Hoo Sheau Peng	University of Cambridge
Ms Audrey Lim Yoon Cheng	University of Cambridge
Mr Aedit Abdullah	National University of Singapore
Mr Tan Boon Gin	University of Cambridge
Ms Sia Aik Kor	University of London
Ms May Loh Bee Bee	University of Kent

First Class Undergraduate Law Degrees (continued)

Mr Hui Choon Kuen	University of Oxford
Ms Lim Hui Mien Sharon*	University of Cambridge
Mr Tan Boon Khai	University of Nottingham
Mr Koh Meng Sing Alvin	University of Leeds
Ms Ngoh Siew Yen	National University of Singapore

First Class Postgraduate Law Degrees**

Mr Hamzah Moosa***	University of London
Ms Teoh Ai Lin	University of Cambridge
Mr See Kee Oon	University of Cambridge
Mr Aedit Abdullah	University of Oxford
Mr Toh Yung Cheong	University of London

In all, 32 members of the Subordinate Courts Bench hold postgraduate law qualifications. They are:

Postgraduate Law Degrees ****

Mr Richard Magnus	University of Singapore
Mr Khoo Oon Soo	National University of Singapore and University of Cambridge
Mr Wong Keen Onn	University of London
Mr Ng Peng Hong	University of London
Mr Tan Puay Boon	University of London
Mr Neighbour Roy Grenville	University of London
Ms Jasvender Kaur	University of London
Mr Lau Wing Yum	University of London

Postgraduate Law Degrees ** (continued)**

Ms Valerie Thean Pik Yuen	Harvard University
Mr Chia Wee Kiat	National University of Singapore
Mr P Siva Shanmugam	National University of Singapore
Mr Tan Boon Heng	University of California, Berkeley
Mr Kow Keng Siong	Columbia University
Mrs Regina Ow - Chang Yee Lin	National University of Singapore
Mr Tan Boon Gin	Harvard University
Ms Sia Aik Kor	Harvard University
Ms May Loh Bee Bee	Harvard University
Mr Hui Choon Kuen	New York University
Mr Victor Yeo Khee Eng	University of London
Ms Wong Choon Ning	National University of Singapore
Ms Ng Teng Teng Cornie	Santa Clara University
Ms Lim Hui Mien Sharon	University of California, Berkeley
Ms Ong Chin Rhu	National University of Singapore
Ms Yeo Eng Joo Miranda	Santa Clara University
Ms Shobha Gopalakrishnan Nair	Georgetown University
Ms Asanthi Shiyara Mendis	University of London
Ms Wong Li Tein	Chicago-Kent College of Law

* Seconded to MOF

** First Class & equivalent

*** Seconded to Legal Service Secretariat

**** Including those postgraduate degrees obtained from universities which do not indicate the grade of LLM

THE JUSTICE DIVISIONS

“The Judiciary is an institution which represents the embodiment of ideals far greater than its parts. The Judiciary gives practical expression to our fundamental liberties. Above it all, the Judiciary must guard against the obstruction to justice, or more accurately, access to justice.”

THE HONOURABLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE YONG PUNG HOW

Keynote Address

Twelfth Subordinate Courts Workplan 2003 – 2004

17 May 2003

THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE DIVISION

The criminal justice system is founded on three cardinal principles, namely: the supremacy of the rule of law; equality before the law; as well as the protection of the public. The Subordinate Courts deal with more than 99% of all criminal cases in Singapore. The criminal justice system in Singapore continues to be inviolable to instability and corruption, have integrity, be transparent and efficient. The Courts strive to strike a balance between upholding the constitutional rights of accused persons and protecting the public.

The mandate of the Criminal Justice Division of the Subordinate Courts is to deliver swift, fair and exact justice. Ever mindful of this mandate, the Courts constantly keep pace with changing patterns of crime and criminality by periodically reviewing criminal trends, revising and updating sentencing benchmarks and refining the criminal work processes. Towards this end, the Criminal Justice Division has established an effective sentencing framework focused on crime reduction as well as punishment for the immediate crime.

A comprehensive review of work processes on pre-charging, mentions, pre-trial conferences, hearings and post-conviction/acquittal matters was conducted by the Criminal Process Review Committee. The goals of this criminal process review are to improve access to justice, quality of justice, reduce costs and raise performance standards.

CRIMINAL CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The review has resulted in the successful implementation of the Criminal Case Management System (CCMS). It was piloted with one of the key justice constituents, the Attorney-General's Chambers. It enables both Deputy Public Prosecutors (DPPs) and Defence Counsel to resolve preliminary issues expeditiously so that both parties are ready to take trial dates at the first Pre-Trial Conference (PTC). The Criminal Justice Division has established protocols with the Police, DPPs and Defence Counsel to run CCMS.

LSI-R: INFORMED SENTENCING FOR LOW-RISK OFFENDERS

The Criminal Justice Division worked with the Prisons Department to see how the sentencing judge may adopt a risk/needs assessment system (known as LSI-R) to identify potential low-risk offenders who may be diverted from incarceration or serve short sentences, where appropriate.

SENTENCING TARIFFS AND RESEARCH TOOL (START)

The Subordinate Courts continue to maximise the use of the Sentencing Tariffs and Research Tool (START) to conduct extensive reviews and updating of the Sentencing Guidelines. This ensures that sentences are up-to-date, consistent and current with crime trends.

ADJUSTING SENTENCING BENCHMARKS TO MEET CRIME PREVALENCE

Judges in the Criminal Courts are regularly appraised of prevailing crime trends in order to enable them to adopt a robust approach to sentencing as befitting the facts and circumstances of each case. Relevant data and input are collated, analysed and disseminated on a regular basis and meetings are periodically held to review crime trends and identify emerging issues.

Group Managers of the various Criminal Court clusters continue to meet their respective judges in regular informal sharing sessions to discuss recent decisions and sentencing developments. Judges also update each other on new developments in the law, discuss Magistrate's Appeals and exchange ideas, knowledge and experiences with one another.

PRE-TRIAL CONFERENCES (PTC) REVIEWS BY TRIAL JUDGES

Pre-Trial Conferences are useful case management tools. The judges of the Subordinate Courts enhance the pre-trial management of cases by conducting pre-trial reviews on a date close to the trial date. This is to ensure that parties have complied with all pre-trial directions. Such a measure has enabled the trial courts to take appropriate measures to better control the conduct of the case and save hearing days.

PTC BY TRIAL JUDGES IN SELECTED COMPLEX CASES

Another PTC innovation introduced this year was the conduct of PTCs by the designated trial judge personally. This is done in selected complex cases only. Conduct of the PTC is more meaningful for the trial judge in these cases and he will also be able to better assess the number of trial days required.

PROTOCOL FOR COURT USE OF MEDICAL REPORTS

In criminal proceedings, medical reports are frequently tendered to confirm that an injury has been sustained and the nature of the injury. Protocols have been introduced to ensure there is consistency amongst hospitals and doctors in the preparation of such medical reports.

TAGGING AS A BAIL CONDITION

The Criminal Justice Division is working on a scheme to allow accused persons in appropriate cases to be on bail with the condition that they be e-tagged. This will deter such accused persons from absconding, ensure that they stay at home and not re-offend and be eligible to continue with their education, training or employment.

This scheme was first piloted with the Juvenile Court for juvenile offenders to assist the Juvenile Court in ensuring curfew compliance by offenders. The offender is tagged with an electronic device that fits around either the ankle or wrist. This device sends a continuous signal to a Home Monitoring Unit (HMU) situated in the offender's residence. The HMU is in turn linked to a centralised control unit that registers the movement of the offender during the curfew period.

AUTOMATIC CASH BAIL REFUND

The Bail Centre has drawn up a standard operating procedure to facilitate the automatic refund of cash bail monies to the bailor upon the conclusion of the case. With effect from 1 March 2004, refundable bail monies are now returned automatically to the bailors.

CIVIL JUSTICE DIVISION

The civil justice system promotes fair and effective dispute resolution that will enhance investor confidence in Singapore and facilitate its global competitiveness. The civil justice process has now become highly integrated through the implementation of the seamless justice system which is to integrate the Civil Registry, the eCourts and the e@dr Centre. All civil cases are managed from commencement to final resolution in an integrated fashion minimising wastage of resources and maximising output. The Small Claims Tribunals, which also forms part of the Civil Justice Division, continues to exist as a cost effective and easily accessible means for the public to obtain just resolution of their disputes.

The Civil Justice Division continues to innovate and improve its processes so that justice remains accessible to all.

PERSONAL INJURY MOTOR ACCIDENT (PIMA) PROTOCOL

Building on the successful partnering of industry stakeholders for the Non-Injury Motor Accident (NIMA) protocol, the Subordinate Courts are adopting the same consultative approach in arriving at industry best practices and procedures to facilitate pre-writ out of court settlements of personal injury claims. Strategic dialogues with industry stakeholders including the Law Society and lawyers, the General Insurers Association

of Singapore (GIA) and insurers, as well as the Traffic Police and Ministry of Manpower to work out an industry best practices procedure for personal injury claims and litigation are in progress. The industry best practices procedure is targeted for implementation by the first half of 2005. When ready, it is expected to enhance the conduct of such litigation by streamlining procedure, improving efficiency and saving costs for all.

CREDIT COUNSELLING SINGAPORE

Credit Counselling Singapore (CCS), launched on 14 October 2004, began in 2002 as an initiative by the Subordinate Courts to galvanise community and banking leaders to implement credit counselling schemes for distressed debtors. The other partners in CCS are South West CDC, Singapore Pools Pte Ltd, Social Enterprise Fund, National Council of Social Services and the Lien Foundation. At the launch of CCS on 14 October 2004, the Minister of Education and Deputy Chairman of the Monetary Authority of Singapore Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam hailed CCS as a fitting case study on how a civic society comprising private and public sector organisations can rally resources together to help those who are less fortunate. The Subordinate Courts are supporting CCS in their education and counselling programmes by training counsellors on debt recovery litigation processes and hosting CCS public talks weekly at our Auditorium.

BETTER MANAGEMENT OF CERTAIN TYPES OF INTERLOCUTORY APPLICATIONS

It was observed that for certain interlocutory applications, parties were not ready to proceed on the date of hearing for various reasons. This resulted in precious judicial time being wasted. To better manage such applications, the Civil Registry has implemented a pilot programme since September 2004 for status conferences to be held for three types of interlocutory applications, namely: applications for summary judgment; applications to set aside judgments; and applications to strike out pleadings. This programme has resulted in uncontested applications being dealt with expeditiously and effective directions being given for contested applications. Hearing dates for contested applications are only given when parties are ready to proceed. A diary of the available hearing dates and slots ensures that the parties are able to choose hearing dates suitable for them, and the Deputy Registrar will not have too many contested applications for each hearing slot. In tandem with this, ePractice Direction 4 of 2004 was also issued requiring parties to file written submissions for these three types of applications.

SECTION 15A SUBORDINATE COURT ACT BAILIFF SCHEME

The section 15A authorised bailiffs scheme was put into effect from September 2004. 40 lawyers and legal clerks enrolled for a Bailiffs Training Course conducted by the Subordinate Courts from July 2004 to August 2004. Successful graduates from this course were co-opted into the Subordinate Courts' panel of authorised bailiffs. This provides judgment creditors an additional facility to access quicker executions without being

subject to the often busy schedules of court bailiffs. The section 15A scheme is currently in the pilot phase and the panel may be expanded in 2005.

SECOND EDITION OF PRACTITIONERS' LIBRARY: ASSESSMENT OF DAMAGES

In 2001, the first edition of Assessment of Damages was published. This was widely sold and is currently now widely referred to in practitioners' submissions. Over time it has also caused the quality of submissions, and decisions arising thereafter, to be enhanced. A team of judicial officers are working together on the second edition, expected to be published in 2005, to enable the work to remain a relevant and useful aid to judicial officers and members of the Bar.

THE e@dr CENTRE

The e@dr Centre, also known as the Primary Dispute Resolution Centre (PDRC), provides parties with court-based alternative dispute resolution services for parties to explore resolution without trial. Such early resolution translates into savings for parties, both in monetary terms and time.

EDUCATING STAKEHOLDERS

The PDRC has held seminar cum dialogue sessions with our stakeholders. A seminar for lawyers on Court Dispute Resolution (CDR) Advocacy was presented in May 2004 teaching lawyers how they can make the best use of their CDR sessions by focusing on:

- a. how they should be prepared for CDR;
- b. the importance of punctuality at CDR sessions;
- c. how they should conduct themselves;
- d. what they can do to make the most of their time at the CDR session; and
- e. how they may maximise their prospects for settling their cases at CDR sessions.

A further session to educate insurers was conducted in July 2004. These dialogues helped to enhance mutual understanding and promote collaboration between the PDRC and its stakeholders.

EXTENDING USE OF JOL FOR OVERSEAS WITNESSES AT CDR

In addition to the extensive use of videoconference technology for Court Dispute Resolution International (CDR-I) and JusticeOnline (JOL), the PDRC pioneered the use of JOL for a virtual CDR session to evaluate the evidence of a witness who was based overseas in DC Suit 648/01.

EXPEDITED CDRS FOR URGENT CASES

The PDRC now also offers expedited CDR for special cases of exceptional urgency. In one case, MC Suit 10109/04, the matter was settled in less than 24 hours after an application for CDR was made.

THE MULTI-DOOR COURTHOUSE (MDC)

In accordance with the principles laid down in the Subordinate Courts' Justice Statement, the MDC continues in its mission to enhance greater access to justice by informing the public of the alternatives available for dispute resolution.

RECRUITMENT OF DOCENTS

To engage the community in educating and raising awareness of how the justice system within the Subordinate Courts functions, the MDC is recruiting volunteers, including retirees, to be docents of the Courts. They will render information assistance to persons within the Courts and ease, where possible, the experience of having to be in Court.

THE SMALL CLAIMS TRIBUNALS (SCT)

The SCT recognises that there are instances where respondents fail to comply with SCT Orders, resulting in claimants seeking enforcement measures. The failure to comply by such respondents is usually due to financial difficulty and enforcement actions by claimants sometimes fail to realise the fruits of the Orders. The SCT have piloted a project to assist parties to work out a plan for the debtor to pay the debt owing under an Order of the Tribunals. The project is called Debt Recovery Plans@SCT. Both claimants and respondents benefit from this initiative as the claimant saves on enforcement costs and the respondent is given an opportunity to comply with an Order of Tribunal and not suffer the embarrassment that may arise from an enforcement action. Such counselling sessions are conducted by officers from the Subordinate Courts.

FAMILY AND JUVENILE JUSTICE DIVISION

The philosophy of the Family Court is to protect family obligations as families constitute the fabric and foundation of society. The Juvenile Court believes in restorative justice which seeks to realise the potential for change and reform in young offenders and to re-integrate them back into their families and community.

INFORMATION PACKAGE FOR LITIGANTS-IN-PERSON

A significant number of litigants in family cases are not represented by counsel. This year, the Family and Juvenile Justice Division has developed a specialised information package for litigants-in-person. This package will educate them on the standard documents that they may wish to file or produce at hearings or mediation. It will also contain information on court etiquette. The information in the package is currently being reviewed and updated before printing and dissemination.

CONTINUAL REVIEW OF THE MATRIMONIAL PROCEEDINGS RULES

The Subordinate Courts reviewed the Matrimonial Proceedings Rules to ensure that cases are heard more effectively and expeditiously. The proposed amendments focus on substantive issues such as discovery, child expert evidence and remedies in family proceedings. The purpose of these amendments is to update various outmoded rules, improve the efficiency of family case processes, and safeguard the welfare of children involved in custody and access disputes. The review and proposed amendments are targeted for release in early 2005.

BEST PRACTICES FOR ANCILLARY MATTERS HEARINGS

In August 2004, the Subordinate Courts rationalised and publicised the standard timelines for each stage of the ancillary matters proceedings to ensure that the cases are dealt with expeditiously and to promote consistency in dealing with cases at Ancillary Pre-Trial Conferences.

BENCHMARK COSTS AND MAINTENANCE

A detailed set of internal benchmarks on costs in family proceedings was prepared in 2004. This was issued to all judicial officers to promote consistency in awards. It is envisaged that this will help reduce the time and costs expended in the taxation of bills relating to family work.

ENRICH MARITAL THERAPY

The Family and Juvenile Justice Centre (FJJC) targeted to develop a new programme for couples who have already filed for divorce and who subsequently wish to explore reconciliation. The FJJC is exploring the use of psychometric assessment as a tool to determine the types of intervention required to assist the couples to address their marital conflict and salvage the marriage.

The ENRICH Inventory, comprising a series of questionnaires designed to diagnose, in an objective manner, the specific areas or causes of conflict between the parties, has been piloted on the first group of couples in the second quarter of 2004.

WORKING WITH TEENS AFFECTED BY DIVORCE

The FJJC worked to develop a programme to help address the psychological impact of divorce on upper primary and secondary school children. Thus far, the FJJC has explored the services available in the community for teens affected by divorce and has developed a proposal to help them. The FJJC is exploring the possibility of collaboration with community agencies on this project.

DIVERSIONARY MEASURES FOR JUVENILES AND YOUTHS AT RISK

The Juvenile Court, together with FJJC, have met up with the relevant key stakeholders such as the Police, the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS), the Ministry of Education (MOE) and Volunteer Welfare Organisations (e.g. Beyond Social Services), to discuss the implementation of pre-court programmes where juveniles can be referred to by the Police in lieu of prosecution. The concept of the Family Conference will be introduced at the pre-court stage (i.e. before the juvenile is even charged in Court). This is consistent with the community's effort towards Restorative Justice for juvenile offenders.

DIVERSIONARY PROGRAMMES FOR UNDERAGED SMOKERS

The Juvenile Court initiated a dialogue between Health Sciences Authority (HSA) and MCYS to consider whether juvenile underaged smokers (i.e. those below 16 years old) could be diverted to Family Service Centres for smoking intervention programmes notwithstanding being repeatedly caught for the offence instead of being charged in Court. The MCYS, HSA and Health Promotion Board are in the midst of discussing how this can be implemented. The approach taken would be that charging the juvenile in Court for underaged smoking should be the last resort, and only if the juvenile has other underlying delinquent traits (i.e. theft, aggression, gangs, drugs, inhalant abuse like glue-sniffing, etc.) other than a smoking habit.

INCREASING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

The Family and Juvenile Court Activity Booklet, which is for children aged between 5-12 years old, has been published and copies of the book have been distributed to children who accompany their parents to the Subordinate Courts or Family and Juvenile Courts since February 2004. These children may be waiting in the Children's room while their parents are in court or waiting for counselling appointments. Besides keeping these children constructively occupied, this book contains information on family violence and separation of parents. The information is presented in the form of cartoons and activities. Response to the book (both from parents and children) has been positive. Pending further evaluation, the book could be revised in accordance to feedback given before re-printing. The plan is to distribute the book to schools and social service agencies to reach out to more children.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

A mediation certification course has been designed in conjunction with Temasek Polytechnic School of Business to impart professional knowledge and skills to the interpreter-mediators of the Subordinate Courts. In addition to advanced family mediation skills, the course will also cover basic family law and counselling skills. With better-equipped mediators, Family Court clients will be provided with more effective resolutions to their maintenance issues.

CORPORATE SUPPORT SERVICES

“An effective justice system is critical for the economic and social benefit of the country, as political maturity and social progress are inextricably linked to a strong judicial system. Our justice system and processes must have integrity, be transparent, honest, corruption-free and efficient.”

THE HONOURABLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE YONG PUNG HOW

Keynote Address

Eleventh Subordinate Courts Workplan 2002 – 2003

27 April 2002

CORPORATE SERVICES DIVISION

The Corporate Services Division provides support in matters such as human resource management, infrastructure development and building maintenance, corporate communication, finance, research and statistics, court interpreters and information technology. Working behind the scenes of a community-oriented and quality-focused organisation, the Division has introduced various programmes and undertaken numerous projects to meet the expectations of the public for quality service.

INVESTMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCES

The Subordinate Courts were awarded the People Developer Standard (PDS) in 1999, and were re-certified in 2002. The PDS is a quality standard that gives recognition to organisations which invest in their people and have a comprehensive system for people development. The Subordinate Courts firmly believe that their people are their key resource. The Courts have ensured that they continue to attract the best and brightest to lead the organisation and have made efforts to develop all officers so that they are empowered to maximise their potential.

JUDICIAL SCHOLARSHIPS

Four Judges were awarded the Legal Service Commission (LSC) Scholarships to undertake the Masters in Law Programme at the National University of Singapore (NUS) Law Faculty for the academic year 2004/2005.

District Judge Mavis Chionh and District Judge Eric Tin were awarded scholarships to pursue their Masters Degree in Chinese Law.

District Judge Hoo Sheau Peng and Magistrate Alvin Koh were awarded scholarships to pursue their Masters Degree in Intellectual Property and Technology Law.

In addition, District Judge Valerie Thean attended the 6-week 11th Senior Management Programme organised by the Institute of Policy Development (IPD) from 14 June 2004 to 23 July 2004.

EVALUATING THE STRENGTH OF THE ESTABLISHMENT

The Subordinate Courts are conducting a manpower assessment to ensure that manpower remains proportionate to workload. The assessment extends to evaluating the re-distribution of contract officers in the various sections so that each section will have a core group of permanent officers. A schedule detailing the results and recommendations arising from the assessment will be prepared.

In addition, a manpower review and projection of court administrators over the next 10 years will be conducted. Two reviews will be conducted, each over a five-year period. The first review will be until 2009. Following this review, career and succession planning, identification of core competencies and training will be mapped accordingly. Various sectional heads from the Corporate Services Division will be involved in this review.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The functions of the Public Affairs Unit (PA) have evolved significantly over the years. To reflect these changes, the PA has also changed its name to the Corporate Communications Unit (CC) with effect from 14 June 2004.

The enlarged parameters of the new CC include both internal and external communication, with particular focus on media, publication and events management.

MEDIA / PRESS MANAGEMENT

The media has an important role to play in the administration of justice. The media is the main channel for public awareness of what is happening in the Subordinate Courts. The CC has embarked on strategic media management though effective communication with both local and international media. Efforts have been made to nurture officers within the Courts to be more media-friendly, and regular dialogue sessions are held with the media to share various court initiatives and projects.

In addition, a pro-active approach has been adopted where the CC officers effectively source for and provide appropriate information/stories to the media. To this end, officers from the CC have been present in open court hearings since February 2004 to source for noteworthy information and cases. This has helped to reduce response time to the media.

The Subordinate Courts also regularly contribute ideas and articles to various external publications. Links have been established with the Sunday Times, which carries stories about the Subordinate Courts on a regular basis. Contributions have also been made to the Challenge magazine (published by the Prime Minister's Office (Public Service Division)), the Law Gazette (published by the Law Society of Singapore) and the Faces magazine (a publication by the Ministry of Community Development Youth and Sports), to keep the public informed of the latest happenings in the Subordinate Courts.

REVAMP OF WEBSITE, CORPORATE VIDEO AND PAMPHLETS

In line with the Subordinate Courts' efforts to reach out and be accessible to the community, the Subordinate Courts are currently working on improving the various communication channels. The Subordinate Courts' website, corporate video and information pamphlets will be revamped to provide up-to-date information to the public.

SECURITY ENHANCEMENTS

As part of ongoing efforts to provide a safe and secure court environment, additional surveillance cameras were installed along the perimeter of the Subordinate Courts Complex. Security checks and patrols were further enhanced.

IMPROVEMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACILITIES

A public address system was installed in the Subordinate Courts Complex to provide more effective command and control during an emergency evacuation.

The Subordinate Courts are also undertaking a comprehensive building audit of the present Havelock building. The audit is to confirm that the existing building, constructed in 1975, is in good condition, and able to sustain Court operations for the next few years.

ECONOMY-DRIVE (ED) INITIATIVES

Since mid-2003, the Subordinate Courts have successfully embarked on a range of ED initiatives to further enhance operational efficiency, create value and trim expenditure. These initiatives include better management of email storage usage, reducing hardcopy legal publications & encouraging online legal

research, optimising paper usage, migration of the ATM network to Gigabit Ethernet Network, replacement of the SingTel lease line between Havelock building & Apollo Centre office with cost-effective Free Space Optics connection, arrangement of in-house training courses and improved coordination in engaging the services of foreign language interpreters. The ED momentum gathered speed in 2004 when the Subordinate Courts continued to strengthen the cost-conscious value-creating mindset in all staff within the organisation. Driven by the internal ED Committee, all sectional managers, supervisors and their operating staff were involved in ongoing ED efforts. This teamwork and collective hard work resulted in approximately \$400,000 cash savings for FY2004, over and above the across-the-board 2% budget cut applied by Ministry of Finance in FY2004 to all government departments. This is a particularly noteworthy achievement in view of the already lean operating budget.

LIBRARY AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Research & Resource Centre (RRC) continues to provide judges and court administrators information, research and knowledge through initiatives that enhance the legal research capability of the library.

As part of RRC's efforts to create a Knowledge Culture Hub @ JDC, it held a series of promotional activities known as Activities Buzz @ JDC with themes including Hobbies Month @ your library, Food Delights @ your library, Lunchtime Movie @ your library and Stretch your Body & Mind @ your library.



Food Delights @ your library: Lunchtime Cooking Demonstration.



Hobbies Month @ your library: Craft Workshop.

ROSES AT THE SUBORDINATE COURTS

To nurture and promote an attitude of service excellence in the officers who have direct contact with court users, the Subordinate Courts implemented the Registry Officers for Service Excellence (ROSE) programme on 1 June 2004. This programme emphasises effective service delivery at the frontline counters.

Under this initiative, frontline counter officers are now known as ROSEs. A clear system has been set up to evaluate the performance of ROSEs at each stage of the service delivery process, that is, on their service readiness at the point of contact with the court user, and in processing and closing the transaction. This is augmented by separate guidelines to ROSEs and ROSE Gardeners, which elaborate on key elements of customer service, the scoring system and follow-up action that will be taken.

ROSE Gardeners are the respective Heads of Department and nominated officers. They will walk the ground at designated frontline service counters to counsel, guide, and evaluate ROSEs on the performance of their counter duties. Assessment is made using an objective and transparent scoring system. In this way, the performance of ROSEs can be tracked, allowing ROSE Gardeners to identify areas of improvement in the service levels. In addition, ROSEs who exceed performance expectations will be rewarded. The overall effect is an energised and motivated workforce.

INFOCOMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The Subordinate Courts continue to tirelessly leverage on information technology to increase access to justice and promote easy use of court services. Today, the Subordinate Courts have one of the world's most technologically advanced court systems.

GOVERNMENT CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER (GCIO) OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

The Information Technology Department (ITD) was awarded the Outstanding Achievement Award by the GCIO of the Infocomm Development Authority (IDA) in July 2004. This award acknowledges IT departments that have attained top scores in overall customer satisfaction in a survey conducted by GCIO in the previous year among its 26 customer sites (comprising ministries, organs of states and statutory boards). This is the third consecutive year that ITD has been presented the award since its inception in February 2002.

ISO9001 RE-CERTIFICATION AUDIT

ITD has passed the ISO900: 2000 Re-certification Audit in July 2004. Under the ISO9001 framework, certified organisations are required to go through 6-monthly surveillance audits and a re-certification exercise once in three years to ensure that the organisation is continually practising and enhancing its ISO Quality Management System.

REDEVELOPMENT OF CRIMINAL CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

A tender was called in July 2004 for the redevelopment of the existing Singapore Case Record and Information Management System (SCRIMS). The new criminal case management will incorporate new criminal processes, including computerisation of the Juvenile Court process, and electronic data exchange with partner agencies. The project will help the Subordinate Courts achieve better usage of resources, facilitate closer collaborative efforts with partner agencies, and allow easier performance monitoring by management through electronic means.

FREE SPACE OPTICS

Free Space Optics (FSO) is a leading edge wireless technology that provides an enterprise-class alternative to traditional lease lines for network connectivity in buildings within close proximity. The Subordinate Courts successfully piloted FSO from August 2003 to February 2004 as a viable connectivity technology that provides network connection between the Subordinate Courts Havelock Building and the office at Apollo Centre with no reduction in service level.

As a result of this pilot, the Subordinate Courts reaped significant recurrent cost savings from December 2003 by replacing its original lease line connection between the two office buildings with the FSO link.

MIGRATION OF ATM NETWORK TO GIGABIT ETHERNET TECHNOLOGY

A tender was awarded in February 2004 for the migration of the Subordinate Courts' ATM-based corporate network to the newer, faster and more cost-effective Gigabit Ethernet (GE) technology. The migration was successfully completed in August 2004.

REVAMP OF DESKTOP COMPUTING ENVIRONMENT

The desktop computing environment for all Subordinate Courts staff was revamped in 2004.

The revamped desktop computing environment provides an up-to-date computing environment for Subordinate Courts staff. The upgrade to Windows XP provides better desktop security and more user-friendly features, and ensures compatibility with Government-wide applications and other applications that are upgraded to run on Windows XP. The upgrade to Microsoft Office 2003 provided many new features to increase office productivity, including Word document auto-recovery and helpful toolbars for users in Word, Excel and Powerpoint. The upgrade to the Lotus Notes email system provided better features to enhance communication.

YEAR IN REVIEW

“To ensure our survival in this fast-evolving landscape, it is rudimentary that we are able to adjust and cater to the expectations and needs of the society which the Judiciary and the legal profession serve. The Judiciary cannot accomplish this alone. The support of one and all in the legal circle is essential. The cornerstone of a democratic, rich, vibrant and dynamic civic society is a sound judicial and legal system which has the respect and confidence of its people.”

THE HONOURABLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE YONG PUNG HOW

Chief Justice’s Response

Opening of the Legal Year 2002

5 January 2002

YEAR IN REVIEW

SUBORDINATE COURTS 13TH STRATEGIC WORKPLAN 2004/2005

The Workplan Seminar was held on 3 April 2004. It was attended by the judges and staff of the Subordinate Courts. The theme for the Workplan was "Subordinate Courts and Communities of Justice". The Operational Workplan for the various Justice Divisions and operation sections was presented.

Prior to the Seminar, the Subordinate Courts had reached out to the various justice constituents for their feedback on various proposed initiatives of the Subordinate Courts. Five comprehensive papers outlining possible reforms for discussion with the justice constituents were drafted and sent to them for their consideration. The papers were:

- "Challenges of a New World" which outlined the need for the Subordinate Courts to respond to these changing times by being more forward-looking, identified the key emerging national and international patterns/driving forces that shape the judicial scenarios and set a new vision for the future.
- "Just Truth and Peace in Civil Justice" which focused on improving areas crucial to generating fair outcomes and on minimising the social and economic impact of personal injury litigation cases.
- "Interfacing the Phases and Faces in Criminal Justice" which sought to strengthen the pre-court phase so that regulatory offences are compounded and relational disputes are settled as far as possible without court prosecution and to ensure that criminal cases are substantially ready for prosecution before they enter the court system.
- "Compact with the Third Sector: Building Strong Families and Communities" which aimed to introduce timely and effective intervention in families to facilitate and encourage early resolution of family conflicts without turning to the justice system except as a last resort.
- "Corporate Services Division" which focused on enhancing court administration by improving governance and management of public resources. This is critical as court administration forms the backbone supporting the court processes.

The feedback and ideas obtained from the justice constituents helped the Subordinate Courts to reach a common understanding with its justice constituents and to arrive at a shared purpose with them.

JOINT COLLABORATION WITH LAW SOCIETY TO PRODUCE INFORMATION BOOKLETS

To enhance the quality of the Bar, in particular counsel's submissions, the Subordinate Courts are co-writing booklets with the Law Society. These booklets cover the areas routinely practised in the Subordinate Courts, and highlight the principles and considerations applied by judicial officers, with suitable illustrations.

The booklets will cover the following topics:

- Mitigation Plea
- Order 14 - Summary Judgment
- Leave to Appeal to High Court
- Custody issues in the Family Court

CMC @ SUBORDINATE COURTS

On 3 May 2004, the Community Mediation Unit (CMU) opened the doors of a Community Mediation Centre (CMC) facility at the Subordinate Courts. This fourth CMC facility in Singapore was a result of collaborative efforts between the Subordinate Courts and the Ministry of Law.

The Subordinate Courts' links with the CMC existed even prior to the setting up of the CMC facility within the premises of the Subordinate Courts. The Multi-Door Courthouse had been referring suitable cases to the CMC. There had also been referrals with consent of parties by Magistrates pursuant to section 15 of the Community Mediation Act. Prior to its amendment in 2004, section 15 of the Act only empowered Magistrates to refer cases to the CMC if both parties consented. With the amendment which came into effect on 3 May 2004, Magistrates are empowered to order all appropriate cases to the CMC.

The CMC presence within the Subordinate Courts now allows for the immediate referral of parties for mediation at the CMC. This heightens and tightens the link between the two, allowing litigants to benefit from the CMC's services to resolve their complaints amicably through mediation.

KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE SHARING

The Subordinate Courts continue to communicate with other judiciaries around the world to exchange ideas and experiences. In 2004, the Subordinate Courts hosted visits by 26 foreign dignitaries and delegations. These include:

- Dr Ahmad Movahead, Head of Judicial Courts Against Economic Crimes, Iran under the auspices of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime;
- Mr David Jordan, Associate to Senior Judge, District Court of Western Australia;

- Mr Abdullah Ali Al-Essa, President of the Supreme Council of Court, State of Kuwait;
- His Excellency Dr Addis Alem Balema, Ambassador of The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia;
- Justice Duong Van Binh, Deputy Chief Judge, Civil Division, Supreme People's Court of Vietnam;
- Mr Song Jianchao, Senior Judge of the Judges Management Department of the Supreme People's Court of the People's Republic of China, and
- Lord Philips of Worth Matravers, Master of the Rolls, United Kingdom.



Visit by His Excellency Dr Addis Alem Balema, Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.



Visit by Ms Li Li, Director, Supervisory Bureau of Xuanwu District, Beijing Municipality, People's Republic of China.

"It is an honour to come to this Court and discuss the Singapore Justice System. It is beyond my expectation and it would be a system which I hope my country would learn from. I hope we will achieve the quality and fairness of the Singapore system through hard work and partnership with you. Thank you very much for the reception and briefing."

His Excellency **Dr Addis Alem Balema**
Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
9 June 2004

"This has been a very impressive experience for me. Judiciary in Singapore is a real role-model for the world. Congratulations and thank you for sharing all these with us."

Petter Langseth
Programme Manager
Global Programme Against Corruption Division for Operations
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
29 June 2004



Visit by His Excellency Mr Abdullah Ali Al-Essa, Counsellor and President of the Supreme Council of Court, State of Kuwait.

"It was really a great opportunity for me and the delegation of the Ministry of Justice to visit the Courts of the Republic of Singapore. We have seen great development and perseverance and precision in performance, let alone the structure of the building. The most important things of course, are the social justice, the importance given to children, and the introduction of technology to administer justice."

Mr Abdullah Ali Al-Essa

Counsellor and President of the Supreme Council of Court, State of Kuwait
29 June 2004

NATIONAL HONOURS AND OTHER AWARDS

In recognition of their outstanding contribution and years of dedicated service to the Subordinate Courts and the nation, the following judges and staff of the Subordinate Courts were awarded:

The Public Administration Medal (Bronze)

District Judge Kow Keng Siong

The Efficiency Medal

**Mr Lashman Singh
Ms Teo Sew Eng**

The Long Service Medal (25 years of Service)

**District Judge Jocelyn Ong
Ms Nornahar Bte Abdul Rahman
Ms Suppaletchumi d/o Suppiah**

Subordinate Courts 10-year Service Award

**District Judge See Kee Oon
Mr Lee Chun Yip
Ms Ra'idah Bte Marwan
Mr Zaini Bin Sojah**

**Subordinate Courts 10-year Service Award
(continued)**

**Ms Anees Parvin
Ms Juliet Fenendees
Ms Prasakthi d/o Allagoo
Ms Norartiyangseh Bte Jibani
Ms Choo Oi Peng**

**Ms R Thamayanthi
Mr Ismail Bin Mat**

Court Administrator of the Year 2004

**Ms Samsiah Mizah
Mrs Mok-Goh Kit Soon
Ms Mahani Adam**

NATIONAL DAY OBSERVANCE AND CARNIVAL @ COURTHOUSE SQUARE

The Subordinate Courts marked Singapore's 39th Birthday with a difference. Our celebration began with a flag raising and pledge recitation ceremony. Thereafter, the Senior District Judge flagged off the heritage trail. Concurrently, a carnival was held at the Courthouse Square. Officers set up stalls and became enterprising social entrepreneurs for a day. The carnival and the pre-carnival fund raising activities raised \$10,000 for the



Flag-raising at the Subordinate Courts' National Day Observance Ceremony.



Subordinate Courts officers reciting the National Pledge at the National Day Observance Ceremony.



Carnival @ Courthouse Square.



Heritage Trail @ Empress Place.

Children's Cancer Foundation, the Subordinate Courts' adopted charity. That day, the judges and staff also honoured the National Day Award winners and others who had done the Subordinate Courts' proud. Three officers were presented with the Court Administrator of the Year Award. The Senior District Judge also presented Benchmark Awards for Volunteerism to the 2004 winners. An ethnic costume parade by staff rounded off the day's celebration.

SUBORDINATE COURTS BENCHMARK AWARDS FOR VOLUNTEERISM

The Subordinate Courts launched the Subordinate Courts Benchmark Awards for Volunteerism in 2003 to show its recognition and appreciation for the role played by volunteers in enhancing the administration of justice. For 2004, the winners are:

Individual Advocate & Solicitor Category

Mr John Ng Lee Chye

Individual Category

Associate Professor Debbie Ong Siew Ling

Corporate Category

Tanjong Pagar Family Service Centre



The Senior District Judge presenting the Benchmark Award for Volunteerism (Corporate Category) to the representative from the Tanjong Pagar Family Service Centre.

SUBORDINATE COURTS SUPERSTAR COMPETITION

The Judicial Recreation Club committee organised the Subordinate Courts Superstar Competition. This was held on 6 August 2004. Of 15 participants who auditioned for the competition, eight performed during the event to vie for the top three prizes. Two Judges and the Registrar of the Small Claims Tribunals served as judges for the event. Turnout for the event was overwhelming and the depth of performing talent within our ranks was indeed a revelation. Mr Jim Lim of the FJJC emerged as the winner of the competition, a feat he repeated at the Judiciary Dinner & Dance where he emerged as overall winner for the Judiciary.

JUDICIARY FAMILY DAY

The Annual Judiciary Family Day took place on 4 September 2004 at the Big Splash. This event brought together the staff and families of the Supreme Court and Subordinate Courts for an afternoon of fun and games.



Subordinate Courts Superstar Competition.



Winner of the Judiciary Superstar Competition, Mr Jim Lim collecting his prize from Senior Assistant Registrar Mr Toh Han Li.

JUDICIARY DINNER & DANCE

The Annual Judiciary Dinner & Dance was held on 9 October 2004, and was attended by the judicial officers and staff of both the Supreme Court and Subordinate Courts. In line with the theme for the evening, officers and staff came dressed in their “retro” best. Held at the Amara Hotel, this was another activity aimed at promoting the welfare of the staff.

NEW PAPER BIG WALK

For the first time, the Subordinate Courts’ officers and their family members took part in the New Paper Big Walk as a group on Sunday, 23 May 2004. The event started off and ended at the National Stadium. The Subordinate Courts fielded a team of 67 participants. The Big Walk provided the officers with an opportunity to interact with their colleagues. The large turnout demonstrated the camaraderie and teamwork of the officers from the different sections in the Subordinate Courts.



Team Subordinate Courts at the New Paper Big Walk 2004.



Judiciary Family Day at the Big Splash.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

**“A strong judicial system of fair and effective
dispute resolution will enhance investor confidence
in the nation and facilitate global competitiveness.”**

THE HONOURABLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE YONG PUNG HOW

Keynote Address

Eleventh Subordinate Courts Workplan 2002 – 2003

27 April 2002

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Under the able leadership of The Honourable the Chief Justice and the Senior District Judge, the Subordinate Courts have gone from strength to strength. This is reflected in the international ranking surveys conducted by various reputable organisations.

INTERNATIONAL RANKINGS

The Singapore Judiciary continued to stay at the top, excelling in regional and international ranking studies conducted by renowned externally based organisations. The quality, adequacy, and efficiency of the Singapore Judiciary scored top marks. In 2004, Singapore was rated best in the administration of justice and the rule of law in studies and surveys conducted by respected bodies like the Political & Economic Risks Consultancy (PERC), Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RISKS CONSULTANCY (PERC)

The Political & Economic Risks Consultancy Ltd (PERC) is an international consulting firm specialising in strategic business information and analysis for organisations in the ASEAN countries, China and South Korea. PERC publishes a series of risk reports on the key trends, socio-political and other subjective variables shaping the business environment in individual Asian countries as well as the inter-linkages between countries and the people of the region.

The quality of the judiciary in Singapore relative to countries in the Asian region was rated by PERC. In PERC's 2004 Asian Intelligence Report, expatriates working in Asia were surveyed on their perceptions on the overall integrity and quality of the local judicial system and the consistency in the application of laws.

Top Quality of the Judiciary

Singapore maintained pole position (with a score of 1.50) in Asia for the overall quality and integrity of the judicial system in 2004. This reaffirmed the adequacy and efficiency of the Singapore judicial system, which has consistently been rated as one of the best in the world. Hong Kong and Japan were ranked second and third with a score of 2.60 and 3.90 respectively. The gap between Singapore and the top three leading countries has also widened in Singapore's favour [see Figure 1].

Figure 1: PERC's ranking for Judicial System, 2001-2004

2001			2002		2003		2004	
Ranking	Countries	Score	Countries	Score	Countries	Score	Countries	Score
1	Singapore	3.50	Singapore	2.00	Singapore	1.00	Singapore	1.50
2	Hong Kong	3.60	Hong Kong	2.86	Japan	1.50	Hong Kong	2.60
3	Japan	4.00	Japan	4.00	Hong Kong	2.56	Japan	3.90
4	Malaysia	4.00	South Korea	4.75	Malaysia	4.75	Taiwan	5.75
5	South Korea	6.00	Taiwan	6.17	South Korea	5.00	South Korea	6.00
6	India	6.13	Malaysia	6.57	Taiwan	5.67	Malaysia	6.33
7	Taiwan	6.13	Thailand	7.22	Philippines	6.67	China	7.00
8	Thailand	6.82	Vietnam	7.25	India	8.00	Philippines	7.08
9	Philippines	7.60	India	7.33	Vietnam	8.33	Thailand	7.50
10	Vietnam	8.25	Philippines	7.50	China	8.33	India	8.00
11	China	8.75	China	8.33	Thailand	8.50	Vietnam	8.36
12	Indonesia	9.33	Indonesia	9.83	Indonesia	9.67	Indonesia	9.00

Grades are on a 0 to 10 scale with 0 representing the best situation possible and 10 the worst.

Consistency in the Application of Local Laws

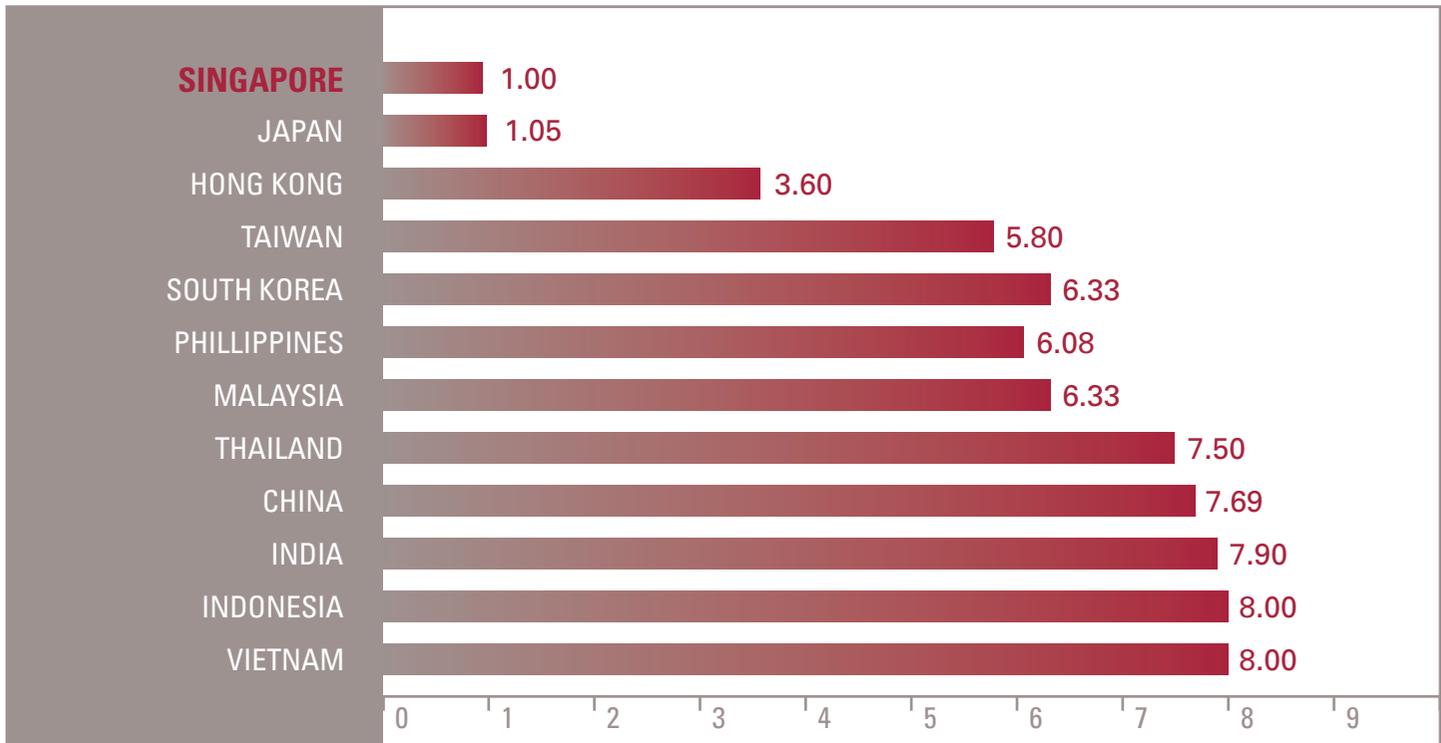
Singapore was also ranked number one with a score of 1.00 in 2004 for consistency in the application of laws. Japan and Hong Kong were ranked second and third after Singapore with a score of 1.05 and 3.60 respectively [see Figure 2].

PERC's report shows that expatriates are most impressed with Singapore's judicial system as laws are implemented consistently and that the Police are rated as very efficient. Their confidence and trust in Singapore's judicial system is important to the nation's economic development as there is a direct correlation between the perceived quality of key national institutions and a country's level of economic development. PERC concludes that Singapore's reliable and sound judicial system has undoubtedly contributed in attracting foreign businesses and multinationals to Singapore and underpinned its economic development.

THE ECONOMIST INTELLIGENCE UNIT (EIU)

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) is a leading provider of country, industry and management analysis. Through their global network of analysts and economists, they assess and forecast the political, economic and business climates of 200 countries and provide reliable analysis for making global decisions.

Figure 2: Consistency in the application of local laws



Grades are on a 0 to 10 scale with 0 representing the best grade possible and 10 the worst.

Source: 2004 Asian Intelligence Report, PERC.

Well Qualified and Independent Singapore Judiciary

In March 2004, EIU reported that the judiciary is experienced, well-qualified and independent, especially in commercial and business matters. The report also stated that Singapore Legal System is effective, impartial and responsible in dealing with business issues. The Singapore Legal system is viewed to be highly efficient, effective and professional in dealing with business disputes. Contractual arrangements in Singapore are secure and are easily enforceable with no favouritism shown to domestic companies.

It was quoted in the EIU report that *“The legal system is highly effective in dealing with business disputes, reaching decisions quickly. No favouritism is shown to domestic companies on legal matters and contracts are easily enforceable. There is virtually no risk that foreign assets will be expropriated... Intellectual property rights are reasonably well protected, although the penalties for infringement may be too light. Private property rights are well respected...”*

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF)

In February 2004, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in their Financial System Stability Assessment of Singapore indicated that an efficient judiciary was one of the cornerstones for Singapore's well-regarded efficient legal system. Singapore's financial sector has benefited from an efficient legal system.

Efficient Singapore Judiciary

IMF also gave top marks for the soundness of Singapore's legal, supervisory and institutional framework. The IMF report mentioned that *"Singapore has in place a sound and comprehensive legal, institutional, policy and supervisory framework for Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT)."*

The report further ascertained that *"The legal system is well regarded, with a low crime rate, an intolerance for corruption and an efficient judiciary. The known incidence of drug trafficking, corruption and other serious crimes is comparatively low. White-collar crime is the most common money laundering typology."*

SUBORDINATE COURTS CASELOAD

The Subordinate Courts handle over 95% of all cases entering the judicial system in Singapore. In 2004, the Subordinate Courts received a total of 451,030 matters. This represented an increase of 2.8% from the 438,597 number of cases received in 2003.

CASELOAD PROFILE	2003	2004 ^P
Criminal Justice Division		
Criminal Mentions		
Criminal ⁽¹⁾	67,721	60,180
Departmental/Statutory Board	117,201	140,460
Town Council (Night Court)	7,107	11,250
Traffic	30,152	33,330
Special Courts		
Coroner	3,539	3,500
Others		
Magistrate's Complaints	10,313	12,650
Police Summons	1,532	1,490
	237,565	262,860
Civil Justice Division		
Originating Processes		
Writs of Summons (DC & MC)	49,547	37,860
Originating Summons	774	590
Probate	2,955	2,890
Interlocutory Applications		
Summons-in-Chambers ⁽²⁾	19,398	18,630
Summons for Directions (O.25/37)	5,879	4,130
Summary Judgment (O.14)	1,196	840
Others		
Taxation	497	370
Assessment of Damages	1,216	1,260
	81,462	66,570
e@dr Centre		
No. of Cases Mediated	7,464	8,320
Small Claims Tribunals		
No. of Claims Filed	34,300	31,260

CASELOAD PROFILE	2003	2004 ^P
Family and Juvenile Justice Division		
Family Justice Division		
Maintenance & Family Violence	10,989	10,520
Divorce Petitions	4,718	5,410
Originating Summons	207	150
Adoption	700	690
	16,614	16,770
Juvenile Justice Division		
No. of Applications	2,540	2,130
Enforcement Proceedings		
Writs filed with Bailiff's Section		
Writs of Seizure & Sale	11,116	9,350
Writs of Seizure & Sale @ SCT	2,936	2,180
Writs of Possession	192	250
Writs of Distress	341	270
Warrant to Levy (Fine)	78	0
Warrant of Attachment against Surety	1,152	2,300
Warrant of Levy (CPF)	775	470
Others	7	20
	16,597	14,840
Lodged With Warrant Section		
Warrant of Arrest (Issued)	46,586	53,640 ⁽³⁾
Notice to Surety	1,429	1,740
Warrant of Attachment	237	240
Warrant of Levy	825	490
Search Warrant	442	490
	49,519	56,600

p - Preliminary: Figures are estimated, based on Jan-Sep 2004.

Notes:-

(1) Includes DAC, MAC, DI, OR/OA, MOM,MPA, NPB & NS cases.

(2) Excludes O.25/37.

(3) Only includes Warrant of Arrest issued by the Warrant Section.

CASES DEALT WITH	2003	2004 ^P
Criminal Justice Division		
Criminal Mentions		
Criminal ⁽¹⁾	64,765	63,210
Departmental/Statutory Board	103,742	120,190
Town Council (Night Court)	4,851	4,750
Traffic	25,810	28,020
Special Courts		
Coroner	3,202	3,060
Others		
Magistrate's Complaints	2,027	2,690
Police Summons	1,359	1,280
	205,756	223,200
Civil Justice Division		
Originating Processes		
Writs of Summons (DC & MC) ⁽²⁾	40,014	49,880
Probate	3,035	2,550
Interlocutory Applications		
Summons-in-Chambers (includes O.24/37 & O.14) ⁽³⁾	27,605	23,470
Others		
Taxation	520	390
Assessment of Damages	364	280
	71,538	76,570
e@dr Centre		
No. of Cases Disposed of	7,156	8,060
Small Claims Tribunals		
No. of Claims Disposed of	37,079	34,670

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CASES DEALT WITH	2003	2004^P
Family and Juvenile Justice Division		
Family Justice Division		
Maintenance & Family Violence	9,344	8,140
Divorce Petitions	4,460	4,730
Originating Summons	206	150
Adoption	705	730
	14,715	13,750
Juvenile Justice Division		
No. of Cases Disposed of	2,141	1,900
Enforcement Proceedings		
Writs filed with Bailiff's Section		
Writs of Seizure & Sale	2,245	2,760
Writs of Seizure & Sale @ SCT	1,886	2,720
Writs of Possession	51	100
Writs of Distress	92	50
Others	22	10
Lodged With Warrant Section		
Warrant of Arrest (Processed)	60,109	58,490
	64,405	64,130

p - Preliminary: Figures are estimated, based on Jan-Sep 2004.

Notes:-

- (1) Includes DAC, MAC, DI, OR/OA, MOM,MPA, NPB & NS cases.
- (2) Includes cases where no action was taken by the plaintiffs for 6 months and hence lapsed.
- (3) Separate figures for Summons-in-Chambers & Summons for Direction & Summary Judgment disposed of are not available.

WAITING PERIODS*/PROCESSING TIMES

The Subordinate Courts are committed to providing quality service to court users and to ensure that there is timely and expeditious administration of justice. In 2004, the Subordinate Courts continued to provide high standards of service as evident from the statistics below:

		Performance Jan - Sep 2003	Performance Jan - Sep 2004
Criminal Division			
Criminal Cases	Within 4 weeks	97%	96%
Traffic Cases	Within 2 weeks	100%	100%
Coroner's Cases	Within 8 weeks	100%	100%
Processing of Bail	Within 24 hours	99%	100%
Family Division			
Maintenance/Family Violence Cases	Within 3 weeks	71%	77%
Divorce Cases			
Uncontested	Within 4 weeks	100%	100%
Contested	Within 4 weeks	100%	92%
Adoption	Within 4 weeks	100%	100%
Juvenile Cases	Within 2 weeks	100%	100%
Civil Division			
Interlocutory Applications			
Summons in Chambers	Within 4 weeks	100%	100%
Summary Judgment	6 weeks (Statutory min)	100%	100%
Summons for Directions	Within 2 weeks	100%	100%
Assessment of Damages	Within 4 weeks	100%	100%
Examination of Judgment Debtor	Within 4 weeks	100%	100%
Probate	Within 4 weeks	100%	100%
Taxation Review	Within 2 weeks	100%	100%
Appeal to District Judge in Chambers	Within 4 weeks	98%	100%
Appeal to High Court Judge in Chambers	Within 10 weeks	100%	100%
Hearing of Civil Cases	Within 4 weeks	99%	100%
Small Claims Tribunals			
Tourist Claims			
Tourist in Person ⁽¹⁾	Within 24 hours	85%	94%
Representative Tourist	Within 10 hours	100%	100%
Consumer Claims	Within 10 days	100%	100%
Non-Consumer Claims	Within 2 weeks	100%	100%

Notes:-

(1) Out of the 2 cases that exceeded the timelines, 1 was delayed because of claimant's request to have Chinese documents translated and as for the other case, it was filed on a Saturday and therefore, consultation was fixed on the following Monday.

* From last mention/PTC/set down to 1st Hearing.

SUBORDINATE COURTS FINANCIAL PROFILE

The Subordinate Courts have continued to focus on the effective use of resources, budgeting prudence, financial transparency and rigorous cost control and management. These practices allow the Subordinate Courts to maximise their resources to better serve the court users.

ACTIVITY / ACCOUNT	FY2003 Budget	FY2003 Actual
Maintenance Expenses (buildings & equipment)	5,000,000	4,998,754.57
Rental of Office Premises & Equipment	880,000	729,163.40
Public Utilities	1,330,000	1,329,069.52
Training, Welfare & Public Relations		
Local Training Courses, Workshops & Seminars	180,000	124,714.48
Overseas Training Courses	18,000	0.00
Overseas Conferences	30,000	20,542.02
Scholarships	200,000	193,272.57
Staff Recreation & Welfare	23,640	23,047.79
Dental & Medical Subsidy	205,000	172,923.14
Staff Suggestions & Productivity Schemes	1,480	577.00
Managing For Excellence Award	74,540	74,537.76
Long Service Awards	30,000	29,799.33
Campaigns & Exhibitions	1,500	1,500.00
Advertising	0	0
Membership of Overseas Organisations	3,200	3,195.86
	767,360	644,109.95
Support Services		
Office Supplies	420,000	408,057.78
Library Materials	380,000	322,776.29
Transport Claims	20,000	17,109.62
Telecommunications & Postage	376,600	309,096.20
Data Transmission	210,000	209,575.69
Data Centre Charges	850,000	847,026.18
Computer Services	4,510,000	4,173,476.17
Professional & Consultancy Services	260,000	253,805.26
Books, Publications & Brochures	110,000	102,306.00
CISCO & Security Services	212,000	211,508.00
Security Systems	650,000	643,689.00
Administrative Services	3,250,000	3,221,203.95
Purchase of Equipment	460,000	451,498.75
Witness Allowances & Payments to Foreign Language Interpreters	620,000	616,458.45
Other Financial Claims	50,000	49,075.00
	12,378,600	11,836,662.34
Expenditure On Manpower		
Legal & Support Services	27,575,910	27,482,893.53
Development Projects	2,799,200	2,413,853.91
Total	50,731,070	49,434,507.22

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

District Judge Aedit Abdullah

District Judge James Leong

District Judge Sharon Lim

District Judge Regina Ow

District Judge Wong Peck

Magistrate Asanthi Mendis

Magistrate Miranda Yeo

Ms Elyana M Ishak

Ms Angeline Kwah

Ms Sarah Lim

IN CONSULTATION WITH

Senior District Judge Richard Magnus

SUBORDINATE COURTS

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