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LEADING CHANGE IN THE SINGAPORE'S MAGISTRACY: THE SEVEN WORKING PRECEPTS¹

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Background

1. Singapore is a geographically small country measuring 660 square kilometres, densely populated with 3.2 million residents and 0.7 million foreigners. More than 7 million tourists visit Singapore every year and it hosts more than 400,000 foreign workers. The country has a multi-ethnic composition and operates with four official languages: Malay, Chinese, Tamil and English. Secular in nature, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Taoism are the major practiced religions. It has a brief history of independence since 1965. Human talent is its only natural capital.

2. With resource limitations, cultural diversity, and a growing population, the maintenance of law and order is of paramount importance for Singapore. Keeping peace between man and man living in close proximity and constantly competing for scarce resources becomes a hard reality. Any breakdown of order and law can mean calamity for Singapore. The commitment to the rule of law thus becomes inseparable from the people's lives. But the rule of law itself is devoid of content unless the institutions that support this ideal are effective in giving it practical meaning for the people. The judiciary is a key public institution that determines to a large extent the scope of the rule of law. It is the pillar of constitutional government that defines the relationship between the state and the individual, and between individuals inter se, by interpreting and applying the law. It metes out distributive or corrective justice. Its

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decisions directly bind the parties who submit to its jurisdiction, while indirectly shape social behaviour and norms. In upholding the rule of law, the judiciary serves a critical socio-economic function.³

3. Singapore inherited from the English colonial administration the legacy of the Anglo-Saxon common law, with a similar system of courts and of the administration of justice. In 1993, Singapore enacted the Application of English Law Act to rationalise the continuing reception of English law⁴, and in 1994 cut the Gordian knot from the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council⁵. The Singapore justice system today is autochthonous. Article 93 of the Constitution vests judicial power in the Supreme Court and Subordinate Courts which function as an independent third branch of constitutional government. The Supreme Court consists of the Court of Appeal, the highest court of the land, and the High Court⁶. The Subordinate Courts consists of the District Courts, Coroners' Court, Magistrates' Courts, Juvenile Court, and the Small Claims Tribunals.⁷ Since 1996, the Subordinate Courts were conferred jurisdiction to deal with family cases and applications for adoption of children which used to be dealt with in the High Court⁸. The Subordinate Courts today deal with more than 95 percent of all the cases and judicial matters at first instance in Singapore.

The Singapore Magistracy

4. The Singapore Magistracy is a critical component of the Subordinate Courts. A Magistrates' Court exercises both original civil and criminal jurisdiction. It determines claims in civil cases up to S\$60,000. It also hears criminal cases and statutory offences subject to the jurisdiction and sentencing powers conferred by the applicable written laws. The Magistracy runs a mentions court, three trial courts, and a dedicated night court which deals with statutory offences every weekday evening. Magistrates also deal with chambers applications in the Crime Registry, such as Magistrates' Complaints, search warrant and bail applications. They perform mediation for relational disputes arising from Magistrates' Complaints. Magistrates also conduct mediation for civil cases in chambers at the Primary Dispute Resolution Centre. A duty Field Magistrate is available to attend to charge accused persons who cannot be brought to the Courts within 48 hours from the time of arrest as mandated by the Constitution. Magistrates are also responsible for attending on-site to issue Further Detention Orders against illegal immigrants awaiting deportation.

5. The Juvenile Court is presided over by a Magistrate.⁹ It is empowered to deal with matters relating to juvenile offences and anti-social juvenile behaviour. The Small Claims Tribunals, dealing with civil claims of up to S\$10,000 (and with parties'

³ This is evident by the fact that the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and USAID extend huge loans and technical assistance to developing countries to restructure their justice system as part of poverty eradication and socio-economic reform. The Global Competitiveness Report (by World Economic Forum), World Competitiveness Report (by International Institute for Management Development), Comparative Country Risks Reports and Asian Intelligence Reports (by Political & Economic Risks Consultancy), and Economic Freedom of the World Report (by Cato and Fraser Institute) also include evaluation of the effectiveness of legal framework and justice system in their overall assessment of a country's performance.
Cap. 7A.

⁴ By repealing the Judicial Committee of Privy Council Act, which allowed appeals to lie from the Singapore Court of Appeal to the Privy Council in UK.

⁵ s 3, Supreme Court of Judicature Act, Cap 321.

⁶ s 3(1), Subordinate Courts Act Cap 322.

⁷ This is done vide the Supreme Court Of Judicature (Transfer of Matrimonial, Divorce and Guardianship of Infants Proceedings to District Court) Order made by the Chief Justice.

⁸ s 32(1), Children and Young Persons Act, Cap 38.

consent up to S\$20,000) for contracts for sale of goods or services, or tortious damage to property (excluding motor vehicle claims), are presided over by Referees, who are ex officio Magistrates, in the adjudication proceedings. Referees' orders are deemed orders of the Magistrates' Courts and can be enforced in like manner, and Referees also enjoy the same privileges and immunities as Magistrates.¹⁰ Magistrates also deal with applications for maintenance and family protection orders at the Family Division of the Subordinate Courts¹¹. They facilitate mediation for divorce cases and ancillary matters.

6. The Singapore Magistracy therefore deals with offences, civil disputes, breakdown of families and juvenile delinquency. With globalization and information technology defining and redefining the socio-economic structures of nations, societies are increasingly cosmopolitan and economies intensely competitive. These forces of change impact individuals, public institutions and private enterprises. In such an environment, the Singapore Magistracy had to evolve rapidly to meet the changing needs of society. In the last decade, cases coming to the courts have expanded in range, scope and volume. In year 2000 alone, Magistrates' caseload in real numbers was 232,744¹², or 60.6 percent of the total caseload in the Subordinate Courts (approximately 57.6 percent of the total judicial caseload in Singapore)¹³. There were some 12 Magistrates in year 2000. Notwithstanding the heavy case volume, we have no backlog since 1993 and cases generally follow strict prescribed timelines and very short waiting periods ranging from weeks to months from commencement to disposal (see **Annex A**). Of all the decisions made by Magistrates, only a very low percentage attracted appeals. An insignificant percentage of Magistrates' decisions was disturbed or overturned by the appellate courts.¹⁴

Seven Working Precepts in Leading Change

7. The Singapore Magistracy has been able to lead, instead of react to, change in administering justice by following seven simple working precepts. These precepts corresponds with Steven Covey's "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People", and they are:

- (a) Be Proactive
- (b) Begin with the End in Mind
- (c) Put First Things First
- (d) Think Win-Win
- (e) Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood
- (f) Synergise
- (g) Sharpen the Saw

¹⁰ ss 36 and 44, Small Claims Tribunals Act, Cap 308.

¹¹ This is pursuant to Part VII and VIII of the Women's Charter.

¹² This comprises 35,463 civil suits, 18,072 interlocutory applications for civil suits, 6,827 maintenance order applications, 3,103 family protection order applications, 104 enforcement orders for family cases, 4,144 mediation for divorce and ancillary matter applications, 2,568 juvenile matters, 149,885 statutory offences, 6,546 criminal cases, and 6,032 Magistrates' Complaints.

¹³ The Subordinate Courts dealt with a total of 383,808 cases in year 2000. This accounts for more than 95 percent of the total judicial caseload in Singapore.

¹⁴ In year 2000, only 3 appeals were filed for civil suits heard by Magistrates. 51 appeals were filed for statutory offences, criminal cases, juvenile matters and private summonses (arising from Magistrate's Complaints). Of all the cases dealt with in 2000, less than 0.01 percent had the decisions disturbed on appeal.

8. These working precepts are not intended to be, nor do they qualify as, a code of management best practice. Nor are they cast in stone like the biblical Ten Commandments or the Roman Twelve Decemviral Tables. They are merely a reality checklist for the Magistracy to consider if it has been effective to meet modern societal needs for justice. We intend this paper as a descriptive jurisprudence to share our experience. As the Singapore Magistracy is a critical component of the Subordinate Courts and the Singapore Judiciary, interchangeable references will be made in this paper.

Precept One: Be Proactive

9. In the face of rapid change cycles, an institution must be proactive and forward looking to be above and ahead change. It must be able to anticipate and be suitably equipped to forestall changes. The rationale is patent: an organisation that only reacts to change is bound to suffer the negative and unsettling effects of change which will eventually upset its system, process and structure. The judiciary, a critical public institution which determines the rights and liabilities of the state and the people, simply cannot allow change to undermine its system, process and structure. If the judiciary is dictated by change, it will soon lose its effectiveness to deal with the people's problems. If the people lose their respect for the judiciary, there will be private justice, street justice, and reprisals. Anarchy will result. This has been the experience of some Latin American countries.

10. We began our judicial reform efforts in the early 1990s with the appointment of Chief Justice Yong Pung How and Chief Judge Richard Magnus. The former heads the whole Singapore Judiciary while the latter administers the Subordinate Courts. The reform efforts began with a fundamental change in mindset of those working in the courts. Judges, Magistrates and Court Administrators are all encouraged to be proactive. Emphasis is placed on judicial productivity. Gradually a pro-change institutional culture developed. We started with eradicating backlogs in 1992 (which accumulated from 1948) to demonstrate the will to reform. Backlogs were cleared within a year or so. We then introduced caseload management practices which quickened the pace of litigation, which was hitherto led by the Bar and the parties. We became the "programmer" who decide the timetable rather than a mere "program" that would process cases as and when they were presented. This is because we recognised that the traditional adversarial ethic rooted in common law jurisdictions was operating to the detriment of a rapidly developing young nation and was placing an unjustifiable strain on the justice system. We decided to adopt a more inquisitorial approach, where the courts will act *ex proprio motu* where necessary to ensure that cases move at a speed acceptable to a modern society.

11. We introduced Pre-Trial Conferences (PTCs) to ascertain whether the parties are really ready for trial and to narrow down the trial issues. The PTC system has grown over the years, both in scope and reach, and is now a norm in the justice process for all cases. Since July 1992, we introduced hearing fees to further streamline the civil justice process. This scheme compels parties to conduct their cases in the most efficient and productive manner by imposing a pecuniary disbenefit in addition to other opportunity costs (such as time and the attendant stresses). A strict policy against adjournment of trials was instituted to ensure all cases that were set down will not be vacated unless there are good reasons.

12. Judges and Magistrates are clustered into groups under a Group Management of Cases (GMC) scheme. Each group is led by a senior Judge designated the Group Manager to oversee the case allocation and management within the group. All cases in the Subordinate Courts are presently managed by nine GMC groups¹⁵. The Group Manager in turn accounts to the Chief Judge who has statutory supervisory control over the distribution of business in the Courts. The GMC scheme ensures optimal utilisation of judicial resources at any given time. A system of Differentiated Case Management (DCM) was also implemented to manage civil cases according to their nature and complexity. Individualised tracks are drawn up for each case to promote its expeditious disposition. For instance, the express track is appropriate for actions involving relatively simple and straightforward issues and do not need much pre-trial preparation. This ensures that simple cases are expeditiously disposed of and do not clog up the justice system.

13. The courts must be proactive because court resources are scarce and need to be apportioned carefully. The provision of judicial services is economically a public good to which all taxpayers, regardless of the proportion of tax paid, should be allowed equal access. It is antithetical to a fair justice system to allow a small minority, through inefficient planning or management, to monopolise a disproportionate share of court time at the expense of other court users. Hence our emphasis on case and caseflow management. But resource planning per se is insufficient. To be proactive involves futures and scenario planning. The former is a process of identifying the long term objectives of an organisation and planning to achieve those objectives. The latter involves emerging trends analysis and thereafter using these trends to draw up possible scenarios for the organisation and from there postulate the preferred scenario within a realistic timeframe. Planning is led by the Chief Judge and Group Managers, but the planning process involves all Judges, Magistrates and Court Administrators. The Justice Policy Group, which comprises selected Judges and Magistrates with leadership potential, is a strategic think-tank to aid in this planning process.

Precept Two: Begin with the End in Mind

14. Beginning with the end in mind simply means that we must have the outcome in mind before working towards achieving it. The courts' core business is to administer justice, thereby upholding the rule of law. The respect for rule of law can only be sustained if there is public trust and confidence in the manner in which laws are applied by the courts. The outcome of each decision must therefore be heightened public trust and confidence in the courts' administration of justice. Our planning therefore emphasise on the ends of public trust and confidence and we usually begin planning with this outcome in mind (see **Annex B** for our diagnostic model of strategic planning). In 1997, we adopted a Justice Statement which is a mission statement of sorts for the Courts (**Annex C**). It gives the organisation a sense of what it does, and what it seeks to achieve. In short, it provides the reason for its continued existence. It provides meaning and direction. These guidelines and principles are set out to keep the organisation focused and committed to worthy end results.

¹⁵ There are 5 Criminal, 1 Civil, and 1 Family GMC groups. The Registry and the Primary Dispute Resolution Centre are each managed by a GM as well.

15. The Justice Statement encapsulates the Courts' belief, core values, ideals and principles. It is the reference point which we resort to in the daily discharge of our duties and in the annual workplan organisation. For instance, as the institution that apply the principle of equality before the law, the judiciary should have as its objective the enhancement of access to justice for all. We produced a Courts Charter to articulate the service standards that the public can expect of the courts. It serves to remind us to strive towards overall improvement in court service, which are also in keeping with the principles of expedition and timeliness, one of the five core values essential for a responsive justice system. We also established a dedicated Customer Service Section to deal with public enquiries, complaints and assignments to help continually improve public access to justice. Through Night Courts for minor offences (which operate on weekdays after office hours to convenience the public), extended service hours at the Registries, and after office hour mediation sessions, and through the provision of free mediation and other court services, we removed temporal and economic barriers to access justice. The outcome is better public perception of the courts and enhanced public trust and confidence (see **Annex D**).

16. The six principles in the Justice Statement serve as a constant guide for every Magistrate. These six principles govern the discharge of judicial duties and are embodied in the Oath of Office and Allegiance to which we subscribe upon taking office. The Oath of Office binds Magistrates to uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct and maintain the respect and confidence of society in our judicial system. In a recent virtual discussion by judges from several jurisdictions in the Subordinate Courts e-Justice Judges' Corridor, there was unanimity that judges must have intellect and wisdom, moral courage, a reputation for fairness, patience, decisiveness, be dignified, have unquestionable honesty and integrity and be able to temper justice with mercy. In line with this, only the best and the brightest are considered for the Magistracy, and their performance on the Bench is constantly evaluated to ensure that consistent high standards are maintained. Emphasis is placed on developing the core competencies of Magistrates. Magistrates who perform well are considered for overseas postgraduate and training courses on scholarships at reputable Ivy League and Oxbridge universities. We invest in continuing judicial education and have a code of judicial ethics because if Judges and Magistrates are not respected for their probity and ability, there will be little public trust and confidence for the courts. After all, an excellent structure and process cannot function well without good people in place.

Precept Three: Put First Things First

17. The ability of an organisation to prioritise the numerous and varied tasks that it faces affects its responsiveness. Public resources are limited, and we frequently need to make hard decisions to ensure optimal allocation of resources. Recognising this, we put in place a system of annual workplans since 1992. These annual workplans, with a strategic and an operational component, each carry a theme and play a pivotal role in focusing the Courts' attention and resource allocation on areas requiring immediate attention. The process of annual planning also systematically and incrementally direct the courts towards achieving higher standards of performance and excellence. A summary of the last nine Subordinate Courts' workplans can be found in **Annex E**. The annual workplans are short-term or intermediate objectives. For long range planning, we have followed the Nine Streams of Judicial Reforms. Ranging from

structural overhauling to futures planning, these long-term objectives have been classified as:

- (a) Restructuring from within
- (b) Rethinking the role of the judge
- (c) Redefining justice models
- (d) Refining service standards
- (e) Redeploying community resources
- (f) Re-engineering through info-technology
- (g) Re-setting and re-evaluating intermediate goals
- (h) Re-aligning the paradigm of our value system
- (i) Repositioning the courts

18. Apart from considering these larger objectives in planning, the Courts also rely on the Strategic Grid (**Annex F**) and the Conjunctural Feasibility Test (**Annex G**) to prioritise what ought to be developed and implemented as justice initiatives. The question asked under the Strategic Grid is which initiative will have the “turnaround” effect, ie. highest innovativeness and public benefit, to justify priority in the allocation of scarce resources. Under the Conjunctural Feasibility Test, an initiative that comes within the intersection of “Legitimacy & Support”, “Public Value” and “Institutional Capacity”, and is consistent with the mission and objectives of the courts, will be accorded priority. These two planning tools, together with the diagnostic model of strategic planning, have been applied in the development of all the justice initiatives undertaken in the Singapore Subordinate Courts.

Precept Four: Think Win-Win

19. “Think Win-Win” is about optimal allocation of resources both for the courts and the parties by way of consensual (as opposed to confrontational) dispute resolution process, ie. mediation. Parties in a common law adversarial system are usually positional and focuses on a win-lose outcome. The amount of time, money, energy and other resources invested in a courtroom battle may however be unjustifiably disproportionate to the outcome. Frequently, parties’ position can be at variance with their real interests. Insisting on a full trial process indiscriminately for every case also means a drain on court resources. In modern day reality, rigid adherence to an adversarial process can prove highly inefficient for the courts and parties against a soaring caseload.

20. For the parties, the informal mediation process which focuses on the interests rather than the position saves time, expenses and other opportunity costs. Parties are also empowered to make decisions between themselves instead of having judgments made by an umpire foisted on them. Mediated decisions, over which parties have control and influence, are by their nature less likely to be repudiated. For the courts, it means that limited resources can be more effectively utilised to broaden public access to justice. Mediated decisions are also found to be more often adhered to and less likely to create enforcement problems which the courts have to deal with. Encouraging consensus building also promotes social harmony and peace which is a public good and a deliverable expected of a competent democratic judiciary.

21. We have infused this working precept into our criminal, civil, juvenile and family justice models. Mediation is now a norm in most cases. In minor relational disputes (eg. disputes involving kinsmen, friends and neighbours) that carry a criminal element, before parties are led through a full criminal trial by way of private summons initiated by a Magistrate's Complaint, parties are brought before a Magistrate in chambers to attempt settlement by mediation. Our experience is that such cases normally involve larger emotional or cultural issues and needs which formal court proceedings do not offer the best solution. With the same objective, mediation has been introduced in every stage of family cases. These include divorce proceedings during which parties will disagree over grounds for divorce, maintenance, custody over children and division of matrimonial assets. The mediation process compels parties to focus on their changed status and obligations brought about by their own decisions to bring the family union to an end. Parties are also urged to be future-oriented and concentrate on their best interest because taking aggressive positions and harping on old wounds will only result in tedious and prolonged trials that retard the parties' lives and the courts' pace.

22. Mediation was first introduced into the civil justice model at the consultation stage of Small Claims Tribunals proceedings. At that stage, parties to a minor civil claim are encouraged to settle the claim amicably, failing which the matter will proceed for adjudication on the merits by a Referee. Mediation was later introduced in District Courts and Magistrate Courts exercising civil jurisdiction within a holistic framework of court dispute resolution. We now have an array of mediation services such as the Med-Arb, CDRI, eCDRI and e@dr, which offer low cost, added value options for parties. The Primary Dispute Resolution Centre is a one-stop centre within the courts' infrastructure where parties to a civil claim can mediate the case facilitated by a settlement judge. Med-Arb, which combines mediation and arbitration, deals with cases where parties can agree on substantially most of the issues in contention, but are for some reason unable to reach full settlement. CDRI (Court Dispute Resolution International) is an initiative involving foreign judges who co-mediate cases (especially involving cross-border elements or foreign law) with our Judge or Magistrate via videoconference. This gives the parties an added perspective of their case to encourage consensual resolution. eCDRI is based on the same concept using email as the medium of communication. e@dr is a borderless initiative that transcends the traditional concept of territorial and monetary jurisdiction, a first of its kind in the world. It is premised upon parties' agreement to take advantage of the dispute resolution services provided by the Subordinate Courts, including mediation and formal proceedings, for all civil cases including emerging e-commerce, intellectual property and bio-technology cases.¹⁶

23. Initiatives under the "Think Win-Win" precept help to keep down high costs of litigation for the parties. They also serve as an alternative to litigation which is an economic cost to society. Mediation enhances access to justice by removing the economic barrier to those who do not have the means or strength to finance long drawn civil litigation. Settlement rate in mediated cases is very high¹⁷. Investment in mediation also yields a long-term social benefit in that the people will learn to resolve

¹⁶ This is at <http://www.e-adr.org.sg>

¹⁷ The settlement rate at the Primary Dispute Resolution Centre for civil cases is about 95.4 percent, 90.6 percent of applications for maintenance and protection orders were disposed of without trial after mediation, while 95.0 percent of relational dispute cases commenced by Magistrate's Complaint were disposed of without trial after mediation.

their own disputes instead of depending on State intervention. In juvenile justice, we introduced Peer Mediation in schools to equip youths with problem-solving skills that encourage communication and compromise. This takes the “Think Win-Win” precept a step further by educating the young on how they can handle disputes amicably on their own. The endeavour to institutionalise this precept into the justice process was not a walk in the park. The same can be said of the introduction of mediation in all the four justice models. Much time and effort was invested in the pilot-testing, implementation and administration by the courts. It however demonstrates the criticality of the courts to lead change in the legal and public community, so as to bring about greater social benefit for all.

Precept Five: Seek First to Understand, then to be Understood

“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where this is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light
And where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much
seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.”

24. The prayer of St. Francis of Assisi most succinctly dissected the very human needs evident in everyday life. This precept, which could very well have drawn its inspiration from the saint’s prayer, is time-hallowed. St. Francis wisely recognised the challenge to first fulfill the needs of those around us instead of merely focusing inwards upon our own desires. The fact that we seek to be understood should not preclude our trying to understand others. Otherwise, it may lead to inappropriate and ineffective responses.

25. The judiciary in the administering justice is expected to promote order, certainty and stability which benefit society. To properly perform this function, the courts need to understand the community and constituents which they serve. Beyond the immediate judicial organisation over which we have control and influence, we must understand the reality in the transactional environment over which we have no control but only some influence. To do so, we must reach out to the community and seek to understand society’s needs, and its pressing and emerging concerns. We can then dovetail initiatives to address the relevant concerns. This strategic approach will help the courts formulate strategies, including suitable preemptive measures, to deal with the problems.

26. With this awareness, we have instituted a range of initiatives that function as our “feelers” in the community. Through the Justice Policy Group, which performs scenario planning, and a dedicated Research and Statistics Unit which regularly

conducts surveys and trends analysis, the Courts get an accurate picture of certain social issues and can fashion the appropriate responses accordingly. Community-focused groups and court support groups are formed to obtain feedback on issues within their cognizance and competence, and which the courts will be expected to deal with.

27. A good illustration of this precept is the recent establishment of the Psychological Services Section which serve the Juvenile Court and the Family Division of the Subordinate Courts. Within the broad framework of restorative justice, the Section assists the Juvenile Court to venture beyond the rehabilitative sphere into a therapeutic one. The Section recently developed an evaluative tool to help the Juvenile Court Magistrate assess the needs and characteristics of a juvenile offender before dealing with him. The Juvenile Offender Behaviour Criteria (JOB Criteria) provides an individualised, concise and flexible analysis of the particular offender. The JOB Criteria will better inform the Magistrate on the juvenile offender's profile before deciding on the best possible rehabilitative, therapeutic or punitive option. Through a more in-depth understanding of the individual juvenile offender and treating him according to his profile, the Juvenile Court can prevent him from graduating into the adult criminal justice process.

Precept Six: Synergise

28. Synergising means the willingness to seek and value the opinions, viewpoints and perspectives from others. These inputs can be used as a springboard to create value-added solutions, which would be better than what would have been developed without consultation. It is always better to receive a different perspective and draw from a range of experiences as the fusion of ideas may create better solutions. We acknowledge the wisdom in this and welcome stakeholders in our justice system. In synergising with the stakeholders, it must be remembered that the constitutional and institutional independence of the courts cannot be compromised, traded or eroded. To the contrary, any sound interdependent relationship assumes and requires a high degree of independence of each of the collaborating bodies.

29. The courts can synergise with those that has to work with them in the transactional environment, as well as those in the broader contextual environment. In the transactional environment, our courts have actively expanded and strengthened community links to leverage on the strengths of other organisations whose interests are consistent with those of the Courts. Our Court Support Groups in the family justice system comprise volunteer doctors who run free medical clinics, volunteer lawyers who run pro-bono legal clinics, volunteer social workers who help in counselling, and volunteer mediators from good faith associations and the academia who help mediate the division of matrimonial assets and issues of custody and maintenance. The Court Appointed Counsel Scheme taps upon the expertise and resources of senior and eminent private practitioners amicus curiae in highly contentious child custody cases to advance the child's interest in such disputes. The local Bar has generally been very supportive of our Courts' initiatives. Faith-based organisations also assist in both the Family Division and in the Juvenile Court.

30. The Courts also work with various governmental bodies on family and juvenile justice issues which necessarily involve deeper social problems which the

courts are themselves inadequate to handle. With the Ministry of Community Development and Sports, we developed the National Standards for the Probation of Offenders and Their Rehabilitation in the Community. The main objective was to review the practices and procedures in the management of probation cases which involve the Ministry's Probation Unit and the Courts. With the Ministry of Education, the Juvenile Court developed various programmes ranging from the School-Probation-Courts (SPC) Link-up, Peer Group Advisors Programme, and the Peer Mediation Programme. The Family Division developed a KIDS-line (Kids in Difficult Situations) that assists children who are caught in the midst of the parents' marital breakdown and family violence situations. It teaches children how to cope with such situations and where and from whom they can seek help. With the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Courts implemented the Singapore Co-operation Programme to offer technical assistance to judiciaries of developing countries. This catalysed the exchange of views on common justice and judicial administration issues affecting judiciaries.

31. In the contextual environment, we have already established strategic partnerships with forward-looking and progressive judiciaries in Australia, the UK, the US, and the Nordic countries. We have a working relationship with the Australian Institute of Judicial Administration (AIJA), Commonwealth Magistrates' and Judges' Association, US-based National Center for State Courts and National Association for Court Management, and the UK Judicial Studies Board. We have also assisted in World Bank technical assistance programmes, participated in UN initiatives against crime and corruption, and instituted the Singapore Cooperation Programme to transfer judicial reform knowledge. Through international gatherings at conferences and symposiums, regular videolink discussions with foreign judges and court experts, the CDRI and eCDRI regime, the e-justice Judges' Corridor cluster¹⁸ (a listserv virtual discussion forum with international membership of judges and court administrators), we exchange views and share experiences with other judiciaries to study common justice problems and trends.

32. Participation in many of the conferences organised by the AIJA enabled our Judges and Magistrates to gain invaluable insight on the various aspects of judicial reform and administration. We co-convened two Asia-Pacific Courts Conferences with AIJA in Sydney (1997) and in Shanghai (1998) where our Chief Justices delivered joint keynote addresses. Our representatives have also participated in the AIJA Criminal Trial Reform Conference and the AIJA Annual Tribunals Conferences. We hope to build on the strong ties that exist between the Singapore Courts and the Australian Courts at the Magistracy level.

Precept Seven: Sharpen the Saw

33. This precept refers to the need of every organisation to constantly take stock of its progress and renew itself to adapt to changing circumstances. Regular auditing will have positive effects on the quality and productivity of our work processes and systems. Inadequate areas can be identified and improved. At another level, we constantly upgrade the core competencies of our invaluable human talent, hence sharpening their judging and court administration skills. Magistrates participate fully in all continuing judicial education programmes. Regular training seminars in all areas

¹⁸ <http://www.ejustice.gov.sg>

of the law are regularly organised and Magistrates are expected to attend training sessions that pertain to their area of expertise and keep abreast of developments in other areas of the law. Many of our Magistrates' works have also been published in various legal journals, textbooks and practitioners' guides. Numerous articles and papers on both legal developments as well as judicial administration are written and presented at overseas conferences. Also in place are Bench Manuals, written by Judges and Magistrates, and regularly updated. These manuals, now available in electronic form, cover almost every area of the legal and court practices, serving as useful internal guides. All these efforts reify our knowledge and sharpen our judicial skill.

34. We also leverage on technology. An example is the electronic Tickets and Summons System (TICKS) for minor statutory and regulatory offences. TICKS integrates with the Automated Traffic Offence Management System (ATOMS). ATOMS is a virtual court system that enables offenders in traffic offences to pay composition fines and even plead guilty at kiosks located throughout the country 24 hours a day. The Singapore Case Recording and Information Management System (SCRIMS) was implemented in August 1999 and comprises an integrated computer system designed to manage criminal cases in an efficient and effective manner. Each criminal case with its different stages of process is therefore now dealt with in one system. The time taken for the Crime Registry and the criminal trial courts to manage each case is therefore reduced.

35. We have various performance indicators to audit our progress. The Justice Scorecard, based on the Balanced Scorecard methodology developed by Robert Kaplan and David Norton of the Harvard Business School, is a comprehensive framework implemented in year 2000 that translates the Courts' mission and values into a coherent set of strategic objectives and performance measures against which we could assess our performance¹⁹. The Research and Statistics Unit closely monitors timelines, waiting periods, and appeal results for all cases, and measures service standards at the mentions and trial courts and the registries. Internal reviews are conducted regularly on operational and workplan matters. We also monitor public and international perception of our judiciary in ranking and survey results published by Political and Economic Risks Consultancy, International Institute for Management Development, Heritage Foundation, Cato Institute and Fraser Institute, and the World Bank. The findings and results of these surveys and rankings provide useful indicators to evaluate relevant areas that the Courts need to "sharpen" to enhance public trust and confidence in our justice system.

Conclusion

36. This paper provided an overview of how the Singapore Magistracy, within the structure of the Subordinate Courts, led change to enhance access to justice. Singapore aims to be a vibrant cosmopolis and a foremost international business centre in our time zone. The Singapore Judiciary, as a critical public institution, must support this national vision. The seven working precepts have been useful to us in managing modern day reality and new challenges. The results of our efforts are found

¹⁹ The Subordinate Courts' application of the Balanced Scorecard system has been endorsed by Norton and Kaplan in their latest book "The Strategy-Focused Organisation" (Harvard Business School Publishing, 2000).

in international rankings, local surveys and evident from Parliament's repeated enlargement of the Magistracy's jurisdiction in small claims cases, civil cases, family protection cases, and statutory offences in recent years. The courts today have to deal with a high volume of cases with significantly broadened range and scope. With limited resources and competing priorities, we have to be bold, imaginative and yet pragmatic in our approach to innovate the justice system. We must lead change and lead the community to have "citizenship" of the justice process.

37. We do these for a simple reason: the judiciary exists to advance the interests of the people and justice is a fundamental need and ideal of humanity.

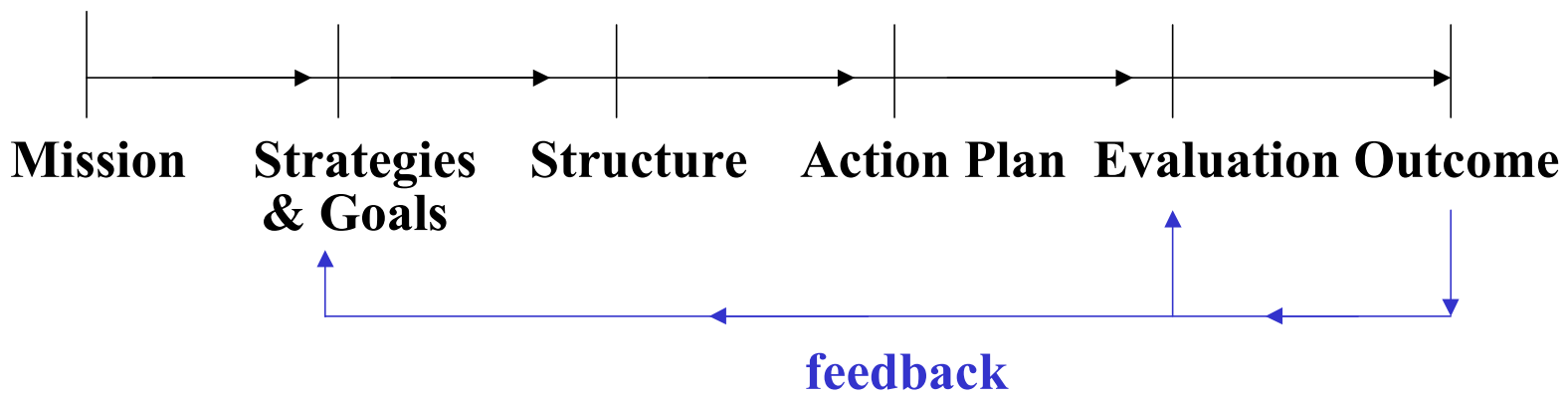
ANNEX A

COMP

Waiting Periods	May 1992	Dec 1992	1993	2000
<u>Criminal</u>				
Criminal Cases	11-22 months	4 - 6 months	4 weeks	Within 4 weeks
Traffic Cases	6 - 8 months	2 months	1 week	Within 2 weeks
Coroner Cases	4.5 months	1.5 months	1.5 months	Within 8 weeks
Juvenile Cases	4 weeks	1.5 months	2 weeks	Within 2 weeks
<u>Civil</u>				
Civil Cases	12-24 months	4-6 months	3-4 weeks	Within 4 weeks
Summary Judgments	7 weeks	7 weeks	6 weeks	6 weeks
Summons for Directions	8 -9 weeks	6 weeks	2 weeks	Within 2 weeks
Assessment of Damages	4 months	1 week	2 weeks	Within 2 weeks
Probate	4 weeks	3 weeks	3 weeks	Within 4 weeks
Taxation	8 weeks	4 weeks	2-2.5 weeks	Within 2 weeks
<u>Family</u>				
Maintenance Cases	4 months	1.5 months	2 weeks	3 weeks
Adoption	7 weeks	6 weeks	3-4 weeks	Within 4 weeks
<u>Small Claims</u>				
Tourist Claims	1 day	1 day	1 day	Within 24 hours
Other Claims	2.5-6 months	3-6 weeks	1-2 weeks	Within 2 weeks

Annex B

Diagnostic model of strategic planning





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 & Fair Dispute Resolution
Family Justice: Protecting Family Obligations

Five Values

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

Six Principles

The judges and magistrates subscribe to
the principles in their Oath of Office and Allegiance:

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

ANNEX D

Extract Of An Independent Survey Of The Business Community's Perception Of The Singapore Judiciary (500 Respondents) By ACNielson-SRS Pte Ltd

Key Survey Findings	% Agree/Strongly agree	% Disagree
▪ The courts administer justice regardless of language, religion, race or social class	97%	3%
▪ The courts inspire trust and confidence	95%	5%
▪ There is full confidence in the air administration of justice	94%	6%
▪ The courts independently dispense justice according to the law	94%	6%
▪ The courts faithfully adhere to relevant laws, rules that guide procedures and established practices	94%	6%
▪ The introduction of mediation services has made it more affordable to access justice	92%	8%
▪ The courts' proceedings and business are transparent and open	90%	10%
▪ The courts' facilities are easily accessible and convenient	88%	12%
▪ The public can obtain efficient and prompt resolution of their disputes	88%	12%
▪ The courts deal with cases quickly and within the timelines set	85%	15%
▪ The courts administer justice impartially according to the law and there is consistency in the sentences in that similar cases receive similar sentences	85%	15%

ANNEX E

A SUMMARY OF THE NINE SUBORDINATE COURTS' ANNUAL WORKPLANS FROM 1992 TO 2000

First Workplan (1992/93): “Progressing Toward Excellence”

In the inaugural workplan the focus was on strategies and measures to solve the backlog problem. Rather than build more courts, which would have been a short-term solution, the productivity of the courts was raised, as judges took a more active role in managing the cases before them. Special pretrial conferences were conducted to review the status of all backlog cases, a strict no-adjournment policy was adopted for cases that had been fixed for trial, punctuality at court sittings was enforced, hearings were conducted beyond office hours when necessary, hearing fees were imposed to discourage frivolous cases, civil cases were individually managed by the registrars to whom the cases were assigned, and a pro-change culture was established among judges and staff.

Second Workplan (1993/94): “Achieving Excellence”

In the second workplan the judges implemented and institutionalized case management in order to ensure that the backlog problem did not reemerge. Case management, introduced in 1992/93, was extended in 1993/94. Examples of case management included pretrial reviews to help parties narrow issues and explore settlement. Case management enabled the courts to monitor and control a case from its commencement to disposal. The group management of cases scheme was also extended to both criminal and civil cases. The jurisdiction of the Subordinate Courts was increased dramatically, with the district court’s civil jurisdiction increasing from S\$50,000 to S\$100,000 and the magistrate’s court’s civil jurisdiction increasing from S\$10,000 to S\$30,000.

Third Workplan (1994/95): “The Subordinate Judiciary in the Twenty-First Century: Excellence and Beyond”

The first two workplans focused on processes and resources. In the third workplan the focus shifted toward performance and performance measurement. In an effort to bolster the case management system, the Subordinate Courts rules were amended, empowering the courts to summon parties to court to ascertain the progress of a case. Under this provision, a lawyer who causes a delay can be ordered to bear the cost of the delay. A delay caused by a party to a lawsuit can cause the case to be dismissed or judgment entered.

Centralized sentencing courts were also established for each group of cases. The Children and Young Persons Act and the sentencing options of the Juvenile Court were reviewed. Information leaflets were published to inform the public about the processes and services of the Subordinate Courts. Court Vision 21 showcased the latest cutting-edge court technology and demonstrating how technology and information application systems can be harnessed to improve the effectiveness of the

courts. Futures planning was fully institutionalized to help plan for the future of the Subordinate Courts.

Fourth Workplan (1995/96): “The Subordinate Courts: Excellence and Beyond: The Next Phase”

In the fourth workplan the focus turned to the core values of the Subordinate Courts in order to ensure that the achievements attained in the previous years would be sustainable. The five timeless core values include accessibility, timeliness, equality, fairness and integrity, independence and accountability, and public trust and confidence.

Disposition periods for cases were established, in recognition of the courts’ responsibility to the state, to the parties, and to witnesses. Differentiated case management, under which different types of cases are assigned different timelines, was implemented. Case conferences and case evaluation conferences were convened to monitor cases, and cases with a possibility of settlement were referred for court dispute resolution. This involved district judges conducting settlement conferences to help parties achieve amicable resolutions of their disputes. The Court Mediation Center was set up to provide mediation services for civil, criminal, family, and small claims tribunals cases. It also trains staff and volunteer mediators in mediation. Also created was the Automated Traffic Offence Management System (ATOMS), which allows offenders to pay fines for minor traffic violations at kiosks located at convenient locations throughout Singapore.

The family court was established, providing the public with a one-stop center for family-related services. Mediation was used as a key tool to help parties resolve their disputes in an amicable manner. A court support group, manned by volunteers, was also formed. Improvements in the juvenile courts were introduced, with an emphasis on increased involvement of the family and society. Family conferencing was also introduced. The method of evidence taking was simplified, allowing initial evidence to be tendered in a sworn written statement, thereby relieving the court of the need to record the witness’ oral evidence. This simplification reduced time spent in court. Video links to courts (for vulnerable witnesses, for example) were also introduced to improve operation and services.

To further emphasize the point that court time is a scarce resource and to encourage the efficient use of court hearing time, court hearing fees were introduced for trials that lasted more than 1 day. Technology was introduced into the daily processes of the Subordinate Courts, with email used widely by judges and other court personnel. The Subordinate Courts also organized the Asia-Pacific Intermediate Courts Conference, held in Singapore 1995, with the theme “Judicial Administration: Current Trends and Future Challenges.” The conference, the first of its kind in the region, brought together judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and administrators from more than 15 countries.

Fifth Workplan (1996/97): “The Subordinate Courts: Excellence and Beyond: Phase II”.

In the fifth workplan the Subordinate Courts turned their focus to the timeliness of cases, decisions, and administrative processes. Environmental scanning, a futures planning method, was used to identify emerging trends that could affect the justice system; more court support groups, made up of volunteer mediators and counselors, were established; night mediation for family cases was introduced; the small claims tribunals were regionalized; the family court legal clinic was launched; free legal advice was made available to parties involved in matrimonial proceedings who satisfy a means test; a conference entitled “Justice and Technology: Superhighway to the Twenty-First Century Courts” was organized; the Singapore mediation model was developed for civil and family cases; a code of ethics for mediators was drafted; the Center for Judicial Education and Learning for judicial officers was established; and matrimonial and guardianship cases were transferred from the High Court to family court, which hears almost all family-related matters.

Sixth Workplan (1997/98): “Our Vision: A World-Class Court”

In the sixth workplan the Subordinate Courts set out a vision of becoming a world-class court. The Subordinate Courts introduced key initiatives to achieve this vision, which included the justice statement, the justice policy group, a code of ethics for judges, and strategic partnerships with advanced judiciaries.

The justice statement sets out the vision, mission, goals and objectives, core values, and principles for discharge of judicial office. It is a public declaration by the Subordinate Courts of their commitment to professionalism and excellence of service. The four justice models were enshrined in the statement. The concept of restorative justice was the impetus for the creation of innovative programs such as family conferencing, youth and family care, the teen development program, boot camp for teenage offenders, the peer advisors scheme, and peer mediation. The Justice Policy Group, a think tank of forward-looking judges and administrators, was formed to advise on and assist in the formulation of proactive judicial policies.

A draft code of judicial ethics was prepared to establish standards of acceptable conduct for judicial officers. Strategic partnerships with advanced judiciaries were established to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas relevant to the administration of justice, including problems, solutions, policies, practices, judicial research, and personnel. In addition, a corporate logo was created; the civil monetary jurisdiction of the district court was increased from S\$100,000 to S\$250,000; night mediation for small claims matters was introduced; and the women’s charter, which provides for the filing of a parenting plan together with the petition for divorce, was passed. (The parenting plans require the parents to chart out the arrangements for the care of their children after the divorce, even before the petition is filed.) A joint courts charter was created, describing the various services and establishing the standards of service that court users can expect, and a Family Protection Unit was established, creating a one-stop intake counter for applications for protection orders and a counseling unit. The courts also organized several training and knowledge sessions

including a conference held in Singapore entitled “International Mediation: Dynamics and Phenomenon” as well as a conference entitled “Managing Change in the New Environment,” which was run jointly with the Australian Institute of Judicial Administration.

Seventh Workplan (1998/99): “Subordinate Courts 21: Leading Justice into the New Millennium”

In the seventh workplan the Subordinate Courts focused on building competencies that will enable them to lead justice into the next millennium. Key initiatives included the establishment of the multidoor courthouse (a one-stop center for screening and channeling cases and sharing information), the redesignation of the court mediation center as the primary dispute resolution center, the launching of the Strengthening Community Links project, and the putting in place of the trilogy of court governance.

The Strengthening Community Links Project was launched in collaboration with the Ministry of Law, the National Council of Social Services, the People’s Association, and the Singapore Police Force in order to assist the community in accessing justice. The project aims to institutionalize and operationalize various community-based programs and initiatives and to coordinate the various services provided to the public by enforcement agencies, community agencies, and the courts in order to strengthen community links.

The Subordinate Courts institutionalized the justice statement, the framework of core competencies, and the strategic framework. The justice statement identifies timeless and immutable universal justice values. The framework of core competencies provides the knowledge capital that will drive the courts into the twenty-first century. The strategic framework provides benchmarks against which future activities can be assessed.

Other measures were also introduced. They included the women’s charter (matrimonial property plan); the upgrading of the Singapore Case Recording and Case Management System (SCRIMS), which automates the processing of criminal cases from registration to disposal; the preparation of the third information technology plan to support business process re-engineering projects in courts; the preparation of the information technology masterplan for the Subordinate Courts for the next millennium; introduction of a pilot program testing the balanced scorecard concept in small claim tribunals; and organization of the Third Asia Pacific Courts Conference, in Shanghai, China.

Eighth Workplan (1999/2000): “Administering Justice in the Knowledge Economy”

In this workplan the Chief Justice urged the Subordinate Courts to lead justice into the new millenium amidst more pervasive new discontinuities and unexpected challenges. He challenged the Subordinate Courts to be *primus inter pares*, the first amongst equals, in the world judiciaries; to continue to lead the community in the citizenship of the justice process; and as an organisation, to be a dynamic public institution. The backdrop was the Knowledge Society.

The Subordinate Courts provided a broader dispute resolution process in civil cases with cross-border elements in the CDRI, Court Dispute Resolution International, regime. This regime involves cross-border real time co-mediation with judges from other jurisdictions to enhance the quality of civil justice by providing higher judicial content, added-value and a broader judicial perspective. This initiative has been extended to include participation from Australian, American and European judiciaries. Video-link sessions were established with the Senior Master of the Queen's Bench Division in the Royal Courts of Justice in London, and with the District Judges in the County Courts, and the Family Court of Australia, to discuss daily judicial issues. A virtual multi-jurisdictional judicial cluster – with the domain name, e-justice.subcts.gov.sg – was established for judges and court administrators over the world to brainstorm court governance and jurisprudential issues and provide an opportunity for the diffusion of ideas.

The Multi-Door Courthouse of the Subordinate Courts began to facilitate and coordinate community involvement in a concerted manner by starting with linkages to the Family Service Centres and the police. The Multi-Door Courthouse worked together with the Singapore Police Force, the Community Mediation Centres of the Ministry of Law, the National Council of Social Service and the People's Association in a strategic partnership to train front-line service providers, such as police officers and NCSS counter staff, to provide relevant information about the courts. An integrated pamphlet was written by participating agencies to disseminate information to the general public. For the indigent who come to the courts to seek assistance, a scheme, implemented jointly with the Legal Aid Bureau, will enable litigants to apply for Legal Aid, and to have their cases referred to the Legal Aid Bureau within the precincts of the Multi-Door Courthouse.

The Primary Dispute Resolution Centre began to offer an impressive range of new services: mediation-arbitration procedures will be offered outside of accident claims, co-mediation with technical experts will be available in complex, high-value claims, and the court dispute resolution conference will be experimented with. In respect of the civil process, a committee of judicial officers examined ways to make the rules and procedures simpler for litigants. A third regional centre of the Small Claims Tribunals was established in the western part of Singapore.

The Family Court set up the Family Justice Centre to coordinate and implement counselling programmes, legal clinics, medical facilities, and joint projects with government organisations, hospital referrals, community welfare agencies and crisis shelters. The Family Court started to adopt a therapeutic approach. The abusers were referred to innovative programmes to assist their rehabilitation. Appropriate cases were monitored with the assistance of a panel of experts, existing mandatory counselling orders are to be refined and volunteer protection officers would visit the homes of the couple to help them in their on-going relationship. At the same time, the victims of family violence were channelled to appropriate counselling programmes for empowerment purposes. The Family Court commenced pre-petition information sessions in cases where divorce is contemplated, to ensure parties have sufficient information to deal with and to ameliorate the trauma of the dissolution.

In high-conflict custody of children cases, court counsellors would furnish reports of such cases. Court-appointed amici curiae may then interview children with the assistance of the court counsellor, and see parties, again with the counsellor, with a view to settlement. In some cases, post-custody order reviews would be conducted by a counsellor. The counselling unit set up a Kids in Difficult Situations (KIDS)-Line, to provide information to children who are caught in the middle of parental conflict. A Children's Resource Centre was established to furnish opportunities for children to share their anxieties and obtain advice.

The Juvenile Court and the Roundtable Committee on Juvenile Delinquency intensified their efforts to facilitate a plethora of restorative and community-based programmes, such as family conferencing and peer mediation. Probation standards were reviewed. The Subordinate Courts also chaired an inter-agency committee to study the enhancement of the juvenile justice system.

The Subordinate Courts also produced publications on sentencing practice in the Subordinate Courts, Family Court practice, and Coroner's Court medical negligence practice. These publications concern areas of law commonly practised in the Subordinate Courts and highlighted unreported Subordinate Courts decisions and the guiding principles set by appellate courts.

The Automated Traffic Offences Management System was extended to offences under the Parking Places Act prosecuted by the Housing and Development Board and the Urban Redevelopment Authority. The system was enhanced to enable persons to use the kiosks up to the scheduled date of his court appearance. To encourage victims of family violence to seek protection early, the Family Court installed video-link facilities to enable complainants to lodge complaints from remote sites. A broadband network infrastructure using the most advanced technology, the Asynchronous Transfer Mode, enabled the public to access the multimedia-rich broadband applications which the Subordinate Courts will progressively offer..

Emphasis was placed on training and career-long education. Road maps, with a full complement of training plans and initiatives, have been worked out for individual officers and will be implemented in the coming year. Refresher courses on a variety of legal issues were conducted by Supreme Court judges. Video-conference sessions with experts were arranged. Computer-based training was experimented to enable officers to view talks and sessions from their personal computers.

The Justice Scorecard, based on the Balanced Scorecard System, was piloted at the Small Claims Tribunals.

The Justice Policy Group developed a preliminary preferred scenario for the Subordinate Courts in 2020. Strategic conversation with small focus groups were conducted to refine the preferred scenario so that the entire organisation would think, plan and act in concert with a coherent vision.

Ninth Workplan (2000/2001): "i.nvesting in Justice in the New Economy @ The Subordinate Courts"

In the ninth workplan, the Chief Justice challenged the Subordinate Courts to be a premier justice eco-lab, a Silicon Valley of the global justice community, and to sustain their pole position in the administration of justice for the nation and the community.

On the international front, the United Nations Centre for International Crime Prevention tapped the Subordinate Courts' experience in the administration of criminal justice. The Subordinate Courts also shared its judicial work and reform experience with ASEAN and non-ASEAN judiciaries through the Singapore Cooperation Programme and working with the Asian Development Bank. The e@dr Centre finalised discussion with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Centre to provide virtual resolution to aggrieved parties in IP, e-commerce and domain name cases. At the same time, the CDRI programme was expanded to bring in a wider judicial input from judges in Europe and the Asia-Pacific.

As Singapore wants to be an e-commerce hub, an e-commerce dispute resolution infrastructure was necessary. The Subordinate Courts, worked with the Economic Development Board, the Trade Development Board, the Singapore Mediation Centre, the Singapore International Arbitration Centre and the Ministry of Law to establish a comprehensive dispute resolution framework for e-commerce cases. Parties concerned will be able to resolve e-commerce disputes by leveraging on videoconferencing and other electronic means which the courts were equipped with. e-justice [lab@subcts](#), an experimental laboratory, was set up to allow judges, court staff, lawyers and leading info-comm technology vendors and developers of hardware and software to field-test cutting-edge technologies with potential for court-related uses, for the benefit of the justice system. Limited functional research with the private sector was undertaken.

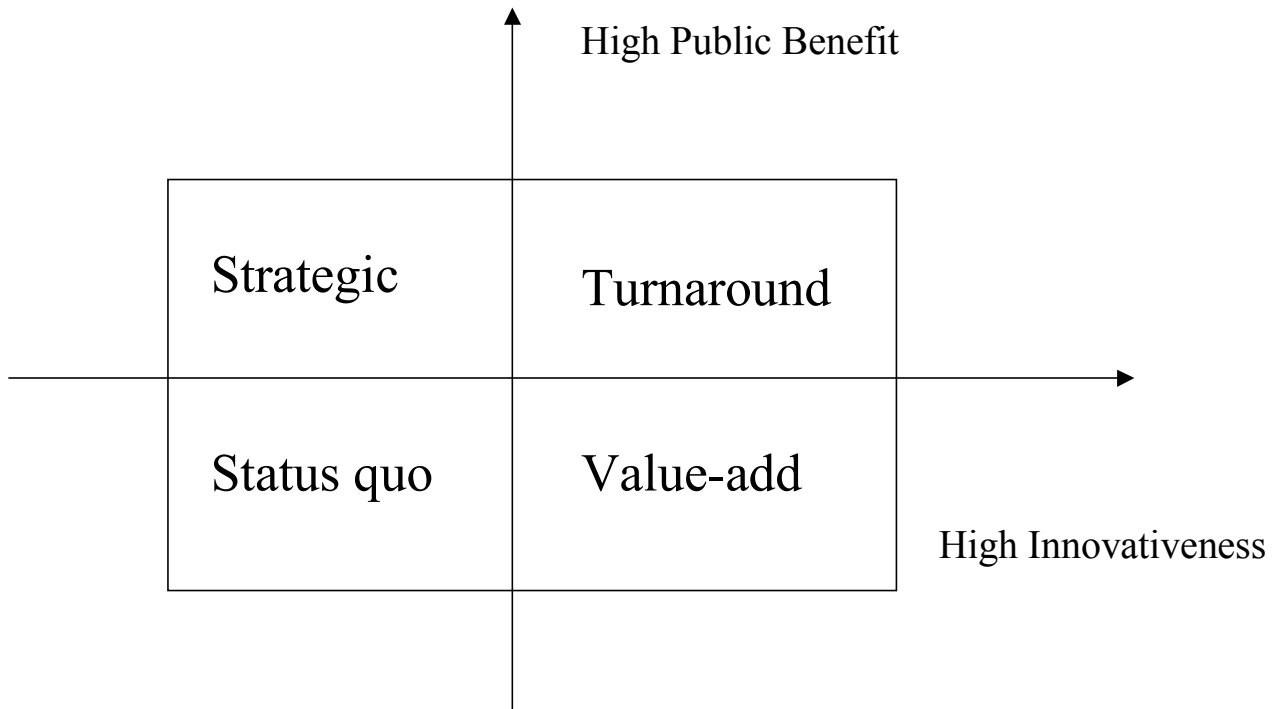
One of the focuses was to concentrate, process and reify all knowledge work within the Subordinate Courts, thereby turning human capital into structural capital. Examples include giving Subordinate Courts scholarships, sending judicial officers for High Court and overseas attachment, establishment of a specialist cluster of Commercial Criminal and Civil District Courts, and forming a knowledge management group which coordinate communities of practices within the Subordinate Courts.

To ensure a participative justice system, the People's in.court Lab, a Court technology interactive training and learning lab for members of the public, was set up to further access to justice. A one-stop web-based information portal for the public -"Law For The Layman On The Web"- a joint initiative the Law Society and the Ministry of Law, was another initiative. The "EFS learning lab" allows less IT savvy lawyers to participate fully in the EFS environment. The Chief Justice's Award For Judicial eNnovation was launched to bring the justice system closer to the people and give them a constructive role in building up a court for the people. Community participation in justice programmes was achieved through the courts' partnership with two Community Development Councils. Some secondary schools within the Marine Parade CDC, with support from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Law, were involved in peer mediation initiatives led by the Juvenile Justice Centre. The Family Justice Centre also worked with the Sembawang-Hong Kah CDC to intervene early where divorce and custody proceedings are contemplated. The courts also continued dialogue with the biotechnology, life-sciences and info-comm technology

sectors, besides business organisations, trade bodies and relevant statutory boards to acquire new knowledge.

This Workplan also saw the build up of a holistic justice system through establishment of various specialised justice centres. The Family Justice Centre offered counselling services of the courts' FAMCARE Centre, family rehabilitative programmes for family violence cases and outreach programmes. Parenting workshops were expanded to include group counselling for children. KIDS' Line, an interactive educational programme for children affected by family violence, was established. A TEENS' Line was also developed. A Juvenile Justice Centre was established. Together with the Ministry of Community Development and Sports, and the Inter-Ministry Committee on Youth Crime and Family Service Centres, the Centre helps in the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders. by equipping young offenders with the resources and skills necessary for them to embark on more constructive lifestyles. A Criminal Justice Centre was set up to study and evaluate criminal justice developments in other jurisdictions so as to review Singapore's criminal justice system. A seamless civil justice system with better use of resources, lower costs for litigants and easy access to justice for all was constructed.

Annex F
Strategic Grid



Annex G

Conjunctural Feasibility Test

