



Constitution

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

The Subordinate Courts are presided over by the Senior District Judge, District Judges, Magistrates, Coroners, the Registrar, Deputy Registrars and Referees of the Small Claims Tribunals. The President appoints the Senior District Judge, District Judges, Magistrates, Coroners and Referees of the Small Claims Tribunals on the recommendation of the Chief Justice. The Chief Justice appoints the Registrar and Deputy Registrars.

The Subordinate Courts comprise a total of 47 District and Magistrates' Courts, the Civil, Family and Crime Registries (headed by the Registrar), the Primary Dispute Resolution Centre, and the Small Claims Tribunals. Under the Group Management of

Cases (GMC) scheme, the various courts are divided into groups. Each group is overseen by a Group Manager, who is a District Judge of seniority. There are nine GMC groups altogether. Six of the GMC groups consist of Criminal Courts and the Juvenile Court. The e@dr Centre forms one GMC group. The remaining two GMC groups consist of the Civil Courts and the Family Court respectively. All the Group Managers, the Registrar, and the Senior Referees of the Small Claims Tribunals, report to the Senior District Judge.

In addition to their judicial duties at the Subordinate Courts, District Judges preside in the following Administrative Tribunals: Military Court of Appeal, Copyright Tribunal, Industrial Arbitration Court, Liquor Licensing Board, Anti-Dumping Tribunal, Income Tax Board of Review, Tenants' Compensation Board, Hotels Licensing Board, Requisition 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 during night hearing sessions, on a monthly basis.

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 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. However, where the law expressly 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 (Cap 50), the Misuse of Drugs Act (Cap 185), the Prevention of Corruption Act (Cap 241), and the Securities Industry Act (Cap 289).

Magistrates' Courts

A Magistrate's Court can try offences where the maximum imprisonment term does not exceed three years or 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 also 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.

The 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 Justice

The Family Court hears matters such as divorce, custody, maintenance, division of matrimonial property, adoption of children and guardianship of infants. With effect from 1 August 1999, where there is a marriage under Muslim law or a marriage with Muslim parties, the District Court has concurrent jurisdiction with the Syariah Court to deal with matters relating to maintenance, custody, and the division of property upon a dissolution of the marriage. 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 by the Tribunal for the Maintenance of Parents.

Juvenile Justice

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.

Court Governance and Administration

The Senior District Judge has overall responsibility for the management and administration of the Subordinate Courts, and is directly accountable to the Chief Justice. The Senior District Judge is assisted in his duties by the Group Managers (consisting of District Judges of seniority) who are each responsible for the management of their GMC group. He is also assisted by the Registrar, Principal Director (Corporate Services), Senior Director (Corporate Services) and Director (Legal). Other court administrators provide essential para-legal services and corporate support services. Para-legal services are provided in the various registries dealing with civil, criminal, family, juvenile, small claims and other matters. Corporate support services are also provided in areas such as personnel, infrastructure development, public affairs, human resource development, finance, research, statistics, information technology and court services.