

THE MULTI-DOOR COURTHOUSE



Reading an information pamphlet



A friendly welcome at the Multi-Door Courthouse



Attending to a member of the public



Multi-Door Courthouse officers

The MDC enhances access to justice by providing a broad range of services to the public. In particular, it assists parties in pairing disputes within the jurisdiction of the Subordinate Courts with the most appropriate dispute resolution methods. It also seeks to be a one-stop information centre for court users. The MDC has instituted various programmes to carry out its task of enhancing access to justice for the public.

Law for the Layman on the Web

The Law for the Layman on the Web is intended to be a website giving comprehensive legal information to the layman. It is a joint project involving the Subordinate Courts, the Ministry of Law and the Law Society of Singapore.

“Frequently Asked Questions at the Multi-Door Courthouse” Pamphlet

The MDC has published a set of pamphlets in the four official languages featuring frequently asked questions at the MDC, for the convenience of the public.

“Justice @ Subordinate Courts” Project

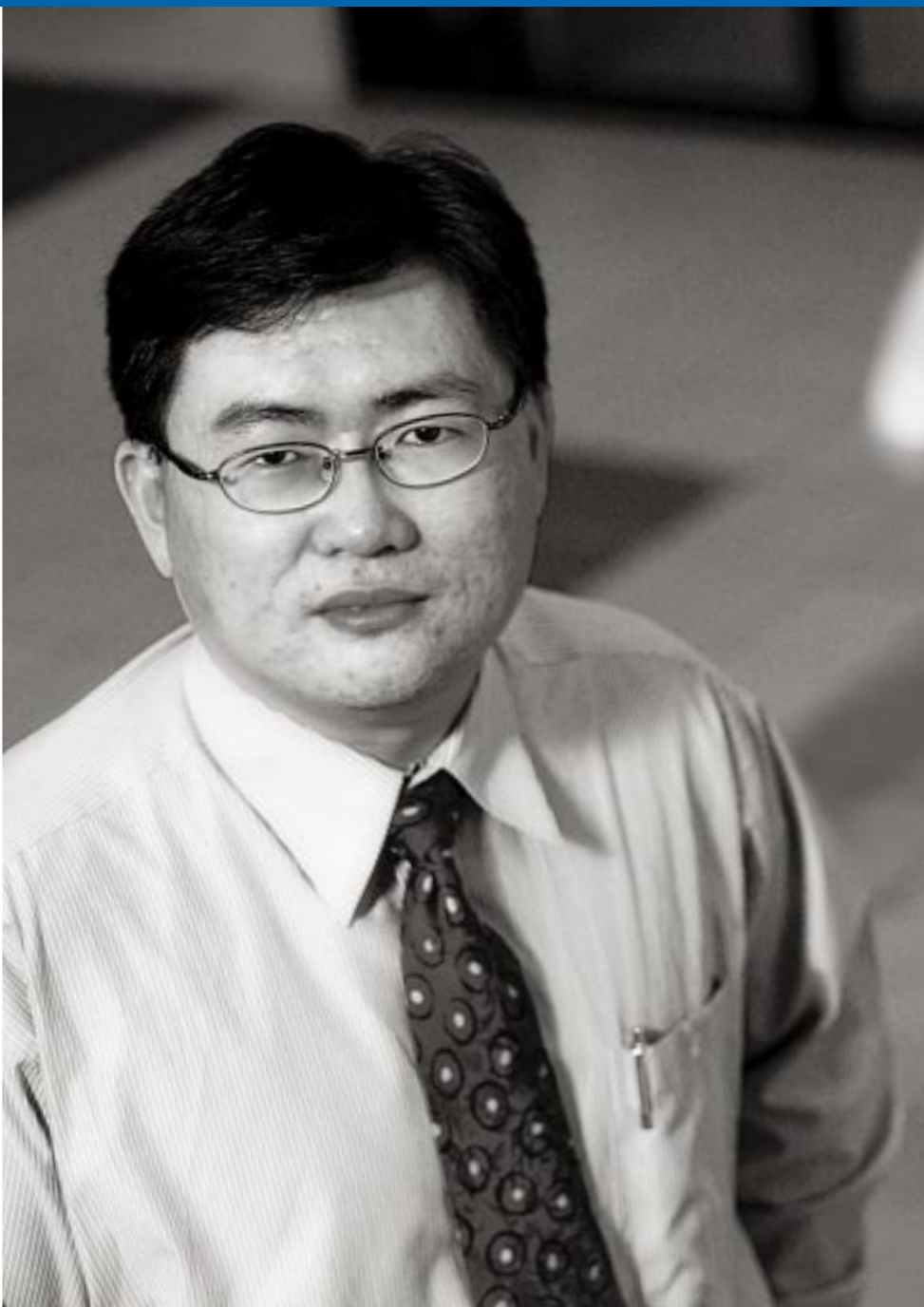
The above project involves the production of CD-ROMs and the publication of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) pamphlets. This is a joint project between the MDC and the Marine Parade Community Development Council. The target group is Members of Parliament and grassroots leaders. The project will allow them to assist their constituents in queries relating to the Courts. Work on the CD-ROMs and pamphlets have been ongoing throughout the year 2001.

Vulnerable Witness Support Programme

The aim of the Vulnerable Witness Support Programme is to provide adequate support to vulnerable witnesses who have to testify in public prosecutions in criminal cases. The programme is an initiative of the MDC, working with the Singapore Children’s Society, in collaboration with the Attorney-General’s Chambers and the Singapore Police Force. Under this programme, a vulnerable witness (any child or young person below 16 years of age, or, in special

cases, any person with a mental age of below 16) will be assigned a Volunteer Support Person (VSP) (who is a court volunteer). The VSP will build rapport with the child and parent(s) or caregiver(s), provide information on court proceedings, and assist with stress management. The VSP will accompany the child to court, wait with the child, and in appropriate cases, sit in court while the child testifies. The VSP will continue to provide emotional support for the child until the court proceedings are concluded.





A visit to the courts' complex and the courtroom before the commencement of the trial will be arranged by the Case Administrator of the Multi-Door Courthouse for those on the Vulnerable Witness Support Programme, in order to familiarise them with the physical structure and layout of the Court. After the court proceedings are over, the VSP will help prepare the child for the outcome of the court proceedings and, when the outcome is known, continue to provide support to the child and the parent(s) or caregiver(s), if necessary.

The support provided by the VSP is practical and emotional. No evidence involving or touching on the case is discussed between the child and the VSP, or the VSP and the parent(s) or caregiver(s). Neither will the VSP nor the Singapore Children's Society provide professional counselling or therapeutic services either before or during the trial. This is to avoid any allegation that the child has been coached, or that the evidence has been interfered with. However, referrals for counselling or therapeutic services may be made by the Multi-Door Courthouse Case Administrator to appropriate agencies in suitable cases after the conclusion of the court proceedings.

"In each instance, a support person, who is governed by a Code of Behaviour and Ethics, will help the vulnerable witness walk-through the court environment before the trial. This will cut down the anxieties of the vulnerable witness."

The Honourable the Chief Justice, Yong Pung How
Response, Opening of the Legal Year, 1998

Mr Peh Eng Kiat,

Assistant Superintendent of Police, Head Curriculum Development and Methodology, School of Criminal Investigation, Criminal Investigation Department, Liaison Member of the Vulnerable Witness Support Programme

"As Singaporeans, we can proudly say that our country is one of the safest to live in and our crime rates are among the lowest in the world. Criminals would think twice before committing a crime in Singapore due to our tough laws and an effective and efficient criminal justice system. As Police Officers, and part of the criminal justice system, we share the same mission with the Subordinate Courts, that is to reduce crime."



(from left to right):

Ms Sandra Kadir (*seated*), Intake Officer, Multi-Door Courthouse (MDC), **Mr Tony Lim**, Intake Officer, MDC, **Mr Steven Chiang** (*seated*), Case Administrator, MDC, and **Ms Marilyn Lee**, Assistant Case Administrator, MDC

Mr Steven Chiang (*seated*), Case Administrator, MDC

"I am very much aware of the necessity to be receptive to the ever-changing environment and needs of the public. This means having to consistently be on the lookout for changes in policy and law, and to monitor the developments and new initiatives of our strategic partners.

In this day and age where expectations are much higher, the public want comprehensive and readily accessible information that is, at the same time, easily understood. A key feature of the MDC is its direct interaction with the public. Users of the services can be appreciative, aggressive, emotional, rude and indifferent. I will not know what emotional baggage and motives lie behind each enquiry. The one certainty is to expect the unexpected. Every enquiry is a test of one's ability to analyse and communicate."