

## ■ ***JusticeOnLine*** ***ENHANCING ACCESS TO JUSTICE – AN UNCEASING QUEST***

*JusticeOnLine* is another strategic IT initiative of the justice system of the Subordinate Courts. It is an application of broadband Internet technology and video-conferencing tools which was jointly developed by the private and public sectors.

The product is a multi-party communication platform which connects the Courts to the Attorney-General's Chambers, law firms, and other government bodies involved in the administration of justice.

*JusticeOnLine* was piloted at the Subordinate Courts in January 2002. Since 28 June 2002, *JusticeOnLine* has been available for solicitors to conduct their chamber hearings for non-contentious civil matters and family proceedings.

*JusticeOnLine* has been adopted by many law firms for their various chamber matters. *JusticeOnLine* has been found to be a cost-effective service which increases law firm productivity by reducing travelling and waiting time. *JusticeOnLine* also enables law firms to physically locate their practices outside the Central Business District and to be closer to the community or clients they serve.

The use and application of *JusticeOnLine* has been extended to non-contentious civil interlocutory applications, non-contentious taxation hearings, non-contentious probate hearings, contentious (or potentially contentious) civil interlocutory applications, registrar's appeals, status conferences and pre-trial conferences for family proceedings, non-contentious and contentious ancillary matters, originating summonses and summons-in-chambers for family proceedings, adoption matters, pre-trial conferences for criminal cases and settlement conferences for Court Dispute Resolution. New applications continue to be added to *JusticeOnLine* from time to time.

*JusticeOnLine* is not merely an easily accessible video-conferencing system. It is a holistic delivery of court services through the web. Solicitors may book their online hearings on the web, queue virtually, appear at hearings from the comfort of their offices and check their bills on the web. For lawyers, State Counsel and Deputy Public Prosecutors, this has meant and will continue to mean substantial cost savings in terms of travelling and waiting time, heightening productivity and quality of work. Thus, the use of *JusticeOnLine* lessens the traditional emphasis of the brick-and-mortar courthouse. At the same time, it allows us to extend the essential judicial traits of visibility and transparency, and access to justice, which engender public trust and confidence.

Now, with *JusticeOnLine*, we are effectively the first cybercourt in the world to administer criminal, civil and family justice virtually. In so doing we are meeting the increasingly sophisticated needs of our community.

“The New Economy is informational, global, networked and rapid. The Judiciary and the Attorney-General’s Chambers have led the way by introducing *JusticeOnLine* in close collaboration with the IDA, IT and the legal industries. This new initiative will further streamline the administration of justice in a networked society, enabling our legal services to be more innovative, competitive and value-added. Many challenges remain, if we are to take full advantage of the early inroads that have been made. I am confident that our legal sector will sense and respond well to the needs that lie ahead, and will not let up. *JusticeOnline* is a first step, one of the many in our exciting journey.”

**The Honourable the Chief Justice Yong Pung How, Excerpt from Keynote Address at the official launch of *JusticeOnLine***

“I am very impressed with *JusticeOnLine* as it really does seem to help lawyers use their time more productively. Instead of waiting in court, lawyers can continue working in their office until the court calls them to log in for their hearing. This is yet another example of the courts’ concern with preserving excellent service standards and enhancing access to justice.”

**Mr R Palakrishnan, S.C., President, The Law Society of Singapore**

“*JusticeOnLine* is a highly effective time management tool which offers advantages to both client and lawyer. The client’s costs will be reduced or his money better spent because his lawyer will not have to spend time waiting for hearings, or travelling to and from the court. That time can be used more productively by the lawyer either to better prepare for the hearing or generally to improve the quality of the service to the client.”

**Mr Davinder Singh, S.C., Drew & Napier LLC**

“*JusticeOnLine* not only reinvents the way legal hearings are conducted, it demonstrates Singapore’s lead in embracing new technology.”

**Mr Dennis Mark, General Manager, Personal Systems Group, HP Singapore**