

FACTSHEET ON FAMILY JUSTICE ACT 2014

What the Act is about

- The Act covers the constitution, jurisdiction and powers of the Family Justice Courts, and the administration of justice in the Family Justice Courts.
- It seeks to empower the court to adjudicate and resolve family disputes more effectively so as to lessen the trauma and acrimony involved. Court processes will also be streamlined to reduce unnecessary legal costs and delay.
- The new Family Justice Courts will play a central role in the Government's and the Courts' efforts to fundamentally improve the family justice system.

Key Features of the Act

The key features of the Act are as follows:

- A new **Family Justice Courts (FJC)** comprising the High Court (Family Division), the Family Court and the Youth Court will be established to hear all **family-related proceedings**.
 - The Family Court will, by default, hear all family proceedings except cases under the Children and Young Persons Act (Cap. 38), which will be heard by the Youth Court.
 - The Juvenile Court will be renamed the **Youth Court** and come under the FJC instead of the State Courts. It will hear cases related to children and young persons, and where necessary, may direct the parties to undergo mediation or counselling, as well as to participate in available family support programmes.
 - The High Court (Family Division) will primarily hear appeals against decisions of the Family Court and the Youth Court.
- The FJC will have a **central Registry** which will receive, assign and manage all cases for hearing, and will be under the supervision of the Registrar of the FJC.
- **The Presiding Judge** of the FJC will be the most senior judge of the FJC and a Judge or Judicial Commissioner of the Supreme Court. The Presiding Judge of the FJC will be appointed by the President on the recommendation of the Chief Justice.
- The Chief Justice will also be given powers under the Act to designate:

- **District Judges and Magistrates** for the **Family Court and/or Youth Court**;
 - **Registrar, Deputy Registrar and Assistant Registrars** who will run the Registry; and
 - **Officers** who will assist in the operations of the FJC (e.g. bailiffs, interpreters, counsellors, social workers, psychologists).
- In any proceedings before the **Family Justice Courts** involving the **custody or welfare of a child**, the court may, where necessary, appoint a registered medical practitioner, psychologist, counsellor, social worker or mental health professional to examine and assess the child or person for the purposes of preparing expert evidence for use in those proceedings.
 - A **Family Justice Rules Committee** will be established to make Family Justice Rules, regulating and prescribing the procedure and practice of the FJC. The Committee will consist of the Chief Justice, who will be Chairman of the committee, as well as Judges of the Supreme Court, Presiding Judge of the FJC and Registrar of the FJC.

Next Steps

- The Family Justice Act will form the basis for the setting up of the FJC infrastructure and related court processes.

MINISTRY OF LAW
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