

Guidebooks on defamation and tribunals launched by State Courts

Charmaine Ng

Two books that aim to better inform law practitioners on defamation cases and how tribunals should be managed were launched by the State Courts yesterday.

The books, which are the first of their kind, are titled *Practitioners' Guide On Damages Awarded For Defamation Cases In Singapore*, and *Law And Practice Of Tribunals In Singapore*. They were written by judges from the State Courts, with contributions from other individuals in the legal industry.

The first book details the range of damages awarded for defamation cases, and contains case summaries that set out the factors considered by the courts in arriving at different awards of damages, as well as the outcome of appeals.

It also outlines the general principles of defamation law and the State Courts' pre-action protocol for defamation actions that took effect in September last year to encourage pre-action settlements.

Speaking at the launch, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon said the tort of defamation is complex, technical and frequently misunderstood and, as a result, defamation proceedings are often protracted and poorly argued. "Many plaintiffs also struggle to accurately assess the likely outcome and the amount of damages. In this context... the guide provides welcome clarification on the tort of defamation and how it is adjudicated in Singapore," he said.

Examples of cases that are illustrated in the guide include slander against a company, professional and community leader, as well as libel against a political leader and an office bearer. These include the 2015 defamation suit brought by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong against blogger Roy Ngerng, and a 2017 case involving WhatsApp messages sent to committee members and office bearers of the Mahabodhi Monastery.

The second book explains the legal principles governing tribunals, how tribunal hearings should be conducted and how tribunals

GET THE BOOKS

WHAT:

- Practitioners' Guide On Damages Awarded For Defamation Cases In Singapore
- Law And Practice Of Tribunals In Singapore

WHERE: www.sal-e.org.sg

PRICE: \$64.20 each

should be managed. It also provides guidance for new tribunals and established ones, and best practices for tribunals to consider adopting.

The book was drawn from the State Courts' experience in managing their tribunals for small claims, community disputes and employment claims.

"Tribunals play a critical role in the administration of justice in Singapore because of the number and the spectrum of the dispute that they deal with," said the Chief Justice.

"The authors (of this book) have deliberately avoided the use of technical or complex jargon to ensure that the text remains highly accessible to laypersons," he added.

Both books can be bought online at www.sal-e.org.sg

At the event, Chief Justice Menon also witnessed the signing of memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with the law schools of the National University of Singapore (NUS), Singapore Management University (SMU) and Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS).

The MOUs with the NUS and SMU law schools formalise the Clinical Clerkship Programme that was piloted two years ago with NUS and extended to SMU this year to give law students the opportunity to experience judicial work.

Students under the joint NUS-SMU law module are supervised by two senior judges of the State Courts – the deputy presiding judge and the senior district judge.

The MOU with the SUSS School of Law establishes the Legal Clerkship Programme to provide students with practical training and clinical experience by allowing them to prepare court documents and present them in a mock court hearing, and to develop their written and oral advocacy skills.

ngxtc@sph.com.sg