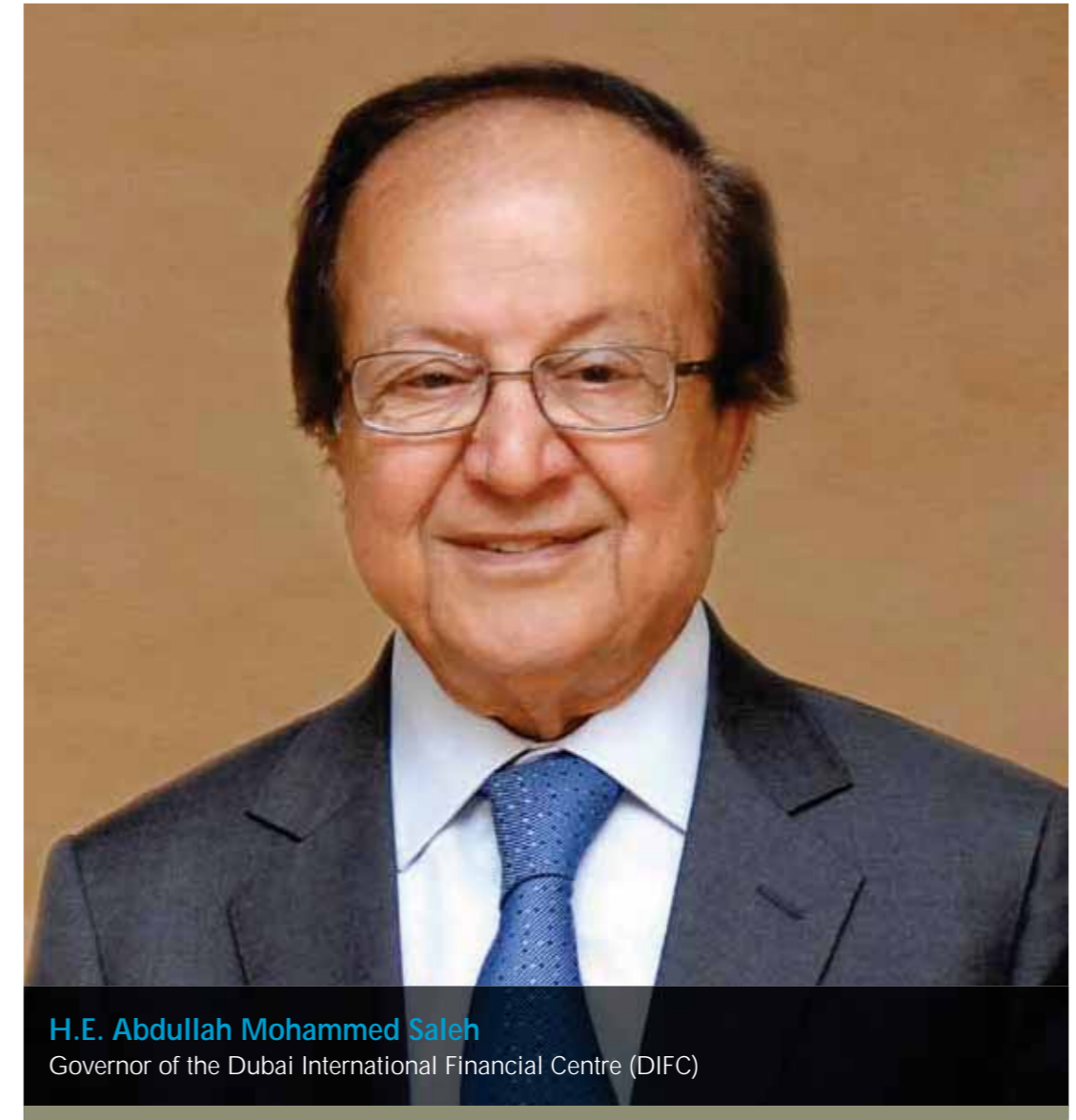
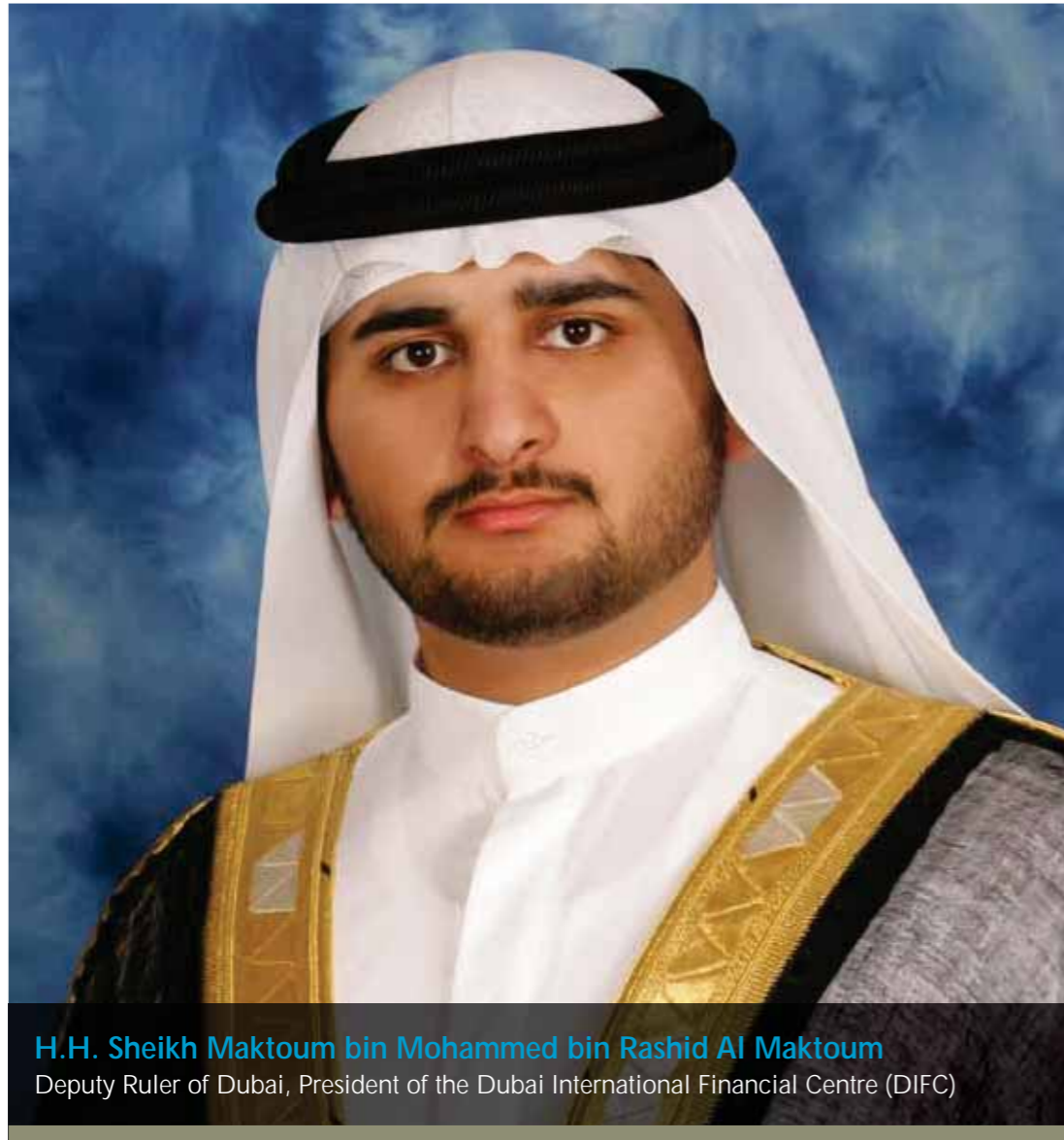




H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum
Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai



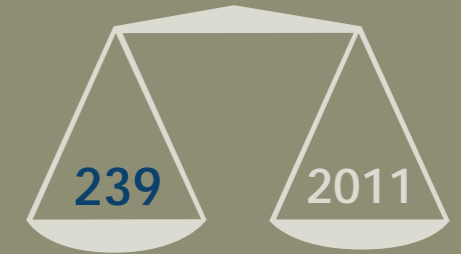
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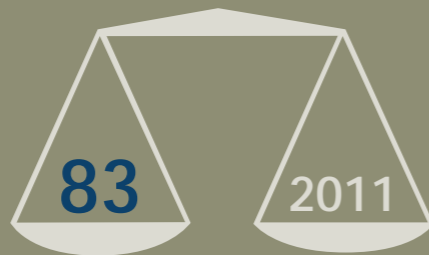
COURT OF FIRST INSTANCE

27 cases*tried before DIFC Courts in 2010***31 cases***tried before DIFC Courts in 2011*

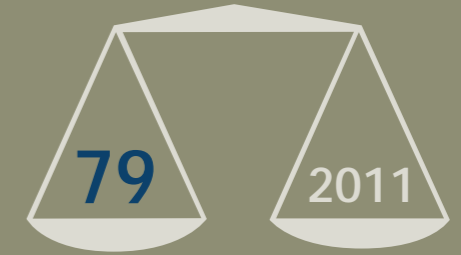
As the Court of First Instance's case load increases each year, so too does the complexity and average claim amount of the cases heard. Despite the increase, cases are still disposed of within six months in this Court.

PRACTITIONERS' REGISTRY (*individual*)**227***registered practitioners in 2010***239***registered practitioners in 2011*

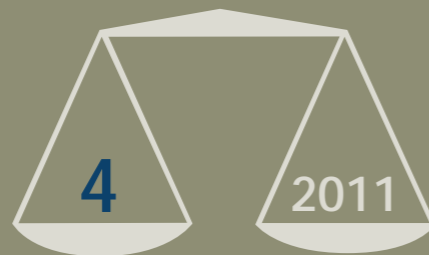
SMALL CLAIMS TRIBUNAL

81 cases*tried before DIFC Courts in 2010***83 cases***tried before DIFC Courts in 2011*

We have maintained an average settlement period of less than three weeks in 2011. Caseload has increased year-on-year in this court as awareness of the function grows and practice directions have extended its mandate.

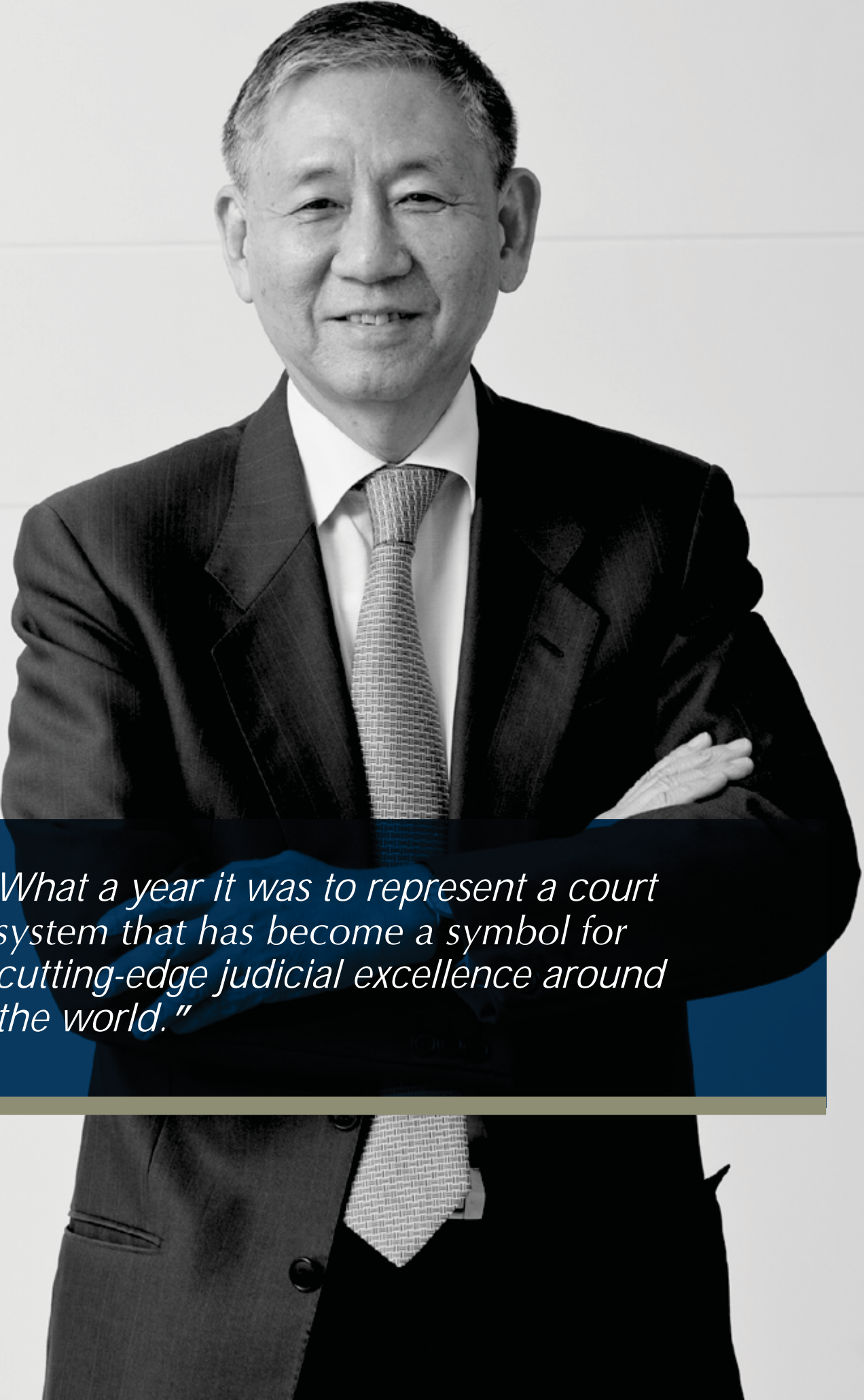
PRACTITIONERS' REGISTRY (*firms*)**66***registered firms in 2010***79***registered firms in 2011*

COURT OF APPEAL

2 cases*tried before DIFC Courts in 2010***4 cases***tried before DIFC Courts in 2011*

The low appeal case load is testament to the community's confidence in our justice.





“What a year it was to represent a court system that has become a symbol for cutting-edge judicial excellence around the world.”

A FOCUS ON HUMAN AS WELL AS LEGAL VALUES

2011 was my first full year as the DIFC Courts’ Chief Justice and what a year it was to represent a court system that has become a symbol for cutting-edge judicial excellence around the world. Courts whose technical infrastructure, both in the courtroom and online via initiatives such as the e-registry, have become an international benchmark of quality; whose efficient practices and user-focused process achieve outstanding user satisfaction survey results year after year; whose dedication to improving customer engagement delivers commercial justice, be it in a complex, cross-border case, or that of a small claims tribunal resolution, which focuses on human as well as legal values.

It was also a year for Dubai to play a leading role on the international judicial stage, when the annual IBA conference brought the world’s leading legal luminaries to the Emirate in the autumn. The decision to locate the definitive global legal conference here speaks volumes about the global acknowledgement of the Emirate’s dedication to excellence in justice and the importance of the rapidly emerging Middle East as a business centre. The DIFC Courts were honoured to partner with the Dubai Courts in hosting a stand at the exhibition and we were represented by our Judges at many events.

The year in review saw much change at the Courts, most notably to our jurisdiction. In October, Dubai Law No. 16 decreed that the DIFC Courts’ unique and efficient brand of justice would be open to hear any commercial case that may make us their forum of choice. This was seen as one of the greatest developments for regional justice in many years, and was taken to be a meaningful move to affirm international business confidence in Dubai, particularly amongst the GCC countries, where our enhanced jurisdiction is likely to be of most interest, given the mutual recognition of court judgments between these countries.

I need not labour the point of what these developments mean to the Courts. We expect, and are prepared to manage, greater developments in 2012.

My work at the DIFC Courts is supported by truly first-class infrastructure, including an amazing registry team and bench of peer judges. I must thank the hard work and wisdom of this group for their dedication to serving the highest standards of justice and once again, I will be looking to them to continue with that vigour in 2012.

Michael Hwang
Chief Justice

JUDICIAL EXCELLENCE IS A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

It is my pleasure to follow the Chief Justice in introducing another of the DIFC Courts' Annual Reports. Every year since our inception we have reported rapid and meaningful developments to regional justice made by the Courts: the first Pro Bono programme and the first Code of Professional Conduct in the Middle East; the introduction of a world-class e-case management system and e-registry; enforcement protocols and judicial memoranda of understanding all count among the newsworthy events from recent years.

Similarly, every year I celebrate the previous 12 months' historic importance in this letter, but I need not stress the overwhelming significance of 2011 – the year in which the Courts' jurisdiction was extended to all commercial and civil cases. I would like instead to take this opportunity to thank the many parties involved in bringing the DIFC Courts to this milestone.

In addition to the significance of the jurisdiction's extension for inward investment into the Middle East, Law No.16 of 2011 (see page 13) was a compliment to our unwavering dedication to the highest standards of commercial justice in the UAE.


A core group at the Courts has performed above and beyond expectations to build a judicial infrastructure that is often referred to in international circles as one of the world's finest. The Courts' judicial bench and registry work passionately to offer the most professional and efficient, transparent and friendly service to the business and legal community.

This unwavering commitment to accessible, consistent justice and customer engagement is supported by our Users' Committees; the DIFC Authority; Dubai Financial Services Authority (DFSA); government organisations; our partner court network, especially our close allies, the Dubai Courts; the media; and the legal practitioners and litigants whose cases we hear. There are many who can be proud to have brought the DIFC Courts to a standard at which the worldwide business community called for our services to be open to all.

There is a lot of speculation about just how busy we might become in the year ahead and the increase in case complexity and value we may experience. I can report that we are ready for such an upsurge.

The Courts, from our registry to our bench of revered, international judges, are here to help and to make justice as easy – and dare I say, as pleasant – for you to achieve as possible.

Mark Beer
Registrar



“The Courts are here to help and to make justice as easy – and dare I say, as pleasant – for you to achieve as possible.”

“A very positive development for justice, and a reflection of Dubai’s commitment to supporting investors and businesses both domestically and from around the world.”

Dr. Ahmed Bin Hazeem
Director General, Dubai Courts



EXTENDING ACCESS TO WORLD-CLASS JUSTICE IN DUBAI

The highlight of a year noted for positive news and innovative developments at the DIFC Courts was the jurisdiction extension authorised by His Highness’ Law No. 16 of 2011.

The change, decreed on 31 October, meant that the Courts’ world-class services were now open to hear commercial cases presented by the domestic and international business community.

From the SME sector in Dubai, who had been calling for access to our Small Claims Tribunal (SCT), to an audience of international investors with interests in the Middle East, the news was well received and the response was immediate. International law firms based in the region set about redrafting contracts and small business management and individual investors drove enquiries in their hundreds to the SCT, with a view to settling long-standing debts and contract disputes.

Proving that the Courts’ first-class infrastructure was more than capable of handling this major development, the first non-DIFC related case filed in response to the extension was settled before the end of the year. The DIFC Courts are now open to hearing any case in which both parties agree to our jurisdiction.

Other jurisdiction terms are outlined below:

Court of First Instance: open to hear cases related to the DIFC or where both parties agree to the Courts’ jurisdiction

Court of Appeal: open to all cases appealed from at the DIFC Courts’ Court of First Instance

Small Claims Tribunal: open to hear the following types of cases:

- where the amount of the claim or the value of the subject matter of the claim does not exceed AED 100,000; or
- where the claim pertains to the employment or former employment of a party and the amount of the claim or the value of the subject matter does not exceed AED 200,000 or all parties to the claim elect in writing that it be heard by the SCT; or
- which do not fall within the provisions above, but in respect of which (i) the amount of the claim or the value of the subject matter of the claim does not exceed AED 500,000; and (ii) all parties to the claim elect in writing that it be heard by the SCT.

Sir Anthony David Colman
Deputy Chief Justice

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE, LOCAL UNDERSTANDING



Chief Justice
Michael Hwang

Current positions

- Member of the Special Tribunal Related to Dubai World
- Elected Member of the American Law Institute
- Singapore's Non-Resident Ambassador to Switzerland
- Adjunct Professor of the National University of Singapore
- Council Member of the International Council of Arbitration for Sport at Lausanne
- Trustee of the Dubai International Arbitration Centre

Previous positions

- Commissioner of the United Nations Compensation Commission (UNCC), Geneva
- Member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague
- Court Member of The London Court of International Arbitration
- Vice-President of the International Council for Commercial Arbitration
- Vice Chairman of the International Court of Arbitration of the International Chamber of Commerce
- President of The Law Society of Singapore
- Visiting Professor to the National University of Singapore
- Judicial Commissioner of the Supreme Court of Singapore
- Head of Litigation and Arbitration and Partner at Allen & Gledhill, Singapore
- One of the first 12 Senior Counsel of the Supreme Court of Singapore



Deputy Chief Justice Sir
Anthony David Colman

Current positions

- Co-founder and Member of the Management Committee of the European Commercial Judges Forum
- Honorary President of the Italian Society for Mediation and Principal of the Faculty of Mediation, London
- Vice-President of the Academy of Experts, London
- Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators

Previous positions

- Judge in Charge of the Commercial Court in the High Court, London
- Chairman of Inquiry of the re-opened investigation into the Loss of MV Derbyshire
- Special Adviser to the Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic on Civil Procedure
- Consultant to the European Commission on Czech Republic's accession to the EU and Slovakia's accession to the Union
- Queen's Counsel and Master of the Bench of Gray's Inn
- Chairman of The Commercial Bar Association (COMBAR)



H.E. Justice Omar
Juma Al Muhairi

Current positions

- Resident Court of First Instance and Small Claims Tribunal Judge
- Member of the Education Council of the Judicial Committee of Dubai
- Member of the Joint Committee of the Dubai Courts and the DIFC Courts
- Enforcement Judge

Previous positions

- Co-founder of the Small Claims Tribunal
- Senior Judicial Officer
- Adviser to the Dubai Financial Services Authority
- Member of the 2004 committee that established the DIFC Courts
- Founding Member of the Joint Committee of the Dubai Courts and the DIFC Courts
- Judge of the Dubai Courts
- Public prosecutor for Dubai Public Prosecution
- Member of the committee set up to review and implement changes to the Dubai Judicial Institute



H.E. Justice Ali
Shamis Al Madhani

Current positions

- Resident Court of First Instance and Small Claims Tribunal Judge
- Member of the Joint Committee of the Dubai Courts and the DIFC Courts
- Enforcement Judge
- Chairman of the Middle East Board for IACA

Previous positions

- Co-founder of Small Claims Tribunal
- Senior Judicial Officer of the DIFC Courts
- Member of the committee to establish the DIFC Courts
- Advisory role at the Dubai Financial Services Authority
- Judge of the Dubai Courts
- Public Prosecutor for Dubai Public Prosecution

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE, LOCAL UNDERSTANDING *continued*



Justice Tan Sri Siti
Norma Yaakob

Current positions

- Eisenhower Fellow and Vice-President of the Eisenhower Fellows Association of Malaysia
- Pro-Chancellor, University of Malaya
- Board Member of four corporates, Malaysia
- Chair of two charitable foundations, Malaysia
- Honorary Bencher, Gray's Inn

Previous positions

- Chief Judge of Malaya
- Barrister, London
- Senior Assistant Registrar, Kuala Lumpur High Court
- President of the Sessions Court, Kuala Lumpur
- Chief Registrar of the Federal Court, Malaysia
- High Court Judge, Malaya
- Judge of the Court of Appeal, Malaysia
- Judge of the Federal Court, Malaysia
- President of the Association of Women Lawyers
- President of the Judicial and Legal Service Officers' Association
- Council Member and Regional Vice-President of the Commonwealth Magistrates' Association
- Secretary, Governing Council Member and Executive Council Member of the Asean Law Association
- Member of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission



Justice Sir John
Murray Chadwick

Current positions

- President of the Court of Appeal, Cayman Islands
- Member of the Special Tribunal Related to Dubai World

Previous positions

- Judge of the Court of Appeal, England and Wales
- Judge of the High Court, England and Wales (Chancery Division)
- Judge of the Courts of Appeal, Jersey and Guernsey
- Queen's Counsel, UK
- Standing Counsel to the Department of Trade and Industry, UK



Justice David Williams

Current positions

- International Arbitrator, Bankside Chambers, Auckland and Singapore
- Judge of the Court of Appeal of the Cook Islands
- Member of the International Council for Commercial Arbitration
- Honorary Professor, University of Auckland

Previous positions

- Judge of the High Court of New Zealand
- Member of the International Court of Arbitration of the International Chamber of Commerce, Paris
- Board Member of the American Arbitration Association
- Member of The London Court of International Arbitration
- Chief Justice of the Court of the Cook Islands



Justice Sir David Steel

Current positions

- Member of Chartered Institute of Arbitrators
- Supporting Member of the London Maritime Arbitrators Association
- Member of The London Court of International Arbitration - Lloyd's Salvage Appeal Arbitrator
- Bencher of Inner Temple
- Younger Brother of Trinity House

Previous positions

- Judge of the Commercial and Admiralty Courts, London
- Judge in charge of the Commercial and Admiralty Courts - Chairman of European Commercial Judges Forum
- Chairman of inquiry into loss of trawler Gaul-Presiding Judge of the Western Circuit
- Member of the Advisory Committee on Legal Education
- Head of Chambers at 2/4 Essex Court
- Junior Counsel to the Treasury
- Associate of Coudert Brothers, New York

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE, LOCAL UNDERSTANDING *continued*



Shamlan Al Sawalehi
Judicial Officer
and Small Claims
Tribunal Judge

Current positions

- Judicial Officer and Judge of the Small Claims Tribunal
- Member of Chartered Institute of Arbitrators
- Member of The London Court of International Arbitration
- Member of Dubai International Arbitration Centre
- Member of G.C.C Commercial Arbitration Centre
- Member of International Council for Commercial Arbitration
- Member of ICC UAE, UAE National Committee to the International Chamber of Commerce
- Member of International Centre for Dispute Resolution
- Member of The International Islamic Centre for Reconciliation and Arbitration
- Enforcement Judge

Previous positions

- Founder and Managing Partner of The Shamlan Law Firm
- Director of Strategic Affairs at The Executive Office (TEO) of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice-President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai
- Member of the Dubai Labour Affairs Committee
- Member of the Ministry of Interior Special Committee
- Manager of Enforcement at the Dubai Financial Services Authority
- Public Prosecutor for Dubai Public Prosecution

ENABLING EFFICIENT JUSTICE



Mark Beer
Registrar at the
DIFC Courts

Current positions

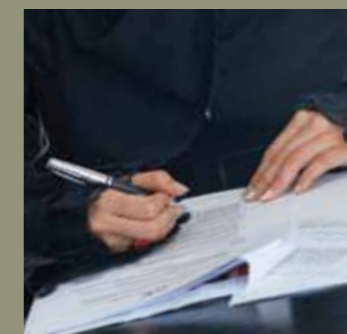
- Registrar at the DIFC Courts
- Small Claims Tribunal Judge
- Chairman of the Courts' Users' Committee
- Member of the Rules Subcommittee
- Registrar of the Special Tribunal Related to Dubai World
- Member of the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on the International Legal System (2010-2011 term)
- Vice-President for the Middle East of the International Association for Court Administration



Reem Al Shihhe
Head of HR and
Business Excellence

Current position

- Head of HR and Business Excellence



Amna Sultan Al Owais
Deputy Registrar
at the DIFC Courts

Current positions

- Deputy Registrar of the Dubai World Tribunal
- Registrar, Judge and Co-Founder of the Small Claims Tribunal
- Project Leader on the e-registry and e-case Management programme
- Founder and Leader of the Pro Bono programme



Ghada Qaisi Audi
Manager

Current positions

- Judicial Support and Communications (January - December 2011)
- Acting Deputy Registrar and Small Claims Tribunal Registrar (January - May 2011)
- Member of the Rules Sub-Committee
- Acting Deputy Registrar of the Special Tribunal Related to Dubai World (January - December 2011)

ENABLING EFFICIENT JUSTICE *continued*



Rita Engelbrecht
Courts' Co-ordinator

Current positions

- Judicial Assistant
- Manager of DIFC Courts' Register of Legal Practitioners
- Executive Assistant to the Courts' Registrar
- Secretary of the Courts' Users' Committee
- Honourable Mention, Chief Justice Award 2011



Javeiria El Edroos
Case Progression Officer
and Marketing Assistant

Current positions

- Pro Bono Programme Co-ordinator
- E-registry and e-case Management Co-ordinator
- Winner of the Chief Justice Award 2011
- Website Co-ordinator

USERS' COMMITTEES



Courts' Users' Committee Members

Chairman

DIFC Courts - **Mark Beer**
Registrar

Committee Members

DFSA - **Michael Ridgeway**, *General Counsel*

NASDAQ Dubai - **Angela Russo**, *General Counsel*

Al Tamimi & Company - **Rita Jaballah**
Partner

DLA Piper - **James Delkousis**
Partner

Global Advocates - **Ali Al Hashimi**
Partner

SNR Denton - **Peter Shaw**
Senior Counsel

Bin Shabib & Associates - **Imran Shafiq**
Barrister & Senior Associate

DIFC Authority - **Roberta Calarese**
Chief Legal Officer

Norton Rose - **Patrick Bourke**
Partner

Committee Secretary

DIFC Courts - **Rita Engelbrecht**
Courts' Co-Ordinator



Rules Sub-Committee Members

Chairman

DIFC Courts' Deputy Chief Justice - **Sir Anthony Colman**

Committee Members

Fichte & Co - **Jasamin Fichte**
Managing Partner

Fulbright & Jaworski - **Philip Punwar**
Partner

Clifford Chance - **Graham Lovett**
Partner

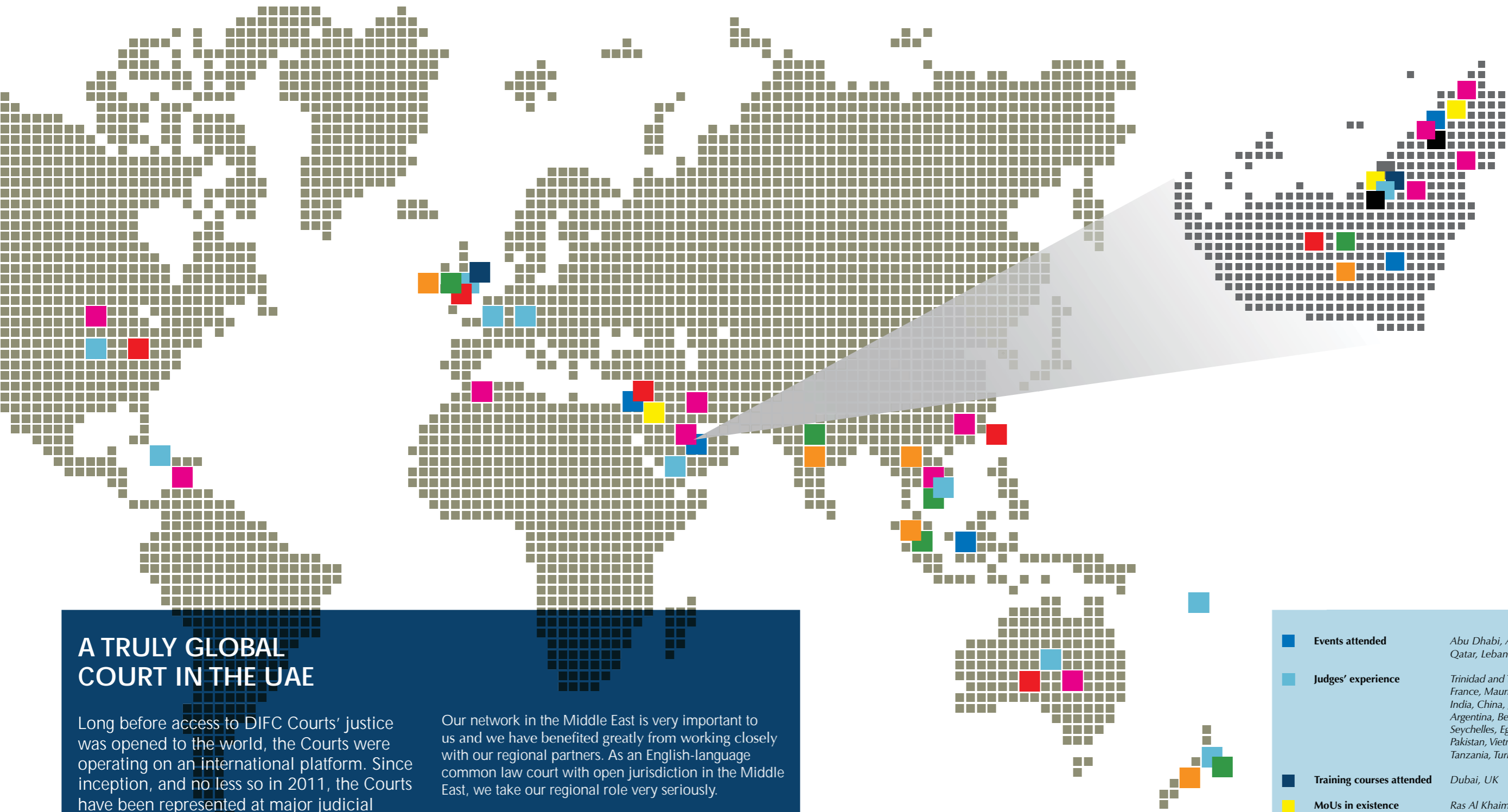
Al Tamimi & Company - **Rita Jaballah**
Partner

Norton Rose - **Patrick Bourke**
Partner

DIFC Courts - **Mark Beer**
Registrar

DIFC Courts - **Ghada Audi**
Manager, Judicial Support and Communication

As at 31 December 2011



A TRULY GLOBAL COURT IN THE UAE

Long before access to DIFC Courts' justice was opened to the world, the Courts were operating on an international platform. Since inception, and no less so in 2011, the Courts have been represented at major judicial events around the globe where they have shared knowledge with other courts and legal experts.

We have partnered with other judicial organisations, officially and less formally; we have welcomed international visitors keen to learn more about us; and we have welcomed staff and interns from all over to enhance our user experience.

Our network in the Middle East is very important to us and we have benefited greatly from working closely with our regional partners. As an English-language common law court with open jurisdiction in the Middle East, we take our regional role very seriously.

This map will give you an idea of the scope of experience we draw from and a flavour of the reach of the Courts' global footprint.

Justice Tan Sri Siti Norma Yaakob

■ Events attended	<i>Abu Dhabi, Al Ain, Dubai, Indonesia, Qatar, Lebanon</i>
■ Judges' experience	<i>Trinidad and Tobago, Australia, Iraq, Geneva, France, Mauritius, Hong Kong, Canada, Indonesia, India, China, Japan, Malaysia, Korea, Bahrain, Argentina, Bermuda, Bangladesh, Brunei, Sri Lanka, Seychelles, Egypt, Guam, Italy, Russia, Macau, Pakistan, Vietnam, Thailand, St. Kitts, Taiwan, Tanzania, Turkey, Philippines</i>
■ Training courses attended	<i>Dubai, UK</i>
■ MoUs in existence	<i>Ras Al Khaimah, Jordan, Dubai Courts, UAE Ministry of Justice</i>
■ Delegations received from	<i>Sharjah, Ajman, Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah, USA, Trinidad and Tobago, Singapore, Bahrain, Algeria, Australia, Iraq, China</i>
■ Courts delegations to	<i>Dubai, Abu Dhabi</i>
■ Interns secondments from	<i>Singapore, UK, UAE</i>
■ Staff from	<i>UK, New Zealand, UAE, Singapore, India, Malaysia, Bangladesh</i>
■ Registered practitioners' network	<i>UAE, USA, UK, Lebanon, Australia, Hong Kong, Canada, Singapore</i>



CONFIDENCE THROUGH UNDERSTANDING

In 2011, the DIFC Courts' education and awareness programmes were significantly expanded. With the announcement of the Courts' extended jurisdiction, it became more necessary than ever to engage with our users, providing them with as much information as possible about how they can make use of us - and how we can help.

On an international level, our website is perhaps our 'shop window' and with this in mind, an overhaul of the site took place in 2011. We worked to make the site more user-friendly and relaunched it towards the end of the year. Managing the development of the site is an on-going task, but feedback on the improvements has already been positive.

A series of new clear and simple user guides was published in 2011. The full range, which is regularly updated as procedures develop here, is available on our website and in the Courts' reception.

Events are an important way for the Courts to educate their community. In 2011, Courts' spokespeople engaged audiences all over the world about what we have to offer, and we contributed to judicial, commercial and common law debate at most of the key conferences and summits. We spoke, moderated at and spread our messages on platforms worldwide.

We were busier than ever with our own events, in particular our Lecture Series. In line with our KPIs for the year, we hosted four seminars in this programme, two of which were the largest we have ever hosted.

Our 'Insolvency in the UAE and across the world' conference in the first half of 2011 and the 'Women in Law and the Judiciary' gathering held in the second half both attracted audiences in their hundreds, with delegates and speakers travelling from all over the world to attend. Press coverage of these definitive events was plentiful and positive and the sessions became definitive milestones within the advancements of their respective subject areas. Other seminars focused on exploration of common law in a Shariah country, as well as e-litigation and e-disclosure training.

Bespoke events in the shape of in-house DIFC Courts' training sessions for some of our registered firms were a popular initiative and something we expect to build on over the next 12 months. Also reaching out to the legal community, at the 2011 IBA Conference in Dubai, we were honoured to co-host a stand with the Dubai Courts. We had a presence at most of the IBA conference events and our courtroom tour held in the week was particularly popular; it was in fact oversubscribed.

The first DIFC Courts' Law Reports books were published at the start of 2011, which was an important moment for the Courts. The Rules hardbound volumes were also published in the spring.

'Our community' increased exponentially towards the end of the year with the jurisdiction changes, and plans for the extended outreach were approved before the end of 2011.

Amna Al Owais

Deputy Registrar and Small Claims Tribunal Judge

STRENGTH THROUGH COLLABORATION

We are truly stronger when we work with others and to that end the DIFC Courts have always strived to partner with similarly excellent judicial organisations. Over the seven years since our inception, we have shared knowledge and worked to develop together, with Courts and judicial bodies around the world. Some of these collaborations are close, but informal – others are expressed through specific memoranda of understanding.

A strong regional network, which extends to MoUs with bodies such as Ras Al Khaimah Courts and the Jordanian Ministry of Justice, existed at the start of 2011. During this year we sought to further cement some of the most productive relationships and to reach out to new partners.

In 2011, the Joint Committee of the DIFC Courts and Dubai Courts met twice and the knowledge shared and mutual reviews of strategies and practices was invaluable. We enforced Dubai Courts' orders in the year and the Dubai Courts served to execute our own in the Emirate.

In the spring, as every year, both courts shared their annual reviews at a public ceremony, demonstrating our close relationship and respect for each organisation's output in the previous year. The DIFC Courts' and Dubai Courts' co-hosted booth at the IBA Conference was a resounding success and the two courts spread messages of judicial collaboration and excellence in the Emirate to the international delegates.

Our inaugural meetings of the Ministry of Justice and DIFC Courts' Joint Committee, in accordance with the previous year's MoU, were a thorough success. In the same period we formally reached out to the Abu Dhabi Judicial Department and the Dubai Police, with delegations of the DIFC Courts' registry and judges alike. Our meeting with the Bahrain Chamber for Dispute Resolution and QFC Courts developed commitments to tri-lateral collaboration and a visit from the Iraqi Judicial Board stimulated future plans for more formal and public collaboration.

With a broader jurisdiction established at the end of 2011, the Courts find themselves under a bigger spotlight on an international stage and our role as an English-language common law court under open commercial dispute jurisdiction is one we hold dear. We are proud to represent the Middle East and we look forward to working more closely still with other court systems in 2012 in raising and spreading the word about regional standards of court excellence.

Shamlan Al Sawalehi
Judicial Officer





EFFICIENCY THROUGH OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

The DIFC Courts have received recognition for our commitment to operational excellence: a main driver of the efficiency for which we have been widely praised. Customer service is accordingly a central focus of our development. Every one of our operational initiatives during 2011 was aligned with the Customer Service Charter announced by H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum – with the aim of meeting customers' needs through efficient service and timely delivery.

In 2011 we advanced our popular, award-winning e-registry initiative by launching a paperless court system. This was another ground-breaking first for the region and something applauded internationally. More than 136,000 papers were transferred to online archives and it was estimated that this change will reduce the need to print around 40,000 pages within the first year. Updates to the e-registry required additional work to the Courts' website, which underwent an overhaul in 2011.

In addition to satisfied users, we were rewarded with the STAR Customer Service award for the Courts' e-registry system in 2011. Going forward, we plan to spend time educating our practitioners about the platform and adapting it to their needs.

By the end of the year, Courts' audiences could administer their cases in full, including payments, online through our e-case management programme. This has reduced time and costs for our users and for the registry team. The business of the Courts can now be conducted much faster and with more flexibility.

Javeiria El Edroos
Case Progression Officer and Marketing Assistant

Rita Engelbrecht
Courts' Co-ordinator

"More than 136,000 papers were transferred to online archives and it was estimated that this change will reduce the need to print around 40,000 pages within the first year."





POWERED BY NATIONAL TALENT

The Courts' increased independence in 2011 saw the organisation migrating all human resources management in-house. I joined the team at the start of the year with a challenging but very rewarding mandate to establish a dedicated HR function at the Courts.

Beyond important HR infrastructure developments, focus has always been on attracting and developing the best talent, and in particular on harnessing the finest of our home-grown Emirati talent.

Staff development is of great importance to the Courts and so co-ordinating training was something to which my team gave great attention in 2011. Staff completed a number of specialist courses, both legal and administrative, here in the Middle East and abroad.

Courses taken by the team covered everything from Conflict Management, delivered by the Singapore Mediation Centre, to Euromoney Contract Law training in London, in addition to an Advanced Communications Strategy course and specialist courts' administrators and business administrative training programmes.

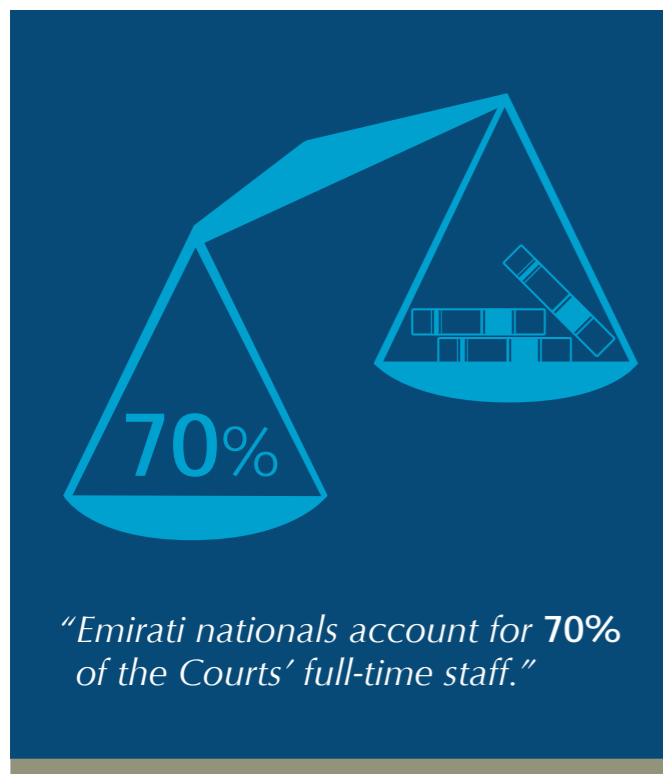
In 2011 the Courts formalised our internship programme to better manage this valuable resource and responsibility. Outstanding legal students and graduates joined us periodically from as far as the UK and Singapore. As part of our dedication to nurturing and attracting national talent at the Courts, this programme became more focused on the wealth of talented Emirati students in the second half of the year and we were well served by secondments of some most impressive young Emiratis, who completed the Courts' programme.

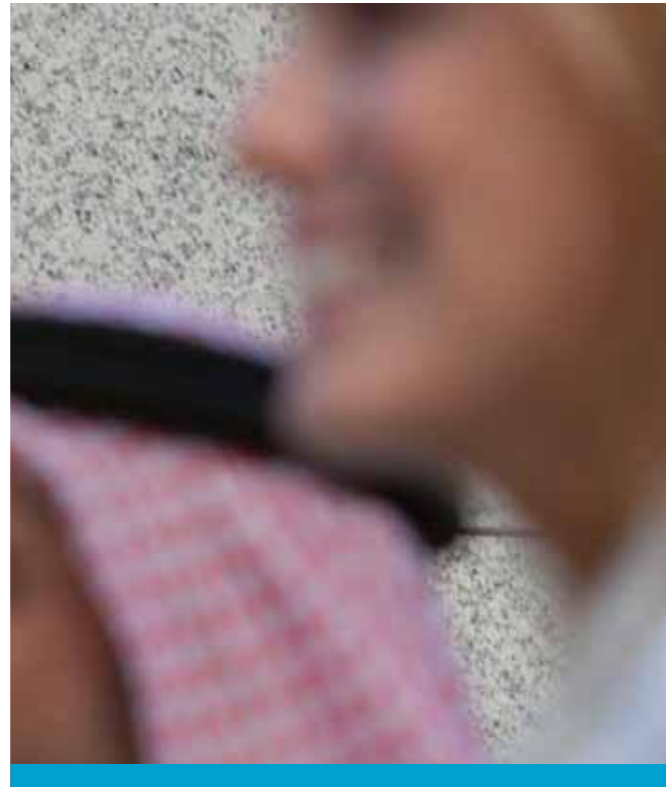
Exceptional talent was rewarded through internal programmes and we were especially proud when the Courts' Deputy Registrar, Amna Al Owais, received an honourable mention at the IBA Young Lawyers Awards. Internally, the Chief Justice's Award was this year won by Javeiria El Edroos, our hard-working Marketing and Case Progression Officer.

Internal communication and team-building efforts were formalised within the new HR structure and events designed to enhance our teamworking took place periodically throughout the year.

I have been lucky to join an already tight-knit, hard-working team in 2011 and the human resources structures and initiatives implemented throughout the year have served to streamline the organisation's working processes and further nurture a supportive and caring working environment.

Reem Al Shihhe
Head of HR & Business Excellence





BOLDER AIMS, BUSIER COURTS

2011 was an important year for the Courts, arguably the most important since our inception. Possibly 2012 will be even more critical, as the world watches how activity will progress over the year in the wake of the jurisdiction extension

We have spoken openly of our forecasts for caseload expansion. It was evident at the end of 2011 that applications for the Small Claims Tribunal were higher than ever before and that the Tribunal may well experience an increase. Likewise, we also heard from international law firms operating in the region and many local practices after the announcement. Based on feedback we expect a substantial increase in caseload, complexity and claim value in the Court of First Instance.

Continuous refinement of our registry systems and case processes is a recurring theme in our Annual Report's outlook section. It is central to our customer engagement and absolutely vital in supporting our increasing case flow. We will be working closely with the Courts' users in the year ahead to tweak all technical platforms according to their evolving requirements and our support ideas and capabilities.

Also key to the user-centric mission is the education and awareness programme. The Courts' English-language common law offering is one of the world's best, but this is meaningless unless our audiences know about this and how they can make use of it.

In addition to the English-speaking business communities, it will be important for the Courts to reach out to our local community of UAE advocates in 2012. When this report went to print, an event for UAE advocates had been successfully staged, at which we were supported by thought leaders from the Emirati legal community who could talk knowledgeably about the opportunities for the group at the Courts. Mentoring and high-level intern programmes are due to launch during the year, giving national advocates the opportunity to gain meaningful qualifications and hands-on experience in English-language common law justice.

From our new international platform, we will be leading the establishment of a body for judicial excellence in the Middle East in 2012. H.E Justice Ali Al Madhani will be presenting a report on the judicial system in the region to The Hague in the summer. Working with and extending our partner court network is taken seriously by the Courts. At home, court excellence will be further pursued with a new Code of Professional Conduct, to be launched in the spring.

It is going to be a busy year that we are more than prepared to meet head-on. We welcome the challenges this new chapter presents and our opportunity to show the world that the very best of English-language common law justice is here, on the ground in Dubai and ready to serve you.

Mark Beer
Registrar

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