



THE MARK OF JUDICIAL DISTINCTION
ANNUAL REVIEW 2008



HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai,
and President* of the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC)

*Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai appointed
HH Sheikh Maktoum Bin Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum as the President of DIFC
pursuant to a Decree issued on 2 June 2009.



HH Sheikh Maktoum Bin Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Deputy Ruler of Dubai, and President of the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC)



HE Dr. Omar Bin Sulaiman

Governor of the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC)

محاكم

DIFC

COURTS



An in-depth perspective of the DIFC Courts

Key Highlights and Achievements

02 - 03

Letter from the Chief Justice

04 - 05

Letter from the Registrar

06 - 07

DIFC - Structure

08 - 09

DIFC Courts - Structure

10 - 11

DIFC Courts - Overview

12 - 13

DIFC Courts - In Review

14 - 17

DIFC Courts - Operations

18 - 19

DIFC Courts - Judiciary and Registry

20 - 27

Forward Looking Strategy

28 - 29



A swift, transparent justice system to help parties settle cases arising within the DIFC



Vision

To establish and maintain a world-class system of justice that is reliable, accessible, efficient and fair, with an unconditional commitment to the rule of law and the fulfillment of its statutory function.

Mission

To unflinchingly uphold the principles of fairness and impartiality, and to consistently dispense equal justice according to the law and international best practices.

Values

- Judicial Independence
- Equality and Integrity
- Collaboration

Key Highlights and Achievements

- Initiating a swift, transparent justice system to help parties settle cases arising within the DIFC
- Developing an internationally renowned bench of Judges to ensure transparent and efficient justice in civil and commercial matters relating to the DIFC
- Operating a world-class, English-language, state-of-the-art Court
- Setting up a Small Claims Tribunal (SCT) which is unique in the region
- Appointing the first female Judge in the UAE
- Case Activity: 9 cases were filed in the Court of First Instance (CFI). 36 cases were filed in the Small Claims Tribunal (SCT) and 90% of those cases were settled within four weeks
- Judgments: In 2008, 100% of judgments were issued within three months from the date of the trial
- Employee Retention: Employee retention rate as of December 2008 was 100% with zero employees leaving the DIFC Courts' team



The overarching objective of the DIFC Courts is to offer a swift, transparent justice system that fosters a legal and judicial environment conducive to trade, finance and investment within the UAE.



Letter from the Chief Justice

It fills me with immense pride and a sense of accomplishment to present the DIFC Courts' Annual Review.

As the DIFC Courts conclude the first year of fully operational status and successful case handling, one of the most outstanding achievements has been the efficiency and speed with which this judicial institution was established. The purpose and emphasis of setting up a judicial system of this distinction was to comply with the Dubai Strategic Plan that required equal access to justice; equality of treatment and neutrality; accuracy and transparency of all investigations and judgments; and efficiency in the hearing of judicial cases. Consequently, these are the foundations of the DIFC Courts.

The DIFC Courts were established under the two laws enacted by the erstwhile Ruler of Dubai, His Highness Sheikh Maktoum Bin Rashid Al Maktoum: Dubai Law No.12 and DIFC Law No.10, which allows for the independent administration of justice in the DIFC, and sets out the powers, procedures, functions and administration of the DIFC Courts.

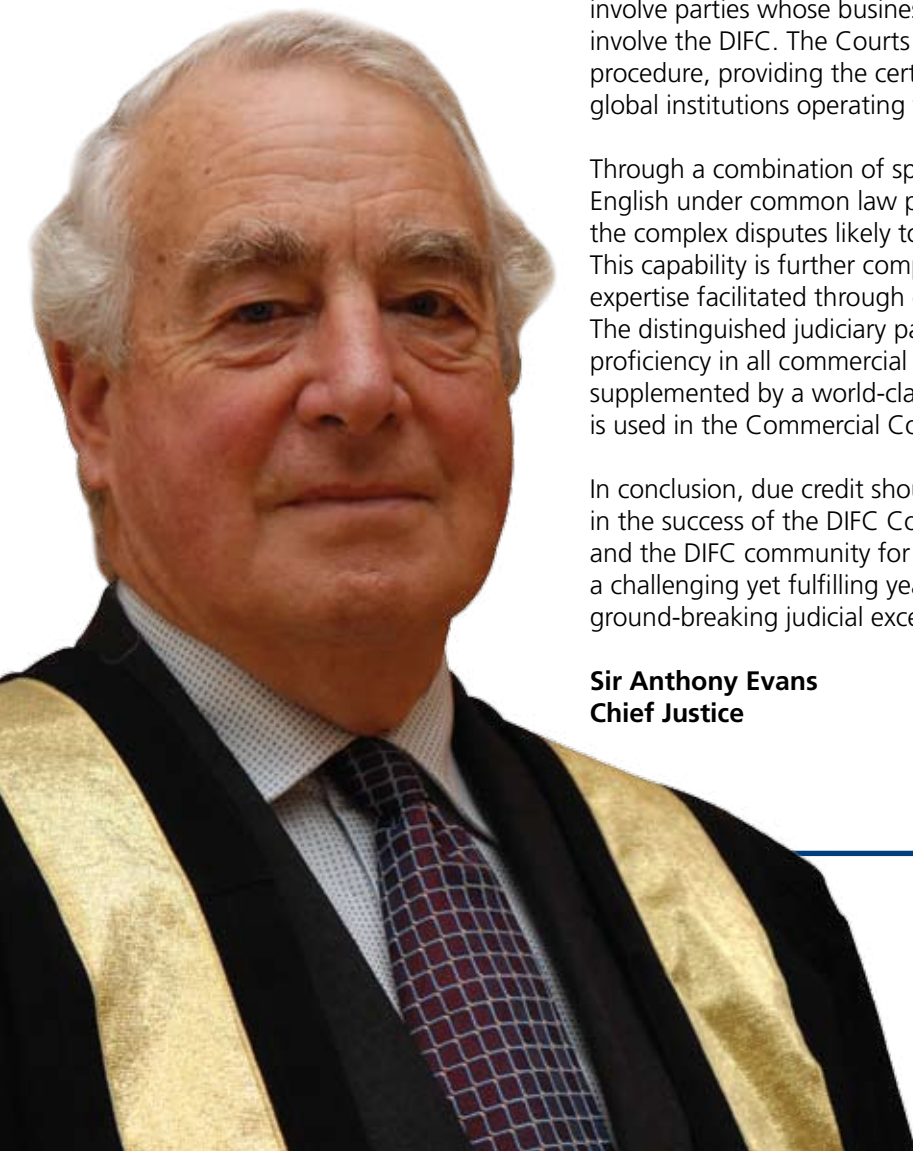
The overarching objective of the DIFC Courts is to offer a swift, transparent justice system that fosters a legal and judicial environment conducive to trade, finance and investment within the UAE. This has been accomplished through a strong and viable judiciary and an established rule of law developed in line with international best practices.

The DIFC Courts are based within Dubai's judicial system and hear cases which involve parties whose businesses are registered within the DIFC or matters that involve the DIFC. The Courts ensure the highest international standards of legal procedure, providing the certainty, flexibility and efficiency expected by the global institutions operating within the DIFC.

Through a combination of specialist civil and commercial courts operating in English under common law principles, the DIFC Courts are well suited to handle the complex disputes likely to arise from companies operating within the DIFC. This capability is further complemented with international, best-in-class judicial expertise facilitated through eight Judges – two resident and six non-resident. The distinguished judiciary panel offers a cumulative portfolio of experience and proficiency in all commercial and civil matters. Their collective legal acumen is supplemented by a world-class case management system, similar to that which is used in the Commercial Court in London.

In conclusion, due credit should be given to all who played an integral role in the success of the DIFC Courts. I wish to thank the Judges, Registry staff and the DIFC community for their tireless efforts throughout what has been a challenging yet fulfilling year, and eagerly look forward to another year of ground-breaking judicial excellence in the DIFC.

Sir Anthony Evans
Chief Justice





I believe that the DIFC Courts is an exceptional institution – a status that can be confidently claimed in light of the outstanding achievements and commendable performance experienced over the past year.



Letter from the Registrar

Looking back on 2008, it is pleasing to note that the DIFC Courts have made substantial progress. The collective efforts of the Judges, the Courts' staff and other contributors have allowed the DIFC Courts to deliver reliable, accessible, efficient and fair justice for all: be it global institutions accustomed to and expecting the highest international standards of legal procedure, or individuals living or working within the DIFC.

The overriding objectives of the DIFC Courts include dealing with cases justly and swiftly, and promoting settlement. Although designed to deal specifically with the sophisticated transactions conducted within the DIFC, the DIFC Courts are also able to provide access to justice for individuals and small to medium enterprises (SMEs). In addition to offering the highest standards in legal dispute resolution and a judicial system based on international best practices, the DIFC Courts provide a Small Claims Tribunal which is unique in the region.

Through the course of 2008, the Courts have adapted and innovated to serve the needs of the DIFC community. In order to enhance awareness, understanding and trust in its operations and capabilities, the DIFC Courts have held seminars for lawyers and the media, and hosted an educational workshop as well. Relationships with other courts in the region were developed even further, and joint training courses involving the Dubai Courts' Judges and lawyers were conducted.

Other accomplishments in 2008 include the creation of the post of 'Deputy Registrar', and the appointment of a DIFC Courts Coordinator. Equally important was the foundation of a case management system (CMS) that set the stage for the DIFC Courts' efficient and reliable operation.

I believe that the DIFC Courts is an exceptional institution – a status that can be confidently claimed in light of the outstanding achievements and commendable performance experienced over the past year.

The success of the DIFC Courts in such a short timeframe is directly attributable to the dedication of the Judges and Courts' staff (past and present) and the cornerstones of our operations: teamwork, empowerment and continuous improvement. All this combined with the adoption of best practices, hard work and unwavering commitment to justice will ensure that the DIFC Courts attain excellence in providing the community with access to justice.

Mark Beer
Registrar, DIFC Courts





DIFC - Structure





DIFC Courts - Structure



Court of First Instance (CFI)

The Court of First Instance hears cases where the amount in dispute exceeds AED 100,000 and a single Judge hears the proceedings.

The CFI has exclusive jurisdiction over:

- Civil or commercial cases and disputes involving the DIFC, any of the DIFC's bodies or any of the DIFC's establishments.
- Civil or commercial cases and disputes arising from or related to a contract that has been fulfilled or a transaction that has been carried out, in whole or in part in the DIFC.
- Objections filed against a decision made by the DIFC's bodies, which are subject to objection in accordance with the DIFC's laws and regulations.
- Any application over which the Courts have jurisdiction in accordance with the DIFC's laws and regulations.

Court of Appeal (CA)

The Court of Appeal deals with a variety of civil and commercial disputes. It comprises at least three Judges, with the Chief Justice or most senior Judge presiding.

The CA has exclusive jurisdiction over:

- Appeals filed against judgments and awards made by the CFI.
- Interpretation of any article of the DIFC's laws based upon the request of any of the DIFC's bodies or the request of any of the DIFC's establishments, provided that the establishment obtains leave of the Chief Justice in this regard. Such interpretation shall have the power of law.
- The Court of Appeal is the highest court in the DIFC Courts and no appeal shall arise from a decision of this Court.

Small Claims Tribunal (SCT)

The Small Claims Tribunal was set up to enable access to justice in a swift and efficient manner for disputes amounting to less than AED 100,000. The SCT Rules were created following extensive consultation and review of international best practices and provide a clear framework for all stages of the SCT process. Cases in the SCT are resolved in an expeditious, cost-efficient manner without the need for lawyers. This allows the SCT to resolve more than 90% of disputes in less than two weeks.

The process requires the claimant to fill in a simple claim form and lodge it with the SCT Registry. Concerned parties then attend a Consultation before an SCT Judge, who will attempt to mediate the dispute. The SCT aims to settle each dispute within two weeks of submission of the claim. If the dispute is not resolved at the consultation stage, the matter is fixed for a hearing within one week of the consultation at which point the SCT Judge will issue directions.



DIFC Courts - Overview

Functions

The DIFC Courts deal exclusively with cases and claims arising out of the DIFC and its operations. All functions are carried out in an independent manner, in accordance with the laws and regulations of the DIFC.

Organisations operating within the DIFC may opt for a legal jurisdiction, other than the DIFC, when entering into contracts. However, the DIFC laws will be applicable by default to institutions that have not specified their legal jurisdiction, allowing them to file a case in the DIFC Courts. The jurisdiction of the DIFC Courts covers civil and commercial matters, and not criminal or family matters, which are referred to the appropriate external authorities.

Team

The DIFC Courts are led by Chief Justice Sir Anthony Evans and Deputy Chief Justice Michael Hwang. The judiciary team includes six other Judges from the United Kingdom, Malaysia, Singapore, New Zealand and the United Arab Emirates, who bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to the Courts. In addition, the Courts' team includes the Registrar, Deputy Registrar and the DIFC Courts' Coordinator. (For more details, refer to pages 22 - 26)

Powers

The Chief Justice has appointed two Execution Judges to issue Execution Orders within the DIFC. Within its jurisdiction, the DIFC Courts has the power to make any orders in relation to restitution, disgorgement, compensation, or damages, including those of an arbitral nature, and to direct the issue of any appropriate injunctions. The DIFC Courts also has the ability to waive any procedural requirements if satisfied that an applicant is unable to meet them.

مركز دبي المالي العالمي



محاكم

DIFC

COURTS

Dubai International Financial Centre

DIFC Courts - In Review

2008 in Review

Since establishing operations, we have been taking great strides in addressing the many strategic challenges initially encountered, relating to accessibility, case efficiency and operational efficiency. We have launched several initiatives and projects to ensure accessibility to justice and international best practices.

Awareness and Education

Public trust and confidence is critical to the success of the DIFC Courts. It is by enhancing the public's and lawyers' understanding, both regionally and internationally, about the judiciary and the Courts, that confidence in their ability to dispense fair, consistent and transparent justice has been increased.

The DIFC Courts have initiated various activities to increase awareness and understanding, including:

- The development of a targeted strategy to increase its interaction and relationship with media in the UAE. This has included hosting two media workshops in the Courts and the production of press releases announcing key milestones. During the workshops the media were able to ask questions about the operation of the Courts and their ability to report on proceedings. A set of media guidelines has also been issued.
- In order to raise awareness, and to communicate the various services provided by the Courts, a workshop was held in November and was attended by over 300 people. In addition, the DIFC Courts' website enhances public access to internal information related to the Courts' organisational structure, rules, draft forms, practice directions, judgments and orders.
- A series of lectures were held to educate legal practitioners about the procedures of the DIFC Courts.
- Raising awareness and strengthening relationships with key stakeholders through meetings with the Dubai Courts and by speaking at events organised by the Dubai Judicial Institute. This reinforces the DIFC Courts' commitment to working in partnership with other stakeholders that share the vision to deliver world-class justice.

Highly Qualified Workforce and Stimulating Work Environment

The DIFC Courts values its team and their contributions. In support of creating a friendly and stimulating environment, the DIFC Courts fosters and encourages flexibility, creativity, innovation and commitment to excellence. In order to have a world-class justice system working at its full potential, the DIFC Courts' Justices and Registry staff must be highly qualified and motivated.

Day-to-day processes are handled through the implementation of a state-of-the-art electronic case management system, and through the use of specific job descriptions, measurable objectives and open communication, employees have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

The DIFC Courts have secured the right resources to initiate and carry out the judicial process by:

- Appointing the Deputy Registrar, Ms. Amna Sultan Al Owais, in October and the Registrar, Mr. Mark Beer, in June.
- Appointing a Courts' Coordinator for greater coordination between the Courts, the Justices and the case parties. This ensures greater efficiency in the handling of cases and the administration of the Courts.
- Swearing in three Judges: Justice Tan Sri Siti Norma Yaakob, Justice Sir John Chadwick and Justice Sir Anthony David Colman in January. In November Justice David Williams was sworn in. H.E. Justice Omar Al Muhairi and H.E. Justice Ali Al Madhani were sworn in as Execution Judges earlier in the year and as Court of Appeal judges in November.
- Ongoing and regular training and professional development programmes to increase awareness and improve their ability to provide world-class judicial services.

International Best Practices

The effective administration of justice is essential to creating a world class judicial system. This requires constant attention to judicial developments and international best practices in order to provide the highest and most advanced level of service.

The DIFC Courts have ensured that international best practices are upheld and encouraged by taking the following initiatives:

- Creating a fee schedule based on international standards and benchmarking data from other common law courts, in consultation with Judges and the Courts' Users Committee. This process led to the basic fee for initiating proceedings being halved, and with a sliding scale dependent on the amount of the claim. This promoted accessibility to justice by ascribing an initiation fee based on the amount of the case, rather than the erstwhile flat fee arrangement.
- The exchange of opinions and experiences in the operation of commercial courts when the Specialised Commercial Court of Kazakhstan visited the DIFC Courts in November 2008.





- The formation of a sub-committee to develop a Code of Professional Conduct ensuring that all practitioners appearing and submitting documents to the Courts abide by high professional and ethical standards.
- Initiating an allocation process for new cases to make certain that the appropriate judges are informed of relevant case matters, thereby allowing them at any time to deal with urgent applications about matters arising in relation to an allocated case.

Transparent and Accessible Justice

Justice must be easily accessible and available to all who need it. Technology helps expand access to justice by providing the public remote availability of judicial services. Courts must be easily accessible to the people in the communities they serve, and must act in a fair, transparent and impartial way, absent of influence from personal, political or external pressure. Providing the public with full access to all judicial decisions and laws increases transparency, accountability and public knowledge of the judicial system. By making judicial decisions accessible to the public, judges are held accountable for the quality of their decisions.

The DIFC Courts have instituted a variety of measures and technologies to provide transparent and easy access to justice, through:

Guidelines and Rules:

- Publishing the Rules of the DIFC Courts in February, following public consultation.
- Publishing guidelines for legal practitioners, witnesses, the public, and the media to ensure that the different categories of Courts' users are well-versed with the Courts' procedures.
- Completion of the Rules that relate to arbitration and the Small Claims Tribunal, following a formal drafting process and consultation period.

Technology:

- Arranging with Complanet and Bloomberg to distribute content from the DIFC Courts through their networks. This increases access to information about the Courts, and enhances transparency and trust in the quality and operation of the Courts.
- Adjusting the Courts' website to ensure that all Courts' users have easy access to the Rules of the DIFC Courts., as well as orders, judgments, press releases, Practice Directions and Registrar's Directions. This is an essential tool to ensure that Courts' users are aware of the procedures and rules of the DIFC Courts, and can easily obtain information about the Courts and their operations.
- Implementing a world-class Case Management System (CMS) to maintain case documents in electronic form.
- Setting up an emergency telephone number for the handling of urgent application. This gives businesses operating across time zone 24/7 access to justice when needed, and not just during the working hours of the DIFC Courts.
- Establishing a law library, with the titles determined in consultation with the Judges.



DIFC Courts - Operations

Technology plays an important role in the functioning of the DIFC Courts. The efficient operation of the Courts is critical to its reputation and success. Access to swift, efficient and transparent justice is part of the Courts' vision and mission. It is also integral to the Courts' value proposition to the community it serves. At the heart of the Courts' operation is the way in which it manages cases and the systems used to do so.

Electronic Case Management System (CMS)

The use of an electronic CMS allows for ease of filing and reviewing of documents submitted to the DIFC Courts while allowing Judges and their clerks access to documents 24/7. This greater efficiency supports the vision, and benefits Courts' users by:

1. Dramatically reducing case processing times and ensuring efficient handling
2. Giving Courts' Judges greater and more flexible access to Courts' documents
3. Increasing information sharing
4. Ensuring data integrity through the elimination of redundant entries
5. Providing data backup and storage capabilities
6. Benefiting Courts' users by allowing for a more efficient judicial system

Recording and Transcription

The installation of a world-class recording system in the courtroom provides clear recording of all hearings, facilitates review and makes the production of transcripts more efficient. The technology also includes the option to use electronic presentation of evidence to all hearing participants.

This use of technology promotes greater efficiency, increases the reliability of the Courts to deliver high quality judicial administration and adds to the efficiency of the Registry office.

In addition, Courts' users have access to several pre-trial and litigation support services, including same-day transcriptions, real-time reporting and digital recording.

Distribution of Content

In addition, arrangements have been made for Courts' content to be distributed through Complanet and Bloomberg's networks. This increases access to information about the Courts, and enhances transparency, accessibility and trust in the quality and operation of the Courts.

Information and Knowledge Management

The use of e-mails within the team allows for information sharing through specific e-mail accounts, such as registry@difccourts.ae. This means that e-mails go to a pre-designated group from the Courts, ensuring the right people get the right information. Papers written about the Courts are converted to pdf format and placed on the DIFC Courts' website for internal and external use.

دبیر العالمی للعلمی

لاکھ



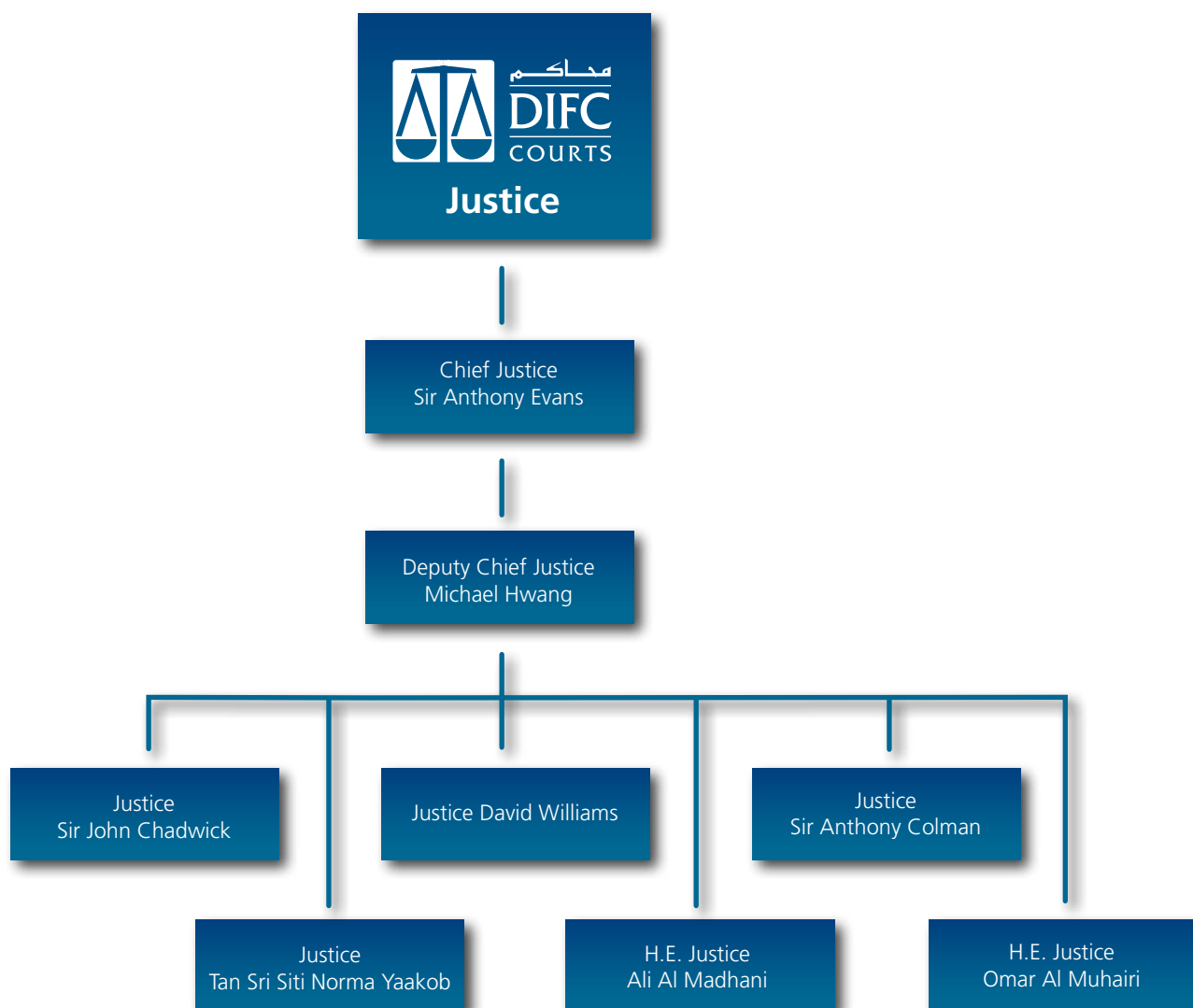
DIFC

COURTS

International Financial Centre

DIFC Courts - Judiciary and Registry

The DIFC Courts' judiciary is one that offers a collective portfolio of experience and expertise. The best-in-class judicial team consists of six non-resident Judges and two resident Judges who cumulatively possess proficiencies in commercial and civil matters from across the globe. Their legal competency is complemented by a world-class case management system and international best practices.

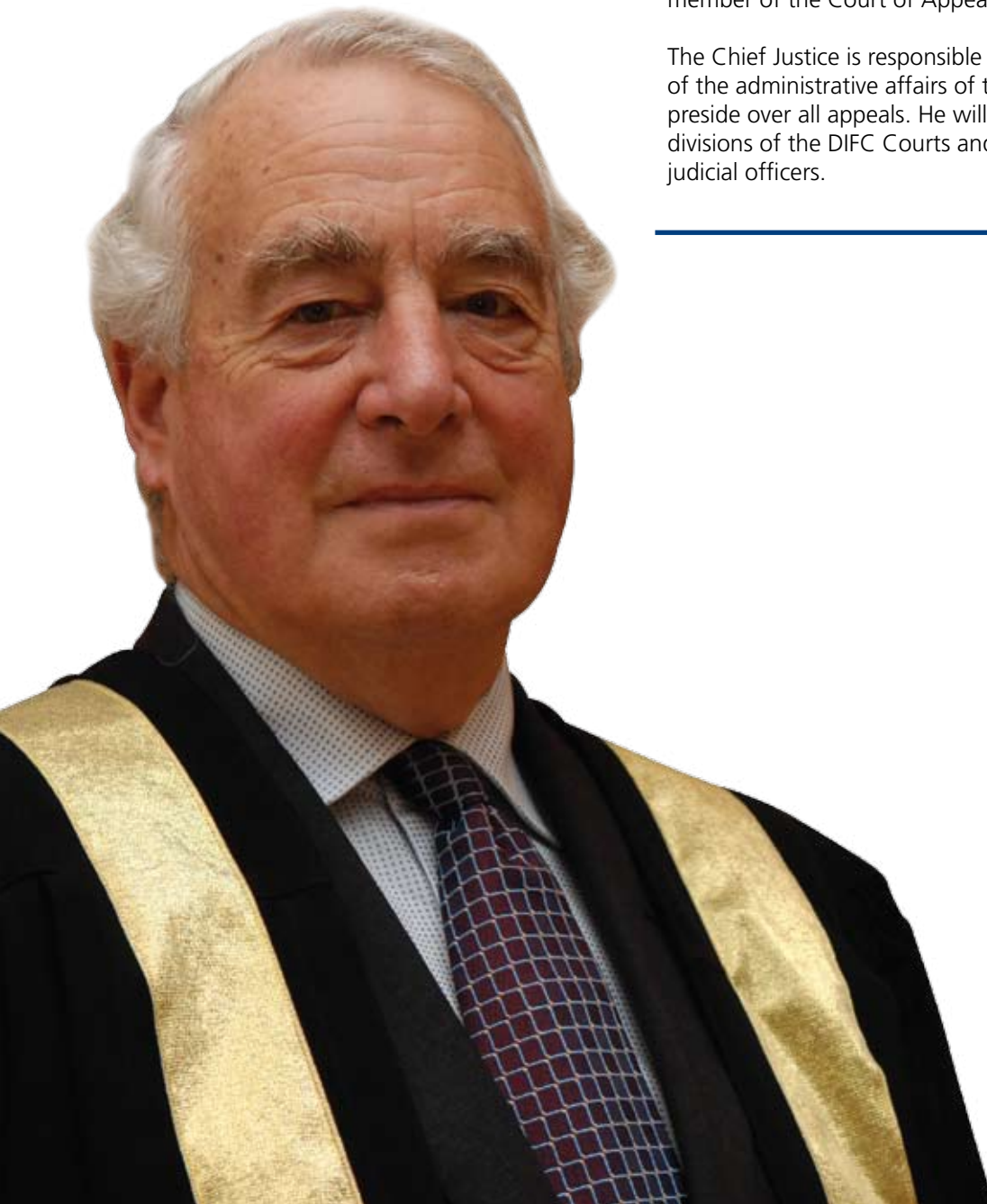


Chief Justice Sir Anthony Evans

Appointed Chief Justice of the DIFC Courts in April 2005, Sir Anthony Evans was a High Court Judge in England and Wales from 1984 until 1992, and a Lord Justice of Appeal (a member of the Court of Appeal) from 1992 until his retirement in 2000. Prior to his appointment as Judge, Sir Anthony practised as a Barrister, specialising in commercial cases. He became Queen's Counsel in 1971 and a Recorder of the Crown Court in 1972. As a High Court Judge, he sat regularly in the Commercial Court, and from 1990 until 1992 he was Judge in Charge of the Commercial List.

Chief Justice Sir Anthony Evans has extensive experience as an arbitrator, with particular emphasis on international commercial arbitration. Since 2000, he has continued to sit from time to time in the Court of Appeal and as a member of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. He is also a member of the Court of Appeal in Bermuda.

The Chief Justice is responsible for the overall management of the administrative affairs of the DIFC Courts and will preside over all appeals. He will also establish circuits and divisions of the DIFC Courts and appoint the staff and judicial officers.



Deputy Chief Justice Michael Hwang

Deputy Chief Justice Michael Hwang was appointed in April 2005. He was educated at undergraduate and postgraduate levels at Oxford University. He was called to the Singapore Bar in 1968, when he joined Allen & Gledhill, now Singapore's largest law firm. He retired from the firm at the end of 2002 after serving as Head of its Litigation and Arbitration Department for 10 years.

From 1991 to 1992 he served as a Judicial Commissioner of the Supreme Court and was appointed one of the first twelve Senior Counsel of the Supreme Court of Singapore in 1997.

Michael now practices as a Barrister, primarily servicing lawyers as Independent Counsel and Arbitrator.

Michael is member (and a former Vice Chairman) of the International Court of Arbitration of the International Chamber of Commerce, a Vice President of the International Council for Commercial Arbitration, a member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, a Court Member of the London Court of International Arbitration and a Council

Member of the International Council of Arbitration for Sport. He was formerly a United Nations Compensation Commissioner and a Vice-Chair of the International Bar Association's Arbitration Committee.

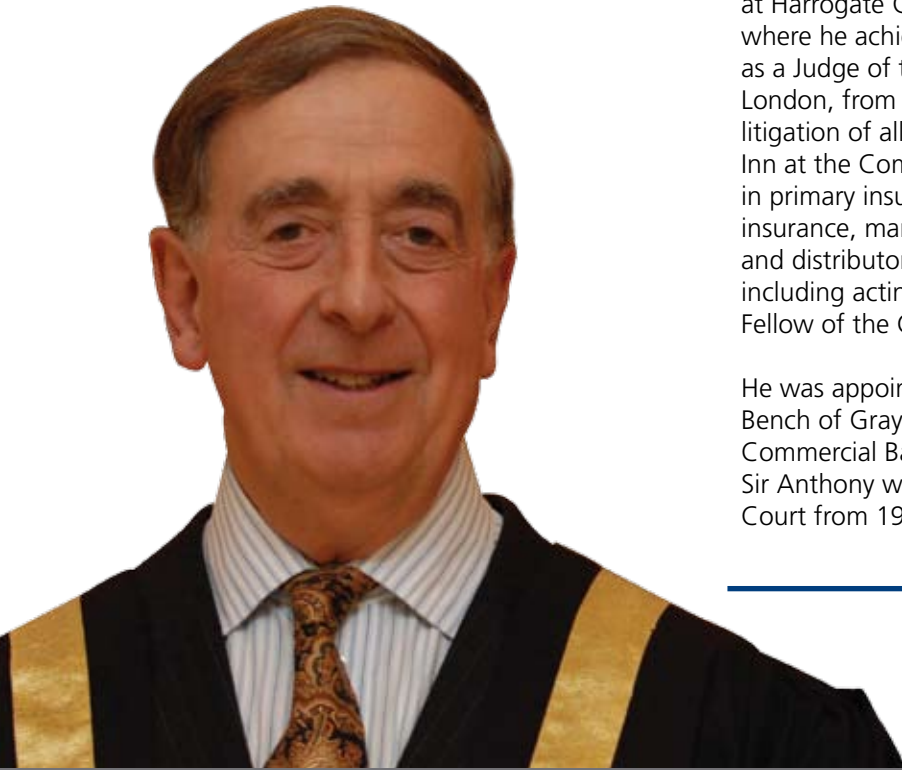
He also serves as Singapore's Non-Resident Ambassador to Switzerland and is an Adjunct Professor at the National University of Singapore.

In 2008 Michael assumed office as the President of the Law Society of Singapore.

He is active in domestic and international disputes as counsel and arbitrator as well as mediator. His arbitrations and mediations have involved disputes in Argentina, Bangladesh, Brunei, China, Egypt, Guam, Indonesia, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Mauritania, Macau, Pakistan, Russia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Seychelles, Taiwan, Thailand, Tanzania, Turkey, UK, USA and Vietnam.



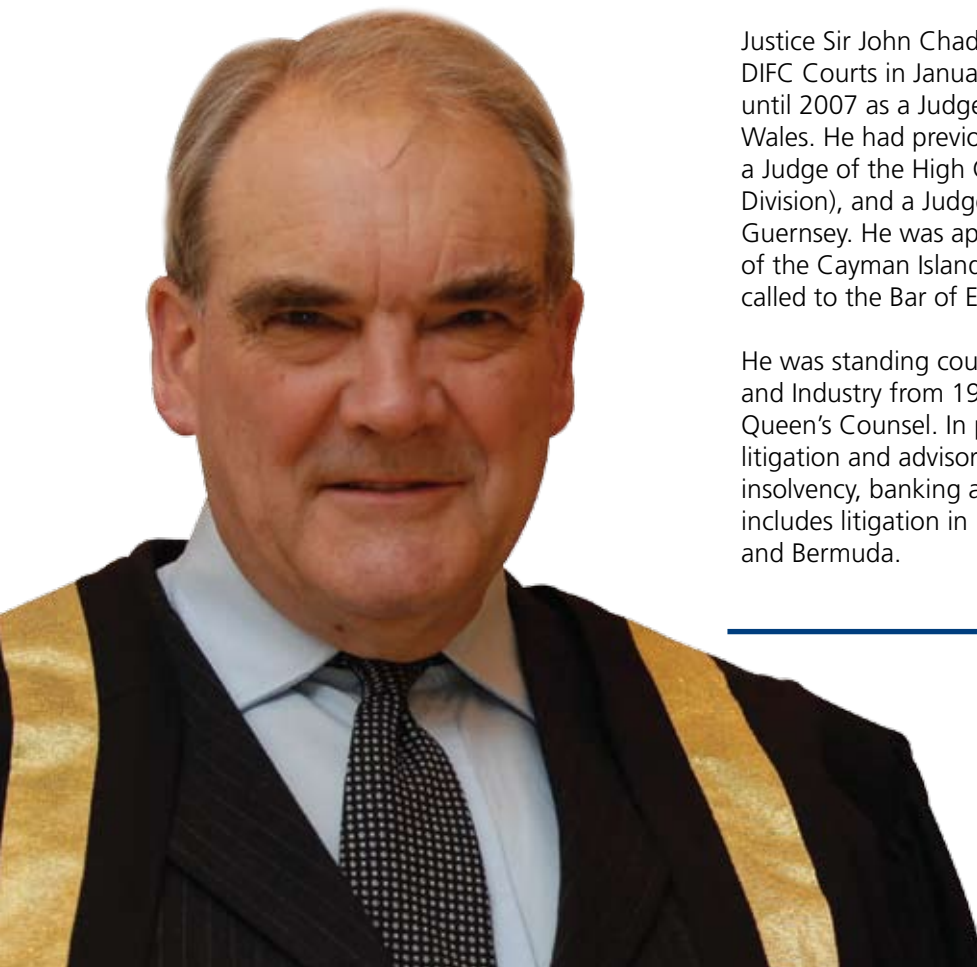
Justice Sir Anthony Colman



Justice Sir Anthony Colman was appointed as a Judge of the DIFC Courts in January 2008. Sir Anthony was educated at Harrogate Grammar School and Trinity Hall, Cambridge, where he achieved a Double First in Law Tripos. He served as a Judge of the Commercial Court and in the High Court, London, from 1992 to 2007, specialising in commercial litigation of all kinds. He practised as a Barrister of Gray's Inn at the Commercial Bar from 1962 to 1992, specialising in primary insurance and reinsurance including marine insurance, maritime disputes, banking and international trade and distributorship agreements, ICC and ICSID arbitrations, including acting as ICC, LCIA and ICSID arbitrator and a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators.

He was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1977, Master of the Bench of Gray's Inn, (1986 to present), and Chairman of the Commercial Bar Association (COMBAR) 1991 to 1992. Sir Anthony was also the Judge in charge of the Commercial Court from 1996 to 1997.

Justice Sir John Chadwick



Justice Sir John Chadwick was appointed as a Judge of the DIFC Courts in January 2008, having served for 10 years until 2007 as a Judge of the Court of Appeal of England and Wales. He had previously held senior judicial appointments as a Judge of the High Court of England and Wales (Chancery Division), and a Judge of the Courts of Appeal of Jersey and Guernsey. He was appointed President of the Court of Appeal of the Cayman Islands in 2008. Justice Sir John Chadwick was called to the Bar of England and Wales in 1966.

He was standing counsel to the UK Department of Trade and Industry from 1974 until 1980, when he was appointed Queen's Counsel. In private practice he undertook both litigation and advisory work; principally in property, company, insolvency, banking and insurance matters. His experience includes litigation in Malaysia, Hong Kong and Bermuda.

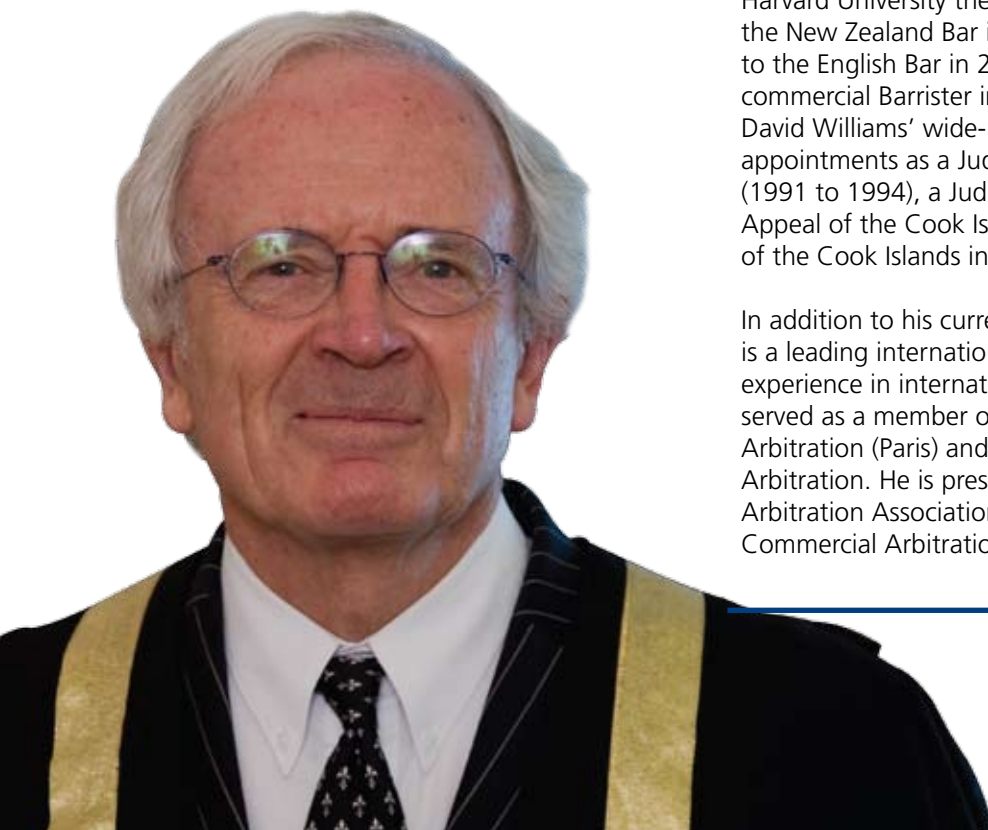
Justice Tan Sri Siti Norma Yaakob



Justice Tan Sri Siti Norma Yaakob was appointed a Judge of the DIFC Courts in January 2008. She retired as Chief Judge of Malaya in January 2007 having held office since February 2005. After qualifying as a Barrister in London in 1962, she was appointed as a Senior Assistant Registrar in the Kuala Lumpur High Court the following year. Before becoming Chief Judge, she held a series of senior judicial and legal positions in Malaysia including that of 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; and Judge of the Federal Court, Malaysia.

She is an Eisenhower Fellow and presently holds the position of Vice-President of the Eisenhower Fellows Association of Malaysia. She also serves as a Pro-Chancellor, University of Malaya, sits on the Board of four companies and is very active in the running of two charitable foundations. In late November 2007, the Master Benchers of her alma mater, Gray's Inn, London elected her as an Honorary Benchers.

Justice David Williams



Justice David Williams was appointed as a Judge of the DIFC Courts in January 2008. He graduated LL.B from the University of Auckland Law School in 1965 and LL.M from Harvard University the following year. He was admitted to the New Zealand Bar in 1965, the Australian Bar in 1987 and to the English Bar in 2003. For many years he practised as a commercial Barrister in New Zealand and overseas. Justice David Williams' wide-ranging judicial experience includes appointments as a Judge of the High Court of New Zealand (1991 to 1994), a Judge of the High Court and Court of Appeal of the Cook Islands (2000 to 2005), and Chief Justice of the Cook Islands in 2005.

In addition to his current judicial duties, Justice David Williams is a leading international Arbitrator and has extensive experience in international dispute resolution. He has also served as a member of the ICC Court of International Arbitration (Paris) and the London Court of International Arbitration. He is presently a Board member of the American Arbitration Association and the International Council for Commercial Arbitration.

H.E. Justice Ali Al Madhani



H.E. Justice Ali Al Madhani was appointed as a Senior Judicial Officer at the DIFC Courts in August 2005. From 1994 until 1998 he was a Prosecutor for Dubai Public Prosecution. In 1998, he was appointed by the Ruler of Dubai to serve as a Judge in the Dubai Courts. During his tenure as a Dubai Courts Judge, H.E. Justice Ali Al Madhani adjudicated a large number of major criminal, commercial and civil cases. In late 2004, H.E. Justice Ali Al Madhani joined the DFSA as a Management Associate to provide expertise on local issues and the application of UAE and Dubai legislation to the DFSA.

H.E. Justice Ali Al Madhani was also appointed to the Committee which established the DIFC Courts. In 2007 H.E. Justice Ali Al Madhani was appointed as a SCT Judge. In January 2008 he was sworn in as a Judge of the DIFC Courts and in April 2008 was appointed Execution Judge.

H.E. Justice Omar Al Muhairi



H.E. Justice Omar Al Muhairi was appointed as a Senior Judicial Officer at the DIFC Courts in August 2005. In 1994, H.E. Justice Omar Al Muhairi was appointed as Prosecutor for Dubai Public Prosecution and served until 1998. In 1998, he was appointed by the Ruler of Dubai to serve as a Judge in the Dubai Courts. During his tenure as a Judge, H.E. Justice Omar Al Muhairi dealt with a large number of major criminal, commercial and civil cases. In late 2004, H.E. Justice Omar Al Muhairi joined the Dubai Financial Services Authority as a Management Associate to provide the DFSA with a working knowledge of the UAE laws and its future co-relation with the DIFC's laws.

H.E. Justice Omar Al Muhairi was also appointed to the Committee, which established the DIFC Courts. In 2007 H.E. Justice Omar Al Muhairi was appointed as a SCT Judge. In January 2008 he was sworn in as a Judge of the DIFC Courts and in April 2008 was appointed as Execution Judge.



Registry

Mark Beer, Registrar

Mark Beer, Registrar joined the DIFC Courts from MasterCard Worldwide, where he was Regional Legal Counsel for South Asia, Middle East and Africa (SAMEA) handling legal and regulatory matters across that region. He was later promoted to Vice President, heading Government Relations and Corporate Services across SAMEA. Mark Beer's portfolio of experience includes working in the corporate finance team of Man Investments in Switzerland and law firms in the UK and the UAE. As Registrar, Mark undertakes judicial functions and other duties prescribed in Article 17 of the DIFC Courts Law and is responsible for administering the DIFC Courts' office and staff.

Amna Sultan Al Owais, Deputy Registrar and SCT Registrar

Amna Sultan Al Owais, Deputy Registrar and SCT Registrar joined the DIFC Courts in October 2006. Prior to joining the Courts' team, Amna worked as a lawyer for Hadeef Al Dhahiri & Associates in their litigation and commercial department. Amna obtained her Masters with Commendation in International Commercial Law from Kingston University, London and has been admitted to practise in the UAE, both at the local and federal courts. In her current role in the DIFC Courts, Amna is responsible for the management of the claims lodged in the DIFC Courts, providing general administrative support and research assistance to the Judges and Judicial Officers of the DIFC Courts.

Rita Hicks, Courts Coordinator

Rita Hicks, Courts Coordinator joined the DIFC Courts in November 2008 after having spent 18 months working for the Dispute Resolution team at Clyde & Co, Dubai. Before moving to Dubai, Rita worked as an Associate to a High Court Judge at the Auckland High Court, New Zealand. Rita has also worked as a Judges' Assistant at District Court level and has had an extensive legal background with two legal firms in New Zealand specialising in conveyancing. Rita is responsible for managing the daily functions of the Courts and providing administrative support to the Registrar, Chief Justice and Judges of the DIFC Courts. She is also secretary of the Courts Users Committee.



Forward Looking Strategy

Focus: 2009

With a successful year now completed, the DIFC Courts is poised and prepared to continue evolving and ensuring access to justice through a variety of key initiatives in 2009:

- Working with the Dubai Courts and Dubai Judicial Institute to establish a 'Law Student of the Year' award - a clear demonstration of the co-operation between the Courts. H.E. Justice Omar Al Muhairi will be on the committee establishing the award and will put together the framework for the competition.
- Promoting regular and open discussion to further strengthen relationships with other courts in the region through the signing of MoUs to encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing in order to deliver world-class justice in the region.
- Establishing a pro bono legal assistance programme that will assist those who cannot afford a lawyer. This will enhance accessibility to justice and ensure that all parties are on equal footing in proceedings before the Courts.
- Organising lecture events for practitioners in the community by inviting prominent speakers to present and provide assistance on appearing before the DIFC Courts, as well as an overview of international best practices.
- Putting into place a Code of Conduct for all practitioners or individuals appearing and submitting documents to the Courts.



For more information, please contact us at:

DIFC Courts
Ground Level, Building 4
The Gate District, DIFC
+9714 427 3333
www.difccourts.ae