**Q1. Are the Courts in your jurisdiction open and functioning as per normal?**

The Chief Justice of Singapore has directed that the Supreme Court, State Courts and Family Justice Courts will hear only essential and urgent matters during the ‘Relevant Period” which commenced on 7 April 2020 and more recently extended to 1 June 2020. This direction applies (but is not limited to) appeals, trials, applications (interlocutory or otherwise), case management conferences and pre-trial conferences in all three Courts.

These matters will be heard, as far as possible, by electronic means of communication without requiring physical attendance before the Court. Nonetheless, the Court retains full discretion to decide on the means of conducting the hearings.

For most hearings, the Court will issue directions for appropriate matters to be heard by video conferencing. Solicitors may then write in to the Court to raise any concerns that they may have within 2 days of receiving such directions. However, the use of video conferencing is optional, albeit strongly encouraged, for litigants in person.

The Courts’ Registries and other court services still continue to remain operational to manage these essential and urgent matters.

**Q2. If not, are there any exceptions to the arrest of ships and/or are other injunctive or enforcement procedures available?**

Only the Supreme Court of Singapore has jurisdiction to hear Admiralty matters.

The Registrar of the Supreme Court has issued circulars identifying matters that may be considered essential and urgent.  This includes but is not limited to applications for the arrest or release of a vessel, for the discharge of dangerous or perishable cargo, for the judicial sale of a vessel where the safety of the crew is a concern, for urgent injunction or search order and to set aside an injunction or search order.

**Q3. Can Judicial Sale of Ships still take place?**

Yes, as stated above but only where the safety of the crew is a concern.

**Q4. Do you know how long the Courts in your jurisdiction will be closed for?**

On  21 April 2020, the Relevant Period during which the Courts will hear only essential and urgent matters was extended to 1 June 2020. Hearing for all other matters will be adjourned until the end of the Relevant Period. Unless there is a further extension of the Relevant Period, the Courts will resume hearing most matters **a week after** the end of the extended Relevant Period, i.e. from **8 June 2020**.

Further in order to dispose of some of the backlog which may have accrued during the Relevant Period, the Supreme Court will not enter into its usual recess in June 2020.

**Q5. Is the flag registry in your jurisdiction (if applicable) operating as per normal in terms of the registration of ships and registration of mortgages and deletion of same.**

Generally, yes. The Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore is still accepting applications such as registration of vessel, registration/discharge of mortgage, recording of Bill of Sale and closure of registry with the Singapore Registry of ships. Supporting documents to these applications will be accepted in scanned copy first with the original to be posted or dropped into a designated drop-off box.

However, counter services have ceased and there are minor adjustments on documents acknowledgement and companies who do not have MPA billing accounts. All acknowledgement of courier services are no longer available. Further, companies or individuals making applications but who do not have a MPA billing account will be required to make payment via internet banking.

**Q6. Has your flag administration issued any special exemptions for the period of the Pandemic?**

As maritime services is a key economic sector and the Port of Singapore is critical in ensuring the flow of goods, the port remains open for cargo operations and will continue to provide essential services including bunkering, ship stores and supplies.  Maritime-related activities are exempted from the suspension of activities during the “Circuit Breaker” period.  These include shipping and shipping-related services, safety and navigation services, port and terminal operations, port marine services such as ship chandlers, bunkering, etc.  The ship registry’s services in relation to seafarers’ matters (collection of Seaman Discharge Books, Certificate of Authorisation (COA) for Seafarer Recruitment and Placement Services, etc), flag/port state control and ship surveys and certification issues remain available.  The registry has also indicated that they are available at their usual contact numbers to answer queries on these issues.