



**THE STATUTES OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE**

**RECIPROCAL ENFORCEMENT OF FOREIGN  
JUDGMENTS ACT**

**(CHAPTER 265)**

**(Original Enactment: Ordinance 29 of 1959)**

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2001



# Reciprocal Enforcement of Foreign Judgments Act

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An Act to make provision for the enforcement in Singapore of judgments and awards given in foreign countries which afford reciprocal treatment to judgments given in Singapore, for

facilitating the enforcement in foreign countries of judgments given in Singapore and for matters connected therewith.

[26th March 1959]

## PART I

### REGISTRATION OF FOREIGN JUDGMENTS

#### **Short title**

1. This Act may be cited as the Reciprocal Enforcement of Foreign Judgments Act.

#### **Interpretation**

2.—(1) In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires —

“appeal” includes any proceedings by way of discharging or setting aside a judgment or an application for a new trial or stay of execution;

“country” includes a territory;

“country of the original court” means the country in which the original court is situated;

“foreign country” means any country outside Singapore which is not part of the Commonwealth;

“judgment” means a judgment or order given or made by a court in any civil proceedings, or a judgment or order given or made by a court in any criminal proceedings for the payment of a sum of money in respect of compensation or damages to an injured party;

“judgment creditor” means the person in whose favour the judgment was given, and includes any person in whom the rights under the judgment have become vested by succession or assignment or otherwise;

“judgment debtor” means the person against whom the judgment was given, and includes any person against whom the judgment is enforceable under the law of the original court;

“original court”, in relation to any judgment, means the court by which the judgment was given;

“prescribed” means prescribed by Rules of Court;

“registration” means registration under Part I and “register” and “registered” shall be construed accordingly;

“registering court”, in relation to any judgment, means the court to which an application to register the judgment is made.

[2/99]

(2) For the purposes of this Act, “action in personam” shall not be deemed to include any matrimonial cause or any proceedings in connection with any of the following matters:

- (a) matrimonial matters;
- (b) administration of the estates of deceased persons;
- (c) bankruptcy;
- (d) winding-up of companies;
- (e) lunacy; or
- (f) guardianship of infants.

(3) Subject to Rules of Court, any of the powers conferred by this Act on any court may be exercised by a judge of the court.

### **Power to extend Part I to foreign countries giving reciprocal treatment**

3.—(1) The Minister, if he is satisfied that, in the event of the benefits conferred by this Part being extended to judgments given in the superior courts of any foreign country, substantial reciprocity of treatment will be assured as respects the enforcement in that foreign country of judgments given in the High Court of Singapore, may by order published in the *Gazette* direct —

- (a) that this Part shall extend to that foreign country; and
- (b) that such courts of that foreign country as are specified in the order shall be deemed superior courts of that country for the purposes of this Part.

(2) Any judgment of a superior court of a foreign country to which this Part extends, other than a judgment of such a court given on appeal from a court which is not a superior court, shall be a judgment to which this Part applies, if —

- (a) it is final and conclusive as between the parties thereto;
- (b) there is payable thereunder a sum of money, not being a sum payable in respect of taxes or other charges of a like nature or in respect of a fine or other penalty; and
- (c) it is given after the coming into operation of the order directing that this Part shall extend to that foreign country.

[S 227/95]

(3) For the purposes of this section, a judgment shall be deemed to be final and conclusive notwithstanding that an appeal may be pending against it, or that it may still be subject to appeal, in the courts of the country of the original court.

(4) An order directing that this Part shall extend to a foreign country may provide that the order shall come into operation before, on or after 25th February 1999.

[2/99]

(5) The Minister may by a subsequent order published in the *Gazette* vary or revoke any order previously made under this section.

### **Application for, and effect of, registration of foreign judgment**

4.—(1) A person, being a judgment creditor under a judgment to which this Part applies, may apply to the High Court at any time —

- (a) within 6 years after the date of the judgment; or
- (b) where there have been proceedings by way of appeal against the judgment, after the date of the last judgment given in those proceedings,

to have the judgment registered in the High Court.

(2) On an application under subsection (1), the court shall, subject to proof of the prescribed matters and to the provisions of this Act, order the judgment to be registered.

(3) A judgment shall not be registered under this section if at the date of the application —

- (a) it has been wholly satisfied; or
- (b) it could not be enforced by execution in the country of the original court.

(4) Subject to the provisions of this Act with respect to the setting aside of registration —

- (a) a registered judgment shall, for the purposes of execution, be of the same force and effect;
- (b) proceedings may be taken on a registered judgment;
- (c) the sum for which a judgment is registered shall carry interest; and
- (d) the registering court shall have the same control over the execution of a registered judgment,

as if the judgment had been a judgment originally given in the registering court and entered on the date of registration.

(5) Execution shall not issue on the judgment so long as, under this Part and the Rules of Court made thereunder, it is competent for any party to make an application to have the registration of the judgment set aside or, where such application is made, until after the application has been finally determined.

(6) If at the date of the application for registration the judgment of the original court has been partly satisfied, the judgment shall not be registered in respect of the whole sum payable under the judgment of the original court, but only in respect of the balance remaining payable at the date.

(7) If, on an application for the registration of a judgment, it appears to the registering court that the judgment is in respect of different matters and that some, but not all, of the provisions of the judgment are such that if those provisions had been contained in separate judgments those judgments could properly have been registered, the judgment may be registered in respect of the provisions aforesaid but not in respect of any other provisions contained therein.

(8) In addition to the sum of money payable under the judgment of the original court, including any interest which by the law of the country of the original court becomes due under the judgment up to the time of registration, the judgment shall be registered for the reasonable costs of and incidental to registration, including the costs of obtaining a certified copy of the judgment from the original court.

[34/92]

### **Cases in which registered judgments must or may be set aside**

5.—(1) On an application in that behalf duly made by any party against whom a registered judgment may be enforced, the registration of the judgment —

- (a) shall be set aside if the registering court is satisfied —
  - (i) that the judgment is not a judgment to which this Part applies or was registered in contravention of sections 3 and 4;
  - (ii) that the courts of the country of the original court had no jurisdiction in the circumstances of the case;
  - (iii) that the judgment debtor, being a defendant in the proceedings in the original court, did not (notwithstanding that process may have been duly served on him in accordance with the law of the country of the original court) receive notice of those proceedings in sufficient time to enable him to defend the proceedings and did not appear;
  - (iv) that the judgment was obtained by fraud;
  - (v) that the enforcement of the judgment would be contrary to public policy in the country of the registering court; or
  - (vi) that the rights under the judgment are not vested in the person by whom the application for registration was made; or
- (b) may be set aside if the registering court is satisfied that the matter in dispute in the proceedings in the original court had before the date of the judgment in the original court



been the subject of a final and conclusive judgment by a court having jurisdiction in the matter.

(2) For the purposes of this section, the courts of the country of the original court shall, subject to subsection (3), be deemed to have had jurisdiction —

(a) in the case of a judgment given in an action in personam —

- (i) if the judgment debtor, being a defendant in the proceedings in the original court, submitted to the jurisdiction of that court by voluntarily appearing in the proceedings otherwise than for the purpose of protecting, or obtaining the release of, property seized or threatened with seizure, in the proceedings or of contesting the jurisdiction of that court;
- (ii) if the judgment debtor was a plaintiff, or counterclaimed, in the proceedings in the original court;
- (iii) if the judgment debtor, being a defendant in the proceedings in the original court, had before the commencement of the proceedings agreed, in respect of the subject-matter of the proceedings, to submit to the jurisdiction of that court or of the courts of the country of that court;
- (iv) if the judgment debtor, being a defendant in the proceedings in the original court, was at the time when the proceedings were instituted resident, or being a body corporate had its principal place of business, in the country of that court; or
- (v) if the judgment debtor, being a defendant in the proceedings in the original court, had an office or place of business in the country of that court and the proceedings in that court were in respect of a transaction effected through or at that office or place;

(b) in the case of a judgment given in an action of which the subject-matter was immovable property or in an action in rem of which the subject-matter was movable property, if

the property in question was at the time of the proceedings in the original court situate in the country of that court; and

- (c) in the case of a judgment given in an action other than any such action as is mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b), if the jurisdiction of the original court is recognised by the law of the registering court.

(3) Notwithstanding anything in subsection (2), the courts of the country of the original court shall not be deemed to have had jurisdiction —

- (a) if the subject-matter of the proceedings was immovable property outside the country of the original court;
- (b) except in the cases mentioned in subsection (2)(a)(i), (ii) and (iii) and (c), if the bringing of the proceedings in the original court was contrary to an agreement under which the dispute in question was to be settled otherwise than by proceedings in the courts of the country of that court; or
- (c) if the judgment debtor, being a defendant in the proceedings in the original court, was a person who under the rules of public international law was entitled to immunity from the jurisdiction of the courts of the country of the original court and did not submit to the jurisdiction of that court.

### **Power of registering court on application to set aside registration**

6.—(1) If, on an application to set aside the registration of a judgment, the applicant satisfies the registering court either that an appeal is pending, or that he is entitled and intends to appeal, against the judgment, the court, if it thinks fit, may, on such terms as it may think just —

- (a) set aside the registration; or
- (b) adjourn the application to set aside the registration until after the expiration of such period as appears to the court to be reasonably sufficient to enable the applicant to take the

necessary steps to have the appeal disposed of by the competent tribunal.

(2) Where the registration of a judgment is set aside under subsection (1), or solely for the reason that the judgment was not at the date of the application for registration enforceable by execution in the country of the original court, the setting aside of the registration shall not prejudice a further application to register the judgment when the appeal has been disposed of or if and when the judgment becomes enforceable by execution in that country, as the case may be.

(3) Where the registration of a judgment is set aside solely for the reason that the judgment, notwithstanding that it had at the date of the application for registration been partly satisfied, was registered for the whole sum payable thereunder, the registering court shall, on the application of the judgment creditor, order judgment to be registered for the balance remaining payable at that date.

### **Foreign judgments which can be registered not to be enforceable otherwise**

7.—(1) No proceedings for the recovery of a sum payable under a foreign judgment, being a judgment to which this Part applies, other than proceedings by way of registration of the judgment, shall be entertained by any court in Singapore.

[2/99]

(2) Where the date of coming into operation of the relevant order is before the date it is published in the *Gazette*, subsection (1) shall apply only to proceedings commenced in any court in Singapore on or after the date the relevant order is published in the *Gazette*.

[2/99]

(3) In subsection (2), “relevant order” means the order made under section 3 by virtue of which the foreign judgment is a judgment to which this Part applies.

[2/99]

### **Rules of Court**

8.—(1) Subject to this section, the power to make Rules of Court under section 80 of the Supreme Court of Judicature Act (Cap. 322) shall include power to make rules for the following purposes:

- (a) for making provision with respect to the giving of security for costs by persons applying for the registration of judgments;
- (b) for prescribing the matters to be proved on an application for the registration of a judgment and for regulating the mode of proving those matters;
- (c) for providing for the service on the judgment debtor of notice of the registration of a judgment;
- (d) for making provision with respect to the fixing of the period within which an application may be made to have the registration of the judgment set aside and with respect to the extension of the period so fixed;
- (e) for prescribing the method by which any question arising under this Act whether a foreign judgment can be enforced by execution in the country of the original court, or what interest is payable under a foreign judgment under the law of the original court, is to be determined; and
- (f) for prescribing any matter which under this Part is to be prescribed.

(2) Such rules shall be expressed to have and shall have effect subject to any such provisions contained in orders made under section 3 as are declared by the orders to be necessary for giving effect to agreements made between the Minister and the foreign countries in relation to matters with respect to which there is power to make the rules.

## PART II

### APPLICATION TO COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES

#### **Power to apply Part I to Commonwealth**

9.—(1) The Minister may by order published in the *Gazette* direct that Part I shall apply to the Commonwealth and to judgments obtained in the Commonwealth as it applies to foreign countries and to judgments obtained in the courts of foreign countries.

(2) If the Minister has directed under subsection (1), this Act shall have effect accordingly and the Reciprocal Enforcement of Commonwealth Judgments Act (Cap. 264) shall cease to have effect except in relation to any part of the Commonwealth to which that Act extends at the date of the order.

(3) If at any time after the Minister has directed under subsection (1), an order is made under section 3 extending Part I to any part of the Commonwealth to which the Reciprocal Enforcement of Commonwealth Judgments Act applies, that Act shall cease to have effect in relation to that part of the Commonwealth.

**Modification of this Act in relation to Commonwealth**

**10.** Where an order is made under section 3 extending Part I to a part of the Commonwealth to which the Reciprocal Enforcement of Commonwealth Judgments Act (Cap. 264) applies, Part I shall in relation to that part of the Commonwealth have effect as if —

- (a) the expression “judgment” included an award in proceedings on an arbitration if the award has in pursuance of the law in force in the place where it was made become enforceable in the same manner as a judgment given by a court in that place;
- (b) the fact that a judgment was given before the coming into operation of the order did not prevent it from being a judgment to which Part I applies, but the time limited for the registration of a judgment were, in the case of the judgment so given, 12 months from the date of judgment or such longer period as may be allowed by the High Court; and
- (c) any judgment registered in the High Court under the Reciprocal Enforcement of Commonwealth Judgments Act before the coming into operation of the order had been registered in the High Court under Part I and anything done in relation thereto under the Reciprocal Enforcement of Commonwealth Judgments Act or any Rules of Court or other provisions applicable to that Act had been done under

Part I or the corresponding Rules of Court or other provisions applicable to that Part.

### PART III

#### MISCELLANEOUS AND GENERAL

##### **General effect of certain foreign judgments**

**11.**—(1) Subject to this section, a judgment to which Part I applies or would have applied if a sum of money had been payable thereunder, whether or not it can be or is registered, shall be recognised in any court in Singapore as conclusive between the parties thereto in all proceedings founded on the same cause of action and may be relied on by way of defence or counterclaim in any such proceedings.

(2) This section shall not apply in the case of any judgment —

(a) where the judgment has been registered and the registration thereof has been set aside on some ground other than —

(i) that a sum of money was not payable under the judgment;

(ii) that the judgment had been wholly or partly satisfied;  
or

(iii) that at the date of the application the judgment could not be enforced by execution in the country of the original court; or

(b) where the judgment has not been registered, it is shown (whether it could have been registered or not) that if it had been registered the registration thereof would have been set aside on an application for that purpose on some ground other than one of the grounds specified in paragraph (a).

(3) Nothing in this section shall be taken to prevent any court in Singapore recognising any judgment as conclusive of any matter of law or fact decided therein if that judgment would have been so recognised before 21st March 1959.

**Power to make foreign judgments unenforceable in Singapore if no reciprocity**

**12.—**(1) If it appears to the Minister that the treatment in respect of recognition and enforcement accorded by the courts of any foreign country to judgments given in the High Court of Singapore is substantially less favourable than that accorded by the courts of Singapore to judgments of the superior courts of that country, the Minister may by order apply this section to that country.

(2) Except in so far as the Minister may by order under this section otherwise direct, no proceedings shall be entertained in any court in Singapore for the recovery of any sum alleged to be payable under judgment given in a court of a country to which this section applies.

(3) The Minister may by a subsequent order vary or revoke any order previously made under this section.

**Issue of certificates of judgments obtained in Singapore**

**13.—**(1) Where a judgment under which a sum of money is payable, not being a sum payable in respect of taxes or other charges of a like nature or in respect of a fine or other penalty, has been entered in the High Court against any person and the judgment creditor is desirous of enforcing the judgment in a foreign country or in a part of the Commonwealth to which Part I applies, the court shall, on an application made by the judgment creditor and on payment of such fee as may be prescribed, issue to the judgment creditor a certified copy of the judgment, together with a certificate containing such particulars with respect to the action, including the causes of action, and the rate of interest, if any, payable on the sum payable under the judgment, as may be prescribed.

(2) Where execution of a judgment is stayed for any period pending an appeal or for any other reason, an application shall not be made under subsection (1) with respect to the judgment until the expiration of that period.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY  
RECIPROCAL ENFORCEMENT OF FOREIGN JUDGMENTS  
ACT  
(CHAPTER 265)

This Legislative History is provided for the convenience of users of the Reciprocal Enforcement of Foreign Judgments Act. It is not part of the Act.

**1. Ordinance 29 of 1959 — Foreign Judgments (Reciprocal Enforcement) Ordinance 1959**

Date of First Reading : 3 March 1959  
(Bill No. 211/59 published on  
7 March 1959)

Date of Second and Third Readings : 18 March 1959

Date of commencement : 26 March 1959

**2. Ordinance 72 of 1959 — Transfer of Powers (No. 2) Ordinance 1959**  
(Consequential amendments made by)

Date of First Reading : 22 September 1959  
(Bill No. 31/59 published on  
30 September 1959)

Date of Second and Third Readings : 11 November 1959

Date of commencement : 20 November 1959

**3. 1970 Revised Edition — Reciprocal Enforcement of Foreign Judgements Act 1970 (Chapter 25)**

Date of operation : 1 March 1971

**4. 1985 Revised Edition — Reciprocal Enforcement of Foreign Judgments Act**

(G.N. No. S 227/1995 — Rectification Order)

Date of operation : 30 March 1987

**5. Act 34 of 1992 — Bills of Exchange (Amendment) Act 1992**  
(Consequential amendments made by)

Date of First Reading : 14 September 1992  
(Bill No. 35/92 published on  
15 September 1992)

Date of Second and Third Readings : 16 November 1992

Date of commencement : 18 December 1992



**6. Act 2 of 1999 — Probate and Administration (Amendment) Act 1999**  
(Consequential amendments made by)

Date of First Reading : 23 November 1998  
(Bill No. 48/98 published on  
24 November 1998)

Date of Second and Third Readings : 20 January 1999

Date of commencement : 25 February 1999

**7. 2001 Revised Edition — Reciprocal Enforcement of Foreign Judgments  
Act**

Date of operation : 31 July 2001

**COMPARATIVE TABLE**  
**RECIPROCAL ENFORCEMENT OF FOREIGN JUDGMENTS**  
**ACT**  
**(CHAPTER 265)**

The following provisions in the 1985 Revised Edition of the Reciprocal Enforcement of Foreign Judgments Act have been renumbered by the Law Revision Commissioners in this 2001 Revised Edition.

This Comparative Table is provided for the convenience of users. It is not part of the Reciprocal Enforcement of Foreign Judgments Act.

| <b>2001 Ed.</b>      | <b>1985 Ed.</b>  |
|----------------------|------------------|
| <b>3—(5)</b>         | <b>3—(4)</b>     |
| (4)                  | (5)              |
| <b>4—(1) and (2)</b> | <b>4—(1)</b>     |
| (3)                  | Proviso to 4—(1) |
| (4)                  | <b>4—(2)</b>     |
| (5)                  | Proviso to 4—(2) |
| (6)                  | <b>4—(4)</b>     |
| (7)                  | (5)              |
| (8)                  | (6)              |
| <b>9—(1) and (2)</b> | <b>9—(1)</b>     |
| (3)                  | (2)              |
| <b>13—(1)</b>        | <b>13</b>        |
| (2)                  | Proviso to 13    |