



THE STATUTES OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE

GOVERNMENT PROCEEDINGS ACT

(CHAPTER 121)

(Original Enactment: M Ordinance 58 of 1956)

REVISED EDITION 1985

(30th March 1987)

Prepared and Published by

THE LAW REVISION COMMISSION
UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF
THE REVISED EDITION OF THE LAWS ACT (CHAPTER 275)

Informal Consolidation – version in force from 2/1/2021

Government Proceedings Act

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

PART I

PRELIMINARY

Section

1. Short title
2. Interpretation

PART II

SUBSTANTIVE LAW

3. Right of Government to sue
4. Claims enforceable by proceedings against Government
5. Liability of Government in tort
6. Limits of liability of Government
7. Savings of acts done in exercise of public duties
8. Public nuisances
9. Public, religious, social or charitable trusts
10. Priority of Government debts
11. Sureties to be sued as principals
12. Provisions as to industrial property
13. Application of law as to indemnity, contribution and contributory negligence
14. Provisions relating to the armed forces
15. Saving in respect of acts done under prerogative and statutory powers

PART III

JURISDICTION AND PROCEDURE

The High Court General Division of High Court

16. Civil proceedings in General Division of High Court

State Courts

Section

17. Civil proceedings in State Court

General

18. Application of written law relating to procedure
19. Parties to proceedings
20. Service of documents
21. Summary application to General Division of High Court in certain revenue matters
22. Interpleader
23. Suits in the name of deceased persons
24. Appearance of legal officers
25. Transfer of proceedings to General Division of High Court
26. Removal and transfer of proceedings
27. Nature of relief
28. Appeals and stay of execution

PART IV

COSTS, JUDGMENTS AND EXECUTION

29. Costs
30. Interest on debts, damages and costs
31. Satisfaction of orders against Government
32. Execution by Government
33. Attachment of moneys payable by Government

PART V

MISCELLANEOUS AND SUPPLEMENTAL

Miscellaneous

34. Discovery
35. Exclusion of proceedings in rem against Government
36. Application to Government of certain statutory provisions

Supplemental

37. Rules of court
38. Savings
-

An Act to make provision for proceedings by and against the Government.

[25th February 1965]

PART I
PRELIMINARY

Short title

1. This Act may be cited as the Government Proceedings Act.

Interpretation

2.—(1) Any reference in this Act to the provisions of this Act shall, unless the context otherwise requires, include a reference to Rules of Court made for the purposes of this Act.

(2) In this Act, except in so far as the context otherwise requires or it is otherwise expressly provided —

“civil proceedings” means proceedings of whatever kind of a civil nature before a court and includes proceedings for judicial review and recovery of fines and penalties and an application at any stage of a proceeding;

[7/97 wef 01/10/1997]

“law officer” means the Attorney-General, a Deputy Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General;

[Act 41 of 2014 wef 01/01/2015]

“legal officer” includes a law officer and a legally qualified member of the Attorney-General’s Chambers;

“officer”, in relation to the Government, includes a person in the permanent or temporary employment of the Government and accordingly (but without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing) includes a Minister of the Government;

“order” includes a judgment, decree, rule, award or declaration;

“prescribed” means prescribed by or under Rules of Court made for the purposes of this Act;

“proceedings against the Government” includes a claim by way of set-off or counterclaim in proceedings by the Government;

“State Court” means a District Court and any Magistrate Court.

[Act 5 of 2014 wef 07/03/2014]

(3) Any reference in Part IV or V to civil proceedings by or against the Government, or to civil proceedings to which the Government is a party, shall be construed as including a reference to civil proceedings to which any officer of the Government as such is a party:

Provided that the Government shall not for the purposes of Parts IV and V be deemed to be a party to any proceedings by reason only that they are brought by the Attorney-General upon the relation of some other person.

PART II

SUBSTANTIVE LAW

Right of Government to sue

3. Subject to the provisions of this Act and of any written law, where the Government has a claim against any person which would, if such claim had arisen between private persons, afford ground for civil proceedings, the claim may be enforced by proceedings taken by or on behalf of the Government for that purpose in accordance with the provisions of this Act.

Claims enforceable by proceedings against Government

4. Subject to the provisions of this Act and of any written law, any claim against the Government which —

- (a) is founded on the use or occupation or the right to the use or occupation of State land;
- (b) arises out of the revenue laws;
- (c) arises out of any contract made by the authority of the Government which would, if such claim had arisen between private persons, afford ground for civil proceedings; or

(d) is a claim (other than a claim in tort) for damages or compensation not included in paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) which might lawfully be enforced by civil proceedings as between private persons,

shall be enforceable by proceedings against the Government for that purpose in accordance with the provisions of this Act.

Liability of Government in tort

5. Subject to the provisions of this Act, the Government shall be liable for any wrongful act done or any neglect or default committed by any public officer in the same manner and to the same extent as that in which a principal, being a private person, is liable for any wrongful act done, or any neglect or default committed by his agent, and for the purposes of this section and without prejudice to the generality thereof, any public officer acting or purporting in good faith to be acting in pursuance of a duty imposed by law shall be deemed to be the agent of and to be acting under the instructions of the Government.

Limits of liability of Government

6.—(1) No proceedings shall lie against the Government by virtue of section 5 in respect of any act, neglect or default of any public officer, unless proceedings for damages in respect of such act, neglect or default would have lain against such officer personally.

(2) Any written law which negatives or limits the amount of the liability of any public officer in respect of any act, neglect or default committed by that officer shall, in the case of proceedings against the Government under section 5 in respect of such act, neglect or default of such officer, apply in relation to the Government as it would have applied in relation to such officer if the proceedings against the Government had been proceedings against such officer.

(3) No proceedings shall lie against the Government by virtue of section 5 in respect of anything done or omitted to be done by any person while discharging or purporting to discharge any responsibilities of a judicial nature vested in him, or any

responsibilities which he has in connection with the execution of judicial process.

(4) No proceedings shall lie against the Government by virtue of section 5 in respect of any act, neglect or default of any public officer, unless that officer was at the material time employed by the Government and paid in respect of his duties as an officer of the Government wholly out of the revenues of the Government, or any fund certified by the Minister responsible for finance for the purposes of this subsection or was at the material time holding an office in respect of which the Minister responsible for finance certifies that the holder thereof would normally be so paid.

Savings of acts done in exercise of public duties

7.—(1) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this Act to the contrary, no proceedings, other than proceedings for breach of contract, shall lie against the Government on account of anything done or omitted to be done or refused to be done by the Government or any public officer in exercise of the public duties of the Government.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1), “exercise of the public duties” includes —

- (a) the construction, maintenance, diversion and abandonment of railways, roads or bridges;
- (b) the construction, maintenance and abandonment of schools, hospitals or other public buildings;
- (c) the construction, maintenance and abandonment of drainage, flood prevention and reclamation works; and
- (d) the maintenance, diversion and abandonment of the channels of rivers and waterways.

(3) Nothing in this section shall prevent the bringing of any suit for damages or compensation arising out of negligence or trespass in the execution of any works of construction or maintenance undertaken by the Government in the exercise of the said public duties.

Public nuisances

8.—(1) In the case of a public nuisance the Attorney-General, or two or more persons having obtained the consent in writing of the Attorney-General, may institute a suit, though no special damage has been caused, for a declaration and injunction or for such other relief as may be appropriate to the circumstances of the case.

(2) Nothing in this section shall be deemed to limit or otherwise affect any right of suit which may exist independently of its provisions.

Public, religious, social or charitable trusts

9.—(1) In the case of any alleged breach of any express or constructive trust for public, religious, social or charitable purposes, or where the direction of the court is deemed necessary for the administration of any such trust, the Attorney-General or two or more persons having an interest in the trust and having obtained the consent in writing of the Attorney-General, may institute a suit or be joined as a party in any existing suit on behalf of the Government or the public for the purpose of —

- (a) asserting any interest or right in the trust property;
- (b) removing any trustee;
- (c) appointing a new trustee;
- (d) vesting any property in a trustee;
- (e) directing accounts and inquiries;
- (f) declaring what proportion of the trust property or of the interest therein shall be allocated to any particular object of the trust;
- (g) authorising the whole or any part of the trust property to be let, sold, mortgaged, charged or exchanged;
- (h) settling a scheme; and
- (i) obtaining such further or other relief as the nature of the case may require.

(2) No suit claiming any of the reliefs specified in subsection (1) shall be instituted in respect of any such trust as is therein referred to except in conformity with that subsection.

(3) Subject to subsections (1) and (2), all suits and proceedings in any court relating to any such trust as is therein referred to or otherwise in which the Government is interested, or in which the interests of the public are affected, or in which if brought in England the Attorney-General of England would be, or would be made, a necessary party as plaintiff or defendant, whether by himself or by relation of parties, shall be brought and had in the name of the Attorney-General as plaintiff or defendant; and the Attorney-General shall have and exercise therein the same rights, duties and powers as the Attorney-General of England would have and exercise in England in similar cases so far as the circumstances of Singapore admit.

Priority of Government debts

10.—(1) All debts due and claims owing from time to time by any person to the Government, whether upon judgment, bond, or other specialty, or upon simple contract or otherwise, shall be entitled from the date of the accrual thereof, respectively, to a preference of payment over all debts or claims of every kind which shall, subsequent to such date, have been contracted or incurred by or become due from such person to any other person whomsoever.

(2) Nothing herein shall affect any right vested in any person by virtue of a mortgage or charge of immovable property duly registered in the manner provided by law for the registration of such mortgage or charge.

Sureties to be sued as principals

11. All sureties for persons owing money to the Government may be sued as principals; and if the liability is several as well as joint, they may be sued either severally or any two or more of them may be sued together; and either separately or together with the principal debtors, or with any one, two or more of the principal debtors.

Provisions as to industrial property

12.—(1) Where, after the commencement of this Act, any employee or agent of the Government infringes a patent, a registered trade mark or any copyright and the infringement is committed with the authority of the Government, civil proceedings in respect of the infringement shall, subject to the provisions of this Act, lie against the Government.

(2) Subject to this section, no proceedings shall lie against the Government by virtue of this Act in respect of the infringement of a patent, a registered trade mark or a copyright.

Application of law as to indemnity, contribution and contributory negligence

13. Where the Government is subject to any liability by virtue of this Part, any written law relating to indemnity, contribution and contributory negligence shall apply in favour of or against the Government in respect of the liability to which it is so subject as if the Government were a private person of full age and capacity.

Provisions relating to the armed forces

14.—(1) Nothing done or omitted to be done by a member of the forces while on duty as such shall subject either him or the Government to liability in tort for causing the death of another person, or for causing personal injury to another person, in so far as the death or personal injury is due to anything suffered by that other person while he is a member of the forces if —

- (a) at the time when the thing is suffered by that other person, he is —
 - (i) on duty as a member of the forces; or
 - (ii) though not on duty as a member of the forces —
 - (A) on any land, premises, ship, aircraft or vehicle for the time being used for the purposes of the forces; or

(B) on any journey necessary to enable him to report for duty as such or to return home after such duty; and

[Act 45/96 wef 28/12/1996]

(b) the Minister responsible for finance certifies that his suffering that thing has been or will be treated as attributable to service for the purposes of entitlement to an award under any written law relating to the disablement or death of members of the force of which he is a member:

Provided that this subsection shall not exempt a member of the forces from liability in tort in any case in which the court is satisfied that the act or omission was not connected with the execution of his duties as a member of the forces.

(2) No proceedings in tort shall lie against the Government for death or personal injury due to anything suffered by a member of the forces if —

(a) that thing is suffered by him in consequence of the nature or condition of any such land, premises, ship, aircraft or vehicle as aforesaid, or in consequence of the nature or condition of any equipment or supplies used for the purposes of the forces; and

(b) the Minister responsible for finance certifies as mentioned in subsection (1),

nor shall any act or omission of an officer of the Government subject him to liability in tort for death or personal injury, in so far as the death or personal injury is due to anything suffered by a member of the forces being a thing as to which the conditions aforesaid are satisfied.

(3) The Minister charged with the responsibility for defence or internal security, as the case may be, if satisfied that it is the fact —

(a) that a person was or was not on any particular occasion on duty as a member of the forces;

(aa) that a person was or was not on any particular occasion either on any journey necessary to enable him to report for duty as such or to return home after such duty; or

[Act 45/96 wef 28/12/1996]

(b) that at any particular time any land, premises, ship, aircraft, vehicle, equipment or supplies was or was not, or were or were not, used for the purposes of the forces,

may issue a certificate certifying that to be the fact; and any such certificate shall, for the purposes of this section, be conclusive as to the fact which it certifies.

(4) No act or omission of a public officer shall subject him to liability in tort for death or personal injury, in so far as the death or personal injury is due to anything suffered by a member of the forces being a thing as to which the conditions mentioned in subsection (1) or (2) are satisfied.

(5) In this section —

“armed forces” means the Singapore Armed Forces raised and maintained under the Singapore Armed Forces Act [Cap. 295];

“forces” includes the armed forces and the police force; and

“police force” means the Singapore Police Force established under the Police Force Act [Cap. 235] and includes any volunteer, auxiliary or special police force attached to, or coming under the jurisdiction of, the Police Force.

Saving in respect of acts done under prerogative and statutory powers

15.—(1) Nothing in this Part shall extinguish or abridge any powers or authorities which, if this Act had not been passed, would have been exercisable by virtue of the prerogative of the President or the Government, or any powers or authorities conferred on the President or the Government by any written law, and, in particular, nothing in this Part shall extinguish or abridge any such powers or authorities, whether in time of peace or of war, for the purpose of the defence of

the nation or of training, or maintaining the efficiency of, the armed forces.

(2) Where in any proceedings under this Act it is material to determine whether anything was properly done or omitted to be done in the exercise of the prerogative of the President or the Government, the President may, if satisfied that the act or omission was necessary for any such purpose as is mentioned in subsection (1), issue a certificate to the effect that the act or omission was necessary for that purpose; and the certificate shall, in those proceedings, be conclusive as to the matter so certified.

PART III

JURISDICTION AND PROCEDURE

The General Division of High Court

[Act 40 of 2019 wef 02/01/2021]

Civil proceedings in General Division of High Court

16. Subject to the provisions of this Act, all civil proceedings by or against the Government in the General Division of the High Court shall, subject to the provisions of any other written law for the time being in force, be instituted and proceeded with in accordance with the provisions of this Act and not otherwise.

[Act 40 of 2019 wef 02/01/2021]

State Courts

[Act 17/2005 wef 15/07/2005]

[Act 5 of 2014 wef 07/03/2014]

Civil proceedings in State Court

17.—(1) Subject to the provisions of this Act and of any written law limiting the jurisdiction of a State Court (whether by reference to the subject-matter of the proceedings to be brought or the amount sought to be recovered in the proceedings or otherwise), any civil

proceedings against the Government may be instituted in a State Court.

[Act 5 of 2014 wef 07/03/2014]

[Act 17/2005 wef 15/07/2005]

(2) Any proceedings by or against the Government in a State Court shall be instituted and proceeded with in accordance with the provisions of this Act and not otherwise.

[Act 5 of 2014 wef 07/03/2014]

[Act 17/2005 wef 15/07/2005]

General

Application of written law relating to procedure

18. Subject to the provisions of this Act, the provisions of the written law relating to procedure shall apply to civil proceedings by or against the Government in the same way as to suits between private persons.

Parties to proceedings

19.—(1) The Minister shall from time to time publish in the *Gazette* a list specifying the several Government departments which are authorised departments for the purposes of this Act, and the name and address for service of the person who is, or is acting for the purposes of this Act as, the solicitor for each such department, and may from time to time amend or vary the list.

(2) Civil proceedings by the Government may be instituted either by an authorised Government department in its own name or by the Attorney-General.

(3) Civil proceedings against the Government shall be instituted against the appropriate authorised Government department, or, if none of the authorised Government departments is appropriate or the person instituting the proceedings has any reasonable doubt whether any and if so which of those departments is appropriate, against the Attorney-General.

(4) Where any civil proceedings against the Government are instituted against the Attorney-General, an application may at any stage of the proceedings be made to the court by or on behalf of the

Attorney-General to have such of the authorised Government departments as may be specified in the application substituted for him as defendant to the proceedings; and where any such proceedings are brought against an authorised Government department, an application may at any stage of the proceedings be made to the court on behalf of that department to have the Attorney-General or such of the authorised Government departments as may be specified in the application substituted for the applicant as the defendant to the proceedings.

Upon any such application the court may if it thinks fit make an order granting the application on such terms as the court thinks just; and on such order being made the proceedings shall continue as if they had been commenced against the department specified in that behalf in the order, or, as the case may require, against the Attorney-General.

(5) No proceedings instituted in accordance with this Part by or against the Attorney-General or an authorised Government department shall abate or be affected by any change in the person holding the office of Attorney-General or in the person or body of persons constituting the department.

Service of documents

20. All documents required to be served on the Government for the purpose of or in connection with any civil proceedings by or against the Government shall, if those proceedings are by or against an authorised Government department, be served on the solicitor, if any, for that department, or the person, if any, acting for the purposes of this Act as solicitor for that department, or if there is no such solicitor and no person so acting, or if the proceedings are brought by or against the Attorney-General, on the Attorney-General.

Summary application to General Division of High Court in certain revenue matters

21.—(1) Subject to and in accordance with Rules of Court, the Government may apply in a summary manner to the General Division of the High Court for the payment of any duty, penalty or other sum payable under the written law, or for the delivery of any accounts

required to be delivered, or the furnishing of any information required to be furnished, by any written law.

[Act 40 of 2019 wef 02/01/2021]

(2) Rules of Court made for the purposes of this section may provide that judgment may be given upon an affidavit by a duly authorised officer when the facts are not in dispute upon a written application to the court by such officer.

(3) For the purposes of this section, “duly authorised officer” means an officer of any Government department whose duty it is to administer or enforce the written law in respect of which such application as is referred to in subsection (2) is made and who is duly authorised by the head of such department for the purpose.

[Act 40 of 2019 wef 02/01/2021]

Interpleader

22. The Government may obtain relief by way of interpleader proceedings, and may be made a party to such proceedings, in the same manner in which a private person may obtain relief by way of such proceedings or be made a party thereto, and may be made a party to such proceedings notwithstanding that the application for relief is made by a sheriff or other like officer; and all Rules of Court relating to interpleader proceedings shall, subject to the provisions of this Act, have effect accordingly.

Suits in the name of deceased persons

23.—(1) Suits by the Government against deceased persons may be brought in the names of such deceased persons; and on the death after the commencement of any such suit by the Government of any defendant named in such suit, the suit shall not abate, nor shall the name of the deceased defendant be struck out; but the personal representatives, or any of the next of kin, of the deceased defendant or the official administrator, to be appointed as is provided in subsection (2), shall on application *ex parte* be allowed to intervene to defend, or continue the defence of, the suit as the deceased defendant might have done; and such personal representatives, or next of kin, or official administrator, on entering an appearance, shall give notice in writing thereof to the Government,

and shall be served with process as the defendant might have been if he had lived.

(2) If none of the executors named in the will of a deceased defendant, or none of the next of kin of such deceased defendant takes a grant of probate of such will or of letters of administration to the estate within one month from the death of such defendant, the court may, on the application of the Government, and on notice to the executors or next of kin, or to such of them as are known to be in Singapore, appoint an official administrator to the estate for the purposes of the suit; and such administrator may defend or continue the defence of the suit.

(3) The court may, of its own motion or on the application of any such personal representative or next of kin or official administrator, grant time in any such suit, and otherwise make such arrangements, and impose such terms and conditions for the continuance of the suit as to the court seems right to secure justice to the parties.

Appearance of legal officers

24.—(1) Notwithstanding the provisions of any written law, in civil proceedings by or against the Government a legal officer may appear as advocate on behalf of the Government and may make and do all appearances, acts and applications in respect of such proceedings on behalf of the Government.

(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of any written law, in civil proceedings to which a public officer is a party —

(a) by virtue of his office; or

(b) in his personal capacity, if the Attorney-General certifies in writing that it is in the public interest that such public officer should be represented by a legal officer,

a legal officer may appear as advocate on behalf of such public officer and shall be deemed to be the recognised agent of such public officer by whom all appearances, acts and applications in respect of such proceedings may be made or done on behalf of such public officer.

(3) An advocate and solicitor of the Supreme Court, retained by the Attorney-General in the case of civil proceedings by or against the

Government or a public officer, may appear as advocate on behalf of the Government or the public officer in such proceedings.

(4) In civil proceedings to which the Attorney-General is a party under section 8 or 9, a legal officer may appear as advocate and make and do all appearances, acts and applications in respect of such proceedings on behalf of the Attorney-General.

Transfer of proceedings to General Division of High Court

25.—(1) If, at any stage in any civil proceedings in a State Court to which the Government is a party, an application is made by the Government to the General Division of the High Court by reason that the proceedings may involve an important question of law or may be decisive of other cases arising in the same matter or that it is otherwise desirable in the public interest or for any other reason that such proceedings should be transferred to the General Division of the High Court, and there is produced to the General Division of the High Court a certificate of the Attorney-General to that effect, the General Division of the High Court shall order the proceedings to be transferred to the General Division of the High Court.

[Act 5 of 2014 wef 07/03/2014]

[Act 17/2005 wef 15/07/2005]

[Act 40 of 2019 wef 02/01/2021]

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), if it appears to the General Division of the High Court that the removal of the proceedings in accordance with that subsection is likely to occasion substantial additional expenses to any party to the proceedings other than the Government, the General Division of the High Court may refuse to grant the application unless the Government enters into an undertaking that it will, on or before such date as the General Division of the High Court may specify, pay to such other party such sum of money as, in the opinion of the General Division of the High Court, is necessary to cover the additional expense likely to be so occasioned to such party. The amount of such sum of money shall be ascertained in such manner as the General Division of the High Court may direct.

[Act 40 of 2019 wef 02/01/2021]

(3) If, upon the taxation of the costs of the proceedings, it appears to the General Division of the High Court or the Registrar that such sum of money was greater or less than the additional expense actually incurred by the party, the General Division of the High Court or the Registrar may in its or his discretion order that the amount of the excess or the deficiency, as the case may be, should be repaid by the party to the Government or paid by the Government to the party respectively, and any such amount shall be recoverable as if it were costs awarded in such proceedings to the party entitled to receive the same, but subject as aforesaid no sum or any part thereof paid by the Government in accordance with such undertaking shall be recoverable by the Government as costs or otherwise whatever the event of the proceedings.

[Act 40 of 2019 wef 02/01/2021]

Removal and transfer of proceedings

26. Without prejudice to the rights of the Government under section 25, any written law relating to the removal or transfer of proceedings from a State Court to the General Division of the High Court, from the General Division of the High Court to a State Court, or from one State Court to another, shall apply in relation to proceedings against the Government:

Provided that an order for the transfer to a State Court of any proceedings against the Government in the General Division of the High Court shall not be made without the consent of the Government and shall not be conditional upon the giving of security by the Government.

[Act 5 of 2014 wef 07/03/2014]

[Act 26/2005 wef 01/01/2006]

[Act 40 of 2019 wef 02/01/2021]

Nature of relief

27.—(1) In any civil proceedings by or against the Government the court shall, subject to the provisions of this Act, have power to make all such orders as it has power to make in proceedings between private persons, and otherwise to give such appropriate relief as the case may require:

Provided that —

- (a) where in any proceedings against the Government any such relief is sought as might in proceedings between private persons be granted by way of injunction or specific performance, the court shall not grant an injunction or make an order for specific performance, but may in lieu thereof make an order declaratory of the rights of the parties; and
 - (b) in any proceedings against the Government for the recovery of land or other property the court shall not make an order for the recovery of the land or the delivery of the property, but may in lieu thereof make an order declaring that the plaintiff is entitled as against the Government to the land or property or to the possession thereof.
- (2) The court shall not in any civil proceedings grant any injunction or make any order against an officer of the Government if the effect of granting the injunction or making the order would be to give any relief against the Government which could not have been obtained in proceedings against the Government.

Appeals and stay of execution

28. Subject to the provisions of this Act, all Acts and rules of court relating to appeals and stay of execution shall, with any necessary modifications, apply to civil proceedings by or against the Government as they apply to proceedings between private persons.

PART IV

COSTS, JUDGMENTS AND EXECUTION

Costs

29.—(1) Subject to this section, in any civil proceedings or arbitration to which the Government or a public officer is a party the court shall have power to order costs for or against the Government or the public officer in the same manner and upon the same principles as in proceedings between private persons:

Provided that —

- (a) in the case of proceedings to which by reason of any written law or otherwise the Attorney-General or any officer of the Government as such is authorised or required to be made a party, the court shall have regard to the nature of the proceedings and the circumstances in which the Attorney-General or such officer appears and may in the exercise of its discretion order any other party to the proceedings to pay the costs of the Attorney-General or such officer whatever may be the result of the proceedings; and
- (b) nothing in this section shall affect the power of the court to order, or any provision of any written law requiring, the payment of costs out of any particular fund or property or any provision of any written law expressly relieving the Attorney-General or such officer of the liability for costs.

(2) In any civil proceedings before any court in which a legal officer appears as an advocate under the provisions of this Act, and costs are awarded to or against the Attorney-General, or to or against the party on whose behalf such legal officer appears, such costs shall include such items, including fees for drawing, for getting up the case and for attendances, as would be included within the meaning of the word “costs” in any written law if an advocate and solicitor of the Supreme Court had appeared.

(3) Such costs shall be in accordance with any scale of fees prescribed from time to time to be chargeable by advocates and solicitors and may be taxed in accordance with any written law for the time being in force for the taxation of the fees and costs of such advocates and solicitors.

(4) In any civil proceedings mentioned in subsection (2), costs are payable in respect of the services of more than 2 legal officers if the court so certifies.

[Act 16 of 2016 wef 10/06/2016]

(5) Costs awarded in accordance with this section to a party for whom any of the legal officers referred to in subsection (2) appears as advocate shall, when recovered, be paid into the Consolidated Fund.

(6) A legal officer shall not be personally liable for costs in any proceedings under this Act.

(7) In this section and in section 31, “court” includes an arbitrator.

Interest on debts, damages and costs

30.—(1) The provisions of any written law relating to the payment of interest on judgment debts, damages or costs shall apply to judgments given in proceedings by or against the Government.

(2) This section shall apply both in relation to proceedings pending at the commencement of this Act and in relation to proceedings instituted thereafter.

Satisfaction of orders against Government

31.—(1) Where in any civil proceedings by or against the Government or in any such proceedings as would in England be brought on the Crown side of the Queen’s Bench Division, or in connection with any arbitration to which the Government is a party, any order (including an order for costs) is made by any court in favour of any person against the Government or against an officer of the Government as such, the proper officer of the court shall, on an application in that behalf made by or on behalf of that person at any time after the expiration of 21 days from the date of the order or, in case the order provides for the payment of costs and the costs require to be taxed, at any time after the costs have been taxed, whichever is the later, issue to that person a certificate in the prescribed form containing particulars of the order:

Provided that, if the court so directs, a separate certificate shall be issued with respect to the costs (if any) ordered to be paid to the applicant.

(2) A copy of any certificate issued under this section may be served by the person in whose favour the order is made upon the person for the time being named in the record as the advocate for the Government or for the Government department or officer concerned.

(3) If the order provides for the payment of any money by way of damages or otherwise, or of any costs, the certificate shall state the amount so payable, and the Government shall, subject as hereinafter

provided, pay to the person entitled or to his solicitor the amount appearing by the certificate to be due to him together with the interest, if any, lawfully due thereon:

Provided that the court by which any such order as aforesaid is made or any court to which an appeal against the order lies may direct that, pending an appeal or otherwise, payment of the whole of any amount so payable, or any part thereof, shall be suspended, and if the certificate has not been issued may order any such directions to be inserted therein.

(4) Save as aforesaid no execution or attachment or process in the nature thereof shall be issued out of any court for enforcing payment by the Government of any such money or costs as aforesaid, and no person shall be individually liable under any order for the payment by the Government or any officer of the Government as such, of any such money or costs.

(5) This section shall apply both in relation to proceedings pending at the commencement of this Act and in relation to proceedings instituted thereafter.

Execution by Government

32.—(1) Subject to the provisions of this Act, any order made in favour of the Government against any person in any civil proceedings to which the Government is a party may be enforced in the same manner as an order made in an action between private persons, and not otherwise.

(2) This section shall apply both in relation to proceedings pending at the commencement of this Act and in relation to proceedings instituted thereafter.

(3) Nothing in this section shall affect any procedure which immediately before the commencement of this Act was available for enforcing an order made in favour of the Government in proceedings brought by the Government for the recovery of any fine or penalty, or the forfeiture or condemnation of any goods, or of any ship or any share in a ship.

Attachment of moneys payable by Government

33.—(1) Where any money is payable by the Government to some person who, under any order of any court, is liable to pay any money to any other person, and that other person would, if the money so payable by the Government were money payable by a private person, be entitled under rules of court to obtain an order for the attachment thereof as a debt due or accruing due, or an order for the appointment of a receiver to receive the money on his behalf, the General Division of the High Court may, subject to the provisions of this Act and in accordance with Rules of Court, make an order restraining the first-mentioned person from receiving that money and directing payment thereof to that other person, or to the receiver.

[Act 40 of 2019 wef 02/01/2021]

(2) No such order shall be made in respect of any money which is subject to the provisions of any written law prohibiting or restricting assignment or charging or taking in execution.

(3) For the purposes of this section, “the Government” shall be deemed to include any public officer who in his official capacity has any money in his custody or control.

(4) Subsections (1), (2) and (3) shall, so far as they relate to forms of relief falling within the jurisdiction of a State Court, have effect in relation to State Courts as they have effect in relation to the General Division of the High Court.

[Act 5 of 2014 wef 07/03/2014]

[Act 40 of 2019 wef 02/01/2021]

PART V**MISCELLANEOUS AND SUPPLEMENTAL***Miscellaneous***Discovery**

34.—(1) Subject to and in accordance with Rules of Court —

- (a) in any civil proceedings in the General Division of the High Court or a State Court to which the Government is a party, the Government may be required by the court to

make discovery of documents and produce documents for inspection; and

[Act 5 of 2014 wef 07/03/2014]

[Act 40 of 2019 wef 02/01/2021]

(b) in any such proceedings as aforesaid, the Government may be required by the court to answer interrogatories:

Provided that this section shall be without prejudice to any other written law, or to any rule of law which authorises or requires the withholding of any document or the refusal to answer any question on the ground that the disclosure of the document or the answering of the question would be injurious to the public interest.

(2) Any order of the court made under the powers conferred by subsection (1)(b) shall direct by what officer of the Government the interrogatories are to be answered.

Exclusion of proceedings in rem against Government

35.—(1) Nothing in this Act shall authorise proceedings in rem in respect of any claim against the Government, or the arrest, detention or sale of any ship or aircraft, or of any cargo or other property belonging to the Government, or give to any person any lien on such ship, aircraft, cargo or other property.

(2) Where proceedings in rem have been instituted in the General Division of the High Court or in a State Court against any such ship, aircraft, cargo or other property, the court may, if satisfied, either on an application by the plaintiff for an order under this subsection or an application by the Government to set aside the proceedings, that the proceedings were so instituted by the plaintiff in the reasonable belief that the ship, aircraft, cargo or other property did not belong to the Government, order that the proceedings shall be treated as if they were in personam duly instituted against the Government in accordance with the provisions of this Act, or duly instituted against any other person whom the court regards as the proper person to be sued in the circumstances, and that the proceedings shall continue accordingly.

[Act 5 of 2014 wef 07/03/2014]

[Act 40 of 2019 wef 02/01/2021]

(3) An order under subsection (2) may be made upon such terms, if any, as the court thinks just; and where the court makes any such order it may make such consequential orders as the court thinks expedient.

Application to Government of certain statutory provisions

36. This Act shall not prejudice the right of the Government to take advantage of the provisions of any written law although not named therein; and in any civil proceedings against the Government the provisions of any written law which could, if the proceedings were between private persons, be relied upon by the defendant as a defence to the proceedings, whether in whole or in part, or otherwise, may, subject to any express provision to the contrary, be so relied upon by the Government.

Supplemental

Rules of court

37.—(1) Any power to make Rules of Court shall include power to make rules for the purpose of giving effect to the provisions of this Act, and any such rules may contain provisions to have effect in relation to any proceedings by or against the Government in substitution for or by way of addition to any of the provisions of the rules applying to proceedings between private persons.

(2) Provision shall be made by Rules of Court with respect to the following matters:

- (a) for securing that where any civil proceedings are brought against the Government in accordance with the provisions of this Act the plaintiff shall, before the Government is required to take any step in the proceedings, provide the Government with such information as the Government may reasonably require as to the circumstances in which it is alleged that the liability of the Government has arisen and as to the departments and officers of the Government concerned;
- (b) for providing that in the case of proceedings against the Government the plaintiff shall not enter judgment against

the Government in default of appearance or pleading without the leave of the court to be obtained on an application of which notice has been given to the defendant;

- (c) for excepting proceedings brought against the Government from the operation of any Rules of Court providing for summary judgment without trial, and for enabling any such proceedings to be put in proper cases into any special list which may be kept for the trial of short causes in which leave to defend is given under any such rules of court;
- (d) for enabling evidence to be taken on commission in proceedings by or against the Government; and
- (e) for providing —
 - (i) that a person shall not be entitled to avail himself of any set-off or counterclaim in any proceedings by the Government for the recovery of taxes, duties or penalties, or to avail himself in proceedings of any other nature by the Government of any set-off or counterclaim arising out of a right or claim to repayment in respect of any taxes, duties or penalties;
 - (ii) that a person shall not be entitled without the leave of the court to avail himself of any set-off or counterclaim in any proceedings by the Government; and
 - (iii) that the Government shall not be entitled to avail itself of any set-off or counterclaim without the leave of the court.

(3) Provision may be made by rules of court for regulating any appeals to the General Division of the High Court, whether by way of case stated or otherwise, under any written law relating to revenue, and any rules made under this subsection may revoke any written law in force immediately before the commencement of this Act so far as

they regulate any such appeals, and may make provision for any matters for which provision was made by any written law so in force.

[Act 40 of 2019 wef 02/01/2021]

(4) Rules of Court made under this section shall be published in the *Gazette* and, as soon as possible thereafter, shall be presented to Parliament and if at the next meeting of Parliament after any such rule is presented a resolution is passed annulling such rule or any part thereof, the whole rule shall thenceforth be void, but without prejudice to the validity of anything previously done thereunder, as from the date of notification in the *Gazette* of the passing of such resolution.

Savings

38.—(1) Nothing in this Act shall apply to proceedings by or against, or authorise proceedings in tort to be brought against, the President in his private capacity.

(2) Except as therein otherwise expressly provided, nothing in this Act shall —

(a) affect the law relating to prize salvage, or apply to proceedings in causes or matters within the jurisdiction of the General Division of the High Court as a prize court or to any criminal proceedings;

[Act 40 of 2019 wef 02/01/2021]

(b) subject the Government to any greater liabilities in respect of the acts or omissions of any independent contractor employed by the Government than those to which the Government would be subject in respect of such acts or omissions if it were a private person;

(c) affect any rules of evidence or any presumption relating to the extent to which the Government is bound by any written law;

(d) affect any right of the Government to control or otherwise intervene in proceedings affecting its rights, property or profits;

(e) apply to any proceedings by or against the Official Assignee or the Public Trustee or affect any liability

imposed on the Public Trustee or on the revenues of Singapore by the Public Trustee Act [Cap. 260]; or

(f) apply to any proceedings by or against the railway administration or any person employed or deemed to be employed by the railway administration under the provisions of the Railways Act [Cap. 263].

(3) Where any property vests in the Government by virtue of any rule of law which operates independently of the acts or the intentions of the Government, the Government shall not by virtue of this Act be subject to any liabilities in tort by reason only of the property being so vested; but this subsection shall be without prejudice to the liabilities of the Government under this Act in respect of any period after the Government or any person acting for the Government has in fact taken possession or control of any such property, or entered into occupation thereof.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY
GOVERNMENT PROCEEDINGS ACT
(CHAPTER 121)

This Legislative History is provided for the convenience of users of the Government Proceedings Act. It is not part of the Act.

1. M Ordinance 58 of 1956 — Government Proceedings Ordinance 1956

Date of First, Second and Third Readings : Date not available.

Date of commencement : 25 February 1965

2. Act 20 of 1966 — Government Proceedings (Amendment) Act 1966

Date of First, Second and Third Reading : Date not available

Date of commencement : 8 July 1966

3. 1970 Revised Edition — Government Proceedings Act (Cap. 21)

Date of operation : 1 March 1971

4. 1985 Revised Edition — Government Proceedings Act

Date of operation : 30 March 1987

5. Act 45 of 1996 — Government Proceedings (Amendment) Act 1996

Date of First Reading : 2 December 1996
(Bill No. 35/1996 published on 2 December 1996)

Date of Second and Third Readings : 11 December 1996

Date of commencement : 28 December 1996

6. Act 7 of 1997 — Statutes (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 1997

Date of First Reading : 11 July 1997
(Bill No. 6/1997 published on 12 July 1997)

Date of Second and Third Readings : 25 August 1997

Dates of commencement : 1 October 1997

7. Act 17 of 2005 — Statutes (Miscellaneous Amendments and Repeal) Act 2005

Date of First Reading	:	18 April 2005 (Bill No. 7/2005 published on 19 April 2005)
Date of Second and Third Readings	:	16 May 2005
Date of commencement	:	15 July 2005

8. Act 26 of 2005 — Subordinate Courts (Amendment) Act 2005
(Consequential amendments made to Act by)

Date of First Reading	:	18 July 2005 (Bill No. 16/2005 published on 19 July 2005)
Date of Second and Third Readings	:	15 August 2005
Date of commencement	:	1 January 2006

9. Act 5 of 2014 — Subordinate Courts (Amendment) Act 2014
(Consequential amendments made to Act by)

Date of First Reading	:	11 November 2013 (Bill No. 26/2013 published on 11 November 2013)
Date of Second and Third Readings	:	21 January 2014
Date of commencement	:	7 March 2014

10. Act 41 of 2014 — Statutes (Miscellaneous Amendments à Deputy Attorney-General) Act 2014

Date of First Reading	:	7 October 2014 (Bill No. 37/2014 published on 7 October 2014)
Date of Second and Third Readings	:	4 November 2014
Date of commencement	:	1 January 2015

11. Act 16 of 2016 — Statutes (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2016

Date of First Reading	:	14 April 2016 (Bill No. 15/2016 published on 14 April 2016)
Date of Second and Third Readings	:	9 May 2016
Date of commencement	:	10 June 2016

12. Act 40 of 2019 — Supreme Court of Judicature (Amendment) Act 2019

Date of First Reading	:	7 October 2019 (Bill No. 32/2019)
Date of Second and Third Readings	:	5 November 2019
Date of commencement	:	2 January 2021