(1) This judgment DOES/~~DOES NOT~~ need redaction.

(2) Redaction HAS/~~HAS NOT~~ been done.

Chia Wee Kiat
District Judge
30 October 2025

IN THE FAMILY JUSTICE COURTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE

[2025] SGFC 118

HCF/RAS 29/2025
FC/RA 10/2025
FC/D 1206/2020

Between

WWK

… *Plaintiff*

And

WWL

… *Defendant*

GROUNDS OF DECISION

[Family Law] - [Judge-led approach] - [Exercise of discretion in judicial case management]

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WWK
v
WWL

[2025] SGFC 118

Family Court — D 1206/2020
District Judge Chia Wee Kiat
10 September 2025, 26 September 2025

30 October 2025

District Judge Chia Wee Kiat:

1 The Plaintiff shall be referred to as the "Wife" and the "Defendant" shall be referred to as the "Husband".

2 The parties are medical doctors with two adult children. An interim judgment of divorce was granted on 21 October 2020, but the ancillary matters have yet to be heard to-date.

3 It is of considerable concern that more than five years have passed since proceedings were initiated, yet they remain resolved. Protracted litigation in family proceedings risks undermining both finality and the parties' ability to move forward. Indeed, as noted by Tan Siong Thye SJ in *WXD v WXC and another appeal and another matter* - [2025] SGHCF 14 (at [37]):

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> The value of finality in matrimonial proceedings is vital. The parties have to close this painful chapter of their lives, and to look forward and start anew …

4 In *VTP v VTO* [2025] SGHCF 52, Teh Hwee Hwee J reiterated (at [28]) as follows:

> Therapeutic justice, as it is practised in the Family Courts, is forward-looking, and directed at enabling parties to move on with their lives following a divorce. There is much to be said for emphasising the importance of finality in litigation…

5 The procedural history of the case indicates that the Husband has adopted a course of conduct that has been unduly litigious, thereby contributing to the protraction of the proceedings. In the course of an earlier appeal filed by the Husband *vide* FC/RA 1/2023 ("RA1/2023") against the decision of the learned Assistant Registrar Adriene Cheong ("the AR") given on 13 January 2023 dismissing his application in FC/SUM 3637/2022, I made the following observations:[1]

> It is highly unfortunate, in my view, that the Defendant has chosen to adopt a needlessly aggressive and combative approach of taking out a summons under Rule 695, and threatening to institute committal proceedings against the Plaintiff (in his affidavit of 9 November 2022, at [14]-[15]), when this vexatious course of action was completely unnecessary for the protection of his juridical interests in this proceeding …

6 The Husband's further appeal to the Family Division of the High Court *vide* HCF/RAS 4/2023 was dismissed by Lai Siu Chiu SJ who observed as follows:[2]

> I go further to say he is motivated by malice and ill will. He is deliberately making unnecessary and unreasonable discovery requests of the Respondent and causing her to incur

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1 Brief Grounds (RA1/2023) dated 22 February 2023 at [42].

2 Notes of Evidence of the hearing of RAS 4 on 26 April 2023 at p 19 (exhibited at p 159 of the Wife's 2nd AOM dated 28 August 2023).

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> substantial charges in the process. This court and no court will impose deadlines over and above what a court has ordered just so the Appellant in this case can apply for committal proceedings when the Respondent's conduct does not show any contumelious behavior.

7 The Husband's litigious behaviour was evident in another appeal filed by him *vide* FC/RA 1/2024 ("RA1/2024"). This was the Husband's appeal against the decision of the AR given on 16 February 2024 refusing, *inter alia*, his application for the *Riddick* undertaking to be lifted in relation to certain documents and information, and for those documents and information to be used for the purpose of related proceedings in the General Division of the High Court ("Related HC Proceedings") to determine the beneficial ownership of [Property A].

8 For the reasons explained in *WWK v WWL* [2024] SGFC 25 ("*WWK v WWL*"), I dismissed the Husband's appeal. The Husband's further appeal to the Family Division *vide* HCF/RAS 6/2024 was also dismissed on 19 August 2024.

9 As observed in my written grounds in *WWK v WWL* (at [56]):

> Given that there is no real necessity for the Husband to commence the Related HC Proceedings and taking into account the expansive nature of the orders sought by the Husband, the Wife's apprehension that the Husband may misuse the documents and information if he is released of the *Riddick* undertaking is not without basis. This risk cannot be discounted given the conduct of the Husband as observed in FC/RA 1/2023 and HCF/RAS 4/2023. Additionally, his frequent change of solicitors deepens my concern about the propensity on his part to engage in a course of conduct that is unnecessarily acrimonious and confrontational.

10 It was against the above backdrop that FC/RA 10/2025 ("RA 10") came to be heard before me. RA 10 was the Husband's appeal against the AR's decision given on 25 July 2025 in FC/SUM 559/2024 ("SUM 559") and FC/SUM 560 ("SUM 560"). By the time of this third Registrar's Appeal filed

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by the Husband, he had engaged and replaced no fewer than seven law firms[3], a circumstance which speaks to the manner in which he has conducted these proceedings. This pattern of conduct is emblematic of his broader tendency to engage in aggressive litigation, with little regard to finality and proportionality. The result has been to prolong the proceedings, resulting in the needless consumption of time and resources.

11 SUM 559 and SUM 660 were the Husband's applications for discovery and interrogatories. The AR made no orders on both applications and directed for the matter to proceed for ancillary hearing without further interlocutory applications to be filed by either party.[4]

12 The AR noted that a comprehensive disclosure process had already taken place over two years ago, with at least five rounds of requests made by the Husband.[5] The current applications were filed in February 2024, following which the parties entered into negotiations culminating in an agreement to undertake a joint valuation of the Wife's companies.[6] The Wife had executed the Letter of Engagement ("LOE") and paid her share of the required deposit to the agreed valuer.[7]

13 The AR noted that despite multiple court directions and stipulated deadlines, the Husband failed to execute the LOE and remit his share of the

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3 M/s Dentons Rodyk and Davidson LLP, M/s Yeo & Associates LLC, M/s Fervent Chambers LLC, M/s Lexcompass LLC, M/s WongPartnership LLP, M/s Drew & Napier LLC and M/s Beyond Legal LLC.

4 AR's decision with brief grounds dated 25 July 2025 at [1]-[2].

5 AR's decision with brief grounds dated 25 July 2025 at [4(b)].

6 AR's decision with brief grounds dated 25 July 2025 at [5].

7 AR's decision with brief grounds dated 25 July 2025 at [5].

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deposit.[8] The Husband's persistent non-compliance with the AR's directions effectively frustrated the implementation of the agreed joint valuation exercise[9] and resulted in a significant and unwarranted delay of at least nine months spanning from August 2024 to April 2025.[10] The AR also observed that the Husband's litigation strategy appeared calculated to obtain further disclosure orders by repudiating the previously agreed joint arrangement without any valid justification.[11] His approach has not only caused the Wife to incur unnecessary costs but has also resulted in inefficient use of judicial resources.[12]

14 Having regard to the submissions of parties and the procedural history of the case, I agreed with the AR that the Husband's conduct has had the effect of delaying and obstructing the progress of these proceedings. Greater judicial control is clearly warranted to ensure that the case advances without further undue delay to a hearing. Accordingly, I affirmed the AR's decision and dismissed the appeal. I indicated that in the event of a further appeal, I will provide full written grounds to explain my decision.

15 The Husband has filed a further appeal to the Family Division *vide* HCF/RAS 29/2025, through his ninth set of solicitors.[13] This is his third appeal to the Family Division. I now set out my full grounds of decision.

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8 AR's decision with brief grounds dated 25 July 2025 at [6].

9 AR's decision with brief grounds dated 25 July 2025 at [6].

10 AR's decision with brief grounds dated 25 July 2025 at [9].

11 AR's decision with brief grounds dated 25 July 2025 at [10].

12 AR's decision with brief grounds dated 25 July 2025 at [9].

13 M/s Eden Law Corporation.

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Analysis

16 It is trite that a judge hearing a Registrar's Appeal exercises confirmatory jurisdiction, as opposed to appellate jurisdiction: *VTQ v VTR* [2021] SGFC 85 (at [21]-[22]). As noted in *AOD v AOE* [2015] SGHC (at [21]), there are practical implications to the fact that the judge exercises confirmatory, rather than appellate jurisdiction. Among other things, the judge is not confined to interfering with the assistant registrar's exercise of discretion only if it had been exercised on wrong principles of law or misapprehensions of fact but is entitled to exercise his discretion afresh, while giving due weight to the assistant registrar's decision. In effect, he hears the appeal as if the matter came before him for the first time.

17 Although RA 10 was an appeal against the whole of the AR's decision, the Husband clarified at the hearing that he was not appealing the AR's decision making no orders on the discovery applications. His appeal was confined to the AR's direction for the matter to proceed for ancillary hearing without further interlocutory applications to be filed by either party and the costs order. The Husband accepted that it was within the power of the AR to make orders to expedite the progress of the case under the Judge-led approach but contended that the order made by the AR was draconian as it precluded the Husband from taking out any application to appoint an expert valuer to provide an expert report for the valuation of the Wife's companies.

The Judge-led approach

18 Rule 22(2) of the Family Justice Rules 2014 ("FJR 2014") (which applies to the present proceedings since they were commenced before 15 October 2024) provides as follows:

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> In adopting a judge-led approach, the Court may, at any time after the commencement or at the hearing of any proceedings, of its own motion or on an application by any party to the proceedings, direct any party or parties to those proceedings to appear before it, for the Court to make such order or give such direction as it thinks fit, for the just, expeditious and economical disposal of the cause or matter.

19 As the Minister for Law explained at the Second Reading of the Family Justice Bill, the Judge-led approach to adjudicating family disputes is intended to allow judges "to lead and control the pace and direction of each case, in a manner tailored to the needs and sensitives of each family".[14]

20 The Judge-led powers, encapsulated in Part 3 of the FJR 2014, were further strengthened by the introduction of s 11A of the Family Justice Act 2014 ("FJA") pursuant to the recommendations of the Committee to Review and Enhance Reforms in the Family Justice System ("RERF Committee"). This provision, which came into operation on 14 October 2024, empowers the Court, *inter alia*, to control the filing of any application that will or is likely to impede the just, expeditious or economical resolution or disposal of any matter in the relevant proceedings. The enhanced powers reflect the legislative intent to reinforce active judicial case management, curb the proliferation of unmeritorious applications, and ensure that family proceedings are conducted efficiently. As observed by the RERF Committee in its report, "[t]he filing of unnecessary applications prolongs proceedings, promotes acrimony and strains judicial resources".[15]

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14 The Minister for Law, Mr K Shanmugam, *Second Reading of the Family Justice Bill*, Singapore Parliamentary Debates, Official Report, 4 August 2014, vol 92.

15 Report of the RERF Committee dated 13 September 2019 at [74].

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The exercise of discretion in judicial case management

21 The exercise of the Court's case management powers is a matter of discretion and will often require a balancing of competing interests and considerations. As noted by Choo Han Teck J in *WAH v WAG* [2022] SGHCF 9:

> 11 … ***It must also be remembered that many interlocutory orders are discretionary in nature or discretionary to a large extent. The exercise of a court's discretion, unlike the application of an express rule or principle, should not be disturbed except in the most obvious instance in which the exercise of that discretion had led to a miscarriage of justice.***
>
> 12 A court's decision to allow an adjournment or an extension of time to comply with a previous order is the clearest instance of the exercise of judicial discretion. Appealing against such an order should only be made in the rarest of cases – to prevent a clear and irredeemable injustice.
>
> 13 In family matters, it behoves counsel to impress upon their clients that the resolution of their dispute ought to be made with a clear mind. This often seems terribly difficult because of the rage and animosity between people whose relationships had from love to hatred turned. Nonetheless, litigants should be advised that interlocutory orders should not be lightly appealed against …
>
> [Emphasis added]

22 As also noted by the Court of Appeal in *BDA v BDB* [2013] 1 SLR 607 (at [23]):

> … an exercise of discretion should not be interfered with by an appellate court unless the judge had misdirected himself on a matter of principle, or he had taken into account matters which he ought not to have taken into account or had failed to take into account matters which he ought to have taken into account, or his decision is plainly wrong

23 It is not open to an appellate court to interfere with the first instance exercise of discretion simply because it would have been inclined to find a

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different balance: see *Kiri Industries Ltd v DyStar Global Holdings (Singapore) Pte Ltd* [2023] SGCA(I) 3 (at [80]).

24 That said, I am mindful that in a Registrar's Appeal, the Court is not bound by the manner in which the assistant registrar exercised his or her discretion. Nonetheless, I am of the view that the Court should be slow to interfere with the assistant registrar's exercise of discretion in matters of case management. To do otherwise would risk undermining the effectiveness of the assistant registrar in managing cases and invite unnecessary appeals against proper case management decisions. Allowing proceedings to protract through such appeals defeats the very purpose of conferring broad judge-led powers on the Court to control proceedings. It also runs counter to the legislative intent underlying s 11A of the FJA, which is to strengthen judicial control and deter unmeritorious litigation.

The AR's decision

25 The AR noted that that the Husband's overall conduct throughout the proceedings of close to five years has caused substantial impediment to the expeditious resolution of the matter. The AR cited the following examples:[16]

(a) Obstruction of the Wife's reasonable access to the matrimonial home (whilst seeking disclosure of documents retained within the property), which required a formal application for orders by the Wife to access the home to retrieve her belongings;

(b) Pursuit of multiple interlocutory appeals, none of which have materially advanced the proceedings;

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16 AR's decision with brief grounds dated 25 July 2025 at [12].

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(c) No fewer than six changes in legal representation, each necessitating familiarization time and consequential procedural delays. The latest change of solicitors caused the hearing of the application to be adjourned for about six weeks from June 2025.

26 The AR noted that such conduct has not only prolonged the proceedings but also imposed additional costs and emotional burden on the Wife, while frustrating the Court's objective of ensuring efficient administration of justice in matrimonial proceedings.[17]

27 The AR found that the Husband's pattern of conduct throughout the proceedings demonstrated not merely a casual disregard for procedural efficiency, but rather a deliberate strategy to frustrate the expeditious resolution of these proceedings.[18] The AR noted that the Wife had stated the values of her companies in her first affidavit in March 2021, but the Husband only pursued the issue of valuation in December 2023 and filed the present applications only in February 2024.[19] Having agreed to undertake a joint valuation exercise[20], the Husband unilaterally withdrew from the agreed joint valuation[21] and persisted with pursuing his applications, contending that he needed the disclosure orders for the purposes of obtaining his own valuation of the Wife's companies.[22]

28 The AR noted that the Husband has been afforded multiple opportunities to address the valuation issues in a timely and constructive manner. The

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17 AR's decision with brief grounds dated 25 July 2025 at [13].

18 AR's decision with brief grounds dated 25 July 2025 at [14] & [15].

19 AR's decision with brief grounds dated 25 July 2025 at [4(a)].

20 AR's decision with brief grounds dated 25 July 2025 at [5].

21 AR's decision with brief grounds dated 25 July 2025 at [7].

22 AR's decision with brief grounds dated 25 July 2025 at [4].

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Husband's conscious decision to forgo these opportunities, coupled with his pattern of non-cooperation, has effectively created the current undesirable situation.[23] The AR also found that the amount of documentation available to the Husband through multiple rounds of disclosure is more than sufficient for the Husband to fully present his case at the ancillary hearing and make appropriate submissions.[24] The AR held as follows:[25]

> 21. In the interests of expeditious case management and procedural efficiency, I direct this matter shall proceed to hearing forthwith, without consideration of any further interlocutory applications or additional evidence. The Defendant retains full liberty to challenge the Plaintiff's valuations (of the companies or any other assets) through submissions based on the extensive documentation already disclosed by the Plaintiff throughout the proceedings.
>
> 22. Accordingly, counsel for both parties should move to prepare their joint summary and written submissions for filing in short time, to facilitate the prompt disposition of the matter.

29 In my view, there is nothing ostensibly or manifestly wrong with the AR's decision.

30 From the Joint Bundle of Documents dated 16 September 2025 ("JBOD") submitted by the parties, it was clear that the parties had agreed to the Terms of Reference ("TOR") for the joint valuation on 28 January 2025.[26] The TOR required the valuer to provide an expert opinion on whether [C1] is a dormant company and whether the Wife's Businesses should be valued as a whole or valued separately with the value of each of the three companies determined individually ("1st Stage Opinion"). On providing the 1st Stage

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23 AR's decision with brief grounds dated 25 July 2025 at [17].

24 AR's decision with brief grounds dated 25 July 2025 at [11].

25 AR's decision with brief grounds dated 25 July 2025 at [20]-[21].

26 M/s Rajah & Tann Singapore LLP's letter dated 28 January 2025: see Tab 3 of JBOD.

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Opinion, the parties will consider if they jointly agree to the next stage of work of determining the actual value of the Wife's Businesses to be proceeded with ("2nd Stage Opinion").[27]

31 The terms of the TOR were comprehensive, and included the following instructions on the valuation date:

> 24. The current working valuation date of the Plaintiff's Businesses should be on as current a date footing as possible ("Valuation Date"). Should this change, we will notify you accordingly.

32 On the same day, M/s Drew & Napier, the Husband's then solicitors, wrote to the single joint valuer, Strix Strategies Pte Ltd (SSPL), with the TOR.[28] On 10 February 2025, the Wife provided the documents requested by SSPL[29] in their email dated 20 November 2024.[30]

33 On 11 February 2025, SSPL provided the LOE to parties and requested payment of the deposit to commence work.[31] On 19 February 2025, the Wife duly made payment of her half-share of the deposit to SSPL.[32]

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27 TOR at [17] & [18]: see M/s Drew & Napier's letter dated 28 January 2025 at Tab 4 p 3 of JBOD.

28 M/s Drew & Napier's email dated 28 January 2025: see Tab 4 and Tab 5 pp 7-8 of JBOD.

29 M/s Rajah & Tann Singapore LLP's email dated 10 February 2025: see Tab 5 p 3 of JBOD.

30 SSPL's email dated 20 November 2024: see Tab 5 pp 7-10 of JBOD.

31 SSPL's email dated 11 February 2025: see Tab 5 p 2 and Tab 6 of JBOD.

32 M/s Rajah & Tann Singapore LLP's email dated 19 February 2025: see Tab 5 p 1 of JBOD.

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34 Consistent with paragraph 24 of the TOR, the LOE stated, *inter alia*, as follows: [33]

> The valuation date should be the ancillary proximate date. This date shall be determined later (either by Court or by both sides) but will also take into consideration
>
> - that the interim judgment (IJ) is 21 October 2020; and
> - of the latest possible set of financial statements available.
>
> If the ancillary proximate date is not practical or feasible (due to account cut off), then the closest proxy date on or around a suitable cut off should be used. Please note that while a valuation report can be done, the admission of this report for the case is subject to the Court's approval.

35 The LOE also provided for an option for two valuation dates which, if exercised, will require the valuer to review another set of financial statements and the final report will have two separate figures for each cut-off date.[34]

36 The Husband did not sign the LOE nor did he make payment of his half-share of his deposit. Instead, he appointed new solicitors, M/s Beyond Legal LLC, who informed the AR at the case conference on 28 February 2025 that the Husband was looking for an appointment of a valuer under the Panel of Financial Experts,[35] marking the second time that he had changed his mind on the appointment of a joint valuer.

37 On 11 March 2025, the Husband informed the AR that he had no objections to the appointment of SSPL but took issue with the valuation date.[36]

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33 LOE at pp 1-2: see Tab 6 p 4 of JBOD.

34 LOE at p 4: see Tab 6 p 4 of JBOD.

35 Plaintiff's Written Submissions dated 1 September 2025 at p 7 S/N (j).

36 Plaintiff's Written Submissions dated 1 September 2025 at p 8 S/N (k).

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Directions were then made by the AR for the Husband to sign the LOE by 18 March 2025 but he failed to do so.[37] Instead, he wrote to SSPL on 14 March 2025, requesting *inter alia*, that:[38]

> Specific to the LOE, kindly amend to reflect that the Plaintiff should provide to you all relevant documents for the three companies up to end-February 2025 so that the valuation provided will more accurately account for a full calendar years' worth of business and financial activities by the companies.

38 This invited a response from the Wife on the same day, who informed SSPL that there was no need to make any amendments to the LOE. The Wife explained, *inter alia*, as follows:[39]

> … we note that the Letter of Engagement signed by our client has catered for a situation where a party may elect to have 2 valuation dates, and in the absence of any party exercising this option, that you will "assume that this option will not be exercised". There is hence no need to make any changes, since this was the understanding that both parties had (the possibility of which we had updated the Court about at the case conference on 11 March 2022).

39 SSPL replied on the same day to say that they would not be making any changes to the LOE until parties confirm the steps to be taken.[40]

40 On 19 March 2025, the Husband's solicitors informed the AR via correspondence as follows:[41]

> … we understand that the cut-off date of November 2024 applies only to Phase 1 and the joint valuer is at liberty to

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37 Plaintiff's Written Submissions dated 1 September 2025 at p 8 S/N (k) & (l).

38 M/s Beyond Legal LLC's email dated 14 March 2025: see Tab 7 pp 1-2 of JBOD.

39 M/s Rajah & Tann Singapore LLP's email dated 14 March 2025: see Tab 7 p 1 of JBOD.

40 SSPL's letter dated 14 March 2025: see Tab 8 of JBOD.

41 M/s Beyond Legal LLC's letter dated 19 March 2025: see Tab 10 of JBOD.

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> request for additional documents beyond November 2024 for Phase 2 of his work.
>
> 7. On this basis, our Client will be making payment to Mr. Wan and sign the LOE forthwith.

41 However, he did not do so but instead wrote another letter to the Court dated 1 April 2025 seeking the Court's guidance on the "Ancillary Proximate Date" ("APD").[42] He stated that:[43]

> The Plaintiff appears to propose November 2024 as the APD, without prejudice to the valuer's ability to request further documents. The Defendant, on the other hand, takes the reasonable view that the APD should minimally be the first quarter of 2025, to account as far as practicable for the full financial year of 2024 for all three companies (whose financial years end in December 2024, April 2025 and June 2025), so as to ensure a true and fair valuation as close as possible to the Ancillary Matters hearing date.

42 The Court replied on 4 April 2025 that it was not in a position to make a determination on this issue via correspondence and strongly encouraged parties to discuss and reach a consensus without delay.[44]

43 On 22 April 2025, the Husband informed the AR that he was unable to sign off on the LOE.[45] Consequently, the Husband's discovery applications, which were held in abeyance, were restored for hearing on 5 June 2025.[46] At the hearing on 5 June 2025, the Husband's solicitors applied to be discharged,[47] which resulted in the hearing having to be adjourned and delayed.[48]

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42 M/s Beyond Legal LLC's letter dated 1 April 2025: see Tab 12 of JBOD.

43 M/s Beyond Legal LLC's letter dated 1 April 2025 at [4]: see Tab 12 of JBOD.

44 Court's reply to other hearing related requests dated 4 April 2024: see Tab 13 of JBOD.

45 Plaintiff's Written Submissions dated 1 September 2025 at p 8 S/N (o).

46 Plaintiff's Written Submissions dated 1 September 2025 at [7].

47 Plaintiff's Written Submissions dated 1 September 2025 at [7].

48 Certified Notes of Evidence of the hearing before the AR on 5 June 2025 at p 15.

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44 In my view, the AR was justified in finding that the Husband had repudiated the agreed joint valuation arrangement without any valid justification. Having agreed to the TOR on 28 January 2025, the Husband sought unilaterally to change the terms of the TOR via the LOE by instructing SSPL to amend the LOE "to reflect that the Plaintiff should provide to you all relevant documents for the three companies up to end-February 2025".

45 The Husband's attempt to instruct SSPL on the conduct of the valuation undermined the ability of the joint valuer to undertake its work independently and was contrary to the spirit of a joint appointment. His insistence that the LOE be amended to include documents up to end-February 2025[49] was unreasonable, bearing in mind that it was within the purview of the expert valuer to determine the documents they required for their work.[50] Moreover, the LOE also provided for an option for two valuation dates.[51] There was hence no justification for the Husband to interfere with the independent work of the joint valuer by dictating what documents should be obtained from the Wife and to subsequently abandon the agreed joint valuation.

46 As a result of the Husband's conduct, SSPL could not even proceed with Phase 1 of its work, which did not involve the valuation of the three companies. As noted above, the TOR provided that the parties will consider if they jointly agree to the next stage of work of determining the actual value of the Wife's companies to be proceeded with after SSPL has provided their 1st Stage Opinion.

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49 M/s Beyond Legal LLC's letter dated 1 April 2025: see Tab 10 of JBOD.

50 M/s Rajah & Tann Singapore LLP's letter dated 24 March 2025: see Tab 11 of JBOD.

51 LOE at p 4: see Tab 1 of JOBD; see also M/s Rajah & Tann Singapore LLP's email dated 14 March 2025 at Tab 7 p 1 of JBOD.

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47 Regrettably, the Husband's conduct is indicative of bad faith. His deliberate departure from the agreed process is wholly inconsistent with the spirt of cooperation envisaged in the joint valuation exercise and reflects a continuing pattern of obstructive and tactical behaviour. Such action not only frustrate the orderly conduct of the case but also needlessly protract the resolution of the ancillary matters.

48 The AR was correct to find that the Husband's conduct has had the effect of delaying and obstructing the progress of these proceedings. Such conduct undermines the fair administration of justice, particularly in the context of family disputes where finality of proceedings is important for parties to heal and move on.

49 In my view, this is precisely the sort of case in which the Court must wield its case management powers decisively to rein in obstructive conduct and move the case towards final resolution. As the AR was not in error, there was no reason for me to interfere with her case management decision. Having regard to all the circumstances of the case, I would have exercised my discretion in the same manner as she did.

50 The AR was mindful that the absence of either a joint valuation or competing valuations may constrain the Court's assessment at the ancillary stage.[52] However, it is equally important to note that the Court determining the ancillary matters is not bound by the interlocutory order and retains the discretion to determine if a valuation report is necessary. As noted in *WAH v WAG* (at [10]):

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[52] AR's decision with brief grounds dated 25 July 2025 at [16].

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> Interim and interlocutory orders do not bind the trial judge, and the trial judge may make orders at the trial varying the earlier orders. The fundamental purpose of interim and interlocutory orders is, therefore, to ensure a smoother, quicker trial, and to keep each party's position evenly balanced until the trial. That purpose is lost if the justice system is clogged with unmeritorious appeals against interlocutory orders.

51 Unsatisfactory as it may be, it is necessary to bring an end to the meandering course these proceedings have taken as a result of the Husband's obstructive and uncooperative conduct, and move the case towards hearing without the valuation report.

Appeal dismissed

52 For the above reasons, I affirmed the AR's decision and dismissed the appeal.

53 Rule 854 of the FJR 2014 provides that the Court, in exercising its discretion as to costs, "must, to such extent, if any, as may be appropriate in the circumstances, take into account … the conduct of all parties, including conduct before and during the proceedings". Like general civil litigation, the Court in family proceedings also has a discretion to grant costs on an indemnity basis if it considers it appropriate to do so: see r. 878(1) of the FJR 2014.

54 The circumstances where an order for indemnity costs may be made were discussed in *Pradeepto Kumar Biswas v Sabyasachi Mukherjee* [2024] SGHC(A) 3. The Appellate Division noted (at [6]) as follows:

> An order for indemnity costs is appropriate only in exceptional circumstances (*BIT Baltic Investment & Trading Pte Ltd (in compulsory liquidation) v Wee See Boon* [2023] 1 SLR 1648 at [83], citing *CCM Industrial Pte Ltd v Uniquetech Pte Ltd* [2009] 2 SLR(R) 20 at [32]). In deciding whether to order indemnity costs, the court will have regard to all the circumstances of the case, with the touchstone being that of unreasonable conduct, as

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> opposed to conduct that attracts moral condemnation (*Lim Oon Kuin and others v Ocean Tankers (Pte)* Ltd (interim judicial managers appointed) [2022] 1 SLR 434 at [36]). From our observations of the Applicant's conduct, we find it appropriate to award costs against him on an indemnity basis. The Applicant has failed to satisfy numerous outstanding costs orders and seeks to put the Respondents to further costs of defending the EOT Application with little assurance that he will make good any costs ordered against him. He has also been found on more than one occasion to have abused the court process (ie, by the Judge in SUM 268, and by the Court of Appeal in *Pradeepto* (2022) at [95]). We repeat our observations at [45]–[46] above.

55 As noted in *XHG v XHH* - [2025] SGHCF 13 ("*XHG v XHH*") (at [7]), costs orders are more finely balanced in family disputes which by their nature involve strong emotions. Even so, the Court may award costs on an indemnity basis in appropriate cases.

56 For instance, in *XHG v XHH*, the Court ordered the husband to pay costs on an indemnity basis for the wife having to respond to husband's 5th affidavit of assets and means, filed just prior to the ancillary matters hearing, because it disclosed information that ought to have been disclosed from the beginning. The Court found that the husband could have provided the bank statements and explained them much earlier, and not just before the proceedings commenced. The Husband's conduct led to the Court and the wife expending time and effort to deal with the evidence urgently.

57 In my judgment, there were exceptional circumstances warranting an indemnity costs order in the present case. The Husband's conduct in abandoning the agreed joint valuation and dragging out the process was wholly unwarranted and resulted in unnecessary costs being incurred and valuable time wasted. This was not an isolated incident but a continuation of a pattern of conduct displayed

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by the Husband throughout the proceedings. His conduct was troubling and unreasonable, to say the least.

58 Taking into account that the wasted costs relating to the joint valuation was included in the AR's costs order, I awarded costs of the appeal fixed at $10,000 all in to be paid within 7 days.

59 I should point out that the Wife had submitted that:[53]

> The Defendant has decidedly opted to pursue a litigation strategy which further frustrates the expeditious resolution of the divorce proceedings, with the latest salvo being his attempt to stay these divorce proceedings by filing HC/[redacted]. This was filed despite the learned DJ Chia already finding that such related proceedings are unnecessary in his grounds of decision dated 15 May 2024 and issued in *WWK v WWL* [2024] SGFC 25,38 given that the Defendant "has a real enough choice of taking up Option 1" as envisioned in *UDA v UDB* [2018] 1 SLR 1015

60 For the avoidance of doubt, I did not take the Husband's conduct in filing the High Court suit into consideration in my determination of the substantive merits of the Husband's appeal and costs, even though this appeared to be yet another instance of his propensity to engage in tactical and protracted litigation. The High Court suit was, strictly speaking, a separate matter, and it would have been incorrect to allow it to influence my assessment in the present proceedings.

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53 Plaintiff's Written Submissions dated 1 September 2025 at [44].

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Chia Wee Kiat
District Judge

Mr Shawn Teo (Rajah and Tann Singapore LLP)
for the plaintiff
Ms Stephanie Looi (Constellation Law Chambers LLC)
for the defendant;

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