The Davide Court

Seated from left: Justice Angelina Sandoval-Gutierrez, Justice Leonardo A. Quisumbing, Justice Reynato S. Puno, Chief Justice Hilario G. Davide, Jr., Justice Artemio V. Panganiban, Justice Consuelo Ynares-Santiago, and Justice Antonio T. Carpio

Standing from left: Justice Minita V. Chico-Nazario, Justice Adolfo S. Azcuna, Justice Conchita Carpio Morales, Justice Ma. Alicia Austria-Martinez, Justice Renato C. Corona, Justice Romeo J. Callejo, Sr., Justice Dante O. Tinga, and Justice Cancio C. Garcia

The Panganiban Court

Seated from left: Justice Antonio T. Carpio, Justice Consuelo Ynares-Santiago, Justice Reynato S. Puno, Chief Justice Artemio V. Panganiban, Justice Leonardo A. Quisumbing, Justice Angelina Sandoval-Gutierrez, and Justice Ma. Alicia Austria-Martinez

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF JUSTICE

“Safeguarding the liberty and nurturing the prosperity of our people, while upholding the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary in an atmosphere of integrity, transparency, and accountability.”

This Annual Report for 2005 constitutes compliance with the constitutional provision requiring the Supreme Court to submit to the President and the Congress an annual report on the operation and activities of the judiciary within 30 days from the opening of each regular session.

As an eminent constitutionalist noted, the purpose of the provision is not to place the Supreme Court in an inferior situation in relation to the President and to Congress, but simply to enable the government to be informed about the needs of the judiciary.

It is no secret that of the three great departments of government, the judiciary has the smallest share in the national budget. As a matter of fact, that share has been declining over the years from 1.17 percent in 1998 to 1.05 percent in 2001 and to .88 percent in 2004. In 2005, its share fell even lower to .83 percent.

When the Constitution was being drafted, there was a proposal to peg the budget of the judiciary automatically at 2 percent of the national budget. Unfortunately the proposal fell by the wayside and, up to now, the judiciary still has to make do with much less to answer for its needs.

Nonetheless, this situation has not stopped the judiciary from doing its best to fulfill its raison d’être of dispensing fair and speedy justice to our people.

Indeed, we are ever mindful of what the poet Bertolt Brecht wrote of justice being the bread of the people. If the people do not obtain justice, there can be no peace in our land. And without peace, progress will remain an elusive dream for millions of our countrymen.

Thus, under my illustrious predecessor Hilario G. Davide Jr., the Supreme Court embarked on a comprehensive judicial reform program called the Action Program for Judicial Reform (APJR) to realize his vision of “a judiciary that is independent, effective, and efficient, and worthy of public trust and confidence; and a legal profession that provides quality, ethical, accessible, and cost-effective legal service to our people.” Full implementation of the APJR has been estimated to cost PhP4.3 billion. The cost, however, will be well worth it, considering that “a strong, stable, and credible judiciary is an indispensable ingredient of economic development.”

Though initiated by Chief Justice Davide, the APJR has become an undertaking of the entire Court. It has continued even after his watch and in fact into my own term as Chief Justice, which began a few minutes past two on the afternoon of December 21, 2005, when I took my oath of office before President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in Malacañang.

Then as now, I reiterate my commitment to implement the APJR, even as my short-term agenda for 2006 focuses on the urgent problems that corrode justice, namely, limited access to justice by the poor, corruption, incompetence, and delay in the delivery of quality justice.

In battling these problems, I vowed to lead a reformed judiciary characterized by four ins: independence, integrity, industry, and intelligence; one that is impervious to the plague of “ships”: kinship, relationship, friendship, and fellowship. Internally to the around 26,000 judicial employees nationwide, I laid down the policy of granting maximum financial and fringe benefits allowed by law and within my discretion to give as the overall head of the Judicial Department of our government. In turn, from each employee of the judiciary, I asked three things that I code-named DHL: dedication to duty, honesty in every way, and full loyalty to the Supreme Court and the judiciary.

Likewise, I envisioned a revitalized legal profession composed of competent and ethical lawyers who would courageously uphold truth and justice even above their clients’ causes; and who are fearless advocates for the weak, the oppressed, and the marginalized.

All the foregoing converge on my core judicial philosophy of safeguarding the liberty and nurturing the prosperity of our people, while upholding the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary in an atmosphere of integrity, transparency, and accountability.

These ideals underpin the operations and activities of the judiciary that make up this Annual Report. I hope that the Report will give its readers a clear picture not only of the state of the judiciary as frozen in the facts and statistics of 2005, but also of the dynamic direction in which it is going, always with the welfare of our country and the well-being of our people as our polestar and inspiration. We hope for your support in our journey.

ARTEMIO V. PANGANIBAN

1 *Const., Art. VIII, sec. 16.*
3 *On Balance* (2005) 22-23
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Judicial Review

But more important than anything else, the Court never missed a beat in performing its constitutional duty to "settle actual controversies involving rights which are legally demandable and enforceable, and to determine whether or not there has been a grave abuse of discretion amounting to lack or excess of jurisdiction on the part of any branch or instrumentality of the Government."

In exercising its power of judicial review, the Court upheld with finality its ruling that the Mining Law and its implementing rules and regulations are constitutional, a ruling which holds the record for being the longest decision ever penned in the 105-year history of the Supreme Court. Significantly, the ponente was then Justice Panganiban whose judicial philosophy of Liberty and Prosperity was amply articulated in this case. Before the year passed into history, he announced that it would be the centerpiece of his magistracy as Chief Justice of the Philippines.

Later in the year, the Court also upheld the law on the Expanded Value-Added Tax by declaring it as "not unconstitutional."

On the other hand, it denied with finality any further reconsideration of its ruling which voided the tax exemptions and financial incentives extended by Presidential Proclamation No. 420 to the John Hay Special Economic Zone as these can only be granted by Congress.

The Court also nullified the imposition by the Secretary of the Department of Trade and Industry of a tariff on imported cement.

The Philippine Government was also directed by the Court to pay PIATCO the amount of Php3 billion before taking over Terminal 3 of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport. It is to be recalled that the Court had earlier voided the award for the construction of the said terminal to PIATCO's predecessor-in-interest for its lack of financial capacity and serious irregularities which characterized the consummation of the ensuing contracts.

The Court also had occasion to rule that it has no jurisdiction over actions which seek to compel the Executive Branch in the performance of its discretionary functions. Thus, it denied a petition for mandamus to compel the Executive Branch to transmit the signed text of the Rome Statute creating the International Criminal Court to the Senate. Among the other significant decisions of the Court which were handed down during the year is the reinstatement of the complaint by human rights victims during the martial law years to enforce the US$2.25 billion judgment by a US District Court against the estate of President Ferdinand Marcos, holding that only a minimal amount corresponding to the filing fee was in fact required in that case.

Adjudication and Administration

A grand total of 4,332 cases were decided by the Supreme Court during the year, while the 69-member Court of Appeals was able to dispose of 14,060 cases; the Sandiganbayan, 275 cases;
and the newly-expanded Court of Tax Appeals, 259 cases.

The lower courts – comprising Regional Trial Courts, Shari’a District Trial Courts, Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts in Cities, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts, Municipal Circuit Trial Courts, and the Shari’a Circuit Courts – were able to dispose of 466,195 cases in all for the year. These courts continue to be woefully undermanned, with a 31.6% vacancy rate, meaning that only 1,471 out of the 2,152 positions authorized by Congress are occupied. Thus, Chief Justice Panganiban has plans to fill up 50 percent of these vacant salas.

New Rules

In the exercise of its rule-making power, a number of important rules were promulgated by the Supreme Court. Among them: a rule on the procedure for all proceedings for civil forfeiture, asset preservation, and freezing of monetary instruments, property, or proceeds representing, involving, or relating to an offense punishable under the Anti-Money Laundering Act (RA 9160).

The Court also promulgated the Revised Rules of the Court of Tax Appeals, defining the organization and functions of the recently strengthened tax court.

Reforming the Judiciary

The year 2005 was a most productive one for the Court’s Action Program for Judicial Reform. The APJR will be largely instrumental in the realization of Chief Justice Panganiban’s campaign to solve the judiciary’s ACID problems, namely, limited Access to justice by the poor and marginalized, Corruption, Incompetence, and Delay in the delivery of quality justice.

The Justice on Wheels Project, launched during the last days of 2004, was further expanded and strengthened with the acquisition of two additional mobile courts for deployment to other areas in the archipelago where the lack of courts and judges is most acute. Hearings in the first mobile court – a large bus staffed by a judge, prosecutor, stenographer and other essential court personnel – conducted speedily on-board as it traversed Metro Manila resulted in the successful disposition of nearly 800 cases and the release of 300 detainees as of August 2005.

Complementing the mobile courts is the Access to Justice by the Poor Project. Under this project, the Court will develop and implement a training program involving information, education and communication (IEC) strategies and methods to sensitize first-level judges and municipal clerks of court in selected areas to the economic and social conditions of our indigent and destitute citizens.

Great strides have also been achieved under the APJR for the full computerization of the judiciary. Besides the computerized case tracking and case monitoring projects, the Case Flow Management System (CFM) and the Court Administration Management Information System (CAMIS), the Court is building model electronic courts in the cities of Angeles, Lapulapu, and Cagayan de Oro.

Manila will at long last have a modern Hall of Justice for its trial courts – currently dispersed in various decrepit buildings – at the site of the old GSIS building on Arroceros Street, which the Court swapped for its “Jai-Alai” property on Taft Avenue, which it originally intended to be its Hall of Justice in Manila. The exchange-and-transfer arrangement was formalized by virtue of Proclamation No. 835, issued on April 27, 2005 by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

Launched in 2004, the Supreme Court’s E-Library is now fully operational 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and accessible throughout the world. A boon for lawyers, judges, legal researchers, and students everywhere, it features a powerful search engine that provides enhanced accessibility to a complete compendium of Supreme Court decisions and issuances, as well as laws, rules, and regulations promulgated from the turn of the century. So that the E-Library may be fully utilized, the Court has made available an interest-free loan facility for the purchase of laptop computers to Justices,
judges, SC lawyers, and other court personnel. The Court has likewise approved a JDF-payment loan facility for the purchase of motorcycles and computers by process servers and court stenographers, respectively.

Knowledge-Sharing and Judiciary Networking

The Supreme Court hosted the first International Conference and Showcase on Judicial Reforms on November 28-30, 2005 at the Makati Shangri-La, with the theme “Strengthening the Judiciary of the 21st Century.” The hugely successful event was attended by close to 400 delegates from 45 countries, among whom were 39 Chief Justices and heads of delegation.

The conference resulted in the issuance of “The Manila Declaration Towards Independent, Accountable, and Effective Judiciary for the 21st Century That Function with Integrity and Enjoy Public Trust and Confidence.” The first global judicial conclave on judicial reform held in the Philippines likewise was the venue for the launch of the Asia-Pacific Judicial Reform Forum (APJR Forum) to facilitate knowledge-sharing on judicial reform experiences, lessons learned, best practices, and the possible adoption of common approaches in addressing the issues and problems confronting judiciaries in the 21st century.

Courting the Public

To address the concerns of its external publics, the Court launched a second round of Chamber-to-Chamber dialogues with both local and foreign business sectors. The aim is to apprise these associations of businessmen and investors of the role of the courts in economic governance and clarify to them various initiatives currently undertaken by the Supreme Court, particularly in the area of Alternative Dispute Resolution, the resort to which is encouraged. The Court’s Public Information Office continues to pursue an effective IEC campaign through its daily news bulletins and regular publications, such as the Court News Flash, Benchmark, and Court News. Periodic press conferences and regular media briefings are also conducted to explain and clarify significant decisions and pronouncements of the Court. It also manages the Supreme Court’s website – www.supremecourt.gov.ph – as well as conduct court tours for diverse groups several times each week.

A Change in Leadership

In his farewell speech on the occasion of the retirement ceremony in his honor on December 19, 2005, Chief Justice Hilario G. Davide, Jr. said that those who would follow him in leading the Supreme Court and the judiciary “must and will do better.” The new Chief Justice, Artemio V. Panganiban, assumed office with a singleness of purpose and a determination to live up to the challenge. On his oath-taking before the President on December 21, the first Chief Justice to be appointed in the 21st century issued a statement for all and sundry to hear wherein he vowed to continue the judicial reforms initiated by his distinguished predecessor “which ushered in a judicial renaissance that has propelled our country towards international reknown in the area of judicial reform.” He also took the occasion to unveil his judicial philosophy of Liberty and Prosperity as the centerpiece of his chief magistracy. This posits the principle that “in cases involving liberty, the scales of justice should weigh heavily against the government and in favor of the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized, the dispossessed and the weak; but in conflicts primarily concerned with economic policies, the courts must be deferential to the political branches of government.”
Highlights of the CY 2007 Budget Proposals

The proposed budget for the Supreme Court and lower courts for 2007 embodies the pursuit of the twin visions of (1) a reformed judiciary characterized by independence, integrity, industry, and intelligence, and one that is ethical and morally courageous; and (2) a revitalized legal profession that is responsible, dependable, and morally upright in upholding truth and justice. It is a budget founded on a firm commitment to continuing judicial reform.

While significant headway has been made in its judicial reform initiatives, the Supreme Court recognized that there is more to be done, not just to sustain the improvements so far achieved, but also to explore other avenues for change. Taking those considerations into account, its proposed budget reflects activities in furtherance of its reform goals and targets within the confines of fiscal prudence.

For CY 2007, the Supreme Court is submitting a budget of Php12,358,296,000.00, or a 62% increase from the CY 2006 Recommended Budget of Php7,631,607,000.00. The proposed budget is broken down by expense category as follows:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>PROPOSED CY 2007 BUDGET</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Particulars</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Personnel Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOGE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capital Outlay</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAPs - APJRR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Appropriations - RLP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Auto. Appropriations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Obligation</td>
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BREAKDOWN OF INCREASES

PERSONNEL SERVICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjustment in authorized salaries per P51</td>
<td>587,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% increase in salaries of members of the judiciary and of equivalent ranks per RA 9337</td>
<td>640,411,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reestablishment / new positions in the Printing Office, Supreme Court per MOJCA No. 2006-03-001</td>
<td>3,991,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of new Office of the Hall of Justice positions in the Office of the Court Administrator</td>
<td>3,552,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages of the 810 assistant judges and Office of the Hall of Justice</td>
<td>43,933,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed new 3,046 CPC positions under RA 8369, 1st PDC, BSC, CIO, CIO, CIOAC, CIOAC per RA 9126 &amp; 32 positions in the Hall of Justice per En Bana Resolution No. AM-05-12-16-SC</td>
<td>714,432,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longevity Pay / Step Increase for Justices &amp; Judges / Court personnel to take the next step / level</td>
<td>39,660,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terminal Leave / Retirement Gratuity Benefits of SCPLC Justices, Judges, and personnel who will retire in CY 2007 on the basis of highest salary &amp; aggregate of all allowances for members of the judiciary</td>
<td>468,048,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in BCF, HDW, YFB, UCA, PBI, and PERA, consistent with the increase in the number of positions and increased salary of members of the Judiciary</td>
<td>97,829,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in Additional Compensation from Psp500/month to Psp1,500 per month per AD &amp; BC &amp; AC</td>
<td>279,116,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased rates in BATA as per NIAA No. 99</td>
<td>165,945,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed Honoraria of OCA Consultants</td>
<td>150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pensions/Annuities as per IIA [Highest Salary per aggregate allowance]</td>
<td>43,975,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundries and subsistence allowance per Magna Carta of Health Workers</td>
<td>150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Increase in Personnel Services</strong></td>
<td>2,869,342,000</td>
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MAINTENANCE AND OTHER OPERATING EXPENSES

The proposed budget for MOJSE is Psp3,743,435,000, or an increase of 1,681,463,000, or 22% over CY 2006 budget of Psp1,061,033,000.00. The proposed increase of MOJSE will amount mostly for the increase in maintenance and operating costs & utilities expenses of systems and equipment initially installed and brought by Foreign Assisted Projects, as well as the detected incidental, consequential, and recurring expenses. It is requested that the amount be approved in order to sustain the reforms and assure its continuity, otherwise, some of its gains will be reversed.

CAPITAL OUTLAY

Backed by a World Bank loan, we target by CY 2007, we will be able to purchase equipment and other facilities to widen the access to justice. Beyond this project is also the responsibility of the government to provide its workers, with the means to increase participation in public service as a show of support. For these reasons, we are increasing our proposal for infrastructure and equipment in the total amount of Psp47,462,000.00, broken down as follows:

- SCPLC reg. Budget: Psp161,151,000.00
- Foreign Assisted Projects: Psp288,311,000.00

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Capital Outlay</td>
<td>431,463,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add: Retirement and Life Insurance Premiums</td>
<td>16,581,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Increase over CY 2006 Recommended Budget</td>
<td>4716,581,000</td>
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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CY 2007
State of the 2005 Judiciary

Budget Overview

In 2005, the approved budget of the judiciary totaled Php7,523,732,000, a 6.3% increase from the 2004 approved budget of Php7,073,775,000. The judiciary’s budget is 0.83 percent of the government’s Php907.59 billion 2005 budget. Despite an increase in its budget, its overall share in the national budget has declined.

A total of Php6.75 billion of the judiciary’s 2005 budget went to the Supreme Court (the budget of the SC includes that of the Presidential Electoral Tribunal, or PET) and the lower courts. This is a Php341.37 million increase from the approved Php6.41 billion 2004 budget.

Personnel and Budget Breakdown

A total of 25,521 people, including judges and non-judicial staff, are employed by the Supreme Court and the lower courts — the Metropolitan Trial Courts (MeTCs), Municipal Trial Courts in Cities (MTCCs), Municipal Trial Courts (MTCs), Municipal Circuit Trial Courts (MCTCs), Shari’a Circuit Courts (SCC), Regional Trial Courts (RTC), and Shari’a District Courts (SDCs). Personnel Services (PS) accounted for 87.37 percent of the SC budget, with a total allotment of Php5.89 billion; Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE), Php849.31 million; and Capital Outlay (CAPEX), Php3.16 million.
Vacancy Rates

In 2004, Congress passed RA 9227, which increased the allowances of justices, judges, and other officials of the same rank — a welcome development in light of the numerous salas bereft of judges. Of the 2,152 available judicial positions, only 1,471 are currently occupied, or a vacancy rate of 31.6 percent.
Adjudication: Caseload and Disposition

The lack of judges, the lack of courtrooms nationwide, and ever-growing caseloads have had a significant effect on the ability of judges to dispose of their cases.

Lower Courts

Already saddled with 776,529 cases at the end of 2004, the first and second level courts had to deal with an influx of 376,889 new cases. This number does not count cases that were revived or reopened, nor does it cover cases transferred from other courts. All in all, the first and second level courts had 1,219,706 cases pending in their dockets. Of this number, RTCs handled 539,411 cases, hence the average caseload of the 813 RTC judges was a staggering 663 cases per RTC judge. Our first level courts, on the other hand, handled 680,205 cases, or 947 cases per first level court judge.

Despite all these limitations, these trial courts disposed of 466,195 in 2005; 308,737 cases were decided or resolved; 125,835 were archived; and 31,623 were transferred to other courts.

The Appellate Courts

The appellate courts also have growing caseloads. In 2005, the Court of Appeals received 13,483 new cases to add to the 23,098 cases in its dockets at the end of 2004; 768 cases were added on top of the 1,784 cases pending at the Sandiganbayan by December 2004; and the Court of Tax Appeals got 391 new cases in 2005 to add to the 639 cases pending in its dockets.

The growing caseload notwithstanding, the appellate courts disposed of a total of 14,594 cases: the Court of Appeals, 14,060; the Sandiganbayan, 275; and the Court of Tax Appeals, 259.

The Supreme Court

The Supreme Court also had a busy 2005. It received 4,348 cases and 47,163 pleadings. The High Court remanded 4,640 cases back to the lower courts, and promulgated 4,332 judicial decisions.

The text of the accomplishment reports of the Offices and Committees of the Supreme Court and its attached institutions, the Court of Appeals, the Sandiganbayan, and the Court of Tax Appeals can be found in the Annual Report’s Annexures in a companion publication.
Judicial Reform Activities

Access to Justice

Access to Justice for the Poor Project

Spearheading the battery of reform activities is the Access to Justice for the Poor Project. This project seeks to increase access to justice by the poor and vulnerable sectors in selected provinces with the help of increased knowledge about their basic rights and the judicial system. It seeks to create an enabling and supportive environment through the judiciary and law enforcement institutions as well as an amended overall legal framework, which ensures that the rights of the poor, especially that of women and children, are upheld.

However, due to possible constitutional issues involving project provisions that vested the Court with administrative control or supervision over other government agencies, the implementing agencies of the project have decided to institute the Department of Social Welfare and Development as its executing agency in lieu of the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court’s component is to be implemented in 36 first-level courts in the provinces of Oriental Mindoro, Camarines Sur, Capiz, Lanao del Norte, and Sultan Kudarat.

Public Education on the Rule of Law Advancement and Support Project

In line with promoting access to justice, the Supreme Court through its Program Management Office (PMO), has undertaken the Public Education on the Rule of Law Advancement and Support Project or PERLAS, which involves the development of two books, namely, Teaching Exemplars for Classroom Use for elementary and high school students, and the Student Handbook for high school students. These books are meant to augment existing teaching modules and reinforce students’ understanding of the principle of the Rule of Law. The project aims, among others, to raise awareness within the community that everyone has a stake and responsibility in the promotion of the Rule of Law. A Memorandum of Agreement has been signed between the Department of Education and the Lawyer’s League for Liberty (LIBERTAS), the project’s implementing body, bringing about the conduct of four workshops and the production of 50 exemplars in the year 2005.
Programme on Rehabilitating Internally Displaced Persons and Communities in Southern Philippines

The Programme is being undertaken by the Supreme Court through the Committee on Halls of Justice (CHOJ), the PMO, and the Philippine Judicial Academy (PHILJA). This project involves transforming settlement areas into vibrant communities as well as complementing existing efforts to ensure a comprehensive rehabilitation package for internally displaced persons in Southern Philippines. The signing of a Memorandum of Agreement between the Supreme Court and its implementing partner, Mindanao Economic Development Council (MEDCo), has resulted in, among others, the construction or repair and rehabilitation of various Halls of Justice in Isabela City, Jolo, Marawi City, Cotabato City, Malabang, and Zamboanga City, as well as the procurement of necessary equipment.

Justice on Wheels

The Justice on Wheels Project aims to literally bring the courts to the people via an air-conditioned bus that houses a small courtroom and offices of the first or second level court judge assigned via a rotation scheme, and is staffed by court personnel and a mediator. The project’s 23-day pilot run was from December 2004 to January 2005. As of August 2005, the implementation of the project has resulted in the successful hearing of 754 cases and the release of 300 detainees in Metro Manila. The project has been expanded through the acquisition of two additional vehicles for deployment in the Visayas and Mindanao, with the further acquisition of another vehicle being contemplated for deployment in Luzon (outside Metro Manila).

E-Payment

In order to avoid situations involving extended custody of money, the Court has also begun the process of adopting an E-Payment system wherein docket fees may be paid online. The software necessary for this has been completed by the Management Information Systems Office (MISO) and has been accepted by users in pilot courts in Manila, Makati City, and Calamba, Laguna.

Incompetence

Human Resource Development

In its efforts to eliminate incompetence within the judiciary, the Court, through its Office of Administrative Services (OAS) and the PMO, has undertaken the Philippine-Australian Human Resource Development Program with the Australian Agency for International Development. This program entails both short-term and long-term human resource solutions, namely, training and diploma courses, the latter of which is to be held in Australia.

Improved Legal Research and Skills Enhancement

Also part of the JRSP, the E-Library continues to serve as the judiciary’s primary legal research tool, giving members instant online access to the nation’s laws, jurisprudence, and the Court’s various issuances. The digitization of decisions from 1901 to 1995, as well as updates of recently decided jurisprudence, continues to take place even as the SC Library Services continues to distribute CD copies of the E-Library on a quarterly basis, ensuring that the members of the judiciary are kept informed of the latest laws and jurisprudence.

The year 2005 also saw the development by the Court of a uniform manual of style to be used by the SC Justices and legal researchers in drafting decisions, opinions, memoranda, and other legal documents. The Manual of Judicial Writing was launched on December 15, 2005.

Five video presentations were also prepared and completed by the OAS and the PMO, which will be used as demonstration materials during the training of judges and clerks of court on the conduct of pre-trial and the use of deposition and discovery procedures.

Corruption

Codes of Conduct

To help address the issue of corruption within the judiciary, the Court has developed a Comprehensive Manual on the Code of Ethics as part of the Judicial Reform Support Project (JRSP) under the PMO. From May 2004 to December 2005, 90 orientation seminars on the New Code of Judicial Conduct and the Code of Conduct for Court Personnel have been conducted. A total of 11,549 justices, judges, and court personnel have been oriented on its provisions.
The Court also fought against incompetence through the enduring efforts of the PHILJA and Mandatory Continuing Legal Education Office (MCLEO), which conducted 110 academic training programs and 1,203 lectures and programs in 2005, respectively.

**Delay**

**Delay in the Resolution of Cases and Case Congestion**

The year 2005 – a year after the enactment of RA 9285, the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Act – highlighted the Supreme Court's efforts in addressing case congestion and delay.

To speed up the disposition of court cases, the Court has more effectively monitored cases, and continued implementing alternative modes of dispute resolution not only in the lower courts but also in the Court of Appeals (CA).

**Court Administration and Management Information System**

Focusing on the development and implementation of an online system of gathering statistical data directly from respective court locations of the 2,152 trial courts nationwide, the CAMIS Project has already demonstrated its significant impact on the administration of justice even in its pilot run.

The CAMIS Project automates the manual collection and summary of statistical data, as well as the analyzing and reporting of information used in making decisions.

Through CAMIS, lower court reports will be completed and entered into the database through the internet. It aims to improve management of the courts and ultimately pave the way for the decongestion of court dockets through a transparent, flexible, publicly accessible, and comprehensive user-friendly database of all cases under the jurisdiction of the lower courts, including the tracking of their current status.

In 2005, additional technical assistance was brought in to prepare a framework and plan for the system to include the revenue statistical enhancement system, to plan and test the rollout of the enhanced CAMIS in more lower courts, and to assist in the institutionalization of the online system.

**Case Flow Management**

The Case Flow Management System is a computerized system of managing cases. It uses a computer program to enable trial courts to monitor their respective cases from the time of filing to the time of disposition. This would lead to more expeditious resolution of cases through effective monitoring and strict observance of time limits in the conduct of case events.

A management and information system for the project was also established to serve various functions, such as the tracking of cases, scheduling of events, reminding of deadlines, and providing timely and reliable information. For this purpose, a manual containing the rules, guidelines, and forms for CFM implementation in line with existing laws, rules of procedure, and SC circulars, was formulated.

The CFM also aids early settlement or disposal of cases either through diversion to ADR methods or through formal litigation. Aside from reducing litigation costs, it provides efficient use of court time, physical facilities, and human and other resources.

The project, implemented by the PHILJA, Office of the Court Administrator (OCA), Management System Information Office, and PMO, had its pilot run in the lower courts of Pasay City from July 2004 to June 2005.

**Justice Reform Initiative Support (JURIS) Project**

The Justice Reform Initiative Support (JURIS) Project seeks to support the implementation of the APJR. The project has three major components, namely, (1) Mediation Support, (2) Judicial Education, and (3) Reform Advocacy Support.

The project covers both court-annexed mediation and alternatives to court adjudication. This component addresses mediation mechanisms as a vehicle for declogging the courts while providing effective and inexpensive dispute resolution mechanisms. To provide a venue for introducing and testing court-annexed mediation, 14 model Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) courts will be established in Angeles City in Pampanga, and Bacolod City in Negros Occidental over a five-year period.

Joining the Supreme Court in the JURIS project are the OCA, PHILJA, PMO, and the Alternative Law Groups, with the Canadian Institute of Development Agency (CIDA) as the development partner.

The Supreme Court-approved guidelines on mediation provides that all civil cases, settlement of estates, as well as those covered by the Rule on Summary Procedure, except those by which law may not be compromised; those cognizable by the Lupong Tagapamayapa under the Katarungang Pambarangay Law; and the civil aspect of anti-bouncing checks law violations may be brought to mediation.
Bar Examination Reforms

The 2005 Bar exams saw the implementation of structural and administrative reforms (short-term and long-term proposals), changes in the design and construction of the test questions, and methodological reforms (for marking the Bar exams and identifying key areas that may require technological enhancements) as provided in Bar Matter 1611, Re: Resolution on Reforms in the Bar Examinations, promulgated on June 8, 2004.

Five-Strike Rule

The “five-strike” rule was implemented during the 2005 Bar exams. The rule limits to five the number of times a candidate may take the bar exams, reputed to be the most grueling government-administered test.

A record 5,777 applicants took the 2005 Bar examinations, headed by Justice Romeo J. Callejo, Sr. as Chairman of the 2005 Committee on Bar Examinations. Seven applications were denied leaving 5,798 admitted to take the 2005 Bar exams. Twelve applicants withdrew from the examinations. Even then, the number of examinees registered a record high in the exams’ 104-year history.

Multiple Choice Questions

Bar Matter 1161 also provided for the adoption of multiple-choice questions for 30 to 40 percent of the total number of questions for each subject.

In mid-August 2005, Justice Callejo told law schools deans during a forum that he had asked the year’s Bar examiners to submit five multiple-choice type questions for possible inclusion in the exams. He clarified that the examinees will be required to explain their answers to the multiple-choice questions. He, however, acknowledged the need for transition in training students on how to answer such type of questions.

Certification of No Derogatory Record

Another reform – the submission by law deans of a certification that a candidate has no derogatory record in school and, if any, the details and status thereof – was also implemented during the 2005 Bar exams.

Other Reforms

Other reforms provided for under Bar Matter 1611 for implementation within one to two years from its promulgation are instituting disciplinary measures for those involved in attempts to violate or vitiate the integrity and confidentiality of the Bar examination process, improper conduct during the Bar examinations, and improper conduct of “Bar examinations,” personal preparation by the examinees by handwriting or using a typewriter, of 50 main questions, excluding subdivisions, and their submission to the Chairperson in sealed envelope at least 45 days before the schedule examination on any particular subject; fixing at June 30 of the immediately preceding year as the cut-off date for laws and Supreme Court decisions and resolutions to be included in the bar examinations; and the consideration of suggested answers to Bar exams questions prepared by the U.P. Law Center and submitted to the Chairperson.

The formulation of essay test questions and “model answers” as part of the calibration of test papers and the introduction of performance testing by way of revising and improving the essay examination are among those to be implemented within two to five years. Moreover, the designation of two examiners per subject depending on the number of examinees; appointment of a tenured Board of Examiners with an incumbent Supreme Court Justice as Chairperson; creation and organization of readership panels for each subject area to address the issue of bias or subjectivity and facilitate the formulation of test questions and the correction of examination booklets; and the adoption of the calibration method in the corrections of essay questions to correct variations in the level of test standards are also to be implemented.

To facilitate application, testing, and reporting procedures, the Supreme Court also plans to implement, within five years, the further computerization or automation of the Bar examinations.
Transparency and Accountability

Public Information Office

Officially established on January 1999, through Supreme Court resolution AM No. 98-12-08-SC, the SC Public Information Office is primarily tasked to disseminate, as promptly and as widely as possible, news about the Supreme Court, its projects, and its decisions and provide the public with judicial information in a manner that the general public can easily understand through print, broadcast, and even the internet. Its primary objective is to bring the courts closer to the people.

The PIO produces and disseminates news bulletins, backgrounders, stationers, and media advisories – all subsumed under the heading Court News Flash – to help the media accurately report about the Court’s actions or judicial activities. In 2005, it issued 465 Court News Flash reports.

In April 2005, the PIO started issuing press releases specifically geared for broadcast over radio, the medium most accessible to the masses. Written succinctly in Filipino and shorn of legalese, Balitang Korte Suprema (BKS) reports issued in radio script format lend themselves easily to on-air reading. In 2005, the Supreme Court issued 266 BKS reports.

The office is also responsible for two publications distributed to the Court’s internal and external publics. Formerly a bi-monthly eight-page publication, the Benchmark was released monthly as four-page spread starting September 2005 to better address the concerns and interests of court personnel as well as in view of the rapid pace of events of Chief Justice Davide’s valedictory year. The Benchmark’s circulation list includes the lower courts, law firms, law schools, state universities and colleges, alternative law groups, law libraries, government PIOs, and legislators. On the other hand, the Court News is a monthly full-color four-page newsletter intended for the Court’s diverse external publics, such as the chambers of commerce, nongovernmental organizations, the provincial press, and foreign embassies.

The PIO also regularly conducts lectures and tours of the Supreme Court as part of a legal education program for non-lawyers, especially high school and college students. In 2005, the PIO conducted a total of 28 court tours for students from various schools and universities as well as several foreign visitors. The PIO, through its personnel in the Committee on Protocol, also organized and conducted Court briefings for foreign dignitaries, lawyers, law enforcers, judges, and justice officials. It has also assisted in the memorial services and departure honors for members of the Court.

Brochures on the Court, its justices, and the Philippine judicial system were also produced in 2005. The PIO also prepared materials for magazines, journals, and other periodicals and facilitated the publication of articles about the judiciary at no cost to the Court. The PIO also produced the 2005 Court Calendar and facilitated its distribution to various courts and government agencies nationwide.

For the International Conference and Showcase on Judicial Reforms (ICSJR), the PIO produced daily ICSJR Bulletins with two issues on the final day. The four-page full-color newsletter contains reports and pictures of the Conference’s daily highlights.

As the Court’s liaison to various media organizations, it facilitated the orderly media coverage of Court events as well as the distribution of information materials for publications. It organized five media events in 2005, including the December 7, 2005 Isang Pasko ng Paggunita at Pasasalamat: A Christmas Celebration with the Media celebration with retiring Chief Justice Hilario G. Davide, Jr. and the December 22, 2005 Meet the New Chief Justice event for then newly sworn-in Chief Justice Artemio V. Panganiban.

By virtue of its membership in several policy-recommending committees or bodies, the PIO has likewise been exercising its mandated function in support of the Court’s major policies and program initiatives, particularly on the ongoing APJR in 2005. Among others, it assisted in the conduct of the Chamber-to-Chamber Dialogues, and the ICSJR, as well as in the editing and lay-out of the Manual of Judicial Writing. It also took an
active role in the National Police Commission’s Technical Committee on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice called to propose projects and activities to address system-wide problems in the criminal justice system.

To bridge the gap between the business community and civil society and the courts, the PIO has assisted the Justices of the Court in their non-judicial interactions with these diverse interest groups. The PIO has assisted in drafting messages and speeches for delivery by the Justices before many of these groups.

The PIO also enhanced its sub-domain in the Court’s website with the prompt uploading of its press releases and media advisories as well as the online version of its publications. Per the January 27, 2006 memorandum of Chief Justice Artemio V. Panganiban, management of the content of the SC website has been turned over to the PIO. Since then, the PIO and SC websites have been merged under the administration of the PIO.

Knowledge Sharing

Judge-to-Judge Dialogues

To enhance the knowledge of the magistrates on their role and function in a democratic state, a series of Justice-to-Justice and Judge-to-Judge Dialogues were conducted in 2005. The dialogues were also aimed at sustaining the involvement of the trial court judges in the judicial reform efforts.

The 2005 talks covered topics such as “The Role of Judges in the Reform Process” and “The Role of the Judiciary in a Global Economy.” During the dialogues, the judges were also briefed about the new innovations implemented by the Supreme Court such as the E-Library and the E-Learning projects.

From February to September 2005, five such dialogues were conducted in the different parts of the country – three in Manila and one each in the cities of Cebu and Davao. The participants were the justices of the Supreme Court and the appellate courts and the judges of the trial courts. Resource persons included justices or judges from other jurisdictions, as well as justices of the High Court.

International Conference and Showcase on Judicial Reforms

From November 28 to 30, 2005, the Philippine Supreme Court hosted the first International Conference and Showcase on Judicial Reforms (ICSJR), which gathered together more than a hundred Chief Justices and other judicial officials worldwide.

With the theme “Strengthening the Judiciaries of the 21st Century,” the ICSJR aimed to facilitate the sharing of ideas, experience, best practices, and reform initiatives that address issues on judicial independence, integrity, transparency, accountability, efficiency, and access to justice. A part of the APJR, the conference, which was chaired by now Chief Justice Artemio V. Panganiban, was the first of its kind in the country’s history and even in the world as it gathered together in one place the largest number of jurists, judicial educators, and judicial reformers. A total of 127 delegates from 44 other countries participated in the conference. This included 35 Chief Justices and heads of delegations. Philippine justices and judges also participated in the international gathering.

Chamber-to-Chamber Dialogues

To further enhance understanding and develop the working relationship between the judiciary and the business sector, the Supreme Court has embarked on a series of dialogues with the various chapters of local and foreign business groups in different parts of the country through the Chamber-to-Chamber Dialogues.

The term “chamber” refers to the chambers of commerce of various business groups and the chambers of justices and judges where the judgments are formed. The dialogues, which started in 2004 and continued in 2005, were aimed at advocating the various reform programs and projects of the Court. Such an initiative would lead to a greater understanding of SC decisions on business and economic matters and thus enhance investor confidence in the judiciary and government as a whole.

The dialogues for 2005, entitled Chamber-to-Chamber II: Dialogues with the Foreign Business Sector and Integration of Mediation in Business, also promoted the use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms in business transactions. Members of the business sector were given an opportunity to present their special concerns regarding the administration of justice.

From January 28 to October 21, 2005, the Court was able to dialogue with five foreign and 16 local Chambers of Commerce and one with the Bankers Association of the Philippines. Mostly, the dialogues with the local business groups were done in the Visayas and Mindanao areas.
During the ICSJR, ideas and best practices on judicial reforms were exchanged not only through platform addresses but were also demonstrated through an exhibit where various judicial reform projects from the Philippines and other jurisdictions were displayed or showcased.

The conference was by highlighted the signing of the Manila Declaration, which formally set the mechanisms to preserve the gains of the conference and further cooperation among the judiciaries of the world. The signing also marked the creation of the Asia-Pacific Judicial Reform (APJR) Forum, a collaborative network of magistrates and legal practitioners in the Asia-Pacific region. The APJR Forum focuses on sharing lessons and best practices on designing and implementing judicial reforms and modernization, as well as facilitating judicial cooperation across the Asia-Pacific Region and strengthening judicial independence and fiscal autonomy.

Judicial Reform Network in the 21st Century (JRN21) Website

At the conclusion of the ICJSR, the Judicial Reform Network in the 21st Century (JRN21) Website was also launched. The JRN21 was established in order to collect, share, and disseminate valuable information, in real time, from different countries, regions, and other members of the global judicial reform community. The JRN21 website (http://jrn21.supremecourt.gov.ph/) would be the “electronic encyclopedia of judicial reforms.” It also serves as the forum for knowledge sharing, discussion and information dissemination. JRN21 tools will include targeted e-mailings, electronic forums, discussion groups, and bulletin boards.

The JRN21, which is projected to soon become a global judicial reform network, would initially and primarily focus on high priority issues of common regional interest. This includes information, policies, and programs designed to promote judicial independence, transparency, accountability, and integrity, as well as to formulate judicial budgets and judicial career systems. The Program Management Office of the Supreme Court is currently acting as the JRN21 secretariat.

Infrastructure and Facilities

Halls of Justice

As of December 31, 2005, 282 buildings in 251 locations nationwide were constructed or renovated under the Justice System Infrastructure Program (JUSIP). Under the program, courthouses or Halls of Justice (HoJs) shall be rehabilitated or constructed for the use and occupancy of the lower courts and the National Prosecution Services, Public Attorneys Office, Parole and Probation Administration, and the Registries of Deeds.

In 2005, several local government units and other agencies also turned over 16 buildings to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court approved a distinctive façade for all HoJs in the country. The façade will feature the beautiful columns similar to those of the SC Building along Padre Faura Street.

On December 8, 2005, the Court broke ground on the additional Court of Tax Appeals building to be constructed on its newly acquired 6,000-square meter lot which it obtained through a presidential proclamation. On October 22, 2005, another groundbreaking ceremony was held for the Php70 million building of the Cebu station of the Court of Appeals. The Supreme Court also entered into six Memoranda of Agreement with various LGUs regarding the maintenance and improvement of courthouses not built under the JUSIP.

Computerization and Information Technology Projects

As part of the modernization of the Philippine judiciary, computer sets were distributed to the lower courts. In 2005, 750 sets of computers were purchased by the Court ensuring that there is at least one set of computer and printer installed in every court nationwide.

In the Supreme Court, a local area network is currently running various back office applications, such as judicial, administrative and financial systems. Several ICT-related equipment were also purchased by the Court to support its operations, such as blade servers and the APC ISX uninterruptible power supply system.

The Court’s Management Information Systems Office (MISO) also provided both the lower court and Supreme Court employees with training and tutorials on various application softwares. It also gave justices and judges technical assistance on computer usage and the use of the legal research facility. A Task Force for the computer literacy program of the judiciary was created in October 2005.

The Court has also approved the installation of DSL internet connection to lower courts nationwide, starting with Metro Manila courts. The connection will enable the courts to gain access to the E-Library and other online legal research facilities, and access the E-Learning program.
The Philippine Judicial System

The Philippine Judiciary is a hierarchical organization consisting of four levels.

First Level

Occupying the first level of the hierarchy are the first-level courts comprised of the Metropolitan Trial Courts (MeTCs), which are created in each metropolitan area established by law; the Municipal Trial Courts in Cities (MTCCs), in every city which does not form part of the metropolitan area; the Municipal Trial Courts (MTCs) established in each of the other cities or municipalities; and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts (MCTCs), created in each circuit comprising such cities and/or municipalities as grouped by law.

At the same level are the Shari’a Circuit Courts (SCCs). Shari’a Courts have been established in Islamic regions and provinces to interpret and apply the Code of Muslim Personal Laws (Presidential Decree No. 1083). Their decisions are appealable to the Shari’a Appellate Court, which, however, is yet to be organized.

Second Level

The second tier consists of the Regional Trial Courts (RTCs) established in each of the 13 regions in the Philippines. Each RTC is composed of several branches. RTCs act as trial courts and may receive evidence from the parties of the case. They also exercise appellate jurisdiction over decisions of the MeTCs, MTCCs, MTCs, and MCTCs in their respective territorial jurisdictions.

Also at the same level are the Shari’a District Courts (SDCs). Their decisions are appealable to the Shari’a Appellate Court.

Third Level

Court of Appeals

At the third level is the Court of Appeals (CA), which exercises its powers, functions, and duties through 23 Divisions of three members each. The CA’s 18th, 19th, and 20th Divisions comprise the CA Visayas, located in Cebu City; while the 21st, 22nd, and 23rd Divisions make up CA Mindanao, situated in Cagayan de Oro City. The CA is assigned to review cases elevated to it from the RTCs as well as quasi-judicial agencies such as the Civil Service Commission, Securities and Exchange Commission, National Labor Relations Commission, and the Land Registration Authority.

The CA also reviews death penalty cases as well as decisions of the Office of the Ombudsman in administrative disciplinary cases. The CA is a collegiate court and may sit en banc only for the purpose of exercising administrative, ceremonial, or other non-adjudicatory functions. Being essentially an appellate court, it generally resolves cases only on the basis of records, but in certain
instances, it may also try cases, conduct hearings, and receive evidence.

The Philippine Judicial System also includes two special courts: the Sandiganbayan and the Court of Tax Appeals.

Sandiganbayan

The Sandiganbayan is an anti-graft court that tries public officers – including their co-accused private persons – charged with criminal cases involving graft and corrupt practices as well as corresponding civil cases for the recovery of civil liability. The Sandiganbayan is composed of a Presiding Justice and 14 Associate Justices who sit in five divisions of three Justices each. Like the CA, its decisions are directly appealable to the Supreme Court.

Court of Tax Appeals

The CTA is composed of a Presiding Justice and five Associate Justices, and may sit en banc or in two divisions of three justices each. Republic Act 9282, which took effect on March 30, 2004, has elevated the status of the CTA to that of the CA. It has exclusive jurisdiction to review on appeal decisions in cases involving disputed assessments, refunds of internal revenue taxes, fees, or other charges, penalties in relation thereto, or other matters arising under the National Internal Revenue Code or Tariff and Customs Code. It also exercises original jurisdiction over all criminal offenses arising from violations of the Tax or Tariff Codes and other laws administered by the Bureau of Internal Revenue or the Bureau of Customs.

Fourth Level

Supreme Court

At the apex of the judicial hierarchy is the Supreme Court. It is composed of a Chief Justice and 14 Associate Justices who sit en banc or in three divisions of five members each. It has the power to settle actual controversies involving rights that are legally demandable and enforceable, and to determine whether or not there has been grave abuse of discretion amounting to lack or excess of jurisdiction on the part of any branch or instrumentality of the government.

The Supreme Court is considered “the court of last resort” since no more appeals can be made from a judgment or decision on the merits rendered by this court. A decision of a Supreme Court division is considered a decision of the entire Court. Decisions of the Supreme Court are considered as part of the law of the land.
Chief Justice Hilario G. Davide, Jr.
November 30, 1998 to December 20, 2005

The 20th Chief Justice of the Philippine Supreme Court, Chief Justice Davide is the brain and moving spirit behind the Court's Action Program for Judicial Reform (APJR). He was appointed to the SC on January 24, 1991 and was named Chief Justice on November 30, 1998. He is the chairman of the Court’s First Division and the ex officio chairman of the Presidential Electoral Tribunal, and the Judicial and Bar Council.

Chief Justice Davide has occupied positions in all three branches of the government. Prior to his stint in the judiciary, he served as Chairman of the Commission on Elections (1988-1990) and Assemblyman in the Interim Batasang Pambansa (1978-1984). He was a delegate to the 1971 Constitutional Convention and was among the 50 Commissioners in the 1986 Constitutional Commission which drafted the 1987 Constitution. In 1999, he was thrust into the national spotlight when he presided over the impeachment trial against deposed President Joseph E. Estrada.

Chief Justice Artemio V. Panganiban
December 21, 2005 to December 7, 2006

Artemio V. Panganiban is the 21st Chief Justice of the Philippines, becoming its first primus inter pares in the 21st Century. With “liberty and prosperity” as his North Star, he has accelerated the implementation of more than one hundred wide-ranging projects under the APJR launched by his immediate predecessor, retired Chief Justice Davide, capped by an international conference of chief justices and jurists in Manila late last year. His able stewardship of the judicial branch of Government has already been distinguished with the promulgation by the Supreme Court of three landmark decisions championing political and civil rights in the first four months of his term. His judicial philosophy and vision for the Judiciary are amply articulated in the ten books – one for each year of his magistracy – that he has written so far.

Prior to his appointment to the Supreme Court as Associate Justice in 1995, Chief Justice Panganiban has also chalked up impressive achievements in law practice, the academe, business, and even media (as president of the Philippine Daily Inquirer). He was likewise active in the promotion of tourism and commerce. He has served as president, director, or officer of several civic and business organizations at various times. He also holds the distinction of being the only Filipino named by the late Pope John Paul II to the Pontifical Council for the Laity for the 1996-2001 term.

An activist even in his youth, he founded and headed the National Union of Students of the Philippines (NUSP), the largest organization of students in the country up the present, even as he was the youngest and first sophomore student to be elected as president of the central student council of the Far Eastern University from where he earned his law degree in 1960, cum laude, and proceeded to place 6th in the Bar examinations held that same year. He has reciprocated the honor by becoming the first FEU alumnus to be appointed Chief Justice of the Philippines.

He is married to Elenita Carpio, until recently Associate Dean of the Asian Institute of Management. Their union has been blessed with five highly accomplished children.
Senior Associate Justice Reynato S. Puno

Justice Puno is the most senior of the associate justices and concurrently chairs the Court’s Second Division and the Senate Electoral Tribunal (SET).

Prior to his appointment to the Supreme Court on June 28, 1993, he served, among others, as Associate Justice of the Intermediate Appellate Court and the Court of Appeals (CA), Deputy Minister of Justice, Assistant Solicitor General, and City Judge of Quezon City. He holds the distinction of being the youngest appointee to the CA at the age of 40.

He obtained his Bachelor of Science in Jurisprudence and Bachelor of Laws degrees from the University of the Philippines in 1962, and pursued his post-graduate studies in the United States on full scholarship. He obtained his Master of Comparative Laws at the Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, with high distinction and as valedictorian of his class; his Master of Laws at the University of California, Berkeley, California; and finished all the academic requirements of the degree of Doctor of Juridical Science at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, Illinois. In 2005, he became the first Filipino recipient of the Distinguished Global Alumnus Award given by the Dedman School of Law, Southern Methodist University. He has been conferred honorary doctorate degrees by three Philippine universities and the Hannam University, South Korea.

Among other honors, he has served as editor of the Philippine Collegian, chosen as one of the Ten Outstanding Young Men of the Philippines in 1977, Araw ng Maynila Awardee as Outstanding Jurist in 1987, and Outstanding Alumnus, UP College of Law in 1996, and Ulirang Ama Awardee in 2005. A native of Manila, Justice Puno is married to the late SC Clerk of Court Luzviminda D. Puno with whom he has three children, Reynato, Jr., Emmanuel, and Ruth.

Justice Leonardo A. Quisumbing

Justice Quisumbing took up his LL.B. studies at the University of the Philippines and then earned his LL.M. degree from Cornell University in New York. During his student days, he was a college scholar, president of the UP Student Council, editor of the university paper, the Philippine Collegian, president of the Student Councils Association of the Philippines, and member of the National Debating Team to Australia that won the Wilmot Cup. He capped his many achievements by placing 12th in the 1966 Bar Examinations. His writing stint started at the M.L. Quezon University where he edited The Quezonian and where he graduated magna cum laude, A.B. Journalism. He has been awarded four honorary doctorate degrees in law, public administration, and humane letters.

He taught and practiced law for almost 15 years, then served government in various posts for over 21 years. Prior to his appointment to the Supreme Court in 1998, he was Secretary of Labor and Employment. Before that, he served as Undersecretary of the Department of National Defense during President Corazon C. Aquino’s administration and then Senior Deputy Executive Secretary to President Fidel V. Ramos. Before his court appointment, he also held the rank of Commodore of the Philippine Coast Guard, 106th Auxiliary Squadron.

Justice Quisumbing took special training in Management of Public Agencies at Cornell Graduate School, Research at Georgetown University, Communications at Michigan State University, and Public Sector Negotiations at Harvard University.


A native of Masbate, Masbate, Justice Quisumbing is married to Commission on Human Rights Chairperson Dr. Purificacion V. Quisumbing. They have two children, Josefa Lourdes and Cecilia Rachel.

Justice Consuelo Ynares - Santiago

Justice Ynares-Santiago served for 17 years as a trial judge and nine years as Court of Appeals justice. Her appointment to the Supreme Court on April 6, 1999 is eloquent proof of her outstanding and dedicated service, integrity, and competence.

Justice Santiago is a staunch advocate of children’s and women’s rights. She has attended and spoken in several local and international fora, including the 15th Annual Global Conference of the International Women’s Forum (1999) in Washington D.C., the Judicial Colloquium on the Application of International Human Rights Law at the Domestic Level (1999) in Vienna, Austria, the Judicial Administration and Reform Course (2002) in Sydney, Australia, 19th LAWSIA Conference (2005), in Queensland, Australia, and the Third Regional Seminar of Asian Constitutional Court Judges (2005) in Ulan Bator, Mongolia. She served as Bar examiner for Labor Law and Social Legislation in 1996 and Taxation in 1998. She is the recipient of several distinctions and awards, including the Gintong Ina Award and the Ulirang Ina Sectoral Award for Law and Judiciary.
Justice Sandoval-Gutierrez holds the distinctions of being the first recipient of the prestigious Cayetano Arellano Award as an Outstanding Regional Trial Court Judge of the Philippines and the first winner in the annual Best Written Decision/Judicial Essay Contest among RTC women judges sponsored by the Philippine Women Judges Association. She was chosen as Bar examiner in Criminal Law in 1994 and 1998. She is also an Ulirang Ina Awardee, her three children being all lawyers. Justice Gutierrez reached the peak of her career through the judicial ladder – from the Metropolitan Trial Court to the Regional Trial Court, Manila, then to the Court of Appeals and ultimately to the Supreme Court. Justice Gutierrez hails from Alitagtag, Batangas. She earned her Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of Santo Tomas and is its first alumna elevated to the Supreme Court. She attended judicial and legal courses in various universities in the U.S., such as Harvard Law School, Academy of American and International Law at the University of Texas, National Judicial College at the University of Nevada, and University of Southern California. Presently, she is a member of the House of Representatives Electoral Tribunal and chair of several Supreme Court committees, including the 2006 Committee on Bar Examinations.

Justice Angelina Sandoval-Gutierrez

At 52, this native of Davao City became the youngest appointee to the Supreme Court on October 22, 2001. A former Chief Presidential Legal Counsel, he was President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo’s first appointee to the High Court. Justice Carpio was also a former Senior Partner of the Carpio and Villaraza Law Offices and a former Regent of the University of the Philippines. He finished his Bachelor of Laws from the same university in 1975, graduating valedictorian and cum laude, and placed sixth in the Bar examinations conducted that year. He used to write columns for the Manila Times, the Sun Star Manila, and the Philippine Daily Inquirer until his appointment to the SC. The Chairperson of the SC Committee on Computerization and Library, Justice Carpio spearheaded the launching of the SC electronic library (E-Library) – the first web-based searchable electronic library in the Philippine Government. He is also co-chairman of the Committee on Halls of Justice and a member of the Committee on Legal Education and Bar Matters, Legislative-Executive Relations Committee, and Committee on Public Information.

Justice Antonio T. Carpio

Justice Ma. Alicia Austria - Martinez

Justice Austria-Martinez’s appointment to the Supreme Court on April 12, 2002 caps her 40th year of service in the government. Among the government positions she has previously held are as Associate Justice, then, Presiding Justice of the Court of Appeals, Executive Judge of the Regional Trial Court, Pasig City, and CA Division Clerk of Court. Born in Manila, Justice Martinez earned her Bachelor of Laws degree in 1962 from the University of the Philippines. She has also obtained a Master’s degree in National Security Administration in 1980 from the National Defense College of the Philippines where she eventually became the chairperson of the Panel of Examiners for Oral Defense in 1987, 1988, and 1991. She was examiner in Commercial Law and Remedial Law in the 1994 and 2000 Bar exams, respectively.

A native of Binangonan, Rizal, where she was born on October 5, 1939, she received the Pambayang Gawad Palosebo, the highest municipal award given to outstanding citizens of Binangonan, Rizal who have excelled in their professions and are role models for the youth. She is married to the late Atty. Francisco B. Santiago with whom she has four accomplished children: Pura Angelica, a lawyer; Jonas Francisco and Regina Carmela, both physicians; and Jennylind Allison, a Hotel and Restaurant Management graduate. Justice Santiago earned her Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of the Philippines in 1962.
A former Chief Presidential Legal Counsel, Justice Corona was appointed to the Supreme Court on April 9, 2002. Prior to his government service, Justice Corona distinguished himself in banking and finance. He was at one time connected with the Tax Division of SGV & Co. and the Commercial Bank of Manila.

He finished his Bachelor of Arts, with honors, at the Ateneo de Manila University and his Bachelor of Laws at the Ateneo Law School where he ranked 5th in the class of 1974. He thereafter pursued his MBA at the Ateneo Professional Schools. In 1982, he obtained his Master of Laws degree as a scholar from Harvard Law School, with concentration on foreign investment policies and the regulation of corporations and financial institutions.

Prior to his appointment to the Supreme Court, he held various positions in the Executive Department– Presidential Spokesman, Chief Presidential Legal Counsel, Acting Executive Secretary, and Presidential Chief of Staff.

He taught Corporation Law and other commercial law subjects at the Ateneo Law School for 17 years and wrote a regular column on tax and commercial law topics for several years. He was President of the Ateneo Alumni Association in 1991-1992. He was conferred the Philippine Legion of Honor Award (rank of officer) in 1998 and was named one of the Outstanding Manilans of 2005.

Four Presidents oversaw the rise of Justice Carpio Morales in the judiciary. In 1983, then President Ferdinand E. Marcos appointed her judge of the Pili, Camarines Sur Regional Trial Court, Branch 32. During the term of President Corazon C. Aquino, she was appointed to the Pasay City RTC, Branch 110. In 1994, then President Fidel V. Ramos appointed her to the Court of Appeals. She was appointed to the Supreme Court on August 26, 2002 by President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

Justice Carpio Morales pursued private law practice after passing the Bar and then worked at the Department of Justice – where she held the position of Special Assistant to then Justice Secretary Vicente Abad Santos and, later on, as Senior State Counsel – before joining the judiciary.

Born in Paoay, Ilocos Norte, she earned her Bachelor of Economics and Law degrees from the University of the Philippines.

Before his appointment to the Supreme Court in September 2002, Justice Callejo had already served the judiciary for 16 years. As RTC Judge, he twice received the Outstanding Judge Award and was also a recipient of the Cayetano Arellano Award for Judicial Excellence. As CA Justice, he was Chairperson of the Committee on Ethics and was a member of the Committee on the Revision of the Internal Rules. He chaired the Philippine Judicial Academy’s Department of Criminal Law, and, before his elevation to the Supreme Court, was a professor and bar reviewer at the Ateneo de Manila University, Far Eastern University, Arellano University, and San Beda College. He was the 2005 Bar Examinations Committee Chairman.

Born in Sta. Lucia, Ilocos Sur, he earned his Associate in Arts and Bachelor of Laws degrees from San Beda College where he graduated as class Silver Medalist.

Along with retired Chief Justice Hilario G. Davide, Jr., this native of Katipunan, Zamboanga del Norte was a delegate to the 1971 Constitutional Convention and was among the 48 members of the 1986 Constitutional Commission who drafted the 1987 Constitution. He earned his Bachelor of Laws degree, cum laude, from the Ateneo. After placing 4th in the 1962 Bar Exams, he began his public service working first as assistant private secretary to then Court of Appeals Presiding Justice Jose P. Bengzon. He headed the staff of Justice Bengzon when the latter was appointed to the Supreme Court in 1964.

Justice Azcuna did post-graduate studies on International Law at Salzburg University in Austria in 1977. He practiced law with the Bengzon Law Office and, later, with the Azcuna Yorac Sarmiento Arroyo and Chua Law Offices. He was appointed to the SC on October 17, 2002.

During the term of President Corazon C. Aquino, he served as Presidential Legal Counsel and was a member of President Aquino’s cabinet as Press Secretary and as Presidential Spokesperson. He also served as Chairperson of the Philippine National Bank for one year.
Justice Dante O. Tinga

Before his appointment to the Supreme Court on July 3, 2003, Justice Tinga served as dean of the College of Law at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (2001-2003) and the UE College of Law (1988-1992). He also served in Congress as Representative of the lone district of Taguig-Pateros for three consecutive terms from 1987 to 1998 where he was chosen by Congress beat reporters as outstanding Congressman every year.

Prior to his public career, he engaged in extensive private law practice, first as senior attorney at the Araneta Mendoza & Papa Law Offices, and later as senior partner at Santiago Tinga & Associates, as managing partner at the Pimentel Cuenco Fuentes Tinga Law Firm, and as managing partner of the Tinga & Corvera Law Firm.

Born in Taguig, Rizal (now Metro Manila), Justice Tinga finished his law course in 1960 at the University of the East College of Law at the top of his class, graduating magna cum laude. He passed the Bar examinations on the same year, placing 15th in a field of more than 4,000 examinees with a grade of 87.7%. He obtained his Master of Laws degree in 1970 from the University of California at Berkeley on a fellowship grant, specializing in corporation law, securities regulation, and international business transactions.

Justice Minita V. Chico-Nazario

Justice Chico-Nazario holds the distinction of being the first woman justice in the Sandiganbayan and its first woman Presiding Justice. She is also the first Sandiganbayan Presiding Justice to be appointed to the Supreme Court.

Her appointment to the High Court on February 10, 2004 is a homecoming of sorts, having served as the social secretary of the late SC Justice Juan Liwag after graduating from the University of the Philippines College of Law in 1962.

Justice Nazario served as Division Clerk of Court at the Sandiganbayan’s First Division (1981-1987) and was later appointed Regional Trial Court Judge of Biñan, Laguna (1987-1993). In 1993, she became the first woman justice of the anti-graft court.

She also held other government positions including Legal Researcher, Special Deputy Clerk of Court of the Court of First Instance, Judicial Supervisor of the Department of Justice, Supreme Court Judicial Assistant, and SC Senior Judicial Assistant. Likewise, she was a professor of law at the University of Perpetual Help in Las Piñas City (1994-1997).

Justice Nazario has to her credit more than 40 years of uninterrupted service in government prior to her SC appointment.

Born in San Miguel, Bulacan, Justice Nazario is the current president of the Philippine Women Judges Association. She was the Criminal Law Bar Examiner in 2000. Among other honors, she was named Ulirang Ina Awardee (For Law and Judiciary) in 2000 and Most Outstanding Kapampangan in the Field of Law in 2002.

Justice Cancio C. Garcia

Justice Garcia was the Presiding Justice of the Court of Appeals when he was elevated to the Supreme Court on October 6, 2004.

His appointment to the High Court fittingly caps 43 years of continuous and devoted government service which started initially at the executive branch when he joined the Legal Office of the Office of the President as legal assistant. In 1972, he was appointed Assistant Solicitor at the Office of the Solicitor General. He subsequently served as RTC judge from the cities of Caloocan and Angeles. His tenure in the Judiciary was briefly interrupted when he was appointed Assistant Executive Secretary for Legal Affairs early in the term of then President Corazon C. Aquino. In December 1990, Justice Garcia was appointed Associate Justice of the Court of Appeals, and, on April 2003, as Presiding Justice of the Appellate Court.

He is the co-author of A Study of the Philippine Constitution, published in 1975.

A son of Alttagtag, Batangas, Justice Garcia earned his Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of the Philippines in 1961. He was a member of the Order of Purple Feather, the UP Law Honor Society.

Justice Presbitero J. Velasco, Jr.

Justice Velasco became the fourth Court Administrator named to the Supreme Court when he was appointed on March 31, 2006. Appointed Court of Appeals Justice in 1998, Justice Velasco was ranked eighth in the disposition of cases when he was elevated to the position of Court Administrator in 2001. He also served as Undersecretary of the Department of Justice, Commissioner of the Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board and the Commission on Settlement of Land Disputes, and Chairman of the Board of Pardons and Parole.

Prior to joining the public sector as a regular member of the Judicial and Bar Council in 1993, Justice Velasco was a private law practitioner for 20 years. He served the Integrated Bar of the Philippines as its National President in 1987, as Commissioner of the IBP Committee on Bar Discipline, and as Honorary Chairman and Past National Co-Chairman of the IBP National Committee on Legal Aid.

After finishing his Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of the Philippines in only three years, Justice Velasco pursued his Bachelor of Laws degree from the same university where he became a member of the Order of the Purple Feather Honor Society and the Editorial Board of the Philippine Law Journal. In 1971, he graduated eighth in his class with a grade of 1.79 and placed sixth in the Bar exams with a bar rating of 89.85% in the same year.
The Office of the Clerk of Court (OCC) En Banc is the nucleus or the centerpoint of the whole administrative machinery of the Court. It assists the Court in its delicate task of adjudicating with finality all justiciable disputes, public, and private. One of its primary tasks is the preparation of the agenda of the Court En Banc in their weekly sessions. This office is headed by the Clerk of Court whose main responsibilities include the implementation of the policies formulated and the work programs set by the Court, through the Chief Justice; general supervision over personnel and administrative matters; and recommendation of courses of action on various matters ranging from personnel to non-judicial concerns. In addition, the Clerk of Court is the custodian of the Court’s funds, revenues, properties, and premises and is usually the liaison officer in all official matters and in relation to other government agencies.

Since the Court sits also in Divisions of five members each, three Offices of the Division Clerk of Court have been constituted to perform the administrative functions of the adjudicatory power of the Court.

Office of Administrative Services

The Office of Administrative Services (OAS) plans, recommends, and implements personnel management and development programs and administrative service functions of the entire Supreme Court, including the Presidential Electoral Tribunal (PET), Judicial and Bar Council (JBC), Philippine Judicial Academy (PHILJA), the Maintenance Sections of the Halls of Justice, the PHILJA Development Center, Inc., and the Mandatory Continuing Legal Education Office (MCLEO).

Fiscal Management and Budget Office

The Fiscal Management and Budget Office takes charge of the fiscal, budget, accounting and cashiering activities of the Court. This includes planning the budget and accounting work methods and procedures, preparing the estimates of the expenditures of the Judiciary, managing Court expenditures, and submitting budget estimates and financial reports. It is tasked with all financial transactions of the Supreme Court including those of the JBC, the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA), all the Halls of Justice, the PHILJA, the PET, and the MCLEO.

Office of the Chief Attorney

The Office of the Chief Attorney is the legal research office of the Supreme Court. It renders adjudicative support functions, such as planning, coordinating, and reviewing research and case studies. From time to time, it performs tasks specially assigned by the Chief Justice, Associate Justices, and the Clerks of Court.

Office of the Reporter

The Office of the Reporter is charged with the publication of the Philippine Reports, containing the decisions of the Supreme Court. It also prepares synopses, syllabi, and topical indices for the Philippine Reports, Monthly Decisions, and Monthly Digests.
Office of the Bar Confidant

The Office of the Bar Confidant manages the conduct of the annual Bar examinations, takes custody of the bar records and personal records of lawyers; assists the Court in disciplining lawyers; directs and supervises the investigation of complaints against bar candidates; monitors, updates, and maintains Court statistical data pertaining to the Bar examinations and related matters; and updates the list of the members of the Bar.

Management Information Systems Office

The Management and Information Systems Office is the information technology arm of the Supreme Court. It is tasked with providing technical expertise on the formulation of system design studies and application system development as well as support services on hardware maintenance. Its goal is to support and guide the Court in establishing a state-of-the-art information technology infrastructure to further its modernization program. It consults the Committee on Computerization on policies and implementation of new technology or the improvement of systems already used either in the Supreme Court or in lower courts.

Medical and Dental Services

The Medical and Dental Services attends to the medical and dental needs of Supreme Court justices, judges, officials and employees as well as of its component bodies such as the JBC and PHILJA. They also provide medical services during official activities, such as the Bar examinations and out-of-town seminars. The main form of service is by way of consultation and treatment. Medications are dispensed free whenever appropriate. Other services rendered are pre-employment and annual physical examinations, laboratory testing, psychological testing, and physical therapy.

Judicial Records Office

The Judicial Records Office (JRO) manages and superintends activities in connection with judicial processes from the filing of cases to the promulgation of decisions, entry of judgment, and remand of records of cases disposed of. It controls the receipt, processing, reporting, and distribution of pleadings filed before the Court. It takes custody of rollos and records of cases, including transcripts and exhibits. It prepares and keeps data or statistics on judicial cases.

Library Services

The Supreme Court Library Services is continuously being developed towards its goal of maintaining the highest standard of collection and services for the mission/vision of the Supreme Court and the whole judiciary and for judicial reform. It has maintained and has further improved its standards of being a Model Centennial Law Library. With the launching of the SC E-Library last November 19, 2004, it is now the sole government online digital law library in the Philippines.

Printing Services

The Printing Services addresses the printing requirements and needs of the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals, the Sandiganbayan, and the lower courts, and including attached institutions such as the PHILJA, the JBC, and the MCLEO.
Offices under the Office of the Chief Justice

Public Information Office

The Public Information Office (PIO)'s primary task is to disseminate, as promptly and as widely as possible, news about the Supreme Court and its decisions and provide the public with judicial information in a manner that they can easily comprehend. The primary objective of the PIO is to bring the Court closer to the people. It is not a public relations outfit but an information-based office which cultivates the Court’s good relations with the media and the general public.

Atty. Ismael G. Khan, Jr.
Assistant Court Administrator and Chief

Program Management Office

The Program Management Office (PMO) was created by the Supreme Court to coordinate and manage the implementation of the technical and administrative aspects of the judicial reform program. Its activities focus on project development, resource mobilization, advocacy for reform, procurement and contract management, monitoring, financial management, and administrative management.

Ms. Evelyn Toledo-Dumdum
Chief

Financial Services Division/Internal Audit Division

The Financial Services Division is in charge of all Supreme Court-funded payments while the Internal Audit Division takes charge of all those funded by the lower courts. These divisions inspect and audit supplies, equipment, vehicles, and buildings. They check bidding and progress reports before final payment of bills, making sure that there are proper documents supporting the cash outflow.

Mr. Nestor S. Caminero
Head

Other Offices

Mandatory Continuing Legal Education Office

In a resolution in Bar Matter No. 850 promulgated on August 22, 2000, the Court adopted the Rules on Mandatory Continuing Legal Education for Members of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (MCLE Rules) in order that lawyers in the country may keep abreast with law and jurisprudence, maintain the ethics of the profession, and enhance the standards of the practice of law. For this purpose, the Court promulgated Administrative Order No. 113-2003 creating a Mandatory Continuing Legal Education Office to carry out the objectives of the mandatory continuing legal education program. The MCLEO also sets the schedule of MCLE fees, in consultation with the IBP Board of Governors and with the approval of the Supreme Court.

Justice Carolina C. Griño-Aquino
Chairperson

Ms. Evelyn Toledo-Dumdum
Chief

Committee on Judicial Excellence

The Committee on Judicial Excellence is in charge of the annual Judicial Excellence Awards for outstanding members of the Judiciary. In choosing the awardees, the Committee on Judicial Excellence, through the Board of Judges, considers the nominees’ efficiency and effectiveness in carrying out their duties and responsibilities; their initiatives, innovativeness, and resourcefulness in meeting the exigencies of the service; public perception in terms of honesty, impartiality, diligence, avoiding impropriety, and appearance of impropriety in all activities, and upholding judicial integrity and independence; their noteworthy contributions to the administration of justice; and leadership in the judiciary and the community.

Atty. Ma. Luisa L. Laurea
Executive Director

Mr. Nestor S. Caminero
Head

Justice Carolina C. Griño-Aquino
Chairperson

Atty. Ismael G. Khan, Jr.
Assistant Court Administrator and Chief

Ms. Evelyn Toledo-Dumdum
Chief

Atty. Ma. Luisa L. Laurea
Executive Director
Pursuant to Section 6, Article VIII of the 1987 Constitution, the Supreme Court exercises administrative supervision over all lower courts. To properly discharge this constitutional mandate, the Court is assisted by the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA), which was created under Presidential Decree No. 828, as amended by Presidential Decree No. 842, and further strengthened in a Resolution of the Supreme Court dated October 24, 1996.

The OCA is tasked with the supervision and administration of 2,153 lower courts all over the country and all of their personnel. It likewise reports and recommends to the Supreme Court all actions that affect lower court management, personnel and financial administration, and administrative discipline. Christopher O. Lock heads the OCA.

The OCA is assisted by four line offices: the Office of the Administrative Services (OAS), the Court Management Office (CMO), the Financial Management Office (FMO), and the Legal Office.
The Presidential Electoral Tribunal (PET) is the sole judge of all contests relating to the election, returns, and qualifications of the President and Vice-President. It is composed of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court as Chairman and the 14 Associate Justices as Members. Officially supervising and administering the activities of the PET is Clerk of Court Atty. Ma. Luisa D. Villarama.

Pending before the PET is a vice-presidential protest filed by Loren Legarda questioning the election and proclamation of Noli de Castro as Vice-President of the Philippines in the May 10, 2004 national elections. Legarda contested election returns involving 9,007 precincts and ballots involving 124,404 precincts. She indicated as her pilot areas the provinces of Cebu, Pampanga, and Maguindanao, involving a total of 14,959 ballot boxes.

In 2005, the PET hired revisors and other support personnel such as tabulators, encoders, ballot box custodians, and ballot box handlers. On December 12, 2005, 25 revision teams were organized and commenced the revision of ballots. As of the end of 2005, the revision teams had already examined and revised the contents of 653 ballot boxes, with 14,306 ballot boxes still to be examined and revised.

The creation of the Judicial and Bar Council (JBC), which is under the administrative supervision of the Supreme Court, was an innovation in the 1987 Philippine Constitution. Its principal mandate is to recommend to the President at least three nominees for every vacant Judicial position as well as vacant positions of Ombudsman and Deputy Ombudsman.

The JBC performs its sacrosanct task of ensuring that the nominees possess not only the minimum constitutional qualifications but also the essential attributes of “proven competence, integrity, probity, and independence.” This is in consideration of the basic principle that the quality of the judiciary hinges on the quality of the members composing it, the assurance of such quality being necessarily intertwined with the selection process.

The JBC is headed by Chief Justice Artemio V. Panganiban as ex officio Chairman.

In 2005, 183 candidates were appointed out of the 2,523 applications for various judicial positions processed by the JBC. Nominations to 108 vacancies were pending in the Office of the President as of December 31, 2005.

For 2006, the JBC continues to pursue, as well as integrate into its day-to-day operations, reform measures with the end in view of further enhancing the quality of the selection process to ensure that only the best and the brightest are nominated to vacant judicial positions and to the positions of the Ombudsman and Deputy Ombudsman.

For 2005, the JBC processed a total of 2,523 applications for various judicial positions and for the position of Ombudsman.
Philippine Judicial Academy

The Philippine Judicial Academy was originally created by the Supreme Court under Administrative Order No. 35-96 on March 16, 1996, and finally mandated by RA 8557 on February 26, 1998. This Republic Act institutionalized PHILJA as a “training school for justices, judges, court personnel, lawyers, and aspirants to judicial posts.” It is headed by retired Supreme Court Justice Ameurfina Melencio-Herrera as Chancellor.

The PHILJA conducted 110 academic training programs in 2005, which included the International Conference and Showcase on Judicial Reforms, and the study tour components of delegates from the Supreme Court of Vietnam.

PHILJA also provided conventions and seminars, development programs for court personnel, a roundtable discussion for Bangko Sentral hearing officers, professorial competency programs, and discussion sessions on the New Code of Conduct for the Philippine Judiciary. It also launched special projects on environmental law and E-learning.

In addition, PHILJA was tapped as the prime mover for the Chief Justice Hilario G. Davide, Jr. Distinguished Lecture Series, a monthly activity marking the valedictory year of Chief Justice Hilario G. Davide, Jr. It also participated in the International Conference and Showcase on Judicial Reforms with a presentation on Alternative Dispute Resolution.

To declog court dockets, the PHILJA continues its efforts at improving the Court Annexed Mediation Project in the first and second level trial courts, which was spearheaded by the Academy in 1999. Recently, it launched the Appeals Court Mediation Project to expand the mediation project to cover cases pending with the Court of Appeals. Corollary, 2,290 cases were mediated under the Justice Reform Initiatives Support (JURIS) Project.

Likewise, PHILJA continues its partnership with development agencies in various programs, special focus seminars, workshops, and related activities. Some of these development partners are the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), The Asia Foundation, National Judicial Institute of Canada, Rule of Law Effectiveness, American Bar Association-Asia Law Initiative (ABA-ALI), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), British Embassy, United States-Asia Environmental Partnership (US-AEP), and the European Commission (EC).

As a fitting finale to a successful year, PHILJA received good news in the form of the Department of Finance’s official advice addressed to former Chief Justice Hilario G. Davide, Jr. of the approval by the Government of Japan of the Php300 million grant under the Non-Project Grant Assistance of Japan Counter Value Fund (NPGA-CVF) to finance the construction and equipping of the PHILJA Development Center in Tagaytay City.
GR No. 127882, February 1, 2005 (Res.)

The Court ruled with finality that the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 (RA 7942) and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) are constitutional.

In its December 1, 2004 resolution, the Court had overturned its January 27, 2004 decision declaring unconstitutional certain provisions in the Mining Law and the FTAA between the Republic of the Philippines and Western Mining Corporation Philippines (WMCP). In its December 1 resolution, it had also ruled that all but two provisions of the FTAA, executed in 1995 between the government and WMCP, do not contravene the Constitution. The Court had noted that the Constitution expressly allows service contracts in the large-scale exploration, development, and utilization of minerals, petroleum, and mineral oils via “agreements with foreign-owned corporations involving either technical or financial assistance” as provided by law.

Office of the Ombudsman v. Honorable Court of Appeals and Former Deputy Ombudsman for the Visayas Arturo C. Mojica
GR No. 146486, March 4, 2005

The Supreme Court declared that deputy ombudsmen are not impeachable officers. Under Article XI, sec. 2 of the Constitution, the only impeachable officers are the President, the members of the Supreme Court, the members of the Constitutional Commissions, and the Ombudsman. The Office of the Ombudsman was thus ordered to proceed with the investigation of the criminal and administrative cases against Deputy Ombudsman for Visayas Arturo C. Mojica.

GR No. 119775, March 29, 2005 (Res.)

The Court denied with finality the motions to reconsider its October 24, 2003 decision that, among others, declared unconstitutional the second sentence of sec. 3 of Presidential Proclamation No. 420. The provision granted tax exemptions and financial incentives to the John Hay Special Economic Zone (SEZ) similar to those enjoyed by the Subic SEZ under RA 7227 (Bases Conversion and Development Act of 1992). The Court reiterated its ruling that generally it is only the legislative branch which has the power to grant tax exemptions.

GR Nos. 96027-28, March 8, 2005

The Court denied the motion to reopen the case involving the murders of former Senator Benigno Aquino, Jr. and Rolando Galman because the requisites in determining whether evidence is newly-discovered to justify a new trial were not met.

Ronald Allan Poe a.k.a. Fernando Poe, Jr. vs. Gloria Macapagal Arroyo,
PET Case No. 002, March 29, 2005 (Res.)

The Court, sitting as the Presidential Electoral Tribunal, denied for lack of merit the motion of movie actress Susan Roces (Jesusa Sonora Poe in real life) to intervene and substitute for her late husband Fernando Poe, Jr. (Ronald Allan Poe in real life) in the latter’s election protest against President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. It held that Roces was not a real party in interest in the election protest as she will not directly benefit from the protest’s outcome.
**Rosendo Herrera vs. Rosendo Alba, minor, represented by his mother, Armi A. Alba and Hon. Nimfa Cuesta-Vilches**

GR No. 148220, June 15, 2005

The Supreme Court held that a DNA test is a valid probative tool to determine paternity. The Court said that there is nothing in the rules of evidence or law that prohibits the admissibility of a DNA test.

**Garcia vs. Sandiganbayan and Ombudsman**

GR No. 165835, June 22, 2005

The Supreme Court upheld the jurisdiction of the Sandiganbayan over and the authority of the Office of the Ombudsman to investigate, initiate, and prosecute the forfeiture case against Major General Carlos F. Garcia and his family.

**Sen. Aquilino Pimentel, Jr., et al. v. Office of the Executive Secretary, et al.**

GR No. 158088, July 6, 2005

The Court denied a petition to compel the executive branch of the government to transmit the signed text of the Rome Statute creating the International Criminal Court to the Senate even without the signature of the President. The Court held that it had no jurisdiction over actions seeking to compel the executive branch in the performance of its discretionary function.

**Coconut Oil Refiners Association, Inc., et al. v. Hon. Ruben Torres, et al.**

GR No. 132527, July 29, 2005

The Court held that the Clark Special Economic Zone cannot enjoy all the incentives granted to the Subic Special Economic and Free Port Zone (SSEZ) in the absence of an express grant of tax and duty-free privileges under RA 7227, the Bases Conversion and Development Act of 1992.

**Southern Cross Cement Corporation vs. Cement Manufacturers Association of the Philippines, et al. (Res.)**

GR No. 158540, August 3, 2005

The Court denied with finality the motion to reconsider its decision nullifying the imposition by the Department of Trade and Industry Secretary of a definitive safeguard duty of P20.60 per 40 kilogram bag on imported gray Portland Cement. It reaffirmed its earlier ruling that the Court of Tax Appeals, not the Court of Appeals, had jurisdiction to decide on a petition questioning the decision of the DTI Secretary in connection with the imposition of a safeguard measure under the Safeguard Measures Act.


G.R. No. 160792, August 25, 2005

The Court dismissed the appeal of Lt. SG Antonio Trillanes and several junior officers who led the July 2003 Oakwood mutiny from the dismissal of the Court of Appeals of their petition for
issuance of the writ of habeas corpus. It ruled that the writ of habeas corpus is not the proper remedy to address the detainee’s complaints against the regulations and conditions in the ISAFP Detention Center and will only be proper if what is challenged is the fact or duration of confinement.


The Supreme Court dismissed all five petitions assailing RA 9337 (the Expanded Value-Added Tax Law of 2005) and declared the tax law “not unconstitutional.”

On October 18, 2005, SC denied motions for reconsideration with finality and lifted the temporary restraining order issued last July 1, 2005.

Ernesto B. Francisco, Jr. v. The House Committee on Justice GR No. 169351, September 13, 2005

The Supreme Court dismissed lawyer Ernesto B. Francisco, Jr.’s petition that sought, among others, to nullify certain provisions of the Rules on Impeachment against President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo adopted by the House of Representatives and compel the Lower House to admit all three impeachment complaints against President Arroyo. The Court said that Francisco’s petition was “premature as no motion for reconsideration was filed with the House of Representatives” on the dismissal of the impeachment complaints against Arroyo.

Roque, Jr., et al. vs. Ermita, et al. (Res.) GR No. 169773, October 18, 2005

The Supreme Court dismissed, without prejudice to refiling in the appropriate trial court, the petition seeking to nullify and declare unconstitutional the US$503 million contract dubbed the “Northrail Project” signed by the government with a Chinese firm for the construction of railways from Caloocan City to Malolos, Bulacan.

Republic of the Philippines, Represented by the Presidential Commission on Good Government vs. Estate of Hans Menzi (Through its Executor, Manuel G. Montecillo), Emilio T. Yap, Eduardo M. Cojuangco, Jr., Estate of Ferdinand Marcos, Sr., and Imelda R. Marcos G.R. No. 152578, November 23, 2005

The Supreme Court declared 46,626 shares in the Bulletin Publishing Corporation in the name of Eduardo M. Cojuangco, Jr. as ill-gotten wealth. It held the PCGG as the legal owner of the block of shares and directed the PCGG, in accordance with the June 9, 1988 Agreement it entered into with the Bulletin, to transfer ownership of the shares to the Bulletin Publishing Corporation.

Republic, et al. v. Judge Gingoyon and PIATCO (Res.) GR No. 166429, December 19, 2005

The Supreme Court ordered the Philippine Government to pay PIATCO over Php3 billion before it can take over the NAIA Terminal 3. The amount represents the proffered value of the NAIA 3 facilities.
SIGNIFICANT RULES AND GUIDELINES

GUIDELINES FOR THE FORFEITURE OF REAL PROPERTY BONDS AND DISPOSAL OF THE FORFEITED REAL PROPERTY
A.M. No. 05-3-06-SC, April 12, 2005

The Guidelines provide that if a property bond is forfeited pursuant to Rule 114, sec. 21 of the Revised Rules on Criminal Procedure, the bondsman shall be given 60 days to pay the amount of bail. If the bondsman fails to pay the amount, the property shall be sold in a public auction after notice is given to the bondsman and the notice of sale is published in a newspaper of general circulation in the province where the property is located. The proceeds of the sale shall accrue to the Judiciary Development Fund up to the amount of the bail. The rest shall be turned over to the bondsman after subtracting administrative expenses.

If there is no bid higher than the value of the property, a second auction sale will be conducted 30 days after the first auction sale for properties valued at not more than Php50,000 or on the date indicated in the published notice of sale for properties valued at more than Php50,000. If the second sale is again unsuccessful, the officer conducting the sale shall make a return of the proceedings to the court that ordered the forfeiture. In turn the court must order the Register of Deeds where the property is located to transfer the ownership of the property to the Government in the name of the Supreme Court. The title shall then be submitted to the Committee on Disposal of Real Property Bonds.

The Committee, which is also tasked to monitor the forfeiture and disposal of real property bonds, shall then recommend the appropriate action over the confiscated properties. These recommendations may range from the sale of the property to the use of the property by the Judiciary or any other government entity.

ON THE CONTINUING ASSASSINATIONS/INTENTIONAL KILLINGS OF JUDGES WHILE IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR DUTIES
A.M. No. 04-6-18-SC, April 5, 2005 and October 4, 2005

Under the Guidelines for Detail of Court Personnel as Security of Judges, a judge who receives a direct threat may apply with the Philippine National Police (PNP) for protective security. A direct threat is defined as “an actual threat of danger or physical harm.” On the other hand, should it be felt that the judge is under an imminent threat, or if the judge’s request to the PNP is denied, the judge may apply with the Security Committee for authority to designate a member of the judge’s staff as an escort. An imminent threat is defined as “a probable danger of death or physical harm.” Only one employee of the court may be designated as an escort by the judge.


On October 4, 2005, the Court issued another resolution approving the Guidelines for the Special Processing Privileges for Firearms of judges. These Guidelines are aimed at facilitating the judges’ application for permits to carry firearms outside their residences.
Several judicial officials and employees, as well as members of the Philippine Bar, were penalized for various offenses in 2005.

Employees who had the habit of leaving their workstations after punching in their bundy cards were sternly warned (AM No. 04-11-671-RTC, October 14, 2005). The Court said such employees might be charged with “loafing,” an offense defined under Civil Service Rules as “frequent unauthorized absences from duty during regular hours.”

The Court suspended for three months a lower court stenographer for willful failure to pay just debts and misconduct (Bernal, Jr. v. Fernandez, AM No. P-05-2045, July 29, 2005). The same person was reprimanded in another case (Marata v. Fernandez, AM No. P-04-1871, August 9, 2005) for a similar offense and fined Php5,000 for gross insubordination.

A lower court utility worker paid a great price for using a codigo which she hid in her handkerchief while taking the Civil Service examination. The Court ordered her dismissal from service for dishonesty (CSC v. Javier, AM No. P-05-1981, April 6, 2005) for a similar offense and fined Php5,000 for gross insubordination.

The Court did not spare even those who had committed infractions but had already retired or resigned from the judiciary. It found a dismissed Caloocan RTC judge guilty of gross inefficiency and fined him Php20,000 for failing to observe the mandatory 90-day period within which to decide cases and motions (AM No. RTJ-04-1830, January 17, 2005). A lower court employee who had resigned was fined Php40,000 for dishonesty and grave misconduct in connection with the loss of part of the money used as evidence in a drug case before the Cebu City RTC. He would have been dismissed had he not resigned (AM No. 03-3-179-RTC, January 26, 2005).

Some lawyers were disbarred and suspended by the Court for committing infractions. A former Basco, Batanes RTC judge was disbarred by the Court after he continued to represent clients with conflicting interest in spite of being previously admonished for such actions (AC 5580, June 15, 2005). Another lawyer, a former Municipal Administrator of Cainta, Rizal, was also disbarred after he was found guilty of violating the Code of Professional Responsibility for notarizing a special power of attorney purportedly executed by a person when in fact the latter had already died in 2000 (AC No. 5864, April 15, 2005). Still another was disbarred for acquiring for himself his client’s lots, the titles of which had been entrusted to him (AC No. 1526, January 31, 2005).

The Court suspended a lawyer indefinitely after he was found guilty of direct contempt of court and gross misconduct as an officer and member of the bar for filing a pleading entitled “A Practicing Lawyer’s Plaint” that insinuated that “something is indeed amiss” and “there is a lot of corruption going around involving justices” (GR No. 159288, April 4, 2005).

For snubbing a client, another lawyer was meted a year’s suspension. He was found guilty of violating Rules 18.03 and 18.04 of the Code of Professional Responsibility after neglecting to file a pleading and to keep his client informed of the status of the latter’s cases (AC No. 6026, November 29, 2005).

But to raise the morale of judicial officers, as well as to protect its own, the Court not only dismissed a baseless complaint for grave misconduct, abuse of judicial office, and/or gross ignorance of the law against a Kabancalan, North Cotabato Municipal Circuit Trial Court (now a Midsayap, North Cotabato Regional Trial Court) judge but also fined the complainant (AM No. MJT-05-1601, August 11, 2005).
# Data on Administrative Complaints

## JUSTICES

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SC Justices</th>
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**SC Justices are impeachable officers.**

## LOWER COURT JUDGES

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RTC Judges</th>
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## COURT PERSONNEL

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### DATA ON ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINTS

#### RTC, MeTC, MTCC, MTC, and MCTC Personnel

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**Source:**
*Docket and Clearance Division, Legal Office, OCA and the Complaints and Investigation Division, OAS*

### LAWYERS

#### PENALTY IMPOSED

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**Source:** *Office of the Bar Confidant*
Employee Welfare and Benefits

Special Allowance for the Judiciary (SAJ)

RA 9227 (An Act Granting a Special Allowance for Justices, Judges, and those Holding Ranks Equivalent to Justices of the Court of Appeals and the Regional Trial Court) was enacted in 2003. It granted justices, judges, and other judiciary officials having similar rank special allowances equivalent to 100 percent of the individual basic monthly salaries under the Salary Standardization Law. Its implementation was spread uniformly over the span of four years in amounts equivalent to 25 percent of the basic salaries covered for each installment. The fourth and final installment is to be released on November 2006. Any excess in the fund for a given period was given to the other judiciary employees.

Additional Cost of Living Allowance from the Judiciary Development Fund (JDF)

PD 1949 created a Judiciary Development Fund. The JDF is derived from the increase in legal fees since 1984, and from other sources, such as, Bar examination fees, interest on deposits of its income, confiscated bail bonds, income from publications of the Supreme Court Printing Press, and rentals of facilities in Halls of Justice. Section 1 of PD 1949 provides that “[t]he Fund shall be used to augment the allowances of members and personnel of the Judiciary and to finance the acquisition, maintenance, and repair of office equipment and facilities.” It also provides that at least 80 percent of the Fund shall be used for cost of living allowances, and that not more than 20 percent of the said Fund shall be used for office equipment and facilities of the various courts.

The 80 percent of the JDF is distributed monthly to all employees in proportion to their basic monthly salaries. Those who have rendered at least six months of service are entitled to this benefit.

Personal Economic Relief Assistance (PERA) and Additional Compensation

These amount to Php500 each or a total of Php1000 per month, received by each employee upon assumption of duty.

Productivity Incentive Benefit

This is based on productivity and performance as evaluated by the heads of the respective offices. Employees who have a performance rating of at least “satisfactory” and have rendered actual government service for at least one year are entitled to receive this.

Year-End Bonus & Cash Gift

Judiciary employees receive, every December, a bonus equivalent to the actual base monthly salary as of October 31 of each year and a cash gift of Php5,000. Those who have been in the service from January 1 to October 31, and those who have rendered at least four months of service inclusive of leaves of absence with pay receive this benefit.

Clothing Allowance

Under Memorandum Circular No. 06-2005 “Grant of Uniform or Clothing Allowance and Wearing of Office Uniform in the Judiciary” issued by Chief Justice Davide last October 13, 2005, employees who have rendered at least one year of service were given clothing allowance.
Educational Support Program for the Lower Courts (ESP-LC)

The program grants lower court personnel who are going to take the Bar and Board examinations an official study leave with pay for six months.

For 2005, a total of 138 applications were approved, a 4.3 percent increase from 2004.

Loyalty Award

This is granted to employees who have rendered an initial 10 years in the judiciary and every five years thereafter.

Shuttle Bus Service

As part of the SC’s program to extend additional economic benefits, 10 shuttle buses help personnel save transportation expenses. Each bus has a fixed route: Bulacan, Las Piñas, Cainta, Valenzuela, Novaliches, Fairview, Laguna, Cavite, and Marikina.

Motorcycle and Computer Acquisition Program (MCMAP)

The program grants interest free motorcycle and computer loans to qualified process servers and stenographers, respectively, for a period of not more than five years for motorcycle loans, and three years for computer loans. Loans are funded through the JDF and are amortized monthly.

On September 20, 2005 the Court issued a resolution that expanded the program and allowed justices, trial court judges, and SC lawyers to benefit from the Computer Acquisition Program. For 2005, 68 out of 142 applications were approved.

Medical and Dental Services

In 2005, the Supreme Court Clinic serviced a total of 23,668 patients from the SC and other courts nationwide. Majority of the patients (86%) came in for BP monitoring, pre-employment physical and psychological examination, and the provision of medication, specifically the administration of vaccinations for meningococemia.

Upper respiratory tract infections accounted for 24% of cases in 2005. Hypertension cases decreased to 19% from last year’s 22%, while there was a slight increase in the number of cases of diabetes mellitus going up to 10%.

Psychological testing for 2005 totaled 220 subjects, the volume comprised new applicants or appointees to various SC positions, while the rest were done for either disability retirement or diagnostic purposes.

The SC Clinic also performed various dental services for court employees in 2005 registering a total of 3,369 patients. Services varied from oral prophylaxis (11%), simple procedures such as temporary filling (6%) or extraction (8%), to more advanced procedures such as permanent filling (17%), and gum treatment (30%).
Chief Justice Hilario G. Davide, Jr. Distinguished Lecture Series

The Chief Justice Hilario G. Davide, Jr. Distinguished Lecture Series was a year-long monthly activity that seeks to promote the Chief Justice’s vision of “a Judiciary that is independent, effective and efficient, and worthy of public trust and confidence; and a legal profession that provides quality, ethical, accessible, and cost-effective legal service to our people and is willing and able to answer the call to public service” as laid down in the Davide Watch. The lectures were free, open to the public, and MCLE-accredited.

Lecturers were retired Justice Jose C. Vitug, Senior Associate Justice Reynato S. Puno, former University of the Philippines College of Law Dean Raul Pangalangan, Australian High Court Justice Michael Donald Kirby, Guatemalan Chief Justice Rodolfo De Leon Molina, Ateneo Law School Dean Emeritus Fr. Joaquin Bernas, former Senate President Jovito Salonga, World Bank East Asia Pacific Region Chief Legal Counsel Anthony Gerald Toft, Justice Leonardo A. Quisumbing, CA Justices Regaldoo E. Maambong and Oscar M. Herrera (Ret.), Manuel Luis Quezon University President and former Ateneo Law Dean Eduardo D. de los Angeles, UP Professor Marvic MVF Leonen, and Justice Artemio V. Panganiban. Lecture topics included judicial reform, recent legal trends and issues, as well as Chief Justice Davide’s contribution to governance and to the judiciary. Chief Justice Davide himself gave the final lecture on the State of the Philippine Judiciary.

International Conference and Showcase on Judicial Reforms

The International Conference and Showcase on Judicial Reforms (ICSJR), the first and largest gathering of Chief Justices and heads of judicial reform programs in the Asia-Pacific Region, was held on November 28-30, 2005 at the Shangri-La Hotel, Makati City.

The ICSJR was aimed at facilitating the sharing of ideas, experiences, best practices, and reform initiatives that address issues on judicial independence, integrity, transparency, accountability, efficiency, and access to justice.

Aside from lectures and discussions, there was also a showcase of the Philippine judiciary’s various reform projects, as well as reform projects from other countries.

Participants of the Conference also signed the Manila Declaration, where they committed to the establishment of the Asia Pacific Judicial Reform Forum, to facilitate knowledge...
sharing on judicial reform experiences, lessons learned, best practices, model reform experiences, and possible common approaches to address issues judiciaries face in the 21st century. The Judicial Reform Network in the 21st Century (JRN21) Website was also launched.

PHILJA-San Beda Graduate School of Law Consortium

The Academy endorsed 21 applicants to the program composed of five regional trial court judges, seven first level court judges, one Clerk of Court, and eight Pre-Judicature Program graduates.

Judge Eduardo B. Peralta, Jr., Presiding Judge of the Manila RTC, Branch 17, topped this year’s batch, graduating cum laude with a Master of Laws degree, major in Jurisprudence. PHILJA Chancellor Ameurfina A. Melancio Herrera was also conferred an honorary Doctor of Laws degree in a Special Academic Convocation.

Pilot Testing of the Modules on Psychological Incapacity and Electronic Evidence

From December 1, 2004 to February 28, 2005, 100 judges from first and second level courts nationwide pilot-tested the modules on psychological incapacity and electronic evidence under the E-Learning training program.

The PHILJA-administered E-Learning program is an internet-based distance education program where participants are able to learn from the e-modules in the comfort of their offices or homes. They may in the process query the mentors, who in turn respond promptly with the requested information.

The program has obtained positive feedback from majority of its participants.

Development Programs for Court Personnel

In the first quarter of 2005, PHILJA held Regional Judicial Career Enhancement Programs Level 4 (RJCEP) for 854 judges and 1,424 court personnel from nine regions of the country. These included workshops on the New Code of Judicial Conduct for the Philippine Judiciary and the Code of Conduct for Court Personnel.

Special Focus Programs on the two Codes were also implemented. Other seminars were held on the use of forensic DNA technology, restorative justice, recent developments in tax laws and jurisprudence for Court of Tax Appeals attorneys, and juvenile justice.

PHILJA also held three professional enhancement seminars for 152 Court of Appeals lawyers in Manila and Cebu. Topics included rules of procedure in cases involving violence against women and their children and developments in appellate procedures, and civil, commercial, and constitutional law.

The Academy, together with the National Judicial Institute Canada (NJi) JURIS Project, also administered two workshops focusing on new and emerging trends in judicial education, evaluation methodologies, and the formulation of different modules that focused on a “skills-based” approach in key areas such as ethics, communication, gender sensitivity, and commercial law.

Employee Development and Training

The Office of the Administrative Services (OAS) Employee Development and Training Division conducted a total of 31 training programs for 2005. Seminars and workshops included those on the Code of Conduct Conduct for Court Personnel, Supervisory Development and Service Delivery Enhancement courses for court personnel, as well as teambuilding workshops for judicial staff and personnel from the Office of the Court Administrator.

Judiciary IT Literacy Program

The program included mandatory topics on basic computer concepts, viruses, security, legal research, office productivity tools, internet, and e-mail.

Justices from the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, Sandiganbayan, and the Court of Tax Appeals were beneficiaries of the program.

The MISO also conducted training and tutorials on application software for the different offices of the Supreme Court. It also extended technical assistance and orientation on the use of the legal research facility to lower court judges.
Significant Accomplishments of SC Committees

The Standing and Ad Hoc Committees of the Court continued to make substantial contributions to the dispensation of its constitutionally mandated responsibilities in 2005. Among these significant contributions are the following:

Standing Committees

Management Committee and Component Working Committees for the Judicial Reform Support Project (JRSP)

The Committee was formed to support the development of a more effective and accessible judicial system that fosters public trust and confidence. Under the Management Committee are working committees that oversee the four components of the JRSP: Improving Case Adjudication and Access to Justice, Enhancing Institutional Integrity, Strengthening the Institutional Capacity of the Judiciary, Ensuring Stakeholder Support for Reform, and Strengthening the Program Management Office.

The highlight of the JRSP for 2005 was the International Conference and Showcase on Judicial Reform, the first and largest gathering of Chief Justices and judiciary officials from all over the world on judicial reform.

Committee on Public Information

To foster better understanding between the judiciary and the business sector, the Committee conducted Chamber-to-Chamber Dialogues from April to November 2005 in partnership with the United States Agency for International Development through The Asia Foundation. Participants included seven foreign business chambers, 17 local chambers, and the Banker’s Association of the Philippines (BAP).

The first phase was a dialogue and action planning to get feedback from the business sector on issues that affect the judiciary. The second phase presented the judiciary’s actions on these issues and promoted mediation as a means of settling disputes.

Committee on Computerization

Besides overseeing the CFM and CAMIS Projects, the Committee had approved the procurement of the ISO 17799 tool kit, an internationally recognized set of controls comprising best practices on information security. This will be the basis for the formulation of more comprehensive computer guidelines and policies.

Also part of the Committee’s continuing efforts to modernize the Court’s facilities was the transfer of various legacy
computerized systems developed by the Management Information Systems Office to new blade servers last September 2005. The acquisition of blade servers helped in the construction of the data center that presently houses the servers and the rack-based UPS system.

Committee on Library, Records Management, Legal Research, and Printing

Through this Committee’s initiatives, the Court launched the SC Electronic Library (E-Library). The web-based system provides a more efficient legal research facility for justices, judges, and legal researchers. It is the first web-based searchable electronic library in the Philippine government.

The E-Library contains a compilation of Supreme Court decisions and resolutions from 1996 to the present, as well as recently released circulars and orders uploaded on a daily basis to provide timely information and updated research materials. Once completed, the E-Library will establish a network of court libraries, which will provide a complete, comprehensive, and updated electronic compilation of all legal information to the judiciary and the general public. Digitization of Supreme Court decisions from 1901-1995, as well as the completion of procurement for Open Book Scanners to update the services of the Library are also in the works.

Committee on Gender Responsiveness in the Judiciary

The goal of the Committee on Gender Responsiveness is to create a more gender sensitive judiciary. The Committee is also tasked to create rules, systems, and procedures that are more gender responsive, as well as increase the accessibility of these systems to women and children.

In 2005, the Sub-Committee on Training and Capability Building conducted focus group discussions and the worked on the development of modules for gender sensitivity trainings.

Committee on Protocol

The Committee on Protocol is responsible for carrying out the social and ceremonial functions of the Supreme Court involving courtesy calls, airport courtesies, diplomatic functions, reception for visiting dignitaries, and dialogues and meetings between the members of the Court and visiting dignitaries or members of the diplomatic community.

The members of the Committee underwent two training courses – “Protocol, Etiquette and Social Graces,” and a “Conference Management Training Course” – in preparation for the ICSJR.

Committee on Legal Education and Bar Matters (CLEBM)

The CLEBM's Knowledge-Sharing Forum on Professional Examinations held at the Hyatt Hotel, Manila last August 12, 2005 was attended by several law deans from all over the country. Resource persons included officials of the Professional Regulations Commission, Civil Service Commission, and the University of the Philippines Admissions Office. On October 6-7, 2005, the CLEBM held a seminar on Multiple Choice Questions for the Bar Examinations at the Pan Pacific Hotel, Manila. Speakers were Dr. Susan Case, Director for Testing of the U.S. Bar Examinations, and Dr. Milagros Ibe, Dean of the Graduate School, Miriam College. Both seminars were conducted in coordination with the Program Management Office and the ABA-Asia Law Initiative.

A task force was formed to facilitate the establishment and operation of the Legal Education Board to address a report of Atty. Carmelita P. Yadao-Sison Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Representative, on applications to form law schools, review centers, or subjects recommended for offerings in law schools. Justice Vicente V. Mendoza (Ret.) was named Chairman and UP Law Dean Salvador Carlota, Arellano University Law Dean Mariano Magsalin, and Atty. Rogelio Vinluan were named to the task force.

The Court En Banc also approved three recommendations by the Committee on the establishment of clinical legal education programs in Xavier University in Cagayan De Oro, Marcelo H. del Pilar College of Law of the Bulacan State University, and the Aquinas University College of Law in Legaspi City.

Committee on Advanced Syllabi

For 2005, the Committee on Advanced Syllabi completed 11 copies of Monthly Case Digests for the months of February-December 2004 and printed a total of 33,000 copies by September. By the end of the year, three more Monthly Case Digests covering the first quarter of 2005 were printed.

Committee on Legislative-Executive Relations

This Committee has been strengthened to improve relations with the the Executive and Legislative branches. Its functions have also been expanded to include liaising with the other departments to get support for the constitutionally mandated fiscal autonomy of the judiciary and better compensation for judicial personnel. Per Memorandum Order No. 37-2005 dated August 5, 2005, its membership now includes the presiding justices of the Court of Appeals, the Sandiganbayan, and the Court of Tax Appeals.
The Supreme Court Health and Welfare Plan Committee

The Supreme Court Health and Welfare Plan (SCHWP) is a medical assistance scheme for justices, judges, officials, and employees of the Supreme Court and lower courts. Its standard benefits include annual hospitalization (Php50,000), out-patient medical care (Php20,000), and a burial benefit (Php20,000).

For 2005, a total of 3,948 claims were evaluated by the screening committee. Medical claims accounted for 88 percent of the total. The total amount of claims amounted to Php37,804,310.27.

Supreme Court Program on Awards and Incentives for Service Excellence Committee (SC PRAISE)

Loyalty Award Program

In 2005, the Supreme Court Program on Awards and Incentives for Service Excellence (SC PRAISE) Committee honored Associate Justice Angelina Sandoval-Gutierrez with a loyalty award for her 40 years of service in the judiciary. Justice Gutierrez was the lone recipient of the gold ruby service pin.

The loyalty awards given by the SC PRAISE Committee totaled 218. It awarded 16 gold with pearl service pins for employees rendering 35 years of service, 42 gold service pins for 30 years of service, 65 silver service pins for 20 and 25 years of service, and 94 bronze service pins for 10 and 15 years of service. Each of the loyalty awardees also received a cash incentive.

Grant of Service Award Program

Included in its program of activities for 2005 was the awarding of Grant Service Awards for compulsory retirees in the amount ofTwenty Thousand Pesos (Php20,000.00), payable on the day of retirement. Among the compulsory retirees for 2005 was the late Atty. Luzviminda D. Puno, Clerk of Court, and Chief Justice Hilario G. Davide, Jr.

Personnel Development Committee

In 2005, some 117 Court employees availed of human resource development programs administered by the Personnel Development Committee. A total of 100 employees attended 25 local trainings, workshops, conferences, and conventions, while one employee participated in a foreign training program. Three employees were also granted foreign scholarships. On the other hand, 13 court employees were allowed to take study leaves to prepare for the Bar exams.

Bids and Awards Committees for the Judicial Reform Support Project (BAC-JRSP)

For 2005, 27 Resolutions were issued by the Bids and Awards Committee for the Judicial Reform Support Project (BAC-JRSP) covering the Access to Justice for the Poor Project, the computerization of the courts, the construction and/or renovation of Halls of Justice and mobile courts nationwide, and consultancy services for the courts, among others.

A total of Php9,292,013.00 worth of goods were procured under the BAC-JRSP, while 10 consultancy contracts worth Php39,800,250.00 were awarded.

Other Standing Committees

As of December 2005, the other Standing Committees of the Court included the Change Management Committee; Executive Committee for Judicial Reform Program; Selection and Promotion Board; Committee on Revision of the Rules of Court, with the Sub-Committee on E-Commerce, Sub-Committee on Juveniles Charged with Violation of the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act, and Sub-Committee on Notarial Practice; Raffle Committee for En Banc Cases; Committee on Computerization of Courts; Raffle Committee for Division Cases; Committee on Security; Reorganized Supreme Court Health and Welfare Plan Board, with the Sub-Committees Medical Screening Committee, Lower Court Medical Screening Committee “A”, and Lower Court Medical Screening Committee “B”; Committee on Bids; Bids and Awards Committees for the Maintenance, Security, and Janitorial Needs of the Halls of Justice; Committee on Disposal of Forfeited Real Property Bonds; and the Committee on Foreign-Assisted Projects Under the APJR.

AD HOC COMMITTEES

Bids and Awards Committee for Infrastructure Projects

Several contracts for the renovation of the Supreme Court Buildings in Manila and Baguio were approved for 2005 under the Bids and Awards Committee for Infrastructure Projects. These included contracts for the replacement of the broken marble slabs in the stairs leading to the lobby of the New Supreme Court Building as well as the restoration, strengthening, and enhancement
of its stone grounds; the improvement of a portion of the perimeter fence, including the fabrication and mounting of the Supreme Court seal; and repainting of the Supreme Court New Building.

The Task Force also submitted recommendations to expedite the disposition of cases, as well as an inventory of all cases pending before the Court En Banc and the Divisions.

### Procurement Planning Committee

As of December 31, 2005, the Procurement Planning Committee had spent a total of Php870,470,016.37 taken from the previous year’s approved budget of Php1,011,840,209.89.

### Shuttle Bus Committee

Despite an increase in fuel prices, the Court’s shuttle buses continued to ferry court employees to and from its fixed routes, namely, Bulacan, Las Piñas, Cainta, Valenzuela, Novaliches, Fairview, Laguna, Cavite, and Marikina.

The shuttle buses were also fully used to bring court personnel to the Chief Justice Hilario G. Davide, Jr. Lecture Series held in different academic institutions in Metro Manila. The buses also served the transportation needs of the various offices of the High Court for their training/workshops.

To further their technical and people skills, the shuttle bus drivers also went through a “Driver Development Course,” conducted by the Employee Training and Development Division of the Office of the Administrative Services (OAS).

### Other Ad Hoc Committees

As of December 31, 2005, other Ad Hoc Committees created by various administrative circulars of the Supreme Court included:

- Committee to Draft the Rules on Sexual Harassment; Bids and Awards Committee for Consultancy Services; Grievance Committee; Ad Hoc Committee on Justice on Wheels; Ad Hoc Committee to Formulate Guidelines on the Rates of Allowances for Local and Foreign Travels of Officials and Employees of the Judiciary; Ad Hoc Committee on Hazard Allowance; Sub-Committee for the Study, Drafting, and Formulation of the Rules Governing the Appointment of Notaries Public and the Performance and Exercise of their Functions; Task Force: Annual Chief Justice Awards for Outstanding Service in the Judiciary; Task Force: Formulate a Disclosure Policy for the Supreme Court; Task Force: Information Systems Strategic Plan for the Judiciary; Task Force: Judicial Electronic/Digital Imaging; and Task Force: Coffee Table Book on the Action Program for Judicial Reform.

### Bids and Awards Committee for Office Uniforms for the Supreme Court and Presidential Electoral Tribunal

For the year 2005, the Bids and Awards Committee for Office Uniform of the Supreme Court and Presidential Electoral Tribunal procured through public bidding office uniforms for 2,080 officials and employees. It had a budget allocation of Php8,320,000. From this amount, each official/employee was entitled to Php4,000 clothing allowance.

### Bids and Award Committee for Office Uniforms for the Lower Courts

In 2005, a total of 4,690 lower court employees from the Regional Trial Courts and Metropolitan Trial Courts in the National Capital Judicial Region were given uniforms for Calendar Year 2006. The total allocated budget was Php18,760,000.

### Task Force to Review the Status of Pending Cases

As of December 2005, the Task Force to Review the Status of Pending Cases submitted to the Office of the Chief Justice a list of the 1,834 criminal cases involving the penalties of death, reclusion perpetua, or life imprisonment that were transferred to the Court of Appeals pursuant to the ruling in People vs. Mateo.

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### SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF SC COMMITTEES

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Table of Organization

SUPREME COURT

Office of Administrative Services
Office of the Chief Attorney
Office of the Reporter
Office of the Bar Confidant
Judicial Records Office

Fiscal Management and Budget Office
Management Information Systems Office
Library Services
Medical and Dental Services
Printing Services

Legal Office
Court Management Office
Financial Management Office
Office on Halls of Justice

Office of Administrative Services
Office of the Jurisconsult
Offices of the Assistant Court Administrators
Offices of the Deputy Court Administrators

Program Management Office
Public Information Office

Chief Justice
Offices of the Associate Justices

Judicial and Bar Council
Office of the Clerk of Court 1st Division
Chief of the Clerk of Court 1st Division
Office of the Clerk of Court 2nd Division
Chief of the Clerk of Court 2nd Division
Office of the Clerk of Court 3rd Division
Chief of the Clerk of Court 3rd Division

Mandatory Continuing Legal Education Office

Associate Justice
Chief Justice
Office of the Associate Justice
Office of the Chief Justice

Philippine Judicial Academy
Council Judicial and Bar
Office of the Clerk of Court
