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Judiciary of Bhutan



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

ཁྲིམས་འོག་དབྱེར་མེད་དང་མཉམ།
Equal Justice Under Law

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“Our region is gaining momentum, and the world’s leading companies are looking to Asia for opportunity. Gelephu Mindfulness City will be a place where business can be conducted with confidence, supported by strong institutions, clear laws, and reliability. Asia holds the future, and we will build the gateway to Asia.”

His Majesty The King

17 December 2025



VISION

Strive to create a free, fair, just, and harmonious society through effective resolution of disputes and expeditious dispensation of justice.

MISSION

Safeguard, uphold, and administer justice fairly and independently without fear, favour, or undue delay in accordance with the rule of law to inspire trust and confidence and to enhance access to justice.



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FROM THE CHIEF JUSTICE OF BHUTAN

The Judiciary of Bhutan continues to uphold its sacred mandate of safeguarding justice, strengthening the rule of law, and ensuring peace and harmony within our society. The progress reflected in this Annual Report 2025 is the result of the tireless efforts, dedication, and integrity of our Judicial personnel across the nation. Through their commitment to timely adjudication, professionalism, and unwavering service to the people, we have sustained a positive trend in reducing case backlogs and enhancing the delivery of justice. This achievement is not merely statistical - it reflects renewed public confidence in our courts and reinforces the Judiciary's central role in nurturing accountability, fairness, and trust in governance.

As we stand at the crossroads of rapid social transformation, it is imperative that the Judiciary remains forward-looking, progressive, and responsive to the realities of our time. Human behavior, social interaction, and civic conduct are increasingly shaped by emerging technologies, digital platforms, and evolving cultural norms. These developments influence how individuals engage with one another and with institutions, creating new opportunities as well as new challenges. In such a dynamic environment, Judicial creativity, adaptability, and foresight are essential. Above all, trust remains our most precious yet fragile asset, given the solemn nature of our responsibilities and the profound impact of our decisions. We must therefore continue to strengthen institutional integrity, transparency, and compassion in the dispensation of justice, so that the Judiciary remains a steadfast pillar of confidence for present and future generations.

As we serve the Tsa-Wa-Sum, we draw constant inspiration from the timeless wisdom and guidance of His Majesty The King. It is our solemn duty to support and contribute to His Majesty's noble vision for the nation. In this journey, the ongoing evolution of the GMC initiative, born from His Majesty's aspirations, calls upon us to remain aware, prepared, and adaptive to Bhutan's future transformation - particularly its legal landscape - and to shape our Judicial institutions accordingly.

I extend my deepest gratitude to all members of the Judiciary for your dedication, and unwavering service to the nation. Your commitment to upholding the values of justice, unity, and national well-being reflects the highest traditions of our Judicial system. As we look ahead, may we continue to work together with wisdom, humility, and purpose, ensuring that the Judiciary remains strong, relevant, and worthy of the trust reposed in it by His Majesty The King, our people, and our nation.

Norbu Tshering
CHIEF JUSTICE OF BHUTAN
Supreme Court
Royal Court of Justice
Thimphu, Bhutan

ABOUT THE JUDICIARY



The Judiciary is one of the three arms of the Government, together with the Executive and the Legislature. The Judiciary comprises the Supreme Court, the High Court, Dzongkhag Courts, Dungkhag Courts and Bhutan National Legal Institute.

SUPREME COURT OF BHUTAN

The Supreme Court is headed by the Chief Justice of Bhutan. The Supreme Court consists of the Supreme Court Benches and Supreme Court Registry and is supported by the Judicial Administration team headed by the Registrar General of the Supreme Court. It hears both civil and criminal cases and is composed of 5 Benches, namely, Singye Bench, Langchen Bench, Tachog Bench, Maja Bench, and Khading Bench. It serves as the ultimate authority on the interpretation of laws. It has appellate jurisdiction over High Court order/decision/judgment and exercises its Advisory Jurisdiction whenever a question of law or a fact is referred to it by His Majesty The King for consideration.

HIGH COURT OF BHUTAN

Serving as the court of first instance for constitutional cases and providing appellate jurisdiction, the High Court is led by the Chief Justice of the High Court and six Justices. It is supported by its Administration team headed by the Registrar General of the High Court. It comprises of the Khorlo Bench and the Reldri Bench. Hears all civil and criminal appeals against decisions made by the Dzongkhag Courts and arbitration awards by the Alternative Dispute Resolution Centre.

DZONGKHAG COURTS

Dzongkhag Courts, 20 in total, serve as courts of first instance for most cases within their territorial jurisdiction and each Dzongkhag Court is presided over by a Drangpon. Few Dzongkhags have multiple benches. It exercises appellate jurisdiction over an appeal from order/decision/judgment of Dungkhag Courts.

DUNGKHAG COURTS

There are 15 Dungkhag Courts spread across 11 Dzongkhags. These courts serve as courts of first instance for cases within their jurisdiction and are presided over by a Dungkhag Drangpon. Phuentsholing and Gelephu Dungkhags have two benches each.

BHUTAN NATIONAL LEGAL INSTITUTE

The Bhutan National Legal Institute (BNLI) is the Judicial training institution, established on 25 February 2011 under the Judicial Service Act of Bhutan, 2007, through the vision and leadership of Her Royal Highness Princess Sonam Dechan Wangchuck. The Institute is entrusted with the mandate to advance legal education, professional training, and research in law and related disciplines, thereby contributing to the development of Bhutan's legal system and jurisprudence.

JUDICIAL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



Supreme Court



Chief Justice
of Bhutan

Langchen Bench
Tachog Bench
Maja Bench
Khading Bench



Justices



Royal Judicial Service Council



Registrar General



Registrar



Registry



Human Resource
Division



Finance Division



Engineering
Division



ICT Division



Planning &
Policy Division



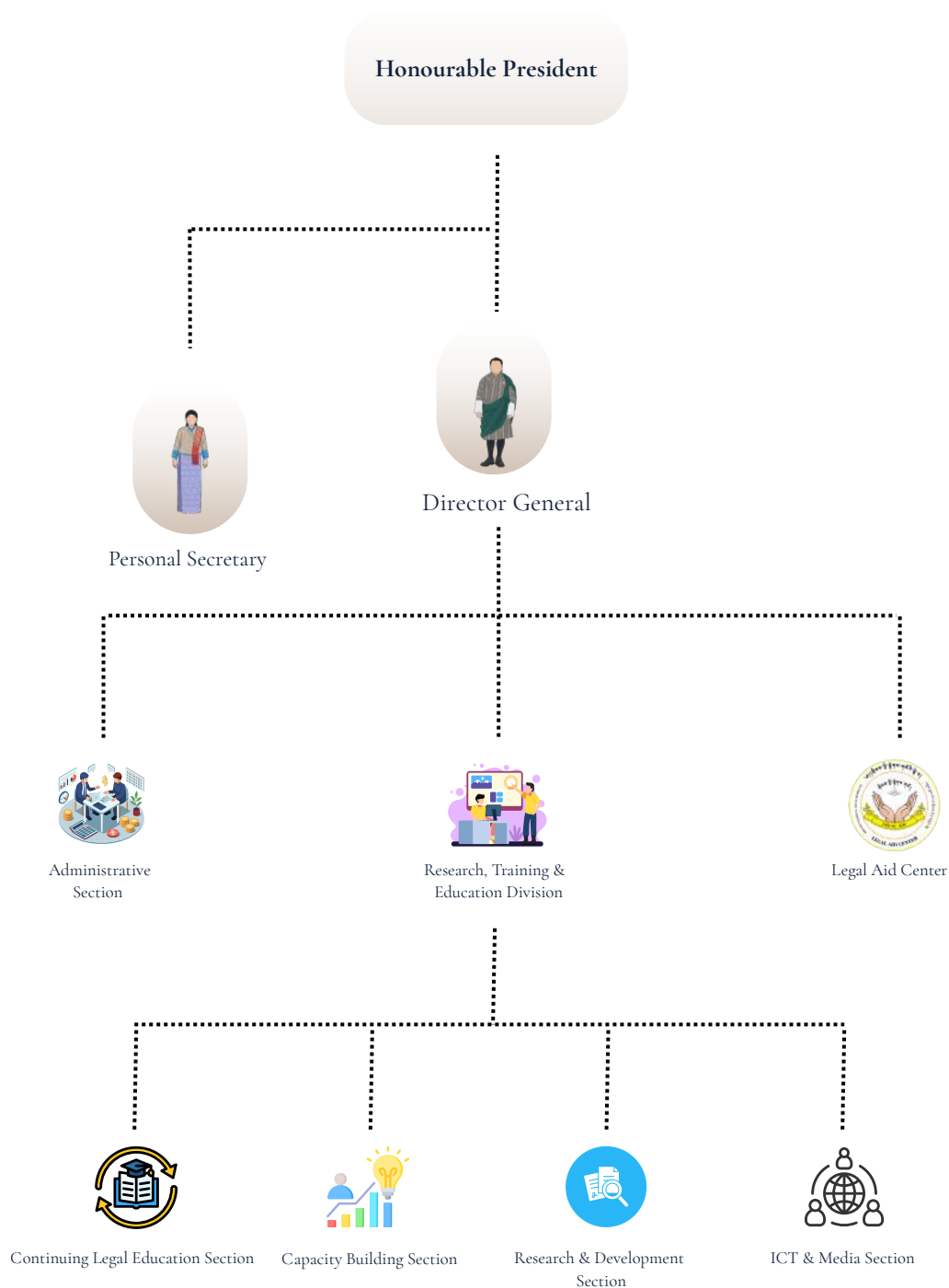
Media &
Communication
Unit



Grievance Cell

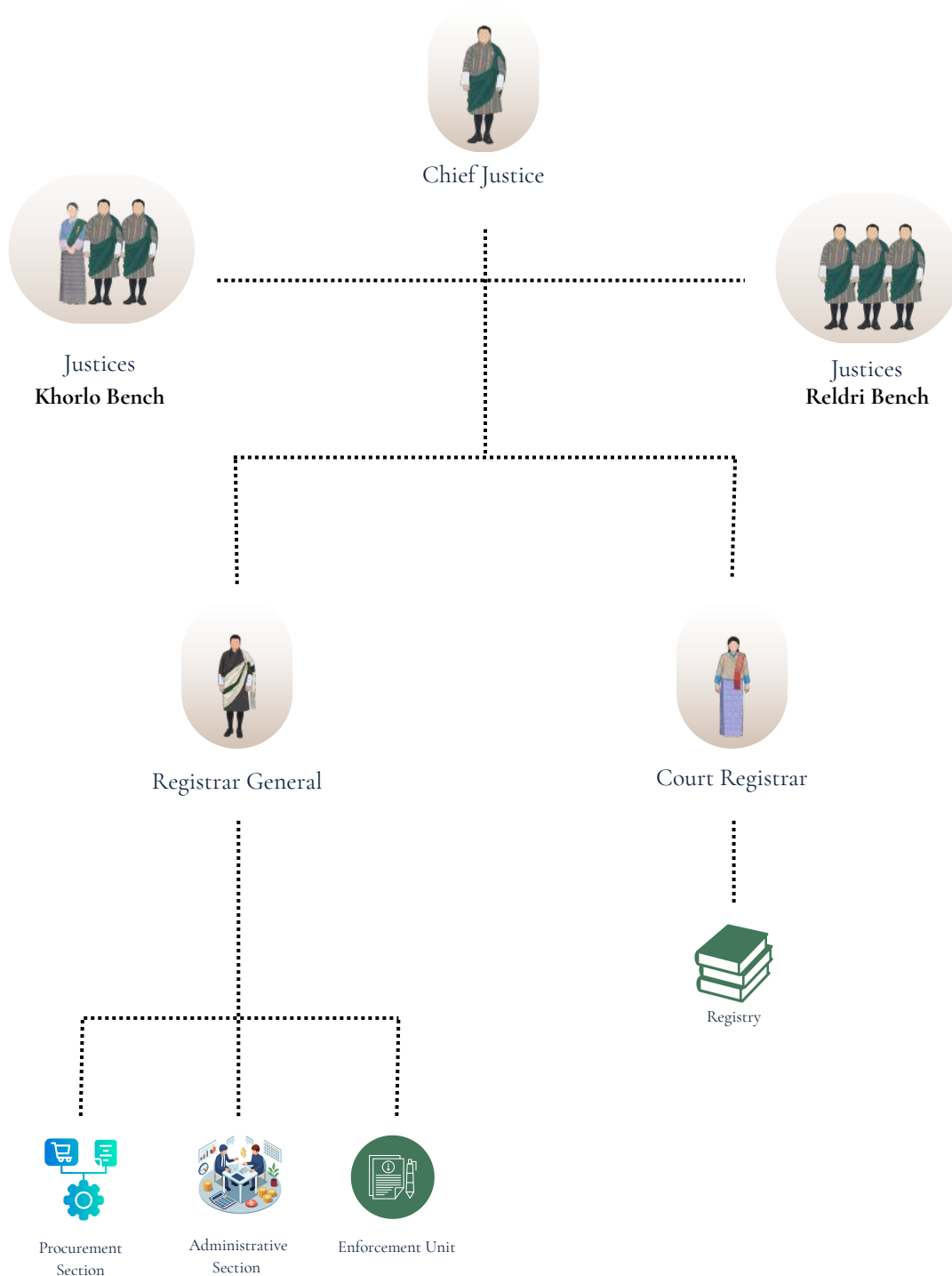


Bhutan National Legal Institute





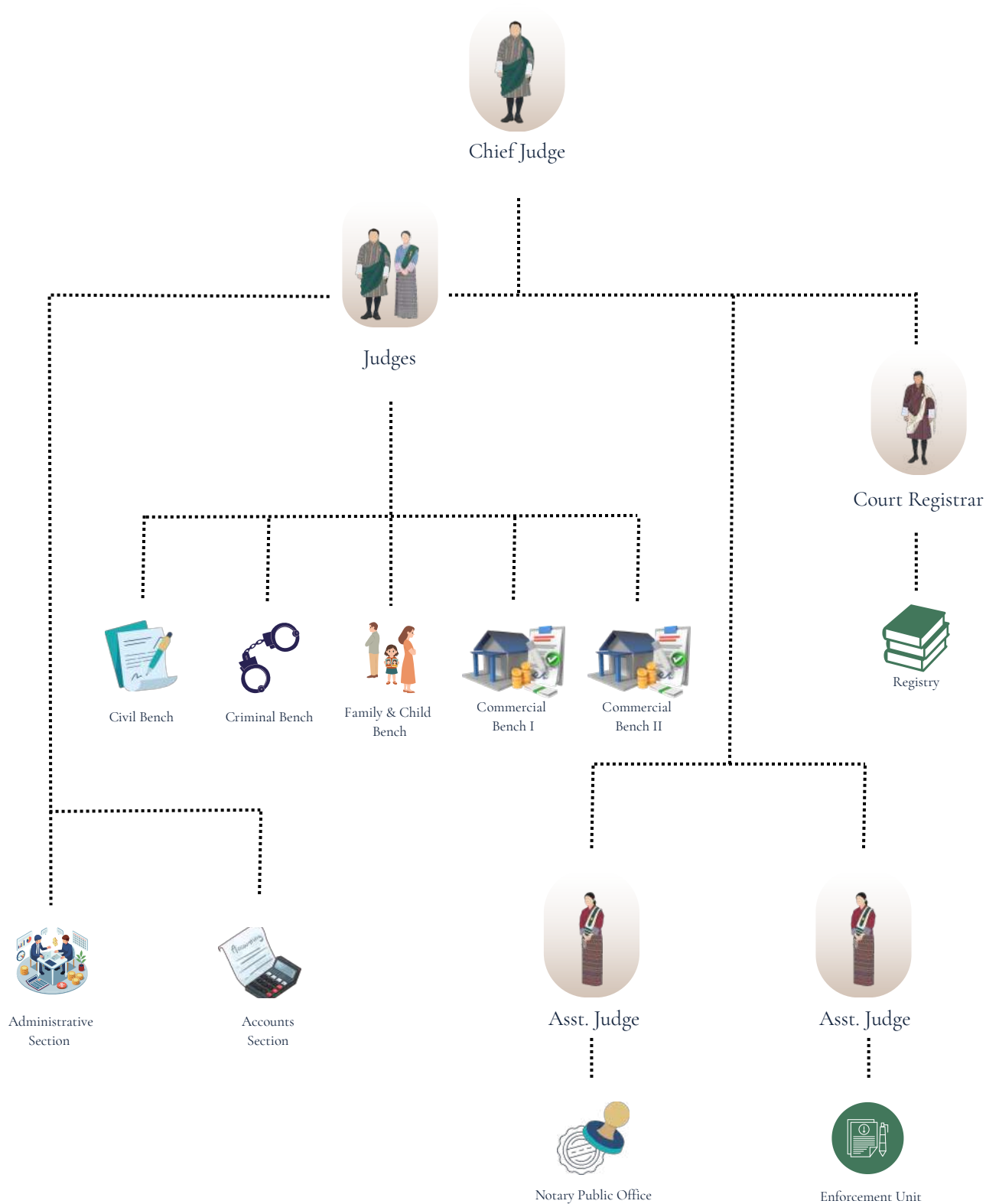
High Court





Dzongkhag/Dungkhag Court

(DZONGKHAG COURT WITH SPECIALIZED BENCHES)





Any Other Court



Judge



SUPREME COURT JUSTICES



L to R

■ Justice Pema Wangchuk ■ Justice Sangay Khandu ■ Chief Justice Norbu Tshering ■ Justice Kinley Dorji
■ Justice (Dr.) Jangchuk Norbu

HIGH COURT JUSTICES



L to R

■ Justice Kinley Namgay ■ Justice Lobzang Rinzin Yargay ■ Chief Justice Duba Dukpa ■ Justice Pasang Wangmo ■ Justice Bir Bahadur



SUPREME COURT & HIGH COURT REGISTRAR GENERALS

L to R

- Registrar General Phurba Dorji of the Supreme Court
- Registrar General Chimi Dorji Shartsho of the High Court

DZONGKHAG DRANGPONS



Chief Drangpon
Wangchuk Drukpa
Commercial Bench I
Thimphu Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Tharchean
Commercial Bench II
Thimphu Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Rinchen Penjor
Haa Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Pema Needup
Director General
Bhutan National Legal Institute



Chief Drangpon
Chador Phuntsho
Bench I
Paro Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Sonam Gyeltshen
Bumthang Dzongkhag Court



Chief Drangpon
Ugyen Jamtsho
Bench I
Wangdue Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Tashi Dorji
Gasa Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Norbu
Trashigang Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Gembo Tashi
Sarpang Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Pelden Wangmo
Family & Child Bench
Thimphu Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Tashi Yangzom
Tsirang Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Karma Dorji
Punakha Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Lhindup Zangpo
Trongsa Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Pema Choden
Chukha Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Kinley Tenzin
Pema Gatshel Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Pema Dechen
Bench II
Paro Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Kesang Choden
Criminal Bench
Thimphu Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Tenzin
Chief Administrator
Bhutan Alternative Dispute
Resolution Centre



Drangpon Dechen Wangmo
Civil Bench
Thimphu Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Thongjay
Dagana Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Singye Wangdi
Samtse Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Jigme Lodey
Mongar Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Gyelpo
Gelephu Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Sangay Chedup
S/Jongkhar Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Tenzin Dorji
Lhuentse Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Richa Gurung
Bench II
Wangdue Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Tshoejab M. Denlen
(Additional Judge)
Commercial Bench II
Thimphu Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Sonam Tshering
Trashigang Dzongkhag
Court



Drangpon Phuntsho Wangchuk
Zhemgang Dzongkhag Court

DUNGKHAG DRANGPONS/DRANGPON RABJAMS



Dungkhag Drangpon
Damcho Lhundup
Samdrupcholing Dungkhag



Dungkhag Drangpon
Tobgay
Lingzhi Dungkhag Court



Dungkhag Drangpon
Ugyen Nima
Tashicholing Dungkhag Court



Dungkhag Drangpon
Bholanath Dahal
Dorokha Dungkhag Court



Dungkhag Drangpon
Purushotam Ghimerey
Lhamoizingkha Dungkhag Court



Dungkhag Drangpon
Dungay Tshering
Wamrong Dungkhag Court



Drangpon Rabjam
Tshering Pelden
Public Notary Office
Thimphu Dzongkhag Court



Dungkhag Drangpon
Pema Yechang
Bench I
Phuentsholing Dungkhag Court



Dungkhag Drangpon
Dawa Gyeltshen
Gelephu Dungkhag Court



Dungkhag Drangpon
Jigme Gyaltshen
Bench II
Phuentsholing Dungkhag Court



Drangpon Rabjam
Tshering Yangdon
Enforcement Unit
Thimphu Dzongkhag Court



Drangpon Rabjam
Sonam Deki Retty
Office of the Gyalpoi Zimpon



Acting Dungkhag Drangpon
Tshering Yangzom
Nganglam Dungkahg Court



Acting Dungkhag Drangpon
Tshering Dorji
Jomotsangkha Dungkhag Court



Acting Dungkhag Drangpon
Tshering Dago Wangmo
Pangbang Dungkahg Court

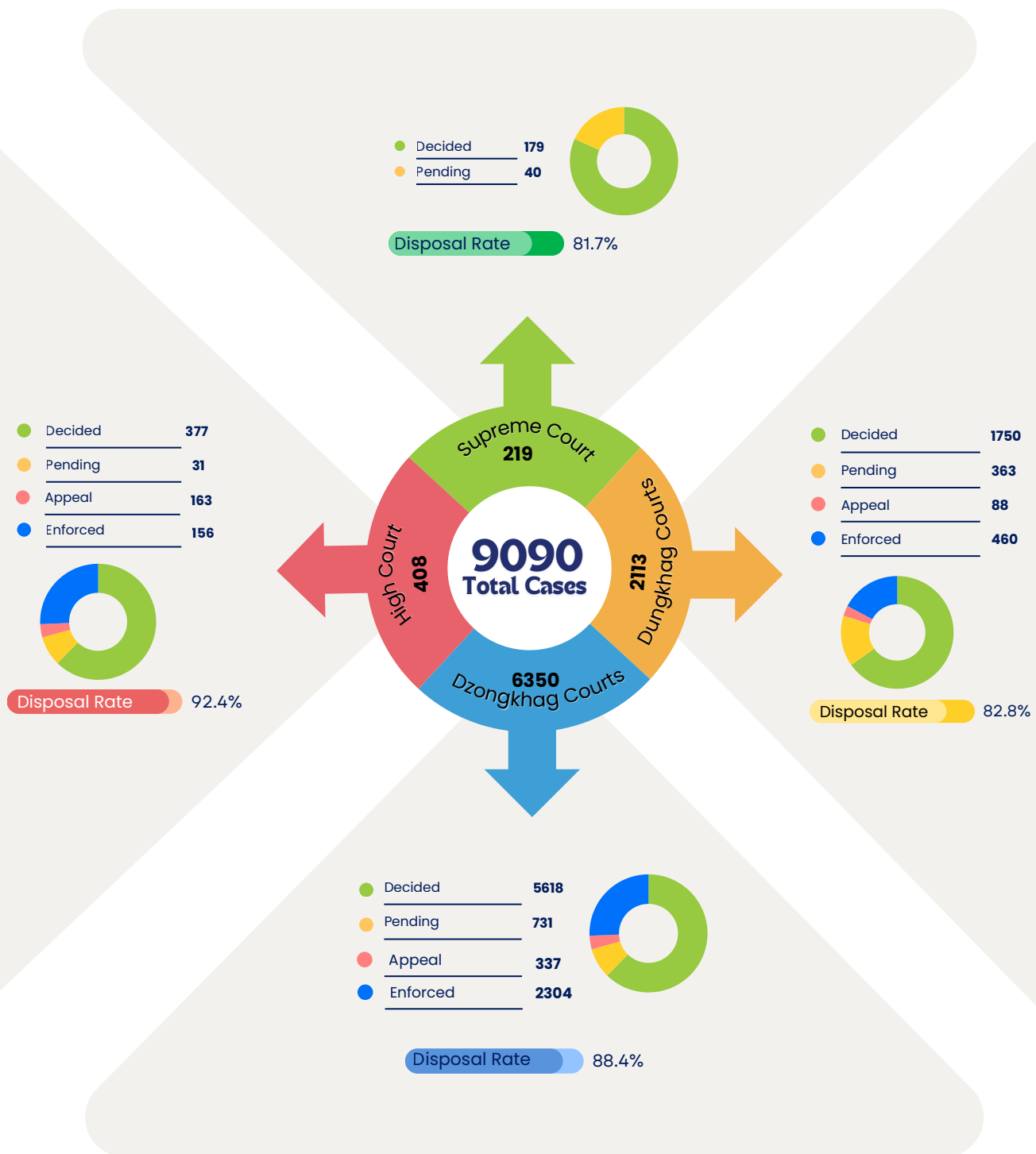


Acting Dungkhag Drangpon
Tashi Dorji
Phuentsholing Dungkhag Court

JUDICIAL PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW

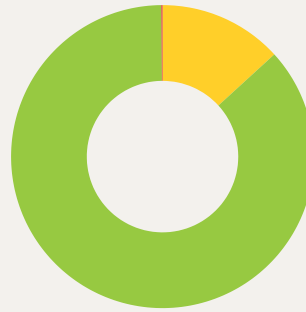


A) JUDICIAL YEAR IN FIGURES



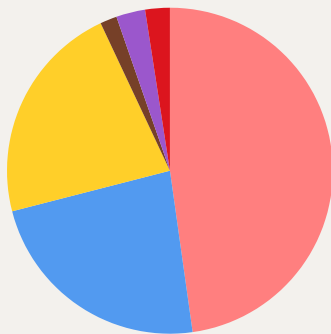
Court-Annexed Mediated Cases

Dungkhag Courts	212
Dzongkhag Courts	1390
High Court	2



Notary Services

Marriage Certificates	6827
Attestation of Docs	3318
Affirmation of MC	3146
Child Travel Docs	238
Closing and Transfer of Accounts and Shares	412
Others	349

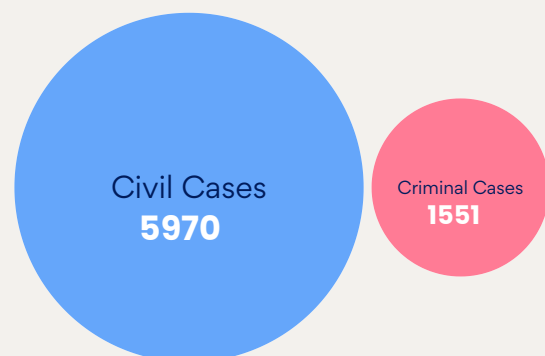


Budget and Revenue

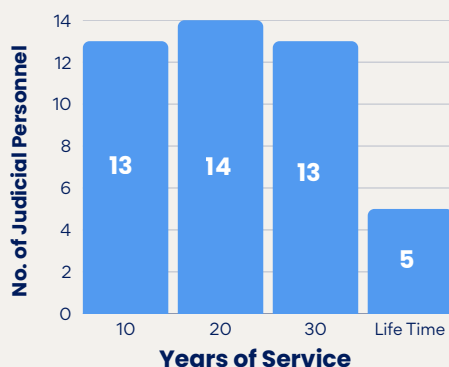


Amount in Millions

Classification of Total Cases (Dungkhag and Dzongkhag)

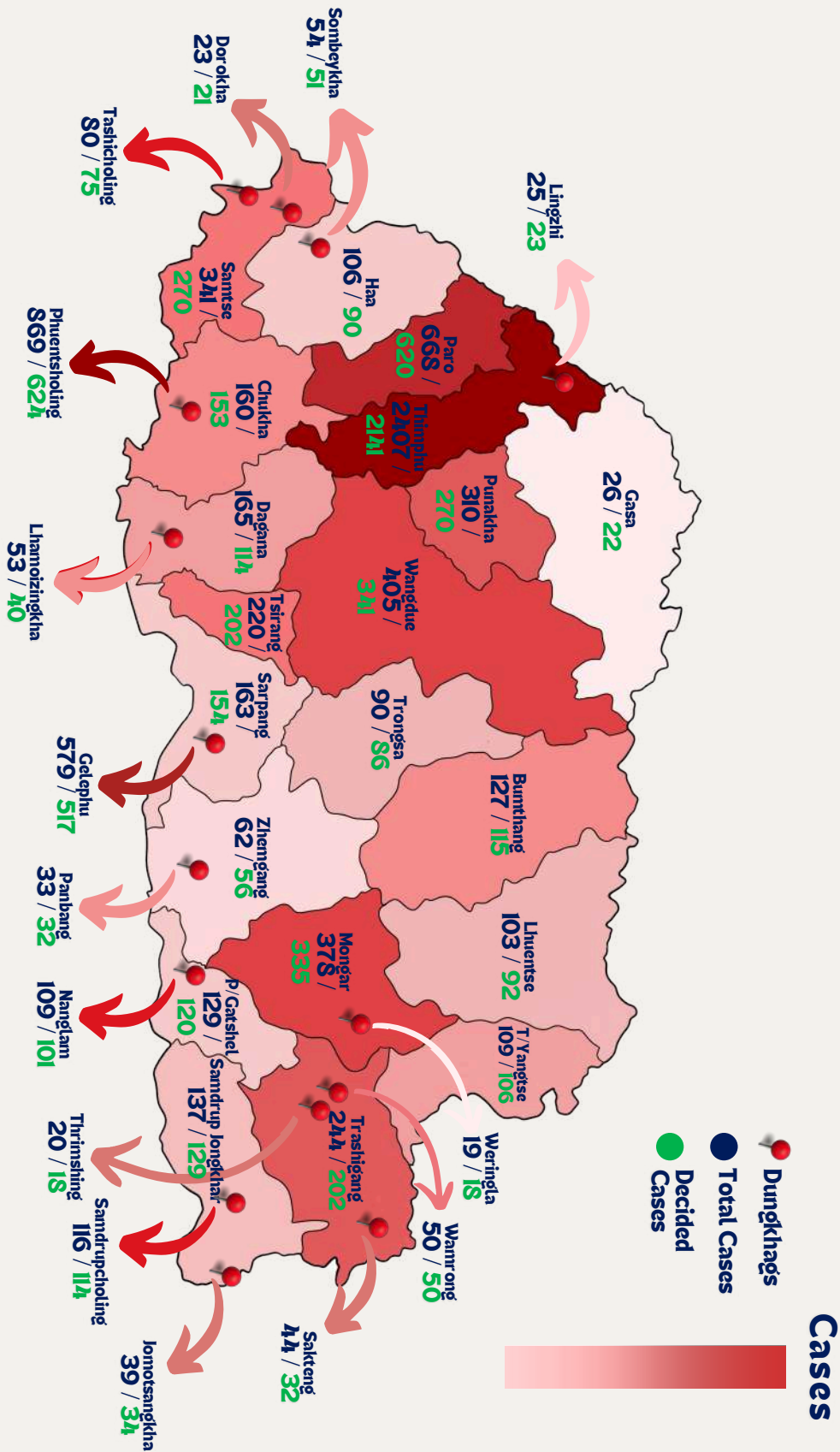


Civil Service Awards



CASES OVERVIEW

CASES IN DZONGKHAG & DUNGKHAG COURTS

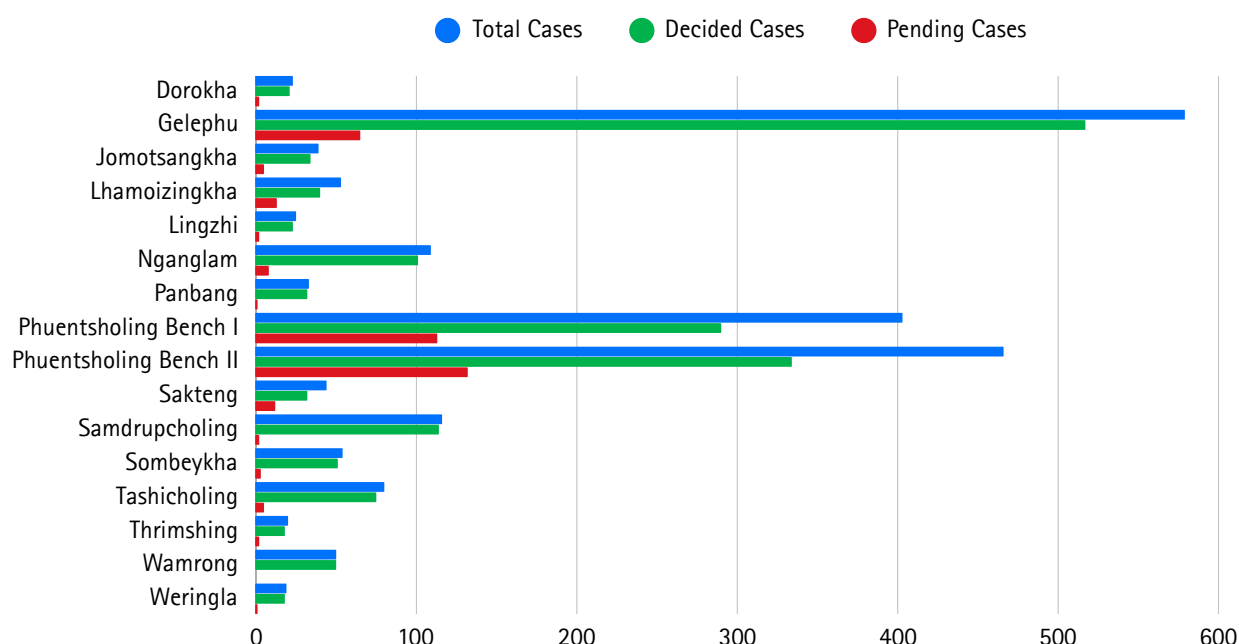


Note: Blue figures denote total cases and green figures denote decided cases

B) CASE STATISTICS

1. DUNGKHAG COURTS

Sl. No.	Court	Misc. Matter	Opening Balance	Registered	Total	Decided	Pending	Pending beyond 12 months	Appeals to Dzongkhag Court
1	Dorokha	151	3	20	23	21	3	0	1
2	Gelephu	1947	63	516	579	517	62	0	36
3	Jomotsangkha	124	2	37	39	34	5	0	2
4	Lhamoizingkha	140	16	37	53	40	13	3	5
5	Lingzhi	36	0	25	25	23	2	0	0
6	Nganglam	223	14	95	109	101	8	0	10
7	Panbang	78	1	32	33	32	1	0	0
8	Phuentsholing Bench I	2823	87	316	403	290	113	7	17
	Phuentsholing Bench II		149	317	466	334	132	49	9
9	Sakteng	64	18	26	44	32	12	3	1
10	Samdrupcholing	361	17	99	116	114	2	0	3
11	Sombeykha	76	0	54	54	51	3	0	1
12	Tashicholing	478	0	80	80	75	5	0	1
13	Thrimshing	61	0	20	20	18	2	0	0
14	Wamrong	164	2	48	50	50	0	0	1
15	Weringla	44	1	18	19	18	1	0	1
Total		6770	373	1740	2113	1750	363	62	88



This year, the fifteen Dungkhag Courts collectively handled a total of 6,770 miscellaneous matters, of which 1,740 cases were formally registered. With an opening balance of 373 cases, the total caseload amounted to 2,111, from which 1750 cases were successfully decided, yielding an overall disposal rate of 82.90 percent.

Among the courts, the higher volume courts were Phuentsholing Dungkhag Court that received 633 cases (representing 36.37% of the total cases registered) and decided 624 cases, achieving a disposal rate of 71.80 percent, and Gelephu Dungkhag Court that received 516 cases (29.65% of the total cases registered) and decided 515 cases, achieving a disposal rate of 89.29 percent.

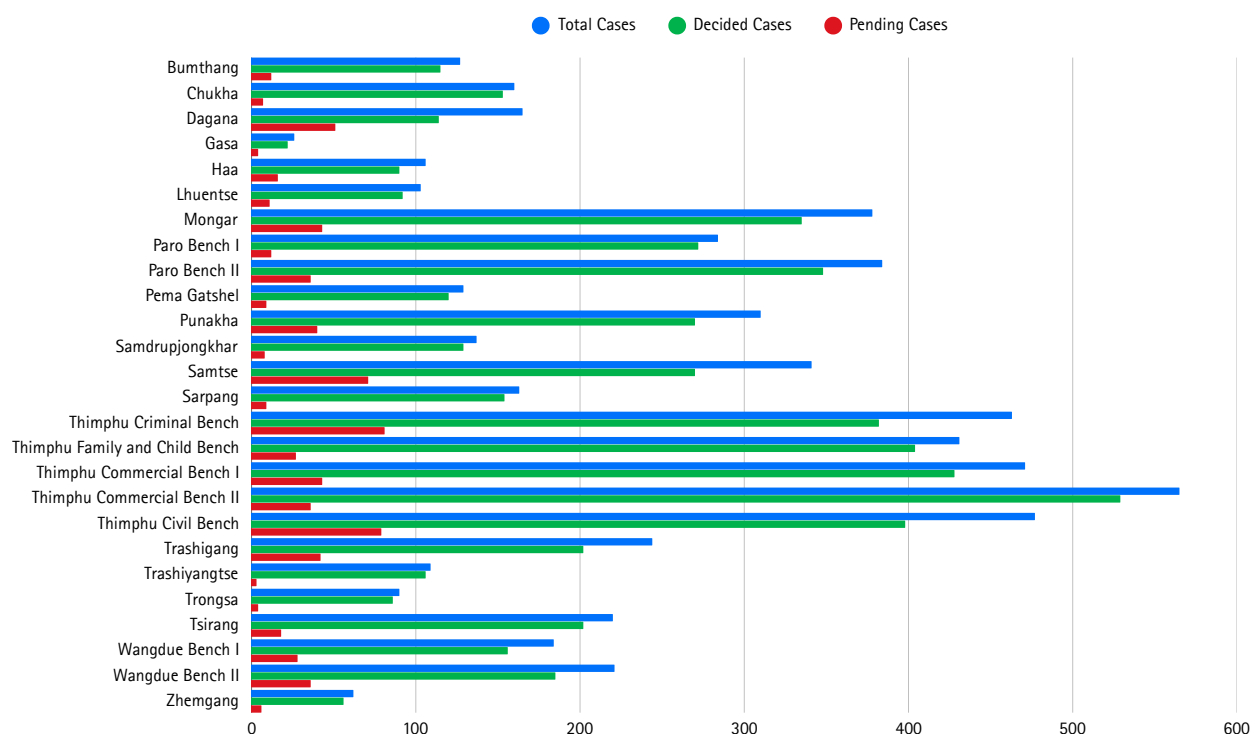
The overall performance of the Dungkhag Courts reflects a commendably high disposal rate with courts like Wamrong achieving a 100 percent disposal rate and no pending cases. Panbang and Weringla Dungkhag Courts each concluded all but one case, while Dorokha, Lingzhi, Samdrupcholing, and Thrimshing Dungkhag Court reported only two pending cases each.

The disposed cases consisted of both civil and criminal cases, including disputes relating to civil liabilities, sexual offences, drug-related offences, and corruption cases. This wide spectrum of adjudication highlights the diversity and complexity of disputes at different court tiers with the data supporting the deployment of widely-accepted strategies like court-annexed mediation.

Out of 1750 cases decided, 88 cases were appealed to Dzongkhag Courts, with no appeal from Pangbang and Thrimshing Dungkhag Court, and even the Gelephu Dungkhag Court, which decided the 517 cases, also maintained a low appeal rate of 6.96 percent. The overall appeal rate for the Dungkhag Court judgements remained at 5.02%.

2. DZONGKHAG COURTS

Sl. No.	Court	Misc. Matter	Opening Balance	Registered	Total	Decided	Pending	Pending beyond 12 months	Appeals to High Court
1	Bumthang	532	11	116	127	115	12	0	1
2	Chukha	456	13	147	160	153	7	1	12
3	Dagana	526	34	131	165	114	51	0	12
4	Gasa	107	1	25	26	22	4	0	0
5	Haa	397	22	84	106	90	16	0	5
6	Lhuentse	387	7	96	103	92	11	0	2
7	Mongar	815	20	358	378	335	43	0	7
8	Paro Bench I	2201	14	270	284	272	12	0	10
	Paro Bench II		35	349	384	348	36	0	25
9	Pema Gatshel	366	8	121	129	120	9	0	7
10	Punakha	794	43	267	310	270	40	2	10
11	Samdrup Jongkhar	766	10	127	137	129	8	1	12
12	Samtse	1218	37	304	341	271	70	0	5
13	Sarpang	556	0	163	163	154	9	0	30
14	Thimphu Comm Bench I	6017	55	416	471	428	43	2	35
	Thimphu Comm Bench II		149	416	565	529	36	6	38
	Thimphu Family & Child Bench		12	419	431	404	27	0	11
	Thimphu Criminal Bench		96	367	463	382	81	18	29
	Thimphu Civil Bench		40	437	477	398	79	4	43
15	Trashigang	811	38	206	244	202	42	0	9
16	Trashiyangtse	495	3	106	109	106	3	0	2
17	Trongsa	428	9	81	90	86	4	0	5
18	Tsirang	670	6	214	220	202	18	0	8
19	Wangdue Bench I	1585	28	156	184	156	28	2	9
	Wangdue Bench II		19	202	221	185	36	0	1
20	Zhemgang	270	1	61	62	56	6	0	9
Total		19397	711	5639	6350	5618	731	36	337



Dzongkhag Courts continued to demonstrate strong adjudicative capacity in the reporting year, registering 5,639 new cases and rendering 5,618 judgments out of a total cases of 6,350, leaving 731 cases pending at year-end. This translates into an overall disposal rate of 88.47%, indicating that the system as a whole is largely keeping pace with incoming demand while still carrying a manageable residual backlog.

Caseload distribution remains uneven, with a small number of benches bearing a significant share of registrations and total workload. Thimphu's five specialised benches account for a substantial proportion of filings, led by the Thimphu Commercial Bench II (565 total cases), Commercial Bench I (471), Civil Bench (477), Criminal Bench (463) and the Family and Child Bench (431). Among regional centres, Mongar (378), Samtse (341), Punakha (310), Paro Bench II (384), Paro Bench I (284), Trashigang (244), Tsirang (220) and Wangdue Bench II (221) emerge as key demand courts, while the remaining dzongkhags operate with considerably smaller caseloads.

Disposal performance generally correlates with volume and complexity. Lower-volume courts such as Gasa (26 total; 22 decided; 4 pending), Trongsa (90 total; 86 decided; 4 pending), Trashiyangtse (109 -

total; 106 decided; 3 pending), and Zhemgang (62 total; 56 decided; 6 pending) maintain high clearance rates and low pending figures. Several mid-volume courts, including Chukha (160 total; 153 decided; 7 pending), Pema Gatshel (129 total; 120 decided; 9 pending), Sarpang (163 total; 154 decided; 9 pending) and Samdrup Jongkhar (137 total; 129 decided; 8 pending), similarly achieve disposal rates above 90%, reflecting effective case management.

By contrast, high-volume and structurally constrained courts exhibit relatively lower disposal rates and more pronounced pending loads. Dagana disposed 114 of 165 cases, leaving 51 pending, while Samtse decided 271 of 341, with 70 pending, both indicating persistent pressure on local capacity. Thimphu Criminal Bench (463 total; 382 decided; 81 pending) and Thimphu Civil Bench (477 total; 398 decided; 79 pending) also show significant pending figures, suggesting that case complexity, sustained inflows and lack of additional human resource are straining existing Judicial resources despite strong output.

An important qualitative dimension of pendency relates to cases pending beyond 12 months. Across the system, 36 such long-pending matters

were recorded, concentrated mainly in the Thimphu Criminal Bench (18), Thimphu Commercial Bench (8) and few other courts with isolated instances often linked to external factors such as forensic reports or medical issues of parties. The relatively small number of long-pending cases, compared to the overall pendency, indicates that most matters are being processed within a reasonable timeframe, although the clusters in high-volume courts warrant focused attention.

Overall, the data portray a system that is performing robustly, but with emerging inequities in workload and backlog distribution. High-volume courts in Thimphu and selected regional courts require targeted support through additional human resources, specialised case management, and timely access to expert services such as forensic analysis to sustain and improve disposal rates. At the same time, the consistently high performance of lower-volume courts provides a useful benchmark for best practices in case management and timely adjudication that can inform systemic reforms across the judiciary.

3. HIGH COURT

Sl. No.	Misc. Matters	Bench	Opening Balance	Registered	Total	Decided	Pending	Pending beyond 12 months	Appeals to Supreme Court
1	1116	Khorlo Bench	29	183	212	195	17	0	91
2		Reldri Bench	10	186	196	182	14	0	72
Total		39	369	408	377	31	0	163	

4. SUPREME COURT

Sl. No.	Misc. Matters	Bench	Opening Balance	Registered	Total	Decided	Pending	Pending beyond 12 months
1	585	Langchen Bench	16	42	58	46	12	1
2		Tachog Bench	11	45	56	46	10	0
3		Maja Bench	14	41	55	43	12	0
4		Khading Bench	13	37	50	44	6	0
		Total	54	165	219	179	40	1

In 2025, the High Court entertained 1,116 miscellaneous matters. It registered 337 appeals from the District Courts, 18 appeals from Bhutan ADRC, and 14 others, which, together with 39 cases pending from 2024, brought the total caseload to 408 cases. The two Benches of the High Court decided 377 out of the 408 cases, achieving a notable disposal rate of 92%. As of the end of 2025, 31 cases remained pending before the High Court.

During the year, the High Court affirmed 189 judgments of the District Courts appealed to it and partially reversed 126 judgments.

The enforcement of judgments is another major responsibility undertaken by the courts. In this regard, the High Court's Enforcement Section successfully enforced 156 judgments out of 186 total enforcement cases in 2025.

In 2025, the Supreme Court dealt with 585 various miscellaneous matters. It registered 163 new appeals from the High Court. Together with 54 cases pending from the previous year, and few review cases, the total caseload for the year stood at 219 cases. With a disposal rate of 81.7%, the four Benches of the Supreme Court decided a total of 179 cases in 2025, leaving 40 cases pending at the end of the year.

Regarding the nature of decisions rendered, the dismissal of appeals from the High Court was

the most common outcome, with 94 appeals dismissed. This is primarily attributable to the weak grounds of appeal submitted by the parties, as the Supreme Court dismisses appeals after reviewing the grounds of appeal presented by the appellants. 36 judgments of the High Court appealed to the Supreme Court were partially reversed, and 31 were affirmed. Only 16 judgments were fully reversed by the Supreme Court.

5. PENDING CASE STATISTICS OF PAST 5 YEARS

Year	Case Pending	Case Pending beyond 12 months
2021	1806	100
2022	1779	64
2023	1621	179
2024	1183	161
2025	1206	102

6. APPEALS FROM ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION CENTRE

Sl. No	Institution	
1	Alternative Dispute Resolution Centre	18

7. TYPES OF CASE DISPOSAL HIGH COURT

Sl. No.	Bench	Affirmed	Fully-Reversed	Partially-Reversed	Remand	Negotiated Settlement	Withdrawal	Dismissal
1	Khorlo Bench	108	14	57	3	0	12	0
2	Reldri Bench	81	9	69	4	3	14	1
	Total	189	23	126	7	3	26	1

8. TYPES OF DISPOSAL SUPREME COURT

Sl. No.	Bench	Affirmed	Fully-Reversed	Partially- Reversed	Dismissal
1	Langchen Bench	5	4	11	24
2	Tachog Bench	9	7	9	20
3	Maja Bench	6	1	5	31
4	Khading Bench	11	3	11	19
Total		31	15	36	94

9. ENFORCEMENT OF JUDGMENTS BY COURTS

Sl. No.	Bench	Opening Balance	Petitions Registered	Total Judgments Enforced
1	Dungkhag Courts	855	624	460
2	Dzongkhag Courts	1823	2474	2304
3	High Court	37	149	156
Total		2715	3247	2920

Enforcement of Judgements by Courts

The role of courts extends beyond the adjudication of cases to the crucial responsibility of ensuring that their decisions are enforced. This year, a total of 3,247 cases were registered for enforcement across all tiers of courts, of which 2,920 judgements were successfully executed. The Dungkhag Courts enforced 460 judgments, the Dzongkhag Courts 2,304, and the High Court enforced 156 judgments. Significantly, the Thimphu Dzongkhag Court's Enforcement Unit led with 1,124 enforced judgments.

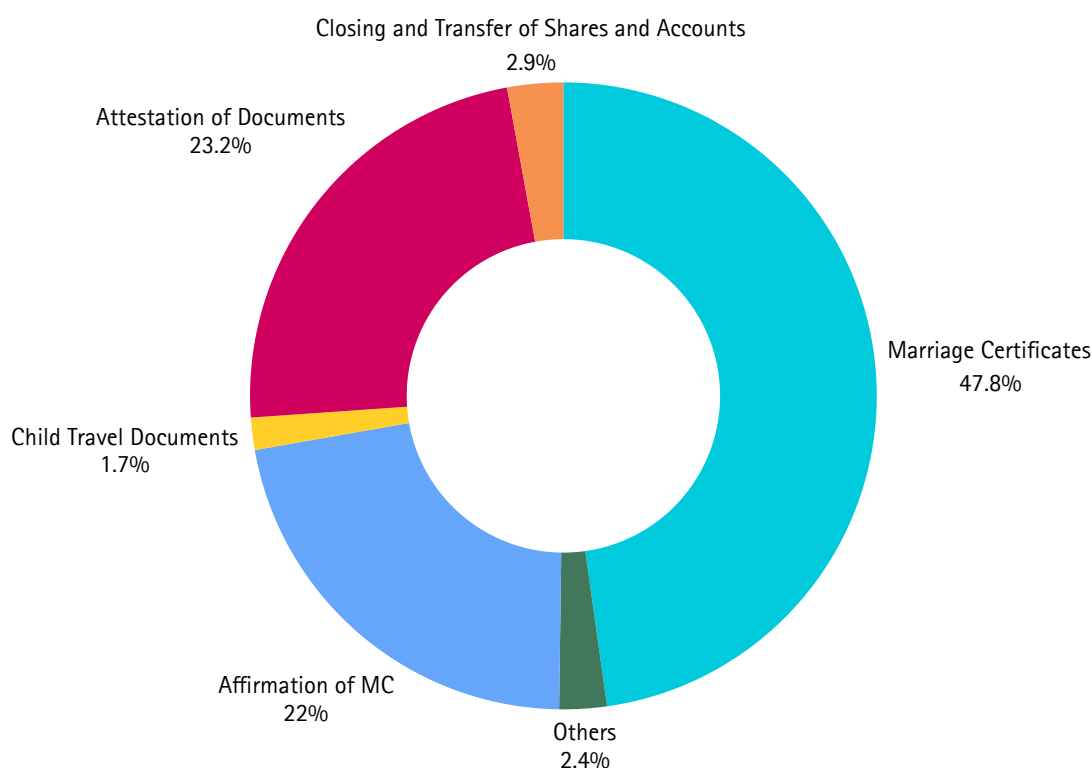
This execution illustrates how enforcement transforms Judicial decisions and laws into concrete actions and results. By executing nearly all registered enforcement petitions, the courts not only secured the rights of the parties but also compelled compliance with legal duties. Through such mechanisms, the Judiciary of Bhutan continues to safeguard, uphold, and administer justice thereby ensuring confidence in the nation's legal order.

C) NOTARY SERVICES

1. DUNGKHAG COURTS, DZONGKHAG COURTS, AND HIGH COURT

Sl. No.	Court	Marriage Certificate	Name/Date Change	Affirmation of MC	Lost Documents	Marital Status	Child Travel Documents	Attestation of Documents	Child Adoption	Organ Transplant	Closing and Transfer of Shares and Accounts	Attestation of Agreements, Wills, Contracts, and Testaments	Affidavit
1	Dorokha	50	0	10	0	2	0	0	0	0	8	0	0
2	Gelephu	441	1	110	1	18	5	29	0	0	21	0	0
3	Jomotsangkha	35	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	0
4	Lhamoizingkha	50	0	12	0	3	0	0	0	0	4	0	0
5	Lingzhi	20	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	Nganglam	49	1	10	0	0	3	5	0	0	12	0	0
7	Panbang	12	0	3	0	0	0	4	0	0	3	0	0
8	Phuentsholing	564	15	46	0	34	6	51	1	0	12	2	0
9	Sakteng	13	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
10	Samdrupcholing	107	0	7	0	1	0	5	0	0	7	0	0
11	Sombeykha	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	Tashicholing	136	0	27	0	6	0	13	0	0	9	0	0
13	Thrimshing	12	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
14	Wamrong	33	2	21	3	0	3	0	0	0	8	0	0
15	Weringla	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
16	Bumthang	516	0	44	0	2	0	10	0	0	13	9	3
17	Chukha	118	0	63	0	4	2	8	1	0	8	0	9
18	Dagana	84	1	29	3	4	0	6	0	0	5	0	5
19	Gasa	32	0	4	0	0	0	2	0	0	5	0	3
20	Haa	73	0	45	0	2	4	4	0	0	3	0	0
21	Lhuentse	76	1	13	0	6	1	4	0	0	3	0	0
22	Mongar	186	0	64	0	0	2	8	0	0	9	1	0
23	Paro	363	0	85	0	7	9	138	3	0	19	16	0
24	Pema Gatshel	74	0	8	0	0	2	1	0	0	25	0	1
25	Punakha	149	1	19	1	3	1	18	1	0	3	0	3
26	Samdrup Jongkhar	228	1	34	0	5	2	27	0	0	12	0	0
27	Samtse	235	2	30	7	10	1	20	0	0	17	0	4
28	Sarpang	149	0	22	0	3	0	5	0	0	3	0	0
29	Thimphu	2294	9	2239	0	30	182	2873	13	30	100	7	5
30	Trashigang	100	0	29	0	3	3	13	0	0	17	0	2
31	Trashiyangtse	70	0	10	0	5	1	6	0	0	17	0	0
32	Trongsa	90	0	24	0	1	5	8	0	0	14	1	8
33	Tsirang	163	7	30	0	8	3	7	0	0	10	0	3
34	Wangdue	239	0	79	4	1	2	46	0	0	24	0	0
35	Zhemgang	56	0	20	0	0	1	6	0	0	11	0	0
Total		6827	41	3140	19	158	238	3318	19	30	412	36	46
36	High Court	Foreign MC Registered: 111						Foreign MC Issued: 28					

Notary Services



In addition to their core adjudicatory function, courts across the country provided various notary services, including the issuance of marriage certificates, attestation of documents, child adoption, closure of bank accounts, and transfer of shares.

The twenty Dzongkhag Courts delivered the highest number of notary services, totalling 12,154. Similarly, the Dungkhag Courts provided 2,096 notary services. The issuance of marriage certificates constituted the largest category of notary services rendered by both the Dzongkhag Courts and the Dungkhag Courts, numbering 5,295 and 1,532, respectively.

Meanwhile, the High Court conducted interviews and reviewed 111 applications for Foreign Marriage Certificates, of which 28 were approved, and the corresponding Marriage Certificates were issued in 2025.

D) REPORT ON COURT-ANNEXED MEDIATION

1. DUNGKHAG COURTS, DZONGKHAG COURTS, AND HIGH COURT

Sl. No.	Court	No. of Cases Mediated
1	Dungkhag Courts	212
2	Dzongkhag Courts	1390
3	High Court	2
Total		1604

YEAR IN REVIEW



HIS MAJESTY THE KING GRANTED DAKYEN TO LYONPO NORBU TSHERING

On July 23, 2025, His Majesty The King granted Dakyen to appoint the fourth Chief Justice of Bhutan, Justice Norbu Tshering, who previously served as the Senior Most Drangpon of the Supreme Court.



JUDICIAL FORUM: A DIALOGUE ON GMC LAW NO. 1

The Judiciary of Bhutan, in collaboration with the Bhutan National Legal Institute, convened a national Judicial Forum on “A Dialogue on GMC Law No. 1 of 2024” from April 2–4, 2025, at JSW School of Law, Pangbisa. This landmark three-day event brought together all judges and court registrars from across the country to engage in substantive deliberations on the Application of Laws Act 2024 and its implications for Bhutan’s evolving legal and economic landscape.

A total of 39 judges and 16 court registrars participated as speakers, contributing to rich discussions centered on the legal framework governing the Gelephu Mindfulness City (GMC), Special Administrative Region. Drawing upon the guiding principles of mindfulness, innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainability, the forum examined how GMC Law No. 1 integrates selected enactments from Singapore and the Abu Dhabi Global Market (ADGM) to establish a dynamic and internationally aligned legal structure.

The deliberations focused on critical legislative instruments including the Official Secrets Act, Insolvency and Restructuring Act, Electronic Transactions Act, Employment Act, and various financial and regulatory frameworks. These were analyzed in the context of Bhutan’s broader vision to balance economic advancement with the nation’s enduring values of sustainability and well-being.

Envisioned by His Majesty The Druk Gyalpo Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, the GMC embodies Bhutan’s forward-looking aspiration to nurture a knowledge-based economy that fosters excellence in innovation, art, and entrepreneurship. As a Special Administrative Region, GMC is positioned to serve as a transformative economic hub driving national prosperity and regional collaboration.

The forum further provided an opportunity for the judiciary to deepen its understanding of comparative legal practices and governance mechanisms. Discussions encompassed diverse legal domains such as national security, insolvency management, e-commerce, labour relations, taxation, data protection, corporate governance, and trade facilitation. Through these exchanges, participants gained invaluable perspectives on ensuring transparency, accountability, and fairness within the legal architecture of GMC.

The event underscored the Judiciary’s commitment to enhancing Judicial capacity and promoting a legal environment that supports innovation, integrity, and sustainable economic growth in alignment with Bhutan’s national vision.



COMPLETION OF THE FIVE-YEAR TENURE OF THE HONOURABLE CHIEF JUSTICE OF BHUTAN, LYONPO CHOGYAL DAGO RIGDZIN

The Judiciary of Bhutan proudly commemorated the successful completion of the five-year tenure of the Honourable Chief Justice of Bhutan, Lyonpo Chogyal Dago Rigdzin, marked by visionary leadership, Judicial innovation, and transformative reforms. Granted *Dakyen* by His Majesty The Druk Gyalpo under Article 21, Section 4 of the Constitution of Bhutan on June 11, 2020, Lyonpo Chogyal Dago Rigdzin brought to the Judiciary over three decades of distinguished public service since joining the civil service in June 1990.

During his tenure as the Chief Justice, Lyonpo Chogyal Dago Rigdzin chaired more than 143 Justices' Conferences and has been involved in rendering several landmark cases, contributing significantly to the evolution of Bhutan's jurisprudence and strengthening the principles of justice, accountability, and the rule of law.

Under his dynamic leadership, the Judiciary witnessed major institutional reforms and innovations. Among the most notable was the formulation of the Judiciary Strategic Plan 2022–2032 (21st Century Judiciary Roadmap), which set out a clear vision for the Judiciary's modernization and long-term development. The establishment of the Media and Communication Unit enhanced transparency and public engagement, while the Grievance Cell created a vital interface for litigants and citizens to express concerns and receive redress, promoting openness and institutional responsiveness.

An exemplary initiative introduced under his leadership was the Time-Bound Bench, aimed at expeditiously resolving a large volume of complex and interrelated cases. The establishment of the Enforcement Unit at the Thimphu Dzongkhag Court further strengthened Judicial efficacy by improving the implementation of judgments.

The year 2023 witnessed the Judiciary's first comprehensive performance review of Dzongkhag and Dungkhag Drangpons, advancing meritocracy and accountability within the Judicial service. A defining milestone of his tenure was the formal delinking of the Judiciary from the Royal Civil Service Commission, a historic reform that reaffirmed the constitutional principle of separation of powers and enhanced Judicial independence.

In 2024, a landmark Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Supreme Court of Bhutan and the Supreme Court of India, marking a new chapter of Judicial cooperation and mutual learning.

A formal farewell ceremony was held at the Supreme Court of Bhutan on June 11, 2025, to honour Lyonpo Chogyal Dago Rigdzin's distinguished service. His tenure stands as a testament to innovation, integrity, and dedication to justice, leaving a lasting legacy in Bhutan's Judicial history.



HONOURABLE CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA'S VISIT TO BHUTAN

The Supreme Court of Bhutan was honoured to receive the Honourable Bhushan Ramkrishna Gavai, Chief Justice of India, from 22nd to 26th October 2025. The four-day visit represented a significant milestone in Judicial relations between the two nations, underscoring the enduring friendship that characterizes the Bhutan-India partnership. The visit materialized within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Supreme Court of Bhutan and the Supreme Court of India on 9th October 2024, demonstrating both Judiciaries' commitment to sustained collaboration and institutional strengthening.

During the visit, Honourable Chief Justice of India held substantive discussions with the Honourable Chief Justice of Bhutan, Lyonpo Norbu Tshering, at the Supreme Court on 23rd October 2025. He subsequently delivered keynote addresses at the Fifth "Wisdom for Future" Talk Series at the Jigme Singye Wangchuck School of Law and at the Distinguished Speaker's Forum on 25th October 2025. These engagements provided invaluable insights on contemporary Judicial challenges, institutional governance, and the role of the judiciary in advancing rule of law - subjects of profound relevance to Bhutan's legal fraternity and the next generation of jurists.

A major outcome of the visit was the establishment of a professional exchange programme under which the Supreme Court of India agreed to host two Bhutanese law graduates for a three-month Clerkship Programme beginning in January 2026. The first two participants, Court Registrar Jimba Dolma Gyeltshen of the High Court and Court Registrar Sherab Zangmo of the Thimphu Dzongkhag Court, have been nominated by the Supreme Court of Bhutan. This two-year initiative represents a tangible investment in human capital development and Judicial capacity enhancement. Through exposure to India's premier court, participating fellows will acquire specialized knowledge, best practices, and comparative jurisprudential perspectives that will strengthen Bhutan's Judicial cadre. The visit exemplifies the quality of bilateral cooperation and reinforces that effective Judiciaries are built through sustained dialogue, reciprocal learning, and professional networks across borders. This partnership provides essential scaffolding for Bhutan's Judicial modernization agenda and signals the institutionalization of mechanisms for continuous professional learning and institutional strengthening.



JUDICIARY STAFF PARTICIPATE IN VOLUNTARY SERVICE AT GMC

The Judiciary of Bhutan reinforced its commitment to national development and community engagement through two significant voluntary service campaigns at the GMC. Led by the Her Royal Highness Princess Sonam Dechan Wangchuck and Honourable Chief Justice of Bhutan, Judicial staff members participated actively in both the Second and Third Voluntary Service initiatives, exemplifying the institution's dedication to the nation-building imperatives articulated by His Majesty The King.

During the Second Voluntary Service from 4th to 8th September 2025, sixty-three Judicial staff members joined approximately 7,050 volunteers comprising residents, Gyalsups, Desuups, Members of Parliament, and community organizations from across the Kingdom. The Judicial contingent focused on foundational development activities, including the clearing of vegetation to establish public spaces and parks, installation of essential amenities such as benches, water points, and sanitation facilities, and the overall beautification and aesthetic enhancement of the GMC landscape. These efforts represented a tangible contribution to the physical and social infrastructure of the proposed city.

The Judiciary's engagement continued with renewed vigor during the Third Voluntary Service from 7th to 10th October 2025. Led by Her Royal Highness Princess Sonam Dechan Wangchuck and Honourable Chief Justice of Bhutan, the Judicial staff joined more than 5,600 participants in landscape beautification initiatives, including land clearing, grass sowing, and park development across multiple sites within the GMC. This second phase of participation demonstrated the sustained commitment of the Judiciary to the GMC vision and to the broader nation-building agenda.

A watershed moment in this initiative was marked by His Majesty's announcement of the launch of Pelsung (Guardians of Prosperity) during the Third Voluntary Service programme. Pelsung was unveiled as the third pillar of nation-building, complementing the existing pillars of Desuung and Gyalsung. This initiative represents a clarion call to Bhutanese youth to engage in designing and developing creative and practical solutions tailored to the GMC's development. The Judiciary's active participation in these voluntary service campaigns underscores its institutional alignment with His Majesty's vision and its commitment to fostering a culture of shared national purpose among its personnel.



JUDICIAL MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME

The Judiciary of Bhutan instituted the Judicial Mentorship Programme (JMP) to ensure the systematic preservation of institutional wisdom and to strengthen the professional growth of Judicial officers. Designed as a structured capacity-building initiative, the programme reflects the Judiciary's commitment to nurturing excellence, integrity, and leadership within the Judicial service.

The programme was developed in response to a situational analysis that revealed gaps in institutional memory, collegiality, and the absence of an organized system for knowledge transfer from senior judges to newer entrants. The JMP addresses these gaps by creating formal mentor–mentee groupings, thematic learning tasks, and regular professional dialogues aimed at fostering guidance, reinforcing Judicial values, and cultivating ethical discipline.

Its rationale is anchored in strengthening Judicial competence, enhancing institutional resilience, and preparing the Judiciary to meet evolving legal and technological challenges. By drawing on the experience of senior judges, the programme supports junior and mid-career officers in developing analytical capability, sound judgment, and professional confidence.

The JMP's core objectives include preserving institutional memory, enhancing judgment-writing and decision-making skills, promoting accountability, and encouraging continuous learning. Expected outcomes include improved Judicial performance, seamless leadership succession, strengthened public trust, and a more cohesive institutional culture. Ultimately, the programme aspires to build a Judiciary that is professionally robust, ethically grounded, and prepared for future challenges. In doing so, the programme reinforces the Judiciary's long-term vision of an institution that is resilient, future-ready, and unwavering in its service to the nation.



CIVIL SERVANTS SERVICE MEDALS

This year's Civil Service Award Ceremony honoured numerous Judiciary personnel for their dedicated service to the nation. This year's ceremony in particular is special, as Her Royal Highness Princess Sonam Dechan Wangchuck was presented with a medal of over 20 years of service to the nation. The Lifetime Service Award was presented to one Drangpon, one Dy. Chief Court Registrar, two Bench Clerks, and one Personal Assistant in recognition of their long and distinguished careers.

For over 30 years of service, the Judiciary recognized the Chief Justice of Bhutan, three Justices of the Supreme Court, the Chief Justice of the High Court, two High Court Justices, three Chief Drangpons, one Bench Clerk, one Personal Assistant, and one Driver. In the category of more than 20 years of service, one Drangpon, ten Bench Clerks, one Store Keeper, and one Personal Assistant received the honour. Additionally, awards for over 10 years of service were presented to one Drangpon, six Bench Clerks, one Dispatcher, and one Gardener.

The Civil Servants Service Medal represents far more than a ceremonial accolade. It is a meaningful instrument for promoting excellence, integrity, and commitment within Bhutan's public service. Medal recipients exemplify these values and serve as role models for younger Judicial personnel, motivating them to uphold the same high standards of professionalism.

RECRUITMENT OF COURT REGISTRARS AND OTHERS



The Judiciary welcomed four new Court Registrars and one Bench Clerk on January 1, 2025, enhancing its administrative capacity across various institutions. Court Registrar Ashis Gurung assumed office at the Enforcement Unit in the High Court of Bhutan, Court Registrar Tempa Dorji at the Enforcement Unit in the Thimphu Dzongkhag Court, Court Registrar Dawa Choden at the Chukha Dzongkhag Court, and Court Registrar Karma Dorji at the Legal Aid Center in Bhutan National Legal Institute. The administration also welcomed 7 new staff members in various capacities, including a Dy. Chief Legal Officer for BNLI, an Assistant Planning Officer and an Asst. ICT Officer for the Supreme Court administration and a Driver for Thimphu District Court, one gardener and two personal assistants.

JUDICIAL INDUCTION AND ORIENTATION PROGRAM FOR NEWLY APPOINTED ACTING DRANGPONS

On 5 March 2025, the Judiciary of Bhutan organized a two-day Judicial Induction and Orientation Programme for newly appointed Acting Drangpons of the Dzongkhag and Dungkhag Courts. Acting Dzongkhag Drangpon Phuntsho Wangchuk assumed office at the Zhemgang Dzongkhag Court, Acting Dungkhag Drangpon Tshering Yangzom assumed office at the Nganglam Dungkhag Court, Acting Dungkhag Drangpon Tshering Dorji assumed office at the Jomotsangkha Dungkhag Court, and Acting Dungkhag Drangpon Tshering Dago Wangmo assumed office at the Panbang Dungkhag Court.

The program was facilitated by senior justices and judges, who provided guidance to the newly appointed acting judges on the responsibilities of judges, Judicial functions, courtroom procedures, and decision-making processes. Through practical insights and mentorship, the programme aimed to equip the new generation of professionals with the knowledge and values necessary to uphold fairness

integrity, and excellence in delivering Judicial services to the people. This initiative aimed to achieve the Judiciary's overarching goals of strengthening Judicial capacity, enhancing professionalism, and ensuring access to justice, thereby reinforcing its commitment to safeguarding the rule of law.

TWO ACTING DUNGKHAG DRANGPONS TRANSFERRED TO PHUENTSHOLING DUNGKHAG COURT

Acting Dungkhag Drangpon Tshering Dorji and Acting Dungkhag Drangpon Tashi Dorji, were appointed to the Phuentsholing Dungkhag Court to ensure timely delivery of Judicial services to the people. By assigning Judicial officers to courts experiencing increased demand, the Judiciary aims to strengthen justice service delivery and ensure continued access to services of the courts. This arrangement, in addition to encouraging staff well-being, highlights the Judiciary's commitment to address the evolving needs of the public and advance its goal of providing timely and quality justice for all.



GUEST LECTURE SERIES: A NATIONAL TRIBUTE TO VISIONARY LEADERSHIP



In commemoration of the 70th Birth Anniversary of His Majesty The Fourth Druk Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the Judiciary of Bhutan, through the BNLI, launched a nationwide *Guest Lecture Series* across 53 School Law Clubs. The initiative began in Bumthang Dzongkhag, themed “The Life and Legacies of The Great Fourth Druk Gyalpo,” reflects the Judiciary’s profound reverence for His Majesty’s unparalleled statesmanship and transformative vision.

Judges and Court Registrars from Dzongkhag and Dungkhaag Courts delivered the lectures, reaffirming the Judiciary’s commitment to fostering civic consciousness, legal awareness, and national pride among the youth. By engaging directly with students, the Judiciary sought to translate His Majesty’s enduring wisdom into practical inspiration for young Bhutanese, echoing His Majesty’s timeless message that *“the stability of our country lies in the hands of our youth.”*

The Lecture Series highlights His Majesty’s far-reaching contributions to nation-building, particularly his investment in education, decentralisation, environmental stewardship, and the strengthening of democratic governance. It also

acquaints students with the future-oriented aspirations of the Golden Throne, including His Majesty The King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck’s Vision for the GMC and the Diamond Strategy, linking the past’s profound legacy with the nation’s forward-looking development trajectory.

Through this initiative, the Judiciary underscores the importance of nurturing informed, responsible, and value-driven citizens. The Guest Lecture Series stands as a tribute to the extraordinary leadership of The Fourth Druk Gyalpo and as a reaffirmation of the Judiciary’s enduring mandate to uphold justice, safeguard national values, and contribute meaningfully to shaping an enlightened and resilient generation of Bhutanese.

STRENGTHENING JUDICIAL RESPONSIVENESS THROUGH MENTAL HEALTH AND CHILD PROTECTION CAPACITY BUILDING

On 5 May 2025, the Judiciary of Bhutan, through the BNLI in collaboration with The PEMA Secretariat, conducted a three-day national workshop on Mental Health and Child Protection to further strengthen a compassionate and people-centred justice system. Bringing together 61 judges, registrars, and legal officers from across the country, the programme reinforced the Judiciary’s commitment to informed, sensitive, and context-aware adjudication.

Through focused sessions on mental health, trauma, addiction, and child-sensitive procedures, participants deepened their understanding of the vulnerabilities underpinning cases involving children and individuals with psychosocial challenges, thereby enhancing the quality of Judicial decision-making and ensuring that court processes uphold dignity, protection, and fairness.

JUDICIAL MENTORSHIP TRAINING FOR JUDGES AND COURT REGISTRARS

On 9 June 2025, the Judiciary of Bhutan, through the BNLI, conducted a one-day training on Judicial Mentorship as a continuation of the Judicial Mentorship Program initiated in March 2025. This training reaffirmed the Judiciary's enduring commitment to nurturing integrity-driven leadership, strengthening institutional capacity, and fostering a culture of continuous professional development across all Judicial institutions.

Designed to deepen understanding of effective mentoring practices, the session emphasized the pivotal role of mentorship in guiding professional growth, enhancing Judicial competence, and ensuring the orderly and sustainable transition of leadership within the judiciary. The Director General of BNLI opened the program with an address outlining the vision, values, and long-term significance of mentorship in shaping the future of Bhutan's Judicial service.

A key highlight of the training was the presentation of experiences by ten mentorship groups, who shared reflections on their progress, challenges encountered, achievements made, and strategies for maintaining meaningful engagement. Their insights demonstrated how structured mentorship not only supports new and aspiring Judicial officers but also enriches institutional wisdom and strengthens collective accountability.



INTEGRATED TRAINING ON JUDGMENT DRAFTING AND INTERPRETATION OF STATUTES



From 16 to 20 June 2025, the Judiciary of Bhutan conducted a five-day Integrated Training on Judgment Drafting and the Interpretation of Statutes in Paro, coordinated by BNLI. The training was designed for Acting Judges, Court Registrars, and Bench Clerks, bringing together a total of 20 participants from various levels of the Judicial service.

The training aimed to enhance participants' competencies in two fundamental areas of Judicial practice: drafting clear and reasoned judgments, and interpreting statutes in accordance with established legal principles. These skills are critical to promoting clarity, consistency, and quality in Judicial decision-making, thereby strengthening public confidence in the justice system.

Adopting a consultative and interactive approach, the training combined theoretical sessions with practical exercises, group discussions, and problem-solving activities. Participants engaged in hands-on exercises that allowed them to apply legal principles to real-world scenarios, fostering both professional expertise and practical skills essential for effective Judicial functioning.

JUDICIAL TRAINING ON CHILD WITNESS AND CHILD VICTIM PROTECTION

From 20 to 22 August 2025, the Judiciary of Bhutan, with the support of UNICEF Bhutan, conducted a three-day specialized training in Bumthang to strengthen Judicial capacity in handling cases involving child witnesses and child victims. The program reinforced the judiciary's commitment to a trauma-informed, rights-based, and child-sensitive approach, recognizing the heightened vulnerability of children who come into contact with the justice system.

Grounded in the *Child Care and Protection Act 2011*, the *Child Care and Protection Rules and Regulations 2015*, and Bhutan's obligations under the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, the training equipped judges with practical strategies to uphold the best interests of the child throughout Judicial proceedings. Through case analyses, simulations, and expert-led discussions, participants explored protective courtroom practices, child-friendly communication techniques, and measures to minimize re-traumatization.

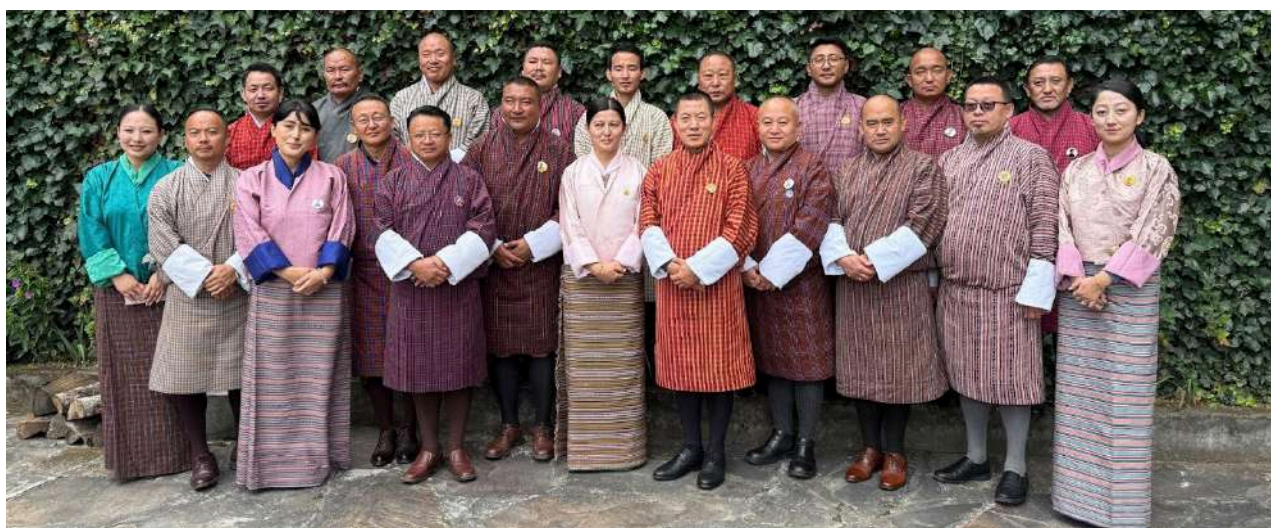
The program also emphasized the psychosocial dimensions of child participation in Judicial processes, underscoring the need for coordinated support among courts, law enforcement, and child protection agencies.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REGIONAL LEGAL AID CENTER IN PHUENTSHOLING DUNGKHAG COURT

In a significant advancement toward strengthening equitable access to justice, the Judiciary of Bhutan, through the Bhutan National Legal Institute and with support from UNDP Bhutan and the European Union, established a Regional Legal Aid Center at the Phuentsholing Dungkhag Court. The Center was inaugurated on 30 August by His Excellency Lyonpo Norbu Tshering, Chief Justice of Bhutan, alongside His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Younus, Resident Representative of UNDP Bhutan.

Phuentsholing, as one of the nation's busiest commercial and border hubs, serves a diverse population from the south-central region. The establishment of the Center ensures that essential legal services, particularly for vulnerable and underserved groups, are brought closer to the communities that rely most heavily on Judicial support.

The Center provides early-stage legal advice, assistance, and referrals; facilitates coordination among courts, law enforcement agencies, civil society organizations, and legal professionals; and undertakes targeted initiatives to raise legal awareness. Its mandate is to strengthen timely, reliable, and people-centered legal assistance, thereby reducing barriers that often impede access to the justice system.





ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REGIONAL LEGAL AID CENTER IN MONGAR DZONGKHAG COURT

On 15 December 2025, the BNLI, in collaboration with the Legal Aid Center (LAC) and with support from UNDP Bhutan, officially inaugurated the Regional Legal Aid Center in the Mongar Dzongkhag Court. This landmark initiative represents a significant step in bringing justice services closer to communities in eastern Bhutan. The occasion also marked the launch of the Legal Aid Data Management System, a key measure to enhance efficiency, transparency, and accountability in the delivery of legal aid services

nationwide. The establishment of the Regional Legal Aid Center fulfils a pledge made by BNLI and LAC to commemorate the 70th Birth Anniversary of His Majesty The Fourth Druk Gyalpo. By expanding legal aid services to the regions, this initiative strengthens access to justice for all, with particular emphasis on indigent and vulnerable populations.

The inauguration ceremony was graciously attended by the Hon'ble Justice of the Supreme Court, Dasho Sangay Khandu; His Excellency Mr. Mohammad Yunus, Resident Representative of UNDP Bhutan; His Excellency Mr. Adel Hussain Aljassam, Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to Bhutan, alongside Honourable Dashos and other distinguished dignitaries.





VISIT OF THE CHIEF JUSTICE OF BHUTAN TO INDIA

Lyonpo Norbu Tshering, Chief Justice of Bhutan, undertook an official visit to India from 23 to 27 November 2025 at the invitation of the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India and the Supreme Court of India. During the visit, Lyonpo Norbu Tshering participated in several significant Judicial and ceremonial events that further strengthened the longstanding bonds of friendship and Judicial cooperation between the two nations.

On 24 November 2025, Lyonpo Norbu Tshering attended the ceremony held at Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi, to mark the swearing-in of Justice Surya Kant as the Chief Justice of India. The event was graced by the Hon'ble President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu, and the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, along with senior leaders of the Government of India and eminent members of the Indian legal fraternity. The ceremony was also attended by distinguished international delegations, including Chief Justices and Supreme Court Judges from Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

On 26 November 2025, Lyonpo participated in the Supreme Court of India's Constitution Day Programme, commemorating the vision and legacy of the framers of the Constitution of India and reaffirming commitment to its enduring principles and values.

During the visit, Lyonpo extended warm felicitations to Justice Surya Kant, Hon'ble Chief Justice of India on behalf of the Judiciary of Bhutan on his assumption of office. Lyonpo also had the opportunity to interact with Justices of the Supreme Court of India, as well as Chief Justices and Judges from Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

The delegation visited the National Judicial Museum and Archive of the Supreme Court of India, where they received presentations on advancements in Judicial digitization, including the integration of artificial intelligence in case management systems. Lyonpo, along with other visiting dignitaries, also had the privilege of sitting on the Bench during a live court hearing with the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India. Lyonpo expressed deep appreciation for the warm hospitality extended by the Indian judiciary and acknowledged the Supreme Court of India's leadership and contributions to promoting Judicial excellence in the region and beyond.

The visit of the Chief Justice of Bhutan to the Supreme Court of India reflects the ongoing efforts to strengthen Judicial cooperation between the judiciaries of India and Bhutan.



COURT VISITS BY THE HON'BLE CHIEF JUSTICE OF BHUTAN

Lyonpo Norbu Tshering assumed the Office of the Chief Justice of Bhutan on 30 July 2025 following the granting of Dakyen by His Majesty The King. After assuming office, the Chief Justice of Bhutan undertook official visits to six Dzongkhag and Dungkhag Courts during the year 2025. The first visit began with the Phuentsholing Dungkhag Court on 30 August 2025, and the year concluded with an official visit to the Wangduephodrang Dzongkhag Court on 16 December 2025.

The objective of these visits was to engage with Judicial personnel, gain deeper insight into the functioning of the Dzongkhag and Dungkhag Courts, and understand the challenges and working conditions faced by court officials in their respective courts.

During the visits, the Chief Justice conveyed three key messages:

1. Appreciation and Acknowledgment

Lyonpo expressed sincere appreciation to the Drangpons and court officials for their hard work, dedication, and steadfast service to the Tsa-Wa-Sum, despite various professional and personal challenges.

2. Commitment to Integrity and Teamwork

Lyonpo encouraged Judicial personnel to continue to uphold diligence, integrity, and professionalism in the discharge of their duties. He reminded them that accountability remains a cornerstone of the Judicial institution, while also emphasizing the importance of unity, collaboration, and teamwork in ensuring the effective delivery of justice.

3. Adaptability and Embracing Change

Lyonpo underscored the need for Judicial personnel to remain responsive to evolving legal developments and societal changes. He urged officials to adopt a progressive mindset and embrace technological advancements, as the Judiciary stands on the threshold of significant institutional transformation. He further encouraged them to remain open to new ideas, share innovative perspectives, and contribute creatively toward strengthening Judicial services.



APPOINTMENT OF NEW DRANGPONS OF THE SUPREME COURT

His Majesty The King appointed High Court Justices Pema Wangchuk and Dr. Jangchuk Norbu as the new Justices of the Supreme Court of Bhutan on 13 December 2025. Justice Pema Wangchuk was serving at the Khorlo Bench of the High Court after his appointment to the Court in 2017, while Justice Dr. Jangchuk Norbu had been serving at the Reldri Bench of the High Court since his appointment there in 2020.

His Majesty The Druk Gyalpo appoints Drangpons of the Supreme Court under Article 21(5) of the Constitution. The appointment of the two new Drangpons completes the full quorum of the Supreme Court, which has five justices, including the Honourable Chief Justice of Bhutan.

PARTICIPATION IN THE JUDICIAL EXECUTIVE PROGRAMME, SINGAPORE

Drangpon Tharchean of the Thimphu Dzongkhag Court and Drangpon Tenzin, Chief Administrator of the Bhutan Alternative Dispute Resolution Centre, attended the Flagship Judicial Executive Programme 2025 organized by the Singapore Judicial College. The week-long programme brought together 29 international Judicial leaders to share experiences and perspectives on Judicial leadership, innovation, and reform.

Through five key themes – *Judge as Learner and Adjudicator, System Reformer and Leader, Judicial Risks and Futures, Technology and Courts of the Future, and Judicial Transformation and Innovation* – the participants explored contemporary issues shaping modern judiciaries. The exposure to Singapore's user-centred and technology-driven justice system provided valuable insights that can be adapted to strengthen Bhutan's Judicial processes and institutional capacity.



JUDICIARY-BADRC PANEL DISCUSSION ON BEST PRACTICES IN INTERNATIONAL ARBITRATION



On 30 April 2025, Judiciary of Bhutan, in collaboration with the Bhutan Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Centre, organized a panel discussion on Best Practices in International Arbitration, moderated by Drangpon Tenzin, Chief Administrator of the Bhutan ADR Centre. The expert panel included Mr. Toby Landau, International Arbitrator; Mr. Nageshwara Rao, former Justice of the Supreme Court of India; Ms. Nudrat B. Masjeed, barrister and arbitrator based in Islamabad, Pakistan; and Mr. Aditya Singh, Partner at White & Case, Singapore Office. The session was attended by Justices, judges, Members of Parliament, and members of the Judicial fraternity. The discussion focused on emerging trends, procedural innovations, and international standards in arbitration, providing valuable insights into

effective dispute resolution practices and reinforcing collaboration between the Judiciary and the Bhutan ADR Centre.

AWARD OF HR DEVELOPMENT SCHOLARSHIPS TO THE JUDGES

The Judiciary awarded two Human Resource Development Scholarships to judges this year, underscoring its commitment to strengthening Judicial capacity and promoting professional excellence. These scholarships support advanced education and specialized training, which enables the judges to deepen their legal expertise and stay current with emerging developments in the justice sector.

By investing in the continuous growth of its Judicial officers, the Judiciary reinforces its dedication to fair and well-informed decision-making while supporting long-term institutional development.

The master's programs pursued through these scholarships will help fill existing gaps in Judicial expertise, further enhancing the overall knowledge and capability of the Judiciary. The recipients of these scholarships are Dungkhag Drangpon Jigme Gyaltsen of Phuentsholing Dungkhag Court and Acting Dungkhag Drangpon Tshering Dorji of Jomotshangkha Dungkhag Court. They will be pursuing their Masters in Criminology from Murdoch University in Australia.



VISIT BY PHUENTSHOLING HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS TO THE SUPREME COURT

On 8th August 2025, a group of students from Phuentsholing Higher Secondary School visited the Supreme Court of Bhutan as part of an educational tour organized by the school. The program aimed to recognize and encourage students who had demonstrated exceptional dedication and discipline in their studies.

The visit, facilitated by the Supreme Court, was designed to provide the students with a broader understanding of Bhutan's Judicial system and to inspire in them a deeper appreciation for the rule of law. During the visit, the students had the opportunity to engage in interactive sessions with Justice Sangay Khandu of the Supreme Court, Registrar General Chimi D. Shartsho of the High Court, and Sr. Court Registrar Jigme Singye of the Supreme Court.

The interactions offered valuable insights into the functioning of the Judiciary, the importance of the Constitution, and the role of courts in upholding justice and rule of law. The visit proved highly enriching and educational for the students, leaving them with a heightened awareness of the significance of an independent and fair Judicial system in the democratic governance of the country.

JUSTICE PASANG WANGMO'S PARTICIPATION AT THE 26TH CONFERENCE OF CHIEF JUSTICES OF THE WORLD, LUCKNOW

Justice Pasang Wangmo from the High Court of Bhutan participated in the 26th Conference of Chief Justices of the World held from November 19-24, 2025 in Lucknow, India. The conference brought Chief Justices, Justices, and Judicial leaders from across the world inviting reflections on how global institutions must evolve to meet today's complex challenges. Hon'ble Justice also presented on Bhutan's perspective in one of the plenary sessions highlighting Judicial cooperation across borders in addressing transnational challenges, the role of courts in safeguarding fundamental rights and promoting peace, and innovations in Judicial administration to enhance efficiency and accessibility of justice. The Judiciary's participation at this global forum reaffirmed its dedication to learning from best practices while sharing Bhutan's own experiences in contributing to the collective pursuit of strengthening Judicial institutions worldwide.





LEGAL AWARENESS AND JUDICIAL ENGAGEMENT

Building on the success and lessons of the Legal Advocacy Program on Access to Justice for Children, the BNLI convened a One-Day Legal Awareness & Judicial Engagement Program for the Teachers and Students of the School Law Clubs of Thimphu Thromde on 19 December 2025. The session was graced by the Honourable Justices of the Supreme Court, who were the Speakers of the day-long program.

The session was designed to illuminate the law in action from its silent yet far-reaching influence on daily life, to its role in protecting life, nature, and constitutional values, and finally to the leadership responsibilities entrusted to the judiciary in upholding justice and public trust.

The participants made a visit to the Full Bench of the Supreme Court and the Benches of the High Court, offering them a rare and meaningful exposure to the functioning of Bhutan's appellate courts. This Program was initiated by BNLI with funding from the UNICEF.

DRANGPON TENZIN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE WIPO JUDICIAL FORUM, GENEVA

Drangpon Tenzin, Chief Administrator of the Bhutan ADR Centre, participated in the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Judicial Forum held in Geneva, Switzerland from 14-15 October 2025. The Forum convened judges from multiple jurisdictions to deliberate on emerging developments and best practices in the adjudication of intellectual property disputes.

Discussions focused on Judicial approaches to complex and cross-border IP matters, the impact of technological advancements on intellectual property rights, and the promotion of consistency in IP jurisprudence. Participation in the Forum enhanced exposure to comparative Judicial practices and international perspectives, contributing to strengthened Judicial capacity and informed adjudication of intellectual property-related matters within the Judiciary.



TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR JUDGES AT NATIONAL JUDICIAL ACADEMY, BHOPAL

As part of the Judiciary of Bhutan's continued efforts to strengthen professional excellence and institutional capacity, the second phase of the Training Programme for Judges and Court Officials commenced on 24 November 2025 at the National Judicial Academy (NJA) in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India. The program, organized jointly by the Supreme Court of Bhutan and the BNLI under the Memorandum of Understanding signed in October 2024, brought together 23 District and Dungkhag Judges and 15 Court Officials to participate in a comprehensive five-day Judicial training.

Anchored in the Judiciary's long-term vision of fostering a knowledgeable, principled, and forward-looking Judicial service, the training was designed to enhance competence across the full spectrum of Judicial responsibilities. The curriculum covered a wide range of critical and emerging areas, including Judicial ethics and behaviour, judgment writing, alternatives to adjudication, forensic and electronic evidence, sentencing principles, and criminal justice administration. Participants further engaged with advanced topics such as cybercrime, the application of Artificial Intelligence in Judicial governance, child-related laws, and the evolving

principles of evidence. Importantly, the program also integrated modules on Judicial wellness, recognising the essential role of well-being in sustaining a resilient judiciary.

The training was generously funded by the Government of India under the Project Tied Assistance, reflecting the enduring partnership and cooperation between the two Judiciaries. This collaborative initiative not only supports capacity development but also promotes the exchange of knowledge, good practices, and contemporary approaches to justice delivery.

The Judiciary of Bhutan views such programs as vital investments in strengthening the quality, integrity, and effectiveness of Judicial services nationwide. By equipping judges and court officials with enhanced analytical skills, technological awareness, and a deeper appreciation of Judicial values, the training contributes directly to improving adjudication, Judicial governance, and public trust. The program concluded successfully on 28 November 2025, marking yet another milestone in Bhutan's ongoing pursuit of Judicial excellence and innovation.



ELEVEN INSTITUTIONS OF THE JUSTICE SECTOR COMMIT TO THREE TRANSFORMATIVE PLEDGES

Guided by His Majesty The King's vision and inspired by The Great Fourth's timeless legacy, eleven Justice Sector institutions committed to three transformative pledges on 1 November 2025. The institutions collectively pledged 1) to make justice faster, transparent, and accessible by digitizing its systems and developing a Justice Data Integration Blueprint across all key institutions, 2) to establish JusTech and Innovation Centre to serve as a hub where law meets technology and artificial intelligence, driving research and collaboration to keep Bhutan's justice system relevant and responsive, and 3) institutionalize a Mandatory Continuing Legal Education program to uphold ethics, professionalism, and excellence among all legal professionals. This joint commitment marked the collective responsibility of the institutions to deliver justice in a timely and fair manner responding to the needs of the society.

VISIT TO THE SUPREME COURT BY JUSTICE BALKRISHNA DHAKAL, SUPREME COURT OF NEPAL

On 25 July 2025, Justice Balkrishna Dhakal of the Supreme Court of Nepal paid a visit to the Supreme Court of Bhutan. The visit provided a valuable opportunity for engagement and exchange providing a platform to share perspectives on Judicial practices, reforms, and its roles in serving the changing needs of the society.



CONCLUSION



The Judiciary of Bhutan remains resolute in the discharge of its constitutional mandate to safeguard, uphold, and administer justice independently, impartially, and without fear, favour, or undue delay, in faithful adherence to the rule of law. Anchored in this enduring commitment, the Judiciary continues to strengthen public trust, broaden access to justice, and enhance the quality, consistency, and timeliness of Judicial outcomes. The performance of the courts and related services in 2025 reflects a maturing institution, one that is responsive to societal needs, reflective in its approach, and forward-looking in its pursuit of excellence in justice delivery.

At the appellate level, both the Supreme Court and the High Court demonstrated strong institutional efficiency and jurisprudential coherence. The Supreme Court managed a total caseload of 219 cases and achieved an 81.7% disposal rate, with the majority of appeals dismissed or affirmed, and only a limited number of judgments fully reversed. This trend reflects the overall soundness of High Court adjudication and reinforces consistency in the interpretation and application of law. The High Court, in turn, disposed of 377 out of 408 cases, attaining a notable disposal rate of 92.4%. The high rate of affirmation and partial modification of District Court judgments, coupled with effective enforcement of decisions, underscores the quality of first-instance adjudication and the Judiciary's sustained emphasis on ensuring that judgments are meaningful, enforceable, and outcome-oriented.

At the primary tiers of justice delivery, the Dzongkhag and Dungkhag Courts continued to serve as the backbone of the Judicial system, collectively addressing the largest share of public demand for justice. The Dzongkhag Courts registered 5,639 new cases and decided 5,619 cases out of a total caseload of 6,350, maintaining an overall disposal rate of approximately 88.48%. While high-volume courts, particularly in urban and regional centres, experienced sustained caseload pressures and greater case complexity, the relatively small number of cases pending beyond twelve months (36 cases) indicates that most disputes are resolved within reasonable timeframes. The Dungkhag Courts similarly demonstrated commendable performance, disposing of 1,750 cases out of a total caseload of 2,113, with an overall disposal rate exceeding 82.82% and a low appeal rate to higher courts (88 cases). These outcomes reflect both public confidence in the quality of adjudication and the effectiveness of Judicial processes at the community level.

In addition to its adjudicatory mandate, the Judiciary continued to make a significant contribution to civil administration through the delivery of extensive notary services, including marriage certificates, attestations, adoptions, and related legal processes at Dzongkhag and Dungkhag Courts, with the High Court processing foreign marriage applications. Complementing these functions, Court-Annexed Mediation (CAM) remained an integral component of Judicial service delivery. In 2025, 1,604 cases were successfully mediated, demonstrating the growing reliance on amicable dispute resolution to reduce litigation costs, conserve Judicial resources, and promote sustainable settlements. The Thimphu District Court recorded the highest mediation uptake with 252 cases, while Gasa, Haa, and Lingzhi Drungkhag Courts recorded minimal or no cases due to low caseloads. Matrimonial disputes dominated mediation referrals, whereas employment and minor community-based disputes remained the least recorded.

Overall, the performance of the Judiciary in 2025 reflects a strong, credible, and forward-looking institution, one that has continued to enhance efficiency, uphold quality, and expand access to justice, even amid evolving demands and structural constraints. While workload imbalances and capacity pressures in high-volume courts warrant targeted and strategic interventions, the collective achievements across all tiers of courts demonstrate institutional resilience, professionalism, and a deep commitment to service. Guided by the profound vision and unwavering support of His Majesty The King, and strengthened by the dedication of Judicial officers and court personnel nationwide, the Judiciary of Bhutan remains firmly positioned to further excel in its mission, advancing justice, reinforcing the rule of law, and serving the people with integrity, wisdom, and compassion.

TASHI DELEK



ROYAL COURT OF JUSTICE

 Hejo, Thimphu; Bhutan

 +975-02-321817/326822/326823

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