

## **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE JUDICIARY OF THE KINGDOM OF BHUTAN, 1992**

The search for JUSTICE is daunting. The goal is far and yet it is accessible. In the past two years, the Judiciary of Bhutan took on itself a great challenge. We set a goal to dispose off all cases by December 17, 1992, Bhutan's National Day and rigidly proceeded by this daunting aim. As the deadline approached, the Courts throughout our country came under renewed pressure to achieve this aim. The judicial staff throughout the kingdom responded to this worthy challenge with remarkable enthusiasm and energy. They were able to dispose off all cases by December 17, 1992 without compromising the quality of justice.

One of the most important measures for increasing the performance of courts was the introduction of daily work log-book. The daily work log-book is a form which courts have to complete every day. The completed forms are sent every Tuesday to the High Court for monitoring. The forms contain summary reports on daily hearing. The High Court computerized this daily work log-book into a more easily accessible information base. Using this information base, the High Court was able to appraise the progress of the each Thrimpon or Thrimrab in each case. As a matter of routine, a district court has to hear a minimum of five cases daily. Cases are heard simultaneously in more benches were opened in a district court. Cases are assigned to different benches so that the cases are speedily but fairly disposed off. Where the cases were prolonged, the High Court sent additional staff and organized mobile benches to hear and resolve the cases.

The maximum numbers of pending cases are related to loan and land. In a small number of cases, litigants refused to appear. In old cases, the litigants could not be traced because they have gone to live somewhere else or died. In these cases, summon was issued through Bhutan Broadcasting Service. With the exception of rare instances, we were able to eliminate all pending cases. Removal of backlog cases was done without compromising the quality of justice. One proxy for quality of justice is the average time given to hearings. The time given to trials did not decrease. The other indirect but rough measure is the number of pages of judgments. This too did not decrease,

We were equally concerned with long term improvement of the Judiciary than meeting immediate deadlines. We have taken care that the immediate dispensation of justice in all cases took place side by side with long term reforms. To begin with, the High Court conducted training and conferences to improve office management. This will be done more regularly. In particular, we

were acutely concerned with support staff capabilities and we will continue to provide training to enhance its capabilities at all levels of the Judiciary. Another important step taken to improve the judiciary personnel was the introduction of job description. It defined their responsibility and authority fairly clearly so that they knew what responsibility they could take independently.

Our primary aim is to improve the service to the public and elimination of pending cases is a major advance in this direction. In future the courts in Bhutan ought not to have a backlog of cases. We hope that the people in Bhutan will always be spared the frustration and delay of a slow grinding judicial system, which we have sought to remove. In its on-going pursuit, the Courts of Bhutan have always endeavored in its on modest measure towards giving chance to Justice. The following did not have pending case as on the following dates:

Wamrong Dungthrim	- Yeshe Phuensog 25-10-92
Mongar Thrimkhang	- Pema Gyalsthen 6-11-92
Ha Thrimkhang	- Kaka Dorji 17-11-92
Wangdi Phodrang Thrimkhang	- Ugyenla 18-11-92
Paro Thrimkhang	- Thinley Thogmi 18-11-92
Tongsa Thrimkhang	- Minjur Dorji 23-11-92
Punakha Thrimkhang	- Dasho Gnawangla 23-11-92
Pema Gatsel Thrimkhang	- Singye Namgyel 24-11-92
Samchi Thrimkhang	- Dasho Tethrim Gyalsten 27-11-92
Jakar Thrimkhang	- Dasho Namgye 30-11-92
Phuensholing Dungthrim	- Karma Namgyel 30-11-92
Sarbang Thrimkhang	- Bap Kuenga 30-11-92
Chirang Thrimkhang	- Tsering Dorji 1-12-92
Thimphu Thrimkhang	- Pemba Gyatshen 7-12-92
Chukha Thrimkhang	- Phub Dorji 8-12-92
Shemgang Thrimkhang	- Dasho Chagye 8-12-92
Tashi Gang Thrimkhang	- T Rinchhen 10-12-92
Tashi Yangsti Thrimkhang	- Thinley Dorji 12-12-92
Lhuensti Thrimkhang	- Tsewang Dorji 15-12-92
Dagana Thrimkhang	- Wangdi Norbu 22-12-92
High Court	- 28-12-92