

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA

In the matter of an application in terms of Article 126 read with Article 17 of the Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

SC (FR) Application No. 133/2016

R.M. Sajith Bandara,
Attorney-at-Law,
"Kavisiri", Kurukudegama,
Pattiyagedara, Bandarawela

PETITIONER

Vs.

1. Inspector of Police, Perera,
Acting Officer in Charge,
Police Station, Welimada.
2. Officer in Charge,
Police Station, Welimada.
3. Senior Superintendent of Police,
Office of the Senior Superintendent of Police, Badulla.
4. Deputy Inspector General of Police,
Office of the Deputy Inspector General of
Police, Badulla.
5. Inspector General of Police,
Police Headquarters, Colombo 1.
6. Professor Siri Hettige,
Chairman, National Police Commission, Colombo 7.
7. Hon. Attorney General,
Attorney General's Department, Colombo 12.

RESPONDENTS

Before: Arjuna Obeyesekere, J
Sampath B. Abayakoon, J
K.M.G.H. Kulatunga, J

Counsel: Saliya Peiris, PC with Varuna De Saram and Dhimarsha Marso for the Petitioner

Jacob Joseph for the 1st Respondent

Induni Punchihewa, Senior State Counsel for the 5th and 7th Respondents

Argued on: 29th May 2026

Written Tendered on behalf of the Petitioner on 1st February 2021

Submissions: Tendered on behalf of the 1st Respondent on 22nd February 2021

Tendered on behalf of the 5th and 7th Respondents on 1st February 2021

Decided on: 30th June 2026

Obeyesekere, J

- (1) The Petitioner is an Attorney-at-Law and engaged in his profession in Welimada. He filed this application on 28th April 2016 complaining that his fundamental rights guaranteed by Articles 11, 12(1) and 14(1)(g) of the Constitution have been violated by the 1st Respondent, who was serving at that time as the Acting Officer-in-Charge of the Police Station, Welimada. Leave to proceed for the alleged violation of the said Articles was granted on 25th May 2016.

Facts in brief

- (2) The Welimada Police had received a complaint on 22nd February 2016 from the Ceylon Electricity Board that several concrete poles belonging to the Ceylon Electricity Board that were lying on the side of a main road pending installation had been stolen by some persons who are said to have come in a lorry belonging to the Army. Pursuant to investigations conducted by the Welimada Police, several Army Officers had been arrested in early March 2016 and produced before an

Identification Parade but had not been identified, probably due to the reason that there were no eye witnesses to the alleged theft of the concrete poles. The Police had thereafter directed the Officer-in-Charge of the Army Camp in Welimada to request the driver of the Army lorry that is said to have transported the concrete poles to be present before the Welimada Police on 28th March 2016.

- (3) The Petitioner states that on 27th March 2016, he was asked by his senior to accompany three Army Officers to the Welimada Police Station the next day. He had accordingly visited the Police Station at about 9.10 in the morning of 28th March 2016 along with the said three Officers and two other Officers from the Military Police.
- (4) Having arrived at the Police Station, the Petitioner had informed the 1st Respondent that the Army Officers are present in relation to the above incident. The Petitioner states that the 1st Respondent was in an irritable mood at that time and had shouted out loud that an Attorney-at-Law is not required [මේකට කල කෝටි කාරයෙක් ඕන නැහැ]. Having ignored the said comment of the 1st Respondent, the Petitioner states that he had inquired from the 1st Respondent whether the Army Officers were wanted as suspects or only to record a statement. The Petitioner states that the 1st Respondent had replied by stating that “මට ඕනනම් තලගොයා කබරගොයා කරන්නේ පුළුවන්, කබරගොයා තලගොයා කරන්නේ පුළුවන්”.
- (5) The Petitioner states that he felt that the 1st Respondent was not happy about his presence since the 1st Respondent would be compelled to record statements according to law and would not be able to dictate terms to the said Officers. Realising that it's best to allow the 1st Respondent to calm down, the Petitioner states that he left the Office of the 1st Respondent but stayed within the compound of the Police Station with the Army Officers.
- (6) The Petitioner states further that about two hours later, the 1st Respondent had come to where they were and directed one of the Army Officers by the name of Basnayake to come to another room, where he had instructed Police Sergeant 3658 to record the statement of Basnayake. The Petitioner states that he and the 1st Respondent were present inside the said room while the statement was recorded.

- (7) The Petitioner admits that at one point, he had told the Officer recording the statement to only record what is being said by Basnayake, at which point the 1st Respondent had responded in an extremely threatening manner and stated as follows:

“තමුසේ මොකෙක්ද? තමුසේ යනවා එළියට තමුසෙට මෙහි එන්න අයිතියක් නැහැ. තමුසේ හිතන්නේ මං අට පාස් එකෙක් කියලද? මං තරු ගැහුවේ නිකන් නෙමෙයි. උඹ වගේ එවුන් දැකලා තියෙනවා ඔන තරම්. මට ඔනා මේකගෙන් මුත්ගෙ ලොකු එකා ඇරෙස් කරන්න ඔන කට උත්තරය ගන්න. මම දැන් කට උත්තරය ගන්නේ නැහැ. මුව හෙට පෙරටුවට දානවා. උඹට පුළුවන් දෙයක් කරපන්.”

- (8) Even though the Petitioner states that he intervened only to ensure that what was being recorded was only what the said Army Officer was saying and not the version as understood by the said Police Sergeant which rather regretfully has now become the customary way of recording a statement, the Police Sergeant who recorded the statement has recorded that the Petitioner interrupted him [බාධ කිරීමක්] while the statement was being recorded. What has been recorded by the Police Sergeant is factually incorrect in that the 1st Respondent too admits in his affidavit filed before this Court that the Petitioner had only stated to record what is being told [කියන එක ලියා ගන්න]. To my mind, this is not an interruption or an interference with the duties of the Police. In any event, whether it was interruption or intervention, the fact remains that the version of the Petitioner as to what gave rise to the above language is supported by the 1st Respondent.
- (9) The Petitioner states that the above incident occurred in the presence of two of the Army Officers who accompanied him. The Petitioner had immediately informed his Senior colleague about the conduct of the 1st Respondent and had been advised by his Senior colleague to lodge a complaint. The Petitioner states that even though the recording of the statement of Basnayake was completed, the Police had not shown any interest in recording the statements of the others. The Petitioner had therefore left the Welimada Police Station at 3.30pm.
- (10) The Petitioner had lodged a complaint with (a) the 4th Respondent, the Deputy Inspector General of Police on the next day, (b) the Bar Association of Sri Lanka on 1st April 2016 [P4], and (c) the Human Rights Commission on 22nd April 2022 [P6]. I

have examined the said complaints and observe that the version narrated by the Petitioner in his petition to this Court is consistent with what he had stated in the aforementioned complaints.

- (11) Thus, the complaint of the Petitioner is that the 1st Respondent behaved in an aggressive manner towards him, verbally abused him and prevented him from engaging in his professional duties as an Attorney-at-Law. The Petitioner has annexed affidavits from the Army Officers who accompanied him to the Police Station to corroborate his version.
- (12) Even though leave to proceed has been granted for the alleged violation of Articles 11, 12(1) and 14(1)(g) since Court was satisfied that the Petitioner had made out a *prima facie* case, a careful consideration of the version of the Petitioner demonstrates that the said version does not meet the evidentiary threshold that must be satisfied by a petitioner in order to succeed with a violation of Article 11 of the Constitution. Furthermore, other than the abusive language said to have been used on the Petitioner, the material placed by the Petitioner before this Court does not indicate that the Petitioner was prevented from engaging in his professional duties as an Attorney-at-Law. I shall therefore limit this discussion to the alleged violation of Article 12(1).

Article 12(1) of the Constitution and Human Dignity

- (13) In terms of Article 12(1), *“All persons are equal before the law and are entitled to the equal protection of the law.”* In **W.P.S.Wijerathna v Sri Lanka Ports Authority and others** [SC (FR) Application No. 256/2017; SC minutes of 11th December 2020], Kodagoda, PC, J stated that:

“It is well settled law that, at the core of Article 12 of the Constitution is a key concept, namely the concept of ‘equality’. The concept of equality is founded upon the premise that, all human beings are born as equals and are free. Equality confers equal value, equal treatment, equal protection and equitable opportunities to all persons, independent of or notwithstanding various demographic, geographic, social, linguistic, religious and political classifications

based on human groupings prevalent in contemporary society, some of which are immutable or born to and others acquired."

- (14) I must begin by stating that each and every citizen of this Country who visits a Police Station, either as a complainant, witness or as a suspect, must be treated with dignity that each of us, as humans, are entitled to. Police Officers or any other person in authority is not superior in any manner whatsoever to any other human being. Police Officers must bear in mind that powers relating to law enforcement have been conferred on them by the People of this Country to be held in trust for the People, that they are therefore the trustees of the People and that all members of the Public must be treated with respect and dignity at all times. Police Officers must also bear in mind that the conferment of powers relating to law enforcement is not a license given by the State to a Police Officer to abuse the rights of our People.
- (15) A situation similar to this case, although not involving a Police Officer, arose in **W.S Sathyananda v Professor Kapila Perera and others** [SC (FR) Application No. 8/2025; SC minutes of 19th May 2026] where it was stated as follows:

"The preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) to which Sri Lanka is a signatory stipulates that, "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world" and goes on to provide in Article 1 that, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." Article 1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union provides that, "Human Dignity is inviolable. It must be respected and protected." Thus, human dignity is the foundational concept of the global human rights regime and is the 'ultimate value' that gives coherence to human rights. [emphasis added]

"Dignity" as a constitutional value finds specific reference in the Svasti to the Constitution of Sri Lanka, which reads as follows:

"The PEOPLE OF SRI LANKA having, by their Mandate freely expressed and granted on the Sixth day of the waxing moon in the month of Adhi Nikini in the

*year two thousand five hundred and twenty one of the Buddhist Era (being Thursday the twenty-first day of the month of July in the year one thousand nine hundred and seventy seven), entrusted to and empowered their Representatives elected on that day to draft, adopt and operate a new Republican Constitution in order to achieve the goals of a DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC, and having solemnly resolved by the grant of such Mandate and the confidence reposed in their said Representatives who were elected by an overwhelming majority, to constitute SRI LANKA into a DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC whilst ratifying the immutable republican principles of REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY and **assuring to all People FREEDOM, EQUALITY, JUSTICE, FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS** and the INDEPENDENCE OF THE JUDICIARY **as the intangible heritage that guarantees the dignity and well-being of succeeding generations of the People of SRI LANKA** and of all the People of the World, who come to share with those generations the effort of working for the creation and preservation of a JUST AND FREE SOCIETY:” [emphasis added]*

Thus, the Constitution has assured to all our People, freedom, equality, justice and fundamental human rights as their intangible heritage that guarantees the dignity and well-being of the People. This is buttressed in Article 27 (2)(a) which provides that, “The State is pledged to establish in Sri Lanka a Democratic Socialist Society, the objectives of which include the full realisation of the fundamental rights and freedoms of all persons.”

- (16) Having considered the aforesaid and the judgments of this Court in Kandawalage Don Samantha Perera v Officer in Charge, Hettipola Police Station and others [SC (FR) Application No. 296/2014; SC Minutes of 16th June 2020], Kanapathipilli v Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation and others [(2009) 1 Sri LR 406], Sachith Prabath Wijeratna v Police Inspector B.S. Chandrasiri and others [(SC (FR) Application No. 365/2020; SC Minutes of 10th February 2025)] and Colombage Dona Bandulani Basnayake v Sunil Hettiarachchi, Secretary, Ministry of Education and others [SC (FR) Application No: 311/2016; SC Minutes of 16th October 2023], it was concluded in Sathyananda [supra] as follows:

“human dignity is the fundamental virtue sought to be protected through the securement of fundamental rights and the Rule of Law. The Rule of Law is assured through Article 12(1) of the Constitution and therefore, human dignity is the hallowed goal towards which Article 12(1) seeks to carve out a path, hewing down arbitrary obstacles.”

- (17) This Court has emphasised time and again that Police Officers have not been given a license to abuse the rights of the People who visit a Police Station. While there must be zero tolerance to any incident of abuse, either physically or emotionally, inside a Police Station, it was stated in Vithana Arachchige Anurasiri Vithana Arachchi v Police Constable 57746, Jayakody and others [SC (FR) Application No. 304/2020; SC minutes of 5th December 2025], that, *“This Court has repeatedly stated that Police brutality in whatever form and in whatever degree must stop. Unfortunately, judgments pronounced by this Court have fallen on deaf years, both of the Inspector General of Police and the National Police Commission.”*
- (18) I must perhaps reproduce the following cautionary observation of Aluwihare, PC, J in Hondamuni Chandima and another v Inspector Malaweera, Police Station, Ambalangoda and others [SC (FR) Application No. 242/2010; SC minutes of 30th April 2021] as a stern reminder to all Police Officers holding public office:

*“Article 12 (1) stipulates that everyone is equal before the law and is entitled to the equal protection of the law. **It needs no reiteration that the primary responsibility of upholding these fundamental protections lies with the State.** As reminded over and over again by this Court, police officers, being state officers tasked with law enforcement and the maintenance of law and order have an utmost responsibility in respecting, safeguarding and advancing these rights. **Police officers are expected to extend common courtesies at all times when dealing with the public.** The identity or the status of the person whom the police is dealing with should have no bearing whatsoever on the fair and courteous treatment that they are entitled to, as of right. Police officers are bound to treat every person with dignity and respect.”* [emphasis added]

Mutual respect between Attorneys-at-Law and Police Officers

- (19) The friction between Police Officers and Attorneys-at-Law who visit Police Stations to attend to their professional duties has been the subject matter of several cases over the years and resulted in the Inspector General of Police formulating a set of Rules, known as the Police Officers (Appearance of Attorneys-at-Law at Police Stations) Rules, 2012 [the Rules]. The background to the said Rules was referred to by Aluwihare, PC, J in **Hondamuni Chandima and another v Inspector Malaweera, Police Station, Ambalangoda and others** [supra] in the following manner:

"In D. W. C. Mohotti v. Upul Seneviratne, OIC, Bambalapitiya and Others, (SC FR 527/08 SC minutes 27. 04. 2009) which involved an incident where an Attorney-at-Law was obstructed by a police officer in representing his client at the police station, a settlement was reached between the parties. The terms of the settlement were to the effect that the IGP would issue formal rules under Section 55 of the Police Ordinance delineating the manner in which the police should interact with persons at police stations, police headquarters and/or any other permanent unit, base, post or such like that have been established by the Sri Lanka Police. By Rule No. 3 it was stated that "No officer of the Police Force shall in any manner or circumstances whatsoever, use, physical force, abusive language or resort to any other intermediary conduct in respect of any person." Regarding the treatment of Attorneys-at-Law who may enter such place for the purpose of representing and/or watching the interests of their clients who are suspects or otherwise, it was stated by Rule No. 1 that their right to represent their clients should be fully recognized. Rule No. 2 required that every officer of the Police Force shall at all times, treat such Attorney-at-Law within the above-mentioned places "cordially, and courteously, and shall afford to such Attorney-at-Law all reasonable assistance during the course thereof." Any officer who acts in violation of those rules, or aids and abets the violation of those rules is to be dealt with severely, according to the available procedures and may be liable to any other disciplinary inquiry/proceedings and punitive sanctions.

Although the present case was anterior to the publication of the 'Police (Appearance of Attorneys-at-Law at Police Stations) Rules, 2012' in Gazette Extraordinary No. 1758/36 of 18. 05. 2012 which provided guidelines to the Police

regarding interacting with Attorneys-at-Law within the precincts of police stations, the rules agreed upon in the Mohotti case (*supra*) would be applicable to the present case. In my view the Rules referred to have only restated the Fundamental Rights enshrined in the Constitution and referred to them expansively with the objective of enlightening the police officers of the need to respect Fundamental Rights. **The effect of the said rules is that every person who enters a police station or similar premises should be treated with dignity and politeness by the police. Attorneys-at-Law who represent the interests of their clients and act in the exercise of their professional duties too are entitled to courteous and proactive treatment. Needless to say, even in the absence of any binding rules, these are basic human decencies any public servant owes a fellow citizen, in their interactions. ... Police officers are required to take extra care in the discharge of their duties in view of the fact that they are endowed with coercive powers to perform their functions.**” [emphasis added]

(20) Rule 3 of the said Rules specifically provides that:

“(1) Every Attorney-at-Law, who enters the precincts of a police station established under the Police Ordinance (Chapter 53) situated in any part of Sri Lanka, in his capacity of an Attorney-at-Law for the purpose of representing and watching the interests of a person who is the client of such Attorney-at-Law, **shall be treated cordially and courteously** and given a fair and patient hearing by the police officers attached to such Police Station, whatever their rank.

(2) Every police officer attached to a Police Station shall not at any time during which he is dealing with an Attorney-at-Law present in such police station for the purpose of representing and watching the interests of a person who is his client, use physical force on the person of such Attorney-at-Law or **resort to the use of abusive language or any other form of intimidatory conduct.**”

(21) I must also emphasise that while Police Officers must treat Attorneys-at-Law courteously, Attorneys-at-Law too must behave in a respectable and professional

manner befitting an Attorney-at-Law, thus ensuring mutual respect for each other in the discharge of their professional duties.

- (22) In **Ratnayaka Weerakoonge Sandya Kumari v Lakshitha Weerasinghe and others** [SC (FR) Application No. 75/2012; SC Minutes of 18th December 2019] the petitioner, a lady Attorney-at-Law complained that she was abused and harassed inside the Meegahatenna Police Station by the Officer-in-Charge when she went to surrender a suspect who was wanted on an allegation of rape. Having weighed the evidence produced by the parties, this Court was inclined to accept the narration given by the Police Officers that the petitioner created a commotion at the police station. Murdu Fernando, PC, J [as she then was] went on to state that:

“Another factor that should be borne in mind is that the office of an Attorney at-Law is also governed by the Supreme Court (Conduct of and Etiquette for Attorneys-at-Law) Rules of 1988 where it is specifically stated that an Attorney at-Law must not conduct herself in any manner which would be reasonably regarded as unworthy, disgraceful and dishonorable by an Attorney-at-Law of good repute.

When analysing the behavior of the petitioner and the 1st respondent based on the affidavits filed before Court, I am reminded of the oft quoted saying that, ‘courtesy begets courtesy’.”

- (23) A similar conclusion was reached in **Ariyaratne and another v Jayantha Wickremaratne, Inspector General of Police and others** [SC (FR) Application No. 123/2009; SC minutes of 21st March 2025] where, having considered the conflicting versions of the two parties, it was stated as follows:

*“What is clear to my mind however is that the entire incident was triggered by the distrust and the dislike that the 1st Petitioner had towards the officers of the Negombo Police Station arising from the alleged torture of Nishantha Fernando, and possibly other incidents involving officers of the Negombo Police Station. This led to an insignificant issue of the 1st Petitioner being unable to park at a place of his choice being blown out of proportion. It is clear that both parties failed to act with restraint and with respect towards each other. **Just as much as Police Officers must act with courtesy to all those visiting a police station, an Attorney-at-Law must also bear in mind that he or she cannot use his or her professional***

status and privilege to impose unnecessary demands on those serving in a Police Station.” [emphasis added]

Culpability of the 1st Respondent

- (24) I shall now consider the position of the 1st Respondent in the light of the allegations levelled against him by the Petitioner. Whilst denying the allegations made against him by the Petitioner, the 1st Respondent has filed several supporting affidavits of Police Officers who were on duty on that date. Thus, I have before me two conflicting versions, each supported by affidavits of persons who were present at the Welimada Police Station on 28th March 2016.
- (25) In order to place in context what transpired inside the Welimada Police Station on 28th March 2016, I must perhaps refer to the statement made by the 1st Respondent to the Assistant Superintendent of Police on 17th May 2016 as part of an inquiry conducted on the complaint of the Petitioner, where the 1st Respondent has stated that when he assumed duties as the Acting Officer in Charge of the Welimada Police on 3rd March 2016, he had observed that the resolution of crimes was at a low level [අපරාධ විසඳීම ඉතාමත් දුර්වල මට්ටමක තිබූ බව]. Thus, it would be safe to assume that the 1st Respondent was keen to apprehend those responsible for the theft of the concrete poles.
- (26) The verbal abuse alleged by the Petitioner occurred in two stages. The first is when the Petitioner met the 1st Respondent for the first time at the Police Station, where the Petitioner states that the 1st Respondent, unhappy that the Army Officers had come with an Attorney-at-Law, had remarked that an Attorney-at-Law was not required [මේකට කල කෝටි කාරයෙක් ඔහු නැතැ]. This was followed by the remark, “මට ඔහුනම් තලගොයා කබරගොයා කරන්නේ පුළුවන්, කබරගොයා තලගොයා කරන්නේ පුළුවන්” in response to the question whether the Army Officers were required as witnesses or suspects.
- (27) These two remarks must be understood in the aforementioned context and the inability on the part of the Police to have identified those who had been involved in the theft of the concrete poles, even though a period of over month had lapsed since the complaint. It appears to me that the Police was frustrated by the lack of progress

in the investigation and was keen to arrest whoever that came their way. This is borne out by the 1st Respondent's own affidavit where he states that he directed Police Sergeant 3658 Nimal to record the statement of Basnayake, and thereafter arrest Basnayake. Thus, not knowing the involvement of Basnayake except the fact that he is said to have driven an Army lorry on the day that the concrete poles went missing, a decision to arrest Basnayake could not have been taken prior to his statement being recorded. This demonstrates that whatever may have been the position of Basnayake, it had been decided to arrest him, even though the Police did not have any more evidence than what it did at the beginning of their investigation in early March.

- (28) The second stage of the verbal abuse occurred while the statement of Basnayake was being recorded and when Basnayake was threatened to state the truth or be remanded for 14 days [අත්ත කියපන් නැතිනම් දින දාහතරකට අතුලට යවනවා]. The Petitioner states that he intervened at that stage and told the 1st Respondent not to threaten the witness and asked Sergeant Nimal to record what is being said by Basnayake. I am of the view that it was within the Petitioner's right as an Attorney-at-Law to have said so. However, it is this response of the Petitioner that attracted a verbal barrage from the 1st Respondent. In my view, the abusive language used during the second stage too must be viewed in the same context as the first stage, in that the 1st Respondent, in his capacity as the newly appointed Acting Officer-in-Charge of the Welimada Police Station was desperate to find someone responsible for the theft and appears to have seen the Petitioner as an obstruction to his plans.
- (29) The 1st Respondent states that the moment the Petitioner intervened while the statement of Basnayake was being recorded, he had informed the Assistant Superintendent of Police of such fact and on his instructions made an entry in the Information Book. A copy of the said entry has however not been tendered with the affidavit of the 1st Respondent.
- (30) I must also observe that with this application having been filed on 28th April 2016, the Welimada Police filed a 'B' Report in the Magistrate's Court in Case No. 31558/16 on 10th June 2016 alleging that the Petitioner had obstructed the duties of a Police Officer. The 1st Respondent has not tendered a copy of the 'B' Report filed

on 10th June 2016 but has only filed the further 'B' Report filed on 29th August 2016 [1R2] which however does not contain any details of the alleged incident. Furthermore, 1R2 refers to a complaint made on 28th March 2016 by the 1st Respondent, which too has not been tendered to this Court. Be that as it may, it appears to me that the said 'B' Report is an afterthought on the part of the Police and has been filed to counter the allegations levelled against the 1st Respondent in this application.

Conclusion

- (31) Having carefully considered the versions of both parties, I am satisfied that the Petitioner has established on a balance of probability that the 1st Respondent acted in an aggressive manner towards him and used abusive language, and that he failed to treat the Petitioner with dignity and courtesy. To my mind, this is sufficient to warrant a finding that the Petitioner has been denied the equal protection of the law and that his fundamental rights guaranteed by Article 12(1) has been infringed by the 1st Respondent.
- (32) In the above circumstances, I declare that the fundamental rights of the Petitioner guaranteed by Article 12(1) of the Constitution has been infringed by the 1st Respondent.

JUDGE OF THE SUPREME COURT

Sampath B. Abayakoon, J

I agree

JUDGE OF THE SUPREME COURT

K.M.G.H Kulatunga, J

I agree

JUDGE OF THE SUPREME COURT