This Report highlights the work of the Judiciary in 2005 and the key challenges ahead.

As in the past, this Report is divided into three main parts. Part I reports on the progress of the Civil Justice Reform. Part II gives a picture of the operation of our court system and its administration. Part III focuses on our judges, our staff and our interface with the community.

The mission of the Judiciary is to maintain an independent and competent judicial system which upholds the rule of law, safeguards the rights and freedoms of the individual, and commands domestic and international confidence.
Civil Justice Reform continues to be an important area of our work. In 2005, the Steering Committee on Civil Justice Reform worked on those recommendations in the Final Report involving amendments to the relevant primary and subsidiary legislation. The amendment exercise to primary and secondary legislation is well underway. The Steering Committee also worked on formulating an information technology enhancement strategy to support the reformed procedures, and started devising a training strategy for Judges and court support staff. Further, it started to study the application of the Civil Justice Reform to the District Court.

To enhance transparency in the judicial process, new Practice Directions 25.1 and 25.2 came into operation on 18 July 2005. Pursuant to the two Practice Directions, chambers hearings in civil proceedings in the High Court, the District Court, the Lands Tribunal and the Family Court are generally open to the public and can be reported in the same way as proceedings in court, except those which are not to be open as required by statute or by reason of their nature.

Having completed the review of the Labour Tribunal in June 2004, and the review of the Lands Tribunal in December 2004, the Judiciary implemented a number of administrative measures in 2005, with a view to improving the operation and procedures of these two Tribunals. We also worked on the implementation of other recommendations arising from these two reviews which require legislative amendments.
The Judiciary is an institution which belongs to and serves the community. It is important to continue to strive for improvements to meet the rising expectations of the community. In 2005, the Judiciary Administration won the Silver Award in the 2005 Hong Kong Management Association Quality Award. Moreover, following the ISO 9001:2000 re-certification for the Registries in the Lands Tribunal and the Small Claims Tribunal in 2004 and 2005 respectively, the Registries and Court Support Services of the Magistrates’ Courts also obtained the ISO 9001:2000 certification in 2005.

It is important for the Judiciary to enhance professional competence and keep abreast of changing times through exchanges with other jurisdictions. In 2005, I attended the 11th Conference of Chief Justices of Asia and the Pacific held in Brisbane, the 14th Commonwealth Law Conference held in London and the Global Constitutionalism Seminar 2005 held in New York. In September 2005, I led a Judiciary delegation to attend the 22nd Congress on the Law of the World held in Beijing and Shanghai. We also attended a Seminar on various legal issues held before the Congress attended by delegates from the Mainland, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. During the year, we received delegates from the Mainland and other jurisdictions, including Australia, Vietnam, the United Kingdom, Israel, Finland, Thailand and the United States. Through these exchanges and communications, we learnt more about the latest developments in other jurisdictions, and shared with them our experience in the administration of justice in Hong Kong.
I hope you will enjoy reading this Report and gain a better understanding of our work.

We are determined to ensure that the rule of law will continue to thrive in our community. We are committed to meeting the challenges ahead and the community's expectations.

Andrew Li
Chief Justice