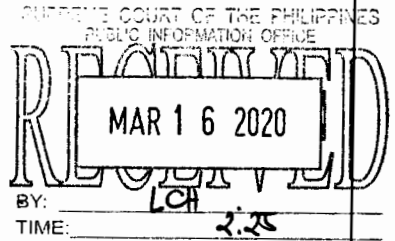




Republic of the Philippines
Supreme Court
Manila



ADMINISTRATIVE CIRCULAR NO. 31 - 2020

**TO : ALL LITIGANTS, JUSTICES, JUDGES AND PERSONNEL
OF THE JUDICIARY, AND MEMBERS OF THE BAR**

RE : RISING CASES OF COVID-19 INFECTION

Considering the apparent exponential spread of Covid-19 cases in the country, which has placed several regions, provinces and cities on either “community quarantine” or “lockdown,” whether fully or partially, with the consequential imposition of curfew in many places, and upon the recommendation of the Judiciary Task Force on Covid-19 and consultation with the Court *en banc*, the following are hereby ORDERED:

1. ALL COURTS NATIONWIDE SHALL DRASTICALLY REDUCE OPERATIONS beginning today, 16 March 2020 until 15 April 2020, unless provided otherwise.
2. All courts, from the Supreme Court down to the first level courts, during this period, shall maintain the necessary skeleton-staff to immediately act on urgent matters brought before them. Accordingly, at least the majority of the justices of the collegiate courts, and one (1) or two (2) judges in the multi-sala stations of the second and first level courts, together with the necessary skeleton-staff, which shall be determined by the Executive Judges, must be in court or on stand-by at any given day during this period to immediately act on these urgent matters.

For single-sala stations, their respective judges and the necessary skeleton-staff must always be in court or on stand-by.

The operations of the night courts are COMPLETELY SUSPENDED.

3. Considering that many cities and provinces have imposed an 8:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. curfew, ALL COURTS NATIONWIDE shall operate only from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. during this period.

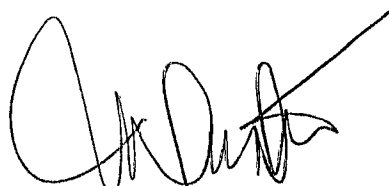
4. There shall be NO WORK in all courts, court offices, divisions, sections and units, including in the Supreme Court, during this period, **except in courts and court offices concerned with the resolution of urgent matters and cases, the payments of salaries in the Judiciary, the release of the 2019 Bar Examinations, the medical services, and the security of the courts.** Work that can be performed in the respective residences of the justices, judges, and court personnel shall proceed.
5. ALL HEARINGS NATIONWIDE are suspended during this period, **except on urgent matters, such as but not limited to petitions, motions and pleadings in relation to bail and *habeas corpus*, promulgation of judgments of acquittals, reliefs for those who may be arrested and detained during this period, and other related actions that may be filed in relation to measures imposed at the local or national levels to address the declared health emergency.**
6. The filing of petitions and appeals, complaints, motions, pleadings, and other court submissions that fall due during the period from 15 March 2020 until 15 April 2020 is EXTENDED for THIRTY (30) calendar days counted from 16 April 2020. However, those who prefer to file the said pleadings within the reglementary period without the need of the extension granted may do so by facsimile or by transmitting them through electronic means, if available.
7. All court actions which are NOT considered urgent, such as but not limited to promulgations of decisions in civil cases, executions of judgments, implementations of other writs, services of summons, auction sales in extrajudicial foreclosures, solemnizations of marriages, etc., scheduled during this period are likewise SUSPENDED and shall be rescheduled. For court actions with prescribed periods, these periods shall likewise be EXTENDED for THIRTY (30) calendar days counted from 16 April 2020.
8. All justices and judges are however expected to draft decisions and orders in their respective residences during the said period, which decisions and orders shall be promulgated and issued once the courts are fully operational.
9. All official meetings, including meetings of the bids and awards committees and other committees, round table discussions, focus group discussions, seminars, trainings, conventions, and functions in the Judiciary shall be DEFERRED, except those called from hereon and authorized by the Chief Justice or by the Judiciary Task Force on Covid-19.

10. The panel interview by the Judicial and Bar Council for the position of Supreme Court Associate Justice (vice Hon. Andres B. Reyes, Jr., who will compulsorily retire on 11 May 2020) is RESET to a later date which will be announced in due time.
11. Flag raising ceremonies during the said periods are likewise SUSPENDED.
12. All concerned MUST REGULARLY VISIT the Supreme Court website and MONITOR the Supreme Court Twitter Account for the latest developments and announcements.

This Administrative Circular supersedes Administrative Circular Nos. 27-2020 and 30-2020, and all other previous issuances which are inconsistent with herein.

The Constitution and our laws are not suspended, and our courts are not shutting down in times of emergencies. But with the situation still rapidly evolving and an atmosphere of uncertainty pervading, we must all do everything we can, including making drastic adjustments in our operations without sacrificing the need to attend to urgent cases that affect life and liberty, to prevent the spread of Covid-19, and protect the health and safety of our justices, judges, court workers, lawyers and the public we serve.

Manila, 16 March 2020



DIOSDADO M. PERALTA
Chief Justice