

Legislation Publication Ordinance gazetted

The Legislation Publication Ordinance was gazetted today (June 30). The new Ordinance provides the legal basis for the establishment of a brand-new electronic database of the Laws of Hong Kong. The contents of the database will be verified and given a statutory status that can be accepted by the courts.

A spokesperson for the Department of Justice said, "The tender notice for the new system was also gazetted today. It is expected that the new system will be implemented in 2015/16 at the earliest. Legislation data will then be gradually migrated from the loose-leaf edition to the database in the subsequent years. By then, members of the public and professionals such as judges and lawyers will be able to access promptly updated Hong Kong legislation via the Internet at any time, and enjoy advanced search functions of the system."

"For those who wish to use a printed version of legislation, they will be able to download and print legislation free of charge, or buy printed copies at the Publications Sales Unit of the Information Services Department after the implementation of the database. Complete sets of the whole consolidated statute book will also be available for public access at major public libraries," the spokesperson added.

At present, members of the public can access the contents of legislation via the Internet through the Department's Bilingual Laws Information System. The data in the system, however, does not have a statutory status. The texts of legislation with a statutory status are contained in a printed version, i.e. the loose-leaf edition of the Laws of Hong Kong. As it takes time to compile, print and distribute replacement pages for the loose-leaf edition, the edition may not always reflect the latest position of all legislation.

"Easy access to legislation by the public is an

indispensable element of a sound legal system. In this respect, the Ordinance sets a new milestone for the publication of legislation in Hong Kong.

The establishment of the new legislation database system will allow Hong Kong to keep abreast with other advanced common law jurisdictions on the legislation publication front. It will also assist the legal profession in Hong Kong in providing high-quality professional services to the business sectors as well as to the general public," the spokesperson said.

Ends/Thursday, June 30, 2011