

DOJ's Prosecutions Division releases its Yearly Review 2011

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The Prosecutions Division of the Department of Justice has released its Yearly Review for 2011, presenting an overview of the work of the Division and highlighting some of the key cases and events in the previous year.

Describing the year 2011 as a challenging and significant year, the Director of Public Prosecutions, Mr Kevin Zervos, SC, shares his thoughts and perspectives on the work of prosecutors and the major issues and concerns addressed in the course of the year in the Director's Overview.

As a dynamic, modern and professional prosecution service, the focus of the Division in 2011 was on improving and reforming the prosecution service.

"It has always been our prime concern to improve the prosecution service in every way possible in an effort to accomplish our objective of providing justice to all equally and fairly," Mr Zervos said today (October 31).

Mr Zervos also highlighted the approach taken by prosecutors in handling cases relating to public order events and first time offenders. In respect of public order events, Mr Zervos emphasised the fundamental right to a lawful and peaceful demonstration, and the positive duty of the authorities to facilitate the proper exercise of it, and said that prosecutors would only prosecute when people seriously cross the line and behave in an unlawful manner.

Regarding first time offenders, Mr Zervos remarked that he has taken a more active role in ensuring that first-time offenders are treated with an appropriate measure of compassion in order to steer them away from crime and not into it. "The public is well served by this approach in appropriate cases," he said.

Following are the key reforms and initiatives introduced by the Division in the year:

- * Modernising and revamping case management systems;
- * Reviewing and updating guidelines, instructions and manuals;
- * Implementing specially tailored and comprehensive training programmes;
- * Drafting and publishing reference texts;
- * Developing a partnership with lawyers in the private profession;
- * Outreaching to the community and regional and international bodies;
- * Developing closer collaboration with law enforcement agencies; and
- * Promoting greater transparency and accountability.

"The results have been immediate and effective, as prosecutors and support staff have worked hard to enhance professional standards and the quality of service we provide to the public," Mr Zervos said.

The review also includes a feature article written by Dr Gerard McCoy, SC, on the issue of misconduct in public office. Professor Simon Young, who led the Continuing Legal Education programme in the Division in the year, also contributed an article on the importance of continuing education for prosecutors.

The Yearly Review is available at www.doj.gov.hk/eng/public/yearbook2011.htm.

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