

Legal professionals discuss criminal justice system reform

More than 170 local and overseas legal professionals and members of the judiciary today (November 17) participated in the Criminal Law Conference 2012 to discuss how to enhance the criminal justice system in Hong Kong.

Organised by the Prosecutions Division of the Department of Justice, the conference seeks to address key topics and areas for reform by examining the overall interests of Hong Kong's criminal justice system.

Delivering the conference's opening address, the Secretary for Justice, Mr Rimsky Yuen, SC, said that the rule of law and judicial independence are the core values of Hong Kong.

"Under the Basic Law, Hong Kong remains a common law jurisdiction, and enjoys independent judicial power including that of final adjudication. Rights and freedoms of Hong Kong residents and other individuals are safeguarded under the Basic Law, the Bill of Rights Ordinance and other relevant legislations.

"As far as criminal justice is concerned, it has always been our aim to put in place a system that is fair and effective, and one that strikes the right balance between the protection of human rights and the need to protect the community from criminal activities.

"The enhancement of the administration of criminal justice is an ongoing commitment. The Department of Justice is committed to ensure that Hong Kong's criminal justice system will develop appropriately to meet the needs of our ever changing society," Mr Yuen said.

The Director of Public Prosecutions, Mr Kevin P Zervos, SC, said that Hong Kong is a modern international city with

an established and respected legal system based on the common law. The public expects its criminal justice system to be transparent, fair and efficient.

The conference has put together a wide range of topics for discussion in search for possible areas of reform at various levels of the criminal justice system, he added.

The conference today covered four major topics, namely prompt, efficient and fair criminal justice; reforming the criminal law and criminal statutes; achieving justice through the appeal process, and safeguarding a fair prosecution and a fair trial.

The Law Commissioner for Criminal Law and Evidence, England and Wales, Professor David Ormerod, delivered a keynote speech. Other renowned speakers and participants included the Honourable Justice Susan Glazebrook of the Supreme Court of New Zealand; the Right Honourable Sir Anthony Hooper from England and Wales; the Attorney General of Brunei, Her Excellency Datin Seri Paduka Hajah Hayati; the Director of Public Prosecutions of Fiji, Mr Christopher Pryde; the Chief Prosecutor of Singapore, Mr Aedit Abdullah, SC, and the State Counsel of Mauritius, Ms Kesri Soochit.

Ends/Saturday, November 17, 2012