

Government determined to further develop mediation services
(with photo)

The Government is determined to further develop mediation services in Hong Kong, and will work closely with the mediation community and other stakeholders so as to foster a mediation-friendly environment and enhance the requisite infrastructure, the Secretary for Justice, Mr Rimsky Yuen, SC, said today (July 18).

Speaking at the "Mediate First" Pledge Reception organised by the Steering Committee on Mediation today, Mr Yuen said, "We have no doubt that the promotion of mediation is in the best interest of Hong Kong. Not only does mediation offer an effective means of resolving disputes, the promotion of mediation services would reinforce Hong Kong's status as an international financial and commercial centre.

Apart from being more cost-effective than litigation, mediation is much more flexible in producing settlements that satisfy the needs of the parties and may go beyond what the court can do."

Mr Yuen pointed out that mediation was not a privilege enjoyed only by huge commercial entities or international corporations. "Mediation works equally well for SMEs (small and medium enterprises) and they will be one of our target groups in the future activities. In addition, our plan for the future covers other forms of dispute including those arising from healthcare issues as well as community and building management (such as water seepage)," he added.

Speaking at the same occasion, Justice of Appeal of the Court of Appeal of the High Court, Mr Justice Johnson Lam, explained that "Mediate First" was the adoption of a policy of resolving disputes through mediation before resorting to other more drastic means like litigation and arbitration.

Mr Justice Lam called on commercial enterprises to establish a mindset on the part of the management to deal with conflicts in a collaborative manner and cultivate such a culture in the commercial world.

"After a substantial number of commercial entities have embraced a 'Mediate First' culture and the momentum has been built up, those who are lagging behind will need to follow," he said.

More than 40 prominent companies, community organisations and education institutes, including the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited, the Bank of China (Hong Kong) Limited, Moissele International Holdings Limited, Sino Land Company Limited, the Prudential Assurance Company Limited, the Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong, and HKU School of Professional and Continuing Education, signed the "Mediate First" Pledge at the reception today, undertaking to resolve disputes by mediation first before litigations are considered.

Organised by the Public Education and Publicity Sub-committee established under the Steering Committee on Mediation, the reception today was attended by more than 170 professionals from the legal and mediation sectors, Consul Generals, and representatives of private companies, business associations and community organisations.

Ends/Thursday, July 18, 2013