

Prosecution Week to enhance public understanding of the criminal justice system (with photos)

The public is an important group of stakeholders, with which the Department of Justice has to work closely so as to maintain an effective and fair criminal justice system, the Secretary for Justice, Mr Rimsky Yuen, SC, said today (June 23) at the opening ceremony of the Prosecution Week 2014.

Organised by the Prosecutions Division of the Department of Justice, the Prosecution Week 2014 aims to enhance the community's understanding of the rule of law and the criminal justice system, under the theme "Prosecutions: Fearless, Accountable, Impartial and Robust".

Mr Yuen said, "We need to have public support and confidence before we can properly maintain our criminal justice system.

"With growing community understanding of and support to the prosecution process, I believe our prosecution team can go from strength to strength in bringing the prosecution service even closer to the general public. In this way, it can respond more readily to the community's aspiration for the rule of law and better serve the public."

Mr Yuen pointed out that Article 63 of the Basic Law entrenches the conduct of criminal prosecutions by the Department of Justice independently and free from any interference.

"It is an important principle which we always adhere to when we discharge our duties. In particular, when faced with politically sensitive cases or cases which attract huge media interest, such as cases involving public figures or cases concerning public order events, it is all the more important to strictly adhere to this cardinal principle so that truly independent decisions are made, and that every step taken in

the prosecution process is strictly in accordance with the law and the Prosecution Code," he said.

Speaking at the same occasion, the Director of Public Prosecution, Mr Keith Yeung, SC, said that the prosecution service needs to be fearless, accountable, impartial and robust in conducting prosecutions.

"Prosecutions are often controversial. The prosecutor must have the strength and confidence to resist criticism from whatever quarter, no matter how strident or painful.

"The need to be accountable and impartial is obvious. A prosecutor acts on behalf of the community. A prosecutor has no ego when discharging his or her duties. Personal preferences and idiosyncrasies of the prosecutor have no role to play. Political considerations are completely irrelevant. The judgment of the prosecutor on a case must never be overborne by such irrelevant considerations. Independence is the norm.

"It is also important to be robust. 'Rule out crime' - I repeat one of the themes of the First Prosecution Week. It is indeed one of the duties of the prosecutor to ensure that the prosecution case is conducted robustly and firmly," Mr Yeung said.

During the week from June 24 to 30, visits to the Department of Justice and courts, talks and mock court will be organised to enhance public understanding of the criminal justice system and the works of Public Prosecutors.

The Meet the Community programme was also launched recently to further promote the criminal justice system. Public Prosecutors of the Prosecution Division will visit schools and community organisations and give talks on important legal topics relevant to the criminal justice system, such as the role of prosecutors, drug abuse, cyber

bullying, sexual offences, juvenile crime and triad activities.

A slogan competition for the Prosecution Week was also organised with over 100 entries submitted by secondary school students. The prize presentation was also held at today's ceremony.

Ends/Monday, June 23, 2014

