

Prosecution Week to enhance public awareness of the rule of law (with photos)

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Organised by the Prosecutions Division of the Department of Justice, the Prosecution Week 2015 was kicked off today (June 23) with the objective of enhancing community awareness of the rule of law and citizens' civil rights and duties, under the theme "Uphold Justice with Professionalism and Independence".

Speaking at the event's opening ceremony, the Secretary for Justice, Mr Rimsky Yuen, SC, said that the environment of Hong Kong as a whole is undergoing significant changes, and so is the legal landscape of Hong Kong as well as the environment within which our public prosecutors have to perform their duties.

"These changes bring about huge challenges to our law enforcement agencies as well as our public prosecutors, if not the entire Department of Justice. For instance, the advance of technology has brought about challenges to our substantive criminal law as well as generated complex and difficult issues in the context of criminal evidence and criminal procedure. The upsurge of cross-border or multi-jurisdictional criminal activities, on the other hand, calls for better co-operation amongst different jurisdictions.

"Another challenge is how to engage the general public, so as to provide them with the appropriate explanations within the limit permitted by the law and which would best serve public interests," Mr Yuen said.

The Director of Public Prosecution, Mr Keith Yeung, SC, said at the same occasion that this year's theme has summarised two fundamental principles which the Prosecutions Division held dear in the pursuit of criminal justice.

"Before we decide whether or not to prosecute in any given case, we must carefully and critically evaluate all the available evidence. Unless we are satisfied that the evidence supports a reasonable prospect of success, there can be no prosecution. And once we are so satisfied, we proceed to consider whether the public interest requires the prosecution to be brought. And at all time, we guide ourselves by the law, international standards, all applicable practice, and our Prosecution Code.

"In carrying out our duty to prosecute, we strive to ensure that the rights of all parties to the criminal proceedings are always sufficiently safeguarded. It is this high degree of professionalism on the part of the

prosecutors that help ensure the maintenance of a fair criminal justice system as we know it, and ultimately the rule of law.

"Article 63 of the Basic Law preserves the primacy of prosecutorial independence by providing a constitutionally entrenched guarantee that the Department of Justice shall control criminal prosecutions 'free from any interference'. It is on this foundation that each of us as prosecutor is expected to carry out our duties, without being subservient to anyone however rich or powerful," 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.

A slogan competition for the Prosecution Week was also organised with a total of 364 entries submitted by secondary school students. The prize presentation was also held at today's ceremony.

Ends/Tuesday, June 23, 2015

