

Department of Justice releases "Prosecutions Hong Kong 2016"

The Prosecutions Division of the Department of Justice today (September 5) released its annual report, "Prosecutions Hong Kong 2016", which reviews the Division's work and important cases of last year.

In his fourth and last letter presenting the report as Director of Public Prosecutions to the Secretary for Justice, Mr Keith Yeung, SC, described the year 2016 as "challenging yet fruitful". In the Director's Overview, he explained the challenges faced by the prosecution team in terms of case load, as well as the difficult and controversial nature of the cases handled. This notwithstanding, prosecutors remained apolitical in handling their prosecution work. "Our mindset is accordingly clear, and we make a point to keep it clear We shall not allow ourselves to be influenced by any irrelevant considerations," Mr Yeung said.

In his letter to the Secretary for Justice, Mr Yeung also summarised the Prosecutions Division's work in 2016 in respect of the development of the criminal justice system. He said, "We in 2016 took forward two separate public consultations, one on prosecution works in the Magistracy, and the other on the use of live television link by complainants when giving evidence on certain sexual offences.

"Our arguments in HKSAR v Ngo Van Nam & Anor contributed towards the revision by the court of the previous sentencing practice of giving a full one third discount to even court door pleas, which revision brought about far-reaching changes to plea patterns at all three levels of the court system.

"The Prosecutions Division also took active part in the

exercise commenced in September 2016 by the Judiciary in modernising the case management regime in criminal proceedings in the Court of First Instance, leading to the finalisation and implementation of Practice Direction 9.3 in June this year." These efforts and achievements are further elaborated in the Director's Overview.

It is also reported that with the appointment of Miss Anna Lai as Senior Counsel in 2016, the Prosecutions Division has, for the first time since establishment, four silks each heading one sub-division. Looking ahead, with the additional manpower resources acquired and resumption of recruitment of Court Prosecutors in 2017, it is Mr Yeung's view that "the Prosecutions Division is well equipped to face new challenges in the future".

Apart from a detailed account of the main activities of and key cases handled by the different sub-divisions and units of the Prosecutions Division, this latest review also provides information on various trainings and conferences, both locally and internationally, in which prosecutors participated during the year. Moreover, the division also continued to actively reach out to its partners and the community by organising events such as Prosecution Week and the Meet the Community programme.

The review also contains an interview with one ex-member of the Prosecutions Division – Mr Peter Power who retired in September 2016 as Senior Assistant Director of Public Prosecutions – sharing his invaluable work experience, beliefs and views as a veteran prosecutor. Moreover, Professor Simon Young, who led the Continuing Legal Education Programme of the Division in the year, contributed an article on the Continuity of Continuing Legal Education for Hong Kong Prosecutors.

"Prosecutions Hong Kong 2016" is available at the

website of the Department of Justice
(www.doj.gov.hk/eng/public/yrreviewpd2016.html).

Ends/Tuesday, September 5, 2017