

**Legislative Council Panel on
Administration of Justice and Legal Services**

Hong Kong e-Legislation – Completion of Verification Project

Purpose

This paper updates Members of the completion of the project of verifying all current Hong Kong legislation for publication of verified copies on the Hong Kong e-Legislation (“**HKeL**”) and replacing the Loose-leaf Edition of the Laws of Hong Kong (“**Loose-leaf Edition**”) in March 2025 (“**Verification Project**”). This paper also briefs Members of the developments in laws publication and the enhancements of HKeL in the past few years.

Background

2. In January 2017, we briefed Members on the official launch of HKeL, a verified electronic database of all current Hong Kong legislation for free access and download (see LC Paper No. CB(4)430/16-17(01)). The Legislation Publication Ordinance (Cap. 614) (“**Cap. 614**”), enacted in June 2011, provided the necessary statutory backing for implementing HKeL and giving legal status to verified copies of legislation published on HKeL.

3. Under section 5 of Cap. 614, verified copies of legislation are presumed, unless the contrary is proved, to correctly state the legislation as at the date specified in the copies. With the establishment of HKeL, we have embarked on the Verification Project to progressively verify all chapters of Hong Kong legislation, so as to provide timely access to verified copies of all current legislation and to keep pace with the advancement of information technology.

4. The aim of the Verification Project is to transform access to legislation by replacing the previous Bilingual Laws Information System (“**BLIS**”), which was for information only, and gradually phasing out the Loose-leaf Edition, which was once the official source of consolidated Hong Kong legislation with legal status. In the digital era, the lead time of a number of months for updating the Loose-leaf Edition was considered inadequate for access to updated legislation in

a timely manner.

Verification Project

5. For a text of legislation to be given verified status in HKeL, the converted data from BLIS has to undergo a rigorous accuracy assurance process of checking against the official version of the relevant legislation in the Loose-leaf Edition and the Government Gazette. In addition, its format is also checked and updated to the current legislative style by Editorial Records whenever required.

6. During the transitional period of phasing out the Loose-leaf Edition, after the verified copy of an Ordinance or item of subsidiary legislation has been published on HKeL, the Ordinance or item would be removed from the Loose-leaf Edition. A purple Check List would then be retained in the Loose-leaf Edition stating that the Ordinance or item could be found on HKeL. During the transitional period, we have also prepared bilingual guide and videos on HKeL to give subscribers of the Loose-leaf Edition detailed instructions on how to maintain their printed copies of legislation.

7. Throughout the Verification Project, a total of 2,375 chapters involving over 80,000 bilingual pages have been verified. As the verified copies of all Hong Kong legislation are now available on HKeL, the Loose-leaf Edition has fulfilled its historical mission. The last issue of the Loose-leaf Edition (Issue 70) was published in March 2025. From now on, members of the public may simply access HKeL for the official consolidated Hong Kong legislation.

Policy Initiatives and Developments since 2017

8. In conjunction with the Verification Project, a number of policy initiatives have been taken since the launch of HKeL in 2017. They are set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

9. ***Decommissioning of BLIS:*** To facilitate the transition from BLIS to HKeL, HKeL and BLIS were in parallel run for nearly 18 months. After consulting the HKeL Liaison Group¹ on the proposed BLIS decommission date and considering the views of the legal profession, BLIS was decommissioned on

¹ HKeL Liaison Group comprises representatives from the Hong Kong Bar Association, the Law Society of Hong Kong, the Judiciary and the Legal Service Division of the Legislative Council Secretariat.

1 July 2018. From that date, HKeL has become the only government legislation website for Hong Kong (see LC Paper No. CB(4)1138/17-18(01)).

10. ***Implementation of electronic Editorial Record:*** Starting from 2019, editorial amendments to legislation are made under section 12 of Cap. 614 electronically. They are recorded and published on HKeL with legal status under section 15 of Cap. 614. The first electronic Editorial Record in HKeL with legal status was published on 10 April 2019.

11. ***Open data policy:*** In support of the Government's policy to open up data for free public use to facilitate technology research and innovation, we have also made available both current and past legislation data (dating back to 30 June 1997) in Extensible Markup Language (XML) format on the Public Sector Information portal for free access and download starting from October 2019.

12. ***Combined DoJ Glossaries of Legal Terms:*** Since the launch of HKeL, the existing Glossaries of Legal Terms have been published on HKeL for information. After the launch of the Combined DoJ Glossaries of Legal Terms ("**Combined Glossaries**"), a dedicated website was established to host the Combined Glossaries in September 2021 for reference purposes. Since then, HKeL has provided a quick link to the website of the Combined Glossaries for easy access.

13. ***New editorial and formatting powers:*** As benefited from the operational experience, Cap. 614 was subsequently amended in 2012, 2018 and 2024. The amendments were to empower the Secretary for Justice to make formatting amendments and further editorial amendments, so as to facilitate the rectification of minor errors and the standardization of the format and style of the statute book.

Continuing Effort to Enhance HKeL

14. We have also continued to make enhancements to HKeL to cater for the needs of different users, as part of our continuing effort to facilitate public access to the updated Hong Kong legislation in a timely manner. Items (a) to (f) below highlight some of the major HKeL enhancements that we have implemented since our previous information paper in May 2018 (see LC Paper No. CB(4)1138/17-18(01)).

(a) Legislation available in multiple formats

15. To cater for the needs of different users, we have made copies of legislation available in multiple formats. For example, a PDF copy of legislation is available in two options, verified PDF copy (with legal status) and assisted PDF copy (with no legal status), for free access and download.

16. From December 2019, users can also access copies of current versions of legislation in Rich Text Format (RTF) for reference purposes. The feature has made it easier for users to “copy and paste” legislative texts to emails and other documents. Users may also make use of the RTF copies of legislation in desktop word-processing software for drafting amendments to, and marking comments and notes on, the copies.

17. The feature has been further extended to all past verified versions of legislation in March 2020. Moreover, the RTF copies of legislation are available in both individual provisions format and whole chapter format.

(b) “Subsidiary Legislation” tab

18. In May 2021, to facilitate users to access all subsidiary legislation under a principal Ordinance, a “Subsidiary Legislation” tab (see illustration below) has been added to the “View Legislation” pages of the principal Ordinance and each item of subsidiary legislation. The tab shows the list of subsidiary legislation at a glance, and allows users to access an item of subsidiary legislation via embedded hyperlinks and download its PDF or RTF copy.



(“Subsidiary Legislation” tab)

(c) Back-capturing of past Gazettes

19. Since November 2021, we have introduced the initiative of back-capturing the past Government Gazettes, for more convenient access to past Gazettes to facilitate academic, legal and policy research. In the past, only post-2000 Gazettes were available online.

20. As of today, we have uploaded a total of 19,077 electronic copies (involving around 74,000 pages) of Legal Supplement No. 1 (Ordinance), No. 2 (Subsidiary Legislation, etc.) and No. 3 (Bill) and Supplement No. 6 (Private Bills only) published from 1965 to May 2000, as well as all Legal Supplement No. 7 (Authentic Chinese text), by batches to HKeL for reference purpose. Users may access and download the electronic copies on the “Gazette” page (accessible via the “Gazette” tab on the HKeL menu bar).

21. Embedded hyperlinks have also been set up to those electronic copies in the source note of the related legislative provisions and under “Enactment History” of the “Other” tab of the “View Legislation” page of the related legislation, for ease of cross-referencing (see illustration below).



(Embedded hyperlinks in source notes)



(Embedded hyperlinks in Enactment History)

(d) “Get QR Code” function

22. In December 2022, we introduced a new “Get QR Code” function in HKeL (accessible via the QR code below) to facilitate public access to, and dissemination of, Hong Kong legislation. The function enables users to generate a QR code for any HKeL content, or make their own QR code for any specified chapter or provision in HKeL in their preferred language.



(QR code for accessing the “Get QR Code” function)

23. Users can then copy and paste the generated HKeL QR code to email or document, or download it in the PNG format for optimal use and sharing on a computer or mobile device. Since June 2023, users can also choose to generate HKeL QR codes in JPEG format for inclusion in printed materials.

(e) “My Collection” function

24. In May 2024, a new “My Collection” function in HKeL was introduced to facilitate a more efficient and customized retrieval and search of legislation. It allows users to create their own collections of bookmarked provisions (in any language version across the timeline) and perform more targeted search within their own collections of provisions.

(f) Search functionality

25. We have continued to implement enhancements to the search functionality of HKeL from time to time, in order to facilitate easier and more efficient search of the target legislation for different groups of users.

26. With an expanding database of e-Gazette under HKeL, the search function of the “Gazette” page (accessible via the “Gazette” tab on the HKeL menu bar) has also been upgraded for quicker search results based on any year, month or date as specified by users since September 2022. The search bars for

Gazette number and title have been further enhanced in May 2023 to make it easier for users to input the required search criteria.

27. In August 2024, we further enhanced our most commonly-used “Quick Search” function. After entering keywords in the search criteria, in addition to the provisions that match the inputted keywords, the matched results of Chapter titles are also displayed separately.

Reproduction of Loose-leaf Edition in Electronic Format

28. Despite its retirement after the publication of its last issue (Issue 70) in March 2025, the Loose-leaf Edition remains a valuable source of information. To preserve the integrity and accessibility of the Loose-leaf Edition, we have initiated a new project to gradually convert the voluminous printed Loose-leaf copies (Issues 1 to 70, around 230,000 pages) into image PDF format.

29. The electronic copies of Issues 1 to 10 have already been uploaded to HKeL. They may be accessed via the “Loose-leaf Edition” tab (accessible via the “Useful Information” tab on the HKeL menu bar). The electronic copies of the other Issues will be uploaded to HKeL in batches in the coming years for public access.

Loose-leaf Edition

The Loose-leaf Edition of the Laws of Hong Kong, published between 1990 and 2025, was the only official source of consolidated legislation with legal status before the implementation of Hong Kong e-Legislation (*HKeL*) in 2017. The Loose-leaf Edition was then being gradually replaced by the verified copies of legislation with legal status published on HKeL.


To facilitate public access to the Loose-leaf Edition for reference purpose, we are gradually converting the Loose-leaf Edition into electronic copies. You can now access and download the electronic copies of **Issues 1 to 10** of the printed Loose-leaf Edition on HKeL. The other issues will be uploaded to HKeL in batches in the coming years.

[Supplementary Information about Loose-leaf Edition](#)

Issue No.

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Chapter / Instrument No.	Chapter / Instrument Title	As at Date	PDF
2	Public Finance Ordinance	01/11/1991	 
2A	Capital Works Reserve Fund	01/11/1991	 
2B	Capital Investment Fund	01/11/1991	 

(“Loose-leaf Edition” page)

Support from HKeL Liaison Group

30. The HKeL Liaison Group was established in September 2013, so as to provide a channel through which the HKeL project team could receive feedback from frequent users of HKeL for continuous improvement. In the coming years, we will continue to keep the HKeL Liaison Group informed on proposed enhancements to HKeL and solicit the HKeL Liaison Group's views on particular topics concerning users.

Conclusion

31. The completion of the Verification Project marks the conclusion of an important chapter in the implementation of HKeL. We are committed to continuing with our effort in enhancing HKeL to improve its functionalities and user-friendliness for the benefit of the legal profession as well as the general public.

Department of Justice
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