

Secretary for Justice speaks about appointment of DPP

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Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Rimsky Yuen, SC, and the Director of Public Prosecutions (Designate), Mr Keith Yeung, SC, to the media today (August 1):

Secretary for Justice: Dear friends from the media, the purpose of today's meeting is to announce the Government's appointment of Mr Keith Yeung Kar-hung, SC, to succeed Mr Kevin Zervos, SC, as the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), who will leave the civil service in September.

A prosecution service that is fair, just, in accordance with the law and free from political intervention is of fundamental importance in maintaining the rule of law. The Department of Justice (DoJ) has all along placed great emphasis on the quality of our prosecution work.

In November 2012, the DoJ conducted a promotion-cum-open recruitment exercise so as to source a suitable candidate for the post of DPP. After the selection process which took more than six months, the Selection Committee chaired by the Secretary for the Civil Service considered Mr Yeung to be the most suitable candidate and decided to appoint him as the next DPP.

With over 25 years of experience in the legal profession, Mr Yeung has a wealth of experience and an in-depth knowledge in criminal law and civil law, especially commercial crime and securities-related legal matters.

Over the years, Mr Yeung has been actively involved in legal and related services. As the Vice-chairman of the Bar Association as well as in other capacities, he has been involved in different areas of work for promoting the development of legal services and the legal profession.

Further, Mr Yeung is no stranger to the work of the Government. He has been involved in various public services, including Chairman of the Non-local Higher and Professional Education Appeal Board and Deputy Chairman of the Appeal Board Panel (Town Planning).

Mr Yeung enjoys a very good reputation in the Bar. I am confident that he will bring a wealth of experience and expertise to the DoJ, and that he will discharge his role as the DPP in a fair and balanced manner. I and my colleagues in the DoJ very much look forward to working with him.

Last but certainly not least, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my special gratitude to the incumbent DPP, Mr Kevin Zervos, SC, for his valuable service in the DoJ for over 21 years. During his tenure as the DPP, he has strived to uphold the rule of law by handling prosecutions in a just and impartial manner. He has also been active in promoting community awareness of the rule of law by organising a number of public activities, such as the Prosecution Week, which has been held twice, to enhance public understanding of the rule of law and criminal prosecution. His outstanding performance has won the recognition and praise of the Government as well as members of the legal profession. I wish Mr Zervos, SC, every success in whatever new venture he will take up.

Now I would invite Mr Yeung to say a few words.

Director of Public Prosecutions (Designate): Dear friends, I am glad to meet you today. This is my very first time in this capacity.

The system of criminal prosecutions is a vital aspect of the Hong Kong legal system. Its key objective is to uphold the rule of law. To achieve that, we need an independent, fair, impartial and open system of public prosecutions.

Under Article 63 of the Basic Law, the Department of Justice of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall control criminal prosecutions, free from any interference.

Over the years, the Secretary for Justice, the Director of Public Prosecutions and members of the 400-strong Prosecutions Division of the Department have been striving to uphold the rule of law in Hong Kong. They have conducted criminal prosecutions with a high degree of professionalism and competence. Their efforts are well recognised by the international community.

Now I am privileged and I am glad to join them as a member. I look forward to working with them and to have a productive relationship with them.

In discharging the duties of the Director of Public Prosecutions, I will try my utmost. I will uphold the prosecutorial independence preserved and vested upon the Department of Justice by the Basic Law. I will handle all criminal prosecutions in a fair and impartial manner. I will be guided by the public interest. I will uphold the rule of law.

I look forward to working with all the colleagues and the team in the Department of Justice. We will together to handle criminal prosecutions in Hong Kong in a fair, independent, impartial and professional manner. Thank you.

Reporter: What have you done to make up the knowledge of DoJ and what is the most pressing issue for you?

Director of Public Prosecutions (Designate): As perceived lack of experience is concerned, I have been practising for 25 years. Over the 25 years, I've never ceased practising in criminal law. In fact, criminal law has always been a very important aspect of my practice. So when defending, I have the chance to observe how the prosecution works and in fact over the years, I have also done prosecution works on behalf of the Department of Justice. So in that regard I am confident I have enough experience and knowledge about the operation of the Department of Justice. In any event it is also very important that we are not talking about an individual. We are talking about a team. Within the Department of Justice, there is a team of highly professional and experienced lawyers. And no doubt we will work together and achieve prosecutions and prosecution policies in accordance with the established policies.

Reporter: Mr Yeung is not promoted from the people working in the DoJ. Do you think morale will be affected?

Secretary for Justice: As I said in my opening, we conducted an open recruitment-cum-promotion exercise. The reason why we embark upon that exercise is to ensure that we can source the best candidate from both the private Bar as well as internally within the Department of Justice. Our aim is to ensure that we have (a) identified all the best candidates and (b) to ensure the most appropriate candidate will be appointed as the next Director of Public Prosecutions. I can assure you that all the colleagues in the Prosecutions Division understand the reason why we embark upon that exercise and there will be no negative impact on the morale of all the colleagues in the Prosecutions Division. Indeed on the contrary as I said earlier, I myself and all the colleagues within the Department of Justice, including those colleagues in the Prosecutions Division, are very much looking forward to work with and co-operate with Mr Keith Yeung, SC. Thank you very much.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

Ends/Thursday, August 1, 2013