

Notice of Motion to seek LegCo's approval of Criminal Procedure (Appeal against Ruling of No Case to Answer) Rules

The Department of Justice today (December 4) gave notice to the Legislative Council (LegCo) of its intention to move a motion to seek the LegCo's approval of the Criminal Procedure (Appeal against Ruling of No Case to Answer) Rules at the LegCo meeting on January 8, 2025. The Rules were made by the Criminal Procedure Rules Committee under section 9 of the Criminal Procedure Ordinance (Cap. 221) on November 14, 2024. The Rules set out the relevant procedural matters for the new "no case to answer" appeal mechanism under the Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Ordinance 2023. The new appeal mechanism allows the prosecution to appeal against rulings of no case to answer made by the Court of First Instance (CFI) of the High Court in criminal trials with a jury.

A spokesman for the Department of Justice said that the new "no case to answer" appeal mechanism addresses the lacuna in the criminal appeal system due to the prosecution's inability to appeal against erroneous rulings of no case to answer made by judges of the CFI in jury trials. To facilitate its smooth operation, a new set of procedural rules has to be made for such appeals before the relevant provisions of the Amendment Ordinance come into effect.

Relevant stakeholders including the Law Society of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Bar Association and the Legal Aid Department were consulted, and they welcomed the implementation of the Rules. The Department of Justice has also issued an information paper to the LegCo Panel on Administration of Justice and Legal Services in July this year to brief members of the Panel on the proposed draft rules.

Subject to the LegCo's approval of the Rules, the Department of Justice will bring the relevant provisions of the Amendment Ordinance and the Rules into operation as soon as practicable.

EDB announces arrangements on application for S1 discretionary

places

The Education Bureau (EDB) today (December 4) announced that parents of Primary Six (P6) students participating in the current (2025) cycle of the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) who wish to apply for Secondary One (S1) Discretionary Places (DP) in government, aided and caput secondary schools as well as Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) secondary schools participating in the SSPA System for their children have to submit the applications to the secondary schools concerned between January 2 and 16, 2025.

Digitalisation of SSPA

Parents who have registered as SSPA e-platform (eSSPA) (esspa.edb.gov.hk) users and bound their account to "iAM Smart+" may browse choice-making information starting from tomorrow (December 5), and submit DP applications and view application results via the eSSPA at a later stage. The EDB encourages parents to register with "iAM Smart+" (www.iamsmart.gov.hk/en/reg.html) as early as possible and activate their eSSPA account using "iAM Smart+" for more convenient and faster electronic services.

To cater for the needs of different parents, paper application forms will continue to be accepted, and primary schools participating in the SSPA System have been informed to collect copies of the Application Forms for Secondary One Discretionary Places (application forms) and the Handbook for Application for Secondary One Discretionary Places (Handbook) tomorrow. Parents of P6 students will each receive two paper application forms from their children's primary school. For students not studying in primary schools participating in the SSPA System (including newly arrived children and dependants under various talent admission schemes who are eligible for participating in the SSPA), their parents can obtain the application forms at the School Places Allocation (SPA) Section of the EDB.

Submission of S1 DP applications

An EDB spokesman said, "Parents are encouraged to submit the application forms and other required documents to secondary schools via the eSSPA. If parents prefer submitting paper application forms and other necessary documents in person, they should note the school office hours."

The two electronic or paper application forms that parents will receive will show Order of School Preference 1 and School Preference 2 respectively. Order of School Preference 1 stands for the student's first-choice school and Order of School Preference 2 stands for the student's second-choice school. In all circumstances, primary and secondary schools should not request students or parents to disclose their order of preference. Likewise, applicants and their parents should not disclose their order of preference to

schools.

The spokesman reminded parents to read carefully the Notes for Parents on Application for Secondary One Discretionary Places. Parents should not submit applications to more than two secondary schools participating in the SSPA no matter whether the applications are submitted via the eSSPA or in paper application form. Otherwise, the DP applications of their children will be rendered void. In addition, parents should not submit duplicate applications via the eSSPA and in paper application form for the same child.

The spokesman said, "The schools to which parents apply for DPs are not restricted by districts. Parents are strongly advised to consider the schools in all respects, such as their educational philosophy, tradition, religion, class structure, admission criteria, development and operation, and their children's characteristics, personalities, abilities and interests to make a suitable school choice. Parents may refer to the relevant information in the Secondary School Profiles (www.chsc.hk/secondary) or school websites for reference.

"Students who are successful in the DP application stage will not be allocated a school place in central allocation (CA). Parents should, therefore, apply to schools of their preference. The EDB will match students' preferences against schools' Successful/Reserve Lists for Discretionary Places. If a student is successful in both schools to which he or she has applied, allocation will be based on the student's order of preference."

Notification arrangements for successful DP applicants

The spokesman reminded that under the notification arrangements for successful DP applicants, if students are included by participating secondary schools in their Successful Lists for Discretionary Places, their parents will receive notifications from the schools on March 31, 2025. Parents who have registered as eSSPA users may also view notifications for successful DP applicants via the eSSPA starting from 10am on the same day. Parents do not need to reply to the secondary schools whether they would accept the DP offers. The allocation results of DP and CA will be released at the same time on July 8, 2025.

Enquiries

For the list of secondary schools accepting DP applications and the number of DPs for application, parents may ask for the Handbook from primary schools for reference or obtain the latest version of the Handbook through the EDB website (www.edb.gov.hk) and the fax service of the EDB's 24-hour Automatic Telephone Enquiry System on 2891 0088.

If parents have enquiries about DP applications, they are advised to consult their children's primary schools or the secondary schools to which they apply. For general enquiries, parents may contact the SPA Section (SSPA) of the EDB (Tel: 2832 7740 and 2832 7700; address: Podium Floor, West Block,

LCQ22: Making good use of sports venues of Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Following is a question by the Hon Dominic Lee and a written reply by the Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (December 4):

Question:

There are views that the Government should further enhance the quality as well as the efficiency of use of sports facilities in Hong Kong, so as to support the sports development strategy more effectively, thereby dovetailing with the policy direction of fostering sports development by promoting sports in the community, supporting elite sports and promoting Hong Kong as a centre for major international sports events. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it is learnt that at present, lockers in the sports venues under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) are only available for use by members of the public on a daily basis, and it is observed that the utilization rate of such lockers is on the low side, with quite a number of users opting to place their belongings at the side of the sports venues rather than putting them in the lockers, while on the other hand, professional athletes and coaches often need to bring along a lot of equipment for training, and they must take away such equipment each time as the lockers are not available for overnight use, whether the LCSD will consider setting up an application system for its venues to allocate lockers to eligible persons for overnight use, so as to enhance the efficiency of use of its facilities and facilitate their use by professional athletes;

(2) given that the LCSD will make available six additional sports centres in the first quarter of next year for booking by members of the public for new sports (e.g. dodgeball, dodgebee and kin-ball), bringing the total number of sports centres under the Trial Scheme on New Sports Activities (Trial Scheme) to 12, whether the authorities will consider further extending the Trial Scheme to other sports centres across the territory, so as to achieve the popularization mode of "single venue, multiple use"; if so, of the specific implementation timetable; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as there are views that the current shortage of four-sided glass-panelled

professional squash exhibition venues with spectator stands in Hong Kong has undermined the possibility of hosting international squash tournaments locally, whether the authorities will consider the additional provision of relevant facilities, so as to enhance Hong Kong's capability of hosting international tournaments and promote squash development in Hong Kong?

Reply:

President,

In respect of the question raised by the Hon Dominic Lee, my reply is as follows:

(1) At some leisure venues under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), such as sports centres, sports grounds and swimming pools, lockers are available for users at no cost when they are using the venues, and are to be returned when the users leave the venues. In general, the lockers at leisure venues are very popular among users with high utilisation. As the leisure venues have to be used for sports activities as far as possible, the number of lockers provided thereat are limited. Priority is therefore given to accommodate the needs of venue users.

To facilitate the training of professional athletes, the LCSD has already arranged designated leisure venues for "national sports associations" to meet the training needs of Hong Kong teams. Storage areas are available at such venues for long-term storage of large-scale training equipment and facilities.

The LCSD will continue to closely monitor the usage of lockers.

(2) The LCSD is dedicated to promoting the development of diversified sports activities. With the increasing popularity of many new sports in recent years, the LCSD has opened up six sports centres, namely the Stanley Sports Centre, the Cheung Sha Wan Sports Centre, the Lei Yue Mun Sports Centre, the Cheung Fat Sports Centre, the Fu Heng Sports Centre and the Long Ping Sports Centre under the Trial Scheme on Opening up the Arena of Selected Sports Centres for Booking by Individuals for New Sports Activities (Trial Scheme). Members of the public may book the arenas of these sports centres for conducting six new sports that are more popular, including dodgeball, dodgebee, kin-ball, korfball, pickleball and tchoukball. Given the positive feedback from the public since the launch of the Trial Scheme, the LCSD plans to extend the booking arrangements to cover peak hours (i.e. from 6pm onwards on weekdays and all time slots on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays) and open up more suitable arenas of the sports centres. The six new sports centres proposed are located in Eastern District, Wong Tai Sin District, Yau Tsim Mong District, Islands District, Sai Kung District and Sha Tin District respectively. The LCSD is consulting the District Councils on the arrangements concerned and will further announce the implementation details after obtaining support from relevant District Councils. The LCSD will review the implementation of the above arrangements in a timely manner, and consider whether to further extend such arrangements to more venues.

(3) The Hong Kong Squash Centre under the LCSD provides 17 standard squash courts as well as a four-sided glass-panelled exhibition court with a seating capacity of 286 for conducting large-scale competitions. In addition, the LCSD provides multi-purpose sports venues with various facilities and markings, allowing flexibility in fitting-out options to cater for the needs of different sports. In the past, some organisations would also hire and set up those venues for international competitions, such as the setting up of four-sided glass-panelled exhibition courts at the Hong Kong Park Sports Centre and the Edinburgh Place for the Hong Kong Squash Open, facilitating the staging of large-scale competitions in Hong Kong.

LCQ18: Enhancing district governance

Following is a question by Dr the Hon So Cheung-wing and a reply by the Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs, Miss Alice Mak, in the Legislative Council today (December 4):

Questions:

It has been reported that the Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs led a delegation of all 18 District Officers (DOs) earlier on to Beijing and Zhejiang for a study programme on district governance, which included understanding the concept of co-ordinating different community organisations to participate in local governance through studying the "Fengqiao Experience" and the "Pujiang Experience", with a view to enhancing district governance. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the relevant details of the "Fengqiao Experience" and the "Pujiang Experience", including the specific insights gained by DOs therefrom; whether it has studied how the essence of those Experiences will be applied to the district governance of Hong Kong in the future;

(2) whether it has plans to arrange for the members of various District Councils (DCs) to go to the Mainland to study the experience of district governance there; how it will train DC members to achieve the goal of being "mindful of the people, their responsibilities, and the rules";

(3) given that the seventh-term DCs have operated for nearly one year, whether the Government has compiled statistics on the specific tasks and contributions of various DCs so far, and whether it has reviewed if all of those tasks have met the performance indicators; and

(4) given that the operation of DCs has been comprehensively enhanced, with various DCs being chaired by DOs of the respective Districts, whether the Government has reviewed if DCs have encountered new challenges that need to

be overcome in the course of the enhanced operation?

Reply:

President,

The Home and Youth Affairs Bureau (HYAB) provided a series of trainings to District Officers (DOs) and District Council (DC) members in 2024 to enhance their capabilities in discharging their duties and the efficacy of district governance on an on-going basis.

For the individual parts of the question, our consolidated reply is as follows:

(1) & (2) The Secretary for Home and Youth Affairs led a delegation of 18 DOs for a study programme on district governance in April 2024, comprising lectures at the National Academy of Governance and a visit to Zhejiang Province, so to have a deeper understanding of the national policies and development and learn about the experiences in district governance in the Mainland. Subsequently, the HYAB also arranged DC members to visit Zhejiang Province or Shanghai by batches from July to October 2024 to study the national theories of grassroots governance and conduct site visits to observe first-hand the practical experiences of district governance in the Mainland.

The tenets of "Fengqiao Experience" are to have the well-being of the people close to our hearts, and to systematically prevent and resolve conflicts at early stages; while "Pujiang Experience" advocates for "turning people's petitions into leaders' personal outreach to the grassroots, connecting with the people, and dedicating real effort to understand and address the needs of the people with hearts". These experiences emphasise on building a strong relationship between the Government and the people so to strengthen grassroots governance.

Through lectures and visits to better understand the application of "Fengqiao Experience" and "Pujiang Experience" in different places in the Mainland, DOs and DC members appreciate the need to enhance communication with the people in district governance. They have to understand the people's pressing issues and problems that are of concern so as to address their issues and problems early. People could then have a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment in their daily life. For example, after the improvements to governance at the district level, when torrential rain causes flooding in certain areas, District Offices, DCs and District Services and Community Care Teams (Care Teams) would plan disaster prevention work well ahead of time, so as to identify, address and resolve difficulties faced by the people pro-actively. DOs, together with DC members and relevant departments, would also visit locations affected by flooding and formulate suitable improvement measures for the future. DC members would also actively assist District Offices in engaging residents to expedite the implementation of improvement measures so as to benefit local residents and improve their living environment early.

(3) Since the new-term DCs took office in January 2024, their advisory and service functions have been markedly enhanced and the overall performance has been satisfactory. After taking office, DCs immediately addressed the issues of concern in the district and collected views from the people. Various committees and working groups were also established to follow up on district affairs. DC members have also actively participated in district work and set up their ward offices. To strengthen their communication and interactions with residents, DC members have been meeting residents in person regularly under the "Meet the Public Scheme" arranged by the District Offices, as well as setting up street counters and visiting buildings in the district in person. DC members have been discharging their duties to ensure effective two-way communications between the Government and the public.

DC Secretariats have regularly uploaded DC members' attendance at meetings to the DC website for reference by members of the public. Pursuant to the Performance Monitoring Guidelines for DC members, DC members are required to submit work reports to DC Chairmen every year, elaborating on the major work done during the year. The work report shall be completed within two months after the end of the reporting period. The HYAB have all along been monitoring the work of DCs and DC members, so to ensure DC members fulfil their duties and responsibilities.

(4) Under the improved governance at the district level, DOs serve as the DC Chairmen, the commanders of Care Teams, as well as the Chairmen of the District Management Committees. Under the arrangement, DOs can better co-ordinate government departments, DC members, Care Teams and district committees, so to facilitate their collaboration and create synergy to serve the public more effectively. The public also have higher expectations on the Government in relation to district governance, especially on resolving district issues that were long-standing, large scale and complex. DOs would balance between different perspectives and adopt pragmatic and innovative approaches. They would deploy resources and manpower efficiently, and strengthen the co-ordination amongst district organisations and groups to work with the Government, so that the Government's policies can be fully implemented in the district and ultimately benefit the people.

[Speech by CE at 25th Hong Kong Forum Keynote Luncheon \(English only\) \(with photos/video\)](#)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the 25th Hong Kong Forum Keynote Luncheon today (December 4):

Mr Hans Poulis (Chairman of the Federation of Hong Kong Business Associations

Worldwide), Dr Peter Lam (Chairman of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council), friends of Hong Kong from around the world, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. Welcome to Hong Kong, and the annual Hong Kong Forum – the landmark 25th edition of the Forum.

This year's anniversary event gathers some 400 businesspeople from all over the world, from every sector and industry, here – this year and every year, for a quarter of a century now.

Many of you are part of the Federation of Hong Kong Business Associations Worldwide, a global network spanning across some 40 countries and world, counting over 11 000 members around the globe. You are international businesspeople, united by the strong belief in, and commitment to, the city of Hong Kong. Most importantly, you are here, because Hong Kong means business.

Our "one country, two systems" principle makes that possible. It gives Hong Kong singular business, trade and financial opportunities, with the full support of China, our country, while allowing us to do what we have long done so well for so many – and that's create opportunities and connections. Hong Kong, ladies and gentlemen, is the world's "super connector". Your super connector.

Hong Kong has long attracted businesses and investors, thanks to our clear and compelling advantages – from a free and open investment environment and simple and low tax system, to modern infrastructure and logistics networks and the unfettered flow of information, capital, goods and people.

It helps, too, that Hong Kong boasts a long-standing commitment to the rule of law, and is built on a common law system, one that resembles the legal system in many major global financial centres. We are the only common law jurisdiction in China, and the only common law jurisdiction in the world with a body of law accessible in both Chinese and English, our official languages.

Our advantages are widely recognised. Hong Kong is the world's 10th largest merchandise trading entity, and the world's fourth-largest foreign direct investment destination.

Canada's Fraser Institute, in its 2024 Economic Freedom of the World Report, ranked Hong Kong the world's freest economy, number one. We also topped the Report's "freedom to trade internationally".

In this year's World Competitiveness Yearbook, published by the Swiss-based International Institute for Management Development, Hong Kong ranked fifth globally, up two places from last year. We also topped the global rankings in international trade and business legislation.

To build on our strengths, the Hong Kong SAR (Special Administrative Region) Government has implemented a wide range of initiatives, over the past two years, promoting economic opportunities.

We are pressing ahead with the development of the "eight centres" of excellence, as set out in the 14th Five-Year Plan, as well as the Northern Metropolis, the new engine of Hong Kong's economic future. We've also set up Hong Kong Talent Engage and the Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises, to boost our strategic value and drive for talent and enterprises.

The Northern Metropolis, which makes up one-third of Hong Kong's area, enjoys the advantage of a close proximity to Shenzhen, one of the most energetic cities on the Mainland. Indeed, the World Intellectual Property Organization has, for five years in a row, ranked the Shenzhen-Hong Kong-Guangzhou science and technology cluster second, globally, in its Global Innovation Index.

These three neighbouring cities, together with Macao and seven other cities in southern China, form the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, the GBA.

The GBA boasts a population of 86 million and a combined GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of US\$1.9 trillion, rivalling that of the world's 10th largest economy. Hong Kong is joining hands with other cities in the GBA to develop into an international innovation and technology (I&T) centre.

We are developing in the Loop, an area in the Northern Metropolis that straddles across the boundary between Hong Kong and Shenzhen, a science and technology innovation co-operation zone. We will roll out a series of measures that facilitate the flow of personnel, materials, capital and data between Hong Kong and Shenzhen in the zone.

The zone will provide wide, and welcome, opportunities for a world of investors and entrepreneurs to pursue I&T developments, capitalising on the best of both sides of the Shenzhen River, and tapping into the vast Mainland market.

And much more is in the policy pipeline. In my annual Policy Address, in October, I introduced initiatives to enhance Hong Kong's position as an international financial, shipping and trade centre. Integrating their strengths, we will create a high value-added supply chain centre in Hong Kong, attracting Mainland Chinese and overseas companies to establish international or regional headquarters here.

Hong Kong offers diversified advisory services for enterprises, as well as extensive networks in offshore trading and supply chain management. In realising this development, I am counting on the expertise and far-reaching connections of the Trade Development Council and Invest Hong Kong.

My Policy Address also focused on high value-added industries, such as the low-altitude economy. A working group will come up with strategies and interdepartmental plans to help open up the low-altitude airspace. Pilot projects will explore drone use for surveys, performances, delivery and other prospects.

Similarly, we are committed to driving innovation in telecommunications,

artificial intelligence and the wide-ranging, ever-evolving digital industry.

We strive to attract the best enterprises and talent to Hong Kong. We have got good news on these fronts, I'm pleased to add. Our Office for Attracting Strategic Enterprises, set up just two years ago, has already brought to Hong Kong over 60 strategic enterprises. They are from such key industries as artificial intelligence and data science, life and health technology, fintech, and advanced manufacturing and new energy technology. These enterprises are expected to bring in HK\$42 billion in investments and create over 17 000 jobs.

As for talent, the enhanced talent attraction regime launched by us two years ago is seeing encouraging results as well. Some 160 000 professionals have already settled in Hong Kong with their families over the past two years.

We go all out in bringing the best to Hong Kong. In July, I led a high-level delegation to Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, following my visit, last year, to Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia. I also made my first visit, as Chief Executive, to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates last year.

Highlights of these visits included the signing of some 100 MOUs covering a wealth of sectors, industries and institutions. The agreements will create fresh opportunities for collaboration between Hong Kong and our valued partners in ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries and the Middle East.

Alongside our overseas visits, the Government maintains 16 offices and liaison units in the Mainland and 14 Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices overseas.

Add Invest Hong Kong and the Trade Development Council's worldwide offices, and Hong Kong has a formal presence in 66 cities covering 129 countries.

We are believers, too, in the immediate benefits and long-term promise of free trade agreements, as well as investment agreements.

To date, we have signed 24 investment agreements with 33 economies, and nine free-trade agreements (FTAs) with 21 economies. That includes our latest FTA, with Peru. It was signed just a few weeks ago, on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting in Lima, the Peruvian capital. Coupled with an earlier FTA with Chile, it reinforces the message that Hong Kong looks forward to creating closer economic ties throughout Latin America.

Investment agreement negotiations with Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia, let me add, are in full swing. And we will explore bilateral FTA prospects with economies in the Middle East.

These wide-ranging trade, investment and co-operation agreements will certainly boost Hong Kong's status as an international trade centre and

"super connector" to the world.

We hope soon to add RCEP, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, to our FTAs and global connectivity. RCEP, of course, is the world's largest FTA and includes all 10 members of ASEAN.

We have received positive responses from a number of RCEP members in support of Hong Kong's accession to RCEP. And I am pleased to note that RCEP's Joint Committee recently adopted an accession protocol for new members, underlining the Partnership's commitment to openness and inclusivity.

Our accession to RCEP will strengthen our trade relations and business ties with the countries of ASEAN and RCEP, as well as the cities of the Greater Bay Area, bringing mutual benefits to all.

And we recently signed an amendment to the Agreement on Trade in Services of CEPA, the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement. The amended CEPA will introduce further liberalisation measures across several services sectors in which Hong Kong enjoys competitive advantages.

On implementation of the revised CEPA, Hong Kong-invested enterprises will be able to "adopt Hong Kong law" and choose Hong Kong for arbitration in the Greater Bay Area.

There's more. The three-year requirement for business operations in Hong Kong to qualify as a "Hong Kong service supplier" has been removed for most sectors. That will allow companies and entrepreneurs, worldwide, to use Hong Kong as their base for expanding into the Mainland market, enjoying preferential treatment under CEPA that much faster.

I'm pleased to add that the multiple-entry visa for foreign staff of Hong Kong-registered companies has been extended, to a maximum of five years.

These and many other concrete measures underline the unparalleled advantages Hong Kong offers overseas businesses and investors, and our distinct role as a "super connector" and "super value-adder".

In face of challenges in geopolitical tensions and transformation in the global order, Hong Kong remains committed to development and progress. We are dedicated to free trade and working to ensure a flourishing future for our economy and our community. And that includes all those who work with us, who believe in Hong Kong. Ladies and gentlemen, that certainly includes you.

I am grateful to the Federation of Hong Kong Business Associations Worldwide and the Hong Kong Trade Development Council for organising this milestone 25th anniversary Hong Kong Forum, for bringing us together once again.

I wish you all a rewarding Forum and the best of business in the coming

year. I invite you, too, to find time for Hong Kong, a world city, and the rising East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange.

That includes giant pandas. If you're out and about this Saturday afternoon, Ocean Park is holding a Giant Panda Greeting Ceremony, in honour of the two giant pandas our country gifted us in September. A fantastic, or should I say, a "pandastic" time is guaranteed for all.

I wish you the best of business in the year to come. Thank you!

