

LAD 50th Anniversary Roving Exhibition to mark golden jubilee

The first roving exhibition to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Legal Aid Department (LAD) was unveiled today (June 2) to promote public understanding of the services and work of legal aid. The LAD has also produced a 50th anniversary commemorative publication to mark the golden jubilee, showcasing its contributions on legal aid services in the past half century.

Officiating at the launching ceremony of the "Legal Aid Department 50th Anniversary Roving Exhibition", the Director of Legal Aid, Mr Thomas Kwong, said the department has grown from a handful of employees 50 years ago to its present establishment of 560 staff. Last year, the LAD handled more than 11 000 civil and 3 500 criminal legal aid applications.

The LAD has developed in terms of scale and establishment. Over the years, the LAD has been moving with the times and has been continuously expanding its services to meet the needs of society.

"Hong Kong has one of the best legal aid systems in the world after half a century of development," Mr Kwong said. "Since its inception, the department's objective has always been to ensure that those with reasonable grounds for pursuing or defending a legal action in Hong Kong will not be denied access to justice because of a lack of means. Legal aid is available to everyone irrespective of nationality, ethnicity or religious beliefs. To date, the department has provided access to justice to more than 440,000 people in Hong Kong.

"In terms of scope, civil legal aid here covers almost all kinds of proceedings in the District Court and the courts above, and extends to a wide range of case types including personal injuries, wage claims, medical negligence, matrimonial, and immigration and public law matters. In some common law jurisdictions, personal injury claims are no longer covered by legal aid," Mr Kwong elaborated.

There will be three roving exhibitions, with the first being held at the Exhibition Hall, 1/F, Low Block, Hong Kong City Hall, from today till June 4. Exhibition items include panels and videos on the LAD's historical development and scope of services, as well as the operation of the various legal aid schemes. Furthermore, augmented reality (AR) game booths and a humanoid robot are specially set up to interact with visitors so as to enhance their legal aid knowledge.

At this milestone of 50 years, the LAD has also produced a commemorative publication summing up its evolution over the years, narrating the mission, historical development and the important role of the department in upholding the rule of law. Through notable legal aid cases and real life stories by aided persons, it reviews the rule of law, social, political and economic

changes and challenges Hong Kong has faced over the years. The commemorative publication has been uploaded to the LAD's 50th Anniversary website for browsing.

At today's ceremony, a trailer of the television series "Legal Aid – a Gateway to Justice" co-produced by the LAD and Radio Television Hong Kong was shown. This series of six half-hour episodes on legal aid stories will be broadcast on television channel RTHK 31 starting from June 20 to July 25, 2021, at 9.30pm every Sunday. The series is a programme recording the department's efforts in serving the community and its contribution in upholding the rule of law over 50 years. After the television broadcast, the episodes can be reviewed at the LAD's 50th Anniversary website and RTHK's archives/mobile apps.

Also officiating at today's ceremony were the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam; the Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal, Mr Andrew Cheung Kui-nung; the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung; and the Chairman of the Legal Aid Services Council, Professor William Leung.

The second roving exhibition will be held at the atrium of Domain Mall in Yau Tong from June 25 to 27, and the third exhibition will be held in the New Territories in August. Visitors to the exhibition can test their knowledge on legal aid by interacting with the humanoid robot and by challenging themselves at the AR game booths. All participants will be awarded with attractive prizes.