

Ombudsman safeguards public administration for continuous community betterment (with photo)

The following is issued on behalf of the Office of The Ombudsman:

The Ombudsman, Mr Jack Chan, presented the 2023/24 Annual Report of the Office of The Ombudsman to the public today (July 3). The Office fully met all 11 of its targets on service standards in handling enquiries, complaints, reassessments and complaint reviews and exceeded 10 of those targets in the reporting year.

With the lifting of the mask-wearing requirement in March 2023, the year 2023/24 was the first full year since the COVID-19 pandemic where life in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region returned to normal. The Office received 4 351 cases of complaints. Pandemic-related complaints plummeted from 766 to 33 year on year. The Office also received 8 599 enquiries.

During the year, the Office completed 4 397 cases, including some carried over from the preceding year. Among these cases, 2 053 were pursued and concluded, while the rest of the complaints (2 344) were closed after assessment due to insufficient grounds to pursue or being outside the statutory purview of the Office.

In the year, the Office conducted 95 full investigations, of which 52 (54.7 per cent) were substantiated, partially substantiated, or unsubstantiated but with other inadequacies found, and the rest were unsubstantiated. Among the 1 771 inquiry cases concluded, inadequacies were found in 335 (18.9 per cent) cases. During the year, the Office conducted and completed 10 direct investigation operations.

During the year, the Office made a total of 186 recommendations upon completion of full investigations and direct investigation operations. Of these, a total of 169 (90.9 per cent) were fully accepted by the government departments and public organisations for implementation, while 17 (9.1 per cent) remained under consideration as of June 30, 2024, with no rejection expected.

In the year, the Office resolved 187 complaints by mediation. The average time taken was 13.5 days, with many cases only taking a few days. Over 92 per cent of the respondent complainants and participating government departments and public organisations were satisfied with the mediation service provided by the Office, and over 94 per cent were satisfied with the performance of the mediators. The Ombudsman will allocate more resources to mediation work and has instructed his officers to press ahead at full steam with the use of mediation to resolve complaints in the coming year. By using mediation to alleviate public grievances and address contradictions in

society, he aspires to foster harmony and social cohesion, improve people's livelihood and contribute to the development of Hong Kong.

During the year, there were 79 complaints cases related to access to information (ATI). Among the 72 ATI cases concluded, inadequacies were found in only 23 cases (32 per cent).

As this year marks the 35th anniversary of the Office of The Ombudsman, Mr Chan said, "I will lead the Office to serve the public with vigour and dedication. We shall set targets, strive for results, and perform our gatekeeping role conscientiously for the continuous betterment of the community."

The full text of the Annual Report can be viewed or downloaded from the Office of The Ombudsman website at www.ombudsman.hk.

