

Speech by SJ at Law Society of Hong Kong's Pro Bono and Community Service Award Presentation Ceremony 2024 (English only) (with photo)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, at the Law Society of Hong Kong's Pro Bono and Community Service Award Presentation Ceremony 2024 today (December 9):

Chief Justice (Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal, Mr Andrew Cheung Kui-ning), President Roden Tong (President of the Law Society of Hong Kong), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to join you all today at the 2024 Pro Bono and Community Service Award Ceremony organised by the Law Society of Hong Kong. On this special occasion, we come together not only to celebrate the outstanding contributions of the awardees this year but also to reaffirm our collective responsibility to uphold the rule of law and to ensure equal access to justice for all.

Our society has faced numerous challenges in the past years – the global pandemic, social unrest, as well as economic uncertainties caused in part by geopolitical tensions. These have heightened our sense of vulnerabilities and feeling of insecurity. Sometimes, the most marginalised, disadvantaged and underprivileged of our society may be the first to be affected. It is during these critical moments that we, as part of the legal community, may feel the urge to go the extra mile to provide support to those in need and to advocate for those who do not have the resources to advocate for themselves.

I am sure some, or I hope most, of us here would not merely see being a legal professional as only a job. To me, it is also a commitment to uphold the principles of justice, fairness, and equality that the rule of law promises. In a similar vein, pro bono work is not only about providing legal assistance free of charge. It is about ensuring that everyone, regardless of his background or circumstances, has equal access to the resources he needs to navigate the complexities of the law. By taking up pro bono work, legal professionals demonstrate a deep sense of civic duty and a commitment to uphold the rule of law which, needless to say, is and will always remain the core value of our society and the bedrock of our legal system.

Today, we celebrate the outstanding achievements of the awardees this year who have selflessly dedicated their skills, knowledge, energy and countless hours to help the needy and to serve the community. They are indeed inspiring role models who have set an excellent example for others to follow. However, as the Secretary for Justice, I am proud to say that my colleagues in the Department of Justice (DoJ) also share the same vision of taking up and promoting pro bono work and community service.

For instance, as some of you may already know, the DoJ has launched the Rule of Law Education Train-the-Leaders Programme, which aims to train community leaders from different walks of life to enhance their ability and effectiveness in disseminating correct messages on the rule of law. Recently, we joined hands with an NGO, SidebySide (sidebyside.org.hk), to arrange trainees of the Programme to take part in mock trials at the Former North Kowloon Magistracy. Through community engagement activities of this kind, we hope to reach out to different sectors of our society, raise awareness of the principle of justice for all, and provide opportunities for others to take part in pro bono and community work.

The DoJ's role in the promotion of pro bono and community work is by no means limited to that of a facilitator. Our volunteer team in the DoJ has also in the past few months paid visits to NGOs, an elderly centres and transitional housing, to name a few, to show our care and concern to the less privileged of our community. Additionally, I have had the pleasure of personally organising several charity events for underprivileged children at my official residence throughout these past few years, and I am also excited to share that the next charity event will take place this Saturday. These events bring us immense joy as we strive to make a positive impact in the community. We truly believe that the practice of law is not only about the application of legal knowledge and skills in our offices or the courtrooms but also rooted in our integrity, compassion, commitment to serve, and a sense of belonging in our society. These are what guide and sustain us in our long legal career and our pursuit of justice.

In fact, the commitment to serve the community is not only confined to the Department of Justice. It spreads across the entire civil service of the HKSAR Government, which forms the backbone of our administration and Government. Indeed, just not long ago in November this year, the Secretary for Civil Service presented commendation awards to civil servants from different bureaux and departments for their outstanding performance in volunteer service. By engaging with members of the public and meeting them face to face, civil servants could gain a better understanding of their real needs, stand a better chance of coming up with more informed and effective policies, and help cultivate a sense of unity and solidarity in our society.

Before I conclude, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Law Society for its contributions to fostering a pro bono culture in the legal community. Throughout the years, the Law Society has played a most critical role in raising awareness, providing trainings and creating opportunities for legal professionals to engage in pro bono work and community service. The initiatives that the Law Society has implemented, including of course the Pro Bono and Community Work Recognition Programme, provide an invaluable platform for legal professionals to make a positive change in society. These initiatives not only benefit those in need but also enrich the professional lives of those who participate.

In closing, may I once again congratulate all the awardees this year on their outstanding achievements and contributions to pro bono work and community service. They have shown us how we could help create a society that is inclusive, compassionate and dedicated to the pursuit of justice for all.

As we are approaching the end of the year, may I also wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Thank you very much.



[EMSD responds to PCPD report](#)

The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) noted that the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data (PCPD) has completed its investigation of the leakage of personal data from an online server platform of the EMSD's contractor, and released the investigation report today (December 9). The personal data were collected by the EMSD in "restriction-testing declaration" operations to combat COVID-19 in 2022. The EMSD will study the report in detail for stringent and appropriate follow-up actions.

The EMSD attaches great importance to information security and personal data privacy. Relevant policies and guidelines (including the retention period of personal data) have been formulated and circulated to staff regularly. The procurement terms between the EMSD and the contractor providing the online server platform stated that the relevant data would be deleted after termination of the service, and the EMSD had clearly informed the contractor of the expiry of the service by the end of February 2023. Since noticing the leakage of the data on April 30, 2024, the EMSD has been acting in a proactive and responsible manner in reporting the case to law enforcement agencies, and has been co-operating with the PCPD on the investigation. Noting that the PCPD has announced earlier that there were cases of leakage of personal data involving the same online server platform provided by the contractor during the same period, the EMSD immediately conducted an in-depth enquiry with the contractor about the operational details of the server platform to ensure the complete removal of the relevant data.

Having consolidated the experience from this incident, the EMSD is committed to establishing a more robust privacy security framework and a corporate culture for personal data protection to prevent the recurrence of similar incidents. It has since taken a series of measures, including reinforcement of privacy management, holistically reviewing and enhancing guidelines in handling personal data, stepping up staff training, and monitoring contractors of online server platforms. It will also enhance computer system support, including developing a dedicated platform to store personal data in its own server. For outsourced services involving the handling of personal data, the EMSD will remind the contractor to delete the relevant data by the end of the retention period, and will proactively check with the contractor to confirm that the deletion of personal data has been completed.

Company and its director fined \$60,000 for contravening Employment Ordinance

Ready To Cook Limited and its director were prosecuted by the Labour Department (LD) for violation of the requirements under the Employment Ordinance (EO). The company and its director pleaded guilty at Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts today (December 9) and were fined a total sum of \$60,000. The company was also ordered to pay an outstanding sum of about \$34,000 to the employee concerned.

The company wilfully and without reasonable excuse contravened the requirements of the EO, failing to pay an employee wages within seven days after the expiry of wage periods and termination of an employment contract totalling about \$34,000, as well as the awarded sum of about \$34,000, within 14 days after the date set by the Labour Tribunal (LT). The director concerned was prosecuted and convicted for his consent, connivance or neglect in the above offences.

"The ruling will disseminate a strong message to all employers, directors and responsible officers of companies that they have to pay wages to employees within the statutory time limit stipulated in the EO, as well as the sums awarded by the LT or the Minor Employment Claims Adjudication Board," a spokesman for the LD said.

"The LD will not tolerate these offences and will spare no effort in enforcing the law and safeguarding employees' statutory rights," the spokesman added.

Fraudulent website and internet banking login screen related to China Construction Bank (Asia) Corporation Limited

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) wishes to alert members of the public to a press release issued by China Construction Bank (Asia) Corporation Limited relating to a fraudulent website and an internet banking login screen, which have been reported to the HKMA. A hyperlink to the press release is available on the [HKMA website](#).

The HKMA wishes to remind the public that banks will not send SMS or emails with embedded hyperlinks which direct them to the banks' websites to carry out transactions. They will not ask customers for sensitive personal information, such as login passwords or one-time password, by phone, email or SMS (including via embedded hyperlinks).

Anyone who has provided his or her personal information, or who has conducted any financial transactions, through or in response to the website or login screen concerned, should contact the bank using the contact information provided in the press release, and report the matter to the Police by contacting the Crime Wing Information Centre of the Hong Kong Police Force at 2860 5012.

Fraudulent website and internet banking login screen related to China CITIC Bank International Limited

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