

**Presentation by Judiciary Administrator  
at the Special Meeting of the Finance Committee  
on Tuesday, 26 March 2002**

Mr Chairman,

In the past year, the Judiciary had been mobilising resources to cope with increasing demand. We have also introduced new facilities and information technology applications to further enhance our services to judges, court users and the public.

**Court of Appeal**

2. Following the CFA judgment on 10 January 2002, there are still over 4,500 Right of Abode appeals to be dealt with by the Court of Appeal. However, new cases lodged have dropped significantly since February and improvement to the waiting time is expected towards the end of this year.

**High Court**

3. The civil caseload at the High Court still recorded an increase, from 29,132 cases in 2000 to 32,609 in 2001, primarily the result of a 140% increase in bankruptcy petitions. There are no signs that the number is coming down.

4. The criminal caseload at the High Court, though remained steady at 433 in 2001 compared with 416 in 2000, is getting more complex in terms of court days required to deal with them.

5. The above factors have had significant adverse effects on case waiting time. But we shall closely monitor the waiting time and where necessary redeploy resources to cope with the increase in workload.

**District Court**

6. The District Court increased its civil jurisdictional limit from \$120,000 to \$600,000 on 1 September 2000. The Judiciary would examine the need for any further increase towards the end of this year.

7. The number of civil claims filed at the District Court increased from 32,515 in 2000 to 36,748 in 2001. The increase in interlocutories dealt with by Masters was even more significant, rising by 83% from 8,385 hearings in 2000 to 15,313 hearings in 2001. However, the District Court is coping well with the increased civil caseload, keeping the waiting times within target.

### **Labour Tribunal**

8. The economic downturn continued to bring pressure to the Labour Tribunal where the number of claims rose by nearly 9% from 9,611 in 2000 to 10,450 in 2001. In coping with the caseload, the Labour Tribunal replaced one night court by a day court in October 2001, thereby increased the Labour Tribunal's capacity to deal with trials.

### **New Court Buildings**

9. The Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts (replacing the San Po Kong and South Kowloon Magistrates' Courts) commenced operation on 3 July 2001. The New Fanling Law Magistrates' Courts will be completed shortly and will commence operation in July 2002. Currently, we are planning for the construction of two new court buildings in the West Kowloon and on the Hong Kong Island. Planned completion dates of the proposed West Kowloon Law Courts and Hong Kong Island Law Courts Buildings are 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 respectively.

### **Application of Information Technology**

10. All the projects under Phase III of the Judiciary Information Systems Strategy, except the Pilot Electronic Filing of Tax Claims at the District Court, have been completed.

11. We are building the first Technology Court at the High Court Building for the conduct of trials and hearings. Facilities will include multi-media presentation of evidence and case related material in electronic form and video conferencing. We will have the Technology Court ready for use this year.

12. We have put the judgments of District Courts and above and practice directions on our Homepage for free public access. We will provide an on-line catalogue of our libraries on the Internet for public access this year. We will also explore more opportunities for electronic transactions with court users and members of the public to enhance access to the court.

## **Conclusion**

13. The proposals I outlined above are part of our efforts to maintain an independent and competent judicial system, capable of upholding the rule of law and safeguarding the rights and freedom of the individual. With Members' support, we have no doubt that we will be able to meet the challenges ahead.

14. Thank you.