

Legislative Council
Panel on Administration of Justice and Legal Services

Implementation of a Five-day Week in the Judiciary

Purpose

This paper sets out the progress on the phased implementation of a five-day week in the Judiciary.

Background

2. In June 2006, the Judiciary informed Members of its plan to implement a 5-day week in the Judiciary in three phases. Phase I commenced on 1.7.2006, covering the following services and offices:

- (a) **Court sittings:** generally no sittings are listed on Saturdays, with exception of some special hearings. A new Saturday sitting roster arrangement has been introduced since 12.8.2006 in the magistrates' courts to deal with fresh remand cases; and
- (b) **Back offices** without any interface with members of the public.

3. This Phase is in operation smoothly.

Phase II

4. Phase II will commence on 1.1.2007. The offices to be covered will be essentially those which have a public interface but the switch to a 5-day week will involve administrative arrangements rather than legislative amendments. Such offices are:

- (a) Information Counters and Public Enquiry Services in the Court of Final Appeal and the High Court;
- (b) Libraries in the Court of Final Appeal and the District Court;
- (c) Press and Public Relations Office;
- (d) Complaints Office; and
- (e) Resource Centre for Unrepresented Litigants.

5. After the Phase I implementation of a 5-day week on 1.7.2006, the usage of the above services on Saturdays continues to be low. The Judiciary will therefore include these services in the Phase II implementation and extend the opening hours of these offices during weekdays.

6. After the implementation of Phase II, court users can still make enquiries on Saturdays at the registries or general offices which will remain open after 1.1.2007. Moreover, information concerning the services of these offices are readily accessible by court users and members of the public through the Judiciary website.

High Court Library

7. The Judiciary has reconsidered whether the library in the High Court should be covered in Phase II. Its usage was specially monitored during the months of July, August and September 2006. It was noted that it had an average of about 40 users on Saturdays. Having regard to this and taking into account the views of the Bar Association and the Law Society, the Judiciary will continue to open the High Court Library. We will review the situation by July 2007.

Phase III

8. Phase III will mainly cover the remainder of the offices with a public interface where the implementation of a five-day week will require legislative amendments to primary and/or subsidiary legislation, such as the court registries, general offices of magistrates' courts and accounts offices. The Judiciary is still studying the issues involved and the implementation of this Phase is under consideration.