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Panel on Administration of Justice and Legal Services

Meeting on 31 March 2025

Background brief on the work plan and progress of rule of law education and promotion

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the rule of law education and promotion work of the Department of Justice (“DoJ”), and summarizes the major views and concerns expressed by members of the Panel on Administration of Justice and Legal Services (“the Panel”) on the above and related matters.

Background

2. Reinforcing the core value of the rule of law is one of the key priorities set forth in the Chief Executive’s 2022 Policy Address; and enhancing the public’s awareness, proper understanding and confidence in respect of the rule of law is one of the important tasks in upholding the rule of law and safeguarding its spirit. To strengthen the promotion of the rule of law education in Hong Kong, DoJ established the **Steering Committee on Rule of Law Education** (“the Steering Committee”)¹ in February 2023. The Steering Committee is chaired by the Secretary for Justice, with representatives from the relevant bureaux, the judicial and legal sectors and the law schools as its members. The terms of reference of the Steering Committee and the main responsibilities of its two working groups (namely the Working Group on Course Design and Teaching Materials, and the Working Group on Coordination and Liaison) are set out in [Appendix 1](#).

3. According to DoJ, with a view to enhancing the proper understanding and awareness of the rule of law in different sectors of the community, DoJ has been actively initiating various rule of law education projects in a diversified manner,

¹ The Legal Enhancement and Development Office of DoJ is responsible for providing research and secretarial support services to the Steering Committee and its two working groups.

including: (a) launching the “Rule of Law through Drama” project targeted at primary schools in the 2020-2021 academic year; (b) introducing the **ROLE Stars Train-the-Leaders Programme** (“TTL Programme”)² in November 2023; (c) disseminating legal knowledge to the public by means of promotional and educational video clips, publications, etc.; (d) making good use of new media channels such as online media and social media platforms commonly used by the public to distribute correct messages on the rule of law and to dismiss rumours and wrong messages in a timely manner; and (e) organizing various law-related courses and seminars to continuously reinforce the rule of law awareness of Government Counsel and the legal sector, as well as their understanding of the Mainland legal system and the latest developments of our country.³

Members’ views and concerns

Overall strategy for promoting the rule of law

4. Members commended the Administration’s efforts to promote the rule of law on all fronts, but some members considered that the existing initiatives were too conceptual to be understood by the general public. They made a number of suggestions on how to further refine the contents of the promotion initiatives to enable the public to have a better understanding of statute law and case law, the two cornerstones of the common law system, including that: (a) for the **publicity and promotion** of any **newly enacted legislation**, **DoJ** (rather than the policy bureau which introduced the legislation) should take the **leading role**; (b) as part of the systematic review of statutory laws of Hong Kong undertaken by the Law Reform Commission (“LRC”) Secretariat, the **drafting of the existing legislation** relating to people’s livelihood should **be reviewed** in a bid to make the provisions of such legislation **simpler** and **easier to understand**; and (c) brief **summaries of court judgments** should be provided alongside the full judgments on the relevant website to **enhance public understanding of case law**.

5. The Administration advised that as far as newly enacted legislation was concerned, it was the usual practice for the policy bureau or department which introduced the legislation to take the lead in its publicity and promotion, and DoJ would assist if legal or drafting issues were required to be addressed. Moreover,

² The TTL Programme seeks to train people from different sectors of the community to enhance their ability and effectiveness in disseminating correct messages on the rule of law in their diverse community work and capacities, with the aim of promoting rule of law education on all fronts.

³ At the request of the Panel, DoJ on 20 July 2023 provided information on the rule of law education or training initiatives implemented by government bureaux and departments (or those co-organized with non-governmental organizations) known to the Steering Committee (as at the end of June 2023), the details of which are set out in the Annex to LC Paper No. [CB\(4\)729/2023\(02\)](#).

DoJ had also uploaded summaries of notable judgments handed down by local courts in the past 12 months to its website, and was preparing a compendium of annotations of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ("HKNSL") to provide a convenient and practical tool with educational and reference value, so as to promote public understanding in this regard. DoJ would relay the suggestion of reviewing the existing legislation to the LRC Secretariat for its reference.

Effectiveness of the efforts to promote the rule of law

6. As regards the Administration's strategy of endeavouring to launch various public education and promotion activities on the rule of law **through** multiple channels such as **social media**, some members were disappointed to note the **lukewarm response from the public towards these activities**. They also criticized DoJ for **not updating** the relevant **information** on its online platforms or web pages **in a timely manner**, with **some publications available in English only**, and urged the Administration to rectify the situation. The Administration advised that while the number of responses received through its social media platforms was on the low side, it had received positive feedback regarding the content of "Studio DoJ"⁴ on DoJ's website. The Administration assured members that it would keep updating the information on its social media platforms, websites and publications.

7. Members mentioned that according to the findings of a non-governmental organization's survey released in June 2023, more than half of the youths at risk interviewed had engaged in improper activities in the past year, of which 70% were illegal activities related to triads, violence, drugs, harassment or vandalism. In this connection, they expressed concern about the effectiveness of the Administration's efforts to promote the rule of law, and urged the Administration to **help teenagers develop a law-abiding awareness through more down-to-earth approaches**. The Administration advised that DoJ always took a serious view of promoting the law-abiding spirit among young people. For instance, the TTL Programme sought to recruit people from different sectors of the community to receive training for disseminating consistent and correct messages on the rule of law to teenagers and others. The Administration would continue its promotion work targeted at teenagers and students, and would review the effectiveness of such work from time to time.

⁴ "Studio DoJ" introduces legal concepts and knowledge about the rule of law to the public in a light-hearted way through lively short videos and interesting comical characters.

Rule of law education and promotion work targeted at teenagers and students

8. Members were also gravely concerned about how to further **enhance** the Administration's **rule of law education and promotion work targeted at teenagers and students**, and suggested that the Administration might consider (a) recruiting teachers from secondary schools across the territory to participate in the TTL Programme to receive training related to the Constitution, statute law and HKNSL for promoting the rule of law to their students; and (b) enhancing teachers' standard of and confidence in teaching the rule of law by means of standardizing the teaching materials on rule of law education in schools, etc.

9. The Administration advised that a total of about 290 trainees, coming from 21 organizations responsible for youth-related and community work and more than 100 secondary schools in Hong Kong, had participated in the two phases of the TTL Programme as at October 2024.⁵ The TTL Programme could help enhance trainees' understanding of legal concepts and the rule of law, bolster their confidence in teaching the relevant contents, and ensure the accuracy of the knowledge imparted by them. In addition, the curriculum and teaching materials of the TTL Programme had been examined by the Working Group on Course Design and Teaching Materials under the Steering Committee, and uploaded to the TTL Programme's dedicated web page⁶ for public reference and use.

Latest position

10. The Administration will brief the Panel on the work plan and progress of rule of law education and promotion at the meeting on 31 March 2025.

Relevant papers

11. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in [Appendix 2](#).

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⁵ Please refer to [footnote 2](#) for information on the TTL Programme.

⁶ Information on the courses and notes for the first two phases of the TTL Programme is available at https://www.role-ttl.gov.hk/en/training/#training_popup_1_1.

**Terms of reference of the Steering Committee on Rule of Law Education
and the main responsibilities of its two working groups**

Terms of reference of the Steering Committee on Rule of Law Education

To advise and assist the Department of Justice on the strategy and programme for the promotion of the rule of law education in Hong Kong, including but not limited to:

- (a) advising on the launch of the ROLE Stars Train-the-Leaders Programme (“TTL Programme”) and monitoring its implementation;
- (b) facilitating coordination and cooperation between government departments and relevant non-governmental organizations in the promotion of the rule of law education in Hong Kong; and
- (c) considering and dealing with such other matters as may be incidental to any of the matters stated above.

Main responsibilities of the working groups under the Steering Committee on Rule of Law Education

Working Group on Course Design and Teaching Materials

- (a) To guide, coordinate and examine the structure and key contents of the training courses, as well as the design and preparation of the relevant teaching materials, under the TTL Programme; and
- (b) To report to the Steering Committee on Rule of Law Education on its work progress.

Working Group on Coordination and Liaison

- (a) To coordinate the implementation of the TTL Programme, including the invitation of speakers, the recruitment of students, the promotion and publicity of the TTL Programme, and the direction and coordination of the strategy for further promoting the rule of law in the community; and
- (b) To report to the Steering Committee on Rule of Law Education on its work progress.

(Source: [Website of the Steering Committee on Rule of Law Education](#))

Work plan and progress of rule of law education and promotion

List of relevant papers

Committee	Date of meeting	Papers
Panel on Administration of Justice and Legal Services	3 July 2023	Agenda Item IV: Briefing on initiatives of the Department of Justice to promote rule of law on all fronts Minutes
	1 November 2024	Agenda Item III: Briefing by the Secretary for Justice and the Director of Administration on the Chief Executive's 2024 Policy Address Minutes of policy briefing-cum-meeting

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