

**For discussion
on 2 June 2025**

**Legislative Council
Panel on Administration of Justice and Legal Services**

**Latest Developments of the Judiciary's
Use of Technology in Court Operations**

PURPOSE

This paper updates Members on the latest developments of the Judiciary's use of technology in court operations.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

2. The Judiciary has been making pro-active efforts in making greater and wider use of technology with a view to enhancing the efficiency of court operations while ensuring access to justice as well as fairness and impartiality in the administration of justice. Since our last report to this Panel in November 2024, there have been some major developments in our work, mainly regarding the integrated Court Case Management System ("iCMS"), remote hearings and live broadcasting of court proceedings outside court premises.

(A) integrated Court Case Management System

3. The Judiciary is steaming ahead with the implementation of the iCMS, the major initiative under the Information Technology Strategy Plan aimed at enabling the handling of court-related documents and payments electronically across various court levels. The iCMS is being implemented by phases –

- (a) under the first phase, the iCMS has been implemented in the District Court ("DC") and the Magistrates' Courts ("MCs") since May and December 2022 respectively. The electronic

mode can currently be used for personal injuries actions, tax claim proceedings, civil action proceedings and employees' compensation cases in the DC, as well as summons cases in the MCs; and

- (b) under the second phase, the iCMS has been extended to cover bulk claim cases of the Small Claims Tribunal starting from October 2024. With the tabling of relevant subsidiary legislation in the Legislative Council ("LegCo") on 30 April 2025 for negative vetting, the iCMS is targeted to be extended to the civil proceedings of the High Court ("HC") starting from the end of June 2025. It is the Judiciary's plan to further extend the use of the iCMS to the Court of Final Appeal ("CFA"), the criminal proceedings of the HC and the DC, as well as the non-Summons Courts of the MCs incrementally afterwards.

Utilisation

4. As at 30 April 2025, a total of 588 court users (including 456 law firms, representing about 50% of law firms registered with the Law Society of Hong Kong) have registered for accounts under the iCMS. Around 566 000 new cases have been initiated under the iCMS, representing about 67% of the total number of relevant new cases during the period. Separately, court users have filed about 938 000 documents, conducted about 12 000 inspections of documents and made about 26 400 payment transactions via the iCMS. The take-up rate is expected to rise progressively following the continued promotion of the iCMS. For illustration, the percentage of new cases initiated under the iCMS has been increased from about 13% as at 31 January 2023 to about 67% as at 30 April 2025.

New filing arrangement at the High Court – requirement of electronic copy

5. Upon the extension of the iCMS to selected case types in the HC, if a party chooses to file or submit a document in the conventional paper mode under an iCMS-enabled case type, the party must also provide the Court with an electronic copy of that document for the purpose of building up a full set of e-filing records for e-inspection by parties under the iCMS. To facilitate this process, self-service kiosks have been set up in the HC Building primarily for litigants-in-person to scan and upload their

documents. As regards law firms, they will need to prepare the electronic copy by their own means and then use these kiosks for uploading only, as the last transitional step towards the mandatory use of the iCMS as from 2026 (see paragraph 6 below). This new filing arrangement is designed to induce court users, especially law firms, to file or submit documents via the iCMS. Extensive publicity and assistance will be provided in the HC to inform, prepare and support users in coping with this new requirement.

Preparation for mandatory use

6. The Judiciary intends to start mandating the use of the iCMS starting from 2026 for all legally represented litigants in respect of case types where the electronic mode has been made available. Following the positive response to our consultation on this initiative in January 2024, we have been liaising closely with key stakeholders including the Law Society of Hong Kong in drawing up the implementation arrangements.

Promotion

7. To incentivise registration under the iCMS during the initial years, court users are offered a fee concession of 20% for five years and three years for case types implemented under the first and second phases respectively (see paragraph 3 above), on fee items related to the electronic handling of court documents.

8. To induce migration to electronic filing, we introduced the use of drop boxes for specified types of documents which do not require immediate processing or payment, and the use of e-mail communications for certain registry business in the HC and DC Registries in August 2023 and December 2023 respectively. Their utilisation has been steadily increasing. This operational mode of court registry business will further evolve and be adjusted as appropriate upon extension of the iCMS to selected cases types in the HC with the imposition of the requirement for the parties (both law firms and litigants-in-person) to provide an electronic copy of court documents when filing or submitting them as explained in paragraph 5 above.

9. The Judiciary has also, in conjunction with the Law Society of Hong Kong, organised a Continuing Professional Development (“CPD”) briefing session for members of the legal professional body on

3 October 2024 for a walkthrough on key iCMS external functions (including registration, electronic filing, electronic inspection and electronic payment functions). CPD points are awarded to a total of about 500 attendees joining the face-to-face briefing session or via webinar. Another programme of awarding CPD points for members of the legal professional body who have conducted not less than 20 numbers of electronic filing via the iCMS has been launched for the period from May to October 2025 as a further promotion initiative. To tie in with this programme, we will organise in conjunction with the Law Society of Hong Kong another CPD briefing session for its members on 30 May 2025 for a walkthrough on the key iCMS external functions.

10. Apart from the above initiatives, the Judiciary has been implementing a series of promotion and facilitation measures to raise the awareness of the iCMS and help potential users familiarise with handling court businesses in the electronic mode, as set out below –

- (a) providing information on the e-services offered by the iCMS on a dedicated webpage, which was launched in April 2022 and updated from time to time. For instance, promotional videos and leaflets on the new filing arrangement as mentioned in paragraph 5 above will be put up on the webpage;
- (b) operating an iCMS Help Centre and enquiry/technical hotlines to provide law firms and litigants-in-person with advice and assistance on the registration and use of electronic litigation services under the iCMS gratis;
- (c) conducting briefings and demonstration sessions as from 2022. A total of 66 briefing-cum-hands-on demonstration sessions for law firms were conducted from January 2023 to April 2025 with the assistance of the Law Society of Hong Kong. Around 850 representatives from some 380 law firms participated in the sessions, and all the sessions were well received;
- (d) inviting key external stakeholders (including government departments, public organisations, legal professional bodies and law firms) to take part in pilot runs so as to familiarise with the electronic workflow and the iCMS functions before rolling out

the iCMS external functions of relevant case types of different court levels; and

- (e) introducing Deposit Account as an additional electronic payment option for the iCMS Organisation Account users in June 2025 so that a legal firm can make non-interest bearing prepayments (and subsequent top-ups as required) at or above a specified minimum amount for settling all subsequent payments for transactions under the iCMS without the hassle of paying for each individual transaction.

(B) Remote Hearings

11. The Judiciary has been promoting the wider use of remote hearings for civil proceedings since 2020. So far, over 2 200 remote hearings (including video-conferencing or phone hearings) have been conducted and the experience has been positive.

12. The Courts (Remote Hearing) Ordinance (Cap. 654) (“the Ordinance”), which came into operation on 28 March 2025, provides a clear legal basis for judges and judicial officers (“JJOs”) to order remote hearings at various levels of courts and tribunals where appropriate, having regard to the requirements under the Ordinance. While stepping up the promotion on the use of remote hearings, the Judiciary is prepared to conduct remote hearings more often in suitable court proceedings, particularly for short proceedings (such as three-minute hearings) and non-trial criminal proceedings (such as bail applications).

(C) Live Broadcasting of Court Proceedings outside Court Premises

13. Live broadcasting of court proceedings outside court premises enhances the transparency of court procedures and public understanding of the judicial process. Upon review of the trial runs of live broadcasting of court proceedings on four selected cases of the CFA in 2024, the Judiciary launched a pilot scheme on the live broadcasting of all substantive appellate proceedings in the CFA (excluding cases that are considered not suitable for live broadcasting) for two years by setting up our own in-house platform

starting from April 2025. The categories of cases that are considered not suitable for live broadcasting comprise –

- (a) cases where the protection of the interests of children or mentally disabled adults, privacy interests, trade secrets or commercial confidentiality, etc. is required; and
- (b) proceedings related to national security, high-profile public order cases, or highly politically charged cases.

14. After the live webcast ends, the videos of the court proceedings will be uploaded to and kept on the CFA website for one month after the hearing date to allow easy access and flexible viewing. Upon completion of the pilot scheme in March 2027, we will review and consider the long-term arrangements for live broadcasting of court proceedings outside court premises.

(D) Responsible and Prudent Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

15. In July 2024, the Judiciary promulgated its first set of guidelines on the use of generative artificial intelligence (“AI”) for JJOs and support staff, which has also been uploaded onto the Judiciary website. The guidelines have been drawn up with reference to similar guidelines issued by courts in other jurisdictions.

16. As set out in the guidelines, JJOs and support staff may make prudent and responsible use of generative AI in the course of their work where appropriate. Until and unless there is a generative AI model with proven ability to protect confidential, restricted and private information and adequate built-in checking and verification mechanism to ensure accuracy and reliability, the Judiciary does not recommend the use of generative AI for legal analysis (including judgment writing). On the other hand, generative AI may potentially be useful in tasks such as summarising information, speech/presentation writing, legal translation and administrative tasks (e.g. drafting e-mails/memoranda/letters) where necessary and appropriate. The guidelines are subject to further review and revision to keep abreast of developments in generative AI technology and experience in other courts.

17. For non-judicial work, the Judiciary intends to explore and participate in other pilot AI projects (such as HKPilot and HKChat) promulgated by the Digital Policy Office of the Government where appropriate.

18. As regards judicial work, since 2023, the Judicial Institute (“JI”) under the Judiciary has been carrying out research and experiments on use of generative AI tools. While there is a growing global trend across both civil and common law jurisdictions of court systems in exploring the adoption of AI to assist with their work, the outcome of JI’s tests (as confirmed by academics carrying out similar tests on a much wider scale) indicates that there remain extensive concerns about the reliability of AI, particularly large language models, in carrying out or even assisting with complex tasks such as legal research, legal analysis and judgment writing. These issues are mainly related to the accuracy, consistency, as well as transparency of logic and reasoning required for the relevant tasks. It is noted that commercial legal reference providers are already sensitive to the reliability issues, and are dedicating resources to improving the accuracy in the AI tools. We also note the imposition of specific restrictions on the use of generative AI in the guidelines issued by many jurisdictions to legal practitioners¹. We will continue to keep abreast of evolving developments on use of AI in various aspects of judicial and non-judicial work in court.

OTHER TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVES AND FACILITIES

(A) Use of Voice-to-Text Technology

19. The Judiciary has been actively exploring the use of voice-to-text (“VTT”) technology (an AI technology) for recording court proceedings. We have been testing and developing our own VTT system

¹ These include, amongst others, (a) “Guide on the Use of Generative AI Tools by Court Users” issued by the Singapore courts in September 2024 (https://www.judiciary.gov.sg/docs/default-source/news-and-resources-docs/guide-on-the-use-of-generative-ai-tools-by-court-users.pdf?sfvrsn=3900c814_1) and (b) “Supreme Court Practice Note SC Gen 23 – Use of Generative AI” issued by the Chief Justice of New South Wales in January 2025 (https://supremecourt.nsw.gov.au/documents/Practice-and-Procedure/Practice-Notes/general/current/PN_SC_Gen_23.pdf).

using VTT software products in the market with a view to enhancing the efficiency in recording court proceedings and production of transcripts where appropriate in the longer run. Following rounds of model training for over ten months using the audio recordings of court hearings and pieces of legislation/ordinances as well as pilot runs in real court cases with the participation of JJOs, the accuracy rates of our VTT system have gradually improved from approximately 60% at the onset to around 80%. Since December 2023, the Judiciary has been using the VTT system for JJOs' real-time note-taking in hearings to facilitate judgment writing. The VTT system has been enabled in 42 courtrooms of the HC Building and four courtrooms of the Wanchai Law Courts Building thus far. Setup work to enable the use of VTT in more courtrooms at different levels of court is in progress².

20. Meanwhile, the Judiciary is planning to adopt an incremental approach in deploying the use of VTT-generated texts to facilitate transcript production. As the Judiciary's VTT system will be fully set up in the CFA Building and HC Building by the third quarter of 2025, we will be launching a pilot arrangement of producing transcripts using texts generated by the Judiciary's VTT system for selected court hearings in the CFA Building and HC Building by including the relevant requirements in the new contracts for Digital Audio Recording and Transcription Services ("DARTS") from November 2025. We will continue to keep abreast of the latest developments of the VTT technology (including different AI engines behind such technology) and explore new modes of operation with a view to enhancing the overall efficiency of transcription work.

(B) E-appointments for Specific Court Services

21. To minimise the need for court users to queue up for registry services, the Judiciary introduced the e-appointment system, providing online booking service for court users to make appointments for specific services of the court registries. It has been incrementally launched in the Probate Registry, the Family Court Registry, the Lands Tribunal Registry, the HC Registry, the Appeals Registry of the Clerk of Court's Office and the

² It is our plan to complete the VTT setup in all 54 courtrooms of the CFA Building and HC Building by the third quarter of 2025. Similar setup work for courtrooms of other law courts buildings will subsequently be arranged.

Integrated Mediation Office to cover specific services since March 2021. The service is largely for unrepresented litigants and will be further extended to the DC Registry in the second half of 2025.

22. As a facilitation measure, the auto form-filling function of “iAM Smart” has been introduced for e-appointments for filing of self-bankruptcy petitions in the HC Registry. Those who are registered users of “iAM Smart” may use this function to provide relevant personal data for making online appointments. This function will gradually be included in other e-appointment services in light of operational experience.

(C) E-bundles at Court Hearings

23. The Judiciary started using e-bundles in the Court of First Instance (“CFI”) and the Court of Appeal of the HC in 2017 and has extended the arrangement to hearings for suitable DC civil cases since December 2020. From December 2020 to April 2025, a total of 167 e-bundle hearings were conducted and most of these hearings are related to CFI civil trials (e.g. hearings related to companies, winding-up and bankruptcy matters). A practice direction was issued to mandate the use of e-bundles for cases of the commercial list at the CFI starting from May 2022. Another practice direction for the companies and bankruptcy list came into effect in July 2023. The feedback from users has generally been positive. Taking into account operational experience, the Judiciary will encourage more use of e-bundles at court hearings in the near future.

(D) Technology Facilities in Courtrooms

24. To respond to the changing needs of court services, technology-related facilities have incrementally been provided in more courtrooms. At present, 185 out of a total of some 220 courtrooms (around 84%) are equipped with user-friendly features and up-to-date facilities that support the conduct of proceedings, including video-conferencing, e-bundles, digital evidence and exhibits handling, and courtroom extension broadcasting – all fully integrated into a centrally controlled network.

25. To facilitate hearing cases with large number of defendants, two mega courtrooms have been established in the West Kowloon Law Courts

Building and the Wanchai Law Courts Building. These two mega courtrooms are capable of accommodating approximately 50 defendants and 100 advocates each. In addition to the above facilities, they have been equipped with more advanced facilities including multi-language simultaneous interpretation systems, 8-channel audio recording capabilities, and VTT system integration.

(E) IT Infrastructure Systems in the Judiciary

26. The Judiciary is proceeding with the detailed implementation arrangements for the provision of information technology (“IT”) infrastructure in the new DC Building at Caroline Hill Road and upgrading of IT infrastructure of the Judiciary. These include the design and planning, procurement and installation work for the systems and equipment which incorporate the latest IT and audio-visual technologies; building a new primary data centre in the new DC Building (to replace the existing aged data centre at the HC Building) for supporting all court premises; as well as upgrading the IT infrastructure systems in the West Kowloon Law Courts Building data centre as the backup data centre for all premises in the Judiciary with a view to providing a highly reliable active-active production environment for the delivery of IT services to the Judiciary as a whole. The upgrade of the core IT security equipment is in progress and will first be completed by the end of 2025 for the West Kowloon Law Courts Building data centre. The overall implementation arrangements are targeted to be completed by the end of 2027 to tie in with the commissioning of the new DC Building.

(F) IT Security Enhancement in the Judiciary

27. To meet the new challenges brought about by the advancement of technologies and recent developments of IT in the work environment, the Judiciary has updated the IT security policy and strengthening the IT security measures in different areas in accordance with the relevant IT security standards and requirements stipulated by the Government in May 2025.

28. We are proceeding with the procurement of IT infrastructure facilities of the new DC Building which have been designed on the basis of

the highest standards of IT security stipulated by the Government in data management and protection, service stability and sustainable development, covering three aspects of information/data security protection, namely confidentiality, integrity and availability. For this purpose, the network infrastructure of the new DC Building and the enterprise grade 5G services will adopt a multi-layer design such that network systems serving the internal and external users of the Judiciary will be physically separated and completely controlled by the Judiciary.

WAY FORWARD

29. The Judiciary will continue to explore and enhance the efficiency of court operations through the use of technology.

Judiciary Administration
May 2025