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Replies to initial questions raised by Legislative Council Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2026-27

Judiciary Administrator
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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

JA001

(Question Serial No. 1838)

Head: (80) Judiciary

Subhead (No. & title): (-)

Programme: Not Specified

Controlling Officer: Judiciary Administrator (Ms Esther LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Not applicable

Question:

Converting the housing allowance payable to judges into cash salaries will greatly enhance the attractiveness of transitioning to the bench for legal professionals. Will the Administration consider allocating resources to the Judiciary to tackle the shortfall in manpower?

Asked by: Hon CHAN Hiu-fung, Nick (LegCo internal reference no.: 5)

Reply:

The remuneration package for Judges and Judicial Officers (JJOs) is determined by the Government after considering the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Judicial Salaries and Conditions of Service (Judicial Committee), an independent advisory body set up to advise and make recommendations on the salary and conditions of service of JJOs. The established review mechanism comprises an annual review for pay adjustment having regard to a host of factors, and a benchmarking study conducted by the Judicial Committee around every five years on a regular basis.

As part of the remuneration package, Judges are provided with housing benefits corresponding to their respective judicial ranks, subject to their meeting the eligibility criteria.

Judges at the High Court level and above are entitled to Judiciary Quarters (JQs), and when JQs are not available for allocation to eligible Judges, they may receive Judiciary Quarters Allowance (JQA) (\$185,752 per month with effect from 1.4.2025) for the period pending availability of JQs allocation to them. They may also receive Non-accountable Cash Allowance (NCA) (\$60,610 per month with effect from 1.4.2025) as an alternative form of housing benefits if they choose not to live in JQs upon their first appointment to the Judiciary. Judges at the District Court level (i.e. the Chief District Judge, Principal Family Court Judge and District Judge) are provided with a NCA (\$45,460 per month with effect from 1.4.2025) as housing benefit. Both JQA and NCA are cash allowance in nature.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

JA002

(Question Serial No. 1840)

Head: (80) Judiciary

Subhead (No. & title): (-)

Programme: Not Specified

Controlling Officer: Judiciary Administrator (Ms Esther LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Not applicable

Question:

The estimated expenditure of the Judiciary increased from HK\$2.78 billion for 2025-26 to the revised estimate of HK\$2.91 billion for 2026-27, representing an increase of only 4.48%. However, the shortfall in manpower in the Judiciary is quite severe. Please inform this Council if there are any corresponding measures.

Asked by: Hon CHAN Hiu-fung, Nick (LegCo internal reference no.: 8)

Reply:

To address the shortfall in judicial manpower, the Judiciary has been taking pro-active efforts in conducting more frequent open recruitment exercises for Judges and Judicial Officers (JJOs) at different levels of court in recent years. The recruitment exercises launched in 2023 yielded positive results with a total of 24 judicial appointments made. In November 2024, the Judiciary launched the latest round of open recruitment exercises for different levels of JJOs, starting from Judges of the Court of First Instance of the High Court with one judicial appointment made in September 2025. The recruitment exercise for District Judges was launched in January 2026, while that for Permanent Magistrates will be launched later this year. Continual efforts are also being made by the Judiciary to engage temporary judicial manpower including recorders and deputy JJOs from the legal profession at different levels of court. On average, around 40 temporary/deputy JJOs (including recorders) have been sitting at different levels of court at any one time.

As regards non-judicial manpower, the Judiciary has been arranging open recruitment exercises for various grades of support staff in 2026-27, including Judicial Clerk and Court Interpreter grades with a view to ensuring adequate support for court services. We are also planning to engage more legally qualified assistants, including judicial associates and contract marshals to enhance legal professional support to JJOs.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

JA003

(Question Serial No. 1841)

Head: (80) Judiciary

Subhead (No. & title): (-)

Programme: Not Specified

Controlling Officer: Judiciary Administrator (Ms Esther LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Not applicable

Question:

Please provide information for the past 3 years on the establishment of judicial posts, the number of serving judges/judicial officers and their emoluments in total.

Asked by: Hon CHAN Hiu-fung, Nick (LegCo internal reference no.: 10)

Reply:

The establishment and strength of Judges and Judicial Officers (JJOs) as at 1 March in the past three years are as follows –

	1.3.2024	1.3.2025	1.3.2026
Establishment of JJOs	211 [^]	211 [^]	211 [^]
Strength of JJOs	160	160	159

[^] Including around 15 posts reserved for internal deployment through cross-postings between the District Court and the Magistrates' Court depending on operational needs

The expenditure on Personal Emoluments for JJOs for the past three years are set out in the table below -

	2023-24 Expenditure (\$ million)	2024-25 Expenditure (\$ million)	2025-26 Expenditure (as at 28.2.2026) (\$ million)
Salaries	484.7	499.7	455.9
Allowances	21.3	20.2	18.5
Job-related allowances	1.5	1.4	1.2

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

JA004

(Question Serial No. 1768)

Head: (80) Judiciary

Subhead (No. & title): (-)

Programme: (1) Courts, Tribunals and Various Statutory Functions

Controlling Officer: Judiciary Administrator (Ms Esther LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Not applicable

Question:

Please inform this Council of the number of registrations of enduring power of attorney in each of the past 10 years.

Asked by: Hon CHAN Man-ye, Grace (LegCo internal reference no.: 44)

Reply:

The number of Enduring Power of Attorney (EPoA) registered at the High Court in the past five years are provided below:

Year	Number of EPoAs registered at the High Court
2021	1 109
2022	1 401
2023	2 047
2024	2 572
2025	3 966

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

JA005

(Question Serial No. 0055)

Head: (80) Judiciary

Subhead (No. & title): (-)

Programme: (1) Courts, Tribunals and Various Statutory Functions

Controlling Officer: Judiciary Administrator (Ms Esther LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Not applicable

Question:

1. Owing to issues such as debt and tenancy triggered by the economic pressure, as well as neighbourhood conflicts over issues that arise from the living environment such as water seepage or noise, there is significant public concern about the efficiency of the Judiciary in handling civil cases to protect the interests of members of the public and maintain social harmony. In this connection, please provide details of the following civil cases handled by various levels of court in the past 3 years: (a) contractual disputes regarding personal debts, (b) claims for damages arising from water seepage, (c) contractual disputes between landlords and tenants, and (d) claims for damages arising from traffic accidents:
 - i. the number of cases handled and the average number of days taken to handle these cases;
 - ii. the amount claimed by the parties and the amount ultimately awarded.

Asked by: Hon CHOW Ho-ding, Holden (LegCo internal reference no.: 8)

Reply:

Depending on the nature of disputes and amount of money involved, civil cases are handled by different levels of courts and tribunals having regard to their respective jurisdictional limits. While the Judiciary does not have the requested statistics on the specific types of civil cases in the Question, we would like to provide the relevant information on the civil cases at different court levels for reference.

The Court of First Instance of the High Court

The Court of First Instance of the High Court has unlimited jurisdiction in civil matters. Common types of civil proceedings in the Court of First Instance include bankruptcy, breach of contract, hire-purchase, personal injuries, mortgage, etc. The caseload and average waiting time for handling such cases are set out below –

List type	Caseload			Case disposal		
	2023	2024	2025	2023	2024	2025
Civil jurisdiction	17 094	20 126	21 051	14 055	16 604	20 516

List type	Definition	Average waiting time			
		Target (days)	2023 (days)	2024 (days)	2025 (days)
Civil fixture list	from application to fix date to hearing	180	158	172	151

The District Court

The general civil jurisdiction of the District Court is limited to claims up to \$3 million, or for recovery of land where the annual rent, rateable value or annual value of the land does not exceed \$320,000. The most common types of civil proceedings that the District Court deals with are contract, tort, recovery of land or premises, distress, employees' compensation, personal injuries, etc. The caseload and average waiting time of handling such cases are set out below –

List type	Caseload			Case disposal		
	2023	2024	2025	2023	2024	2025
Civil cases	24 826	30 270	31 958	17 792	20 704	22 671

List type	Definition	Average waiting time			
		Target (days)	2023 (days)	2024 (days)	2025 (days)
Civil fixture list	from date of listing to hearing	120	115	110	113

The Lands Tribunal

The Lands Tribunal has jurisdiction to hear and adjudicate cases under various Ordinances, including the Landlord and Tenant (Consolidation) Ordinance (Cap. 7) and the Building Management Ordinance (Cap. 344). It mainly handles cases relating to building management and tenancy. The caseload and average waiting time of handling such cases are set out below –

List type	Caseload			Case disposal		
	2023	2024	2025	2023	2024	2025
Building management cases	174	232	205	173	166	173
Tenancy cases	3 872	4 201	3 999	3 659	3 488	3 412

List type	Definition	Average waiting time			
		Target (days)	2023 (days)	2024 (days)	2025 (days)
Building management cases	from setting down of a case to hearing	90	32	34	55
Tenancy cases	from setting down of a case to hearing	50	15	18	35

Small Claims Tribunal

The Small Claims Tribunal deals with monetary claims arising from contract or tort, involving amounts not exceeding \$75,000. The major types of claims handled by the Small Claims Tribunal include debts, service charges, damage to property, goods sold, and consumer claims. The caseload and average waiting time of handling such cases are set out below –

List type	Caseload			Case disposal		
	2023	2024	2025	2023	2024	2025
Small Claims Tribunal	52 304	57 454	56 059	50 440	53 821	55 722

List type	Definition	Average waiting time			
		Target (days)	2023 (days)	2024 (days)	2025 (days)
Small Claims Tribunal	from filing of a case to first hearing	60	35	41	41

In general, while the caseload of the various types of civil cases remained at a high level in 2025 and comparable to that of 2024, the majority of the civil cases across all court levels can meet the target waiting times¹.

The Judiciary does not maintain statistics on the amount claimed by the parties and the amount ultimately awarded, and other requested statistics.

- End -

¹ For civil proceedings, the court waiting time is defined by the number of days between either the date of listing the case for trial or the date of application to fix a date and the date of trial.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

JA006

(Question Serial No. 0056)

Head: (80) Judiciary

Subhead (No. & title): (-)

Programme: (1) Courts, Tribunals and Various Statutory Functions

Controlling Officer: Judiciary Administrator (Ms Esther LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Not applicable

Question:

1. Please provide information on the actual effectiveness of the Judiciary's promotion of the use of mediation at different levels of court to facilitate the resolution of disputes for court cases, including the number of cases where the use of mediation had been suggested during the adjudication of cases at different levels of court, and the number of hearings so discontinued through the use of mediation.
2. Has the Judiciary assessed the actual effectiveness of promoting the use of mediation amongst parties at different levels of court? If yes, what are the details? If not, how will the Judiciary improve the effectiveness of the courts' promotion of the use of mediation?

Asked by: Hon CHOW Ho-ding, Holden (LegCo internal reference no.: 9)

Reply:

Over the past years, the Judiciary has been making continual efforts in promoting the wider use of mediation at different levels of court to facilitate resolution of disputes for court cases. Through promulgation of a series of Practice Directions (PDs)¹, mediation has become an integral part of active case management to assist the Court to discharge its judicial duty by encouraging parties to use mediation as an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) procedure.

¹ PDs include: PD 31 Mediation; PD 15.10 Family Mediation; PD 6.1 Construction and Arbitration List; PD 3.3 Voluntary Mediation in Petitions Presented under Section 724 of the Companies Ordinance, Cap. 622, Section 177(1)(f) of the Companies (Winding Up and Miscellaneous Provisions) Ordinance Cap. 32; PD 18.1 Personal Injuries List; PD 18.2 Employees' Compensation List; President's Direction LTPD: BM No. 1/2009: Case Management and Mediation for Building Management Cases; President's Direction LTPD: CS No.1/2011 Mediation for Compulsory Sale Cases Under the Land (Compulsory Sale for Redevelopment) Ordinance (Cap. 545); and PD 20.2 Probate and Administration of Estate Proceedings.

While mediation is to be conducted on an entirely voluntary basis, parties have a positive duty to consider the use of mediation as ADR at the relevant levels of court, and the legal representatives must certify that they have duly explained and advised their clients on the use of mediation, and that failure to mediate upon a request by the opposite party without reasonable explanation may attract adverse costs order, i.e. the winning party not being awarded its costs from the losing party. In 2025, more than half of the mediated cases referred by the Judiciary resulted in full or partial settlement. The use of mediation has proved to be effective in reducing the length and number of the relevant trials, bringing about consequential savings on judicial resources otherwise required to handle the cases in court.

It should be noted that the majority of cases (over 80% on average) brought before the Small Claims Tribunal, the Lands Tribunal and the Labour Tribunal are disposed of without trial through settlement mechanism facilitated by adjudicators/presiding officers or dedicated court support staff as appropriate. The cases referred to mediation for settlement form only a small portion of these cases. As for the Family Court, during the past few years, among some 20 000 cases each year, over 12 000 (60%) do not involve disputes or relief claims which are normally disposed of efficiently and may not need to be referred to mediation for settlement. Only a small portion of the remaining around 7 500 (40%) cases involving disputes or relief claims are referred to mediation.

Relevant statistics on mediation cases and settlement rates over the past three years from 2023 to 2025 are at **Annex**. This information only covers those cases where the use of mediation and/or mediation service have been reported to and/or referred by the Judiciary. We do not maintain statistics on mediation services privately engaged by parties to the proceedings.

The Judiciary will continue to promote the wider use of ADR including mediation for suitable civil cases at different levels of court through multi-pronged measures including –

Provision of Mediation Referral and Support Service and facilities

The Integrated Mediation Office of the Judiciary is responsible for overseeing and supporting referral services for family mediation, general mediation as well as building management mediation. In 2025, around 1 800 litigants/visitors visited the Mediation Offices and over 900 information sessions were arranged. A dedicated webpage has been set up to provide updated information on court-related mediation services, thematic educational videos, schedule of information sessions, statistical reports and contact list of mediation bodies, etc. for promoting the use of mediation. Appropriate facilities for mediation services are also made available at different court premises and mediation offices so that private dispute resolution rooms and associated breakout rooms could be provided for mediators to interview the parties. In addition, dedicated mediation facilities have also been included in the new District Court Building Complex under construction so as to facilitate settlement among parties, particularly for family cases.

Promoting the Development of Mediation

The Judiciary and the Hong Kong Mediation Accreditation Association Limited (HKMAAL)² have been jointly running the Family Mediation Supervision Pilot Scheme to facilitate the matching of family mediation supervisors with family mediator trainees through the HKMAAL. The scheme has proved to be effective in increasing the number of accredited family mediators from 194 in 2013 to 388 in 2025. The Judiciary has also been participating in various promotional campaigns and activities, including the bi-annual Mediation Week and Conference organised by the Department of Justice. Relevant Judges and Judicial Officers would share experience on the use of mediation in court proceedings so as to encourage the wider use of such means to resolve disputes other than litigation.

Launching New Mediation Schemes to Promote the Use of Mediation

Since 2019, the Judiciary has been implementing a series of new mediation schemes. These include the Mediator-assisted Financial/Children's Dispute Resolution Pilot Scheme for divorcing parties of matrimonial cases to resolve their financial/children's disputes; the Family Court-annexed Mediation Scheme which assists litigants-in-person with limited financial resources to settle their disputes on issues³ which tend to take up disproportionate judicial time to resolve during litigation process; and Case Settlement Conference and Mediator-Assisted Case Settlement Conference which focus on facilitating the settlement of general civil cases during case management hearings in the District Court. These schemes have proved to be effective in enhancing the efficiency of litigation which facilitates the better utilisation of judicial resources. The settlement rate of these schemes ranges from 56% to 89% in 2025.

The Judiciary will continue to work closely with relevant stakeholders, including legal practitioners and mediators, in exploring and developing various mediation schemes, as well as encouraging litigants to make use of mediation to resolve disputes with a view to reducing the length and number of trials, thereby optimising the use of the judicial resources.

² HKMAAL is a non-statutory accreditation body for mediators in Hong Kong. It aims to (a) set standards for accredited mediators, supervisors, assessors, trainers, coaches and other professionals involved in mediation in Hong Kong, and to accredit them on satisfying the requisite standards; (b) set standards for relevant mediation training courses in Hong Kong, and to approve them on satisfying the requisite standards; and (c) promote a culture of best practice and professionalism in mediation in Hong Kong.

³ Mainly covers cases that (a) involve fewer issues which could easily reach settlement in a few hours (for instance, children matters are not much in dispute, calling for social investigation report is not necessary and the dispute on financial matters is mainly on spousal maintenance or children maintenance); (b) involve parties that are more emotionally stable and are ready to discuss for effective and quick disposal of the matters; (c) not involving domestic violence or high risk of domestic violence; and (d) involve parties that are not legally represented.

Statistics of Mediation Reports filed in the Court of First Instance⁴
(2023 to 2025)

	2023	2024	2025
a) Cases with agreement through mediation ⁵ (Full & Partial)	120 (50%)	132 (46%)	125 (46%)
b) Cases with no agreement through mediation	119 (50%)	158 (54%)	145 (54%)
c) Sub-total (Cases with mediation) (a+b)	239 (100%)	290 (100%)	270 (100%)
d) Ongoing/ Cases settled/ withdrawn/ discontinued without mediation	47	19	12
e) Total (c+d)	286	309	282

⁴ It covers six civil case types to which the Civil Justice Reform is applicable, including Civil Action (HCA), Admiralty Action (HCAJ), Commercial Action (HCCL), Construction and Arbitration Proceedings (HCCT), Miscellaneous Proceedings (HCMP) and Personal Injuries Action (HCPI) in the Court of First Instance of the High Court.

⁵ Include those cases not settling through mediation but disposed of within 6 months afterwards.

Statistics of Mediation Reports filed in the District Court⁶
(2023 to 2025)

	2023	2024	2025
a) Cases with agreement through mediation ⁷ (Full & Partial)	208 (56%)	208 (57%)	197 (56%)
b) Cases with no agreement through mediation	162 (44%)	156 (43%)	156 (44%)
c) Sub-total (Cases with mediation) (a+b)	370 (100%)	364 (100%)	353 (100%)
d) Ongoing/ Cases settled/ withdrawn/ discontinued without mediation	447	401	377
e) Total (c+d)	817	765	730

⁶ It covers six civil case types to which the Civil Justice Reform is applicable, including Civil Action (DCCJ), Employee's Compensation Case (DCEC), Equal Opportunities Action (DCEO), Miscellaneous Proceedings (DCMP), Personal Injuries Action (DCPI) and Tax Claim (DCTC) in the District Court.

⁷ Include those cases not settling through mediation but disposed of within 6 months afterwards.

**Family Cases referred to independent Mediators
through Integrated Mediation Office
(2023 to 2025)**

	2023	2024	2025
a) Cases with agreement through mediation (Full & Partial)	81 (60%)	121 (66%)	110 (73%)
b) Cases with no agreement through mediation	55 (40%)	63 (34%)	41 (27%)
c) Sub-total (Cases with mediation) (a+b)	136 (100%)	184 (100%)	151 (100%)
d) Ongoing/ Cases settled/ withdrawn/ discontinued without mediation	123	89	101
e) Total (c+d)	259	273	252

**Building Management Cases referred to independent Mediators through
Building Management Mediation Co-ordinator's Office
(2023 to 2025)**

	2023	2024	2025
a) Cases with agreement through mediation (Full & Partial)	15 (31%)	26 (60%)	19 (48%)
b) Cases with no agreement through mediation	33 (69%)	17 (40%)	21 (52%)
c) Sub-total (Cases with mediation) (a+b)	48 (100%)	43 (100%)	40 (100%)
d) Ongoing/ Cases settled/ withdrawn/ discontinued without mediation	9	12	10
e) Total (c+d)	57	55	50

**Small Claims Cases referred to independent Mediators through
Integrated Mediation Office (West Kowloon)
(2023 to 2025)**

	2023	2024	2025
a) Cases with agreement through mediation (Full & Partial) ⁸	121 (60%)	200 (62%)	200 (65%)
b) Cases with no agreement through mediation	82 (40%)	125 (38%)	110 (35%)
c) Sub-total (Cases with mediation) (a+b)	203 (100%)	325 (100%)	310 (100%)
d) Ongoing Cases	16	2	0
e) Total (c+d)	219	327	310

- End -

⁸ It includes cases with settlement (full or partial) by mediation and those not settling through mediation but disposed of within 6 months afterwards and those cases which were settled by direct negotiation after enquiry/consultation with the Integrated Mediation Office (West Kowloon) without mediation.

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

JA007

(Question Serial No. 2210)

Head: (80) Judiciary

Subhead (No. & title): (-)

Programme: (1) Courts, Tribunals and Various Statutory Functions

Controlling Officer: Judiciary Administrator (Ms Esther LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Not applicable

Question:

1. With regard to the court services provided by the Small Claims Tribunal (SCT) in the past 3 years, please provide information on each of the following: the number of cases handled, the types of cases filed or causes of action, the amounts awarded, the establishment of judges and judicial officers and the total expenditures.
2. For the past 2 years, the actual average waiting time from filing of a case to first hearing in the SCT (41 days) has remained below the target time (60 days). This shows that the SCT has adequate service capacity to take on more cases. In this connection, will the Judiciary explore increasing the jurisdiction of the SCT from \$75,000 to \$100,000? If yes, what are the details? If not, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon CHOW Ho-ding, Holden (LegCo internal reference no.: 7)

Reply:

- (1) The respective number of cases filed to the Small Claims Tribunal (SCT) and the breakdown on the claim amount in the past three years are appended below:

Claim Amount (HK\$)	Number of Cases Filed		
	2023	2024	2025
≤ 25,000	33 817	39 510	39 006
> 25,000 - ≤ 50,000	7 820	8 180	7 862
> 50,000 - ≤ 75,000	10 667	9 764	9 191
Total	52 304	57 454	56 059

As the Judiciary has been flexibly deploying its operating resources to support the services at different levels of court and tribunals having regard to operational needs, it does not maintain the breakdown of expenditure incurred exclusively for coping with the SCT's services. The staff establishment, number of posts, ranks and estimated

salary provision for Judges and Judicial Officers (JJOs) and support staff of the SCT for the past three years (i.e. 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26) are as follows:

Tribunal	Establishment	Existing number of posts	Estimated salary provision* (\$ million)		
			2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Small Claims Tribunal	80	1 – Principal Adjudicator 11 – Adjudicator 21 – Judicial Clerk grade staff 46 – Clerical staff 1 – Office Assistant	57.2	58.9	58.9

* Estimated on the basis of prevailing annual salaries at mid-point, excluding fringe benefits and allowances claimable by eligible JJOs and civil service support staff.

The Judiciary does not maintain the other requested statistics.

- (2) The jurisdictional limit of the SCT was increased from \$50,000 to \$75,000 with effect from 3 December 2018. The increase was made having regard to a comprehensive and objective analysis taking into account a host of factors, including the need to enhance access to justice, impact on demand for and operation of the SCT's services, changes in economic indicators as well as stakeholders' views. Since then, the Judiciary has been closely monitoring the caseload of the SCT.

According to statistics on cases filed with the SCT involving claim amounts exceeding \$50,000, the annual number of such cases from 2020 to 2022 was around 43% lower than that in 2019, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on court operations. Although the caseload figures increased from 2023 to 2025, they remain around 31% on average below the 2019 level. The percentage share of such cases has fallen considerably from around 26% in 2019 to 20% in 2023 and 16% in 2025.

The average court waiting times of the SCT in both 2024 and 2025, recorded at 41 days, are within the target waiting time of 60 days. It should be noted that waiting times of the SCT is only one of the indicators of its operational efficiency. It does not reflect the substantial resources involved in the processing of cases by the SCT, particularly on the part of the Adjudicators and Tribunal Officers in assessing, liaising with litigants/parties and facilitating settlement of cases through alternative dispute settlement out of court (including mediation) instead of trial proceedings. Such cases account for around 90% of the cases disposed of at the SCT.

Since any further adjustment of the jurisdictional limit of the SCT could have a significant impact on the administration of justice for parties of the affected cases, as well as the SCT's caseload, operation and delivery of its services to court users, the Judiciary considers it more prudent to collate more data over a longer time period to facilitate assessment of the need for any further changes to the jurisdictional limit.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

JA008

(Question Serial No. 1180)

Head: (80) Judiciary

Subhead (No. & title): (-)

Programme: (2) Support Services for Courts' Operation

Controlling Officer: Judiciary Administrator (Ms Esther LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Not applicable

Question:

Under Programme (2), the Judiciary provides various support services, including the use of technology and other modern management tools to enhance the efficiency of court support services. Last year, the Judiciary stated that generative artificial intelligence (AI) can be used in administrative tasks; 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). However, other jurisdictions, including Singapore and Mainland China, have already allowed AI to participate in judicial processes.

- 1) The staffing establishment and actual expenditure for the implementation of generative AI applications in each of the past 5 years (2021-22 to 2025-26);
- 2) How does the Judiciary plan to allocate resources and collaborate with other departments or organizations to consider researching or developing dedicated generative AI models for self-learning? And
- 3) How to evaluate the effectiveness of generative AI in enhancing the efficiency of judicial processes?
- 4) With reference to the practices in other jurisdictions, will the Judiciary keep an open mind towards allowing AI to participate in judicial processes? If so, what are the details? If not, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon KAN Wai-mun, Carmen (LegCo internal reference no.: 32)

Reply:

The Judiciary is committed to making greater use of technology for enhancing the efficiency of court operations. We have been proceeding at full steam with the implementation of a series of major technology initiatives. These include exploring the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in work of the Judiciary.

In July 2024, the Judiciary promulgated its first set of guidelines on the use of generative AI for Judges and Judicial Officers (JJOs) and support staff, which has been uploaded onto the Judiciary website (https://www.judiciary.hk/doc/en/court_services_facilities/guidelines_on_the_use_of_generative_ai.pdf). The guidelines were drawn up with reference to similar guidelines issued by courts in other jurisdictions, including England, New Zealand, Canada and the Mainland. In gist, JJOs and support staff may make **prudent** and **responsible** use of generative AI in the course of their work where appropriate.

According to the guidelines, JJOs and support staff may make use of generative AI 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, on condition that they are held responsible for the outcome of such work and for checking and verifying any information obtained to ensure its accuracy and reliability before using or relying upon it in their work.

To avoid compromising on the fair administration of justice, the Judiciary has yet to recommend the use of generative AI for core judicial functions, including legal analysis and judgment writing, 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 is keeping abreast of developments in generative AI technology and experience in other courts with a view to reviewing and updating the guidelines as and when appropriate.

Separately, the Judiciary is in the process of drawing up guidelines on use of generative AI for legal practitioners and other court users for consultation with the legal profession later this year. We will make particular reference to the specific restrictions by many other jurisdictions on the use of generative AI in their guidelines for legal practitioners.

Since 2023, the Judicial Institute (JI) under the Judiciary has continually been carrying out research and experiments on use of generative AI tools, particularly in conducting legal research and analysis. There is a clear and growing global movement across both civil and common law jurisdictions for court systems to explore how AI can support judicial work. Experience from JI's testing, together with wider academic studies, shows that AI, particularly large language models, is still in a developmental phase when applied to complex legal tasks such as legal research, legal analysis and judgment drafting. The issues identified to date largely reflect transitional challenges typical of an emerging technology, including the continued refinement of accuracy, consistency, and the clarity of legal reasoning. Notably, commercial legal reference providers are already actively investing in addressing these areas and steadily improving the reliability of their AI tools. In this evolving landscape, the Judiciary will continue to closely follow developments in AI and consider its potential applications in judicial work as the technology matures.

For non-judicial work, the Judiciary has participated in other pilot AI projects (such as HKPilot, HKChat and HKMeeting developed by the Hong Kong Generative AI Research & Development Center) under the coordination of the Digital Policy Office of the Government where appropriate.

As the Judiciary has been flexibly deploying its operating resources to support the implementation of different technology initiatives having regard to operational needs, it does not maintain the breakdown of the resources deployed exclusively for development and application of AI tools. The expenditure on the planning and implementation of the Judiciary's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) initiatives is as follows –

Year	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Expenditure (\$ million)	225	238	280	293	334

The expenditure on ICT initiatives represents an average of about 11% of the total operating expenditure of the Judiciary in the past five years.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

JA009

(Question Serial No. 1181)

Head: (80) Judiciary

Subhead (No. & title): (-)

Programme: (1) Courts, Tribunals and Various Statutory Functions

Controlling Officer: Judiciary Administrator (Ms Esther LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Not applicable

Question:

Under Programme (1), different levels of court and tribunals hear and adjudicate criminal cases and civil disputes. The objectives include ensuring just and expeditious disposal of cases. In this connection, please inform this Council:

- 1) as to why, aside from the average waiting time from referral by a magistrate to determination in the Obscene Articles Tribunal, there are no respective targets set for the waiting time from hearing to determination with regards various cases handled in the other courts;
- 2) in tabulated form the number of cases for which criminal and civil judgments were handed down by the Court of Final Appeal, the Court of Appeal and the Court of First Instance of the High Court and the District Court in each of the past 5 years (from 2021-22 to 2025-26), and the percentages of cases where the times taken from conclusion of the cases to handing down of judgments were over 0.5 year, over 1 year, over 1.5 years, over 2 years and over 3 years respectively;
- 3) in tabulated form the number of cases for which judgments were handed down by the Family Court in each of the past 5 years (from 2021-22 to 2025-26), and the percentages of cases where the times taken from conclusion of the cases to handing down of judgments were over 0.5 year, over 1 year, over 1.5 years, over 2 years and over 3 years respectively;
- 4) whether the guideline for the time taken from conclusion of case to handing down of judgment will be reviewed. If yes, what are the details? If not, what are the reasons?
And
- 5) how will measures such as the allocation of additional resources, retention of judges and expedition of new judicial appointments be taken to speed up the handing down of judgments, thereby enhancing judicial efficiency?

Asked by: Hon KAN Wai-mun, Carmen (LegCo internal reference no.: 34)

Reply:

(1)

Court waiting time is an important performance indicator for assessing the administrative efficiency of courts and tribunals in handling cases awaiting trials or other legal proceedings without compromising fairness in administration of justice.

In general, the court waiting time for civil cases is defined by the number of days between the date of application to fix a date and the date of trial. This is generally in line with the definitions of court waiting times in other common law jurisdictions.

The definition of court waiting time for cases of the Obscene Articles Tribunal (OAT) is effectively similar to that of all other civil cases in courts and tribunals in Hong Kong. As a specialised tribunal, the OAT is responsible for delivering two main functions with respect to articles and matters, namely classification¹ and determination². Unlike other courts/tribunals, the decisions of the OAT can normally be made on the same date when it conducts the hearing, i.e. the first date of hearing. Two court waiting time targets for the OAT have been set on this basis: (i) court waiting time from receipt of application to classification; and (ii) court waiting time from referral by a magistrate to determination. They are hence similar to the court waiting time counted from date of application/listing to commencement of trial.

(2) and (3)

In May 2022, the Judiciary issued Practice Directions (PDs) 36 and 37 with the aim of ensuring that reserved judgments are handed down as expeditiously as is reasonably practicable having regard to the circumstances of the case, including its nature and complexity, and other commitments of the court.

PD 36 applies to all cases before the High Court, with the exception of non-refoulement claims and related matters. PD 37 applies to all cases before the District Court including those in the Family Court and the Lands Tribunal. Relevant timeframes for handing down of judgments as set out in the two PDs are as follows:

¹ The OAT can classify an article as Class I (neither obscene nor indecent), Class II (indecent) or Class III (obscene).

² A court or magistrate may, in the course of proceedings, refer an article or matter to the OAT, asking it to determine whether -

- (a) the article is obscene or indecent;
- (b) the matter is indecent; or
- (c) the publication of the article or the public display of the matter is intended for the public good.

PD 36 (High Court)

High Court	Judgment to be handed down
1. Bail applications for criminal case to the Court of First Instance and the Court of Appeal	Within 14 days
1. Applications for leave to appeal to the Court of Final Appeal or other miscellaneous applications 2. Oral hearings before a single judge 3. Court of First Instance civil cases – interlocutory applications and paper applications 4. Court of First Instance criminal cases – magistracy appeals and all other applications (other than bail) 5. Conclusion of the hearing for a contested matter by masters	Within 3 months
1. Court of Appeal civil cases – oral hearings or paper applications 2. Court of Appeal criminal cases – oral hearings before the full bench 3. Court of First Instance civil cases – trials and substantive applications which last for less than 15 days 4. Assessment of damages by masters	Within 6 months
1. Court of First Instance civil cases – trials and substantive applications which last for 15 days or more	Within 9 months

PD 37 (District Court and Lands Tribunal)

District Court / Lands Tribunal	Judgment to be handed down
1. Bail applications for criminal case to the District Court	Within 14 days
1. District Court civil cases – interlocutory applications and paper applications 2. Conclusion of the hearing for a contested matter by the District Court masters 3. Lands Tribunal cases – interlocutory applications and paper applications	Within 3 months
1. District Court – trials and substantive applications which last for less than 15 days 2. Assessment of damages by District Court masters 3. Lands Tribunal – trials and substantive applications which last for less than 15 days	Within 6 months
1. District Court – trials and substantive applications which last for 15 days or more 2. Lands Tribunal – trials and substantive applications which last for 15 days or more	Within 9 months

PD 37 (Family Court)

Family Court	Judgment to be handed down
1. Paper applications to the Family Court cases 2. Conclusion of the hearing for a contested matter by Family Court masters	Within 3 months
1. Trials and substantive applications in relation to children matters	Within 6 months
1. Trials and substantive applications in relation to other proceedings	Within 9 months

The Judiciary only maintains statistics on handing down of reserved judgments for the above-mentioned court levels ever since the implementation of the respective PDs. The vast majority (over 90%) of the cumulative total of over 6 600 judgments at these levels of court were handed down within the stipulated timeframes.

(4)

The Judiciary will continue to closely monitor the situation with a view to ensuring that all judgments are handed down as expeditiously as practicable, and consider the need to review the relevant PDs as and when appropriate.

(5)

The Judiciary has been taking a series of measures to ensure and enhance efficiency of the administration of justice. To address the persistent shortfall in judicial manpower, the Judiciary has been conducting more frequent open recruitment exercises for Judges and Judicial Officers (JJOs) at different levels of court and actively promoted judicial careers to legal professionals. The recruitment exercises launched in 2023 yielded positive results with a total of 24 judicial appointments made. In November 2024, the Judiciary launched the latest round of open recruitment exercises for different levels of JJOs, starting from Judges of the Court of First Instance of the High Court (CFI) with one judicial appointment made in September 2025. The recruitment exercise for District Judges was launched in January 2026, while that for Permanent Magistrates will be launched later this year. With the support of the Government, the retirement age of JJOs were extended and the terms and conditions of JJOs were enhanced where appropriate in recent years, with a view to enhancing the appeal in JJO recruitments as well as retaining senior and experienced JJOs.

Continual efforts are also being made by the Judiciary to engage temporary judicial manpower including recorders and deputy JJOs from the legal profession at different levels of court. On average, around 40 temporary/deputy JJOs (including recorders) sit in different levels of court at any one time. In addition, more judicial associates and contract marshals for supporting JJOs are planned to be engaged to provide professional support to JJOs.

To expedite the disposal of cases relating to non-refoulement claims, the Judiciary launched a special scheme since February 2025 under which eligible private practitioners from the legal

sector are appointed as Deputy Judges of the CFI (Non-refoulement Claims) exclusively for the purpose of handling cases relating to non-refoulement claims. As at 1 March 2026, 16 eligible practitioners have been identified under the scheme, of whom 13 have been appointed to work as Deputy Judges of the CFI (Non-refoulement Claims) for different durations.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

JA010

(Question Serial No. 2292)

Head: (80) Judiciary

Subhead (No. & title): (-)

Programme: (1) Courts, Tribunals and Various Statutory Functions

Controlling Officer: Judiciary Administrator (Ms Esther LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Not applicable

Question:

Regarding judicial review, please inform this Council of:

- 1) the number of applications for leave to judicial review, the number of judicial reviews, the number of appeals against judicial review decisions, the administrative departments involved, the subject matters of the cases, and their average waiting times (with separate figures for non-refoulement claims) in each of the past 5 years (from 2021-22 to 2025-26) in tabulated form;
- 2) in furtherance of the above question, the number of judicial review cases that were granted legal aid, the outcomes of these judicial reviews, the paying parties of costs and the amounts (with separate figures for non-refoulement claims) in each of the past 5 years (from 2021-22 to 2025-26) in tabulated form;
- 3) the court manpower, ranks of judicial officers and expenditure involved in handling judicial review cases related to non-refoulement claims in the past 5 years (from 2021-22 to 2025-26) in tabulated form; and
- 4) the number of appointments of deputy judges of the Court of First Instance of the High Court designated to handle non-refoulement claims; the effectiveness of such appointments; and how to expedite the handling of the backlog of non-refoulement claims.

Asked by: Hon KAN Wai-mun, Carmen (LegCo internal reference no.: 33)

Reply:

The statistics maintained by the Judiciary that are relevant to the question for the past five years from 2021 to 2025 are as follows –

Judicial Review Cases	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
<i>Court of First Instance of the High Court</i>					
(a) No. of leave applications filed	1 767	1 545	2 191	2 549	2 703
(b) No. of leave applications filed relating to non-refoulement claims	1 673	1 445	2 087	2 418	2 563
(c) Average waiting time from listing to hearing of leave application ¹	24 days	26 days	31 days	33 days	35 days
(d) No. of substantive judicial review cases filed	47	77	43	49	71
(e) No. of substantive judicial review cases filed relating to non-refoulement claims	34	64	35	32	62
(f) Average waiting time from listing to hearing of substantive judicial review case ¹	98 days	88 days	76 days	85 days	90 days
<i>Court of Appeal of the High Court</i>					
(g) No. of appeals against refusal of leave filed	380	297	264	338	1 007
(h) No. of appeals against refusal of leave filed relating to non-refoulement claims	350	279	246	314	971
(i) Average waiting time from listing to appeal hearing in respect of refusal of leave application ¹	58 days	53 days	43 days	55 days	50 days
(j) No. of appeals against judicial review decisions filed	8	11	1	6	2
(k) No. of appeals against judicial review decisions filed relating to non-refoulement claims	1	6	0	0	0
(l) Average waiting time from listing to appeal hearing ¹	119 days	99 days	81 days	50 days	159 days
<i>Court of Final Appeal</i>					
(m) No. of applications for leave to appeal (civil) filed ²	564	670	352	186	189
(n) No. of applications for leave to appeal (civil) filed relating to non-refoulement claims	510	603	307	147	146
(o) No. of substantive appeals (civil) filed ²	6	14	10	12	6
(p) No. of substantive appeals (civil) filed relating to non-refoulement claims	0	0	0	0	0

Remarks:

¹ Separate average waiting time is not available for non-refoulement claim cases.

² The figures are total number of cases filed to the Court of Final Appeal which include non-judicial review cases.

The number of applications for leave to apply for judicial review (other than those relating to non-refoulement claims), with breakdown by government bureaux/departments involved in the past four years from 2022 to 2025, is provided at Annex.

The Judiciary does not maintain the other requested statistics on judicial review cases.

The expenditure on handling legal proceedings relating to non-refoulement claims forms part of the general operating expenses of the Judiciary. The Judiciary has been flexibly deploying its operating resources for handling such cases at different levels of court and tribunals having regard to operational needs. The relevant expenditure includes the salary and related expenses as well as other operating expenses of judges and supporting staff in the High Court and the Court of Final Appeal who are handling these cases alongside all other cases on a rotational or day-to-day basis^{Note}. The Judiciary does not maintain the breakdown of operating expenses incurred exclusively for coping with cases relating to non-refoulement claims.

The Judiciary has also been engaging Deputy Judges in the Court of First Instance of the High Court (CFI) and contract supporting staff to assist in handling non-refoulement claim related cases. Currently, five retired judges have been appointed as Deputy Judges to assist in handling these cases. In addition, since February 2025, the Judiciary launched a special scheme under which eligible private practitioners from the legal sector are appointed as Deputy Judges of the CFI exclusively for the purpose of handling cases relating to non-refoulement claims. As at 1 March 2026, 16 eligible practitioners have been identified under the scheme, of whom 13 have been appointed to work as Deputy Judges of the CFI (Non-refoulement Claims) for different durations. The additional expenditure in the past five years for such extra manpower is as follows:

2021-22 (\$ million)	2022-23 (\$ million)	2023-24 (\$ million)	2024-25 (\$ million)	2025-26 (\$ million)
13.3	10.0	10.1	14.2	27.4

^{Note:} The breakdown of expenditure of judges in the Court of Appeal of the High Court and Court of Final Appeal is not available as the number of appeal cases listed for their disposal in a year hinges on multiple varying factors.

The Judiciary has been proactively adopting a strategic and targeted approach to expedite the processing of incoming judicial reviews cases relating to non-refoulement claims. This includes deploying additional and dedicated judicial manpower, as mentioned above, as well as streamlining administrative procedures and presentation of the judgment/decision notice. The results of these initiatives have been encouraging. In 2025, the CFI has disposed of over 3 700 such cases, representing about 2.1 times the total number of cases disposed of in 2024. The Judiciary will continue to monitor the progress and flexibly deploy resources in response to operational needs, with a view to further enhancing the efficiency in handling non-refoulement claim related cases.

**Number of applications for leave to apply for judicial review
(excluding non-refoulement claims) in the past four years**

(with breakdown by the government bureaux/departments involved
based on the names of the parties)

	2022	2023	2024	2025
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government	2	2	1	1
Chief Executive's Office	9	6	1	1
Chief Executive in Council	1	0	1	0
Chief Secretary for Administration's Office	0	0	0	2
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department	1	0	0	0
Buildings Department	2	4	4	2
Civil Engineering and Development Department	0	1	1	0
Civil Service Bureau	5	1	3	2
Commerce and Economic Development Bureau	0	1	0	0
Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau	0	1	0	1
Correctional Services Department	1	3	3	0
Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau	0	0	0	1
Customs and Excise Department	1	0	0	3
Department of Health	0	0	2	3
Department of Justice	9	9	5	7
Development Bureau	1	2	1	0
Drainage Services Department	0	0	0	1
Education Bureau	1	0	2	3
Environment and Ecology Bureau	1	0	0	1
Environmental Protection Department	1	1	1	0
Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau	0	1	0	0
Fire Services Department	1	2	1	0
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department	0	1	1	2
Government Logistics Department	0	0	0	1
Health Bureau	8	0	2	3
Home Affairs Department	0	3	1	1
Home and Youth Affairs Bureau	0	0	2	2
Hong Kong Police Force	9	4	7	7
Housing Bureau	1	0	0	0
Housing Department	1	1	4	7
Immigration Department	17	8	14	31
Information Services Department	0	0	0	1
Inland Revenue Department	3	0	2	3
Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau	1	0	0	2
Labour and Welfare Bureau	0	1	0	0

	2022	2023	2024	2025
Labour Department	1	0	0	0
Land Registry	0	1	0	1
Lands Department	4	11	4	6
Legal Aid Department	3	5	8	8
Office of the Communications Authority	0	1	0	2
Official Receiver's Office	1	1	0	0
Radio Television Hong Kong	1	0	0	0
Registration and Electoral Office	0	2	0	0
Security Bureau	9	4	4	1
Social Welfare Department	1	0	0	2
Transport and Logistics Bureau	0	1	0	0
Transport Department	0	2	1	4
Total	96	80	76	112

Note:

- (1) Information before 2022 is not available.
- (2) The total number above does not tally with the caseload of a particular year because the caseload figure covers also applications from parties which are not government bureaux/departments and also more than one government bureau/department may be involved in a case.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

JA011

(Question Serial No. 3611)

Head: (80) Judiciary

Subhead (No. & title): (-)

Programme: (2) Support Services for Courts' Operation

Controlling Officer: Judiciary Administrator (Ms Esther LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Not applicable

Question:

With respect to the integrated Court Case Management System (iCMS), please provide this Council with the following information:

- 1) The situation and trend of law firms registering for the iCMS in the past 5 years (2021- 2025);
- 2) The Judiciary's promotion efforts directed to law firms, and the difficulties encountered in promoting the iCMS and the solutions; and
- 3) The Judiciary aims to mandate the use of the iCMS for all legally represented litigants for case types where the electronic mode has been made available as from 2026. What is the current progress of the preparatory work, and what are the estimated expenditures and staffing establishment involved?

Asked by: Hon KAN Wai-mun, Carmen (LegCo internal reference no.: 35)

Reply:

- (1) The Judiciary has been implementing the integrated Court Case Management System (iCMS), the major initiative under the Information Technology Strategy Plan. It aims at enabling the handling of court-related documents and payments electronically across various court levels. The iCMS is being implemented by phases –
 - (i) 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

- (ii) under the second phase, the iCMS has been extended to cover bulk claim cases of the Small Claims Tribunal (SCT) starting from October 2024. From June 2025 onwards, the iCMS has been extended to selected case types of civil proceedings of the High Court (HC) by phases, including the civil appeal cases (CACV) in the Court of Appeal, and commercial cases (HCCL), construction and arbitration cases (HCCT), intellectual property cases (HCIP), personal injuries cases (HCPI) and civil action cases (HCA) in the Court of First Instance. The Judiciary is planning to further extend the use of the iCMS to the Court of Final Appeal, other case types of civil proceedings of the HC, the criminal proceedings of the HC and the DC, the non-Summons Courts of the MCs, as well as non-bulk claim cases of the SCT incrementally.

As at 28 February 2026, a total of 917 court users (including 727 law firms, representing about 80% of law firms registered with the Law Society of Hong Kong) have registered for accounts under the iCMS. Since its implementation in May 2022, the number of law firms registered for the iCMS in the past four years are tabulated below –

	As at 28 February 2023	As at 29 February 2024	As at 28 February 2025	As at 28 February 2026
Number of law firms registered for the iCMS	56	333	441	727

The take-up rate is expected to rise progressively following the continued promotion of the iCMS and substantially upon the imposition of mandatory use by all legally represented litigants as from the second half of 2026.

- (2) 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, on fee items related to the electronic handling of court documents. Besides, 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 –
- (i) 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;
 - (ii) 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;
 - (iii) conducting briefings and demonstration sessions as from 2022. A total of 75 briefing-cum-hands-on demonstration sessions for law firms were conducted from January 2023 to February 2026 with the assistance of the Law Society of

Hong Kong. Around 980 representatives from some 450 law firms participated in the sessions, and all the sessions were well received.

In October 2024 and May 2025, we organised in conjunction with the Law Society of Hong Kong Continuing Professional Development (CPD) briefing sessions for members of the legal professional body on key iCMS external functions (including registration, electronic filing, electronic inspection and electronic payment). CPD points were awarded to attendees joining the face-to-face briefing sessions or via webinars;

- (iv) organising pilot runs for key external stakeholders (including government departments, public organisations, legal professional bodies and law firms) so as to familiarise them with the electronic workflow and the iCMS functions before rolling out the iCMS external functions of relevant case types at different court levels;
- (v) introducing Deposit Account as an additional electronic payment option for the iCMS Organisation Account users in June 2025 so that a law 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;
- (vi) encouraging migration to e-filing by introducing the new requirement of providing the court with scanned/e-copy of documents when filing or submitting documents in the conventional paper mode for iCMS-enabled case types in the HC and the steps of using the self-service kiosks for uploading the scanned/e-copy of documents;
- (vii) with the extension of iCMS to the HC, the Judiciary has been reaching out to law firms that handle a relatively high volume of the relevant case types to offer dedicated technical support, with a view to facilitating their early migration from conventional paper mode to the iCMS. To prepare law firms for mandatory e-filing in the second half of 2026, starting from October 2025, the Judiciary has been inviting law firms to make an appointment with the Judiciary for technical assistance on using the iCMS, either at the HC Building or in their own offices, when they are initiating a new case of an iCMS-enabled case type for the first time;
- (viii) starting from December 2025, the Judiciary has been proactively reaching out to all law firms that have yet to register for the iCMS account, reminding them to complete the registration as soon as possible. If necessary, the Judiciary can arrange staff to visit their offices to assist with submitting the registration applications. Subsequently, the Judiciary has reviewed and streamlined the registration process, enabling visiting staff to complete the registration and activate the accounts for law firms on-site. If a law firm needs to commence a new case, the visiting staff can also provide immediate support; and

- (ix) enhancing training on the iCMS in preparation for the upcoming mandatory use of e-filing by increasing the frequency of the briefing-cum-hands-on demonstration sessions for law firms at the HC Building from monthly to bi-weekly starting from March 2026.

After nearly two years of promotion and the provision of briefing sessions, out-reaching registration and support services to law firms, about 80% of law firms have registered under the iCMS as at 28 February 2026. We will continue our efforts in promoting and publicising the system to encourage more users to switch to the electronic mode and facilitate its smooth implementation.

- (3) The Judiciary intends to start mandating the use of the iCMS for all legally represented litigants in respect of case types where the electronic mode has been made available by phases starting from the second half of 2026. We conducted a stakeholders' consultation on the proposals and implementation details in January 2024. The responses were generally supportive of the initiative and its phased implementation approach. The Judiciary has been liaising closely with key stakeholders including the Law Society of Hong Kong in drawing up the implementation arrangements.

The Judiciary has been adopting the following measures with a view to incentivising migration to the use of the iCMS –

- (i) introducing 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. Feedback from operational experience has been positive and the utilisation has been steadily increasing. The new operational mode of court registry business sought to induce a cultural change in the filing practice of the legal profession from conventional over-the-counter services to contactless transactions, and eventually to electronic transactions via the iCMS; and
- (ii) with the extension of the iCMS external functions to selected case types of the HC starting from June 2025, the Judiciary has stipulated in the practice direction that a party who files or submits a document in the conventional mode under an iCMS-enabled case type is required to provide to the Court at the same time of making the filing or submission an electronic copy of the document (in USB mass storage device or portable hard disk with USB interface) 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 the second half of 2026. 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 have been provided in the HC to inform, prepare and support users in coping with this new requirement.

To better prepare all law firms for the mandatory use of iCMS starting from the second half of 2026, the Judiciary –

- (i) will continue with our out-reaching efforts to ensure all law firms (except those not planning to continue with filing business) will have registered for iCMS before mandatory use; and
- (ii) is planning to introduce in mid-2026 a further transitional arrangement for law firms by requiring all law firms which have yet to commence new cases under the iCMS in the HC (for the iCMS-enabled case types) to do so for at least once either on their own or with technical support by the Judiciary. This seeks to enhance training for law firms and boost their utilisation rate of iCMS particularly for case commencement.

As the work on mandating the use of the iCMS is part and parcel of the duties of in-house staff responsible for the development and management of technology initiatives of the Judiciary Administration, there is no breakdown on the expenditure incurred in the relevant preparatory activities. The relevant expenditure is included in the estimated recurrent expenditure on the planning and implementation of the Judiciary's Information and Communications Technology initiatives of around \$379 million which represents about 13% of the total estimated operating expenditure of the Judiciary in 2026-27.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

JA012

(Question Serial No. 3612)

Head: (80) Judiciary

Subhead (No. & title): (-)

Programme: (1) Courts, Tribunals and Various Statutory Functions

Controlling Officer: Judiciary Administrator (Ms Esther LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Not applicable

Question:

- 1) Please provide the detailed listing of the names of the Judges who have been elevated and who have retired (including their ranks before elevation/retirement) over the past 5 years (from 2021-22 to 2025-26), the names of the newly appointed Judges of the Court of First Instance of the High Court and their positions (including Deputy Judges and Recorders), and the vacancies yet to be filled;
- 2) Please provide the listing of the names of non-judicial administrative personnel (including their ranks before elevation/retirement) over the past 5 years (from 2021-22 to 2025-26), and the vacancies yet to be filled; and
- 3) Please provide the listing of the names and positions of the Judges who will retire in the coming 5 years (from 2026-27 to 2030-31). What is the plan to make up for the shortfall?

Asked by: Hon KAN Wai-mun, Carmen (LegCo internal reference no.: 38)

Reply:

- (1) The list of Judges who were appointed from serving Judges or Judicial Officers at other levels of court (internal elevation) and appointed to the Court of First Instance of the High Court (CFI) in the past five years (including their previous positions) from 2021-22 to 2025-26 are set out in Annex A.

The list of Judges who retired from 2021-22 to 2025-26 is set out at Annex B.

Arising from creation of new judicial posts, elevation of Judges and Judicial Officers (JJOs) from lower to higher levels of court, and natural wastage (mainly due to retirement of JJOs), the number of vacancies varies at different times across the years. As at 31 March 2026, the number of vacancies at the CFI was six. The average vacancy rate in the past five years from 2021-22 to 2025-26 was about 24%.

The Judiciary has been taking pro-active efforts in conducting more frequent open recruitment exercises for filling judicial vacancies in recent years. In the previous round of recruitment exercises for JJOs, seven CFI Judges were appointed in 2024-25. In November 2024, the Judiciary launched the latest round of open recruitment exercises for different levels of JJOs, starting from CFI Judges with one judicial appointment made in September 2025.

- (2) The Judiciary Administration has a staffing establishment of over 1 800 civil service posts providing an extensive range of administrative support services in ensuring the administration of justice. They mainly include court registries, support to JJOs in court hearings and proceedings, bailiff services, translation and interpretation services, use of technology in courts, mediation services, court and office accommodation, court security, media and publicity, general administration, financial and human resources management etc. Among the civil service posts, about 600 are from Judiciary grades, including Judicial Clerk, Court Interpreter, Bailiff and Bailiff's Assistant and Tribunal Officer; 1 200 are from other grades in the civil service, including Administrative Officer, Executive Officer, Treasury Accountant, Systems Manager, Information Officer, Clerical Officer etc. In view of the large number of staff involved, the frequent staff movements arising from the appointment of new recruits, internal redeployments, transfers, resignations and retirement, as well as privacy concerns about the personal data involved (e.g. the year of appointment, promotion or retirement of individual staff), we are not able to provide the list of non-judicial administrative personnel over the past five years.

The number of vacancies varies at different times of the year with changes due to retirement, resignations, promotions and appointments to other civil service grades. As at 1 March 2026, the vacancy rate of the civil service posts in the Judiciary is around 8.5%. The vacant posts mainly belong to the grades of Judicial Clerk, Court Interpreter, Clerical Officer and Clerical Assistant. To ensure there is adequate manpower at different ranks, open recruitment and promotion exercises for various grades have been arranged all year round. The vacancies will be filled at different junctures when the required recruitment and promotion formalities are completed.

- (3) Since the actual retirement age of Judges may be affected by various factors, including early retirement and extension of term of office, we are unable to provide the list of Judges who will retire in the coming five years. The Judiciary has all along been closely monitoring the judicial manpower situation including the wastage (retirement and resignation) of JJOs at different court levels with a view to appointing JJOs through internal elevation and open recruitment for filling the vacancies in a timely manner.

I. List of Judges appointed from serving Judges or Judicial Officers at other levels of court (internal elevation) from 2021-22 to 2025-26

	Name of Judge and rank	Former rank
1.	Mr Justice Johnson LAM, Permanent Judge of the Court of Final Appeal	Justice of Appeal of the Court of Appeal of the High Court
2.	Madam Justice Anthea PANG, Justice of Appeal of the Court of Appeal of the High Court	Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court
3.	Mr Justice Anthony CHAN, Justice of Appeal of the Court of Appeal of the High Court	Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court
4.	Mr Justice Johnny CHAN, Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court	District Judge
5.	Mr Justice Herbert AU-YEUNG, Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court	District Judge
6.	Madam Justice Winnie TSUI, Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court	District Judge
7.	Mr Justice LEUNG Chun-man, Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court	District Judge
8.	Mr Justice Douglas YAU, Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court	District Judge
9.	Mr Justice Anthony KWOK, Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court	District Judge
10.	Madam Justice Amanda WOODCOCK, Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court	District Judge

	Name of Judge and rank	Former rank
11.	Mr WONG King-wah, Registrar of the Court of Final Appeal and Senior Deputy Registrar, High Court	District Judge
12.	Mr HUI Ka-ho, Senior Deputy Registrar, High Court	District Judge
13.	Judge WONG Sze-lai, District Judge	Permanent Magistrate
14.	Judge CHEUNG Kit-ye, District Judge	Permanent Magistrate
15.	Judge Dick HO, District Judge	Principal Magistrate
16.	Judge Ada YIM, District Judge	Principal Magistrate
17.	Judge Lawrence YIP, District Judge	Permanent Magistrate
18.	Judge Michelle LAM, District Judge	Permanent Magistrate
19.	Judge LEE Siu-ho, District Judge	Permanent Magistrate

II. List of Judges appointed to the Court of First Instance of the High Court from 2021-22 to 2025-26

	Name of Judge and rank	Former rank before appointment
1.	Mr Justice Johnny CHAN, Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court	District Judge
2.	Madam Justice Anna LAI, Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court	Senior Counsel
3.	Madam Justice Yvonne CHENG, Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court	Senior Counsel
4.	Mr Justice Herbert AU-YEUNG, Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court	District Judge
5.	Madam Justice Winnie TSUI, Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court	District Judge
6.	Mr Justice LEUNG Chun-man, Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court	District Judge
7.	Mr Justice Douglas YAU, Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court	District Judge
8.	Mr Justice Anthony KWOK, Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court	District Judge
9.	Madam Justice Amanda WOODCOCK, Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court	District Judge
10.	Mr Justice TAM Yiu-ho, Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court	Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions, Department of Justice
11.	Mr Justice Eugene FUNG, Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court	Recorder of the Court of First Instance of the High Court and Senior Counsel

List of Judges who retired from 2021-22 to 2025-26

Justices of Appeal of the Court of Appeal of the High Court

1. Mr Justice Wally YEUNG
2. Madam Justice Maria Candace YUEN
3. Madam Justice Maggie POON
4. Madam Justice Anthea PANG

Judges of the Court of First Instance of the High Court

1. Madam Justice Bebe CHU
2. Mr Justice Joseph YAU
3. Mr Justice Albert WONG
4. Mrs Justice Audrey Patricia CAMPBELL-MOFFAT
5. Madam Justice Marlene NG

Principal Family Court Judge

1. Judge Chan Chan-kok

District Judges

1. Judge Michael WONG
2. Judge Katina LEVY LAW
3. Judge KWOK Wai-kin
4. Judge David John DUFTON
5. Judge SHAM Siu-man
6. Judge Katherine LO
7. Judge Andrew LI
8. Judge Roy YU
9. Judge PANG Chung-ping
10. Judge Timothy Harry CASEWELL
11. Judge Angela KOT
12. Judge Reuden LAI
13. Judge PANG Ka-kwong

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

JA013

(Question Serial No. 3613)

Head: (80) Judiciary

Subhead (No. & title): (-)

Programme: (2) Support Services for Courts' Operation

Controlling Officer: Judiciary Administrator (Ms Esther LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Not applicable

Question:

It is stated in “Matters Requiring Special Attention in 2026-27” under Programme (2) that the Judiciary will implement the Information Technology Strategy Plan (ITSP) to provide electronic filing and related services by phases at different levels of court, and make greater use of technology to enhance efficiency of court operations. In this connection, please inform this Council of:

- 1) the staffing establishment and actual expenditure for the implementation of the ITSP in each of the past 5 years (from 2021-22 to 2025-26) (with a breakdown by initiatives);
- 2) the staffing establishment and estimated expenditure for the implementation of the ITSP in 2026-27 (with a breakdown by initiatives);
- 3) the details of the ITSP and its current progress and effectiveness; what measures will be taken by the Judiciary to expedite the process of digitisation of court operations; and
- 4) whether the Judiciary has formulated Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the ITSP, so that the application of technology can practically enhance efficiency of court operations. If yes, what are the details? If not, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon KAN Wai-mun, Carmen (LegCo internal reference no.: 39)

Reply:

The Judiciary has been implementing the integrated Court Case Management System (iCMS), the major initiative under the Information Technology Strategy Plan (ITSP). It aims at enabling the handling of court-related documents and payments electronically across various court levels. The iCMS is being implemented by phases –

- (i) 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

- (ii) under the second phase, the iCMS has been extended to cover bulk claim cases of the Small Claims Tribunal (SCT) starting from October 2024. From June 2025 onwards, the iCMS has been extended to selected case types of civil proceedings of the High Court (HC) by phases, including the civil appeal cases (CACV) in the Court of Appeal, and commercial cases (HCCL), construction and arbitration cases (HCCT), intellectual property cases (HCIP), personal injuries cases (HCPI) and civil action cases (HCA) in the Court of First Instance. The Judiciary is planning to further extend the use of the iCMS to the Court of Final Appeal, other case types of civil proceedings of the HC, the criminal proceedings of the HC and the DC, the non-Summons Courts of the MCs, as well as non-bulk claim cases of the SCT incrementally.

As at 28 February 2026, a total of 917 court users (including 727 law firms, representing about 80% of law firms registered with the Law Society of Hong Kong; all 37 law enforcement agencies; six government departments; 19 organisations; and 128 litigants-in-person) have registered for accounts under the iCMS. Around 820 000 new cases have been initiated under the iCMS, representing about 72% of the total number of relevant new cases during the period. Separately, court users have filed some 1 364 100 documents, conducted about 21 300 inspections of documents and made about 41 300 payment transactions via the iCMS. The take-up rate is expected to rise progressively following the continued promotion of the iCMS and substantially upon the imposition of mandatory use by all legally represented litigants as from the second half of 2026. For illustration, the percentage of new cases initiated under the iCMS has been increased steadily from about 13% as at 31 January 2023, to about 40% as at 31 January 2024, to about 65% as at 28 February 2025, and then to about 72% as at 28 February 2026.

The number of registered users of the iCMS and its utilisation in the past four years are tabulated below –

	As at 28 February 2023	As at 29 February 2024	As at 28 February 2025	As at 28 February 2026
Number of registered users	102	413	562	917
Number of new cases initiated under the iCMS	9 300	185 600	509 000	820 000
Number of documents filed via the iCMS	3 000	220 500	839 000	1 364 100
Number of inspections of documents conducted via the iCMS	1 900	6 300	11 000	21 300
Number of payment transactions made via the iCMS	2 300	13 000	24 000	41 300

The Judiciary has been deploying the required manpower and financial resources on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for implementing various initiatives involving the use of technology which seek to enhance the efficiency in court operations on an on-going basis. In 2026-27, the estimated recurrent expenditure on the planning and implementation of the Judiciary’s ICT initiatives is around \$379 million which represents about 13% of the total estimated operating expenditure of the Judiciary. The average annual increase in the past five years is around 9%. Within this estimated expenditure provision, around \$114 million is estimated to be required for on-going support of the information systems under the ITSP including the maintenance and support of the iCMS.

The iCMS is an on-going project which is being implemented at different court levels by phases. The estimated salaries and related costs of civil service staff of the Judiciary involved in both the development and implementation of the iCMS (along with all other ICT initiatives) where appropriate in 2026-27 have been included in the above \$379 million relating to ICT within the estimated operating expenditure of the Judiciary.

Within the funding commitment of around \$680 million for the ITSP under Head 710 of the Capital Works Reserve Fund, the actual expenditure on the development of the iCMS, which includes the procurement of hardware, software and implementation services (covering information technology professionals engaged on contract) in the past five years, and the estimated expenditure for the coming year are as follows –

Year	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27 (estimate)
Expenditure (\$ million)	31.9	49.6	73.5	80.6	36.0	4.3

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

JA014

(Question Serial No. 3268)

Head: (80) Judiciary

Subhead (No. & title): (-)

Programme: (1) Courts, Tribunals and Various Statutory Functions

Controlling Officer: Judiciary Administrator (Ms Esther LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Not applicable

Question:

With regard to the service demands and allocation of resources in the Family Court, could the Administration inform this Council of the following:

1. Please provide information for the past 3 years on each of the following: (i) the number of divorce cases filed with the Family Court, (ii) the number of applications for injunction orders / interim custody orders by victims of domestic violence, (iii) the number of applications for maintenance, (iv) the number of cases in relation to disputes of child access and custody;
2. Please provide information for the past 3 years with a breakdown by type of cases: (i) the average waiting time, (ii) the longest waiting time and (iii) their respective target waiting times for Family Court Cases, and elaborate on the reasons for the gap between them as well as plans for improvement;
3. Please provide information on the estimated establishment, number of posts and expenditure on the remuneration of judges / judicial officers / support staff (e.g. family mediators, mediation officers, social workers, etc.) in the Family Court for 2026-27;
4. To provide greater support to parties in family cases, will the Judiciary allocate additional resources (e.g. to extend mediation service, introduce professional counselling, etc.) in 2026-27? If yes, please provide information on the estimated expenditures and the indicators of expected service improvements, with a breakdown by category of measures.

Asked by: Hon KOON Ho-ming, Peter Douglas (LegCo internal reference no.: 40)

Reply:

- (1) The respective numbers of divorce cases filed to the Family Court (FC) from 2023 to 2025 are as follows:

	2023	2024	2025
Number of divorce cases filed in the year	20 621	19 989	18 892

While the Judiciary does not maintain statistical breakdown as requested, statistics relating to claims for ancillary relief (including but not limited to maintenance) and custody/access involved in divorce cases from 2023 to 2025 are as follows:

Claim nature	2023	2024	2025
Ancillary relief ^{Note 1} only	1 375	1 192	2 779
Custody/access ^{Note 2} only	3 020	2 909	1 044
Both ancillary relief and custody/access	3 941	3 982	3 527

Note 1: Ancillary relief includes periodical maintenance, interim maintenance, lump sum payment, transfer of property, education expenses, etc., which may be claimed upon filing of petition/joint application.

Note 2: Custody/access includes sole custody, joint custody, interim access, defined access, etc.

- (2) The statistics on the average waiting time ^{Note 3} and the longest waiting time for the relevant cases from 2023 to 2025, and their respective target waiting time are as follows:

	2023	2024	2025	2026 Target
Special Procedure List				
Average waiting time (Days)	35	35	34	35
Longest waiting time (Days)	35	35	35	-
Defended List				
Average waiting time (Days)	53	42	37	110
Longest waiting time (Days)	144	103	97	-
Financial Applications				
Average waiting time (Days)	71	73	74	110 - 140
Longest waiting time (Days)	253	189	194	-

Note 3: The waiting time counts from setting down of a case to hearing.

Through the concerted efforts of the Judges and Judicial Officers (JJOs) and support staff, the target average waiting times for the FC have been met in the past three years. The Judiciary will continue to make dedicated efforts towards enhancing the overall efficiency in handling the FC cases through multi-pronged measures as set out in (4) below.

- (3) The establishment, number of posts and estimated salary provision for JJOs and support staff of the FC for 2026-27 are as follows:

Establishment	Number of posts[#]	Estimated salary provision* (\$ million)
63	1 – Principal Family Court Judge 7 – District Judge 26 – Judicial Clerk grade staff 23 – Clerical staff 1 – Secretarial staff 5 – Workman II	49.0

* Estimated on the basis of prevailing annual salaries at mid-point, excluding fringe benefits and allowances claimable by eligible JJOs and civil service support staff.

Judicial Officers serving as Family Masters in the FC have been deployed from Magistrates' Courts since October 2023 and the relevant posts for Family Masters (six in number as at mid-March 2026) are not included in the above table.

- (4) The Judiciary has continued to make pro-active and dedicated efforts to expedite court proceedings through multi-pronged measures. The Family Procedure Ordinance (Cap. 646), which was passed in June 2023, provides a legal basis for the establishment of a Family Masters System in the FC. Under the Family Masters System, which was implemented in October 2023, Family Masters are empowered to handle certain procedural matters in family-related proceedings, such that Family Judges can concentrate on handling more complicated issues and substantive case hearings. This aims at enhancing the overall efficiency of handling the cases in the FC. Since the implementation of the Family Masters System, there has been a general improvement to the average waiting times in the FC. For instance, the average waiting time for defended cases heard before Family Judges reduced from 53 days in 2023 to 37 days in 2025. In addition, relevant Practice Direction has been implemented to ensure timely handing down of reserved judgments. So far, majority of the judgments were handed down by the FC within the stipulated timeframes.

Besides, to strengthen support for unrepresented litigants on matrimonial matters, enhanced counter services have been arranged at the FC Registry to offer on-site assistance to unrepresented litigants on procedural matters and assistance relating to electronic booking of petitions for divorce or joint applications via the existing e-Appointment system. FC Registry would also refer suitable unrepresented litigants to relevant organisations administering free legal advice services or schemes (such as the Legal Advice Scheme for Unrepresented Litigants on Civil Procedures) as appropriate.

On the other hand, the Judiciary has all along been actively promoting the wider use of family mediation services to facilitate the resolution of disputes in court cases in a more efficient, cost-effective and amicable manner. The Integrated Mediation Office (IMO) in Wanchai Tower provides information on court-related mediation, including family mediation in matrimonial proceedings through holding information sessions and

pre-mediation consultations to divorcing parties, and refers suitable cases to welfare agencies which provide mediation services or private mediators outside the Judiciary. In 2025, a total of 252 cases were referred to family mediators by the IMO. The overall settlement rate, based on cases completed, was 73%.

Various mediation schemes, such as the Mediator-assisted Financial/Children's Dispute Resolution Pilot Scheme (MFDR/MCDR) introduced in 2019 and the Family Court-annexed Mediation Scheme (FCAMS) launched in March 2024, have been implemented with a view to helping divorcing parties of appropriate matrimonial cases to resolve their disputes through the collaboration among the Family Judges and Masters, the mediators and IMO. Both schemes have achieved encouraging settlement rates since their implementation. In 2025, the settlement rates of MFDR/MCDR and FCAMS were 77% and 89% respectively.

The Judiciary will continue to make dedicated efforts to promote and enhance the above initiatives. As the Judiciary has been flexibly deploying its operating resources to support the services at different levels of court and tribunals having regard to operational needs, it does not maintain the breakdown of the expenditure incurred exclusively for the services of the FC.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

JA015

(Question Serial No. 0640)

Head: (80) Judiciary

Subhead (No. & title): (-)

Programme: Not Specified

Controlling Officer: Judiciary Administrator (Ms Esther LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Not applicable

Question:

The courts of justice in Hong Kong comprise the Court of Final Appeal, the High Court (comprising the Court of Appeal and the Court of First Instance), the Competition Tribunal, the District Court (which includes the Family Court), the Lands Tribunal, the Magistrates' Courts (which include the Juvenile Court), the Coroner's Court, the Labour Tribunal, the Small Claims Tribunal, and the Obscene Articles Tribunal. In this regard, will the Judiciary inform this Council of:

1. the operational expenses and the staffing establishment at different levels of court in 2025; and
2. whether the Administration has relevant measures to address the current issue of exceedingly long trials in the coming 3 years? If yes, what are the details?

Asked by: Hon LEUNG Mei-fun, Priscilla (LegCo internal reference no.: 37)

Reply:

(1) The establishment, number of posts and estimated salary provision for Judges and Judicial Officers (JJOs) and support staff in various levels of court and tribunals are as follows:

Tribunal/ Court	Establishment	Existing number of posts	Estimated salary provision in 2025-26* (\$ million)
Court of Final Appeal	22	1 – Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal 3 – Judge of the Court of Final Appeal 6 – Judicial Clerk grade staff 5 – Clerical staff 6 – Secretarial staff 1 – Workman II	29.3
High Court (Including Competition Tribunal)	349	1 – Chief Judge of the High Court 14 – Justice of Appeal of the Court of Appeal of the High Court 34 – Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court 1 – Registrar, High Court 4 – Senior Deputy Registrar, High Court 10 – Deputy Registrar, High Court 112 – Judicial Clerk grade staff 160 – Clerical staff 4 – Secretarial staff 9 – Workman II	376.4
District Court	225	1 – Chief District Judge 32 – District Judge 1 – Registrar, District Court 8 – Deputy Registrar, District Court 71 – Judicial Clerk grade staff 2 – Accounting Officer grade staff 91 – Clerical staff 5 – Secretarial staff 14 – Workman II	195.9
Family Court #	63	1 – Principal Family Court Judge 7 – District Judge 26 – Judicial Clerk grade staff 23 – Clerical staff 1 – Secretarial staff 5 – Workman II	49.0

Tribunal/ Court	Establishment	Existing number of posts	Estimated salary provision in 2025-26* (\$ million)
Lands Tribunal	31	3 – District Judge 2 – Member 8 – Judicial Clerk grade Staff 17 – Clerical Staff 1 – Office Assistant	25.6
Magistrates' Courts #	359	1 – Chief Magistrate 9 – Principal Magistrate 52 – Magistrate 14 – Judicial Clerk grade staff 2 – Accounting Officer grade staff 266 – Clerical staff 8 – Secretarial staff 7 – Workman II	244.0
Labour Tribunal	90	1 – Principal Presiding Officer 8 – Presiding Officer 14 – Judicial Clerk grade staff 15 – Tribunal Officer 42 – Clerical staff 5 – Secretarial staff 5 – Workman II	62.8
Small Claims Tribunal	80	1 – Principal Adjudicator 11 – Adjudicator 21 – Judicial Clerk grade staff 46 – Clerical staff 1 – Office Assistant	58.9
Obscene Articles Tribunal	7	2 – Magistrates 5 – Clerical staff	5.9
Coroner's Court	14	3 – Coroner 1 – Judicial Clerk grade staff 8 – Clerical staff 1 – Secretarial staff 1 – Workman II	10.8

* Estimated on the basis of prevailing annual salaries at mid-point, excluding fringe benefits and allowances claimable by eligible JJOs and civil service support staff.

Judicial Officers serving as Family Masters in the Family Court (FC) have been deployed from the Magistrates' Courts (MCs) since October 2023 and the relevant posts for Family Masters (six in number as at mid-March 2026) are not included in the table of the FC but included in the table of the MCs.

As the Judiciary has been flexibly deploying its operating resources to support the services at different levels of court and tribunals having regard to operational needs, it does not maintain the breakdown of the expenditure incurred by respective courts and tribunals.

- (2) The Judiciary is fully committed to upholding the rule of law and judicial independence in Hong Kong through maintaining an efficient and effective judicial system. While the Judiciary continued to contend with a persistently heavy caseload across all court levels, driven chiefly by an increasing number of complex civil and criminal proceedings, through the concerted efforts of all JJOs and support staff, the total number of cases disposed of in 2025 was comparable to that in 2024, which is higher than the average for the past five years from 2020 to 2024. The majority of civil cases across all court levels continued to meet target waiting times and there were steady and continuous improvements in the average waiting times for criminal proceedings over the years.

The Judiciary has been undertaking a series of multi-pronged measures to expedite court proceedings while steadfastly upholding the principles of justice. The major measures and initiatives include engaging additional judicial manpower, strengthening case management, promoting the wider use of mediation or other means of alternative dispute resolution where appropriate, making greater use of technology, and enhancing court facilities.

Engaging additional judicial manpower

To strengthen judicial manpower, the Judiciary has been conducting more frequent open recruitment exercises to appoint additional JJOs at different levels of court and tribunals. As at March 2026, eight Judges of the Court of First Instance of the High Court (CFI), nine District Judges, one Member of the Lands Tribunal (LandsT) and seven Permanent Magistrates have been appointed. The latest round of recruitment exercise for District Judges was launched in January 2026, while that for Permanent Magistrates will be launched later this year.

Continual efforts are also being made by the Judiciary to engage temporary judicial manpower including recorders and deputy JJOs from the legal profession at different levels of court. In addition, more judicial associates and contract marshals for supporting JJOs are planned to be engaged to provide relief to the tight judicial resources. Specifically, with a view to expediting judicial review cases relating to non-refoulement claims, the Judiciary has been deploying additional and dedicated judicial manpower to cope with the ongoing surge of such cases. In addition to recruiting retired judges to serve as Deputy Judges of the CFI, a special scheme has been launched since February 2025 to appoint eligible private practitioners from the legal sector as Deputy Judges of the CFI exclusively for the purpose of handling cases relating to non-refoulement claims. As at 1 March 2026, 16 eligible practitioners have been identified under the scheme, of whom 13 have been appointed to work as Deputy Judges of the CFI (Non-refoulement Claims) for different durations. This, together with the streamlining of administrative procedures and presentation of the judgement/decision notice, has enhanced the efficiency of disposing cases relating to non-refoulement claims. The number of such cases disposed of at the CFI in 2025 was over 3 700, which exceeded

the number of new cases filed in the year (around 2 500), and represented about 2.1 times the total number of cases disposed of in 2024 (around 1 800 cases).

Strengthening case management and promoting mediation

More pro-active case management efforts have been made at various levels of court in handling both civil and criminal proceedings. The Judiciary issued relevant Practice Directions in 2022 with the aim of ensuring that reserved judgments for the High Court (HC), the District Court (DC), the FC and the LandsT are handed down as expeditiously as is reasonably practicable having regard to the circumstances of the case. So far, the majority of the judgments at various levels of court were handed down within the stipulated timeframes.

At the same time, the Judiciary has continued to promote mediation as a major form of alternative dispute resolution so as to make more cost-effective and efficient use of judicial time and resources. In recent years, the Judiciary introduced a series of new mediation schemes with a view to enhancing the promotion of mediation to parties to suitable cases. For example, the Family Court-annexed Mediation Scheme¹, introduced on a pilot basis in March 2024, continued to achieve a high success rate of 89% in 2025. The Case Settlement Conference scheme², piloted in the DC from 2021 to 2024, was regularised in 2025. It has proved to be effective in facilitating the settlement of general civil cases, with a notable success rate of 56% in 2025, thereby saving litigation time and costs and reducing the adversarial nature of proceedings. The Judiciary will continue to work closely with relevant stakeholders, including legal practitioners and mediators, in exploring and developing various mediation schemes, as well as encouraging litigants to make use of mediation to resolve disputes with a view to reducing the length and number of trials, thereby optimising the use of the judicial resources.

Greater use of technology

The Judiciary is committed to making greater use of technology for enhancing the efficiency of court operations. We have been proceeding at full steam with the implementation of a series of major technology initiatives. These include the development and implementation of the integrated Court Case Management System (iCMS) by phases across various court levels for handling court-related documents and payments electronically, promoting the wider use of remote hearings, and making use of voice-to-text (VTT) technology (an artificial intelligence (AI) technology) for recording court proceedings.

¹ The Scheme aims to assist parties in resolving disputes over issues that often consume a disproportionate amount of judicial time during litigation. Accredited freelance family mediators are engaged as service providers on a commissioning basis to deliver mediation services, as needed, at court premises. These services are offered in suitable cases involving litigants-in-person on both sides with limited financial resources.

² The Case Settlement Conference focuses on facilitating the settlement of general civil cases and is conducted during case management hearings in the DC. Legal practitioners with expertise in mediation are engaged as Temporary Masters or Deputy Registrars to assist parties in reaching a settlement.

Apart from the DC, the MCs and the Small Claims Tribunal (SCT), the iCMS was extended to six case types of civil proceedings of the HC between June and December 2025. The Judiciary is planning to further extend the use of the iCMS to the Court of Final Appeal (CFA), other case types of civil proceedings of the HC, the criminal proceedings of the HC and the DC, the non-Summons Courts of the MCs, as well as non-bulk claim cases of the SCT incrementally.

As at 28 February 2026, a total of 917 court users (including 727 law firms, representing about 80% of law firms registered with the Law Society of Hong Kong) have registered for accounts under the iCMS. Around 820 000 new cases have been initiated under the iCMS, representing about 72% of the total number of relevant new cases during the period. The take-up rate is expected to rise progressively following the continued promotion of the iCMS.

It is the ultimate aim of the Judiciary to make this electronic platform the primary litigation system. The Judiciary intends to start mandating the use of the iCMS for all legally represented litigants in respect of case types where the electronic mode has been made available by phases starting from the second half of 2026. The Judiciary has been liaising closely with key stakeholders including the Law Society of Hong Kong in drawing up the implementation arrangements.

Remote hearings are one of the Judiciary's key initiatives in the use of technology. So far, around 2 610 remote hearings (including video-conferencing or phone hearings) have been conducted and the experience has been positive. The Courts (Remote Hearing) Ordinance (Cap. 654), which came into operation on 28 March 2025, provides a clear legal basis for the JJOs to order remote hearings at various levels of court and tribunal where appropriate, having regard to all relevant factors, as well as the dual requirements of open justice and fair hearing. On 12 January 2026, the Judiciary extended the use of remote hearings to non-trial criminal proceedings, starting with two bail applications. This arrangement allows the persons in custody to attend from penal institutions instead of travelling to court, saving time and resources while avoiding transport-related risks. We will continue to make wider use of remote hearings in suitable proceedings.

The Judiciary is also actively using VTT to enhance the efficiency in recording court proceedings and production of transcripts where appropriate. Since December 2023, the Judiciary has been using the VTT system for JJOs' real-time note-taking during court hearings. The VTT system has been enabled in all 54 courtrooms of the CFA Building and HC Building, and five 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 progress. Meanwhile, the Judiciary has been deploying the use of VTT-generated texts for facilitating transcript production in an incremental manner. In November 2025, we launched 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 the Digital Audio Recording and Transcription Services. We will continue to keep abreast of 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.

Enhancing court facilities

Apart from enhancing the existing court facilities to make available more courtrooms and chambers, the construction of the new DC Building at Caroline Hill Road, which will house the DC, the FC, and the LandsT, is in progress and expected to be commissioned by mid-2028. Upon commissioning of the new building, there will be more extensive use and application of technology in more courtrooms, chambers and supporting facilities to cope with the increasing volume and complexity of court business in a more efficient manner.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

JA016

(Question Serial No. 0642)

Head: (80) Judiciary

Subhead (No. & title): (-)

Programme: (1) Courts, Tribunals and Various Statutory Functions

Controlling Officer: Judiciary Administrator (Ms Esther LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Not applicable

Question:

The Judiciary has been conducting remote hearings for civil proceedings at different levels of court where appropriate since April 2020. Please inform this Council of:

1. the number of cases for which remote hearings were conducted by the Judiciary at all levels of court in 2025;
2. the types and numbers of cases for which remote hearings were conducted in 2025;
3. the expenditure on remote hearings by the Judiciary in 2025.

Asked by: Hon LEUNG Mei-fun, Priscilla (LegCo internal reference no.: 16)

Reply:

- (1) & (2) The total number of remote hearings conducted at different levels of court in 2025 is 424, with breakdown as follows –

Levels of court	Hearings using video-conferencing facilities		Phone hearings
	Civil proceedings	Criminal proceedings	
Court of Final Appeal	0	0	0
High Court	24	1	116
District Court	0	6	213
Family Court	30	Not applicable	0
Magistrates' Courts	0	11	0
Small Claims Tribunal	4	Not applicable	0
Labour Tribunal	15	Not applicable	0
Coroner's Court	4	Not applicable	0
Total	77	18	329

Notes:

- (a) Before enactment of the Courts (Remote Hearing) Ordinance on 28 March 2025, only those proceedings with Judge(s) and/or Judicial Officer(s); and/or one or more party (parties) or his (their) representative(s) attended remotely were included in the above statistics. From 28 March 2025 onwards, on top of the aforementioned categories of attendees, any other person(s) involved in the proceeding (e.g. witness, court interpreter, etc.) who is/are allowed by the court to attend remotely are also included.
 - (b) Coroner's inquests do not fall within the scope of civil or criminal proceedings. For ease of statistical reporting, the relevant remote hearing figures are counted under civil cases.
- (3) As the Judiciary has been flexibly deploying its operating resources to support the implementation of different technology initiatives having regard to operational needs, it does not maintain the breakdown of the resources deployed exclusively for remote hearings. The relevant expenditure is included in the recurrent expenditure on the planning and implementation of the Judiciary's Information and Communications Technology initiatives of around \$334 million which represents about 12% of the total operating expenditure of the Judiciary in 2025-26. Within this expenditure provision, around \$30 million was spent on the installation of information technology/audio-visual facilities and support equipment, and carrying out related services in courtrooms and other office areas, including those required for supporting remote hearings.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

JA017

(Question Serial No. 3538)

Head: (80) Judiciary

Subhead (No. & title): (-)

Programme: (2) Support Services for Courts' Operation

Controlling Officer: Judiciary Administrator (Ms Esther LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Not applicable

Question:

Regarding the implementation of the Information Technology Strategy Plan (ITSP), please inform this Council of the following:

- (1) the estimates and the staffing establishment for the implementation of the ITSP in 2026-27;
- (2) in respect of case types where the electronic mode is available, the numbers and percentages of cases not using the integrated Court Case Management System (iCMS) in the past year in a tabulated form;
- (3) It is noted that the Administration will provide outreach technical support services to law firms with a view to expediting the promotion of registrations for iCMS accounts among the legal profession. What are the estimates and the staffing establishment for such outreach services? What are the details of the services? What is the estimated number of times that such outreach services can be provided each month?

Asked by: Hon LEUNG Tsz-wing, Dennis (LegCo internal reference no.: 26)

Reply:

- (1) The Judiciary has been deploying the required manpower and financial resources on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for implementing various initiatives involving the use of technology which seek to enhance the efficiency in court operations on an on-going basis. In 2026-27, the estimated recurrent expenditure on the planning and implementation of the Judiciary's ICT initiatives is around \$379 million which represents about 13% of the total estimated operating expenditure of the Judiciary. The average annual increase in the past five years is around 9%. Within this estimated expenditure provision, around \$114 million is estimated to be required for on-going support of the information systems under the Information Technology Strategy Plan (ITSP) including the maintenance and support of the integrated Court Case Management System (iCMS).

The estimated salaries and related costs of civil service staff of the Judiciary involved in both the development and implementation of the iCMS (along with all other ICT initiatives) where appropriate in 2026-27 have been included in the above \$379 million relating to ICT within the estimated operating expenditure of the Judiciary.

- (2) For case types that are iCMS-enabled, the number of documents filed using the system in 2025 are as follows –

Case type	No. of documents filed using iCMS	% of documents filed using iCMS (Note 1)
High Court (HC) (Note 2)		
(a) civil appeal cases (CACV)	569	5.5%
(b) commercial cases (HCCL)	32	27.4%
(c) construction and arbitration cases (HCCT)	300	36.1%
(d) intellectual property cases (HCIP)	747	36.8%
(e) personal injuries cases (HCPI)	1 063	28.5%
(f) civil action cases (HCA)	803	33.1%
<i>Total (HC)</i>	<i>3 514</i>	<i>18.0%</i>
District Court (DC)		
(a) personal injuries cases (DCPI)	8 111	5.8%
(b) tax claims (DCTC)	4 002	90.7%
(c) civil action cases (DCCJ)	4 775	4.3%
(d) employees' compensation cases (DCEC)	4 558	6.1%
<i>Total (DC)</i>	<i>21 446</i>	<i>6.5%</i>
Magistrates' Courts (MCs)		
summons cases	490 565	80.3%
Small Claims Tribunal (SCT)		
bulk claims	27 151	43.5%

Notes:

- For case types in the HC, DC and MCs that are iCMS-enabled, the statistics on filed documents include those for both new cases and on-going filing for existing cases by law firms as well as those by litigants-in-person (LiPs). For SCT, only LiPs are involved. We do not have case-based utilisation statistics.
- iCMS external functions were rolled out incrementally in the HC starting with (i) CACV on 30 June 2025; (ii) HCCL, HCCT and HCIP on 29 August 2025; (iii) HCPI on 30 October 2025; and (iv) HCA on 19 December 2025.

In 2025, the percentage of documents filed not using iCMS in the HC, DC, MCs and SCT are 82.0%, 93.5%, 19.7% and 56.5% respectively.

- (3) With the extension of iCMS to the HC, the Judiciary has been reaching out to law firms that handle a relatively high volume of the relevant case types to offer dedicated technical support, with a view to facilitating their early migration from conventional paper mode to the iCMS. To prepare law firms for mandatory e-filing in the second half of 2026, starting from October 2025, the Judiciary has been inviting law firms to make an appointment with the Judiciary for technical assistance on using the iCMS, either at the HC Building or in their own offices, when they are initiating a new case of an iCMS-enabled case type for the first time.

Starting from December 2025, the Judiciary has been proactively reaching out to all law firms that have yet to register for the iCMS account, reminding them to complete the registration as soon as possible. If necessary, the Judiciary can arrange staff to visit their offices to assist with submitting the registration applications. Subsequently, the Judiciary has reviewed and streamlined the registration process, enabling visiting staff to complete the registration and activate the accounts for law firms on-site. If a law firm needs to commence a new case, the visiting staff can also provide immediate support. About 80% of law firms have registered under the iCMS as at 28 February 2026.

To better prepare all law firms for the mandatory use of iCMS starting from the second half of 2026, the Judiciary –

- (a) will continue with our out-reaching efforts to ensure that all law firms (except those not planning to continue with filing business) will have registered for iCMS before mandatory use; and
- (b) is planning to introduce in mid-2026 a further transitional arrangement for law firms by requiring all law firms which have yet to commence new cases under the iCMS in the HC (for the iCMS-enabled case types) to do so for at least once either on their own or with technical support by the Judiciary. This seeks to enhance training for law firms and boost their utilisation rate of iCMS particularly for case commencement.

As the implementation of the iCMS, including user registration and promotion of its wider use, is part and parcel of the duties of in-house staff responsible for the development and management of technology initiatives of the Judiciary Administration, there is no breakdown on the expenditure incurred in such preparatory activities. The relevant expenditure is included in the estimated recurrent expenditure on the planning and implementation of the Judiciary's ICT initiatives of around \$379 million which represents about 13% of the total estimated operating expenditure of the Judiciary in 2026-27.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

JA018

(Question Serial No. 3291)

Head: (80) Judiciary

Subhead (No. & title): (-)

Programme: (1) Courts, Tribunals and Various Statutory Functions

Controlling Officer: Judiciary Administrator (Ms Esther LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Not applicable

Question:

1. Please provide the number of applications for leave to judicial review, the number of judicial reviews, the number of appeals against judicial review decisions and the number of final appeals in the past 3 years. Among them, what is the number of non-refoulement claim cases? What are the number of cases in which leave has been granted and the time spent on processing them? How many of these cases were legally aided? What is the estimated time required for disposing of the backlog of judicial review cases involving non-refoulement claims?
2. What are the various expenses and the total expenses incurred from the handling of applications for leave to judicial review, judicial reviews, appeals against judicial review decisions and final appeals, engagement of briefed-out counsel and solicitors, legal aid and all related legal proceedings involving non-refoulement claims?
3. What measures will be taken to expedite the handling of the backlog of judicial review cases; and what are the relevant details and expenditures?

Asked by: Hon QUAT Elizabeth (LegCo internal reference no.: 10)

Reply:

The statistics maintained by the Judiciary that are relevant to the question for the past three years from 2023 to 2025 are as follows –

Judicial Review Cases	2023	2024	2025
<i>Court of First Instance of the High Court</i>			
(a) No. of leave applications filed	2 191	2 549	2 703
(b) No. of leave applications filed relating to non-refoulement claims	2 087	2 418	2 563
(c) No. of leave applications with leave granted ¹	26	33	21
(d) Average processing time (from date of filing of leave application to date of decision) ²	383 days	187 days	132 days
(e) No. of substantive judicial review cases filed	43	49	71
(f) No. of substantive judicial review cases filed relating to non-refoulement claims	35	32	62
<i>Court of Appeal of the High Court</i>			
(g) No. of appeals against refusal of leave filed	264	338	1 007
(h) No. of appeals against refusal of leave filed relating to non-refoulement claims	246	314	971
(i) No. of appeals against judicial review decisions filed	1	6	2
(j) No. of appeals against judicial review decisions filed relating to non-refoulement claims	0	0	0
<i>Court of Final Appeal</i>			
(k) No. of applications for leave to appeal (civil) filed ³	352	186	189
(l) No. of applications for leave to appeal (civil) filed relating to non-refoulement claims	307	147	146
(m) No. of substantive appeals (civil) filed ³	10	12	6
(n) No. of substantive appeal (civil) filed relating to non-refoulement claims	0	0	0

Remarks:

- ¹ The figures denote the number of leave granted for the leave applications filed in that year and hence subject to updating as at the report generation date.
- ² The figures denote the average processing time of leave applications filed in that year and hence subject to updating as at the report generation date. Such statistics only take into account the number of leave applications with leave granted or leave refused, but exclude those withdrawn or outstanding leave applications.
- ³ The figures are total number of cases filed to the Court of Final Appeal which include non-judicial review cases.

The Judiciary does not maintain the other requested statistics on judicial review cases.

The expenditure on handling legal proceedings relating to non-refoulement claims forms part of the general operating expenses of the Judiciary. The Judiciary has been flexibly deploying its operating resources for handling such cases at different levels of court and

tribunals having regard to operational needs. The relevant expenditure includes the salary and related expenses as well as other operating expenses of judges and supporting staff in the High Court and the Court of Final Appeal who are handling these cases alongside all other cases on a rotational or day-to-day basis^{Note}. The Judiciary does not maintain the breakdown of operating expenses incurred exclusively for coping with cases relating to non-refoulement claims.

The Judiciary has also been engaging Deputy Judges in the Court of First Instance of the High Court (CFI) and contract supporting staff to assist in handling non-refoulement claim related cases. Currently, five retired judges have been appointed as Deputy Judges to assist in handling these cases. In addition, since February 2025, the Judiciary launched a special scheme under which eligible private practitioners from the legal sector are appointed as Deputy Judges of the CFI exclusively for the purpose of handling cases relating to non-refoulement claims. As at 1 March 2026, 16 eligible practitioners have been identified under the scheme, of whom 13 have been appointed as Deputy Judges of the CFI (Non-refoulement Claims) for various durations. The additional expenditure in the past three years for such extra manpower is as follows:

2023-24 (\$ million)	2024-25 (\$ million)	2025-26 (\$ million)
10.1	14.2	27.4

Note: The breakdown of expenditure of judges in the Court of Appeal of the High Court and Court of Final Appeal is not available as the number of appeal cases listed for their disposal in a year hinges on multiple varying factors.

The Judiciary has been proactively adopting a strategic and targeted approach to expedite the processing of incoming judicial reviews cases relating to non-refoulement claims. This includes deploying additional and dedicated judicial manpower, as mentioned above, as well as streamlining administrative procedures and presentation of the judgment/decision notice. The results of these initiatives have been encouraging. In 2025, the CFI has disposed of over 3 700 such cases, representing about 2.1 times the total number of cases disposed of in 2024. The Judiciary will continue to monitor the progress and flexibly deploy resources in response to operational needs, with a view to further enhancing the efficiency in handling non-refoulement claim related cases.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

JA019

(Question Serial No. 1518)

Head: (80) Judiciary

Subhead (No. & title): (-)

Programme: Not Specified

Controlling Officer: Judiciary Administrator (Ms Esther LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Not applicable

Question:

The draft estimate of 2026-27 for the Judiciary is \$2,906.3 million, which represents an increase of about \$124.7 million (+4.5%) over the revised estimate of 2025-26 (\$2,781.6 million). However, it is expected that there will be a net decrease of 18 posts in 2026-27 as regards the establishment. In this connection, will the Administration inform this Council of the following:

1. Amid a decrease in the number of posts, the total estimated expenditure still records a considerable increase. Is the main reason due to the increased provision for “filling vacancies and operating expenses for court operations” as stated on page 719 of the Estimate Book (English version)? Please specify the amount of additional expenditure involved in filling vacancies, and provide a breakdown of the increase in operating expenses for court operations;
2. Given the decrease in the number of posts and the increase in expenditure, how will the Judiciary assess and measure the efficiency of utilising these additional resources (such as change in estimated amount for hire of services and professional fees) to ensure prudent use of public money;
3. With the increase in estimate under this programme, what plan does the Judiciary have in place for 2026-27 to enhance judicial efficiency?

Asked by: Hon SO Shiu-tsung, Thomas (LegCo internal reference no.: 1)

Reply:

(1)

The Judiciary has all along been taking a pragmatic and prudent approach in drawing up and putting up our request for manpower and financial resources from the Government in each financial year. We have also been making continued efforts in optimising the use of public resources through internal re-deployment as far as practicable.

The provision for 2026-27 is \$124.7 million (+4.5%) higher than the revised estimate for 2025-26. The increase is mainly due to the additional provision of \$55 million for filling vacancies for Judges and Judicial Officers (JJOs) and support staff at different ranks; the increase in hire of services and professional fees of around \$46 million mainly for use of technology and engagement of deputy JJOs; the increase in general departmental expenses of around \$14 million mainly for procurement of equipment and maintenance services; and the increased provision of around \$10 million for contributions to the Mandatory and Civil Service Provident Funds.

(2) & (3)

The Judiciary is fully committed to upholding the rule of law and judicial independence in Hong Kong through maintaining an efficient and effective judicial system. The Judiciary has been assessing the cost-effectiveness of the resources expended mainly with reference to our capability of handling the caseload and managing court waiting times, as well as taking forward measures and initiatives, with a view to ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of the administration of justice. To achieve this overall objective, the Judiciary has been undertaking a series of measures and initiatives, which include engaging additional judicial manpower, strengthening case management, promoting the wider use of mediation or other means of alternative dispute resolution where appropriate, making greater use of technology, and enhancing court facilities.

Engaging additional judicial manpower

To strengthen judicial manpower, the Judiciary has been conducting more frequent open recruitment exercises to appoint additional JJOs at different levels of court and tribunals. As at March 2026, eight Judges of the Court of First Instance of the High Court (CFI), nine District Judges, one Member of the Lands Tribunal (LandsT) and seven Permanent Magistrates have been appointed. The latest round of recruitment exercise for District Judges was launched in January 2026, while that for Permanent Magistrates will be launched later this year.

Continual efforts are also being made by the Judiciary to engage temporary judicial manpower including recorders and deputy JJOs from the legal profession at different levels of court. In addition, more judicial associates and contract marshals for supporting JJOs are planned to be engaged to provide relief to the tight judicial resources. Specifically, with a view to expediting judicial review cases relating to non-refoulement claims, the Judiciary has been deploying additional and dedicated judicial manpower to cope with the ongoing surge of such cases. In addition to recruiting retired judges to serve as Deputy Judges of the CFI, a special scheme has been launched since February 2025 to appoint eligible private

practitioners from the legal sector as Deputy Judges of the CFI exclusively for the purpose of handling cases relating to non-refoulement claims. As at 1 March 2026, 16 eligible practitioners have been identified under the scheme, of whom 13 have been appointed to work as Deputy Judges of the CFI (Non-refoulement Claims) for different durations. This, together with the streamlining of administrative procedures and presentation of the judgement/decision notice, has enhanced the efficiency of disposing cases relating to non-refoulement claims. The number of such cases disposed of at the CFI in 2025 was over 3 700, which exceeded the number of new cases filed in the year (around 2 500), and represented about 2.1 times the total number of cases disposed of in 2024 (around 1 800 cases).

Strengthening case management and promoting mediation

More pro-active case management efforts have been made at various levels of court in handling both civil and criminal proceedings. The Judiciary issued relevant Practice Directions in 2022 with the aim of ensuring that reserved judgments for the High Court (HC), the District Court (DC), the Family Court (FC) and the LandsT are handed down as expeditiously as is reasonably practicable having regard to the circumstances of the case. So far, the majority of the judgments at various levels of court were handed down within the stipulated timeframes.

At the same time, the Judiciary has continued to promote mediation as a major form of alternative dispute resolution so as to make more cost-effective and efficient use of judicial time and resources. In recent years, the Judiciary introduced a series of new mediation schemes with a view to enhancing the promotion of mediation to parties to suitable cases. For example, the Family Court-annexed Mediation Scheme¹, introduced on a pilot basis in March 2024, continued to achieve a high success rate of 89% in 2025. The Case Settlement Conference scheme², piloted in the DC from 2021 to 2024, was regularised in 2025. It has proved to be effective in facilitating the settlement of general civil cases, with a notable success rate of 56% in 2025, thereby saving litigation time and costs and reducing the adversarial nature of proceedings. The Judiciary will continue to work closely with relevant stakeholders, including legal practitioners and mediators, in exploring and developing various mediation schemes, as well as encouraging litigants to make use of mediation to resolve disputes with a view to reducing the length and number of trials, thereby optimising the use of the judicial resources.

Greater use of technology

The Judiciary is committed to making greater use of technology for enhancing the efficiency of court operations. We have been proceeding at full steam with the implementation of a

¹ The Scheme aims to assist parties in resolving disputes over issues that often consume a disproportionate amount of judicial time during litigation. Accredited freelance family mediators are engaged as service providers on a commissioning basis to deliver mediation services, as needed, at court premises. These services are offered in suitable cases involving litigants-in-person on both sides with limited financial resources.

² The Case Settlement Conference focuses on facilitating the settlement of general civil cases and is conducted during case management hearings in the DC. Legal practitioners with expertise in mediation are engaged as Temporary Masters or Deputy Registrars to assist parties in reaching a settlement.

series of major technology initiatives. These include the development and implementation of the integrated Court Case Management System (iCMS) by phases across various court levels for handling court-related documents and payments electronically, promoting the wider use of remote hearings, and making use of voice-to-text (VTT) technology (an artificial intelligence (AI) technology) for recording court proceedings.

Apart from the DC, the Magistrates' Courts (MCs) and the Small Claims Tribunal (SCT), the iCMS was extended to six case types of civil proceedings of the HC between June and December 2025. The Judiciary is planning to further extend the use of the iCMS to the Court of Final Appeal (CFA), other case types of civil proceedings of the HC, the criminal proceedings of the HC and the DC, the non-Summons Courts of the MCs, as well as non-bulk claim cases of the SCT incrementally.

As at 28 February 2026, a total of 917 court users (including 727 law firms, representing about 80% of law firms registered with the Law Society of Hong Kong) have registered for accounts under the iCMS. Around 820 000 new cases have been initiated under the iCMS, representing about 72% of the total number of relevant new cases during the period. The take-up rate is expected to rise progressively following the continued promotion of the iCMS.

It is the ultimate aim of the Judiciary to make this electronic platform the primary litigation system. The Judiciary intends to start mandating the use of the iCMS for all legally represented litigants in respect of case types where the electronic mode has been made available by phases starting from the second half of 2026. The Judiciary has been liaising closely with key stakeholders including the Law Society of Hong Kong in drawing up the implementation arrangements.

Remote hearings are one of the Judiciary's key initiatives in the use of technology. So far, around 2 610 remote hearings (including video-conferencing or phone hearings) have been conducted and the experience has been positive. The Courts (Remote Hearing) Ordinance (Cap. 654), which came into operation on 28 March 2025, provides a clear legal basis for the JJOs to order remote hearings at various levels of court and tribunal where appropriate, having regard to all relevant factors, as well as the dual requirements of open justice and fair hearing. On 12 January 2026, the Judiciary extended the use of remote hearings to non-trial criminal proceedings, starting with two bail applications. This arrangement allows the persons in custody to attend from penal institutions instead of travelling to court, saving time and resources while avoiding transport-related risks. We will continue to make wider use of remote hearings in suitable proceedings.

The Judiciary is also actively using VTT to enhance the efficiency in recording court proceedings and production of transcripts where appropriate. Since December 2023, the Judiciary has been using the VTT system for JJOs' real-time note-taking during court hearings. The VTT system has been enabled in all 54 courtrooms of the CFA Building and HC Building, and five 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 progress. Meanwhile, the Judiciary has been deploying the use of VTT-generated texts for facilitating transcript production in an incremental manner. In November 2025, we launched 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 the Digital Audio Recording and Transcription Services.

We will continue to keep abreast of 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.

Enhancing court facilities

Apart from enhancing the existing court facilities to make available more courtrooms and chambers, the construction of the new DC Building at Caroline Hill Road, which will house the DC, the FC, and the LandsT, is in progress and expected to be commissioned by mid-2028. Upon commissioning of the new building, there will be more extensive use and application of technology in more courtrooms, chambers and supporting facilities to cope with the increasing volume and complexity of court business in a more efficient manner.

Collectively, these measures seek to uphold the Judiciary's unwavering commitment towards ensuring the effective and efficient administration of justice while steadfastly upholding its core principles. Through the concerted efforts of all JJOs and support staff, the total number of cases disposed of in 2025 was comparable to that in 2024, which was higher than the average for the past five years from 2020 to 2024. The majority of civil cases across all court levels continued to meet target waiting times and there were steady and continuous improvements in the average waiting times for criminal proceedings over the years.

- End -

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

JA020

(Question Serial No. 1519)

Head: (80) Judiciary

Subhead (No. & title): (-)

Programme: (1) Courts, Tribunals and Various Statutory Functions

Controlling Officer: Judiciary Administrator (Ms Esther LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Not applicable

Question:

To address the shortage of judicial manpower, the Judiciary has enhanced the terms of service of Judges and Judicial Officers (JJOs) and extended their retirement ages. Since 2023, the Judiciary has also been launching open recruitment exercises at more regular intervals with 24 judicial appointments made, and 1 judicial appointment of a Judge of the Court of First Instance of the High Court was made in September 2025.

In this regard, will the Administration inform this Council of the following:

1. Despite the 24 judicial appointments made, the waiting time for criminal cases remained long. Does this show that the current recruitment effort is insufficient to fill the judicial vacancies due to wastage? Has the Judiciary assessed the current overall wastage rate of JJOs (e.g. the numbers of those who have retired or resigned) and the projected manpower requirement in the coming few years?
2. Will the Judiciary explore appointing Non-Permanent Judges of the Court of Final Appeal from common law jurisdictions in developed countries or regions other than the Five Eyes and inviting experienced solicitors of good standing in the legal profession to be JJOs at different levels of court in Hong Kong?
3. To cope with the increasingly complex cases (such as cases relating to national security and technology), apart from traditional legal training, does the Judiciary provide refresher training for existing and newly appointed JJOs on professional knowledge in specific fields (such as technology, finance, and national security law)? If yes, what are the relevant training budget and staffing arrangements in 2026-27?

Asked by: Hon SO Shiu-tsung, Thomas (LegCo internal reference no.: 2)

Reply:

- (1) To address the shortfall in judicial manpower, the Judiciary has been taking pro-active efforts in conducting more frequent open recruitment exercises for Judges and Judicial Officers (JJOs) at different levels of court and retaining experienced senior Judges. The recruitment exercises launched in 2023 yielded positive results with a total of 24 judicial appointments made. In November 2024, the Judiciary launched the latest round of open recruitment exercises for different levels of JJOs, starting from Judges of the Court of First Instance of the High Court (CFI) with one judicial appointment made in September 2025. The recruitment exercise for District Judges was launched in January 2026, while that for Permanent Magistrates will be launched later this year. In the past three years, seven JJOs at the High Court or above agreed to extend their services beyond their normal retirement age.

Continual efforts are being made to engage temporary judicial manpower including recorders and deputy JJOs from the legal profession at different levels of court. On average, around 40 temporary/deputy JJOs (including recorders) have been sitting at different levels of court at any one time.

With the increasing judicial appointments and concerted efforts of the JJOs and support staff, there have been steady and continuous improvements to the average waiting times for criminal proceedings¹ over the years though the waiting times for certain types of criminal cases, particularly those at the High Court and the District Court, remained relatively long. Each criminal case invariably needs time to complete a series of necessary steps and procedures to ensure due administration of justice. In recent years, the average waiting times for criminal cases were lengthened by the continued impact of the priority handling of a considerable number of complicated cases related to the 2019 anti-extradition amendment bill incidents (anti-EAB) and national security (NS), which are typically more complex, involving more defendants, requiring longer time to prepare for trials and more lengthy trials. The impact is augmented by the need for three criminal judges to handle each NS case in the High Court where requested by the Secretary for Justice and the longer than expected trial durations of various anti-EAB and NS cases. With the majority of the remaining anti-EAB and NS cases scheduled for trial in 2026, the above impact on the average waiting times for other proceedings is expected to subside gradually.

To expedite the disposal of non-refoulement claims related cases, eligible private

¹ Court waiting times for criminal cases are counted mainly from the filing of indictment or first appearance in court to the date of trial. For criminal cases in general, before a case is ready for trial, parties in each case will invariably need to complete a series of necessary steps and procedures to ensure due administration of justice (including access to a fair trial and safeguarding the rights and interests of all parties). These include investigation, collection of evidence and seeking legal advice from the Department of Justice by law enforcement agencies, defendants' application for legal aid or arrangement for private legal representatives, obtaining evidence from the prosecution, investigation of such evidence and seeking legal advice, as well as trial preparation by parties. Where necessary, the court may deal with issues on case management, such as the consolidation or severance of cases to facilitate the conduct of trials. According to operational experience, the time required for completion of these necessary steps and procedures would normally be at least six months.

practitioners from the legal sector are appointed as Deputy Judges of the CFI (Non-refoulement Claims) under a special scheme launched since February 2025, exclusively for the purpose of handling cases relating to non-refoulement claims. As at 1 March 2026, 16 eligible practitioners have been identified under the scheme, of whom 13 have been appointed to work as Deputy Judges of the CFI (Non-refoulement Claims) for different durations.

In addition, we are planning to engage more judicial associates and contract marshals to enhance legal professional support to JJOs.

- (2) As stipulated under Article 92 of the Basic Law, JJOs shall be chosen on the basis of their judicial and professional qualities and may be recruited from other common law jurisdictions. In addition, section 5(3) of the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal Ordinance (Cap. 484) provides that the Court of Final Appeal (CFA) may as required invite judges from other common law jurisdictions (CLNPs) to sit on the Court. Section 12(4) of the Ordinance stipulates the statutory qualifications requirements of CLNPs.

All CLNPs of the CFA are judges or retired judges of the most eminent standing with profound judicial experience who enjoy the highest professional status and reputation in common law jurisdictions.

Of all the other common law jurisdictions, Hong Kong's legal system has the closest affinity to that of the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. Canada is also a common law jurisdiction with which Hong Kong shares many common legal approaches, particularly in the areas of equity, commercial law and criminal law. The legal systems in other common law jurisdictions such as Singapore and Malaysia have relatively greater differences from that of Hong Kong. Nevertheless, judges from all the above common law jurisdictions will be considered if candidates with suitable judicial and professional qualities are identified in such jurisdictions.

All JJOs in Hong Kong are appointed in accordance with Articles 88 and 92 of the Basic Law, and the professional qualifications as stipulated in the provisions of the relevant Ordinances. Solicitors meeting the professional qualifications for JJOs under the relevant Ordinances are also eligible to apply for filling JJOs' vacancies. JJOs are recommended for appointment through competitive selection exercises on the basis of their judicial and professional qualities in accordance with Article 92 of the Basic Law.

- (3) The Hong Kong Judicial Institute (JI) is responsible for organising judicial training for JJOs at all levels of court. The JI's current executive manpower comprises an Executive Director, three Directors and six Counsel who are legal professionals, as well as four support staff including one Senior Executive Officer, two Assistant Clerical Officers and one Personal Secretary.

The JI's judicial training programme of each year typically comprises induction training for newly appointed JJOs; core courses mainly on court craft, judicial ethics, judgment writing, sentencing, use of technology and specific aspects of the law (e.g. regulatory framework of the financial markets and digital assets), for meeting their

professional needs and operational needs of the courts; as well as seminars (including Chinese law and legal system in Mainland China) and exchange activities with courts in the Mainland and other common law jurisdictions from time to time.

Keeping abreast of the evolving developments in court operation and technologies, the JI will continue to organise the above-mentioned judicial training programmes for meeting professional needs of JJOs and operational needs of the courts. In 2026-27, the Judiciary's estimated expenditure for the above-mentioned judicial training is about \$2 million.

Apart from the judicial training programmes organised by the JI, the Judiciary has been deploying dedicated in-house support staff for system development and implementation of these technology initiatives. Their responsibilities include the organisation and provision of technical training (e.g. briefing and demonstration sessions; hands-on practice) for JJOs, support staff of the Judiciary and major court users. Specifically, various training activities, such as training on the integrated Court Case Management System at various levels of court, briefings on e-hearings, seminars on information technology security, demonstration on generative artificial intelligence tools, etc., have been organised for JJOs.

As the organisation of training for JJOs, support staff of the Judiciary and court users is part and parcel of the duties of in-house staff responsible for the development and management of technology initiatives of the Judiciary Administration, there is no breakdown on the expenditure incurred in the organisation of such training activities. The relevant expenditure is included in the estimated recurrent expenditure on the planning and implementation of the Judiciary's Information and Communications Technology initiatives of around \$379 million which represents about 13% of the total estimated operating expenditure of the Judiciary in 2026-27.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

JA021

(Question Serial No. 1520)

Head: (80) Judiciary

Subhead (No. & title): (-)

Programme: (2) Support Services for Courts' Operation

Controlling Officer: Judiciary Administrator (Ms Esther LEUNG)

Director of Bureau: Not applicable

Question:

The Judiciary is implementing the “Information Technology Strategy Plan” and using technology and other modern management tools etc. to enhance the efficiency of court support services, including the rollout of the integrated Court Case Management System by phases and the wider use of remote hearings. In this regard, please inform this Council of the following:

1. Apart from administrative and support services, has the Judiciary studied or planned to apply artificial intelligence (AI) technology in the work of judicial support staff (e.g. assisting in compiling basic facts such as case background and the course of court proceedings or conducting preliminary screening and analysis of voluminous documentary evidence) to assist judges with handling complex cases more efficiently? If so, what are the preliminary targets and timelines?
2. When introducing any technology-assisted tools, how will the Judiciary establish a stringent review and monitoring mechanism to ensure that the technical accuracy, data security and judicial independence are not compromised? Will the relevant estimates for assessment and the expert consultations be made public?

Asked by: Hon SO Shiu-tsung, Thomas (LegCo internal reference no.: 3)

Reply:

- (1) The Judiciary is committed to making greater use of technology for enhancing the efficiency of court operations. We have been proceeding at full steam with the implementation of a series of major technology initiatives. These include actively exploring and making use of voice-to-text (VTT) technology (an artificial intelligence (AI) technology) for recording court proceedings in the past few years.

We have been developing our own VTT system 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 Judges and Judicial Officers (JJOs), the accuracy rates of our VTT system have gradually been improved from around 60% initially to around 80%. Since December 2023, the Judiciary has been using the VTT system for JJOs' real-time note-taking during court hearings. The VTT system has been enabled in all 54 courtrooms of the Court of Final Appeal (CFA) Building and High Court (HC) Building, and five 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 progress.

Meanwhile, the Judiciary has been deploying the use of VTT-generated texts for facilitating transcript production in an incremental manner. In November 2025, we launched 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 the Digital Audio Recording and Transcription Services. We will continue to keep abreast of 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.

In July 2024, the Judiciary promulgated its first set of guidelines on the use of generative AI for JJOs and support staff, which has been uploaded onto the Judiciary website (https://www.judiciary.hk/doc/en/court_services_facilities/guidelines_on_the_use_of_generative_ai.pdf). The guidelines were drawn up with reference to similar guidelines issued by courts in other jurisdictions, including England, New Zealand, Canada and the Mainland. In gist, JJOs and support staff may make **prudent** and **responsible** use of generative AI in the course of their work where appropriate.

According to the guidelines, JJOs and support staff may make use of generative AI 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, on condition that they are held responsible for the outcome of such work and for checking and verifying any information obtained to ensure its accuracy and reliability before using or relying upon it in their work.

To avoid compromising on the fair administration of justice, the Judiciary has yet to recommend the use of generative AI for core judicial functions, including legal analysis and judgment writing, 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 is keeping abreast of developments in generative AI technology and experience in other courts with a view to reviewing and updating the guidelines as and when appropriate.

Separately, the Judiciary is in the process of drawing up guidelines on use of generative AI for legal practitioners and other court users for consultation with the legal

profession later this year. We will make particular reference to the specific restrictions by many other jurisdictions on the use of generative AI in their guidelines for legal practitioners.

Since 2023, the Judicial Institute (JI) under the Judiciary has continually been carrying out research and experiments on use of generative AI tools, particularly in conducting legal research and analysis. There is a clear and growing global movement across both civil and common law jurisdictions for court systems to explore how AI can support judicial work. Experience from JI's testing, together with wider academic studies, shows that AI, particularly large language models, is still in a developmental phase when applied to complex legal tasks such as legal research, legal analysis and judgment drafting. The issues identified to date largely reflect transitional challenges typical of an emerging technology, including the continued refinement of accuracy, consistency, and the clarity of legal reasoning. Notably, commercial legal reference providers are already actively investing in addressing these areas and steadily improving the reliability of their AI tools. In this evolving landscape, the Judiciary will continue to closely follow developments in AI and consider its potential applications in judicial work as the technology matures.

For non-judicial work, the Judiciary has participated in other pilot AI projects (such as HKPilot, HKChat and HKMeeting developed by the Hong Kong Generative AI Research & Development Center) under the coordination of the Digital Policy Office of the Government where appropriate.

- (2) To meet the new challenges brought about by the advancement of technologies and recent developments of information technology (IT) in the work environment, the Judiciary has been updating the IT security policy and strengthening the IT security measures in different areas on an on-going basis, in accordance with the relevant IT security standards and requirements stipulated by the Government. In the meantime, the IT infrastructure facilities of the new District Court Building have been designed on the basis of the highest level of IT security stipulated by the Government. The core technologies and technical services adopted generally conform with the highest government standards in data management and protection, service stability and sustainable development, covering three aspects of information/data security protection, namely confidentiality, integrity and availability.

The relevant expenditure on strengthening the IT security measures is included in the estimated recurrent expenditure on the planning and implementation of the Judiciary's Information and Communications Technology initiatives of around \$379 million which represents about 13% of the total estimated operating expenditure of the Judiciary in 2026-27.

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