

CJ's Speech at Labour Tribunal Building Opening Ceremony (with photos)

The following is the full text (translation) of the speech delivered by the Hon Chief Justice Mr Andrew Kwok-nang Li at the Opening Ceremony of the Labour Tribunal Building today (March 7):

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of colleagues in the Labour Tribunal, I would like to welcome you to this Opening Ceremony of the new Labour Tribunal Building. Your support to the Tribunal is deeply appreciated.

The Labour Tribunal offers a quick, informal and inexpensive means to resolve disputes between employers and employees. When it was set up in 1973, it had only one courtroom and was located in the then Permanent Comfort Building in Sheung Wan. Over the years, the Tribunal had been moved to different locations. In 1976/77, it was moved to the then Whitfield Barracks, and the number of courtrooms was increased to three. Thereafter it was relocated to the Middle Road Carpark Building. In 1982, the number of courtrooms was increased to six, and they became all centralised in Tsim Sha Tsui Centre. In 1987, the number of courtrooms went up to eight, and they were distributed in Western District, Kwun Tong and Tuen Mun. In 1991, the Tribunal was moved again to the Eastern Magistrates' Courts and the Shatin Magistrates' Courts. In 1996, it was relocated to the Pioneer Centre in Mongkok, where it had been in operation until the end of 2007.

In 2004, the Working Party on the Review of the Labour Tribunal ("Working Party") chaired by Madam Justice Chu of the Court of First Instance of the High Court, submitted its Report on the review of the operation of the Tribunal. The Working Party pointed out that it was undesirable to house the Tribunal inside a commercial building, and amongst its recommendations for improvement, suggested that alteration works be carried out at the building of the old South Kowloon Magistrates' Courts to house the Tribunal.

Today, with the completion of the alteration works, the Tribunal is housed in its own court building, thus enhancing its image of independence. This building has thirteen courtrooms, six discussion rooms for court users and two conference rooms. There are spacious public waiting areas to cater for the needs of court users. In addition, the building provides sufficient and suitable chambers and offices for judicial officers, tribunal officers, tribunal staff and various support teams. Separate access and lifts are also provided for Presiding Officers and court staff.

Furthermore, the Mandatory Provident Fund ("MPF") Schemes Authority has set up an enquiry centre in the building. With the benefit of experience, it has become clear that quite a number of Tribunal cases involve MPF issues. Such logistical arrangement should make it more convenient for users of the Tribunal.

The alteration works for the building took some two years to complete. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all parties concerned who have provided us support in this project. They include the Administration which has provided the necessary resources and assistance as well as the Legislative Council which approved the funding for the project. I would also like to thank the Architectural Services Department, the consultant engaged by the Department and staff of the contractor company who assisted us in this project. Indeed, the establishment of the Tribunal in this new and modernised building is the fruit of labour of all parties concerned. Last but not least, I would like to thank all concerned colleagues of the Judiciary for their dedication and shouldering the extra work on top of their busy work schedule to ensure the smooth relocation of the Tribunal.

The Tribunal was established 34 years ago and relocated six times. It is my pleasure to see that the Tribunal is finally settled in its own home. I look to the Tribunal to continue with its service to employers and employees of Hong Kong in this convenient and appropriate location.

Thank you.

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The Honourable Chief Justice Mr Andrew Kwok-nang Li today (March 7) delivers a speech at the Opening Ceremony of the Labour Tribunal Building.



The Honourable Chief Justice Mr Andrew Kwok-nang Li today (March 7) unveils the plaque to mark the official opening of the Labour Tribunal Building.