

## Speech by the Chief Justice

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Following is the speech (translation) delivered by the Hon. Chief Justice Mr Andrew Kwok-nang Li at the Opening Ceremony of the Fanling Law Courts Building today (December 6):

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for attending the opening ceremony of the Fanling Law Courts Building. It is another modernized law courts building of the Judiciary completed after the Kowloon City Law Courts Building. The Fanling Law Courts shall function as the major courts in the New Territories, serving the eastern, western and the border districts of the New Territories.

The special architectural design of the old Fanling Magistracy has become the landmark of the area. Having served the area for over 30 years, it has, in finale, fully accomplished its mission with distinction. Back in the 60s and the 70s, cases tried in the Magistracy were relatively simple, amongst other cases, there were cases such as dog-biting and careless pedal-cycling. In the 80s and the 90s, at a time when workload increased drastically, Fanling Magistracy had been the main venue dealing with cases of breach of town planning regulations and more serious ones like smuggling. The completion of this new law courts building comes timely to embrace new challenges.

The Fanling Law Courts Building took three years to complete, during which staff of many Government Departments had extended their help and co-operation to us. I am very grateful to them. I am particularly thankful to the Architectural Services Department that designed this exquisite and modern court building for the Judiciary. With this new building, we can keep up with the development of society and enhance the quality of the services we provide. With the full support of the Hong Kong Police Force, the Department of Justice, the Correctional Services Department, the Social Welfare Department and the Duty Lawyer Service Office, we have achieved a smooth transition of operations from the old court building to this new one. I am extremely grateful for that. Finally, I wish to express my thanks to all colleagues who have worked very hard to make this possible.

There are nine courts in the Fanling building, including six adult courts, one juvenile court and two other courts specifically designated to deal with care and protection orders. The colour scheme, lighting, acoustics and seating arrangements in each of the adult courts are meticulously designed. They are also equipped with an advanced recording system to ensure that everyone in the courtroom can clearly see and hear the proceedings inside the courts. As for the juvenile court, it is designed with a soft colour scheme to make it more user-friendly and to alleviate the anxiety of youngster appearing in court. Furthermore, we have installed specially designed closed circuit TV system and sophisticated audio-visual device to meet the needs of various cases.

This spacious new building gives all court staff a much improved working environment. There are sufficient seats and conference rooms on each floor. There is also a Press Room for the exclusive use of the reporters.

Nowadays, cases tried in Magistrates' Courts are more and more complex in nature and law. Also, the public has higher expectations of us. Given the tightened budget and shrinking resources, I fully appreciate the pressure that our colleagues of all grades are experiencing. At this era of challenges, I hope that we could all keep up with our professional standard of work, hold steadfastly to the principles of fairness and justice, and contribute continuously to uphold the rule of law.

Thank you.

End/Friday, December 6, 2002

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