

Speech by Chief Justice Andrew Cheung at the Law Society's Spring Cocktail Reception (12 February 2025)

Secretary for Justice, President of the Law Society, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen,

1. It is a privilege to be among so many distinguished solicitors and guests this evening. On behalf of the Judiciary, I extend our warmest blessings for the Chinese New Year to all.

2. On this joyous occasion, I wish to say a few words on the vital role of solicitors in our justice system, while fully appreciating that solicitors' work and contributions extend far beyond the administration of justice.

3. Solicitors are the foundation of legal practice. You are the first port of call for most who seek legal help. You guide your clients through complex challenges, protecting their rights in an often overwhelming system.

4. Beyond client service, solicitors are critical to the effective administration of justice. It is your preparation, your diligence, and your expertise that allow cases to be properly presented in court. It is often your skill in negotiation and dispute resolution that prevents costly and time-consuming litigation altogether. The impact of your work may be invisible to the public, but it is no less vital. For those who practise as advocates in courtrooms or arbitration, you exemplify the versatility and broad expertise of your profession.

5. While the number of solicitors choosing to join the Bench has been modest, those who do bring exceptional skills and a unique perspective. Outstanding examples include Madam Justices Mimmie Chan and Bebe Chu, experts in arbitration and family law respectively. Solicitors often have a broader experience of the practical realities faced by clients, and this insight is invaluable to judicial work.

6. In my recent address at the Opening of the Legal Year, I described the legal profession as a staunch defender of the rule of law, and reiterated the Judiciary's need to recruit from private practitioners. On that occasion, I specifically called on Senior Counsel to join the Bench, as too few had done so. This evening, I want to extend a similar appeal to our experienced litigators, solicitor advocates, dispute resolution solicitors, and solicitor-arbitrators, recognising the valuable contributions they can make. Their expertise, practical insight, and dedication to justice are essential qualities that would greatly strengthen the Judiciary. Justice is a shared endeavour. Solicitors bring their own unique and indispensable strengths to the justice system, ensuring that the system works for the benefit of society.

7. As we settle into 2025, I thank you for your contributions to the rule of law and legal services in Hong Kong. Your work, whether in litigation or other areas of practice, is not only appreciated but essential to the values we all hold dear. Thank you.