

THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

2009 was a busy year for the Standing Committee on External Affairs as the activities and events coordinated under the auspices of the Standing Committee and its two sub-committees, namely the Mainland Legal Affairs Committee and the Community Relations Committee had increased significantly both in terms of number and complexity.

The membership of the Standing Committee also underwent some changes. Mr. Stephen Hung succeeded Mr. Billy Ma as the new Chairman of the Standing Committee from July 2009. Mr. Fred Kan who was one of the longest serving members of the Standing Committee stepped down in February, and Mr. Kenneth H S Ng and Mr. Stephen R Yap were co-opted as new members.

Members of the Standing Committee and their attendance at meetings during the year (in brackets):

Stephen W.S.HUNG (Chairman from July)	(9/11)	Elaine Y.L. HO	(7/11)
Billy W.Y. MA (Chairman up to June)	(10/11)	Lillian L.N. HO	(4/11)
Melissa K.PANG	(10/11)	Frederick K.C. KAN (retired in February)	(1/11)
Ambrose S.K.LAM	(7/11)	Kenneth H.S. NG (joined in February)	(9/10)
Bonita B.Y.CHAN	(8/11)	Ludwig S.W.NG	(8/11)
Charles C.C. CHAU	(8/11)	Philip W.C. WONG	(7/11)
Anthony W.K. CHOW	(8/11)	Stephen R. Yap (joined in February)	(6/10)

Secretary: Director of Communications

Below are highlights of events and activities coordinated by the Standing Committee in the year:

COUNCIL VISIT TO BEIJING

Led by the then President Mr. Lester Huang, Council members visited the offices of the Supreme People's Court, the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, the National People's Congress Standing Committee, the Ministry of Justice, All China Lawyers Association and Beijing Lawyers Association on 21 and 22 April.

The visit provided an opportunity for Council members to have a direct dialogue with senior officials of the relevant Mainland authorities and to exchange views with them on how to further develop solicitors' practices in the Mainland legal services market. The two-day visit was fruitful.

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COUNCIL'S VISIT TO TAIPEI

For the first time, The Law Society Council paid a courtesy visit to Taiwan and Taipei Bar Associations to establish formal ties with lawyers from Taiwan. With the assistance of Hong Kong Trade Development Council Taipei Office, the visit took place in mid July. The Law Society delegation was warmly received by the President of the Judicial Yuan Mr. Lai In-Jaw, the President of Taiwan Bar Association Mr. Wellington Koo, the Executive Director of Taipei Bar Association Mr. C. C. Lee, the Executive Director of Taiwan Arbitration Association Mr. James C. C. Ku, and members of the professional bodies. The visit opened the door for dialogue between lawyers from the two places and received the support of Taipei lawyers in participating in the Cross Strait Four Regions Lawyers Summit held in the latter part of the year.



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LAW WEEK 2009

Law Week remained a flagship event in the year plan of the Standing Committee. Bearing the theme of ‘Solicitors Care and Share’, the Opening Ceremony of Law Week 2009 was for the first time in many years presented in the form of a televised show on ATV Home channel. The Opening Ceremony attracted over 230,000 viewers when it was broadcast in the evening of 28 November. The show was later on broadcast at the ATV HDTV service on 3 December. The one-hour show also featured highlights of another major event hosted by The Law Society, the ‘Cross Strait Four Regions Lawyers Summit’.

The Opening Ceremony of Law Week 2009 was unique not just because it was presented on television but also because a group of young mentees participating in The Law Society ‘Path Builders’ Mentorship Programme were also involved. To the young mentees, the experience was eye-opening and they were particularly thrilled to have the opportunity of meeting in person with distinguished guests including the Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal, Mr. Andrew Li, GBM, Secretary for Justice Mr. Wong Yan Lung, SC, JP, Member of the Legislative Council (Legal Functional Constituency) Ms. Margaret Ng, Director of Legal Aid, Mr. Benjamin Cheung, JP, Chairman of the Hong Kong Bar Association, Mr. Russell Coleman, President of The Law Society Mr. Huen Wong, and Chairman of the Law Week 2009 Organizing Committee, Mr. Billy Ma.

Following the Opening Ceremony, a series of law courses covering a wide range of legal topics was held. The courses generated a lot of interest from the public. Those who had missed the courses could also access the course handouts on some of the more popular subjects on The Law Society’s official website.

This year, key chains carrying a teddy bear icon in solicitor’s robe were produced as souvenirs for the officiating guests, the speakers for the law courses, students and other participants attending the taping of the Law Week television special programme.

The success of Law Week 2009 represented the hard work of a dedicated team comprising members of the Law Week Organizing Committee and the staff of The Law Society Secretariat. The team deserved compliments for their dedication and contribution.

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Members of the Law Week Organizing Committee:

Billy W. Y. MA (*Chairman*)

Stephen W. S. HUNG (*Vice-Chairman*)

Grand H. L. CHAN

Isabella W. H. CHAN

Serina K. S. CHAN

Benjamin C. M. HO

Anthony J. HUNG

William C. Y. KONG

Alex C. Y. LAM

Stephanie W. Y. LAU

Eva LEE

Elsa MAK

Kenneth H. S. NG

Melissa K. PANG

Cecilia G. WONG

Philip W. C. WONG

Ann M. S. YEUNG



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SPRING RECEPTION 2009

Spring Reception was an annual fare that topped the priority list of tasks of the Standing Committee in 2009. The festive event represented a gesture of appreciation by The Law Society for the support rendered by government officials, practitioners, volunteers and friends in support the work of The Law Society.

For a change, the Spring Reception celebrating the Year of the Ox was held in a Chinese restaurant offering a menu blending Chinese-style dim sum with western drinks. Over 270 quests attended.



PUBLICITY CAMPAIGNS

During the year, the following publicity campaigns aiming at raising public awareness on certain legal issues and promoting the services of solicitors were coordinated under the auspices of the Standing Committee:

Publicity campaign concerning recovery agents

The campaign ran from February to June and it carried the following key messages:

- Claimants pursuing personal injuries compensation in Court should seek assistance directly from lawyers instead of hiring the recovery agents;
- Lawyers only charge professional fees and would never deduct any portion of compensation as part of their fees.; and
- Members of the public can access legal services more easily by looking for lawyers handling personal injury claims from The Law Society website: <http://www.choosehklawyer.org/en/index.asp>, and obtain 45 minutes free initial legal consultation from law firms and solicitors listed on this website, or call The Law Society Personal Injuries Helpline for assistance.

Through newspaper articles and a public education seminar, the campaign succeeded in alerting members of the public of the aftermaths of having recovery agents representing them in personal injuries claims.

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The official launch of The Law Society Personal Injuries Helpline and the establishment of a personal injuries panel to provide one hour of free legal advice service to those who approach for assistance through the Helpline were announced by President Huen Wong at a press conference in May. The news received wide coverage in the major newspapers and electronic media.

Publicity campaign on the new Land Titles Registration System

The publicity campaign was launched in response to the public consultation by the Government on the Land titles registration system. It formed part of a lobbying effort put up by The Law Society in securing support towards The Law Society's position on the new titles registration system. The campaign was of a modest scale consisting of a poster campaign reaching out to all District Offices, selected schools, NGOs, property management companies, professional bodies, Kai Fong Associations and other organisations; and a public seminar delivered promoting by the Chairman of the Working Party on Land Titles Ordinance Mr. Andy Ngan on 7 March. The poster campaign was supplemented by media interviews and press articles highlighting the merits and demerits of the new land titles registration system.

Publicity Campaign on Criminal Legal Aid Fees Reform

The External Affairs Department assisted in the implementation of the publicity campaign initiated by the Criminal Law and Procedures Committee on the criminal legal aid fees reform. A press conference was held on 16 September announcing a one-month boycott action by members of the Criminal Law and Procedures Committee to protest against the Government's stance.

Publicity Campaign on promotion of mediation services provided by solicitors

The Public Education and Publicity Sub-Group under the Working Group on Mediation chaired by the Secretary for Justice organized a 'Mediate First' Briefing Reception on 7 May to promote the use of mediation to resolve commercial disputes. The Law Society was a supporting organization. Apart from supporting promotional activities initiated by the Sub-Group, The Law Society also produced and distributed flyers promoting solicitors as the first choice for providing mediation services.

Public Education Campaign on Drink Driving

Launched in April, the two-month campaign on drink driving represented the joint effort of The Law Society and Hong Kong Medical Association. The two professional bodies shared concerns about the harm that drink driving could cause and joined efforts to launch the campaign.

The campaign is meant for the general public, especially drivers, experienced and inexperienced. 50,000 copies of flyers containing answers to frequently asked questions concerning the legal and medical aspects of drink driving were distributed to target groups and to law firms for alerting their clients to think twice before sitting behind the wheel after consuming alcohol.

Council Members Mr. Lester Huang, Mr. Billy Ma and Mr. Stephen Hung represented The Law Society in the Joint Working Party overseeing this campaign.

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Public Education Flyer on Anti-Youth Drug Abuse

In view of the overwhelming drug abuse problem among young people, The Law Society and Hong Kong Medical Association joined hands again in launching a public education campaign on anti-youth drug abuse in June. At a press conference on 27 October, the joint Working Party comprising representatives from the two professional bodies announced the launch of an educational flyer which was presented in Chinese with a more illustrative and light layout conveying messages on the detrimental impact of drug abuse and reminded young people of the legal and medical consequences they would have to bear if they took drugs. In support of the campaign, the Secretary for Justice Mr. WONG Yan Lung SC, also attended the press conference.

The flyers were also targeted at parents and the general public who could obtain copies at the offices of two professional bodies, the Hong Kong Jockey Club Drug InfoCentre of Narcotic Division, the 7 centres of Counselling Centre for Psychotropic Substance Abusers and 18 Federation of Parent-Teacher Associations.



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SME WORLD EXPO 2009

SME World Expo was a major annual event organized by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council to showcase the capabilities of small and medium-sized companies in Hong Kong and their overseas counterparts as well as facilitating global business connections among the SMEs. It also constituted a platform where thousands of visiting SMEs around the world could find business solutions to the challenges they frequently encounter, to enhance their competitiveness and to explore business opportunities.

As a supporting organization of the Expo, The Law Society set up a kiosk from 3 to 5 December to promote the professional services of solicitors firms. Representatives from law firms made presentations at the Expo.



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MEDIA RELATIONS

The Law Society maintained a high profile in the media throughout the year. Upon requests by various print and electronic media, the President and other Council members attended interviews discussing matters concerning the legal profession and on legal issues of public concern. Their presence in the media had to a large extent raised not only the profile of The Law Society but also enhanced its image in that The Law Society was seen as more proactive and responsive.

As the head of The Law Society, the President acted as the chief spokesman at press conferences, media interviews and other public functions. It was a very demanding job but both President Lester Huang and President Huen Wong had, with the assistance of fellow Council members, managed the job with flying colours.

To step up relations with the media, The Law Society hosted luncheons for reporters periodically to keep them abreast with the work of The Law Society and issues that The Law Society intended to promote or generate public's support. Media representatives were also invited to meet with Council members on some occasions as and when appropriate; or to attend events such as the annual sports and recreation night organized by The Law Society. Engaging reporters in Law Society activities on a more frequent basis has helped The Law Society build a closer network with the media.

Press conferences and press releases were other means used by The Law Society to inform the public of its views and actions on subjects of public concern such as the screening of claimants under the Convention against torture, the election method of the Chief Executive of the HKSAR and the formation of the Legislative Council in 2012. In 2009, The Law Society issued 15 press releases.

The Law Society Secretariat also monitored news reports and produced daily news alerts for Council members.



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GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

The Law Society maintained good working relationship with the Government and various agencies through meetings, courtesy visits, luncheons or other activities.

The Law Society was particularly thankful to the continuing support of the Chief Justice Mr. Andrew Li and the Secretary for Justice Mr. Wong Yan Lung, SC towards the work of The Law Society throughout the year. We were also grateful for the generous sponsorship from the Legal Aid Department towards Law Week 2009; and InvestHK for sponsoring a luncheon for heads of bar associations/law societies on the occasions of the Opening of Legal Year and the Commonwealth Law Conference in 2009.

The Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in Hong Kong was also very supportive in assisting The Law Society in coordinating visit to Beijing and other events in the Mainland.



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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The Law Society has become increasingly active in developing and maintaining relationships with counterparts of the legal profession around the world. Apart from attending the annual conferences hosted by the International Bar Association, the American Bar Association and other overseas bar associations or law societies, the President and members of The Law Society Council also participated in a variety of international events such as the LAWASIA Conference in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam in November; and the Presidents of Lawyers Association in Asia in Seoul, Korea in July.



Representing The Law Society, the President joined Hong Kong Services Mission to Moscow led by the Financial Secretary in May, the American Bar Association annual meeting in Chicago in August, the 60th Anniversary of the Japan Federation of Bar Associations in September, the Opening of the Legal Year in England and Wales in October, and the Opening of the Paris Bar and Conference in December. Vice President Junius Ho attended the Qatar Law Forum in Doha in May.

Other activities coordinated in the area of international legal affairs during the year include:

Opening of the Legal Year in Hong Kong

The Law Society received the heads of overseas bar associations/law societies or their representatives during the Opening of the Legal Year in Hong Kong in January. A sizable delegation from the Czech Bar Association with whom The Law Society had signed a MOU in 2008 was amongst the visitors attending the ceremonial opening of the legal year. At a joint press conference chaired by the President Lester Huang, the President of the Czech Bar Association Dr. Vladimir Jirousek gave an account on the legal services market in the Czech Republic and called for further cooperation among Czech and Hong Kong practitioners.



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Signing of MOU with the Law Institute of Victoria, Australia

At the Commonwealth Law Conference held in Hong Kong in April, The Law Society entered into a MOU with the Law Institute of Victoria, Australia on 9 April. Both parties undertook, amongst other things, to exchange information on the legal practices in the two places and to provide mutual assistance in meeting the mandatory CPD requirements to those members who hold practising certificates both in Hong Kong and Victoria.



International Young Lawyers Forum in Seoul, Korea

The Forum was co-organized by The Law Society of England and Wales and the Korean Bar Association on 9 February in Seoul, Korea. The main theme of the event was 'Opportunities and Challenges for Young Lawyers in a Global Marketplace'. Six young lawyers from Hong Kong participated in the Forum under the sponsorship of The Law Society of Hong Kong Legal Educational Trust Fund. It was a valuable and fruitful experience for the Hong Kong delegates. The Law Society's involvement in the event also strengthened the relationship with the Korean Bar Association.

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A Week in Legal Hong Kong – East meets the West

This was a programme organized by the State Bar of California during their visit to Hong Kong in November. At their invitation, members of The Law Society attended sessions covering arbitration and mediation. President Huen Wong participated in a panel discussion on 6 November discussing the mission and functions of Law Society and how it might cooperate with the State Bar of California and the Hong Kong Bar Association to bring value to their members.

Visits by Overseas Delegations

Other visitors from overseas jurisdictions included (a) a group of judges from Canada; (b) representatives from the US Consulate; (c) lawyers from Birmingham UK under the coordination of the British Consulate; and (d) representatives of the Kyushu and Hiroshima Federation of Bar Associations.

MAINLAND RELATIONS

The Mainland Legal Affairs Committee (“MLAC”) has remained an important sub-committee under the Standing Committee. MLAC plays a key role as the official link between The Law Society and its counterparts in Mainland China. As in the past years, MLAC maintained a very active profile in 2009 by heavily engaging itself in promoting professional exchanges between Hong Kong and the Mainland lawyers, receiving visitors from various provincial and municipal authorities and lawyers associations in Mainland China, as well as organizing special projects to assist members in diversifying their services in the Greater China region.

Members of the Mainland Legal Affairs Committee:

Junius K.Y. HO (*Chairman*)

Wilfred K.P. TSUI (*Vice-Chairman*)

Carmelo K.S. LEE
(*Vice-Chairman and member up to July*)

Emily Y. M. LAM (*Vice-Chairman*)

Paulina M.S. CHAN

Margaret CHOI

Anthony W.K. CHOW

Grace H.W. CHU

Elaine Y.L. HO

Jing HE (*member up to November*)

IP Shing Hing

Ambrose S.K. LAM

Patrick K.H. LAM

William C.W. LAM

Maurice W.M. LEE

Brian C. S. LEUNG (*joined in August*)

Elsie O. S. LEUNG (*joined in February*)

Vincent W.S. LIANG

Alexandra D.W. LO

Derek Y. W. TSANG (*joined in February*)

Herbert H.K. TSOI

Tony Y.H. YEN

Christine P.W. WONG

WONG Tak Shing

James K.T. WONG

Simon S. M. YEUNG (*joined in February*)

Secretary: Acting Assistant Director, External Affairs

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MLAC also took charge of a number of special projects in 2009 including the following:

Cross Strait Four Regions Lawyers Summit 2009 (“The Summit”)

Held on 28 November, the opening of the Summit was honoured by the presence of the Chief Executive of the HKSAR Government Mr. Donald Tsang Yam Kuen, GBM as the Officiating Guest. The Summit brought lawyers from Hong Kong, the Mainland, Taipei and Macau on the first occasion under one roof. Over 200 delegates comprising more than 100 mainland lawyers from Beijing, Shanghai and the nine cities in the Pearl River Delta Region, 63 from Hong Kong and 20 from Taipei and Macau participated in the event.

Bearing the theme of ‘Global Economic Force – Strategic Synergy of Cross Strait Four Regions Legal Profession’, the Summit presented an impressive line-up of presenters comprising the Secretary for Justice Mr. Wong Yan Lung, SC, leaders of legal professional bodies in all four regions, scholars, and highly-respected practitioners. Their presentations at the theme seminars and breakout sessions were insightful and offered very constructive suggestions on how lawyers from the four regions might collaborate to develop cross border legal practices, and to establish a Greater China legal services platform to facilitate cross referrals.



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One of the highlights of the Summit was the Presidents' Roundtable where the presidents of All China Lawyers Association, lawyers associations from Beijing, Shanghai, Guangdong, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Dongguan, Foshan, Jianmen, Zhaoqing, Zhongshan, Huizhou and their counterparts from Hong Kong, Taipei and Macau reached a consensus as follows:

- establish and improve the system of legal business referrals and law practice collaboration in the Cross Strait Four Regions; and to facilitate mutual business cooperation by lawyers in meeting the emerging demands for legal services generated by the rapidly increasing social and commercial interactions in the region;
- establish a comprehensive information, publicity and cooperation platform for the legal services market in the Cross Strait Four Regions for the sustainable development of cross-boundary legal services; and for the promotion of law practice collaborations by lawyers in the region. The actual mode of operation and the establishment of this platform will be dealt with by consent by the secretariats of the respective lawyers associations;
- strengthen the cooperation between lawyers associations in the regulation of legal professional ethics and conduct; the provision of continuing professional development programmes and training, in particular, the training of young lawyers with a view of maintaining high standards in the practice of law and public confidence of the legal profession;
- promote the cooperation in relation to arbitration and mediation in the Greater China Region; and
- encourage lawyers in the region to participate in pro bono work.

The Summit received wide-spread publicity in the local press. A half-hour television programme capturing the highlights of the Summit was also broadcasted on ATV Home channel a week after the event, followed by another on Taiwan's CTV service through which The Law Society gained exposure not only in the local community but also across regions.

Needless to say, organizing the Summit required arduous and meticulous planning and coordination. The Organizing Committee comprising mainly members of the MLAC and the team from The Law Society should be commended for a job well done.

Value added road shows in Nanjing and Hangzhou

The Law Society, in conjunction with Jiangsu Bar Association, Lawyers Association of Zhejiang and the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) in Zhejiang and Jiangsu, organized two cross-boundary legal services promotion road shows in Nanjing and Hangzhou on 16 and 17 July. A Law Society delegation consisting of 16 members from different law firms participated in the road shows during which they were able to explore potential business referrals through networking opportunities. The road shows were attended by more than 120 Mainland participants including representatives of local enterprises and lawyers.

Materials presented by various speakers at the road shows were posted on The Law Society's official website.

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Seminar on 'Guangdong-Hong Kong Cross-Boundary Legal Services'

Following the release of “The Framework on Development and Reform Planning for the Pearl River Delta Region (2008-2020)” (PRD Framework Plan) by the National Development and Reform Commission in December 2008, MLAC has been actively pursuing options to step up cooperation between lawyers from Hong Kong and their counterparts from major cities in the PRD Region.

To explore how lawyers from Hong Kong might capitalize on the policies set out in the PRD Framework Plan, MLAC organized a two-day study tour to Guangzhou in June and exchanged views with officials from the National Development and Reform Commission in Guangdong and lawyers in Guangzhou.

The study tour was jointly organised by The Law Society and the Hong Kong Academy of Law with the support of the Guangzhou Lawyers Association and the Sun Yat-Sen University School of Law. 32 members representing different law firms participated in the tour.



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Training programme for Shandong lawyers

At the invitation of the Shangdong Lawyers Association, MLAC organized a two-week tailor-made training course for a delegation of 36 lawyers from Shandong Lawyers Association who visited Hong Kong in October. The training programme took the form of a series of seminars held at The Law Society Secretariat. It consisted of a wide range of topics that were of interest and relevance to the delegates including anti-dumping law practice, cross-regional legal services, Hong Kong company law and real estate law, and cross-border legal cooperation under CEPA. As part of the training programme, the Shangdong delegation also visited the Department of Justice, the High Court, Hong Kong Bar Association, Hong Kong Stock Exchange, Association of China Appointed Attesting Officers and the Land Registry.

Professional Development Programme

The Professional Development Programme for Hong Kong and Mainland lawyers was first launched by The Law Society in 2001. Since then, a total of 160 Mainland lawyers were seconded to firms in Hong Kong for a four weeks on-the-job training. On the recommendation of the MLAC, The Law Society submitted an application in the last quarter of 2009 for funding a new series of Professional Development Programme for Mainland and Hong Kong lawyers in 2010. The first batch of five lawyers from Henan was expected to commence the 4-weeks attachment at Hong Kong firms in the 2nd quarter of 2010.

Signing of Cooperation Agreement with the Foshan Lawyers Association

As one of the five cities selected for launching ‘pilot schemes’ in the service sector under the PRD Framework Plan, the Foshan Lawyers Association entered into a cooperation agreement with The Law Society on 26 August at the ‘Foshan - Hong Kong CEPA Cooperation Forum’ staged in Hong Kong.



Translation of HKLS Professional Conduct Guide

At the invitation of the Zhejiang Lawyers Association, MLAC agreed to review a draft Chinese translation of the “The Hong Kong Solicitor’s Guide to Professional conduct (Vol.I) (“The Guide”)” prepared by them subject to approval by The Law Society Guidance Committee. MLAC members, Ms. Emily Lam, Mr. Derek Tsang, Mr. Tony Yen and Mr. Wong Tak Shing were members of a task group set up to review the draft.

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During the year, MLAC also coordinated the following courtesy visits and participated in events organized by the Mainland parties:

Visit to Guangdong and Shenzhen

Thirteen members of The Law Society led by the then Vice President Mr. Huen Wong paid a courtesy visit to the Guangdong Provincial Justice Bureau and the Shenzhen Municipal Justice Bureau on 16 February. The purpose of the visit was to ascertain how the proposals set out in the PRD Framework Plan might have impacted the legal profession in the PRD Region and in Hong Kong. Issues concerning concessions provided for Hong Kong lawyers under CEPA were also discussed. The meetings ended with an encouraging note with parties involved agreeing to step up liaison in the future and to explore ways for further collaboration.

The Law Society and the Shenzhen Lawyers Association also met and agreed that the Councils of the two professional bodies should meet once or twice a year to foster closer relationship. The first meeting by the two Councils was subsequently held on 23 July. Matters concerning the provision of training for young lawyers from Shenzhen, organization of legal seminars, sharing of training materials among lawyers from the two places, and attachment opportunities for Shenzhen lawyers in Hong Kong law firms were discussed. The two parties also agreed that a Joint Working Party should be formed to consider how to take the matters discussed forward. Council members Mr. Junius Ho, Ms. Sylvia Siu, Mr. Joseph Li and the Secretary General represented The Law Society in the Joint Working Party which subsequently met in September, October and November. The discussion mainly focused on the development of the service industry in the Qianhai zone and opportunities for lawyers related to infrastructure works in Hong Kong and Shenzhen.

The 8th China Lawyers Conference

The annual conference was held in Chengdu, Sichuan on 14 and 15 August. A 16-member delegation from The Law Society attended the Conference and President Huen Wong delivered a presentation on the topic of ‘Globalization vs. Internationalization of Legal Practice’ on that occasion.

2009 Straits Law Forum in Fuzhou

Staged in Fuzhou, Fujian on 17 and 18 August, the Forum was attended by lawyers, scholars and legal experts who were given the opportunity to compare notes on their respective legal systems and law practices. Mr. Wilfred Tsui and Ms. Elaine Ho from the MLAC represented The Law Society at the Forum.



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Apart from coordinating events and visits to facilitate professional exchange and identifying areas of cooperation between the legal professions from Hong Kong and the Mainland, MLAC also reviewed from time to time how it might best disseminate information on PRC legal policies, legislative changes, practice issues and other related matters to members of The Law Society.

In 2009, MLAC consolidated all Mainland related resource materials posted on The Law Society official website and grouped them under one single menu bar titled 'Mainland Information' in both the public zone and member's zone to facilitate easy access. The material was updated periodically.

MLAC also produced a Manual in March featuring information about MLAC, its organization, its work lawyers associations in the Mainland, and relevant PRC legislations. The Manual should allow general members and visitors better understand the mandate of the MLAC and its activities. The contents of the Manual were updated periodically.

Contributing articles to the 'Mainland Column' in Hong Kong Lawyer, the official journal of The Law Society was another means of disseminating useful information on legal practices and policies adopted in the Mainland. The table below sets out the articles that MLAC had contributed in 2009.

January	Cross-Border Practice: The Hong Kong Perspective
February	Shenzhen Legal Panorama - December 2008
April	Preliminary Proposals on Further Enhancing Cooperation between HK & Mainland Lawyers to implement the Policies of the Framework for Reform & Development for the Pearl River Delta Region 2008-2020
June	Liberalisation Measures on Legal Services under CEPA
August	Cooperation between Guangdong & HK in Cross-Border Legal Services: Recent Developments
September	Opportunities in China for Hong Kong Legal Profession
October	Entering into Cooperation Framework Agreement with Foshan Lawyers Association
November	Developing Synergies in the Cross Strait Four Regions Legal Services Industry

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Other activities coordinated by MLAC during the year include:

Date	Courtesy visits to Mainland parties/participation in events organized by Mainland parties
14 January	Trip to Shenzhen by overseas lawyers attending the Opening of Legal Year in Hong Kong
16 February	Visit to Guangdong and Shenzhen by Law Society delegation
23 February	Visit by the Deputy Minister of Justice, Zhao Dacheng
4 March	Visit by Mr. Shen Tian Feng, Vice President of Zhejiang Lawyers Association
18 March	Visit by delegation from Foshan Lawyers Association
25 March	Visit by representatives from the Shanghai Bar Association
31 March	Visit by Shandong Lawyers Association
21 April	Participation in HKTDC 'Seminar on HK Financial & Professional Services' in Changchuan
23 April	Visit to Foshan Lawyers Association
24 May	Participation in HKTDC 'HK Business Mission to Henan'
2 June	Visit to the Shenzhen Lawyers Association
2 June	Visit by PRC trainees under DOJ's sponsorship
4 June	Visit by a group of senior mainland judges attending training programme at the City University of Hong Kong
24 July	Visit by students from Shantou University Law school
7 September	Visit by senior officials from various Mainland Justice Bureaus undergoing training in HK under DOJ's sponsorship
17 September	Visit by officials from the Guangdong Justice Bureau
21 October	Visit by a group of judges from Dongguang
5 November	Visit by officials from the Ministry of Justice
12 November	Visit by officials from Jiangsu Justice Bureau and lawyers undergoing training at the HKU SPACE
30 November	Visit by officials from the Hefei Justice Bureau and representatives from the Hefei Lawyers Association
15 December	Visit by delegation from the Tianjin Economic Technological Development Area

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COMMUNITY RELATIONS

For decades, lawyers in Hong Kong have volunteered service in community projects and pro bono work, whether in their individual capacity or as members of their firms. Nowadays, more and more lawyers are prepared to engage themselves in voluntary work while an increasing number of firms have devoted resources to support community projects.

The Law Society fulfills its social responsibilities through projects coordinated by its Community Relations Committee (“CRC”) which has in the past initiated many programmes catering for the needs of various sections of the community and one of its signature programme is “Law and the New Generation” programme under which solicitors volunteered as speakers in secondary schools.

Members of the Community Relations Committee:

Melissa K. PANG (*Chairman*)

IP Shing Hing

Bronco M. T. BUT

Grace W. C. BUT (*member up to October*)

Serina K. S. CHAN

Isabella W. H. CHAN

Alexander Y. H. CHANG

Charles C. C. CHAU

Eric C. H. Heung (*joined in March*)

Secretary: Director of Communications

Anthony W. M. KWAN

Alexander H. S. LEUNG

MAK Hon Ming

MAN Kwok Leung

Yim SAUW (*joined in March*)

Patricia WIJAYA

Cecilia G. WONG (*joined in March*)

Peter K. C. YIP (*joined in March*)

In 2009, the CRC took a step forward and launched the “Solicitors Care and Share” Programme (“the Programme”) under which a series of activities are organized for children, youths and the elderly commencing May. Highlights of activities organized under the Programme were:

• ‘Path Builders’ Mentorship Programme 2009

In support of the recommendations put forward by the Task Force on Youth Drug Abuse chaired by the Secretary for Justice Mr. Wong Yan Lung, SC to launch of a ‘Path Builders’ mentorship programme for providing guidance to youngsters and help them stay away from drugs, The Law Society launched a 6-month Mentorship Programme (“The Mentorship Programme”).

Phase one of the Mentorship Programme was successfully completed in January 2010. About 60 solicitors and trainee solicitors volunteered as mentors for a total of 93 students from 11 schools in the Yuen Long district.

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Under the Mentorship Programme, a series of activities were held to facilitate communication between the mentors and mentees including:

- A briefing for the mentors was held in early June to introduce the objective and the logistics of the Mentorship Programme and prepare the mentors for meeting with their mentees at the launching ceremony at the Noah's Ark Resort on 27 June;
- a visit to the Info Drug Centre to educate the young mentees on the damaging effect of various drugs and how drug-taking might affect their lives;
- a lunch at the Hong Kong Park where the mentees also have the opportunity to meet with members of other professional bodies;
- participation in the '9.9.9. Anti-Drug Campaign;
- delivery of mooncakes to the homes of elderly living on their own in Tuen Mun;
- orientation and sharing session for mentors participation in Law Week 2009 programme; and
- day camp marking the close of Phase One of the Mentorship Programme.



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The successful implantation of Phase One of the Mentorship Programme was the result of the concerted effort to the Working Party in charge of the project, support from the schools, the Secretary for Justice, the Narcotics Division of the Security Bureau, and other organizations and individuals who have in one way or another contributed to the Mentorship Programme. The Law Society's initiative in launching the Mentorship Programme and its efforts generated compliments from government officials, school principals and attracted media attention.

Caring Cooking Competition

The Competition aimed at promoting community service among members of the legal profession and developing partnership and cooperation between them and the NGOs. It was held on 12 July with a total of 18 competing teams. Solicitors, barristers and representatives from the Department of Justice and law firms signed up as contestants and raised fund for various NGOs. All teams prepared 2 dishes including a self-nominated dish using any ingredients at their choice and a creative dish using eggs as the main ingredient.

The Secretary for Justice Mr. Wong Yan Lung, SC, The Hon Mr. Justice Woo, GBS, Mr. Keith Yeung SC, the Hon. Secretary of the Hong Kong Bar Association, renowned chef Mr. Yeung Koon Yat, food critic Ms. Doreen Leung, and President Huen Wong formed the panel of judges.



All participating teams demonstrated exceptional talents in cookery and the food they prepared received compliments from the panel of judges as well as the audience. Taking into account the popularity of this event and raising more funds for the NGOs, charity calendars were produced featuring the winning dishes and the recipes for sale to Law Society members.



The Standing Committee on External Affairs

Mooncakes for the elderly

To show our love and care for the elderly during festive occasions, mentors and mentees visited and delivered mooncakes to the elderly in Tuen Mun for them to enjoy during the Mid-Autumn Festival. Those who have participated in the event found the experience to be meaningful.



Rice-dumplings for the elderly

In celebration of the Tuen Ng Festival, a group of 40 lawyers, families and staff of law firms attended a demonstration of making rice-dumplings by elderly members of the Agency for Volunteer Service Elderly Centre in the Western District on 16 May. The elderly enjoyed the experience as much as the participating lawyers and their friends and families. Together they made hundreds of rice-dumplings. The day ended with volunteers presenting the rice-dumplings as personal gifts to the elderly who all walked away with smiling faces.



The Law Society was thankful to members' support towards activities organized under the "Solicitors Share and Care" Programme to encourage participation in community service by all members of The Law Society.

Apart from the list of activities initiated or undertaken by Community Relations Committee ("the Committee") mentioned above, the Committee was also involved in the following activities in the year:

Pro Bono Roundtable

Hong Kong Pro Bono Roundtable is a group made up of representatives from approximately thirty law firms who met on a quarterly basis to discuss pro bono opportunities in both Hong Kong and the broader Asia region. At the invitation of the Roundtable, Mr. Mak Hong Ming, a member of the Committee and Chairman of the Working Party on 'Path Builders' Mentorship Programme attended a meeting of the Roundtable in September. The meeting offered an opportunity for The Law Society to share its experience in encouraging volunteering among solicitors and at the same time to better understand the types of pro bono work that firms engaged.

The Standing Committee on External Affairs

Internship Scheme for secondary five students in Yuen Long and Tin Shui Wai

At the invitation of the Hong Kong Coalition of Profession Services, The Law Society supported its call to invite law firms to provide a two-week internship for Form 5 students attending schools in the Yuen Long and Tin Shui Wai districts. The Committee was entrusted with the responsibility to coordinate this activity. In response, 17 law firms offered placements for 24 students and provided an allowance of HK\$100 per workday to each student.



Law and New Generation

This programme was first launched in 2003 for the purpose of enriching secondary students' legal knowledge. Member of the CRC volunteered as speakers at schools. In 2009, over 50 talks were given at various schools covering general legal knowledge and laws governing drug use.

“Legal Mail Box” Column in Sing Tao Daily

The ‘Legal Mail Box’ Column published in Sing Tao Daily on a weekly basis has been launched since 2006. Articles published were authored by members of The Law Society on a voluntary basis. A vetting group formed under the CRC was responsible for reviewing the articles which were normally presented in a Q & A format covering topical legal subjects.

Authoring articles for newspapers on a weekly basis was a highly demanding task because of the tight timeline. The Law Society was grateful to the group of writers for volunteering their services.

Community Talks

The CRC coordinated among speakers for giving talks at the request of government departments and non-profit making organizations. A wide range of legal subjects were covered and the most common topics are the making of a will, divorce, building management issues and formation of owners corporations, criminal law. Again, increase in requests for speakers has added to the burden of the CRC in identifying speakers for the talks.



External Affairs Department