

Judiciary launches two-year pilot scheme for live webcast of court proceedings in Court of Final Appeal

The following is issued on behalf of the Judiciary:

The Judiciary today (March 11) announced that it will launch a pilot scheme for the live broadcasting of substantive appellate proceedings in the Court of Final Appeal (CFA) for a period of two years starting from April 1, 2025.

Open justice is a key to maintaining public confidence in the judicial system and upholding the rule of law. Subject to the overriding consideration of the due administration of justice, live broadcasting of judicial proceedings beyond court premises will enhance the transparency of court procedures and strengthen public confidence in the judicial process.

The Judiciary conducted four trial runs of live broadcasting of court proceedings in four selected cases of the CFA vide the CFA website last year for testing the technical feasibility of the arrangements, as well as the logistical and operational details.

Having reviewed the arrangements of the trial runs, the Judiciary plans to implement live broadcasting for all substantive appeal cases in the CFA, except for the following categories of cases:

- cases where the protection of the interests of children or mentally disabled adults, privacy interests, trade secrets or commercial confidentiality, etc is required; and
- proceedings related to national security, high-profile public order cases, or highly politically charged cases.

These exceptions are aimed to preserve judicial decorum, prevent excessive pressure on litigants and lawyers, and safeguard the fair and proper administration of justice. When such exceptions apply, hearings remain open to the public, who may still attend in person as they are always entitled to do, unless otherwise directed by the CFA.

The first two CFA hearings will be broadcasted live on April 1 and 7 this year.

Arrangements for public access and viewing of the live broadcasting via the CFA website will be similar to those of the trial runs last year as follows:

- Members of the public may view the live webcast of the CFA substantive appellate proceedings on the CFA website via desktop computers or mobile devices installed with common browsers.
- The core written materials will be made available on the CFA website before the hearings. Relevant information of the live webcast will be provided nearer the time of the court proceedings on the websites of the CFA and the Judiciary.
- Members of the public, including the media, must not record the live webcast or use the live broadcast footage for any purpose. Measures such as digital rights management commonly found on streaming platforms will be put in place to deter unauthorised recording, screen capturing and illegal distribution of the live broadcast footage.

After the live webcast ends, the videos of the court proceedings will be uploaded to and kept on the CFA website for one month after the hearing date to allow easy access and flexible viewing.

Following the enactment of the Courts (Remote Hearing) Bill which is expected to resume its second reading debate in the Legislative Council in late March, the offence provisions relating to unauthorised recording and broadcasting of court proceedings will apply to the live broadcasting of the CFA hearings during the pilot period.

The live broadcasting will be conducted on the Judiciary's in-house platform under the pilot scheme, replacing the outsourcing arrangements used for the four trial runs. This approach aims to ensure the most cost-effective use of public resources.

Upon completion of the pilot scheme, the Judiciary will review and consider long-term arrangements for live broadcasting of court proceedings outside court premises.