

West Kowloon Mediation Centre opens

The West Kowloon Mediation Centre (WKMC) had its opening today (November 8) with a Pilot Mediation Scheme launched at the same time. The significant project marks the Government's commitment to promote the use of mediation and to enhance public awareness of its benefits.

The WKMC is a unique facility dedicated to mediation. It is located adjacent to the West Kowloon Law Courts Building, which houses the Small Claims Tribunal (SCT). The Pilot Mediation Scheme will be operated at the WKMC by the Joint Mediation Helpline Office (JMHO), an independent co-ordinator appointed by the Government. Jointly founded by eight professional organisations, the JMHO is a non-profit making, charitable institution in Hong Kong.

Under the Pilot Mediation Scheme, mediation services will be provided to litigants of SCT cases that are suitable for mediation and other suitable cases. Parties to suitable cases will be required to pay a nominal, all-inclusive application fee of \$200 each.

As the independent co-ordinator, the JMHO will be responsible for matching cases with suitable mediators on the WKMC panel of mediators, and for providing all necessary administrative, logistical and other support to the parties.

Officiating at the opening of the WKMC were the Secretary for Justice, Ms Teresa Cheng, SC; the Vice-President of the Court of Appeal of the High Court, Mr Justice Johnson Lam; and the Chairman of the JMHO, Mr Antony Man. The swift implementation of the Pilot Mediation Scheme is an important milestone in encouraging the more extensive use of mediation in Hong Kong to resolve disputes. It also shows the Government's determination to promote the use of mediation as a time- and cost-effective alternative to litigation in resolving disputes. Implementation of the scheme will be subject to review on a regular basis.