

URA and JMHO sign Memorandum of Understanding on provision of mediation venues

The Urban Renewal Authority (URA) and Joint Mediation Helpline Office (JMHO) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the Pilot Scheme for Community Venue for Mediation (Pilot Scheme) today (12 June 2014) on the provision of meeting facilities for the Pilot Scheme.

According to the MOU, the URA will provide meeting facilities at its Urban Renewal Resource Centre (URRC) at No. 6 Fuk Tsun Street in Tai Kok Tsui to residents in the service areas of the Authority for holding mediation meetings relating to disputes on urban renewal, building repair and maintenance, property valuation, construction and so forth.

Both organisations hailed the partnering as a breakthrough in expediting the development of mediation services in old districts.

Attending the signing ceremony today were the Executive Director (Commercial & Operations) of the URA, Mr Pius Cheng, Advisor to JMHO, Mr Chan Bing-woon, Law Officer (Civil Law) of the Department of Justice, Mr Benedict Lai, Assistant Director of Home Affairs Department, Mr Franco Kwok, and Vice Chairman of Yau Tsim Mong District Council, Ms Ko Po-ling. Putting the signatures to the MOU were Head of Community Development of the URA, Mr Simon Wong, and Chairman of JMHO, Mr Antony Man.

Mr Cheng said, in line with the objective of the setting up of the URRC, the collaboration between the Authority and JMHO to provide mediation facilities at a convenient location will help promote extensive use of mediation services in all strata of the community.

"Our cooperation will create synergy effects on using URA's existing resources to further expand mediation services. The URA will continue to support the development of mediation services in relation to urban renewal, subject to the availability of resources." Mr Cheng also thanked the Department of Justice and Home Affairs Department for making the joint venture possible.

Also attending the ceremony, Mr Antony Man of JMHO said a cosy and a suitable venue in the urban area would facilitate mediation services. Mediation parties need not concern with the leasing and expenses of the venues, making mediation services economical to pursue. He believed that JMHO's cooperation with the URA would encourage the general public to resolve disputes through mediation.

Mr Lai said the Steering Committee on Mediation set up by the Secretary for Justice is committed to promoting more extensive and effective use of mediation, including identifying suitable and affordable community venues for mediation. He said: "Since the introduction of the Practice Direction on Mediation by the Judiciary in 2010, there has been staunch support from stakeholders and better understanding of mediation services among the general public. The Public Education and Publicity Sub-committee under the Steering Committee will continue to strengthen public education on mediation."

Upon signing of the MOU, the mediation facilities at URRC are immediately available for public use. Any parties that are interested in using the mediation facilities at the URRC could apply through JMHO. A standard fee of \$48 per hour will be charged, which would be waived for pro bono mediators. For details, please contact JMHO at 2901 1224.

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