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Courts will continue to leverage on digital technology

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KOTA KINABALU: The Sabah and Sarawak courts will continue to leverage on digital technology in its justice delivery system to ensure continued access to justice for all stakeholders and members of the public.

Chief Justice of Sabah and Sarawak (CJSS) Tan Sri Abang Iskandar Abang Hashim said in tandem with the various initiatives particularly in light of the recent Covid-19 pandemic, it is crucial to continue to improve their system in order to keep them current, adaptable, versatile and capable of ensuring that the public continue to receive their services.

"Hence the need to adjust our work process according to the changes that happened around us. We know that worldwide the judiciary in other jurisdictions are working towards digitalisation of court's processes so as to make sure that access to justice is delivered not only fairly but also expeditiously.

"The reality of the future of the world is technology and any industry refuses to adapt to technological advancement will find it hard to compete as well as sustain the world of the 4.0 Industrial Revolution (IR4.0) and that includes public offices or



departments and the court too is not immune," he said.

He further said that whatever technology we decide to adopt or any advancement that we create, justice of the case before us must remain our top priority.

"The Artificial Intelligence in Court Sentencing (AiCOS) and Video Conferencing System of Sabah and Sarawak Courts (V-COSS) are yet again proofs that technology and justice can thrive in a symbiotic ecosystem," he said at the launching ceremony of AiCOS and V-COSS at the Kota Kinabalu Courts Complex conference hall on Monday.

Abang Iskandar further said that the enhancement and expansion of AiCOS and V-COSS are specific efforts that have been undertaken to achieve overarching objective.

"AiCOS had been implemented since 2020 as a pilot project that aimed to encourage consistency and parity in sentencing. It is heartening to note that the

implementation of AiCOS has received numerous recognitions both locally and internationally since it first launched on Jan 18, 2020.

"Previously the system could only provide recommendation and analysis on sentencing for the offence of possession of scheduled drugs under Section 12(2) of the Dangerous Drugs Act which is punishable under Section 12(3) of the same Act," said Abang Iskandar.

He also said that with the current improvement, the system is expanded to the offences of theft in dwelling house under Section 380 of the Penal Code. More parameters have been included in the system which will improve the accuracy, thus the probative value of the recommended sentences.

"AiCOS guides and provides a baseline for the judge to assess the appropriate sentence of by following or departing from the recommended punishment. In appropriate cases, the magistrate may decide to follow the recommended punishments proposed by AiCOS but that decision to follow lies always with the magistrate.

"As for the video conferencing system which was already in place

since 2007 but was rebranded as V-COSS and enhanced with more advances features to accommodate the needs of more users and integrate it with new and emerging technologies," he said, adding that there are 11 prison locations across Sabah and Sarawak that currently are using V-COSS including for the conduct of remand proceedings.

He said that it was undeniable that the use of remote communication technology for court hearings in Sabah and Sarawak for the past 15 years has been proved to be efficient and accepted as a norm amongst members of the legal fraternity.

In a press release by the court house, it was stated among others that VCOSS and AiCOS are two of the new features, approved and funded by the Federal Government in 2020, under the E-Kehakiman Sabah and Sarawak (eKSS) project.

It was further stated that the project will be developed and implemented over a three-year period beginning August 2020. It is anticipated that AiCOS for section 380 of the Penal Code will be fully deployed and operational in the courts in Sabah and Sarawak by the first quarter of 2023.



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SUMMARIES

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