

15 judges selected to sit on new panel

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Fifteen retired or serving judges have been recommended as non-permanent members of the Court of Final Appeal bench and will be endorsed by provisional legislators today.

The move effectively makes the court ready to hear appeals, but last night the panel was criticised by ousted legislator Emily Lau Wai-hing for not being authoritative enough.

The eleven from Hong Kong are former chief secretary and chief justice Sir Denys Roberts; retired Court of Appeal judges Sir Alan Huggins, Arthur McMullin, Philip Clough and Neil Macdougall; retired Court of Appeal vice-presidents Sir Derek Cons, William Silke and Kutlu Fuad; Court of Appeal vice-presidents Mr Justice Noel Power and Mr Justice Gerald Nazareth; and Justice of Appeal Barry Mortimer.

Those from overseas are former Australian High Court chief justice Sir Anthony Mason, Australian High Court justice Sir Daryl Dawson, former Court of New Zealand president Lord Cooke and former New Zealand Court of Appeal judge Sir Edward Somers.

The term of the appointments is three years and most of the judges will be officially available from Monday.

Secretary for Justice Elsie Leung Oi-sie will tell legislators today that the criteria used to select the panel included candidates' judicial and professional track records, whether they were still judicially active or held other public offices, and whether they had adopted a political stance likely to render their appointment as inappropriate.

The maximum number of judges allowed on the panel is 30 and Ms Leung said it would eventually be expanded.

But Ms Lau was "stunned and disappointed" by the appointments.

"I don't think [the local choices] are up to the standard of judges in the Privy Council of Britain," she said.

Former Executive Councillor Dennis Chang Khan-lee SC and former Bar Association chairmen Gladys Li Chi-wei SC and Jacqueline Leong SC were better candidates, she said.