

Transcript of SJ's media session after opening of Legal Services Forum in Shanghai

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Following is the transcript of remarks (English portion) by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Wong Yan Lung, SC, after attending the opening ceremony of the Hong Kong Legal Services Forum in Shanghai:

Reporter: You met with the Vice-minister of Justice today. Is there any target for opening the domestic market for Hong Kong lawyers to practise PRC law here because we know that domestic lawyers can practise Hong Kong law and they have been coming to Hong Kong.

Secretary for Justice: PRC lawyers cannot practise Hong Kong law yet. There are a number of mega firms from China coming to Hong Kong. But you have to understand that they are registered in Hong Kong as foreign lawyers. They cannot practise Hong Kong law unless they get themselves qualified as Hong Kong lawyers. As for Hong Kong lawyers coming into the Chinese legal services market, you are aware of CEPA. Lawyers from Hong Kong are not always requesting for more openings or opportunities. For example, some of the things high on their agenda, which we have taken note of and which we are speaking to the Ministry of Justice about, include Hong Kong lawyers getting fully qualified as Mainland lawyers after passing the relevant judicial examinations. At the moment, they cannot conduct a full practice. There are limitations on what they can do. For example, in relation to litigation work, they are still very much confined to Hong Kong related matrimonial cases and the like. One area that they would like to have expansion is the further liberalisation of the area of practice. Another is in terms of engaging local lawyers in China. At the moment, there is also restriction. But things are being opened up gradually. You may also be aware of CEPA 6, through which we have a pilot scheme in Guangdong where there are further liberalisation measures enabling greater cooperation between Hong Kong lawyers and their Guangdong counterparts. We look forward to seeing the demonstration of success of the pilot scheme so that we can rely on that to further expand the scheme in the area more extensively. We see the openings. It is very important that we get to understand each other and get to understand what each other can offer. Thank you.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

Ends/Tuesday, July 6, 2010