

Pilot scheme for Hong Kong and Macao lawyers to practise in nine Mainland municipalities in GBA extended for three years and practice experience threshold lowered

The General Office of the State Council published the revised pilot measures for Hong Kong and Macao legal practitioners to obtain Mainland practice qualifications and to practise as lawyers in the nine Mainland municipalities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) yesterday (September 28), so as to implement the decision passed by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC) early this month to extend the period of the pilot scheme for Hong Kong and Macao legal practitioners to practise in the nine Mainland municipalities in the GBA until October 4, 2026. Pursuant to the revised pilot measures, which will come into operation on October 5 this year, the practice experience threshold for Hong Kong and Macao legal practitioners to enrol in the GBA Legal Professional Examination (GBA Examination) has also been lowered from five years to three years.

The Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, said, "I am deeply thankful to the Central Government for attaching high importance to the expectations of the Hong Kong legal sector and for revising the pilot measures, thereby providing the legal sector with more room for development in the GBA and enabling them to seize the unlimited opportunities brought by the country's overall development and leverage Hong Kong's advantages to meet the country's needs. I also thank authorities including the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), the Department of Justice of Guangdong Province, the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, and the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region for proactively striving to implement the relevant suggestions, and for their tremendous efforts in taking forward the extension of the period of the pilot scheme and lowering the practice experience threshold. The Department of Justice (DoJ) will continue to work closely with authorities such as the MoJ and the Department of Justice of Guangdong Province to encourage more Hong Kong legal practitioners to enrol in the GBA Examination, thereby further showcasing the advantages and achievements of the GBA lawyers' practice regime, and nurturing more foreign-related legal talent with dual qualifications for the country."

According to the MoJ's information, as at September 28 this year, 357 Hong Kong and Macao lawyers have obtained the Lawyer's License (GBA). The DoJ plans to organise, in co-operation with the Supreme People's Court, the MoJ and the High

People's Court of Guangdong Province, the GBA lawyers' practical legal training course within this year, covering theoretical and practical modules, in order to enhance the practical knowledge of Hong Kong legal practitioners practicing in the GBA of the Mainland courts' handling of different areas of civil and commercial matters.

The NPCSC decided in August 2020 to authorise the State Council to conduct a pilot scheme for eligible Hong Kong and Macao legal practitioners to provide legal services in the nine Mainland municipalities in the GBA on specified civil and commercial matters to which the Mainland laws apply, after passing the GBA Examination and having obtained the Lawyer's License (GBA). The pilot scheme is for a period of three years and will originally expire on October 4 this year.

The DoJ will continue to keep in close contact with the two legal professional bodies to understand the legal sector's concerns relating to the implementation of the pilot scheme for GBA lawyers' practice, and convey their concerns, as appropriate, to authorities such as the MoJ and the Department of Justice of Guangdong Province.

Ends/Friday, September 29, 2023