

Legal Week GBA Forum strengthens "soft connectivity" of legal and dispute resolution practices in GBA (with photos)

A forum themed "Gateway to the Opportunities in the GBA" (Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area), co-organised by the Department of Justice (DoJ), the Department of Justice of Guangdong Province, and the Office of the Secretary for Administration and Justice of Macao, was successfully held today (November 9). It attracted over 1 000 registrations from Hong Kong, Mainland and overseas for participation in a hybrid mode, including about 200 representatives from the legal sectors of the Mainland and Macao coming to Hong Kong to attend in person, to discuss the promotion of "soft connectivity" in the legal and dispute resolution practices of the three places.

As one of the highlights of the Hong Kong Legal Week 2023, the forum under the theme "Gateway to the Opportunities in the GBA" was officiated by the Deputy Secretary for Justice, Mr Cheung Kwok-kwan; the Director-General of the Department of Justice of Guangdong Province, Mr Chen Xudong; and the Director of the Legal Affairs Bureau of Macao, Ms Leong Weng In. The Director of the Bureau of Lawyers' Work of the Ministry of Justice, Mr Tian Xin, delivered a keynote speech, introducing the extension of the pilot scheme for Hong Kong and Macao legal practitioners to practise in the GBA, recently authorised by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the current situation and the next step in taking forward the relevant work.

At the forum, legal practitioners and scholars from the three places gathered together to explore from various perspectives on various issues, such as strengthening legal co-operation and the interface of legal systems, better nurturing legal talents, enhancing the depth and breadth of participation by Hong Kong and Macao legal sectors in Mainland legal proceedings, so as to join hands in promoting the rule of law development in the GBA and high-level opening up of the GBA. Also featured unprecedentedly in this forum was a GBA mock court session on a case involving a cross-border trading of goods and loan agreement, with a view to illustrating the similarities and differences in substantive laws and procedures relevant to the handling of cross-border commercial disputes among the three places and exploring ways to strengthen collaboration of the legal professionals in the GBA in order to build a rule-based business environment together.

Also set up for the first time are exhibition booths dedicated to promotion of legal services, where representatives from Hong Kong, Macao and the nine Mainland cities in the GBA introduced to forum participants the new developments and opportunities of the legal services in the GBA, and answered enquiries in person. eBRAM International Online Dispute Resolution Centre also featured an exhibition booth at the venue to showcase to the participants its newly launched deal-making portal as well as the features and strengths of its online dispute resolution services.

In his opening remarks, Mr Cheung stressed that given the paramount importance of the GBA to the overall modernisation of the country, it is therefore necessary to continue to promote the interface of the rules and mechanisms of the three places in the GBA to achieve "soft connectivity".

He hoped that all parties could work together in turning the "differences" among systems into "benefits", thereby facilitating the exchanges and interactions between people and businesses.

He said that the DoJ is also actively implementing various measures to facilitate the public and the businesses to resolve cross-boundary disputes, such as enhancing the mechanism for mutual legal assistance in civil and commercial matters between Hong Kong and the Mainland, promoting the extension of the measures of "allowing Hong Kong-invested enterprises to adopt Hong Kong law" and "allowing Hong Kong-invested enterprises to choose for arbitration to be seated in Hong Kong", and taking forward the setting up of a standard online mediation platform for the GBA to support the synergistic development of the legal sector of the three places.

He also mentioned that legal practitioners from Hong Kong and Macao are important contributors to enhancing the rule of law in the GBA. He hoped that this forum could provide more innovative ideas to facilitate the concerted efforts of all parties in making quality legal service a brand name for the GBA.

This afternoon, the DoJ and the Law Society of Hong Kong co-organised a GBA Young Lawyers Forum under the theme of "Building a Future Together under GBA Opportunities". Representatives from the legal, political and business sectors discussed the roles of the legal professionals in the rule of law development in the GBA. Young legal practitioners from the three places then shared their experiences in practising in the GBA through an interactive session in understanding the three jurisdictions, and explored how the young lawyers could contribute to the country's

high-quality development with their expertise.

Interested parties are welcome to visit the dedicated website at www.legalweek.hk or webcast.info.gov.hk for broadcast.

Ends/Thursday, November 9, 2023