

DSJ promotes Hong Kong's strengths in legal and dispute resolution services in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (with photos/video)

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The Deputy Secretary for Justice, Mr Cheung Kwok-kwan, led a delegation comprising representatives from the Law Society of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Bar Association and the dispute resolution services sector to participate in the inaugural Riyadh International Disputes Week (RIDW) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on March 5 and 6 (Riyadh time). The objective of the visit is to promote Hong Kong's legal and dispute resolution services, enhance co-operation between Hong Kong and the Belt and Road region, explore more opportunities for the industry, and strengthen Hong Kong's status as an international legal and dispute resolution services centre in the Asia-Pacific region.

This was the first time that the Department of Justice has led a delegation to the Middle East to participate in an international legal and dispute resolution event. The RIDW brings together key players from the dispute resolution sector from more than 65 countries and regions to explore developments and opportunities in dispute resolution in the Middle East and promote collaborations and exchanges. Mr Cheung and his delegation attended various events at the RIDW.

They first attended a thematic event, "Hong Kong and Riyadh: Legal and Dispute Resolution Services for Businesses along the Belt and Road", organised by the Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre, on March 5. The event attracted more than 150 registrants from the business and legal sectors in the Middle East and other regions. The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Mr Chen Weiqing, also attended and spoke at the event.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Mr Cheung stressed that Hong Kong enjoys the strong support of the motherland whilst being closely connected to the world. Apart from being the only common law jurisdiction within the country, it is also a "super connector" serving as an important bridge between China and Saudi Arabia as well as the rest of the world, which gives unparalleled advantages in offering legal and dispute resolution services.

Mr Cheung said that Hong Kong has long been a renowned centre for international arbitration. With the staunch support of the Central Government, the headquarters of the

International Organization for Mediation, the world's first inter-governmental international legal body dedicated to settling international disputes by mediation, will be housed in Hong Kong, which fully demonstrates the country's confidence in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, the Department of Justice will take forward the establishment of the Hong Kong International Legal Talents Training Academy this year, sparing no effort in the training of legal talent.

At the luncheon of the thematic event, Mr Cheung told the participants from the business and legal sectors in the Middle East and other regions that the Arrangement on Reciprocal Recognition and Enforcement of Judgments in Civil and Commercial Matters by the Courts of the Mainland and of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has come into operation, making cross-border enforcement of judgments more cost-effective and streamlined. Hong Kong is the only jurisdiction to have an arrangement with the Mainland on reciprocal recognition and enforcement of judgments with such a wide coverage, which will help businesses in the Belt and Road region to explore the Mainland market.

During the panel discussion session at the thematic event, members of the delegation briefed participants on Hong Kong's comprehensive and diversified legal and dispute resolution services, as well as the opportunities for investing and doing business in the city. They also attended other events at the RIDW afterwards to enhance exchanges.

Mr Cheung and the delegation attended the 3rd International Conference and Exhibition organised by the Saudi Center for Commercial Arbitration (SCCA) today (March 6), gathering senior officials and industry experts from various regions to discuss the development of dispute resolution in Saudi Arabia and around the world.

At the RIDW events, Mr Cheung also met briefly with the Secretary of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, Ms Anna Joubin-Bret, and the Secretary-General of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, Dr Marcin Czepelak, to exchange views.

In addition, during his stay in Riyadh, Mr Cheung and the delegation met with the Vice-Minister of Justice of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Dr Najem bin Abdullah al-Zaid, and representatives of the Saudi Bar Association, briefing them on the legal and dispute resolution services in Hong Kong and exploring ways to strengthen co-operation

in legal services between the two places. Mr Cheung also visited the local office of an international law firm to gain a better understanding of the Middle East's need for cross-jurisdictional legal services.

Mr Cheung also called on the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Mr Chen Weiqing, at a dinner gathering and thanked Mr Chen for supporting Hong Kong's promotion of legal and dispute resolution services in the Middle East. The Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Professor Sun Dong, who was also on duty visit in the Middle East, attended the dinner as well.

Mr Cheung and members of the delegation will attend a dinner event organised by the SCCA and conclude the visit afterwards. They will return to Hong Kong tomorrow (March 7).

Ends/Wednesday, March 6, 2024