

LCQ12: Supporting judicial facilities in Northern Metropolis

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Thomas So and a written reply by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, in the Legislative Council today (May 20):

Question:

The Government has established an industry park company and is formulating packages of preferential policies for the Northern Metropolis to attract Mainland and overseas enterprises to participate in its development. As the population within the Northern Metropolis gradually increases and industries move in, there is also a need to construct supporting judicial facilities. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has plans to establish within the Northern Metropolis judicial institutions such as District Courts and Magistrates' Courts, as well as dispute resolution infrastructures such as arbitration centres and mediation centres; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it has considered establishing specialised judicial mechanisms or industry-oriented arbitration and mediation services tailored to the emerging industries prioritised for development in the Northern Metropolis (including but not limited to innovation and technology, advanced manufacturing, and intellectual property-intensive industries), to handle related commercial and industry-academia-research disputes; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it will use the Northern Metropolis as an "early and pilot implementation" platform to explore the alignment of rules and the integration of mechanisms regarding judicial and legal services with other cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In response to the question raised by Dr the Hon Thomas So, upon consulting the Development Bureau (DEVB) and the Judiciary, the consolidated reply is as follows:

(1) and (2) Following the Judiciary's advice, the DEVB has already reserved land in the Hung Shui Kiu New Development Area for building a Magistrates' Court. Should the Judiciary further require establishment of other levels of courts in the Northern Metropolis (NM), the DEVB will render full support.

As there is ample space in the NM, the DEVB considers that adequate land or space could be identified to meet various service demands.

On the other hand, Hong Kong's dispute resolution industry and the mediation and arbitration services provided are industry-led and market-driven. The Hong Kong Government introduces policy initiatives from time to time to facilitate the formulation of dispute resolution schemes in specific areas, encouraging the use of mediation and/or arbitration to resolve disputes. These initiatives are not limited to the NM, but are intended to benefit and cover Hong Kong as a whole.

(3) With the support of the Central Government and the joint efforts of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao governments, Hong Kong has significant achievements in interfaces of regulatory frameworks and mechanisms, including:

(a) Developing "Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) Standards", including The Greater Bay Area Cross-boundary Disputes Mediation Model Rules and "The Greater Bay Area Mediator Code of Conduct Best Practice", and jointly promulgating the GBA Mediator Panel 2025 and the GBA Arbitrator Panel, to strengthen the interface of dispute resolution talent within the GBA, so as to reduce the costs of businesses in resolving cross-boundary disputes;

(b) Successfully extending the applicable scope of the measures of "allowing Hong Kong-invested enterprises to adopt Hong Kong law" and "allowing Hong Kong-invested enterprises to choose Hong Kong as the seat of arbitration", which provide Hong Kong-invested enterprises with more options of legal and dispute resolution services;

(c) Working closely with the authorities including the Ministry of Justice and the Department of Justice of Guangdong Province in their work to facilitate the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Legal Professional Examination (GBA Examination). Currently, over 630 Hong Kong and Macao legal practitioners have passed the GBA Examination and obtained the Lawyer's License (GBA) to provide legal services in the nine Mainland municipalities in the GBA on specified civil and commercial matters to which the Mainland laws apply; and

(d) Continuously enhancing the mutual legal assistance arrangements between Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland. Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland have signed 10 arrangements regarding mutual legal assistance in civil and commercial matters, covering assistance in legal proceedings, arbitration matters as well as reciprocal recognition and enforcement of judgments. In April this year, the Department of Justice and the Supreme People's Court successfully signed the latest arrangement – Arrangement on Mutual Service of Judicial Documents in Civil and Commercial Proceedings between the Mainland and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, with an aim to further promote the alignment of mechanisms and rules between the two legal systems.

Hong Kong will continue working closely with the relevant Mainland authorities, local bureaux/departments of Guangdong and Macao and other stakeholders to, subject to the full compliance with the Constitution, the Basic Law and the legal systems of

Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, explore suitable matters and measures for aligning mechanisms and rules to utilise the NM as an "early and pilot implementation" platform.

Ends/Wednesday, May 20, 2026