

LCQ4: Building AI foundational large model for legal sector in Greater Bay Area

Following is a question by the Hon Wu Ying-peng and a reply by the Deputy Secretary for Justice, Dr Cheung Kwok-kwan, in the Legislative Council today (May 27):

Question:

Regarding the development of an AI foundational large model for the legal sector in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) in light of the unique position of "one country, two systems and three jurisdictions" in the GBA, whether the Government will take the lead in studying the development of the aforesaid large model and lead the construction of the Hong Kong component, while formulating clear development objectives, an implementation roadmap and a timetable to align with national development plans; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) in the process of promoting the interoperability of legal databases and the sharing of computing-power resources across the three places, whether the Government will cooperate with relevant departments in Guangdong and Macao to establish a governance mechanism covering data security, critical infrastructure security, and compliance reviews for alignment, so as to safeguard the steady development of cross-boundary legal services and judicial collaboration; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether the Government will expeditiously enhance regulations and ethical guidelines related to legal technology (lawtech), and incorporate content such as AI literacy, data ethics, and lawtech application into the core curriculum of the legal profession, so as to cultivate virtuous and able interdisciplinary talent who possess a perspective of both law and technology; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In response to the questions raised by the Hon Wu Ying-peng, the reply incorporating

input from the Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau (ITIB) is as follows:

(1) and (2) The Government has been actively promoting the local development of AI, providing necessary support to the industries, thereby fostering an ecosystem centred on foundational large language models and industry applications, hence enabling Hong Kong to seize the opportunities of upgrade and transformation arising from the development of AI. The suggestion in question is to build an AI foundational large model for the legal sectors in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA Model), promoting interconnection of legal databases and sharing of computing resources. This suggestion requires joint research by Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, alongside with in-depth consultation with the legal sectors and stakeholders to understand their specific needs. The objectives, feasibility and relevant technical aspects of the GBA Model must be carefully assessed. The Department of Justice (DoJ) will give serious consideration to the relevant suggestion and thoroughly examine the various challenges in developing the GBA Model, including big data training, model application and other relevant aspects.

(a) Investment of resources

Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao each have different legal frameworks. Building a reliable and sustainable GBA Model requires large volumes of diverse data and computing infrastructure capable of handling massive data loads, in addition to training technologies that support continuous data updates and content verification. Compliance issues must also be addressed in the process of application. Therefore, the construction, application and maintenance of the GBA Model will involve significant financial resources and the need to overcome multiple complicated technical challenges.

(b) Challenges in data governance

At present, Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao have different laws, regulations and applicable standards regarding cross-boundary data governance and jurisdiction, data flow standards, and rules for localisation of data storage. If the GBA Model is to be applied in cross-boundary legal practice, it will often involve commercial, financial and other sensitive information. Therefore, ensuring data security and proper safeguards for legal professional privilege will be one of the paramount considerations in the development, application and maintenance of the GBA Model.

The Government is committed to promoting the safe and orderly cross-boundary flow of various types of data within the GBA, in compliance with the legal framework for data security and safeguards for personal privacy. In December 2023, the ITIB and the Cyberspace Administration of China jointly announced the facilitation measure, the Standard Contract for the Cross-boundary Flow of Personal Information within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao GBA (Mainland, Hong Kong) to promote and simplify compliance arrangements for the cross-boundary flow of personal information from the Mainland to Hong Kong.

As far as the Hong Kong legal sector is concerned, the DoJ has been actively engaging with the sector and various stakeholders through diverse channels to better understand of the sector's specific needs and developments in the lawtech market, as well as to study and formulate policy measures relating to lawtech. Currently, the DoJ is actively encouraging the broader use of lawtech in the legal sector, for example, in document generation, workflow management, online dispute resolution and trial support, so as to further enhance the sector's competitiveness.

(3) The Government adopts a positive and proactive approach to address the potential risks and necessary regulatory requirements that may arise from the development and application of AI, striving to strike a balance between promoting development and mitigating risks.

In respect of enhancing regulations and ethical guidelines related to legal technology, to evaluate whether the laws under different policy areas can keep pace with technological advancements, including AI, the DoJ convened a Steering Committee meeting in the first quarter of this year for the establishment of the Inter-Departmental Working Group to Review Legislation to Support Wider Application of AI (Working Group). The Working Group helps policy bureaux and government departments (B/Ds) keep a sharp focus in conducting a critical review of the areas of law under their policy responsibility. The objective of the Working Group is for B/Ds to explore targeted and practical solutions in light of actual circumstances.

The Digital Policy Office has formulated the Ethical AI Framework and launched the Hong Kong Generative AI Technical and Application Guideline to provide guidance for organisations undertaking projects involving the development and application of AI

technologies, helping them identify and manage potential risks associated with AI projects, and to establish a governance framework tailored to the local characteristics and Hong Kong's context.

The DoJ also highly recognises the importance on the continuous nurturing of talent with both legal knowledge and technological literacy. As a member of the Standing Committee on Legal Education and Training, the DoJ would put forward proposals to enhance the quality of legal education in Hong Kong from time to time, including integrating lawtech and AI into the legal curriculum. In recent years, the three law schools introduced subjects relating to lawtech and AI into their Bachelor of Laws and Juris Doctor programmes, with a view to ensuring that graduates are well-equipped to meet the challenges to legal practice brought by the technological developments, as well as the needs of the society.

Thank you, President.

Ends/Wednesday, May 27, 2026