

LCQ16: Consolidating Hong Kong's status as international arbitration centre

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Following is a question by the Hon Maggie Chan and a written reply by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, in the Legislative Council today (June 24):

Question:

The SAR (Special Administrative Region) Government is committed to developing Hong Kong into a leading international arbitration centre in the Asia-Pacific region and has been actively welcoming international and mainland arbitration institutions to establish their bases in Hong Kong. Currently, there are at least nine arbitration institutions in Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the Government has provided any direct financial assistance, manpower resources or facilities to those arbitration institutions to support their daily operation in the past three years; if so, of the beneficiary institutions, forms of support and the amount involved each year; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) how the Government assesses the effectiveness of its work in promoting Hong Kong as an international arbitration centre in the past three years, and whether it has set relevant performance indicators for this purpose; and

(3) in the face of strong competition from international arbitration centres such as Singapore and London, of the Government's medium- to long-term positioning for Hong Kong as an international arbitration hub; and of the new measures it will introduce to further encourage and consolidate Hong Kong's status as an arbitration centre, so as to enhance its arbitration efficiency?

Reply:

President,

In response to the questions raised by the Hon Maggie Chan, the reply is as follows:

(1) Currently, all arbitration institutions in Hong Kong operate entirely independently. With the exception of eBRAM International Online Dispute Resolution Centre Limited (eBRAM), the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government has not provided any direct financial assistance or human resources to support the day-to-day operations of these institutions in the past three years. These institutions primarily finance their operation through case management fees, membership fees and administrative fees to ensure their independence and neutrality.

In response to the COVID-19 Online Dispute Resolution Scheme established under the second round of the Anti-epidemic Fund, in 2020, the Government allocated \$70 million to and appointed eBRAM as the service provider of the Scheme. The Scheme

ended on September 30, 2023, and the mediator and arbitrator fees (\$20 million) covered by the allocation were refunded to the Government upon the conclusion of the Scheme. In January 2021, the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council approved a funding of \$100 million to eBRAM for the establishment of an online dispute resolution platform. According to the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Government and eBRAM, the funding has been disbursed in phases starting from 2021. As of February 2026, the Government had disbursed approximately \$87 million out of the said funding to eBRAM. It is eBRAM's aim to operate on a self-financing basis after the conclusion of the Government funding.

Regarding the provision of facilities by the Government, since November 2020, the Government has established the Hong Kong Legal Hub to provide office space for international and local legal and dispute resolution institutions. If an arbitration institution's application as a tenant of the Legal Hub is accepted, the Government will provide corresponding office facility to support that institution to develop its services in Hong Kong, for deepening international exchanges and co-operation, creating synergies, and consolidating and enhancing Hong Kong's unique advantages as an international legal hub.

(2) The Government has been committed to promoting Hong Kong as an international arbitration centre through various initiatives and activities. Key initiatives include:

(i) The Department of Justice (DoJ) established the Working Group on Arbitration Law Reform in October 2025. The Working Group provides advice to the DoJ on the legal framework for arbitration in Hong Kong, including reviewing and making recommendations to amend the Arbitration Ordinance, with a view to advancing the relevant legislative amendment work within 2026.

(ii) With effect from March 1, 2025, the Government regularised and refined the Pilot Scheme on Facilitation for Persons Participating in Arbitral Proceedings in Hong Kong, and renamed it to the Immigration Facilitation Scheme for Persons Participating in Arbitral Proceedings in Hong Kong (Scheme). Under the Scheme, persons in possession of a "Letter of Proof" issued by a designated arbitral and dispute resolution institution or a venue provider proving that they are eligible persons participating in arbitral proceedings seated in Hong Kong are permitted to do so as visitors without the need to obtain an employment visa. The regularised and refined Scheme expands the categories of eligible persons and covers all arbitrations physically taking place in Hong Kong, offering parties to the arbitration and legal practitioners great convenience and more choices of arbitrators, legal experts and related professionals, thus further enhancing Hong Kong's attractiveness as a seat or destination of arbitration.

Regarding the promotion of Hong Kong's arbitration services, the Government has been actively promoting its high-quality arbitration services through organising the Hong Kong Legal Week, co-organising with the Hong Kong Trade Development Council thematic breakout sessions on dispute resolution at the Belt and Road Summit and the Business of Intellectual Property Asia Forum, and co-organising with Vis East Moot

Foundation the Vis East International Commercial Arbitration Moot.

The Government has not established a set of rigid key performance indicators for arbitration-related initiatives. The effectiveness of arbitration-related initiatives involves multiple aspects, and the actual benefits are difficult to quantify. However, international recognition can directly reflect the effectiveness of the current initiatives. For instance, in the 2025 Queen Mary University of London International Arbitration Survey, Hong Kong was selected as the most preferred arbitration seat in the Asia-Pacific region and ranked second globally alongside Singapore, fully reflecting the effectiveness of current initiatives. The Government will continue to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of current initiatives and conduct timely reviews in light of industry feedback and international developments.

(3) Faced with fierce international competition, the Government is implementing a multi-pronged approach to further consolidate Hong Kong's leading position in arbitration and enhance arbitration efficiency. In terms of legal system and infrastructure, through the Working Group on Arbitration Law Reform established in 2025, the Government is continuously enhancing the Arbitration Ordinance, to comprehensively ensure that Hong Kong's arbitration system responds promptly to global trends and remains at the forefront of international developments. Furthermore, the Government is planning the construction of the Hong Kong International Legal Service Building, aiming to bring together the facilities such as the headquarter of the Hong Kong International Legal Talents Training Academy and international legal and dispute resolution institutions, in order to create synergy and provide arbitration parties with more comprehensive arbitration facilities.

At the same time, through the Hong Kong International Legal Talents Training Academy and the visa policy facilitating arbitration professionals to participate in proceedings in Hong Kong, the Government is actively cultivating local talent and attracting top international talent, and strengthening co-operation with the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and countries along the Belt and Road Initiative, so as to promote talent exchange and align with the National 15th Five-Year Plan in supporting Hong Kong to deepen its position as an international legal and dispute resolution services centre and to build an international hub for high-calibre talent.

Ends/Wednesday, June 24, 2026