LCQ13: Supporting the legal and dispute resolution sectors
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Following is a question by Dr the Hon Johnny Ng and a written reply by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, in the Legislative Council today (November 11):

Question:

The National 14th Five-Year Plan has identified Hong Kong as a centre for international legal and dispute resolution services in the Asia-Pacific region, and the 15th Five-Year Plan further deepens Hong Kong's role as above. There are views that, with the changes in the geopolitical landscape and competition among cities in the Asia-Pacific region, Hong Kong's legal and dispute resolution services face new opportunities and challenges. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of cases brought to Hong Kong from overseas for arbitration or mediation over the past two years, and of the number and proportion of those involving emerging markets;

(2) given that the SAR Government is actively establishing economic and trade ties with countries in the Middle East, in ASEAN and along the Belt and Road, of the specific measures in place to promote Hong Kong's common law system, as well as arbitration and mediation services, to businesses in those regions, with a view to attracting them to adopt Hong Kong law as the applicable law for their contracts and choose Hong Kong as the seat for dispute resolution;

(3) given that the Chief Executive's 2026 Policy Address proposes that the Government will continue to implement, in collaboration with the legal and sports sectors, the Pilot Scheme on Sports Dispute Resolution, exploring co-operation opportunities with international and regional sports associations, of the number of applications received since the launch of the pilot scheme, its effectiveness, and the types of sports disputes involved; and of the specific strategies and timetables in place for attracting international and regional sports organisations to establish presence in Hong Kong, or for prompting relevant sports organisations to designate Hong Kong as the preferred seat for arbitration and mediation of sports disputes in their articles of association, with a view to developing Hong Kong into an international sports dispute-resolution centre;

(4) following the introduction of policy measures such as the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Mediator Accreditation Standards, how the authorities will further promote the substantive alignment and mutual recognition of legal mechanisms across Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao; and whether they will push for further expansion of the scope 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

(5) of the latest development and financial support in promoting the digital transformation of the local legal and dispute resolution sectors (e.g. online dispute resolution platforms and artificial intelligence-based legal support systems); and of the latest specific measures to leverage Hong Kong's strengths in innovation and technology to position Hong Kong as a LawTech hub in the region?

Reply:

President,

Regarding the questions raised by Dr the Hon Johnny Ng, having consulted the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (CSTB), our reply is as follows:

(1) Under the Arbitration Ordinance (Cap. 609) and the Mediation Ordinance (Cap. 620), mediation and arbitration are generally confidential dispute resolution processes. The Department of Justice (DoJ) does not maintain the requested case statistics.

The Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre (HKIAC) publishes its case statistics annually which may be of reference purpose. Of the 388 arbitrations submitted to the HKIAC in 2025, 84.3 per cent were international arbitrations (i.e. defined by the HKIAC as having at least one party out of Hong Kong), 45.4 per cent involved no Hong Kong parties, 58.2 per cent involved no Chinese Mainland parties and 13.7 per cent involved no parties from Asia. Of 352 arbitrations submitted to the HKIAC in 2024, 76.4 per cent were international arbitration, 41.5 per cent involved no Hong Kong parties, 59.4 per cent involved no Chinese Mainland parties and 14.5 per cent involved no parties from Asia. The HKIAC's statistics do not provide a separate breakdown for emerging markets.

(2) To attract enterprises from the Middle East, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and countries along the Belt and Road to choose Hong Kong law as governing law of the contracts and to select Hong Kong as a venue for resolving disputes arising from contracts, the DoJ has in recent years undertaken a series of proactive, comprehensive and targeted promotional measures, including senior officials leading delegations to visit abroad and promote Hong Kong's legal, arbitration and mediation services, as well as actively signing memoranda of co-operation with local government departments and institutions so as to drive communication and exchange through high-level interactions, foster mutual understanding and establish mutual trust.

The promotional measures include: (i) the Secretary for Justice led a cross professional delegation of about 40 members comprising members of Hong Kong's legal and dispute resolution sectors, as well as the financial and accounting sectors to visit Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in August 2026 to strengthen the exchange and co-operation among the legal and professional service sectors of Hong Kong and the two places, and to promote Hong Kong's advantage of connecting the Chinese Mainland and the world and the strength of its professional services; (ii) the Secretary for Justice and the Deputy Secretary for Justice led, on multiple occasions, delegations or attended international and regional legal events related to ASEAN (such as the China-ASEAN Prosecutors-General Conference, the China-ASEAN Commercial Law Forum, China Conference: Southeast Asia, etc) promoting Hong Kong's advantages brought by its unique common law system, international legal talents and commercial mediation and arbitration to ASEAN government and business sectors as well as the legal sector; and (iii) in May 2024, the Secretary for Justice led a delegation of about 30 members, comprising representatives from the Law Society of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Bar Association, the Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited, Invest Hong Kong and other related sectors to visit the Middle East to promote legal professional services developments and exchanges with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

(3) The Pilot Scheme on Sports Dispute Resolution, launched by the DoJ and supported by the CSTB, commenced accepting applications for resolving sports disputes on February 13, 2026. Since its rollout, the said pilot scheme has received multiple enquiries, has been actively processing applications and has recorded successfully mediated cases, overall demonstrating promising progress. As of September this year, the total number of sports dispute mediation and arbitration cases handled under the Pilot Scheme on Sports Dispute Resolution has reached double digits. Subject to compliance

with the confidentiality requirements for mediation and arbitration, the DoJ will share further information on the operation of the said pilot scheme with the public in due course.

The CSTB has launched the three-year pilot scheme to strengthen the presence of Hong Kong in Asian and international sports associations in April this year to provide financial support for national sports associations (NSAs) in Hong Kong to attract Asian and international sports associations to establish a presence in Hong Kong by setting up their headquarters or regional headquarters in Hong Kong. The Pilot Scheme, through the NSAs in Hong Kong, provides operational grant of up to $800,000 per year for a period of three years to Asian or international sports organisations that established a presence in Hong Kong. As at the end of October this year, the Asian Bowling Federation, the Asian Squash Federation, the International Shuttlecock Federation, the International Dragon Boat Federation, the Asia Flying Disc Federation, as well as the Asian Rowing Federation have set up headquarters in Hong Kong. The CSTB will continue to support, through NSAs in Hong Kong, Asian or international sports associations to establish a presence in Hong Kong, and encourage NSAs to strengthen ties with the relevant associations.

As the administering body for the Pilot Scheme on Sports Dispute Resolution, the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre has also published a model clause for sports dispute resolution on its website, and actively visits various NSAs to encourage them to adopt the model clause and promote the said pilot scheme.

At the same time, the DoJ is actively exploring co-operation with international and regional sports organisations, while continuing to collaborate with the legal and sports sectors to organise promotional and training events on sports dispute resolution, including co-organising the Sports Dispute Resolution Summit with the Law Society of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Bar Association in December 2026, so as to promote the Pilot Scheme on Sports Dispute Resolution and develop Hong Kong into an international sports dispute resolution centre.

(4) Promoting the alignment and collaboration of legal mechanisms among the three jurisdictions within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) must take place within the framework of the national Constitution and the Basic Law. It is essential to maintain clear distinctions between the legal systems of the Mainland, Hong

Kong, and Macao, while simultaneously establishing connections between them. Only by doing so, the unique advantages of Hong Kong's common law system be fully leveraged to serve the overall interests of the nation.

The DoJ published the Action Plan on the Construction of Rule of Law in the GBA in April 2024, outlining the DoJ's blueprint for the construction of rule of law in the GBA. The Action Plan underpins the guiding principle of "Three Interfaces, Two Connects and One GBA" and the development direction, whilst at the same time systematically consolidates specific policy measures we seek to effectively implement, so as to assist the construction of an internationalised GBA with a vibrant market and a solid basis on rule of law for our country, capitalising the GBA's unique strengths of "one country, two systems and three jurisdictions".

Since February 2025, 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" have been further expanded - "allowing Hong Kong-invested enterprises to adopt Hong Kong law" has expanded from Qianhai to the entire cities of Shenzhen and Zhuhai, while "allowing Hong Kong-invested enterprises to choose for arbitration to be seated in Hong Kong" has been further extended beyond the Free Trade Zones to cover all nine Chinese Mainland municipalities in the GBA. We will continue to maintain contact with the relevant Mainland authorities, industry sectors and other stakeholders, closely monitor the implementation of the measures, seeking to create favourable conditions for a further extension of the scope of these measures in due course.

The legal departments of Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao have been committed to promoting the establishment of several GBA Standards involving mediation and arbitration in the GBA, including the GBA Mediator Accreditation Standards, the GBA Mediator Code of Conduct Best Practice, the GBA Cross-boundary Disputes Mediation Model Rules and Working Guidelines on the Panel of GBA Arbitrators, and jointly published the GBA Mediator Panel and the GBA Arbitrator Panel.

At this year's joint conference, the legal departments of Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao will further explore pathways to promote the establishment of the GBA arbitration model rules, so as to provide a more stable and predictable legal environment for cross-boundary commercial activities in the region.

To adopt and implement GBA standards systematically and strategically, and under the support of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Legal Departments Joint Conference, the DoJ actively promotes the establishment of a Platform for Promotion of the GBA Standards on Arbitration and Mediation, bringing together mediation and arbitration institutions in the GBA for promoting the adoption of relevant GBA standards.

At the same time, the DoJ will actively implement the measures proposed in the Policy Address 2026 to set up a Task Force on Expediting the Alignment of Rules and Mechanisms in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao in the first quarter of 2027. Led by the Deputy Secretary for Justice, the Task Force will co-ordinate relevant bureaux and work with corresponding government departments in the Chinese Mainland and Macao to study and expedite the alignment of rules and mechanisms in the GBA.

(5) The DoJ is committed to promoting the development of lawtech, and has established the Consultation Group on LawTech Developmentin January 2025. With the assistance and support of the Consultation Group, the DoJ has been exchanging views with the sector and various stakeholders through diverse means to understand the sector's needs and the development of the lawtech market, and encourage the sector to make better use of lawtech and formulates lawtech-related policies and measures. Tasks completed in 2025 and 2026 include the organisation of five rounds of LexGoTech Roundtables, the release of the LexGoTech Roundtables Report, and the launch of the Survey of LawTech Service Providers in Hong Kong. The DoJ also hosted the Hong Kong LawTech Fest for two consecutive years during its annual flagship programme, the Hong Kong Legal Week, which is well-received.

The DoJ has been receiving extensive feedback from the sector, academics, and the relevant stakeholders regarding the adoption of lawtech and the development of the legal sector. The DoJ notes that small and medium-sized law firms, as well as junior barristers, are particularly concerned about the financial burden of adopting lawtech tools. As a response to the needs of the sector, the DoJ launched the Funding Scheme for LawTech Solution Subscription by the Hong Kong Legal Sector (Funding Scheme) in November 2026. The Funding Scheme aims to encourage the Hong Kong legal sector to enhance their capability to adopt lawtech, further strengthening the competitiveness of legal services and deepening Hong Kong's status as an international legal and dispute resolution services centre.

The DoJ also released in November 2026 a Guidance Note on the Use of LawTech in Legal Practice (Guidance Note). The Guidance Note seeks to promote the responsible, secure, and ethical use of lawtech by legal professionals in their professional practice. The Guidance Note, though not legally binding, has been formulated to incorporate comments and suggestions from the legal professional bodies, the Consultation Group, relevant experts and stakeholders. It provides key principles and practical guidance to assist legal professionals to harness lawtech's benefits while safeguarding against the possible risks associated with the use of lawtech and upholding their fundamental professional duties.

Ends/Wednesday, November 11, 2026