

Speech by SJ at signing ceremony of MOU between DoJ and Ministry of Justice of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (English only) (with photo)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, at the signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding of Cooperation between the Department of Justice of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the Ministry of Justice of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia today (April 22) to strengthen their co-operation on issues relating to dispute avoidance and resolution:

Your Excellency Dr Waleed Mohammed Alsmami (Minister of Justice of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great honour to sign the Memorandum of Understanding, on behalf of the Department of Justice of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, with the Ministry of Justice of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

This Memorandum is the first memorandum on legal co-operation that Hong Kong signs with a Middle East jurisdiction. This signifies the great value and importance Hong Kong attaches to fostering stronger and closer relationship with the Middle East, in particular, Saudi Arabia.

Under the principle of "one country, two systems", Hong Kong has the unrivalled advantages of enjoying strong support of the Central People's Government of China and at the same time being closely connected to the world. As the only common law jurisdiction within China, our well-established legal system and top-notch legal and dispute resolution services give Hong Kong a unique edge which attracts business opportunities from across the globe. These distinctive features afford Hong Kong the solid foundation to act as a "super connector" and a "super value-adder" connecting China and countries around the world.

Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia have nurtured a close friendship and partnership over the years, especially since the visit to Riyadh by our Chief Executive last year. The signing of the Memorandum will no doubt strengthen the relationship between Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia to the next level by enhancing our communication, collaboration and co-operation on issues relating to dispute avoidance and resolution, and facilitating development of the related services. I am very confident that the Memorandum will promote cross-fertilisation of legal talent and encourage exchanges between the legal profession of the two jurisdictions at the international level. It is worth mentioning that the Department of Justice is going to establish the Hong Kong International Legal Talents Training Academy. Pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding we signed, our initiative in this respect, namely the setting up of the Hong Kong International Legal Talents Training Academy, will be one of the means to implement various objectives under the Memorandum.

Another thing that is worth mentioning to highlight Hong Kong's status as an

international legal and dispute resolution services centre is that Hong Kong is going to host the biennial International Council for Commercial Arbitration Congress from May 5 to 8 this year. This is the most important international commercial arbitration event. Representatives of the Ministry of Justice of Saudi Arabia and other interested participants from Saudi Arabia are most welcome to join this important event.

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to Saudi Arabia for their trust and support, and the warm hospitality that they extended to the Hong Kong delegation led by the Deputy Secretary of Justice, Mr Horace Cheung, during their visit in Riyadh last month for participating in the Riyadh International Disputes Week. I myself will also lead a delegation from the legal and dispute resolution sectors and other related sectors to visit Saudi Arabia in a few weeks' time. So the timing for the signing of this Memorandum of Understanding is perfect for my upcoming visit. It lays a very good foundation for Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia to further discuss and exchange on various areas of legal co-operation. I very much look forward to the upcoming visit as well as the myriad opportunities to deepen collaboration and co-operation between our two respective jurisdictions in the future, which would be in the mutual interests of Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia. Thank you very much.

Ends/Monday, April 22, 2024