

Speech by SJ at opening ceremony of Hong Kong Common Law Practical Training Course (English only) (with photo)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, at the opening ceremony of the Hong Kong Common Law Practical Training Course today (January 6):

Director General Si (Deputy Director General of the Research Office of the Supreme People's Court, Ms Si Yanli), judges, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. Firstly, I would like to welcome all of you to the Hong Kong Common Law Practical Training Course. This Course marks the inaugural programme of the Hong Kong International Legal Talents Training Academy. We are pleased to co-organise the Course with the Supreme People's Court of the People's Republic of China. Thank you for coming to Hong Kong to join this Course.

The Academy was officially launched in November last year during the Hong Kong Legal Week 2024. It is a significant milestone for the Academy, and it is truly our honour to co-organise this meaningful programme. Thank you for the unwavering support of the Supreme People's Court, bringing all together 25 prominent, experienced senior judges from the Mainland.

Under the "one country, two systems" principle, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) is the only common law jurisdiction within China. By leveraging Hong Kong's unique position as a vibrant legal hub with a robust bilingual common law system, the Course aims to facilitate valuable exchanges that bridge the legal systems of the HKSAR and the Mainland, providing a deeper understanding of Hong Kong's common law system. Against such background and in consultation with the Supreme People's Court, this Course will focus on the practical and operational aspects of the Hong Kong's common law system, covering a wide range of variety of topics including contract and company law, family law, criminal litigation procedure, and judicial review of arbitration, etc. We are very honoured to have a distinguished lineup of speakers who are judges and leading practitioners specialising in the relevant areas of the law. I am confident that their knowledge, insights, and practical experiences could be readily utilised and integrated into your own legal practices.

As you are aware, all lectures of this Course will be conducted in English. There are two major reasons for this. First, English is the lingua franca of the common law jurisdictions, through which we could have a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the concepts and rationales behind the common law principles. Besides, English is also the language most commonly used in international commerce. I hope this Course could provide participants with opportunities to use English in practice. Besides lectures, there are also dialogue sessions and court visits so that you would have the first-hand experience of the Hong Kong court proceedings, as well as discussions with major players in the legal and dispute resolution sectors.

In this regard, I encourage everyone to actively participate in discussions, ask as many questions as you wish, and by all means share your perspectives in the coming two weeks. This Course is not just an opportunity to learn from the speakers, but also about creating a collaborative environment where we can all benefit from one another's sharing and experiences. By the end of this Course, I hope you will have a more thorough understanding of Hong Kong's common law system, and the various topics that we will explore together.

Common law has undoubtedly played a very significant role in Hong Kong's evolution from a modest fishing village to a prominent international and financial commercial centre. This transformation underscores the significance of maintaining the common law framework, which is essential for the sustainable development of Hong Kong. The commitment to upholding the common law system is important, as it attracts investment and supports continuous economic growth. The judiciary's independence and high standards are integral to this system, as they uphold justice without external interference. The HKSAR's robust legal framework allows it to engage with other common law jurisdictions, further strengthening its position as a key player in global finance and commerce.

Looking ahead, with the constitutional guarantee enshrined in the Basic Law of the HKSAR, along with the excellence of our independent judiciary and legal profession, I am confident that the common law will continue to thrive in Hong Kong.

The evolving legal landscape of Hong Kong does not only uphold the rule of law but also creates a fertile ground for nurturing legal talent. As mentioned in our Chief Executive's Policy Address in 2023 and 2024, the Hong Kong International Legal Talents

Training Academy seeks to capitalise on Hong Kong's unique strengths and advantages made possible by the "one country, two systems" principle, which always enjoys a high reputation around the world. The Academy will co-ordinate capacity building programmes and relevant resources of the Department of Justice of Hong Kong and, together with the current secondment programmes with various international legal organisations, strengthen the role of Hong Kong as an international legal services centre and develop Hong Kong as a capacity building hub.

In the future, the Academy will regularly organise different practical courses, seminars and international exchange activities in order to promote legal talent exchanges along the Belt and Road, and provide foreign-related legal talent training for our country. Training programme would cover topics including international law, common law, civil law and national legal systems of other Belt and Road countries.

As I have mentioned earlier, this Course is the first tailor-made training programme organised by the Hong Kong International Legal Talents Training Academy. We are privileged to have you, experienced senior judges from the Mainland, to be the Academy's very first group of alumni. As the first cohort, your engagement, insights and experiences will play a vital role in shaping our future training programmes. I encourage you to share your thoughts on what worked well and what could be improved. Whether it is the content, the delivery, or other aspect of the Course, your feedback will guide us in creating more effective training opportunities in the future.

Ladies and gentlemen, this Course serves as a valuable opportunity for both our speakers and participants to share and exchange knowledge and insights. I encourage you to take full advantage of the resources available throughout this Course, and to explore the diverse experiences that Hong Kong offers - not only its robust legal infrastructure but also its rich cultural diversity and dynamic business environment.

In closing, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Supreme People's Court, and to each of you for joining this Course as the Academy's inaugural group of trainees. As senior judges, you all play a pivotal role in upholding the rule of law and promoting justice in our country. Your presence here signifies a commitment to excellence and a dedication to the vital responsibilities you hold. Thank you once again for your dedication, and I look forward to the fruitful discussions that await us. Thank you very much.

Ends/Monday, January 6, 2025