

Speech by DSJ at Seminar titled "Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Legal Professional Examination and Career Development Opportunities" (English only) (with photos)

Following are the opening remarks by the Deputy Secretary for Justice, Dr Cheung Kwok-kwan, at the Seminar titled "Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Legal Professional Examination and Career Development Opportunities" today (January 16):

Professor Xi (Dean of the Faculty of Law of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Professor Xi Chao), the Hon. Eunice Yung (Legislative Council member, Ms Eunice Yung) and Vivian (President of GBA Young Talents Association, Vivian Ji), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. I am very pleased to be here today meeting many young and aspiring members of our legal community who are keen to learn much more about the development opportunities of the Greater Bay Area (GBA).

Immense potential of GBA

Why is GBA so important? The straightforward answer is that GBA offers unique and immense opportunities. GBA is one of the most open and dynamic regions in our country. As at 2023, GBA's GDP exceeded USD\$1.92 trillion, overtaking the New York Bay Area and San Francisco Bay Area. It is now on a par with the leading Tokyo Bay Area.

Most importantly, GBA is home to a unique legal landscape – in GBA, we have three jurisdictions – the Mainland, Macao and Hong Kong, each having its distinctive features.

Unique role of GBA Lawyers

Against such unique legal landscape and being mindful of GBA's significance, the Department of Justice (DoJ) is strongly committed to fostering interfaces among the jurisdictions within the GBA, in terms of mechanisms, regulatory frameworks and legal talents. Such interfaces underline GBA's advantages of "one country, two systems and three jurisdictions".

In light of the theme of today's Seminar, let me focus on the initiative of GBA lawyers. At present, over 500 Hong Kong and Macao legal practitioners have obtained the qualification to practise as GBA lawyers, serving clients in both contentious and non-contentious civil and commercial matters. In Hong Kong, they are serving a population of around 7.5 million. Comparatively, they are eligible to serve a population of over 86 million in GBA. In short, we now have a bigger legal market.

GBA lawyers themselves are the best ambassadors to bridge the gaps in the different legal systems in the GBA. The qualification to practise in different jurisdictions allows them to act as a key player in GBA's development.

Through the mechanism of GBA lawyers, we have witnessed stronger collaboration and mutual benefits among the legal professions in the GBA. On the one hand, GBA lawyers are gaining practical experience in handling Mainland legal issues and developing a better understanding of the needs of Mainland clients. On the other hand, Mainland lawyers and clients could benefit from GBA lawyers' international experience and common law perspectives, since common law is broadly in line with the laws and practice of GBA's major trading partners, and is familiar to many foreign investors.

Look ahead, DoJ is seeking to set up a dedicated platform for GBA lawyers, so as to better co-ordinate training for and exchanges among GBA lawyers, thereby further consolidating their competitiveness and "brand-building".

DoJ's other measures to promote interface in GBA

We are also seeking to enhance the opportunities for GBA lawyers and indeed Hong Kong lawyers as a whole. Let me introduce two very important measures. Firstly, we actively support the export of Hong Kong's rich experience in dispute resolution, including commercial mediation. Notably, a considerable number of Hong Kong lawyers are on the panel lists of mediators of Mainland courts in the GBA and also on the latest GBA panel of mediators released last month. This enables Hong Kong practitioners to gain direct access to mediation market.

Secondly, we are actively promoting the adoption of Hong Kong law and the choice of Hong Kong as the arbitration seat by Hong Kong enterprises registered in the Mainland GBA cities. This measure would not only

bring much more business to our lawyers, but more importantly, it would leverage Hong Kong's institutional strength as the world's only bilingual common law jurisdiction.

Closing remarks

Today's Seminar is definitely a great avenue to hear first-hand experience and to learn some useful tips from the speakers on how best to prepare for the GBA lawyers examination and advance your career in GBA and beyond. I wish the Seminar a great success. Thank you.