

Speech by SJ at School of Law of City University of Hong Kong Commencement
(English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Justice, Mr Paul Lam, SC, at the School of Law of City University of Hong Kong Commencement today (June 10):

Professor Lin (Dean of the School of Law of City University of Hong Kong, Professor Lin Feng), learned professors, distinguished guests, graduates, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. It gives me great pleasure to join you today. I would like to begin by offering my warmest congratulations to the graduation class of 2026. Your long years of dedication and hard work have finally paid off. Today is a day to take pride in your hard-earned achievements. Today is a day to pay tribute to your teachers, family and friends.

More importantly, today's ceremony also marks the successful completion of one chapter and the commencement of another. You have obtained the requisite qualification to become the custodians of justice in Hong Kong. There are both opportunities and challenges.

Let me start with opportunities. As I have said repeatedly, our common law system is one of the most unique and significant strengths of Hong Kong under the principle of "one country, two systems". Hong Kong is the only common law jurisdiction in China, and the only bilingual common law jurisdiction using both Chinese and English in the world. You are both the beneficiaries and custodians of this advantage. I am pleased to see that the CityU (City University of Hong Kong) School of Law has taken the initiative to connect, and enhance mutual understanding between, the Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong legal systems through its renowned Chinese Judges Programmes and the China Legal Placement Programme. By studying here, you have been immersed in an environment that respects the rigour of the common law while remaining deeply attuned to our national legal development.

I would urge you to leverage the unique advantages that no other jurisdiction in the world can offer. Thanks to the strong support of the Central Government, the doors are now wide open for you to take part in transboundary legal matters and even to obtain and acquire dual qualifications to practise in both jurisdictions. One way to do so is through the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Legal Professional Examination (GBA Examination). As you may have heard, the Department of Justice (DoJ) is striving to persuade the Central Authorities to convert the pilot scheme in this respect, which will expire later this year, into a permanent one.

The GBA Examination is far more than a credential; it is a strategic career catalyst. It will enable you to obtain the professional qualification to provide legal services in the nine Mainland municipalities in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) in specified civil and commercial matters to which Mainland laws apply.

A GBA lawyer with dual qualifications not only serves as a "super-connector" or "super-value-adder" in terms of the provision of legal services, but also contributes to the building of a pool of foreign-related legal talent for our country.

Let me turn to challenges. As you step out of the lecture halls into the courtrooms, law firms, barristers' chambers or in-house legal departments, you are entering a profession that is undergoing a paradigm shift. We often hear that the law is a tradition-bound profession, but in this ever-changing technological era, we must be "innovative yet rooted".

One of the most significant shifts is the proliferation of lawtech and AI. There is often a fear that AI will replace lawyers. I disagree. I believe that AI will empower rather than replace lawyers. AI-powered legal tools can elevate the quality of legal services by minimising human errors, speeding up administrative tasks, and ensuring more accurate and timely responses to clients. They can also facilitate a wide variety of tasks such as legal research, document review and e-discovery that would otherwise take up much of a lawyer's time.

However, there are matters that AI will not be able to replicate: your legal creativity, ethical judgment and the "human touch" in advocacy. That's why I am convinced that AI cannot and will not replace lawyers but complement them by adopting the "Human+AI" approach under which we may harness the benefits of technology while guarding against potential risks like AI hallucinations as well as challenges to data privacy, accountability, transparency, etc. To meet the challenges in this respect, you must master both the skills and the ethical rules governing the use of AI.

In fact, the DoJ has been actively promoting the integration of lawtech and AI in the legal sector and has taken on a pivotal role in shaping the broader legal regime for AI governance. For instance, the DoJ has established the Consultation Group on LawTech Development to discuss development strategies and policies to promote the use of lawtech in the legal and dispute resolution industry.

As new blood in the legal community, you are the guardians of our legal system, and you may perform such a role in different ways. One way is to join the DoJ. The DoJ has a very popular Legal Trainee Scheme, and we will organise information days to introduce our work. I would take this opportunity to invite you to consider this option.

There is no doubt that the path ahead will be demanding and challenging. But do remember that this is your choice. Joining the legal profession is not just for a job, but also for a calling. To the CityU graduates: Your School has taught you to be "well-rounded, intellectually rigorous and socially conscious". Please carry that CityU spirit with you.

In closing, I welcome you to the legal community. Do not be afraid to challenge the status quo, do not fear the evolution of technology, and do not limit your horizons to our shores. Try your best to explore the enormous opportunities open to you, which are made

possible by our country's development and Hong Kong's special status under the principle of "one country, two systems".

On this note, I wish to congratulate you and your beloved ones once again on your achievements. And I wish you all the best in your future legal career. Thank you.

Ends/Wednesday, June 10, 2026