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**Legislative Council Panel on  
Administration of Justice and Legal Services**

**Report on the achievements of the Secretary for Justice-led  
delegation's visit to ASEAN member states**

**Introduction**

The Secretary for Justice (SJ) visited Brunei, a member state of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), from 22 to 24 September this year, and led a Hong Kong delegation comprising representatives from the Law Society of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Bar Association and related sectors to visit Vietnam and Malaysia, two other ASEAN member states, from 24 to 28 September this year (Visit) to promote Hong Kong's legal and dispute resolution services and enhance co-operation and exchanges between Hong Kong and these ASEAN member states. The Visit was supported by the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Jakarta (Jakarta ETO) and the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Singapore (Singapore ETO). This paper intends to brief Members about the Visit and the results achieved through the Visit.

**Visit to Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei**

2. SJ commenced the Visit with the first stop at Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei. SJ exchanged views with the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Brunei in implementing the Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) signed between the Department of Justice (DoJ) and the Supreme Court of Brunei in May last year, as well as discussed with the Attorney General of Brunei the potential legal collaboration between Hong Kong and Brunei.

3. During the Visit in Brunei, SJ also met with representatives of the Brunei legal and dispute resolution sector (including the Law Society of Brunei Darussalam and Brunei Darussalam Arbitration Centre) to introduce and promote Hong Kong's legal and dispute resolution services and discussed co-operation opportunities. SJ was also invited to visit selected heritage and cultural venues to learn more about Brunei's history and development.

4. The courtesy visit by SJ to Brunei represents our commitment to implement the MoC, hence reinforcing our dedication to strengthen the co-cooperation between Hong Kong and Brunei.

### **Visit to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam**

5. SJ led the Hong Kong delegation to visit Vietnam from 24 to 25 September. The delegation, on the first day upon arrival, immediately attended a forum and networking dinner titled "Hong Kong – The Common Law Gateway for Vietnamese Businesses to China and Beyond", co-organised by DoJ, the Singapore ETO and the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry, with over 120 participants from the legal, business and other sectors. SJ delivered the welcome remarks and keynote address at the forum and the networking dinner respectively, while speakers from the Hong Kong delegation shared their views with the participants on various topics, from Hong Kong's diversified legal and dispute resolution services, Hong Kong's latest lawtech services for resolving cross-border disputes, Hong Kong's unique advantages of "having strong support from the motherland while being closely connected to the world" under "one country, two systems", as well as the opportunities arising from the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the Belt and Road Initiative.

6. During the visit in Vietnam, the delegation also met with representatives from the China Business Association Ho Chi Minh City Branch and Hong Kong Business Association Vietnam respectively for in-depth exchanges on the business environment in Vietnam, discussed how Hong Kong's legal services could facilitate their business growth in ASEAN and beyond, as well as gained a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities for Hong Kong businesses in Vietnam and their need for cross-jurisdictional legal services. Meetings were also arranged with representatives from Vietnam's legal and dispute resolution sector (including the Ho Chi Minh City Bar Association and the Vietnam International Arbitration Center) to exchange views on recent developments in the legal and arbitration landscape respectively and explore potential future collaborations for building stronger and closer ties between the two jurisdictions.

7. The visit to Vietnam provided a platform for interactive networking and exchanges between the Vietnamese participants and the Hong Kong delegation, hence forging new friendships and exploring opportunities.

### **Visit to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**

8. The delegation continued the Visit to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 26 to 28 September. To kick start the visit in Malaysia, DoJ, the Jakarta ETO and the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia co-organised a forum and networking reception titled "Hong Kong – The Common Law Gateway for Malaysian Businesses to China and Beyond". SJ and Malaysia's Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Law and Institutional Reform) respectively delivered a keynote address and a special remarks addressing about 150 participants from the legal, business and other sectors of Malaysia. Hong Kong speakers also shared their views on various topics, including the unparalleled legal services provided by Hong Kong as one of the world's leading financial centers, Hong Kong's world-class arbitration services and facilities, as well as our role

in contributing to national policies (including the Belt and Road Initiative as strongly supported by Malaysia).

9. During the visit in Malaysia, SJ also had a meeting with the Attorney General of Malaysia to discuss issues of mutual interest, as well as witnessed the signing of two memoranda of understanding (MOU) facilitated by DoJ, i.e. an MOU between Malaysia's Asian International Arbitration Centre (AIAC) and the South China International Arbitration Center (HK) (SCIA(HK)) and a supplementary MOU between AIAC and the eBRAM International Online Dispute Resolution Centre (eBRAM). The signing of the MoU signified the commitment of Malaysia and Hong Kong in building closer ties in collaborations in the area of legal and alternative dispute resolution.

10. The delegation also met with representatives from the Malaysian Bar, the AIAC and the Malaysian International Mediation Centre to learn more about their proceedings and provision of institutional support for domestic and international arbitrators. The delegation then had a meeting with representatives of the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia and received a market briefing from Standard Chartered Saadiq Malaysia to learn more about the latest economic situation, business developments in various sectors and future outlook, as well as the needs of Malaysian business sector for cross-jurisdictional legal services.

### **Key Outcomes of the Visit**

11. This was the first SJ-led delegation to ASEAN member states since taking office in July 2022. The Visit solidified existing collaborations and opened up opportunities for new areas of cooperation with ASEAN member states on the legal front, and also provided an opportunity to all parties to discuss further cooperation on matters such as capacity building and matters benefiting legal talents in the ASEAN region.

12. The Visit also strengthened the relationship between Hong Kong’s legal and alternative dispute resolution sector with their counterparts in Vietnam and Malaysia. After the Visit, SCIA(HK) immediately visited Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 12 to 19 October, and co-organised events with their local counterparts (including the Vietnam International Commercial Mediation Center and AIAC respectively). The Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre is also in active discussion with the Vietnam International Arbitration Center to conclude the signing of a MoU.

13. About 20 meetings and events were organised during the Visit, through which the delegation highlighted Hong Kong’s unique strengths under the common law system and Hong Kong’s strategic position as a centre for international legal and dispute resolution services in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as Hong Kong’s strategic role as a “super connector” and “super value-adder” between the Mainland and the rest of the world, hence encouraging overseas businesses to explore investment opportunities in the Mainland and Hong Kong, as well as promoting the Belt and Road Initiative and adding momentum to the opening up of new horizons and opportunities through consolidation and expansion of networks with ASEAN member states.

**Department of Justice**  
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