

Fifth Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Legal Departments Joint Conference reaches consensus on issues including establishing collaborative online dispute resolution platform and enhancing measures to nurture foreign-related legal talent

The Deputy Secretary for Justice, Mr Cheung Kwok-kwan, this afternoon (December 7) departed for Macao to attend the fifth Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) Legal Departments Joint Conference, an annual meeting to discuss promoting development of the rule of law in the GBA and related issues with the legal departments of Guangdong and Macao.

The Joint Conference was hosted by the Secretary for Administration and Justice of the Macao Special Administrative Region Government, Mr Cheong Weng Chon, and attended by the Director-General of the Department of Justice of Guangdong Province, Mr Chen Xudong, and other representatives.

At the meeting, the three parties supported the Department of Justice's (DoJ) proposal to foster closer co-operation among arbitration and mediation institutions in the three places. Consensus was reached on the joint development of a collaborative online dispute resolution platform, which will start with information and resources sharing among these institutions in the GBA. This initiative echoes the policy initiative of the Policy Address 2022 to establish an online mediation platform in the GBA.

The three parties agreed to develop an online dispute resolution platform together, with a view to integrating information and resources in relation to mediation and arbitration in the GBA, so as to facilitate the sharing of relevant resources in the GBA for the convenience and benefit of the public, and to promote the use of mediation, etc, to resolve disputes. It is also conducive to promoting the use of lawtech and contributing to the development of diversified dispute resolution mechanisms in the GBA.

The conference also made good progress in advancing the "soft connectivity" of rules, systems and talents among the three places.

On mediation and arbitration, the three parties have, on the basis of the Greater Bay Area Mediator Accreditation Standards, conducted in-depth discussions on various topics, such as the respective formulation of mediator accreditation rules of each place, the work on promoting the establishment of

panels of GBA mediators and arbitrators, as well as the relevant work on the promotion and research of recognising and enforcing settlement agreements.

On training of legal talents, they actively exchanged views on establishing a mechanism on nurturing foreign-related legal talents in the GBA. The three parties agreed to set up a working group under the Joint Conference on nurturing legal talents in the GBA to study ways to enhance collaboration on this front in the three places to fully capitalise on the GBA's unique advantage of "one country, two systems and three jurisdictions".

Noting that the GBA has an important strategic position in the new development setting of the country, Mr Cheung stressed that a better interface of the legal systems and rules as well as the connection of talents in the GBA will not only assist in promoting the rule of law development in the GBA, but also further facilitate Hong Kong's integration into the overall development of the country. Meanwhile, the development of rule of law in the GBA will require a large pool of foreign-related legal talents, and strengthening the development of the rule of law in foreign-related affairs will ensure the high-level opening up of the GBA to the outside world, and continuously enhance its legal services as an international brand.

He pointed out that the DoJ will set up a dedicated office and an expert group to take forward the policy initiative in the Policy Address 2023 to establish the Hong Kong International Legal Talents Training Academy. This is in support of the country's work in advancing the rule of law in foreign-related affairs, leveraging Hong Kong's bilingual common law system and international status.

Also, the DoJ is actively preparing to establish a standing interface platform with the Supreme People's Court as a high-level, regular and institutionalised official channel to take forward the research and practical work on judicial and legal matters relating to the GBA.

The GBA Task Force, led by Mr Cheung, will continue to focus on strengthening the mechanisms for mutual legal assistance in civil and commercial matters, and facilitating the convergence of legal practices in the GBA, so as to promote the launch of more measures for the convenience and benefit of the public.

Mr Cheung said, "As an important establishment in promoting high-level institutional development in the GBA, the Joint Conference, which is held face-to-face for the first time today since the resumption of normalcy, means a lot. I firmly believe that the sincere co-operation among Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao under the Joint Conference will bring forth stronger collaboration among the legal sectors of the three places, deepening and strengthening the development of the rule of law in the GBA."

Mr Cheung will return to Hong Kong in the evening.