

Speech by CE at Hong Kong Legal Week 2023: Rule of Law for the Future (English only)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the Hong Kong Legal Week 2023: Rule of Law for the Future today (November 10):

Deputy Director Liu Guangyuan (Deputy Director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)), Honourable Mr Justice Poon (the Chief Judge of the High Court), ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It gives me great pleasure to speak to you today at the "Rule of Law for the Future" conference, the last of Hong Kong Legal Week's five fruitful days of events.

This year's Legal Week, I'm pleased to note, has attracted some 11 000 participants, in person and online.

And I know I'm speaking this morning to an audience that lives and breathes the rule of law: eminent judges and legal practitioners, distinguished business leaders engaged, in the maritime and aviation sector, in finance, intellectual property, art and numerous other business areas. Each and every one of you counting on the rule of law and the confidence it instils in businesses and investors from Hong Kong, throughout the region and around the world.

"Connecting the World" is the central theme of this year's Legal Week. And Hong Kong has what it takes to drive connectivity for the region and beyond.

Under the unique "one country, two systems" principle, we are seamlessly connected to the world, while enjoying our country's unwavering support. Our bilingual common law system, with its strong and longstanding heritage, and a judiciary that exercises its power independently, is well-regarded internationally.

As China's only common law jurisdiction, Hong Kong will continue to play to its unique strengths, and serve as the central conduit between the Mainland and the rest of the world.

Firmly enshrined under the Basic Law, Hong Kong's rule of law protects both businesses and the community, ensuring Hong Kong's long-term prosperity and stability.

In this year's Rule of Law Index, published by the World Justice Project, Hong Kong came 23rd out of 140 countries and jurisdictions. It

places us firmly in the top quintile of the world, in terms of the rule of law.

Thanks to the rule of law, and our sound legal system, Hong Kong has long been recognised as one of the world's freest economies. In the World Competitiveness Yearbook this year, Hong Kong is ranked as the seventh most competitive economy in the world. In the report, our ranking in "business legislation" came first in the world.

Our acknowledged legal prowess will bring us immense opportunities. It will bring about a bright future, premised on the rule of law.

Hong Kong is determined to help drive the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA)'s international success with our established legal services. As I noted in my Policy Address which I delivered two weeks ago, we will work to extend the adoption of Hong Kong law and the use of our dispute resolution services, to Mainland companies and their contracts.

That's why I'm pleased to see that, for the first time, exhibition booths dedicated to our legal services, as well as those of Macao and the GBA's nine Mainland cities, have been set up just outside Legal Week's main venue.

The Legal Week's "Gateway to the Opportunities in the GBA" event, yesterday, included a mock court session promoting legal regulatory connectivity among the GBA's three jurisdictions: Guangdong, Macao and Hong Kong. They help to promote to the world the diverse, yet complementary, services our "nine plus two" cities could provide.

The rule of law, coupled with our common law system, also makes possible Hong Kong's development as a centre for international legal and dispute resolution services in the Asia-Pacific region, which are highly welcomed. It will also propel our status as an international financial, shipping and trade centre.

As you know, legal organisations such as the Hague Conference on Private International Law, the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization Hong Kong Regional Arbitration Centre, and the International Organization for Mediation Preparatory Office, have established their presence in Hong Kong.

And we work, hand in hand, with prominent international organisations in promoting legal co-operation.

The UN Commission on International Trade Law, for instance, has just held its fifth Asia Pacific Judicial Summit here on the first day of this Legal Week.

All of these, ladies and gentlemen, showcase how Hong Kong, as a liberal city with a solid basis of the rule of law, can thrive as a platform for regional, and international, exchange and collaboration on jurisprudence and legal services.

Opportunity is one thing. Realising it is another thing entirely. For that, we need a continuing flow of talent. Strategic, wide-ranging talent. In my Policy Address, I announced the establishment of the Hong Kong International Legal Talents Training Academy. We have the potential and the promise to rise as a regional centre for capacity building.

Taking good advantage of our talent base and co-operation with international organisations, we will develop practical training courses and exchange programmes with countries and regions along the Belt and Road. We will also train specialists, from around the world, in foreign-related legal affairs and international law, common law, civil law, as well as the Chinese legal system.

Speaking of nurturing talents, I'm pleased to note that a panel discussion, this afternoon, focuses on "Youth Empowerment through Rule of Law Education". Speakers will include both secondary and university students, as well as secondary school teachers and others with a professional interest in rule of law education.

Of course, we all have an interest in rule of law education. We must all work together to educate our youth and bring up our next generation to become law-abiding citizens with global perspectives, as well as a sense of affection for our country and our Hong Kong home.

This future generation of talents, ladies and gentlemen, will ensure the sustainability of Hong Kong's development, long down the broad road of the rule of law.

I'm grateful to the Department of Justice (DoJ) of the HKSAR Government for, once again, organising a successful Hong Kong Legal Week.

The DoJ will, I'm confident, continue to play a meaningful role in enhancing Hong Kong's connectivity at all levels, contributing to the development of our city and the country, as well as helping to build a global community with a shared future.

On that note, I wish you all a rewarding conference today, and the best of business, and the rule of law, in the coming year. Thank you very much.