

DoJ welcomes special examination for legal practitioners in Greater Bay Area

The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC) today (August 11) passed the decision on authorising the State Council on the implementation of pilot measures for Hong Kong and Macao legal practitioners to obtain Mainland practice qualifications and to practise as lawyers in the nine Pearl River Delta municipalities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. The Department of Justice welcomes the decision, which would be conducive to the expansion of professional service by the local legal sector in the Greater Bay Area.

The Secretary for Justice, Ms Teresa Cheng, SC, said, "I am most grateful to the Central Government for launching such an arrangement, which allows eligible Hong Kong legal practitioners to practise in specific areas of Mainland law upon passing a special examination and obtain the practice qualifications in the nine Pearl River Delta municipalities in the Greater Bay Area. This will further promote Hong Kong as an international legal and dispute resolution services centre in the Greater Bay Area. I believe that more facilitation and opportunities will be available for Hong Kong's legal sector in the Greater Bay Area upon implementation of the measure."

According to the Agreement Concerning Amendment to the CEPA Agreement on Trade in Services signed by the Mainland and Hong Kong in November last year, Hong Kong legal practitioners, upon passing a special examination, will be qualified to practise in specific areas to provide Mainland civil and commercial legal services in the nine Pearl River Delta municipalities in the Greater Bay Area. The measure will be implemented on a three-year pilot basis.

Under the liberalisation measures for early and pilot implementation in the Greater Bay Area, the Department of Justice of Guangdong Province announced in July last year the "Trial Measures of the Department of Justice of Guangdong Province on Hong Kong Law Firms and Macao Law Firms Operating in the Form of Partnership Association with Mainland Law Firms in Guangdong Province (2019 Revision)" (the Trial Measures). Further liberalisation measures relating to partnership associations set up between Mainland and Hong Kong law firms in the Guangdong Province were implemented, including the removal of the minimum capital injection ratio of 30 per cent by Hong Kong partner firms in the partnership associations set up between Mainland and Hong Kong law firms, as well as allowing Mainland and Hong Kong lawyers to be employed direct in the partnership associations' own name.

There are currently 12 partnership associations in Guangdong Province. It is anticipated that more Hong Kong and Mainland law firms, especially small and medium-sized firms, will consider establishing partnership

associations in the future to provide a one-stop shop of cross-jurisdictional legal services in the Mainland. By enabling Hong Kong legal practitioners to practise in specific areas of Mainland law in the nine Pearl River Delta municipalities in the Greater Bay Area upon obtaining the qualification, more professional talents will be available for the partnership associations. The arrangement fully complements the Trial Measures.

Ms Cheng noted that the liberalisation measures for early and pilot implementation are conducive to promoting the development of a multi-faceted dispute resolution mechanism based on wide consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, which is laid out in the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. Ms Cheng expressed her gratitude to the legal organisations and representatives from the legal sector, including the Small and Medium Law Firms Association of Hong Kong and the Law Society of Hong Kong, for their staunch support for the introduction of the special examination measure by reflecting the sector's opinions and providing suggestions.

Police enforce law as crowd gathered in Sha Tin

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

Please broadcast the following message as soon as possible and repeat it at suitable intervals:

At around 6pm today (August 11), some protestors were gathering and chanting slogans at a shopping mall on Sha Tin Centre Street, Sha Tin. Participants may contravene related offences under the Public Order Ordinance and the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation. Police entered the mall to enforce the law and requested the protestors to stop gathering. Police may issue summons or conduct arrest operations otherwise.

Police appeal to the protestors to stop gathering and leave immediately. Members of the public are advised not to take part in any unauthorised assemblies and prohibited group gatherings. Police strongly condemn such irresponsible actions that endangered public health. Police have zero tolerance towards illegal acts and will take enforcement action resolutely.

Police enforce law as crowd gathered and chanted slogans in Mong Kok

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

Please broadcast the following message as soon as possible and repeat it at suitable intervals:

At around 6pm today (August 11), some crowds gathered at a shopping mall on Argyle Street, Mong Kok and behaved in a disorderly manner. Participating in such events may contravene of "taking part in an unauthorised assembly" in accordance with the Public Order Ordinance, and may commit certain offences related to participating in prohibited group gatherings under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation. Some crowds chanted slogans which were suspected to have breached related offences under the National Security Law. Police officers attended the scene to enforce the law and conduct interceptions.

Police request the protestors to stop gathering and leave immediately. Members of the public should refrain from taking part in such activities. Police will take enforcement action resolutely.

Police professional law enforcement to safeguard national security

Nine men and one woman were arrested yesterday (August 10) by officers of the National Security Department of the Hong Kong Police Force in a law enforcement operation in several districts across the territory for suspected collusion with a foreign country or with external elements to endanger national security, contravening Article 29 of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (National Security Law), and conspiracy to defraud etc.

In respect of yesterday's operation, the Police had applied from the court a search warrant in accordance with the legal requirements and procedures, and conducted searches at various locations to collect evidence against the illegal acts in accordance with the authorisation of the search warrant. As the workplace of the arrested persons was a media organisation, the Police conducted evidence collection at the media organisation. During the process, the Police displayed the search warrant multiple times for examination by the media organisation's personnel and legal representatives. The Police stressed that the operation was targeted at the alleged offenders'

unlawful acts, but not individual media organisation.

Freedom of the press is an important cornerstone of Hong Kong and the Police always respect the freedom of the press, speech and publication. Prior to yesterday's operation, officers have been specifically reminded to avoid going through news materials during the evidence collection process, which was also conducted in the company of the media organisation's personnel. The Police expressed regret that some media had deliberately discredited the Police's search operation.

The Police stressed that yesterday's operation was conducted in accordance with the law to safeguard national security. Regardless of the identity or background of the suspects involved, the Police will enforce the law professionally in accordance with the relevant legislation and the actual circumstances.

On press arrangement, the Police reiterated that they always respect press freedom and the rights of the media in reporting. Without compromising operation effectiveness, the Police has all along endeavoured to facilitate media's reporting work. To meet operational needs, the Police will set up cordoned-off zones during law enforcement operations and it will facilitate media in performing their reporting work outside the cordoned-off areas.

In recognition of the public's concerns about a law enforcement operation in Tseung Kwan O yesterday, the Police Public Relations Branch actively communicated with the frontline commander in charge of the operation and through the co-ordination of the Force Media Liaison Cadre at scene, some media organisations, including television, radio and newspapers, gained access into the cordoned-off zones to cover the operation from a more vantage point, thereby enhancing the transparency of police work.

The Police fully acknowledged that some media organisations or reporters have different views on this trial arrangement, and will review and improve the measures in the future after fully listening to the views of the media.

Transcript of remarks by LegCo President on NPCSC's decision to let Sixth LegCo continue to discharge its duties

The following is issued on behalf of the Legislative Council Secretariat:

Following is the transcript of remarks by President of the Legislative Council (LegCo), Mr Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, on the decision of the Standing

Committee of the National People's Congress to let the Sixth LegCo continue to discharge its duties at a media briefing at the LegCo Complex today (August 11):

As you all know, in view of the severe COVID-19 pandemic situation, the Government of the Special Administrative Region (SAR) has postponed the general election for the Seventh LegCo to ensure that it can be conducted fairly and impartially. To address the issue arising from the postponement of the election, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress has made the decision to let the Sixth LegCo continue to discharge its duties for no less than one year.

I welcome the Standing Committee's decision. In the present unprecedented pandemic situation, the Standing Committee has made this principled decision to enable the continued smooth operation of the Legislature, and ensure the effective administration of the SAR Government.

In the midst of the current pandemic, Hong Kong is facing severe economic hardship. I hope that when the Council resumes work in October, Members across the political spectrum could put aside political differences and work together to discharge their constitutional duties, with the common goal to resolve economic and livelihood issues in the best interest of the community.