

**Young Lawyers Exchange Programme co-organised by
The Law Society of Hong Kong and the Malaysian Bar**
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (22-23 August 2025)

**Welcome Remarks by Mr Roden Tong
President of The Law Society of Hong Kong
at Malaysia-Hong Kong Young Lawyers' Symposium**
Saturday, 23 August 2025

President Mohamad Ezri Abdul Wahab,
The Hon. Justice Dato' Anand Ponnudurai,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the inaugural Malaysia-Hong Kong Young Lawyers' Symposium, as part of a two-day Young Lawyers Exchange Programme organised by The Law Society of Hong Kong and the Malaysian Bar. Since formalising our partnership through a Memorandum of Understanding in January 2016, the collaborative relationship between our organisations has continued to grow. Recent official delegate visits and professional exchanges have further strengthened the ties between our legal communities.

Last September, The Law Society was invited to join the delegation led by Mr Paul Lam, Secretary for Justice of the HKSAR, to ASEAN countries, where we engaged with the Malaysian Bar to explore legal co-operation and exchanges. In January, we were honoured to be invited by the National Young Lawyers and Pupils Committee to attend Soirée 2025 by the Malaysian Bar, further strengthening our ties with Malaysia's legal community.

Today, we build upon that foundation by presenting a meaningful platform for young lawyers from Hong Kong and Malaysia to foster synergy, exchange ideas, and cultivate enduring professional friendships.

Fun fact: While Cantonese is the primary language for most in Hong Kong, a significant portion of Malaysia's Chinese population also speaks Cantonese.

Strategic Economic Importance of Hong Kong–Malaysia Ties

The partnership between Hong Kong and Malaysia holds strategic importance in the global landscape. As two dynamic economies in Asia Pacific, our collaboration extends beyond legal exchange – encompassing trade, cross-border investment, financial innovation, cultural exchange, and tourism.

In 2023, Malaysia ranked as Hong Kong's third-largest trading partner and third-largest investor among ASEAN countries. Its cumulative FDI in Hong Kong reached a total of US\$4.4 billion by the end of 2022, reflecting the depth of our economic ties.

Also, I am pleased to note that Hong Kong is set to open its fourth Economic and Trade Office in Southeast Asia – this time in Malaysia – by the end of this year, marking another significant milestone in the bilateral relations.

Hong Kong's Strength as a Global Business Partner in Asia-Pacific

Closely connected to the world's leading business centres, Hong Kong offers a dynamic, free and open, convenient and safe environment for doing business. Its strategic location and business-friendly policies make it an ideal gateway to Asia and beyond.

According to the Global Financial Centres Index (GFCI) 37 Report, Hong Kong ranks first in the Asia-Pacific region and third globally – behind only New York and London. This recognition reaffirms Hong Kong's status as one of the world's leading international financial centres. The city is also globally acclaimed as a world-leading international trade, aviation and shipping centre.

In business, it is often said that “law comes first”. Every commercial activity is inherently tied to legal frameworks and relies on the support of legal services to ensure compliance, clarity and confidence.

It brings us to **the core strength of Hong Kong: its legal profession**, consistently recognised as one of the most esteemed across global jurisdictions. Hong Kong's robust legal and financial systems are the cornerstone of its success in becoming an international business and trade centre. They provide the stability, transparency, and trust that global partners seek when choosing where to do business.

Introducing the Young Lawyers Exchange Programme

As exchanges between Hong Kong and Malaysia continue to grow, so will the demand for cross-border legal services. This presents an opportunity to leverage the collective strengths of lawyers from both jurisdictions. We should strive to collaborate more closely, across broader and deeper dimensions.

However, all meaningful collaboration begins with trust. That is why The Law Society of Hong Kong is proud to partner with the Malaysian Bar to launch the Young Lawyers Exchange Programme — an initiative that embodies our shared commitment to nurturing the next generation of legal professionals.

In its inaugural year, we have received an overwhelming response and carefully selected 20 representatives from Hong Kong, underscoring our members' strong interest in learning about Malaysia's legal system and cross-jurisdictional practices.

Just yesterday, these young legal professionals from Hong Kong visited key legal institutions in Malaysia and engaged in fruitful exchanges with their Malaysian counterparts. Today, they continue this journey through professional dialogue at this symposium.

Uniqueness of Hong Kong's Legal System

As President of The Law Society, the statutory self-regulatory professional body for solicitors in Hong Kong, I would like to share with our Malaysian colleagues the unique characteristics of Hong Kong's legal system.

Like Malaysia, where common law forms part of the legal system, Hong Kong also adopts common law under “One Country, Two Systems”. What makes Hong Kong unique is that it is the world’s only Chinese and English bilingual common law jurisdiction, and the only common law jurisdiction within China.

Further, Hong Kong enjoys preferential access to the Mainland China market under the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (“CEPA”) and has entered into Mutual Legal Assistance Agreements with the Mainland. These advantages position Hong Kong as both a “super connector” and a “super value-adder” between China and the rest of the world.

The Law Society has over 13,000 members – many possess dual qualifications, global perspectives, and deep understanding of Mainland legal culture, with extensive experience in cross-border matters and dispute resolution. Currently, around 400 Hong Kong lawyers are qualified to practice Mainland law in the nine Greater Bay Area cities in the Guangdong, China.

About one-third of our members serve as in-house counsel for leading corporations across jurisdictions and industries. They possess extensive legal knowledge spanning multiple legal systems, as well as a deep understanding of the unique regulatory and commercial landscapes of different businesses.

Today, there are more than 1,500 registered foreign lawyers and over 80 foreign law firms in Hong Kong – these figures reflect the openness, diversity and global connectivity of our legal landscape, offering a dynamic environment for legal professionals from around the world to thrive.

With the global rise of mediation and arbitration, Hong Kong is determined to position itself as a global “capital for mediation” and a leading legal and dispute resolution services centre in Asia-Pacific.

According to 2025 International Arbitration Survey (by Queen Mary University of London), Hong Kong is ranked second globally as the most preferred seat for arbitration. Institutions like the Hong Kong International Arbitration Centre (HKIAC), known for their expertise and impartiality, have seen a steady rise in case numbers — reflecting international confidence in Hong Kong’s legal framework and independence.

With a strong pool of internationally recognized dispute resolution experts, Hong Kong offers arbitral awards that are enforceable in over 150 Contracting States under the New York Convention, including reciprocal arrangements with Mainland China and Macao SAR. Hong Kong’s position as a premier centre for cross-border dispute resolution is further reinforced by the upcoming establishment of the International Organization for Mediation headquarters and new initiatives in sports arbitration.

Suggestions to Young Lawyers

As I always say: for legal talents, internationalisation is essential for both career and personal growth. The Exchange Programme creates valuable opportunities for you all here to **connect, collaborate and seize opportunities** in cross-jurisdictional business and legal affairs, especially as the global landscape grows increasingly complex.

We believe, young lawyers today hold limitless potential – to lead with integrity, innovate with purpose, and uphold justice in an evolving legal landscape. You are changemakers of tomorrow, and you will shape the future of our profession.

Nurturing the next generation of legal professionals has long been a key priority for The Law Society of Hong Kong. Personally, I have been actively involved in developing young legal talent for over a decade, serving as a mentor, chairman, and advisor to a variety of professional development initiatives. I believe the Malaysian Bar shares this same commitment to empowering future legal professionals.

I look forward to deepening collaboration between lawyers in Hong Kong and Malaysia. Today's symposium is a meaningful opportunity for exchange on topics of mutual interest, and I am confident it will spark insights, partnership, and lasting friendships.

I hope you all enjoy the event. Thank you.