



# Newsletter JAN 24

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### **NEW HONOURS**



We are honored to be recognized as one of the **Best Overall Law Firms** in **Hong Kong** in the 2023 China Business Law Regional Awards which are based on nominations received from China–focused corporate counsel and legal professionals around the world.



We are pleased to be named as **Outstanding Law Firm** for Dispute Resolution, Intellectual Property in **Hong Kong** in this Asialaw Profiles 2024 Guide. We are also **Highly Recommended** for Banking & Finance, Construction and Restructuring & Insolvency, and **Recommended** for Banking & Financial Services, Technology & Telecommunications, Consumer Goods & Services, Real Estate, Private Client and Corporate/M&A Practice, and named as **Notable Firm** in Labour & Employment.



For consecutive years, we have been ranked a **Leading Firm** in the practice areas of Intellectual Property and Dispute Resolution: Litigation in **Hong Kong** in The Legal 500 Asia Pacific 2024, the Client's Guide to the best law firms and top lawyers.





We are pleased to be ranked Top 100 PRC Trademark Agencies 《中國商標代理 100 強》 by the China Trademark Association ("CTA") in late 2023. CTA, established in 1994, is a national social organization initiated by well-known Chinese enterprises upon approval by the Ministry of Civil Affairs, and currently operates under the guidance of the CNIPA.

# Congratulations

We are proud of the recognition given to our lawyers and congratulate them on their achievements.





John Budge

John Budge, Consultant of our Dispute Resolution Practice Group, recently received a Gold Award in the 2023 Pro Bono and Community Work Recognition Programme of the Law Society of Hong Kong. For many years John has been very involved in public service in Hong Kong, and this is the sixth time he has received this award.









### AsiaLaw Leading Lawyers 2023/2024



Raymond Chan



Michael Ma



Florence Chan



Keith Ho



Mena Lo



Annie Tsoi



Andrea Fong

Raymond Chan, Senior Partner and Head of our Corporate Practice Group, has been recognized as Elite practitioner in Corporate and M&A. Michael Ma, Partner of our Corporate Practice Group, has been named as Distinguished Practitioner in Corporate/M&A. Florence Chan, Partner of our Dispute Resolution Practice Group, is recognized as Notable Practitioner in Dispute Resolution, whereas Mena Lo and Annie Tsoi, respectively Head and Partner of our Intellectual Property Practice Group, are ranked as Notable practitioner in Intellectual Property. Keith Ho and Andrea Fong, Consultants of our Dispute Resolution and Intellectual Property Practice Groups are named as Elite practitioner in their respective practice area.



# II WWL

### Who's Who Legal: Mainland China & Hong Kong SAR & Macao SAR 2023





Mena Lo

Andrea Fong

Mena Lo and Andrea Fong, respectively Head and Consultant of our Intellectual Property Practice Group, have been recognized as Recommended Leaders in IP - Trademarks in Mainland China, Hong Kong SAR and Macao SAR.

# ppointments

Through strong participation in major national and international bodies, our lawyers contribute to the community.

The Law Society of Hong Kong

Annie Tsoi, Partner, Intellectual Property Practice Group, has been re-appointed as a member of the Intellectual Property Committee of the Law Society of Hong Kong for a 3-year term commencing from 31 October 2023.

**INTA** Geographical **Indications** Committee

Annie Tsoi, Partner, Intellectual Property Practice Group, has been newly appointed to the INTA Geographical Indications Committee for the term 2024-2025. This Committee develops and advocates INTA's policies on the impact of geographical indications (GIs) and their enforcement on trademark rights.

**INTA Enforcement** Committee

Florence Lam, Partner, Intellectual Property Practice Group, has been re-appointed to the INTA Enforcement Committee for the term 2024-2025. This Committee develops and advocates INTA's policy regarding enforcement of trademarks.

**INTA Parallel** Imports Committee **Shireen So**, Partner, Intellectual Property Practice Group, has been re-appointed to the INTA Parallel Imports Committee for the term This Committee develops and advocates INTA's policy regarding the balanced protection against parallel imports.

**INTA** Commercialization of Brands Committee

**Esther Ho**, Partner, Intellectual Property Practice Group, has been re-appointed to the INTA Commercialization of Brands Committee for the term 2024-2025. This Committee develops resources relating to the in-market commercialization of brand offerings.

# Wilkinson & Grist Solicitors & Notaries



**Venus Lee**, Partner, Intellectual Property Practice Group, has been re-appointed to the INTA Building Bridges Committee for the term 2024-2025. This Committee aims at building bridges with non-IP and non-legal associations to facilitate the advancement of INTA's Strategic Plan.

INTA Building Bridges Committee

Florence Lam, Partner, Intellectual Property Practice Group, has been appointed to the Copyright Committee of APAA Hong Kong Group for the term 2023-2025. The Asian Patent Attorneys Association (APAA) is a non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting and enhancing intellectual property protection in the Asian region.

APAAHK Copyright Committee

**Shireen So**, Partner, Intellectual Property Practice Group, has been appointed to the Trademarks Committee of APAA Hong Kong Group for the term 2023-2025.

APAAHK Trademarks Committee

# New Face

We warmly welcome the following newcomer to our firm.

**Teddy Lam** joined our Dispute Resolution Practice Group as an associate in 2023, after completing the 2-year training with the firm. He obtained his Bachelor of Social Sciences (Government and Laws), Bachelor of Laws and PCLL from The University of Hong Kong. Teddy currently works on a variety of litigation matters, including commercial and contractual disputes, banking and insolvency matters, as well as estate administration disputes.



### Talks & Seminars

We are pleased to be involved in, and contribute to, legal education in Hong Kong SAR, China and other regions.

On 1 November 2023, **Paul Liu**, Partner, **Keith Ho**, Consultant, and **Iris Chan**, Senior Associate of our Dispute Resolution Practice Group, conducted a seminar on general civil procedure for one of our bank clients, a leading bank in Asia with a global network of 500 branches and offices across 19 countries and territories in the world. The seminar aimed at equipping bank staff, in particular legal and risk officers, with practical knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals in Hong Kong civil procedure that are essential to their day-to-day business and operation.

Civil Procedure Seminar



# bout Us

We are delighted to be visited by representatives from our Japanese associates Nishimura & Asahi (Gaikokuho Kyodo Jigyo) and its local affiliate office Okada Law Firm on respectively 3 and 23 November 2023.



(From left to right) Our Partner Shireen So; our Senior Partner Raymond Chan; Ms Naoko Omukai, Partner of Nishimura & Asahi (GKJ); our Partners Florence Lam and Annie Tsoi; Mr Takuya Mima, attorney of Nishimura & Asahi (GKJ); Mr Hiroki Fukuo of Okada Law Firm



(From left to right at the back) Our Senior Partner Raymond Chan; Mr Takuya Mima, attorney of Nishimura & Asahi (GKJ); Mr Hiroki Fukuo of Okada Law Firm (From left to right in the front) Ms Saori Okada of Okada Law Firm; our Partners Florence Lam, Annie Tsoi and Shireen So





To welcome the new year with an act of kindness and service to the community, our team of lawyers and staff volunteered with Food Angel (惜食堂) to prepare meals using recycle edible leftover food from local catering industry for free distribution to those in need in the society. It was a truly rewarding event as we worked towards the common goal of "Waste Not Hunger Not" and experienced excellent teamwork in the preparation of over 2,000 meal boxes. We look forward to partnering with more charities and social enterprises in contributing to our community.



# Conferences

Our members will be attending the following conferences and will be delighted to make arrangements in advance for meeting with clients and associates.

LESI Annual Conference Madrid, Spain, 28 April – 30 May 2024

INTA Annual Meeting Atlanta, USA, 18 – 22 May 2024

ECTA Annual Conference Antwerp, Belgium, 19 – 21 June 2024

MARQUES Annual Conference Stockholm, Sweden, 24 – 27 September 2024

AIPPI World Congress Hangzhou, China, 19 – 22 October 2024

INTA Leadership Meeting New Orleans, USA, 12 – 15 November 2024

APAA Council Meeting Metro Manila, The Philippines, 18 – 21 November 2024

# Hong Kong SAR



David Choi

### Legislative proposals on end-of-life care

The Advance Decision on Life-sustaining Treatment Bill (the "Bill"), which was published in the Gazette on 24 November 2023, was introduced into the Legislative Council for first and second reading on 6 December 2023. There are also amendments to the Coroners Ordinance (Cap 504) and the Births & Deaths Registration Ordinance (Cap 174).

The Bill and the relevant legislative amendments seek to provide for legislative frameworks for safeguarding patients, medical professionals and rescuers, including lay rescuers, in relation to Advance Medical Directives ("AMDs"), Do-not-attempt Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation ("DNACPR") orders and also facilitating the choice of dying in place for terminally ill patients in residential care homes for persons with disabilities or elderly persons.

The legislative proposals are aimed at providing quality and holistic end-oflife care to terminally ill patients which can decide on their own medical treatment and care arrangement and where they would like to spend their final days.

#### **AMDs**

Under the Bill, any person who is aged 18 or above and is mentally capable can make an AMD to decide whether to receive a life-sustaining treatment. Life-sustaining treatment means any medical treatment that is necessary to keep a person alive, but does not include basic care and palliative care. A common example includes the feeding of food and drink to the person through a tube or catheter (ie artificial nutrition and hydration).

Once a person has given instructions in the AMD not to receive a lifesustaining treatment, medical professionals will not perform any lifesustaining treatment at the time such person is no longer mentally capable of deciding on a life-sustaining treatment.

The AMDs must be made in writing and usually a scanned and digitised copy of the paper form will be uploaded in a designated electronic system. It is noted that the Health Bureau is now exploring the feasibility of enabling the making of AMDs direct in digital form by electronic means.



The Bill distinguishes AMDs from the concept of euthanasia and emphasizes that a patient cannot refuse basic or palliative care or request the administration or prescription of a substance to end their life through an AMD.

#### **DNACPR** orders

The Bill also mentions about a DNACPR order which is an instrument that directs not to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation ("**CPR**") on a person suffering from cardiopulmonary arrest.

Under the principle of "if in doubt, save life first", medical professionals and rescuers usually have to make prompt decisions whether to perform rescue including CPR on patients facing emergency situations. The Bill provides a safeguard to medical professionals and rescuers so that they do not incur any legal liability for whether they have subjected the patients to a life-sustaining treatment.

#### Dying in place

There are also amendments proposed to be made to the Coroners Ordinance and the Births & Deaths Registration Ordinance to facilitate the choice of dying in place for terminally ill patients in residential care homes. The effect of the amendments is that natural death of a terminally ill resident in residential care homes for persons with disabilities or elderly persons will no longer be considered as a reportable death to the Coroners Court.

#### **Observation**

AMDs, Enduring Powers of Attorney and Wills are altogether regarded as the "Three Instruments of Peace". Unlike Enduring Powers of Attorney and Wills which are now governed by the Enduring Powers of Attorney Ordinance (Cap 501) and the Wills Ordinance (Cap 30) respectively, there is currently no legislation that formally recognizes the legal status of AMDs. We welcome the Bill as it provides a mechanism for a mentally competent person to plan for his/her future medical needs and treatment.

We fully support the life and death education which aims at breaking the taboo on death issues. With the increasing acceptance and recognition of the "Three Instruments of Peace", it is hopeful that they can provide more protection and peace of mind to both the persons concerned and their family members.





Raymond Chan



Crystal Chan

#### Salaries Tax Assessment: Decision of the Court of Appeal in Dr. Leung Ka-Lau Final Commissioner of Inland Revenue [2023] HKCFA 36

In Dr. The Honourable Leung Ka-Lau v The Commissioner of Inland Revenue [2023] HKCFA 36, the Court of Final Appeal ("CFA") considered (i) whether a sum of HK\$1,765,821 (the "Sum") paid as damages by the Hospital Authority ("HA") to the taxpayer ("Taxpayer") for standing by for work on rest days, statutory and public holidays is taxable as salaries tax, and (ii) in particular, whether the Sum was income from employment within the meaning of section 8(1) of the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap 112) ("IRO").

#### **Background**

The HA operated an on-call system whereby doctors would be required to be on stand-by either at or nearby a hospital on their rest days or statutory/public holidays. The Taxpayer, being an employee of the HA, was deprived of certain rest days and statutory/public holidays due to the on-call system.

In 2009, the CFA held that the Taxpayer was entitled to damages payable by the HA for rest days and statutory/public holidays he was deprived of, according to sections 17 and 39 of the Employment Ordinance. damages were assessed to be in the sum of HK\$1,765,821.

The present appeal arose from the assessment of the Commissioner of Inland Revenue ("CIR") that the Sum was subject to salaries tax, to which the Taxpayer filed an objection. The Court of First Instance decided for the Taxpayer. The CIR's appeal was dismissed by a majority of the Court of Appeal. Leave to appeal was granted by the Court of Appeal on the question of law as to whether the Sum was income from employment within the meaning of section 8(1) of the IRO.

#### The Judgement

The CFA unanimously allowed the appeal of the CIR.

The proper test, as set out in the CFA's decision in Fuchs v Commissioner of Inland Revenue (2011) 14 HKCFAR 74, is whether the purpose of the payment at the relevant time, as a matter of substance, was paid to the Taxpayer "acting as or being an employee", rendering past services, or as an inducement to enter into or remain in the contract for further services.

Applying that test, the CFA found the Sum to be taxable for the following reasons.



- 1. The purpose for which the Sum was paid arose from the Taxpayer acting as or being an employee. The Taxpayer was required to be on standby at the request of the HA. This was what the Sum was aimed at compensating. The Taxpayer stood by on his holiday and rest days because he was an employee of the HA. In doing so, the Taxpayer was "acting as or being an employee".
- 2. The Sum might be viewed as a payment for past services. The Taxpayer provided the HA a service by being on stand-by, even if he was not called on to go to the hospital. That was a past service to the HA.
- 3. The terms of the contract that provided for holidays and rest days, of which the Taxpayer was deprived, might be viewed as an inducement to prospective employees to enter into a contract for services with the HA. Hence, it was related to employment under the relevant test.

The CFA rejected the Taxpayer's argument that the Sum was not paid pursuant to the contract of employment but rather to abrogate the Taxpayer's rights. Whilst payment for the abrogation of rights under an employment contract that was entirely set aside, or abrogated, was not taxable, it did not follow that applying the label "abrogation of rights" meant that a sum so described is not taxable. The CFA held that the abrogation cases relied upon by the Taxpayer were distinguishable from the present case, being concerned with situations where the employment was brought to an end.

Here, the contract of employment was never brought to an end but remained fully in force. The Taxpayer's right to be paid for the days he was on stand-by did not negate or abrogate its terms. The Taxpayer relied on those terms and his rights and asked that he be given compensation for the failure to fulfil them. This was not abrogation of the contractual rights, but a demand that they be fulfilled.

The CFA further observed that taxing the Sum would not incur double taxation as the Taxpayer had suggested. The Sum was a compensation for the Taxpayer's loss of rest days and holidays, which was paid over and above the basic monthly salary of the Taxpayer, and therefore not previously subject to tax.

#### **Implications**

The CFA re-affirmed the correct legal test for determining whether a payment is taxable as salaries tax under section 8(1) of the IRO. To be taxable, a payment should be made "in return for acting as or being an employee", or "as a reward for past services or as an inducement to enter into employment and provide future services".



Raymond Chan



Crystal Chan

### Mainland Judgments in Civil and Commercial Matters (Reciprocal Enforcement) Ordinance

#### **Background**

The Mainland Judgments in Civil and Commercial Matters (Reciprocal Enforcement) Ordinance ("Ordinance") and the Mainland Judgments in Civil and Commercial Matters (Reciprocal Enforcement) Rules ("Rules") came into operation on 29 January 2024.

The Ordinance seeks to provide for the enforcement in Hong Kong of judgments in civil and commercial matters given in the Mainland China ("Mainland"), and for facilitating the recognition and enforcement in the Mainland of such judgments given in Hong Kong. It aims at giving effect to the Arrangement on Reciprocal Recognition and Enforcement of Judgments in Civil and Commercial Matters ("Arrangement") by the Courts of the Mainland and of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region signed between the Supreme People's Court of Mainland ("SPC") and Hong Kong Government on 18 January 2019 (for details please refer to our May 2019 Newsletter).

The Rules set out the detailed requirements and procedures for registration and execution of Mainland judgments in civil or commercial matters in Hong Kong.

In the Mainland, the Arrangement will be implemented by way of judicial interpretation to be promulgated by the SPC.

#### Registration of a Mainland judgment in Hong Kong in civil or commercial matters

The key provisions of the Ordinance provide that:

- a judgment creditor under a Mainland judgment in a civil or commercial matter may apply to the Court of First Instance of the High Court ("CFI") to have its Mainland judgment registered with the CFI on an ex parte basis if:
  - (a) the judgment was given on or after the commencement of the Ordinance:
  - (b) the judgment is effective in Mainland;
  - (c) the judgment or part requires the payment of a sum of money, or the performance of an act, by a party to the original proceedings for the judgment;
  - (d) a default in complying with the requirement occurred within 2 years before the date of the registration application; and
  - (e) the default has not been made good as at the date of the registration application;



- 2. the CFI may set aside the registration of judgment if the person against whom a registered judgment may be enforced (for example, a judgment debtor) has applied to the CFI within specified time limit and has proved to CFI's satisfaction that any of the exhaustive grounds of refusal exists (for example, the jurisdictional requirement is not satisfied, the registered judgment was obtained by fraud, the defendant to the original proceedings was not given a reasonable opportunity to make submissions or the enforcement of such judgment is manifestly incompatible with the public policy of Hong Kong);
- 3. where a registration application is made in relation to a Mainland judgment and there are proceedings pending before a Hong Kong court ("Adjudicating Court") in respect of the same cause of action between the same parties, the pending proceedings before the Adjudicating Court must be stayed;
- 4. where a registration application of a Mainland judgment is pending or upon its registration, a party to the original proceedings for the Mainland judgment may not bring in a court in Hong Kong proceedings in respect of the same cause of action; and
- 5. regarding the effect of registration of Mainland judgments, a registered judgment may be enforced in Hong Kong the same way as if it was a judgment originally given by the CFI and given on the day of registration of the judgment.

### Facilitation of recognition and enforcement of Hong Kong judgment in civil or commercial matters in Mainland

Pursuant to the Arrangement, a party may apply to the relevant Mainland court for enforcement of a Hong Kong judgment in a civil or commercial matter subject to the requirements set out in the Arrangement. For the aforementioned application, the Ordinance stipulates that:

- 1. a judgment creditor under a Hong Kong judgment in a civil or commercial matter may apply to the specified Hong Kong court for a certified copy of the Hong Kong judgment; and
- 2. when issuing a certified copy of the Hong Kong judgment, the specified Hong Kong court must also issue a certificate certifying that the judgment is a civil or commercial matter and is effective in Hong Kong, and containing the particulars as prescribed by the Rules.

#### Way Forward

With the implementation of the Ordinance and Rules with effect from 29 January 2024, a more comprehensive mechanism in Hong Kong in respect of registration and enforcement of Mainland judgments in civil and commercial matters would be established.



# China Alerts

### Implementation Rules of PRC Patent Law Revised

On January 20, 2024, the Implementation Rules of the PRC Patent Law (中華人民共和國專 利法實施細則) as revised and promulgated by the State Council became effective. Apart from improving certain patent practices, new chapters are added to provide for:-

- (i) compensation of term of protection for invention patents (which are unreasonably delayed during examination process) and pharmaceutical patents (which are unreasonably delayed during market approval process);
- (ii) special provisions on International Applications for design patents under the Hague Agreement Concerning the International Deposit of Industrial Designs (to include filing guidelines of partial designs).

It is further confirmed in the Rules that the CNIPA shall assess as to whether the utility model or design application obviously lack inventive step during preliminary examination.

### Legalization Requirement of Foreign Public Documents abolished

In March 2023, China officially acceded to the 1961 Convention Abolishing the Requirement of Legalization for Foreign Public Documents. Effective November 7, 2023, such Convention was implemented in China, which would continue to apply to the Hong Kong SAR and the Macao SAR. Consequently, public documents originating from China within the scope of the Convention will no longer necessitate consular authentication. Instead, they can be authenticated through the issuance of an apostille.

Similarly, public documents sent from other states acceded to the Convention can be utilized in China by obtaining an apostille, without the need for consular authentication by the respective state or the Chinese embassy/consulate. One should however bear in mind that while a foreign apostille verifies the authenticity of signatory identities and seals, its acceptance by relevant entities in China is not guaranteed. Hence, it is advisable to ascertain the specific requirements concerning format, content, translation, and other pertinent considerations by consulting the relevant party in China before commencing or relying on the newly introduced procedures.



### China

### Major amendments to the Company Law of the PRC

The Company Law of the People's Republic of China ("PRC") was first promulgated in 1993. The sixth revision of the PRC Company Law started in 2019. After four rounds of review by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the PRC and extensive solicitation of public comments, the revised PRC Company Law ("Revised Company Law") was formally approved on 29 December 2023, and will become effective on 1 July 2024.



Raymond Chan

#### Major amendments include:

1. Regarding capital contribution liabilities of shareholders, the Revised Company Law provides that the registered capital of limited liability companies must be fully paid by the shareholders within five years from the date of the company's establishment.



Crystal Chan

- 2. Regarding protection of shareholders' rights, under the Revised Company Law,
  - (a) shareholders of companies limited by shares have rights to review and copy relevant company materials (including the register of shareholders);
  - (b) where controlling shareholders abuse their rights and significantly harm the interests of the company and other shareholders, minority shareholders are granted the right to require the company to acquire their shares at a reasonable price; and
  - (c) a company is required to proportionally reduce the capital contribution or shareholding of shareholders when it reduces its registered capital unless otherwise specified by law.
- 3. Controlling shareholders and actual controllers who do not serve as directors but effectively control the company's operations shall be subject to the director's fiduciary duties and diligence obligations towards the company.
- 4. The Revised Company Law proposes the establishment and enhancement of a democratic management system with the employee congress.

The Revised Company Law reflects the PRC government's ongoing commitment to improving corporate governance practices and protecting shareholders' rights.



Annie Tsoi

### First-ever judgment on Text-to-Image Generative AI issued

On 27 November 2023, the Beijing Internet Court issued a first-ever judgment regarding a case involving a Text-to-Image Generative AI portrait.

In Li Yunkai v Liu Yuanchun (Li v Liu), the dispute centered around the rights of authorship and dissemination of a Generative AI portrait, as well as surrounding copyright issues. The Internet Court determined that the Text-to-Image Generative AI portrait in question was copyrightable and recognized it as a copyrighted work.

This is not the first time Chinese courts have addressed the copyrightability of Generative AI. In Film v Baidu (2019) which also involved Generative AI, the court emphasized the importance of human involvement and concluded that only natural persons could create copyrightable works.

In Li v Liu (2023), the Internet Court went the extra mile in determining the legal status of the Text-to-Image Generative AI portrait. examined the criteria necessary to establish a copyrightable work, to include whether it:-

- 1. belongs to the field of literature, art, or science;
- 2. has originality;
- 3. possesses a certain form of expression;
- 4. is an intellectual work.

The Internet Court found that the subject Text-to-Image AI portrait fell within the field of art and possessed a certain form of expression. It also recognized that the plaintiff had made intellectual contributions to the creation of the portrait, such as making choices regarding AI cues and commands and adjusting relevant parameters. These intellectual inputs and adjustments reflected the plaintiff's personality and judgment, resulting in an output that exceeded a mere mechanical intellectual algorithm. court reiterated that the Generative AI itself does not possess authorship rights as it lacks the status of a natural person. Since the developers and providers of the Generative AI had waived their rights over the output, the court attributed authorship to the plaintiff based on his intellectual input.

Li v Liu has sparked debates among academics and practitioners. Those in favor of AI's copyrightability argue that AI creations meet the minimum threshold of creativity and should therefore be eligible for copyright protection. The skeptical ones however argue that a user's commands alone cannot directly determine the expressive elements of AI generative content.





While a user's input may provide prompts for generating the final 2-dimensional picture, the specific portrayal of the portrait may not be solely attributed to the user.

Whilst AI technology continues to quickly evolve, the legal landscape surrounding AI-related copyright is far from settled. While China is not a case law country, *Li v Liu* provides insightful reference for Chinese courts to tackle AI copyright disputes.

Notice: This newsletter is intended for general information only and should not be taken as legal advice of Wilkinson & Grist. For any enquiries, please contact Ms Anita Kwan at anitakwan@wilgrist.com.

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