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Stephenson Harwood's HK spin-off launches City office

Hong Kong firm MB Kemp, which was set up by a team that left Stephenson Harwood's regional base last year, has expanded internationally with three new offices.

MB Kemp's new London operations will be spearheaded by partner Marco Pocci, who left Stephenson Harwood's Hong Kong office after a brief stint of less than two years. Pocci was recruited under the UK firm's former Greater China managing partner Voon Keat Lai in August 2019 from Winston & Strawn and has a focus on the renewable energy and infrastructure sectors.

He will be joined in London by former fellow Winston & Strawn senior lawyers Salah Mattoo and Brian Kotick. Both Mattoo and Kotick were senior associates of Winston & Strawn's international arbitration practice in London and have joined MB Kemp as partners.

According to Companies House, **MB Kemp's Hong Kong founding partners Malcolm Kemp and Voon Keat Lai** are also members of the UK LLP.

The London office has three resident partners and two associates, but the firm plans to double its size in the next 18 months and will initially focus on dispute resolution.

Along with the London launch, MB Kemp has also set up a satellite office in Milan, which is led by Pocci who has advised on a number of Asian clients' investment and acquisitions in Italy.

In addition to Europe, MB Kemp has set out plans to grow in the Middle East with the launch of its Abu Dhabi practice. The new practice is headed by partner Imran Shafiq, previously managing partner of local boutique CKR ZIA (Middle East).

"The creation of our firm is timely. Covid-19 is a once-in-a-lifetime disruptor and forces everyone to re-examine how they used to do things. This offers us a great opportunity to explore and try new ways of operating an international law firm,

collaborate with our business network and to serve our clients,” said Voon Keat Lai, MB Kemp’s group managing partner.

Stephenson Harwood has recently completed its Greater China restructuring overseen by regional managing partner Jamie Stranger, who succeeded Voon Keat Lai at the beginning of 2020. Following the year-long restructuring, the firm closed its Beijing office and around half of the incumbent partners left its Hong Kong office. With two rounds of internal promotions and two recent lateral hires, the number of partners in Hong Kong rose to 22, but it is still below the 31 partners at the beginning of the restructuring. In a recent interview with *The Lawyer*, Stranger said **Shanghai will play a key role in the firm’s new Greater China strategy** and growth.

By **Yun Kriegler** 6 July 2021 09:00

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