

News

India at the top of its game in arbitration: SIAC head Davinder Singh



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India is **“at the top of its game”** in international arbitration, Senior Counsel and Chairman of the Singapore International Arbitration Davinder Singh recently said.

He linked this rise to the exceptional analytical depth, sophistication and global competitiveness of Indian lawyers.

Speaking at the SIAC India Conference in New Delhi, Singh said SIAC's data showed an unambiguous surge in India-related disputes, driven by the country's economic growth and by the quality of its legal talent.

"I have been on the opposite side where Indian lawyers have been against me... and I have to tell you, the quality of the Indian lawyers involved in international arbitration is second to none."

He emphasised the distinctive depth of Indian advocacy, noting that panels abroad constantly note upon it:

"Your top lawyers go so deeply into cases. The reasoning is so profound. The quality here is very tough to match — not just in Singapore but elsewhere."

Singh said SIAC frequently hears from judges around the world who praise Indian lawyers' intellectual strength:

"Arbitrators from other countries have told us that when they have sat with some of your lawyers and judges, they have found them to be intellectual giants."

He added that global counsel increasingly seek Indian peers because the legal market has become one of the most dynamic in the world:

"Lawyers from all over the world are knocking on India's doors."

Singh concluded that India's rise in arbitration reflects a larger international perception:

"In the eyes of others, India is a country for the future."

Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said India's growth has increased the number and complexity of disputes:

"India today is the world's fourth largest economy. The volume and complexity of commercial disputes have also grown. This makes an efficient and credible alternative conflict resolution system not just desirable but essential."

He highlighted India's arbitration reforms (2015, 2019, 2022), creation of the India

International Arbitration Centre, and called the Mediation Act 2023 a “watershed moment” that creates a modern and forward-looking mediation ecosystem.

Singapore Law Minister Edwin Tong SC hailed India’s transformation of its arbitration law:

“India has introduced several transformative measures - promoting institutional arbitration, setting stricter timelines, recognising emergency arbitration and restricting the grounds for challenging arbitral awards,” Tong said.

He added that Singapore and India share foundational values of rule of law, independence, transparency, efficiency and responsibility and said Singapore is a “trusted second option” when parties cannot agree on an India seat.

Earlier in the day, the first panel — moderated by Vivekananda Neelakantan, Registrar, SIAC — explored whether neutrality, efficiency and enforceability continue to anchor trust in arbitration.

The speakers included Lucy Reed, President of the SIAC Court of Arbitration; Dr Pinky Anand, Judge, BICC and Senior Advocate; Pallavi Shroff, Managing Partner, Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas; Sanjeev Kapoor, Senior Partner, Khaitan & Co; Ananya Kumar, Partner, JSA; Nish Shetty, Partner, Clifford Chance; and Heena Singh, Head of Legal at ArcelorMittal India.

Reed noted that complaint about delay or cost was often exaggerated and mostly created by outlier situations and the panel discussed expanding disclosure norms, arbitrator availability and enforcement predictability as the issues users continue to evaluate

The conference ended with an Oxford-style debate on the proposition “This House Believes That, Absent an Express Choice by the Parties, the Law of the Seat Should Govern the Arbitration Agreement, Rather Than the Law of the Underlying Contract”.

It featured top arbitration practitioners arguing both sides of the question.

Speaking for the motion were Senior Advocate Ritin Rai, who is also a tenant at 7KBW, and DMD Advocates Senior Partner Fereshte D Sethna, while Senior Advocate Akhil Sibal of the

Delhi High Court and White & Case Partner Emiko Singh rejected the motion.

The session was adjudicated by Delhi High Court judge Justice Tejas Karia, Senior Advocate Gourab Banerji and S&R Associates Partner Niti Dixit, and was moderated by Chandhiok & Mahajan Partner and Head of Competition & Regulatory Practice Karan Singh Chandhiok along with SIAC Counsel Rishabh Malaviya

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