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## Changing faces at SIAC

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**May spells a period of change and growth as the Singapore International Arbitration Centre appoints three new board and four new court of arbitration members.**

A change of guard at the **Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC)** sees three new directors appointed to the arbitral institute's board which is chaired by **Davinder Singh SC**.

Replacing outgoing board members **Cavinder Bull SC** of **Drew & Napier**, **Gautam Banerjee** of **Blackstone Singapore**, **King & Spalding's John Savage QC**, consultant **Giles White** and **Jeannette Wong** who is group executive at **DBS Bank**, the three new board members appointed as of 1 April are **Baker McKenzie Wong & Leow's Chan Leng Sun SC**, **Chong Yee Leong** of **Allen & Gledhill** and **KPMG Asia Pacific's Tham Sai Choy**.

Leng Sun joined Baker McKenzie Wong & Leow in 2011 from local Singaporean firm **Ang & Partners**, where he now heads Baker's international arbitration group.

Meanwhile SIAC has also made changes to its court of arbitration line-up, with the addition of **Catherine Amirfar** of **Debevoise & Plimpton**, **Nigel Blackaby** of **Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer**, and **Alan Thambiayah** and **Professor Lawrence Boo**, both of **The Arbitration Chambers**.

Amirfar, a former US State Department lawyer, re-joined Debevoise in New York at the end of last year following two years in government service. Blackaby is the Washington, DC-based co-head of Freshfields' international arbitration group, who recently acted for **Suez Environment** in obtaining a USD 405 million award against Argentina under **International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes** proceedings.

Both Thambiayah and Boo practice at Singaporean boutique arbitration firm The Arbitration Chambers, which is led by Boo and also includes former English Commercial Court judge **Sir Anthony Colman** and former deputy High Court judge **Andrew Moran QC** on its roster.

Led by president **Gary Born** since March 2015, who is also chair of **Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr**'s international arbitration practice, SIAC's court has seen significant growth under Born's watch. In another record-breaking year, 2016 saw a near 27% rise in the number of cases administered compared to those in the previous year, which had itself observed a 22% rise from 2014.

In a statement, Born welcomed the new court members saying: "Their impressive reputations and professionalism will enhance the international standing and profile of SIAC."

Last summer SIAC implemented new rules which included a first-of-its-kind provision for the early dismissal of claims and defences, while it also introduced a set of bespoke investment arbitration rules.

The institute also last year made strides into capturing the lucrative South Asia market with the appointment of Indian court member **Darius Khambata**, which came after the 2015 hire of **Pranav Mago** as head of SIAC's South Asia desk.

While SIAC and the **ICC International Court of Arbitration** have expanded their efforts in India, the new **Mumbai Centre for International Arbitration** (MCIA) has hopes of attracting Indian disputes which may have previously made their way to Singapore.

At a recent event hosted at **White & Case** in London, representatives of the MCIA, which opened in October 2016, said the new centre was borne from a desire to develop India as an international financial centre. A representative confirmed that MCIA arbitration clauses were to be included in Indian government contracts and its fees were on average 20% lower than those of SIAC, without affecting arbitrator fees.

At the same event, **Vyapak Desai**, a partner at Mumbai firm **Nishith Desai Associates**, said that arbitration legislation in India is as good as global counterparts, but a lack of jurisprudence was holding the country back. However, he said the development of the MCIA should help bridge the gap.

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