The Singapore International Arbitration Centre

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Foundation and growth

The Singapore International Arbitration Centre was established on 1 July 1991 as a not-for-profit organisation.[1] Its beginnings were modest. Under its first chairman, Tan Boon Teik, the annual caseload is reported to have grown from two cases in 1991 to 89 in 1999.[2] The Centre was created three years before the International Arbitration Act, as part of a broader policy to give Singapore the legal services that a regional business centre required.

By the end of 2025 SIAC had handled more than 7,000 cases. In 2026 it celebrates its thirty-fifth anniversary.[3] It is housed at Maxwell Chambers on Maxwell Road, a dispute resolution complex that also hosts other institutions, law firms and barristers' chambers. It administers cases under its own rules and under other rules such as the UNCITRAL Arbitration Rules. In ad hoc arbitrations it acts as appointing authority, which accounted for 149 of its new cases in 2025.[4]

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Governance: Board, Court and Secretariat

SIAC has a three-tier structure similar to that of the ICC International Court of Arbitration. A Board of Directors, chaired at the end of 2025 by Davinder Singh SC, oversees operations and finances. A Court of Arbitration under its President, Lucy Reed of the United States, takes the decisions reserved to the institution, such as the appointment of arbitrators, challenges and consolidation. A Secretariat of 20 lawyers qualified in 14 jurisdictions manages the cases under the Registrar, Vivekananda Neelakantan.[5]

The composition of these bodies is a deliberate signal. The 39 members of the Court come from Singapore, India, mainland China, the United States, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Brazil, Nigeria, Russia and many other jurisdictions. A party from Mumbai or Shanghai that considers a Singapore clause sees lawyers from its own legal tradition in the body that decides challenges against arbitrators. Representative offices for South Asia, China, North East Asia and the Americas market the Centre to in-house counsel abroad, much as the Monetary Authority markets the wealth management centre.

Caseload and users

SIAC received 886 new cases in 2025, the second-highest number in its history. It administered 737 of them, while the remaining 149 were ad hoc appointments, including a set of 135 related cases. The record remains 2020, with 1,080 new cases.[6] The administered cases, the better measure of SIAC's own business, rose from 307 in 2016 to 737 in 2025.

The sums at stake are considerable. The total sum in dispute for all new filings in 2025 reached USD 14.53 billion, or S$18.66 billion, an average of USD 24.70 million per case. The largest single administered case concerned USD 3.93 billion.[7]

The users are mostly foreign. Of the new cases in 2025, 89 per cent were international, with parties from 79 jurisdictions. Among foreign users, mainland China led with 378 parties, followed by Vietnam with 337, India with 178, Thailand with 100 and the United States with 83. The figures for China and Vietnam were

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raised by a series of related cases in which SIAC acted as appointing authority.[8] India's strong presence reflects decades in which Indian companies have chosen Singapore as a neutral seat for contracts with foreign partners, a relationship examined in Chapter I.III.

Singapore law governed 52.1 per cent of the contracts in dispute, followed by English law with 28.4 per cent and Indian law with 5.0 per cent. In all, the laws of 34 jurisdictions were involved.[9] The share of Singapore law shows that the seat promotes the local law as a neutral contract law for Asian business, a theme that Chapter J.III takes up.

International standing

International surveys confirm Singapore's position. The 2025 International Arbitration Survey of Queen Mary University of London and White & Case, based on 2,402 questionnaire responses and 117 interviews, found London to be the preferred seat of 34 per cent of respondents. Singapore and Hong Kong followed with 31 per cent each, ahead of Beijing and Paris with 19 per cent. The SIAC Rules were chosen by 25 per cent of respondents, the same share as the rules of the LCIA and HKIAC.[10]

The arbitration community that has grown around the Centre is itself international. Of the 485 arbitrator nationalities counted among SIAC's appointments in 2025, 151 were Singaporean and 103 British, followed by Indian, Australian and American arbitrators.[11] Law firms, arbitrators, experts, court reporters and funders form a cluster that generates fees, visits and qualified employment, in the same way as the Geneva arbitration community described in the parallel volume.

Notes

1. Wikipedia, “Singapore International Arbitration Centre” (accessed November 2026): “Established on 1 July 1991”; not-for-profit; housed at Maxwell Chambers. ↩

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2. Singapore Law Gazette, January 2000 (v1.lawgazette.com.sg/2000-1/Jan00-23.htm): Tan Boon Teik chairman from July 1991 to August 1999; two cases in 1991, 89 in 1999. ↩
3. SIAC, *Annual Report 2025*, CEO's Report: "more than three decades of institutional experience handling more than 7,000 cases"; "In 2026, SIAC celebrates 35 years". ↩
4. SIAC, *Annual Report 2025*, Statistics 2025, "New Cases": 149 (17 %) ad hoc appointments; International Arbitration Act 1994, s 8(2). ↩
5. SIAC, *Annual Report 2025*: Board and Court of Arbitration as at 31 December 2025; Registrar Vivekananda Neelakantan; Secretariat "comprises 20 international arbitration lawyers who are qualified in 14 jurisdictions"; 39 Court members, of whom 11 are women; representative offices in South Asia, China, North East Asia and the Americas. ↩
6. SIAC, *Annual Report 2025*, Statistics 2025: 886 new cases, 737 (83 %) administered and 149 (17 %) ad hoc appointments, including "a set of 135 related cases"; total new cases 2016–2025: 343, 452, 402, 479, 1,080, 469, 357, 663, 625, 886; administered cases: 307, 421, 375, 454, 1,063, 446, 336, 640, 585, 737. ↩
7. SIAC, *Annual Report 2025*, Statistics 2025, "Sum in Dispute" (exchange rates of 31 December 2025). ↩
8. SIAC, *Annual Report 2025*, Statistics 2025, "Geographical Origin of Parties": 89 % (792) international; 79 jurisdictions; top foreign users Mainland China 378, Vietnam 337, India 178, Thailand 100, USA 83, Hong Kong 81, UAE 69, Indonesia 66, Japan 58, South Korea and UK 42 each. ↩
9. SIAC, *Annual Report 2025*, Statistics 2025, "Governing Laws": 34 jurisdictions; Singapore 52.1 %, "United Kingdom" 28.4 %, India 5.0 %. ↩
10. Conflict of Laws.net, "The 2025 International Arbitration Survey: The Path Forward", 12 August 2025: seats London 34 %, Singapore 31 %, Hong Kong 31 %, Beijing 19 %, Paris 19 %; LCIA, SIAC and HKIAC Rules 25 % each; SIAC 625 new cases in 2024, HKIAC 352. ↩

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11. SIAC, *Annual Report 2025*, Statistics 2025, "Geographical Diversity in Arbitrator Appointments": of 439 appointments (485 nationalities, dual and triple nationals counted separately): Singapore 151, United Kingdom 103, India 31, Australia 29, United States 17. ↩

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