



## CHAIRMAN'S JUNE 2021 MESSAGE

We are almost halfway through 2021 and it is hard to say with conviction that this year has been much better than the previous year, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact our daily lives. Nevertheless, most have been adjusting to life in the new norm. Our early optimism for in-person events have been dampened by renewed social distancing measures imposed in May. In response, we are pushing ahead with our events but holding them virtually.

I am delighted to report that after a hiatus in 2020, our flagship event, the Annual SIAC-CI Arb debate will be held virtually on 13 July 2021 with a distinguished panel of debaters and judges. We have Nigel Blackaby QC with our fellow director Mahesh Rai up against Tai Heng Chen and Elaine Wong, debating the motion "This House believes that Arbitral Institutions must impose a limit on the number of Repeat Appointments from the Same Party." The winning team will be decided by the eminent panel consisting of our own vice-chair Sapna Jhangiani QC, Christopher Lau QC and Dana MacGrath. Please do sign up if you have not already done so as this promises to be a most thought-provoking discussion on a controversial issue in the arbitration community. In previous years, this debate has been a "standing room event" and we have had to turn away registrants due to limited capacity. One of the advantages of holding the event virtually is that we are not constrained by space. So, we look forward to seeing all of you at the debate.

The Branch held its AGM on 27 April 2021. I had intended to step down as Chair after two years in the role, but with the encouragement and support of the board of directors for which I am deeply grateful for, agreed to stay on as Chair. The decision was partly driven by the fact that due to the pandemic; we were not able to implement many of our initiatives and achieve our goals in 2020. I am thankful to each member of the board and the various sub-committees for the hard work they put into running the branch and organising the various courses and events.

Despite the social distancing restrictions in place, we continue to run our regular courses virtually. Since the beginning of this year, we have conducted the following courses with a total of 79 participants attending these courses:

- Introduction to International Arbitration (19 March 2021)
- Module 1 Law, Practice & Procedure of International Arbitration (22 April – 15 July 2021)
- Module 2 Law of Obligations (15 April – 16 September 2021)

My thanks again to the course directors and tutors for taking time away from their busy practices to impart their knowledge of arbitration practice and procedure to the next generation of arbitration practitioners. In response to feedback from the community, we are looking into ways of making the courses more affordable. We appreciate that many of the attendees of our courses are young practitioners and self-funded. Some options we are exploring include scholarships or subsidies to self-funded attendees. I am thankful for the efforts of Andrew Yeo and Chaitanya Arora who are looking into this initiative and we hope to provide some update in the coming months.

To address what we perceive as a gap in the market, Sapna Jhangiani, Steven Lim and myself had a virtual meeting with a potential insurance broker and underwriter to explore the possibility of providing insurance coverage for individuals sitting as arbitrators. We were joined at the discussion

with Dinesh Dhillon and Tay Eu Jin as representatives of SIArb and Judith Gill QC. We are looking to conduct a survey to assess the potential take up rate of any such policy as this will enable the underwriters to decide whether such a scheme would be viable and to enable them to set the premiums.

In terms of engagement with HQ, we continue to have regular calls with Catherine Dixon (Director-General of CIArb) together with representatives from the Asia Pacific branches to discuss common issues of interest and concern. In addition, John Bassie, who takes over as Global President of CIArb in 2022 hosts a quarterly fireside chat with the Chairs of the branches across the world. Personally, I find it enriching to virtually meet and have discussions with Chairs from branches all the way from Asia to Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and the Caribbean.

The Singapore branch was featured in the “Branch Focus” section in the monthly eSolver. Read about it [here](#).

In May, the results of the Queen Mary University of London and White & Case International Arbitration Survey were published. It was pleasing to note that Singapore jointly ranked with London as the most popular seat in the world and as the most preferred seat in Asia-Pacific.

Finally, on a sadder note, earlier this month, Justice Goh Joon Seng passed away. Justice Goh was known to many of us in the arbitration community and his passing is a great loss to the community. I recall appearing before him in my first arbitration following his retirement from the bench. I was struck by his kindness, patience, and compassion, and will never forget his kind words of encouragement to a young practitioner performing his first cross-examination. On behalf of the branch, I extend our condolences to his family on their loss.

I look forward to seeing all of you at our next event and till then, stay safe and well.

**Paul Sandosham, FCIArb**  
**Chairman, CIArb Singapore**  
**June 2021**