



PRESS RELEASE

Singapore Helps Japan Build Expertise in International Commercial Mediation

1. The Singapore International Mediation Centre (SIMC) today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Japan Association of Arbitrators (JAA) to help Japan build expertise in international commercial mediation.
2. Under the MOU, SIMC will help JAA with the setting up of the new Japan International Mediation Centre in Kyoto (JIMC-Kyoto), including helping JIMC-Kyoto set up its panel of mediators. JIMC-Kyoto is Japan's first and only dedicated international commercial mediation centre, and is projected to begin operations by early 2018.
3. SIMC will also work with JIMC-Kyoto to promote international commercial mediation in Japan through joint lectures, conferences and seminars, and to raise the quality of international commercial mediation in Japan through the training of mediators and advocates.
4. Japanese companies are now amongst SIMC's top five foreign users. The total value of disputes mediated by SIMC involving Japanese companies is over S\$20 million in the last two years. SIMC will work with JIMC-Kyoto to further raise awareness of the benefits of mediation, and how it can be used to resolve disputes involving Japanese companies overseas.
5. The MOU was signed by Mr Lok Vi Ming S.C., SIMC Board Member, and Mr Akira Kawamura, President of JAA, in a ceremony in Kyoto, Japan. At the same ceremony held in Doshisha University, JAA announced plans to set up JIMC-Kyoto. The ceremony was attended by over 200 international lawyers and corporate professionals.
6. Commenting on the MOU, Singapore's Senior Minister of State for Law and Finance, Ms Indranee Rajah S.C., said: "SIMC's MOU with JAA is a strong endorsement of Singapore's capability in international commercial dispute resolution. It is also a good example of how Singapore can work with other dispute resolution centres in Asia to build up international expertise, so that we can better serve the needs of businesses."

7. SIMC's MOU with JAA is its fifth MOU with other Asian dispute resolution centres this year. Before this, SIMC signed MOUs with the Indonesian Banking Ombudsman Services, the Seoul International Dispute Resolution Center, the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, and the Hangzhou Arbitration Commission.
8. At the MOU signing ceremony today, Mr Lok said: "While international commercial mediation is a relatively new concept in Japan, there is great potential for adoption. Japan has a business culture that values relationships and reputations, and a creative people which seeks innovative solutions. These traits favour the adoption of mediation. SIMC is happy to work with JAA to raise awareness and help build up international commercial mediation in Japan."
9. Mr Haruo Okada, Chairman of the JAA Committee for the establishment of JIMC-Kyoto, said: "We are pleased to have SIMC as JIMC-Kyoto's first partner. SIMC has done very well with cases from more than 30 different jurisdictions within its first three years. We hope to learn from their experience in starting up a new centre. Moving ahead, we will be working closely so that Japanese and international businesses may access world-class mediation services in Japan. Singapore and Japan share the same objective of providing a stable and business-friendly environment supported by high quality professional services. This MOU marks an important step towards making international mediators available in Japan."
10. As of end-2015, Japan was Singapore's second largest investor with investments totalling S\$114.2 billion, while Singapore was Japan's top Asian investor and fifth largest investor globally with investments totalling S\$20.2 billion.
11. SIMC celebrated its third anniversary in November 2017. At the anniversary celebration, the Chief Justice of Singapore Sundaresh Menon commended SIMC for having made a robust start, and highlighted three key areas of progress. First, SIMC had demonstrated excellence in international commercial mediation, having attracted users from more than 30 different jurisdictions. Second, SIMC had been at the forefront of innovation in the practice of mediation. This was illustrated by the unique Arbitration-Mediation-Arbitration Protocol which SIMC had developed with the Singapore International Arbitration Centre, to enable the mediated settlement to be recorded as an arbitration award enforceable in the 157 states which are party to the New York Convention. Third, SIMC had played a key role in promoting commercial mediation in Asia, and in enhancing Singapore's standing as a global dispute resolution hub. Referring to the MOUs which SIMC had signed with significant Asian centres, Chief Justice Menon commented that they will allow Singapore to benefit from, and contribute to, the vibrant growth and rise of the economies of Asia in the decades to come.

About SIMC

12. SIMC was launched in 2014 by Chief Justice Menon and the Minister for Law, Mr K. Shanmugam S.C. It provides mediation services for parties in cross-border commercial disputes, in particular those doing business in Asia. It has over 70 renowned mediators from around the world, and over 65 technical experts from various industry sectors who can assist the mediator in complex commercial disputes involving technical questions.

About JAA

13. JAA was formed in 2003 to promote the practice of arbitration, and to keep its members updated on the latest developments in alternative dispute resolution. It has 395 members from all over Japan and is headquartered in Tokyo.
14. In 2016, recognising the growing trend for mediation of cross-border commercial disputes, a committee was established to look into the formation of Japan's first and only dedicated international mediation centre. A decision was made for the centre to be located in the iconic city of Kyoto because of its popularity with international travellers and good travel infrastructure. Seeking privately negotiated settlements is a fundamental characteristic of the Japanese culture and Kyoto, being the centre of Japanese culture, is a natural choice for the centre. In fact, many such private negotiations were conducted at temples in Kyoto in the old days.

**MINISTRY OF LAW AND SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL MEDIATION CENTRE
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