



South-eastern promise

Singapore will establish itself alongside London as one of the world's elite disputes hubs before 2030.

Thanks to the growing economic clout of the Asia-Pacific region, a reputation for quality and neutrality, and sustained investment in its courts, Singapore is widely cited as the disputes hub most likely to strengthen its hand over the next decade as a global power. "Singapore has what it takes to be a very real competitor to London – not least because there are a number of formerly UK-based judiciary there and it's a relevant location for half the world," observes Vodafone GC Rosemary Martin.

Support among Chinese and Indian companies for appearing before the Singapore courts – which have distinguished themselves in their use of remote hearings during the pandemic –and the global standing of the Singapore International Arbitration Centre leave the city-state perfectly placed to ride what promises to be a busy disputes wave.

HFW Singapore partner Paul Aston cites recent developments strengthening Singapore's hand, including its backing for a UN convention to help enforce mediation settlements and a wide-ranging new insolvency act – moves that respectively position it as a regional leader for mediation and insolvency.

Views remain divided on whether China's major business courts will be lifted through the decade by the irresistible pull of its economy. But many see the rivalry between Singapore and Hong Kong as ultimately benefiting both hubs. "Twenty-two years ago, when I arrived [in Asia], arbitration in Singapore and Hong Kong was a backwater," says HFW partner Peter Murphy. "Both have come on leaps and bounds, which is great for legal services in this part of the world."

In the market for genuinely global disputes, Singapore and London look set to end the decade in a class of their own.

This is an excerpt from an HFW report on the future of dispute resolution. To read the rest of the report, which includes a series of 30 interviews with senior in-house counsel and other leading figures from across the global disputes industry, as well as insights from our expert litigators, visit: www.hfw.com/litigation

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