

ABRAHAM VERGIS, FCIArb

Managing Director

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Qualifications & Admissions

LL.B (Hons), National University of Singapore.
Advocate and Solicitor, Supreme Court of Singapore.
Fellow, Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (UK).
Accredited Mediator, Singapore Mediation Centre.



INTERNATIONAL ARBITRATION SINGAPORE LITIGATION



CURRICULUM VITAE

Abraham is an experienced Singapore court advocate and counsel in international arbitrations across Asia. He is also a trained mediator and an accredited arbitrator. Abraham is on the panel of various arbitration institutions across Asia. He is lead counsel in 3 Singapore International Commercial Court cases and is the first in Singapore to secure third party funding for the enforcement of an arbitral award against a sovereign state.

Abraham established Providence Law Asia LLC as a boutique international arbitration and litigation practice in 2012 and has 20 years of extensive experience in contentious work in Asia. He works closely with leading lawyers from other jurisdictions and is regularly instructed as counsel by International law firms.

Abraham was named "Singapore Managing Partner of the Year" and shortlisted for "Dispute Resolution Lawyer of the Year" at the Asian Legal Business SE Asia Awards 2019. Abraham was a finalist for "Asia's Disputes Star of the Year" in 2017 and 2018 at the AsiaLaw and Benchmark Litigation Asia-Pacific Dispute Resolution Awards.

Chambers and Partners has consistently ranked Abraham amongst the top twenty litigators in Singapore since 2016. Legal 500 recognises Providence Law Asia as a "Leading Firm" and Abraham as a "Leading Lawyer" in the dispute resolution arena. Providence Law Asia is listed as a Benchmark Litigation Recommended Firm since 2017.

Abraham has been commended by the Singapore Court judgements on being "very competent", "impressed by the quality of Mr Vergis' advocacy, and certainly more than capable of advancing his client's position."

Under Abraham's leadership, Providence Law Asia has attained multiple accolades, including being awarded "Best Dispute Resolution Boutique Practice of the Year in Southeast Asia" in 2017, "Rising Law Firm of the Year" in 2018, and finalist for "Singapore Litigation Law Firm of the Year in 2019", at the annual Asian Legal Business SE Asia Awards.

Main Areas of Practice

- Construction Litigation and Arbitration
- International Commercial Arbitration
- Corporate and Commercial Litigation
- Corporate Insolvency and Restructuring
- Private Wealth Litigation
- Crime, Compliance and Internal Investigations
- Special Interest Cases

Representative Case Experience

Construction Litigation and Arbitration

- 80-day multi-party construction arbitration in Singapore concerning the partial collapse of a cement silo and involving claims of over S\$25 million. This case featured complex civil and structural engineering issues addressed by an international panel of 14 expert witnesses
- 25-day construction arbitration under ICC Rules in Bangkok, between a Malaysian boilermaker and a prominent Thai mill owner, concerning construction defects in a palm oil refinery in Krabi. This matter involved complex technical issues, Thai law issues and accounting evidence concerning loss of profits as well as earning capacity claims in excess of US\$25 million
- Represented the main contractors in termination claims against the concessionaire of a multi-billion-dollar airport reconstruction project for an Indian Ocean republic. The client is a prominent South-Asian infrastructure conglomerate with a track record of airport construction projects in India, Philippines and Turkey. The claims were settled two years after the commencement of arbitration proceedings.
- Commencing an SIAC arbitration on behalf of a Ukrainian party in respect of claims exceeding USD150 million against a sovereign government for repudiating a 50-year joint venture agreement for the development of a lagoon and 50 man-made islands, with claims for aborted reclamation and infrastructure development works, and loss of profits. This will be amongst the first few international arbitration cases in Singapore that will deploy third party funding to finance the arbitration costs following recent changes in Singapore law that now allows for external funding in the context of international arbitrations seated in Singapore.
- Successfully arbitrated a USD70 million claim on behalf of an Australian client against a sovereign government for prematurely terminating a 20-year concession agreement for the development of a comprehensive immigration and border control system at all airports and seaports in the nation's archipelago. The arbitration was presided over by the former Chief Justice of Singapore. The respondent government had sought to impugn the competitive tender process that led to the client being awarded the concession, made spurious allegations of bribery and corruption, and had resorted to having the local parliament declare the concession agreement illegal for contravention of local laws.
- SIAC arbitration in Singapore, representing the Singapore subsidiary of a prominent Malaysian infrastructure conglomerate in a S\$10 million construction dispute. Abraham succeeded in respect of all arguments in a partial award delivered in June 2017.
- Represented the subsidiary of a leading Malaysian construction conglomerate in an adjudication under the Security of Payment Act concerning a single payment claim of over \$7 million involving over 60 heads of claim. Successfully mounted a comprehensive response within very compressed timelines that resulted in 90% of the payment claim being disallowed at the first instance, and on further review, produced a final adjudication determination allowing only \$250,000 of the original claim.
- Persuaded the Singapore High Court in a rare landmark decision to set aside an adjudication determination. The Singapore High Court accepted that the underlying payment claim did not comply with the strict requirements under the Security of Payment Act, and held that as such non-compliance goes to the root of the adjudicator's jurisdiction, they could not be waived and the adjudication determination should therefore be set aside.
- Represented the Respondent before the Singapore Court of Appeal, to uphold a High Court judgment disallowing defects and delay claims relating to condominium development in Singapore.

International Commercial Arbitration

- SIAC arbitration in Singapore, in which Abraham successfully secured damages of approximately US\$17 million for losses of profits and the costs of arbitration for his client in a US\$70 million claim

against a sovereign government for prematurely terminating a 20-year concession agreement between the government and our client.

- Arbitration placed to be resolved in London under the London Metals Exchange Rules, representing of one of Indonesia's largest tin metal traders, Uni Bros Metal Pte Ltd, in the setting aside of a Freezing Order obtained in the High Court of Singapore which restrained the client and its affiliates from the disposition of assets up to a value of about US\$5.7 million
- Advising a high-net worth individual in relation to an SIAC arbitration against a foreign government for breach of a joint venture agreement involving claims valued at US\$150 million to US\$300 million.

Corporate & Commercial Litigation

- Representation of a Russian businessman in a RMB 3 billion suit, heard in the newly established Singapore International Commercial Court involving a failed joint venture with Singapore and PRC entities to develop a Winter Theme Park in Shanghai.
- Representation of an Executive Director of Macquarie Bank Limited, Mr Stephen Wolfe, in the Singapore International Commercial Court for the resolution of a dispute governed by English law, between the Singapore subsidiary of a Chinese state-owned entity and Macquarie Bank, arising from a commodity swap transaction
- 65-day Singapore High Court trial, involving 3 consolidated Suits, 14 parties and 5 sets of Counsel, and concerning claims for misrepresentation and market manipulation in relation to a US\$40 million take-over of a Malaysian public-listed company. The other parties included German and Singapore banks and prominent Malaysian business and political elites
- Instructed in several related High Court Suits involving liquidation of S\$200 million company and competing derivative action and minority oppression claims
- Instructed in a widely-reported real estate dispute worth over S\$50 million involving a Singapore statutory board and a number of sizeable Singapore companies
- A multi-million dollar joint venture dispute before the Singapore High Court, representing a Singapore-headquartered multinational against an Australian public-listed company over oil & gas industry services contracts in the Caspian

Private Wealth Litigation

- Represented a high net worth US Permanent Resident against a claim by one of the wealthiest men in Singapore, in respect of a dispute relating to the shares in an Indian company worth around US\$40 million. This litigation raises complex and novel legal issues involving, among other things, Indian law relating to regulated agricultural land in India and the enforceability of agreements relating to the transfer of property held by, and to be transferred to, third parties.
- Instructed to resolve the deadlocked administration of a S\$320 million estate that had remained unresolved for 15 years.
- Instructed in several related Singapore High Court Suits relating to S\$200 million estate (held through a network of corporate structures and nominees) that became the subject of controversy among the testator's family members and his business associates.
- Represented a member of royalty in South East Asia in a number of Singapore court proceedings relating to a private equity investment.

Crime, compliance & Internal Investigations

- Multi-jurisdictional fraud case involving misappropriation of several million dollars by two senior executives in a Kazakhstan subsidiary of a Singapore company, and diversion of proceeds to Hong Kong, Ahmedabad and Liechtenstein. Abraham directed the fraud investigations in Almaty and Singapore, which culminated in worldwide freezing orders and legal action in the Singapore High Court

- Directed and coordinated multi-disciplinary investigations for a leading airport operator in India against a former director in respect of suspected conflict of interest and other serious irregularities, which led to Singapore High Court proceedings, which were subsequently settled favourably
- Instructed by a foreign Government to investigate substantial hospital bills rendered by a South East Asian hospital in respect of treatment rendered to a group of foreign patients. Investigations revealed that the hospital had systematically overcharged the foreign government millions of dollars, which directly resulted in an amicable settlement based on substantial discounting of all outstanding hospital bills
- Secured two acquittals for a Singapore lawyer in two separate trials on serious charges of perjury and corruption, allegedly committed in the course of his practice as an advocate & solicitor
- Secured an acquittal in the High Court for a client who had been charged with 5 counts of sexual offences against a teenage girl.

Special Interest Cases

- Representation of Mrs Lee Suet Fern, sister-in-law of Singapore's Prime Minister, in Disciplinary Tribunal proceedings against her for her alleged role in the drafting of Mr Lee Kuan Yew's last will and testament.
- Representation of Li Shengwu, nephew of Singapore's Prime Minister, in a criminal contempt claim brought against him by the Attorney-General of Singapore.
- Representation of Mr Deepak Sharma, the retired global chairman of Citi Private Bank in judicial review proceedings against the Law Society of Singapore. Although the review was ultimately dismissed, Abraham succeeded in establishing precedent on novel legal issues on public interest.
- Advised the Air Line Pilots Association Singapore (ALPA-S), a union representing SIA pilots, on its collective agreement negotiations with SIA, particularly in relation to various issues involving the salary and training contracts of SIA pilots.

Appointments

The International Academy of Financial Litigator

- Singapore sole representative

Singapore Academy of Law

- International Promotion of Singapore Law Committee: Appointed by Justice VK Rajah to promote the use of Singapore law and Singapore as a venue for arbitration in cross-border disputes in South Asia
- Law Reform Committee: Appointed by Justice Vinodh Coomaraswamy, and Judith Prakash to consider law reforms in the area of arbitration law
- Professional Affairs Committee under: Appointed by Solicitor-General Lionel Yee to contribute to the Professional Values Chapter

Law Society of Singapore

- Chairman, Law Society's Criminal Legal Aid Scheme
- Served as Chairman of the Law Society's Investigative Tribunal for Inadequate Professional Services Subordinate Courts
- Associate Mediator, Primary Dispute Resolution Centre

INDUSTRY RECOGNITION

Our consistency and reliability in our services are best exemplified in our numerous industry sector awards:

- Asian Legal Business Southeast Asia Law Awards 2019 – Abraham Vergis is recognized as Managing Partner of the Year in Southeast Asia
- Asian Legal Business Southeast Asia Law Awards 2018 – Rising Law Firm of the Year in Southeast Asia
- Asia Business Law Journal – Abraham Vergis is recognized as Singapore’s Top 100 Lawyers 2018.
- Asian Legal Business Southeast Asia Law Awards 2017 – Best Dispute Resolution Boutique Practice in Southeast Asia
- Ranked Lawyers: Band 3 – Dispute Resolution: Litigation – Singapore, Chambers & Partners, 2017
- IFLR1000 Recognised Firms – Restructuring & Insolvency, 2017, 2018 & 2019
- The Legal500 – Recommended Firms (Dispute Resolution), 2016 & 2017 and Tier 4 Law Firm in 2018
- The Legal500 – Abraham Vergis recognized as a Leading Individual in 2018
- The Best Lawyers in Singapore (International Arbitration), 2017 & 2019
- Asia Law Profiles – Recommended Firm for Dispute Resolution and Litigation & Restructuring and Insolvency, 2017 & 2019
- Acquisition International Dispute Resolution – Best Specialist Dispute Practice & Award for Excellence in Cross Border Arbitrations – Singapore
- Chambers & Partners – Top 20 litigators in Singapore: Abraham Vergis, 2017
- Benchmark Litigation Asia-Pacific 2018 – Disputes Star in Commercial Disputes, Bankruptcy & Insolvency and International Arbitration: Abraham Vergis