

BEST BOUTIQUES

As the industry faces sluggish growth, boutique law firms are beginning to come into the spotlight. The inaugural ALB Best Boutiques list profiles some gamechangers.

BY RANAJIT DAM

HONG KONG

GALL

Established: 2010

Practice areas: Dispute resolution, employment

Managing partner: Nick Gall

A boutique dispute resolution firm, Gall specialises in a variety of litigation, mediation and arbitration. Core practice areas include commercial litigation, fraud and asset tracing matters, employment disputes, insolvencies, obtaining emergency injunctive relief remedies, regulatory and criminal matters, and family matters. High-profile work in the past year included acting for Yusuf Alireza, the former CEO of Singapore-listed Noble Group, in his dispute against Richard Elman, the group's founder. Gall also has a well-regarded employment practice.

FITZGERALD LAWYERS

Established: 2012

Practice area: Dispute resolution

Managing partner: Darren FitzGerald
Hong Kong-based FitzGerald Lawyers has associate offices in Shanghai, Beijing and Sydney, allowing it to carry out cross-border disputes work. On the arbitration side, key recent work has included advising Hong Kong's Fully Best in its payment dispute with Singapore's Chimbusco International Petroleum in proceedings before the Hong Kong High Court.

KOH VASS & CO

Established: 2012

Practice area: TMT

Managing partner: John Koh

Operating in association with Osborne Clarke, Koh Vass & Co's range of clients and work belie the fact that the Hong Kong firm just has two partners. "We

are a small office, but we act for several of the largest technology companies, some of the biggest brands and fastest-growing companies," says the firm. "But we punch massively over our weight." Apart from TMT, the firm also specialises in retail and consumer, digital business, life sciences and healthcare, and digital health.

INDIA

PAMASIS LAW

Established: 2012

Practice area: Dispute resolution

Founding partners: Sameer Jain, Sandeep Bajaj, Siddharth Jain
Jain, Bajaj and Jain set up Pamasis in the year 2012. After five years, the firm boasts a client list that includes names like Micromax, Toshiba, Playboy, BHEL and Mahindra. Notable recent work has included assisting in the auction of properties belonging to the Sahara Group of Companies, enabling the recovery of the funds deposited by investors and allowing Sahara to secure the bail of its founder, Subroto Roy.

SPICE ROUTE LEGAL

Established: 2012

Practice area: TMT, M&A

Managing partners: Mathew Chacko, Praveen Raju

Notable TMT work for Spice Route Legal included advising more than 10 Fortune 500 companies on Indian data protection law, and upwards of 25 Asian companies in structuring global data protection compliance. The firm has also assisted in crafting and negotiating the entire contractual framework for monetisation of artists rights around the TV show Indian Idol 2017, and even assisted a leading Indian singer on the false attribution of a sex tape. It also does M&A work, mostly for technology companies.

UNIVERSAL LEGAL

Established: 2004

Practice area: Private equity, M&A

Managing partner: Partha Mandal

The eight-partner Universal Legal has offices around India, namely in Bangalore, Chennai, Mumbai, Delhi, Chandigarh and Ahmedabad. Its private equity practice, which has witnessed solid work in the past year

or so, boasts clients ranging from PE firms to the recipients of investments. The M&A practice is equally active with work across established and emerging sectors in India.

INDONESIA

BAHAR & PARTNERS

Established: 1992

Practice areas: Transportation, TMT

Managing partner: Wahyuni Bahar
Bahar & Partners' transportation practice encompasses aviation, maritime, toll roads and railways, serving clients that include Angkasa Pura, Angkasa Pura II, AirAsia, Kereta Api, IPC, Rig Tenders Indonesia, and Astratel Nusantara. The TMT practice, also well-regarded, covers sectors from digital business and e-commerce to IT solutions and IT transactions, assisting notable clients such as Omnispace, Telkom Indonesia, VADS, IMX and eCurrency. Key personnel include managing partner Wahyuni Bahar, and Anggia Rukmasari, who heads the transportation practice.

DKNS LAWYERS

Established: 2014

Practice areas: Project finance, regulatory

Managing partner: Veronica Situmorang

Infrastructure currently tops Indonesia's development priorities, and Jakarta-based DK & Situmorang Lawyers (DKNS) wants to tap into this segment's great potential for legal work. The firm is looking to guide private sector investors in the infrastructure sector, which face numerous challenges, particularly the country's complex legal structures and regulatory disharmony. Key personnel in the practice are Donke Ridhon Kahfi, Marlindah J. Adriaanz, Diana Widiastuti, Raditya Danarki Dhaksa and Daniel T Lumbanraja.

FARDALAW

Established: 2007

Practice area: Labour law

Managing partner: Darmanto

Recent work for the six-lawyer Farianto & Darmanto Law Firm (Fardalaw) involved

advising an international oil and gas company on issues related to labour and employment law, which includes efficiencies, collective termination, pension, and outsourcing, among others. In the past year, they have helped large clients settle cases by mutual agreement, and also protected clients from risks related to takeovers, downsizing and other corporate actions. "We treat clients not only as kings but also as friends," says the firm. "This means we give them our best service and also make sure they feel comfortable and protected." Fardalaw has seen business pick up, thanks to recent changes in employment regulations, and points out how its philosophy differs from its peers. "Our approach considers humanity, local wisdom and culture," says the firm, "because industrial relations issues are very similar to a family's issues involving a father and his son."



FARIANTO & DARMANTO LAW FIRM

FARDALAW

The focus of our practice has been litigation, especially in providing legal services regarding manpower. Clients who retain us for continuing and ongoing legal work include oil and gas, service, agriculture, consumer goods, insurance, and other companies. We endeavor to treat our clients like kings but also as friends; meaning, we strive to provide the excellence of service usually reserved for royalty while at the same time offering the kind of legal advice reserved for one's close friend. This is done so that our clients fully enjoy the benefits of comfort and protection.

Practice Areas:

- Employment/Manpower law
- Industrial relation disputes (terminations, dispute over rights and interest)
- Corporate action in relation to employment law
- Draft and review of employment agreements, company regulations, collective labour agreements
- Litigation/dispute resolution (bipartite, mediation and industrial relations court)



Darmanto



Willy Farianto

Darmanto is a managing partner of Farianto & Darmanto Law Firm and a member of the Indonesian Advocate Association/PERADI. He handles litigation/dispute settlements regarding industrial relations issues. He is also a frequent speaker on industrial relations matters.

Willy Farianto is a partner of Farianto & Darmanto Law Firm. He is a consultant for companies in relation to manpower especially at times of restructuring, acquisition, etc. He is an author of several national and international journals, books and articles in relation to employment law. He is a frequent speaker on industrial relations matters and is a member of the Indonesian Advocates Association (PERADI). He is a Certified Human Resources Professional and holds a Certificate of Competence in the area of Training Methodology from the Indonesian Professional Certification Authority.

SOHO Pancoran South Jakarta North Wing Noble 1102 Jl. M.T. Haryono Kav. 2-3 Pancoran, South Jakarta, 12810

Telephone : (62-21) 80625809

Email : office@fardalaw.com

Website : www.fardalaw.com

SAMUEL BONAPARTE**Established:** 2012**Practice areas:** Shipping, aviation**Managing partner:** Samuel

Bonaparte Hutapea

Samuel Bonaparte recently proved the strength of its shipping practice by representing a lay-up company in performing a ship arrest at Batam and Bontang ports in a case valued at approximately \$1.5 million. It was the only Indonesian law firm to successfully conduct this arrest and, until the time of printing, had succeeded in maintaining the arrest in spite of attempts by international and Indonesian firms to overturn it. Samuel Bonaparte also has a notable aviation practice, with clients including Nomad Aviation and ICBC Finance Lease.

KOREA**MINWHO LAW GROUP****Established:** 2011**Practice area:** Technology**Managing partner:** Kyung-hwan Kim

Named as the Boutique Law Firm of the Year at the ALB Korea Law Awards 2016, Minwho Law Group is acting on behalf of the Korea Communications Commission in two lawsuits filed by KT and Interpark for the imposition of civil penalties in a high-profile case related to hacking. The firm is also working with the Korea Database Agency to create a fundamental law on data infrastructure and data assets. Other notable clients at present include Hyundai Pay and Dongbu Daewoo Electronics.

SEUM LAW**Established:** 2012**Practice area:** Venture capital**Managing partner:** Hoseok Jung

SEUM Law's clientele includes both investors such as 500 Startups, Legend Capital, Hanwha Dreamplus, FuturePlay and Fast Track Asia, as well as technology companies. Managing partner Hoseok Jung is on the mentor panel for the Korean government's K-Startup programme, as well as the advisory committee of the Korea Creative Content Agency.

MALAYSIA**DONOVAN & HO****Established:** 2014**Practice area:** Labour and employment**Managing partners:** Donovan Cheah, Shawn Ho

Established in 2014, Donovan & Ho recently represented an oil and gas corporation in judicial review proceedings to quash a decision of Malaysia's Minister of Human Resources. It has also assisted and advised multinational corporations with retrenchment and redundancy exercises in Malaysia as well as acted for employers in unfair dismissal claims filed by former employees who were dismissed for misconduct and/or poor performance.

MAHWENCKWAI & ASSOCIATES**Established:** 1985**Practice area:** Sports law**Managing partner:** Raymond Mah

In October 2016, MahWengKwai & Associates (MWKA) merged with Richard Wee's team from fellow Kuala Lumpur law firm Richard Wee & Yip, making it one of the few firms in the country with sports law capability. Wee, who organises the annual Sports Law Conference, also helped set up the Sports Law Association of Malaysia (SLAM), and the firm offered advice to sports real estate owners, athletes, associations and other sports-based companies.

SHANG & CO**Established:** 2011**Practice area:** Matrimonial law**Managing partner:** Chris Chin

Shang & Co. saw a 210 percent increase in revenue last year, and key work included a cross-border parental abduction case that encompassed China, Taiwan, Australia and Malaysia as well as a case involving a New Zealand client with Malaysia domicile on his matrimonial (movable and immovable) assets division in Malaysia, Australia and the U.S. worth \$12.5 million. It also represented a Taiwan client with Malaysia domicile on her matrimonial assets division in Malaysia and Taiwan worth \$6 million. The firm plans to expand its

presence throughout Malaysia and into Southeast Asia.

TAN SWEE IM, SIVA & PARTNERS**Established:** 1999**Practice areas:** Construction, dispute resolution**Managing partner:** Sivabalan

Sankaran

With experience practising in Malaysia and Brunei, Sivabalan Sankaran advises clients on contracts, commercial and litigation, insurance and construction. Significant recent work includes advising on and drafting documents for the Kuala Lumpur City transport project, and other large-value adjudications and major infrastructure-related arbitration. Iskandar Regional Development Authority, BRDB Developments, CMC Machiplex and China Power are among current clients.

PHILIPPINES**GULAPA LAW OFFICE****Established:** 2015**Practice area:** Construction and real estate**Managing partner:** Aris Gulapa

Established just two years ago, Gulapa Law Office (G-Law) has already picked up a number of accolades, including winning the Boutique Law Firm of the Year award at the ALB Philippine Law Awards 2016, where it was also nominated in a number of categories. Current projects the firm is involved in includes the Clark International Airport project, the new Philippine e-passport system, and the C3 Elevated Expressway Project.

SINGAPORE**COLLYER LAW****Established:** 2015**Practice area:** Venture capital and technology**Managing director:** Azmul Haque

Collyer Law specialises in venture capital transactions, and much of its work involves investment into Indian and Singaporean companies in the technology space. Last year, it advised the founder of Capital Square Partners and executive chairman of Minacs Group (Singapore) on certain gainsharing

arrangements in relation to the \$420 million sale of holdings by private equity investors, CX Partners and Capital Square Partners. This was one of 2016's largest acquisitions in the business process outsourcing (BPO) space, where the Synnex Corporation purchased Indian BPO firm Minacs Group.

PROVIDENCE LAW ASIA

Established: 2012

Practice area: Dispute resolution

Managing partner: Abraham Vergis
Recognised as the Dispute Resolution Boutique Law Firm of the Year at the ALB SE Asia Law Awards 2017, Providence Law Asia has been involved in a number of high-profile cases. These included acting for a client in judicial review proceedings against the Law Society of Singapore over a complaint of over-charging by lawyers at WongPartnership. At present, the firm is acting for Russian national Dmitriy Shpor, in a 3 billion yuan suit which is currently being heard by the Singapore International Commercial Court.

TAN KOK QUAN PARTNERSHIP

Established: 2000

Practice areas: Dispute resolution, insolvency

Managing partners: Marina Chin, Eddee Ng

Among Tan Kok Quan Partnership's (TKQP) notable recent work is acting for Sharon Tan, a defendant in the City Harvest Church matter – one of the largest, longest-running and highest-profile white-collar crime cases in Singapore's history, where church leaders were accused of diverting millions of dollars in church funds. TKQP also has a well-regarded insolvency, restructuring and investigations practice.


YEO & ASSOCIATES

Established: 2009

Practice area: Family law

Managing partner: Beatrice Yeo

Recent innovations introduced by Singapore's Yeo & Associates include a do-it-yourself online divorce platform, which can be used for a flat low fee,

as well as a wills package that can be purchased over the counter. "Our strategy is to educate and empower clients about the law and their legal rights on a 'low bono' basis," says managing partner Beatrice Yeo. "We normally aim to prevent litigation and have successfully achieved a mediated settlement in almost all cases. However, if cases require litigation, our firm has the expertise to litigate at all levels of court." Yeo adds that her firm is always at the forefront of launching new legal products and procedures that emphasise speed, quality and low costs. "It's essential for a boutique law firm to reach every level of society," she notes. "Apart from providing our clients with legal knowledge, we also counsel them to give them greater support." The firm has also set up offices in the middle of neighbourhoods in order to enable easy access to clients. 

YEO & ASSOCIATES LLC

ADVOCATES & SOLICITORS

... More than mere Family Lawyers...



6220-3400 | yeo@yeolaw.com.sg | www.yeolaw.com.sg

Practice Areas

Divorce, Annulment & Separation
Mediation
Matrimonial Assets
Maintenance for Wife & Children
Child Custody, Care & Control
Child Adoption
Access Rights
Family Violence
Conveyancing pertaining to
Divorce Court Order

Current Address:

47A Circular Road
Singapore 049402

From September 2017

YEOLAW @ PPC

(Adj Family Justice Courts):
101A Upper Cross Street
#12-13 People's Park Centre
Singapore 058358

YEOLAW @ SENG KANG:

11 Rivervale Crescent
#02-07 Rivervale Mall
Singapore 545082