

**SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR LAW AND HOME AFFAIRS,
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR HO PENG KEE'S SPEECH AT THE 25TH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE SINGAPORE INSTITUTE OF ARBITRATORS, ON
24 NOVEMBER 2006**

I am happy to join you to celebrate this happy occasion of your 25th Anniversary. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Council and members of the Singapore Institute of Arbitrators (SIArb) on this significant milestone your Institute's history. SIArb had humble beginnings in 1981 with just 25 members. Today you boast a membership strength of 625, counting amongst them several prominent arbitration practitioners, both Singaporeans and non-Singaporeans. In your ranks are several Queen's Counsel, Senior Counsel, senior lawyers and industry experts in the field of construction, shipping, commerce, insurance and information technology. Indeed, before I entered politics in 1991 as a University Don, I too was active in SIArb.

2 The Institute has made good progress since 1981. At its launch, one of its main objectives was to promote, encourage and facilitate the settlement of disputes through arbitration. The Institute then emphasised the education and training of arbitrators. In 1994, the Institute made the Entry Course Examination a prerequisite for admission to membership in an effort to improve the quality and calibre of its members.

3 Today, the Institute's Fellowship has become the standard for admission to the SIAC's Panel of Arbitrators. I note that training and education remain very much the primary focus of the Institute, which should be the case. I commend the Council and all the past Councils for bringing the Institute and the practice of arbitration to the level it is today.

4 Singapore is now considered a leading arbitration centre in the region. SIArb has played a part in this achievement. One contribution it has made is by linking up with arbitral institutes in Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia, and Hong Kong, as well as with the National University of Singapore (NUS) and the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators through separate Memoranda of Cooperation. I had witnessed one such MOU signed by the Institute and BANI from Indonesia last year. I understand that representatives from some of these countries and their guests are here amongst us this evening and I welcome you all to Singapore. I urge SIArb to continue to foster closer relationship and co-operation with your counterpart organizations and press on with your effort to build stronger ties with other arbitral institutes in the region. This is certainly one key area where SIArb can add value to our overall efforts.

5 I also note that that the Institute has expanded its training and education programmes beyond Singapore. In this regard, I understand that sometime in 2007, the Institute will be organizing a Regional Conference jointly with its MOU partners, the Malaysian Institute of Arbitrators, the Hong Kong Institute of Arbitrators and the Institute of Arbitrators and Mediators, Australia. SIArb will also be co-hosting the ICMA XVI Conference in Feb/Mar 2007. These are important efforts from the private sector as we relentlessly pursue our goal of enhancing Singapore's position as an arbitration hub.

6 All this has been made possible by the dedication of past and present Council Members, with the support of the arbitration community and the many volunteers who

had contributed to the development of the arbitration profession. I note that the Institute has now established its own Panel of Arbitrators with its own set of Arbitration Rules and Code of Conduct. I urge those on the panel to continue to uphold the highest standard of professionalism.

7 Much of this has been made possible through a 2-year grant from the Economic Development Board (EDB) under its Locally Based Enterprise Advancement Programme (LEAP) to SIArb to develop an Arbitration Capability Enhancement programme (ACE). The aims of ACE include, conducting programmes to enhance arbitration capabilities, providing continual professional development and professional training programmes, hosting international and local conferences, forging strategic alliances with international arbitration bodies as well as provide the use of arbitration services by the Institute's Panel of Arbitrators. Although this 2-year monetary grant expired sometime in October 2005, I am happy to note that EDB remains a keen supporter of SIArb and is currently in discussions with SIArb to collaborate in and support even more activities in the future.

8 Further, the Ministry of Law is developing an integrated dispute resolution complex which will be located at Maxwell Road, to be operational by the end of 2008. We aim to bring in prominent international arbitral institutions to this complex, to add to its synergy and buzz. In this regard, I believe SIArb can also play a role, being a key institution in our local arbitration scene. Co-locating in the complex will also help raise the Institute's profile, both locally and overseas.

9 In conclusion, I once again congratulate the Institute on its 25th Anniversary and commend its efforts promoting arbitration and providing training to strengthen arbitration in Singapore and the region. I am confident that with the dedication of the present and future Councils it will continue to grow from strength to strength.

Thank you and have a wonderful evening.