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4 legal hotshots here make it to list of top arbitrators in Asia

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FOUR legal hotshots here are also Singapore's 'famous four' when it comes to the fine skills of arbitration.

Senior Counsel Michael Hwang, Chelva Rajah and Christopher Lau, as well as Associate Professor Lawrence Boo, rank among the most wanted arbitrators in Asia.

They were named in a newly launched reference directory for clients to identify Asia's leading lawyers for a wide business range that includes capital markets, shipping, and mergers and acquisitions.

Chambers Asia 2008 law directory for business lists them among Asia's 17 most-in-demand arbitrators. Five Singapore-based firms are listed as among the top law companies in Asia with a strong arbitration practice.

The 600-page directory, the first Chambers Asia of an annual series by highly regarded London-based Chambers & Partners, was launched here and is among the books displayed at the exhibition booths of the current International Bar Association (IBA) conference at Suntec City.

Among the four lauded, SC Hwang is described as 'popular, prominent, incisive and decisive' and a 'world-class arbitrator'.

SC Rajah is noted as 'increasingly involved in arbitration and fast gaining a name as an easy-to-work-with and personable tribunal member who is very strong on his law'.

The book also says 'few have worked harder than **Lawrence Boo** to promote Singapore as a centre of arbitration', and adds that SC Lau 'is highly active on the circuit'.

The five Singapore-based groups rated among the top Asian firms for arbitration are: Shearman & Sterling; Rajah & Tann; Allen & Gledhill; Drew & Napier; and WongPartnership.

Among prominent lawyers mentioned from the firms are Senior Counsel Davinder Singh and Mr Sundaresh Menon.

The volume noted that although Mr Singh is 'predominantly known as a courtroom litigator, he can effortlessly turn his brilliant advocacy skills to arbitral proceedings'.

It described Mr Menon as 'Singapore's leading advocate who will add a huge amount of prestige and firepower to the practice' of Rajah & Tann.

Chambers will compile the law rankings annually, based on opinions gathered from clients and the work of its research team.

The publication noted that Singapore continues to grow as an arbitration hub and the Singapore International Arbitration Centre is one of the region's most popular venues.

It also observed that while Beijing's China International and Trade Arbitration Commission (Cietac) is the busiest arbitral centre in the world, parties with China-based disputes 'are bound to it and it is rarely selected out of choice'.