

“Building a strong team of lawyers who are leaders in their areas of practice has been very rewarding. It is especially satisfying to see the firm garner a strong reputation both locally and internationally and becoming the natural choice for multi-nationals and institutional clients.”

Oon Thian Seng and Bazul Ashhab
Joint Managing Partners



The Firm

T S Oon & Bazul was established in 2002 by partners Oon Thian Seng and Bazul Ashhab as a two-man practice. Just eight years on, it has become one of Singapore's leading mid-sized law firms.

Last year, it was recognised as one of the fastest-growing law firms in Asia, making its debut on the Asia Legal Business Fast 30 list with six partners and 20 fee earners. Its strong financial performance helped clinch this accolade too – revenue for the firm rose 52 per cent in 2009 from the previous year.

The firm has also been highly recommended by respected legal industry publications such as Chambers Asia, the Asia-Pacific Legal 500 and Asialaw Profiles, and its partners have been ranked leaders in their individual areas of practice.

What It Offers

Though established as a home-grown Singapore law firm, T S Oon & Bazul now handles a significant amount of work for international clients with disputes and transactions arising across Asia and further afield.

To serve clients' needs, the firm has built up a diverse team of lawyers of different nationalities, who are qualified not just in Singapore but also in jurisdictions such as England, China, India and Malaysia. The depth and breadth of its lawyers' experience enables the firm to guide clients through complex matters whenever they arise.

From the beginning, the firm has had a strong presence in Malaysia with its associated office in Kuala Lumpur, T S Oon & Partners. This now has a team of four lawyers headed by partner Oon Thian Seng who is qualified both in Malaysia and Singapore. The team is heavily involved in arbitration, shipping and insurance work in Malaysia.

The firm's clients include large multi-nationals, international banks, trading houses, insurers and shipping companies. Traditionally, these clients might choose to instruct international law firms, but have found a level of competence and excellence within T S Oon & Bazul that allows them to instruct the firm directly.

The firm prides itself on being dynamic and enterprising. Legal advice is not provided in abstraction but with the practical grounding of its lawyers' strong commercial background and commitment to quality service.

Practice Areas

T S Oon & Bazul regularly acts for clients in international arbitrations, commercial dispute resolution, corporate and commercial matters, restructuring and insolvency, fraud and asset tracing, employment law issues, and conveyancing matters. Its lawyers have particular experience and expertise in the shipping, aviation, banking and finance, international trade, insurance and reinsurance, oil & gas and projects and real estate sectors.

Dispute Resolution / International Arbitration

Its dispute resolution team, headed by partner Bazul Ashhab, has had experience in handling a variety of complex commercial disputes in arbitration and in litigation.

International arbitration work is a core practice area for the firm and one which has seen significant growth. Its dedicated arbitration team continues to receive an increasing number of instructions on arbitrations in London, Singapore and Hong Kong, and has handled major arbitrations in cities worldwide including New York, Paris, Shanghai and Kuala Lumpur.

The arbitration team is able to handle highly complex disputes in niche industries such as shipping, aviation, international trade, oil & gas, projects, reinsurance and natural resources. Dual qualified (Singapore / England & Wales) partner Kanan Thirupathy, who joined the firm last year from the arbitration team of a large international law firm, heads this team.

Working closely with the arbitration team is the firm's commercial litigation practice, led by partner Kelly Yap. Lawyers in this team regularly appear as counsel in actions in the Singapore Courts, and have, over the years, handled a wide range of commercial disputes involving international trade, corporate disputes, banking, insurance, construction and regulatory issues.

Banking & Finance

The firm's banking and finance practice has a strong reputation with banks. It sits on the panels of several major local and offshore banks based in Singapore and its lawyers regularly advise and assist banks with both transactional matters and dispute resolution.

It is particularly well known for advising on trade finance issues, and has helped foreign banks set up trade finance and ship finance units locally as well.

Other matters handled by the practice include receivables financing, project and structured finance, financial derivatives, cross-border financing and security transactions, risk participation agreements, syndicated loans and regulatory and compliance issues.

Insurance/Reinsurance

The firm's insurance and reinsurance team acts for major regional and international insurers, advising them on all classes of insurance including property, professional indemnity, CAR, business interruption, public liability and financial lines.

Its lawyers have acted in arbitrations and litigation relating to reinsurance claims and frequently advise on coverage issues under facultative and treaty reinsurance contracts, as well as the ceding of risk to reinsurers. Key disputes the firm has been involved in include a multi-million dollar claim involving professional negligence of surveyors in the offshore oil & gas industry as well as claims arising from a major explosion at a petroleum tank farm.

Particular growth has arisen from its marine insurance practice, one of the largest dedicated such practices in Asia, which now handles claims worth over US\$500 million annually. The firm's marine insurance team, commended in the 2010 Asia-Pacific Legal 500 as being "without peer in Singapore", acts for a number of major international hull and cargo underwriters, some of whom instruct the firm exclusively on all their legal matters. The team has previously advised insurers in The "Limburg" where a tanker was attacked by terrorists near Africa and The "Selendang Ayu" where a cargo vessel broke in two and sank off the coast of Alaska.

International Trade

T S Oon & Bazul advises the world's largest trading houses on various aspects of international trade. Its international trade team is familiar with the trade of commodities from coal, petroleum and petrochemicals to grain, legumes and metals. It acts in arbitrations under various trade association rules including FOSFA, PORAM and GAFTA, as well as in litigation in the Singapore Courts.

Its expertise extends beyond handling disputes. The firm also guides clients in drafting and negotiating sale contracts, and all aspects of trade finance, cargo insurance and contracts of carriage.

Shipping

Originally founded as a shipping law practice, T S Oon & Bazul has consistently been rated by clients and industry publications as one of the top shipping law firms in Singapore. Partner Bazul Ashhab has been singled out by industry watchers as one of Singapore's top shipping lawyers, and the firm's other partners have strong expertise in this area too. Partner Goush Marikan, who heads the firm's Emergency Response Team, is a former mariner with extensive experience dealing with casualties arising in the region. Kanan Thirupathy handles the firm's "dry" shipping work and arbitrations while Kelly Yap is very experienced in shipping litigation and in handling arrests and other admiralty applications. Corporate partner Ting Chi Yen regularly advises owners and banks on all aspects of ship finance.

The firm is thus well respected for its ability to handle a full range of shipping work across the region, including "dry work", "wet" work, shipbuilding and repair, ship finance and transactional shipping work, marine insurance and admiralty.

Looking Ahead

The firm sees two factors as having driven its growth thus far - the ability to attract good work and clients, and a focus on attracting the best lawyers.

It continues to provide clients with consistently high standards of service, offering solid legal advice alongside commercially sensible solutions. Recruiting bright young lawyers is also important to the firm, whose philosophy is to pay top dollar for top talent. Young lawyers are offered clear career development within a dynamic and growing law firm. The firm recently hired English solicitor Jim Leighton from the London office of a leading English law firm and continues to look out for talented lawyers in Singapore and abroad.

"We aim to be one of the top law firms not just in Singapore but in Asia. These are interesting times in Asia and we fully intend to increase our penetration into the growing regional markets," say managing partners Oon Thian Seng and Bazul Ashhab.



Partners L-R,
Kanan Thirupathy, Goush Marikan, Oon Thian Seng, Bazul Ashhab, Ting Chi Yen, Kelly Yap

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