



HERBERT
SMITH
FREEHILLS



MAY TAI

MANAGING PARTNER, ASIA

[Hong Kong](#)

May is Managing Partner of our Asia offices. She specialises in cross-border China-related and regional Asian disputes and contentious regulatory matters.

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BACKGROUND

May is based in Hong Kong but also spends time in Herbert Smith Freehills' Shanghai and Beijing offices, and has also practised in London, Singapore and Tokyo. She has published several articles on arbitration and dispute resolution, and speaks Bahasa (Malaysian and Indonesian), Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese) and English, and is qualified as a solicitor of England and Wales and Hong Kong.

May is a CEDR accredited mediator and an arbitrator in the HKIAC List of Arbitrators.

KEY SERVICES

[International Arbitration](#)
[Dispute Resolution](#)

KEY SECTORS

[Energy](#)
[Technology, Media and Telecommunications](#)

EXPERIENCE

May specialises in cross-border disputes and contentious regulatory matters. She regularly advises governments, government-owned entities and commercial clients (including financial institutions and energy companies) in Asia, Europe and the United States, including acting as counsel and advocate in arbitrations under various rules and court proceedings. She has acted as arbitrator in SIAC and HKIAC proceedings, and has also sat as an Emergency Arbitrator under the ICC Rules.

May's experience includes:

CHINA-SPECIFIC EXPERIENCE

- representing a major Chinese energy state-owned enterprise as claimant against its joint venture partner in a multi-billion dollar arbitration administered by SIAC. At US\$5.5 billion, this is the largest claim ever filed at SIAC
- secured victory for a subsidiary of a major Chinese energy state-owned enterprise in SIAC proceedings against a UK joint venture oil company in a dispute relating to a shareholders' agreement
- secured victory for an international investment bank in a Chinese-English arbitration against two PRC companies in relation to a share purchase agreement dispute in China
- representing a fast-growing Chinese pharmaceutical company as respondent to an arbitration over a dispute in the client's joint venture with a Hong Kong company
- a Shandong-based SOE on defending arbitration claims brought by a Hong Kong based investment company following the breakdown of a joint venture in the paper manufacturing business. The governing law of the contract was PRC law and arbitration was administered by the HKIAC and seated in Hong Kong
- a leading international financial institution as respondent in a US\$20 million arbitration under China International Economics and Trade Arbitration Commission (CIETAC) rules, relating to a failed investment

OTHER EXPERIENCE

- representing Malaysian telecoms giant Axiata on its BIT claim against Nepal over the state's tax demand in connection with Axiata's acquisition of mobile telco Ncell from TeliaSonera
- representing a leading Asian retail group in relation to significant joint venture disputes
- Telekom Malaysia as claimant in a UNCITRAL arbitration against the Government of Ghana for improper regulatory interference with and expropriation of Telekom's investments in Ghana, and related domestic Ghanaian court proceedings. The arbitration was administered by the Permanent Court of Arbitration and the seat was the Hague
- a major Korean conglomerate company is defending arbitration proceedings (including an emergency arbitrator application) brought by a European company under the SIAC rules in respect of a ship building contract
- BP and Rio Tinto in an International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes arbitration brought by the Provincial Government of East Kalimantan over disputes relating to a coal mining concession contract
- the Barbados Government in a Part XV and Annex VII United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea arbitration against Trinidad relating to maritime delimitation and hydrocarbon rights
- a major German energy company in an International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) arbitration against an Indonesian coal producer for breach of a coal supply agreement, including the effect of government regulations on private parties' contractual obligations
- a global geophysical services company in SIAC arbitration proceedings - and possible parallel Association of Southeast Asian Nations Treaty arbitration - against a Southeast Asian state, relating to the state's refusal to allow the exploration and production of two offshore oilfields
- a major energy consortium on claims, taxes and penalties brought by a Kazakhstan Government agency in the Kazakhstan courts relating to production from a large Kazakh oilfield and other contractual and investment treaty arbitration claims
- a Canadian energy company in an ICC arbitration claim arising out of the sale and purchase of a Kazakhstan limited liability partnership whose primary assets were licences to produce three oil fields in the Caspian, and in a related freezing injunction application in the English High Court
- a major energy company in a London Court of International Arbitration matter regarding the construction of an offshore oil platform in the Gulf of Mexico

ACCOLADES

- Leading individual – China/Hong Kong Dispute Resolution: Arbitration
Chambers Asia-Pacific 2011-2021
 - Leading individual – China/Hong Kong Dispute Resolution: Arbitration
Asia Pacific Legal 500 2013-2021
 - Dispute Resolution Star – International Arbitration
Benchmark Litigation Asia Pacific – 2019-2021
 - International Law Firm Leader of the Year
Asia Legal Awards 2021
 - One of the 100 Role Model Female Executives
HERoes Women Role Model Executives 2019 & 2020
 - Female Lawyer of the Year
Benchmark Asia Pacific Dispute Resolution Awards 2019
 - A Top 100 A List Lawyer in China
China Business Law Journal 2019
 - Best in Dispute Resolution
Euromoney Asia Women in Business Law Awards 2018
 - "She (May) is very prompt in responding and a trustworthy adviser. She understands what we care about as clients. She can also bring great industry knowledge to the table,"
an admiring source reports.
Chambers Asia-Pacific 2019
 - May Tai is 'genuinely down-to-earth, very direct and sticks to the point'.
Asia Pacific Legal 500 2019
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