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Moot Court Bench Teams Make History for Sri Lanka at 20th Vis East Moot

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For the first time ever, a Sri Lankan law school won the 20th Vis East Moot in Hong Kong. The team representing the Royal Institute of Colombo, comprised of Treshan Fernando, Abinesha Rajaratnam, Janithri Panditharatne, Naika Gooneratne and Lalinka De Silva, were awarded the prestigious Eric E. Bergsten Award as the champion team.

Another Sri Lankan team from the Sri Lanka Law College performed admirably as well. Team members Anish de Silva, Nimanga Senanayake and Lasith Hewasiliyange secured a spot in the Top 32 teams, placing as the 8th team overall (out of 111 teams competing), with Anish and Nimanga both winning an Honourable Mention Award for the Best Oralist.

Between these two teams, the commonalities run much deeper than just their nationality. Both teams were coached and guided by the comprehensive institutionalized training regimen offered by [the Moot Court Bench \(MCB\)](#), a fully-integrated, not-for-profit, legal advocacy training platform run entirely by passionate alumni and volunteers. Harish Balakrishnan, Iranthi Walgama, Dilsarah Derrick, Namali Ratnayake and Gaya Kulatunga coached both teams through the MCB.



The teams' journey started in June 2022, with the MCB's International Commercial Arbitration (ICA) Program, a three-month summer course designed to introduce students to the laws of international commercial arbitration and the international sale of goods, and to hone students' written and oral advocacy skills. Ten teams from universities across Sri Lanka participated in the summer course, which culminated in a National Competition where the top teams from each university competed to secure a spot as MCB teams. Sri Lanka Law College and the Royal Institute of Colombo emerged victorious from the National Competition and received months of intense training and mentorship by MCB

The teams from the Royal Institute of Colombo and Sri Lanka Law College (standing), with their MCB coaches (seated).

The two MCB teams worked closely together, spending long nights drafting memoranda, joining multiple practice rounds with international teams, and participating in several Pre-Moots. This system of working together, not as two separate teams operating in their own silos, but as one 'Team Sri Lanka,' proved to be a key factor in the successes that followed: at the 9th Lazareff Le Bars Vis Pre-Moot, Dubai (in-

person) and the 13th Moscow Pre-Moot (virtual), the Royal Institute of Colombo emerged Champions, while at the 13th Middle East Vis Pre-Moot, the Royal Institute of Colombo and the Sri Lanka Law College were Semi-Finalists and Quarter-Finalists, respectively. The US Department of Commerce's Commercial Law Development Program (CLDP) sponsored both teams to participate in several Pre-Moots and the Vis East Moot in Hong Kong. The MCB also provided financial support for the teams to participate at several Pre-Moots, in addition to training and guidance in preparation for the Vis Moot.

The teams' successes exemplify how Sri Lankan talent can thrive with the right preparation and properly institutionalised training. These methods have been developed at the MCB by drawing from the expertise and experiences of a tight-knit community of past mooties and coaches. In fact, the MCB was founded in early 2020 over a Skype call, right around the time of global lockdowns, by a team of individuals who remained connected via the [Sri Lankan Vis Alumni Network](#). The aim was to solidify and institutionalize the training processes for Sri Lankan students taking part in international moots, to pay forward and pave the way for other students to experience the life-changing effect of international moot competitions.

The MCB has worked to expand its own moot court offerings as well. For the last three years, the MCB has hosted a Vis Pre-Moot in Sri Lanka, catering to international teams interested in polishing their oral advocacy skills before competing at the Vis East Moot in Hong Kong or in Vienna. The MCB has also been the pioneers behind the International Investor-State Mediation Competition (IIMC), a competition hosted in Colombo, a new entrant to the field of investor-state mediation. IIMC Colombo 2022 witnessed 24 Teams from 11 countries across the globe, including several expert assessors, draftspersons, and advisors, many of whom are leaders in their industries. The Competition, being a first of its kind, [returns for the second consecutive year, in 2023](#).

The MCB has also grown and evolved to offer programs on trade law and mediation, in addition to arbitration. These act as stepping-stones for Sri Lankan students for the [John H. Jackson Trade](#)

Law Moot, and the ICC Paris International Commercial Mediation Competition; the structured training processes of the MCB have proven to drive success on these fronts, too, with an MCB team emerging as the Global Champions at the Jackson Moot in 2021, in Geneva, with another being placed as the Quarter-Finalists in the same competition in 2022, and with the MCB's mediation teams ranking as 5th out of 48 teams in 2022 and 8th out of 48 teams in 2023 at ICC Paris.

The MCB's impact has been felt outside Sri Lanka's borders, too, with Vis teams from Nepal, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Iraq and Tajikistan being trained by MCB Coaches this year, with some of these teams making their very first foray into the world of arbitration. Plus, the MCB has just opened its ICA Program to an international audience, further forging strong bonds across the world. Held on a virtual platform, the Program is open to both amateurs and experienced law students from Sri Lanka and around the world interested in sharpening their knowledge on arbitration and fine-tuning their advocacy skills.

At the heart of its efforts, the MCB places a strong emphasis on sustainability, carrying institutional experience forward to future generations of student competitors. Of the two Vis teams that made history for Sri Lanka this year, all students have since taken up [key roles](#) at the MCB, just like most former mooties have done in years past, maintaining the virtuous cycle of passing on to others what they have learned and experienced.

You can find out more about the MCB, their programs, and all other opportunities offered on [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), and their [website](#).

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This entry was posted on Thursday, May 25th, 2023 at 8:17 am and is filed under [Moot Courts, Vis Moot](#)

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