

Ali leaves Dechert for solo practice

Susannah Moody

06 January 2025



Arif Hyder Ali, who headed Dechert's international arbitration team, has left the firm after nearly a decade to set up his own practice.

Ali launched AHALI Dispute Resolution on 1 January. He will divide his time between Washington, DC and London and will take on arbitrator appointments and some counsel work on a few select cases.

He leaves after almost 10 years at Dechert. He previously led the international arbitration practices at Weil Gotshal & Manges, where he was appointed co-head of the team in 2012, and at Crowell & Moring, where he set up the practice after leaving Fulbright & Jaworski in 2007 together with **Baiju Vasani** and **Ian Laird**.

Ali tells GAR that he will focus on arbitration, while devoting time to teaching, his academic interests in cultural psychology in relation to dispute resolution and evidentiary rules and standards before international institutions, as well as rule of law projects. He says he hopes his varied jurisdictional experience and multicultural awareness will be attractive to arbitral institutions and parties looking to appoint arbitrators.

Born in Bangladesh, Ali was educated in London before studying in the US at Columbia University and the New York University School of Law. His working languages are English, Spanish, French, Urdu, Bangla and Portuguese.

As counsel, he has represented Hungarian energy company MOL in four arbitrations against Croatia, the last of which was [filed](#) at ICSID last June. He [helped](#) a Lebanese steel trader win an LCIA award against a Chinese state-owned steel conglomerate, and also [acted](#) for Singaporean investor AsiaPhos in a US\$170 million treaty claim brought against China over phosphate mining activities.

As arbitrator, he has heard claims under ICC, ICDR, LCIA and DIAC rules. In July, a US appeals court [upheld](#) an ICDR award issued by Ali as sole arbitrator, which required two venture capital funds to dissolve.

He was decorated with the Order of Bahrain for his role in the resolution of Bahrain's maritime and territorial boundary dispute with Qatar before the International Court of Justice.

From 1993 until 1996, he served as a legal officer and section chief at the United Nations Compensation Commission, and from 2000 to 2001 he served as senior counsel at the World Intellectual Property Organization's Arbitration and Mediation Centre.

He comments: “I’m excited to see how this next chapter of my professional life unfolds. If it holds even a small percentage of what I’ve experienced over the course of the past 35 years, I will have enjoyed good fortune far beyond what I deserve.”

“My thanks to those of you who have helped and guided me and to those who are joining me on this new journey.”

Vasani, who now sits as barrister and arbitrator at Twenty Essex, tells GAR that while more practice heads and senior lawyers are leaving major law firms to go solo, Ali “stands out in a league of his own”.

He says the arbitration market is “in need of more professionals like him – multicultural, multilingual, and adept at handling disputes across multiple jurisdictions” and that his “ability to seamlessly transition from presiding over a Latin American dispute in Spanish to navigating an English or New York law arbitration in Singapore is unparalleled”.

Vasani adds that Ali has a “unique appeal” to parties from the Global South and is the ““go-to” arbitrator for those seeking both expertise and cultural sensitivity”.

Independent arbitrator **John Fellas** describes Ali as “an enormously talented lawyer and a star of the international arbitration community”. He says that after serving on tribunals alongside him, “I can attest to his diligence, common sense, and collegiality”. Fellas adds: “He will be in huge demand.”

Stephen Drymer, head of international arbitration at Woods, tells GAR he has worked with Ali both as counsel and in his capacity as arbitrator, describing him as “the consummate professional: well-prepared, knowledgeable, diligent, with a keen ability to listen (to witnesses, counsel and colleagues) and possessing the utmost integrity”.

Drymer says Ali is “also a delight to work with on tribunals” and that he is certain he will “enjoy great success in his new incarnation as independent arbitrator, and our community and the parties we serve are fortunate to be able to count him among that rank”.

Karim Youssef of Youssef + Partners tells GAR Ali is "an exceptional counsel and arbitrator with whom I have interacted and collaborated in various capacities for over 15 years". He says Ali has "built a remarkable career, and his recent transition is a natural progression of the steps he has taken before".

"This change will provide him with greater flexibility and fewer potential conflicts, all while maintaining the global exposure he is accustomed to. I wish him the best of luck in this new venture, and I am confident it will be both successful and enjoyable."

Seladore Legal partner **Laurence Shore** says: 'All who have had the good fortune to serve on a tribunal with Arif have benefited from his brilliance in analysing legal issues and his generosity in working with tribunal colleagues.'

Shore adds: “He will now have the opportunity to spend more time working as arbitrator, which is a great advantage for the many counsel wanting to appoint him, albeit a definite loss for clients who would want to continue to instruct him.”

King & Spalding partner **Samaa Haridi**, who worked with Ali at Crowell & Moring and Weil, says he is a “world-class arbitration lawyer and one of the most talented and dedicated advocates I know”.

She comments: “I am deeply grateful for his mentorship and support throughout the years. I wish him all the best as he embarks on this new chapter at AHALI Dispute Resolution."

Érica Franzetti, who joined the King & Spalding partnership from Dechert in 2021, tells GAR: "I’m thrilled to see Arif launching a firm that not only embodies his exceptional skills as a lawyer but also emphasises collaboration and showcases his unparalleled insight as an arbitrator."

A spokesperson for Dechert tells GAR A Dechert spokesperson says: “We would like to thank Arif for his contribution to the firm and we wish him well in his new venture.”

Ali’s is the latest in a string of departures from Dechert’s international arbitration team over the past year, as the firm prioritises other practice areas. At the end of 2023, Paris-based practice co-chair **Eduardo Silva Romero** left with a team to found Wordstone Dispute Resolution, followed shortly after by **Claudia Annacker** who went solo, and **Philip Dunham**, who moved to Signature Litigation.

Mark Mangan left the Singapore office in [February 2024](#) to set up a new Asia-Pacific boutique, while in October **Alexandre de Gramont** and **David Attanasio** [headed](#) to Womble Bond Dickinson, where de Gramont became practice head.

Susannah Moody

Reporter
GAR

[View full biography](#)

