EMIRATES LEGAL

FIRM PROFILE · AUGUST 2026

Counsel for the Decisive Moment

Boutique Depth. Barrister-Led Advocacy.

LITIGATION & ARBITRATION · CORPORATE & COMMERCIAL

PRIVATE WEALTH · FUNDS & REGULATION

DIFC · ADGM · AIFC · DUBAI · LONDON · ASTANA · NEW DELHI

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A boutique with the record of an institution

Emirates Legal is a Dubai International Financial Centre law firm founded in 2009 by Syed Mujtaba Hussain. It was built on a simple conviction: that clients facing their most consequential disputes and transactions deserve the sustained attention of senior counsel — not the middle of a pyramid.

Three decades of practice stand behind the firm. Its founder was enrolled in 1995, has appeared before the Supreme Court of India, served the United Nations in Geneva, and has held full rights of audience before the DIFC Courts since 2016. Around him, the firm fields a deliberately compact senior team, reinforced through its barrister network in London and established relationships with onshore UAE advocates.

The record is not asserted; it is published. The firm maintains a compendium of the judgments and orders obtained in its matters — and this profile is drawn from those texts.

Emirates Legal is registered with the DIFC, the ADGM and the AIFC in Kazakhstan, and acts as registered agent across Dubai's free zones and Onshore Dubai. In the onshore Dubai Courts it works alongside established Emirati advocates — the route by which it secured and fully recovered an AED 108 million judgment against a prominent investment bank — and its enforcement practice reaches to India, where it has had three DIFC judgments recognised and now appears before the Supreme Court of India.

30+
years in practice — enrolled September 1995

43
arbitrations · 38 awards secured · balance settled

~99%
success rate in contested litigation

1,000+
clients advised on UAE corporate structures

AED 108m
judgment against an investment bank — recovered in full

22
judgments & orders in the published DIFC compendium

THE FOUNDER

Syed Mujtaba Hussain

FOUNDER & MANAGING PARTNER · ADVOCATE (INDIA, 1995)

A disputes lawyer whose cases have not merely applied UAE law — they have helped make it.

Mujtaba's three decades in practice run from the High Court of Kashmir and the Supreme Court of India, through the United Nations Compensation Commission in Geneva, to General Counsel of a Dubai investment group — and, since 2009, to the head of Emirates Legal. He has been a registered practitioner with full rights of audience before the DIFC Courts since March 2016, and has appeared as counsel in the Court of First Instance and the Court of Appeal, including against benches comprising former chief justices of three jurisdictions.

His practice concentrates on high-value dispute resolution and the complex, cross-border contractual relationships that generate it — with the UAE as base and the world as the marketplace. As lead counsel he has conducted arbitrations against the region's most prominent developers, taken a US$93 million judgment off the books for his clients, and won seven-figure trial judgments instructing King's Counsel.

> *"You do not set up in Dubai to do business in Dubai. You set up in Dubai to do business with the world."*

ADMISSIONS

India — enrolled September 1995

DIFC Courts — full rights of audience, 2016

Registered: ADGM Courts · AIFC Court

EDUCATION

LL.M., UC Berkeley (Boalt Hall), 2003

LL.M. International Law, Essex, 1997

Environmental Law Fellow, Stanford, 2001

B.A. LL.B. (Hons), National Law School of India University

CAREER LANDMARKS

Supreme Court of India — appearances incl. public-interest litigation

United Nations Compensation Commission, Geneva

General Counsel, GulfCap Group, Dubai

Founder, Emirates Legal, 2009

Litigation that shaped the law

Every disputes firm promises experience. Very few can point to legislation. Two threads of litigation conducted by Emirates Legal stand at the origin of Dubai's modern architecture for resolving conflicts of jurisdiction between the Dubai Courts and the DIFC Courts.

When clients retain Emirates Legal, they retain the firm whose cases defined the ground on which the next case will be fought.

2016

The conduit, and the birth of a tribunal

Acting for Ms Chenshan Liu, the firm persuades the DIFC Courts to recognise and enforce an onshore DIAC award — the pioneering “conduit” route. Within weeks, Decree No. 19 of 2016 constitutes the Joint Judicial Tribunal to resolve precisely the question the case brought to a head. The firm then defeats the award debtor's stay application under the new Decree, with costs.

2024

The US$93 million reversal

For the Goel guarantors against Credit Suisse, the firm carries the jurisdictional fight through every level to the Joint Judicial Tribunal — and wins. Every order in three DIFC actions is set aside, the US$93 million judgment falls away, the worldwide freezing order is discharged and the clients' assets are released. The ruling establishes that Tribunal decisions are final and operate retrospectively.

2024–25

A new legal order

The questions this litigation exposed feed the reform of the conflicts regime under Decree No. 29 of 2024 and the clarified jurisdictional gateways of Dubai Law No. 2 of 2025 — the new DIFC Courts Law, under which the firm is again among the first to litigate, securing an early ruling on the Article 14(B) opt-in within months of enactment.

Litigation, arbitration, enforcement

The firm fights across the full cycle — urgent interim relief, jurisdiction battles, trial, appeal, and the enforcement stage where most firms stop and Emirates Legal continues. Advocacy is the core craft: senior counsel with rights of audience, instructing King's Counsel where the matter warrants it — and, in the onshore Dubai Courts, working alongside established Emirati advocates under the firm's strategy and supervision.

Credit Suisse (Switzerland) Ltd v Goel & Others

DIFC COURTS & JOINT JUDICIAL TRIBUNAL · 2020–2024 · FOR THE GUARANTORS

A worldwide freezing order and immediate judgment exceeding US$93 million — all set aside, the freezing order discharged, the clients' assets released. One of the most complete reversals in the DIFC Courts' history.

The AED 108 million recovery

DUBAI COURTS · ALONGSIDE EMIRATI ADVOCATES · FOR THE CLAIMANT

Against a prominent investment bank, the firm secured judgment for AED 108 million in the onshore Dubai Courts — then carried the enforcement proceedings through to full recovery. Judgment obtained, money collected, client paid.

Forbes v Kidd

DIFC CFI · TRIAL JULY 2025 · FOR THE CLAIMANT, INSTRUCTING TWO KCS

GBP 4.6 million won at trial on an unsigned success-fee engagement — now a leading authority on contract formation by conduct under UAE law.

Access Group & ProEx v BLS International

DIFC CFI · TWO-WEEK TRIAL, 2025 · FOR THE DEFENDANT

Every substantive claim over five visa-processing subcontracts dismissed; the client recovered €491,176 in outstanding debts with interest.

Judgments that travel — the India practice

Three DIFC Courts judgments taken to India and all three recognised under the judicial cooperation arrangements between India and the UAE — including execution through the Commercial Division of the Bombay High Court. The most recent matter is on appeal to the Supreme Court of India, where the firm appears as counsel.

The arbitration record

Counsel in 43 references under DIAC, DIFC-LCIA/LCIA, ICC and GAFTA rules — construction, real estate, commercial and investment disputes — with 38 awards secured and the balance settled on favourable terms.

Notable judgments

Outcomes below are stated as the courts recorded them. Full texts are reproduced in the firm's Compendium of Judgments — DIFC Courts, available to clients on request.

Chenshan Liu v Dubai Waterfront

ARB-004/2016 · 2016

DIAC award recognised and enforced through the DIFC; Decree 19 stay defeated with costs. The case that precipitated the Joint Judicial Tribunal.

Credit Suisse v Goel & Others

JJT CASSATION NO. 10/2021 · ORDER 9 JULY 2024

DIFC jurisdiction denied; every order set aside; US$93m judgment and worldwide freezing order gone. Established the retrospective effect of Tribunal rulings.

Abdelsalam v Expresso Telecom

CFI-015-2019 · CA-011-2021

For the employer: immediate judgment on limitation, then the Court of Appeal ruling that now governs the transitional operation of the DIFC Employment Law.

Forbes v Kidd

CFI-081-2023 · JUDGMENT 7 AUGUST 2025

GBP 4,599,352 with interest and costs after a seven-day trial before Justice Sir Jeremy Cooke.

Innovative Production Group v Innovation Factory

CFI-054-2025 · 15 OCTOBER 2025

Jurisdiction challenge dismissed with immediately assessed costs — among the first rulings on Article 14(B) of the new DIFC Courts Law.

Agarwal v ICAI (Dubai Chapter)

CFI-016/2024 · 17 OCTOBER 2024

Claim against the institution struck out in its entirety with costs — the anchor authority on judicial review of private-body decisions in the DIFC.

Al Sahel Contracting v E.Construct

CFI-046-2022 · ORDER 18 JANUARY 2023

For the claimant contractor: payment out of AED 1.8 million in admitted sums secured before trial, with every condition sought by the defendant rejected.

Lakhani v Srivastava & Anr

BOMBAY HIGH COURT · ORDER 7 JANUARY 2026

DIFC decrees executed in India to a court-recorded settlement backed by undertakings, an asset status quo obligation and automatic revival with 9% interest on default.

Dubai as a base for doing business with the world

The firm's structuring philosophy begins from a thesis proven across a thousand engagements: you do not set up in Dubai to do business in Dubai only — you set up in Dubai to reach every other market. Every structure is built around that idea.

1,000+	880+	44+
clients advised on UAE corporate structures since 2009	companies incorporated in the UAE, with MESA Management Consultancy	UAE free zones navigated through the firm's proprietary selection checklist

Choosing among the UAE's free zones is genuinely hard — activity permissions, ownership rules, substance, tax, banking acceptance and enforceability all pull in different directions. Over twenty-one years the firm has distilled this into a structured checklist applied to every business entering the UAE: the difference between being sold a licence and being advised on a structure.

The transactional practice

- Cross-jurisdictional structures — DIFC holding layers over free zone and mainland operations, executed end to end
- Mergers, acquisitions and joint ventures, including the India–UAE corridor, with extensive buy-side due diligence
- Construction contracts and real estate agreements — acquisition, development, disposal
- Sector breadth from construction and manufacturing to packaging, trading, technology and family enterprise
- Contracts drafted by lawyers who litigate them — and structures built to withstand the attacks we know how to make

Trusts, foundations & succession

Private wealth is where the firm's corporate, funds and contentious strengths converge — and one of the largest bodies of work it has built in the DIFC: foundations and trusts established for founders, families and family offices across the world.

DIFC Foundations — Law No. 3 of 2018

An incorporated body that owns its assets in its own name, with no shareholders, governed by a council under a charter and by-laws the founder writes. Assets pass outside probate and forced heirship; the 2024 amendments strengthened the firewall — creditors must prove intent to defraud, claims face a three-year limit, and inconsistent foreign judgments are not enforced. Under the DIFC's arrangement with the Dubai Land Department, a foundation may hold real estate anywhere in Dubai.

DIFC Trusts — Law No. 4 of 2018

One of the most modern common-law trust regimes in the world: discretionary, fixed, charitable, protective and purpose trusts; reserved settlor powers; unlimited duration; and firewall protections mirroring the foundations regime. The firm advises on the choice between trust and foundation — and frequently deploys both together.

In practice

- Foundation and trust establishment — charters, by-laws, endowments, councils, guardians, protectors
- Family offices under the Family Arrangements Regulations 2023; family charters embedded in enforceable by-laws
- Dubai real estate transferred into DIFC foundations; DIFC Wills; intergenerational transfer
- Funds and asset management interface — including Protected Cell Companies, a core specialism
- When structures are attacked, we defend them — with a disputes team before the DIFC Courts week in, week out

Fund formation and DFSA licensing

Fund formation is one of the firm's most developed DIFC practices. Emirates Legal has structured and launched funds across the Centre's full vehicle range, with substantial work in the protected cell space — incorporating Protected Cell Companies and advising managers and family offices on how cellular structures ring-fence assets and liabilities between strategies and investors. The practice extends through the fund's life: manager licensing, offering documents, investor negotiation, administration and custody appointments, and eventual restructuring or wind-down.

Funds & asset management

- Qualified Investor, Exempt and Public Fund structuring and formation
- Investment companies, partnerships, trusts and Variable Capital Companies
- Protected Cell Company incorporation and cellular fund structures
- Private Placement Memoranda, LPAs, subscription documents and side letters
- Fund Manager and External Fund Manager licensing
- Islamic and Shari'a-compliant funds and Supervisory Board arrangements
- Comparative DIFC / ADGM / AIFC domicile analysis and parallel structures

Financial services regulation

- DFSA authorisation across Categories 1 to 5 — banking, dealing, custody, asset management, advisory and Islamic finance
- Representative Office and Innovation Testing Licence applications
- Crypto token and digital asset licensing under the DFSA rules in force from 12 January 2026
- Prudential capital planning, including the Activity-Based Capital Requirement
- Compliance manuals, AML/CTF frameworks and internal governance
- DFSA supervisory engagement, thematic reviews and enforcement response

Emerging regulatory practices

AI Governance

Deployment and market-entry advice under the Dubai Universal Blueprint for AI, the Abu Dhabi AI and Advanced Technology Council, and federal data protection law.

Cybersecurity

Mandatory UAE cyber-compliance obligations, including AML Decree-Law No. 10 of 2025, CBUAE Decree-Law No. 6 of 2025 and DIFC Data Protection Amendment Law No. 1 of 2025.

ESG & Climate Tech

Emissions reporting under Federal Decree-Law No. 11 of 2024 and the National Carbon Credit Registry under Cabinet Resolution No. 67 of 2024.

Virtual Assets & Web3

VARA licensing and compliance, the CBUAE Payment Token Services Regulation, and the DIFC Digital Assets Law No. 2 of 2024.

A transactional track record across every sector

Since 2009 the corporate and commercial practice has ranged across virtually every sector of the UAE economy: construction and engineering, manufacturing and industrial plants, packaging, trading, real estate, technology, financial services and family enterprise. Twenty-one years in, there are few corners of the UAE commercial landscape the practice has not worked in.

Representative mandates

A US$2 billion smelter project and a US$300 million float-glass project in Saudi Arabia

An AED 2 billion transaction for a Chinese investor with a leading Dubai real estate group

A US$180 million cement plant transaction in the Middle East

A US$90 million mining contract negotiation in the Kingdom

A US$100 million private-equity-led real estate development in Oman

A US$200 million investment into a cement plant in Kazakhstan, where the firm maintains an AIFC-regulated presence

Forums and rights of audience

DIFC Courts — registered practitioners with full rights of audience (Part I and Part II); Court of First Instance, Court of Appeal and Small Claims Tribunal.

ADGM Courts and AIFC Court — registered before both centres, giving clients common-law disputes coverage across the Gulf and Central Asia.

Arbitration — counsel in 43 references under the DIAC, DIFC-LCIA/LCIA, ICC and GAFTA rules, seated in the UAE and abroad.

Dubai Courts and the Joint Judicial Tribunal — onshore proceedings conducted alongside established Emirati advocates under the firm's strategy and supervision.

Cross-border enforcement — recognition and execution of judgments and awards beyond the UAE, including before the High Court of Bombay and on appeal to the Supreme Court of India.

READ FURTHER

The firm's library

This profile is the door. Behind it sits a suite of documents — each available to clients on request — in which every claim made here is set out in full and sourced to the record.

Practice Statement — Syed Mujtaba Hussain

The founder's credentials in full: three decades of practice, the arbitration record, and a judgment-by-judgment addendum of the firm's notable cases and their contribution to UAE law.

Litigation & Dispute Resolution Profile

The disputes practice presented matter by matter — forums, rights of audience, representative cases with outcomes as the courts recorded them.

Corporate Profile

The transactional and structuring practice: UAE-wide incorporation, DIFC entities, funds and DFSA licensing, private wealth, and the full service schedule.

Compendium of Judgments — DIFC Courts

The evidence. 22 judgments and substantive orders, 304 pages, spanning 10 May 2016 to 7 January 2026 — indexed, bookmarked and reproduced in full, with a 56-document master compendium extending to the Dubai Courts and Joint Judicial Tribunal.

Engagement

The firm acts on fixed and staged fee structures with clearly defined scopes and, where appropriate, agreed caps. Every engagement is governed by DIFC law and subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the DIFC Courts. Current insights, practice notes and firm news are published at www.emirateslegal.ae.

Retain the counsel who has already fought — and won — the fights that defined this jurisdiction.

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REGISTERED & PRESENT

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Registered agent: Dubai free zones and Onshore Dubai

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