

RGNUL Students Shine on the Global Stage: Semi-Finalists at the ICC Hong Kong International Commercial Mediation Competition 2025

Ms. Vanshika Jain and Ms. Aviral Pathak, B.A.LL.B., final-year students of the Rajiv Gandhi National University of Law (RGNUL), Punjab, brought remarkable laurels to the university by securing a coveted position among the Semi-Finalists at the ICC Hong Kong International Commercial Mediation Competition 2025. Held from 24th to 27th November 2025, the competition drew top student negotiators and aspiring mediators from across continents.

Against this vibrant international backdrop, the RGNUL team stood out not merely for their analytical skill and composure but also for the historic nature of their accomplishment. This achievement carries special significance for RGNUL. The duo was the only Indian team to break into the semi-finals in this year's edition and, notably, the first-ever team from RGNUL to receive an invitation to any ICC Mediation competition. Such recognition signals the growing presence of the university in the global dispute-resolution ecosystem and showcases the institution's expanding commitment to experiential legal education. Their milestone is not just an honour for the participants but a meaningful institutional moment that reflects the university's investments in negotiation, mediation, and problem-solving training.

The 2025 edition of the competition was one of the most diverse in recent years, featuring 42 participating teams representing countries such as Russia, Cambodia, India, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Indonesia, Kenya, and several others. This impressive diversity transformed the competition into a vibrant learning arena rich with cultural nuance, negotiation variability, and complex commercial fact patterns. For RGNUL, which was making its debut on this global stage, the high level of competition meant a steep learning curve. Yet, the team progressed confidently through the rounds, demonstrating intellectual clarity, strategic negotiation, and professional maturity.

The competition followed a rigorous multi-stage format comprising six rounds. The first two days witnessed three preliminary rounds, where teams were assessed on their ability to navigate factually dense commercial disputes while maintaining collaborative negotiation dynamics. The third day hosted the quarter-finals, pushing the remaining teams to refine their strategic approach under heightened evaluative criteria. The final day featured both the semi-final and final rounds, creating an increasingly demanding trajectory that tested endurance, consistency,

adaptability, and the ability to respond to fast-shifting negotiation positions. The RGNUL team sustained their composure and continued to excel at each step underscored not only their preparation but also their instinctive ability to think on their feet in a competitive mediation environment.

Across these stages, the participants tackled a wide range of mediation problems, each demanding a blend of doctrinal clarity, commercial understanding, and interpersonal skill. The disputes spanned issues such as intellectual property conflicts involving licensing and technology transfer, construction-contract disagreements over cost escalation and quality assurance, and procurement-related challenges arising in the healthcare sector. Every scenario required a nuanced understanding of business interests, stakeholder needs, risk-sharing preferences, and long-term commercial relationships. The team's ability to engage meaningfully with mediators, articulate interests rather than positions, and develop creative problem-solving proposals proved central to their strong performance.

Reflecting on their journey, the team described the experience as profoundly enriching. "Participating in the ICC–HK International Commercial Mediation Competition was an invaluable learning opportunity. Advancing to the semi-finals among such accomplished teams from across the world was both challenging and deeply rewarding," they shared. Their statement encapsulates not only the pride of the moment but also the sense of intellectual growth that such platforms foster among emerging dispute-resolution professionals.

One of the most valuable aspects of the competition was the opportunity to receive detailed feedback from experienced mediators, practitioners, and negotiators from various jurisdictions. Participants were exposed to a spectrum of negotiation styles, some assertive, some interest-driven, and others collaborative yet highly structured. The competition also introduced them to practical aspects of mediation conducted under ICC frameworks, enriching their understanding of how procedural structures align with real-world commercial expectations. These insights are expected to meaningfully shape their future engagements in dispute-resolution settings.

Additionally, the event served as a significant networking platform, allowing participants to interact with student teams, academics, and professionals from across the world. Such exchanges broadened their perspective on cross-cultural communication, an essential competency for lawyers navigating global commercial disputes. For RGNUL, these

interactions lay the groundwork for longer-term academic partnerships and cross-border learning opportunities.

This achievement is closely aligned with the broader institutional vision of RGNUL's Centre for Alternative Dispute Resolution (CADR) and the Dr. P.C. Markanda Chair on ADR. Both bodies have been actively fostering a culture of practical skills training, global exposure, and high-quality research in dispute resolution. The Centre and the Chair continue to encourage participation in international competitions, specialised workshops, and professional training programmes so that students can gain hands-on experience alongside doctrinal knowledge. The success of the team reinforces the importance of these initiatives and signals the university's growing readiness to contribute meaningfully to international ADR discourse.

The participation of the RGNUL delegation was made possible through the generous support of the Justice Kuldip Prakash Bhandari Foundation, particularly Ms. Varuna Bhandari, Mr. Bharat Bhandari, and Mr. Pradip Bhandari, as well as Senior Advocate Arvind Datar. Their sponsorship ensured that financial constraints did not restrict the opportunity, allowing the team to represent the university on a global stage. Such support highlights the crucial role of philanthropic engagement in enabling students to access international experiential learning platforms.

RGNUL also extends its appreciation to the International Chamber of Commerce, Hong Kong, for organising an event that was both professionally executed and intellectually stimulating. The competition offered participants unparalleled exposure to international mediation techniques, evaluative frameworks, and negotiation methodologies.

The Semi-Final achievement of Ms. Vanshika Jain and Ms. Aviral Pathak stands as a testament to their dedication, discipline, and professional aptitude. Their performance sets a motivating benchmark for future RGNUL participants and is expected to pave the way for deeper engagement with global mediation initiatives. Their journey demonstrates not only personal excellence but also the institution's growing capacity to nurture world-class dispute-resolution talent.