

Regional Employment Law Review 2025



Contents	2
Introduction	3
Key Contacts	4
About the RTA Regional Employment Practice Group	5
Cambodia	6
Indonesia	9
Malaysia	13
Myanmar	17
Philippines	22
Singapore	26
Thailand	31
Vietnam	33
Our Achievements	37
Our Regional Contacts	38
Disclaimer	39

Introduction

2025 has seen much activity in the area of employment law. Governments and employment regulators in the region have focused on developing their respective employment law frameworks to ensure that they are up-to-date and in line with current economic realities. Apart from new legislation and regulations, and amendments to existing laws, domestic courts have also issued judgments which have wide-ranging impact on the employer-employee relationship. Employers, particularly those operating across jurisdictions, would be well advised to keep updated with the latest changes and expected developments.

In this year-end publication, we look back at the major developments in employment law over the course of 2025 in selected regional jurisdictions, highlighting the changes that employers should be aware of. We also look ahead to the coming year of 2026, examining major trends and developments that may be expected. The jurisdictions covered are:

- [Cambodia](#)
- [Indonesia](#)
- [Malaysia](#)
- [Myanmar](#)
- [Philippines](#)
- [Singapore](#)
- [Thailand](#)
- [Vietnam](#)

If you have any queries or matters to discuss, please feel free to contact our regional employment law team.

Key Contacts

Singapore

Rajah & Tann Singapore LLP

Desmond Wee

D +65 6232 0474

E desmond.wee@rajahtann.com

Jonathan Yuen

D +65 6232 0161

E jonathan.yuen@rajahtann.com

Ang Tze Phern

D +65 6232 0922

E tze.phern.ang@rajahtann.com

Doreen Chia

D +65 6232 0599

E doreen.chia@rajahtann.com

Jonathan Cham

D +65 6232 0945

E jonathan.cham@rajahtann.com

Cambodia

Rajah & Tann Sok & Heng Law Office

Hout Sotheary

D +855 23 963 112 / 113

E hout.sotheary@rajahtann.com

Indonesia

Assegaf Hamzah & Partners

Ahmad Maulana

D +62 21 2555 7816

E ahmad.maulana@ahp.id

Muhamad Kamal Fikri

D +62 21 2555 7824

E kamal.fikri@ahp.co.id

Malaysia

Christopher & Lee Ong

Yau Yee Ming

D +601 7362 3459 / +603 2267 2669

E yee.ming.yau@christopherleeong.com

John Rolan

D +603 2273 1919 / +603 2267 2664

E john.rolan@christopherleeong.com

Myanmar

Rajah & Tann Myanmar Company Limited

Dr Min Thein

D +959 7304 0763

E min.thein@rajahtann.com

Philippines

Gatmaytan Yap Patacsil Gutierrez & Protacio
(C&G Law)

Cesar E. (Jun) Santamaria, Jr.

D +632 8248 5250

E cesantamaria@cagatlaw.com

Thailand

Rajah & Tann (Thailand) Limited

Piroon Saengpakdee

D +66 2 656 1991

E piroon.s@rajahtann.com

Vietnam

Rajah & Tann LCT Lawyers

Vu Thi Que

D +84 28 3821 2382

E que.vu@rajahtannlct.com

Huynh Thi Thu Thuy

D +84 28 3821 2382

E thuy.huynh@rajahtannlct.com

About the RTA Regional Employment Practice Group

The award-winning Regional Employment Practice of Rajah & Tann Asia offers unrivalled expertise in all employment matters in the region, backed up by highly regarded local experts drawn from each of our offices within our network.

With top-ranked resident experts in their home countries well-versed in local employment laws, with on the ground experience, right of audience in local Courts and a firm grasp of local culture and business practices, we provide unparalleled and seamless services to our clients in the region.

We provide support across the full spectrum of workplace needs, including:

- Contracts, policies and HR compliance;
- Executive compensation and negotiations;
- Whistle-blowing, grievance reporting, workplace investigations and disciplinary processes;
- Industrial and union relations, collective and enterprise agreements;
- Business protection (including managing confidentiality, restraint of trade and non-competes);
- Employment structuring (including Employer on Record arrangements and engagement of contract/gig/platform workers);
- Immigration, work pass and global mobility;
- Restructuring, reorganisation and retrenchments;
- Occupational and workplace health and safety;
- Sustainability, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion support;
- Mergers and acquisitions;
- Employment disputes and contentious employment issues; and
- Representation in national court, arbitration, employment tribunal, mediation proceedings as well as in multi-party negotiations involving government bodies.

Cambodia

Looking Back: 2025

In 2025, the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training ("MLVT") and relevant authorities have continued to issue regulations from time to time to govern and enhance the relationship between employers and employees.

These regulatory developments addressed key topics such as labour dispute resolution procedures, working hours and overtime work, special protection for female employees, extortion of money or incentives in exchange for jobs, and employment suspension.



Summaries of the key developments are provided below.

Procedures for the Resolution of Individual and Collective Labour Disputes

On 4 March 2025, MLVT issued two separate Prakas on Procedures for the Resolution of Individual Labour Disputes and Procedures for the Resolution of Collective Labour Disputes. The parties in both individual and collective disputes are required to follow the procedures pertaining to their respective labour disputes, including filing a complaint with MLVT, the Arbitration Council, and the competent courts, where applicable.

For more information, please see our full Legal Updates on the Collective Labour Dispute resolution process [here](#), and on the Individual Labour Dispute resolution process [here](#).

Overtime Work Outside of Normal Working Hours, Work on Paid Public Holidays, and Suspension of Weekly Day Off

MLVT issued Prakas No. 112/25 on 6 May 2025 to set out the conditions, formalities, and procedures governing overtime work outside of normal working hours, work on paid public holidays, and suspension of the weekly day off. This Prakas applies to all enterprises, establishments, and individuals falling under the scope of the Cambodian Labour Law and must be complied with whenever overtime work is required in the aforementioned situations.

Special Protection for Pregnant Employees

On 7 February 2025, MLVT issued Instruction No. 015/25 with the aim of promoting the welfare of female employees and ensuring better working conditions for pregnant employees. This Instruction sets out a list of measures that all enterprise owners or directors are required to implement, including prohibition against discrimination against pregnant female employees, prohibition of suspension/termination of female employees within prescribed periods after giving birth, and the timing of maternity payments.

Failure to comply with these measures will result in a penalty in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

Violation Involving Extortion of Citizens in Exchange for Jobs in Cambodia

On 7 August 2025, MLVT issued Instruction 025/25 to inform the public that demanding money or incentives in exchange for jobs in Cambodia is illegal, even when such money or incentives are provided voluntarily by the job seekers. Such acts of demanding money or incentives are considered fraud and labour exploitation, and are punishable by imprisonment of six months to three years under the Cambodian Criminal Code, as well as monetary fines under the Cambodian Labour Law and other applicable regulations.

Suspension of Employment Contracts

On 20 August 2025, MLVT issued Instruction No. 138/25 to provide clear guidance and requirements in relation to the suspension of employment contracts pursuant to Articles 71 and 72 of the Cambodian Labour Law.

Enterprises, companies, or factories encountering serious economic or material difficulties, or any other exceptional difficulties, may suspend the employment contracts of their workers and employees through the Labour Centralised Management System, provided that they comply with the requirements outlined in this Instruction, including, but not limited to, the notice of suspension and obtaining mutual consent.

Public Services of the MLVT

On 23 March 2025, MLVT and the Ministry of Economy and Finance issued Interministerial Prakas No. 193 on the provision of public services under the MLVT. Following this Prakas, a number of labour services are now provided free of charge, such as applications for labour inspection books, and payroll ledgers.

Implementation of Licence for Special Employees in Casino Establishments

On 3 July 2025, the Commercial Gambling Management Commission of Cambodia issued Instruction No. 008/25 with the aim of ensuring compliance with casino operations and effective management of casino employees in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. This Instruction sets out a list of obligations that casino owners and/or casino

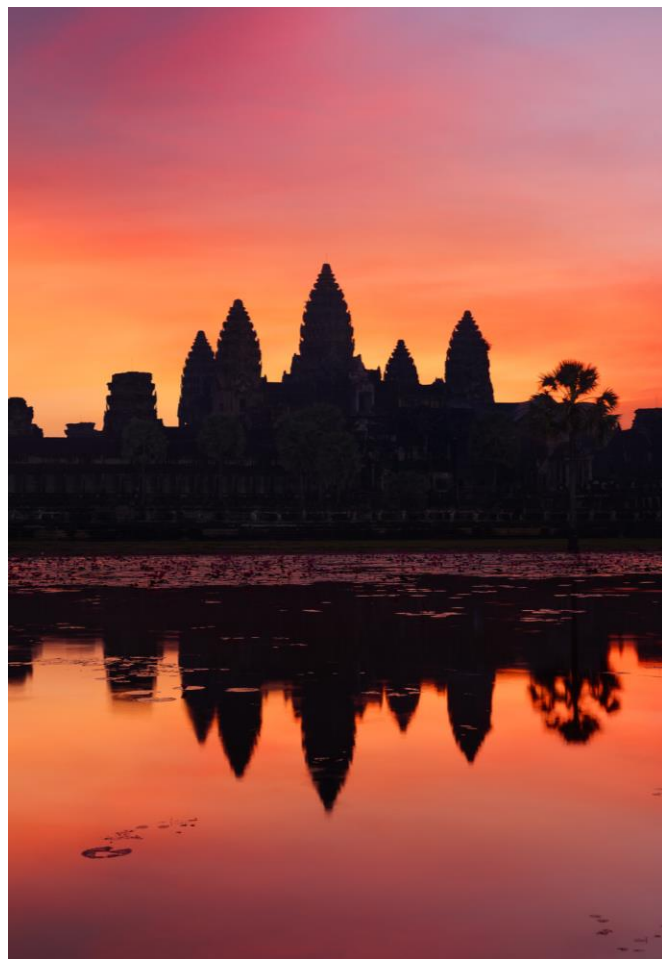
operators shall comply with. Failure to comply with this Instruction shall be considered as a violation of the Law of Management of Commercial Gambling, and shall be subject to administrative sanctions and/or fines in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations.

For more information, please see our full Legal Update [here](#).

Projecting Into: 2026

MLVT continues to lead transformative developments through ongoing initiatives such as the Draft Law on Occupational Safety and Health and Draft National Policy on Occupation and Employment 2026-2035. These milestones reflect a commitment to enhancing safety and health for employees working in Cambodia, promoting and strengthening social security, and striving to achieve the plans as determined in the Strategic Development Plan for the Labour, Social Security, and Vocational Training 2024–2028.

Apart from the foregoing, works in progress also include drafting and reviewing labour-related regulations, modernising labour platforms, and integrating labour services into a centralised system, among others.



Draft Law on Occupational Safety and Health

The Law on Occupational Safety and Health is currently in the drafting and consulting stages. The main purpose of the draft law is to promote occupational safety and health conditions and ensure that individuals will be able to obtain decent work, following the definition set out by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The drafting of this law is in accordance with the Strategic Development Plan for the Labour, Social Security and Vocational Training 2024–2028, which is one of the technical strategies aimed at developing working conditions, safety and health, and harmonising industrial relations to be in line with global evolution. After the law is promulgated, it is expected that individuals will have better opportunities to seek jobs as well as earn higher incomes with better working conditions, especially occupational safety and health.

Draft National Policy on Occupation and Employment 2026-2035

The Draft National Policy on Occupation and Employment 2026–2035 sets out Cambodia's long-term plan to build a competitive, skilled, and inclusive workforce through lifelong learning and a robust labour market system. The draft policy has four main objectives, namely:

1. promoting decent and productive work;
2. developing human resources through increased skills and productivity;
3. strengthening the labour market information system and active labour market programs for better labour market outcomes; and
4. strengthening labour market governance and regulations.

Importantly, the draft will support economic diversification and serve as a forward-looking framework aligned with Cambodia's socio-economic context as it aims to graduate from least developed country status by 2029.

Indonesia

Looking Back: 2025

In 2025, the Indonesian government has updated the minimum pension age and introduced a new, simplified visa classification system which streamlines the number of work visas. It also issued a circular encouraging application-based service providers to grant a bonus to driver and courier partners.

Concurrently, the courts have clarified that the one-year limitation period for termination claims will begin to run from the date that mediation fails, rather than the date of termination.



Summaries of the key developments are provided below.

Religious Festivities Bonuses for Drivers and Couriers of Application-Based Services

On 15 March 2025, the Ministry of Manpower issued Circular Letter No. M/3/HK.04/III/2025 on Provision of Religious Holiday Bonuses for 2025 for Drivers and Couriers of Application-Based Transportation Services ("**Circular Letter**").

The Circular Letter encourages application-based service providers to grant a Religious Festivities Bonus as a form of corporate social responsibility ("**CSR**"). This entitlement differs from the Religious Holiday Allowance, which is a mandatory payment given to employees annually.

According to the Circular Letter, the bonus is to be granted with the following considerations:

1. The bonus is to be provided to all drivers and couriers who are officially registered with application-based services (collectively "**driver partners**").
2. Payment should be made no later than seven days before Eid-Al Fitr 1446.
3. Driver partners with high productivity and good performance should receive a bonus equal to 20% of their average net monthly income over the past 12 months, paid in cash.
4. Other driver partners should receive a bonus based on the financial capacity of the platform company.
5. The provision of this bonus does not eliminate other welfare benefits granted under applicable laws.

The introduction of the Religious Festivities Bonus through the Circular marks a shift in financial support for driver partners, although it is framed as a CSR initiative rather than an employment entitlement like the Religious Holiday Allowance.

Unlike the Religious Holiday Allowance, which guarantees a fixed one-month salary equivalent, the Religious Festivities Bonus is discretionary,

performance-based, and dependent on the company's financial capacity, reinforcing the government's stance that gig workers remain partners.

However, the lack of a clear definition of "Application-Based Transportation Services" creates questions for companies regarding their eligibility, while enforcement remains contingent on local authorities and regional policies. For driver partners, the Religious Festivities Bonus offers a potential financial benefit, but given its discretionary nature, its actual coverage and impact remain uncertain.

Employment Disputes – One-Year Deadline for Termination Claims Now Runs from Failed Mediation

On 3 September 2025, Indonesia's Constitutional Court issued Decision No. 132/PUU-XXIII/2025 ("**Decision 132/2025**") arising from a judicial review of Law No. 2 of 2004 on the Settlement of Industrial Relations Disputes. The petition challenged the interpretation of Article 82, which previously required employees to file termination-related lawsuits within one year from the date they received or were notified of their termination decision. The Petitioner argued that this interpretation failed to reflect procedural realities. Employees are required to be engaged in mandatory bipartite negotiations or mediation efforts before escalating to court, but these processes may consume a substantial portion of the one-year filing window. As a result, the petitioner requested for the limitation period to be extended to three years.

The Court declined to extend the time limit, but accepted the core concern. It declared Article 82 conditionally unconstitutional, clarifying that the one-year limitation period must be counted from the date on which mediation or conciliation efforts fail, rather than from the initial termination notice. In effect, the decision repositions the clock to start after mediation efforts are exhausted, thereby preventing the limitation period from expiring while statutory dispute-resolution procedures are still underway.

However, this ruling, while addressing procedural fairness, also introduces potential uncertainty. For instance, an employee who initially does not contest the termination could raise a dispute years later, on the basis that mediation was never conducted. To mitigate the risk of long-term claims, employers must ensure that mediation is carried out and supported by clear documentation.

Updated Minimum Pension Age under Indonesian Social Security Program

The pension age in Indonesia is generally agreed upon between the employer and employees through the employment agreement, company regulation, or a collective labour agreement. Employers may also use the minimum age for receiving pension benefits under the Indonesian social security program as a benchmark when setting internal policies.

Since 1 January 2022, the minimum age for receiving pension benefits under the Indonesian social security program has been set at 58. This age will increase by one year every three years until it reaches a maximum of 65, applying equally to men and women.

As of 1 January 2025, this minimum age has been updated to 59 years.

Updated Indonesian Visa Classifications

The Indonesian Ministry of Immigration and Correctional Affairs has issued Ministerial Decree No. M.IP-08.GR.01.01/2025, introducing a new, simplified visa classification system. The following are the newly introduced visa categories under this streamlined framework:

1. **Work Visas**
 - (a) Reduced from 31 types to six.
 - (b) **E23**: Consolidates 20 previous visa indexes for foreign experts employed by companies.
 - (c) New indexes **E23U** and **E23V** introduced for non-corporate sponsors (e.g., non-governmental organisations (NGOs), institutions).
2. **Visit Visas**
 - (a) **A1** visa index now consolidates various short-term activities – such as tourism, business, and medical treatment – into a single category, which previously existed as separate classifications.
3. **Special Activity Visa**
 - (a) **C7**: For art, culture, music, or skill-based activities enabling foreigners to perform or demonstrate expertise.
4. **Investment Visas**
 - (a) **E28F**: For foreign investors in Capital City of Nusantara (*Ibu Kota Nusantara*).

- (b) **E28G**: For representatives of foreign parent companies assigned to Indonesian branches.

Existing visas issued under previous classifications remain valid until their expiry.

New Immigration Oversight and Administrative Actions Regulation

On 7 February 2025, the Indonesian Ministry of Immigration and Correctional Affairs issued Regulation No. 2 of 2025 on Immigration Oversight and Administrative Immigration Actions ("**Regulation**"), replacing previous regulations on foreigner monitoring and immigration procedures.

This Regulation aims to strengthen immigration supervision over Indonesian citizens, foreign nationals, and guarantors, covering both administrative and field monitoring. Oversight applies at entry/exit points, during visa and stay permit processes, and while individuals are in Indonesia or abroad.

Immigration authorities will utilise biometric identification, digital forensics, and data analytics tools. All findings requiring attention will be recorded in the *Simkim* (Immigration Management Information System) database, accessible to relevant government agencies under formal agreements.

Immigration officers are empowered to impose sanctions outside judicial processes, including:

1. Restriction, change, or cancellation of stay permits;
2. Prohibition from certain areas;
3. Mandatory residence in designated locations;
4. Cost recovery charges; and
5. Deportation, which now must be accompanied by inclusion in the blacklist, except for humanitarian or welfare considerations.

Although the Regulation does not modify work-permit requirements, the introduction of enhanced monitoring tools may signal a shift toward stricter enforcement of existing immigration rules. In practice, foreign nationals may be subject to closer scrutiny regarding the accuracy of their immigration status, permitted activities, and travel patterns, particularly when engaged in work across multiple sites or involving frequent cross-border movement.

Foreigners may therefore wish to exercise greater caution and ensure that all underlying permits and documentation remain fully compliant. For employers,

especially those relying on expatriate talent, the strengthened oversight framework may translate into additional administrative touchpoints, including more detailed verification of stay-permit conditions and entry/exit records. Companies may wish to review their onboarding, mobility, and travel-tracking procedures to mitigate operational risks and to ensure that all foreign personnel are properly documented before undertaking any work-related activities.

Projecting Into: 2026

Looking ahead, we anticipate the introduction of a new Labour Law, with input sought from employer representatives and labour unions. New regulations on the outsourcing of work remain under discussion.

We also expect termination-related matters to take centre-stage in employment disputes, particularly arising from redundancy and organisational restructuring.



Draft of New Labour Law

Indonesia is expected to introduce a new Labour Law in 2026, following the recent announcement from the House of Representatives ("**DPR RI**") establishing a dedicated drafting team composed of DPR RI members, government officials, employer representatives, and labour unions. The initiative highlights a stronger commitment to broaden public participation and enhance transparency in the drafting and deliberation process.

Although the legislative timeline remains fluid, this development signals that the process towards a new labour law is more formalised and moving in a clearer direction.

Anticipated New Outsourcing Regulations

The regulatory landscape for outsourcing of work in Indonesia is expected to change in 2026. The discussions remain ongoing, and no official draft or timeline has been shared by the government to date.

Litigation Outlook

Termination-related matters are expected to remain the dominant focus of Indonesian employment law in 2026, particularly those arising from redundancy and organisational restructuring. As businesses continue to optimise workforce structures to align with economic conditions and operational efficiencies, disputes relating to the grounds, procedures, and compensation for termination are likely to persist.

Since restructuring is becoming a common feature across various industries, litigation and negotiations before the Industrial Relation Courts are anticipated to remain heavily driven by challenges to redundancy-based terminations.

Malaysia

Looking Back: 2025

2025 saw some notable developments in Malaysia's employment law landscape. Long-standing differences in employee benefits were addressed, enforcement of compliance requirements were activated, and the appellate courts delivered an important ruling on the power of the Industrial Court (the tribunal that determines employment disputes).

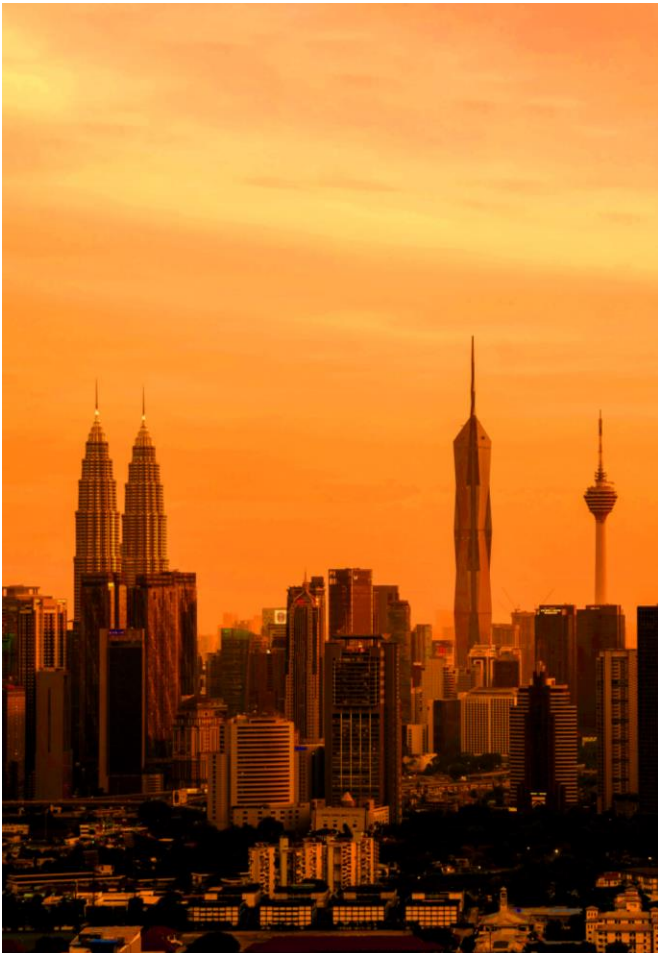
Peninsular Malaysia (West Malaysia) and the states of Sabah and Sarawak (East Malaysia) had always operated under different employment statutes, each providing varying levels of minimum benefits and protections for employees. The Government had repeatedly indicated its intention to standardise these frameworks to ensure uniformity across the country.

Effective 1 May 2025, employment statutes in Sabah and Sarawak were harmonised with those in Peninsular Malaysia, finally removing the long-standing disparities between the two. This standardisation ensures that employees throughout Malaysia now enjoy consistent minimum statutory benefits and protections regardless of geographical location.

Continuing the Government's efforts to standardise employee rights, new laws were passed in 2025 to extend mandatory Employees' Provident Fund ("EPF") contributions to foreign workers. This marks a major shift in Malaysia's social protection policy as previously, compulsory EPF contributions applied only to Malaysian citizens. The reform ensures that foreign employees can now benefit from retirement savings with the EPF.

On the enforcement aspect, although the requirement for employment contracts to be stamped under the Stamp Act 1949 is not new, it was never enforced in practice. In 2025, the Government made a surprise regulatory move by actively enforcing this requirement. Employers were given a grace period to ensure that the necessary employment contracts are duly stamped. This enforcement initiative significantly increases compliance obligations and may result in penalties for unstamped or late-stamped employment contracts moving forward.

*From a judicial standpoint, 2025 also saw an important appellate decision which affirms a fundamental principle of Malaysian company law – the doctrine of separate legal entities. In *Hubline Berhad v. Intan Wazlin Ab Wahab & 39 Ors* [2025] CLJU 2677, the Court of Appeal held that each company within a corporate group remains a separate legal entity, with its own rights and liabilities, and the Industrial Court cannot pierce the corporate veil to join or substitute related entities merely to allow employees to enforce Industrial Court awards against companies who were not the actual employer. The ruling reinforces the boundaries of the*



Industrial Court in that, while it has the statutory power to decide cases based on fairness and equity instead of technicalities, it cannot ignore established legal principles.

Summaries of the key developments are provided below.

Harmonisation of Labour Laws Between Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia

The Employment Act 1955 ("**Employment Act**") applies to Peninsular Malaysia, while the Labour Ordinance (Sabah Cap. 67) and the Labour Ordinance (Sarawak Cap. 76) (collectively, the "**Labour Ordinances**") apply to Sabah and Sarawak respectively.

Although all three statutes set out minimum benefits and protections for employees in their geographical locations, the Employment Act historically provided more favourable entitlements, particularly in areas such as maternity and paternity leave, working hours, protection from harassment and discrimination, and access to flexible working arrangements. This resulted in long-standing disparities in statutory protections between employees in Peninsular Malaysia and those in Sabah and Sarawak.

Effective 1 May 2025, these disparities were removed by way of amendments to the Labour Ordinances. This ensures that employees nationwide now benefit from a uniform baseline of statutory rights.

While the Employment Act and the Labour Ordinances continue to operate as separate pieces of legislation, the minimum benefits and protections they confer have now been harmonised, bringing long-awaited consistency to Malaysia's labour law framework.

Mandatory EPF Contributions Extended to Foreign Employees

For Malaysian employees, the standard EPF contribution is 11% of monthly salary for the employee, with an employer contribution of 12–13%, depending on the employee's monthly salary.

Effective 1 October 2025, EPF contributions became mandatory for foreign employees and their employers at a rate of 2% each. Previously, EPF participation for foreign employees was voluntary.

This expansion applies to all non-Malaysian employees working in Malaysia, excluding domestic servants, who hold a valid passport and an employment pass issued by the Immigration Department of Malaysia.

The current contribution rates can be summarised as below.

Employee Type	Employee Contribution	Employer Contribution
Malaysian earning more than RM5,000 a month	11% of monthly salary	12% of monthly salary
Malaysian earning RM5,000 a month or below	11% of monthly salary	13% of monthly salary
Foreign Employee	2% of monthly salary	2% of monthly salary

Enforcement of Stamping Requirement for Employment Contracts

Under the Stamp Act 1949, employment contracts in Malaysia are subject to a nominal stamp duty of RM10. In practice, however, employment contracts have rarely been stamped, and enforcement of this requirement had historically been dormant.

In August 2025, the Government began active enforcement of the stamping requirement, giving employers a grace period to regularise their contracts before penalties apply. This development introduces new administrative and compliance obligations for companies which also comes at a cost, particularly those with a large workforce.

The transitional framework for compliance is as follows:

1. **Contracts signed before 1 January 2025:** No stamping is required.
2. **Contracts signed from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025:** Stamping is required, but any penalty for late stamping will be waived.
3. **Contracts signed from 1 January 2026 onward:** Stamping is required, and no waiver will be granted for late stamping.

This phased approach allows employers time to update their employment documentation while ensuring full compliance from 2026 onward.

Key Case Law: *Hubline Berhad v. Intan Wazlin Ab Wahab & 39 Ors* [2025] CLJU 2677

In instances where an employee faces difficulty or has doubts in enforcing an Industrial Court award against his/her employer, the employee may apply for an order of the Industrial Court to have a related company join the proceedings, potentially exposing the related entity to enforcement. The Industrial Court has statutory authority to add parties under the Industrial Relations Act 1967, and it may consider the appropriateness of such joinder based on equity and fairness, rather than strict legal technicalities. Over time, this practice has occasionally led to a disregard for the doctrine of separate legal entities.

In *Hubline Berhad v. Intan Wazlin Ab Wahab & 39 Ors* 2025 CLJU 2677, the Court of Appeal reaffirmed that each company within a corporate group is a separate legal entity, with its own rights and liabilities. The Court held that the Industrial Court cannot pierce the corporate veil, nor join or substitute related entities, merely to avoid a "paper judgment" where the actual employer is insolvent or defunct.

The ruling makes clear that the Industrial Court's equitable powers cannot override fundamental company law principles, and entities within a corporate group cannot be added to proceedings simply to facilitate enforcement of awards against non-employers. This decision restores clarity on the limits of the Industrial Court's jurisdiction and highlights that any expansion of liability within corporate groups must come through legislative reform, not judicial reinterpretation. As a Court of Appeal ruling, it is binding on all Industrial Courts in Malaysia.

Projecting Into: 2026

Following the harmonisation of labour laws in Malaysia and the expansion of social protection for foreign employees in 2025, the same theme is expected to continue into 2026, beginning with the extension of protections to gig workers.

*The Gig Workers Bill 2025 ("**Gig Workers Bill**") is anticipated to be enacted, formally granting gig workers rights and protections that they presently lack, including clearer employment recognition, dispute resolution mechanisms, and access to social security benefits.*

In addition, the 13th Malaysia Plan (2026–2030) places a strong emphasis on labour industry reforms with the aim of boosting local workforce participation, reducing reliance on foreign employees, improving work-life balance, and promoting flexible work arrangements. In line with these objectives, further employment law developments are expected to be announced in 2026, including measures to support workforce participation, enhance statutory protections, and modernise labour regulations to align with modern working arrangements.

Gig Workers Bill Expected to be Enacted in 2026

The Gig Workers Bill will provide statutory protections for around one million gig workers in Malaysia. Although not yet in force, platform providers and contracting entities should begin preparing for compliance.

Gig workers will become entitled to:

1. clear information on terms of service and payment before accepting work;
2. access to dispute resolution mechanisms;
3. freedom to engage with other parties;
4. consultation on changes affecting their assignments;
5. protection from discrimination or unjust termination.
6. timely payment with optional earning statements; and
7. participation in or formation of gig worker associations.

"Platform providers" such as digital intermediaries must register gig workers under the self-employment social security scheme and make mandatory contributions to the Social Security Organisation.

The Gig Workers Bill also establishes the Gig Workers Tribunal, offering a cost-effective alternative to court proceedings. The Workers Tribunal can issue legally binding awards, including enforcing service agreements, awarding compensation, and recovering earnings. Hearings are public, and awards are generally issued within 30 days. Non-compliance can result in fines up to RM50,000 and/or imprisonment for up to two years.



Myanmar

Looking Back: 2025

In 2025, Myanmar's employment and labour regulatory environment underwent notable changes aimed at strengthening worker protection, modernising administrative systems, and improving alignment with international labour standards. The developments reflect the government's continued emphasis on social security expansion, workforce development, wage administration, and enhanced regulatory oversight.



Summaries of the key developments are provided below.

Social Security Reforms and Expansion of Coverage

During Meeting No. (1/2025) of the National-Level Social Security Committee ("**Committee**") chaired by the Union Minister for Labour on 23 May 2025, the Committee approved a series of reforms under the Social Security Law (2012) to modernise governance and expand coverage.

Key reforms included:

1. Expansion of the Social Security Scheme to 126 townships, now covering approximately 1.29 million insured workers;
2. Enhanced benefits, including improved healthcare services and strengthened financial support mechanisms;
3. Operational alignment with international good-governance standards, particularly regarding administrative transparency, digitalisation, and system interoperability;
4. Implementation of the Provider Purchaser Split ("**PPS**") model, allowing insured workers access to private hospitals and clinics under revised reimbursement schemes designed to reduce out-of-pocket medical expenses;
5. Approval of special benefits, such as:
 - (a) A 40% family support benefit for insured persons affected by the Mandalay earthquake; and
 - (b) Education grants for children and dependents of insured workers; and
6. Renewed cooperation with Malaysia's Pertubuhan Keselamatan Sosial (PERKESO), reinforcing bilateral protection and benefit portability for Myanmar migrant workers abroad.

These reforms signify a continued move toward a more inclusive, efficient, and professionally administered national social protection system.

Revised Minimum Wage and Daily Allowance Framework

Notification No. 1/2025, issued on 14 October 2025 (and retroactively effective from 1 October 2025), introduced a revised minimum daily wage and allowance regime applicable to all employers covered under the Minimum Wage Law.

Key features include:

1. The total minimum daily wage for an eight-hour workday is set at MMK 7,800, comprising:
 - (a) Base wage: MMK 4,800; and
 - (b) Allowances: MMK 3,000.
2. Updated procedural guidance for:
 - (a) Employer reporting obligations;
 - (b) Documentation and eligibility requirements; and
 - (c) Transition and compliance mechanisms.
3. Alignment of wage-related provisions with prevailing economic conditions and operational realities.

The Notification repeals the 2024 daily allowance framework, streamlining the wage and allowance structure. It forms part of the government's broader efforts to enhance wage transparency, ease administrative burdens, and ensure statutory entitlements are consistently applied.

Additionally, throughout 2025, the Ministry of Labour ("MOL") continued releasing administrative circulars, employment-agency lists, contract-registration guidance, and compliance notices through the official Department of Labour ("DOL") channels, highlighting the importance of regular monitoring by employers.

Labour Migration & Overseas Employment Oversight

In 2025, MOL strengthened oversight of overseas employment through tighter compliance rules, financial penalties, and new deployment controls. On 18 May 2025, MOL warned that 28 licensed agencies risked licence revocation for failing to pay deployment-based taxes. Earlier, on 13 March 2025, 16 agencies were

fined MMK 100,000 per month and suspended for non-submission of required reports.

Beginning early 2025, the Ministry introduced monthly deployment quotas for licensed agencies following a mid-February suspension of overseas departures affecting many male workers aged 18–35. Although Overseas Worker Identification Card ("OWIC") issuance resumed on 11 March 2025, stricter exit procedures were imposed, including a five-day advance approval requirement and mandatory posting on a "safe migration" channel.

By 22 May 2025, agencies reported that male workers aged 18–35 with valid employment contracts were being denied exit permission. Continued delays, unclear age restrictions, and inconsistent OWIC processing prompted the Myanmar Overseas Employment Agencies Association (MOEAA) to submit an appeal in April 2025. Overall, 2025 saw tighter migration controls, heavier administrative burdens, and heightened uncertainty for both agencies and workers.

Workplace Inspections, Occupational Safety & Enforcement

Labour authorities increased workplace inspections throughout 2025 to improve compliance with wage, safety, and employment standards. A May 2025 report highlighted intensified checks at factories and departments, though weak infrastructure and limited enforcement capacity continued to hinder effectiveness.

On 30 August 2025, workers submitted 11 safety and cost-of-living demands, but initial negotiations with the Township Joint Committee ended without agreement. Many workplace grievances remained unresolved, reflecting ongoing enforcement challenges despite increased inspection activity.

Invocation of ILO Article 33

In June 2025, the International Labour Organization ("ILO") invoked Article 33, its strongest enforcement mechanism, against Myanmar. This followed from a commission of inquiry that found "grave and persistent" violations of workers' and human rights in the country, including forced labour and suppression of freedom of association. The move has triggered international calls for member states to take action, including severing commercial and financial ties that perpetuate these abuses, reflecting major international pressure on labour-rights compliance in Myanmar.

This development signals a significant watershed: labour rights enforcement in Myanmar is no longer only a domestic or regulatory issue, but a matter of international legal and political consequence. It marks an escalation in scrutiny and places additional reputational and compliance risks on enterprises, both domestic and foreign, operating in or with Myanmar.

Projecting Into: 2026

Looking ahead to 2026, Myanmar's employment and labour landscape is expected to be shaped by several regulatory trends that build on the developments observed throughout 2025. We anticipate that there will be heightened regulatory vigilance over various aspects of Myanmar employment law.



Tighter Oversight of Labour Migration, Enhancement of OWIC Process

Tighter oversight of overseas labour migration is anticipated to continue, following MOL's enforcement actions against non-compliant overseas employment agencies in 2025. Agencies should expect more frequent audits, stricter reporting obligations, closer scrutiny of tax and deployment submissions, and continued use of quota-based deployment controls.

Parallel to this, the OWIC process is likely to undergo further formalisation and security enhancement. After repeated suspensions and administrative bottlenecks in 2025, authorities have indicated a move toward more structured and secure processing, including stronger document-verification standards, digital tracking mechanisms, and heightened fraud-prevention measures – developments that may lengthen processing timelines but create a more controlled migration framework.

Wage Policies in 2026

In relation to domestic employment regulation, wage policy in 2026 is expected to focus primarily on consolidating the allowance-based minimum wage structure introduced in October 2025, rather than on major headline increases. Incremental refinements may be introduced to maintain alignment with inflation and economic conditions, along with updated guidance to ensure consistent implementation across sectors.

Greater Regulation of Workplace Safety Standards

Workplace inspections and occupational-safety enforcement are also expected to remain a priority in 2026. Government inspections increased noticeably in 2025, and although resource constraints may continue to limit uniform enforcement, targeted inspections—particularly in high-risk and large-scale industrial sectors—are likely to intensify. Employers should therefore anticipate a firmer regulatory stance on wage compliance, workplace safety standards, documentation, and contract registration.

Response to Invocation of ILO Article: Heightened Accountability and Regulatory Vigilance

Finally, the June 2025 ILO Article 33 invocation places Myanmar under unprecedented international scrutiny, signalling major consequences for 2026.

Authorities may tighten labour enforcement, introduce stricter workplace safety and anti-forced-labour measures, and formalise procedures for overseas employment. Employers and agencies will face higher compliance and reputational risks, requiring stronger internal policies, contract oversight, and grievance mechanisms. International pressure may also increase the role of tripartite engagement and alignment with ILO conventions.

Overall, labour rights and compliance in Myanmar are likely to be closely monitored globally, making 2026 a year of heightened accountability and regulatory vigilance.

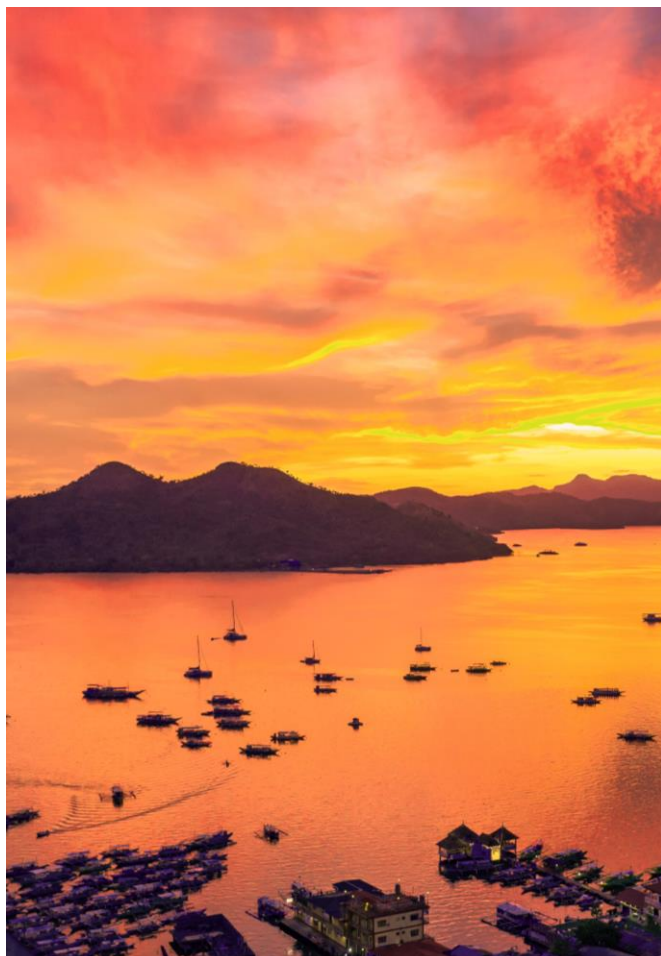
Philippines

Looking Back: 2025

2025 has seen several significant developments in enhancing employability, protecting employees' rights, and raising the minimum wage across various regions in the Philippines.

Following the enactment of the Enterprise-Based Education and Training Framework Act in 2024, the government is continuously undertaking enhancements to its training programs and constructing additional technical vocational education and training innovation centres.

There has been a focus on strengthening safety and health in the workplace, underscoring non-discrimination against women in terms of payment of compensation, and promoting workers' right to freedom of association and self-organisation.



The government issued new rules and regulations governing employment of foreign nationals. An executive order authorising the issuance of a new type of visa to non-immigrant foreign workers who intend to temporarily stay in the Philippines for remote work was also signed.

Summaries of the key developments are provided below.

Employee Rights and Representation – Rules and Regulations of the Magna Carta of Seafarers

The Implementing Rules and Regulations ("**IRR**") of the Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers took effect on 25 January 2025. The IRR outlines seafarers' rights to information, financial security system, protection against all forms of harassment and bullying, safe passage and travel, consultation, fair medical assessment, and fair treatment in the event of a maritime accident, as well as the right against discrimination and the dispute resolution and onshore grievance machinery.

Occupational Health and Safety – Revised Safety and Health Regulations

Department Order No. 252-25, or the Revised IRR of the Occupational Safety and Health Standards Law ("**Revised IRR**"), was issued by the Department of Labor and Employment ("**DOLE**") on 29 April 2025 and took effect on 16 May 2025. The Revised IRR aims to implement inclusive and dynamic occupational safety and health regulations that adapt to evolving industry risks, emerging technologies, and global best practices.

The Revised IRR expressly covers co-working spaces, contracting arrangements, and other analogous arrangements. In contrast, the previous IRR, while broad enough to cover all private establishments, did not expressly recognise modern work arrangements. The Revised IRR imposes higher penalties for repeated violations of safety and health standards, updates competency requirements for safety officers, and requires periodic health and safety program updates.

Discrimination in the Workplace – Highlighting the Prohibition on Gender Discrimination

On 21 April 2025, DOLE issued the new IRR of Article 133 of the Labor Code of the Philippines on the prohibition on discrimination against women with respect to the terms and conditions of employment. While there are existing laws and regulations that seek to ensure gender equality within the workplace, the IRR clearly defines "equal remuneration for work of equal value" as an additional safeguard to eliminate gender-based pay disparities.

Employee Rights and Representation – Strengthening Workers' Right to Freedom of Association and Self-Organisation

On 19 September 2025, the President signed Executive Order No. 97 which adopted the Omnibus Guidelines on the Exercise of Freedom of Association and Civil Liberties ("**Omnibus Guidelines**"). The Executive Order directed all government agencies to implement the Omnibus Guidelines following their mandates under existing laws. This legal development strengthens the Omnibus Guidelines which states the respective responsibilities of various government agencies, as well as workers and employers in the private sector, and their conduct towards promoting, respecting, and protecting workers' exercise of freedom of association, right to self-organisation and collective bargaining.

Wages – Increase in Minimum Wage Rates

The Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Boards ("**RTWPBs**") across different regions in the Philippines increased the minimum wage rates for domestic workers, agricultural workers, and non-agricultural workers in different regions.

Employee Dispute Resolution – Procedures and Mechanisms for Dispute Resolution

On 15 August 2025, DOLE issued the Revised Procedural Guidelines in the Conduct of Voluntary Arbitration Proceedings ("**Revised Procedural Guidelines**") which shall govern the proceedings before a Voluntary Arbitrator or Panel of Voluntary Arbitrators in a labour dispute.

The Revised Procedural Guidelines aim to further promote voluntary arbitration as a non-adversarial mode of dispute resolution by adding new modes of submission to voluntary arbitration and enabling

arbitration proceedings to be held through online platforms. The Revised Procedural Guidelines also incorporate the reforms introduced by the Magna Carta for Filipino Seafarers and clarify the jurisdictional parameters for voluntary arbitrators.

Employment – Launch of the First Labour Market Plan

Following the passage of the *Trabaho Para sa Bayan* ("**TPB**") Act, the Philippines launched the ten-year TPB Plan 2025-2034, which outlines strategic reforms for job creation, generation of quality jobs, workforce development, and labour market transformation.

Employment of Foreign Nationals – Revised Regulations on the Employment of Foreign Workers

DOLE issued Department Order No. 248 or the new IRR on the employment of foreign nationals, which provides that applications for alien employment permits ("**AEP**") should be filed within 15 calendar days from the execution of the contract of employment between the employer and the foreign national or the issuance of an appointment by the former to the latter. This departs from the previous IRR, which required the filing of the application for AEP within ten working days from the signing of the contract or prior to the commencement of employment.

In addition, the new IRR now requires the submission of a Skills Development Program or Understudy Training Program for entities that are (i) registered under the Foreign Investment Act; (ii) operating public utilities or critical infrastructure; or (iii) identified as strategic investments. This is to ensure the effective transfer of technology or skills to the local workforce.

Visas – Digital Nomad Visa ("**DNV**")

On 24 April 2025, the President signed Executive Order No. 86 which authorises the Department of Foreign Affairs ("**DFA**") to issue DNVs to non-immigrant foreign workers who desire to stay in the Philippines for a temporary period for the purpose of working remotely using digital technologies and whose clients or employers are located outside the country. As of date, the issuance of the DNV is not yet implemented as DFA, in coordination with the relevant government agencies, has yet to issue the IRR governing the DNV.

Projecting Into: 2026

The Philippine employment law landscape is poised to remain highly dynamic in 2026, as policymakers, regulators, and courts continue to navigate the structural changes brought about by digitisation, emerging work arrangements, and renewed emphasis on worker protection.

The year ahead will be shaped by stronger safeguards for workers in evolving work models, heightened scrutiny of contracting and labour-only arrangements, and an increasingly rigorous regulatory focus on data governance and the use of artificial intelligence ("AI") in the workplace.



Employment Relations and Labour Standards – Security of Tenure and Renewed Regulation of Contractualisation

Legislative and regulatory efforts to curb labour-only contracting are expected to gain renewed traction in 2026. The proposed Security of Tenure ("**SOT**") bill – intended to tighten restrictions on "labor-only" contracting and address end-of-contract ("**ENDO**") schemes – was previously approved by Congress but vetoed by the President in 2019 due to concerns about its potential impact on business flexibility. Following the veto, lawmakers refiled the bill in the House of Representatives, aiming to recalibrate its provisions to better balance worker protection with operational and market realities for employers.

The SOT bill is still pending, with ongoing discussions among labour and legal groups regarding amendments to the Labor Code to address contractualisation and ENDO.

Employment Relations and Social Protection – Gig Worker Regulation

The Philippines is in the process of regulating gig and freelance workers, primarily through proposed legislation such as Senate Bill No. 1373. The measure seeks to formalise the rights and obligations of freelancers by requiring written contracts before any work begins and by mandating transparency on essential terms including compensation, scope and duration of services, timelines, and conditions for breach or termination.

These reforms reflect the government's broader effort to close protection gaps in non-traditional work arrangements and ensure that gig workers receive fair, predictable, and enforceable working conditions.

Digital Governance – Data Privacy, Workplace Monitoring and AI in Human Resources

By 2026, the Philippines is expected to place stronger emphasis on human oversight of AI-driven decisions and stricter adherence to data-minimisation principles, as employers expand their use of digital tools for workplace management. The National Privacy

Commission ("**NPC**") continues to underscore the need for transparency when using closed-circuit television, GPS trackers, productivity-monitoring software, and similar surveillance technologies. NPC is also anticipated to issue more targeted guidance on employee monitoring, remote-work surveillance, and automated decision-making in hiring and disciplinary processes.

Labour and Socioeconomic Policy – Institutionalisation of the National Employment Master Plan

The institutionalisation of the National Employment Master Plan for 2026 formalises the integration of the TPB Plan 2025–2034 into government operations. Key to this institutionalisation is the alignment of the 2026 national budget with the TPB Plan's strategic priorities, funding programmes in youth employment, agricultural development, and employment resilience. By securing both coordination and resources, the plan ensures a sustainable and strategic approach to generating inclusive employment across the Philippines.

Migrant Workers Law – Ongoing Reforms in OFW Standard Employment Contracts and Compensation

In 2026, the Philippines is advancing reforms in Overseas Filipino Workers' ("**OFWs**") standard employment contracts and compensation to enhance protection, transparency, and fairness. The Department of Migrant Workers underscores the shared commitment of the government, private sectors, and OFW groups to uphold OFWs' rights and welfare throughout every stage of their labour migration journey.

Among the issues raised were the need to review and update standard contracts for care and domestic workers and the provision of comprehensive full-cycle reintegration programs for returning OFWs. By aligning contracts with international labour standards and strengthening compliance and reintegration mechanisms, the government seeks to safeguard OFWs' welfare, ensure equitable compensation abroad, and support their long-term well-being.

Singapore

Looking Back: 2025

There have been several key developments in Singapore's employment law landscape in 2025.

*The Workplace Fairness Bill ("**WF Bill**") and the Workplace Fairness (Dispute Resolution) Bill ("**DR Bill**") were recently passed, laying the groundwork for the coming into effect of the landmark Workplace Fairness Act 2025 ("**WFA**").*

*For the platform economy, the Platform Workers Act 2024 ("**PWA**") has taken effect. The Government continues to keep its finger on the pulse, with the Platform Workers Trilateral Group releasing 10 recommendations to safeguard the livelihoods, safety and well-being of platform workers.*



In relation to salaries, previously announced increases to the qualifying salaries for Employment Pass and S Pass holders have come into force. The Government has also accepted recommendations for a three-year schedule of wage increases for the retail sector.

*To support employees, the compensation limits for work injuries under the Work Injury Compensation Act 2019 ("**WICA**") have been increased. The new Shared Parental Leave ("**SPL**") scheme has also come into effect, alongside an increase of paternity leave.*

Summaries of the key developments are provided below.

Groundwork Laid for Landmark Workplace Fairness Act

On 8 January 2025, the WF Bill was passed in Parliament to (i) strengthen protections against discrimination; (ii) provide for grievance-handling processes; and (iii) provide calibrated enforcement levers to deal with unfair employment practices. It was followed by a public consultation on a draft version of the DR Bill, which sets out the statutory framework for how individuals may lodge and resolve workplace discrimination claims. The DR Bill was passed in Parliament on 4 November 2025.

Combined, the two Bills will form the WFA to establish Singapore's first unified framework addressing workplace discrimination. The WFA is expected to come into effect in end-2027.

Click [here](#) to read our January 2025 Legal Update and [here](#) for our November 2025 Legal Update for more information.

Platform Workers Act Comes into Force; Trilateral Group Releases 10 Recommendations

On 1 January 2025, the PWA came into force. It:

1. imposes several regulatory requirements on platform operators, such as the obligation to provide earnings slips to their platform workers ("PWs");
2. requires platform operators to provide work injury compensation to PWs, as well as imposes a duty to take necessary, reasonably practical measures to ensure the safety and health of their PWs;
3. requires platform operators to provide Central Provident Fund ("CPF") contributions; and
4. empowers platform work associations to collectively represent PWs.

On 11 September 2025, the Platform Workers Trilateral Group released 10 recommendations to safeguard PWs' livelihoods, safety and well-being. The recommendations address two key areas of concerns:

1. Fairer and safer payment and incentive schemes, with a view to improving transparency and to avoid PWs working long hours in pursuit of uncertain earnings; and
2. Unauthorised activities (such as illegal point-to-point rides and foreigners using local PWs' platform accounts), specifically to stamp out illegal undercutting of local PWs.

Click [here](#) to read our December 2024 NewsBytes article and [here](#) to read our September 2025 NewsBytes article for more information.

Increase in Employment Pass, S Pass Qualifying Salaries

The Employment Pass ("EP") qualifying salary is benchmarked to the wages of the top one-third of local PMETs (Professionals, Managers, Executives, Technicians).

To keep pace with the rise in local PMET wages, and to ensure a level playing field for local employees, the EP qualifying salary has been [increased](#) as of 1 January 2025 for new EP applications. The new qualifying salary will apply to renewal EP applications from 1 January 2026.

Similarly, the S Pass qualifying salary was [increased](#) for new applications from 1 September 2025, and will increase for renewal applications from 1 September 2026. The S Pass Basic / Tier 1 levy rate has also been [raised](#) from S\$550 to S\$650 as of 1 September 2025.

Click [here](#) to read the "Factsheet on Foreign Workforce Policy Announcements at COS 2025" published by the Ministry of Manpower ("MOM").

Workplace Safety and Health ("WSH"): Higher Compensation Limits Effective from 1 November 2025, New Guidelines on Preparing for Adverse Weather

The WICA protects local and foreign employees who sustain work-related injuries or diseases, subject to certain exceptions. The WICA allows them to make claims in a more efficient and low-cost manner, as they do not have to file a common law civil suit, and provides for compensation regardless of which party was at fault.

From 1 November 2025, compensation limits under the WICA [have been increased](#) to keep pace with wage growth and rising healthcare costs.

Relatedly, MOM and the WSH Council [introduced](#) the [Workplace Safety and Health Guidelines on Preparing for Adverse Weather](#) ("Guidelines") on 4 April 2025. The Guidelines provide recommendations for managing workplace safety risks during strong winds, floods, lightning, heat stress and haze, enabling employers to run their operations safely with reduced downtime.

Government Accepts Recommendations on Retail Progressive Wage Model for Three-Year Schedule of Wage Increases

On 11 August 2025, MOM announced that the Government has accepted recommendations on the Retail Progressive Wage Model ("PWM"). The recommendations comprised:

1. a three-year schedule of sustained PWM wage increases from 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2028; and
2. an expanded list of training modules and Institute of Higher Learning (IHL) qualifications that can meet the minimum training requirements.

Click [here](#) to read our August 2025 NewsBytes article for more information.

Shared Parental Leave Scheme and Enhanced Paternity Leave Take Effect

On 1 April 2025, the new SPL scheme, as well as the enhanced Government-Paid Paternity Leave ("paternity leave"), came into effect.

1. **SPL scheme:** The parents will be eligible for a total of six weeks of SPL, to be shared between them.
2. **Paternity leave:** Fathers will be eligible for four weeks of paternity leave, an increase from the two weeks provided previously.

Both leave schemes apply where a child's date of birth, estimated delivery date, or date of formal intent to adopt (collectively, "**Relevant Date**") is on or after 1 April 2025.

Click [here](#) to read our December 2024 Legal Update for more information.

Case Law Developments: Protecting Your Confidential Information

The protection of confidential information continues to be a thorny issue for employers. Employees are usually provided access to documents which contain information that is confidential, sensitive, and/or proprietary to the employer.

How then should employers protect their confidential information? From an employment law perspective, there should be sufficient contractual protection over the definition, access, retention and use of confidential information in the employment agreement.

The above issues and practical concerns were brought to the forefront in the Singapore High Court case of *Hayate Partners Pte Ltd v Rajan Sunil Kumar* [2025] SGHC 41. The claimant in the matter was a financial institution, and the defendant was its ex-employee who had accessed and downloaded a large number of its files and had retained them after the termination of his employment. The claimant successfully claimed against the defendant for breaches of both his contractual and equitable confidentiality obligations.

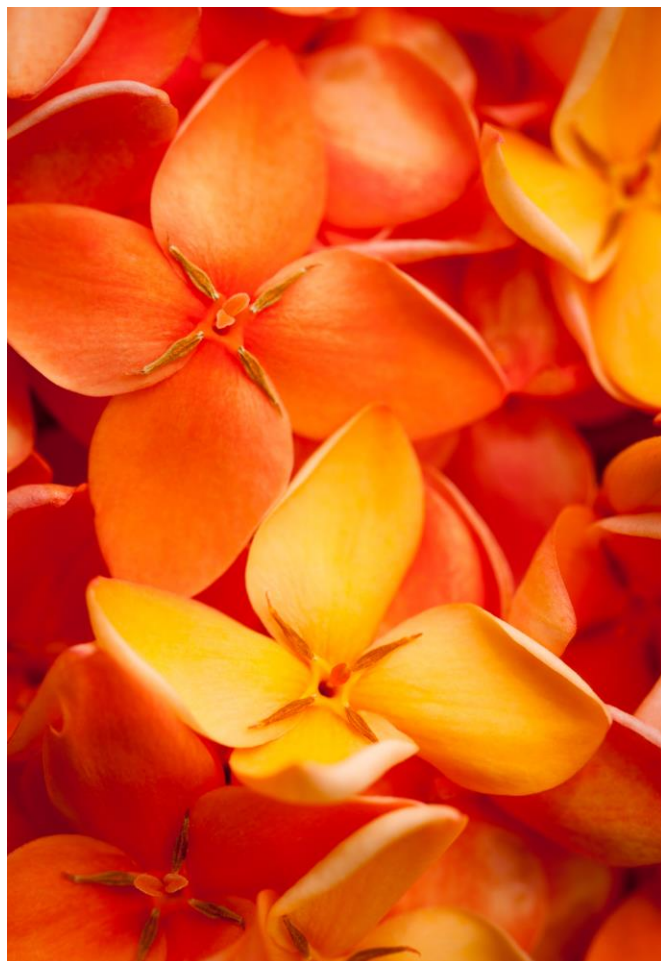
Click [here](#) to read our July 2025 Legal Update for more information.

Projecting Into: 2026

In 2026, preparations to address Singapore's ageing population will be implemented. The retirement and re-employment ages will be raised, coupled with a further increase to the CPF Ordinary Wage ("OW") ceiling and CPF contributions for older employees.

The second stage of the SPL scheme will kick in, providing an increase in SPL for new parents. Employees in the security sector will also benefit from a three-year schedule of sustained wage increases.

We also expect to see the release of recommendations for the review of the Employment Act 1968 ("EA"), being Singapore's primary labour legislation.



Raising of Retirement and Re-employment Ages

Under the Retirement and Re-employment Act 1993, eligible senior workers are protected from dismissal on the ground of age until they reach the prevailing statutory retirement age. Employers are required to offer re-employment to eligible senior workers up until they reach the prevailing statutory maximum re-employment age.

From 1 July 2026, the statutory retirement age will be [raised](#) to 64, up from 63. This applies to those born on or after 1 July 1963.

Similarly, from 1 July 2026, the statutory maximum re-employment age will be [raised](#) to 69, up from 68. This applies to those born on or after 1 July 1958.

Increase in CPF Ordinary Wage Ceiling, CPF Contribution Rates for Older Employees from 1 January 2026

From 1 January 2026, the CPF OW ceiling will be [raised](#) from S\$7,400 to S\$8,000. The ceiling limits the amount of OW that attract CPF contributions in a calendar month for all employees.

This increase is the fourth and last in a series of increases announced in Budget 2023, with the first increase starting from 1 September 2023.

For employees aged 55 to 65, CPF contribution rates will also be raised by 1.5% for wages earned from 1 January 2026. The increases are intended to strengthen retirement adequacy.

Click [here](#) to read the CPF news release for more information.

Second Stage of SPL Scheme to Kick in from 1 April 2026

The second stage of the SPL scheme will [commence](#) on 1 April 2026, where parents will be provided with a total of 10 weeks of SPL, an increase from the current entitlement of six weeks.

The enhanced SPL Scheme will apply where the Relevant Date is on or after 1 April 2026.

Three-year Schedule of Sustained Wage Increases under Security PWM

On 30 October 2025, MOM announced that the Government had accepted the Security Tripartite Cluster's ("**STC**") recommendations on the Security PWM.

Accordingly, from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2028, a three-year schedule of sustained wage increases will be introduced for full-time and part-time in-house security officers. Full-time officers can expect a year-on-year increase of S\$160 per month. STC may consider adjusting the PWM wage from 1 January 2028 upwards if the economic situation improves.

Eligible employers will automatically receive co-funding support under the Progressive Wage Credit Scheme.

Click [here](#) to read the MOM press release for more information.

Recommendations for Review of Employment Act to be Released

On 4 August 2025, MOM announced the formation of a Tripartite Workgroup ("**TWG**") by the tripartite partners to develop recommendations for a review of the EA.

As Singapore's primary labour legislation, the EA provides for the basic terms and working conditions for almost all employees and is subject to regular review by the tripartite partners. The present review will focus on adapting the EA to suit the changing labour force profile, evolving forms of work, and challenging economic landscape.

The TWG is expected to submit its recommendations by 2H 2026.

Click [here](#) to read our August 2025 NewsBytes article for more information.

Thailand

Looking Back: 2025

2025 marked a significant year for employment law in Thailand, with reforms aimed at modernising labour standards, enhancing employee welfare, and aligning with international norms. Key developments included amendments to the Labour Protection Act, wage adjustments, expanded leave entitlements, and new compliance obligations for employers.



Summaries of the key developments are provided below.

Labour Protection Act – Major Amendments (Effective 7 December 2025)

Thailand enacted the Labour Protection Act (No. 9) B.E. 2568 (2025) to introduce expanded protections and family-related benefits, including the following:

1. **Maternity Leave:** Increased from 98 to 120 days, with 60 days being fully paid.
2. **Spousal Birth Support Leave:** New entitlement of 15 fully paid days.
3. **Infant Care Leave:** 15 days at 50% pay in case the child is born with medical complications.
4. **Government Subcontractor Protections:** Statutory benefits extended to certain service-contract workers.
5. **Annual Reporting:** Employers with 10 employees and more must submit employment condition reports each January.

These changes aim to strengthen employee welfare and simplify compliance, and are effective from 7 December 2025.

Wages & Benefits – Minimum Wage and Welfare Fund

The minimum wage in Thailand was increased in 2025 to a range of THB 337 to THB 400 per day, depending on the province, effective 1 January 2025.

The Employee Welfare Fund was also introduced. While originally scheduled for implementation in October 2025, it has since been postponed to 1 October 2026. When implemented, it will require employer and employee contributions starting at 0.25% of wages, increasing to 0.5% from 2031 onward, to provide financial support in cases of job loss, death, or emergencies. Such fund contribution is exempted for employers who already provide a provident fund or termination/death benefits.

Projecting Into: 2026

Thailand is expected to see major employment law reforms in 2026, continuing the trend toward modernising labour standards and improving work-life balance. Two draft bills approved in principle in late 2025 are under legislative review; if enacted, they will significantly reshape workplace norms. These proposals aim to reduce working hours, expand leave entitlements, and strengthen anti-discrimination protections. Employers should prepare for compliance adjustments, including policy updates and workplace accommodations.



Working Hours & Annual Leave – Reduction of Workweek

The first draft bill proposes reducing the standard workweek from 48 hours to 40 hours, with hazardous jobs capped at 35 hours. Employers will also be required to provide two weekly rest days, ensuring no more than five consecutive working days. Paid annual leave entitlement would increase to 10 days after 120 days of service, compared to the current six days after one year of service.

Family Support & Equality – Expanded Leave and Workplace Facilities

The second draft bill introduces menstrual leave of up to three days per month, separate from sick leave, and family care leave of up to 15 days annually. Employers will also be required to provide breastfeeding facilities and allow two 30-minute breaks per day for nursing parents during the first year after childbirth.

Additionally, the bill strengthens anti-discrimination protections, covering disability, gender identity, religion, and political opinions. These measures aim to foster inclusivity and address demographic challenges such as Thailand's declining birth rate.

Vietnam

Looking Back: 2025

The year 2025 marked a pivotal moment in Vietnam's employment law landscape, with sweeping reforms aimed at modernising labour governance, enhancing social protection, and improving administrative efficiency. The most significant development was the enactment of the new Law on Social Insurance and Decree 219/2025/ND-CP, which streamlines the application process for work permits. These reforms reflect Vietnam's commitment to building a more inclusive and transparent labour market.



Summaries of the key developments are provided below.

Expansion of Mandatory Social Insurance Coverage

Effective from 1 July 2025, the New Law on Social Insurance introduces significant reforms to the social insurance framework, including, among others, broader coverage of social insurance, shortened minimum contribution period for pension entitlements, and stricter enforcement.

Under the new rules, employee groups now required to contribute to social insurance include (i) part-time employees; (ii) individuals working under agreements that are not formally labour contracts but receive a salary and are subject to management and supervision by the other party; and (iii) managers who do not receive salaries, thereby extending protection to a wider range of workers. Additionally, the minimum contribution period for pension entitlements has been shortened from 20 years to 15 years, allowing employees to access retirement benefits earlier.

The amendments also introduce stricter enforcement against non-compliance with social insurance obligations:

1. Administrative penalties, collection of outstanding contributions, and late payment fees are now calculated at a fixed interest rate of 0.03% per day on the amount of late payment or evasion, replacing the previous calculation based on interbank interest rates.
2. Authorities are empowered to enforce administrative penalties for late or evaded payments and, where necessary, initiate criminal proceedings for payment evasion.

These reforms signal a more robust, inclusive social insurance system and enhanced social protection for employees.

Management of Foreign Employees

Effective from 7 August 2025, Decree 219/2025/ND-CP ("**Decree 219**") replaces Decree 152/2020/ND-CP and Decree 70/2023/ND-CP, marking a significant reform in foreign labour management. Key highlights include:

1. **Simplified work permit application process:** The Decree removes the requirement to advertise job vacancies for Vietnamese employees prior to recruitment of foreign employees for most forms of employment, and consolidates foreign labour demand reporting and permit application into a single streamlined procedure, with a shortened processing time of 10 working days from receipt of the valid application.
2. **Expanded exemptions:** The Decree introduces additional exemptions to the work permit requirements, including, among others, foreign employees working in Vietnam for less than 90 days in a calendar year. This replaces the previous limit of 30 days per business trip and a maximum of three trips per year.
3. **Revised conditions for job positions for foreign employees working in Vietnam:** The role of an "executive director" is subject to a stricter condition, mandating a minimum of three years of relevant work experience for the intended position in Vietnam. On the other hand, the threshold of experience for "expert" and "technician" has now been relaxed, requiring only two years of relevant experience, down from three years.
4. **Decentralised authority:** Provincial People's Committees now handle work permit issuance and exemptions. In cases where a foreign employee works across multiple locations, the Provincial People's Committee of the employer's head office will serve as the designated authority.
5. **Removal of periodic reporting:** From the date of effect of the new Decree, employers are no longer required to submit semi-annual and annual foreign labour usage reports, reducing compliance burdens.

Projecting Into: 2026

Looking ahead to 2026, Vietnam's employment law framework is poised for significant evolution as key reforms passed in 2025 take effect and new regulatory initiatives emerge. In view of shaping a more modern and regulated employment environment, employers should prepare for stricter data privacy obligations following the rollout of the Personal Data Protection Law, broader unemployment insurance coverage, an increase in regional minimum wages and further digitalisation of human resource processes.



New Personal Data Protection Law ("PDP Law")

Effective from 1 January 2026, the PDP Law, being Vietnam's first comprehensive legislation on data privacy, will impose stricter obligations on employers handling employee data, especially in connection with the new labour market database and e-contract systems, aligning Vietnam more closely with international data protection standards.

1. **Scope and applicability:** The PDP Law applies to all organisations processing the personal data of Vietnamese citizens, including foreign entities without a physical presence in Vietnam, provided they handle such data. This extraterritorial reach means employers must comply even if data processing occurs offshore.
2. **Type of personal data that may be collected:** Employers may only request information necessary for recruitment purposes. Any data provided must be used solely for recruitment and other purposes explicitly agreed upon in accordance with applicable laws.
3. **Consent and lawful basis:** Employers must obtain explicit consent for collecting and processing employee or candidate data. Silence or non-response does not constitute consent. Recruitment data must be deleted if the candidate is not hired, unless otherwise agreed.
4. **Employee data retention:** Upon termination, employers must delete or destroy personal data, unless retention is legally required or contractually agreed to.
5. **Monitoring technologies:** The use of cameras, attendance software or other tracking means requires prior notice and consent. Employers cannot repurpose such data for unrelated purposes without explicit approval.

New Law on Employment – Wider Social Insurance Coverage

Effective from 1 January 2026, the Employment Law 2025 introduces comprehensive reforms to unemployment insurance and labour market governance.

One of the most notable changes concerns the unemployment insurance ("UI") scheme. The revised regulations aim to expand coverage, increase benefits, and clarify the obligations of both employers and employees.

Under the new framework, UI coverage now extends to employees with contracts of one month or more, part-time employees, individuals working under agreements that are not formally labour contracts but receive a salary and are subject to management and supervision by the other party, significantly broadening the scope of protection.

Increase in Regional Minimum Wage

Effective from 1 January 2026, Decree No. 293/2025/ND-CP increases minimum wages by approximately 7%. In Region I (Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City), the monthly minimum wage will rise to VND 5.31 million, while the hourly minimum wage for part-time employees will increase to VND 25,500.

This change is expected to have an impact on payroll and insurance contributions.

Draft Decree on Electronic Labour Contracts

With the growing adoption of electronic labour contracts, which offer significant convenience for both employees and employers, particularly those managing large workforces, a draft decree proposes the establishment of a national "eContract" platform under the management of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Among other proposals, each electronic labour contract would carry a unique identifier and be executed through the eContract platform. This intermediary service provider would facilitate the creation, signing, implementation, storage, retrieval, and overall management of electronic labour contracts, streamlining compliance and administrative processes. Additionally, the eContract platform may be used to declare labour information and report on labour usage.

Our Achievements

Rajah & Tann Asia has a leading Employment Practice in different jurisdictions across Southeast Asia, ranked by all major legal ranking journals, including:



Chambers Asia-Pacific 2025

Employment

Band 1 – Indonesia
Assegaf Hamzah & Partners

Band 1 – Singapore
Rajah & Tann Singapore

Band 2 – Vietnam
Rajah & Tann LCT Lawyers

Band 3 – Philippines
C&G Law



Benchmark Litigation Asia-Pacific 2025

Labour & Employment

Tier 1 – Indonesia
Assegaf Hamzah & Partners

Tier 1 – Singapore
Rajah & Tann Singapore

Tier 2 – Philippines
C&G Law

Tier 2 – Thailand
Rajah & Tann (Thailand)

Tier 3 – Malaysia
Christopher & Lee Ong

Recommended – Vietnam
Rajah & Tann LCT Lawyers



The Legal 500 Asia Pacific 2025

Labour and Employment

Tier 1 – Indonesia
Assegaf Hamzah & Partners

Tier 1 – Philippines
C&G Law

Tier 1 – Singapore
Rajah & Tann Singapore

Tier 2 – Malaysia
Christopher & Lee Ong

Tier 2 – Thailand
Rajah & Tann (Thailand)

Tier 2 – Vietnam
Rajah & Tann LCT Lawyers



IEL Elite 2025

National Elite Firm



Asialaw 2025

Labour and Employment

Outstanding – Indonesia
Assegaf Hamzah & Partners

Outstanding – Singapore
Rajah & Tann Singapore

Highly Recommended – Philippines
C&G Law

Highly Recommended – Vietnam
Rajah & Tann LCT Lawyers

Recommended – Malaysia
Christopher & Lee Ong

Recommended – Thailand
Rajah & Tann (Thailand)



The Straits Times Singapore's Best Law Firms 2026

Employment Law

5-Star Rating

Our Regional Contacts

Cambodia

Rajah & Tann Sok & Heng Law Office

T +855 23 963 112 | +855 23 963 113

<https://kh.rajahtannasia.com>

China

Rajah & Tann Singapore LLP
Representative Offices

Shanghai Representative Office

T +86 21 6120 8818

F +86 21 6120 8820

Shenzhen Representative Office

T +86 755 8898 0230

<https://cn.rajahtannasia.com>

Indonesia

Assegaf Hamzah & Partners
Jakarta Office

T +62 21 2555 7800

F +62 21 2555 7899

Surabaya Office

T +62 31 5116 4550

F +62 31 5116 4560

www.ahp.co.id

Lao PDR

Rajah & Tann (Laos) Co., Ltd.

T +856 21 454 239

F +856 21 285 261

<https://la.rajahtannasia.com>

Malaysia

Christopher & Lee Ong

T +603 2273 1919

F +603 2273 8310

www.christopherleeong.com

Myanmar

Rajah & Tann Myanmar Company Limited

T +951 9253750

<https://mm.rajahtannasia.com>

Philippines

Gatmaytan Yap Patacsil Gutierrez & Protacio
(C&G Law)

T +632 8248 5250

www.cagatlaw.com

Singapore

Rajah & Tann Singapore LLP

T +65 6535 3600

<https://sg.rajahtannasia.com>

Thailand

Rajah & Tann (Thailand) Limited

T +66 2656 1991

F +66 2656 0833

<https://th.rajahtannasia.com>

Vietnam

Rajah & Tann LCT Lawyers

Ho Chi Minh City Office

T +84 28 3821 2382

F +84 28 3520 8206

Hanoi Office

T +84 24 3267 6127 | +84 24 3267 6128

<https://vn.rajahtannasia.com>

Rajah & Tann Asia is a network of legal practices based in Asia.

Member firms are independently constituted and regulated in accordance with relevant local legal requirements. Services provided by a member firm are governed by the terms of engagement between the member firm and the client.

Disclaimer

Rajah & Tann Asia is a network of member firms with local legal practices in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Our Asian network also includes our regional office in China as well as regional desks focused on Brunei, Japan and South Asia. Member firms are independently constituted and regulated in accordance with relevant local requirements.

The contents of this publication are owned by Rajah & Tann Asia together with each of its member firms and are subject to all relevant protection (including but not limited to copyright protection) under the laws of each of the countries where the member firm operates and, through international treaties, other countries. No part of this publication may be reproduced, licensed, sold, published, transmitted, modified, adapted, publicly displayed, broadcast (including storage in any medium by electronic means whether or not transiently for any purpose save as permitted herein) without the prior written permission of Rajah & Tann Asia or its respective member firms.

Please note also that whilst the information in this publication is correct to the best of our knowledge and belief at the time of writing, it is only intended to provide a general guide to the subject matter and should not be treated as legal advice or a substitute for specific professional advice for any particular course of action as such information may not suit your specific business and operational requirements. You should seek legal advice for your specific situation. In addition, the information in this publication does not create any relationship, whether legally binding or otherwise. Rajah & Tann Asia and its member firms do not accept, and fully disclaim, responsibility for any loss or damage which may result from accessing or relying on the information in this publication.