

Regional Round-Up 2024: Laos



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Introduction

Throughout the year, we have been keeping you up to date on noteworthy developments across the region with our Regional Round-up Publications. As we enter 2025, we are pleased to share with you our *2024 year-in-review of the Regional Round-up* for our Regional Offices in the Rajah & Tann Asia network.

In each jurisdiction, we recount the key milestones in the path that has been travelled in 2024, as well as consider the terrain of the road that lies ahead in 2025. In the "**Looking Back: 2024**" section, we take stock of the past year and highlight the key legal and regulatory developments affecting each jurisdiction in 2024. In the "**Gazing Into: 2025**" section, we look ahead to some key areas of development that you should take note of in the year to come, referencing the legal and business trends shaping up potential legislative and regulatory changes in each jurisdiction.

We hope that this year-in-review edition of the Regional Round-up provides some perspective and insight into the legal landscape of the jurisdictions across the region. As always, please feel free to contact our lawyers in our Regional Offices if you have any queries or for further discussions.

Please click on the links below to access the full collection of our country-specific *2024 year-in-review of the Regional Round-up*:

- [Cambodia](#)
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Looking Back: 2024

In June 2024, the Vice President of State Inspection Authority Mr Vilayvanh Bouthdakham presented amendments to the **Law on Anti-Corruption** at the 7th Ordinary Session of the National Assembly. In his presentation, the Vice President stated that the amendment will serve as a legal tool to better regulate and prevent corruption, protect honest people, and tackle social ills in line with current national socio-economic development, other legal instruments and the country's trend of regional and international integration.

On the investment front, Laos's current development plan, the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) (2021-2025) focuses on graduating Laos from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category by 2026. To achieve this goal, the Government continues to prioritise

diversifying the economy and improving the investment climate to encourage domestic and foreign investment to boost growth. To this end, the National Assembly amended the **Law on Investment Promotion**.

In so far as environmental law is concerned, the **Law on Environmental Protection** has been in force for more than 12 years. Prior to its amendment in 2024, the law was not in line with the country's socio-economic growth. The structure and content of the law had gaps. Moreover, there were many issues within the law that were inconsistent with or contrary to other existing laws, such as the Law on Chemical Management, the Law on Disaster Management, the Law on Forestry, the Law on Minerals, the Law on Wildlife, and the Law on Aquatic Animals and Fisheries. This prompted the National Assembly to revise the Law on Environmental Protection.

To support global efforts to combat money laundering and terrorism financing, the President's Office passed in 2022 the Decree on Approval and Promulgation regarding the **Strategy on Anti-Money Laundering and Countering of Financing Terrorism (AML/CFT)** of the Lao PDR in the Period of 10 Years (2021-2030) and Vision to 2035. To achieve the objectives of the decree, the National Assembly passed the **amended Law on Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Financing of Terrorism**.

Other statutory instruments and subsidiary legislation were also issued, affecting various sectors of the country.

Summaries of the key developments relating to these changes are provided below.

Prevention of Corruption – Amendment to Anti-Corruption Law

Law on Anti-Corruption (amendment) No. 52/NA dated 28 June 2024 was published in the Lao Official Gazette ("**Official Gazette**") on 16 January 2025. The law sets



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out the principles, regulations and measures on anti-corruption that seek to protect the property of the state and the collective, and the rights and legitimate interests of the citizens. The law also aims to make the perpetrators of corruption liable for non-compliance.

Investment Law – Investment Promotion

Law on Investment Promotion (Amended) No.62/NA dated 28 June 2024 was published in the Official Gazette on 16 December 2024. The law sets out the principles, regulations and measures relating to the promotion and management of domestic and foreign investment to facilitate streamlined and transparent investment in the country. It aims to attract quality investment into the country while ensuring that the rights and interests of the state, the collective, the people and the investors are protected.

Sustainability – Protecting the Environment

Law on Environmental Protection (Amended) No. 53/NA dated 28 June 2024 was published in the Official Gazette on 16 December 2024. It lays down the principles, regulations and measures regarding the management, protection, restoration and inspection of the environment to reduce and control the impact of man-made or natural pollution. It aims to attain the following: (i) balanced social and natural environment; (ii) efficient and effective use of natural resources; (iii) improved quality of life and health of people, animals, and plants; and (iv) reduced global warming.

Anti-money Laundering – Prevention of Money Laundering and Countering Financing of Terrorism

Law on Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Financing of Terrorism (Amended) No.64/NA dated 1 July 2024 was published in the Official Gazette on 12 December 2024. The law defines the principles, regulations and measures to combat money laundering and counter financing of terrorism. It aims to make the economic and financial system of the country strong, stable, and the society peaceful and orderly.

Financial Institutions – Bullion Bank Business Activity

Decision on Bullion Bank Business Activity No. 1277/BOL dated 29 November 2024 was published in the Official Gazette on 12 December 2024. The

decision sets out the principles, regulations and measures regarding the business operations of bullion banks to enable them to offer their products and services efficiently and transparently.

Corporate & Commercial – Regulation of Credit Guarantee Companies

Decision on Credit Guarantee Company No.1179/NA dated 31 October 2024 was published in the Official Gazette on 12 November 2024. It outlines the principles, regulations and measures regarding the business operations, activities, and management of credit guarantee companies.

Private Education – Regulating Private Education in Lao PDR

Decree on Private Education No.331/GOV dated 19 July 2024 was published in the Official Gazette 30 September 2024. The decree applies to individuals, legal entities, and domestic and foreign state and private organisations that undertake activities related to private education in Lao PDR. The Decree defines private education as education in the national education system in which private entities (whether domestic or foreign) may invest with the permission of the education and sports sector authority.

Land Use – Land Use Conversion and Change of Land Use Right

Two statutory instruments were issued in relation to land use: (i) Decision on the Land Use Conversion No.1095/MNRE dated 18 June 2024 which was published in the Official Gazette on 16 July 2024 ("**Decision**"); and (ii) Instruction on the Activities and Change of Land Use Right No. 0564/MNRE dated 28 March 2024 which was published in the Official Gazette on 26 April 2024 ("**Instruction**"). The Decision provides for the rules and procedures in converting one type of land use to another in an efficient and effective way to achieve maximum benefits. The Instruction sets out the regulations and procedures to register land transactions.

Trade – Technical Barriers to Trade ("TBT") and Sanitary and Phytosanitary ("SPS") Certifications Before Importation and Exportation

The National Assembly released two Decisions on products requiring TBT and SPS certifications before their importation and exportation: (i) Decision on the List of Products Requiring the Certification of Technical Barriers to Trade-TBT Before Importation and Exportation No. 0782/MOIC dated 15 May 2024, published in the Official Gazette on 20 May 2024; and (ii) Decision on the List of Products Requiring the Certification of Sanitary and Phytosanitary-SPS Before Importation and Exportation No. 0781/MOIC dated 15 May 2024, published in the Official Gazette on 20 May 2024. Products requiring TBT certification before importation include: (i) all kinds of two or more wheeled land vehicles run by engines, which may be operated by a driver or driverless; (ii) radio frequency communication equipment; and (iii) telecommunication and information and communications technology (ICT) products. Products requiring SPS certification before importation include: (i) food; (ii) food products and supplements; (iii) beverages that contain alcohol; (iv) animal food; and (v) veterinary medicine.

Products requiring TBT and SPS certifications before exportation must comply with the relevant regulations of destination countries, and treaties to which Laos PDR is a party.

Tax – Value Added Tax ("VAT")

VAT Rate from 1 May 2024

Ordinance on Revised the Value Added Tax No.003/PM dated 19 March 2024, published in the Official Gazette on 26 March 2024, provides that, commencing on 1 May 2024, the VAT rate on the following shall be 10%: (i) importation of goods from foreign countries and special economic zones; (ii) supply of goods and services within the country by individuals, legal entities and organisations which are in the VAT system; and (iii) receipt of supply of goods and services by legal entities that are not established in Lao PDR.

Collection of VAT from Suppliers of Digital Goods or E-commerce Activities from Abroad to Local Users

Instruction Regarding to the Implementation of Value Added Tax Obligations for Supplier of Digital Goods and Digital Platform or E-Commerce Activities from

Abroad to Users in the Lao PDR No. 0558/MOF dated 14 February 2024, published in the Official Gazette on 26 March 2024, sets out guidelines in the management, monitoring, and inspection relating to the collection of VAT from suppliers of digital goods and digital platform or e-commerce activities from abroad to users in the Lao PDR. The objective is to facilitate the collection of revenue into the state budget accurately, completely and effectively.

Intellectual Property – Law on Intellectual Property to Encourage Innovation and Creativity

Law on Intellectual Property (Amended) No.50/NA dated 20 November 2023 was published in the Official Gazette on 1 March 2024. The law defines the principles, regulations and measures regarding the management and protection of intellectual property ("IP") rights to encourage and promote, among others, innovation, creativity, intellectual economy, scientific development, and technology transfer locally and abroad. The law seeks to ensure that the legitimate interests of IP owners and those of the state and society are protected. Additionally, it aims to promote trade and investment, and enable people to compete according to the market economy mechanism in an efficient and effective manner.

Healthcare – Regulation of Medical Service

Law on Treatment (Amended) No.48/NA dated 20 November 2023 was published in the Official Gazette on 21 February 2024. The law sets out the principles, regulations and measures regarding the management and monitoring of medical service in the country.

Financial Services – Regulation of Payment System to Maintain Financial Stability

Law on Payment System No.45/NA dated 20 November 2023 was published in the Official Gazette on 13 February 2024. The law defines the principles, regulations and measures regarding the management and monitoring of the country's payment system. It aims to ensure a payment system that is safe, transparent and effective in order to maintain financial-monetary stability.

Financial Services – Suspension of Business of Importing and Exporting Gold as International Payment

Bank of Lao PDR is in the process of amending its management policy on gold importation and exportation, as well as legislation relating to this, such as Decision on Import and Export of Gold Business as an International Payment No.461/GoL dated 3 June 2019. Following this, it issued Notice on Suspend the Consideration for Permission the Import and Export of Gold Business as an International Payment No.09/BOL dated 15 October 2024 to suspend the consideration of import-export of gold business licences temporarily until the amendment of the relevant legislation is implemented.

Dispute Resolution – Implementation of Law on Notary

Instruction on Implementation of Law on Notary No.1786/MOJ dated 28 December 2023 was published in the Official Gazette 8 January 2024. The instruction seeks to implement Law on Notary No. 24/NA dated 29 December 2022 in a way that is easy to understand. The instruction serves as the basis for the implementation of notarisation work in a uniform, convenient, fast, and accurate manner, aiming to enhance the rule of law and protect the rights and

legitimate interests of individuals, legal entities and organisations that come for notarisation. This, in turn, helps maintain peace, order and justice in the society.

Consumer Protection – Printing of Registration Number on Labels of Food Products

The Ministry of Industry and Commerce has issued Notice on Suspension the Importation and Distribution of Food Products that are not registered and printed the food and drug registration number on the product label in Lao language No 2666/MOIC dated 9 October 2024 ("**Notice**"), suspending the importation and distribution of food products such as water products in closed containers, energy drinks, vitamin drinks, food supplements, and preparation of fermented fish that are not registered with the Department of Food and Drug of the Ministry of Public Health and whose labels do not have the food and drug registration number in Lao language. The Notice came into force on 1 January 2025 and will be in force until a replacement to the Notice is issued. The Notice further stipulates that the printing of the registration number of food and drug on the labels shall be done in the factory where the food and drug originate. This will be implemented from 1 July 2025 onwards. During the interim, import and export companies, wholesale and retail sellers, and domestic producers can print the registration numbers as stickers on the products.

Gazing Into: 2025



In 2025, the Government proposes to pass the following laws:

- Law on **Joint Investment Between State and Private** (from the Ministry of Planning and Investment);
- Law on **Architecture** (from the Ministry of Post and Transportation); and
- Law on **Financial Stability** (from the Ministry of Finance).

The Government proposes to amend the following laws:

- Law on **Prevention and Combating Cyber Crime** (from the Ministry of Technology and Communications);
- Law on **Information Communication Technology** (from the Ministry of Technology and Communications);
- Law on **Medicine and Medical Product** (from the Ministry of Public Health); and
- Law on **Electricity** (from the Ministry of Energy and Mines).

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