

LEGAL AND TAX DIGEST

BANGLADESH

LAOS

MYANMAR

Legislative developments – February 2026



BANGLADESH

Banking and Finance

*S. R. O. No. 63-Act/2026/01/Customs dated 26 February 2026 issued by the Foreign Exchange Policy Department-1 on "**Modification of Paragraph 7 of FE Circular No. 31, dated July 31, 2025**".*

The circular introduces a targeted amendment to paragraph 7 of FE Circular No. 31 (July 2025). The earlier circular consolidated foreign exchange regulations and exempted several categories of exports, including small-value e-commerce shipments up to US\$500 from declaration and repatriation requirements. The new circular removes e-commerce exports from this exemption list. Instead, it clarifies that e-commerce transactions are governed separately under paragraph 64 of FE Circular No. 31/2025 and FE Circular No. 42/2025. All other exemptions, such as trade samples, personal effects, ship stores, government shipments, gift packets, and Bangladesh Bank-certified parcels, remain unchanged.

Regulatory

*S. R. O. No. 63-Act/2026/01/Customs dated 26 February 2026 issued by the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs on "**Negotiable Instruments (Amendment) Ordinance, 2026**".*

Before this amendment, cheque dishonor cases under Section 138 were divided by value. Cheques above BDT 5,00,000 went to Sessions level courts, while smaller value cheques were tried by magistrates. After this amendment, the distinction was removed, and all Section 138 cases must be tried by a Sessions Court. The rules on filing remain the same. A written complaint by the payee or holder in due course, submitted within one month of the cause of action. In short, jurisdiction has been unified under the Sessions Courts, making the process more consistent and straightforward.

Authors and Contacts



Habibullah Shakil

Legal Advisor
habibullah.shakil@vdb-loi.com



Osman Goni

Partner
osman.goni@vdb-loi.com

LAOS



Investment

Decree No. 814/GOV dated 10 December 2025 issued by the Government of the Lao PDR ("GOL") on "High-Technology Zones"

This decree, which was published on the Lao Official Gazette's website on 13 February 2026, sets out the principles, regulations, and guidelines for the development, management, and monitoring of designated high-technology zones ("HTZs"), supporting research and development, advanced manufacturing, innovation centers, human capital development, renewable energy use, and green and sustainable development.

Some of the highlights are outlined below.

Governance and designation

- The Ministry of Technology and Communications ("**MOTC**"), in coordination with relevant ministries and local administrations, proposes areas for the development of HTZs for GOL approval.
- Development models may be fully government, public-private partnerships, or fully private investment.

Establishment of an HTZ (developer process)

- The investor applies for approval to create an HTZ through the One-Stop Service Office at the central level in accordance with the Law on Investment Promotion.
- The application is reviewed by the Ministry of Planning and Investment (as referred to in this decree; however, this ministry has since been dissolved and its functions transferred to the Committee for Investment Promotion and Management), in coordination with relevant ministries and local administrations; upon approval, a memorandum of understanding on studies is signed with the GOL.
- A feasibility study and environmental impact assessment are conducted in line with the memorandum of understanding.
- The MOTC, with relevant ministries and local administrations, reviews and approves the feasibility study and reports the result to the Ministry of Planning and Investment, which then submits it to the GOL for approval and execution of the HTZ development agreement.

- The developer establishes a project company and obtains an operating license from the MOTC.
- Review timelines follow those in the Law on Investment Promotion.

Land, compensation, and public space

- The developer must bear the compensation costs arising from eminent domain (land acquisition) and damage to those affected by the development of the HTZ.
- The Provincial Office of Natural Resources and Environment issues a state land certificate to the developer for concession land.
- At least 20% of the project area must be allocated to public/green space (e.g. parks).

Zone management and investor admission

- Each HTZ has a Zone Management Committee ("**ZMC**") established by the MOTC that reviews and approves investments in its zone; upon receipt of a complete application package, decisions are to be issued within five working days.
- If the zone developer also wishes to invest within the zone, it must set up a new investment company, obtain approval from the ZMC, and follow the standard application procedure.

Investor requirements

- Enter into an investment agreement with the zone developer.
- Obtain the required business operation licenses from the relevant authorities.
- Employ qualified personnel appropriate to the business.
- Demonstrate financial capacity confirmed by domestic or international financial institutions.
- Use appropriate and modern tools/equipment for the business.

Promotion of Lao labor

Developers and investors must support the employment of Lao workers, especially from local communities, women, and ethnic groups, and promote skills development, capacity building, and the transfer of high-technology to the Lao workforce.

Suspension or termination of business

Investors intending to suspend or cease operations must obtain prior approvals from both the zone developer and the ZMC.

Incentives and rights

- **Tax incentives:** These are available to zone developers and investors as provided under the Law on High Technology, the Law on Investment Promotion, and other applicable laws.
- **Land use rights:** Once the developer has completed more than 40% of the approved development plan, it may sublease/assign/transfer land-use rights to investors under concession terms, with ZMC confirmation.

- **Secondary transfers:** Investors may sublease/assign/transfer their land-use rights to other investors under the same lease terms, with ZMC confirmation.
- **On-site power:** Developers and investors generating renewable electricity for use within the zone may sell electricity to other investors in the zone.
- **Visas:** Multi-entry visas that are valid for up to five years per issuance are available for developers, investors, experts, technical officers, and their family members.

Signs

Law No. 89/NA dated 25 June 2025 issued by the National Assembly of the Lao PDR on “Signs”

This law, which was published on the Lao Official Gazette’s website on 18 February 2026, replaces the previous version issued in 2018. It provides amended regulations and guidelines on the requirements and approval authority for signs used nationwide, except for traffic signs. There are new provisions on business operations related to signage and the establishment of a sign business association.

Some of the highlights are outlined below.

Language used on signs (Article 16): Under the previous law, foreign languages were permitted to be used alongside the Lao language on signs. However, this new law now permits only English as the foreign language to be used alongside the Lao language on signs. The English text must not exceed two-thirds of the size of the Lao text and must be placed below or to the right of the Lao text. Any foreign language trademark sign must have its Lao text version placed above it.

Signs used by offices of foreign representatives or organizations must comply with the treaties to which the Lao PDR is a party.

Color of signs and text on signs (Article 17): There are now additional requirements on the colors of signs and the text displayed on signs for organizations and foundations, as well as religious places. Signs used by organizations and foundations must have a white background with blue text; and signs for religious places must comply with other relevant regulations.

This law now expressly allows the use of multiple colors on advertising signs and for their text, provided that such signs comply with other applicable regulations (except as specified above). Under the previous version of the law, the use of multiple colors was permitted only upon obtaining approval from the information, culture, and tourism authorities.

Light intensity (Article 18): The law sets maximum lighting levels for signs at no more than 6,500 nits during the day and 3,500 nits during the night.

Advertising sign size (Article 21): The law sets the maximum size for advertising signs at 400 cm (width) by 800 cm (height) within city areas, and 600 cm (width) by 1,200 cm (height) outside city areas.

Duration for posting signs (Article 23): The law permits indicative signs, educational signs, and address signs used by organizations or private entities to be displayed for an indefinite period, unless modifications are made that require renewed approval from the relevant authority.

Advertising signs have a validity period of one year, which is renewable based on an assessment of the condition and quality of the sign, whereas the previous law allowed advertising signs for the duration of the advertising agreement.

Sign businesses (Articles 26, 27 and 28): The law introduces additional conditions for operating a sign-related business, including the requirement that the operator be established as a legal entity, implement preventive and remedial measures against natural disasters, and obtain an environmental compliance certificate. It also sets a limit on the validity period of sign business operation licenses to one year, whereas under the previous law, such license was granted without a fixed validity period.

Sign business association (Article 34): The law introduces the establishment of a sign business association, which is a voluntary-based non-profit association formed by sign business operators for the purpose of representing and protecting the lawful interests of sign business operators.

Competent authorities for sign regulation (Article 40): Following the government restructuring, the information-related functions of the former Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism have been reassigned to other bodies, and the village-level administration has been replaced by the sub-district administration. As a result, the authorities responsible for sign regulation under this law now include the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism, the District Office of Culture and Tourism, and the culture and society authority at the sub-district level.

Intellectual Property

Decision No. 0306 issued by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce ("MOIC") on 10 February 2026 on "Administrative Dispute Resolution Relating to the Registration of Industrial Property, New Plant Varieties, Copyright Notification, and Copyright-Related Rights"

This decision, which enters into effect on 27 March 2026, provides regulations and guidelines on the administrative resolution of disputes relating to the registration of intellectual property rights administered by the Department of Intellectual Property of the MOIC ("DIP"), establishing procedures for submitting complaints, reviewing disputes, conducting investigations, and issuing decisions.

It replaces the previous version dated 30 June 2023 and expands the scope of administrative dispute resolution to include copyright notifications and copyright-related rights.

Key highlights are provided below.

1. **Scope of administrative disputes:** The decision governs administrative disputes arising from decisions or actions of the DIP relating to:
 - Registration of industrial property rights;
 - Registration of new plant varieties;
 - Copyright notifications; and
 - Copyright-related rights.
2. **Defined terms (Article 3):** This decision introduces a definition of the term “Interpretation”, referring to the determination of whether a work qualifies for copyright or copyright-related rights protection.
3. **Deadline for submitting clarification and additional information (Article 9):** The decision extends the deadline for a petitioner contesting the registration of industrial property or new plant varieties to submit clarifications and additional information following notification from the DIP from 15 working days to 60 working days.
4. **Further guidelines on the appeal process (Article 10):** The decision sets out the following guidelines for the appeal process when an application for the registration of industrial property or new plant varieties is denied:
 - When the DIP denies an application for registration, it must notify the applicant within seven working days from the completion of its review
 - The applicant may file an appeal within 60 days of receiving the denial notice.
 - The DIP must review the appeal within 30 days and notify the applicant of its decision.
 - The DIP may issue a notice requesting clarification or additional information, allowing the applicant 30 days to respond.
 - If the applicant is not satisfied with the outcome, they may request a reassessment from the DIP within 30 days from the date the DIP issues its decision on the appeal.
5. **Cancellation and revocation of IP rights by the owner (Article 11):** The decision sets out the following guidelines when the intellectual property owner requests the cancellation or revocation of their own registered rights:
 - The DIP must notify the requestor of the result within 60 days from the date the request is received.
 - The DIP may issue a notice requiring the requestor to provide clarification or additional information within 30 days from the date of the notice.
6. **Administrative disputes of copyright or copyright-related rights:** The decision sets out the following guidelines for handling administrative disputes relating to copyright or copyright-related rights:
 - For interpretation (as defined above in Item 2) requests, the DIP must notify the requestor of the result within 10 working days after completing the review.

- If the requestor disagrees and files a dispute request, the DIP must notify the requestor of its decision within 10 working days of reviewing the dispute.
 - Disputes are arbitrated by the Administrative Dispute Resolution Committee appointed by the DIP, consisting of either three or five members.
 - Disputes concerning the ownership of copyrights or copyright-related rights may be filed directly with the court.
7. **Administrative Dispute Resolution Committee:** The decision sets out the following guidelines regarding the requirements and procedures of the Administrative Dispute Resolution Committee (the “**Committee**”):
- The Committee must convene a meeting to arbitrate the dispute within 15 days from the date of its appointment.
 - If clarification or additional information from the parties is required, the Committee must issue a notice within five working days of deciding to seek such information.
 - If the dispute is complicated or of a highly technical nature, the Committee may appoint an intellectual property expert to consult with.
 - After the conclusion of the meeting, the Committee must prepare a memorandum summarizing the dispute and arbitration results within three working days. The memorandum must include:
 - The names and details of the disputing parties or their representatives.
 - The names of the Committee members.
 - A description of the dispute.
 - The date and time of the meeting, and the time at which the meeting concluded.
 - The results of the arbitration.
 - The signatures of all attendees.
 - Confirmation by the DIP.
 - The DIP must then notify all related parties and authorities in writing of the results within five working days from the date of issuance of the memorandum.

If any party is not satisfied with the result, they may file an appeal or take further action in accordance with the procedures set out in applicable laws and regulations.

Authors and Contacts



Khammanh Vathanaphone
 Legal Associate
khammanh.vathanaphone@vdb-loi.com



Sornpheth Douangdy
 Senior Counsel
sornpheth.douangdy@vdb-loi.com

MYANMAR



Construction

***"Construction Sector Development Law"** No. 05/2026 dated 4 February 2026 issued by the National Defence and Security Council*

The law focuses mainly on unifying construction policies and implementing the Myanmar National Building Code ("**MNBC**"), ensuring that all infrastructure, excluding wood and bamboo structures, is disaster-resilient, hygienic, and environmentally compatible.

Licensing and registration

The law introduces a strict mandatory registration system for all industry participants:

- **Builders:** Organizations must employ at least one registered engineer or registered senior engineer and a dedicated site supervisor to qualify for a builder registration certificate.
- **Consultants:** Individuals or groups providing advisory services must be led by a registered engineer with a minimum of **five years of experience**.

Construction approval granted by the Regional Committee

Any person wishing to construct the following on a private basis must apply to the relevant government department in accordance with the procedures prescribed by the relevant laws:

- Buildings of **9 to 12 stories** or **100 to 140 feet** high
- Religious buildings of **40 to 68 feet** high
- Public buildings with an area of **10,000 to 12,000 square feet**

After reviewing for adherence to the relevant laws, if the decision is to deny the application, the receiving department will notify the applicant. If it intends to grant permission, it must submit the application along with its remarks to the Regional Committee.

The Regional Committee will then review the application, and if approved, will inform the department and keep a record of its decisions. If the Regional Committee decides to deny the application, its decision and the application will be returned to the department.

The department must keep a copy of the Regional Committee's approval or denial for its records and issue the original decision to the applicant.

Construction approval granted by the Central Committee

Any person wishing to construct the following on a private basis must apply to the relevant government department in accordance with the procedures prescribed by the relevant laws:

- Buildings **of more than 12 stories** or **over 140 feet** high
- Religious buildings **over 68 feet** high
- Buildings of **12 stories that include a basement**
- Public buildings under 12 stories but exceeding an area of **12,000 square feet** or intended for use by **500 people or more**
- Buildings that may pose a **public hazard**, or warehouses for **toxic or explosive materials**

The department reviews and either denies the applicant or forwards the proposal to the Regional Committee with its remarks.

Upon receipt, the Regional Committee will review and forward the application with its remarks to the Central Committee.

The Central Committee will then assign the Steering Committee to scrutinize whether the application should be permitted.

The Steering Committee will then do its review and submit its remarks on whether to permit the project to the Central Committee.

If the Steering Committee recommends approval, the Central Committee will record the application and send the approval through the Regional Committee to the relevant department. If denied, the refusal decision is sent back through the same channels.

The relevant department must keep a copy for its records and issue the approval or denial to the applicant.

Material quality assurance

The law prohibits the use of any construction materials, whether imported or locally manufactured, that lack a quality recommendation certificate.

- **Process:** Applicants must submit material samples and technical documentation to the responsible department (which has yet to be determined).
- **Verification:** Testing is conducted through accredited laboratories to ensure strict compliance with national quality standards before a certificate is issued.

Key prohibitions and compliance

Strict legal boundaries are established to prevent malpractice within the sector:

- Operating as a builder, consultant, or inspector without a valid registration is strictly forbidden.
- Constructing beyond the approved heights or number of floors specified in the original permit is a violation of the law.

- Builders are legally barred from handing over projects to owners if the work is found to be deficient or below MNBC standards.
- Registration certificates for builders and consultants must be renewed 60 days prior to expiry. Failure to meet this timeline results in the immediate nullification of the license.

Penalties

The law sets out the following violations and penalties:

- Working without a registration certificate (as a builder, consultant, or inspector): Imprisonment of up to three years in prison and/or a fine of MMK5 million.
- Working without a license or using fake documents: Imprisonment of up to three years and/or a fine of up to MMK10 million.
- Building higher than the approved plan: Imprisonment of up to three years and/or the extra floors might be required to be demolished.
- Using materials without a quality certificate: This is strictly forbidden and carries a mandatory five-year prison sentence and a fine of MMK50 million. The government will also confiscate the materials.
- Handing over a building to the owner (whether it is under construction or completed) that has been found to be substandard, without rectifying it: Imprisonment for five years and a fine of up to MMK50 million.
- Building high-rises or dangerous structures without the relevant committee's permission: Imprisonment for five years and/or a fine of 30% of the building's value.

If a person disagrees with an administrative order or a permit denial, an appeal can be filed with the responsible ministry (which ministry has not yet been determined) within 60 days. All decisions rendered by the ministry regarding these appeals are considered final and conclusive.

Authors and Contacts



Nu Htet Htet Lwin
Translation Manager
nuhtethtet.lwin@vdb-loi.com



Aye Myat Thu
Partner
ayemyat.thu@vdb-loi.com

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