

COVID-19: Company Meetings and Filings in the Current Situation

Introduction

The government has introduced several measures to alleviate the impact of COVID-19 on business operations in Thailand, namely, several notifications to relax requirements and obligations on the part of business operators. These include, among others, the requirements for corporate entities to hold their annual general meeting and submit financial statements and reports to the authorities. Below is a summary of these measures and relevant guidelines as at **9 April 2020**.

Private Limited Companies

(1) DBD Notification

On 4 March 2020, the Ministry of Commerce ("**MOC**"), by the Department of Business Development ("**DBD**"), issued a Notification of the Department of Business Development Re: Measures Addressing the Spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 or COVID-19 Which may Affect the Convening of Meetings of Juristic Persons B.E. 2563 (2020) ("**DBD Notification**"). Under the DBD Notification, private limited companies which are affected by the COVID-19 situation such that they are unable to hold their meetings within the period specified under the law, are allowed to hold the meetings after such specified period.

As such, private limited companies that are affected by the COVID-19 situation may hold an annual general meeting of shareholders ("**AGM**") after the period specified by the law and, once the AGM is held, submit a letter clarifying the reason for the said delay to the MOC. The form of the clarification letter is available on the DBD's website. These private limited companies must also submit their list of shareholders to the MOC within 14 days from the date of the delayed AGM, and the audited financial statements within one month from the date of the delayed AGM.

The DBD Notification does not contain an exemption from or mention the penalty on the delayed AGM or late mandatory filings. However, the DBD's Q&A on this matter suggests that the registrar of the DBD will consider the issue on a case-by-case basis. As such, it is advisable that, when the situation recovers, private limited companies should arrange their AGM as soon as possible.

It should be noted that, due to the state of emergency, from 1 April 2020, the filings of financial statements and lists of shareholders of a private limited company must be made via DBD e-Filing only

pursuant to the Notification of the Department of Business Development Re: Filing of Financial Statements and List of Shareholders via DBD e-Filing B.E. 2563 (2020) ("**e-Filing Notification**").

(2) Meetings via Electronic Media

It is also relevant to note that, under existing laws, private limited companies are entitled to conduct meetings via electronic media. Under the Notification of the National Council for Peace and Order No. 74/2557 Re: Meetings Via Electronic Media, dated 27 June 2014, and the Notification of Ministry of Information and Communication Technology Re: Security Policy and Standards of the Meeting via Electronic Media B.E. 2557 (2014), dated 24 November 2014, the following requirements must be satisfied in order for a meeting to be conducted by electronic means:

- At least 1/3 of the quorum must attend the meeting at the same place, and all the attendees must physically be in Thailand during the time of the meeting.
- The invitation to the meeting can be sent via email according to the timeline set out in relevant laws or the articles of association. A copy of the invitation in such case must be properly kept or recorded in electronic format.
- The sound and vision of all the attendees must be recorded and will be deemed to be a part of the minutes of the meeting, except in the case of confidential matters. Computer data transmissions from the meeting must also be recorded.

The system used for controlling the meeting must, for example, provide the linkage between at least two meeting places, and enable the attendees to communicate with each other by sound and/or sight through a wire/wireless technology (e.g. Local Area Network (LAN), Integrated Service Digital Network (ISDN), or Wide Area Network (WAN)).

- All the attendees must have access to information presented in the meeting through their devices for the entire meeting.

It is not required that private limited companies' articles of association must allow, or be revised to allow, a meeting to be held via electronic media. A meeting via electronic media will be considered valid and effective provided that all the requirements in the above notifications are satisfied.

Separately, it is also worth noting that, despite the current situation, circular meetings, written resolutions or paper meetings are still prohibited under the law.

Public Limited Companies

(1) DBD Notification

Public limited companies are allowed under the DBD Notification to hold their AGM later than the period required under the law. Once the AGM is held, a letter clarifying the reason for the delay must be submitted to the MOC. Public limited companies must also submit the list of shareholders and the audited financial statements to the MOC within one month from the date of the delayed AGM.

From 1 April 2020, the filing of financial statements, lists of shareholders and the copy of the annual report and AGM minutes of a public limited company must be made via DBD e-Filing only pursuant to the e-Filing Notification.

(2) Meeting via Electronic Media

According to a Declaration of the DBD of the MOC dated 24 March 2020, meetings of public limited companies can be conducted via electronic media in accordance with the same requirements applicable to the meetings of private limited companies set out above. This is provided that doing so is not prohibited in the public limited company's articles of association.

(3) CMSB Notification and SEC Notification

In the case of listed companies, further relaxation measures are available under the Notification of the Capital Market Supervisory Board No. ThorJor. 28/2563, dated 27 March 2020 ("**CMSB Notification**"), and the Notification of the Securities and Exchange Commission No. SorJor. 31/2563, dated 27 March 2020 ("**SEC Notification**").

Under the CMSB Notification, if a listed company is not able to hold its AGM to appoint its auditor due to the COVID-19 situation, the listed company, by the Board of Directors, may instead appoint any auditor in the approved list of the Securities and Exchange Commission ("**SEC**"), and submit its financial statements for the first quarter of 2020 as reviewed by such auditor to the SEC. In this regard, the listed company shall propose the shareholders to appoint such auditor in the next shareholders meeting.

With respect to the SEC Notification, a listed company may request for a delayed submission of quarterly financial statements, annual reports, and annual financial statements for the period ending 1 January to 31 May 2020. The request must be sent to the SEC and contain at least the following information:

- Reason and necessity for the request for the delayed submission; in particular, impact of the COVID-19 situation on the listed company's preparation and submission of relevant statements and/or reports.
- Period of the delayed submission; in particular, (i) for the delayed submission of quarterly financial statements, the period must not be later than the deadline for the submission of the next financial statements, or (ii) for the delayed submission of the annual report and annual financial statements, the period must not be later than four months from the end of the fiscal year.
- The company's opinion in relation to the reason and necessity for the request for the delayed submission and the period for such delayed submission, which must be approved by the audit committee of the listed company or the board of directors, as the case may be.
- Other information which may be useful for the shareholders or investors.

(4) Guidelines of the SET

The Stock Exchange of Thailand ("**SET**") has issued guidelines on the holding of the AGM of listed companies. Among other matters, the SET suggested that the shareholders may appoint independent directors of the listed companies to be their proxy for the AGM, and that the listed companies may consider sharing the AGM via an electronic channel to facilitate the shareholders who cannot be physically present at the meeting. In such case, the listed company must notify relevant details to the shareholders in the invitation to the meeting, and announce the same in the website of the listed companies or SET link.

For more articles and updates from our teams across the region on COVID-19 and related legal issues, please visit [Rajah & Tann Asia's COVID-19 Resource Centre](#).

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Contacts



Surasak Vajait
Managing Partner

D (66) 2656 1991
F (66) 2656 0833
surasak.v@rajahtann.com



Sui Lin Teoh
Partner

D (66) 2656 1991
F (66) 2656 0833
sui.lin.teoh@rajahtann.com



Melisa Uremovic
Partner

D (66) 2656 1991
F (66) 2656 0833
melisa.u@rajahtann.com



Nattarat Boonyatap
Partner

D (66) 2656 1991
F (66) 2656 0833
nattarat.boonyatap@rajahtann.com



Saroj Jongsaritwang
Partner

D (66) 2656 1991
F (66) 2656 0833
saroj.jongsariwang@rajahtann.com



Dussadee Rattanopas
Partner

D (66) 2656 1991
F (66) 2656 0833
dussadee.rattanopas@rajahtann.com



Visitsak Arunsuratpakdee
Partner

D (66) 2656 1991
F (66) 2656 0833
visitsak.a@rajahtann.com



Yingrak Treesaranuwattana
Senior Associate

D (66) 2656 1991
F (66) 2656 0833
yingrak.t@rajahtann.com



Wanvisa Puntawong
Senior Associate

D (66) 2656 1991
F (66) 2656 0833
wanvisa.puntawong@rajahtann.com



Jantapa Erjongmanee
Associate

D (66) 2656 1991
F (66) 2656 0833
jantapa.e@rajahtann.com

Our Regional Contacts

RAJAH & TANN | *Singapore*

Rajah & Tann Singapore LLP

T +65 6535 3600
sg.rajahtannasia.com

CHRISTOPHER & LEE ONG | *Malaysia*

Christopher & Lee Ong

T +60 3 2273 1919
F +60 3 2273 8310
www.christopherleeong.com

R&T SOK & HENG | *Cambodia*

R&T Sok & Heng Law Office

T +855 23 963 112 / 113
F +855 23 963 116
kh.rajahtannasia.com

RAJAH & TANN | *Myanmar*

Rajah & Tann Myanmar Company Limited

T +95 1 9345 343 / +95 1 9345 346
F +95 1 9345 348
mm.rajahtannasia.com

RAJAH & TANN 立杰上海

SHANGHAI REPRESENTATIVE OFFICE | *China*

**Rajah & Tann Singapore LLP
Shanghai Representative Office**

T +86 21 6120 8818
F +86 21 6120 8820
cn.rajahtannasia.com

GATMAYTAN YAP PATACSIL

GUTIERREZ & PROTACIO (C&G LAW) | *Philippines*

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

T +632 8894 0377 to 79 / +632 8894 4931 to 32
F +632 8552 1977 to 78
www.cagatlaw.com

ASSEGAF HAMZAH & PARTNERS | *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

RAJAH & TANN | *Thailand*

R&T Asia (Thailand) Limited

T +66 2 656 1991
F +66 2 656 0833
th.rajahtannasia.com

RAJAH & TANN LCT LAWYERS | *Vietnam*

Rajah & Tann LCT Lawyers

Ho Chi Minh City Office

T +84 28 3821 2382 / +84 28 3821 2673
F +84 28 3520 8206

RAJAH & TANN | *Lao PDR*

Rajah & Tann (Laos) Co., Ltd.

T +856 21 454 239
F +856 21 285 261
la.rajahtannasia.com

Hanoi Office

T +84 24 3267 6127
F +84 24 3267 6128
www.rajahtannlct.com

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