



Selvamalar Alagaratnam
Partner

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“Selvamalar Alagaratnam is a walking encyclopedia on Malaysian employment law.”

“What sets Selva apart is her ability to navigate complex matters with remarkable composure. Even in contentious situations, she remains composed, strategic and solution-oriented.”

Chambers Asia-Pacific 2026

Selvamalar is head of the firm's Employment practice. She provides integrated support to a wide range of clients in various industries on all employment/human resource related matters including compliance with all laws applicable to employment relationships; managing the exit of employees whether by way of collective reduction in force exercises or individual terminations for misconduct or poor performance; protection of confidential and proprietary information; investigations and disciplinary actions; trade unions, both recognition and collective bargaining; dispute resolution at all levels and business immigration.

She is sought after by corporations to assist them in managing and navigating the social criteria in ESG requirements or guidance in Business and Human Rights; and is currently a facilitator for the Leading for Impact (LIP) programme conducted by the Institute of Corporate Directors Malaysia (ICDM) on this topic.

She also provides strategic advice in internal fraud management advising clients in high profile and highly sensitive matters involving fraud perpetrated by employees; and the options available to the organisations to obtain redress against the wrongdoers.

Her client base is spread across various sectors and includes regulators.

Her practice extends to focused compliance on bribery and corruption.

Key Practice Areas

Employment Advisory and Compliance
Employment Disputes
Human Rights in Business
Employee Fraud Management and Investigations

Selected Experience

Employment Advisory and Compliance

Takeovers, Mergers & Acquisitions

- ❖ Advising, assisting and providing comprehensive support in local and global level transactions of business transfers and share acquisitions which includes due diligence, negotiations with the counter-party, drafting of contractual terms, efforts to ensure retention of key personnel and harmonisation of employment terms.

Employment Mobility

- ❖ Advising and assisting corporations on all aspects of global mobility including immigration, secondment arrangements and dual employment.

Crafting of applicable Human Resource Documentation

- ❖ Establishing or reviewing internal documents including employment contracts, handbooks, human resource (including legally mandated) policies, personal data notice and consents, incentive plans, to ensure compliance with local laws, international standards and recommended practice.

Reorganisation and Restructuring, Redundancy and Retrenchment

- ❖ Legal support to corporations in their reduction in force exercises.
- ❖ Assisting and guiding leading international audit, tax and advisory services firms on all employment matters that arise in the course of receiverships and liquidation of various companies.

Compliance

- ❖ Due diligence, advising, guiding and generally providing comprehensive support to ensure compliance with all applicable laws including local employment laws, anti-bribery and corruption laws, anti-money laundering laws and applicable business or international standards.

Employment Disputes

- ❖ Defending employers in claims for reinstatement to employment (arising from dismissals for misconduct/poor performance, constructive dismissals, retrenchments).
- ❖ Advising and representing clients in trade disputes such as claims for recognition by trade unions and collective bargaining.
- ❖ Representing clients in actions related to breaches of confidentiality obligations and restrictive covenants.
- ❖ Acting for clients in actions to recover illegally or fraudulently obtained monies from employees and ex-employees.

Human Rights in Business

- ❖ Supporting corporations to fulfil the broad range of social factors in ESG compliance including helping corporations ready themselves for listing or investment activities, heightening internal governance standards, crafting adequate policies, procedures and contractual terms, conducting internal audits or due diligences, building human rights into HR,

comprehensive risk management, investigations into suspected breaches, including cooperation with industry specific experts.

- ❖ Public relations and crisis management on an immediate basis to minimise business and reputational risks to the client.

Workplace Investigations

- ❖ Conducting workplace investigations into a variety of matters including fraud, harassment and conflict of interest; and providing guidance to internal and external investigation teams e.g. forensic/ surveillance teams.
- ❖ Advice on disciplinary action to be taken in conjunction with action taken by the relevant authorities or otherwise.
- ❖ Immediate public relations and internal crisis management strategy support to corporations including financial institutions in circumstances involving alleged fraudulent practices by employees or practices that may prejudice the business or matters which are highly sensitive.
- ❖ Liaising with the relevant authorities where investigations reveal criminal or other non-compliance.
- ❖ Immediate and on-going guidance on managing out high level or high-profile employees with minimal exposure, both in legal and reputational aspects.

Bribery & Corruption

- ❖ Advising and assisting clients in risk management, including in planning or conducting due diligence exercises; drafting or review of relevant policies and procedures; advising clients on adequate procedures that should be undertaken to avoid corporate liability for bribery and corruption; creating, managing and implementing an efficient anti bribery management system; training and the management of a whistle-blower channel.
- ❖ Advising on the requirements and obligations under the relevant local laws governing reporting, investigations and inquiries pursuant to an actual or suspected non-compliance.

Qualifications & Professional Affiliations

Qualifications:

Advocate and Solicitor, High Court of Malaya (1994)
Certificate of Legal Practice (1993)
LL.B (Hons), University of London (1992)

Professional Affiliations/Positions:

Member, Anti-Sexual Harassment Tribunal
Governor of Malaysian Institute of Corporate Governance (MICG)
Past Chair, International Bar Association's Employment & Industrial Relations Law Committee
President, Malaysian Society for Labour and Social Security Laws (local chapter of International Society for Labour and Social Security Laws)
International Vice Chair, Outreach to International Lawyers Committee for American Bar Association Section of Labor and Employment

Publications & Talks

Authored the following publications:

- Presented several papers on Employment and Industrial law at various conferences and seminars in Malaysia and abroad.
- Co-author, Law of Dismissal, Commerce Clearing House (CCH).
- Co-author, Malaysia Court Forms – Employment Law Section.
- Co-author, Labour Law Handbook.
- Co-author, Legal Guide to Employee Dispute Malaysia.
- Author, Malaysian Chapter-Corporate Immigration Law: A Practitioner's Guide to the Global Labour Market, Volumes I and II, Oxford University Press Inc.
- Author of the chapter on Sexual Harassment, Law and Practice of Employment Law in Malaysia

Accolades

- Ranked Band 1 for Employment & Industrial Relation by Chambers Asia-Pacific from 2009 - 2026
- Listed as a "*Leading Individual*" by Legal 500 Asia Pacific 2020 – 2025 in Labour and Employment
- Listed as a "*Litigation Star*" by Benchmark Litigation Asia Pacific 2020 – 2025
- Recognised in the Top 100 Women in Litigation- Asia Pacific Award by Benchmark Litigation Asia-Pacific 2022 – 2025
- Recognised as a "*Leading Lawyer*" by asialaw Profiles from 2016 – 2025
- Recognised as a "*Thought Leader*" for Employment and Industrial Relations in Who's Who Legal in 2017 and 2018
- Recognised as a "*Thought Leader*" in Who's Who Legal Thought Leaders: Labour & Employment 2019 - 2025
- Listed as one of the world's leading practitioners in Management Labour & Employment by Who's Who Legal in 2014 – 2017
- "*Selvamalar Alagaratnam is a walking encyclopedia on Malaysian employment law. What sets Selva apart is her ability to navigate complex matters with remarkable composure. Even in contentious situations, she remains composed, strategic and solution-oriented.*" – Chambers Asia Pacific 2026
- "*Selvamalar Alagaratnam and Sara Lau Der Yin give a helicopter view on the matter at hand and provide practical legal solutions therein.*" - Legal 500 Asia Pacific 2024

- *"Selvamalar is very easy to reach at any time, with the ability to give advice that is frank and straightforward."* - Chambers Asia Pacific 2022
- *"Easy to communicate with, excellent with response times and concise in her advice."* - Chambers Asia Pacific 2021
- *"She is one of the best employment lawyers and is very knowledgeable."* - Chambers Asia Pacific 2020
- *"Highly experienced, professional and wonderful to deal with"* - Chambers Asia Pacific 2019
- *"Selvamalar is very well respected among market sources...She regularly acts on issues linked to breaches of confidentiality and employment contracts."* - Chambers Asia Pacific 2018