

MECA

EMPLOYERS CONSULTING AGENCY

MECA IR CONVENTION 2026



30TH ANNIVERSARY

7 & 8 OCTOBER 2026

CONNEXION CONFERENCE & EVENT CENTRE

REFRAMING IR: WHEN COMPLIANCE IS NOT ENOUGH

WHY LEGALLY SOUND
DECISIONS STILL LEAD TO CONFLICT

CONVENTION AGENDA

— 7 OCTOBER 2026 —

★ DAY ONE ★

09.00 – 09.30	Welcome & 30th Anniversary Address MECA at 30: From Compliance to Credibility	  Dharmen Sivalingam CEO MECA
09.30 – 10.45	TOPIC Cinematic Experience: Misconduct & Domestic Inquiry What is Best Practice and How to Do It	 Film Screening with Expert Analysis
10.45 – 11.15	Morning Break	
11.15 – 12.00	TOPIC The Psychology of Escalation Why Employees Sue, Fight Back and Refuse to Let Go	
12.00 – 13.00	TOPIC Expert Dialogue: VSS & MSS The Art of Securing Separation Settlements Without Disputes	 Mar Azleena Omar Regional Human Resources Lead VTI  Yong Hon Cheong Partner ZAID IBRAHIM & CO.
13.00 – 14.00	Lunch	
14.00 – 15.00	TOPIC Live Theatre Experience: The Bias Nobody Sees Unconscious Bias in Workplace Decision-Making	 KL Shakespeare Players Theatre Company
15.00 – 16.00	TOPIC Expert Dialogue: Mental Health, Medical Leave & Workplace Accommodation Compassion, Capability and Business Reality	 Dharmen Sivalingam CEO MECA  Shariffullah Majid Partner LEE HISHAMMUDDIN ALLEN & GLEDHILL
16.00 – 16.30	TOPIC Day 1 Reflections	 Dharmen Sivalingam CEO MECA
16.30 – 17.00	Afternoon Break + Networking	

CONVENTION AGENDA

8 OCTOBER 2026

DAY TWO

09.00 – 09.45	TOPIC Expert Dialogue: Union Recognition and Organised Resistance Understanding the Conditions That Fuel Collective Action	 Arun Kumar Lawyer ARUN KUMAR & ASSOCIATES  Dharmen Sivalingam CEO MECA
09.45 – 10.30	TOPIC Expert Insight: You Say Underperforming, They Say Unfair. The Reality of Performance Assessments	
10.30 – 11.00	Morning Break	
11.00 – 12.00	TOPIC Cinematic Experience: Performance Management The Making of a Dismissal Case	 Film Screening with Expert Analysis
12.00 – 13.00	TOPIC Genuine Reorganisation or Disguised Dismissal? Lessons from Industrial Court Decisions	 Sujatha Selliah Partner DSP  Heidi Syahira Hamzah Legal Associate DSP  Kirta Viloshen Ravindra Kumar Legal Associate DSP
13.00 – 14.00	Lunch	
14.00 – 15.15	TOPIC Cinematic Experience: Retrenchment & Reorganisation When Business Necessity Meets Human Reality	 Film Screening with Expert Analysis
15.15 – 15.45	Afternoon Break	
15.45 – 16.30	TOPIC Signature Panel Discussion: If You Think You Have a Strong Case, Think Again The Realities of Industrial Court Litigation	 Datuk S. Nantha Balan RETIRED JUDGE, Court of Appeal & presently a CONSULTANT with Messrs. Adnan Sundra & Low  Wong Keat Ching PARTNER ZUL RAFIQUE & PARTNERS
16.30 – 17.00	TOPIC Closing Keynote, Lucky Draw, & Convention Close	 Dharmen Sivalingam CEO MECA

AGENDA DETAILS

7 OCTOBER 2026

★ DAY ONE ★

9.00AM - 9.30AM	Welcome & 30th Anniversary Address MECA at 30: From Compliance to Credibility For decades, employers have understood that the key to managing workplace disputes is legal compliance. Yet many disputes arise not because the law was ignored, but because employees perceived decisions to be unfair, inconsistent, or lacking in empathy. As Industrial Relations continues to evolve, organisations must look beyond process and documentation to understand the role of trust, communication, and workplace perception. This opening address sets the stage for a new way of thinking about Industrial Relations – one focused not merely on compliance, but on credibility.
9.30AM - 10.45AM	CINEMATIC EXPERIENCE Misconduct & Domestic Inquiry What is Best Practice and How to Do It A realistic workplace misconduct scenario brought to life through film, followed by expert analysis of how investigations, documentation, and management conduct can strengthen, or undermine, an employer position.
11.15AM - 12.00PM	The Psychology of Escalation Why Employees Sue, Fight Back, and Refuse to Let Go Behind every workplace dispute lies a human story. Guided by an organisational behaviour expert, this session explores why some employees move on while others become determined to challenge workplace decisions. Discover the psychological factors that shape perceptions of fairness, drive conflict, and often determine whether a workplace issue is resolved or escalates into litigation.
12.00PM - 1.00PM	EXPERT DIALOGUE VSS & MSS The Art of Securing Separation Settlements Without Disputes Why do some separation exercises proceed smoothly while others trigger resentment, resistance, and claims? Led by experienced negotiators who have managed hundreds of separation discussions, this session explores the art of securing agreement through fairness, communication, and trust. Learn how to navigate difficult conversations, manage expectations, and achieve closure without escalating tensions.
2.00PM - 3.00PM	LIVE THEATRE EXPERIENCE The Bias Nobody Sees Unconscious Bias in Workplace Decision-Making Bias is often invisible to those who hold it. Through an engaging live theatre performance, this session demonstrates how unconscious assumptions can influence recruitment, performance management, disciplinary action, and promotion decisions. Participants will gain insight into how hidden biases can affect workplace outcomes and employee perceptions of fairness.
3.00PM - 4.00PM	EXPERT DIALOGUE Mental Health, Medical Leave & Workplace Accommodation Compassion, Capability and Business Reality Requests for work-from-home arrangements, workplace accommodations, and extended flexibility following illness, surgery, or mental health challenges are becoming increasingly common and increasingly complex. Bringing together the perspectives of a medical practitioner, HR leader, and employment law expert, this session explores how employers can assess such requests fairly and consistently while balancing operational realities. Gain practical insights into managing medical certifications, flexible work requests, workplace accommodations, and the difficult questions that arise when compassion, capability, and business needs intersect.
4.00PM - 4.30PM	DAY 1 REFLECTIONS Key lessons from the day on perception, psychology, bias, and the loss of control that occurs when workplace disputes escalate beyond the organisation.

AGENDA DETAILS

8 OCTOBER 2026

★ DAY TWO ★

9.00AM – 9.45AM	EXPERT DIALOGUE Union Recognition and Organised Resistance Understanding the Conditions That Fuel Collective Action By the time a recognition claim arrives, the real story often began much earlier. This session explores the organisational conditions that encourage collective action, the warning signs employers frequently miss, and the practical realities of managing recognition claims once they arise. Gain insights from management, labour, and legal perspectives on building workplaces where employee concerns are addressed before they develop into organised resistance.
9.45AM – 10.30AM	EXPERT INSIGHT You Say Underperforming, They Say Unfair. The Reality of Performance Assessments Performance disputes are rarely about ratings alone. Employees often challenge not only the outcome, but the fairness of the process that led to it. This dialogue explores the growing disconnect between management expectations and employee perceptions, examining how feedback, goal setting, performance reviews, and performance improvement plans can either build trust or create litigation risk. Join our experts as they discuss what truly constitutes a fair and effective performance management process in today's workplace.
11.00AM – 12.00PM	CINEMATIC EXPERIENCE Performance Management The Making of a Dismissal Case Follow a performance management journey from initial concerns to termination and examine the pitfalls, missed opportunities, and interventions that often determine whether disputes arise.
12.00PM – 1.00PM	Genuine Reorganisation or Disguised Dismissal? Lessons from Industrial Court Decisions Employers frequently rely on reorganisation, restructuring, and redundancy exercises to adapt to changing business needs. Yet many such exercises ultimately find themselves scrutinised before the Industrial Court. This session examines how the courts distinguish between a genuine business reorganisation and a dismissal disguised as restructuring. Through a review of key Industrial Court decisions, participants will explore the factors courts consider, including business rationale, redundancy selection, redistribution of duties, creation of new positions, replacement hiring, consultation efforts, and documentary evidence. The session provides practical guidance on how employers can better structure and document organisational change to withstand legal challenge.
2.00PM – 3.15PM	CINEMATIC EXPERIENCE Retrenchment & Reorganisation When Business Necessity Meets Human Reality Retrenchment may be driven by commercial realities, but it is experienced by employees on a deeply personal level. Through a compelling cinematic presentation, this session follows a company navigating a restructuring exercise and the human reactions that accompany it. From uncertainty and speculation to communication challenges and questions of fairness, attendees will gain valuable insight into how perceptions are formed during organisational change and what employers can do to minimise conflict and preserve trust.
3.45PM – 4.30PM	SIGNATURE PANEL DISCUSSION If You Think You Have a Strong Case, Think Again The Realities of Industrial Court Litigation Many employers enter litigation convinced they have a strong case, only to discover that workplace decisions are viewed through very different lenses. Bringing together lawyers, HR practitioners, and speakers with judicial experience, this panel explores how fairness, credibility, perception, and proportionality influence the assessment of employment disputes. Understanding these perspectives may be the key to resolving issues before they escalate, reminding us that effective Industrial Relations requires more than compliance alone - it requires the careful management of perception.
4.30PM – 5.00PM	CLOSING KEYNOTE, LUCKY DRAW, & CONVENTION CLOSE

OUR EXPERT SPEAKERS

VOICES OF AUTHORITY.
PERSPECTIVES THAT MATTER.



**Dharmen
Sivalingam**

CEO
MECA Employers
Consulting Agency



**Mar Azleena
Omar**

Regional Human Resources Lead
VTTI



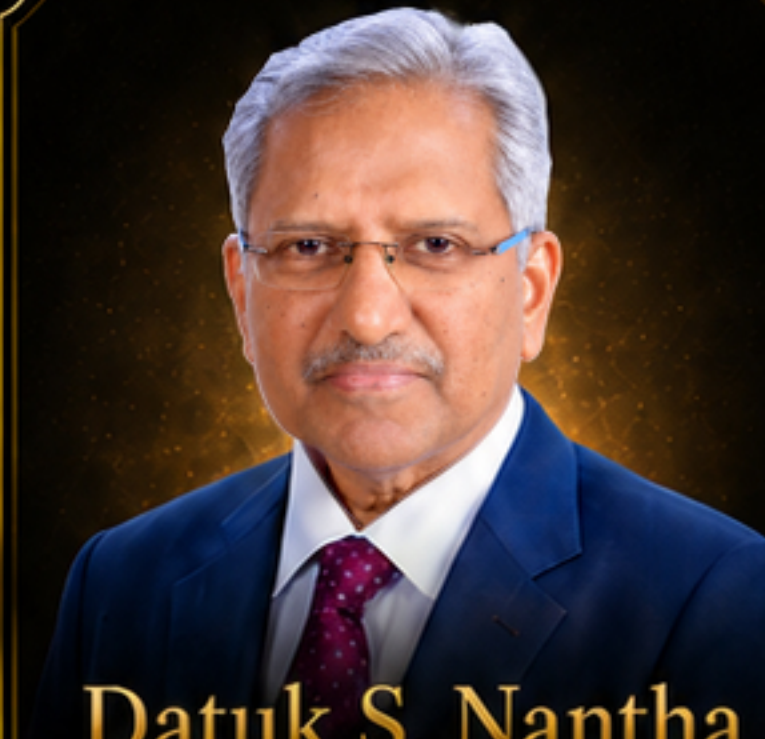
**Yong
Hon Cheong**

Partner
Zaid Ibrahim & Co.



**Wong
Keat Ching**

Partner
Zul Rafique & Partners



**Datuk S. Nantha
Balan**

Retired Judge, Court of Appeal
& presently a Consultant
with Messrs. Adnan Sundra & Low



**Shariffullah
Majeed**

Partner
Lee Hishammuddin Allen &
Gledhill



AND MANY MORE INDUSTRY LEADERS & SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS



MECA

MECA IR CONVENTION 2026

TICKET PRICING



30TH ANNIVERSARY

REGULAR TICKET PRICE AFTER 15TH AUGUST 2026

RM3,500

EARLY BIRD RATES

Valid until 15th August 2026

MECA MEMBER

RM2,450



30% OFF

NON-MEMBER

RM3,150

10% OFF



MECA MEMBERS SAVE MORE THAN

RM1,000+



GROUP DISCOUNTS



2 DELEGATES

ADDITIONAL

RM150 OFF

/ DELEGATE



3-4 DELEGATES

ADDITIONAL

RM250 OFF

/ DELEGATE

CORPORATE REGISTRATIONS



5 delegates
or more?

Contact us for a
customised corporate
registration package.

SPEAKER

PROFILES



30TH ANNIVERSARY



Dharmen Sivalingam

CEO

MECA EMPLOYERS CONSULTING AGENCY

Dharmen, an Industrial Relations practitioner with more than 20 years' experience, has supported numerous employers on every aspect of Industrial Relations.

He has experience in the end-to-end management of what can be a delicate relationship between an employer and an employee. He represents only employers and has acted as Counsel for many employers in litigious matters before the Malaysian Courts. He has written numerous articles on Industrial Relations issues at various platforms.

Dharmen has earned a reputation for success in IR disputes because of his distinct ability to process data quickly and distinguish issues in question, thereby producing solutions which are clear and accurate. Dharmen read law at the University of Wolverhampton and was called to the Malaysian Bar in 2001. He commenced legal practice with one of the larger legal firms in Malaysia and set up DSP in 2013.



Mar Azleena Omar

REGIONAL HUMAN RESOURCES LEAD

VTI

Mar Azleena Omar is a people-centric HR leader with over 35 years of extensive experience across diverse industries and organizations. Renowned for her strong emphasis on strategic business partnering combined with hands-on operational expertise, she has built a solid foundation across the full HR spectrum - ranging from talent management to organizational development.

Throughout her enduring career, Azleena has demonstrated a deep passion for coaching leaders, building organizational capabilities, and driving meaningful cultural transformation. Her ability to align people strategies with business goals has consistently contributed to high-performing teams and sustainable growth. In addition to her corporate leadership, she finds fulfillment in mentoring young adults, aiming to positively shape their personal and professional journeys.

MECA

IR CONVENTION 2026

SPEAKER

PROFILES



30TH ANNIVERSARY



Yong Hon Cheong

PARTNER
ZAID IBRAHIM & CO.

Yong Hon Cheong heads the Human Capital Services practice at Zaid Ibrahim & Co. On the advisory side, he has handled employment issues in some of the country's largest M&A projects and works regularly with international law firms and multinationals on Malaysian employment matters in global and regional corporate exercises. His clients span automotive, hospitality, manufacturing, consulting and financial services, and he increasingly advises on ESG-related social issues such as modern slavery and anti-harassment.

A regular figure at the Industrial Court, Hon Cheong represents corporate clients in employment and industrial relations disputes, with extensive experience in judicial review and appeals before the Court of Appeal and Federal Court. His litigation work spans unjust dismissal, trade disputes and collective bargaining.

He is a sought-after speaker on employment law and contributes articles to international and regional publications. Since 2011, he has been ranked under 'Employment & Industrial Relations' in Chambers Asia Pacific.



Wong Keat Ching

PARTNER
ZUL RAFIQUE & PARTNERS

Wong Keat Ching is a Partner in the Employment & Industrial Relations, Litigation, and Legal Forensic Investigation & Compliance practice groups, and serves as a key contact for the ESG practice group. She was admitted as an Advocate and Solicitor of the High Court of Malaya in 1998.

An active litigator, Keat Ching has appeared at all levels of the Malaysian Courts, advising on workplace misconduct, corporate restructuring, labour due diligence, legal forensic investigations, and related legal actions. She is Co-Chair of the Malaysian Bar Council's Industrial & Employment Law Committee and Chair of the LAWASIA Employment Law Committee.

She is also an active trainer for the Bar Council Advocacy Training Course and speaks regularly at local and international conferences.

SPEAKER

PROFILES

30TH ANNIVERSARY

Datuk S. Nantha Balan

RETIRED JUDGE, COURT OF APPEAL &
PRESENTLY A CONSULTANT
WITH MESSRS. ADNAN SUNDRA & LOW

Datuk S. Nantha Balan is a retired Judge of the Court of Appeal of Malaysia with more than three decades of legal experience across private practice and the Judiciary. Called to the Malaysian Bar in 1988, he spent 25 years in active litigation as a Partner in the Dispute Resolution groups of two major Kuala Lumpur firms before his appointment to the Bench in 2013. He was elevated to the Court of Appeal in 2019 and retired in October 2025.

His practice and judicial work spanned a broad range of areas, including constitutional and administrative law, contract, tort, company law, banking, land law and industrial relations. On the Bench he authored numerous reported judgments, including a notable dissent on citizenship rights for children born abroad to Malaysian mothers married to foreign nationals.

A strong advocate of mediation and alternative dispute resolution, he is a regular seminar speaker, an advocacy trainer for the Malaysian Bar, and Co-General Editor of Malaysian Civil Procedure (2024).



Shariffullah Majeed

PARTNER
LEE HISHAMUDDIN ALLEN & GLEDHILL

Shariffullah Majeed was admitted as an advocate and solicitor of the High Court of Malaya in 2008. His practice focuses on industrial relations and employment law, where he advises multinational corporations and government-linked companies on employment-related matters, including misconduct, sexual harassment complaints, workplace investigations, whistleblowing, retrenchment, and disputes involving employment contracts.

He has also acted in civil claims arising from employment contracts and tortious liabilities, and regularly speaks at conferences on topics such as intellectual property rights post-employment, ESG considerations in employment, mental health at the workplace, and discrimination. Shariffullah collaborates with local universities through research papers and lectures on industrial relations and employment law.

He was ranked as a Leading Partner by The Legal 500 Asia-Pacific 2026, Band 3 by Chambers Asia-Pacific 2026, and recognised by Benchmark Litigation Asia-Pacific 2026.