

COVID-19 Flash Update: Government Guidance Affecting Migrant Workers and their Employers in Thailand and Neighbouring Countries

The COVID-19 situation is evolving rapidly. In this update, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) provides information for migrant workers and their employers on government decisions relevant to migrant workers in Thailand, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar.

Important Note: Please note that this is only a summary of the information provided by the above governments. Every effort is made to ensure information is up to date, however, as the situation is changing quickly you are encouraged to seek further information by contacting the Ministry of Labour or respective embassies directly.

Updates and Information from IOM Thailand

A Thai-language version of IOM's **COVID-19: Guidance for employers and business to enhance migrant worker protection during the current health crisis** is [now available](#).

IOM Thailand is now able to receive **individual donations** through the global website:
<https://thailand.iom.int/donate>

- Individual donations received through this channel will all be used for direct assistance to meet the needs of migrants who are affected by COVID-19 (e.g. food and hygiene items).
- With small-scale funding already received, IOM Thailand has already reached a number of migrants on the ground. With your additional support, we can reach out more of those migrants most at risk.

IOM Thailand is monitoring border movements and providing assistance to migrants and the Royal Thai Government. For updates and to access IOM tools and guidelines related to COVID-19, please check here:
<https://thailand.iom.int/iom-thailand-covid-19-response>

Thailand

NEW registration procedure for migrant workers in Thai fishing industry

On 29 April, the Office of the Prime Minister announced new registration procedures for migrant workers in the Thai fishing industry.

[Two rounds](#) of registration are scheduled. Employers and migrant workers can elect to participate in either round:

- First Round: 1 May to 30 June, 2020
- Second Round: 1 July to 30 September, 2020

According to the new procedures, **migrant workers** must:

1. be at least 18 years of age;
2. hold a valid passport;
3. approach one of the [Fisheries Provincial Offices located in one of 22 coastal provinces](#) (or other assigned authority) for collection of bio-data, including finger print and eye scan.

For **migrant fishers changing employers**, migrant workers must have been unemployed for no longer than 15 days for migrants on registered Name Lists; and 30 days for migrants with MOU status. Under Thai law, the right to change employers only applies when migrant workers have been dismissed by their former employer, or in situations where the former employer:

- passed away;
- went bankrupt;
- was physically abusive;
- did not comply with labor protection laws;
- required the worker to work in dangerous worksites, which affected the worker physically and/or mentally.

The **employer** must support migrant workers during the above-mentioned procedures with:

1. **Registration Form:** employer must submit the [registration form](#) along with:
 - Employment contract stating the worker's benefit package;
 - Fishing permission license;
 - Vessel registration book;
 - List of current workers and captain on board.
2. **Medical Check-Up and Health Insurance:** the employer is responsible for taking migrant workers to the hospital to complete medical clearance. The employer must purchase medical insurance for the worker, unless the migrant worker has valid health insurance and a valid medical certificate obtained within the past year. The employer must cover all expenses related to this process. Should the worker not pass the medical check-up, the worker will be deported. Note: According to Thai law, work permits cannot be issued to workers suffering from: leprosy, advanced stage tuberculosis, elephantiasis, chronic alcoholism, drug addiction, and/or tertiary syphilis.
3. **Bank Account:** the employer is responsible for supporting the worker to open a bank account, including covering bank fees related to opening the account, and salary transactions.

Extension of State of Emergency until 31 May

Reference: <http://www.thaigov.go.th>

The national State of Emergency was officially extended until 31 May, under a Cabinet Resolution on 28 April. Key points are summarized as below:

- The nighttime curfew remains in place: the nationwide curfew should be observed daily from 10:00 PM to 4:00 AM. Additional provincial restrictions remain in place until 31 May. More details on the additional restrictions can be found on page 1 in [IOM's Flash Update #3](#).
- The closure of land and sea border checkpoints has been extended to 31 May.
- The incoming flight ban has been extended to 31 May. Exemptions apply to all state and military aircraft, emergency landings, humanitarian, medical, cargo, and repatriation flights. Some domestic flights commenced operation on 1 May.
- Travel between provinces is not recommended but possible. Travelers must comply with provincial regulations, which have been consolidated by Thailand's Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) on this [website](#).
- Local hospitals and authorities must plan to increase the frequency of community-based COVID-19 testing, especially for migrant workers and service sector workers.

Royal Thai Government to ease the lockdown measures from 3 May

Reference: [The Royal Thai Government](#), 30 April 2020

The Government has proposed plans to ease the lockdown for the following businesses, subject to compliance with hygiene and social distancing standards:*

1. Fresh markets, floating markets, community markets, walking streets, street vendor operations;
2. Food shops outside malls, including drinks shops, ice-cream shops, and small restaurants (social distancing measures must be applied for sit-in customers);
3. Small retail businesses;
4. Barbers and hairdressers, but only for haircuts, washing and drying.

*Full list of places expected to be permitted to reopen can be accessed [HERE](#).

Thai Red Cross and Migrant Working Group distributing survival kits

From 1 May onwards, the Thai Red Cross and Thailand Migrant Working Group (of which IOM is a member organization) will accept requests for the distribution of survival kits called 'Than Num Jai' (*the Stream of Good Will*). Employers and migrant workers who are in self-quarantine or who became unemployed due to COVID-19 are eligible to submit requests. The Provincial Thai Red Cross committee and volunteers will support distribution. Requests should be submitted to contact@mwgthailand.org and should include:

1. Number of packages needed;
2. Location details;
3. Worker's occupation;
4. Other relevant information, e.g. special requests for dependents, personal health conditions.

The survival kits contain essential items including: 5kg raw white rice, 10 cans of sardines, 30 packs of instant noodles, soap, detergent, garbage bags, egg curry, spicy tuna, shampoo, fabric bag. The initiative is fully funded by the Thai Red Cross.

Donations are welcomed via the QR code below:



COVID-19 Hotline for Migrants launched

On 29 April, the Department of Disease Control (DDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) launched a COVID-19 hotline for health-related enquiries. The hotline operates in three migrant languages: Lao, Myanmar and Khmer. The operators are native speakers of these languages, largely comprised of NGO workers employed in Thailand. Operators were trained by the DDC and WHO.

To contact the hotline, dial 1422 and use extension **81 for Khmer, 82 for Lao, 83 for Myanmar**. The hotline operates daily (except on weekends and public holidays) from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, starting from 1 May. Callers will be charged at the local rate. The hotline can only be contacted from Thai phone numbers.



IOM Thailand Chief of Mission, Dana Graber Ladek, attended the Hotline launch event on 29 April 2020

The 2nd Thai-Myanmar friendship bridge in Mae Sot preparing to reopen

Reference: [TV Channel 7](#), 29 April

The Governor of Tak Province announced preparations to reopen the 2nd Thai-Myanmar friendship bridge in Mae Sot on 1 May for regular citizens (NOT migrant workers) of both Thai and Myanmar sides, to cross over by foot for shopping.

Thailand has extended land border closures until 31 May, and at the time of writing the Myawaddy-Mae Sot border had not opened. Both governments are coordinating to facilitate the possible return of Myanmar nationals via this border point. IOM is closely monitoring the situation and expects a further announcement on 3 May.

Myanmar

Repatriation flight planned for stranded Myanmar nationals in Thailand

Reference: The Embassy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar in Bangkok, 25 April 2020

Myanmar has suspended all international commercial flights until 15 May 2020. The Government is organizing repatriation flights to Thailand for Myanmar nationals wishing to return.

The cost of the return trip must be covered by passengers. Myanmar nationals who intend to join the flight should provide a copy of their passport, and personal details required for travel arrangements, to the Embassy of Myanmar in Bangkok, using the following contact information:

- Daw Khin Mar Lar Win +66 06 2716 6062
- Daw Su Sandar +66 06 2714 0140
- Daw Khin Nw'e Win +66 09 1454 6051
- Daw Aye Sandar Htay +66 09 9037 0235
- Daw Aye Chan Moe +66 09 4508 6707

The flight schedule will be arranged based on demand.

Upon arrival in Myanmar, all passengers must undergo 21-days of quarantine in a community-based facility (individuals can choose either Government quarantine centres or hotels) followed by 7-days of self-quarantine. The cost in a Government quarantine centre is covered by the Government, while the cost in a hotel must be paid by individuals.

Stay at Home order in three additional Townships in Yangon

Reference: [Ministry of Health and Sports](#), Order 43/2020, 24 April 2020

Three more Townships in Yangon are now under a stay at home order: Mingaladon Township, Tamway Township, and Botahtaung Township, in addition to seven Townships under existing restrictions. Detailed regulations and exemptions can be found on page 2-3 in [IOM's Flash Update #6](#).



IOM Myanmar, together with Government Basic Health Staff, packaging WASH consumable kits for distribution to returning migrants at the Myawaddy MRC, 11 April 2020

Myanmar prepares to receive 2,500 returnees per day at Myawaddy border gate

Reference: The Embassy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar in Bangkok, No. 613/11 2020

The Myanmar Embassy has informed Thai authorities that Myanmar is ready to accept 2,500 returnees per day at the Myawaddy-Mae Sot border gate from 1 May onwards. The returnees must undergo COVID-19 screening and quarantine on the Myanmar side.

Thailand has extended land border closures until 31 May, and at the time of writing the Myawaddy-Mae Sot border had not opened. Both governments are coordinating to facilitate the possible return of Myanmar nationals via this border point. IOM is closely monitoring the situation and expects a further announcement on 3 May.

Cambodia

Businesses are allowed to suspend labour contracts and Social Security Fund contributions

Reference: Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT), Letter No. 045/20kb

Effective from 17 April, the MoLVT has granted permission for employers to temporarily suspend issuing employment contracts and contributing to workers' Social Security Funds. This applies particularly to factories, enterprises, business owners of garment factories, and travel agencies. This applies to businesses in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Preah Sihanouk, Kep and Kampot provinces, including hotels, guesthouses, restaurants, and tourism agencies, that are severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Draft Law on State of Emergency signed

The draft Law on State of Emergency was approved on 10 April 2020 during the 4th Session of National Assembly. It entered into force on 29 April 2020. This does NOT mean that Cambodia has declared a State of Emergency, but establishes the legal framework for the Government to declare one, should it be deemed necessary.



IOM Cambodia and Anti-Human Trafficking Police raise awareness on safe migration at Ou Beichoan Point of Entry, 29 April 2020

Lao People's Democratic Republic

Six restrictions to be eased after 3 May

Ref: [Vientiane Times](#), 28 April

The Lao National COVID-19 Taskforce Committee proposed the following six restrictions to be lifted, provided no new COVID-19 cases are recorded in the period from 13 April through to 3 May:

1. Organizations can resume work in offices or continue flexible working arrangements;
2. Necessary travel within provinces can be approved;
3. Training sessions, meetings, and religious ceremonies with up to 50 people can be

conducted as long as they comply with COVID-19 prevention measures;

4. Outdoor exercise and/or sporting events with up to 50 people can be held as long as they comply with COVID-19 prevention measures;
5. Factories and major development projects can resume operations;
6. Kindergartens, primary and secondary schools can reopen.

The following restrictions will remain in place beyond 3 May:

1. Ban on non-essential inter-provincial travel;
2. Closure of local and international borders for non-essential travel;
3. Closure of entertainment venues, karaoke bars, spas, massage parlours, night markets, and indoor sports facilities;
4. Ban on entry visas for citizens of countries affected by COVID-19;
5. Gatherings of more than 50 people.

An official announcement from the Prime Minister will be issued before 3 May. IOM is closely monitoring for updates and is seeking clarification on the criteria for “essential travel”.

Lao Patients with special conditions are eligible to receive treatment in Nongkhai, Thailand

Reference: Nongkhai 0017.3/8503, 27 April 2020

The Governor of Nongkhai province in Thailand announced that Lao patients can cross the border and seek medical treatment in Thai hospitals in the province, under the following conditions:

- Patients must be Lao nationals with chronic ailments, namely cancer, cardiovascular disease and stroke, who need continuous treatment;
- Only one caretaker is allowed to join the patient, both should comply with the [Nongkhai provincial quarantine rules](#) while in Thailand;
- The patient must make an appointment with the hospital in advance;
- The patient must not take public transportation, including taxis, to reach the hospital;
- In emergency situations, the decision to allow entry must be made by the immigration authorities in Nongkhai on a case-by-case basis.

This COVID-19 Flash Update: Government Guidance Affecting Migrant Workers and their Employers in Thailand and Neighbouring Countries, has been produced by IOM Thailand. For more information, please contact ThailandLHD@iom.int

Important disclaimer: The information presented in this document does not necessarily reflect the views of IOM. The inclusion or presentation of material does not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IOM or of any of its members or partners.
