

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 Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Thailand.

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

IOM Thailand has updated [Tips for Migrant Workers Whose Job is Affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic](#), providing information for migrant workers on COVID-19 prevention measures, social protection, access to services, and procedures for changing employers and extending stay and work permits.

IOM Lao People's Democratic Republic published [Returning Migrants Survey # 2](#). This is the second report in a series highlighting COVID-19's social and economic effects on migrants returning from Thailand.

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

State of Emergency extended from 1 to 30 November 2020

Reference: [Government Public Relations Department](#), 29 October 2020

On 29 October 2020, the Thailand Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA) and the Cabinet approved the extension of the State of Emergency Order to 30 November 2020. This extension, the sixth since

March 2020, allows the Royal Thai Government to continue implementing COVID-19 preventative measures in the country.

The Department of Employment issues reminder on the established process for work permit extensions

Reference: Department of Employment's [official website](#), 27 October 2020

The Department of Employment (DOE) has issued a notification reminding employers of three groups of migrant workers to complete visa extension and medical examination processes on or before 31 January 2021. These steps need to be completed in order to obtain a Work Permit card by 31 March 2021. Migrant workers who were eligible for stay and work permit extensions detailed in [IOM's Flash Update #17](#) must have a valid Work Permit card after this date.

This announcement applies to the following three groups of migrant workers, who are eligible **provided that their employers submitted a hiring request for them to the DOE by 31 October 2020:**

- Group 1 - MOU workers who have completed four years of employment.
- Group 2 - MOU workers whose work permits are invalid due to a change in employers.

Note: This is an exemption to Thai law which normally requires MOU workers to complete the process of changing employers within a

30-day period of finishing work with their previous employer.

- Group 3 - Pink card holders whose work permits expired on or before 30 September 2020.

The DOE noted that the submission of work permit extension requests to the DOE is not the final stage of the process. The process involves several steps, including obtaining medical clearance at a designated Thai hospital and obtaining a Non-LA visa at an Immigration Bureau office **by 31 January 2021**, and obtaining a Non-Thai Identification Card at a District Office of the Ministry of Interior **by 31 March 2021**.

Migrant workers who have not completed their work permit extension before 31 March 2021 will be subject to a fine of THB5,000 to THB50,000 and deportation. Employers found to be employing migrant workers irregularly are subject to a fine of THB10,000 to THB100,000 per employed irregular migrant worker and/or imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year, and a ban on hiring migrant workers for three years.

Myanmar

Update on safe return arrangements for Myanmar migrants in Thailand

Reference: General Administrative Department, Myawaddy and Department of Labour, Tanintharyi region and Shan state

Between 22 March and 3 November 2020, 126,015 Myanmar nationals were safely repatriated from Thailand through safe return arrangements. For more details on these arrangements, see page 2 in [IOM's Flash Update #10](#).

IOM's COVID-19 response in Myanmar

IOM Myanmar continued to provide humanitarian support for vulnerable returnees in a distressed situation, reaching a total of 207 migrants during the period from 23 October to 4 November 2020. IOM covered their onward transportation and meal costs and provided

clothing items and medical support in close collaboration with Kayin State authorities.



IOM Myanmar providing humanitarian support for returned migrant workers at Myawaddy, 26 October 2020

Cambodia

Approval to Extend Expired Black Passports for Cambodian migrant workers in Thailand

Reference: [Letter of the Royal Embassy of Cambodia in Thailand No. 790/20/SKB3](#), 29 October 2020

The Royal Embassy of Cambodia in Thailand informed Cambodian workers holding Black Passports, also known as a Travel Document (TD) (a specific passport type issued to migrant workers from Cambodia in Thailand with a validity of five years), that Prime Minister Hun Sen has approved that expired TDs can be extended by the Royal Cambodian Embassy. This approval has been granted to support Cambodian workers in Thailand who could not return to Cambodia due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Migrant workers can apply to extend their TD at the Royal Cambodian Embassy in Bangkok, starting from 29 October 2020. At the time of writing details on the application procedure were not available; IOM is closely monitoring for further announcements.

IOM's COVID-19 response in Cambodia

IOM Cambodia reached 101 community members from three villages of Anlong Vil and Vaot Ta Moem communes, Sangkae district, Battambang province through a community outreach campaign conducted on 3-4 November 2020. The outreach campaign raised participants' awareness on COVID-19 prevention measures and safe migration, and was conducted in collaboration with the village and district authorities, Provincial Health Department, Health Centre and Commune Committee for Women and Children, and Village Support Help Group. All participants received General Department of Identification's leaflets and IOM booklets on safe migration.



IOM Cambodia conducting a community outreach campaign for 101 community members from three villages of Anlong Vil and Vaot Ta Moem communes, Sangkae district, Battambang province, 3-4 November 2020

Lao People's Democratic Republic

Further easing of restrictions from 1 November to 31 December 2020

Reference: The Prime Minister's Office, No.1202/PMO, 31 October 2020

The Prime Minister officially announced further easing of restrictions during the period from 1 November to 31 December 2020. Details are provided on [Lao COVID-19 Taskforce Official Website](#).

Key measures are listed below, with all measures subject to compliance with physical distancing and COVID-19 prevention measures:

- Local and traditional Points of Entry (POEs)¹ remain closed, except for some POEs which are allowed for goods transportation with the Government's permission.
- International Points of Entry (POEs) are open only for movement of individuals with emergency needs as identified by the Lao COVID-19 Taskforce. Transportation of goods through the international POEs is allowed.
- The issuance of entry visas remains suspended for individuals travelling from or transiting through countries affected by COVID-19. Entry of staff of diplomatic representations and international organizations, non-Lao workers, investors, business representatives, and technical specialists who are to be posted at designated embassies, organizations, operations, or projects for urgent needs, must be legally authorized by the Lao COVID-19 Taskforce Committee. The entry process must strictly follow the Guidance of the Taskforce Committee.

¹ Local POE is for Lao nationals crossing the border using day passes.

Traditional POE is for residents of the area surrounding the border crossing. Residents do not have to present any paperwork to cross the border using traditional POE.

- Nightclubs, liquor bars and karaoke are allowed to operate until 23:00 daily with strict implementation of measures to prevent, control, contain, and respond to COVID-19.
- To prevent COVID-19 from entering the country, the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Public Security and relevant local authorities must enhance monitoring of entries and exits through all border checkpoints to ensure that there are no cases of irregular migration.

Continuing consultations were announced to inform easing of measures for the entry and exit of individuals between Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Japan, Viet Nam, and ASEAN member states.



IOM Lao People's Democratic Republic conducting a rapid assessment at the Friendship bridge 2 Point of Entry in Savannakhet Province, observing the operational procedures and processes in border management amid COVID-19, 13 October 2020

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

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