

## 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

IOM's [COVID-19: Guidance to enhance migrant worker protection during the current health crisis](#) is now available for download in Thai language:

- For [Employers and Business](#)
- For [Labour Recruiters](#)

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: Changes to duration of stay for seasonal workers, and MOU workers who have completed four-years of employment**

Reference: [The Secretariat of the Cabinet, Naewna Newspaper](#)

A new announcement on 5 May extended permission for seasonal workers to stay and work in Thailand until 31 May, even with expired stay and work permits. Previously, seasonal workers holding a Border Pass were required to

exit Thailand within seven days of borders reopening, which now no longer applies. More updates to this policy are expected to be released by the Government **before 31 May**.

The 5 May announcement also reduced the permissible length of stay for MOU workers who have completed four years of employment. While these workers were previously permitted to stay until 31 July, the updated announcement allows these workers to stay and work in Thailand until **31 May only**. Permission to stay for all other workers are outlined on page 1 of [IOM's Flash Update #5](#).

**Migrants can now purchase health insurance without the need for medical clearance**

Reference: The [Thai Ministry of Public Health](#)

The Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) informed Government hospitals to allow migrant workers to purchase health insurance without going through medical examinations, effective from 20 April.

In order to purchase health insurance when applying for or extending their visa and work permits, migrant workers are usually required to undergo a medical examination and submit the result to a Government hospital.

However, a number of Government hospitals suspended medical check-ups for migrants in order to allocate staff

resources to the COVID-19 response. This was a major challenge for migrant workers who were in the process of formalizing or extending their work status.

With this announcement entering into force on 20 April, migrants are now encouraged to contact their nearest Government hospitals to purchase health insurance, without needing to go through the necessary medical examinations.

MOPH made this decision after receiving an open letter from the [Thailand Migrant Working Group](#) (of which IOM Thailand is a member), regarding concerns on migrants' access to health support. At the time of writing it had not been confirmed whether this measure also applies to irregular migrants.

### Additional and remaining COVID-19 Restrictions

Reference: [Royal Thai Government Gazette number 5](#), 1 May 2020

Following the extension of the State of Emergency, the Royal Thai Government outlined additional restrictions and relief measures in the [Government Gazette number 5](#). Key points are summarized below:

- Ban on all group gatherings (maximum number of people was not indicated);
- All educational institutions remain closed;
- Ban on unauthorised food distribution. For permitted food distribution, social distancing of 1 metre is required;
- All individuals must undergo a 14-day quarantine period on arrival in Thailand;
- Provincial governors must issue orders to close facilities including daycare centres for children, spas and massage parlors, conference halls and others listed in the [Royal Thai Government Gazette number 5](#);
- Travelers moving between provinces must have their ID and necessary supporting documents

stating the purpose of their travel. They may be asked to present these to local authorities in the destination province. The Gazette did not specify the types of documents, which will be determined by each provincial authority.

## Myanmar

### Repatriation flights for Myanmar nationals in Thailand

Reference: Myanmar Labour Attaché Office – Thailand, [official Facebook page](#)

On 6 May, 135 Myanmar nationals were repatriated from Thailand on a flight organized by the Myanmar Government and operated by Myanmar Airways International (MAI).

Myanmar nationals who wish to return home via future repatriation flights should contact the Embassy of Myanmar in Bangkok to provide a copy of their passport, and personal details required for travel arrangements. The Embassy can be reached at:

- 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

Detailed instructions on repatriation flights for Myanmar nationals are summarized on page 4 of [IOM's Flash Update #7](#).

## Cambodia

### Official plans to reopen land borders between Thailand and Cambodia not yet in place

Reference: The Royal Embassy of Cambodia in Thailand, [official Facebook Page](#), 5 May 2020

On 5 May 2020, the Labor Attaché from the Royal Embassy of Cambodia in Thailand announced that “[t]here has not been any official information yet regarding the reopening of land borders between Thailand and Cambodia.”

To Note: IOM Cambodia is monitoring the flow of Cambodian returnees along the Points of Entry (PoEs) with Thailand. IOM is also working closely with provincial authorities, General Department of Immigration (GDI), and provincial health departments to assist the returnees at the POEs. While POEs remain officially closed, reports confirm that Cambodian migrants are returning from Thailand in small numbers on a daily basis.

### Announcement on health protection and livelihoods of migrant workers staying abroad or preparing for return

Reference: Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT), No. 048/20 KB/SNNKL, 29 April 2020

The Ministry announced further instructions on the health, security and livelihoods of Cambodian migrant workers staying abroad during COVID-19, as well as for those who are planning to return:

- **Cambodian migrants living and working abroad should:**

Follow laws, orders and regulations issued by the host country authorities, and follow the instructions of the Cambodian Embassy in the host country. The MoLVT instructed migrant workers to contact the Cambodian Embassy or Consulate via phone or official Facebook page if experiencing any problems during the pandemic.

- **Migrants returning to Cambodia should:**

Follow and respect orders issued by border authorities and conduct 14-days home

quarantine. Returnees facing livelihoods issues should contact the sub-national authority in their province for necessary assistance. Meanwhile, the MoLVT can provide advice on available job opportunities in Cambodia. The Ministry encourages returnees to consider agricultural activities and raising livestock.



IOM Cambodia staff providing hotline numbers, leaflets and food to migrant returnees at Ou Beichoan border, Banteay Meanchey Province, 1 May 2020

### Lao People’s Democratic Republic

Public transportation resumes within Vientiane and provinces from 4 to 17 May

Ref: Ministry of Public Works and Transportation, N.292/MPWT, 3 May 2020

Public transport, including taxis, tuk-tuks and other pick-up and drop-off services has resumed inside all provinces, including Vientiane Capital. After an initial period of operations between 4 and 17 May, this announcement will be subject to extension or revision.

Hygiene practices required while operating may include:

- Passengers must be seated at least 1 metre apart;
- The driver and/or assistant must check temperatures of all passengers. Passengers with temperatures higher than 37.5°C must contact the COVID-19 hotline at 165 or 166 (free of charge);
- Passengers must wear masks at all times;
- Hand sanitiser and garbage bins must be provided.

### Green Bus Company in Vientiane preparing to resume operations after 17 May

IOM confirmed that the Public Green Bus Company based in Vientiane Capital will resume operating the following 11 public bus routes within the Vientiane Capital from 17 May (subject to further announcements and developments):

1. Thaduea (the Friendship Bridge I, Vientiane – Nonkhai)
2. Tha Ngon
3. Dongdok-South Station
4. Phonetong
5. Dongkhamxang
6. North Station
7. Donpamai
8. Xungchiang market – Sikhai market
9. ITEC – Wattay International Airport
10. Sungthong District
11. Namsuang.

### Eight restrictions lifted with five remaining in place, from 4 to 17 May

Reference: N.524/PMO, 1 May 2020

The Prime Minister officially announced eight measures to be lifted, while five existing measures will remain in place from 4 to 17 May. Details are listed in the National

COVID-19 Taskforce [official website](#). Key measures being lifted include:

- Government and companies can resume work in offices or continue flexible working arrangements;
- No restrictions on travel inside Vientiane Capital and inside provinces, provided precautionary measures are followed;
- Official meetings and workshops, outdoor exercise and sports events, opening of commercial shops and business are all allowed, while maintaining social distancing and COVID-19 prevention measures;
- Factories and major development projects can resume operations. The National and Provincial Taskforce Committees will issue a memo and agreement to certify the inspection of worksites that employ a large number of workers;
- Students enrolled in their final year of primary school and final year of secondary school, as well as Police Schools under the Ministry of National Defence, will re-open on 18 May 2020, while maintaining social distancing and COVID-19 prevention measures. Other school years, colleges and universities remain closed until further notice;
- Foreign nationals can leave the country at their discretion if means to travel are available. Lao nationals who plan to study and work overseas can also depart, provided they comply with the host nation's regulations.

The following five restrictions remain in place:

1. Ban on non-essential inter-provincial travel (travel with an official letter is permitted for official duties, students, businesspersons, illnesses, death, general freight, patient transfer);

2. Closure of entertainment venues and outdoor sports;
3. Ban on gatherings of more than 10 people;
4. Closure of local and international borders for non-essential travel;
5. Ban on entry visas for citizens of countries affected by COVID-19. Exceptions for technical and professional purposes will be determined by the immigration authority on a case-by-case basis. These travellers will have to undergo COVID-19 testing and undertake quarantine for 14-days in Government facilities. The National Taskforce Committee will issue details and comprehensive guidelines shortly.

*Note:* these measures are being implemented temporarily only. If any province reports one new COVID-19 case, that province must resume lockdown measures. If more than two provinces report new COVID-19 cases, nationwide lockdown will be reinstated.



IOM Lao PDR handed over 2,000 copies of infosheets for returning migrant workers to the International Labour Organization (ILO), who will distribute them across the four Migrant Worker Resource Centres (MRCs) across the country, 4 May

*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](mailto:ThailandLHD@iom.int)*

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