

## 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 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>

**Thai Red Cross** produced [a video](#) for workers and employers regarding the COVID-19 preventive measures in factories, vessels, construction sites, and for those who commute to work on public transportation.

### Thailand

According to [the Department of Employment](#), as of 7 April, more than 140,000 employees lost their jobs in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic is expected to put at least 6.5 million workers out of their jobs, said the Employers' Confederation of Thai Trade and Industry. This estimate accounts for migrant workers and employees in the informal sector.

The Director-General of the Department of Employment reported that a total of 144,861 people signed up to receive unemployment benefits in March.

**PM's announcement: All visa types expiring on 26 March onwards are automatically extended to 30 April**

Reference: Thai Immigration Bureau summaries in English is [HERE](#).

All non-Thai nationals (including migrant workers) whose visa has expired from 26 March 2020, are automatically extended to 30 April 2020, with no need to apply for a visa extension during this period. NO fine of THB 500 per day will be charged for overstay during this period.

**Updated measures for expired seasonal work permit holders**

The Thai Immigration Bureau [announced further measures](#) on 7 April for expired seasonal work permit holders. Seasonal work permit holders are permitted to stay in Thailand but must depart Thailand within 7 days of the border crossing points re-opening.

## Moratorium on 90-day reports for all

Non-Thai nationals (including all migrant workers) who are required to report to Immigration every 90 days, and who were due to do so between 26 March to 30 April, are temporarily exempted from reporting to the Thai Immigration Bureau during this period. Currently there is no further information on required steps after the end of this period.

## Criteria to access free COVID-19 test and treatment

Eligibility criteria to access medical treatment at NO cost and regardless of nationality, outlined in last week's [#3 Flash Update](#), have been further [updated by the Ministry of Public Health on 7 April](#). All criteria are listed below.

1. Confirmed cases of COVID-19; or
2. Patients under Investigation (PUI) who have developed relevant symptoms in combination with having a travel history or being in close contact with confirmed COVID-19 patients, and who subsequently test positive for COVID-19; or
3. **NEW:** Persons (including migrants) who have developed COVID-19-related symptoms (for example: fever above 37.3°C, sore throat, difficulty breathing) in combination with:
  - a travel history to risk areas, including COVID-19 outbreak countries, markets, shopping malls, public transportation, and other crowded areas; or
  - being in close contact with confirmed COVID-19 patients within 14 days prior to the onset of the symptoms; or
  - being associated with a group of at least four other people with similar symptoms who have all tested negative for influenza. \*
4. **NEW:** Persons (including migrants) whose conditions do not improve within 48 hours despite undergoing acute pneumonia treatment, or/and patients whose chest radiography results are compatible with COVID-19.

\* Since COVID-19 and influenza symptoms are similar, patients are often tested for influenza first. Those who had gathered in groups of five or more, and who are exhibiting symptoms but have tested negative for influenza, will receive free COVID-19 testing to prevent cluster transmission.

## Additional measures in provinces following nation-wide curfew in Thailand

The Thai Prime Minister announced a nation-wide curfew from 3 April until further notice, which is applicable to everyone living in Thailand regardless of nationality. In [#3 Flash Update](#), IOM summarized specific measures taken by provincial governors in Bangkok, Tak, Ranong, Samut Sakorn and Phuket. This week, more provinces have announced additional measures which are listed below:

**Nakornpranom** (bordering with Lao People's Democratic Republic): Ban on non-Thai nationals' travel to the province with no exception from 5 April to 30 April. (original announcement in Thai is [HERE](#))

**Srakaew** (bordering with Cambodia): Ban on migrant workers' travel to the province with no exception from 4 April until further notice. (original announcement in Thai is [HERE](#))

**Songkla**: Ban on all travels in and out of the province, except for transportation of consumer products, parcels, newspapers, and medical-related equipment, from 6 April to 30 April. Any other businesses can apply for an exception by submitting a request to Songkla Governor (no details of template by the time of writing). (original announcement in Thai is [HERE](#))

**Ranong**: Everyone travelling to and from Ranong is required to provide a medical certificate to prove that they tested negative for COVID-19 within 72 hours before their departure from and/or arrival in the province. This requirement applies from 8 April until further notice. (original announcement in Thai is [HERE](#))

Additionally, a [new COVID-19-related announcement](#) from the Ranong Governor came into effect as of 5 April. Key takeaways are summarized below.

1. The closure of all stores including grocery stores, convenience stores and local stores during a curfew from 9 PM to 5 AM. Non-compliance can result in two years imprisonment and a fine of up to THB 40,000.
2. All people in Ranong must wear a surgical mask or cloth mask properly when they go out from

their property. A mask should cover the nose down to the chin. Non-compliance can result in a fine of up to THB 20,000.

**Samut Sakorn:** workers and businesses who transport goods and wish to be exempted from observance of the nightly curfew, need to submit requests to the District Chief. The request must include workers' information including name, age, position, ID card number, departure and destination points, type of goods transported. (official FAQs in Thai is [HERE](#))

### [Songkran holidays postponed in Thailand](#)

The Royal Thai Government has postponed Songkran holidays, initially scheduled on 13, 14, and 15 April, until further notice. As a result, workers will not receive holiday wages for this period. The Royal Thai Government did not suggest a holiday compensation plan but rather left this decision to employers. Employers must re-arrange this three-day holiday at another time and inform employees accordingly.

## Myanmar

### Thingyan holiday continues with stay-at-home order

Reference no. 4/8-2 (15) lu mhu, 2 April 2020

The Yangon State Government instructed all township-level committee members to make sure residents remain home during the Thingyan holiday, observed between 10 and 19 April. Persons involved in the COVID-19 response and those who need emergency health care, as well as those purchasing food are exempted from complying with this order.

By the time of writing, only the Yangon State Government announced measures for the coming Thingyan holiday. Other township-level authorities may announce further restrictions regarding Thingyan holidays in the coming days.

## Cambodia

### New temporary transit centre open to receive returnees in Banteay Meanchey province

Administration of Banteay Meanchey Province

On 5 April 2020, the Governor of Banteay Meanchey Province made the decision to open one temporary transit centre in Ou Beichaon - Sa Kaeo border to receive Cambodian returnees from Thailand.

The Governor of Banteay Meanchey Province also called all responsible provinces, especially those that have been receiving returning migrants, to collaborate on supporting returnees, protecting local communities and preventing COVID-19 from spreading.

### Khmer New Year cancelled due to COVID-19

On 7 April 2020, the Prime Minister H.E. Hun Sen hosted a press conference, in which he ordered the cancellation of the Khmer New Year observed between 13 and 16 April. The holiday will be compensated with a 5-day holiday at a later date. The cancellation has been confirmed in an official letter from the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (reference no. 012/20) issued on 7 April.

## Lao People's Democratic Republic

### Update: Not all private health care facilities must close

Reference: N.0413/MOH, 2 April 2020

Following the order to temporarily close all private clinics and hospitals, on 2 April, the Minister of Health provided further details on the closure of these facilities.

The Minister clarified that the decision is to only suspend the operation of Personal Medical Examination Rooms\*.

*\* Personal Medical Examination Rooms are known as private healthcare facilities or personal clinics, which usually belong to doctors and nurses who are also full-time workers for public hospitals. These health professionals usually operate their own Medical Examination Rooms after official working hours in public ones.*

Other private healthcare facilities such as Physicians Specialties Examination Rooms, Embassy Clinics and Private Hospitals, are still allowed to open but are NOT allowed to treat patients with COVID-19 symptoms. In other words, only public hospitals in Lao People's Democratic Republic can receive and treat COVID-19 patients.

The [Vientiane Times](#) reported on 3 April that these measures are designed to ensure equal access to national-standard health and medical facilities for all those in need of COVID-19 testing and treatment. The Deputy Head of National Task force Committee for COVID-19 stated these measures would ensure all COVID-19 patients receive health services free of charge; would pool all health professionals and available medical resources in order to fight COVID-19; and would ensure health care facilities involved in the response all meet national standards.

#### All Lao-Thai international borders ordered to close

Ref: No.187/MOFA, 3 April 2020

The Lao Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) has informed The Royal Thai Embassy in Vientiane that Lao People's Democratic Republic will completely close all international borders and will not allow individuals to travel except for transportation of goods and medical emergencies, starting from 3 to 19 April 2020. Therefore, MOFA requested the Royal Thailand Embassy to advise Laotian migrant workers to remain in Thailand during this period.

However, according to information provided by the Lao Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, on 3 and 4 April,

returns of Laotian workers continued at the Savannakhet - Moukdahan Border. From 5 April, no returnees have been reported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.

#### Lao New Year (Pi Mai) continues with restrictions on public celebrations

Prime Minister's office N.397, 19 March 2020

The Pi Mai New Year Holidays remain unchanged, on 14, 15, and 16 April. All public celebrations are cancelled. Government offices will work on Saturday 11 April and will be compensated with a one-day holiday on Friday 17 April.

The latest announcement from the Central Buddhist Fellowship Organization on 7 April emphasized that temples will not host new year celebrations this year to prevent the spread of COVID-19.



IOM and public health officials from Ranong Hospital raising awareness on COVID-19 with the Myanmar migrant community in Ranong, 24 March 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](mailto:ThailandLHD@iom.int)*

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