

Flash Update:

Migrant Worker - Related Government Guidance on COVID-19 Measures in Thailand

The COVID-19 situation is evolving rapidly. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has combined key updates from the Government of Thailand and governments of the neighbouring countries in relation to migrant workers currently employed in Thailand.

This update provides information for migrant workers and their employers about the governmental decisions relevant to workers from Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar.

Important Note: 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.

One-Stop-Service Centers and transition to Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) status

An estimated 1.2 million migrant workers employed in Thailand were expected to change to MOU status by March 2020, via One-Stop-Service Centers (OSS). On March 17, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Thailand published the Cabinet's Decision on One-Stop-Service Centers (OSS). Key points are summarized below.

1. OSS operations will be closed in Bangkok. Employer/employee shall proceed with document extension as per the pre-OSS arrangements, i.e. individually approach hospitals, Immigration Bureau and local DOE office to complete the necessary documentation.

2. The employer should contact DOE in Bangkok, or the DOE office in the province where their business is registered, to adjust their appointment with OSS in order to proceed with the document extension.

3. The employer/employee should submit a request for document extension online for DOE in Bangkok, or online or offline for DOE offices in the province where their business is registered, before March 31. This step does not require the worker's presence at the center. Provincial Governors have the power to adjust OSS operations in their areas of responsibility (AOR) as they see fit.

4. The deadline for completing the transition to MOU status has been extended until June 30.

The Department of Employment website for employers to submit the extension request is:

https://www.doe.go.th/prd/main/news/param/site/1/cat/7/sub/0/pull/detail/view/detail/object_id/33320

IOM is seeking clarification on plans to address the needs of the many migrant workers whose work permits will expire on March 31. A Cabinet meeting on March 27 may provide more guidance on this.

Ranong Provincial Governor

On March 19, Ranong Provincial Governor issued a statement outlining:

Crossing the Ranong-Kwathaung border: Temporary ban on foreign nationals doing visa runs through Ranong - Kawthaung border was put in place from March 22. The Governor mentioned that this decision was in line with Kawthaung authorities who closed the Kawthaung border starting from March 22.

Non-Thai citizens who arrived at the Ranong Immigration Office prior to the closure were the last group allowed to cross the border. The Governor mentioned that special requests can be submitted at a local Immigration Bureau. The Bureau can consider individual cases for an extension of up to 30 days. This policy applies to holders of the Tourist Visa in particular.

Border pass holders: Thai or Myanmar nationals holding border passes, both for 7 days and seasonal, are still allowed to commute between the two countries. Foreigners who are traveling to Ranong for visa extension purposes will be rejected at the security checkpoint. They can contact the immigration office of the province in which they reside for the extension.

The Government of Myanmar to Myanmar Workers in Thailand

On March 14, in response to the World Health Organization (WHO) announcement that COVID-19 is a pandemic, the Government of Myanmar issued a letter stating that they would like Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand to stay in Thailand during the upcoming Songkran/New Year Holiday. The Government **asked for cooperation from Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand to avoid** traveling across the border, and traveling to other locations within Thailand, including to visit their families **until 30 April 2020**. This is to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to protect health and society of migrant workers and their families.

The Embassy of Cambodia to Cambodian Workers in Thailand

On March 16, the Embassy of Cambodia in Thailand issued a letter stating the Government encourages Cambodian nationals living in Thailand to cooperate with the rules and recommendations of the destination country. Cambodian nationals are advised to avoid unnecessary travel between Thailand and Cambodia. The Embassy advised its nationals to follow the news and announcements from the Government of Thailand to inform their travel plans. Cambodian nationals who experience any symptoms of COVID-19 are requested to contact the Ministry of Health in Thailand by hotline 1422 or contact the Embassy of Cambodia at 092 805 0561.

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