



Immigration news alerts

COVID-19

COVID-19 (also previously referred to as 2019 Novel Coronavirus or 2019-nCoV) is a virus identified as the cause of an outbreak of respiratory illness first detected in Wuhan, China. While it is unclear how easily this virus is spreading between people, authorities across the globe are issuing travel health notices related to this outbreak.

In this series of news alerts, we will provide you with immigration updates to keep you up to date on the rapidly evolving situation within our region.

Note: If you have trouble accessing any of the links below, please try to copy and paste them directly into your browser.

India

List of essential services that will remain operational during India's 21-day lockdown

The Economic Times | 25 March 2020

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi has imposed a nationwide lockdown in an attempt to slow the spread of COVID-19. The restrictions came into force at midnight on 25 March and will be enforced for 21 days.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has since released a guideline containing a comprehensive list of essential services that will remain operational during the nationwide lockdown. Key points to note include:

- Offices of the Government of India, its Autonomous/Subordinate Offices and Public Corporations shall remain closed.
- Offices of the State/Union Territory Governments, their Autonomous Bodies, and Corporations, shall remain closed.
- All air, rail, roadways shall remain suspended. The only exceptions are transportation for essential goods, and fire, law and order, and emergency services.
- Hospitality services shall remain suspended. The only exceptions are hotels, homestays, lodges and motels which are accommodating tourists and persons stranded due to the lockdown, medical and emergency staff, air and sea crew, as well as establishments used/earmarked for quarantine facilities.
- All persons who have arrived in India after 15 February are subjected to strict home/institutional quarantine for a period to be decided by the local health authorities, failing which they will be liable to legal action.

For the full list of measures, please refer to the link below.



[More information](#)

Malaysia

Prime Minister Muhyiddin extends movement control order in Malaysia until 14 April

Channel NewsAsia | 25 March 2020

Malaysia will extend the movement control order (MCO) by two weeks until 14 April to contain the further spread of COVID-19, said Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin on Wednesday. The Malaysian government had earlier imposed the MCO for two weeks from 18 March until 31 March to curb the spread of COVID-19.

As part of the order, Malaysians are barred from travelling overseas while visitors are not allowed to enter the country. It also involves the closure of all government and private premises except for those providing essential services. All houses of worship and business premises are also closed except for supermarkets, grocery shops and convenience stores selling daily necessities.

The government has announced that offenders could be fined up to RM1,000 or jailed up to six months, or both.



[More information](#)

Safe distancing measures for foreign workers

Ministry of Manpower (MOM) | 26 March 2020

In an email circular from the MOM to employers on 26 March, employers are strongly advised to remind all foreign work pass holders to strictly observe the following:

- Workers are to only commute between their accommodation and work places.
- Workers are permitted to go out to get meals or essential items. They are to keep any visit short. Avoid crowded places.
- Avoid eating out. Take away food and consume it at home. Lunching together with others should be limited in numbers.
- Observe a safe distance (at least one metre apart) when queuing or sitting in public places. If seats are fixed, sit at the seats marked for usage.
- Workers who feel unwell, e.g., having mild flu-like symptoms, should see a doctor and stay at home to prevent spreading illness to others.

Employers to monitor and report health conditions of workers who entered Singapore between 14 March and 20 March to MOM daily

If employers have any workers who entered Singapore between 14 March and 20 March and are not issued with a Stay-Home-Notice (SHN), the employers should monitor their health for 14 days. This includes taking their temperature twice daily.

From 26 March until 3 April, employers are to submit a daily health declaration of all your affected workers to MOM. If any workers fall sick (e.g., having mild flu-like conditions), ensure that they see a doctor. Employers are to submit the declaration via this [form](#).

Update MOM with the contact details of foreign work pass holders who recently entered Singapore; MOM will conduct checks to ensure workers are socially responsible

If employers have foreign work pass holders who entered Singapore between 14 March and 20 March (including work pass holders affected by Malaysia's MCO and are currently staying in Singapore), they are required to update the mobile numbers of these affected workers through this [form](#). Ensure that the mobile number provided is a local (Singapore) phone number.

Employers are required to **update MOM by 26 March**. MOM will periodically check on the workers' whereabouts. They will receive an SMS and they are to respond. Failure to do so will result in enforcement action being taken against the employer and worker.

Travellers arriving In Singapore will receive advance notification of SHN requirements

Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) | 25 March 2020

From 27 March, 9.00 a.m., all travellers arriving in Singapore, including residents

(Singapore Citizens, Permanent Residents), and Long-Term Pass holders (Student's Pass, Dependant's Pass, Work Pass and Long-Term Visit Pass Holders), must submit a health declaration before proceeding with immigration clearance. They will have to do so via the SG Arrival Card (SGAC) e-Service. The health declaration will be made available before 27 March as part of the SGAC e-Service, so that travellers who are due to arrive in Singapore after 27 March, 9.00 a.m., can complete it in advance of their arrival.

Upon submission of their health declaration, travellers will be notified electronically via email on the need to comply with the 14-day SHN on arrival in Singapore. This allows travellers to be notified of their SHN requirements earlier, instead of only during immigration clearance in Singapore. At the same time, they will be made aware of the penalties under Section 21A of the Infectious Diseases Act (IDA) if they fail to comply with the requirements.

Travellers will receive the following when they submit their health declaration:

- a. An acknowledgment email after submission of the health declaration via SGAC e-Service.
- b. A reminder on the SHN requirements 24 hours prior to their arrival, if the health declaration was submitted more than 24 hours before arriving in Singapore.

On arrival, travellers will need to show their acknowledgement email, either on their mobile device or a printout copy, to ICA officers. Travellers must therefore provide a valid email address and contact number when submitting the electronic health declaration, as they will be used to send the acknowledgement. Travellers who do not have the acknowledgement email will experience delays during immigration clearance.

 [More information](#)

MOM entry approval and SHN requirements for Work Pass Holders from Malaysia

Ministry of Manpower | 25 March 2020

With immediate effect, the MOM will require all new and existing work pass holders (including dependants) planning to enter Singapore from Malaysia, to obtain MOM's approval before they commence their journey. This is applicable regardless of the mode of travel into Singapore.

The entry approval requirement applies to:

- a. Existing work pass holders currently out of Singapore; and
- b. In-Principle Approval holders who have yet to enter Singapore.

Upon arrival in Singapore, all affected work pass holders will be placed on a mandatory 14-day SHN. When applying for entry approval, employers will be required to declare to MOM that they have arranged for suitable housing premises for these employees and have made appropriate arrangements for food for the duration of their SHN.

Employers are required to apply for entry approval using this online facility. Employers should inform their affected employees (including their dependants) not to make travel plans to Singapore until approval has been received from MOM. Employers will be required to send the MOM approval letter to the employees who will need to show it to the airline staff upon check-in (if travelling by air) and at the ICA checkpoint upon arrival in Singapore.

Exemptions for Malaysians and Work Pass Holders conveying essential services or supplies

The Singapore-Malaysia Special Working Committee has agreed that the transport of all types of goods between Malaysia and Singapore will be facilitated during the duration of Malaysia's MCO. As such, those conveying essential services, or supplies (e.g., lorry drivers, vegetable supply truckers, frozen supply truckers) via land and sea crossings will be exempted from MOM's entry approval and SHN requirements.

 [More information](#)

MOM will revoke work passes of migrant workers in large gatherings if they refuse to disperse

The Straits Times | 25 March 2020

In a statement on Wednesday, 25 March, the MOM said it would step up inspections on the ground to disperse large gatherings by foreign workers, in particular foreign domestic workers (FDWs).

"As outdoor gatherings among FDWs tend to be large, MOM will take action to disperse them as an added precaution... Workers who do not cooperate will have their work passes revoked," said the statement.

MOM advised foreign workers to remain in their residence on rest days, and said their employers and dormitory operators should "educate" them on this.

Workers should minimise time spent outside when running important errands, while employers should know where they are and have them return home once their tasks are complete. If they meet indoors, workers must observe the latest rules on gatherings, the MOM added.

 [More information](#)

South Korea

South Korea eyes stricter screening on all arrivals from United States (US) starting 27 March

Korean Air | 26 March 2020

South Korea's prime minister said in a [statement](#) on Wednesday that the

government is targeting to implement stricter screening procedures for all arrivals from the US over the new coronavirus starting no later than Friday, 27 March.

From 27 March, all passengers departing from the US and entering Korea will be subjected to a COVID-19 test if they have symptoms.

For those who have no symptoms of COVID-19,

- Korean nationals or foreign nationals on long-term stay will return to their residence and will be quarantined for 14 days.
- Foreign nationals on short-term visit will move to a facility and undergo a COVID-19 test. If the result is negative, they will be monitored.



More information

Thailand

Announcements from the One Stop Service Centre (OSSC)

26 March 2020

The following measures may affect the timeline for in-country processing of on-going visa extensions and/or re-entry permit applications:

- **Employment Department at OSSC**

The Employment Department at OSSC has announced that foreigners who have travelled to or transited at any of the 20 locations below should refrain from attending to immigration matters at the OSSC until 14 days after their arrival: Austria, Belgium, China, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Iran, Italy, Japan, Macao, Netherlands, Norway, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, United Kingdom and United States.

Foreigners who need to obtain their work permit booklet at the OSSC, but have not fulfilled the 14-day requirement may appoint a representative to obtain the booklet on their behalf so that they need not be physically present at the OSSC. The representative must arrange for the work permit holder to sign the work permit and cover the signature with a clear sticker provided by the Employment Department.

Foreigners arriving from areas not on the above mentioned list are still required to visit the OSSC to obtain the work permit booklet in person as usual.

- **Immigration Department at OSSC**

The Immigration Department at OSSC has announced that all foreigners should refrain from attending to immigration matters at the OSSC until 14 days after their arrival in Thailand. They should postpone their applications for visa extension and/or re-entry permits until 14 days after their arrival if their physical presence is required, except for emergencies.

This announcement does not apply to immigration applications where the foreigner's physical presence is not required, such as 90-day report submission, visa cancellation, and transfer of visa endorsements to a new passport.

- **Board of Investment (BOI)**

For digital work permits and visas applied under BOI, applications to fill the employees in the approved position (last step of the new work permit and visa extension approval process), work permits, and visa renewals can be submitted to BOI through the Single Window from 14 days after the foreigner's date of arrival.

Announcements on the postponement of the Songkran holidays

26 March 2020

To control the spread of COVID-19, the Songkran holidays will be postponed to limit public gathering and movement. Accordingly, 13 April to 15 April will no longer be public holidays, and will be designated as normal working days for government agencies including the Immigration Bureau, and Employment Department. The government will set replacement holidays to compensate for the loss of these holidays when the situation returns to normal.

Updated practices for the certifying of tax documents at the Revenue Department in Bangkok

26 March 2020

In view of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Revenue Department in Bangkok has announced that effective 1 April, companies who submit and remit payments for tax documents online—including the monthly salary withholding tax return (PND.1 form), monthly Value Added Tax (VAT) return (Por. Por. 30 form), corporate income tax return (P.N.D.50 form), and annual personal income tax return (P.N.D.91 form) for individuals—are required to submit all requests for certified tax documents to the Revenue Department **online** once the submission receipt is available on the system.

The process will take three working days from the date of submission and payment remittance for the tax documents, plus an additional three working days from the date of submission of the online request for certified documents. This is a change from the previous official certification process, which took about four to eight working days.

This new practice will have an impact on all Non-BOI/IEAT (Board of Investment/Industrial Estate Authority of Thailand) companies where certified tax documents are required to support employees' visa extension/renewal applications. It will not affect companies under BOI/IEAT as they do not require certified tax documents to support visa extensions.

Health certificate and health insurance required for all foreigners travelling to Thailand

22 March 2020

With effect from 22 March, all foreigners travelling to Thailand are required to present the following documents:

- Health certificate issued no more than 72 hours prior to the date of travel certifying that the person shows no evidence of COVID-19; and

- Health insurance policy covering COVID-19, with a minimum medical coverage of US\$100,000 in Thailand.

Closure of non-essential businesses in Bangkok

22 March 2020

From 22 March to 12 April, non-essential businesses, including schools and universities, will be closed in Bangkok. Shops offering food and essential services will be among the few that will remain open.

Immigration Bureau to grant Temporary Tourist Visas

18 March 2020

Due to flight cancellations, tourists in Thailand may face difficulty in returning home. From 18 March, the Immigration Bureau will accept visa extension applications, and grant an extension not exceeding 30 times to applicants who fulfil the following conditions to enable them to legally remain in Thailand:

- Foreigner who has entered Thailand on a Tourist Visa, and has applied for a one-time visa extension; or
- Foreigner who has entered Thailand with other types of visa, but is unable to present a certifying letter issued by their national embassy in Thailand required to support their visa extension.

Contact

Should you have any comments or questions arising from this newsletter, please feel free to contact me.



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