

# Burma: Quarter of a Million Myanmar Workers Left Jobless Due to COVID-19

Sunday 28 June 2020, by [HTWE Zaw Zaw](#) (Date first published: 26 June 2020).

YANGON—Around 250,000 Myanmar workers have lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 crisis both locally and internationally as factories, shops, restaurants and other major employers have been forced to close, the Ministry of Labor, Immigration and Population (MOLIP) said on Friday.

Deputy Labor Minister U Myint Kyaing said at the ministry's press conference on Friday that more than 110,000 Myanmar workers returned home from overseas countries including Thailand and China between March and June after losing their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, more than 140,000 locally based workers have been left without work due to the outbreak following the closures of 5,658 micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and 270 large factories, shops and restaurants.

According to U Myint Kyaing, all migrant returnees have been listed at township-level labor departments in all regions and states. He added that the labor departments have recorded the skills of those returnees and would try to find jobs for them in local sectors.

The ministry said it had managed to find jobs for many returnees in the industrial and other sectors that have managed to resume operations.

Despite offering to send workers, Myanmar is having difficulty placing laborers abroad due to a lack of flights and continued lockdowns in many countries.

U Myint Kyaing also said that about 1.1 million Myanmar workers who are registered in Thailand under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) agreed by the two countries would be reemployed after their initial job contracts expire.

At the Thai government's request, the Myanmar government will facilitate the extension of the workers' documentation, the deputy minister said.

The ministry is also in discussions with employers who have invested in Myanmar to find jobs for those affected by the COVID-19 outbreak.

"We are implementing various methods to create employment opportunities," U Myint Kyaing said.

U Myo Myint Than, Myanmar's ambassador to Thailand, said during a videoconference with State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on June 2 that about 60,000 workers from Myanmar are currently waiting to travel to Thailand for employment under the bilateral MoU.

The Labor Ministry expects Thailand, which is the source of most foreign jobs for Myanmar workers, to resume employment at the end of July, while the second-most important source of jobs, Malaysia, would not be able to resume employing workers until after August due to the COVID-19 lockdown there.

“We are ready to send labor abroad, as we have labor demand letters. But, we can only send them if the receiving countries allow it,” U Myo Aung, MOLIP permanent secretary, said at Friday’s press conference.

During the global COVID-19 pandemic, Myanmar has not been able to send any laborers abroad; it was able to create new local job opportunities for 9,300 people in April and for 6,000 people in May.

Before COVID-19, up to 30,000 workers traveled to nine countries monthly and more than 20,000 workers were employed locally each month, according to the ministry’s data.

**Zaw Zaw Htwe**

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- The Irrawaddy. 26 June 2020:

<https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/quarter-million-myanmar-workers-left-jobless-due-covid-19.html>