

Sino-Thai worker camp near Bangkok sealed after 500+ workers contract COVID

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Hundreds of construction workers employed by a company owned by the nation's top health official have contracted the coronavirus and been sealed inside their metro Bangkok workplace.

The latest outbreak to rip through Thailand's migrant worker population is in Nonthaburi's Soi Phibunsongkram 7, which was sealed under order of Gov. Suchin Chaichumsak after more than 500 workers tested positive. The Burmese, Cambodian and Thai workers work for Sino-Thai Engineering and Construction, the construction conglomerate owned by the family of Health Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, who once served as president.

Among the 515 infected were 43 Thai, 207 Cambodian and 265 Burmese workers. Most were asymptomatic, Suchin said, but he fears more might have been contracted COVID-19. They accounted for over half of the nearly 1,000-strong workforce living there.

Much as Singapore did at the peak of its outbreak last year, Thailand's response to outbreaks in vulnerable immigrant populations has been to cut them off from wider society. This month, that included a large Italian-Thai construction camp in the capital's Laksi area and a [Nonthaburi apartment building](#).

Like the overcrowded prisons [ravaged by the unchecked spread](#) of the virus, camp conditions are ripe for outbreaks.

In recent days, mushrooming infections at the Cal-Comp Electronics in Phetchaburi province has approached 2,000 infected workers, mostly from Myanmar. They've been given makeshift pads to sleep on the factory's floor and sealed within until early June. The company said it would continue to pay the workers.

The Sino-Thai Engineering site in Nonthaburi will be sealed off and all work stopped until June 20.

Workers with COVID-19 are being treated at hospitals while the rest are ordered to quarantine inside the camp under close monitoring.

Just last week, Thailand confirmed another cluster of cases involving the so-called Indian variant at a construction site in Bangkok's Laksi district where about 500 had taken ill. The variant had infected 36 workers – 21 Thai, 10 Burmese and five Cambodian. It is the first time the “double-mutant” variety that's believed to be especially virulent has been found outside state quarantine after it was [discovered earlier this month in a pregnant woman](#) returning from Pakistan.

Health officials announced another 3,226 cases today, 882 of which were inside the prison system. Twenty-six more deaths were recorded.

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