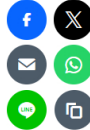


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Hul Reaksmeay
VOA Khmer

Factory Worker COVID-19 Case Raises Concerns of Accelerated Transmission

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Garment factory workers wear face masks as they finish their work shift near Phnom Penh, Cambodia, Friday, Feb. 26, 2021. (AP Photo/Heng Sinith)

PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA — Union leaders said they were concerned about workers' safety after one garment factory worker tested positive for COVID-19 on Tuesday, as part of a growing cluster that has registered close to 400 cases so far.

A worker at Phnom Penh's Y&W Garment Factory tested positive for the novel coronavirus on Tuesday, according to Spean Thmar commune Police Chief Chhim Ra. He said the worker was taken away by health officials for treatment on Tuesday night.

"Yes, it's a positive test. So, she is taken [for treatment]," he said.

He could not confirm how many workers had been tested but only confirmed that the worker's husband was in quarantine.

"They took her first and they will search further to find out who she was traveling with or who she was living with?" Chhim Ra added.

The Y & W Garment factory produces children's clothing and employs more than 5,700 workers, according to information on the Garment Manufacturers Association of Cambodia website.

According to Khmer Times, a local health official said the worker was likely infected by her son.

Cambodia is facing its second community transmission which has seen a large number of foreign nationals, and some Cambodians, contract the disease. The cluster has spread beyond Phnom Penh and Kandal to Preah Sihanouk and Svay Rieng provinces.

At least 370 cases have been traced back to this current cluster which was first detected on February 20, with Cambodia registering upwards of 800 total cases and zero confirmed deaths since the start of the pandemic.

Or Vandine, spokesperson at the Ministry of Health, and Ngy Mean Heng, director at Phnom Penh's Municipal Health Department, could not be reached for comment on Wednesday.

Labor Ministry spokesperson Heng Sour and representatives for Y&W could not be reached as well.

Ath Thon, president of the Cambodian Labor Confederation (CLC), said further infections were possible if quick preventive measures were not taken by the authorities because factory workers normally travel together or stay together in shared accommodation.

"So, if there is one infection, we are really worried about further transmissions," he said.

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GMAC Secretary-General Ken Loo said he had no official information about a worker testing positive for COVID-19 at the Y&W factory, adding that the factory is still operating normally.

"As far as I am aware, the factory seems to run as normal," he said.

Pav Sina, president of the Collective Union of Movement of Workers, said the factory had decided to suspend its operations and that the building where the woman worked had been closed off and hundreds of workers were taken for medical tests.

"As far as I know, the factory has suspended work activities, giving the workers time off," he said.

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