

SOCIETY

Paychecks Delayed for Garment Factory Workers in Quarantine

Khut Sokun | Tue Apr 13, 2021 2:40 pm

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A worker exits the Din Han Enterprise factory in Meanchey district, where hundreds of cases of Covid-19 have been reported since April 3. (Hy Chhay)

[responsivevoice_button voice="US English Female"]
Phnom Penh's Din Han Enterprise garment factory, which has seen hundreds of workers test positive for Covid-19, is struggling to pay last month's paychecks to workers placed in lockdown.

The factory, in Meanchey district's Stung Meanchey commune, was trying to shift its payments to processor Wing to deal with the situation, but with workers unable to leave lockdown, the factory was finding it difficult to confirm their payment details or otherwise get the money to them, a factory administrator said.

In the meantime, some workers said they were struggling to make ends meet.

Din Han has become one of the epicenters of Phnom Penh's recent surge in coronavirus cases, which saw more than 1,000 new patients identified over two days late last week. On Saturday, Prime Minister Hun Sen said the factory had found more than 630 Covid-19 cases.

Sdoeung Seang, an electrical technician there, said on Monday that monthly paychecks usually arrived on the 10th of each month. But he had yet to receive his latest salary.

"Our problem is that we lack the money to pay for the purchase of food," Seang said. He and other workers were struggling to meet their expenses, he said, though he added that the commune administration had provided food and some other basic supplies on Sunday.

Yon Phally, another worker at the factory, said she had been stuck alone in a rented room with no rice or money.

"I do not know why they let us be so isolated," Phally said, adding that colleagues and the commune had come to her aid, bringing her rice.

"But about the money, they said to wait for the next round" of payments next month, she said.

A factory administrator, who only gave his name as Lin, said the factory did not want to be late in payments, but the workers being in quarantine and locked down neighborhoods presented a challenge. The factory was looking to find ways to pay them through Wing, which can transfer money at kiosks based on phone numbers as identification, he said.

"If anyone can go out, we will transfer [money] to [that person]. Before transferring, we confirm the phone number with [the person]. If they can't get out, what can we do?" Lin said.

"Some people said [they can] wait till they get back to work to get it. They do not care about money. For now, their parents can send them [money] to spend temporarily in this situation. What should we do? Are we to blame?"

Labor Ministry spokesperson Heng Sour could not be reached for comment.

Over the weekend, Prime Minister Hun Sen promised that the government would provide 300,000 riel, or about \$75, 25 kg of rice and a box of instant noodles per family placed in quarantine. Residents of locked down areas would also be exempt from paying water and electricity bills for two months, he said.

Ahead of the Khmer New Year, which begins on Wednesday, the number of active Covid-19 cases in the country reached a new record on Tuesday. The Health Ministry announced 181 new cases of Covid-19, 40 recoveries and three deaths, bringing the number of active cases in the country to 2,406.

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