

that the casino had “made a fortune” during the crisis, but had failed to step up for its employees, despite a lack of government assistance.

“The proceeds appear to benefit only foreigners who are shareholders of the company,” he said.

“They bring their earned money back their countries while Cambodians remain poor and desperate. The government also ignores our suffering.”

Vorn Pov, president of the Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA), told RFA that while life is already hard, the government has stepped up restrictions on the freedom of expression, leaving those impacted with few channels to convey their grievances.

“Informal sector workers are in an awfully bad shape because the government has set a priority for the garment factory workers,” he said, referring to Cambodia’s key export industry and largest employer.

“They don’t help us [in the informal sector]. And on top of that, they deprive us of our rights and freedom of expression.”

‘File complaints’

Government spokesperson Phay Siphon said plenty has been done to help the general population, especially the poor.

Regarding informal workers, he suggested that they file complaints with the banks.

“The government cannot do much other than ask the banks for leniency for those who owe them money,” he said.

“The banks have agreed to help people during this crisis. If people are not happy with how the banks treat them, they can file complaints before the courts.”

The Cambodian Food and Service Workers’ Federation’s Ou Tephalin, who has unsuccessfully filed petitions calling for assistance with several government institutions, including the Ministry of Labor, and even King Norodom Sihamoni, said she was troubled by Phay Siphon’s comments.

“People are in dire straits financially and desperate, but he suggests filing complaints with the courts,” she said.

“How on earth could that help when people cannot even afford to buy food, let alone paying for court fees? I think what the government is doing is flouting its responsibility to its own people.”

Reported by RFA’s Khmer Service. Translated by Nareth Muong. Written in English by Joshua Lipos.

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