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Garment workers protest over agreement reversal

NATIONAL

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Reporter : Long
Kimmarita

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The workers claim that the owners agreed to terminate their employment contracts and give them their last month's wage. Facebook

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More than 800 workers from the Crystal Martin 7NG factory in Vihear Suor commune, in Khsach Kandal district, Kandal province, protested on Wednesday and Thursday after the factory reneged on its deal to terminate their employment, and instead suspend them for two months.

The workers claimed that the factory owners agreed to terminate their employment contracts and give them their last month's wages, remaining annual indemnity, seniority, notification pay, and compensation.

The workers said the management changed its stance and announced that the jobs would only be suspended, thus not allowing the workers to terminate their employment as agreed and depriving them of their lay-off benefits.

A worker who declined to give his name said: "The day before the protests, the factory invited us to a meeting and agreed on the lay-off payments and benefits.

"When the time came, it did not pay me but instead announced that my job was suspended. I did not agree to that, and I will not agree to that as the factory does not have work for me.

"I don't understand why it didn't keep to the agreement. I need the money that is owed to me so I can find other work."

Mao Sam Aun, the president of a union at the factory, could not be reached for comment.

However, he told local media that the company had previously collected raw material from one building and moved it to another to show visiting Ministry of Labour representatives that it did not have enough to keep garment workers in its operation.

Therefore the workers in the building that did not have material could not work, Sam Aun alleged. He said talks then began with the workers offered one of two options.

"These two options were either to be suspended for two months or accept a contract termination.

"When the workers chose contract terminations, the company announced a suspension, that's why the workers are protesting," he claimed.

Kandal provincial labour department director Thol Neang told The Post on Thursday that his working group would continue to coordinate with factory workers and give them legal advice.

He said if the factory had imposed the suspension due to a shortage of raw materials, government policy would kick-in to assist the workers.

Neang urged them to accept the terms of the suspension and collect their 40 per cent subsidy from the factory and a further 20 per cent from the government.

He said the workers should accept the terms in light of the Covid-19 situation that Cambodia and the world are in.

"The letter submitted by the factory to the provincial Labour Department on February 27 requested a two-month suspension. The alleged talks concerning contract termination and benefits that went on between the factory and its workers do not constitute a legal agreement.

"The factory has asked for job suspensions. There is no law requiring the factory to terminate contracts and provide additional benefits.

"The law states that if the workers still demand termination, they can get only one to two benefits," he said.

He said his working group is urging the factory to pay the 40 per cent subsidy to the workers as soon as possible and provide them with relevant training to



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This would see workers receive around \$120 a month, he said.

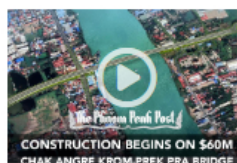
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