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Zhen Tai garment factory workers claim non-payment of April wages

NATIONAL


Publication date
12 May 2021 | 21:41 ICT

Reporter : Long Kimmarita

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Workers at Zhen Tai garment factory. Facebook

Garment factory workers have demanded that their employer, Zhen Tai garment factory, pay them a portion of their monthly wages and their Khmer New Year holiday bonus for the period when Phnom Penh and Kandal province's Takmao town had been in lockdown.

The workers say they have been paid less than 50 per cent of their total salaries for their work in the first two weeks of April.

In April, the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training advised factory, enterprise and company owners to pay the wages for their workers from April 1-4 and provide allowances to their workers during the lockdown.

The owners were also encouraged to provide additional assistance to their workers to the best of their ability on a humanitarian basis to show solidarity and a commitment to social responsibility during a difficult period.

However, the 1,700 workers of Zhen Tai garment factory in Kouk Khleang commune of Sen Sok district say they have been suspended from work for two and a half weeks due to the pandemic.

When the factory reopened, the workers and their union submitted a joint letter to the factory on May 11 to ask that the factory pay them their salaries for April 1-13 and pay them their Khmer New Year holiday bonus and benefits during the April 15-30 lockdown.

Kim Sokhen, the president of the Cambodian Workers' Spirit Union, told The Post on May 12 that in mid-April the workers had not been paid the 50 per cent of their total salaries which they usually received, on average amounting to between \$200 and \$300 a month.

He said that the workers had received only \$100 for their work in the first two weeks of April and salaries for week three and four of April – during which the factory was suspended – will be paid on May 14.

"The labour ministry called on the factory to pay the money according to the best of its ability. But during this lockdown our workers experienced great difficulties. When receiving their second paychecks, some of them did not get even a single riel and some others got just 400 riel," Sokhen said, adding that the workers had warned the factory that they would protest by boycotting overtime work.

A worker named Seng Kunthea said he hoped that the factory side would meet the workers' demands so that they would earn enough to support themselves as the salary they received in April was simply not enough.

Sa Bung, a legal officer at the factory, told The Post that the factory had followed the law and the decision by the labour ministry as well as the basic principle that the amount workers would receive for April would depend on how much work they did.

"In general, the factory always follows the ministry's guidance. I personally cannot respond to their request, but let's wait and see what the situation is when the factory opens for work tomorrow," he said.

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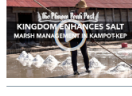
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