



ECONOMY

Governor Asks for More Time for Courts to Resolve 11-Month Workers' Dispute

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Tran Techseng | Wed Nov 4, 2020 7:53 pm



Workers from garment factories Dignity Knitter Limited and Eco Base march to submit a petition to the Kandal Provincial Court over unsettled compensation claims on July 13, 2020. (Hy Chhay/VOD)

[responsivevoice_button voice="US English Female"]

Workers at the Dignity Knitter and Eco Base garment factories, embroiled in a labor dispute for 11 months, say they will reconvene in 10 days after the Kandal provincial governor visited and asked that they give the courts more time to process their employer's bankruptcy proceedings.

The dispute began in December due to late wage payments, leading the workers to keep up a 24-hour vigil outside the factories to prevent the factories' owners from fleeing with equipment. The sister factories closed in April, and bankruptcy proceedings are currently before the Kandal Provincial Court to sell off property

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and pay owners' debts.

Phin Sophea, head of the local union, said on Wednesday that he didn't like the governor's offer to create a committee of lawyers to help represent the workers. Authorities have already had months to help them, but nothing was resolved.

In 10 days, he will call another workers' meeting, he said.

"As you may already know, we are workers, working one month just to survive one month. So when the factory closed like this, you can imagine — how can I find money to support our families, both me and the others?" Sophea asked.

"But it doesn't matter what we want," he said. "[I am] just a worker, just a small workers' representative at a factory. I don't have the right to tell him what to do."

Those in power could help if they wanted "from their real will and heart," he said.

Cheuk Bunsan, another workers' representative, said he hoped there would be some resolution as the governor promised.

"He said in front of all workers to stay a bit more patient. That it will be finished soon. He promised in front of the workers," Bunsan said. "But he didn't specify when."

The governor, Kong Sophorn, told VOD that the bankruptcy proceedings were being processed, and it was taking a long time because the factory owner had many creditors who all made claims at the court's hearings.

But the process was nearing its end, he said.

"The Royal Government will give priority to the workers as the creditors to be paid first," Sophorn said. "I believe this case will go through a fast process and meet our workers' and employees' demands."

He couldn't give the court a deadline, but Prime Minister Hun Sen's lawyer will work on the case to help the workers, Sophorn said.

Kong Atith, president of the Coalition of Cambodian Apparel Workers Democratic

Union, said the workers would likely consider bigger protests if the delays continued.

“The workers will be considering what they should do next,” Atith said. “They now have Samdech Techo’s lawyer and others to help so we’ll wait to see how it goes this time.”



CCAWDU, GARMENT FACTORY, LABOR DISPUTE

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