

- **Several Cambodian construction workers shot in Thailand by foreman:** (1 July) [One was killed](#), another seriously injured, and more may have suffered minor injuries following a fight with a Thai construction foreman who was also killed in Rayong Province, Thailand. The Cambodian embassy and Thai authorities are investigating the case. The fight appears to have broken out after the foreman ordered the workers to stop drinking and making noise on the night of June 29. The body of the killed worker was sent back to Cambodia on June 30. The Thai company has compensated the family 9,000 baht (around \$290). A **CENTRAL** programme officer urged Cambodians working abroad to drink responsibly and to respect the laws of the country they are in. He also urged the Thai government to create greater safety on construction sites by forbidding foremen from carrying guns or weapons.
- **Businesses shut amid COVID-19 exempted from ‘payments’:** (2 July) MoLVT [has announced](#) that businesses closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic do not have to pay “damages” and “prior notice payments” to workers, saying the labour law states that economic hardship or any special difficulties that cause the suspension of activities for longer than two months allows for the suspension of employment contracts. The **CUMW** President expressed regret over the decision, saying it was not transparent to workers. He said it was not only the employer who is impacted by the COVID-19 crisis so the Ministry of Labour should set up a dialogue between stakeholders before deciding the benefits that workers receive.
- **400 factories suspended, 150,000 workers affected:** (2 July) Around 400 garment, footwear and travel goods factories [have suspended](#) their operations, leaving over 150,000 workers jobless due to the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a joint statement by GMAC, the Cambodia Footwear Association and the European Chamber of Commerce in Cambodia. The statement said that the number is likely to rise in the coming weeks as many brands and retailers in Europe and North America have cancelled or delayed orders.
- **Union head warned over factory protest:** (2 July) On 1 July, MoLVT [issued a warning letter](#) to the **CATU** president for her alleged role in organising a protest by workers from the Violet Apparel factory in Sen Sok district, Phnom Penh on the same day. Hundreds of workers protested at the factory, demanding benefits from the company, which has declared bankruptcy.

The letter said the union president incited factory workers to illegally threaten and pressure employers, and that the protest cause traffic congestion. The Ministry’s Department of Labour Dispute Director also said the president had forced employees to protest to achieve individual objectives, and that the protest contradicted the COVID-19 prevention measures. He said that if the President does not stop her actions, she will be sued and face the law.

The **CCU** President said she did not incite or push workers into illegal acts as they were demanding the benefits they were legally entitled to. She said she was unhappy with the warning letter and will continue protecting the rights of workers.

The factory suspended workers in May. On June 25, they declared bankruptcy and promised to provide benefits by 1 July. However, they then decided to give fewer benefits and not pay until July 6. One worker said the protest was not the result of union intervention, but self-organised by workers.
- **Cash handout programme 80% complete:** (2 July) On 2 July, the Minister of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation [said](#) the implementation of the Cash Transfer Programme For Poor and Vulnerable Households During COVID-19 has been implemented for more than 80% of the over 562,686 families. The programme was introduced one week ago. The Minister

expects that within another week, all of the handouts will be disbursed to eligible recipients. He said complications which occurred during the implementation were minor compared to the overall results.

- **Cambodian bank demands “action” against CATU, LICADHO, and CENTRAL for debt report:** (2 July) On 2 July, ACLEDA Bank [accused](#) the organisations of defamation and urged the government to “take action” against them after releasing the “Worked to Debt” report calling for debt relief for workers (see newsletter #18). ACLEDA’s statement accused the groups of trying to confuse people, provoke social chaos and take advantage of companies in the private sector. It said the “baseless” report was written without proper research, has affected ACLEDA’s reputation and “can be regarded as incitement with an intent to defame” the banking sector. The statement also demanded that the NGOs cease any further actions that could impact the reputation of banks and MFIs.

A LICADHO spokesperson had no comment on ACLEDA’s statement. He said the report did not seek to incite workers as the information in the paper is already known and that LICADHO is not concerned about actions the government might pursue.

- **More Cambodians repatriated from Malaysia:** (3 July) A flight [carrying](#) 44 Malaysians and 148 Cambodian students and workers arrived on July 3. This was the third flight coordinated by Cambodian and Malaysian authorities. The next is scheduled for July 9. Cambodians have also recently returned from India and Indonesia with the help of the Cambodian authorities. Cambodian workers in Jordan have not been assisted (see newsletter #18).
- **Unions urge brands to raise workers’ wages:** (3 July) **Clean Clothes Campaign** [has blamed](#) clothing brands over contributing to garment workers’ low wages. The CLC President said brands are looking for cheap prices and good quality so suppliers cannot afford higher wages for workers. He added that at the times of minimum wage negotiations, buyers always promise to offer higher prices to suppliers but ultimately do not. He said CLC supports CCC and asks brands to continue to pay higher prices in order to increase workers’ wages.
- **Casinos allowed to reopen:** (3 & 5 July) Hun Sen [has authorised](#) casinos to reopen, although they will have to restrict their activities to gambling and slot machines. All casino owners need to first ask for permission from the Ministry of Health and fulfil COVID-19 preventive measures. NagaWorld [is the first](#) to file a request to reopen.
- **KTV and clubs to become restaurants:** (4 July) They [are allowed](#) to reopen as restaurants but must adhere to safety measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- **45,000 tourist sector workers out of jobs:** (4 July) As of May, nearly 3,000 tourism and tourism-related businesses [had closed](#) and over 45,000 workers had lost their jobs. According to the Minister of Tourism, in the first three weeks of June there were some positive signs as over 450,000 tourists visited Cambodia, an increase of 7.24% compared to the first three weeks of May. However, the President of the Asia-Pacific Travel Association said Cambodian tourism still depends heavily on international tourists and only domestic holidaymakers cannot save this industry. He forecast that if the pandemic ends at the end of 2020, the sector will recover by 20 percent and can only fully recover by 2025.