

# Tripartite talks over minimum wage start

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Garment workers leave their factory after work in Dangkor district on the outskirts of Phnom Penh in July. [Hong Menea](#)

Tripartite discussions on the 2022 minimum wage for workers in the garment, textile and footwear sectors were set to begin on September 14. According to industry observers, the employers are planning to offer \$183.40, as opposed to \$214.20 requested by trade unions.

The National Council on Minimum Wage (NCMW) kicked off the negotiations earlier this year. Workers in the garment and footwear sectors are currently receiving a minimum wage of \$192 per month.

Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training spokesman Heng Sour told The Post on September 14 that each side has so far maintained its position and both have brought scientific research and economic data to the table to bolster their arguments.

The NCMW scheduled September 21 and 28 for further discussions with the goal of having both sides agree to a final figure.

Cambodian Labour Confederation president Ath Thon said workers would maintain their demands for an increase of \$22.20, or 11.6 per cent, to the minimum wage over the previous year's figure.

According to Thon, the employers are adamant that the minimum wage of 2022 should actually decrease rather than increase due to pandemic-related economic factors.

He noted that the labour ministry's study of the issue found that the minimum wage should stay the same.

Garment Manufacturing Association in Cambodia (GMAC) secretary-general Kaing Monika said the current crisis posed by Covid-19 is the most important factor for all parties to take into account and should especially serve to temper the unions' expectations.

Monika said many countries have delayed discussions on their wages as they wait and see how the fluid economic situation develops. Vietnam suspended their wage discussions last year and this year delayed them again until 2022.

“Our minimum wage is already higher than that of Vietnam's most industrialised localities. Bear in mind that we need to compete for investors, not only in the garment and footwear sectors, but also for other value-added sectors we wish to bring to Cambodia,” he said.

Pav Sina, president of the Collective Union of Movement of Workers (CUMW), expressed concerns that workers and their families will face more difficulties if the minimum wage does not increase at all or only by a small amount.

He said workers and their families will suffer hardships and struggle to pay their daily expenses in addition to paying their debts and dealing with interruptions to their employment due to the pandemic.

“It is clear that if workers' wages don't increase in line with inflation, they will have to reduce their daily expenses because of the higher costs of goods and that will ultimately affect their health and wellbeing,” he said.