

# Last Tai Yang strikers hoping for resolution

**Mom Kunthea**

WORKERS who were left stranded after protests at three Tai Yang Enterprises garment factories dragged on for months earlier this year were hoping for a long-awaited resolution when they attended the Arbitration Council yesterday.

The 53 employees of the Kandal provincial factory, which supplies Levi's and Gap, left disappointed, but with the possibility of a solution next week still dangling.

"The officials from the company at first said they would not find a solution for us, because of how much money they have lost by us striking," worker Pho Han said.

After a separate 20-minute discussion between the Arbitration Council and Tai Yang's management, however, the workers were told their bosses had reconsidered and would agree to solve the month-long dispute next week.

"I don't understand why they changed their mind quickly like this," Han said.

Workers at the three factories in Ang Snuol district, one of which has since closed, began striking on June 25, accus-

ing the company of not paying them seniority bonuses.

The strike involved as many as 4,000 workers over more than two months and, at its peak, was costing the company \$10,000 a day, manager Wu Menghuor said.

Social Affairs Minister Ith Sam Heng sent a letter to Tai Yang in mid-August, asking Minghuor to reinstate 37 strikers he had fired. He refused, and the dispute reached a deadlock.

Eventually, the case – now involving 53 workers who want severance pay or their jobs back – ended up at the Arbitration Council yesterday.

Menghuor said he was not clear on what the workers wanted. "They did not agree to come back to work or accept money when we offered it to them, but demanded reinstatement once we had deleted them from our records."

Dave Welsh, country manager for the American Centre for International Labor Solidarity, said a suitable resolution would involve dropping all legal action against the workers for taking part in the strike.

"All of that has to be off the table," Welsh said.

ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY SHANE WORRELL ■