

Call to Sports City and its Customers to Provide Aid to Workers

Concerned workers of Sport City are calling on management and global brands to provide a wage subsidy of P10,000 per month to some 17,000 employees who have been rendered jobless since March 29 and are suffering due to the no work, no pay scheme. Only some ten workers are working as skeletal force in the warehouse department and no one in garment production is at work.

For years, workers have labored hard on minimum wages (which are less than half of the cost of living in Metro Cebu) thus ensuring substantial profits for Sports City and the global brands. In these extreme period of need, ethics dictates that those who have benefited from the labor of workers should now extend a real helping hand.

However that is not the case. Just before the temporary shutdown of the Sport City factories due to the lockdown imposed in Lapu Lapu City, management gave 5 kilos of rice and a few pieces of canned goods. This was easily consumed in two or three days by workers and their families.

This is the only aid provided by the company. The other forms of so-called assistance are actually workers' wages and benefit that are just advanced.

Sports City advanced P2,000 to be charged on the legally mandated 13th month (or year-end) pay. This is just a portion of the year-end benefit, not even the full amount. This is rightfully the workers' benefits and so is not a dent on the company's expenses. This was given just before the shutdown and probably lasted one week for food expenses.

Last April 20, Sports City provided another P2,000 as loan to be paid from workers' wages. Again, this is not a dent on the company's expenses and will last only for one week's subsistence.

Finally, the Labor Department has closed its assistance for workers affected by the covid lockdown (<https://www.dole.gov.ph/news/statement-department-of-labor-and-employment-april-16-2020/>). The Labor Department has repeatedly declared that its priority is small and medium enterprises. As of April 21, workers in Global Wear Central Warehouse 1, with around 300 workers, received the assistance. But the rest of the Sports City production factories employing thousands of workers each are no doubt classified as large companies. **It is almost a certainty that the 17,000 production workers of Sports City will not be qualified for government assistance.**

A new program, the Wage Subsidy for Small Business (<https://www.dof.gov.ph/small-business-wage-subsidy-program/>), has been opened but as is obvious from its name, Sports City workers will not be qualified as beneficiaries.

Sports City is tentatively due to re-open on May 4 (Monday) on the assumption that the lockdown is lifted in April 30. However, there is possibility that the lockdown will be extended. The return to work of 17,000 workers however raises the question of Sports City's guarantee for the health and safety of its workers.

Should workers return to work on May 4, they would have endured more than 4 weeks of quarantine with just P4,000 in advances on their wages and 4 kilos of rice and a few canned goods. Evidently Sport City workers have survived only by taking out personal loans and severely restricting their consumption due to the lack of assistance from the company and the brands.

There are two weeks until Sports City opens at the earliest. It is not too late for Sport City and the brands to be responsible and ethical companies that takes care of its workers.