

# **Sri Lanka: FTZ workers' salaries: BOI says paid, unions deny**

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The dispute arose after Minister of Industrial Exports and Investment Promotion Prasanna Ranatunga last week instructed the BOI to close all the FTZs in the country until further notice. On Thursday (26), thousands of employees working in the FTZs took to the streets in protest, demanding that their salaries be paid.

However, the BOI yesterday (28) asserted that salaries for March had been paid along with bonuses for April.

"In fact, enterprises have paid workers for the months of March and have provided advances for the April Sinhala and Tamil New Year festival," BOI Director of Media and Publicity Dilip Samarasinghe told The Sunday Morning.

In addition, he said that no complaints had been made to the BOI regarding the matter. "No formal complaints have been made with the BOI regarding the non-payment of any salaries," he said.

When contacted, Inter-Company Employees Union (ICEU) President Wasantha Samarasinghe charged that the Government was making false claims. "The BOI is lying. No salaries have been paid. If not, why would thousands of workers be protesting on the streets?" he asked.

He said that only the February salaries had been paid and called on the Government to step in and resolve the issue.

"This crisis took a turn for the worse in mid-March and the lockdown occurred around the 16<sup>th</sup>. So how could this month's salaries have been paid? The Government must direct the private sector companies to pay salaries in this time of crisis, especially with prolonged curfews," W. Samarasinghe said.

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