

# Sri Lanka: COVID-19 strikes factories again

Friday 8 April 2022, by [DIAS Sunimalee](#) (Date first published: 13 February 2022).

**A significant rise in the number of COVID-19 cases has left factories compelled to delay the timeline in meeting orders.**

There are huge absentees of about 15-20 per cent in each and every factory as a result of COVID-19, Free Trade Zone Manufacturers Association Secretary Dhammika Fernando told the Business Times on Tuesday.

He noted that usually factories expect average absenteeism to be around 5 per cent but under the circumstances the numbers have risen.

"We just can't recruit people through manpower agencies as we need trained people and not just casual hands," he explained.

As a result production will get hampered to some extent although the situation has not caused a crisis yet at the factories, Mr. Fernando noted.

There is a delay in meeting the production deadline; he said adding that apparel factories are at present readying to meet orders for summer clothing. Trade unions are also finding that there are an alarming number of cases of COVID-19 reporting from the factories.

Many workers have high fever and all other symptoms, FTZ Trade Union General Secretary Anton Marcus told the Business Times.

He noted that unlike in previous instances when there was a COVID-19 outbreak, today the management is asking employees to continue to work as a result of which the pandemic is widely spreading in the factories.

Mr. Marcus explained that since workers cannot operate with fever they are applying for their own leave to rest at home.

He noted that as a trade union they have requested and held meetings with the National Labour Advisory Council and the health authorities to lay out a new set of restrictions at the workplace in a bid to assist workers since last November.

Today even workers are not taking this illness seriously as due to the rise in debts they are compelled to come to work and as a result the situation is likely to aggravate, Mr. Marcus said.

He pointed out that the onus is on the employers to take the situation seriously as they too have a responsibility to look after the welfare of their workers.

The trade union leader explained that in some factories contract labour is being employed and now employers are less insistent on the vaccination when recruiting new workers.

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**P.S.**

The Sunday Times

<https://www.sundaytimes.lk/220213/business-times/covid-19-strikes-factories-again-471794.html>