

Strikers to be paid for 2009 public holiday

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The Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers Union yesterday, 20 April 2011, won a R3m arrears wage payment settlement for clothing workers in the Western Cape.

In 2009, employers affiliated to the Apparel Manufacturers Association of SA refused to pay workers for the Heritage Day holiday, arguing that since they were on strike they had automatically forfeited their right to be paid.

The matter was sent for arbitration earlier this week. Arbitrator Coen de Kock, an advocate, ruled in favour of the union but is yet to give his reasons.

The clothing and textile sector in the province has been battling to survive with job losses almost commonplace. Union figures released last year showed that 14400 jobs had been lost in SA's textile sector because of counterfeit World Cup apparel, mainly from China.

Union general secretary Andre Kriel said yesterday the settlement amounted to a day's full back pay for 24 September 2009, and was worth just under R2,95m, "benchmarked at a machinist's 2009 rate of R693 per week for at least 21312 clothing workers employed in the Western Cape and registered with the bargaining council at the time".

Conciliation proceedings in the same matter for KwaZulu-Natal workers got under way yesterday in Durban, Kriel said.

Apparel Manufacturers Association of SA executive director Johann Baard said the employers respected the outcome of the arbitration.

"At no stage, though, did the arbitrator quantify the amount ... we proposed to the unions for the matter to be clarified by voluntary arbitration, we respect the decision and we have requested all our members, who happen to be a minority, to respect and honour the decision," he said.

Source: Business Day