

# Cash No Longer Accepted for Import Tax at Ports

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Import tax payments in cash are no longer accepted at the Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville ports for companies and individuals importing more than \$1,000 worth of goods to Cambodia, government officials said Thursday.

As of April 1, tax paid on goods brought in through the two ports must be paid by check to the National Bank of Cambodia or through an account set up at the NBC, said Vong Sarann, deputy director of the Finance Ministry's Customs and Excise Pochentong administration office.

"It is quite an easier system," Vong Sarann said. "Customs will

only see paper and the amount of cargo [imported] and won't be seeing cash anymore," he said.

The new payment system was put into place to save time and to lower the amount of damaged bill and counterfeit currency being submitted to the customs offices, he said. "When an importer paid cash, we were spending too much time counting it."

Vong Sarann added that the change to bank payments was not to combat corruption. "Customs officials do not ask for extra money from the importer," he said.

A senior NBC official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that the new payment system is a more efficient way to keep track of tax generated by imports.

"The system is good and will allow custom officials to have clear records for how much money is collected from importers month by month," the official said, adding that if the new payment system works well, it will be expanded to all customs offices in the country.

Several importing firms contacted on Thursday had not heard of the new payment system. But Pen Tha, an accountant for the generator-importing company Metro Group, said that he had just returned from paying import tax at the NBC.

"It's much easier," he said. "Paying tax through the [NBC] does not waste as much time." *(Additional reporting by James Welsh)*