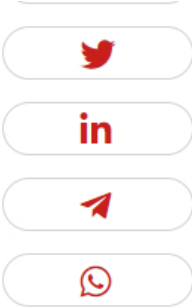


Naga casino workers strike in support of union leader

10 January 2020 8:44 AM | Yon Sineat



Almost 2,000 NagaWorld workers protested in front of the casino in Phnom Penh on Thursday to demanding the reinstatement of their union representative. Cambodia



of a strike demanding the reinstatement of their union representative as well as higher wages.

The strike was held despite an injunction issued by the Phnom Penh Municipal Court on Wednesday that said it would be deemed a serious offense if the workers went ahead.

Chhim Sithar, president of the Naga union, was **suspended in September** after a defending a colleague who was carrying a T-shirt that had been printed as part of a campaign to demand higher wages.

The workers are seeking her reinstatement as well as raises across the board.

Ek Bopha, 28, a dealer at the casino, said the workers knew the company could afford to give them higher salaries.

“They make more and more in profit every year,” she said. Meanwhile, “the cost of living keeps increasing.”

She knew she was risking her job, she said, but “if we don’t join the strike today, we will not succeed in getting what we demand, and in the future we will accept whatever the company gives us. Then I won’t be able to secure a better future for my children.”

Ter Monika, another dealer, said she had worked at the casino for eight years and was pregnant with her second child.

“I already have difficulty providing for one child because the cost of living keeps increasing. I still rent a dorm room; I’m still not able to have my own house for my kids,” Monika said. “I need a living wage.”

Phnom Penh governor Khuong Sreng told reporters at the protest that “as parents, we don’t want to see our kids fight,” referring to the dispute between the company and workers.

“I allowed them their freedom of expression, as long as they don’t block traffic for the public,” he said, adding that any demands for higher wages should follow formal processes.

In an injunction dated January 8, however, municipal court Judge Ros Piseth said Naga workers must call off the strike planned for Thursday and resume work at the casino. If they continued with their strike, the court would deem the strike to be illegal and a serious offense, the injunction said, noting that the workers could appeal the decision.

Sithar, the union president, told CamboJA News that the court was working in Naga’s interests.

The injunction “follows the request of the NagaWorld company, not based on the law and international labor standards that say that workers have the right to strike,” Sithar said.

“This is a peaceful strike, and the demands are not steep since the company makes lots of profits every day and they can afford what the workers ask for,” she said.

The strike is expected to continue on Friday, with workers vowing to keep up the strike until a solution is found.

NagaCorp chief executive Tan Sri Chen Lip Keong did not respond to questions about the dispute.

682 views

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