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Garbage strike negotiations fail


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Waste collection workers from Cintri plan to continue their strike after talks broke down on Sunday.  Hean Rangsey

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Hundreds of waste collection workers from Cintri plan to continue their strike after talks broke down on Sunday and their demands were dismissed.

The municipal hall, meanwhile, announced it will recruit new workers to replace them.

Worker Seam Norm, 30, who was striking in front of the company's building in Dangkor commune on Sunday, told The Post she and the other workers will not go back to work if the company refuses their demands.

Those demands include seniority payments, compensation, prior-notice payments, last salary and annual leave.

"We agree to return to our jobs only if there is a contract between the company and our representatives to provide what we have demanded. Even with two or three points of agreement, we need a clear contract," Norm said.

Another worker Chum Mali, 56, who has worked as a Cintri waste collector for 20 years, said unless there is a result she will not go back to work.

"I'm worried and aware of the impact on our city's beauty because of rubbish heaps everywhere, but my work is also important. I strike to demand my money and benefits," Mali said.

Cambodia Tourism Workers Union Federation president Touch Kosal who negotiated with the Phnom Penh Municipal Hall and relevant officials yesterday at Cintri's office said the closed-door meeting yielded no results.

Company officials said they will not pay the workers because the company has no money.

Kosal said he wants the problem resolved smoothly and quickly so workers can return to collect the piles of rubbish.

"Their five demands have not yet been met, but I ask all workers to resume their work. I would like to explain to them that it is not yet time to make a claim because the company is still operating," Kosal said.

The strike started because workers feared the company could go bankrupt and heard news that the city is looking for a new company to handle rubbish collection.

Phnom Penh Municipal Administration deputy director Chin Bunthoeun, who led the meeting, told the workers that everyone is worried about losing their job and income, but it is not yet the right time for workers to make demands because the company has not fired anyone.

"I understand your concerns, but the company has not fired anyone. I don't know why you are worried. If there is a new company, you still need to work. If the company terminates you, the company will abide by the labour law," Bunthoeun told them.

Following the breakdown in negotiations, the Phnom Penh municipal administration issued a notice to recruit workers to collect and transport waste in Phnom Penh.

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