

Cintri workers end strike as company agrees to demands

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Cintri workers cheer after company management agreed to meet their demands, bringing their 12-day strike to an end. Panha Chhorpoan



Employees of trash collection firm Cintri agreed to return to work across Phnom Penh on the evening of October 14 after the company said it would meet their demands when their contracts end on January 31 next year, according to union representatives.

Kao Sovath, president of Cintri's chapter of the Cambodia Tourism Workers Union Federation (CTWUF), said all employees had agreed to end their 12-day strike after Cintri said it would fulfil their benefits.

"The company agreed to pay us all benefits in the second week of February of next year," Sovath said. "Night shift workers will go out to collect garbage around 4pm or 5pm [October 14] and workers in day shift will go to collect garbage in the morning tomorrow."

He noted that Cintri had agreed to cover five benefits, including seniority indemnity pay, compensation pay, final salary, remaining annual leave pay, and notice pay, when the company's contract is terminated after City Hall selects three new companies to carry out trash collection duties on October 16.

However, Sovath said that workers' pay would be cut for the seven days of strike action from October 8 to 14 because they had not returned to work when Phnom Penh Governor Khuong Sreng had asked them to do so.

As a result, district officials were tasked with collecting the trash that had piled up on sidewalks throughout the capital.

"There were more than 3,000 tons of trash discarded per day in Phnom Penh," Sovath said, adding that more than 20,000 tons of trash had accumulated on the streets while the garbage workers were striking.

A court injunction issued October 13 said that the strike by Cintri employees is illegal, and ordered them to return to work before October 16.

The garbage collection workers began their strike on October 2 after hearing that City Hall had planned to finalize contracts on October 16 with three new garbage companies, which would cause them to lose their jobs at Cintri. As a result, they demanded that they be guaranteed compensation should their contracts be terminated.



Cintri workers collect trash in Phnom Penh on the evening of October 14 after 12 days of strike action. Panha Chhorpoan

Cintri employee Rong Saray confirmed that the workers had agreed to return to work this evening.

“Now, we have agreed to return to work because the company agreed to pay us all of the benefits,” Saray said.

However, he said it was unclear yet whether the nearly 2,000 employees at Cintri would be given new jobs at the new companies that City Hall selects to take over trash clearance in Phnom Penh.

CTWUF President Touch Kosal said that after the workers’ contracts are terminated on January 31, 2021, they would be paid benefits as requested, and may also be rehired by Cintri after that date under a new contract.

“I think that after the result of the meeting today, both the worker and company parties accept the solution,” Kosal said.

City Hall spokesman Met Measpheakdey commended district authorities’ efforts to clean up trash across the city.

“Our officials worked hard to collect trash in Phnom Penh while the Cintri workers were striking,” Measpheakdey said.

He confirmed that City Hall was in the process of selecting three companies to share trash collection tasks in Phnom Penh, but declined to name the firms that have been shortlisted.

Cintri Chairman Seng Savy could not be reached for comment.

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