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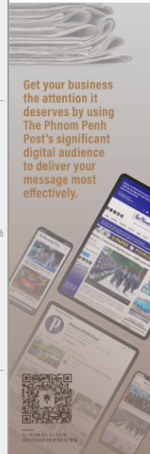
Laid-off Siem Reap airport employees demand solution

NATIONAL

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Reporter : Long Kimmarita

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Former Siem Reap International Airport employees protest in front of the airport demanding solution over the firing them on July 23. FACEBOOK

Thirty out of 131 former Siem Reap International Airport employees have resumed their demand for compensation after being laid off in November last year. However, provincial labour officials said the demands exceeded what was required by law.

Mom Simsela, a former employee with 19 years of seniority at the airport, told The Post on July 27 that protests had resumed after negotiations to resolve the issue were suspended in February due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

He said workers are currently facing difficulties and could not wait for the final settlement. They decided to gather on July 23 to ask the labour department to resolve the issue.

"I do not have any income at the moment. I have three dependent children and my wife will finish working at the end of the month. Other people are facing the same problem. So, we protested to demand relevant institutions to assist us," he said.

In November last year, 161 airport employees were fired by the airport investment company VINCI Airports as it was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Following a series of negotiations, the company agreed to reinstate 30 employees, promising the remaining ex-staff compensation in accordance with the law.

Ron Ravan, head of the Siem Reap International Airport Union and chief of Cambodia Transport Workers Federation, said that at the last discussion held in February with stakeholders four demands were agreed.

The first, he said, was compensation to senior employees based on the full salary in the first three months of 2020.

The second was to claim compensation for six months. He said the company has only provided compensation for three months.

The third point was the company promised to accept employees back once the situation returns to normal. Employees requested a guarantee of work for five years, but the company only offered three years.

The final demand was a tax exemption for any compensation received.

"The pandemic has suspended negotiations. However, it was recently announced that 15 people could be reinstated, so employees have asked the labour department to continue negotiations to resolve the issue," he said.

Chan Sokhom Chenda, director of the provincial labour department, told The Post that the department was unable to hold talks proposed by former staff due to Covid-19.

He added that the remaining demands by former staff were beyond the scope of the law.

"Officials have already showed them what was stated in the law. The law also explains what benefits and compensation they can receive. Their remaining claims are not justified."

Sokhom Chenda said settlement was between the company and staff and they have already negotiated. The airport company has paid some compensation,

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which was made after agreement between former staff and the company with the knowledge of the coordinating authority.

He said former employees have sought additional compensation for mental illness, which goes beyond legal procedures. But demanding negotiations during the Covid-19 pandemic was inappropriate.

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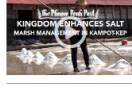
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