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# NagaWorld to 'Volunteer' to Close, Days After Covid-19 Cases

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Tran Techseng | Tue Mar 2, 2021 4:30 pm



The park in front of Phnom Penh's NagaWorld hotel and casino complex, decorated for Chinese New Year, on March 1, 2021. (Danielle Keeton-Olsen/VOD)

[responsivevoice\_button voice="US English Female"]  
After NagaWorld workers began a work boycott over the weekend about employees being kept in the dark about Covid-19 cases at the casino, its owner NagaCorp announced it would act "responsibly and swiftly to volunteer to temporarily suspend its business."

Workers said testing at the casino started Thursday night with little explanation. One worker earlier told VOD that he was tested on Friday and found out he was positive on Saturday.

About 3,000 workers joined a boycott to demand the business be suspended, and the casino and hotel facilities be disinfected, a union representative said on Monday.

In a statement dated March 1, the company said health authorities had found 11 Covid-19 cases after testing 3,000 workers, without specifying when the cases were found.

"[T]he company is acting responsibly and swiftly to volunteer to temporarily suspend its business for a more thorough review of its precautionary and preventive measures already undertaken while running in parallel a wholesome cleansing of the entire property to further protect all of its employees and visitors alike," the statement says.

The company intends to reopen after "achieving some milestones of success in the fight and prevention for Covid-19 after consultation" with the Health Ministry, the statement adds.

Health Ministry spokesperson Or Vandine has not answered questions about the case.

Chhim Sithar, president of the NagaWorld workers union, said on Tuesday that the late closure was better than nothing, but wondered why NagaWorld had been treated differently than 78 locations authorities have closed down due to links to a Covid-19 outbreak.

"I am surprised that they use the word 'volunteer' because when they use a word like that, it sounds like the government and the Ministry of Health have no role at all and that they waited until the NagaWorld company volunteered," Sithar said.

During trading on Tuesday, NagaCorp stocks fell 9 percent to HK\$9.56 (US\$1.23) according to Bloomberg, though still ahead of their lowest value during the pandemic.

Amid the testing, NagaCorp held an extraordinary general meeting on Friday awarding more shares to members of the company's board. CEO Chen Lip Keong, who was naturalized as a Cambodia citizen late last year, is worth more than \$5 billion, according to Forbes.

The company recorded an average daily net gaming revenue of more than \$1.6 million amid Covid-19 travel restrictions in the third quarter last year. It is scheduled to hold a board meeting on March 8.

Sithar said she wanted all staff tested before the casino reopens.

"It would still be risky there. It won't be a safe place for staff to return to work and for guests

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to visit without fear of contagion," she said.



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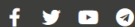


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