

Angkor protesters slighted

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Trucks carrying Angkor beer yesterday morning pushed through a fragile blockade formed by "beer girls" trying to garner public support for what they described as an attempt to force one of the Kingdom's largest brewers to show more respect to them and the law.



Photo by: Pha Lina

A group of Angkor beer promoters protest outside the company's head office on Norodom Boulevard in Phnom Penh yesterday.

Drivers had stopped in front of more than 30 women who gathered for almost five hours in front of Angkor Brewery's head office on Norodom Boulevard yesterday morning, but company executives ordered them to push through the group.

The women used loudspeakers and banners to draw attention to their protest. They said they were protesting because they could not survive on what the company paid them for promoting its brand in restaurants and nightspots.

Moreover, it was also ignoring a June 15 ruling by the Arbitration Council to double Sunday overtime wages to US\$4 a day, they said.

The company all but ignored the protest, sending a single executive out to tell them to disburse because they were getting in the way of cargo.

"We didn't want to protest, but with a basic salary of only \$50 a month we cannot cover survive, and we if we work on Sunday we only get \$2 more," said beer-seller Si Noun.

She, along with her colleagues, said the company owed them back salary for three years because it had not been paying them overtime for working on Sundays and that the Council's ruling was retroactive.

Sin Chanthoeun, 32, said she and her colleagues wanted the company pay up by the end of the week.

"We are protesting because we want the company to respect the law," she said.

Cambodian Food and Service Workers' Federation president Ou Tep Phally said the women had been warned that if they tried to strike they would be dismissed.

About 200 beer promoters had planned to strike, but most became too afraid to join the protest after hearing rumours that police were searching for organisers, she said. Ou Tep Phally said the federation would file a complaint against the company if it failed to honour the Arbitration Council's ruling.

Sarin Denora, a lawyer for Angkor Beer Company, declined to comment, saying he was too busy.