Cambrew to pay overtime to beer girls on Monday

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CAMBREW yesterday paid the beer promoters who went on strike in late July to demand that the company abide by an Arbitration Council ruling earlier that month that said it owed the women three years of overtime for working on Sundays.

“All the beer promotion girls who protested are already back to work, and today we will pay those who started the protest,” Cambrew executive Gneap Chheng Leap told a press conference.

The company, which is half owned by Carlsberg, said it would also pay overtime of US$2 for every Sunday worked to beer promoters who did not join the strike. All 600 of them will receive payment on September 5 for every Sunday they worked over a more than three year period, Cambew said.

“We will compensate US$2 [for every Sunday worked] for all beer girl promoters in the country for the period between November 2007 and December 2010,” Cambrew executive Chu Jung Kim said.

Because of a rescheduling of working hours, none had worked overtime this year, he said.

Yesterday’s announcement followed discussions with the Trade Union Personnel Workers’ Progressive of Angkor Beer, an internal union, company executives said.

The Cambodian Food and Service Workers’ Federation, the union that led the strike and mobilised international pressure on Carlsberg, was not invited to yesterday’s press event.

Even so, the federation’s president, Sar Mora, welcomed the decision by Cambrew, saying he was pleased it had rectified its mistake and that this could encourage other brewers in the Kingdom to abide by the country’s labour laws.

Gneap Chheng Leap also denied allegations that seven beer promoters had been moved to less popular venues to punish them for striking, saying that they had been replaced while striking because the venues they had left needed staff.

The beer promoters began their strike in front of the company’s Phnom Penh office on July 25, following a ruling from the Arbitration Council earlier that month that said Cambrew owed them $2 in overtime for working on Sundays, and that payment was retroactive for three years.

The protest drew media attention in Cambodia and Denmark, where Carlsberg is based. Intense pressure from international unions was exerted on Carlsberg to encourage its Cambrew to find an equitable end to the strike.