

Police warn beer protesters

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After police ordered them to quiet down on the third day of their strike, the "beer girls" protesting in front of the head office of Cambrew Ltd took aim at the slogan of one of the Kingdom's most popular brands, Angkor beer.

While about 25 police observed them from the other side of Norodom Boulevard yesterday morning, the women began singing "My country, my beer. My beer does not love Khmer". The brand's slogan is "My country, my beer".



Photo by: Meng Kimlong
Police stand guard while Angkor beer promoters protest for payment of overtime outside the Cambrew headquarters in Phnom Penh yesterday.

As they had on the previous two days, the women arrived at about 7am. The police arrived about three-and-a-half hours later. They ordered the more than 30 protesters to stop using drums and loudspeakers, telling them they were disturbing the neighbourhood. The women obliged, but soon after the police crossed to the other side of the street the women picked up their drums and started beating them again. They said they were becoming more determined each day of the strike.

"If the company does not resolve the dispute we will lay in the driveway and the trucks will have to run over us to get in," said protester Kong Nuon. "We are always patient and calm with customers. We work so hard for the company, but it will not even talk to us. This is not fair," she said.

The women say they are protesting against the company's refusal to pay them overtime for working on Sunday, despite a ruling by the Arbitration Council earlier this month that sided with the beer-sellers.

An employee contract from the company obtained by The Post does not include overtime for working on Sundays, which is required by law. Sin Chan Thoeun, 32, said that although the police ordered them to stop drumming and shouting into loudspeakers they decided to continue doing so because their protest was non-violent. "We beat drums so that people can hear our sorrow. The actions of the police were a threat to the right to protest peacefully," she said.

Company officials declined to comment yesterday.




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