

Chronology of dispute

29 Dec -29 Jan: About 1,700 members were locked out after failed collective bargaining negotiation.

29 Jan: Both parties reached agreement and CBA concluded. According to Thai law, the company has to call all the locked-out workers back to work.

The company called some of the workers back to work, and told the rest to stay outside of the plant. These workers were not technically locked out, just not allowed to return to work. They were paid a wage, but not entitled to other benefits and allowances that were only given when they worked.

All the union board members were also ordered to stay out of the plant, so they could have almost no contact with the members inside the plant.

The company progressively called more workers back, after conducting interviews to check their attitudes, asking them to provide incriminating information about union leaders or other workers, and writing an letter of apology to the company. By the end of April, 450 workers were still outside the plant.

The activities such as military training or cleaning elder houses also happened during this period.

July 2018: The company filed a complaint to the Labour Court asking to dismiss the former union president, Cherd, and general secretary, Thanaphat (in position during the lock-out, they both held position in employee committee so the company could not dismiss without court order).

At the beginning of August 2018, 88 workers were still outside the plant. Then the company laid off 24 of them, and called 64 workers back to plant. However, the company later ordered 48 (out of 64), including Cherd and Thanaphat, to stay outside the plant again.

Conclusion of what happened to the 88 workers waiting to get back to work in the beginning of August.

- 24 laid off
- 48 (including Cherd and Thanaphat) called back but ordered to stay outside again.
- 16 back to work (truly reinstated)

September 2018

The workers inside the plant were called to signed an individual agreement to replace the previous CBA agreed with the union, to prevent these workers from re-engaging with the union. The union has operated for over 20 years.

The agreements included the terms on wage increase, bonus payment, and benefits. The workers also had to sign to agree that they were not member of any union and would not be involved with the proposals filed by the union. If they broke the agreement, all the wage increases, bonus payments, or benefits they received would have to be returned to the company, including the compensation for the violation.

October 2018

The company called 48 workers back to the plant but made proposals to them. These workers received two proposals (as a union member, and as individual worker). There is not much difference in detail.

The proposals are different from the ones offered individually to workers in September, and are intended to force these 48 workers, union leaders or very active members, out of the plant.

The company is demanding to be able to make unilateral changes to wage structure, working shifts, working date and time and breaks, annual wage increase, bonus, health insurance, skill allowance, and all other benefits. The company is also demanding that it should decide to either assign or not assign work to these workers, and also to be able to send workers to work in any department or anywhere in Thailand.

Scenarios for these 48 workers are, if they disagree and choose to negotiate (either with the union or individually), the company can “legally” lock out (without paying wage) which brings everything to square one.

If they agree just to avoid the lock-out, the company can unilaterally decide on the wage. A similar case happened before, and the company reset wages of all the former union leaders to legal minimum wage. This would also allow the company to decide where they would work, which could be hundred miles from their current location. This happened previously.