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# Changchun three-wheel cycle workers strike against clamp-down on licenses

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**On 30 November, about 300 three-wheel cycle drivers staged a demonstration in front of the Shuangyang district government building in Changchun city, Jilin province, demanding that the government stop clamping down on their operation. A protestor told me that they have been staging the sit-in there for four days since 27 November.**

<http://divergences.be/sites/divergences.be/local/cache-vignettes/L400xH300/chine-6fb7b.jpg>

**Worker:** We're going home to have lunch at noon and will come back in the afternoon. We have been protesting for several days already. We will come back again at noon tomorrow.

**Han Dongfang (Han):** When did you start the demonstration?

**Worker:** Monday. It has been four days now. We are here everyday.

**Han:** How many participants?

**Worker:** There were about 300-500 people. There were more people in the morning and fewer in the afternoon.

**Han:** Did any government officials come out to receive you?

**Worker:** How would they come out to receive us? They are clamping down (on our licenses). Changchun city transport police chief Wang Wuzhong said three-wheel cycles need to be banned as they affect the city's transport. Only the disabled will be allowed to use three-wheel cycles. But the disabled are also unable to take any passengers. No three-wheel cycle operators will be allowed in the city. If you want to do it, you can only go to do it in the countryside. But Shuangyang is 45 kilometres away from the urban area. It is already the countryside. Why do you still clamp down on our licenses? We want to discuss this (problem) with them, but they simply ignore us.

He said the district government officials told the workers that the clamp-down on the three-wheel cycles was in preparation for the Winter Asia Games to be held in Changchun two months later. The move was to clean up the city and give foreigners a good impression that Changchun was a modernised city.

**Worker:** The Winter Asia Games is going to be held in Changchun. The authorities are afraid that we would affect the city's image, so that they ban us from operating in the city. If we want to do our business, we can only go to the countryside. But Shuangyang is originally a county, already in the countryside. It has nothing to do with the Winter Asia Games. But they still ban us, three-wheel cycle workers, from operating in the city.

**Han:** What kind of activities will be held in Changchun?

**Worker:** The Winter Asia Games. But the district government told us that a three-wheel cycle hit a foreigner. The foreigner then said why we still had three-wheel cycles in such a modernised city.

Then, I telephoned the Shuangyang district government office.

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## Changchun three-wheel cycle workers strike against clamp-down on licenses

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**Government officer:** The government leaders here are only handling the matters with normal procedures. We are not clamping down on the three-wheel cycles. Those three-wheel cycles violate the regulations. The transport police is handling it with normal procedures. It means that they have no license, no driving license and no operation license. Some are even worn-out vehicles. The police is now dealing with those vehicles which violate the transport regulations.

**Han:** Then, does the government have a policy to ban three-wheel cycles?

**Government officer:** Not for the moment. We will release a notice if we have that policy.

**Han:** Can three-wheel cycles continue to operate legally in Shuangyang district?

**Government officer:** If they have completed various necessary procedures and have got all necessary licenses, they can operate normally.

Then, I called the protesting worker I interviewed again. He said most of the three-wheel cycle workers were previously state-owned enterprise workers who were laid off for many years. They were unable to pay all the license fees.

**Worker:** We have licenses for our three-wheel cycles. Some of us are especially poor and with low social security. Some are laid-off workers and unemployed persons. They don't have money to pay the license fees. It's expensive. It includes additional fees and material fees. It's really not cheap. (We) spent 300-400 yuan to buy the license plate (Editor's note: it refers to the three-wheel cycle license) to start our operation.

**Han:** How many three-wheel cycle operators are involved?

**Worker:** More than 1,000. About 300-500 of them have gone to petition.

Another protesting worker told me that the district government had said that those three-wheel cycle operators who had licenses could go to operate outside the city area. But they would be caught if they appeared inside the city.

**Worker:** They don't allow us to ride in the city. If you want to ride, you can only ride in areas with few people. Go to the countryside and outside the city area.

**Han:** Then, what will be the problem for you if you have to operate outside the city area?

**Worker:** Then, we can't make a living. That's rural area. You can't ride anybody to there and you can't carry any goods to there. You just can't survive.

**Han:** So it means that the government didn't say they would ban your operation, but only that they don't allow you to operate inside the city area?

**Worker:** Right. We can't operate inside the city area. You can only carry goods, but can't ride any passengers. But people who asked us to carry their goods would also ask us to take them as well. In other words, that's only their excuse to clamp down on three-wheel cycle operators.

**Han**

How did the government give you a reply? How did they tell you?

**Worker:** They told us that we'd better give up our three-wheel cycles. They will catch us if we ride in the city. They said we're definitely not allowed to ride in the city.

**Han:** How did you know about the government's policy that you'll be caught if you ride in the city?

**Worker:** Their team leader (the transport police chief) and officials of the petition office told us to wait at home and not to ride in the city. "The city government might issue a kind of compensation rules on that during this week. You wait for that (document). It should be released this Friday," they said.

**Han:** If I help you connect your call to the district government office now, do you have any questions to ask them directly? Do you mind?

**Worker:** I don't mind. I'm not afraid of any danger. I have already put aside my life. I tell you. Since I dare to do this, I have nothing to worry about.

I connected our conversation to the Shuangyang district government office.

**Han:** Hello, is it the district government office?

**Government officer:** Yes, yes.

**Han:** Sorry, I have just called before. My surname is Han, from Radio Free Asia. It's about the three-wheel cycle workers' sit-in since the 27th that...

**Government officer:** When was the sit-in in front of the government building?

**Han:** Isn't it that they have demonstrated since the 27th, demanding that the government not clamp down on the three-wheel cycle operators? So I connect you to the same telephone line now. Hi, can you tell this government officer what problems you have?

**Worker:** I have a request to the on-duty government officer. Before the government clamp down on the three-wheel cycles, it should make a reasonable and appropriate arrangement for us...

**Han:** Wait. Let me ask if the on-duty government officer is still with us. Hello, oh, he has hanged up.

**Worker:** Mr Han. I want to say a few words. We will continue our petition in the next two days. You can interview us any time tomorrow or later. We will have a larger group than today.

**Han:** Then, can you tell our audience what your demands are?

**Worker:** We demand that the government let us continue our operation in the original locations before it has made any reasonable and appropriate re-employment or compensation arrangements for us who are laid-off worker and unemployed persons. Now, the government only emphasises that we don't have operation licenses. We don't have money to pay that. We demand that the government exempt us from paying the licenses.