

The Oyu Tolgoi I know

I feel that today, although we are living in an unfair society, where the police buy individual cigarettes from shops (it is illegal to sell individual cigarettes, according to Mongolian regulations) and bars work after midnight and serve 21 year olds and children younger than 18 years of age (it is illegal for bars to work after midnight, according to Mongolian regulations), we are attacking the only just thing.

I have a good friend from my childhood who graduated high school with excellent marks, passed exams successfully and was accepted to study at the medical university. In the fall, he came to UB and enrolled in the university. However, he could not pay the study tuition for the 2nd semester and therefore, left the school. He went back to his native province and began to work as a bar waiter. When I went back home, during the summer, he had been promoted to bartender. I think that when someone works in such a place with vodka and alcohol for a long time, that person eventually turns into an alcoholic. He was not only drinking occasionally, he was drinking every night after work. Later, I was very worried when I heard he spent his whole salary, 180 thousand MNT, on alcohol when his girlfriend was about to give birth. After some time, I heard that the Phased Technical School in Dornod province turned into a Polytechnic college and my friend quit his job and enrolled in the one year Oyu Tolgoi vocational training programme. Each student enrolled in the programme receives a 210 thousand tugrug salary. When I met with my friend, during my winter vacation in Dornod, he said excitedly that his wife had given birth to twins, a boy and a girl. He is very happy that he quit his job and no longer wants to drink alcohol. Life is exciting and his salary of 210 thousand tugrug is good enough for now. My friend told me that after graduation he will go directly to Oyu Tolgoi and work there and his salary will be more than one million. While we were talking, a classmate of my friend joined us. Surprisingly, that classmate used to be our high school history and social science teacher. I was very surprised and asked him why he was enrolled in this programme. He said it is very difficult to live on the salary of teacher. After one year of study here, jobs are readily available and the salary at Oyu Tolgoi is three to four times higher than the salary of a teacher. His classmates include five students from Ulaanbaatar. It is said that students of the engineering departments at the Mongolian University of Science and Technology quit their school after second year and come here to study in this programme.

Now, my friend comes to UB from Dornod by car and then flies to Oyu Tolgoi (he said there soon will be a direct air route from Oyu Tolgoi to Dornod). He works at the Oyu Tolgoi site for about 15 days, earning more than 1 million tugrug in salary and then goes home for a vacation. He has 15 days of vacation and then flies back to Oyu Tolgoi to work for 15 days. He loves to talk about his job. The job is not long hours, strictly adheres to safety rules and offers sufficient personal protective clothing and equipment for each person. The site mess hall offers three choices of meals: Asian, European and Mongolian. The camp living quarters are warm, comfortable and the floors are heated. The camp laundry personnel wash the employees' clothes. If employees consume more alcohol than the required limit, they are dismissed immediately. Chinese workers are rarely seen, so there is not much sense in the talk of Chinese abusing Mongolians. This is how he happily talks about his job. Now I no longer worry about my friend. It is my friend who worries about me now. When he comes to Ulaanbaatar from Oyu Tolgoi, he takes me out for a meal, to the cinema and the theater. We also go to the market to buy things for his family and he gives me some money to help a poor student like me and then he goes home.

The mere fact that people from the far-away eastern provinces of Mongolia are going to Oyu Tolgoi and travelling more than 1300km, shows the scale of the investment and demonstrates the progress and high salary rate and well-supplied and satisfactory environment at Oyu Tolgoi. Sometimes, I think, I should have become athlete. If I took up sports from my childhood, I would have already won at the Olympics Games, proudly raised our national flag and decorated my chest with medals made from the mineral treasures of our country. However, I'm not regretful, I'm confident that each Mongolian person is benefitting from Oyu Tolgoi and therefore, the largest development work in Mongolia, stretching over two centuries, will bring benefits to our children and future generations.

Let our Mongolians not to attack Oyu Tolgoi, which implements multi-sided activities and is conscious of its social responsibility. Like, Zorig, I trust "in the sound mind of the Mongolian person". (Zorig is a slain Mongolian democratic leader).

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