



The Phnom Penh Post

Celebrating 20 Years 1992 - 2012

www.phnompenhpost.com

VOLUME 21, No. 276

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2012

Successful People Read *The Post*

4000 RIELS



Buot Chinda, a 21-year-old garment worker, recovers at Svay Rieng provincial hospital after she was shot in the chest during a protest at the Kaoway Sports factory, near Bavet town, yesterday. DEREK STOUT

Bloody day in Svay Rieng

May Tithara and David Boyle

Three gunned down at shoe factory protest

A YOUNG woman is fighting for her life after she was shot in the chest during a protest of about 6,000 workers yesterday at a factory that supplies sportswear giant PUMA by an assailant that witnesses have said was dressed in police uniform.

The victim, Buot Chinda, was one of three people shot in front of police during the rowdy protest at the Kaoway Sports Ltd factory, in Svay Rieng province, in an incident PUMA has said it is taking "very seriously".

She remains in a critical condition from the bullet wound that narrowly missed her heart and punctured her lung and has been rushed to Phnom Penh's Calmette Hospital.

The shootings began when two truckloads of police confronted protesters after they began hurling rocks through the factory's windows, ignited tyres and invaded the premises, demanding increased benefits.

From her hospital bed, Bout Chinda said yesterday she could not identify

the person who shot her as she walked through the crowd, because she was in severe pain and shock.

"When I was walking to the toilet, I was shot. When the bullet entered my body, I didn't think I would survive," she said.

Her sister, Som Sina, who also works at the factory, said a man wearing a short-sleeved police uniform stepped out of a car and began firing randomly into the crowd, hitting her sister and two others.

"It didn't make a sound because he used a silencer. Some of the workers recognised him as a Bavet town police officer," she said.

A Kaoway Sports Ltd employee, who works for the management but wished to remain anonymous, also identified the perpetrator as a man dressed in a police uniform, adding that he was flanked by a police officer and a bodyguard.

"After he shot the workers, some of the protesters tried to follow and

capture him, but he got into a black Camry that was waiting for him and drove away," the employee said.

This account, which was confirmed by several other protesters who witnessed the scene, was disputed by Bavet police chief Keo Kong, who denied a police officer was responsible, adding that six officers had also been injured.

"We just know that one man wearing a white shirt fired on the workers. Police and workers tried to arrest him, but failed because he ran into

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National

Svay Rieng shoe factory protesters gunned down

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the forest," he said. Keo Kong said the 6,000 protesters at the Taiwanese-owned Kaoway Sports factory, in Bavet town's Manhattan Special Economic Zone, included employees from other factories in the zone including Kingmaker, Sheico Group and Ankor Supreme.

He identified the other workers who had been shot as Keo Neth, 18, Nuth Sakhorn, 23, both of whom were in a stable condition.

National Police spokesman Kirt Chantharith said a special team had been sent to investigate and arrest the gunman.

"The gunman is not in our police forces, and we did not hurt anyone," he said.

Kaoway Sports Ltd could not be reached by the *Post* for comment yesterday.

But PUMA was quick to respond to the incident, releasing a press statement before telling the *Post* it already had people on the ground investigating the situation.

"PUMA takes this incident very seriously and will take all measures to ensure that the safety of its supplier factory workers is paramount," the statement read.

"According to the information PUMA has been able to

obtain, factory management has evacuated all personnel from the compound to ensure the employees' safety and workers have been sent home."

The shooting, the latest in a series of incidents over the past two months in which protesters have been fired upon, has drawn outrage from civil-society groups and the opposition Sam Rainsy Party.

SRP lawmaker Mu Sochua, who visited Buot Chinda in hospital yesterday, said it was extraordinary such action had been taken against workers seeking about \$US25 in monthly benefits on top of the \$61 minimum wage they receive.

"Does PUMA want its name to be tainted by the blood of workers in Cambodia? These are young women who want nothing more than \$10 for transportation and an extra 50 cents for their food," she said.

Jill Tucker, chief technical adviser at the International Labour Organisation's Better Factories Cambodia, said that although details of the incident remained sketchy, it was worrying for the country's international reputation as a supplier of footwear and clothing.

"It doesn't look good for Cambodia when this type of violence is concerned," she said.

Ek Tha, a spokesman for the



A security guard walks past broken windows at the Kaoway Sports factory in Svay Rieng province following a protest yesterday during which at least three people were shot. About 6,000 workers reportedly turned out for the protest. DEREK STOUT

Council of Ministers, said no one should draw conclusions about what had happened until a full investigation was completed.

Ken Loo, secretary-general of the Garment Manufacturers Association in Cambodia, of which Kaoway Sports Ltd is a member, downplayed the severity of the situation.

"We all know that one worker was injured and it was originally rumoured that worker

was killed, but that's not the case," he said.

He suggested protesters were just looking for "an excuse to make trouble" rather than seeking genuine benefits due to external, non-union agitation and claimed the factory had accepted the workers' requests before they amended their demands and began vandalising the factory.

The protest reportedly erupted into violence when

Kaoway Sports Ltd agreed to only two or three demands made by workers, including monthly allowances of \$10 for transport, \$10 as an attendance bonus and US 50 cents a day for lunch.

Svay Rieng provincial governor Chieng Am said that after the shootings, the company had agreed to all the workers' demands and vowed to give 500,000 riel compensation to each victim.

Meanwhile, Buot Chinda's doctor, Svay Rieng provincial hospital deputy Kouch Sipha, is just hoping his patient will stay alive.

"We are trying our best to save her life," he said before Buot Chinda was sent to Phnom Penh because her condition had deteriorated. ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY DEREK STOUT. MAY TITTHARA REPORTED FROM BAVET TOWN. DAVID BOYLE REPORTED FROM PHNOM PENH.



A Puma shoebox lies on the pavement in front of the Kaoway Sports factory following a violent protest yesterday during which at least three people were shot and injured. DEREK STOUT



Buot Chinda, 21, receives treatment at Svay Rieng provincial hospital after being shot in the chest yesterday during a protest at the Kaoway Sports factory. DEREK STOUT

Boeung Kak residents given more land titles

Khouth Sophak Chakrya

DISTRICT authorities issued land titles to another 46 families living in Village 22 around Boeung Kak lake in Phnom Penh yesterday, although some residents still feared eviction as the 12.44 hectares of land designated for them by the government was not clearly marked, a village representative said.

Tep Vanny, who received a land title yesterday, said 73 of the 194 families in Village 22 in Daun Penh district's Srah Chak commune had received land titles in the past week. Twenty-eight families had been told previously that they would not receive a title because their homes were not within the 12.44 hectares.

"We are happy, but we are not sure whether we all can avoid eviction a second time if the

12.44 hectares of land is not clearly marked," she said. The families also want the government to build a drainage system and issue titles to families cut from the 12.44-hectare area.

Resident Bou Chhorvy, 38, said she had waited five years to receive a land title.

"However, we're still all worried because we do not have a drainage system around our houses and the Boeung Kak area floods when it rains heavily," she said.

In Saophorn, deputy chief of Srah Chak commune, said one land title had been withheld yesterday because the family members involved were in dispute.

"In this case, we will provide the land title to either the husband or wife, based on who the court judges as the correct recipient. We have no right to make this decision," she said. ■

Manhattan melodrama

Tep Nimol

NEARLY 2,000 workers from the Manhattan Cambodia garment factory in Kampong Cham province's Kampong Siem district protested in front of the factory yesterday to urge its owner to implement multiple orders by the Arbitration Council on worker demands, a union official said.

Yen Sokheang, vice-president of the Free Trade Union of Cambodia at the factory, said workers had protested all day with no reaction from factory representatives or provincial labour department officials.

Yen Sokheang said that last Thursday, workers had sent a letter to the factory stating that they would strike if a

resolution was not reached.

"The Arbitration Council ordered the factory owner to agree to five of the 12 points demanded by workers, but the company did not follow [the order]," he said, adding that the most recent ruling had been handed down in October.

The Arbitration Council has ordered that the company offer permanent contracts to employees who have worked in the factory for more than two years, to provide a bonus of two months' salary for workers on permanent contracts who resigned and to allow workers to wear shoes at work to protect their safety.

It also ruled that workers whose contracts were not renewed immediately after

they expired should receive extra money for the time they worked without a contract, and that the company must pay one month's salary and other financial benefits to former worker Chea Phalla, who workers claim was unfairly dismissed.

Sam Seyha, administrative manager at the factory, could not be reached for comment yesterday, but has previously told the *Post* the company would not go against an Arbitration Council decision.

Provincial hall administrative manager Kun Navuth said an inspection team from the Labour Ministry would travel to the factory today to investigate the dispute between workers and the company owner. ■



The Phnom Penh Post

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www.phnompenhpost.com

ISSUE NUMBER 1372

THURSDAY, MAY 10, 2012

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Capital's tallest building tops out

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A Tuol Sleng interrogator speaks out

May Titthara

SEATED under a wooden house in a remote part of Takeo province's Bati district, a grey-haired man in a blue and grey shirt takes a cigarette from his pack and lights it.

Exhaling a cloud of white smoke, the thin man, named Prak Khan, begins to speak.

"I never told my bitter background to anybody in my village, even my wife," he says. "They only know me as a banana seller."

What his neighbours don't know is that from 1976 to 1979, Prak Khan, 60, was an interrogator at the infamous S-21 detention center.

Records from the Documentation Centre of Cambodia (DC-CAM) confirm that Prak Khan interrogated 51 prisoners, rewriting two of their confessions. Some were high-level members of the Khmer Rouge purged from party ranks. Some were culled from the military, both Pol Pot's and Lon Nol's. Some were secretaries of districts and regions, and the rest were simply people accused of espionage by an increasingly paranoid Khmer Rouge leadership.

"My wife just found out when the ECCC invited me to testify on Case 001,

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Holy plough

Prince Norodom Chakravuth (second right) follows the royal oxen during the Royal Ploughing Ceremony yesterday in Phnom Penh. HENG CHIVDAN

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Looking for a better life

Cassandra Yeap and Mom Kunthea

Thailand's allure powerful in struggling district

DRY, parched ground – evidence of severe dry season drought – stretches for miles in Siem Reap's Srei Snam district. In a couple of months, the rains will flood these fields. Both conditions make it equally impossible to produce a good harvest.

Srei Snam was a former Khmer Rouge stronghold until the late 1990s, and development and employment remain scarce, district governor Mak Samphea says.

The district borders both Oddar Meanchey and Banteay Meanchey provinces. For the residents of Srei Snam, these two provinces represent a gateway to a better life across the border in Thailand.

Every year, 25 to 30 per cent of the population – more than 3,000 people in all – migrate to Thailand for a number of reasons, Mak Samphea says.

"One reason is the poverty. Another, because the crop has no good re-

sult. [And] this district is very close to the Thai border.

"They have no jobs... The poverty makes the people try to go everywhere to seek a job," he says.

The district is bleeding workers, most of them youths, even as Prime Minister Hun Sen has made repeated calls for Cambodians to stay in the country, pointing to shortages in the construction and agriculture industry.

Nok Lang, the district's Smach village chief, says about half the fami-

lies in his village lose at least two members each year to work illegally in Thailand.

Usually, these are the father and oldest son, but newly married couples often go together as they have no other income, for jobs that include construction, rubbish collection and selling fruit.

"They've got the information about Prime Minister Hun Sen appealing for Cambodian people to work in the country, but they can-

not find work in the country with higher wages than in Thailand, even though they face dangerous risks," Nok Lang says.

The living standards of those who worked in Thailand were also clearly better than those of families that did not, he adds, holding up Le Meth, a 29-year-old construction worker in Thailand as an example.

"Before [Le Meth went to Thailand] his family's living standard was difficult and they lived in a small house, but after he worked and earned

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DECORATION SERVICES FOR HOUSE AND OFFICE SPACE ARE ON THE RISE



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National



Pulling your weight

A man pulls a two-wheel cart as he passes a construction site in Phnom Penh's Russey Keo district. HONG MENEHA

POLICE
BLOTTER

Angered son assaults mother for drug money

POLICE arrested a 30-year-old man for biting, punching and kicking his mother on Monday in Phnom Penh's Tuol Kork district. The mother said her son was a drug addict and had recently been released from prison. In addition to assaulting his mother, the son used an axe to destroy the interior of her home. Police said the son was angry because his mother had refused to lend him money to buy drugs.

KOH SANTEPHEAP

Suspected drug dealer nabbed by authorities

A 33-YEAR-OLD man was arrested for drug trafficking after a raid on his house in Battambang town on Monday. Police said they had been following the suspected drug dealer for a while, but lacked enough evidence to make an arrest until recently. Fifty-five pills of yama were confiscated in the raid. The suspect confessed to the crime, admitting that he bought the drugs from a dealer at the Cambodia-Laos border.

KAMPUCHEA THMEY

Gambling father, son pair captured in raid

POLICE in Kandal province arrested a father and son duo for gambling on Monday. The arrest occurred after authorities raided a gambling hall. Most gamblers fled the scene and police were only able to arrest the father and son pair, ages 53 and 35. Police suspected that some of the gamblers may have been tipped off to the raid, because so many were able to escape quickly. The father and son are awaiting trial.

Sticky-fingered thieves swipe water machines

POLICE in Kampong Chhnang province's Cholkiri district arrested three men for stealing their neighbour's water-pumping machines on Monday. The victim said his two machines had been stolen while he was away from his home. As police were conducting their investigation, they saw three men selling the water-pumping machines and promptly arrested them. The trio confessed to the crime and are awaiting trial.

KOH SANTEPHEAP

Fraudulent gold seller arrested by authorities

A 37-YEAR-OLD woman was arrested for selling fake gold in Kampot town on Monday. A suspicious customer had taken a sample of what the vendor was selling as gold to an examiner to determine its authenticity. After the examiner reported that it was fake, the customer filed a complaint and the fraudulent vendor was arrested by authorities. The seller admitted to fraud and is awaiting trial.

RASMHEY KAMPUCHEA

Translated by Sen David

An S-21 interrogator speaks

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so from now on, I have to speak out to let the young generation know about their history," he says, his sadness plainly visible.

Prak Khan was born into a farming family in Takeo province, the oldest son out of five brothers and sisters. He worked on the farm feeding animals until 1971, when he joined the Khmer Rouge.

"Angkar [the Khmer Rouge's shadowy leadership] said that if a man from the village did not serve as soldier for two or three years, women would not marry that man," he says. "So, all the men joined Angkar."

Prak Khan was 17 years old, lured in, like many others, by the promise that he was fighting for his king and country.

"I was fighting bravely to protect the nation, but I never knew who my leader really was," he says. "I only knew that I was fighting to get the country back for King Norodom Sihanouk. I only found out the names Khieu Samphan, Nuon Chea and Ieng Sary when

the Khmer Rouge controlled Phnom Penh."

Prak Khan started working in Tuol Sleng in 1976, first as a guard, then as an interrogator when his superiors discovered he had an eighth-grade education. He was one of 30 in his interrogator group; he received no training.

"Duch only allowed me to go along with the older interrogator and see what he did, and I followed him for a long time," he says. "Then Duch let me start my job: one person questioning one person in a quiet place, trying to make the prisoner confess everything."

With the prisoners' confessions already in hand, Prak Khan says he didn't ask specific questions. If the prisoners did not begin to confess, he would start to threaten them, then beat them with whip.

If the prisoner still didn't confess, the torture escalated.

"For the prisoners who did not confess, we would put a plastic covering over their head and face, and stab a pin



The metal frame of a bed where prisoners were held at S-21 Prison, now called Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, on display in 2010. JULIE LEAFE

under their fingernail, so that they'd answer all the questions," he explains.

The techniques, says Prak Khan, were up the interrogators.

"We used our own methods for getting answers, but for all the prisoners we tortured, we did not kill them, because we were afraid that we would lose their answers," he says. "If the prisoner died, we were punished."

Interrogations for one prisoner took two or three months, and were done in secret at all hours of the day and night, in a building separate from the main holding cells.

All the prisoners' confessions were taken to Duch and Mam Nai, another interrogator, says Prak Khan, lighting another cigarette. Sometimes they were given back, along with orders to re-interrogate the prisoner

because their answers were unsatisfactory.

"When I heard Duch was sentenced to spend his whole life in prison, it was justice, because victims' families can accept that," he says. "If it wasn't a whole life sentence, it would not be justice, because he ordered the killings of a lot of people in his regime."

However, Prak Khan endorses Duch's accusations against Nuon Chea.

"I know that what Duch said at the ECCC about Nuon Chea is true, because I saw Nuon Chea three or four times," he says, calling Nuon Chea's rebuttal a lie.

Nuon Chea, currently on trial before the ECCC, has vehemently denied he is responsible for the reign of terror that caused the deaths of a quarter of the population.



Former Khmer Rouge interrogator Prak Khan testifies at the Khmer Rouge tribunal in 2009. ECCC/POOL



The Phnom Penh Post

Celebrating 20 Years 1992 - 2012

www.phnompenhpost.com

ISSUE NUMBER 1380

TUESDAY, MAY 22, 2012

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> Spurs sweep Clippers but the Heat get level



SPORT
BACK PAGE



Insuring a good view

Men attend the opening ceremony of a new insurance company at Canadia Tower yesterday in Phnom Penh. HENG CHIVAN

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Women in upper union positions vital

Shane Worrell and Mom Kunthear

FEMALE union leaders in the garment industry – where women constitute 90 per cent of the work force – are effective at bargaining for better working conditions, but their voices aren't being heard in a union landscape dominated by men, a labour expert said yesterday.

Veasna Nuon, co-author of *Building Unions in Cambodia: History, Challenges, Strategies*, said even in factories where women are elected as union leaders, they are often unable to effect much change because bargaining usually takes place further up the union chain, where men hold most positions of power.

"In terms of union representation, there are more women at a lower level," he said. "But the number of women elected at federation level is less than 10 per cent," he said. "They have . . . almost nothing when it comes to national representation . . . men are making decisions for women."

Cambodia's garment industry has an estimated 400,000 employees working in hundreds of factories. But while the vast majority of these workers are women, little more than half of elected union representatives at the factory level are female, Veasna Nuon said.

One of these union leaders is Ti Sokhun, a 36-year-old garment worker who works at a factory in Phnom Penh.

After seven years of frustration at

Tales of brutality surface

May Titthara

VILLAGERS detained during a bloody crackdown in Kratie province last week in which a 14-year-old was shot dead have accused security forces of brutal acts of cruelty, including forcing pregnant women to stand naked in the sun for hours.

The villagers from Pro Ma village in Chhlong district's Kampong Damrei commune have alleged that military police and police forced men and women to strip naked,

Women stripped, handcuffed: Kratie villagers

handcuffed them and left the females in broad daylight for hours while the males were not freed until the end of the day.

Almost 1,000 police and military police officers stormed the village, where residents have a longstanding land dispute with the company Casotim, at about 8:30am last Wednesday in an operation they said was to arrest the ringleaders of a group attempting to create a

mini autonomous state. Sotheavy, a 19-year-old who requested her real name be concealed, said she had "never seen such brutality" as the violence the forces employed while storming the village of about 1,000 families – which led to the death of 14-year-old Heng Chantha.

"It is so difficult to forget the event. They pointed their guns at me and ordered many women to take their shirt and underwear off, then seized

our money and tied our hands behind us and ordered us to stand in broad daylight for two or three hours," she said.

Sopheap, 63, who also requested her real identity be concealed, said the villagers would file a complaint against the perpetrators.

"I experienced Pol Pot's regime, but it was not as cruel as this. Now that I've tasted being handcuffed and bound in the hot daylight, if I had land

in another place, I would not live in the area," she said.

Kratie provincial governor Sar Chamrong – who took the post on Friday, replacing recently deceased governor Kham Phem – said the forces had only been authorised to search for weapons.

"If the forces hit, harassed and forced people to undress, it is not a policy," he said.

The operation, ordered by a joint committee of the Ministry of Interior, the national police and the provincial

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National

Women in upper union positions vital: expert

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issues her co-workers faced, Ti Sokhun decided last year it was time for change.

"I couldn't stand to see female workers constantly threatened and looked down upon by factory officials," she said.

"I asked my fellow workers if they would support me to be their leader in the factory, even though I didn't particularly want to do it."

Ti Sokhun stormed to victory in an internal Cambodian Federation for Workers' Rights leadership vote in October to become her factory's first female union representative.

It was only then she began to notice things change for women – and even men – in her factory.

"The difference between before I was union leader and after was enormous," she said.

"The factory officials, who had not paid attention to our demands before, began to listen. They stopped threatening workers, so more joined the union – now we have more freedom, attendance bonuses and other things."

Achieving major changes that would affect the whole industry are much more difficult to achieve, Veasna Nuon said.

"At a factory level, it is more democratic than at a national level," he said. "[At a national level], there are so many issues that are not met," he said. "It's very broad."

Perpetuating the problem were barriers preventing women from climbing the union ladder.

"The union job is not an easy job. People have competing interests, it's long hours, voluntary, and [many women] have family commitments and often no support from their families to become a union leader at this level," he said.

Dave Welsh, country director of the American Center for International Labor Solidarity, said the industry faces a huge challenge in getting women more involved in the labour movement at all levels.

"There needs to be more gender diversity," he said.

"Just from a morale point of view, if you're looking across the trade union movement and thinking: 'We're all women. Why aren't any of us in leadership positions?' then it's an issue."

"There are certain issues that require gender sensitivity – there are certain issues embedded in



Garment workers make athletic apparel at a factory in Phnom Penh's Meanchey district last year. WILL BAXTER

the labour law that require gender sensitivity."

Under Cambodia's Labour Law, factories must allow women to breast feed, they must provide them Western toilets and they cannot order them to lift heavy boxes if they have recently given birth or miscarried. Protection from sexual harassment is also clearly spelled out.

In his book with Melisa Serano published in 2010, Veasna

Nuon wrote that Cambodia's labour movement was "essentially a women's movement under male leadership".

"It would augur well for unions to adopt policies and strategies that would enhance women's participation of women in union activities."

"I don't think anything has changed since then," he said yesterday.

Rong Chhun, president of the

Cambodian Confederation of Unions, said he encouraged such participation within his confederation. "We need to have more women union leaders, because more than 90 per cent of garment workers are women. If their leaders are women, they can easily understand women's issues," he said.

Women are often lacking inside knowledge of how unions work and are therefore not con-

fident when it comes to being involved, he said.

"We need to [nurture] their leadership and [encourage participation]," he said.

Ti Sokhun will be one person relieved when more of her co-workers become involved in the union movement.

"Sometimes I feel tired and I want to abandon this work, but I think there will be no one else to help the workers," she said. ■

Ieng Sary health woes prompt adjournment

Bridget Di Certo

FORMER Khmer Rouge Minister for Foreign Affairs Ieng Sary has been undergoing emergency treatment for bronchitis since Thursday, according to a medical report read aloud at the Khmer Rouge tribunal yesterday.

Judges adjourn proceedings until Wednesday, when they will hear from doctors who have been treating the octogenarian at the Khmer-Soviet Friendship Hospital since his evacuation to the facility.

"Having read the report that clearly indicates that Ieng Sary cannot be discharged from the hospital until [Tuesday], the chamber now decided that [Monday and Tuesday] proceedings cannot go on," Trial Chamber president Nil Nonn said.

Ieng Sary defence counsel Michael Karnavas told the court that he had been blocked from visiting his client in hospital.

"It would be good if the lawyers were informed about his medical condition. Normally, we are not; normally, we are kept in the dark," Karnavas said of his client, who has been hospitalised several times since his detention at the tribunal began in 2007.

Speaking to the *Post* by telephone yesterday, Karnavas said that he had visited his client at the Khmer-Soviet Friendship Hospital – some-



Former Khmer Rouge Foreign Minister Ieng Sary attends a hearing at the ECCC in 2010. ECCC/POOL/MAK REMISSA

thing previously barred by Calmette Hospital.

"My impression is that my client is probably best to have the week off and rest," Karnavas said. "And there will be no waiver [of his right to be present at trial] provided for witnesses testifying to his case particularly."

Karnavas said the former diplomat was very active in his defence and gave lawyers guidance and advice during proceedings.

"With his present condition, we don't know yet how capable he is to follow proceedings," Karnavas said. "If he falls asleep in the holding cell, that is not active participation."

"That would be nothing but a charade to suggest that he is following the proceedings." ■

Open Society Justice Initiative trial monitor Clair Duffy said the decision to adjourn was "absolutely correct".

"We are exploring issues of policies, and authority over individuals. It is very hard for the Trial Chamber to proceed without him," Duffy said.

"If this unravels over a period of time, there might be other measures the court needs to consider, like severing him from the proceedings, and that will come down to what his health conditions are and how likely they are to worsen," she added.

Ieng Sary's wife, Ieng Thirith, has already been severed from proceedings in Case 002 for health reasons. The "first lady of the regime" has been diagnosed with dementia believed to be caused by Alzheimer's. ■

Tales of brutality surface in Kratie

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governor, was launched under the pretext that a group called the Democratic Association, led by Bun Ratha, was provoking a separatist movement.

But villagers have repeatedly said Bun Ratha, who evaded arrest along with the four other alleged ringleaders of the group, was merely helping them stand up to the company Casotim.

Eight people have been arrested as a result of the crackdown.

Touch Sok, 52, alleged that during the operation, forces had also confiscated rice and gasoline as well as slaughtered their poultry. "I seem defeated, but if I am not allowed to live in the area, where can I live to farm and feed myself? I have to return to the area when the situation becomes normal," he said.

Sar Chamrong said forces had begun pulling out of the area but that some would remain to protect the safety of some 200 fami-

lies that had lived in the area since 2006.

Others who had migrated to the area from Kampong Cham and other provinces after being tricked by Bun Ratha had been sent home, he said.

But a 2010 Phd thesis suggests their migration there had been economically motivated.

Titled *The Geographies of Evasion: The Development Industry and Property Rights Interventions in Early 21st Century Cambodia*, the thesis found that significant numbers of migrants, most from Kampong Cham, had moved to Chhlong district after Casotim was awarded a logging concession there and in Snuol district.

Part of the thesis, by Robin Bidulph of Sweden's University of Gothenburg, examines the impact that Casotim's 124,000-hectare logging concession, granted in the 1990s, had on the local population.

The thesis found the conces-

sion had led to industrial-scale logging in Chhlong and Snuol districts where officials responsible for the forest became "far more ambivalent".

"Anyone with a tractor or truck that could carry felled trees from the forest to the Mekong was able to pay a fee to Casotim to go into the forests, cut wood, and then sell it to the company. As many as 50 locally owned tractors and trucks participated in this business," the thesis reads.

Villagers had developed the perception that the military and the Forestry Administration, which had become the equivalent of informal regulators and tax collectors, worked for the concessionaires, the thesis found.

"For the villagers, these soldiers were known simply as the 'Casotim soldiers,'" it says, referring specifically to the military.

Ly Hout, a representative of Casotim declined to comment yesterday. ■



Villagers are forced to leave Pro Ma village, in Kratie province's Chhlong district last week, during a military-led eviction which resulted in the killing of a 14-year-old girl. HENG CHIVON



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www.phnompenhpost.com

ISSUE NUMBER 1475

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2012

Successful People Read The Post

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NATIONAL NEWS

Mine kills six, injures two in Battambang

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Beehive Radio director Mam Sonando (centre) is hustled into a van to be taken to Prey Sar prison after being sentenced to a 20-year jail term yesterday. HENG CHIVOAN

'Shots fired at me,' says Tep Kolap

Buth Reaksmeay Kongkea and Abby Seiff

IN A bizarre series of events, only days after being vindicated by the Supreme Court, Phnom Penh International University rector Tep Kolap claimed to have been chased across Phnom Penh yesterday evening by men who shot at her car as she sought refuge in Prime Minister Hun Sen's home.

"Police have been ordered to investigate the shooting," said Phnom Penh municipal police chief Touch Naruth, speaking from Kolap's home last night.

According to Naruth, a warrant was issued by the Phnom Penh Municipal Court yesterday for an outstanding charge against the beleaguered rector, and police will accompany her to court today for questioning.

Speaking by phone, an audibly distraught Kolap said a group of men began following her as soon as she left the Khmer-Soviet Friendship hospital, where she had been receiving medical treatment following her release.

"About seven or nine men chased me as I was leaving the hospital. And then they shot at me three times," said Kolap.

"We tried to go to some embassies, but the embassies didn't open the doors. Then one of my nephews drove to the prime minister's house ... and

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Sonando gets 20 years

May Titthara and Stuart White

IN A MOVE that stunned his supporters and drew ire from rights groups and foreign embassies alike, independent radio station owner Mam Sonando was sentenced to 20 years in prison yesterday on charges of insurrection.

Sonando, owner of broadcaster Beehive Radio and president of the rights group the Association of Democrats, was convicted of masterminding a so-called secessionist plot in Kratie prov-

ince's Pro Ma village in May—an accusation that has been roundly dismissed by rights groups and opposition figures as baseless and politically motivated.

"Even for a long-time activist like myself, a 20-year activist, it's still shocking to see them convict someone like Mam Sonando with no shred of evidence," Cambodian Center for Human Rights President Ou Virak said outside the courtroom after the verdict was announced. "I'm very, very upset that we've been pushing this government, but nothing has changed. The court is

still a political tool, and the verdict read like a political essay."

In addition to his 20-year sentence, Sonando was ordered by the court to pay a 10 million riel (\$2,500) fine. The court also convicted in absentia alleged co-conspirator Bun Ratha—who had once volunteered for the Association of Democrats—sentencing him to 30 years' imprisonment and a fine of 10 million riel.

Bun Chhorn and Sok Tong, also convicted in absentia, were each sentenced to 15 years and fined eight million riel,

and three other co-defendants were given sentences ranging from 10 months to three years in jail.

However, the five defendants who had previously cut immunity deals with the government and promised to testify against their alleged ringleaders were all given suspended sentences.

Inside the courtroom, the gallery burst into shouts of disbelief as the guilty verdict was read, prompting presiding Judge Chang Sinath to call the room to order.

Din Phannara, Sonando's wife, called

the court "unjust", and the verdict "unacceptable" before worrying aloud about the ramifications of her husband's imprisonment.

"His absence is like the absence of the Beehive Radio station, and Cambodia will not have democracy anymore," she said.

Sok Sam Oeun, head of the Cambodian Defenders Project and Sonando's attorney, declined to comment on the verdict, noting that if a court could

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National

Sonando convicted, gets 20-year sentence

Continued from page 1

convict Sonando over so little, they could convict him too.

"I cannot say whether the court's verdict is just or unjust, because only a few words of conversation are considered to be incitement, so me giving a comment would be incitement as well," he said.

Outside, a collective cry of outrage arose as word of the verdict worked its way through the throng of Sonando supporters. Protesters who had previously been slipping through laxly enforced checkpoints in ones and twos swelled en masse past the barriers and clashed with a hurriedly formed police line a few metres away.

The demonstrators soon broke through the line, halting their advance after police regrouped, but continuing to shout – in many cases, tearfully – at police and onlookers.

Sonando supporter Som Sim, 84, angrily denounced the court, which he characterised as being a tool of the powerful.

"What is he guilty of? Why was he jailed? He always helped the poor people, and did only good things," Sim said. "I will seek justice for him under any

circumstances, until the end of my life."

The charges against Sonando stemmed from the forced eviction of hundreds of families in Kratie province's Pro Ma village last May, an eviction in which an unarmed 14-year-old girl was shot and killed by government forces. The government never investigated the killing, nor was anyone arrested, but officials later described the operation as a necessary anti-secessionist raid, meant to quell a group that was attempting to withdraw from Cambodia and form an "autonomous zone".

Villagers repeatedly insisted that they had no intention of seceding, and maintained that they had simply been applying for land titles.

Prime Minister Hun Sen first implicated Sonando in the alleged plot in a speech in June, just one day after Sonando broadcasted a report from The Hague, where the US-based group Khmer People Power Movement had filed a complaint to the International Criminal Court accusing the ruling party of crimes against humanity in its treatment of land disputes.

The KPPM figured heavily into the prosecution's case



Supporters of Beehive Radio director Mam Sonando gather outside Phnom Penh Municipal Court yesterday. PHA LINA

against Sonando, with prosecutors arguing that Sonando shared the group's view of the government.

The prosecution presented what appeared to be KPPM mission statements they said they had found on the internet, and noted that Sonando had met with the movement's leader, but offered no further evidence that Sonando was sympathetic to their cause.

Sonando, for his part, said that he had indeed met with the group, but only as a reporter.

Huon Pannary, undersecretary of Sonando's As-

sociation of Democrats, also maintained that Sonando's meetings with the KPPM had been totally innocuous.

"He's a journalist; he just interviewed the KPPM," she said.

The rest of the prosecution's case relied almost entirely on witness testimony, testimony that often conflicted with previous statements to police and that of other witnesses, and testimony that several witnesses freely admitted was based solely on hearsay.

Evidence of armed insurrection was limited to a handful of seized farming implements

and traditional bows and arrows that villagers maintained were used for nothing more than hunting.

Civil society, the opposition and foreign governments were quick to slam the verdict.

Amnesty International researcher Rupert Abbott said after the trial that Sonando was targeted for prosecution because "he was seen as a threat to the government".

"There was no evidence whatsoever that Mam Sonando was involved," he told reporters. "We can see that this verdict marks a year that

has seen a decline in the human rights situation [in Cambodia] ... The space for free speech is shrinking."

However, Abbott said, Cambodian courts have learned to present at least a façade of credibility. "I think on the face of things, the process was quite good on this trial, especially when you compare it to the Boeung Kak trial," he said, before adding that observers "have not been fooled by the appearance of justice".

Sam Rainsy Party lawmaker Mu Sochua called the sentence a "travesty and an injustice", and a "huge step backward for democracy in Cambodia."

Sochua also said that she had received calls from villagers in Kampong Cham, Prey Veng and Kandal provinces who said they had been threatened by authorities when it came to light that they planned to attend yesterday's demonstration.

A dozen NGOs and rights groups – including Licadho, the Cambodian Human Rights Action Committee and the Community Legal Education Center – blasted the court's decision in a joint statement, calling the conviction "shocking" and the sentence "draconian".

The office of the EU's high representative for foreign affairs, Catherine Ashton, issued its own statement, saying the verdict "raises severe doubts about the impartiality and independence of the court". ■

RANGER VS. The WORLD



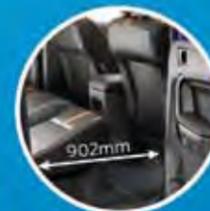
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The Phnom Penh Post

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www.phnompenhpost.com

ISSUE NUMBER 1480

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2012

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Seoung Yarat, an ethnic Tampuan village representative, looks out over land that he claims has been taken from his community by the company DM Group in Lumphat district, Ratanakkiri province. HENG CHIVOAN

Living with the enemy

May Titthara
Lumphat district, Ratanakkiri province

Remaining Tampuan still battle company

FOUR years after they began fighting the well-connected concessionaire DM Group, members of the ethnic Tampuan who remain in Svay Sor village are exhausted.

While the DM Group has seen its complaints against villagers and activists routinely heard at court, those filed by the affected families remain stalled or are ignored.

"If I'd given \$10,000 to the court, my case would've been processed to trial," Seoung Yarat, 50, said with disgust.

Yarat, a village representative, has been fighting two battles against the DM Group – one on behalf of 60 families who allege the rubber company has illegally encroached upon 260 hectares of their farmland, the other to seek justice after being shot in the leg by a police officer moonlighting as

a security guard, who fired on him during a 2009 protest.

As he spoke, Yarat, whose leg had to be amputated following the injury, pointed a walking stick at the land in front of him. Spread before are hectares of blighted land, freshly planted with rubber saplings. At the very edge of the plantation stand five spare homes.

"We now work for the company to get some money to buy milled rice,

since we don't have the farmland anymore," Yarat said.

DM Group, which first moved into the district in 2005, has been steadily acquiring land in three communes occupied by indigenous Tampuan villagers.

Over the years the company has amassed at least 1,500 hectares by under-compensating and intimidating residents, rights monitors maintain,

forcing scores of villagers to flee from their ancestral homeland. In Svay Sor, 40-year-old Plenh Thaem has seen her neighbours leave one by one.

"We ethnic minorities depend solely on our farmland. Losing the land means killing us," she says. Residents have lodged complaints with all relevant institutions "but none of them have resolved it".

"I heard the local authorities dare not to resolve the problem because the

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China slows E Asia growth



WORLD
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Defence spending up in region



National

In brief

Preah Vihear protesters plan rally at PM's house

ABOUT 170 villagers involved in a Preah Vihear land dispute plan to protest in front of Prime Minister Hun Sen's house this morning after mobilising under the radar to prevent authorities from blocking the attempt, a villager representative said yesterday. Responding to previous attempts by authorities to prevent protesters travelling to Phnom Penh from Preah Vihear's Choam Ksan district – site of a long-running dispute with now defunct NGO Drugs and Aids Research and Prevention Organisation – villagers in the past few days have trickled into the capital in small groups, Sat Savoeun said. "We will get up early in the morning to gather at Prime Minister Hun Sen's house, so that we are not blocked by authorities," he said. PHAK SEANGLY

Capital hosts navy meet

MEETING at the midpoint of a five-day training mission to Cambodia, Japanese and Cambodian naval officials yesterday discussed maritime security in Phnom Penh. Rear Admiral Hidetoshi Fuchinoue, commander of the Japan Training Squadron, met with Cambodian Royal Navy Commander Tea Vinh at navy headquarters in Phnom Penh. "I hope that there will be a plan created for technical training next year that will support Cambodia to keep security in its maritime area," Fuchinoue said at the meeting. Vinh also announced that the Kingdom's navy has requested financial support from Japan, Cambodia's largest aid donor, to build a new headquarters. VONG SOKHENG

Habitat Day marked by capital's evictees

Chhay Channyda

EVICTEES wearing small model houses on their heads to symbolise their struggles marched to the National Assembly yesterday to ask authorities to intervene to stop more forced evictions.

About 400 representatives of 40 communities across the capital joined human rights activists at the former Dey Krahorrm eviction site on Chamkarmon district's Tonle Sap commune yesterday as part of a World Habitat Day event.

World Habitat Day was celebrated internationally on October 1, but many of the activists who attended yesterday had spent that day supporting Beehive Radio director Mam Sonando as he was sentenced to 20 years in prison for masterminding a so-called secessionist plot in Kratie province.

Black T-shirts emblazoned with the words "eviction-free zone" stood out as the crowd marched in support of villagers who have been forcibly evicted from communities including group 78, Boeung Kak and Borei Keila without proper compensation.

Cheng Srey Vann, a former resident of Dey Krahorrm who was evicted in early 2009, said she had lived in poverty since.

She now fears eviction from the \$2,000 house her family had bought in Boeung Trabek commune in Chamkarmon district.

Activists clutched loud-



Land rights activists wearing hats that look like houses protest in Phnom Penh yesterday. HONG MENEA

speakers as they complained of eviction "thefts" dressed up as urban development and demanded the release of imprisoned activists Yorm Bopha, from Boeung Kak lake, and Borei Keila's Tim Sakmony.

They also made fresh pleas for the court to release Sonando.

Eang Vuthy, a representative of Equitable Cambodia, said civil society groups and residents wanted the government to respect housing rights.

"At resettlement sites, there are difficulties because they are so far away and they lack

infrastructure," he said.

Phnom Penh Municipal Hall spokesman Long Dimanche said people had made a career out of protesting and were not stopping to think of the positive sides of development.

"We always see the same faces at protests," he said. "They find any excuse to go against the government without fully considering why."

Council of Ministers spokesman Phay Sipphan said Sonando's supporters had no reason to protest because his case would be heard at the Court of Appeal.

General released after bust

Lieng Sarith

A TWO-STAR general of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces was released by Phnom Penh Municipal Court yesterday after being arrested for attempting to obstruct police from investigating a drug bust that occurred on his property, Judge Kim Rothnarin said.

Hak Mao, deputy commander of RCAF brigade G70, and his bodyguard, Keo Tong, were arrested Sunday evening after preventing an investigation of a home owned by Mao in Tuol Kork district on October 4.

Rothnarin said Mao was released and the investigation dropped against him yesterday, although Tong was charged with menace and obstruction of police enforcement and remains in pre-trial detention.

A drug raid on October 3 uncovered renter Huot Voleak, 20, in possession of eight packages of ecstasy and \$2,000.

Mao and Tong, along with four to five of his bodyguards, attempted to quell an investigation the following day that ultimately uncovered one package of ecstasy in Voleak's rented room, according to local police.

"It is the right of the court to detain anyone found guilty and release the innocent," said Kheng Tito, spokesman for the National Military Police, which ordered the arrest of Mao and Tong.

Tito maintained yesterday that his officers made the arrest based on the order of Phnom Penh Municipal Court.

POLICE BLOTTER

Would-be peacemaker gets brunt of attack

A GOOD Samaritan who intervened in a scuffle outside a Pursat pagoda on Friday ended up in a worse off state than the victim he was trying to help. Rather than put a stop to the violence, the intrepid interrupter was set upon by the blade-bearing bully, who stabbed him before escaping into the streets of Pursat's Veal Veng district. The man was sent to hospital while police arrived to arrest his 22-year-old assailant. The original victim, who might consider himself lucky to have escaped the bully's clutches, is also sought by police. KOH SANTEPHEAP

Police arrest two of four loud robbers

ESCHEWING the usual stealth required for burglary, four thieves instead openly barged into a Svey Rieng house with a gun, threatening the owner and arousing the attention of local police, who were patrolling nearby. The panicked owner reported no shots, but the would-be rowdy robbers nevertheless left enough evidence for the cops to arrest two of them not long after. Police are still looking for their fumbling friends. DEUM AMPIL

Police catch den of drug packagers in the act

A NOT-SO-SECRET drug packaging business running out of a Stung Treng guesthouse was raided on Saturday after information gathered in a previous drug bust alerted police. The busy outfit was packaging their wares when police officers appeared on the scene, arresting two members. Others made a run for it, while their fallen comrades admitted it was all precisely what it seemed. RASMEY KAMPUCHEA

Pagoda is no protection in deadly argument

A 21-YEAR-OLD was stabbed to death in a pagoda in Pursat's Bakan district on Saturday. A neighbour reported that the man and his assailant had a blue outside the temple before the victim went inside to offer food. Police say his attacker followed him inside and stabbed the unsuspecting man in the neck and chest. He died on the way to hospital. The suspect managed to escape. KAMPUCHEA THMEY

Police stumped about death of booze seller

POLICE have ruled out murder in the mysterious death of a Battambang drink store owner, who was found dead in his car on Friday. The 39-year-old had enjoyed a tittle with his friends before going out, never to return home. The man was discovered apparently undisturbed in his car. Police are still stumped as to how the man shuffled off this mortal coil and are examining the body. RASMEY KAMPUCHEA

Translated by Sen David

R'kiri villagers struggle on in battle for farmland

Continued from page 1

land is owned by an excellence, a tycoon. Where is the independence and neutrality of the court?"

Sitting nearby, Voeun Phor echoes the complaints of his neighbour.

"If the courts and authorities weren't corrupt, they would take procedural measures on our complaints. [Because they haven't], it means they're committing corruption," he says, pausing to take a drag of his cigarette. "We can only now wait for the company to bulldoze our land and even the lives of the rest of the residents."

Deputy prosecutor Ros Sarom said the case was first thrown out because all villagers have been adequately compensated by the company and that villagers are simply requesting anew the same investigation.

While villagers' complaints hang in limbo or are ignored, those filed by DM Group and local authorities have gone through with ease. At least 12 Tampuon activists have had criminal complaints filed against them, according to the Cambodian Center for Human Rights. Most recently, three rights workers and a journalist

have been called in for questioning over allegations filed by a commune chief who accused the men of incitement.

CCHR President Ou Virak was questioned at Ratankiri Provincial Court yesterday in relation to charges of inciting villagers to rebel against authorities, criminal damage and defamation. On Wednesday and Thursday, Sok Ratha, a journalist for Radio Free Asia, and Adhoc activists Pen Bonnar and Chhay Thy face questioning over similar allegations.

The villagers remaining in the midst of the dispute, meanwhile, complain of seeing no legal recourse for their own allegations.

Clad in black, Norn Chhai has just returned from scavenging for byproducts in the woodlands near her home. Without access to farmland, he and the remaining Svay Sor villagers are increasingly seeking sustenance from the forest.

"Ethnic minorities like us can't be compared even to beasts," he says. "They shot at us and grabbed the land from us. And they live in happiness while we, the owners of the land, live in grief."

DM Group, for its part, has little sympathy for such com-



Ethnic Tampuon leader Seoung Yarat (right) speaks to the Post at his home in Svay Sor village, in Ratankiri province's Lumphat district, where his community has a long-running dispute with DM Group. HENG CHIVOAN

plaints – local representatives have told the Post that villagers in Svay Sor agreed to the compensation terms. (Villagers dispute the claim, saying they have received no compensation.)

Say Chamroeun, a representative for DM Group defended the company's actions, says that villagers were paid years ago.

He also said the land has since been resold to another company, owned by a tycoon he knew only as Nang, though he declined to share ownership documents and NGOs following the case said they have heard of no such transfer.

"Furthermore, I bought the land from the villagers legally without taking advantage, as accused. If we did not resolve for them, we will not live in good happiness," said Chamroeun.

The local government, meanwhile, denied villager claims that no action had been taken on their complaints.

"There is no land dispute raised by civil society... this case is years old," said Pav Hormphan, provincial governor. "If there is such a case, we would work it out."

He also insisted villagers had exaggerated their claim to the

land. "Those people are tricky, because they sold the land out but then shouted that they are the victims of a land grab."

But those investigating the dispute have a markedly different take. Adhoc's Bonnar said there's no doubt the villagers lost their farmland due to encroachment and that authorities won't take their complaints seriously "because there are a number of powerful people involved".

"Now, they have no farmland for cultivation of their own. [Instead], they work as labourers [for the company] to stay alive."