

Art: Mr. Murayama

Briefing

Woman Arrested in Bid To Ransom 15-Month-Old

Police in Siem Reap province arrested a 19-year-old woman Friday for allegedly kidnapping her 15-month-old nephew and demanding a ransom of around \$56, police said Monday. Choeurn Rors confessed to snatching the boy on Feb 23 in Kompong Cham province's Stung Trang district and demanding 2,000-baht ransom from her husband, the boy's blood relative, said Thur Langdy, Kompong Cham anti-human trafficking police chief. Siem Reap district police on Saturday returned the boy to his family unharmed and handed over Choeurn Rors to police in Kompong Cham, Thur Langdy said. Choeurn Rors told police she kidnapped the child because she was angry at her husband for using money she had borrowed to marry another woman in Siem Reap, Thur Langdy said, adding that the suspect was sent to Kompong Cham Provincial Court on Sunday. "She stole the boy in order to exchange 2,000 baht from her husband," he said. Kompong Cham Provincial Prosecutor Huot Vuth could not be reached for comment Monday. *(Cheng Sitthong)*

Meeting To Discuss Ways Of Saving Angkor Area

Scientists are expected to meet in Cambodia next week to present research on how to counter the damage being done to Angkor and the surrounding area, a Unesco official said Monday. Topics at the March 17 symposium in Siem Reap and a March 16 seminar in Phnom Penh could include everything from dealing with increased air pollution to making sure nearby residents benefit from tourism, said Philippe Delanghe, head of the cultural unit of the Phnom Penh office of Unesco. "It's really a gathering of international experts on the environmental situation in and around Angkor," he said, adding that recommendations can be expected. The growth of Angkor as an attraction has led to a strain on resources, Delanghe explained, such as the "huge utilization of water" and problems with waste management. The events, which are open to the public, are being organized by the Japanese project Environment Research Development in Angkor, Cambodia, with help from a handful of organizations, including Unesco. *(Clancy McGilgour)*

Kompong Thom Stadium Plots Go Up for Sale

BY RANG MENGLING
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

Plots of land are now up for sale at the site of the Kompong Thom provincial town sports stadium. Teachers and education department officials said Monday.

Provincial education department official Khim Seng, who declined to give his job title, said that his department sold about 3 hectares of the stadium's land to a private company in January, but he could not provide the name of the company, or the price that the land had sold for.

A new stadium is now under construction about 6 km outside the provincial capital, he said.

Chan Maly, an administrative officer with the provincial education department, said that the land

was sold by high-ranking officials of the Education Ministry, but she also was unaware of the identity of the buyers.

"The company plans to build apartments here," she said.

A person answering the telephone at the number listed on the for-sale signs posted at the stadium she refused to provide the name of the company involved, when questioned by a reporter Monday.

Cambodian Independent Teachers Association provincial director Sun Thon said Monday that state property should not be sold in secrecy to private interests.

"This is corruption," Sun Thon said by telephone.

"They've moved the stadium to the outskirts of town, and we don't even know how much the land

sold for yet," he said.

On Feb 18, SRP lawmaker Men Sothavarith wrote a letter to the Education Ministry and the National Assembly that asked, "Why is the new stadium being built on the outskirts of town while the old stadium is divided into plots for sale?"

Men Sothavarith said by telephone Monday that he wrote the letter hoping for clarification from the government on the sale of the stadium, but he has yet to receive a reply.

Education Ministry Secretary of State Mak Vann referred questions about the sale of the sports stadium to Chea Eouang, undersecretary of state in charge of construction, who said he would not speak with a reporter by telephone.

Publisher Jailed for Defamation To Restart Paper

BY CHHORN CHANSY
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

A newspaper publisher jailed for defamation in the 1990s said Monday he plans to re-launch his New Liberty newspaper today, after it was shut down for six years because of financial problems.

The Phnom Penh Municipal Court convicted Heng Viphak of defamation in 1996 and sentenced him to a year in jail and imposed a 1 million-riel fine, after he published an article titled "A Country for Thieves." However, following an outcry by the international community, Heng Viphak spent only seven days in jail before then-King Norodom Sihanouk issued a royal pardon and he was released.

"Right now, the voice of opposition newspapers is in decline,"

Heng Viphak said by telephone Monday about his decision to restart his newspaper. "We would like the voice of the opposition to become stronger."

New Liberty went bankrupt in 2003, under publisher Soun Vrak, who bought the publishing rights from Heng Viphak soon after his release from prison. Heng Viphak said that he had hoped to revive the paper immediately after its closure, but until recently, he was unable to negotiate the publication rights.

Dan Sthik, editor in chief of the opposition newspaper Monsealsor Khmer, said Monday that he had not heard about the reopening of New Liberty and disagreed with Heng Viphak's assessment of newspapers in Cambodia.

"Our newspaper still takes

stands and writes stories, but lately there haven't been many stories. We aren't afraid of pressure from the government," Dan Sthik said.

Minister of Information and government spokesman Khieu Kanharith said that the government doesn't distinguish between opposition newspapers and those that are supportive of the ruling party.

"The government has never put pressure on newspapers. They have every right to publish their stories," he said. "We welcome the reopening of New Liberty."

New Liberty will print 1,500 copies of its daily editions under new publisher Kim Khyhong. It joins more than 400 newspapers currently publishing in Cambodia, according to Khieu Kanharith's estimate.

Ratanakkiri Villagers Fear Losing Land to Resort

BY CHHORN CHANSY
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

Ratanakkiri province villagers are concerned about losing land and access to resources if a so-called "eco-tourism resort" goes ahead in O'Churn and Banlung districts, a representative said Monday.

The area in question is Yoi mountain, 2 km east of Yeak Lom Lake, where the private HVB Company has been granted a 218-hectare land concession to develop an eco-tourism resort.

Yeak Lom village resident Nham Nea said by telephone Monday that 50 Tampuan minority families would lose their farmland, and villagers are also concerned about a proposed cable car from Yoi mountain to Yeak Lom Lake.

"When the company begins development it will affect the villagers

who live around there," he said.

Provincial Deputy Governor Sim Sou Yong said Monday that there was a plan to compensate villagers for any losses. He added that he would order the company to continue to allow villagers to cut straw and bamboo, but not wood.

Sim Sou Yong said the company plans to build a cable car, but within the bounds of the 218-hectare project. He added that villagers merely misunderstood the project.

According to Sim Sou Yong, though they will lose their land the villagers will profit from the project as it would offer jobs, attract tourists who buy handicrafts, and also protect the forest within the bounds of the resort.

By making way for the private tourist company, the Tampuan villagers would have a chance to

share their culture with outsiders, Sim Sou Yong continued.

The Ministry of Agriculture granted the ethnic minority's land as a business concession at the end of last year, but the HVB Company has not yet started work, Sim Sou Yong said. A letter sent to Sim Sou Yong by the company promised to keep the forest green and to prevent logging in the area.

"The company would also build homes for the villagers" who are evicted, Sim Sou Yong added.

Duong Vibol, director-general of HVB Company, could not be reached for comment Monday.

Pen Bonnar, provincial coordinator for local rights group Adhroc, said that he supported granting land to a firm that might preserve the environment, rather than granting it to one that would destroy it.