



# Corruption Monitor

Issue 7 - June 2008

Monthly review of corruption-related stories in the Cambodian media

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## THIS MONTH

An interesting highlight of this month's corruption-story media monitoring was that for the first time there was a wide range of stories on corruption in the media itself. The stream of publications was triggered by World Press Freedom Day on May 3 and a report released by the local human rights organization Licadho on May 2. Where media themselves focused on limitations in press freedom in Cambodia making it difficult to cover a sensitive topic as corruption, the Licadho report pointed out that there's also corruption among Cambodian journalists themselves. One finding stated that no less than a quarter of the journalists admitted accepting bribes for covering stories. Corruption & Media is therefore this month's highlight on page 2. Another highlight in May was the delivery of nearly 1.1 million signatures of ordinary Cambodians to the National Assembly, requesting the prompt adoption of the nation's draft anti-corruption law.

## NGOS PRESENT ANTI-CORRUPTION PETITION TO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

More than 40 civil society organizations presented a petition bearing 1,098,163 thumbprints and signatures collected from people in 19 towns and provinces across Cambodia to the National Assembly (NA) on May 16 to pressure the government to speed up its endorsement of the anti-corruption law, local media reported May 16 and 17.

SRP lawmaker Yim Sovann said he does not expect the long-awaited anti-corruption law to soon be approved, since he said NA President Heng Samrin designated the NA's first Commission on Human Rights, Complaints, Investigation, and NA-Senate Relations, which does not work on corruption, to receive the petition. He said the petition should have been received by the NA's fourth Commission on Interior, National Defense, Investigation, Anti-Corruption, and Civil Service Administration, **RFA** reported.

Thun Saray, director of local rights

group Adhoc, said that parliamentarians agreed to accept some requests in the petition, but did not say exactly when the anti-graft bill is to be submitted to the NA, **RFA** reported May 17.

Khuon Sundry, chairwoman of the NA's first commission, responded that she was assigned by Heng Samrin to receive the petition, but was not ordered to respond to the requests by civil society organizations, **WMC** reported May 16.

Cheam Yeap, CPP lawmaker and chairman of the Finance Committee of the National Assembly, said that the anti-corruption law has yet to be approved, and that the government is waiting for ideas from the international community.

"The anti-corruption law is now in the hands of the Cambodian government. The international community has asked the government to correct five sections: (1) the identification of corruption (2)

*Continued on page 3*

## PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATION STAGED OVER INFLATION AND EXTORTION

More than 100 cart owners and motor-taxi drivers in Banteay Meanchey province's Poipet district staged a peaceful demonstration May 16 at Poipet border crossing to protest against inflation and alleged extortion by border officials, local media reported May 16-17.

Leng Sarith, member of the Poipet commune Cart Owners Association, said that he had worked as a worker at the border crossing for several years, but had never earned enough money to support his family due to inflation and extortion by police officials along the border crossing, **WMC** broadcast May 16.

The non-violent protest was led by little-known local NGO the Independent Democratic Informal Economy Association (IDIEA), with an attempted interruption by local authorities who claimed that inflation is not caused by the government but by global issues, **RFA** reported May 17.

IDIEA President Von Pov claimed that hundreds of soldiers were deployed to stop the march, which was held also to demand a salary increase for civil servants to keep pace with the soaring prices of gasoline and food, **RFA** reported May 17.

He also claimed officials at Poipet border are violating people's freedom of expression, requesting that the government pay attention to the difficulties Cambodians are facing along the border, **Kampuchea Thmey** reported May 16.

"The government should provide benefits for people who have suffered injustice from Poipet authorities and customs officials. If Samdech [Prime Minister Hun Sen] doesn't care about

*Continued on page 2*

## PARENTS CONCERNED OVER CORRUPTION IN EDUCATION

Cambodian parents have been expressing their concern over teachers' indifference to their children's education and pressure from teachers who are forcing students to pay for extra private classes and buy exam papers in exchange for high exam scores, **RFA** reported May 10.

El Som Oun, a father from Kompong Cham province, said that rampant corruption in the education sector remains an incurable disease which is taking its toll on the efforts to create an educated workforce. However, he said teachers are not to blame for the issue as their low salaries force them to demand money from their students.

An anonymous official from the Ministry of Education acknowledged that the salaries of teachers at public schools remain low, but that the ministry has never sanctioned teachers pressuring students to attend private classes so as to obtain good marks or to be promoted to a higher class.

Yim Nimola, director of the Women's Media Center, is also concerned by the decline in the education of children who she said are the future of the country's workforce.

"It is not a simple case which we can just sweep under the carpet," said Yim Nimola. "We must take the issue into consideration because children are important human resources who will replace our old people."

Ouch Sopharath, president of the Ministry of Education's Secondary Education Department, said the ministry has strictly banned teachers from extorting money from students during examinations.

## CORRUPTION & MEDIA

During the celebration of World Press Freedom Day on May 3, NGOs and government officials expressed diverse opinions on Cambodia's press situation, with a government spokesman hailing Cambodia for enjoying the freest press in the region and a local rights organization lashing out at restrictions, local media reported.

Government Spokesman and Information Minister Khieu Kanharith said Cambodia enjoys the greatest press freedom in Southeast Asia, attributing the journalistic independence to the government's political will and efforts by Cambodian journalists, **VOD** reported May 3.

"Compared to the rest of the Asean region, Cambodia ranks first [in journalistic freedoms]. Cambodia is one of the few countries in the world which allows foreign nationals to establish a newspaper," the spokesman said in an interview with **The Mekong Times**.

However, Licadho President Kek Galabru rejected the claim, claiming Cambodian journalists have to work in an environment ruled by politics, corruption and fear, **VOD**, reported.

The Club of Cambodian Journalists (CCJ) said during the event that journalists received 11 death threats from May 3, 2007 to May 3, 2008 and faced seven legal complaints in the same period, **Kampuchea Thmey** reported.

Khieu Kanharith rejected Galabru's

### Continued from page 1

workers at Poipet, but instead allows border officials to mistreat people, it means that the government's poverty reduction strategy will not be successful," **RFA** reported Pov as saying.

Kum Koun, chief of Poipet commune police department, called the demonstration illegal since it caused disturbance and affected people's business, **VOD** reported. However, Sum Chankea, provincial Adhoc official, stated that bans on peaceful demonstrations are intentionally designed to distance the government's attention from the people's problems and to prevent legal reform.

Two days before the protest, at least one IDIEA employee was arrested when he and three other workers were distributing leaflets urging people to partake in the protest to demand border customs officials stop extorting money from porters, motor-taxi drivers and vendors, according to **Kampuchea Thmey**.

Von Kea said that the arrest affected freedom of expression, adding that corruption and injustice have almost become customary in the commune, **VOD** reported.

statement, saying that journalists in Cambodia can publish satirical caricatures without problems unlike some countries where such images could cost them their jobs or worse, the **English-Khmer daily** added.

The minister also claimed that journalists should not write some sensitive articles affecting national and regional politics.

However, Wolfgang Meyer, country representative of the German Konrad Adenauer Foundation, encouraged the publication of relevant information even if it is sensitive or controversial, **VOD** broadcasted.

"We must not abandon a sensitive issue. We must continue to write it, but we should know how to write it well," Meyer said, reported **VOD**.

Regarding political bias in the media, the minister said: "We can not avoid the problem that some media organizations have a political inclination toward a particular party — we could say that it is democracy. Newspapers can declare their support for any party, **The Mekong Times** reported.

Pen Samithy, president of the Club of

Cambodian Journalists (CCJ) and editor of the country's largest newspaper, **Rasmei Kampuchea**, admitted that his newspaper is supportive of the ruling CPP, but claimed that he covers corruption stories and includes opposition views, according to **The Mekong Times**.

As part of an effort to advance the press sector in Cambodia, which currently has more than 500 media organizations, the CCJ appealed to government institutions to have better spokesmen, develop and adhere to the press law, and asked media owners to help improve media professionals' living conditions by increasing their salaries, **Kampuchea Thmey** reported.

US Ambassador to Cambodia Joseph A. Mussomeli said that readers will receive wrong information if media institutions are not independent, emphasizing that media plays a vital role in developing a nation, **VOD** broadcasted.

Cambodia ranked 85th amongst the 169 countries surveyed in terms of press freedom — the best score in the region — a Reporters Without Borders (RWB) survey found last year, **Koh Santepheap** noted.

## LICADHO: SOME LOCAL JOURNALISTS ARE CORRUPT

Local rights group Licadho on May 2 issued its annual report claiming that corruption also exists among local journalists. The claim was made after Licadho interviewed 141 journalists, with 25 percent stating to know that their colleagues had accepted bribes from politicians and NGO workers, local media reported.

The bribes ranged from US\$1.25-10.00, the **RFA** reported the report as saying May 5. As well as this, an anonymous TV news reader claimed that he is always handed US\$50 if accompanying a powerful politician on a provincial tour.

The 72-page report also said that partisanship and a pervasive culture of corruption contribute to widespread self-censorship, driven by both greed and fear, resulting in "news coverage weighted heavily in favor of those who can pay, namely the government and

the ruling Cambodian People's Party," **VOD** broadcast May 3.

Sixty-five percent of the journalists fear physical attack and 62 percent fear legal action, while 54 percent have already been threatened, the report said, noting that since 1993, the killers of at least nine journalists have yet to be brought to justice, **VOD** broadcast.

Information Minister Khieu Kanharith refuted the report, adding that journalists in Cambodia can publish satirical caricatures without a problem, unlike some countries where altering an image just a little would cost them their jobs, **The Mekong Times** reported May 4.

Licadho President Kek Galabru said that to guarantee real press freedom in Cambodia, criminal law should not be applied to journalists, and a press law should be implemented to deal with them, **VOD** reported.

The **Corruption Monitor** of the **Clean Hand Campaign** is produced every month by **Media Consulting & Development** as part of a year-long survey commissioned by **PACT Cambodia**. During this survey the following newspapers and radio news programs are daily monitored on corruption-related stories: **Rasmei Kampuchea**, **Koh Santepheap**, **Kampuchea Thmey**, **Moneaksekar Khmer**, **Sralanh Khmer** and news broadcasts of **National Radio Kampuchea AM 918**, **FM 102 (Women Media Centre)**, **Voice of Democracy (VOD on FM 105)**

and **Radio Free Asia (RFA on FM 102)**. This review gives an overview of samples found. Corruption-related stories brought by other media are included if found relevant.

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[www.pactcambodia.org](http://www.pactcambodia.org)  
For questions: [mmmt@mcdcambodia.com](mailto:mmmt@mcdcambodia.com)

## US SPONSORS PUBLIC INFORMATION BOARDS IN CAMBODIAN COURTS

The United States recently donated US\$2 million towards providing public information boards in all Cambodian courts.

The information boards project is part of an ongoing overhaul of the court system to improve the accessibility and transparency of the Cambodia's legal system, according to May 20 US Embassy press release, local media reported May 20 and 21.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) project, run in association with the East-West Management Institute (EWMI) and the Ministry of Justice, will give the public greater access to court information, *WMC* broadcast May 20.

The Ministry of Justice began its roll-out of the boards May 21, with every provincial court scheduled to install its own set by mid-July, *Moneaksekar Khmer* reported May 21.

The information boards publicly display details of court rules and procedures that were previously unavailable. The idea came from a model courthouse in Kandal Province developed by the Ministry of Justice with USAID support, according to *Moneaksekar Khmer*. The newspaper also reported that the public information boards will reduce corruption in Cambodian courts, where salient information is often concealed from one side in exchange for bribes.

The Kandal courthouse piloted the information boards in December of 2006, finding the public reaction so positive that USAID and the Justice Ministry decided to expand the program to every courthouse

in the Kingdom, *WMC* broadcast.

The information boards come in sets of three. The first board lists civil dispute filing fees and provides criteria for waiving fees for those who cannot afford to pay. The second board lists the rights of defendants under the newly passed Criminal Procedure Code. The third board provides information on the

rights of accused persons, minors and victims of crime, *WMC* broadcast.

Cambodia has recently overhauled its penal code. One of the last legacies of the 30 year civil war and the murderous 1975-79 Khmer Rouge regime is a general public fear of authority and lack of understanding of institutions such as courts and the police.

## FORMER SOLDIERS REQUEST INTERVENTION IN LAND DISPUTE

Nearly 100 veterans from Banteay Meanchey province blocked a section of National Road 5 in front of the Banteay Meanchey provincial hall yesterday to urge the recently appointed governor's intervention in a land case involving their former superiors, newspapers reported May 27.

The protestors, representing 340 veterans involved in the land dispute, claimed former provincial Sub Operation Region Commander Yal Savuth and current Staff Deputy Director Hun Tha failed to allocate the "policy" land supposed to be given to them but instead sold the property in 2002, *Rasmei Kampuchea* reported.

The disputed land, located in S'lor Kram commune, Svay Chek district, accounts for 1,200 hectares to 1,500 hectares, with each of the veterans in question supposed to have claimed about three hectares, protestors said, according to *Kampuchea Thmey*.

Protestors also alleged that Yal Savuth has deducted nearly US\$20 from each veteran's salary, which he said would be used to demarcate boundary lines and produce ownership titles, the

Khmer-language daily reported.

"We have devoted our fresh blood and fresh in battle for the sake of the homeland, but now the homeland leaders forget us," one of the protestors told *Rasmei Kampuchea*, referring to the accused.

The protestors dispersed themselves after blocking the road for about 20 minutes as police invited five of them to meet with provincial leadership, *Kampuchea Thmey* reported.

During the meeting, Deputy Provincial Governor Sok Saret assured that he would forward the protestors' request to Governor Ung Oeun, who was appointed on May 24 to replace Orn Som after his retirement and resignation to stand as a parliamentary candidate for July's national election, *Rasmei Kampuchea* reported.

"If the land you are protesting to claim is the one that the Forest Administration and provincial authorities have ordered to confiscate, he [the governor] can follow the request of the Sam Dech prime minister to return it to you. Otherwise, further discussion will be held," the newspaper quotes Sok Saret as saying.

## VILLAGERS AND MONKS WELCOME PAGODA'S REPRIEVE

The National Authority for Land Dispute Resolution (NALDR) recently barred Brigade 11 soldiers from bulldozing the newly-built Bak Neum, much to the delight of locals, *RFA* broadcast May 6.

The NALDR apparently acted after complaints from local villagers and resident monks who accused the military officials of plotting to demolish the pagoda in order to grab nearly two hectares of land.

In Sok, chief of Bak Neum pagoda, located in Kampot province's Chum Kiri district, told *RFA* by phone that monks, nuns and villagers all applauded the authority's decision.

"Not only monks and nuns in Bak Neum pagoda, but also villagers from other places came to visit the pagoda after hearing that the government decided to keep it. They expressed their pleasure for the establishment," Sok In added.

The decision was came during an April 30 meeting led by NALDR Secre-

tary General Svay Sitha and attended by officials from the Ministry of Religion, Kampot provincial officials and representatives from Brigade 11.

On April 16, military officials in Brigade 11 ordered monks at the pagoda

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components of national anti-corruption committees (3) the declaration of assets of an official with a position of department director upwards (4) the role of the National Anti-Corruption Committee and (5) legal penalties," the chairman stated, according to *Kampuchea Thmey* on May 16.

However, he hoped that the anti-corruption law will be submitted to the NA and the NA will begin its discussion to approve the bill soon after the 27-July parliamentary election.

Information Minister Khieu Kanharith said the declaration of assets requirement will not only apply to government

to suspend all Khmer New Year festivities and invited Sok In to the military base, telling him that the presence of the pagoda would "no longer be needed" after Khmer New Year, as it was built on brigade land, anonymous sources said.

officials, but also to lawmakers. "NGO employees will also be required to declare their assets and anyone who has a salary of more than one million riel [around US\$250] will be looked into," said Khieu Kanharith, *The Mekong Times* reported on May 15.

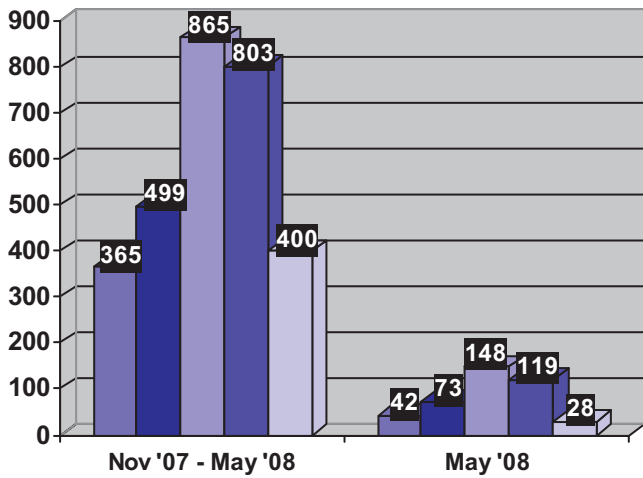
Kek Galabru, president of local human rights group Licadho, said that corruption costs Cambodia around US\$330-500 million annually, or some US\$1 million a day, *Moneaksekar Khmer* reported May 17.

She also said that if the government could curb corruption, salaries of government officials could be raised to US\$130 a month, *VOD* reported May 16.

UPDATE SURVEY ON CORRUPTION-RELATED STORIES

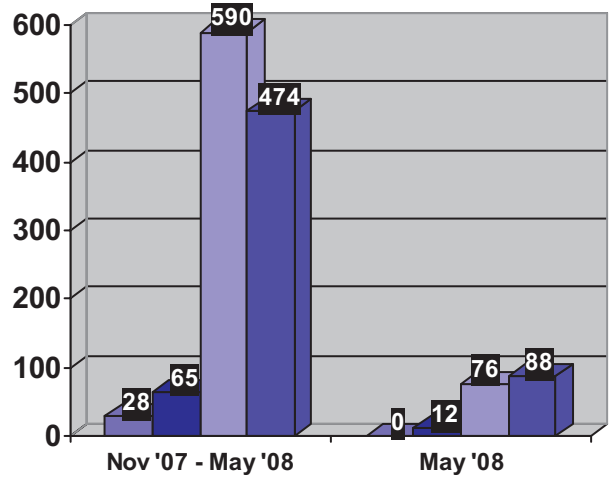
តម្រង់ថ្មីនៃការស្រាវជ្រាវអំពីអត្តសញ្ញាណដែលទាក់ទងនឹងអំពើពុករលួយ

Corruption-related stories per newspaper



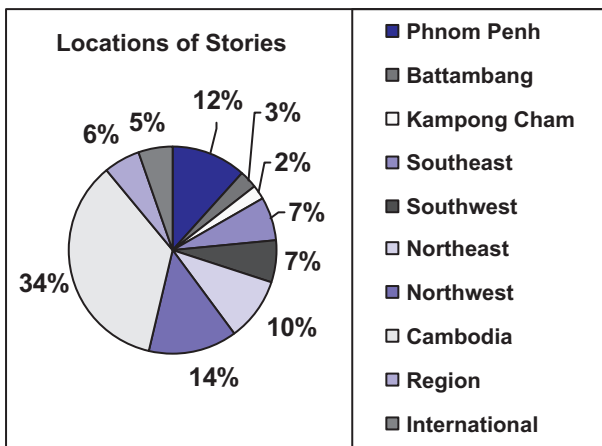
- Koh Santepheap
- Rasmei Kampuchea
- Kampuchea Thmey
- Moneaksekar Khmer
- Sralanh Khmer

Corruption-related stories per radio program

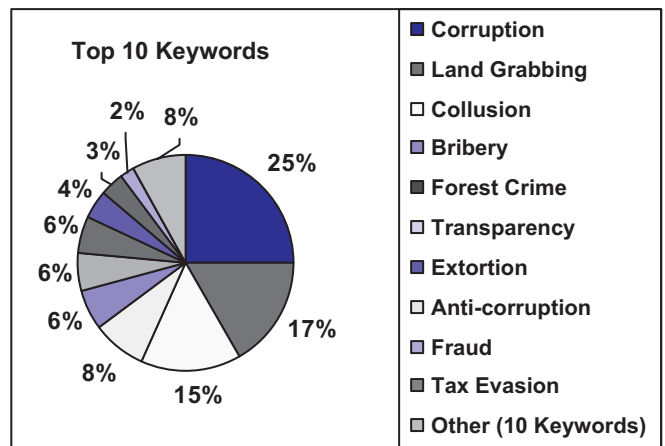


- AM 918
- FM 102
- VOD on FM 105
- RFA on FM 105

Locations of Stories



Top 10 Keywords



Between November 2007 and October 2008 all stories of five main Cambodian newspapers and four main radio news broadcasts are monitored daily on twenty keywords related to corruption. The survey assesses all stories on both quantitative and qualitative parameters. Above the seventh update with quantitative findings for November 1 – May 31.

The radio chart shows that in May national radio AM 918, which has largely avoided broadcasting corruption-related stories since the start of this survey, did not broadcast a single corruption piece. On the newspaper chart, one that is being monitored, *Sralanh Khmer*, is back in business after a period of uncertainty with a pro-*CPP* editorial policy. Corruption stories have not been a focus.

ចន្លោះពីខែវិច្ឆិកា ឆ្នាំ២០០៧ និងខែតុលា ឆ្នាំ២០០៨ គ្រប់រឿងទាំងអស់ដែលប្រមូលបានពីកាសែតជាភាសាខ្មែរចំនួន ៥ និងវិទ្យុចំនួន ៤ សំខាន់ៗត្រូវបានត្រួតពិនិត្យជាប្រចាំថ្ងៃលើពាក្យសំខាន់ៗចំនួន ២០ ដែលទាក់ទងនឹងអំពើពុករលួយ ។

ការស្រាវជ្រាវនេះ វាយតម្លៃលើរឿងទាំងអស់ ទាំងគុណភាព និងបរិមាណ។ ខាងលើនេះជាព័ត៌មានថ្មីទី៧ ជាមួយនឹងលទ្ធផលនៃបរិមាណរឿងពីខែវិច្ឆិកា ថ្ងៃទី០១ ដល់ខែឧសភា ថ្ងៃទី៣១ ។

តារាងវិទ្យុបង្ហាញថា វិទ្យុជាតិ AM 918 ដែលជៀសវាងមិនផ្សាយអត្ថបទដែលទាក់ទងនឹងអំពើពុករលួយ តាំងពីពេលចាប់ផ្តើមការស្រាវជ្រាវនេះក្នុងខែឧសភា មិនបានផ្សាយរឿងពុករលួយសូម្បីតែមួយរឿង។ វាច្បាស់ណាស់ថា កាសែតស្រលាញ់ខ្មែរដែលបានដំណើរការវិញបន្ទាប់ពីរអាក់រអួលមួយរយៈ មិនបានផ្តោតការចាប់អារម្មណ៍របស់ខ្លួនទៅលើប្រធានបទដែលទាក់ទងនឹងអំពើពុករលួយឡើយដោយសារគោលជំហរថ្មីបែបវិចារណកថារបស់កាសែតនេះ គាំទ្រគណបក្សប្រជាជនកម្ពុជា ។