



Corruption Monitor

Issue 8 - July 2008

Monthly review of corruption-related stories in the Cambodian media

NOT FOR SALE
FOR DOCUMENTATION
PURPOSES AMONG
PARTNERS ONLY

THIS MONTH

As Cambodia prepares to vote on July 27, the number of corruption stories directly related to the national election sharply increased. The majority of these stories covered general statements such as an opposition party claiming that if they win the election they will take steps to end corruption. Other stories focused on possible corruption in preparations for the election, with the transparency of the National Election Committee (NEC) receiving frequent and harsh criticism. Media supportive to the ruling party clearly have another point of view, explaining that the massive defection of Sam Rainsy members to the CPP is because of corruption within the SRP. The ongoing request of civil society groups to accept the will of over one million adults that have signed a petition urging the Government to adopt the anti-corruption law as soon as possible continued to draw media attention in June. Media reports on the involvement of the army in corruption is this month's highlight on page 2.

NGOS URGE POLITICIANS TO APPROVE ANTI-CORRUPTION BILL AFTER ELECTION

The Coalition of Civil Society Organizations Against Corruption (CoCSOAC), comprised of 49 national and international NGOs, has urged politicians contesting July's national election to pledge that they will prioritize the adoption of the long-awaited anti-corruption bill should they be elected, newspapers reported June 10.

"The CoCSOAC would like to call on the 11 political parties contesting the national election to promise that they will adopt the anti-corruption law by the first National Assembly (NA) session following the formation of the government," said Kek Galabru, president of local rights group Licadho, during a press conference in Phnom Penh June 9, *Sralanh Khmer* reported.

"I hope that all political parties will support the proposal because any rejection of the proposal could give the wrong message to voters," *The Mekong Times* quoted Sek Bariso, director of Pact's anti-corruption program, as say-

ing. "I believe that the law is a good basis for the fight against corruption."

"I think, according to the law, if political parties do not follow their promises [about the anti-corruption law], voters will know," said Sok Sam Oeun, executive director of the Cambodian Defenders Project, the newspaper reported.

The CoCSOAC will note politicians' promises prior to the election and inform them if they fail to fulfill their pledge, Kek Galabru said, adding that the CoCSOAC will publicize the results of its call for the promises of the 11 parties, according to *Sralanh Khmer*.

Ten of the eleven political parties have agreed that if elected, they would pass the anti-corruption law, *The Cambodia Daily* reported June 27.

Only the CPP did not sign the declaration, which stated that the parties agreed to pass the anti-corruption law within six months of taking office, the CoCSOAC said in a statement to the

Continued on page 2

OIL CONTRACTS REMAIN A 'MYSTERY'

French-owned petrochemical giant TOTAL and Chinese National Offshore Oil Corporation are likely to reach an agreement with the Cambodian government soon to drill offshore oil in the Kingdom. However, Te Doung Dara, secretary general of the Cambodian National Petroleum Authority, declined to comment on media that the companies were close to signing drilling contracts for onshore oil exploration with the government, calling such questions "annoying," *Moneksekar Khmer* reported June 14.

Patrick Pouyanne, senior vice president of TOTAL's strategic business development, claimed the firm is hopeful of receiving a license from the government to drill for offshore oil. "We are under discussion process with the Cambodian National Petroleum Authority to guarantee that the company can implement its oil exploration activity," he said.

An anonymous official from the CNPA said that the China National Oil Corp intends to explore oil in Tonle Sap Lake region, but that it remains unclear in which region TOTAL will explore oil. The official added that the discussion on the offshore oil agreement between the Cambodian government and the two foreign firms seems to be riddled with ambiguities and irregularities.

SRP Lawmaker Eng Chhay Eang called the agreement "mystery," suggesting the agreement be made public to boost transparency. "When the agreement is made without transparency and public bidding there are doubts related to corruption," he said.

Some diplomats and international organizations are concerned that the Kingdom's natural resources will become a curse if Cambodia cannot well manage the income well. Concerns began after Chevron, a US oil company, revealed plans to drill oil in Cambodia's 'Block A'.

WB INJECTS US\$41.5 MILLION IN LOANS & GRANT AID TO CAMBODIA

The Ministry of Economy and Finance announced recently that the World Bank (WB) had provided loans and grant aid worth US\$ 41.5 million to the Cambodian government for two projects: road construction and distribution of land to the poor, *Rasmei Kampuchea* reported June 15.

The US\$ 41.5 million agreement was signed between Finance Minister Keat Chhon and WB Country Director Ian Porter on June 13 at the ministry.

Keat Chhon on behalf of the Cambodian government expressed his deepest thanks toward the WB for providing its financial assistance to help Cambodia and pledged to use the aid with transparency and accountability.

"We will use the assistance transparently and accountably, and we promise that the interests from the aid will flow into the hands of our Cambodians," the minister said.

Of the US\$ 41.5 million, US\$ 30 million will go to road construction project and US\$11.5 to land distribution and economic development project. The Cambodian government also contributed its financial support to the projects, making the amount climb up to US\$ 56 million, said a press release issued by the ministry.

ARMY & CORRUPTION

* Cambodian border officials from Banteay Meanchey Province said June 6 that cows are being smuggled from Thailand into Cambodia through the O Bei Choan border and Daem Russei border points, both of which should be controlled by border police, **Rasmei Kampuchea** reported June 11. According to the same source the smuggling has been going on for over a month now with perpetrators bribing military officials, border police, mobile customs officials and other relevant authorities instead of paying taxes to the state.

* Norng Sophoan, a villager from Poipet municipality, said that six plots of land which she has owned since 1999 have been grabbed by Vorn Sareth, chief of Stung Bat village, for sale to a property agent, reported **Kampuchea Thmey** June 8. Sophoan, a widow, claimed that when commune authorities tried to intervene in the land dispute, the land agent involved said he could not be questioned as he is a high-ranking military official. She has asked authorities at all levels for justice, adding that she is very concerned about her safety because she has been intimidated by unidentified men over the land dispute.

* Several families from Siem Reap province's Banteay Srey district plan to continue their sit-in protest at Somrong Pagoda in Kandal province's Takmao town to seek intervention from Prime Minister Hun Sen in land disputes with local authorities and powerful military officials, **VOD**, reported June 17. The villagers said that local authorities had

colluded with powerful military officials to grab 100 hectares of their land. The residents also warned they would not return home unless the solution from the premier is found. The villagers also claimed that two protestors were shot dead over the land dispute and a witness was sent to prison in June 2007, adding that to date he has not been released.

* Approximately 500 people representing more than 1,000 families from Kampot and Battambang provinces and Sihanoukville municipality rallied on May 29 in front of Prime Minister Hun Sen's residence in Kandal province's Takmao town to ask for his intervention in land grabbing cases, **Kampuchea Thmey** reported June 1. Villagers who came from Sihanoukville to join the rally claimed that on May 6 about 20 armed military and forestry officials used a tractor to bulldoze their farmland and destroy their houses.

* Gasoline continues to be smuggled from Vietnam into Cambodia with smugglers using bicycles and motorbikes to carry the illegal gasoline to the kingdom. **Kampuchea Thmey** reported June 5. A smuggler, who asked

not to be named, claimed he now doesn't make much profit as before as he now has to pay higher bribes to military and police officials who facilitate the illegal business. Some people said that it is hard to arrest smugglers as some of them are known as military and police officials.

* Low salaries, forced evictions and land grabbing are worsening the meager living conditions of low-ranking, disabled and demobilized soldiers in Stung Treng and Ratanakiri provinces, **RFA** reported June 12. Low-ranking soldier Son Theng, who has served in the Cambodian army since 1979, said that he gets only 120,000 riel [about US\$30] monthly salary. Stung Treng's former soldier Dy Vantha claimed he was removed from the army in 2005 due to a land dispute and that he suffered forced eviction the same year. Sea Vannak, a disabled soldier from Stung Treng who has served in the army since 1990, claimed that her land of only 100 square meters was grabbed by a senior soldier. CPP Lawmaker Som Chen stated in a reaction that the government has made every effort to upgrade the living standard of soldiers, especially those

COURT SUSPENDS VERDICT ON EXTORTION CASE

The Phnom Penh municipal court adjourned the announcement of a verdict on two men accused of extorting US\$380,000 from an unnamed Russian mining company after hearing the case June 16.

Yim Neang, deputy chief of the Interior Ministry's International Relations Office, and Srey Bun Heang, an engineer and the president of an environmental impact study firm, were charged by the Phnom Penh Municipal Court on August 06, 2007 with extorting money from the Russian company.

The accused denied the charges, saying the company had asked Srey Bun Heang to conduct an environmental impact study to obtain a mining license for Preah Reach Trop Mountain in Pailin province, promising them US\$380,000, which was later reduced to US\$310,000.

However, when the study was completed, the Russian company had the military police arrest them, the men claimed.

Responding to the denial, representatives of the Russian firm said the two men extorted money from them, threatening to sell the 12-month project on the environmental impact study to an American company and lambasting their operation to the prime minister if they refused.

Without enough evidence of extortion, prosecutor Ek Chheng Huot and a defense lawyer asked the extortion charges be changed to corruption and bribery.

The court was adjourned before passing any verdict without specifying the date the hearing would recommence.

Kampuchea Thmey, June 17, 2008

Continued from page 1

media. But CPP Lawmaker Cheam Yeap did say to **The Cambodia Daily** that: "The CPP will pass the law in the first year of the fourth mandate", adding that "an anti-corruption law is a vital point for the CPP".

The current Cambodian government has been in the process of drafting the long-awaited anti-corruption legislation for several years.

The CoCSOAC recently sent the NA over one million thumbprints to demonstrate the public's concern about the ongoing wait for the approval of the bill. It is estimated corruption costs Cambodia over US\$300 million each year.

CoCSOAC members insisted that the adoption of the legislation and effective enforcement will help address national concerns including low public wages, judiciary, social and economic development, equal distribution of economic benefits and investment, **Samleng Yuvachun Khmer** 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.

Articles are quoted and translated as is, without any warranty as to the accuracy of the information reproduced. The **Corruption Monitor** does not necessarily reflect the views and opinion of **USAID/PACT**. For more information and corruption-related stories visit:

www.pactcambodia.org
For questions: mmmt@mcdCambodia.com

IMMIGRATION POLICE EXTORT MONEY FROM CAMBODIAN WORKERS

Many Cambodian workers crossing the Cambodian-Thai border to seek jobs in Thailand accused immigration police stationed at Poipet border crossing in Banteay Meanchey of charging exorbitant fees for the issuing of identification cards, *Sralanh Khmer* reported June 10.

Sovan Ry, a 17-year-old Cambodian worker from Kandal province, claimed that police officials had distorted his identity card by changing his name into Nil Peik, 19 and his address into to O Chrov district, Banteay Meanchey province to demanded 100,000 riel [about US\$25]

from him without giving any reasons.

Each Cambodian worker who wishes to work in Thailand is obliged to apply for a white card that remains valid for two years. The card, issued by immigration police officials at the border crossing with a reasonable cost set by the state, allows Cambodians to enter Thailand once per week, according to *Sralanh Khmer*. A senior police official who declined to be named said that each Cambodian worker is asked to pay only 30,000 riel [about US\$7.5] for one card.

Pich Saron, chief of Poipet immigration police, could not be reached for

comment on the issue. Deputy Chief Em Thon refused to comment, saying he was busy attending a meeting and referring questions to other police officials at the border crossing.

Banteay Meanchey Deputy Provincial Governor Sok Sareth said that the card is issued only for people in Banteay Meanchey and promised to investigate the accusations. "Border police must know the issue. Allowing the problem to exist can spoil the honor of our nation," the deputy governor said, warning action would be taken against any official involved.

ETHNIC MINORITIES' LAND GRABBED

Poor ethnic minorities in Kampong Cham province's Memot district suffering land encroachment, recently renewed their complaint with the provincial authorities against the Chhor Thary firm, which they accused of bulldozing farmland, *Sralanh Khmer* reported June 11.

The villagers have little hope of a good result from their lawsuit as the accused is known as a powerful and well-off businessman in the province, *Sralanh Khmer* claimed.

Chhor Thary Company and three

other unidentified businesses owned by Oknhas in the province have illegally bulldozed Stieng ethnic minorities' farmland in the three villages of Changkum 1, Changkum Kandal and Changkum Spean, leaving them with insufficient land to farm, villagers residing in Tonlung commune said. They alleged that the companies ordered soldiers to bulldoze the farmland, which then was passed to the four companies.

The companies had signed a 94-year lease contract of only 1,660 hect-

ares with the authorities in Memot district's Tonlung commune but the firms ordered the soldiers to encroach on the land between 4,000 to 5,000 hectares, according to the residents, who also alleged the land had sold to a Vietnamese company for rubber cultivation.

The victims, who have already sought an intervention from the National Assembly twice, also plan to rally in front of Prime Minister Hun Sen's residence in Phnom Penh to seek help from the premier, after losing confidence in local authorities.

MUNICIPAL POLICE CHIEF WARNS DISTRICT POLICE CHIEF OVER EXTORTION

Phnom Penh Municipal Police Chief Touch Naroth on June 5 warned Mok Hong, the newly-appointed Toul Kork District Police chief, not to extort money from any administrative posts under the control of the district authority, *Rasmei Kampuchea* reported June 7.

The one-star general claimed such extortion had happened repeatedly in the past, discouraging officials working at administrative posts from their work and encouraging them to try to earn money for a district police chief instead.

Toul Kork District Governor Seng Rathanak was hopeful that Mok Hong will cooperate with all levels of authorities in the district in a bid to strengthen the security in the district and to protect the interests of residents.

STATE FOREST CLEARED

Unknown parties have begun to clear about 2,000 hectares of state forest in Banteay Meanchey province's Phnom Srok district, officials said according to June 4 newspaper reports.

About 200 hectares of forest in the area between Por Char, Nam Tao and Phnom Dei communes have already been cleared illegally and demarcated for sale over the past two months, wrote *Kampuchea Thmey*.

Por Char commune chief Peng Buntaram said that his authority, village chiefs, monks, teachers and other fellow villagers in the commune have appealed to provincial and district governors as well as forest administration officials to intervene and crack down on the illegal clearance, the newspaper reported.

"The forest has served the interest of citizens in the whole district, with places to search for firewood, cattle herding, animal shelters and forest fruits ... which is why we want to take the order ... of the government to prevent crimes of forest clearance and preserve [the

trees], *Rasmei Kampuchea* quoted the commune chief as saying.

District Governor Kim Chhoung said that he has assigned administration forest officials to take action, but has yet to see any results.

District forest administration official Prak Chamnan admitted that people have cleared the state land to claim ownership of the land. "We cannot just arrest and punish them with the law because they are so poor," he said, *Rasmei Kampuchea* wrote. "But the measure is

to detain them and then search for merchants or ring leaders instigating the clearance of forest."

There are rumors that those instigating the forest clearance are relatives of the Por Char commune chief and the district governor, *Kampuchea Thmey* reported. No comment from the two officials was reported.

Local residents told the newspaper that that a mass protest against the forest clearance could occur in the commune if no practical action is taken.

DRUG TRAFFICKER RELEASED TO RESIDENTS DISMAY

Vendors at Rom Long Market were dismayed at the Kampong Thom Provincial Court's decision to release one of two drug-traffickers nabbed by military police in Baray district whilst dealing narcotics May 1.

Yen Song Ly, 22, and Chey Phalla, 39, were caught after military police discovered drugs concealed on their persons, said Baray District Military Police Chief Khun Bunhour. Yen Song Ly apparently purchased drugs from Phnom Penh for Chai Phalla to distribute to local students and gangsters.

Some sources said Chey Phalla, the one who was released by the court, is known as a relative of Ty Sovathal, a powerful prosecutor in the provincial court.

Both market vendors and local residents expressed disappointment in the release, saying a criminal has been allowed to walk free, as if he had committed no crime.

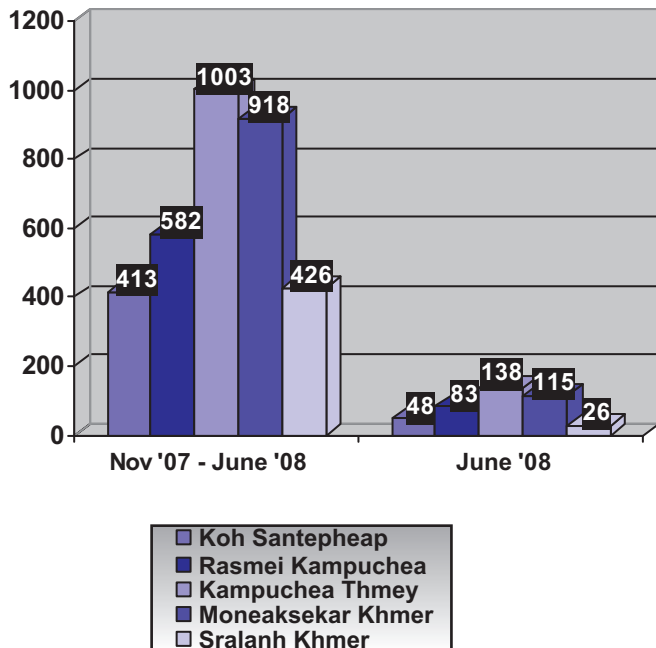
They alleged that criminals are set free by the court while innocent people who lack money for bribes are arrested and imprisoned to extort money.

Kampuchea Thmey, June 4, 2008

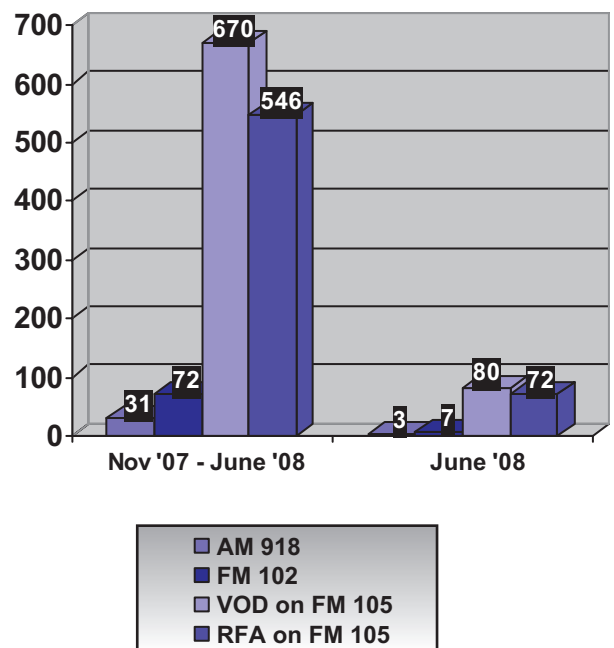
UPDATE SURVEY ON CORRUPTION-RELATED STORIES

ឧប្បត្តិការក្នុងស្ថានភាពសង្គមដែលទាក់ទងនឹងអំពើពុករលួយ

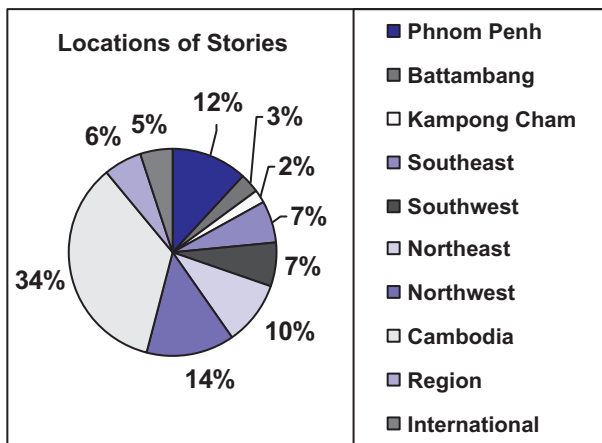
Corruption-related stories per newspaper



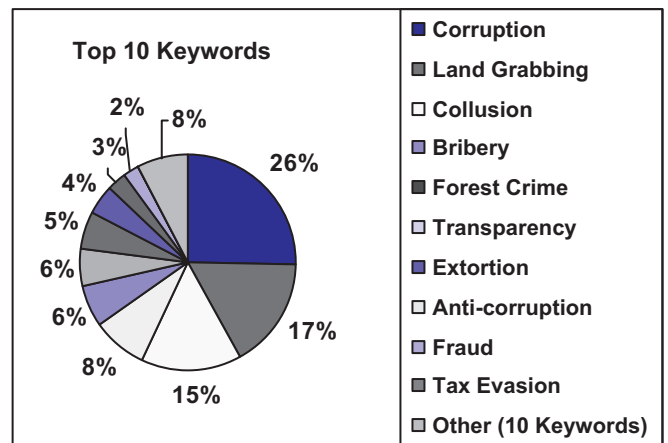
Corruption-related stories per radio program



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 eighth update with quantitative findings for November 1 – June 30.

After eight months of monitoring, 3342 newspaper and 1319 radio stories related to corruption have been found, a combined total of 4661 stories. This represents an average of 583 stories each month, or 65 stories per monitored medium. The above charts show that **Kampuchea Thmey**, **Moneaksekar Khmer** and **VOD** score much above that average, while **AM 918** has not even reached half of that monthly average in eight months time and **FM 102** below this average.

ចន្លោះពីខែវិច្ឆិកា ឆ្នាំ២០០៧ និង ខែតុលា ឆ្នាំ២០០៨ គ្រប់រឿងទាំងអស់ដែលប្រមូលបានពីកាសែតភាសាខ្មែរចំនួន៥ និង វិទ្យុចំនួន៤ សំខាន់ៗត្រូវបានត្រួតពិនិត្យជាប្រចាំថ្ងៃលើពាក្យសំខាន់ៗចំនួន ២០ ដែលទាក់ទងនឹងអំពើពុករលួយ ។

ការស្ទង់នេះ វាយតម្លៃលើរឿងទាំងអស់ ទាំងគុណភាព និងបរិមាណ។ ខាងលើនេះជាព័ត៌មានថ្មីទី៧ ជាមួយនិងលទ្ធផលនៃបរិមាណរឿងពីខែវិច្ឆិកា ថ្ងៃទី០១ ដល់ខែមិថុនា ថ្ងៃទី៣០ ។

បន្ទាប់ពីការត្រួតពិនិត្យអស់រយៈពេល៨ ខែអត្ថបទកាសែតចំនួន ៣ ៣៤២ និង វិទ្យុចំនួន ១ ៣១៩ ដែលទាក់ទងនឹងអំពើពុករលួយត្រូវបានរកឃើញដែលរឿងសរុបមានរហូតដល់ ៤ ៦៦១ នៃចំនួនរឿងជាមធ្យមចំនួន ៥៨៣ ក្នុងមួយខែ។ ដែលកាសែតមួយមានចំនួនរឿងជាមធ្យមចំនួន៦៥ ក្នុងការត្រួតពិនិត្យក្នុងការត្រួតពិនិត្យមួយខែ។ តារាងខាងក្រោមនេះ បង្ហាញថា កាសែត**កម្ពុជាថ្មី** និង **វិទ្យុសម្លេងប្រជាធិបតេយ្យ** មានចំនួនរឿងលើសពី ៦៥រឿង ចំណែកវិទ្យុ**ជាតិកម្ពុជា** មានចំនួនរឿងមិនដល់ពាក់កណ្តាលចំនួនជាមធ្យមនេះផងបន្ទាប់ពីការស្ទង់អស់រយៈពេល ៨ខែ មកហើយ វិទ្យុ**មណ្ឌលព័ត៌មានស្រ្តីកម្ពុជា** ស្ទើរតែគ្មានសោះ ។