

## NATIONAL

## Briefing

## Sam Rainsy Summoned

The Phnom Penh Municipal Court has summoned opposition leader Sam Rainsy for questioning on April 22 over his defamation suit against National Assembly President Prince Norodom Ranariddh, Sam Rainsy's lawyer said Wednesday. Lawyer Som Chandina said he filed the suit on Sam Rainsy's behalf on Feb 17 over comments the prince made more than two years ago, alleging the opposition leader was seen in a car behind demonstrators during the 2003 anti-Thai riots. Since Sam Rainsy is in self-imposed exile in Europe with no scheduled return, Som Chandina will appear in court instead, he said. Deputy Chief Prosecutor Nget Sarath on Wednesday confirmed he summoned Sam Rainsy. "If the plaintiff does not come to clarify, his complaint will not qualify," he said. (Pin Sisovann)

## Sex Worker Beaten to Death by Boyfriend

A sex worker in Kompong Thom province died after she was beaten by her boyfriend and denied treatment at a local hospital, police said. Ith Sokha, 26, was beaten unconscious April 7 by her boyfriend of five years, known only as Sao, at the couple's Stung Sen district home, provincial Deputy Police Chief Pen Chan Sokrin said Wednesday. Ith Sokha was taken to a hospital by her landlord and Sao but was denied treatment because they could not pay for it, Pen Chan Sokrin said. She died the following evening, and her boyfriend fled the scene, he said, adding police are seeking a warrant for his arrest.

(Phann Ana)

## Kompong Thom Storm Destroys 72 Homes

Seventy-two houses in Kompong Thom province's Stong district were destroyed by heavy rainfall and strong winds on April 10, district police Chief Huot Sarim said Wednesday. Sixty-two families were affected in Chamnar Leu and Chamnar Krom communes, he said, adding that the provincial office of the Red Cross had distributed bread and tents to those affected. "It is not strange because our province always [has] this wind," he said. "We face only the huge wind. Now we are at the level of rebuilding houses," Huot Sarim said.

(Prak Chan Thul)

## Clerk Arrested for Threatening Heng Pov

By SAING SOENTHRITH  
AND KUCH NAREN  
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

Police arrested Kompong Chhnang provincial court clerk Ly Sothy, 49, and his niece Vat Nakiny, 35, on Tuesday for using abusive language and threatening Phnom Penh Municipal Police Commissioner Heng Pov.

"I filed a complaint against Ly Sothy. I accused him of scolding me and threatening me," Heng Pov said Wednesday. "It is not only me, but some other police officials and a schoolmaster also complained against the [court clerk], too."

It was unclear Wednesday whether Ly Sothy and Vat Nakiny will be formally charged. Kompong Chhnang Chief Prosecutor Mak Pany said he was waiting for

the police report.

According to Heng Pov, the court clerk threatened him for failing to arrest a Russei Keo district schoolmaster whom his niece had accused of beating her son.

Vat Nakiny accused the Chraing Chamras primary school teacher of hitting her son on the head and was demanding \$3,000 in compensation.

"After our police worked hard to investigate, we found that the schoolmaster had done nothing wrong. The schoolmaster only used his hand to push the boy to be in line to respect the national anthem," Heng Pov said.

"That woman called me and asked me about her complaint... she urged me to arrest the schoolmaster," Heng Pov said.

"Suddenly another man was

talking to me and shouted at me strongly 'are you going to arrest him or not? If you are not, you must be careful for your safety! I work for Kompong Chhnang court,'" he added.

Police later discovered the number belonged to Ly Sothy, clerk for Kompong Chhnang court Chief Ing Sarun.

Sok Sam Oeun, executive director of the Cambodian Defenders Project, said there is no law forbidding the use of rude words against a police officer, although slander is a crime. He also questioned whether using threatening words against a police officer was a crime. "I think there is no law about threatening police officers. There is a law about threatening witnesses," he said. (Additional reporting by Erik Wasson)

## NGOs Decry Alleged Harassment at Orphanage

By PRAK CHAN THUL  
AND YVONNE LEE  
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

Local rights group Licadho and Action Pour Les Enfants issued a joint statement Tuesday expressing concern over the alleged intimidation of five children who filed complaints against a British citizen accused of sexually abusing them at a Phnom Penh orphanage.

Michael Leach, 44, was detained by Phnom Penh municipal anti-trafficking police on April 1 after the children, ages 12 to 15, filed the complaints.

"In recent days, the homes of child complainants in this case have been visited by persons who allegedly urged the children and

their parents to withdraw their complaints against the Englishman," the organizations wrote.

At least one of the children was persuaded to sign a document, the contents of which were not read to the child, the organizations added.

A former manager of the Lighthouse Orphanage, who gave his name as Rithy, said on Wednesday that he has a statement by his sister, an orphan and complainant against Leach, denying that he had sexually assaulted her.

"[She] told the police that Michael touched her stomach. Touching like this is not wrong," Rithy said, adding that he and his sister were called in for questioning by Chief Prosecutor Ouk Sa-

vuth last week. Rithy said he did not encourage his sister to change her complaints.

Interviewed last week, Leach admitted that he had masqueraded as a doctor at the orphanage and that he had examined Rithy's sister in his presence and on other occasions. Leach also said he had touched her just above the groin.

"When I examined her, I remember distinctly, Rithy was present. Rithy was not only the supervisor of the orphanage, but her brother," Leach said last week.

Leach was bailed out of police custody by Lighthouse Orphanage Director Chea Savy—whose husband is senior Interior Ministry official Ly Kim Long.

## Gov't Defends Ban on Public Demonstrations

By PIN SISOVANN  
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

The Ministry of Interior for the first time has defended its ban on virtually all public demonstrations that has been in effect since January 2004, despite being in violation of the Constitution's guarantee of freedom of expression and assembly.

In a letter dated April 8, Interior Ministry spokesman Khieu Sopheak responded directly to criticism by union officials and human rights groups that since the Anti-Thai riots of 2002, the government has refused to grant permits for any demonstrations and has used withering violence to break up those that do occur.

"Organizers did not fill out forms or abide by the Law on Demonstrations, and some demon-

strations did not notify the authorities or authorities could not give permission," Khieu Sopheak wrote in response to a Free Trade Union letter dated March 24 on the use of government force against peaceful protesters.

"Participants always caused serious impact to security and public order, which create opportunity for gangs, and other offenders to steal, snatch or commit other acts which cause chaos in society and cause damage to public and private property," Khieu Sopheak continued.

Ny Chankrya, chief investigator for the rights group Adhoc called the statement a "pretext to strip the people of their rights."

He also said violence is instigated by counter-demonstrators, many of whom are pro-govern-

ment. "This is the government's mistake," he said. "Government should divert demonstrators and counter-demonstrators away from each other."

FTU President Chea Mony called the statement irresponsible Wednesday and said it is the duty of police to protect demonstrators and ensure protests are orderly, not to enforce a total ban.

"We notice that counter-demonstrators supporting the government cause insecurity and use violence," Chea Mony said.

Khieu Sopheak on Wednesday defended the ban and blasted rights workers. "[They] earn for their boss only, not for the interests of the Cambodian people," he said. "Their job is to criticize...if they do not write such reports their work would be finished."