

NATIONAL

Briefing

Accused Pedophile Backtracks on Statement

Chea Savy, director of the Lighthouse Orphanage, said Wednesday she was aware that accused child abuser Michael Leach, 44, was masquerading as a doctor when he examined children at her center, but allowed him to continue because "he has the money to donate." Chea Savy, whose husband is senior Interior Ministry official Ly Kim Long, said Leach "didn't have the right to touch the kids, but there were people there [during the examinations]." Chea Savy bailed Leach out of police custody after 10 hours of questioning over abuse complaints lodged by five children at the orphanage. Maintaining his innocence, Leach said Wednesday that he did not pose as a doctor, reversing an admission made Monday in which he said he lied about his profession in order to treat the children. "I'd made it absolutely clear that I was not posing as a doctor," he said. Local rights group Licadho expressed concern about Chea Savy's willingness to give Leach access to the children. "We would be very surprised if any responsible orphanage director would allow an unqualified person to conduct medical examinations," Licadho said in a statement. (*Yvonne Lee and Prak Chan Thul*)

Police Move on Garment Factory Protesters

About 90 workers from the Kin Tai garment factory protested in front of Phnom Penh Municipal Court before being moved by police Wednesday morning. The court on Tuesday ordered the factory's striking workers to return to their jobs within 48 hours. "We are not going to return to work," Khmer Youth Union representative Nov Titha said. Judge Tan Senarong's April 5 verdict ruled the workers' 12-day strike illegal. The judge said Wednesday that his ruling is based on the Labor Law's requirement that workers seek arbitration before calling a strike. On March 22, the Arbitration Council had ruled on an earlier dispute between workers and management at the factory. Nov Titha said workers accepted the decision but had new demands, including annual bonuses, a baby-feeding center on site and the sacking of factory lawyer Sar Samnang. "Their request is too extreme," Tan Senarong said. (*Prak Chan Thul*)

City Stands Firm on Choeng Ek Privatization

BY KUCH NAREN
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

The Phnom Penh Municipality said Wednesday that it would not be deterred by the growing criticism of its decision to sign a 30-year deal allowing a private Japanese company to run the Choeng Ek genocide memorial.

On the eve of the official signing ceremony with the JC-Royal company, Phnom Penh's first vice governor, Mam Bun Neang, said the privatization of the Khmer Rouge era "killing field," where the skeletons of some 9,000 execution victims were unearthed in 1980, would go ahead. "The municipality cannot change," Mam Bun Neang said. "We have already entered into a contract with the company."

He added that the signing ceremony will take place today at 8 am.

Chea Vandeth, cabinet chief of the Council of Ministers and chairman of JC-Royal's board of directors, who according to documentation wrote to Phnom Penh Governor Kep Chuktema seeking his

approval of the deal, declined to comment Wednesday.

Youk Chhang, director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia, wrote on Tuesday to Prime Minister Hun Sen requesting that the government halt the deal and offering DC-Cam's assistance in running Choeng Ek.

"I urged the prime minister to reconsider the deal because I [feel] the deal has not been sealed as yet, and I don't think that the prime minister has been informed," Youk Chhang said.

"[Municipal officials] say that the city is making so much progress...so why can they not afford to maintain Choeng Ek? It does not make any sense," he added.

Chea Vannath, president of the Center for Social Development, said Wednesday that she feared the Japanese company would focus primarily on increasing tourism to the genocide site.

"Whatever development, it needs to keep the original feeling of the crime, the sadness and the

sorry. The concept of tourism is opposite to the concept of the 'killing fields,'" Chea Vannath said.

Tourism Ministry Secretary of State Thong Khon said Wednesday that he supported the privatization of the killing field.

"Where there are tourism sites, they need to provide facilities and services including accommodation, food and drink services. It seems City Hall is thinking about providing better services," he said.

Mam Bun Neang denied on Wednesday a report by residents that other companies had been granted land in the area to develop water leisure activities.

He said that a study has been completed to construct a multimillion dollar wastewater treatment basin in the area to relieve Phnom Penh of sewage problems.

The project will require 400 hectares of lake land in Choeng Ek and will be funded by the Japanese and Cambodian governments, he said. (*Additional reporting by Kay Kimsong*)

CFF Convicts Claim Ignorance During Appeal

BY PIN SISOVANN
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

During a two-day Appeals Court hearing that ended Wednesday, 14 of 19 convicted members of the Cambodian Freedom Fighters recanted earlier confessions made to the Phnom Penh Municipal Court and said they were fooled into joining the movement.

The 19 were appealing their sentences handed down in connection with a November 2000 attack on government buildings in Phnom Penh and grenade explosions in 2001 near the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Funcinpec headquarters.

Cambodian-American Sao Chum Gilbert, who is serving 10 years in prison for his role in the 2000 attack, told the court that he

knew the California-based CFF founder, Chhun Yasith, but that he was not a member of the anti-communist group.

Sao Chum Gilbert said he had helped Chhun Yasith install computer equipment in the US and accepted as payment an airline ticket to Cambodia, where he was also to help with computer installation. Sao Chum Gilbert said he did not know that his name was listed as a CFF member.

"If I knew, I would not have come," he told the court.

Imprisoned for his role in the grenade attacks, Hang Bunthon accepted his guilt and implicated Keo Tak as an accomplice.

"I went with Keo Tak. He drove the motorcycle and threw the grenade near Funcinpec headquarter-

ters," Hang Bunthon told the court.

However, Keo Tak denied he ever knew Hang Bunthon and asked: "How could I drive a motorcycle and throw a grenade?"

Others said they were cheated into signing their names as CFF members, believing they were joining an NGO called Santa.

Presiding Judge Saly Theara said he did not believe those who were now denying their confessions. He added that those who confessed may have their sentences reduced.

The court will announce its verdict on April 22, Saly Theara said.

Human rights workers have claimed that arrests made in the wake of the 2000 CFF attack targeted supporters of the opposition.

Chea Sim...

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been regarded by political observers as a counterweight to Hun Sen's power within the CPP, and many have often speculated about a rift between those party members loyal to the president and those loyal to Hun Sen, the CPP's deputy president.

CPP stalwart Sim Ka said Wednesday that it is "impolite" for members to discuss the future presidency of the party while Chea Sim is still at the helm.

But, the lawmaker said: "Unofficially, CPP leaders and officials are concerned about his health."

Chea Sim is now often feverish, due to his chronic heart problem, and suffers from joint dysfunction and a tumor in his neck, Sim Ka said.

"So he is taking special care of himself," he added.

If Chea Sim were no longer able to fulfill his position, his duties would automatically go to the CPP's deputy president, Hun Sen, Sim Ka said.

As the acting president, Hun Sen would then be required to

call a meeting of the CPP's Central committee to elect a new president, he said. However, he added, the party's internal regulations do not specify how much time is allowed before an election is called.

He declined to say which party leaders would be candidates for the position.

"All leaders are worried [about Chea Sim]," Sim Ka said.

"If something happens to Chea Sim, the CPP can have enough experience to handle the situation," he said. "But we cannot think we lose him."