

## NATIONAL

## Police Arrest Healer for Alleged Rapes

BY NHEM SREY ROTH  
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

A traditional healer was arrested in Kompong Thom province on Sunday for raping a woman, and possibly dozens of others, under the pretense of issuing medical treatment, police said yesterday.

Chhuon Sam Ath, 32, was apprehended after he allegedly raped a 40-year-old woman on Saturday in Santuk district's Chreap commune, provincial serious crimes bureau chief Chea Poeun said.

"The victim has an illness, a goiter, so she went to the traditional healer's house for help," Mr. Poeun said. "But when the victim arrived, the suspect told her that if she wanted to be cured, he needed to mix male and female bodily fluids with some medicines.... The suspect led the victim to his room and had sex with her."

Police were alerted after the victim, who has four children, told her husband what had happened and the husband filed a complaint with deputy district police chief Kao Vuthy, Mr. Poeun said.

He added that the police report had shown that Mr. Sam Ath confessed to the rape and also admitted to having sex with another 70 women under similar circumstances.

But in later questioning, Mr. Sam Ath contradicted himself, denying having sex with the women and claiming that he had instead used women working at karaoke parlors to provide the bodily fluids he needed for his so-called medical practice.

"The suspect told us that this [using bodily fluids for medicine] was the way he was taught," Mr. Poeun said.

"It is really very serious if the suspect raped 70 people, but we wonder why no one else has filed a complaint [against the healer]," he added.

Mr. Poeun said that Mr. Sam Ath had been sent to the Kompong Thom Provincial Court yesterday evening.

Deputy provincial prosecutor Ouch Kimlong confirmed that he had received information on the case, but said he could not comment because the court was still trying to untangle Mr. Sam Ath's contradictory statements.

## Gov't Counters Rumors Over Sok An's Health

BY ZSOMBOR PETER  
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

Citing the need to counter "psychological warfare," the Council of Ministers' Press and Quick Reaction Unit released a statement yesterday confirming that Deputy Prime Minister Sok An is overseas recovering from treatment for kidney stones.

The unit, it said in its brief statement, "has the honor to inform the public that in the last few days, there has been disseminating news in the form of psychological warfare and some rumors which exaggerate far from the truth concerning the state of health of His

Excellency Dr. Sok An."

The unit, it added, "is duty-bound to inform the public that as of now, the health condition of His Excellency Dr. Sok An is improving and as strong as normal after the successful treatment of lime stone in the kidney by overseas specialized doctors.

"His Excellency Dr. Sok An will return home soon," it concluded, without specifying when the deputy prime minister might return or elaborating on the source or nature of the "psychological warfare."

Press and Quick Reaction Unit spokesman Ek Tha said he would not elaborate on the statement.

"Everything is in the press release. We do not comment beyond that," he said, citing orders from his "boss," whom he also declined to name.

Council of Ministers spokesman Phay Siphon referred all questions back to the Quick Reaction Unit.

Mr. Siphon first confirmed rumors that Mr. An was suffering from kidney stones on Monday and said he was recovering in Singapore on the advice of his doctors. Mr. Siphon said earlier this month that he had been told various stories about Mr. An's health status, including that he had a minor stroke.

## Rise in Drug Arrests Cause for Concern, UN Says

BY SIMON LEWIS  
AND PHORN BOPHA  
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

The U.N.'s regional representative for tackling illegal drugs said yesterday that a spike in the number of people arrested in Cambodia for drug crimes is a concern and warrants investigation.

The number of drug-related arrests reported by Cambodian police rose from 864 in 2010 to 2,381 in 2011, according to the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

"I'm quite concerned...about the number of arrests that have taken place," said Gary Lewis, the UNODC's representative for the East Asia and Pacific region. The tripling of the number of arrests "tells us something about something, and that should make us worried," he said.

Mr. Lewis said the rise could be explained by an improvement in law enforcement, or a greater volume of drug crime. However, he said, "It could mean that there are other reasons why people are being arrested for alleged drug pos-

session and use and trafficking."

Mr. Lewis, who was speaking on the sidelines of a regional workshop on the UNODC's Synthetics Monitoring: Analysis, Reporting and Trends project, said that the UNODC would be looking into the figure.

David Harding, a technical adviser on drugs at NGO Friends International, who works with drug users on the streets of Phnom Penh, said there was a clear policy to increase arrests of low-level drug offenders, which could be causing harm.

The 2010 Commune and Village Safety Policy, intended to clean up localities, sparked "a massive increase in the number of drug-related arrests," Mr. Harding said.

The crackdown had made it more difficult for NGOs wanting to provide harm-reduction services to reach and help drug users, he said.

"A lot of effort is being put into the drug control side of things, but there hasn't been a lot of effort put into the health side of things, it is getting more difficult to access those who have problems with drugs with reg-

ularity and consistency."

Interior Ministry spokesman Khieu Sopheap insisted that the arrests were justified since police only arrest suspects when they have proof, and suggested that the large increase was simply due to an increase in illegal activity.

"You would be able to catch a lot of fish because there is a huge amount of fish in the water," Lieutenant General Sopheap said. "[So], we can say there are a lot of [criminal] actions, that's why we catch more people."

Following a series of police actions that have seized chemicals thought to be precursors intended to produce amphetamines in Cambodia, Mr. Lewis also highlighted the threat of Cambodia becoming a hub for drug production.

"There are opportunities [for drug traffickers] here, and in other countries in Southeast Asia, that are provided by virtue of the current capacity level to respond," Mr. Lewis said. "I wouldn't say that it [Cambodia] is becoming a significant producer. What I would say is that we need to be vigilant about the risk of it."

## Frenchman Killed During Late-Night Shooting

BY SAING SOENTHRITH  
AND JENNIFER LAZUTA  
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

A French citizen was shot dead in the early hours of yesterday morning while riding his motorcycle on Street 265 in Tuol Kok district, police said yesterday.

The victim, 43-year-old Franck Mathieu, was looking for his girlfriend, with whom he supposedly had an altercation earlier in the evening, when he was shot once in the left breast by a group of two or three men, said district police chief Huot Chan Yaran.

"Our police are working hard on this case, but we have not yet identified the suspects," he said, adding that Franck Mathieu was taken to Calmette Hospital, where

he later died.

Mr. Chan Yaran said that the motive for the crime was still unknown and that there had been no sign of a robbery having taken place.

"His belongings were still in his pocket and his motorbike at the spot," he said.

According to Cheng Sophan, deputy district police chief for cases involving foreigners, Franck Mathieu was dating a Khmer woman, but had never had any problem with other men.

"Whether or not this case involves revenge is hard to say," Mr. Sophan said.

Following the incident, several local websites posted pictures of the crime, leading the French Embassy to issue a statement denouncing

the publication of such photos.

"[It] constitutes an infringement of respect for privacy and human dignity and are contrary to the basic rules of press ethics," the embassy said. Laurance Bernardi, first secretary of the French Embassy, said that Franck Mathieu was registered with the consulate and had lived in Cambodia for several years. She added that in the past 12 months, there have been six cases of French citizens dying under violent circumstances in Cambodia, none of which have yet been resolved.

"The embassy of France wishes that the police investigation will quickly result in the arrest and indictment of one or several murderers [of Franck Mathieu]," Ms. Bernardi said.