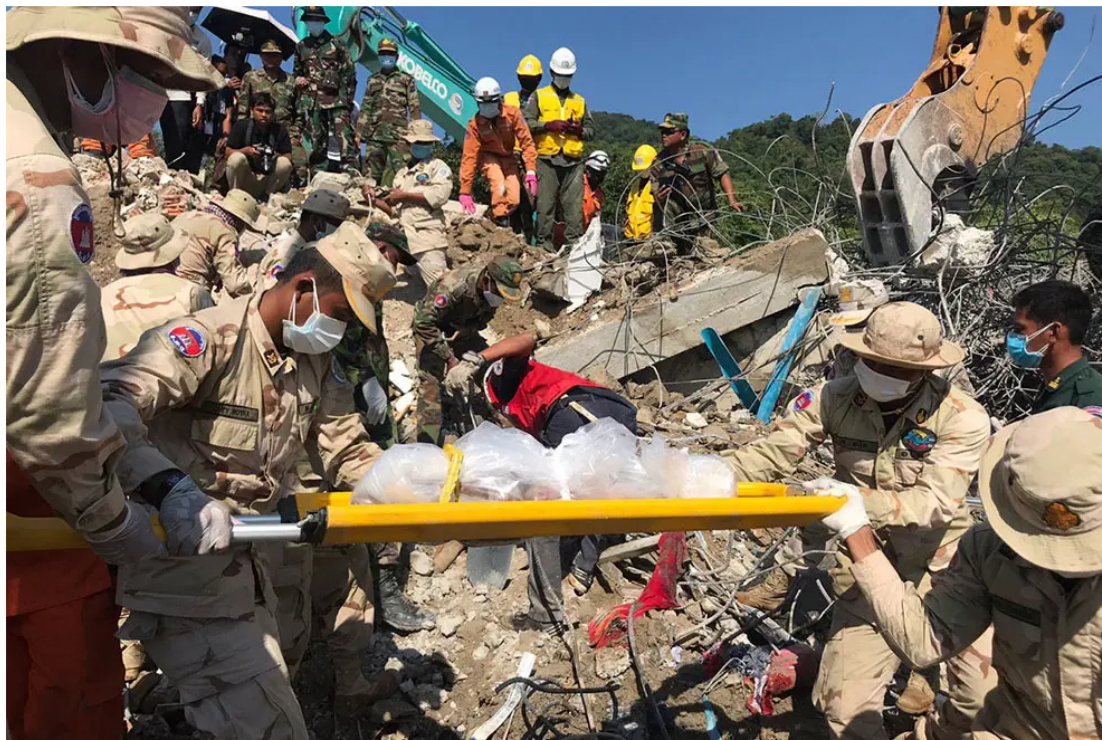


Kep building's owners questioned over potential manslaughter

7 January 2020 8:17 AM | Khy Sovuthy



The rescue team carry a dead body from collapsed building in Kep province. Supplied



The couple who owned an under-construction building in Kep province that collapsed on Friday, killing 36 people, were sent to the Kampot Provincial Court to be questioned for manslaughter, police said.



Ek Sarun and his wife, Chhiv Sothy, were sent from the Kep provincial police headquarters to the court on Monday after being arrested in the wake of the collapse, said deputy Kep provincial police chief Pong Sokheng.



"We sent them to court over whether there was carelessness leading to the deaths and injuries of many people in the collapse of the under-construction building, as well as unintentional homicide," Sokheng said.



The couple were also sent to the court on Sunday but there was not enough time to question them, he said.

Khann Sophal, the Kampot court's spokesman, confirmed that questioning was underway but did not have further details. Court director Long Kesphearum could not be reached.

Six of the 36 dead in the incident were underage, local authorities said on Sunday. Among the dead was Min Vannak, 16, and her mother, Le Na, 40.

Vannak had traveled from her home in Kampot province to work with her mother, and had only been on the

site for five days, said the girl's father, Min Tak.

Tak told CamboJA News that he had already held the funeral for his wife and daughter on Saturday.

"My daughter had only just gone to work with her mother," he said.

Prime Minister Hun Sen announced that the families of the deceased would receive \$50,000 each in compensation, while those injured would receive between \$10,000 and \$20,000.

Tak said he had received 10 million riel (about \$2,500) from the government on Saturday and \$2,000 from the Cambodian Red Cross on Monday, but not yet the full amount.

He said he could not blame the building's owners for the deaths, and would leave it to the court to decide their guilt.

Kep's provincial health department director, Men Sothy, said all of the 23 injured victims appeared to be recovering. Four had been sent from Kep to the Kampot provincial referral hospital. Two were further sent onward to Phnom Penh's Preah Kossamak Hospital with serious injuries, he said.

"However, all of them are getting better now; their lives are not affected," Sothy said.

In a statement on Friday, Land Management Ministry Chea Sophara said a working group of 11 senior ministry officials would be tasked with reviewing the construction of the building.

Seng Loth, spokesman for the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction, said the ministry had already met on the matter and would issue the result of its inspection soon, but declined to comment in further detail.

Sok Kin, president of Building and Wood Workers Trade Union Federation of Cambodia, said what mattered was preventing similar tragedies in the future, and hoped that both the government and construction companies would be open to making changes.

Constructions needed to follow the law and building standards, and, in particular, the practice of workers living on-site needed to end, Kin said.

"Please, the government and the courts, find the real reason ... to avoid this happening again another time," he said.

The collapse in Kep followed a building collapse in Sihanoukville in June that killed 28 people and another in Siem Reap province last month that killed three.

Envoys from Australia, China, Germany and the U.S. have been among those who have expressed their condolences over the loss of life in the building collapse.

149 views

 Building collapsed, Kep City

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