



Nation Busines ព្រឹត្តិការណ៍ 中文新闻 Khmer Times Editoria Opinio Property Spor Press Releases Suppliment
Mobil s TV l n t s

National August 25, 2021

Dark allegations: Sinister claims made about 'The China Project' in Sihanoukville

Husain Haider / Khmer Times /

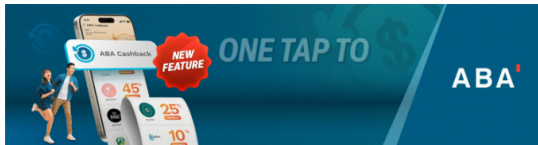


A private security guard motions to the journalist to leave the vicinity. KT/Husain Haider

Click here to get Khmer Times Breaking News direct into your Telegram



Several people have reached out to *Khmer Times* after the release of four Filipino "victims" who say they were held captive at a complex in Preah Sihanouk province. They claim that dozens and possibly hundreds remain held against their will by an internationally organised crime syndicate.



The names, age and nationalities of former employees have been withheld for their protection. Upon their release, many were allegedly told that their safety would be in danger if they spoke out publicly.

It is not clear what the complex was designed for but employees said they received training as "con artists" and sources suggest it was also an illegal gambling operation paying \$600 to \$700 per month with illegal drugs as perks. Allegedly, the compound also houses sex workers. All newcomers had their passports taken away.

They said they want to share their story to get people currently working there out of the situation and prevent others falling for similar "scams".

No one from the complex was available for comment.

News of the complex first reached public knowledge when Filipino victims were released from the 10-building complex in Otres Beach, Sihanoukville and managed to get in touch with their partners.

The Philippine embassy in Phnom Penh declined to comment. Following the release of the four women, however, the embassy issued a public statement warning its citizens about applying for job adverts that appear to be too good to be true.

One "victim" revealed punishment for alleged poor performance by workers was common practice. "They were [kept] in a room without a toilet, kitchen or bed and beaten for not doing their job properly. Their punishment was based entirely on their work attitude and being

FTB
Open Additional Savings Account via FTB Mobile
No Initial Deposit
No Need to Come to the Branch
Make Transactions Immediately
023 862 111

Khmer Times App



Khmer Times is now available on iPhone and Android.

Download the app and keep up with real time news from Cambodia and the world.



Opinion



Maritime community of shared future sets sail

In terms of potential future risks, several critical points require China's attention. First, the Ren'ai Jiao issue in the South China Sea has been simmering since the Philippines started delivering construction

...incapable of performing. The girls did nothing to merit that treatment.”

Despite being threatened with his life, a victim said they were appealing to *Khmer Times* to bring knowledge of the complex – dubbed The China Project – for help because of fear for the well-being of those left behind.

The China Project is believed to be the name of the complex that housed the “captives” on Otres Beach.

One “victim” described the regular dormitories as just a room with a toilet, four metal bunk beds, a balcony and a washing machine. “I was confined to the room and wasn’t allowed to leave under any circumstances. They would walk around with batons and tasers to keep us in line,” he said.

Rooms sometimes housed so many victims that they would often have to share a single mattress on the bunk beds, according to some accounts.

Food was always Chinese cuisine and most often consisted of fried rice.

Those believed to have been left behind vary in age, with the oldest being in his late 30s.

The youngest is believed by former colleagues to be a 17-year-old Thai girl whom they say is “flirted with” and may be groomed to be a sex worker. “I think the odds are 100 percent. It’s a matter of time and money. She is strong but how long can she hold out?” one of several former workers at the complex said.

Thai, Bangladeshi, Indian, Russian, Ukrainian, Filipino, Vietnamese and Turkish nationals are believed to be still working at the complex.

Workers had minimal interaction with people who were not in the same dormitory as them, so it is difficult to piece together the whole picture.

Many victims spoke of two Eastern European women, Ukrainian and Russian nationals, believed to be paid salaries of up to \$8,000 per month to service “employees” of the company.

“I know they were being used for their bodies because one time I asked where [the Russian woman] was and they said ‘She’s upstairs and will be back in an hour. She’s taking care of someone,’ another former employee said.

The women are believed to have more freedom than others in the compound. They are allowed to leave the complex, go shopping, eat outside and one of them had a piano delivered to her apartment building.

It is also claimed minors are being employed to perform housekeeping.

Many of the workers said they answered a job advert on Facebook. Some said they had been referred by a friend.



A taxi driver waits outside the complex with a boot full of bed sheets.
KT/Husain Haider

Others noted they interacted with a Cambodian man who identified himself as “Sihnok” in Phnom Penh who provided details of the job to individuals. Attempts to communicate with him via WhatsApp were not successful.

They detailed similar accounts of being recruited in Phnom Penh before being taken to a Chinese-owned short-stay hotel overlooking a massage parlour near the airport.

Transportation, all said, was organised by a Chinese woman and Cambodian man. Some said they were led to believe the pair were

materials to the Ren'ai Jiao and attempted to make it a permanently occupied military base.



New era in Turkish-Iraqi ties

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan paid a key visit to Iraq, a trip which constitutes a milestone in the development of cooperation between the two sides after a 12-year hiatus.



Trying for a repeat, On India and the world of badminton

In an Olympic year, the quadrennial extravaganza dwarfs every other competition. This is especially true in a sport like badminton where the Olympic gold is the holy grail. Yet, events that lead up to the marquee sporting festival do carry importance, and the ongoing Thomas & Uber Cup in Chengdu, China, is one such tournament.



Türkiye does lion's share of work in weakening terror group Daesh/ISIS

In the battle against the terrorist organization Daesh/ISIS, Türkiye has played a crucial role through military operations, counterterrorism measures, and international collaboration.

Features



Siem Reap Retro Museum houses nostalgic collection

Antiques are little more than scrap to many Cambodians, who have suffered decades of conflict and a genocidal regime, so many have called a genuine collector of antiques “crazy”, but Ly Pengheng loves it.



Worlds Forgotten Temples: Twin Temples of The Gods

Worlds Forgotten Temples: Twin Temples of The Gods



Prosecutors at Donald Trump's

married or at least in a romantic relationship.

Some alleged they stayed at the hotel overlooking what appeared to be a brothel for days while others did so for a brief period.

"I guess there were red flags at this point but I just went for it. The situation... it was a little bit of thrill-seeking mixed with need for money," a worker who agreed to sign a six-month contract said.

He added that he had become close to a group of Bangladeshi nationals during this period.

He said that they had been staying in the hotel for at least three days before the group was ferried to the coastal province in a caravan of silver-coloured Hyundai Starex vans.

Several people must have been transported to the project on that trip alone, the person estimated.

Another trip saw Bangladeshis, Sri Lankans and Indians being transported.

"Young Chinese people are being trafficked as well. No one is doing it by choice. This is run by very powerful criminals, I cannot believe that someone has so much power in Cambodia," one former worker said.

A *Khmer Times* reporter who visited the complex saw a large number of Hyundai vans on the street. Their drivers were seemingly given the ability to enter and exit the complex freely.

The China Project is comprised of 10, 12-storey, long buildings. Each floor had at least 18 balconies, meaning it could house as many as 2,160 individuals – perhaps more because many of the captives are kept in the same room.

Attempts by the newspaper to enter the complex were thwarted.

There are three entrances – each heavily guarded by men sporting emblems depicting Cambodian and Chinese flags side-by-side. They are entirely blocked off to those not familiar to guards.

Cambodian guards at the first gate ordered the reporter away. When he asked for a cigarette light, they simply handed him a lighter and told him to walk away.

Guards at the second gate stopped him before he could approach the entrance.

The reporter informed guards he was there to visit a friend at the third entrance. They asked him to call the friend to come down and collect him.

Food delivery personnel are not granted entrance to the complex. Deliveries are made outside the compound. One taxi waited outside with its trunk laid open, revealing it was loaded with dozens of identical blue bed sheets.

When *Khmer Times* asked what colour their bed sheets were, all former workers communicated with gave the same response – "blue" – suggesting that more people were being moved to the location.

Some said they had applied for the job out of financial hardship.

The Bangladeshis tended farms outside Phnom Penh, Indians largely worked in the hospitality sector while many others worked in education.

Many said they had applied for the job thinking that it was a customer service role for an online gambling business.

Instead, they said organisers lured unsuspecting men into investing in cryptocurrency and investment scams.

"We used Facebook, Telegram, Instagram, WhatsApp, every dating app you can imagine, to prey on people's insecurities and their [lack of] knowledge of the market. We would pretend to be young women who lost their jobs during Covid and said that investing in this company had got them back on track," a victim said.

"We played on emotions. We talked about Covid as a mechanism and said we lost our jobs, started making money through this site and told them they should start trading."

The largest sum garnered from a victim was said to be \$400,000. The employee who lured the investor online was said to have received sexual favours from the Russian sex worker as a reward.

Top performers were also offered their choice of alcohol or drugs as a

hush money trial zero in on the...

The first week of testimony at Donald Trump's hush money trial was the scene-setter for jurors: Manhattan prosecutors portrayed what they say was an illegal scheme to influence the 2016 presidential campaign by burying negative stories.

Good Times2



An on-again, off-again year for Siem Reap's arts

Siem Reap's 2020 arts and lifestyle coverage kicked off the year on an optimistic note that, with the wisdom of hindsight, turned out to be somewhat ironic.



Remaining sane while you care for your baby

Because our baby is now at the centre of our life, it has been mentally challenging since even getting a good night's sleep or a decent meal has suddenly become a real task.

50%

60%

bonus, including ecstasy, amphetamine, cannabis and cocaine.

“They were like employee perks,” the victim said. “At the end of each day they would announce who did what. One Turkish guy has been there for at least one year and they’re not going to let him go because his performance has been so poor.”

New staff said they had received employee training upon arrival at the complex. They were given handbooks and tutorials on how to create fake social media accounts and life stories to lure men.

It is believed the Russian and Ukrainian women consented to using their photographs online to lure the men.

Both women are believed to be in their early 20s and one former worker confirmed the Ukrainian national was 22.

They were also held on standby in case people online asked for a video chat. One ex-worker said the girls would never expose themselves to people because it would “take away incentive” but were forced to watch men pleasure themselves.

Sources familiar with the matter who have entered the complex stressed under the condition of anonymity that parts of the complex are dedicated to online gambling.

Sources say local authorities may be complicit in the trafficking: A local police station sits just metres away from the complex.

They said that they believe the managers of the complex, who hail from various parts of the Chinese mainland, are low on the totem pole and may have been lured to the site under similar pretences by an overarching figure.

Accounts of various experiences led to an understanding that each of the buildings has at least 100 managers in them.

Upon arrival in Otres Beach, the employees were given a brief interview by a young Chinese woman.

They tested individuals on their language ability, asked about their backgrounds and confiscated their passports.

A polymerase chain reaction (PCR) Coronavirus test was conducted outside the complex and they were taken to Ming Guan Hotel awaiting the results.



A police station is located just metres away from the ominous, brutalist structure where it is claimed that dozens, if not hundreds, of people are being held by a Chinese organised crime organisation. KT/Husain Halder

They wondered if the hotel was complicit or aware of the activities in the complex. Often, the workers were the only ones staying there. The casino area had been shut down, according to former workers.

Some cited being handed bills of more than \$1,500 after quarantine but they did not have to pay out of their own pockets. They were informed it was company policy to pay the quarantine fee.

An individual who still has connections to those inside the compound said salaries were paid on the 15th in line with the contracts.

Former workers said this was “the best part” of their stay. The agents who transported the captives to Sihanoukville are believed to be involved with many other organisations, with The China Project just being another client they service.

After results of the PCR tests were received, the victims returned to the complex, where a rapid test was conducted.

After passports were confiscated, contracts were signed, photographs were taken for corporate records and new staff were shown to their quarters. All said they received a package containing a toothbrush, toothpaste, laundry detergent, shampoo and body wash.

Accounts of experiences depict everything from forced labour, to sexual advances, physical violence and private threats. Personal mobile phones were allowed to be stowed in lockers during working hours from 4.30 am to 6.30 pm.

iPhone 7s were provided to conduct the alleged “scams”.

Many staff turned to their private phones during off hours to appeal for help. Upon their release their phones were immediately wiped. Some said they deleted photographs and messages prior to their release voluntarily.

Now, they are appealing to the public and authorities to put an end to The China Project.

“Anyone who ends up there is in danger – the longer they stay inside the worse it gets,” they said.

The China Project was unavailable for comment



Related Posts

- November 24, 2020
China offers a helping hand to Sihanoukville sustainability
- July 3, 2021
'Shootout' at Sihanoukville casino involving foreign national
- August 6, 2021
'3 gunmen' arrested as shots fired in central Sihanoukville
- September 7, 2020
Online Exhibition on Preventing and Control of COVID-19 in China

Tags: [China Project](#), [Sihanoukville](#)

- [PREVIOUS ARTICLE](#)
Banteay Meanchey discovers 119 new COVID-19 cases
- [NEXT ARTICLE](#)
Battambang reports 43 new Covid-19 cases and four deaths



[Contact Us](#) | [About Us](#) | [Advertising](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Job Opportunities](#) | [Site Design by Samaki Media](#)

KB PRASAC Bank

បើក **គណនីឌីជីថល** រហ័ស ងាយស្រួល

តាម **KB PRASAC Mobile** តាមរយៈទូរស័ព្ទ

4% អន្តរាគមន៍ រយៈពេល ១ ខែ

• អំណត្តិប្រាក់ចូលអតិបរមា > 10,000\$
• សម្រាប់ប្រើប្រាស់ប្រព័ន្ធប្រាក់ (F+H KYC)
• អន្តរាគមន៍ប្រាក់បញ្ញើប្រចាំខែ

086 999 911