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Crane operator arrested over deadly collapse

Ben Sokhean / Khmer Times /

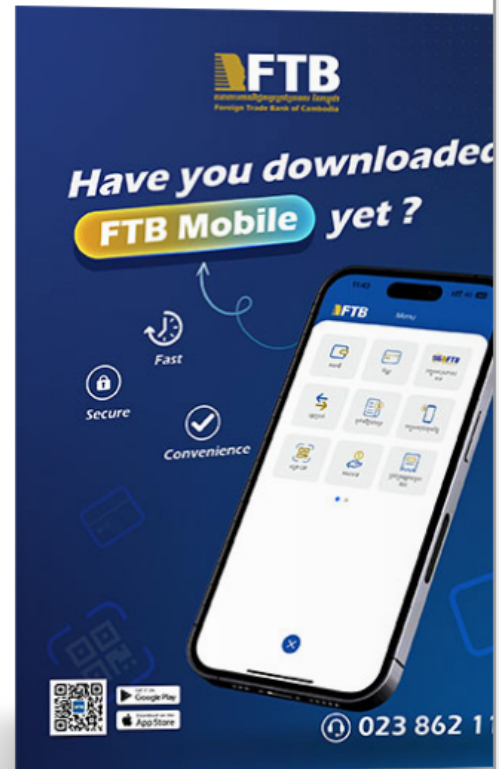


Banteay Meanchey provincial governor Oum Reatrey (centre) and officials provide donations to family members of the crane collapse victims. Facebook

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Banteay Meanchey provincial authorities have arrested the operator of a crane which collapsed and killed five women in Poipet city on Wednesday.



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Provincial deputy governor Ly Sary told *Khmer Times* yesterday the operator was arrested yesterday and is being held responsible for the collapse. However, he said he could not recall the suspect's name.

In the incident on Wednesday afternoon, five other women were also seriously injured when the crane, carrying concrete slabs at an under-construction building, collapsed on a neighbouring house in Phsar Kandal commune.

“The collapse was caused by the negligence of the crane operator and a technical error in installing the crane,” Sary said. “The crane was installed on soft ground and the foundation was not strong enough when it was hit by strong wind, causing it to collapse.”

He also said authorities have decided to send the collapse case to the provincial court for further investigation to find justice for the victims.

“The provincial administration also ordered city authorities to temporarily close the construction site,” Sary said. “We will question the operator before sending the case to the court for further action.”

He said the court would investigate whether any other people should be held responsible for the collapse.

“They could summon the contractor or construction owner to be questioned,” he added.

Sary said the owner of the property, The Park City, had permission to construct the building and the provincial authorities “regret” the deadly incident.

He said a ministry working group has been cooperating with the provincial land management department to regularly inspect all the building constructions in the province, including The Park City project.

“Following the building collapses in Preah Sihanouk and Kep provinces, Land Management Minister Chea Sophara instructed provincial land management departments to inspect all the buildings as well as strengthen the implementation of the law and other legal norms,” Sary said. “We have instructed all contractors to ensure safety standards, but in this case it was negligence that caused the incident.”

According to the police report, the crane was about 40 metres long and used for lifting concrete slabs measuring four-by-four metres and 12 centimetres thick. The report noted that the crane had been carrying the slabs at a height of 20 metres.

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Opinion



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In a letter to The Park City on Wednesday, Poipet city acting governor Keo Dara Raksmeay informed the company to “temporary halt the construction”, citing the collapse of the crane, which resulted in deaths and injuries.

Provincial police chief Major General Ath Khem could not be reached for comment yesterday.

According to Ang Narith, director of the provincial department of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction, the company is building apartments and condominiums to sell.

Khieu Bou, 53, whose wife Chean Hong, 52 died during the collapse, said yesterday she was selling guava to neighbours at the house during the incident.

He urged the authorities to fully investigate the case and find justice for his family.

“I did not file any complaint yet, but I appeal to the provincial, city and commune authorities to find justice for my family,” he said, “I am really saddened over what happened to my wife yesterday [Wednesday].”

Bou said that following the incident, several generous people, provincial and city officials as well as private companies donated money to his family for the funeral.

“I want the authorities to take action based on the existing law,” he said, adding that he has not decided how much compensation the family would demand from the company yet.

Bou said a company representatives had asked him to consider an out-of-court settlement.

“The company representative came to meet my family today. He urged us not to file a lawsuit and to negotiate the compensation.” he said, “But I want justice.”

Justice Ministry spokesman Chin Malin said yesterday he could not comment on whether the case should be settled outside or in the court because it was being handled by the provincial authorities.

However, Main said in general authorities should thoroughly investigate such incidents.

“Based on the principle of law, when an incident causes many people to be killed or injured, like this one, it requires an investigation to find out those who are responsible,” he said.

“It requires them to be prosecuted as well pay compensation to the families of victims.”

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A representative for the company could not be reached for comment yesterday.



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