



A TALE OF TWO LAND PROTESTS IN THE CAPITAL

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PRISON SCANDAL HAS PHILIPPINES IN AN UPROAR

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A QUIET 75TH ANNIVERSARY FOR GWTW

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Taliban kill 130 at Pakistan school

Saad Khan

TALIBAN insurgents killed at least 130 people, most of them children, after storming an army-run school in Pakistan yesterday in one of the country's bloodiest attacks in recent years.

Witnesses described how a huge blast shook the Army Public School in the north-western city of Peshawar and gunmen went from classroom to classroom, shooting children.

Distraught parents thronged the city's Lady Reading Hospital in the wake of the attack, weeping uncontrollably as children's bodies arrived, their school uniforms drenched in blood.

Irshadah Bibi, 40, whose 12-year-old son was among the dead, beat her face in grief, throwing herself against an ambulance.

"Oh God, why did you snatch away my son? What is the sin of my child and all these children?" she wept.

The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the attack as retaliation for a major military offensive in the region, saying militants had been ordered to shoot older students.

The attack began around 10:30am (0530 GMT) when a group of at least six insurgents, reportedly in military uniforms, entered the school.

A security official told AFP that hundreds of students

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An injured Pakistani student lies in bed at a hospital following an attack by Taliban gunmen on a school in Peshawar yesterday. AFP

Premier mulls NA eligibility provisos

Vong Sokheng

PRIME Minister Hun Sen yesterday suggested that he backed the idea of expanding single-nationality restrictions—recently agreed upon for members of a revamped National Election Committee—to cover National Assembly members, senators and government officials.

But the premier, speaking to hundreds of senior officials at a workshop on judicial laws at Phnom Penh's InterContinental hotel, said that now was not the right time for such a move, which would affect many ministers and parliamentarians, including opposition leader Sam Rainsy.

"Now, if [anyone] wants to expand [this single-nationality restriction] please come forward ... in the Constitutional Council, the Senate,

CONTINUED - PAGE 4

HIV nightmare in B'bang

Doctor flees amid accusations as at least 72 found to carry virus

Mom Kunthea and Sarah Taguiam

MORE than 70 residents in Battambang's Sangke district—including children as young as 3—have

tested positive for HIV after some of them received injections from an unlicensed doctor now on the run from authorities, villagers and officials said.

Following examinations by health officials starting on December 8, 72 out of 556

patients in the district tested positive for the virus that causes AIDS, National AIDS Authority (NAA) secretary-general Dr Teng Kunthy said yesterday.

Forty-four women, 14 men, seven girls and seven boys have been affected. Their ages range

from 3 to 82 years old.

"This is a very unusual situation," Kunthy said. "For now, this is the number that we have, but there might be more."

During interviews with the NAA, at least 30 villagers reported receiving injections from an

unlicensed private doctor in the area, he added.

The shots were administered for a variety of maladies, from typhoid to fevers, which may be why infections spanned such a

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National

Cintri 'kidnapping' city: gov't

Khouth Sophak Chakrya

CITY Hall yesterday accused striking rubbish collectors of holding the city hostage as negotiations failed to reach an agreement on the third day of industrial action.

Workers for Phnom Penh's sole waste collection firm, Cintri, are demanding a pay rise of at least \$30 per month for collectors and street sweepers while drivers and mechanics are seeking to almost double their current maximum wage of \$130.

City Hall spokesman Long Dimanche urged the workers and Cintri to reach an agreement.

"We call on the company and workers to negotiate to resolve the problem as soon as possible without using the waste as a tool to kidnap the people of our city," he said.

He added that public order forces in outlying districts of the capital had been mobilised to fill the gap in collection.

Cleaners and street sweepers currently receive a monthly wage from \$90 to \$120 but are now asking for \$150, while drivers and mechanics are seeking \$250 per month.

Aunny Ieng, deputy governor of Phnom Penh, said that up to



A woman cycles past a road lined with rubbish yesterday in Phnom Penh as Cintri garbage workers continued their strike for a second day. HENG CHIVOAN

2,000 tonnes of waste is produced in the capital every day.

But Prak Sokha, a Cintri worker, said a strike was the only way to bring attention to their demands.

"When there are garbage and other waste crises, people realise how important our job is. Usually people look down on us and do not appreciate what we do," he said.

He added that workers face a number of health problems due to exposure to hazardous waste

and deserved a higher standard of living.

"We work up to 10 hours a day, exposing us to diseases, accidents and insults from the rich who are drunk and arrogant every day," Sokha said.

Ngoun Sipheng, operations manager for Cintri, could not be reached yesterday.

Workers yesterday said they would continue to strike today as no agreement had been reached. Cintri has agreed to give rubbish collectors and

street sweepers raises of \$15 and drivers and mechanics \$30 a month, falling far short of their demands.

City residents yesterday said they would stop paying their waste collection fees if the strike continued.

In July, a strike by Cintri workers ended after the company agreed to wage increases of between \$5 and \$10 and suggested another set of raises may be in the offing next year. **ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY DANIEL PYE**

HIV nightmare in a Battambang district

Continued from page 1

wide age group.

Seoum Chhorn, deputy chief of Roka commune, where the outbreak was centred, tested positive, as did his wife, 13-year-old granddaughter and 9-year-old grandson.

"I suspect we got this from the injection that a doctor in this commune did to the villagers who often went to get services from him," Chhorn said, adding that several other families in the area have more than one member affected.

"This doctor is very famous in the commune, and every villager got treatment service from him, but we do not know what kind of medicine he injected in us."

Chhorn, however, said the doctor, whom he identified as Yem Chren, fled the commune and escaped to Takeo province a week ago with his wife.

Since Sunday, health officials have been unsuccessfully trying to reach out to Chren through his family, Kunthy said.

"We tried to invite him to talk, but unfortunately, he's gone now," he said. "We just want to know exactly what happened, and we've asked the family and the commune to report if they hear anything."

For now, the infected villagers are being monitored and have received antiretroviral drug treatments from the NAA.

Their blood samples will be sent to Phnom Penh for further testing, said Battambang provincial health department director Veoung Bunreth.

Further blood tests will be conducted around the district to check for more HIV-positive residents.

"I really pity my grandson and granddaughter so much, because they're very young but they have this disease," Chhorn said. "I want to appeal to the Ministry of Health and the government to intervene and help us immediately and take action

against the doctor who treated and cheated the villagers when he is unskilled."

Major crime officers from Battambang provincial police are now in control of the investigation, which is being assisted by the Child Protection Unit (CPU).

"The Child Protection Unit is heading to Battambang early morning [today] with a group of experts to liaise with major crime officers in the investigation of this alleged perpetrator that might have spread HIV and affected children within a small amount of communes," CPU director of operations James McCabe said.

UNAIDS country director Marie-Odile Emond called the situation "highly unusual".

"It's very rare indeed to have such a high number of people affected in the same place, that's why it's really worth investigating what happened," Emond said.

From 1991 to 1993, HIV/AIDS cases reached almost epidemic proportions in Cambodia.

Through random blood testing, health officials recorded a 150 per cent surge in the rate of incidence among voluntary patients, a figure that did not include sex workers.

But since the early 1990s, Cambodia has made significant strides in improving its national HIV/AIDS response.

Programs, increased government funding and a focus on educating communities about preventative measures have resulted in steep declines in HIV rates, according to NAA figures, to as low as 0.7 per cent in 2013 and 0.6 per cent this year.

Of the estimated 75,000 people living with HIV, most receive appropriate treatments that allow them to live healthy lives.

"Cambodia is doing a lot of good in combating HIV, so it's really important that we clarify what happened to stop its spread quickly," Emond said.

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TOP MONKS PUSH FOR NEW VOTING RULES

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US AND CUBA TO OPEN TALKS ON RESTORING TIES

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SCOTT'S EXODUS TOO MUCH LIKE HIS GLADIATOR

ENTERTAINMENT - PAGE 20

Guilty verdict ignores police

Buth Reaksmeay Kongkea

A JUDGE at the Phnom Penh Municipal Court convicted a Spanish national of intentional murder yesterday and sentenced him to 10 years in jail, despite the court prosecutor and police having argued during the trial that the "victim" had not, in fact, been murdered.

Ricardo Blundell Perez, 40, was arrested on August 11 last year after police found the decomposing body of his British friend, John Peter Connell, at his rental house in Phnom Penh's Daun Penh district.

Connell died on July 17 of a drug overdose and was not murdered, Police Lieutenant Loek Um, who examined the body, told the court during a hearing on November 28.

Perez claims he found Connell dead in his living room after leaving him at his home for a few hours following a drinking session. He admits to having hid the body for weeks in his apartment but said this was because he was scared of being either charged with murder or arrested for illegally living in Cambodia if he reported the body.

At the conclusion of the trial, deputy court prosecutor Um Sopheak had appealed to the judge to change the charge to "hiding a body", because he did not believe murder had been committed.

The Post reported on

CONTINUED - PAGE 4



People provide information to medical workers yesterday as they prepare to take HIV tests in Battambang's Sangke district. HENG CHHOAN

Fear, anger in B'bang

Doctor at centre of HIV controversy threatened as questions swirl

May Titthara, Mom Kunthea and Shane Worrell
Battambang province

AN ALLEGEDLY unlicensed doctor was taken into police custody yesterday as anger

escalated in response to 106 people testing positive for HIV in Battambang's Sangke district.

As the grim reality of the infections began sinking in, villagers made threats to kill a "famous" doctor they allege administered injections to at least 30 people

in the area. Those who have tested positive for HIV are aged between 3 and 82 years old and include monks.

A source close to the case confirmed that a doctor had been detained by police in Battambang province.

"He is assisting with inquiries at this stage," the source said.

The family of the man villagers accuse, Yem Chroem, confirmed that he was "with police" but said it was for his own protection. They were adamant that he was not facing charges.

"He did not flee. He has been busy [elsewhere]," said son-in-law Chhem Choeun, 32. "When he knew there were problems, he wanted to return to face the villagers. But police told him to

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National

Fear and anger rock B'bang

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wait ... they needed him to appear in front of police if needed."

Chet Vanny, Battambang provincial deputy police chief, denied that Chroem was in custody.

"We have not arrested anyone or provided protection for a doctor at our station," he said. "We are still investigating."

Officials began health examinations in the district on December 8, and by Tuesday had discovered that at least 72 people had tested positive for HIV.

As health officials and NGOs rushed to the area yesterday, further tests inflated that figure to 106 out of 895 people examined by 5:30pm, according to National AIDS Authority (NAA) figures. NAA Secretary-General Dr Teng Kunthy said the reason for the infections was not yet clear.

"The people who know clearly that they have not got this through sex may have got this through an injection from the village physician," he said. "But we need more evidence, and we have to study and interview more people."

Health officials, Kunthy added, wanted to speak with Chroem to determine what kind of procedures he had been following.

But Roen Butreth, Battambang director of the provincial health department, said a preliminary report had shown that the HIV infections were "not due to injections".

"Authorities are investigating the cause of the infections," he said.

However, as the number of positive tests grew yesterday, so did the attendant anger.

"If the other villagers and I see [Chroem], then we will kill him," said Seoum Chhorm, deputy chief of Roka commune.

A second blood test yesterday showed another positive HIV reading for Chhorm, 63, his wife



People queue at a medical clinic to be tested for HIV in Battambang's Sanke district yesterday. HENG CHIVOAN

and two grandchildren. "Police cannot stop us killing him."

Chhorm said he has known Chroem for more than 10 years, because Chroem had married one of his relatives.

"I also knew that he himself has HIV, but I forgot; I did not think he would do that to us," he said.

Choeun, Chroem's son-in-law, denied this, saying that "all of us, including my father-in-

“I always call this doctor to get intravenous injections whenever I have a cold or the flu

law, have been blood-tested. They have found nothing."

Chroem, he added, was a gentle man who treated people day and night when needed.

Sam Lorm, 80, told the *Post* outside the Roka commune health centre that he had tested positive to HIV.

"I always call this doctor to get intravenous injections whenever I have a cold or the flu. But if I had not had my blood tested, I would not have believed this. I am still strong," he said.

"I am not afraid, because I am old now. But I am sorry for my 16-year-old [relative] who is studying. He just got injected three months ago."

Other villagers stood crying outside the health centre. Among

them, a devastated Leap Loeut, 55, said she was still coming to terms with the fact that she had tested positive.

She had never had sex with anyone but her husband and regularly warned her children about health risks.

"I tell them to be careful of HIV, but now I have had it without knowing," she said.

Deputy Prime Minister Men Sam An urged police to arrest

any unlicensed doctors responsible for spreading HIV among the population.

"We have to find the reason why it has spread like this," Sam An said. "We have to take strong action against perpetrators. We cannot allow unlicensed doctors to open clinics that make villagers suffer."

But James McCabe, director of operations at the Child Protection Unit, said a thorough investigation was needed before the cause of the infections in Sangke district could be established.

"We're still in the very early stages of investigating," he said. "This will not happen overnight. We need to find out what actually happened and make sure it cannot happen again."

Buth Bunthoeun, Sanke district police chief, said police had yet to determine a cause. Despite rumours Chroem had fled the province, he had actually gone to Takeo province on December 8 for his mother's funeral, Bunthoeun said.

"How can we arrest him without evidence?"

Kunthy, from the NAA, said a team had visited the area to provide support to the victims.

"It's not a problem, we have provided them care packages," he said. Kunthy clarified this comment by saying that those who had tested positive were being offered adequate support and that the NAA was "very sorry" about what had happened.

UNAIDS country director Marie-Odile Emond declined to comment yesterday.

Blame was also being directed towards a system that enabled people to get away with working as unlicensed as doctors.

"From now on, I will stop believing in all doctors. They do not pay attention to the patients; they think about only themselves," said Chhorm, the deputy commune chief.

"The state hospitals never care about the health of their own people - that's why they allow the private clinics and private doctors to spread their services everywhere and end up with a situation like this." MOM KUNTHEAR AND SHANE WORRELL REPORTED FROM PHNOM PENH

STRIKING rubbish collectors reached an agreement with waste collection firm Cintri to end their four-day industrial action yesterday, gaining a number of concessions from the company.

Cintri workers have already started returning to the city's streets. The agreement sees street cleaners' monthly wage raised by \$15 to \$120 and drivers' wages hiked by \$50 to \$180, with additional bonuses for working night shifts.

Drivers have been banned from siphoning off petrol from their vehicles under the deal, which had previously provided a regular supplementary income.

Prak Sokha, a representative of the Cintri staff, said the workers had begun to clean the streets after the end of negotiations yesterday afternoon.

"We know that the garbage has been polluting the environment and spoiling the city's beauty, and the smell has been affecting people's health," he said.

"So after the successful negotiations reached a positive conclusion, we are now in a hurry to carry out our jobs with responsibility and to end the trash mountains."

Cintri representatives could not be reached

EU funding to the Kingdom rises threefold

Shaun Turton

THE European Union's delegation to Cambodia will almost triple its funding to the Kingdom over the next five years because the bloc's aid policy has shifted its focus to least developed countries.

Jean-Francois Cautain, ambassador for the European Union's delegation to Cambodia, announced the EU would inject \$510 million into Cambodia between 2014 and 2020, compared with \$189 million between 2007 and 2013.

"The European Union decided in 2013 to refocus its assistance funding on least developing countries ... in order to assist them in getting out of the poverty trap," Cautain said. "There's the same [overall amount], just fewer countries."

Cautain revealed the figure at a joint press conference with Cambodia's Education Minister Hang Chuon Naron.

The event, at Phnom Penh's Sisowath High School, was held to announce a separate two-year \$46.4 million funding package for Cambodia's Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport.

That funding - under a continuing financing agreement - will be delivered to the ministry's budget only if it meets certain targets including increasing enrollment, lowering primary repetition rates, implementing national assessments and improving budget management.

The \$510 million will be given to Cambodia over the next five years to support a broader range of sectors, as well as education, which is likely to get about \$174 million of the total.

Cautain said the delegation's funds would be spread across

education, natural resource management and governance initiatives.

He said natural resource management projects would include developing a sustainable logging industry and boosting local food processing, particularly rice and fish.

"There is a need for the country to grow and we want to do it in a way that the Cambodian people can benefit from," he said.

He said certifying Cambodian timber for export to the EU was among the delegation's longer-term goals, adding the focus was on developing regulated trade to protect forests because efforts to purely stop illegal logging weren't working.

"It's a race between deforestation and putting in place a system," he said.

He said money for governance would flow into initiatives to increase accountability and decentralise government, as well as fund the trial against the Khmer Rouge's former leaders and genocide education.

Chuon Naron welcomed the EU's \$46.4 million boost to his ministry's budget, saying the funds were necessary to continue the improvements.

Responding to a question about increasing wages in the sector, he mentioned plans to give public employees a pay bump next year as well as increasing teachers' "functional allowance" to attract more graduates.

According to the European Development Cooperation Strategy for Cambodia 2014-2018, the EU delegation's contributions combined with money from EU member states will equal about \$1.8 billion over the next five years.

Cintri deal to end 'trash mountains'

Khouth Sophak Chakrya

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Cintri representatives could not be reached



Temporary workers clean up garbage from the streets of Phnom Penh yesterday while Cintri staff continued to strike. JOE FREEMAN

yesterday.

More than 1,000 Cintri workers had been on strike since Sunday, resulting in mounds of refuse piling up by the city's roads.

Yesterday, commune and district workers were scrambling to try and make a dent in the huge amounts of rubbish that had accumulated since the start of the strike.

Phnom Penh produces about 1,600 tonnes

of waste every day, according to City Hall.

City Hall spokesman Long Dimanche on Tuesday accused striking rubbish collectors of "kidnapping" the city by going on strike.

In July, a strike by Cintri workers ended after the company agreed to wage increases of between \$5 and \$10 and suggested another set of raises could be in the offing next year.

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WASTE SITUATION A TICKING TIME BOMB

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SONY PULLS THE INTERVIEW AMID PRESSURE

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'NEW FAILURE' FOR FIFA AS GARCIA QUILTS

SPORT - BACK PAGE

Nigeria in crisis: B Haram rampage

BOKO Haram militants killed 32 people and kidnapped at least 185 others, including women and children, in a brutal attack on a village in the northeast, officials and a witness said yesterday.

In neighbouring Cameroon, the Islamic extremists launched a raid on an army base in the border town of Amchide, but were repelled in a fierce gun battle with troops that left 116 insurgents dead, according to Cameroon's Defence Ministry.

Separately, a Nigerian court martial late on Wednesday sentenced 54 soldiers to death for mutiny after they refused to deploy for an operation against Boko Haram, blaming a lack of weapons and other equipment.

The court martial underscored the struggles Nigeria's military has faced in containing the five-year Islamist uprising. Civilians complain that they are left defenceless by troops who are often absent when the militants attack.

The insurgents, fighting to create an Islamic state in northern Nigeria, have seized large swathes of territory in the northeast, while cross-border violence has spread in recent months, forcing more than 1.5 million people to flee their homes.

A convoy of heavily armed Boko Haram gunmen

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Authorities search a medical centre in Battambang's Sangke district yesterday for evidence relating to a huge number of HIV cases in the area. HENG CHIVAN

Border killing prompts demand

Phak Seangly
and Shaun Turton

CAMBODIA'S government has demanded Thailand investigate the killing of a Cambodian woman shot in the head by Thai soldiers after straying across the border in search of food.

In a fiercely worded letter sent to the Thai Embassy in Cambodia, the Kingdom's Foreign Affairs Ministry condemned the shooting and called for Thailand's government to stop its soldiers from killing Khmer citizens in the border region.

"The Royal Government of Cambodia strongly protests against the barbarian acts committed by the Thai soldier(s) and requests the Thai authorities to conduct an investigation into the case

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PM doubts HIV outbreak

Health agencies, however, confirm they are dealing with the virus

Chhay Channyda and May Titthara
Battambang province

DESPITE government-administered tests in recent days showing that more than 100 people in Battambang have been infected with HIV, Prime Minister Hun Sen said yesterday

that he was "99 per cent" sure the results are wrong.

Speaking at a graduation ceremony yesterday, the premier said he does not believe HIV infections have occurred.

"Right now, 99 per cent, I don't believe it's AIDS," he said, referring to the disease that develops from HIV infection. "They might

have a virus, but it's not AIDS... Can an 80-year-old person get AIDS? And can young people who do not know anything get AIDS?"

A 74-year-old man tested positive for HIV in Roka village in late November. Since then, testing and retesting has ramped up - with the National AIDS

Authority (NAA) and other groups rushing to the area - and at least 106 people have now registered positive readings, according to the NAA.

Villagers have accused Yem Chroem, an allegedly unlicensed doctor, of administering injections to at least 30 people to treat various complaints.

Chet Vanny, deputy provincial police chief, yesterday alleged that police had found used and unused needles mixed together while searching Chroem's house.

"The doctor is at the police station clarifying some

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National

Refugee limbo Montagnard mission still languishing

UNITED Nations officials are still being blocked by provincial authorities from visiting a group of 13 desperate Montagnard asylum seekers hiding in the jungles of Ratanakiri, more than a week after officials travelled to the northeastern province for a second time.

Provincial authorities have denied a joint delegation of UN and Immigration Department officials access to the group, citing the need for letters of permission from the central government in order to work with them.

Chhay Thy of rights group Adhoc said the asylum seekers were asking the UN to defy the government, as they believe police are trying to find and deport them first. "They want UN officials to come alone without the authorities. They are in need of the UN's help because they are facing food shortages and disease," he said.

When asked yesterday why the UN needed government permission to meet the group, Wan-Hea Lee, the UN rights representative, suggested "the question should be posed to the [government] authorities who claim it is needed".

"For OHCHR, it is a practical matter. We did not wish to place them at risk of arrest or refoulement."

Neither the Ministry of Interior nor the provincial governor could be reached yesterday.

KEVIN PONNIAH AND CHHAY CHANNYDA

UNAIDS says B'bang villagers HIV positive

Continued from page 1

things. We have not taken any action against him," he said.

In his speech, Hun Sen urged people not to jump to conclusions about the situation and instead use "all scientific possibilities" to determine what had happened.

But he also questioned the testing method his own authorities were using to determine whether villagers in Sangke district were HIV positive.

"If we bring this machine here, half of us might also find out we have AIDS," he said. "Actually, we don't look down on our doctors or [health] equipment. But it's hard to believe."

Health agencies yesterday, however, confirmed that they were dealing with HIV.

In a statement headlined "HIV cases in Sangke district, Battambang", the Ministry of Health, the World Health Organization (WHO), UNAIDS, Unicef, the Pasteur Institute in Cambodia and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say they are investigating an "outbreak".

"A complete investigation into this outbreak will be carried out with full technical assistance given," Health Minister Mam Bunheng said in the statement.

But Hun Sen wasn't the only one casting doubt over the tests yesterday.

"We cannot say that they are positive [readings]," Dr Mean Chhivun, director of the National Centre for HIV-AIDS said. "They are reactive re-

sults, not positive. More tests are needed."

Asked to explain what percentage of people in the world whose blood sample produced a "reactive" reading were later found to have HIV, Chhivun said he did not know.

Marie-Odile Emond, UNAIDS country director, however, said that it was "definitely HIV" that officials were dealing with.

"There have been a number of cases confirmed," she said.

Dr Didier Fontenille, from the Pasteur Institute of Cambodia, said his laboratory was providing additional testing of blood samples to confirm positive readings. Of the 30 so far retested by the institute, all were positive, Fontenille said. They were still waiting on additional test results last night.

"It is without doubt," he said of those confirmed. "It is definitive ... the [Health Ministry's] tests were well done."

Chroeum remained in custody yesterday, though no charges have been laid and his family said he was being kept away from his village in Roka commune to protect his safety.

James McCabe, director of operations at the Child Protection Unit, said the doctor in question was continuing to "assist police with inquiries".

Investigators, he added, spent hours yesterday searching a house, where syringes, vials and medicines were seized.

Chhem Choeun, 32, Chroeum's son-in-law, said he was cooperating with police while they searched his family home.



Investigators search for medical paraphernalia and evidence around Yem Chroeum's house yesterday in Battambang province. HENG CHIVONAN

"My dad has been at the police station for two days," he said. "He has not said anything. Police fear for his safety, so they are not letting him go home."

McCabe said authorities had widened their investigation to encompass as many as five communes, he said.

"We have to consider every possibility. Everything has to be discounted. Every single person will need to be retested and thoroughly interviewed."

It could be months before the investigators deliver a finding, he added.

Some experts yesterday said they had never heard of such a case happening before and questioned whether one doctor could be responsible.

"This is a totally new situation and I don't recall having encountered similar incidences like this in the past," said Dr Masami Fujita, the WHO's HIV/AIDS team leader in Cambodia.

"What makes it worse is that

there are so many unknowns," Fujita said. "We're looking at other possibilities at this point."

Sarah Hand, chief executive of international HIV/AIDS charity AVERT, said it was "virtually impossible" for more than 100 HIV-positive patients to contract the virus from a single doctor.

"It doesn't mean that if some individuals were injected with contaminated blood that every single person treated would get the virus," Hand said. "HIV remains a relatively hard virus to contract ... so it's very unlikely that the contamination came from just one source."

Harun Rashid, regional head of the Malaysia-based Coordination of Action Research on AIDS and Mobility, said that the incident was a "failure in the Cambodian government's and global community's job in educating locals about HIV/AIDS".

"The doctor, even if he's unlicensed, must have gotten these needles somewhere and those

places should be investigated," Rashid said.

Some in the government, meanwhile, were in damage control mode yesterday.

"Please trust our health system," said Bunheng, vowing sweeping changes "What is necessary is medical equipment, which the government will supply."

Chivun, from the National Centre for HIV-AIDS, said those infected would receive free antiretroviral drugs for the rest of their lives.

More villagers yesterday were linking their infections to recent doctor trips they had made.

Bunna Sambath, 19, said he believed an injection he had six months ago when he was battling dengue may have been the time that he contracted HIV.

"I am not ashamed, because I have done nothing wrong, and I am not the AIDS carrier alone - almost the whole village is," he said.

ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY SHANE WORRELL AND SARAH TAGUAM

ACU to tackle ghost workers

Meas Sokchea

THE Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) will devote itself to cleaning ministries of ghost workers and absentee officials in the coming year, an official said yesterday.

The announcement comes just two days after the National Anti-Corruption Council (NACC) encouraged it to do just that in an evaluation of the body's work this year.

In an interview yesterday, ACU deputy president Chhay Savuth said that department heads found to be harbouring ghost workers on their payrolls would be axed, but that ministers themselves would be

spared, a proposal the opposition lambasted yesterday.

"If any ministry does not leave out [ghost officials] from the ministry [and] we have enough evidence, we will arrest the heads of those departments," Savuth said.

Ministers, however, couldn't be expected to be aware of ghost workers in the ministries, he continued, and would therefore escape prosecution.

Opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party lawmaker Yim Sovann said the plan was yet another example of the ACU targeting small-time graft, while ignoring corruption at the highest levels.

"If a minister does not know there are ghost names in his ministry, do not be a minister anymore," Sovann said.

San Chey of the Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific also questioned the proposition, saying that targeting ministers would be more effective.

"Doing it from the top to the bottom would be an example, so we want to see elimination from the top down," he said.

In its report on Tuesday, the NACC also said that the ACU had received almost 900 complaints in 2014, but also noted that only 10 had resulted in legal action being taken.

Maids MoU signing no later than January

Sen David

AN AGREEMENT lifting the ban on recruitment agencies sending Cambodian citizens to Malaysia to work as maids will be signed at the end of this month or early next year.

Minister of Labour Ith Sam Heng told reporters on Wednesday that he will fly to Malaysia to sign the agreement, effectively ending the 2011 ban of recruitment firms training and sending Cambodian maids to the neighbouring country for domestic work. The change will come in time for Cambodia's 2015 entrance to the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC).

"I will fly [to Malaysia] to sign the agreement, to once again send Cambodian maids to work in Malaysia on time for 2015, when we will be joining the ASEAN Economic Community," Sam Heng said.

"[This comes] after we finished discussions at the expert level to protect our maids."

Cambodia barred recruiting firms from sending domestic workers to work in Malaysia after revelations of a number of cases in which maids suffered severe abuse at the hands of their



A maid practises bathing a baby, under the supervision of a teacher as part of a training session in Phnom Penh last year, before leaving for overseas employment. PHA LINA

employers and were sometimes prevented to leave by employers who held their passports.

The ban followed allegations of the gang rape of a domestic worker trying to escape Malaysia, suspicious deaths of maids in their employers' houses and raids of recruitment firms in Cambodia that turned up underage recruits in three training centres in 2011.

Currently, 17,000 Cambodians work across several industries in Malaysia.

As part of the agreement, Cambodians who travel to

Malaysia for work will be paid salaries analogous to those of Malaysians in the same industry, Sam Heng said. The equal pay stipulation goes beyond domestic work, to sectors spanning engineering to tourism.

News of the coming agreement was welcomed by Mom Monita, head of the Cambodian Migrant Worker's Solidarity Network in Malaysia.

"We have waited for this agreement," Monita said yesterday. "It will soon protect those of us who work in Malaysia from abuse; the law will protect us."

Wife, daughter slain by officer

Mom Kunthea

A GRIM double murder-suicide has police in Battambang province looking for answers after a deputy military police chief shot dead his wife and 3-year-old daughter on Wednesday before turning the gun on himself.

Rith Thy, 49, deputy chief of Phnom Proek district's military police department, parked his motorbike in front of the district hall that evening with his wife, 27-year-old Sok Panha, and daughter, Chan Na, said An

Yoeth, deputy police chief of Phnom Proek district's Pichr Chenda commune. He then pulled out a handgun and shot his wife in the chest, his daughter in the right side and himself in the chest.

"The wife was sent to the hospital, but she died," Yoeth said. "After he shot his wife and daughter, he shot himself in the chest, too."

Police are left scratching their heads for specific motives, Yoeth said. Thy and Panha were known to have been argu-

ing in the days leading up to the double murder-suicide, and in similar cases Yoeth has seen, a husband's jealousy provided the catalyst.

Neither Thy nor Panha had close family, which makes investigating the crime more challenging, Yoeth said.

"They do not have relatives, so it is difficult for us to find a reason for the crime," Yoeth said yesterday. "As our first conclusion, we suspect that it was motivated by jealousy, but we are not sure [in this case]."



TWO NYC COPS SHOT DEAD IN COLD BLOOD

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ROWLING: IT'S TIME TO END ORPHANAGES

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THAILAND EDGE MALAYSIA IN SUZUKI CUP FINAL

SPORT - BACK PAGE

The Phnom Penh Post

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Toll bails on rail, citing revenue

Eddie Morton

PUBLICLY listed Australian logistics firm Toll Group has sold its stake in the Kingdom's national railway, a project plagued with botched community resettlement attempts and development setbacks.

A Toll Group draft media statement, dated today, says Toll Group on Friday offloaded its 55-per-cent stake in the Toll Royal Railway concession to its joint venture partner, Royal Group.

"The decision to divest our interest in the concession was not taken lightly, but it was decided after generating lower-than-expected returns over a period of time," Toll group managing director, Brian Kruger, is quoted saying in the statement.

"In addition, setbacks and delays in track rehabilitation works by external contractors over the past two years has in our view also impeded the efficient operation, and hence economic viability of the railway."

Toll will continue to provide external logistics support to Royal Group, today's media statement says.

"Toll Royal Railway has prided itself on the professional approach it has taken to training staff, safety management, community education and operational excellence, and Toll recognizes the importance of the improvement of logistics

CONTINUED - PAGE 9



A group of Montagnards sit in front of UN officials yesterday in Ratanakkiri province during a meeting. ADHOC

'AIDS family' grasps for hope

May Titthara
Battambang province

IN BATTAMBANG'S Sangke district, the outbreak that has seen more than 100 people test positive for HIV has devastated a community.

And for one family, the pain has been intensified by the sheer number of those infected - 15 out of a possible 16 have tested positive.

"It's just unbelievable," said Chhay Yav, 78, who herself has contracted HIV. "I am old, it is OK. But I pity my grandchildren; some of them are 6 months old, 2 years old, 18 years old."

The only person in Yav's family who has not tested positive for HIV since health authorities sensed something highly unusual in the village is her husband, 82-year-old Ta Em.

"The whole village, if they talk about our family now,

CONTINUED - PAGE 2

Montagnards reach city

The group of 13 fleeing Vietnam arrive to submit asylum requests

Chhay Channyda
and Laignee Barron

AFTER more than seven weeks of hiding in the forests of Ratanakkiri province to avoid deportation, 13 Vietnamese Montagnards arrived in Phnom Penh yesterday to

submit asylum requests.

The group of 12 men and one woman claim to be fleeing religious persecution in Vietnam, where the northern minority hill tribes have been subjected to police raids, arrests, beatings and forced renunciations of Christian faith.

"I'm OK. I'm with the UN

now. I don't want to go back [to Vietnam]," one of the Montagnards said yesterday.

Eight Montagnards met with UN representatives on Saturday after the organisation spent nearly a month blocked by armed provincial authorities.

Later the same day, Ratanak-

kiri's border police stumbled upon the other five Montagnards in O'Yadav district, approximately 80 kilometres from where the first group had taken cover. The asylum seekers were forwarded on to UN officers.

"We do not know why the local authorities stopped trying to block the joint mission from

meeting with the Montagnards any more than we know why they blocked access to begin with. We are very pleased that whatever the reason, it was overcome and that good cooperation ensued," said Wan-Hea, Lee, country representative for

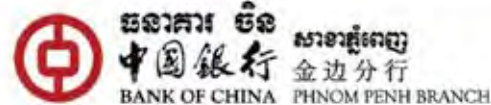
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National

Battambang's 'AIDS family' clings to hope

Continued from page 1

they will know us as the AIDS family, because now everyone carries the virus, except for Ta Em – he is rarely sick."

Like many others, the family believes they have been infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, through treatment from the village doctor, the type a healthy Em has not needed.

"My family is often ill, so we call the doctor to give us intravenous injections. We prefer injections to [oral] medicine, which is less effective," Yav said.

Police yesterday sent Yem Chroem, an unlicensed village doctor, to court, after he was detained at the provincial police station on December 17, amid death threats.

"We have sent him to court for negligence and for working as a doctor without gaining permission from the Ministry of Health," said provincial deputy police chief Chet Vanny.

"Any charges will be dependent on the prosecutor."

Nuon Sang, provincial prosecutor, would not confirm the details last night, but suggested that Chroem would be charged.

"The court is still questioning him. We will know tomorrow what the charges will be," he said.

A 74-year-old man tested positive for HIV in Roka village, in Roka commune, in late November. A rash of testing and retesting followed as it became clear that scores of people,

from babies to the elderly, had been infected.

The Pasteur Institute has said that it has confirmed at least 119 cases in a third round of testing, while one of its doctors, Didier Fontenille, has reportedly told local media outlet Voice of Democracy (VoD) that the figure has risen to 140. He was not available to confirm this yesterday.

Some experts have described the situation as highly unusual, casting doubt on whether a single doctor could infect so many people.

Authorities raided Chroem's house last week, seizing used and unused needles but have said a full investigation could take months.

But many villagers are certain that Chroem's needles have contaminated them. Their reactions range from violent anger to compassion for a practitioner who has answered many of them in their hour of need.

"I feel so much pity for my family," Yav said. "But I am not angry with the doctor; he has not injected us to kill us, but to try to make us better."

Yav's family lives in three houses that border each other. Close to where the 78-year-old spoke, her granddaughter, San Sophy, 25, cried as she swung solemnly in a hammock.

"My daughter found it difficult to take medicine," Sophy said. "We called the doctor to inject her when she had a temperature, but now she is infected with HIV."



Ten family members sit in the shade in Battambang's Sangke district last week after their HIV test results came back positive. HENG CHIVAN

Sophy's husband, unable to accept the news that he, too, has tested positive, has fled to a nearby banana plantation. He has spent days crying and refusing to eat, she said.

"My husband feels pity towards the children and shame that the whole family is infected," Sophy said.

Villagers, she said, always called on Chroem when they

experienced high temperatures, dengue fever, typhoid or influenza. The doctor would see them immediately and sometimes hold off on billing

them until they could afford to pay.

"We wanted to go the village health centre, but it's too hard," Sophy said. "We would get sick early in the morning and would have to wait until 9am to see them. We were in a hurry to get out to the fields, so we preferred the private doctor."

Yav's son, Em San, 48, said that he had stomach pain about

five months ago, which led to the doctor injecting him with 20 needles.

"I just appeal to the government to provide us with medicine – or all of us in the village will die," he said.

Like others, San has been replaying his appointments with Chroem over and over in his mind.

From what he can remember, the practitioner always tore the packets containing new needles open in front of him.

"I am still wondering whether it is possible for the needles to have infected us," he said.

Roeun Vun, 28, Yav's grandson-in-law, was the first in his family to learn that he had HIV. In response, his family members turned on him. His wife even packed his bags for him and ordered him out. Now they seek solace in each other.

"I wanted to commit suicide, because in my life, I have never gone anywhere but the rice

fields," he said. "My wife didn't believe me ... but now the whole village is infected."

As sorrow continues to consume these households and the village as a whole, the authorities keep testing more potential victims.

"We can't get people to come, it's up to them," said Dr Mean Chhivun, director of the National Centre for HIV/AIDS, Dermatology and STDs, who declined to give an official number of those infected.

James McCabe, director of operations at the Child Protection Unit, said a child as young as two months old had tested positive.

"It has yet to be determined whether or not it was passed from the mother."

ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY SARAH TAGUAM AND SHANE WORRELL

The whole village, if they talk about our family now, they will know us as the AIDS family

experienced high temperatures, dengue fever, typhoid or influenza. The doctor would see them immediately and sometimes hold off on billing

them until they could afford to pay.

"I just appeal to the government to provide us with medi-

Group of 13 request asylum

Continued from page 1

the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, or OHCHR.

Following a 12-hour trek from Ratanakkiri accompanied by the UN and a police escort yesterday, the Montagnards registered their asylum applications at the Phnom Penh Immigration Office, where a small fire earlier in the day nearly caused a hiccup in the process.

The UN also had a doctor on standby to visit with the group after their stay in the jungle, which was plagued by illness and malaria.

The UN declined to comment on how the Montagnards' asylum claims will now be assessed or how long the



A van transporting asylum-seeking Montagnards arrives at the General Department of Immigration in Phnom Penh last night after travelling in a convoy from Ratanakkiri province. HONG MENEA

process will take, deferring to the government.

Though Cambodia took over refugee processing from the UN in 2009, officials from the government's immigration centre said yesterday that they were unaware of Montagnards in Phnom Penh

seeking asylum.

"I have no idea about that," said Keo Sarith, director of the Interior Ministry's Refugee Department.

Interior Ministry spokesman Khieu Sopheak abdicated any responsibility for the Montagnards, claiming their status "is

under the control of the UNHCR", the UN Refugee Agency.

The government's treatment of these Montagnards is under increased scrutiny as the first test of Cambodia's refugee policies since a heavily criticised resettlement arrangement was signed with the Australian government earlier this year.

"Cambodia cannot cut corners or play games with these cases, they will need to decide on a fair assessment of the facts that also recognises Vietnam's long-time policy of discrimination and abuse against Montagnards," said Phil Robertson, deputy director of Human Rights Watch Asia division.

Cambodia is one of the few countries in the region to have ratified the 1951 refugee convention, but the government has nevertheless garnered a lacklustre record in protecting refugees – and particularly Montagnards' – rights.

In 2005, approximately 100 Montagnard refugees were detained and attacked by

Cambodian police in a move that elicited international criticism.

Following reports that such attacks and forced repatriations were not uncommon, the UN signed a tripartite memorandum of understanding with Cambodia and Vietnam.

Montagnard asylum seekers already in Cambodia were allowed to stay until their asylum applications were processed. Montagnards granted asylum were presented an option: voluntary repatriation back to Vietnam or resettlement in a third country.

The Interior Ministry said that no Montagnards have settled in Cambodia.

"Those people don't want to stay in Cambodia," said ministry spokesman Sopheak. "Most have been resettled in the US, there is a big community there now."

The largest number of Montagnards outside of Vietnam reside in America where they were resettled due to close

relations formed during the Vietnam War when Montagnards cast their lot with the US Army, an alignment partially responsible for some of the hill tribes' post-war suffering.

Though the Interior Ministry said such a third country resettlement would reflect a "positive outcome", for the Montagnards, the US Embassy yesterday declined to comment on whether it is involved or willing to become involved in the asylum process.

With the international community closely watching Cambodia's handling of the Montagnards, the government "is more likely to give them some recognition", but it's still unlikely to compromise close diplomatic ties with Vietnam, said Carlyle Thayer, a Cambodia expert and professor emeritus at the University of New South Wales in Australia.

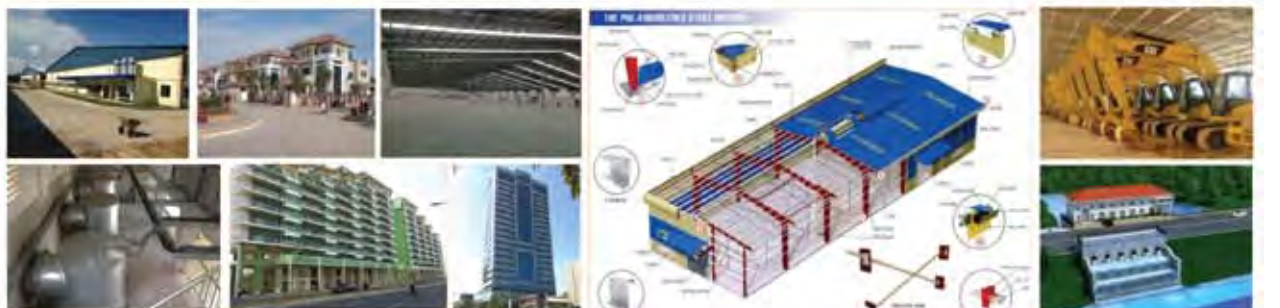
"Cambodia is under no obligations to accept these people, but it is under obligations not to refole them," he said. ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY PHAK SEANGLY



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UKRAINE TAKES HISTORIC STEP TOWARDS NATO

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MARTHA STEWART OFFERS HOLIDAY PARTY TIPS

LIFESTYLE - PAGE 17



FRENCH-BORN CAMBODIAN NETS TENNIS RANKING

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HIV doc 'helped a lot of people'

May Titthara and Joe Freeman

AFTER being voluntarily repatriated from Thailand's largest refugee camp in late 1992 or early 1993, a Cambodian man in his mid-30s moved to Battambang province and settled in Sangke district.

The next chapter of his life started at an auspicious time. In the summer of '93, Cambodians were about to head to the polls to vote in historic UN-sponsored elections. The country was at a turning point in its violent history. Peace was at hand.

One day in the district, however, a resident fell gravely ill. He needed medical attention, but the man was reluctant to treat him. He had only received a basic medical education in public health in the camp and was certified by one organisation as a nurse. He also did not have a licence to practise medicine in Cambodia.

But he did it anyway, and Yem Chroem, who is now 55 and facing murder charges for his alleged role in a mass HIV outbreak in Sangke district, became the local doctor.

"He did not want to cure people at the beginning, because he just got training as a nurse, not a doctor with professional education," said his sister-in-law Lay Thavy, 46, in a telephone interview with the *Post* from her home in Thailand. "But a villager had diarrhoea and vomited a lot and may have

CONTINUED - PAGE 4



Vietnam's President Truong Tan Sang is greeted at the Vietnamese Friendship Monument by an honour guard yesterday in Phnom Penh during the first day of his two-day visit. HENG CHIVAN

N Korea internet is hit by 'attack'

Joe Biddle

NORTH Korea's internet went dark for several hours amid rumours of US retaliation over its alleged hacking of a Hollywood studio, just as the pariah state came under attack at the UN over its rights record.

It was not clear who or what had shut down Pyongyang's web connections, but cyber experts said that the country's already limited internet went completely offline overnight from Monday to yesterday.

Piling further pressure on Kim Jong-un's regime, UN members debated North Korea's brutal treatment of its huge prison population after China, its only major ally, was rebuffed in a bid to shelve the issue.

US-based internet analysts

CONTINUED - PAGE 13

Silence on Montagnards

Analysts wait to see if Vietnam will ask Kingdom for the 13's return

Taing Vida and Laignee Barron

THE topic of Vietnamese Montagnards seeking asylum in the Kingdom was conspicuously absent from high-level discussions that kicked off Vietnamese President Truong Tan Sang's two-

day visit yesterday.

Following a more than two-hour meeting between heads of state at the Peace Palace, spokesmen said there were no substantial issues addressed.

"The meeting did not focus on any problem, it was just a ceremonial meeting. They did not focus on the 13 Montagnards or

on any other issue," said Eang Sopheleth, personal assistant to Prime Minister Hun Sen.

According to the National Police website, the 13 Montagnards yesterday started interviews at the government's refugee office to determine the validity of their claims to asylum.

The head of the refugee office

told the *Post* that the screening process can sometimes take the understaffed department up to four years to complete while the refugee seekers wait on temporary visas.

The group of Montagnards, who are currently under the care of the UN refugee office, emerged earlier this week after almost two

months hiding in Ratanakkiri's forest. The minority group allegedly fled persecution and jail time in Vietnam's highlands.

The Vietnamese Embassy in Phnom Penh again refused to comment on whether the country had made any requests to

CONTINUED - PAGE 2



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National

Doctor described as 'a gentleman'

Continued from page 1

died before being admitted to Ped Thom [the provincial hospital], so he decided to give treatment with some medicines and serum he got from the refugee camp. And the villager recovered and people liked him."

Little is known about the sole suspect in Sangke district's HIV outbreak, which has seen at least 119 people infected since the positive testing of an elderly man in November. On the surface, he sounds like a monster. Chroem was charged on Monday with murder, intentionally transmitting HIV and running a clinic without permission from the Ministry of Health. Under questioning, he allegedly told police that he had reused needles at his clinic and instructed his son-in-law to burn evidence before authorities seized anything.

But this is hardly the picture that emerges after interviews with family and villagers, who described him as kind and helpful. Several documents obtained by the Post also attest to his medical training and exemplary performance on the job.

"He is a gentleman," said Kan Sambath, deputy chief of the district's Roka commune, ground

zero of the crisis where infected residents have vowed to kill Chroem. "He did not talk much, but he helped people in the village a lot."

Born in May 1959, in Takeo province, Chroem - whose name is also spelled Chrin - learned his trade in Site 2 during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Site 2 was the largest Cambodian refugee camp on the border with Thailand and the home base of movements opposed to the Viet-

He was a gentleman ... He did not talk much, but he helped people

name-backed government in Phnom Penh.

The UN and several aid groups worked in the camp. In 1990, the American Refugee Committee certified Chroem as a nurse who possessed "the knowledge, skill, and privileged [sic] to be responsible for performing nursing assessment and providing quality nursing care to the people."

A certificate for Continuing Nursing Education shows that Chroem completed an additional 28 hours of instruction from April 1990 to January 1991.



Yem Chroem (centre) leaves Battambang Provincial Police Station on Sunday to appear in court. PHOTO SUPPLIED

The document notes that his attendance rate in the courses stood at 100 per cent.

In March 1992, Chroem successfully completed a "theoretical and practical training" course in public health from the UN, according to a separate certificate. Later that year, in December, he received a commendation from the American Refugee Committee for "exceptional performance" as Fellow Nurse at the group's hospital and office in Site 2.

"He has served in this capacity with devotion and distinction," the commendation reads. "His

leadership and creativity have contributed greatly to the efficient [sic] management of patient care in the hospital and outpatient departments."

The praise doesn't stop there. In 2000, he received a commendation from a government health organisation for his medical work with a local group called Buddhism for Development.

"Villagers... love my father-in-law very much, because he always cares for villagers in the village," said Chhem Choeun. "He did not willingly spread HIV in that village."

Chroem's first wife died, but he remarried in Battambang and lived with the woman in Sangke district. They have six children, two of them from his first marriage.

Thavy, the sister-in-law of his current wife, cannot fathom the idea of Chroem being guilty.

"I do not believe whatsoever that he did that. If so, it is like he damaged himself and the future of his six kids. He could not do that," she said, adding that the villagers did not seek medical help only from Chroem.

"I am waiting to see how the court judges this case. He is a

nice and good person who gave treatments for more than 20 years. Villagers got treatment from other doctors, but why is there suspicion only on him and [why was he] detained like that?"

Though Chroem has been charged with murder and is sitting in pretrial detention, an investigation into what happened in Sangke will likely take months. Already, the facts aren't adding up. According to the US-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 99.7 per cent of needle stick or cut exposures to HIV-contaminated blood do not lead to infection.

Still, the question remains why a man with such long experience treating others would reuse needles, and whether his training meant that he may have been out of his depth when administering to serious ailments.

Sok Srun, director of the Ministry of Health's hospital department, which oversees standards for working doctors, said that along with a specific profession, a person needs to update or renew skill sets.

"Trainings are good at the refugee camp, but the thing is that a trainee or an individual does not implement correctly as the principles are," he said. "I am not sure and do not accuse him of any thing, but one never advises [a doctor or a nurse] to use the same needle in medical treatment like that."

ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY PHAK SEANGLY

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- 1) Associate Director, Reserch & Analyst
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- 3) Relationship Manager Lending
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- 5) Branch Manager Takmao Branch
- 6) Branch Manager Kampong Cham Province

Deadline of application: 28 December, 2014
 To apply log on to <http://anzroyal.com/en/About-Us/Careers/>
 Only short-listed applicants will be notified.
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