Gov’t scraps deals on Boeung Tamok Lake

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Boeung Tamok Lake has a surface area of approximately 3,000ha. Heng Chivoan

The Council of Ministers has decided to annul the prakas which were previously issued to carve out roughly 30ha in total size from an area currently encompassed by Boeung Tamok Lake on the outskirts of Phnom Penh.

The reversal came following a direct order from Prime Minister Hun Sen.

According to a letter dated January 4 and signed by Council of Ministers permanent secretary of state Hing Thoraksy, the government has annulled its previous prakas, numbered 790, giving permission to carve out 15ha of the lake in Prek Phnov district which was to be used to construct new facilities for the Ministry of Rural Development.

The government also annulled prakas number 791, which would have carved out another 15ha of the lake to make way for the construction of new facilities for the National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM), the Cambodian Human Rights Committee (CHRC) and the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA).

The letter also stated that the government had annulled two other prakas, numbered 897 and 834, that would have seen land swaps among the above-mentioned institutions.

This will therefore void an agreement with TP Moral Construction and Development Co, Ltd, which had been contracted to construct new buildings and warehouses for those institutions.
In light of these annulments, the letter said the government had decided to hand over the buildings of the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction to the rural development ministry. And the current buildings of the rural development ministry will be given to the Phnom Penh Municipal Department of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction.

The letter also said: “The government allocates the current facilities occupied by the Ministry of Mine and Energy for joint use by the NCDM, CHRC, and CMAA.”

Chak Sopheap, executive director of the Cambodian Centre for Human Rights, said the annulment of the earlier sub-decrees was the correct move and long overdue.

In a Facebook post, she said the government must ensure that the remainder of the lake is conserved as state property and will not be completely filled-in.

Refilling the natural lake, she said, will pose dangers and the government should consider reclaiming other portions of the lake that have been privatised.

“Both state and private institutions seeking to benefit from the use of the land [through the filling-in] of this lake should behave responsibly and ensure that their plans won’t negatively affect society or the environment.

“The government should show the public its [environmental] impact assessment and be truthful about their reasons for carving out portions of the lake one after another.

“They should be able to provide some evidence that the lake, which is public property, would no longer be of any benefit to the public should it remain as a lake, in order to fully justify any decision made to privatise it or fill it in,” Sopheap said.

Boeung Tamok Lake has a surface area of approximately 3,000ha. A few hundred hectares of its surface have thus far been granted to the Phnom Penh Municipal Hall to establish a public garden and natural park, and for a new National Police headquarters as well as new buildings for other government entities.

Council of Ministers spokesperson Ek Tha said the government only makes decisions that serve public interests.

“Everything that the government has decided is all in the best interests of the people of our nation,” said.

Details: https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/govt-scrap-deals-boeung-tamok-lake