Third BarCamp Tech Conference Sees Attendance Rise

Tharum Bun, VOA Khmer | Phnom Penh

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An attendee views VOA Khmer Facebook Page at Puthisastra University in Phnom Penh, where more than 800 computer enthusiasts gathered last week to exchange Information Technology knowledge.

Technology is playing a much greater role in the lives and businesses of Cambodians. In response, some 800 tech enthusiasts gathered at a conference in September in an event that
has grown steadily over the years.

The two-day event, called BarCamp, brought together experts and novices alike, who shared information on a range of topics, from information on applications for computers and mobile devices to access of human rights information.

“The social media of this Internet generation is modern and enables us to publicize information about human rights,” Chor Chanthida, a project officer for the Cambodian Center for Human Rights, told VOA Khmer at the conference. “Old media like radio, TV or print newspapers can be controlled by someone in power, or not aired or broadcast freely. But over the Internet, we can publish news for the public. So that's the best means to advocacy and to post breaking news on human rights issues, in particular.”

This BarCamp was Cambodia's third annual gathering, but it has seen a doubling in attendance since 2008. The idea, a free exchange of information, originated with tech fans in Palo Alto, Calif., in 2005 and has since become an international network of events.

“There are many participants and they are keen to share,” said Dara Sanyouth, a student at the
Royal University of Phnom Penh. “Our break-out session rooms are not enough to accommodate them.”

Dara Saoyuth attended a session on time management, which, though short, was informative.

“What I’m impressed by is that the presenters are willing to share and are open,” he said. “They are experts, and they can actually make money offering training, but they want to share their skills with young people for free. And even though it’s free, they do their best to explain and help answer questions from the audience.”

Be Chantra, a lead organizer for this year’s BarCamp, said he hoped participants learned something new from presenters and more about Cambodia’s software industry.

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