Website Lists Human Rights Violations in Cambodia

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THE CAMBODIA DAILY

In December, a village representative was arrested in Koh Kong, a minor crimes police officer allegedly assaulted a Phnom Penh man, and a journalist was threatened in Kompong Chhnang province.

Those cases come not from sifting through police reports or combing through crime blotters, but from a website that is the first in Cambodia to attempt to create a singular source of information on every reported violation of key human rights.

The site, www.sithi.org, has been live for nearly a year but is to be officially launched within three months. It taps into a database which aims to compile nationwide reports concerning at least nine categories of human rights, including judicial fairness, land tenure and freedom of expression.

At the click of a mouse, reported violations can be subdivided and plotted on a map of Cambodia. With limited resources—there is only one researcher to find and write up violations—the data is far from complete, but its creators hope eventually it will be a one-stop rights monitoring shop.

"It should be a human rights portal," said Ou Virak, director of the Cambodian Center for Human Rights, which developed the site. "We want to allow readers to form their own opinion of the human rights situation in Cambodia instead of us writing a report and noting a conclusion.

We want them to draw their own conclusion," he said.

The site has a broad intended audience, noted Mr Virak.

NGOs and rights workers are expected to use it, as are students, whom CCHR hopes to woo with an engaging site design. Eventually, said the designers, there might even be an impact on government policy.

"Hopefully the government will be able to look" [at the situation], said Mr Virak.

According to the site’s developer, Khiev Sokmesa, visitor traffic is still modest—perhaps 100 people visit each day—but with plans to translate the site into Khmer later this year and to roll out a mobile phone application later, he expects the number of visitors to shoot up.