

Legal Body's Leader Fears 'Law of the Jungle'

By Phann Ana
The Cambodia Daily
Monday, July 4, 2005

Suon Visal, who was elected president of the Cambodian Bar Association, said that he was concerned for his safety after being charged with forgery by the Phnom Penh Municipal Court.

Following a complaint filed by his rival for the bar's presidency, Ky Tech, the court on Thursday charged Suon Visal with forging the bar association's official stamp and stationery, said court officials.

"The charge has already been passed on to the investigating judge," a court clerk said on condition of anonymity.

Suon Visal would not disclose his whereabouts on Thursday. "I am worried about my safety. I am worried that they will use the law of the jungle. But if they go by the law, there should be no problem," he said by telephone.

On June 24, former bar association president Ky Tech lodged a court complaint against "Suon Visal and accomplices" for allegedly forging the bar association's stamp, removing his name from the bar's stationery and replacing it with his own.

Ky Tech has maintained possession of the stamps since he lost the Oct 17 presidency election, whose results he later challenged in court.

In a closed-door hearing of the Appeals Court on Nov 19, it was ruled that Ky Tech was the rightful president. That verdict was appealed to the Supreme Court, which ruled on June 2 that the Appeals Court decision

was invalid.

With the case kicked back to the Appeals Court, Suon Visal assumed his elected position as bar president, and accused his rivals of trying to block the association's work by filing a complaint against this use of the official stamp.

Though summoned by Chief Prosecutor Ouk Savouth to appear in court on Thursday, Suon Visal went to the court on Wednesday, accompanied by UN human rights office staff. Ouk Savouth did not answer call on Thursday.

Ket Khy, a bar association member and Suon Visal loyalist, said on Thursday that the courts were trying to intimidate the bar president and force him to leave the country.

Hun Sen Orders Probe of Court Rulings, Judges

By Phann Ana

The Cambodia Daily

Saturday and Sunday, July 2-3, 2005

Prime Minister Hun Sen ordered the Minister of Justice to investigate previous decisions made by judges and prosecutors across the country, according to a copy of a letter obtained Friday.

In a letter to Ang Vong Vathana dated Tuesday, the premier told him to pass on the results of his probe to the Supreme Council of Magistracy's disciplinary council and singled out Phnom Penh Municipal Court Judge Tan Senarong as an example of a court official requiring scrutiny.

"State institutes have received a lot of complaints from people who complained about injustice," Hun Sen wrote.

He accused Tan Senarong of “irregularity in following the legal procedure.”

Hun Sen warned that irregularity at the courts is creating impunity, and seriously undermining public order and security.

“The public judicial service is losing its effectiveness and quality, with the final result being a loss of trust from investors, businessmen and the international community,” Hun Sen said.

On May 19, Tan Senarong ordered the detention of Chay Suthearun for alleged breach of trust, according to her lawyer Chhit Boravuth.

She was released on June 24 by the Appeals Court, which ruled that her detention was illegal.

Her family has lodged repeated complaints against Tan Senarong to Hun Sen, Chhit Boravuth said.

He added that the case likely prompted Hun Sen’s criticism of the judge. Contacted Friday, Tan Senarong declined comment.

Location of Bar Association Head Uncertain

By Phann Ana

The Cambodia Daily

Saturday and Sunday, July 2-3, 2005

The whereabouts of Cambodian Bar Association President Suon Visal were unknown on Friday and supporters of the embattled lawyer said they could not confirm if he had left the country after being charged with forgery on Thursday by the Phnom Penh Municipal Court.

Suon Visal said on Friday night that he was preparing to leave the country and feared for his safety after receiving the forgery charges for using a bar association stamp and re-printing the association's stationery with himself named as president. He did not give further details of his departure and his mobile phones were not working on Friday.

Som Chandina and Sa Sovan, both members of the bar association's 19-member council and supporters of Suon Visal, said they did not know where the president was or if he had left Cambodia.

"I could not contact him throughout today. I don't know his whereabouts," Som Chandina said.

UN human rights workers who have closely followed the internal dispute between Suon Visal and the association's former president, Ky Tech, said they also did not know Suon Visal's location.

Ky Tech has maintained possession of the association's stamp since he lost an Oct 17 presidency election to Suon Visal.

Ky Tech challenged the election result and the Appeals Court ruled in his favor on Nov 19. Suon Visal appealed against the decision to the Supreme Court, which ruled on June 2 that the Appeals Court decision was invalid. The case was sent back to the Appeals Court.

Ny Chakrya, a monitor for local rights group Adhoc, said Friday Suon Visal should not fear arrest over the forgery charge. But, Ny Chakrya said, "If he is arrested, it must be political."

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