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Probe finds BBC video on human trafficking 'baseless'

Son Minea / Khmer Times



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Calling it “news without verified sources and baseless”, Preah Sihanouk Provincial Administration yesterday issued a statement dismissing a controversial BBC documentary titled ‘Pig Butchering Romance Scam’.

The statement issued yesterday said an investigation carried out by the authorities has found that the documentary has “severely affected the honour and dignity of the Preah Sihanouk Provincial Authority as well as the leadership of Royal Government of Cambodia”.

According to the video posted on *YouTube* on March 8 by the *BBC Eye*, an investigative section of *BBC World Service*, human trafficking victims are locked up, beaten, starved and forced to work for criminal gangs at several illegal gambling places in Preah Sihanouk province.

In the video Preah Sihanouk province is portrayed as a hotbed for human trafficking and forced confinement. The story features the notorious Huang Le, a site owned by a powerful person who is alleged to be close to authorities and government leaders.

Huang Le is alleged to be a haven for crimes and no competent authorities are intervening.

The BBC claimed that the video was secretly shot by a victim named Didi from inside the notorious Huang Le compound in Sihanoukville.

His secret video, shared with the BBC, featured four Chinese nationals who are being subjected to torture and forced to carry out online fraud at the Huang Le compound.

released), authorities ordered a probe and found that the report was prepared without verified sources and solely based on earlier situations.

“This video, by no means, reflects the reality of the current situation, as the Royal Government of Cambodia and Preah Sihanouk Provincial authorities have made utmost efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of human trafficking. The report made wrongful conclusions and groundless allegations against the Preah Sihanouk Provincial Authorities,” the statement stressed.

On-the-spot investigation carried out by the Department of Gambling Crime in cooperation with the National Police on February 8 found that the site showed no signs of captivity or torture.

The authorities made three main conclusions.

Based on the scenes in the video taken by the person claiming to be the victim, the investigative team identified the site as the Majestic 2 Casino situated in Village 1, Bei commune, Sihanoukville and owned by Kuong Li, 47-year-old man.

The provincial authorities previously had completed an investigation at the Huang Le site after receiving six complaints from 11 foreigners in August 2022.

One case of human trafficking was identified. It also led to the arrest of one suspect, and the case further proceeded to court (Case Action No. 511).

Two Chinese nationals who claimed to have suffered from captivity and torture in the BBC video were neither recorded in the foreigner identification database, nor in the six complaints related to the alleged site of Majestic 2 Casino case.”

The statement concluded, “Therefore, the Preah Sihanouk Provincial Administration would like to dismiss ‘Pig Butchering Romance Scam of the BBC News dated 8 March 2023.’”

“Victims of all forms of human trafficking should be rescued,” said Senkaruna, adding that Preah Sihanouk authorities must take strict measures to prevent all forms of human trafficking because Interior Minister Sar Kheng has noted that the province is one of the main locations for such crimes.

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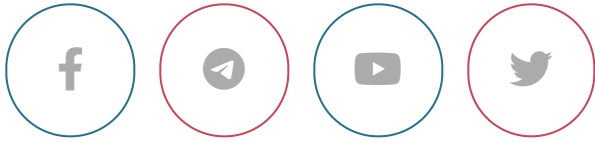
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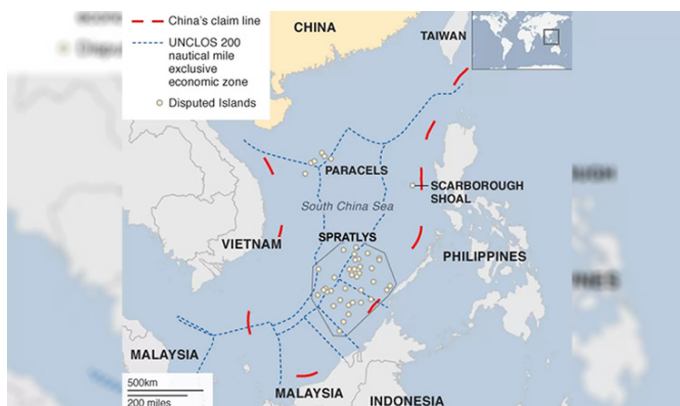
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