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# Saved from 'hell': 41 foreigners freed from clutches of China Project ring

Kong Arey / Khmer Times /



Embassy officials confirming the identities of the Indonesians freed from the 11-building complex in Sihanoukville. Supplied

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Of hundreds of foreign nationals, who have been trapped within the 11-building complex called China Project, 41 of them are now free from the clutches of the syndicate that lured them there.



The 41, all Indonesian nationals, were among the hundreds lured into working in the China Project complex based on the promises of lucrative salaries together with free board and lodgings.

The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Cambodia played a major role in rescuing the 41 when they reached out to the Sihanoukville authorities for assistance.

The 41, including three females were stuck there for several months.

When the beatings and other forms of mental pressure became unbearable, a group of the 41 managed to reach out to their family members in Indonesia and passed on the details of the group, where they were trapped, and pleaded for help to be rescued.

The information was conveyed to the embassy in Cambodia by the Indonesian authorities.

The matter of the trapped Indonesians plight came to light when *Khmer Times* ran a series of explosive exclusive stories on it termed the China Project, located in Otres beach area, Preah Sihanouk province.

As a result of the intense publicity and interest on the project, some expatriate employees were released.

Others were also desperate to leave or be rescued but saw very little action taken despite the extensive focus on the project.

### Workers lured by online ads promising lucrative wages

The Indonesian Embassy in Cambodia said they had received reports in separate occasions from Indonesian nationals inside the China Project, and revealed the nature of work that their employers had forced these Indonesian nationals to do, which involved scams and frauds.

These workers also claimed that their employers threatened to transfer the workers to other companies without their consent as a trade if their work performance did not improve or meet the expectations of their employers.

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### Opinion



### Recharging Cambodia's Tourism Sector

The tourism sector has long been a linchpin of Cambodia's economic growth and employment. The abundance of natural, cultural, and historical assets has helped attract millions of foreign visitors to the Kingdom each year.



Most of these Indonesian workers were in Cambodia previously working for casinos and later found advertisements for job vacancy on Facebook and instant messaging platforms such as Whatsapp or Telegram claiming that the job providers were start-up companies who were willing to pay the workers \$800-1,000 to do online marketing.

“All the reports that came in were on behalf of 41 Indonesian workers who requested for the Embassy’s assistance to leave the compound. The Embassy officially requested assistance from the Cambodian Government, specifically the Sihanoukville Provincial Government and Sihanoukville Police Department to look into this matter and secure the safe release of the 41 Indonesian workers.”

“On September 26, the Embassy received news from the Sihanoukville Police that they had been able to safely free these Indonesian workers. Acting on this, the Embassy sent a team the next day to Sihanoukville to provide consular assistance to these workers especially those who wished to leave Cambodia for home,” Ambassador Sudirman Haseng told *Khmer Times*.

He added that the Sihanoukville Police Department and Sihanoukville Provincial Government provided great assistance not only in safely freeing these 41 workers in total, but also making sure to retrieve these workers passports that were confiscated by the companies during their employment.

“The Embassy’s Team had the opportunity to meet Brigadier General Yi Choun, the Deputy Commissioner of National Police of Preah Sihanoukville province and the Embassy expressed its utmost appreciation for the quick response and for the smooth coordination and sincerely requested for further assistance should there still be any follow ups involving Indonesian nationals within the China Project or other companies with similar modus operandi,” Ambassador Haseng said.



Indonesian Embassy officials with Brigadier General Yi Choun (3rd from R). Supplied

About 20 of the 41 Indonesian nationals have left for home while the others were understood to be seeking other employment opportunities in Cambodia, having learned their lesson on responding to social media recruitment notices.

*Khmer Times* has learned that there are still other Indonesian nationals inside the project but who are unwilling to leave at this time, along with nationals from India, Bangladesh, Russia, Ukraine, Malaysia, Singapore, Egypt and other nations.

“The numbers inside the complex have reduced since the expose and now there are about 6,000 people there. Deaths have also reduced significantly. We are not sure of the reasons for this but it could be due to *Khmer Times* expose as well as change in strategy by the operators who have moved to other areas,” a Preah Sihanouk police official with knowledge of the project said, on conditions of anonymity.

A Khmer lady, in her early 20s who works in a canteen inside the complex said that there were few customers.

“I really cannot talk to you as if the guards saw that, they will beat me up or force me to leave my job. I need the job and turn a blind eye on what is going on inside there as I or my colleagues have not been harmed in any way, except threatened when we are suspected of talking to outsiders,” Phea, not her real name said.



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#### Harmonizing Heritage, Taylor Swift's Melodic Odes as Catalysts...

In the ever-evolving tapestry of music, Taylor Swift stands as a maestro, weaving intricate melodies that transcend generations. Two of her songs, “Timeless” and “Marjorie,” not only serve as auditory time capsules for cherished family memories but also inadvertently spotlight the captivating beauty of Cambodian Temples.



#### Taiwan's status undetermined? A fallacy

Severing “diplomatic” ties with China's Taiwan region, Nauru recently became the 183rd country to recognize the fact that the government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the whole of China, and Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory.

#### Features



#### Post-COVID, Chinese want to study abroad, just not so much in the US

In the Chinese city of Shanghai, two young women seeking an education abroad have both decided against going to the United States, a destination of choice for decades that may be losing its shine.



#### The Bazaar Ramadhan Malaysia

After the successful Malaysian Family Day Event, the Malaysian Embassy would like to announce our next main program for the Ramadan month: the Bazaar Ramadhan, to be held on a grand scale at AEON 1, Phnom Penh.



#### 'Damsel' Dark fairy tale with strong feminist touch

The heroine from *Enola Holmes* goes to a fantasy world with a badass attitude while riding a fire dragon in a film premiering on International Women's Day. That's a *Damsel* that needs no saving from Prince Charming.

#### Good Times2



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Tags: China Project, foreigners

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