Group Says Drug Detention Centers Should Be Shut Down

BY ZSOBOR PETER AND KUCH NAREN
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

Cambodia should shut down its much criticized drug detention centers due to the abusive treatment detainees continue to receive inside, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said in a new report yesterday. A government official dismissed the criticism, saying that the centers are here to stay, while others said the government was seeking alternatives such as voluntary treatment programs.

The American rights group released a scathing report of Cambodia’s drug centers in 2010, accusing the government-run facilities of regularly beating and sexually abusing those in detention while offering them military-style drills in place of genuine treatment. In its latest brief, HRW repeated “These centers need to be shut down.”

“Drug detention centers jeopardize the health and human rights of detainees. They are ineffective, abusive and are detaining people in violation of international law,” Joe Aron, the group’s director of health and human rights, said in a statement.

“There are proven ways to address drug dependency consistent with human rights, but beating, forced labor and humiliation are not among them,” he added.

“These centers need to be closed, and voluntary, effective drug treatment provided in their place.”

In its 2010 report, HRW said about 2,000 Cambodians went to the centers.

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Syria’s Largest City Rocked By Bombings

BY BARAK DEIGHANPISHEH
THE WASHINGTON POST

BEIRUT—Syrian warplanes bombed the nation’s largest city Tuesday, activists said, a dramatic escalation in the 16-month uprising and a stark sign of the government’s growing desperation as it tries to reverse the recent momentum of rebel forces.

Aleppo, like Damascus, the Syrian capital, had long been seen as a stronghold of support for President Bashar al-Assad. But the unrest has spread to the city, Syria’s commercial capital, in recent days, adding to a sense that the regime is losing control after the assassinations last week of four of its top security officials in a bombing.

Tuesday’s aerial bombing of Aleppo, the first of its kind in the conflict, was part of a coordinated assault by government forces that included heavy artillery shelling and rockets launched from military helicopters. The attacks targeted Tariq Bab, a residential area east of Aleppo, as well as the neighborhoods of Salhour and Massaken Hanano in Aleppo, according to the Local Coordination Committees, an activist network.

Although helicopter gunships have been used in the past, the government’s decision to deploy fixed-wing aircraft appeared to be a dramatic escalation.

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Waistlines Expand During Ramadan Fasting

BY CLARE FLEISHMAN
LOS ANGELES TIMES

CAIRO – The sun sets beyond the Nile and the fast is broken. As they have done for centuries during the holy month of Ramadan, Egyptians hurry home through the twilight to eat and drink after a long, scorching day.

Fasting renews the spirit but it often does little to trim the waistline. What happens between dusk and dawn can endanger health: Feasting, inactivity and disrupted sleep—Muslims often stay up until 4 a.m. to eat a last meal before sunrise—can add weight in a population already struggling with one of the highest obesity rates in the world.

“Unfortunately, many Muslim patients, and Muslims in general, tend to overeat upon breaking their fast, and usually the meal involves heavy, fatty foods that are high in calories,” Dr. Al Madani, head of Emirates Diabetes Society, told TradeArabia, an online news site.

The breaking of the fast usually begins with fresh dates and lots of water, followed by soups and juices, including a popular one made from berries and topped with pine nuts. Soon after evening prayers, a large meal, called “iftar” is shared. Poor people are not left out: They dine under tents called “gogolok,” which are donated by the wealthy and dot the neighborhoods of this sprawling, ancient city.

The feasting continues after dinner as Egyptians visit with family and friends. Special desserts such as creamy “konafa” and syrupy “basbousa” are served throughout the night. The next meal, or “sobour,” comes just before morning prayers; there are more sweets to supply fuel through the day.
Drug... continued from page 1 through 11 such centers a year. The U.N. also said in March that more than 300,000 people passed through these centers across Southeast Asia and issued its own call for the host governments to shut them down.

Although Cambodian officials have talked about shutting down some of the centers, they have also defended their approach, even though relapse rates among detainees are believed to approach 100 percent.

Mess Vy bath, deputy secretary-general of the National Authority for Combating Drugs (NACD), said yesterday that the centers were working.

"Of course it [the government] cannot shut down the drug rehabilitation centers. Why do they just continue to recommend closure? Do they want the drug users walking around?" he said. "I think Human Rights Watch should build a drug center by itself to satisfy its demands."

Mr. Vy bath said the government currently has 10 centers running and that long-delayed plans to build yet another in Preah Sihanouk province with Vietnamese funds were still on.

Graham Shaw, a drug use and treatment expert for the World Health Organization (WHO) in Cambodia, said the government was not aware of any improvements at the centers since it received the WHO report. But he said the government was also pushing ahead with a voluntary, community-based approach to treatment in northern Cambodia of the sort the centers' critics have long been advocating for.

When authorities in Stung Treng province called NACD chairman Ke Kim Yan to open a new center, Mr. Shaw said the chairman turned them down and advised them to adopt a community-based program instead.

"Having said that, none of the existing centers have closed, but at least no new ones have opened," he added.

Mr. Vy bath recently started providing training to the voluntary program, which over the past year has expanded from Banjey Mecuy province to Stung Treng and Battambang.

With funding from both the Health Ministry and the U.N., the program trains staff at public hospitals and clinics to counsel drug users, prescribe the appropriate medication and refer them to additional services.

In Banjey Mecuy, the program has served about 600 patients already and is in the process of expanding from there.

Ke Kim Yan is taking a political gamble on this because in this region there is a lot of indigenous support for the compulsory approach, and I think that he's showing political courage in pushing for something that is based on evidence but is counterintuitive to many others," he said.

Olivier Lernert, the UNODC's country manager, said the U.N. was actually at pairs to help scale up the community-based program as quickly as the government would like. Despite the gradual expansion, he said, "the coverage remains much too low in order to reach the critical size and trigger a long-lasting change for people who use drugs."

(Additional reporting by Simon Lewis)

FIFA Trains Cambodian Female Football Coaches

Twenty-five Cambodian female football coaches are participating in training sessions with instructors from FIFA, the international football governing body, in Phnom Penh this week, the Football Federation of Cambodia (FFC) announced Tuesday. The sessions, which began on Monday and will last until Saturday, aim to help strengthen Cambodia's football program by training provincial coaches in professional techniques.

"We're about theory and practice, so the trainees learn professional techniques from the FIFA instructors that they can then pass on to girls across Cambodia," said May Tola, FFC's deputy secretary, "It's a great training opportunity that enriches the women footballers' ability to become high-level, professional athletes."

FIFA instructor Samuel Schweisgruber from Switzerland said that the instructors are teaching the female coaches how to develop young players' skills by teaching them how to progress and by correcting their mistakes. (Lam Long)

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT, WWF-Cambodia

WWF, one of the world's largest independent conservation organizations, has a global network active in more than 100 countries. As part of the WWF Greater Mekong Program (GMP), WWF-Cambodia which manages a wide array of conservation projects in the Mekong, freshwater and species priority areas is seeking experienced and qualified candidates for the below positions:

Project Administrative Assistant, Eastern Plains Landscape, bases in Mondulkiri Province, WWF-Cambodia

The Project Administrative Assistant Responsible for the administrative needs and financial transactions for the efficient functioning of the EPL project. Qualifications & Experience

• University degree of Business Administration or other related degrees
• At least two years experience in administration management
• Thorough understanding of administrative issues
• Proficiency in MS Office (MS Access in an advantage)
• Fluency in written and spoken English and Khmer

Please find detail about major responsibilities in JD.

The Salary Range for this position is from $286 to $429 per month.

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Closing date for applications: 10 August 2012 by 05.30 pm. Please visit the website: http://www.panda.org/cambodia for more information and detailed JD. Only Short listed candidates will be notified. Previous applicants do not need to re-apply.