



2010 Media Releases

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Not a grain of truth in sand export claims, says Cambodian Government

The Royal Government of Cambodia has reacted angrily to malicious and misleading claims by an international trouble maker that sand-dredging operations in Cambodia are causing widespread environmental damage.

A cheap and rubbish report from Global Witness claims that Cambodia is exporting vast amounts of sand to Singapore to help the city-state dramatically increase its landmass; and that the dredging is posing a huge risk to Cambodia's coastline, threatening fish stocks, local livelihoods and endangered species. The claims has been also strongly denied and rejected by the Government of Singapore.

But Cambodian Government spokesman Khieu Kanharith said the Prime Minister of Cambodia, Samdech Hun Sen, had announced a blanket ban on sand exports last year. "There is also a ban on sand-dredging near islands and eco-tourism areas, deep water regions and in zones with large numbers of fish stock."

A small amount of dredging was permitted to serve local demand and allow the passage of ships through over-silted areas, he said.

Global Witness has also claimed that two Cambodian senators, Mong Reththy and Ly Yong Plat have secretly been awarded sand extradition licences.

But Mr Reththy has responded by openly acknowledging he has a licence to export sand. But he denied shipments had ever been made to Singapore. "For a start it's not the sort of sand that meets Singapore's standards. But in any case, I have not sold any sand, not even one kilogramme. I don't know where Global Witness gets its information from."

Pech Siyon, the Director of the Cambodian government's Department of Industry, Energy and Mines in the southwest province of Koh Kong, said sand-dredging operations in his region had stopped since the Prime Minister's ban on sand exports.

Cambodian government spokesman Khieu Kanharith dismissed the Global Witness report as politically motivated. "Their reports are always exaggerated far beyond the imagination and attack the Cambodian Government in order to try and bring political benefit to one of the smaller opposition parties," he said.

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