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\$12 billion satellite city project protested by Siem Reap residents

Fri, 16 January 2009 Kun Makara

Two companies plan a massive ecotourism destination and satellite city to ease congestion, but residents are saying 'no' the project

MORE than 500 residents of Varin district in Siem Reap province have lodged complaints over a proposed multibillion-dollar satellite city and ecotourism destination, an Adhoc regional coordinator told the Post Thursday.

The project is slated for 3,900 hectares of land granted to two private companies out of a total 7,000 for the site.

The dispute stems from an agreement last year between the government and Cambodian-based Banya Group and the Korean company Euro Corp, based in the United States - to build a US\$12 billion satellite city in Sre Noy and Lavea Kreaing communes in Varin district.

Sours Sarin, a Siem Reap monitor for rights group Adhoc, said 540 families have appealed to the group and to provincial authorities to block the land concession.

"I have tried to reach representatives of the [Banya Group] to discuss villagers' complaints, but they have not answered my calls," Sours Sarin said.

He added that Varin district Governor Em Vat has offered villagers \$200 per hectare in compensation for the disputed land but that the offer was rejected.

Instead, Sour Sarin said he had received reports that residents of other provinces had come to Varin district to seize land and broker compensation deals with Banya Group.

Em Vat was not available for comment on Thursday.

The land concession for the proposed satellite city, to be located on 7,000 hectares of land near the Thai border in Siem Reap province and some 50 kilometres from Siem Reap town, was approved by the Council of Ministers and Prime Minister Hun Sen in March last year.

Cambodian media reported last month that Siem Reap Governor Sou Phirin and representatives of the Banya Group and Euro Corp signed a memorandum of understanding for the project.

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