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The Phnom Penh Post

Kampong Speu Sugar relocation site snubbed

Tue, 14 June 2011 [May Titthara](#)

More than 30 families living in Kampong Speu's Oral district involved in a dispute with a sugar company owned by the wife of ruling party senator Ly Yong Phat have rejected a relocation offer, villagers said yesterday.

Cheng Sopheap, a village representative, said 34 families from Ploch village in Trapaing Chor commune met on Sunday with local officials following a protest over the issue on June 10. He said the relocation site is about three kilometres from where the families live, and believes that it now belongs to the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces. Cheng Sopheap said villagers had approached local RCAF officers, who reportedly said they would not allow them to relocate to that land.

"If [the company is] still clearing the land and affecting our houses, we will ask permission from the government to protest and then kill ourselves in that place because we don't want to relocate to a new place, [especially] a new place without [land titles] for us," he said.

Last January, the government granted an economic land concession of 9,053 hectares to Kampong Speu Sugar Company, owned by Ly Yong Phat's wife Kim Heang. This March, the company was awarded an additional 4,700 hectares in Kampong Speu in a sub-decree signed by Prime Minister Hun Sen, prompting criticism that the two concessions together violate the 2001 Land Law's limit of 10,000 hectares.

Chem Sarim, Oral district governor, could not be reached for comment.

Chheang Kimsruon, a representative for the Ly Yong Phat-owned Phnom Penh Sugar Company, said Kampong Speu Sugar had only cleared land awarded to it in the concession and denied that it affected any land belonging to villagers. "We cannot force villagers to exchange their land without agreement," she said.

Ouch Leng, head of the land programme at the rights group Adhoc, said Kampong Speu Sugar was making local residents increasingly impoverished.

A visiting European Union parliamentarian said last month that she would seek a suspension of trade preferences for companies exporting sugar from Cambodia to Europe, citing allegations of human rights violations.

Contact author: [May Titthara](#)

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