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## Villagers camp out to protest 'land grab'

Mon, 27 May 2013 [May Titthara](#)



More than 100 people from two communes in Kratie province's Sambor district gathered yesterday for a three-day protest in front of the provincial office of Think Biotech, a Korean-owned timber company villagers say is encroaching on their land.

Company officials have told residents of Sambor district's Kampong Cham and Boeung Char communes that they cannot farm the disputed land after May, community representative Sam No, 54, said yesterday.

"We are planning to protest with a total of more than 1,000 people," he said. "Now we have just gathered 100 people, but more and more are coming."

As of yesterday evening, 10 armed policemen and six soldiers had taken guard at the office's entrance, said Nam Nak, 33, one of the protesters setting up tents out front.

Since the company, granted an economic land concession, came to the district in April 2012, its activities have threatened about 4,000 families and 48,000 hectares of forest land, Nak said.

Villagers have requested the prime minister's youth volunteers measure their land but have been told that receiving titles depends on their loyalty in the upcoming election, Nak and No said.

"Sok Chenda, president of the youth volunteers, and Kim Lour, a CPP local official, said in a meeting on May 19 that villagers must vote for the CPP," Nak said. "If the party is not elected, they will not measure the land and give them land titles, and all the land in the district will be given to the company."

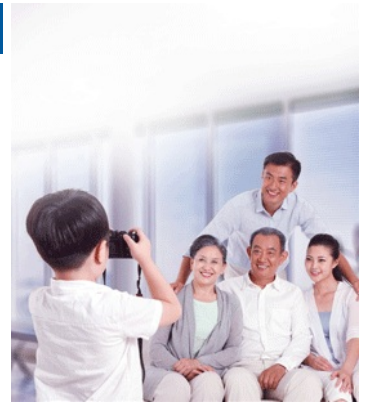
CPP official Kim Lour yesterday denied Think Biotech was encroaching on villagers' land.

"For the accusation that I pressured them to vote for the CPP, I think they misunderstood," he said. "I said we cannot issue titles because it is near the election. When it is finished, we will . . . give them titles."

Sok Chenda, youth volunteers president, and Kang Meng, head of Think Biotech, could not be reached.

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