

Ministry of Mines and Energy

Letter of clarification

The Ministry of Mines and Energy (MME) would like to express its deep dissatisfaction after hearing information of a how false and groundless nature being publicized regarding the proposed Chhay Areng hydro-electric dam in Koh Kong province. This misinformation can make the public confused about the righteous policies of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) regarding economic growth and poverty reduction.

During the program '*Open discussion*', aired on the 30th of September 2014 on Radio Free Asia, the vice-director of Mother Nature Organization Alejandro Gonzalez Davidson expressed that the project, if constructed, would have serious impacts on the environment and on the livelihoods of the local communities. Alejandro Gonzalez Davidson also asserted that the MME has started inflating the power output of the dam to 180MW. As a matter of fact, the secretary of state for the MME Ith Prang, during the press conference held at the ministry on the 30th of September 2014 as well as in the letter of clarification prior published to that, stated how the energy output of the dam was just 108MW.

The MME would like to clarify to the public once more that the dam is not being built and that further studies regarding the project's feasibility as well as the impacts on the environment and local communities need to be made before a decision to build the dam can be made. Furthermore, if no decision is made by the RGC and no official approval by the National Assembly and Senate is passed regarding the project's warranty, the project will not be allowed to go ahead.

The MME has in the past conducted preliminary studies in collaboration with experts regarding the impacts the project would have on birds and mammals of the area, as well as on the fish and invertebrates found in the waterways of the valley. These studies were centred on wildlife habitats in order to find a way to, if the dam is built, preserve these species or mitigate the project's impacts on them. These studies encompassed all species of wildlife, not just dragon fish, black fish or Siamese crocodiles. As the full EIA of the project has not yet been able to commence, there currently are no activities taking place at the site of this proposed dam.

Regarding Alejandro Gonzalez Davidson's accusations on high-ranking government officials from the MME being engaged in corruption with Sinohydro (*the company behind the dam*) we would like to state that accusations of this nature must be firmly based on the rule of law, and if there are documents, witnesses, and clear evidence indicative of this accusation, a legal complaint should be presented to the Anti-corruption Unit (ACU). At the same time, the ministry would like to remind the public that, according to article 41 of the Law on Corruption, *Defamation and Misinformation*, clearly states that '*Defamation or disinformation complaints on corruption lodged with the Anti-corruption Unit or court, leading to useless inquiry, shall be punishable by imprisonment from one (1) month to six (6) months and fine from one million Riel (1000,000) to ten million Riel (10,000,000).*'

Finally, we would like to state that these exaggerations and the baseless accusations by Alejandro Gonzalez Davidson, publicized by non-professional media outlets, are poisoning public opinion as well as affecting the honour and reputation of the institutions of the Royal Government of Cambodia. As such, the individual can be brought to face a court of justice.

Phnom Penh, 2nd of October, 2014