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FESTIVAL

Athletes Prepare to Compete in Inaugural Battambang Race

More than 160 athletes from 12 countries will compete in the 30-km Sangker River Run in Battambang, with the aim of raising funds to keep Phare Ponleu Selpak operating for another 30 years



The 30km Sanger River Run celebrates at Battambang on 20, January organized by Phare Ponleu Selpak to raise \$300,000 to support education and arts programs. Kiripost/supplied



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Runners and cyclists from 12 countries are gearing up to help Phare Ponleu Selpak raise \$300,000 in its 30th anniversary year by competing in Battambang’s first long-distance running and cycling event.

To kick-start the organization’s 30th anniversary celebrations, on January 20, more than 160 athletes will take part in the 30-kilometer event along the Sangker River in Battambang province.

The aim is to raise the first funds of the year’s \$300,000 target to support the arts, education, and youth programs, while also attracting more tourists to the province. As of December 31, the Sangker River Run had raised \$17,730, equivalent to six percent of the overall goal.

A total of 160 runners and cyclists have registered from Cambodia, Japan, South Korea, the US, Australia, Germany, Belgium, Spain, France, the UK, Pakistan, and Vietnam.



The 30km Sanger River Run poster. Kiripost/supplied

Osaman Khawaja, Phare’s executive director, said the Sangker River Run is a celebration of Phare Ponleu Selpak’s 30th anniversary year, kick-starting a year of fund-raising events to support the organization’s operations for the next 30 years.

“Phare isn’t just an arts school, we’re part of the wider arts and culture ecosystem in Battambang, and as such we care deeply about developing Battambang province as a destination for visitors from around Cambodia and across the world,” Osaman told Kiripost.

He added that through the Sangker River Run, Phare wants to reach a wider audience of Cambodians and international athletes, who might not have otherwise heard of Phare, and invite them to join the same vision of changing lives through the arts.

Osaman expects the event will energize the wider Phare community, from long-time supporters to fresh newcomers, to help fundraise for the school and carry out 30 more years of creative and artistic works within Cambodia.

“We are excited to welcome runners and cyclists from all over the world who’ve registered to join us for the Sangker River Run and to fundraise for the school,” said Osman.

He added, “Phare has been changing lives through the arts since 1994, but I believe we’re only at the starting line of what’s possible.”

Registration for the race has already closed; however, the public are welcome to support the runners and cyclists on January 20. To make a donation, visit SimplyGiving.com.

“We invite everyone who can to support our runners, cyclists, and relay teams on SimplyGiving.com or via ABA as they fundraise for Phare Ponleu Selpak. Of course, everyone is welcome to cheer on the participants on the morning of the race on January 20,” he said.

Khoun Chanreaksmey, Director of Community Outreach at Phare Ponleu Selpak and one of the event organizers, agreed that the event was not solely established to fundraise for the school, but to develop Battambang as a tourist destination as well.

“In the years to come, we hope the Sangker River Run can become an annual event for the city and province of Battambang, strengthening its position as the arts and cultural hub of Cambodia,” said Chanreaksmey.

The Sangker River Run begins at the foot of Phnom Banan, a small mountain on the outskirts of Battambang that is home to an 11th-century Hindu and Buddhist temple.



Victorious runners in previous event. Kiripost/supplied

From there, the route winds along the Sangker River past rice fields, over suspension bridges, and through downtown Battambang, a UNESCO Creative City. Participants will finish the race at Phare Ponleu Selpak's campus.

The next few major events to look out for in Phare's 30th anniversary celebrations include a weekend in Phnom Penh from March 1 to 3 March.

This will feature 'Madison Now', a performance directed and choreographed by Belgian director choreographer Michael Laub and

Cambodian dancer-choreographer Vanthy Khen, a fundraising gala at Rosewood Phnom Penh, and a special prologue of the forthcoming contemporary theater show ‘Cabaret of Dreams’.

V-Active and Krud Energy serve as the Sangker River Run’s Platinum Sponsor, and ABA Bank is supporting as a Gold Sponsor. The event is also being supported by a number of local sponsors and partners.



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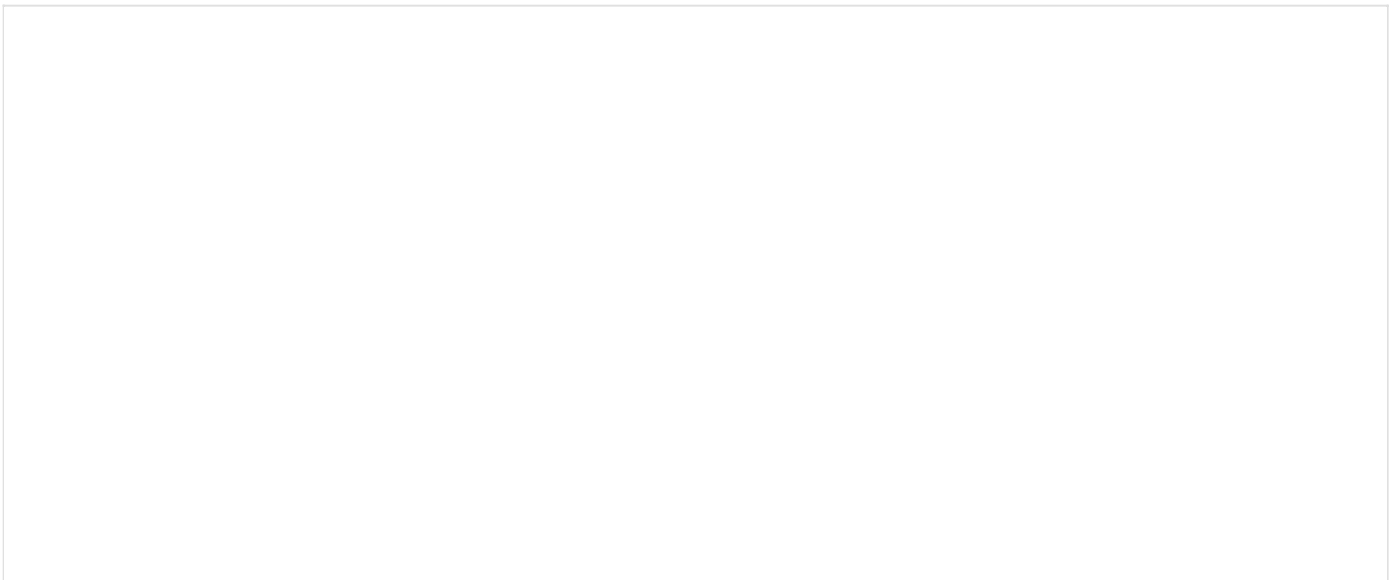
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