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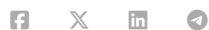
Sangke River Run raises \$35k for Battambang art school

LIFESTYLE

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Reporter : **Hong Raksme**

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Participants encourage each other at the Sangke River Run in January. Phare Ponleu Selpak

The Sangke River Run, held in Battambang to raise funds for Phare Ponleu Selpak – a well-known circus and arts school based in the province – has been celebrated as a success by organisers.

The January 20 event attracted 140 athletes from 14 countries, who took part in a 30km run or cycle. The distance was chosen to mark the 30th anniversary of Phare Ponleu Selpak, which literally means the Brightness of the Arts in Khmer.

Through the efforts of participants and sponsors, as of January 30 the event had raised \$34,498.07, or approximately 10 per cent of the annual fundraising goal of the school’s art and education programmes.

The positive outcome of the inaugural event means the Sangke River Run will become an annual fixture.

“We would like to thank the donors, athletes, sponsors, and all of the volunteers who contributed to the success of the Sangke River Run,” said Phare executive director Osman Khawaja.

“Your generous contributions of time, talent and finances have enhanced the lives of young people here in Battambang province by fostering their education, as well as access to the life-changing power of the arts,” he added.

The 30km route began at the foot of Phnom Banan, home to an 11th-century Angkorian temple, and continued along the scenic Sangke River through the heart of Battambang, ending at the Phare campus.

The events included a solo run, a solo cycle and a relay run.

In the solo 30km run, Hiroshi Ake of Japan was first home, followed by Cambodians Tang Seksang and Hong Vantheth.

“I was so excited to join this event. Although the journey from Phnom Penh was a little taxing, I’m very pleased to have helped this charity run,” said second-placed Seksang, a native of Phnom Penh.

He described the beauty of the route, saying he felt privileged to have run along the beautiful Sangke River while traversing several suspension bridges and passing through numerous villages.

Oliver Rene Bodicker of Germany was the fastest solo cyclist, with Si Meas and Samphous Pharoun, both from the Kingdom, taking second and third.

“The event was well-organised and I had a lot of fun,” said Bodicker.

“The track challenged me with a mix of both smooth and rugged routes. The scenery was also amazing. I encourage others to visit the campus, support the circus, enjoy the arts and culture, and make some contribution. I hope you will come here,” he added.



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Team SuperSonics of France took 1st place in the relay run, with Team Kingdom Fight Gym (UK, Sweden, and Netherlands) and Team Braided Dragons (US) coming in second and third place, respectively.

As cyclists and runners approached the finish line, they were cheered on by fans, while Phare music students greeted them with drums.

Complimentary massages, snacks, and beverages were provided to each finisher, and each racer was invited to a free Phare Battambang Circus show that evening.

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