

Develop the City, as Well as A Conscience

It does not shock me that old buildings are replaced by new ones. This is what we call "development." What shocks me is that some people want to do things without conscience and with a lack of understanding of local culture, tradition and heritage.

Letter to the Editor

Regarding Wednesday's article "B' bang Villagers Block Attempt to Demolish 100-Year-Old Temple" (page 21), it will be regretful if this 100-year-old temple is lost. It will never return.

In some countries, buildings, or even trees, that are older than 50 years are subject to an assessment for their heritage status. This is even more urgent in fast growing cities like Phnom Penh.

In this city, two issues are popular for developers and rich elites.

First, they usually look to replace old buildings with modern high-rise ones. Buildings that can be classified as heritage items must be properly registered and the heritage inventory must be publicly known.

The second issue Phnom Penh is experiencing is the loss of lakes. Lakes could be important assets if we preserve them and use them wisely. Before it is too late, we must be aware of our vanishing heritage.

Only the government can accomplish this task. Decentralizing and devolving power to local authorities is of course a way to achieve "good governance." But local authorities' capacities need to be strengthened to ensure more effective decisions, to avoid such cases as the temple's proposed demolition.

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