

U.S. museum returns 10th-century Khmer statue to Cambodia

By **Sopheng Cheang**
The Associated Press

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia — Cambodia has welcomed home a 10th-century Khmer statue that was looted during the country's civil war before spending the past three decades at an American museum.

The sandstone Torso of Rama statue, which stands 62 inches high and is missing its head, arms, and feet, was formally handed over at a ceremony in Phnom Penh attended by government officials, the U.S. ambassador, and the director of the Denver Museum of Art.

The museum said it acquired the statue in 1986 from the Doris Weiner Gallery in New York City but only recently learned new facts about its provenance.

"We were recently provided with verifiable evidence that was not available to us at the time of acquisition, and immediately began taking all appropriate steps ... for its return home," Christoph Heinrich, the museum's director, said in a joint statement with the Cambodian government.

Cambodia's Secretary of State Chan Thani thanked the museum for voluntarily returning the piece, which he said shows its sensitivity to Cambodian culture.

"The return also highlights the serious looting in the past that had occurred in our country and the government's efforts to repatriate those artifacts that left the country illegally, which are parts of our soul as a nation," he said in the statement.

The statue will be returned to its home at the Prasat Chen temple on the Koh Ker temple complex in Siem Reap province, which is also home to the famed Angkor Wat complex.

It is the latest artwork returned to Cambodia in recent years. Among the galleries that have repatriated art are the Guimet Museum in Paris, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Cleveland Museum of Art, Sotheby's auction house, Christie's auction house, and the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena, California.

Yim Nolson, an official in charge of Cambodian culture,



RELIC RETURNED. The torso of Rama, a 10th-century stone statue, is displayed during a handing-over ceremony in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Cambodia welcomed home the stone statue, which was looted from a temple during the country's civil war, from a U.S. museum. (AP Photo/Heng Sinith)

said the statue was stolen during the civil war in the 1970s and later transported to the U.S.

"Now after a long journey, he is finally back home," he said.

High-speed Mercedes crash ignites uproar

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wreck.

The Mercedes driver, Janepob Verraporn, 37, now tops a list of "Bangkok's deadly rich kids," as one Thai newspaper calls the children of privilege who have killed with their fancy cars. Television talk shows, social-media forums, and editorials have chimed in on a debate that asks whether justice will be served this time or — if history is any guide — if Janepob will walk away from the crime without serving time.

Police have rushed to defend themselves against criticism for initially mishandling the case and acting to shield Janepob, whose father owns a luxury car import company.

"The law is the law — whether you are rich or poor, you have to pay for what you've done," national police spokesman Songpol Wattanachai said, asking skeptics to have faith in the police. "Justice will be served. Just because he is rich doesn't mean he won't go to jail. I'm asking people not to think that way."

Police who initially handled the case in Ayutthaya province, about 30 miles north of Bangkok, were quickly sidelined after failing to test Janepob for alcohol and drug use — and then defending the blunder. Speaking on television, a police commander said the suspect had the right to refuse breath and blood tests, adding that both police and rescue workers did not smell any alcohol on Janepob's breath.

Amid public uproar, police filed a charge against Janepob for driving while unfit or intoxicated, which carries a prison sentence of three to 10 years, said Ayutthaya's deputy police chief, Col. Surin Thappanbupha. Under Thai law, he said, a refusal to be tested is tantamount to driving under the influence.

Janepob faces another charge of reckless driving causing death and property damage, which carries a maximum of 10 years in prison. Janepob was spared provisional detention after posting 200,000 baht (\$5,700) bail while still at one of Bangkok's private hospitals.

The *Bangkok Post* newspaper said in an editorial that the case had hit a nerve in Thailand because of "the sense that there is one set of rules for the rich and influential and another for everyone else."

"Stop me if you've heard this one before," the editorial begins. "An expensive car crashes. One or more people die. A person with a recognizable name ... emerges from the wreckage and flees the scene. No breath test is administered. Compensation is offered and the family

tries to wriggle their way out of any legal consequences. The police fail dismally at their job."

One of Thailand's most famous untouchables is an heir to the Red Bull energy drink fortune. In 2012, Vorayuth Yoovidhya, a grandson of Red Bull founder Chaleo Yoovidhya, slammed his Ferrari into a policeman and dragged the officer's dead body along a Bangkok street before driving away. Vorayuth, who was then 27, has yet to be charged. In that case, police initially attempted to cover up his involvement by arresting a bogus suspect.

In 2010, Orachorn Devahastin Na Ayudhya was 16 and driving without a license when she crashed her sedan into a van on a Bangkok highway, killing nine people. Orachon, the daughter of a former military officer, was given a two-year suspended sentence.

In a country that values deference and patronage, and where police are infamously corrupt, there have been many other similar cases. But Janepob's carried the added shock value of visuals. The video of the crash was taken by a nearby car's dashboard camera, and quickly went viral. Police confirmed the video's authenticity despite a time stamp with the wrong date, apparently because the owner had not set the date and time. A few days later, another video was uploaded and widely shared showing Janepob's Mercedes smashing through an Easy Pass toll gate about an hour before the crash.

Bangkok resident Nant Thananan, 35, was among many who expressed their exasperation on Facebook.

"It's so frustrating because there's nothing we can do. We know this case will go away. We've seen it before," said Nant, who owns a popular Bangkok food truck. "We keep asking ourselves, when are the police going to be ashamed enough to do the right thing?"

Associated Press writer Ying Panyapon contributed to this report.

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Message service Line entering carrier business in Japan

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said users will receive unlimited use of Facebook and Twitter, plus Line communication, calls, chats, and music.

Although social-media companies have struggled to gain revenue, Line, now used in 230 nations, including Asia, South America, and Africa, has succeeded in unusual ways, such as merchandising of its mascot-like characters as dolls, which are sold in real stores.

It also sells sticker images that are sent with Line messages called "stamps" in Japan, some of which are free, but many that come at a small price. Some 2.4 billion such stickers are sent each day, with sales reaching 25.3 billion yen (\$224 million) last year, according to Line, a subsidiary of Korean inter-

net company Naver Corp.

It remains to be seen whether users outside Japan would be as willing to pay for such perks. Line has been rapidly growing in some parts of Asia, such as Indonesia.

Line has signed on major advertisers, like Toyota Motor Corp., and plans to expand its clientele, using its knowledge of users' interests to devise advertising that will appeal to them, said Shintaro Tabata, another Line executive.

Line says it plans to make online payments easier, partnering with a major Japanese credit-card company and offering its own cash cards that can be charged at a convenience store chain. Online Line purchases will accumulate "points" that can be later converted into cash.

Htin Kyaw sworn in as Myanmar's president

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The military has reserved 25 percent of the seats in parliament for itself, guaranteeing that no government can amend the constitution without its approval. The military also heads the Home Ministry and the Defense Ministry, which gives it control over the corrections department, ensuring that the release of political prison-

ers is its decision to make.

Also, it ensured that one of Htin Kyaw's two vice presidents is a former general, Myint Swe, a close ally of former junta leader Than Shwe. Myint Swe remains on a U.S. Treasury Department blacklist that bars American companies from doing business with several tycoons and senior military figures connected with the former junta.

Zuckerberg's run in Beijing's toxic air stirs Chinese public

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that morning.

Journalist and avid runner Peng Yuanwen joked that Zuckerberg's lungs had single-handedly filtered Beijing's smog after the city's air quality noticeably improved by early afternoon.

"The human-flesh smog vacuum is better when it's American made," teased Peng, playing on a joke among Beijing residents

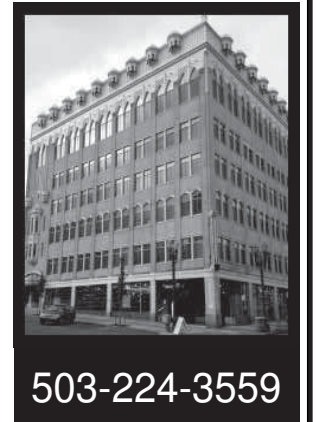
that they filter the city's air with their lungs by inhaling harmful particles.

Others noted that Zuckerberg's run took him through the square where hundreds of thousands of Chinese students gathered in the spring of 1989 to demand democracy. The movement ended in the early hours of June 4 after troops and tanks crushed all resistance, killing hundreds, possibly thousands, of protesters.

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