



# Confession in murder of teen model

Kim Sarom and Shane Worrell

**L**ESS than a month ago, Lim Srey Pich was celebrating her 19th birthday in style after winning a modelling competition that was set to make her the face of Spy Wine Cooler on television and in magazines.

Yesterday, a woman police say has confessed to the murder was re-enacting how she allegedly lured the diminutive teenager to her house on Tuesday and strangled her with a length of wire before disposing of her body.

The daughter of a wealthy car dealer, Srey Pich, also known as Lim Yurimey, was found dead in a canal in Kampong Speu's Kong Pisei district early Wednesday after going missing the day before.

Deputy municipal police chief Chuon Narin said that within hours of Srey Pich's disappearance her parents began receiving text messages from their daughter's mobile demanding ransom money.

"The suspect demanded \$50,000," Narin said. "But negotiations resulted in the price dropping to \$36,000 and eventually to \$16,000."

"The victim's parents co-operated with police, who stationed themselves near the Cambodian Public Bank on Monivong Boulevard, where the money was expected to exchange hands."

The cash handover never happened, and police later arrested one man in Phnom Penh and two in Kampong Speu province.

Information they provided led police to arrest Sok Kimheng, 23, a woman who lives in the capital's Chamkarmon district.

As Srey Pich's family, including her partner of four years, mourned inside a funeral tent that adjoined their home in the capital's Tuol

Kork district yesterday, police charged Kimheng with the model's murder.

"According to our investigations, only one suspect was involved in the murder. She is well built, while the victim is small. The suspect killed the victim then asked for ransom from her parents," Narin said.

Srey Pich was targeted due to her family's wealth, he added, but police were puzzled as to why the model had been killed before the planned cash handover.

Srey Pich also became known as "G22" – her Spy Girl 2012 contestant code – as fans of Spy Wine Cooler, a

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Thai product marketed at young adults, followed her journey from aspiring model to winner of the company's inaugural beauty prize.

The competition's finale was held on September 29 – Srey Pich's 19th birthday.

In the weeks that followed her victory, Srey Pich signed another television contract, this time to become the face of a skin-whitening advertising campaign.

It was her willingness to explore other opportunities that drew her to the Sovanna Shopping Centre on Tuesday to consider a business proposal from a woman who had befriended her on Facebook, her family told local media.

Her partner, a car dealer who has gone into business with Srey Pich's father, drove her to the shopping centre and said goodbye.

Prosecutors will allege Kimheng

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drove Srey Pich to her house, where she asked her to look at clothes before strangling her with the wire, taking her back into the car – which had been driven into the house – and later dumping her near a pagoda about 35 kilometres from Phnom Penh.

P Nattachai, national representative of Siam Winery, which makes Spy Wine Coolers, said his company was devastated to hear of Srey Pich's death.

"We can only say how sad we are," he said. "We have assigned a staff member to go to the funeral and give our respects to her family."

An employee from the company's Thai headquarters, who did not want to be named, said he deeply regretted what had happened.

"We plan to visit a temple and pray for her," he said.

Administrators of the company's "Spy Club Cambodia" Facebook page, which has



Spy model Lim Srey Pich during a photo shoot. PHOTO SUPPLIED

almost 20,000 followers, posted condolences, saying they were mourning the death of the young model.

"We're just only joining to respect and pray to her going to the paradise or new and beautiful world," the post on

Facebook said. Tributes for the popular teenager, who leaves behind two younger brothers, flowed onto her Facebook fan page yesterday.

They wished her peace and good luck for her next life. ■



Suspect Sun Kimheng (left) re-enacts the killing of Spy model Lim Srey Pich with a volunteer yesterday in Phnom Penh. VIREAK MAI