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Hari Krishna leader to appeal Cambodia child sex conviction

Submitted by Mohit Joshi on Thu, 08/07/2008 - 15:20.

Phnom Penh - The leader of a Hari Krishna-affiliated aid organization in Cambodia was to appeal a conviction for molesting a 12-year-old girl, a Phnom Penh court said Thursday.

Police said US national Thomas Rapanos Wayne, head of a Hare Krishna aid group, was found naked in the company of two girls, aged 12 and 16, when he was arrested in a guest house in the capital in March. The age of consent in Cambodia is 15.

Wayne, alias Tattva Darshan Das, 55, was sentenced Wednesday to two and a half years in prison for committing indecent acts against minors.

"He was convicted but he said he was innocent and he will appeal," court clerk Keing Bokhea said by telephone.

Wayne was formerly president of the relatively obscure Bhaktivedanta Eco Village (BEV) Cambodia, an educational aid organization.

He held a copy of the religious text Bhagavad Gita and a portrait of the Hindu god Krishna during his sentencing, the English-language Cambodia Daily said. (dpa)