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Addressing the Seminar on Judge and Prosecutor Works

On December 19, 2002, during the relocation of the Buddha remain from Phnom Penh to the new stupa on top of the Preah Reach Troap Mount of Kandal, Samdech Hun Sen and Madame were warmly welcomed by thousands of Buddhist follow-



“... One day before the end of the year 2002, we are gathering here to reflect, discuss and provide important inputs to improve and increase the effectiveness of the judiciary in Cambodia in response to the expectation of the Cambodian public. Justice is an important part of each citizen's life and also an important part of human rights. Thus, justice is a universal and special issue and it is a domain of the court and judges.

On behalf of the Royal Government and myself, I would like to welcome all comments that our judges and prosecutors raised at this seminar. My assistants, all government agencies and I will seriously study all comments or proposals made by this seminar.

The policy of the Royal Government which was adopted by the National Assembly on 30th November 1998, clearly affirms its policy of peace, stability, national unity which are crucial for establishing a rule of law, developing liberal multi-party democracy and

enhancing the respect of human rights. All these are priority policies of the Royal Government. Four reform programs have been introduced, including the reform of the judiciary. As we have witnessed, the wars have undermined many systems, including the judiciary. The Genocide Regime totally wiped out human rights, therefore, people had to live like animals without anything, including justice. The promotion of the respect for human rights in Cambodia also has revived all sectors from ashes.

So far, although things have progressively evolved hundred times faster than the time we were just reborn, the present proposals and needs remain enormous and exceed our capacity for many times. This requires us to proceed with reforms aiming at resolving the conflict between proposals and capacity, and seek a new means to further enhance the capacity to meet our proposals and objectives.

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12 December 2002 (Siremreap Province)

Addressing the ASEAN Ministers Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication

“... We are happy that you have come to Cambodia to participate in the 3rd ASEAN Ministers Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication. I am certain that you will enjoy the peace and tranquility that we have worked very hard to ensure here in Cambodia. In this atmosphere of security, you can fully experience and savor the invaluable legacy of Cambodia: the great architecture, natural beauty and socio-cultural diversity – all in the land of the Angkor!

Peace and Security: the Foundation of Development

Peace and security is a concern that weighs heavily upon us these days. In our preparations for the ASEAN and related Summits we had to overcome serious difficulties to ensure the security for all the delegates. Attending the Summits were all the ASEAN Leaders, plus the Chiefs of China, Japan, South Korea and South Africa. The President of the Asian Development Bank was also present. In addition, all these Leaders

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02 December 2002 [Unofficial Translation]

The Interview Given to Radio Free Asia (RFA)

On his way back to Phnom Penh after the inauguration of the Kunkru Bridge between Kandal and Kompong Speu provinces, Samdech Hun Sen gave an interview to RFA's Deputy Director Sam Borin on the GMS and ASEAN Summits, partner party in the coalition Government, political threat and violence, and future democracy in Cambodia. Following is the transcription of the interview.

RFA: *In the past few weeks, there has been press coverage on the 8th ASEAN Summit in Cambodia. They hail the success of the meeting. However our people have yet the detail account of the success. Could you give complete accounts on this success to listeners of the RFA?*

Answer: It is an event that re-

sults in two important successes for Cambodia. Firstly, Cambodia was the host of the Summit, which is held for the first time in the Kingdom of Cambodia. It could be said an historic event for Cambodia.

What added to its importance was the fact that the first Greater Mekong Sub-Regional Summit was held for the first time in Cambodia prior to the ASEAN Summit itself. In relation to the ASEAN Summit, two important events have happened. They were the ASEAN + India and

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In the whole country, we have 133 judges and 65 prosecutors. If we compare the number of 198 magistrates with the population of 11 millions, we can see that we have one judge for every 50,000 people. The analysis of this figure requires us to seek all means to promote further training of judges for our country. We have made some progress by the end of 2002 with the establishment of the Royal School of Magistrature, which hopefully in the next few years will enable us to improve the quality and quantity of magistrates will meet the needs of our society.

[Ad-lib comments] *In this point I would like to emphasize that in consultation with HE Dith Munti and HE Sok An, I thought that the Royal School of Judge had previously thought of selecting only 30 students. But I was thinking that this number is not sufficient for the first course in comparison to this enormous need we had. I recommended an increase of the number of student from thirty to fifty persons and only thirty students for each course thereafter.*

... *This is recommended in face of the lack of judges and now we also have provided people in this portfolio with a salary of at least Riels 1,300,000 and the judge trainee would also get Riels 500,000. We are now lacking of judges but we also should refrain from facing a situation in which we have more judges than it is necessary.*

... *You may all remember that we used to have an inflation of military officials because there were thousand of generals. We have taken very effective*

measure in trimming down the number when we reduce every general one star or one level lower. I hope that we would not have such situation by taking the number of judges into consideration.

At the same time, we still have several important issues to discuss together and resolve together to create a just society for all of us. In this regard, may I propose some important points for your consideration.

Firstly, how to reduce crimes?

The fight against crime is not a simple issue. Most of the time, the offenders hide from the police. We cannot win the war against criminals without a unity within the society. All, the police, the court, people and various institutions should unite and believe in their consolidated strength then we can overcome and reduce crimes. Management including data management is also necessary for contributing to the reduction of crime. The establishment of sufficient laws will facilitate the implementation and reduce crime as well. Although there are many factors, education is the most important part. Education does not only refer to advices and information dissemination. The behavior of each person has also an important aspect. A good behavior is a good education, and a bad behavior reflects a bad education for the society.

There is a case, which I would like to draw your attention to. Please do not commit crime vis-à-vis the offenders. The offenders must be judged under the laws. No one has a right to torture the offenders including the police. We say, we hate crimes and the criminals. However, we should not commit offense against the

offenders just out of hatred.

[Ad-lib Comments] *In this point I would like to have the attention more of the competent authorities rather than those of the judges and prosecutors. Our task is to defend justice from offense but we could instead commit guilt and the result of which would take us to hell. Those who committed guilt in this sense would go only to one level of hell but those who committed further offense would go to a deeper level. The accused person had already committed guilt and further penalization is not necessary. Their hands are cuffed and they were beaten. So I wish to make an appeal to our people throughout the country to refrain from committing crimes on any criminal being and let them be tried by law.*

... *I tend to agree with the conclusion that killings of criminals happened because of the people lost their confidence in the court. But there is another factor that we should also give attention to and it has been a bad habit since Cambodia being under the Khmer Rouge regime. We had war and it was a protracted one. Most of us knew about war before anything else from birth and it was noted that the prisoner of war in any places always suffered injustice action committed by those who won.*

... *The game of the fish eating the ant when water floods, and the ant eating the fish when the water recedes had become a habit instilled in the Cambodian political package. Now we have ended this situation completely thanks to the implementation of the win-win policy, from which no one is left as a loser. But we all*

agree that we have the legacy of war and one of which is if one person is identified as a criminal of any action he did, take for instance theft, he has to be punished. Sometimes he could get killed and sometimes he died of no criminal record.

... *So I wish to place my appeal to our citizen throughout the country that if a person is suspicious of being a thief or a guilty person of any sort, please arrest him and give him to the competent authority so that he will be sent to the court. Please refrain from violence action in solving this matter. In the district of Dang-kao last year, two persons were killed but in the end they were not the guilty persons at all. So education and awareness raising in this matter is necessary.*

Secondly, we are lacking a physical facilities, particularly the court building, almost everywhere in the country. In this respect, I always pay my utmost attention and trying to find a strategic solution to respond to this need.

[Ad-lib Comments] *I have closely followed the report of HE Dith Munti about the state of the school. It is true that some parts are in wood and some are in concrete, and what is more important of all is that it does not possess a proper look as a place where justice is protected and provided.*

... *We are poor though the place may be improper we should then try to cope with this issue step by step. You may be warned not to ask for Riels 50 billion in 2003 despite its importance for addressing this need. It is two different things that we have money to*

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build the court and we do not have money to build road. We have a huge need for infrastructure ranging from road, bridge, water canal, and on top of these we have requirements in other areas as well.

... I made a recommendation when we passed the budget bill at the Cabinet's meeting at the Council of Ministers that we should provide funding only to those projects that are urgent and prioritized. If we talk about projects that are necessary, all of them are. But we all know that despite the fact that some projects are necessary, they may not be urgent. Take the bridge damage into consideration it is necessary and urgent. So the budget has to be prepared and diverted to this kind of project.

... The fact that I am talking like this is because we do not have money and if we were to get money we may have to tax our farmers. Take for example we may tax 50,000 to Riels 100,000 from our farmers to build offices or to increase salary for our Government employees. Doing this is tantamount to squeezing out money from our farmers. We should understand their situation and the fact that they are left to pay no tax. I hope that all donor countries similarly understand this situation and its reason that the Cambodian farmer are still poor compared to farmers in other countries, Thailand for example.

Thirdly, from now on we should listen to various complaints made by the public in order to improve the judiciary redress. The prerogative of judges is a power which no one can abuse. However, prerogative does not mean that

one can decide everything in his/her capacity. Prerogative is the power for judges to decide based on the laws- evidence-witness, etc.

With regard to prerogative of judges, I am obliged only to raise the complaints and the public views which I heard for the attention of our judges, such as the decision of detaining without necessity especially in felony cases, the negligence in reviewing documents submitted by parties to the case and unscrupulous investigation makes people feel dissatisfied.

All these complaints, I believe, is a voice that can be a good friend for the prerogative of judges. I wish you all could see the difficulties of the people, and if we clearly see the difficulties of the people we will definitely know how to deal with them? Therefore, I believe that prerogative is not only an effective power of magistrate, but it is also morale, a conscience and the life of each judge. For me, I also believe that prerogative of judge has to avoid **four partialities due to love, hatred, ignorance, and fear**.

[Ad-lib Comments] *Let me add something about this incident in which there was this problem of the circulation issued by the General Commissar of the National Police addressing to the Police Commissars throughout the country. I wish the Ministry of Interior give its inspection on the matter and make it aligned with law. I think it is not yet the matter for the Prime Minister to act. The national police work under the authority of the Ministry of Interior so I wish the authoritative institution to take the matter for consideration. I wish also that HE Head of the Supreme Court,*

who is also the co-chairman of the reform prepares a letter with all the recommendation of the seminar to HE Minister of Interior so that he could advise institutions under his authority. I will act on this matter if I see that the circulation issued by the Ministry of Interior is inappropriate. Otherwise we would find no solution to the issue and we will continue to have accusations from the police to the military police, and vice versa...

... I have noticed that we have here some foreigners and also the presence of Madame the Representative for Human Rights in Phnom Penh. May I make one simple request? I request that they do not act as if they are both the prosecutor and the judge. I consider my request as the demand of the sovereign state. I see that there is problem — when the foreigners are making complaints, the accused have to go to jail. If some people are accused by the foreigners and did not go to jail, the latter will issued their condemnation. I do not understand from where this justice system is coming from... Like what happened in Kompong Cham province, there was an accusation and the provincial court in Kompong Cham judged that the accused is to be free of guilt. The prosecutor there brought the issue to appeal court. Coincidentally the human rights group issued a declaration denouncing the provincial court on their judgement. This is what I called they acted as if they are both prosecutor and judge. Why should we need to have the Cambodian court then? Should not we have only your group?...

... I have ordered the investigation into the case of Global Witness and HE British Ambassador is also here present

today. There was an accusation that the Cambodian police killed a person and caused a number of injuries. In reality that incident does not exist. In this case, would the person/institution who makes false accusation be convicted? If this case has to go to the international court, we also should take it there too in order to find justice and to go on with the forest reform project.

... What I want is nothing but the truth. If the police is found to cause death and injuries to the demonstrators, I would not hesitate to order those policemen arrested and brought to justice. But if the accusation is false, and Mr. (Peter) Leuprecht has also made a declaration based on false fact, what would happen to him and to Global Witness? I do not complicate things but as a sovereign state I could not sit aside.

... We all here had gone through various sufferings. In 1979, after going through the massive killings, we survive with all sorts of punishment. Twenty-three years later, they demand with pressure that we tried the Khmer Rouge. We could survive no further injustice, no matter from whatever circle it may be. You all here may know already that the Khmer Rouge killed so many people here, and they were allowed to sit in the United Nations. We all liberated the country and started to rebuild the country from scratch, we continued to be punished while the Khmer Rouge was in the United Nations. When we out-rooted the Khmer Rouge militarily and politically, and arrested Ta Mok, they pressurize us with an international standard trial... I have got HE Sok An prepared to go to the

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were, of course, accompanied by their senior officials. So you can imagine how concerned we were about ensuring security. Looking back now, the meetings were held successfully, and there was not a single incident. I am thankful for that achievement.

I mention this because it is so clear that no effort to achieve rural development and poverty alleviation can succeed in an atmosphere of war and insecurity. Indeed, peace is the foundation of development and progress. Our experience here in Cambodia and in fact, all

across ASEAN attests to the need to ensure security and stability so that the measures required for sustainable prosperity can be put in place.

The Synergy between Peace and Development

Of course, peace and development go hand in hand. One cannot be sustained without promoting the other. With survival uppermost in the concerns of the hungry, peace and insecurity is but a secondary concern. On the other hand, development that engenders enmity, greed and inequity is not sustainable and does not promote lasting peace. Indeed,

the goal of governance is a pragmatic synergy between peace and development. We all seek to achieve a pace of economic growth rapid and adequate enough to be shared across society. Such growth will in turn generate broad-based support necessary for the difficult choices and steps that will enable further prosperity and peace for all.

I believe that this is the philosophy that underlies the ASEAN's Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI), which provides a framework for regional cooperation through which the more devel-

oped ASEAN members and the ASEAN's development partners could help those member countries that most need assistance, thus fulfilling the principle where to "prosper thy neighbor" is to "prosper ASEAN".

At the 8th ASEAN Summit, I proposed that as part of the Phnom Penh Agenda, ASEAN will further strengthen the IAI through active collaboration with the Greater Mekong Subregion Program. We all agree that the disparity in the economic status among ASEAN members is a major impediment to full regional peace and economic integration. Therefore, concerted efforts in promoting development in the GMS will greatly contribute to the resolution of the gaps among the ASEAN economies. Moreover, the GMS Program has proven to be an effective framework for resource mobilization, particularly from international financial institutions such as the Asian Development Bank.

Cambodia's Efforts to Spur Rural and National Development

We proudly welcome you all to Cambodia as our country is poised for prosperity. Over the past several years Cambodia has enjoyed stability, peace and economic growth denied to Cambodians for more than two decades of war and isolation. In the atmosphere of peace, the Royal Government has rapidly established an atmosphere of diplomatic openness, investment attractiveness and liberal trade.

In the second term of the Royal Government, we have firmly implemented the "Triangle Strategy," as our (Continued on page 5)

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United Nations on January 6 to continue with this discussion. So we have to seek justice from this hour onward. Whatever accusation made unjustly, including the one made by Global Witness, has to be resolved. Let's see the footage by Global Witness itself. Global Witness once asked for an apology, and I did give them. But this time it is not a problem of who goes and who stays, but the problem of seeking justice. Let's find out where the dead is and the people whom they have claimed to be wounded by the policemen. Whoever the policemen may be committed that act would be arrested. But if they could not provide those proofs, who would then take the charge? Would the one who accused take the charge?

... We would not stop the forest sector reform, but we will have to find a stronger organization than Global Witness to continue the monitoring work. HE Chan Sarum only sent the letter to cancel Global Witness and requesting for a new monitoring organization to replace it... We have yet to

decide who would sue Global Witness, the Royal Government, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries or the Police... That is all what I said. Please do not take both prosecutor and Judge's roles. Because if the Judge is giving a verdict that suits one's interest, one welcomes it. But if the verdict contradicts with one's opinion, one denounces it. From whom should I really learn in this matter? After all, we should refrain from acting on behalf of the court. Once it issues a verdict, we have to respect. If one disagreed, they may take it to appeal or the Supreme Court... I would not just grant a yes to anything because I am one of those who survived on the stump of the banana to rebuild this nation. This city lived only 70 people and now we have more than expected. Before the accidents caused by mines was registered up to 1000 people per month, while the accidents caused by traffic was registered at less than one hundred. On the contrary, the traffic accident rises to about 1000, while mines accident comes down to less than 300... Now we have many cases of conflict

on land ownership and as HE Dith Munti said to the seminar, it is not appropriate to provide a verdict and to issue ownership at the same time. The Ministry of Urban Planning, Construction and Land Management has the right to issue ownership title. If the court does this job it is like the court is violating the state affairs. The state is the body who provides land ownership to the people through the Ministry of Land Management. We could not afford to duplicate the titles...

The reform can be successful only if there is a wide participation from state institutions, government officials at all levels, civilians, NGOs, civil societies and especially from excellencies, ladies and gentlemen who are the actors in this judicial system. May the government officials at all levels, military forces, all civilians unite and try to overcome obstacles aimed at realizing the objectives of our people, pushing the ship of Cambodia to the shore "Cambodia is a government of human rights, rule based, justice, democracy and poverty eradication". ■

(Continued from page 4) political platform and development thrust. The strategy envisages a wide-ranging, long-term reform agenda with three main intertwined objectives: (i) ensure and maintain peace, stability and security for the nation and its people; (ii) quickly normalize Cambodia's relations with external partners and gradually but steadily integrate the economy into the region and the world; and (iii) promote the development of Cambodia and reduce poverty based on the favorable environment resulting from the implementation of the first two strategies.

The results of the hard work that has been exerted you can see around you in Cambodia today. Economic growth has been maintained at the high average of 7% while other countries in the region and the world continue to face difficulties. Inflation has been constrained at close to zero and the exchange rate has remained firm.

Overall, macroeconomic management targets have been achieved with satisfactory results. In the implementation of the first Socio-Economic Development Plan, we reduced the incidence of poverty from 39% to 36%. We are moving forward with resolve and strong commitment in reforms in all sectors. The ultimate goal is to reduce, by half, the incidence of poverty within 15-20 years. Our clear vision and commitment to effective performance has earned much support from our development partners.

In June 2002, for the first time, the annual meeting of the Consultative Group (CG) of Donors was held in Phnom Penh. In the meeting, the interna-

tional community pledged more than US\$ 600 million for development and poverty reduction in Cambodia.

Strategies for Poverty Reduction

Although we have achieved substantial progress, the Royal Government of Cambodia is aware of the serious situation where poverty is still widespread in the country. We consider the resolution of poverty the nation's top priority, to be achieved through accelerated growth, improvement in expenditures of government resources and the improvement in social development. Moreover, as more than 80% of Cambodian people and 90% of the poor families live in the rural areas, the RGC's strategy for poverty reduction is focused and concentrated on rural development.

The Royal Government of Cambodia has set out a rural development program focusing on the factors that determine the livelihoods of poor people living in the rural areas, such as the building of rural roads, basic health care and hygiene, the supply of clean water, education and training, community development, family farm plots and rural finance schemes such as seed and fertilized distribution, rice banks, support for small and medium enterprises and improvement in extension and information dissemination to reach the villages. The RGC's strategies for rural development have the following objectives:

- 1) *Launch the decentralized system of financial planning and implementation of rural development projects and programs;*
- 2) *Facilitate diversified rural development focusing on key regions and sectors;*
- 3) *Promote discussion and*

joint actions at all levels of administration, among ministries-institutions, and between ministries-institutions and civil society to generate improved work plans and effective collaboration; and

- 4) *Optimize use of the country's comparative advantage and mobilize capacity available in national and local institutions to help enhance rural development.*

On 29 July 2002, the Royal Government launched the Second Socio-Economic Development Plan, 2001-2005. The overall thrust of the SEDP2 is the reduction of poverty. In addition, we are now finalizing the National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS), which provides more details than SEDP2 for the attainment of accelerated development and poverty reduction in Cambodia.

Building and Strengthening Our Foundations

As I have mentioned earlier, as an important pillar of the poverty reduction strategy the Royal Government of Cambodia has given top priority to building the foundations of rural development and providing opportunities for the poor.

Based on this strategy, since 1996 the Royal Government has been implementing an extensive program of decentralization and deconcentration. This experience has proven to be very positive and progressive and has been adopted as a national policy and program. Commune elections were conducted early this year, resulting in the establishment of 1,621 Commune Councils across the Kingdom.

A commune budget has been

created to support the operations of the Commune Councils. Moreover, a National Committee to Support the Communes has been established to implement the Law on Commune Administration and the Decentralization Policy. Moreover, the Government has also set up a Commune Fund for local development consisting of block grants from the government, tax and non-tax revenues and donor or international organizations assistance.

The Commune Fund will finance local development and public services. Supporting the communes to carry out their own local development will reduce the burden on the national government and help to further strengthen the ownership of the local development programs by the local people themselves. In fact, the Ministries cannot and should not try to do everything. Furthermore, whatever the communes and the people can undertake themselves involves the commitment of the people -- which is crucial for ensuring ownership and sustainability in promoting development.

Toward National and International Unity and Peace

In the wake of the continuing wars and increase in terrible terrorist acts of the past year, humankind is confronted with a sobering realization. No nation can afford to be complacent in a world of plenty among a few and deprivation suffered by many. The contrasts are stark and painful, providing fertile ground for enmity, greed, and envy. Constructive engagement is key to the building of national, regional and international peace...■

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ASEAN + South Africa summits. Secondly, before the Summits took place, there had been terrorist activities in various places, take for example Bali of Indonesia.

There were predictions that Cambodia could not provide security to the Summits. But we had proven that we were able to provide complete security to these very honorary meetings. As for the ASEAN member countries, the achievements are the various agreements that have been reached and signed.

Maybe I would like to have your attention on the fact that in 1998, ASEAN was then a nine-member association with Cambodia not becoming its full member yet. They had approved what they called the 2020-Hanoi Action Plan.

In 1999, the ASEAN meeting in Manila of the Philippines, they signed no agreements but they had in fact sounded out the initiatives for contacts with North-east Asia and East Asia. In 2000 the ASEAN Heads of States/Governments gathered in Singapore and signed "e-ASEAN" agreement.

The ASEAN summit in 2001 in Brunei signed no agreements as well. But there have been many agreements signed in the Phnom Penh-ASEAN Summit. First of all there was a joint declaration against terrorism, which could be said the currently most outstanding issue that requires a joint force against terrorism.

Within the ASEAN framework we have signed the ASEAN Tourism Agreement, which is in fact the Cambodian initiative or my own initiative to put it in other words. We have also signed the ASEAN-China

Agreement on the free trade area. This was in fact a difficult deal, especially when we need to have a consensus as to when we want this idea fulfilled – 2010 or 2012. It was also hard to have a consensus among the ASEAN members on the schedules because some countries preferred 2010, while others saw it better in 2012.

With lots of coordination efforts, the ASEAN + China Summit came to the signing of the Agreement in Phnom Penh. There was another agreement, the South China Sea Agreement, which is the most difficult topic during the summit. This issue had been topic of discussion for many years, from one host country to another, but it has been reached in Phnom Penh, which they call the Phnom Penh Agreement.

So I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Heads of States/Governments of the country members for their generous offer of such an honor to Cambodia while it hosted coordinated the summit.

There are comprehensive agreements reached in the framework of ASEAN + Japan and the approval of the vision of cooperation of ASEAN + Japan and East Asia which were initiated by the Republic of Korea. The first ASEAN + India summit granted a great significance and it has shown a sign of sustainability.

In the first hand among the ASEAN members we seem to have no consensus as to how often the ASEAN + India summit would take place. In the end we came to a consensus that the ASEAN + India summit will take place every year like those of the ASEAN + Japan, ASEAN + China and ASEAN + the Republic of Korea.

I may wrap up that many difficult issues in the framework of ASEAN, ASEAN and its partners like the South China Sea issue or the ASEAN-China free trade agreement – which are all sensitive, have all been resolved in Phnom Penh.

Maybe I have made too long comment but I think it helps you when you make further study on this matter.

RFA: *Could you please tell our listeners in more detail about the Greater Mekong Sub-region Summit. What has the summit achieved?*

Answer: Maybe I should elaborate in more detail on this. What have been achieved in Phnom Penh are the three of my own initiatives.

The first initiative is the ASEAN + India Summit. In my visit to India in 2000 I had suggested that it is high time for the summit to take place. India agreed with my idea and proposed that Cambodia help coordinate the procedure. So the task has been completed and the ASEAN + India summit will take place every year.

The second is the agreement of ASEAN Tourism, which I proposed it to the ASEAN Heads of States/Governments in the summit in Brunei in 2001.

The third initiative is the GMS summit. This is very important. If we talk about the Mekong River Commission it consists of only four countries – Cambodia, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam. China and Burma are not its members.

I see that the river environment management is very important, but it also should be made a contributing factor to the eco-

nomical growth in this region leading to the poverty alleviation. I presented this idea to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) who has actively involved in this process. Finally the Heads of States/Governments of the six countries along the Mekong River, the People's Republic of China included, have all voiced their support.

The three agreements could be considered historic. If we could score success in the GMS framework, the GMS countries could be complementary to the ASEAN pace of development as this would result in the narrowing of gap between the new and old ASEAN members.

Narrowing the gap between the new and old countries does not mean that Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, the Philippines, Brunei and Indonesia, who are older ASEAN countries, to reduce their pace of development or to become poor countries as Pol Pot made the rich people poor in our country.

The idea is to make poorer countries advanced. The four ASEAN countries located along the Mekong River are Burma, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. With the financial assistance from the ADB we will make further development. That will include the connection of infrastructures like the pan-ASEAN rail, which runs through many countries – Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and will stretch through to China.

This is known to be "ASEAN-Kunming and Singapore rail." But we would not be able to fulfil this task if we do not initiate the development in the Mekong River Basin.

The draft agreement of ASEAN
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energy also bears this point. Member countries would make progress in a timely manner together only when they can complement one another as the construction of the hydropower in Laos could also help provide electricity to countries in shortage of electric power. This is what I say a success. Thailand proposed an initiative to create what is called the "Mekong Airline." Taking this opportunity I wish to inform you about my previous ambitious wish.

I have proposed to ADB to set up in Phnom Penh a center for human resource development for the six countries along the Mekong River. But after several discussions the question of sustainability for the center operation arises. We then swapped the draft project to the Phnom Penh Plan after my discussion with ADB.

Formerly in Asia we have the Colombo Plan, which provides scholarship on human resource training. Now we have the Phnom Penh Plan, which will be financed by ADB in providing scholarship to the six countries along the Mekong River. So at least Cambodia has played some roles in this effort.

RFA: *The current Royal Government is a coalition Government with FUNCINPEC as junior partner and CPP as senior. There have been press reports on the problem of cooperation in the Coalition Government. The CPP's partner seems to have internal problems and people are suspicious of what is going on. Could you make clear on this matter?*

Answer: We should first categorize it into separate issues. Talking about the aspect of alliance as partners in the coalition Gov-

ernment I am very proud because officials from the two parties are working together in the current Royal Government. I may say that the second-term Royal Government has been fairly stabilized and there has been a very good cooperation.

I used to say that the Cambodian People's Party and FUNCINPEC could be compared to a plane with two wings. With either one of its wing is broken, the plane would not be flying.

The second-term Government has scored lots of achievements, which are achievements in common. They are not achievements that belong to only CPP or FUNCINPEC separately. They are born out of the efforts made by both. So we could say we share half by half. Or to put in other words we serve our nation.

The correct political program of the Royal Government jointly created by the two parties has been the foundation of my comment that the current Government is stable.

As for the second point regarding the disagreement, I think we better put it in this way. Some members of the Senate and the National Assembly have expressed their ideas and I do not consider this as a political conflict between the partner parties at all.

I consider it as freedom of expression that as members of the Senate or the National Assembly they have to have. They are in fact constructive opinions and are not frightful. I do not take them as attacks on the Royal Government. It is no stranger to me and I always digest those opinions because considering what they have said sometimes show that it is correct.

One has to accept the truth and if

one neglects it one could not lead the Government at all. This should include also opinions given by one's siblings.

The third issue, which is not my task to get involved, is the rift in the partner party. It has gone beyond my capacity. Members of the CPP, myself also included, will not interfere in the partner party's affairs at all.

But if we are approached for help, we may do so but there has to be rational proposal. Samdech Krom Preah Norodom Ranaridh and I used to have regular meetings, if not face to face we meet on the phones.

We have resolved many issues. But all were done only for issues within my competence. Take for example in my position as Prime Minister, I have to respect the proposed changes of FUNCINPEC leaders in political positions. If the candidates are assigned by the Royal Decree, I have to issue a request for changes to HM the King and if necessary I have to seek approval of the National Assembly.

So the decision is the Assembly's and not Hun Sen's. So I have distinguished the issue clearly.

RFA: *As you also know that FUNCINPEC is a big party and it won CPP in the first term elections. What is your impression when you see that the partner party FUNCINPEC, with whom CPP will compete in the next elections, is in such a crisis? Are you happy or unhappy, for example, to see this situation?*

Answer: I must say out loud that when one sets up a political party one always wants to be the winner and no one would want to be a loser. It is a true statement and as a human being one has to

dare say it. I can say that my vision is that Cambodia needs to have coalition Government not only for one or two terms more, but at least in fifteen years from now. Taking the actual situation of Cambodia into consideration, CPP could not drive FUNCINPEC out, and probably FUNCINPEC could not do it otherwise. The bottom line is that one party needs to have two-third majority in the National Assembly (in order to set up a Government), but no one party could achieve this.

Coalition Government is the option. So it is my vision to see that CPP wants to go on staying with FUNCINPEC. Therefore, CPP has no reason to be happy when it sees that FUNCINPEC is in fracture. As I said earlier if CPP is the husband and FUNCINPEC is the wife, it would not be a happy moment when the husband sees that his wife or her siblings are in conflict.

We pray they get over with the conflicts, which may boomerang on us. So I certainly do not want to see the fracture in the partner party and I hope that it can resolve the differences without interference from outsiders. I hope that FUNCINPEC is capable to resolve the problem, to control its internal problems and to refrain itself from further deterioration because of instigation by outsiders. CPP is very concerned if its partner could not resolve the internal differences for we need a strong partner.

RFA: *I have many questions regarding the issue of political party in the Coalition Government and I hope you would give me chances to ask you those questions some other time.*

As we approach the next elections, which you have set the date on July 27, 2003, there

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have been interpretations about violations of election law like in the form of killings as well as vote buying. Travelling throughout Cambodia, I heard of a new CPP's trick. The Royal Cambodian Armed Forces is seen in the road as they are building roads, bridges, etc. Some politicians are saying that the presence of the troops that is under the CPP's control would threaten the forthcoming elections. The presence would force the people to vote for CPP or the army will take measures against them.

So what is your reaction to the said allegation or to the preparation for the elections in 2003?

Answer: It is a funny question but it stems out of the silly arguments of only some politicians. Cambodia is 181,035 square Kilometers and our people are living all over the country. The number of our army working on road or bridge construction is limited by the size of our financial resources. We do not use our army to build roads that are already in good condition, but in places where roads are in demand.

As you might have seen we do not have the army in the national road 4 as the road is in good condition. The practice was seen taking place also in the Sangkum Reastrmiyum period under the leadership of HM the King Norodom Sihanouk. He then used mostly the army to build roads. I also follow this example because they have their engineering equipment and they could work in land-mined areas. I do not understand why they bring up this matter. I think they should say it otherwise that they are afraid that when the army finish building the road, the people will see the benefit of the road and will then be grateful to Hun Sen. I think this is probably

a better argument. Any party or person that uses force to threaten people, s/he will lose the support/vote. I do not think CPP is that stupid and we would pose no threat and intimidation to anyone at all. On top of that all votes are confidential. This kind of people is making up hundreds or thousands of stories. If we do not build roads/bridges, they would blame the Government as incapable in this matter. But when the Government realizes many of the needed infrastructures they are concerned that they are left with nothing for campaigning.

They usually campaign that if they win the elections they will build roads and bridges. So when roads, bridges and schools have all been built, what else can they say and do? I think they should say their minds this way rather than arguing immorally as such. I would not want to compare them with Bin Laden team, but they are the men of the type.

RFA: *What is your vision on democracy building in Cambodia?*

Answer: I am grateful to this question because it allows me to speak some of my visions on how to sustain the nation as well as democracy building in Cambodia. It is true that we have various political programs, which include the triangle strategy, the win-win policy, the four dimensional reforms and I do not want to talk about these issues again. What I wanted to say is that we have to refrain from doing four mistakes.

First is to refrain from committing political mistake. One should not be reckless on this matter. Committing a political mistake may lead to jeopardy for the nation and people. So in all times, not only the time before or after the elections, this matter has

to be born in mind. The political program has to respond to the actual need of the people. The political mistake could be deadlier than that caused by a nuclear bomb. We may think of wrong political decision by Lon Nol and Pol Pot, which brought about devastation to the country.

Second is to increase vigilance for national security and social order. In the past year we have noticed so many terrorist incidents here and there, and the US also included. The ASEAN summit was conducted in a good security environment and the Water Festival with about three million people participated in Phnom Penh proved that we could provide security. But we must not overlook the security issue at anytime because our enemy is in the dark, while we are in daylight. Though Cambodia is not a target of the terrorists but we also want to attract investors and tourists to Cambodia.

Currently the number of tourist increases and if we were to lose our vigilance that caused insecurity in any places; it would have a bad impact. I wish also to say that we have to provide the best security for the forthcoming elections and to prevent all sorts of violence act. I would not want to hear even war of words. But we could not shut up anyone. We can try to silence the noise of gunfire and even the attacks by stone throwing, etc. So if we were to be reckless on issue of security, it would give a negative impact on political environment or safety and security of our people as well as a free and fair elections.

Thirdly we have to do anything possible to prevent hunger among our people. It is well known that Cambodia has had three consecutive years of natural calamity – 2000, 2001 and 2002. My order in this situation

is that no one is left to die of hunger without the knowledge and help. The measures taken is not only about providing people with food but their rice cultivation ranging from transplantation to irrigation as you may have seen just now that rice has good yield. It is truly difficult but we have to be precautionary in terms of food stocks so as to avoid problems like in Somalia... Being short of food is one thing but hunger is another and in Cambodia, the Royal Government will not let this situation happen at all.

Fourthly, do not risk the loss of macro-economic stability and inflation. In 1999, we had 6.4% growth rate, and 0% inflation. In 2000 – 7.7% and 0% inflation. In 2001 – 6.3%, and 0% inflation. And in 2002 there have been various abnormal situations but we are able to achieve 5% growth and under 4% inflation rate. Inflation could be more destructive than a nuclear bomb. A nuclear bomb affects only in the place it goes off. But inflation would destabilize the whole country. If we are able to control the four mistakes, I think the Royal Government will continue to sustain till the end of its term and the successive Government will take over in a better position from the start because of stable economic growth and low inflation and good security.

I think whoever wins the next elections will be satisfied. Whoever wants to be Prime Minister of Cambodia should pray for the current Government to fulfil a good job, to produce more rice, to attract more tourists... So they could start in a better condition than when I did in 1979. Then with only 70 people to start with, I had no money, electricity, water... This is all I wanted to say about guaranteeing development and democracy building in Cambodia... ■