

Cambodia New Vision

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Hun Sen to CNV: Better Security for July-26 Elections, No Objection to the Trial of Pol-potist Leaders, and If CPP Wins... A Government with Effective Human Resources



On May 19, 1998, at his Takhmao residence, Samdech Hun Sen thanked the British Foreign Office Minister of State Derek Fatchett for the European Union's financial assistance to enable Cambodia's electoral preparation and operation to function as scheduled. Samdech Hun Sen told the Minister Fatchett that according to His Majesty's instruction the Royal Government will name a street in Phnom Penh after the late demining expert Christopher Howes, and clarified issues of voters registration, equal access to media by all political parties, and the RGC's commitment to investigate and bring to trial those who are responsible for the killings in the July event.

Approaching the July-26 general elections in Cambodia, Cambodia New Vision(CNV) interviewed Samdech Hun Sen on various aspects of the forthcoming elections, the Khmer Rouge in their current dwindling situation, and his premiership candidacy for the next five-year term.

CNV: Having registered as a voter, do you have any remarks?

Answer: Since the first day of the registration, a great number of Cambodian eligible voters have gone to the registration offices

throughout the country. This indicates that our people prefer to choose a leadership by ballots rather than by bullets. It also points out that the electoral preparation is operational in sufficient security.

CNV: What is the state of security for the July-26 elections to take place?

Answer: If compared with the UNTAC supervised elections in 1993, the July-26-98 elections will be taking place in an atmosphere of better security. In 1993,

Khmer Rouge occupied many places ranging from Phnom Voar, Malay, Pailin, Samlot, Sampeo Loune, Kamrieng, Taken Kohsla to Anlong Veng, Preah Vihear temple area, etc.

Having accepted and implemented the win-win policy since 1994, and thereafter, those areas have been re-integrated one after another into the Royal Government.

The defections not only has extinguished the war flame in Cambodia but also has allowed democracy with elections as an indicator to take place. For example, Pailin that boycotted the 1993 elections is now becoming a constituency with one seat representation in the forthcoming elected assembly this year.

Other factors noticed in the past seven years are that various political parties are getting used to a habit of living together, and of accepting contra-concepts. Another fundamental factor here is that our people have been adequately educated about pluralism, and what free and fair elections are. Therefore, I think that the people of Cambodia will use their own rights in choosing their leaders by casting their votes in 1998 in a safe and secure atmosphere.

CNV: Has the Government taken any measures to guarantee

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

that there will be adequate security and order during the elections?

Answer: In collaboration with the National Election Committee (NEC), the Royal Government of Cambodia has set up a permanent sub-committee on security incorporating members from NEC and relevant competent civilian and military institutions with about 70,000 strong personnel to be at NEC's disposal in making sure that the elections will take place in a safe, stable and non-violent manner.

There will be no tanks, no armored vehicles, trenches or safe havens as there were during UNTAC in 1993.

We will use only simple means to safeguard the situation because what is important is the prevailing trust among political parties that will participate in the elections.

CNV: What is your impression on the arrival in Cambodia of the international observers?

Answer: Although there have been blind attempts by a number of political circles to internationalize once again the elections in Cambodia, the recent and forthcoming arrival in Cambodia of the international observers from the European Union, the ASEAN countries etc. is creating an atmosphere of confidence in the efforts made by the Royal Government of Cambodia, the National Assembly, and the National Electoral Committee in setting July 26 as the historic polling date to be organized by Cambodians for the first time following two decades of protracted wars and the two-billion-dollar elections organized by the UN in 1993.

CNV: Why the electoral date is scheduled for July 26?

Answer: Originally we have set May 23, the date of the elections organized by UNTAC five years ago, as the voting day to elect the second legislature for the next five years from 1998 through to 2003.

This date was postponed because of two reasons. First, technically we were not ready, and secondly, the date was not in conformity with the existing law which stipulates that the elections take place two months prior to the expiration of the mandate of the National Assembly.

Our National Assembly terminates its first legislature mandate on September 24, 1998, thus making July 24, 1998 the right electoral date. Since July 24 and 25 fall on Friday and Saturday, there has been a consensus to set electoral date for the second elections on Sunday, July 26 in order to allow government officials and factory workers to cast their votes on holiday.

Any attempts besides the above procedure are not in conformity with the law.

CNV: There have been concerns that political parties to participate in the elections will not have equal access to the electronic media during the electoral campaign which will start on June 25. Do you have any comments?

Answer: I see that we should think of three options. Firstly, both state-owned and private TVs and radio could be used. This means that all political parties could have equal airtime on TVs and radio as allocated by NEC. Secondly, only state-owned media plus certain private ones could be used. This

means that private media that are not being hired must be kept neutral throughout the campaign. Thirdly, only state-owned media can be used and all private ones are kept neutral.

Any consideration for the first or second option will prompt a financial requirement to lease airtime from the private media for all political parties, and not for only a respected number of them.

What is important here is that we should not be confused between equal access to the electronic media and equal rights of political parties to set up their media.

If all political parties respectively set up their own radio and/or TV stations, Cambodia will have scores of radio and TV stations, and will be a world leading country of media owned by political parties.

What is more important here is equal opportunity (for all political parties) and neutrality of the media in the electoral campaign.

Some dignitaries raised their opinions that if equal access were to be applied, major opposition parties would lose their opportunities.

They proposed that more time should be given to those so-called big parties. I find it difficult to understand this, since all political parties exist under the same Law on Political Parties, and they will compete in the elections under the same law.

Why should those parties be considered big or small? Democracy and human rights do not distinguish people for being rich or poor, but they are equal before the law. If all political parties can not be guaranteed equal rights, and

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

being classified as big and small, how could one mention about democracy and human rights.

CNV: With the Khmer Rouge movement at its weakest, some people raised the view that CPP has lost its greatest enemy, which is tantamount to losing a trump card for the election campaign. Is that true?

Answer: CPP has fulfilled its historic mission – to overthrow the Pol Pot's genocidal regime in January 1979 saving Cambodian people from death and reviving the national society as a whole. It is a task which no other political parties can do.

Prior to as well as after the Paris Peace Agreement, CPP has been the only force which is able to definitely prevent Khmer Rouge attempts and conspiracies to return to power. Recently, if we had not taken timely measures during the July-1997 event, the Khmer Rouge would have succeeded in their maneuvers of returning to power. Many Khmer Rouge documents lately captured confirms this truth.

I see that the use of Khmer Rouge as a political counterbalance is a very dangerous game for the whole nation. These facts are not CPP's imagination.

Besides the Khmer Rouge, the real enemy of the majority of the Cambodian people is poverty.

CPP has defined that a poverty alleviation process carried out through the economic development in accordance with strategies appropriate to Cambodia's concrete conditions, is another noble historic mission to be fulfilled given CPP's human resources and capa-

bilities.

CPP's target of highest priority is to free Cambodian people from poverty in the same manner it did to liberate the people from the genocide regime.

CNV: In connection with bringing the Khmer Rouge leaders to justice before international tribunal, some opinions consider that the win-win policy promoted by Samdech appears to be working against this process. Could you explain?

Answer: I should confirm that since 1979 our policy is to dismantle the political and military organization of the Khmer Rouge. Because, without a strong and effective organization, Pol Pot alone and a few Khmer Rouge leaders could not slaughter millions of people. Now, although there is news that Pol Pot is dead, still I notice that Pol Pot's ideas are still being implemented by the Khmer Rouge hardliners as their guidelines for activities.

Following the World War II, the Hitlerite Nazi war criminals could be brought to trial at Nuremberg only after their political and military organizations had been dismantled. Therefore, we have to make efforts in order to reach this point. Our win-win formula which have enjoyed wholehearted supports from the people, the National Armed Forces of Cambodia, and especially from the part of the Khmer Rouge defectors, is an appropriate method to put a definite end to the Khmer Rouge organization which have existed for several decades.

Some countries always said that Khmer Rouge was very bad. But, let us consider what those countries have done to disintegrate the group. Since 1979, contrary to our

constant demands for holding proceedings to try the Khmer Rouge organization, those countries have taken advantage to use Khmer Rouge for seeking balance of power. Now, when the Khmer Rouge has been reduced to its weakest with the loss of Anlong Veng stronghold, all of a sudden, there are appeals to hold an international tribunal to try the Khmer Rouge.

As the Government policy of attracting the Khmer Rouge to return to the fold of society has produced good results, these appeals are only a trick, aimed at preventing Cambodia from achieving real peace. This is because other Khmer Rouge would no longer dare to break away and to return to the fold of the nation, thus would opt for a continued armed struggle in the form of bandits who would cause the country instability and insecurity.

Any attempts in this direction can not be accepted for it would only help the Khmer Rouge to survive, while prolonging the sufferings of the Cambodian people.

Based on these facts, first of all we should concentrate all our efforts to successfully organize the elections on July 26, 1998 so that a newly elected National Assembly can decide how to try the genocidal regime, especially the Khmer Rouge hardline leaders – Pol Pot, Ta Mok, Nuon Chea, and Khiev Samphan. Personally, I do not object to bringing the Polpotist leaders to justice at all.

CNV: What is the socio-economic and political agenda that CPP/Samdech will present to the voters?

Answer: CPP will announce its political programme to the voters
(Continued on page 4)

Quotes of the Month

On May 12, 1998, inaugurating HAGAR Center of Youth With A Mission (YWAM) in Phnom Penh, Samdech Hun Sen said:

“...Poverty does not mean no dignity. Only human being, rich or poor, can define personal dignity. No matter one is poor or rich, one has a life value. Some people reason that when one is poor one could do all unjust actions. But on the contrary, the poor stand to keep their values with hope and struggle. Have we noticed that some people who possess cars, diamonds are also bad, and exploitative on poor people?... Immoral sexual behaviors conducted by some foreigners on our children are not part of our culture... but they (the Cambodian children) become their victims...”

“... Poverty has come to Cambodia because of wars, genocidal regime, and “political barriers”... We have to maintain peace that we have achieved with a hope that we will be freed from political conditions for the development of ourselves, our own families, and our own country... at which solidarity serves as a bridge...”

On May 28, 1998, presiding over the closing of the National Handicap Sports Day at the Olympic Stadium, Samdech Hun Sen said:

“... The first person to give value to the disabled is each individual disabled him/herself with the encouragement from the whole society... (by participating in the sport activities) the Cambodia disabled are showing that “they can not only create various achievements for the society but also provide prestige to the nation at the international arena...”

(Continued from page 3)

when the election campaign starts. Here, I wish to mention that during the past 18 years that CPP has been in power alone and has shared power, we have fulfilled many tasks for the people’s survival, peace, development and democracy through which I think the Cambodian people are well aware of CPP.

I also take this opportunity to confirm that if CPP wins, a government of effective human resources for economic growth and development will be established in order to cope with the socio-economic problems which are the most crucial challenge in combating poverty.

CNV: CPP has granted an honor to Samdech as the candidate for premiership in the 1998-2003 term. Any comments?

Answer: It is a great honor that I have received from CPP during the past two decades.

I have to return favours to the party as well as the voters through good deeds in combating poverty, preventing the return of the genocidal regime, strengthening peace and the rule of law, eradicating corruption, and defending independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity etc.

I think that the next five-year period is a challenging one. For me, it is still better than the preceding ones, though.

In those days, I led Cambodia in a complicated situation in which peace and wars prevailed together.

Everything started from scratch, and the country suffered an unjust economic embargoes. The country had to conduct political and economic

reforms while pursuing negotiations for a political solution to the Cambodian problem. It was a time when I had to deal with many problems all at once.

From 1993 to 1998, I did continue to solve remaining issues within the framework of a “two-headed” government which later suffered a betrayal committed by a partner in the coalition government. It is very fortunate that the win-win solution has pushed the Khmer Rouge to the verge of collapse. Our country as a whole enjoys peace. This situation is very favourable for the July-26 elected government for it would not face the situation of “all-come-at-once” as before. There remain economic development, and poverty alleviation as a sole direction which the new government would have to concentrate its energy on.

I think that this would be a very good opportunity for me to successfully complete my honorable political missions in my political life.■

Message from Cambodia New Vision

The Cabinet of the Second Prime Minister has great pleasure to share with you its monthly publication of Cambodia New Vision which carries to you selective excerpts of speeches/statements/interviews etc. made by Samdech Hun Sen. Comments on and recommendation for the publication and its contents are welcome at:

Cabinet of Second Prime Minister, Cambodia New Vision, Phnom Penh

e-mail: cabinet1b@camnet.com.kh

Tel: 855-23 219898