

Toast to Gala Dinner for Vietnam's Tet

(17 January 2020 — Unofficial Selection and Translation)



17 January 2020 - Samdech Techo Hun Sen Giving a Toast to Vietnam New Year's Gala Dinner at Sokha Hotel Phnom Penh

Tonight, I have the honor and pleasure to express my sincere thanks to HE Vu Quang Minh, Ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to Cambodia and Madame and HE Nguyen Thanh Dung, President of the Vietnam Business Club in Cambodia, for inviting me to this auspicious gala dinner to celebrate the Vietnam Tet 2020 (the Vietnamese New Year). I

welcome and thank honorable guests for their presences in this pompous event to illustrate bond of traditional friendship and solidarity, and to strengthen partnership with every stakeholders involved and cooperation between the two countries.

On behalf of the Royal Government and the people of

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MFAIC's Annual Review, To Host ASEM 13

(31 January 2020 — Unofficial Selection and Translation)

In addition to the prepared text, Samdech Techo Hun Sen, at the closing session of the Annual Review Conference of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and the Official Announcement that Cambodia Will Host the 13th ASEM Summit in 2020, made the following elaborations:

[From Text] ... sanction is nothing but a policy that big country exerts pressure on smaller ones. It is not a correct policy, especially when they

implement them in the name of values and principles that will bring favors to their sides or interests.

[Comments 1]

On this note, we can see this not only under the pretext of promoting and/or restoring democracy but also in others like in the name of protecting environment [...] this could create tension between one region and another, for in-

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Press Briefing on Kep's Collapsed Building

(05 January 2020 — Unofficial Selection and Translation)

43 Hours Search and Rescue Operation

I am very saddened by loss of lives and I have regrets to have seen those injured in the collapsed building accident in the province of Kep. It is another bitter accident after we had the previous one at the province of Preah Sihanouk last year [...] the search and rescue operation lasted 43 hours and 20 minutes before closing at 11:35 am today. We have exhumed the last body and checked that there has no more victims left in the rubble [...] that the operation took a long time, 43 hours, because we adhered to two principles – firstly, we prioritized saving

those who are still alive. Once there was sign of someone alive, we held all machines and figured out how to get him/her out as safe and best we could. Secondly, we respect the deceased body. We must guarantee that they were intact [...]

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Fourth Annual Press Dinner

(14 January 2020 — Unofficial Selection and Translation)

Eight National and Personal Major Events in January

[...] Today is the fourth meeting between Prime Minister and the press in the Kingdom of Cambodia, and some coming from abroad. The meeting signifies works of the press in relation to our country's development [...] since it falls on the day I became Prime Minister 35 years ago, let me clarify it was not me who chose this date for the celebration. It was just a coincidence [...] in the month of January, there are many events relating to my life, my works and national developments. They are relating to what happened in the country [...]

It is the 41st anniversary of 7 January 1979 liberation. It is an important event and it hap-

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Novel Coronavirus Outbreak

(30 January 2020 — Unofficial Selection and Translation)

"Overreacted Fear" Coupled by "Poisoning News"

Today I have the need to make a verbal speech to Buddhist monks and compatriots on latest development relating to threat of novel coronavirus in our country. What happened in the last few days has been more of an overreaction to fear than fear about the novel coronavirus itself that began in Wuhan, Hebei of China.

We may ask if there has been anyone, local or foreign, who dies of the disease in Cambodia, beside this case (of a Chinese infected) we have found in the province of Sihanouk.

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However, why have our people been under so much mental pressure? The true sickness that has happened so far is emotionally overreacted fear coupled with news that poisoned society [...]

Unprofessional Journalism

The region or world had faced a number of diseases so far. The difference now is the fact that there were no Facebook accesses to provide poisoning information. As everyone has access to Facebook (or generally online media), many used it improperly [...] a VDO clip of a young girl at Preah Sihanouk province working at a casino crying “help me God” was posted by the president of performance artists association – Heng Long.

It was supposed to be concerning the coronavirus incident [...] minutes later, the young girl posted another one herself clarifying she has not been sick and posting the previous clip would cause her trouble [...] Heng Long removed the clip and apologized.

K01 (information) team also did an improper reporting too. If they are present here, they should review their attitudes over the reportage that they did (at the Russia hospital), and ask themselves if it was an act of professional journalism? [...] their action in making the reportage created fear among people who have no information of what happened. People fear because they believe poisoning news/information from irresponsible news/information outlets [...]

We must not place ourselves under a psychological war leading to loss of confidence in each own individual, family and/or country [...]

Human Right Watch Deputy Director Should Reprimand Government in His Country

The matter is under the re-

sponsibility of the Ministry of Health and the spokesperson has done a very good job [...] I think I need to take this moment to give some more insights to what we have been doing and continue to do to provide information and suggestions to institutions as well as to our people [...].

Last night, a foreign radio broadcast in Khmer language quoted words of a deputy director of Human Rights Watch (Asia Division) that the Royal Government of Cambodia should be reprimanded for allowing planes from Wuhan to land in Sihanouk province bringing infectious disease to Cambodia, while in his own country, there was also this virus infection case.

I think he should reprimand his government and not the Royal Government of Cambodia [...]

Banning Flights from China Troubles Economy and Relations with China

While posting news causing fears among our people, there come two suggestions to me. Firstly, (Cambodia should) ban all flights from China to the country. This suggestion was nothing but a measure to kill national economy and to scale down Cambodia’s relations with China [...] in fact the government of China has taken high responsibility not only for their people but also for the world.

As we know it, flights banned not only within China but also to other countries. They also closed train activities to refrain from possible spread of the Wuhan virus to other locations [...] measures taken by China have been high before their people. The Chinese foreign minister also had to postpone his visit to Cambodia to stay in the country to help deal with the challenge [...]

The Chinese government acted responsibly on this [...] closing air connection with

China would trouble the country’s economy because you all know that many Chinese businesspersons and investors come to Cambodia, and many of them do not have anything to do with the sickness.

That would only frustrate Cambodia’s service sector. That is on one front. On political front, it (would be seen as an act to) scale down relation between Cambodia and China.

No Evacuation of Cambodian Citizens

I do not care about who would think what, as some countries already moved their people out (of Wuhan or China) [...] Cambodia would not resort to that measure [...] the second suggestion to me was to evacuate Cambodian students in China to Cambodia [...] while living and studying in China, they are in China’s care and responsibility. I have concern on news that some of them have returned at this time [...]

News has been they come to Cambodia because they are at their terms breaks. Anyway, I urge them to ask for permissions from their universities/schools [...] should we decide to move our students out, China would have marked our behavior toward her.

In good time, we are with them, and in bad time, we abandon them. China has 1.4 billion population and they live in their country, why we dare not? [...]

No Evacuations in Japan and South Korea

We may look into two examples – one in the case with Japan and another with South Korea. You may have remembered about earthquake related nuclear fuel leakage incident (in Fukushima, Japan). There had been suggestions to move our diplomats out provisionally.

I instructed then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of For-

eign Affairs and International Cooperation to inform (Cambodian diplomats in) Tokyo to stay put and respect guidance provided by the Japanese government. We must not abandon Japan in such difficult time [...] if Japanese people can live, we also can.

We also raised some money among our people as a token of friendship for Japan [...] the money was not much but our hearts for Japan matter [...]

South Korea has been a second experience. The North declared it would wage war and warn foreign diplomats to leave South Korea. There had been requests from our people who have their children working and living in South Korea, and some opposition circles, to evacuate Cambodian workers out of the country [...]

My decision was if the people of South Korea can live it, we also can live with them. They have measures to help their people [...] what we did was to live in it with people of South Korea. We shared with them good and bad times [...] as for the case in China there is no need for evacuation [...]

Recommendations

[...] we have swift reactions from many working groups and the news came [...] Minister of Health, HE Mam Bun Heng certified to me that there has been one case found.

I replied instructing him to share the news. It is normal to have Prime Minister’s decision on such delicate issue. We have nothing to cover up. We got the news out and we have this press conference today [...]

As Prime Minister I have followed the issue and allowed competent institutions to take actions [...] to carry this through, let me appeal to our people on the following points:

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**Simultaneously
 Synchronized Efforts**

I hope that this would explain our people as to why it has taken us a long time. However, from my observation, once the accident happened, our forces – not only from Kep province but also those from the provinces of Preah Sihanouk, Kompot, Takeo, and other national institutions, the armed forces – have come to the site to simultaneously synchronize efforts. We also have medical teams and youth teams present and did whatever was required. They worked actively to rescue lives and exhume bodies from rubble. There are 59 victims, 22 of which are women, and there included children too. Among the 36 deceased, 14 are female. There are 23 injured. It is quite unfortunate for our nation [...]

Let me take this opportune moment to express my profound thanks to Their Majesties – HM the King and the Queen Mother – for their concerns and contributions through Samdech Chaohua Veang Kong Sam Ol to the Royal Government to provide to the victims. My thanks also go to the Senate, the National Assembly, and generous people for their donations. I have not appealed for financial help but they do it voluntarily. We have received a sum of 1.7 million USD. I have a special thank for our search and rescue teams whom I have trusted as the backbone of our national forces and I am proud of them.

The media, especially TVs have been active in broadcasting what is happening and going on here. I am sure that we must come up with more plans for training (of our search and rescue operation). I also thank the private sector who provided the operation with their machines and the Chinese experts working at the Preah Sihanouk province

[...] for the joint efforts to rescue our people [...]

**The Kep Governor
 and Officials Unremoved**

It is an accident. Let me clarify to you. Once the collapse happened, some sent to my WhatsApp and Telegram accusing so and so about this and that and even recommended removals, while it was urgent to save lives [...] let me clarify this to clear air to avoid suspicion that the Kep governor and officials will continue to be in office. I make this point because one political party leader asked a question what would happen to the governor of Kep since, for such accident in the province of Preah Sihanouk, the governor resigned [...] building collapse does not happen only in Cambodia [...] why do they call on us to remove so and so from offices? I may review some of our officials in the Royal Government for their comments [...] aimed at urging me to remove the Kep governor from office. It is time for search and rescue [...] some have focused too much on what the Royal Government and I or Samdech Krola Haom Sar Kheng would do to resolve this problem? There will be no such actions, let me clear the air.

**Inspection Commission
 Set Up**

[...] What happened in the province of Preah Sihanouk that the Governor resigned was a different matter. What I did was to move him to do a different job and to get someone to take over. You could have asked if for the engulfed (medieval cathedral Notre-Dame) church in Paris, the governor was required to resign? [...] why do those people like “find others’ faults?” I may review my officials who commented in my WhatsApp and posted (improper comments) in Facebook (on the accidents) and reprimand them. I accepted to take their

opinions for considerations but it is not the time to talk about that. We will have this inspection commission set up soon to investigate the collapse [...]

As of now, the preliminary assessments has pinpointed two major technical shortcomings, though I am not trying to draw a conclusion on behalf of technicians (involved in the assessment). Firstly, as far as the construction goes, constructors do not abide by the architectural requirements. They have swapped to smaller steel bars [...]. Secondly, as far as concrete floor is concerned, they had removed the wooden planks and rods from beneath earlier than conditioned [...] to move to laying another floor up. The construction man died under the building together with his children, though. We could not hold anyone accountable here [...] as far as I know the Police commission of Kep province has the owner of the building in custody and will send him to court [...] to face with civil procedural case [...]

I have noticed this moment of national spirit, except some people who have ill-will opinions [...] that I have said all this is not because I wish to relieve responsibility or hide our weak points. I wanted our people on the other hand not to be extremists and resorting to insulting while lacking objective investigation [...] I have no right to shut them up. It is their freedom but I have right to explain what should we do in time like this. For what happened here, the owner just got out of the building before it collapsed. He could have been dead too [...]

**Fearless Search
 and Rescue Teams**

Some had insinuated my appointment of HE Yun Min, former governor of Preah Sihanouk province, to the post of Secretary of State for Defense [...] for what happened in Preah Sihanouk province

was not his fault, though it did happen in the territory under his supervision [...] I am so proud of our people who worked days and nights in the operation. We are sad for what happened but we are proud of commitments of our forces – men and women working under fractured buildings and rubble [...]

I decided yesterday to offer 10,000 USD for each injured person, except the last seven or so rescued are to receive 10,000 USD each. For the family of each deceased would receive 50,000 USD and ten million Riel for funeral conduction. We will see if we have money left to help with families of the deceased as they have lost their supports [...]

I am proud of quick reactions of our forces and my appreciation goes to General Kun Kim, assuming his duty as the first Vice President of the National Disaster Management Committee for his presence right on spot once the news came and his leadership of the operation before I arrived. We trust in our institutions.

**As Khmers – Whoever, in
 Whatever Tendency, Should
 Help Each Other**

I hope, in the near future, after the law on construction fully implemented, there would be less or no more accidents such as this. We have had our law on construction approved in the last two months or so, under which every construction company is required to have construction inspection from another company [...] (responding to a question on Kem Sokha's contribution) with regard to contributions, we welcome everyone. I have no information about his contribution. At this moment, whoever, in whatever tendency, as Khmer we should help each other. It is not time to go into dispute. If it was what you have said, I welcome Koeum

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Firstly, **please do not overreact to fear because it would waste our time to do whatever you have to.**

We can avoid infections through exercising hygiene and sanitation in our way of living, eating, traveling, and working, etc. Each individual and each family must learn to protect him/herself and themselves. This would help us protect ourselves not only from novel coronavirus threat but also from other viruses [...]

Secondly, **provide and share the truth (true information) to people.**

As I mentioned earlier, once again I thank the media outlets who are quite professional and responsible in providing and sharing the truth. They have provided the truth countering to those that are fake and poisoning society [...]

Let me stress here that credible information must come from the Ministry of Health. The Ministry must be leading in providing news for that matter, not the Quick Reaction Unit (of the Council of Ministers), the Ministry of Information, and/or institutions that are not in charge by law [...]

Thirdly, **ensure normal functioning of state institutions, private companies, factories, enterprises, Buddhist pagodas, mosques, and churches, etc. [...]**

We have pursued a model principle that we agreed and implemented in ASEAN in 2003 when we fought against SARS. Anyone found to be sick in a particular country, the host country must cure her/him until s/he fully recovered before allowing her/him to return to wherever s/he needed to go [...]

Fourthly, **schools/learning institutions must focus on creating confidence for students and their parents, and/**

or supervisors, (so that they) send their children to schools, and exercise measures to ensure hygiene and sanitation in schools of every level [...]

As I appreciate the fact that many parents and/or supervisors send their children to schools despite rumors of fear [...] I hope that those who feared sending their children to schools should resume sending them. Your children needed to be in school or they would be left out [...]

Fifthly, **(one) should wear a mask whenever and wherever necessary.**

I said whenever and wherever is necessary. For instance in this press conference, I have no need to put on a mask. You may observe that at the airport, most European tourists wear no mask [...] they know about the virus [...]

Some of us have overreacted and put on one not even when it is necessary. However, I would put on a mask and other required dressed when I had to see my mother in law who, even after being discharged from hospital is still in an ICU room at home. That was and will be necessary [...]

Sixthly, **people dealing with selling masks should not jack up the price.** It was quite sad that some mask sellers increased the price. I am calling in people who sell mask to take no advantage from this circumstance [...] I am calling on factories to help produce masks and sell to the state or help people who are in real need [...] we must be prepared in case the incident of disease and need to protect ourselves would prolong [...]

Seventhly, **service sector must ensure normal functioning without discrimination** – either from air or water transportations as they are relating to airports, seas/rivers ports, hotels and transportation means.

Should one opt for closing air connection, one would not close only with China but with many other countries (where the novel coronavirus cases found) [...] one good thing about Cambodia seemed to be the fact that though they may be fearful but they continue to travel [...]

Eighthly, Cambodian diplomats, consular officers, and students working and studying in China, those in Wuhan especially, must continue their presence there and join with the people of China in the fight against this disease outbreak.

We must not abandon the Chinese people in this difficult time. Our ancestors have a saying for us all to learn – “We love each other in time of need. We know who is a good friend in time of difficulty” [...]

Questions & Answers

Doem Ampil: [...] *my apology for the mistake yesterday. I have two questions relating to this issue. First, has the Royal Government prepared any amount of fund in this unforeseeable period that we are fighting to prevent the outbreak in Cambodia? Secondly, Would Samdech create any ad-hoc commission to monitor and assess possible impacts on socio-economic condition and tourism industry of Cambodia?*

Samdech Techo: Thank you for your apology [...] now the first question, how much money are we going to spend? Well, I do not disclose how much but I would assure you the Royal Government would spend as much as it is required [...] however, for the moment, it is not yet time for the Royal Government to do so.

The budget allocated to the Ministry of Health is sufficient to cover demanding expenses. On second point, I do not wish to make repetitive remark

about setting up commission to deal with this or that. In the early part of the fifth legislative term of the Royal Government, I dissolved many commissions as they caused lack of responsibilities among institutions designated by law.

The Ministry of Health must stay ahead in taking up respective responsibilities. Concerned institutions too, such as environment, police, etc. [...]

As for possible economic impacts, we have a mechanism in place to do monitoring and making assessments. They will look into relevant issues and would foresee impact of growth [...] Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Finance, HE Aun Pomponiroth would lead this work [...]

In my over 35-year experience holding office, dissolving commissions around the Council of Ministers was the best chance for reforms. Justice takes over judicial reform. Public Function takes over reform of public administration. Reform of the army goes to the Ministry of National Defense, for instance. Public financial reform has increased revenue from custom is almost 1 billion USD [...]

I do not need to tell HE Mam Bun Heng of what to do [...] he takes up his responsibilities for instance whether there needed to install (scanning machines at entry points) or not [...] he has the power in his sphere of technical expertise. As for how much money we would need to spend, I just tell you we go wherever it may take. That is easy to understand [...]

Fresh News: [...] *as of this moment, has the RGC prepared to take any parts in co-operation with the government of China to help relieve its hardship?*

Samdech Techo: we must continue to follow up but I am

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of the opinion that the Chinese government exercise high responsibilities. Prime Minister Li Keqiang was at the epicenter himself [...]

As to how do we go about contributing to China's fight, I think is what we are doing here. We do not need to ban flights or shipping transportations from China, turn away Chinese tourists, and/or evacuate diplomats and students from China. We do not do that means, for we do not add fear to the Chinese people [...]

I do not think China would need our money to help them. We just make sure we are providing good cooperation with the Chinese embassy in Cambodia to create a good environment for Chinese investors and tourists [...] and refrain from any discrimination there may be [...] more so, should we ban flights from China, as I said earlier, we put our economy and relations with China in trouble [...]

Hang Meas: [...] besides posting untrue information by individuals [...] what the Royal Government would do to bloggers and/or media outlets that are sharing fake news?

Samdech Techo: I think the educational measure is more appropriate than legal ones. What I mean is not about prison or any sort like that. I even provided my lawyers to protect the media people who have factual and legal appropriateness.

However, Facebook and or outlets of some sorts are not fully qualified as a press organization. We have no need to go for punishment as long as they confess their mistakes.

Educating them would be the best option. Those who falsify facts and poison society with their works are mostly from abroad [...]

Let me recap what I said, the best measure is not by legal

mean at this stage as long as they confess what they did wrong and correct it.

We must opt for professional education and provide them with fuller information from relevant ministry, and in this case the Ministry of Health, to make them well-informed media persons on the matter and share the truth to people to reject fake ones [...]

Thmey Thmey: [...] what are Cambodia's expertise in treating (the infected Chinese) to recover? [...] people do not seem to trust in treatment [...]

Samdech Techo: Well, let us stay here. I may ask you, the fact that (you said) people do not have trust (in the Ministry of Health or medical expertise of Cambodia), has there been anyone sick yet? (...) if there has not been anyone sick yet, why talking about people having no trust? That was what you have added to it.

The fact is not one Cambodian in Cambodia is sick (from this) yet, why talking about trust, when there has not been treatment yet.

Now, I am answering to your question. As of now, the World Health Organization and the world as a whole have not identified its cause [...] there is no vaccination for it. In this case, we have only two methods to deal with it.

Firstly, we must prevent it from spreading and there are instructions about hygiene and sanitations [...] we used to say in health "to prevent is better than to cure."

Secondly, should we find one with this sickness, we must put her/him in isolation, where s/he will receive medical treatment and care [...] with journalists, it has always been my ways, if they posed me unreasonable questions, I ask her/him back with a question.

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pened 41 years ago.

I have become the youngest Foreign Minister, at the age of not even 27 years old, on 8 January 1979 – a few hours after Phnom Penh liberated [...]

On 14 January 1985, at the age of 32, I became Prime Minister. It was 35 years ago. HE Khieu Kanharith and some other would have remembered then that I had the 100% support for my candidacy for the post of Prime Minister [...]

It is also the 32 years anniversary of the second peace negotiation carried out between Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk and me at Saint-Germain-en-Laye on 20-21 January 1988. The first negotiation conducted on 2 December 1987 at Fere-en-Tardenois [...]

It is the 24th anniversary of the commencement of the win-win policy starting from the secession of Division 18 in Oral led by (General) Keo Pong from the Khmer Rouge (Democratic Kampuchea) in January 1996 [...] that we have ended war on 29 December 1998, but the background work started in 1995 [...]

It is more personal. It is my 44th anniversary to change from a single man to become a married man. I got married with my wife on 5 January 1976 [...]

Also in this month, 20 years ago, I became a grandfather for the first time on 28 January 2000 [...] and,

All my sons and daughters are married in January [...]

Power Transfer, Insults Unforgivable, Ten More Years

I listed to a group discussion online [...] there has been debate about this news on the Cambodia Daily that Hun Sen was seeking to transfer power to his eldest son – Hun Manet, in what they had predicted to

be by 2020-2021. Let me make it clear on this matter that I need ten more years to hold the office of the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia. Though qualified, Hun Manet had to wait until after 2028 or even after 2029 or 2030 [...] Cambodia is a democratic country and there is no such thing as transfer of power from father to son like what happened in some countries. It has to go through elections [...] more so, when I am leaving, it may not be time for my son to take the post as I have here colleagues and we have to sort out things among us [...]

I wish commentators and analysts spare us some judgments and refrain from making illogical conclusions. Some with destructive intention [...] had gone this far to accuse Hun Manet of being a son of a foreigner [...] let me make it clear on this point too that I would not forgive whoever insulted my wife and my son [...] those in foreign circles who preached respects of rights should understand. How do you feel when someone accused your wife to have an affair with someone else? I will not tolerate such attack. It will not end at making comments. I will not tolerate them [...] let me reaffirm that Hun Manet has to go through elections even if he is qualified. In fact, I would not allow him to join the Royal Government. According to his capacity, he could be a Minister of Secretary of State, but I would rather leave him outside [...]

I know that there have been questions mounting on who would be taking over after Hun Sen. That is not a small matter. There would need to be a certain answer to it. However, it is not at this time. As of this moment, after Hun Sen, it will be Hun Sen. In saying so, there is no need for those commentators/analysts to talk about Hun Sen transferring power to son. It will not be

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happening for at least another ten years [...]

“To Abuse No Rights of Others, To Falsify No Truth”

Political and macroeconomic stability is two ends of one knot. Not only that we must ensure political and macroeconomic stability, we also must perform our duty in a timely manner. The press/media – both state and private – have actively contributed to safeguarding peace, political stability, security, and social order [...] they are indispensable partners of the Royal Government and public institutions [...] I have noticed though some online news outlets who performed themselves the duties of director, owners, and reporters themselves insulting and abusing other people’s rights [...]

To keep your value and dignity intact, and confidence, I may give you a slogan “to abuse no rights of others, to falsify no truth.” I have no worries about those major, credible and professional press/media organizations [...] as the press/media wish to be respectable, those employed in the business/jobs must respect other people’s rights. We must be equal before the law. They should not consider themselves a judge, an investigator and argue laws on their own [...]

Seven Tasks to Carry Forwards

Let me now talk about things that we needed to continue to fulfil together. **Firstly, we must continue to keep peace.** Peacekeeping is not a job of only the Prime Minister or a few people in the Royal Government to carry through. Journalists/press/media people must also do their jobs to keep peace. Without peace, where would you all go? [...] you also have to contribute to keeping political stability, security, social order, and to

implement safe village/commune [...] to keep our villages/communes safe from drugs, thefts and robberies [...]

Secondly, I am asking national and sub-national institutions to set up information delivering mechanisms such as spokespersons and social media, etc. [...] I would instruct heads of institutions such as Ministers and governors/mayors of provinces/cities to take the highest responsibilities in delivering/breaking news by themselves. Some have already done well like HE Sun Chanthol, Samdech Pichey Sena Tia Banh, Samdech Krola Haom Sar Kheng, etc. [...] they conduct press briefings and conferences directly with the press/media people. However, they may not have all the times to do so [...]

Thirdly, to serve as bridge from state to people and vice versa on both policies and actual implementations [...] not every policies issued are correct or reflecting what are happening in real. Sometimes it is responsive and sometimes not responsive to the reality. Even for instance the meeting of the Permanent Committee of the Cambodian People’s Party yesterday to prepare reports and set directives for the central committee plenum in February, we decided to review leading to possible amendments of outdated or irrelevant points in its statute [...]

Fourthly, take part actively in fighting social inactiveness, corruption, irregularity and injustices. We are after a clean and transparent society. We all accept that injustices is a causing factor for social instability. This calls on wider and fundamental works and contributions from the press/media to exercise their professions in setting light on the truth and not faking them [...]

Fifthly, to provide true news to combat fake ones. The

world has had concerns about fake news. In the region, Singapore has become the first country to work out law on fake news. We have not gone that far yet. We are in the process of digesting this decision whether to go for it or not. It is very likely though that we may go for it [...]

Sixthly, to get ready to move from analog to digital by 2023 and to finish preparing laws and legal papers concerning information in the sixth legislative term [...] I must declare today that law on access to information must be ready in 2020 [...]

Seventhly, we must devote efforts on human resource development – both general, ethical and professional knowledge. Training of human resource for information institutions must take one-step ahead as we are now in a time of tough competitions [...]

To Charge No Fees on Frequency Use; Provide Legal Help to Press/Media

Let me now touch requests brought to me by HE Khieu Kanharith (Minister of Information) [...] **(concerning this request to the Royal Government to charge no fee on use of frequency) I am giving my support and agree to withdraw the charge.** That will of course alleviate your expense burden. However, you may not ask for more financial backing from the national budget [...]

As for the second request **to provide legal help/lawyers of the Royal Government in defense of press/media persons [...]** well, my answer is I agree to allow lawyers of Samdech Techo to defend press/media people where there are appropriate facts and legal issues. I am asking the President of the Lawyers of Samdech Techo team to look into this request of legal defense for press/media people. They do not have to pay for their services [...].

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Cambodia, I am expressing my greeting to rapid progress made in every fields by Vietnam, especially this achievement of free trade agreement between Vietnam and European Union, which will promote further economic, trade and tourism growths. It would also generate flow of foreign direct investments in Vietnam as well as countries in the region, Cambodia also included, partially contributing to elevate growth, especially living conditions of peoples of our two countries.

Along with this, the current Cambodian-Vietnamese cooperation achievements, as in every other years, have reflected good neighborly relation, traditional friendship, trust, and mutual respect, in every field of cooperation between our two countries, especially realizing progresses in the economic, trade, political and diplomatic fronts. I am optimistic on national and foreign investors, especially those from Vietnam for choosing Cambodia as their potential investment target for initial investment or expansion of their businesses. They have responded to the Royal Government’s investments and businesses principles of non-discrimination encouragement, competition, equality, protection of rights and legal interest, to expand and realize projected trade targets between our two countries.

A moment ago, President of the Vietnam Business Club talked about a trade volume that is more than 5.2 billion USD. This figure recorded by customs officers does not reflect the reality. At least, Vietnam help purchase from one to two million metric tons of rice from Cambodia per year and the customs office might not have properly recorded it. It is on this note that we call on our Vietnamese friends, as they have more ability in pro-

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the Ministry of Industry and Handicraft to become the Ministry of Industry, Technology and Innovation. The Minister, HE Cham Prasidh, will lead this work, and seek to amend related laws and by laws at the National Assembly, while redrafting a sub-decree of law on organization and functioning of the Ministry. It will create units that conducts scientific and technological studies and researches [...] to cope up with the industry 4.0 era [...]

[From Text] ... I encourage leaders in Ministries and diplomats to make further efforts to increase knowledge and raise high capacity in research and analysis of information, especially those relating to geopolitical and geo-economic developments.

[Comments 5]

At this time, 41 years ago, I started to put together the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There were only three of people then. It was I, not even 27 years old, my bodyguard and my driver. There were no human resource. Now, 41 years later, we have plenty [...] in those days we worked for a ration of both rice and corn. The current Supreme Court building was the place where we cooked for staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [...] Cham Prasidh, my personal secretary then, rode a black bicycle. There were no cars [...] we have a different situation now. I have been the only person to serve without interruption in the past 41 years from holding the post of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs to become Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, before I transferred finally the post (of Foreign Minister) to someone else [...]

Arriving to Moscow, we requested to meet with Andrei Gromyko, then foreign minister of the former Soviet Union.

I was 27 years old and he was then 72 years old. I was so concerned that I will be meeting someone with that age and experience [...] my mind came to rest in my voyage between Mumbai and Tashkent that big or small – we are representing a country. I am young but I represent a country [...] after looking at the Cambodian flag on pole by that of the Soviet Union, and a car with national flags of the two countries, it weighs more to my argument of representing a nation [...]

As of present, salary of our diplomatic staff in foreign countries are not that low. We have sought every means to reduce their difficulties [...] I continue to stand firm on my position to allow no one to lead our nose around and we will not trade national sovereignty with favor or assistance of any form. Should we not be able to implement our laws and act according to what is required by others, would we be still a country of independence and sovereignty?

In the past, we could survive under economic embargo around us, though we had relations only with the former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries' bloc or CMEA, plus ... Vietnam, Laos, and India. At present, we have many trade and business partners [...].

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cessing industry, to make further investments in Cambodia. It is beneficial for the Cambodian people as well as for Vietnam businesses in Cambodia.

Today, I am so happy that I have fulfilled the promise I made in one of my visits to Hanoi, where there was this request for an annual meeting. This is the first year that we meet and I hope that for the years to come, before the Vietnam Tet, we would continue to meet. I hope that such a meeting will strengthen further

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Among our 16 million people, no Cambodian is sick from this yet, why do we have this question about people do not seem to trust (Cambodian medical treatment?) [...] people should trust in themselves and make their bests to protect themselves [...]

PNN: [...] a majority of people lack information (about coronavirus). Has the Royal Government, mainly the Ministry of Health, sufficient tools and equipment like in other countries to prevent and fight against this virus?

Samdech Techo: We have talked a lot about this already [...] we have taken precautionary measures to respond to whatever may come and that including also our proactive one that I appeal to factories to help produce masks in reserve to distribute to people [...].

Well, we have in store our measures to deal with the matter. We have put into operation those measures and we are in control of the situation. If our people, some have been overfed with fear, focus on how to protect themselves, it would have been a major contribution, indeed [...]

To (Thmey Thmey reporter) I am sorry that I cut you in with my responsive question [...] I just wish to reaffirm on your

bond of friendship and increase level of mutual trust, especially those of the Vietnamese investors in/to Cambodia.

On this occasion of the celebration of the Vietnam Tet 2020 that is arriving soon, let me invite honorable guests to raise glasses for the strong bond of friendship and solidarity between people of our two countries – Cambodia and Vietnam, especially for health and successes in every tasks of your Excellencies, ladies, Lok Oknha, and gentlemen who are here present./.

point that the world has not yet identified what sickness it is and vaccination would take months to get one as it take a long lab process [...]. Let us agree on the fact that this is the time that we must apply defense strategy.

Should anything happen, we must follow the precedent (medical) procedures [...] you may have done a great help if you just say in your reportage that people must trust first in themselves [...] if we are not sick yet, how could we say there is no trust in the Ministry of Health or medical service [...]

Well, I am taking no more questions. I hope that relevant institutions and sub-national authorities take jointly effective measures especially those media organizations must be more active in their works.

I would recommend those (official and professional) media organizations to defeat fake news with true/official news [...]. Any one TV or media station do that I would consider issuing it/them with a letter of appreciation on 14 January 2021, when we have regular gathering between Prime Minister and media people [...]

You must seek verification or confirmation from the Ministry of Health before releasing information, or even conduct interview with designated person so that your information giving out helps clear people's mind from fake news [...].

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Sokha's attitude [...] and I think what (you said) Keom Sokha did could be a correct move unlike some in the Royal Government.

(According to you) he did not denounce the Royal Government but express his regret and pay condolence (to the victims) [...].

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stance the issue of palm oil as in the case of Indonesia and Malaysia [...]

[From text] ... *Cambodia contributes further in building the ASEAN community aimed at serving people and people will be the center of keeping and strengthening unity and centrality of ASEAN, whereby it would promote and strengthen relations with external partners for development and growth, and society based on two fundamental foundations – making consensus decision and non-interference in internal affairs.*

[Comments 2]

On this point, please allow me to make some comments. A moment ago, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MFAIC) HE Prak Sokhonn proposed establishments of embassies in Africa and Latin America. In principle, I agreed to the requests. We may have one embassy in South Africa and another in Brazil. We should aim to accomplish this objective in 2021 or 2022 [...]

As for ASEAN, we must look to its unity. Principle of a community, whereby consensus is fundamental has been a great experience among the ASEAN countries. I could remember that when we argue about decision on the ASEAN Charter in Cebu, the Philippines, two countries brought up two possibilities (1) in case ASEAN members could not achieve consensus, ASEAN should decide through voting, and (2) there would be this option for an expulsion of country member(s) of ASEAN. On these points, I took the lead in dialoguing with other ASEAN leaders and I made my point clearly that should ASEAN opt to making decision through voting, ASEAN would definitely be divisive. Voting would create those on the majority

and those on the minority sides.

As for the second point about expulsion from membership, I raised a question about expelling members making serious mistakes [...] I asked what is the grave mistake? Was it a military coup, and on another aspect of it who would define who to be committing grave or not grave mistake? Finally, we are able to preserve consensus principle. It was hard but we did it to guarantee unity in the framework of ASEAN. In ASEAN, we have countries that are big and small, rich and poor. (Thanks to this principle,) ASEAN is not divisive and does not have big brother country [...]

In Europe, today the UK is leaving European Union [...] in Davos, in 2017, it was just hours before the swearing in of President Donald Trump, a British scholar asked me a question if there were any member countries of ASEAN consider leaving the group. I said to him that he should change his question to what countries are going to leave EU after Brexit [...] would there be any countries, and it is for a fact, that are considering of leaving? There are home-grown movements for and against in Europe, and this should be a lesson learned from Europe for the sake of strengthening ASEAN [...]

UK was a founding member of EU and lately people in the UK voted in referendum to support Prime Minister Boris Johnson on his strive to leave EU with deals. It could be a suggestion that people in the UK are not happy with Europe. ASEAN should take lessons from what happened in Europe – both good ones and bad ones. We have a role in building ASEAN of solidarity and promoting harmony in the region. I am not hammering it but I have to say it since this is an issue that lies in relation between the two regions.

At present, Europe and ASEAN are not in good term. Five countries member of ASEAN have had issues with Europe, among whom Indonesia and Malaysia are having serious ones regarding this pretext (by the EU) on deforestation (for palm oil). EU response has been to cease purchase of palm oil from Indonesia and Malaysia and this could create tension between the two continents. On Cambodia, Myanmar, and the Philippines, EU have inflicted issues of human rights, and that does not include some people whom EU have always directed its threat at in ASEAN.

Against such backdrops, would strategic partnership relations between ASEAN and EU move any fast [...] countries in Europe have good relations with countries in ASEAN (as we can be happy about). However, they have European Parliament and European Commission who define policies for Europe [...]

Well, I am not taking this forum to criticize Europe but as a country member of ASEAN, I wish the bloc to draw up experiences from its principle of consensus and non-interference in other internal affairs. Consensus is the fundamental principle for ASEAN unity, though it could be difficult to reach a decision. However, it keeps ASEAN together and seeks for more compromising means than voting.

[From text] ... *contribute to efforts to reach an agreement on Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP); continue negotiation for new trade agreements, especially with China, the People's Republic of Korea and Eurasian Economic Union.*

[Comments 3]

We should have understanding reserved for India. In 2012, when Cambodia hosted the

meeting, the Phnom Penh declaration listed sixteen countries and India was one of them. Since it was difficult to protect Indian interest, India has not yet reached the time yet. After leaving the meeting, I also talked to Indian Prime Minister and suggested a formula of 15 + 1 dialogue. This implies on the one hand we are not leaving India out and we leave the door open for the time when India may deem its participation to ASEM agreement. We will negotiate with China, the Republic of Korea and Eurasian Economic Union for Cambodia's free trade agreements with the three.

[From text] ... *focus high attention on development of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital technology to cope up with neighboring countries and to strengthen Cambodian capacity in responding to risks of information technology in the era of industrial revolution 4.0.*

[Comments 4]

Let me clarify this word "big countries looking onto South East Asia." We do not mean to talk about the Indo-Pacific Strategy mentioned in this paper. ASEAN also has its own initiative on Indo-Pacific concept. We are seeking to synthesize regional initiatives, the belt and road also included [...] under the former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, India raised its "Look East" view. Now, the government of Prime Minister Norendra Modi talked about its "Act East" policy. We must reach out to this decision. South Korea initiated its "Look South" policy too. We must in this case synthesize those initiatives in the interest of ASEAN and serve as the center of solidarity between and among states [...]

In the region, there are countries that create Ministry of Science and Technology. I decided to readjust focus of

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