

## Closing Remarks & Press Conference on 40<sup>th</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> ASEAN summits (13 November 2022 — Extensive Excerpts and Unofficial Translation)



“A year has passed since I received the ASEAN chairmanship gavel from H.M. Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei Darussalam on 28 October 2021, a year full of memorable and historical moment for me and for Cambodia, a great honor to have assumed this rotating chairmanship.

As we are making an all-out effort to recover from the impacts of COVID-19 and deal with the Myanmar crisis, unexpected situations with far-reaching security, social and economic consequences have emerged. Nevertheless, ASEAN has managed, once again, to navigated unscathed through these rough waters and successfully delivered substantial outcomes. We have lived up to our chairmanship’s theme “ASEAN A.C.T.: Addressing Challenges Together”.

I am pleased that the 40th and 41st ASEAN Summits and Related Summits are now behind us, thanks to the full cooperation, support and flexibilities extended by ASEAN Member States and all our Partners, we have a long list of achievements to be proud of.

The pleasure that I have in hosting, in Phnom Penh and in per-

son, all the Leaders and delegates is immeasurable. For the last two years, our physical interactions were interrupted by the spread of COVID-19 and its deadly variants. It is certainly a major challenges to conclude 16 Summits within these four days, despite significant challenges. I recognize the hard work of our team and the extra mile they have taken to ensure that everyone is comfortable and this Chairmanship ends with a great success.

Within these four days, we have had a comprehensive and productive discussions on the ways forward to strengthen our ASEAN centrality and our relevance vis-a-vis our in its external partners, particularly at a time when the world is amidst the fast-evolving complex regional and international issues.

We have adopted and noted a total of 70 outcome documents and declarations covering the three pillars of the ASEAN Community and endorsed various cooperation frameworks with our Dialogue Partners. To advance and deepen relations with its partners, ASEAN agreed to extend the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in

(Continued on page 2)

## Diploma Presenting at RULE (1 November 2022 — Extensive Excerpts and Unofficial Translation)

[...] we have faced difficulties, and we have overcome them together. In the field of education, we have seen a new opportunity has arisen at the time of the Covid-19 epidemic. We have closed down schools but we replaced face-to-face classes with online learning. This can be considered as a leap forward in the digital front. Crisis always embodies opportunity.

The estimated 4 million students had learnt online or we can say collectively a digital platform. Digital platform is at its booming stage during the crisis. It is one of the fortunes of the world that Covid-19 was born after the world has already gone online. If the world has not yet found this online connection, perhaps during the shut-

down of individual countries, we will not be able to meet [...]

This year, thanks to our efforts, the country has reopened (its socio-economic activities) since November 1, 2021. Today marks the one-year anniversary of the reopening of the country, which boosted our country’s economic growth to 3% in 2021, after declining to -3.1% in 2020. The economy this year is (estimated to) growing at 5.5 percent as we have put in place a budget law to manage the financial economy for 2023 with a prediction that our growth will reach 6.6 percent. This is also due to all our efforts to reopen the country, in which schools are reopen after online studies [...]

(Continued on page 8)

## “Providing Land Access, Creating a Smile”

(22 November 2022)

*In addition to the prepared text, Samdech Techo gave his adlib comments with the following unofficial selection and translation by CNV:*

[...] I should emphasize this a bit. In the UN guided Millennium Development Goals, there were only eight goals. Cambodia has set then mines action as the ninth goal. As for the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations has set only 17 goals, but Cambodia has added mines action making it goal 18th, and fortunately the UNDP, our partners, as well as the Secretary-General of the United Nations recognized the importance of the added goal.

In a separate meeting between the UN Secretary-General An-

tonio Guterres and I, a few days ago, I asked him to consider, by the mid-term mandate for sustainable development, including issues related to landmines. I feel that many rich countries have had no worries about mines. Therefore, with the issue of sustainable development, or the previous development goals, from the millennium to the sustainable development goals, there included nothing about demining and removing unexploded ordnance. However, in reality, the issue of mines has become a problem. The Secretary-General of the United Nations has accepted this proposal for consideration with the member countries of the United Nations.

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 1)

Southeast Asia (TAC) to include Ukraine during the 40th and 41st ASEAN Summits. Similarly, 6 other states, namely Denmark, Greece, the Netherlands, Oman, Qatar and United Arab Emirates, have similarly signed on the TAC during the 55th AMM and Related meeting last August, bringing a total of 510 countries that are parties to this Treaty. We have issued the Joint Statement on the 20th Anniversary of the DOC to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the signing of the DOC in 2002. The 25th ASEAN Plus Three Summit also adopted important documents, including the Statement on the Commemoration of the 25th Anniversary of the ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation.

As far as our ASEAN Community building is concerned, we had adopted the ASEAN Leaders' Vision Statement on ASEAN A.C.T. Addressing Challenges Together, the ASEAN Leaders' Statement on the 55th Anniversary of ASEAN, and the ASEAN Leaders' Statement on ASEAN Connectivity Post-2025 Agenda. We adopted a Declaration on Building more Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Future through Unlocking Women entrepreneurship in ASEAN, following the successful 2nd ASEAN Women Leaders' Summit on this theme, on 12 October 2022; We are so pleased to be able to replicate for the second time the 2nd ASEAN Global Dialogue to exchange views to build a resilient and sustainable ASEAN in the Post Covid-19 Era.

Lastly, I would like to stress that ASEAN centrality is the primary driving force for substantive dialogue and collaboration with our external partners through various ASEAN-led mechanisms. We must maintain ASEAN unity regardless of circumstances for the best interests of the whole region. Fostering solidarity and unity will remain ASEAN's top priority in the coming years. As attested by this year's spirit of "Togetherness", we have been able to address and overcome

many challenges facing our region, thus enable us to secure peace, prosperity, and harmony within for our ASEAN family.

The Kingdom of Cambodia has full confidence that the Republic of Indonesia, as the incoming ASEAN chair, will continue to drive ASEAN forward to achieve our ultimate goal of having a peaceful, resilient, and inclusive ASEAN Community.

On this auspicious occasion, following my speech, I have the honor to hand over the ASEAN Chairmanship to the Republic of Indonesia for the year 2023, along with my best wishes to His Excellency President JOKO WIDODO for a successful chairmanship.

But right before that before handing Over the Chairmanship Gavel, allow me to take this opportunity to present to H.E. Dato Lim Jock Hoi, with the Royal Order of Sahametrei Grand Cross of the Government of the Kingdom Cambodia. The Medal is conferred in recognition of Dato Lim Jock Hoi's devotion and relentless efforts in ASEAN Community building process, during his tenure as the ASEAN Secretary-General.

At the same time, may I take this opportunity to announce that Mr. Haji Muhammad Iqbal Fakhri Haji Damit of Brunei Darussalam has been conferred the ASEAN Prize 2022. The award is in recognition for his work that enhances the spirit of a people-oriented and resilient ASEAN Community. For over a decade, Mr. Muhammad Damit has been actively mobilizing assistance and driving youth volunteerism in support for the upliftment and development of marginalized and vulnerable people across the region.

I would also take this opportunity to present an invitation to all ASEAN Heads of States and Governments to attend the Official Opening Ceremony of the 32nd SEA GAMES on May 5, 2023 and the Opening Ceremony of the 12th ASEAN Para Games on June 3, 2023, another milestones for our solidarity,

perseverance and friendship.

Finally, I would like to wish Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen good health and successes in your future endeavors."

*The following are selected questions and answer in the press briefing and conference after the 40<sup>th</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> ASEAN summits and related meetings:*

**CC Times (The Cambodia China Times):** [...] (Among other questions) why did ASEAN achieve so many memberships – up to seven countries – as high contracting parties to TAC? [...] Does receiving Ukraine now affect ASEAN-Russia relations? [...]

**Answer:** Thank you. This year, we see it as the first year that ASEAN has received the largest number of signatories to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC). There are two main reasons, in my opinion. The first is our external partners see a clearer picture of the role and importance of connecting with ASEAN. ASEAN itself has been strengthening its role, thus attracted the interest of countries outside the region, to participate in the framework of treaty of friendship and cooperation, with aims to participate in sectoral dialogue partners, to enhance relations, strategic partnership or to work with ASEAN. The second factor is the fact that for the past three years, all countries have been affected by the Covid-19 crisis. Meetings in Vietnam and Brunei did not take place directly. We are able to do it this time in Cambodia. Meeting (face to face) after a two-year absence allowed these countries (which did not sign the contract) the opportunity to sign in Phnom Penh [...]

To the question of whether it would anger Russia to allow Ukraine as a high contracting party to TAC. (Please be informed that) ASEAN is not a nephew of anyone. As President JOKO WIDODO of Indonesia announced during his acceptance of the ASEAN presidency. ASEAN does not care who is angry with whom. We

accept everyone equally. We are in the middle. We are not an ASEAN just to serve Russia or an ASEAN just to serve Ukraine. We are the ASEAN to communicate with all partners who want to communicate with us. I do not think Russia has any reason to oppose ASEAN's acceptance of Ukraine as a signatory to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia [...]

**BTV:** [...] (Among other questions) the head of the United Nations, His Excellency Antonio Guterres, expressed concern about the division of the world into two parts, one ruled by the United States and the other controlled by China. How will ASEAN continue to strengthen its position to resist the power struggles of the world powers, or simply the division of the world powers? And (2) Some people have linked Cambodia to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, saying that [...] Cambodia and other members may send aid to Ukraine, they also want to refer to military aid [...] while Cambodia is considering to send demining forces to help Ukraine. How can Samdech Techo respond and confirm?

**Answer:** Thank you for this question. When it comes to geopolitics, people often say that the world is divided. In the past, it was said that the world is divided between the United States (on one side) and the Soviet Union (on the other) in the Cold War era. Now they start talking about China on one side, and the United States on the other. For ASEAN or for Cambodia, we do not require anyone to be selected. We do not need to choose China and leave the United States or choose the United States and leave China.

Likewise, both the United States and China have told us that there is no requirement to choose between the United States and China. We have confirmed our position. What has been happening in Phnom Penh these days has made it

(Continued on page 3)



(Continued from page 2)

clear whether China and/or the United States come to ASEAN or ASEAN to the United States and China. We have programs like last May ASEAN to the US for special meetings there. Sometimes we go to China/Japan/India/Australia, it is very common.

At this point, the attraction associated with geopolitical issues is obvious, but it is in the attitude of each country and each group. If we talk about ASEAN, it is clear that ASEAN has its own neutrality, as we assert that we are not anyone's nephews. What is stated in Phnom Penh is clear that our external partners, whether rich or poor, small or large, must come to ASEAN territory. Cambodia is small and poor, but we have the ability to invite the President/Prime Minister of rich countries to give a speech according to our arrangements. This is the independence of ASEAN, not biased towards China or US.

Regarding Ukraine, Cambodia has no weapons and/or ammunition, and no intention to send weapons and/or ammunition to any country. We do not pour

Regarding Ukraine, Cambodia has no weapons and/or ammunition, and no intention to send weapons and/or ammunition to any country. We do not pour gasoline on the fire [...] we do not encourage fighting. What we are striving for is a humanitarian goal [...] we have been operating demining operations. We have not yet removed all mines yet. **We thought, and discussed with our partner – Japan, to help train Ukrainian deminers so that they can clear mines on Ukrainian territory.**

gasoline on the fire. This is our principle. Even though we have weapons and/or ammunition, we do not send them to any country because we do not encourage fighting. What we are striving for is a humanitarian goal. We used to be victims of landmines.

Thirty years on, since 1992, we have been operating demining operations. We have not yet removed all mines yet. **We thought, and discussed with our partner – Japan, to help train Ukrainian deminers so that they can clear mines on Ukrainian territory.** It is true that the war will be over, but the

"hidden assassins" are still there. The case in our country, the war ended in 1998, but so far, the mines are not over. Although the number of deaths/injuries (due to landmines) has dropped, it is not over. We are aiming to achieve this (zero mines) by 2025 [...]

I met with the Secretary-General of the United Nations. I suggested to him that when implementing this sustainable development goal, the issue of mines should be included. When they were (setting) the Millennium Development Goals, they did not include efforts about clearing mines. When it comes to setting sustainable development goals, there are nothing said about mines. The United Nations has acknowledged the mine problem. He accepted the recommendation to look into landmine issues [...] war broke out in many parts of the world, because of which mines must be used.

Sometimes, ammunitions used do not explode. We then have to destroy them. This does not mean that we provide military assistance to Ukraine. This is

part of the humanitarian work to save lives in connection with the dangers of landmines and unexploded ordnance [...]

**Fresh News:** [...] (Among other questions) Some countries appeared to wish for ASEAN to take stronger action against Myanmar in its efforts to resolve the deadlock situation in Myanmar [...] May I ask Samdech to help clarify why Cambodia needs to continue to use the cold-hearted policy of Myanmar? [...] and, various international forums have shown great sympathy for Ukraine, and not for Russia, etc. [...] but there does not seem to have initiative to

find a solution to end the conflict between the two countries yet. Have Samdech, at the East Asia Summit as well as other summits, put any new initiatives aiming for a solution to this conflict?

**Answer:** [...] on issue of Myanmar. May I ask who is hot and who is cold. In fact, all the measures taken by ASEAN member countries as well as external partners are aiming at getting Myanmar back to normal as soon as possible. It was

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in the interests of Myanmar. Let us ask this question, if you want a hot action, what are you going to do? It is a question for those who wanted to carry out a hot measure. Do they go fight Myanmar? And if it is a cold measure, can you comfort Myanmar with a piece of candy [...] hence, neither hot action nor cold one is possible. The problem is how to find a way to get the different factions there to get together as a group to work out a solution [...]

I have met this kind of situation. In the past, I was insulted by some that once the Vietnamese army withdrew from Cambodia, the Hun Sen's government would be blown off like a sheet of paper. In the end, the Hun Sen's government did not even shake and stretched its coverage in the country to an extent that concerned parties had had to work with Hun Sen.

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About whether there are initiatives for the situation in

Ukraine. In my meeting with the Foreign Minister of Ukraine, I suggested to him that, since the Russian Foreign Minister is going to be in Cambodia, he should consider a talk with him. Whether there will or will not be any positive outcomes, that will be a gesture of constructive dialogue. It is unfortunate that neither Russia nor Ukraine took that initiative in Phnom Penh.

From the dialogue initiative point, we do not see any specif-

ic signs regarding peace process. Coming were the efforts to find solutions to transporting grain and fertilizers. The Secretary-General of the United Nations and I are also discussing this issue of the Black Sea strait as it is relating to the transportation of grain, wheat, and fertilizers [...]

**PNN TV:** [...] (Among other questions) the presence of Mr. Joe Biden on Cambodian territory seems to have brought closeness [...] how can you confirm the meaning of diplomatic relations between Cambodia and the United States at this time? [...]

**Answer:** Thank you very much for this question. First, I want to talk a little bit about Cambodia-US relations. The **Royal Government has never said that the relations between Cambodia and the United States are bad.** The rumor that the United States does not need a Cambodian leader comes from the words of a group of people who do not like us.

Take for instance, when we had to postpone the US-ASEAN summit in Washington for a few days, they blamed it all on Hun Sen that the United States postponed the summit [...] in the end, it is still Hun Sen who was leading the ASEAN coun-

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

tries. We went there to co-chair the meeting.

I also heard what you just said [...] in Washington, D.C., when walking to the meeting room, I was behind others, and Joe Biden was in my pace. Some say that I walked over so to be able to be with Joe Biden [...]

Now it is obvious, is it not, that Joe Biden, came to Phnom Penh. I did not go to him. He came to me. This is a very common practice between country leaders. If you do not know how to be a leader of the country, do not judge the leader of the country. Making low judgment devalues yourself.

Leaders are polite. They have etiquette and moral. No matter how inconsistent the points, they behave in a constructive conversation [...] between leaders and leaders, no matter what, they have good manners and manage their relationships [...]

In the United States, they picked me up with their car and flew the Cambodian flag along with the American flag. It is true that the United States does not use our cars because they have a high standard of protection, but they flew the Cambodian flag and the US flag together too. This is the morality of respect, not just a practice between the United States and Cambodia, but all countries [...]

**EFC News:** [...] (Among other questions) can you tell us if you are satisfied with this ASEAN chairmanship in 2022, compared to the one in 2012?

**Answer:** I am satisfied with every time that Cambodia chairs the ASEAN Summits and related summits. I am saying this because every time we have different circumstances and issues. I should have said something to highlight this a bit. In 2002, what happened in Phnom Penh was the signing of the Code of Conduct for the South China Sea. That was the time when we had India's annual dialogue.

Cambodia is honored to host

India at the annual ASEAN-India Meeting. It has been 20 years now. In 2012, although there were some issues and I must affirm that they were not Cambodia's fault, you may remember that the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP) was announced in Phnom Penh. RCEP begins the negotiations in Phnom Penh and I announced it myself. That is the point at which I enjoy my role as chair of ASEAN.

The ASEAN chairmanship in 2022, or 10 years after the RCEP, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement came into force. This time, we have the 11th membership of Timor-Leste, plus the promotion of a compre-

The ASEAN Charter does not require the expulsion of anyone. ASEAN unity is within the framework of the charter. The charter does not provide for expulsion. We do not overdo it. Now we continue to invite Myanmar on a non-political level [...] we continue to invite Myanmar to various institutions that have meetings. We also send a message to Myanmar that if you do not comply, your rights as an institutional representative will be reviewed.

hensive strategic partnership with the United States and India, and the participation of seven high contracting parties in the signing of seven peace, friendship and cooperation agreements with Southeast Asia, and many more. Therefore,

**I have my satisfaction with all three Cambodian chairmanships of ASEAN (in 2002, 2012 and 2022).** The point to make here only the fact that we have different stages, different times, and different stories to deal with. We have fulfilled our duties as responsible chair [...]

**Kampuchea Thmey Newspaper:** (Among other questions) would Deputy Prime Minister His Excellency Prak Sokhon, Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair, visit Myanmar again [...] before the end of this term [...] it has been suggested that Myanmar wants to suspend its seat due to non-compliance with ASEAN's five-point unani-

mous agreement. Is it possible? Is there any way for ASEAN to amend the ASEAN Charter to be able to withdraw Myanmar's membership?

**Answer:** Thank you for this question. With regard to whether the special envoy of the ASEAN chair go or not to Myanmar, we are looking for the reaction from Myanmar. We still have more than a month left. We have to decide whether to go or not. I have not yet confirmed whether to go or not [...] the second point about whether is it possible to remove Myanmar as you said.

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charter does not provide for expulsion. We do not overdo it. Now we continue to invite Myanmar on a non-political level [...] we continue to invite Myanmar to various institutions that have meetings. We also send a message to Myanmar that if you do not comply, your rights as an institutional representative will be reviewed.

This is a confirmation from Phnom Penh to Nay Pyi Taw. But the right to evict is not there. It is Myanmar's seat. Myanmar does not give up its rights. We invited non-political representatives, but they did not send ones. We also do not know what to do. The only one way is to leave the seat and the flag there, but there is no one to sit [...]

**Thmey Thmey:** [...] (Among other questions) would the establishment of a comprehensive strategic dialogue partnership between India and the United States [...] be the ASEAN's

strategy to neutralize Chinese influence in the region? [...] (3) about the US statement calling for Cambodia to open up to political freedom next year, as well as the release of Seng Theary?

**Answer:** What is the effect of increasing all-round partnership with the United States and India with China? Let me share with you that China gained the status of a comprehensive strategic partner last year [...] we give the partnership to both China and Australia at the same time. Now we give it to the US and India at the same time. There is nothing a matter about it. The profitable party from this is ASEAN.

In other words, ASEAN is the center of attention, turning to the United States, India, China, Australia as their all-round strategic partners. It is not a matter of catching China and pushing the US away or catching America and pushing China out. Can you Cambodian journalists get rid of the thoughts in your minds [...]

*Regarding the US statement, you go and ask the US yourself. I did not answer because I did not know what the United States was talking about. Joe Biden did not talk much to me [...] because I only do my country work. He talked about this/that during the conversation, and he also talked about the election process next year. I explained to him about the election process and I predict what the election next year will be. In addition, we are talking about this/that, [...] Joe Biden is not talking about internal issues in Cambodia, but about global issues. I just want to confirm.*

**Koh Santepheap Newspaper:** [...] (Among other questions) some people say that the Sultan (of Brunei) seems to copy Samdech Techo's way to bring along HE Hun Manet, as well as the granddaughter on the international stage. What does the prince think about the mention?

**Answer:** Thank you [...] re-  
(Continued on page 5)



On this occasion, I would like to address the Buddhist monks and people across the country in addition to the prepared text that I have sent to the Cambodian people. On behalf of the Royal Government, I would like to mention three important points related to our national pride.

Firstly, as we are “drinking water, we must be thinking of the water source.” We should be deeply grateful to our ancestors of all generations who have worked hard to leave a legacy for our younger generation.

If our ancestors did not leave us anything, we would not have anything to inscribe in the World Heritage List, both tangible and intangible. This is the first point that I would like to emphasize to the Buddhist monks and our compatriots in addition to the letter that I just issued about two hours ago.

Secondly, we thank all the players/sportspersons who have worked hard to raise (cultural/sports human) capital since the liberation in 1979. They tried to

**(Continued from page 4)**  
garding the Sultan’s son, let me tell you that it is not the same as the case of me and Manet. The Sultan has already chosen a crown prince. Brunei has appointed an heir to the throne. The crown prince stays and rules the country in the absence of the Sultan. As for this prince, he always goes with him everywhere, and this time he came to Cambodia [...] I think this is a way to make travel easier for the Sultan. Having a son to travel with is good for him.

**Radio France International:**  
[...] *(Among other questions) I would like to know what progress in the international arena, especially the ASEAN forum, you would like to see when Cambodia comes to its 4th rotating chair; and what do you say about the visiting ship of Japanese Self-Defense Forces to Cambodia and the Ream Naval base [...]*

**Answer:** Well, the fourth meeting. If I wanted to, I would still be alive in another 10 years [...]

stand up and raise (related human) capital because everything was destroyed during the Pol Pot era. There was no better way than to look for the surviv-

ing human capitals – all the arts, sports and other areas. Some have survived so far and some have died.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to those who have died and to pay tribute to the players/sportspersons and coaches who strived to maintain this national identity by gradually pushing until we take this martial art (of Kun Lbokator or commonly known as Bokator) into the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces. That is our main pride.

The presence of Bokator at Angkor Sankranta every year in the past has really shown us

I know that some have cursed me to death. However, I would remind them that they can bet a race in cars, cows, horses, buffaloes, elephants, but they cannot race with karma. You understand clearly. You can race with me on this / that, but race with fate, which has made me the longest-serving prime minister in the world [...] I have no ambition to hold the hammer for the fourth time. I will choose the right time to leave. This Peace Palace is not only for Hun Sen to sit, but for others too [...]

As for **when Cambodia comes to its chair for the fourth time, I would think that a lot will have been resolved** then, including the DOC on the South China Sea. This is my prediction. The situation of geopolitical relations can also be considered calmer than now. Partners within our regional framework will operate in the image of full and well-connected economic cooperation and integration. According to the master plan, there could be connections from

how speedy it is to gain inscription of this martial art (in the World Heritage List) by UNESCO. I would also like to confirm to my compatriots all

over the country that during the Khmer New Year in April 2023, we will celebrate the Angkor Sankranta again.

At that time, I strongly hoped that Bokator would become an important symbol of the gathering at Angkor Sankranta. Thirdly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts as well as the National Olympic Committee of Cambodia for their efforts to promote this work.

Prior to the ASEAN Summit, I had already received a report on the approval by UNESCO in Paris, but we could not do anything for the procedure. We

Turkey or at least from India to Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. Better economic integration, especially with the entry into force of the RCEP, will improve the lives of Cambodians. Therefore, the story that happened in 2002, 2012, 2022 that Hun Sen faced, maybe after Hun Sen, the one in power will not encounter because the situation has improved.

The situation is not going to be bad, just you wait and see. They never work on creating a backward situation. In the meeting yesterday, the US President Joe Biden shared with us and I thanked him on behalf of ASEAN, that in the next few days he will meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping, or maybe even tomorrow. These points govern the relationship between the United States and China. If they both manage good relations with each other, it will create a favorable environment for our ASEAN countries. ASEAN benefits from all directions – the United States, China,

have to wait for about three weeks. It was until only 20 hours ago that the committee rang the bell to accept the “Kun Lbokator or Bokator” as an Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

Since 2008, until now, it has been more than a decade and a half that we have (consistently) inscribed artifacts, temples and asset as world human heritages – both tangible and intangible. I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts and all relevant actors who have worked hard for the good of our country. Hopefully we will be able to inscribe more of our ancestral wealth [...]

I would also like to confirm that in 2023, I will participate in the game of chess. Let me register from now. Weather winning or losing the game, as a veteran chess player, I would be able to at least be in company of the main competitors [...]

Europe and other parts of the world. That is why Cambodia is satisfied with its participation in the ASEAN framework [...]

Regarding Japanese ships. This is not a new story. We have been discussing since I went to Tokyo to attend the funeral of the late Shinzo Abe. The Japanese ship will call the port of Sihanoukville again. It will be a normal visit. This year is the Cambodian-Japanese friendship and cooperation in the field of defense due to the 30th anniversary of Japan’s PKO coming to Cambodia. Therefore, we are cooperating to ensure that Japanese naval vessels enter our waters as usual. We do not just welcome Japan. Whoever want to do so, please do not hesitate to just raise your hand. I told the Prime Minister of New Zealand that if you want to come in, we do not say no. **If any country want to come and do exercises with us on disaster management or counter-terrorism, we will say yes.** We do not have to deal with anyone alone. This is open for relationship [...]

## Closing of the Third National Sports/Games and First National Para Games Events

(30 November 2022)

(Continued from page 1)

At this point I should say that I was very surprised when after the meeting between me and the United Nations, there appeared to be news that the Secretary-General of the United Nations asked me to do this/that, while there was nothing we talked about Cambodia's internal affairs. Antonio Guterres and I, to be honest, have been good partners since the 1980s. He was the Prime Minister of Portugal and I am the Prime Minister of Cambodia, so we know each other, not for a day or two. Whenever we meet up, he never talks about Cambodia's internal affairs. I could not imagine that someone that I do not know or which UN officials, who go to the press with so and so news. Or, there are certain groups of people that constantly cause (fake information?). The matters that I discussed with the UN Secretary General were relating to landmines, cooperation on issue of sending UN peacekeepers and on the Khmer Rouge trial. These are what we discussed and I knew [...]

Outside the meeting, people said that the Secretary-General of the United Nations has asked me to do this/that and the matter has even reached to the US President Joe Biden. I will get to that in the later part. What I have said with the UN Secretary-General is the inclusion of landmines action into the UN Development Plan, which was formerly called the Millennium Development Goals. Now they called it sustainable development goal, which consists of only 17 goals and we set the 18th goal (to include demining). Our partners all support it as a unique story of Cambodia. But the current mine problem is not a separate issue, as it has now happened even in Ukraine, where there needs to be decades of efforts to remove unexploded ordnance, just you wait and see. It is not a small matter. There might be large ammunitions that are becoming unexploded ordnance [...]

On these points I would like to talk a little bit. I thank our development partners who have con-

tributed funds and materials for demining in Cambodia. During the meeting that took place in Phnom Penh last week at the ASEAN Summit and related Summits, I never forgot to talk with all partners about helping Cambodia to clear landmines and unexploded ordnance. I do not forget to mention this issue with every character that I meet. This time I managed to receive and meet every guest compared to the ASEAN Summit and related Summits we hosted in 2012, when I met some of them and did not have the chance to for some. This time I had a way to solve the problem [...]

Of course, we need help from friends, but it is in our duty to work hard to set goals for the flow of funds to support demining activities. In that, I would like to thank Her Majesty Hluang Mae (Queen Mother), and all the philanthropists, who have contributed in the past, which has so far accumulated to more than 10 million US dollars, and we have had more than 8 million dollars left. In relation to mines clearance, I continue to call on the philanthropists with ability to help because helping Cambodia is helping themselves. As for the national budget, I think there is a solution to increase the size of the budget for investment in demining, as we have been doing in releasing about US\$ 40 million a month to help relieve hardships of the people suffered from Covid-19 pandemic. I feel that when Covid-19 is relieved, there will be a reduction in the cost of sustaining the lives of the affected people, so that money can flow for mine action [...]

I will continue to work with HE Aun Porn Moniroth to ensure that our budget is shifted to every project, and every goal we set out. We need to do this to ensure that by 2025 there will be no more landmines. We will prepare it in such a way that we did when there was a shortage crisis of electricity in 2018. We immediately pulled out US\$ 400 million, and bought a 200-megawatt generator from Germany, and a 200-megawatt generator from Finland. We

placed them nearby Phnom Penh to supply immediately when there is a shortage. Next, we have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in Sihanoukville and more investments in roads in Siem Reap. Therefore, we can also invest annually on demining actions.

Should there be without commitment and determination, there would not be an ability for us to clear mines from the Cambodian territory. The only way to get there is to call on friends' contribution from outside, to call on local philanthropists in the country, willing to participate in demining in Cambodia, and to use our national budget to solve this problem. If we can end the mine problem in Cambodia, it is one thing, it is our merit since this country has suffered too much. The war is over, but mine is not over. I raised these issues with the President of the United States too. Unfortunately, there came this news about "releasing the bald head Apsara," for whom I have not heard Joe Biden talked to me about.

Suddenly, it has gone on in the news. I do not seem to understand. Who released the information? And who wrote that information? While the US president does not talk to me about that. We talked about opening up democracy for later elections, but there was no talk about this/that character in person at all. I did not hear it. When some asked me on that during the press conference, I was dazed that they said the President of the United States raised so and so matters to me. I did not hear it. That was why I said "it would be better to ask the United States." It was all because I did not know any of such talk.

To retract on the matter, all the characters whom I met then also raised (mines issue). Let me confirm to the provincial governors along the border, as well as the army, the Ministry of National Defense, the Commander-in-Chief, the Ministry of Interior, and the General Commissioner of the National Police, that with HE Prayuth

Chan-Ocha, the Thai Prime Minister, we have agreed to clear mines where there are mines, regardless whether the border issue has been resolved. In this regard, HE Var Kimhong must continue to work with Samdech Pichey Sena Tea Banh, who will be going to have this border committee meeting soon. Previously, we have proposed to the Thai side that we should clear mines first and leave the border issue to resolve later [...] but the Thai side did not respond. This time, His Excellency Prayuth Chan-Ocha, Prime Minister of Thailand, agreed that the (Thai-Cambodian border) of more than 40 square kilometers is under suspicion of landmines. So, we do not need to wait for demarcation before demining. Let us clear the mines and resolve where the border is later.

As for opening of the border pass, there is no need to wait for the border demarcation. Let us open the border pass first. The opening of the border pass has nothing to do with demarcation. That work must be done so that (there are communication points) in all border areas. With Vietnam, we have done it already. With Laos, we also have done it. What remains to be done is with Thailand. According to HE Prayuth Chan-Ocha, there are about 40 square kilometers left. We have to work with the Thai side on this effort, without having to wait for (the demarcation) [...] the border is not yet clear where it is, but we do not need to determine whether soil under mines is on Thai side or on our land. It is known to both sides that the area is not yet decided on whose side it is. But there are mines. On this matter, let's cooperate. Let say Thai side has cleared mines up to certain point. This might clear mines in their land, and might also work on our land too. As for us, we could remove mines on our land and/or move on Thai land too. We might move on each other's land a bit and there should not be a problem. Most importantly, we can ensure that our people are happy.

(Continued on page 7)



(Continued from page 6)

I would like to take this opportunity to clarify a bit. This year we mark the 30th anniversary of demining and unexploded ordnance (UXO) so that people better understand where, when and how mine action begins to avoid (misinterpretation). There seemed to have several historians these days whose research have apparently misguided even the one who have personally participated in the events. I would like to confirm that the initiation related to demining was made in a joint decision between SNC (Supreme National Council) and UNTAC. The meeting on mines held at the Khemarin palace under the presidency of the late His Majesty the King Father and the President of the UNTAC – Yasushi Akashi. That was the starting point [...] this is a decision-making point. That is the Royal consciousness of the support of our former King Father, who has taken care of this work together with the support of all the members of the Supreme National Council. That was the beginning of the founding of CMAC, which until now has been in action for 30 years [...] we must see that 30 years is not a joke. It has been a long time, and we still have not finished the job.

War broke out in Cambodia from 1970 to 1975, and it was followed by the genocidal regime of Pol Pot. It can be said that the war lasted only 18 years, if we consider that the war started in 1970 and ended in late 1998. But it has taken us 30 years to clear landmines and unexploded ordnance, (and we have not yet finished doing the job). It is in this regard that it is good not to have a war at all. Where there is war, each side finds a way to defeat each other, finds a way to kill each other. Although there is a convention banning the use of landmines, anti-personnel mines are still sometimes used and efforts are made to transform ammunitions to make this/that bomb in order to kill a lot of people. This is where we should pay attention.

I reiterate that those who comment on some of the remarks of

the President of the United States respect the ethics of the debated leaders. I have in my pocket this whole log of conversations with each other. I do not imagine that this (spread of information that I do not know how it exists) has happened. I cannot understand [...] leaders meeting (always) has their minutes, and in this note taking, when Joe Biden speaks in English, they write in English. When I speak in Khmer, we write in Khmer. I have not heard Joe Biden suggested to me about so and so. I did not hear it. I do not know (and how can I make comments) based on what (I do not hear). Journalists kept asking me, “Please go and ask the Americans themselves,” I said. I truly do not know.

(In conversation with US leader) I did thank the United States. We need to acknowledge one fact. The United States is the leading country to bring artifacts back to the (Cambodian) motherland. We have to acknowledge that. The United States is very active. Although the American people own the property, the US government, the US Embassy in Phnom Penh, and the US State Department in Washington are working to bring the artifacts back. “There maybe more,” said President Joe Biden. He will work hard to do this. He made a few points [...] I also thank him. It is not a habit to break down what to say about the minutes of conversations between leaders. But some things do not exist at all and they said about coming to punish at home. It does not seem understandable. He came as a guest of the ASEAN Summit and partners. I received him and we walked together to the meeting place, and at night we ate dinner together. There was nothing to say at that time.

There is one thing. It is not a secret [...] Joe Biden has been paying close attention to the art performance, and he then asked me, “how long have these clothes been around?” I also told him, “We (copied) this fashion from the inscriptions found in the temples. “That means his dress has been

around for a thousand years.” Jokingly, I said, “This Apsara statue is at Angkor Wat, which has both Apsara wearing long skirts and Apsara wearing short skirts.” I also said, “There was a time when a mother told her daughter not to wear shorts. The daughter replied that her mother was not up to date. “A 1,000 years ago, they were already wearing shorts.” This makes an impression on him [...]

I am only clarifying this to confirm to those who released the information or those who received the information that I was the (meeting) negotiator, but I did not hear (that partner raised the story that you publish). As of now, I still do not know (where did it come from?). This morning I called Prak Sokhonn, Sok Chenda Sophea, Srey Thamrong and Ieth Sophea, and received a complete set of documents and a complete transcript of the conversation. It is not a good habit to open up negotiations between leaders and speak up. In addition, it is said that the Secretary-General of the United Nations gives such and such advices. I went to the United Nations in September and met with him without talking a word about Cambodia’s internal affairs. Arriving in Phnom Penh, there is no mention of Cambodia in our discussion too.

(It is a meeting within the framework of) ASEAN-UN Cooperation. However, Cambodia and the United Nations have focused on, firstly, demining cooperation because Cambodia must join with the United Nations in sending troops abroad; secondly, the remaining works of the hybrid courts are transferred to the Cambodian courts; and thirdly, [...] the annual meeting between UN agencies in Phnom Penh and the Prime Minister. Due to Covid-19, such meeting could not be held. Now that Covid-19 is under control, we can reconvene the annual meeting of the United Nations in Phnom Penh with the Prime Minister. Previously, the UN agency in Phnom Penh met with the Prime Minister once a year so that we could discuss

what to do and how to rectify it together. That’s all.

[...] I do not know where they got that word from. I think it (probably) would not be excessive if we asked for verification of the minutes from both sides. I raised the issue (regarding Cambodians in the United States). Samdech Krala Hom knows the story of Cambodian citizens who are imprisoned in the United States and sent to Cambodia. I suggested that [...] we implement the 2002 Memorandum of Understanding, and interviews can be done online or in person. What I ask for is not to send in foreigners [...] last time, suddenly two people went to Laos. Related to the Cambodian people who committed crimes in the United States, where should the United States be evicted? Deported to Cambodia. We have an agreement with the United States for 20 years. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the so-called MOU to repatriate Cambodians.

Some committed suicide and some died [...] some were born in the United States. Imprisoned in the United States, and they were sent to Cambodia. Their parents are in America. Wives and children are in America. At one point we suggested that amendments should be considered to address humanitarian issues. But the United States, looking at the suggestion of amendment, considered us a non-cooperative country and has imposed visa bans on our Foreign Affairs officials. When I raised the issue with the US President, and he said, “I do not get a hold of this. Who gets hold of it?” One of his officials mentioned the matter (in writing) to him. He reads it and he said that he now understands [...] and will continue to solve that problem. Well, there is what we were talking about. As in the case of the bald head Apsara must be released, or this or that person must be released, I do not know, because I do not hear Joe Biden talk about it [...]

About the ASEAN Summit (and related Summits) in Phnom Penh [...] it is the pride

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 1)

I observe that the three state universities are still gaining popularity in accepting students. The first one is the Royal University of Phnom Penh; the second is the National University of Management and the third one is the Royal University of Law and Economics, and there are other public schools that have been accepting an increasingly large number of students.

*These are the human resource that will continue (to develop the country) in the future. What we of this generation build or former generation built are not for ourselves, but for the next generation. Our ancestors built for us, this generation, and we are building in this generation for the next generation (or) successors.* For instance, RULE was established in 1982. I had the opportunity at that time to teach a few courses and it was since the school was flooded and under corrugated zinc roof [...]

Without peace, we can do nothing. Obviously, no one can study under a bomb. People will run away from school, like in 1970-75, how many areas were there that people were still going to schools? [...] this evening, at 4 pm (in Cambodia) and 11 am in Kiev, I will have a telephone conversation with the President of Ukraine on bilateral relations as well as Ukraine-ASEAN relations. We have a Ukrainian student with us here. During the former Soviet Union era, Ukraine helped train Cambodia's human resources, including our naval officers in Crimea. If we look at the situation in war-torn countries and ask if those countries can provide opportunities for students to study or not, the short answer is "no."

We still remember those schools remaining in the post-1970s war, in some of the liberated areas, there were always trenches. Schools in the city were open but also were under the threat of war. In between 1979-1993, some areas students and teachers carried out classes under the threat of war. Teachers had to protect their students

from death or injury in the event of armed clashes. As of present, the Cambodian youth are really lucky that they are no longer suffering from the war. They have more opportunities. We continue to work for the growth of ourselves and our families, which is a great contribution for our national development. Do not talk about development without peace and do not talk about development without human resources. Development requires human resources [...]

[...] (The Royal Government increases) efforts to invest more in human resource training. The 2023 budget law has already been set out for increasing spending on people, including education and health, which have received large sums of money. We give priority to such things [...] those with higher education and post-graduate [...] only from these two universities together have numbered more than 10,000 people [...] recently, some commune chief candidates have bachelor's degrees [...] it is better to have educated people to take up the jobs. Almost every official in every institution ... and even the district officials have higher education (or post-graduate degree) [...]

Reviewing the old memories, I refused to be the Minister of Foreign Affairs because I did not know a thing about it. I said "I would be willing to take the job for three months, and when we all entered Phnom Penh, clearly there would be intellectuals who knew foreign affairs". I did not expect to be the person that has been in the government from January 8, 1979 until today [...] I was only 27 years old at the time, while other leaders were over 40-50 years old. I am very young and can be compared with other leaders as father and son. I have traveled with older leaders and worked together for a long time, till now almost 44 years. Just a few more months it will be 44 years. A few more months, I will be in the post of Prime Minister for 38 years. This is considered that I am the longest-serving prime minister – from the youngest

one to the longest one [...]

[...] Yesterday, the United States of America had had (their President limousines) arrived (at the airport) [...] wherever he went, he took his own cars. The Russian President Vladimir Putin may also be sending his cars. That are their habits. Leaders of other countries use cars that we prepare at their disposal. This meeting is not small for our small and poor country. We must know for ourselves that it is the fact that our country is at peace that our friends dare to come. That our country protects security and social order, and there is no terrorist attack, our friends, who are all superpowers, will come to the meeting [...] so far, we have not received any response from the Russian President Putin whether he will join us attend the meetings – ASEAN and Russia, and the East Asia Summit [...]

[...] Some have suggested that while there are great number of agriculture officials, why not appoint anyone of them as agriculture ministers, and take mining engineers for the job. The (new) Minister of Agriculture responded in an educational way – "Do you know all about agriculture? What is agriculture?" [...] agriculture is not just about growing rice? Just take agronomy. Do you know it all? [...] such words in their suggestion show a lack of knowledge. What is leadership? As for me, I do not have every knowledge. I do not know everything about any subject. I just have to know parts of it and that would be enough [...] even though I used to be in the army, I only know that much about infantry [...] regarding leadership, the key thing is to know how to motivate the officials under his leadership to work effectively [...] while setting out the policy and lead its implementation properly [...]

[...] I am calling on people who have not yet registered to vote, please go and register to vote to exercise your right to choose the leader on July 23, 2023. Political parties that will participate in the election or will not partici-

(Continued from page 7)

of the Cambodian people. We are now having this meeting of AIPA in Phnom Penh. Tomorrow, I preside over the meeting of the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting and ADMM Plus in Siem Reap. As I said yesterday, if nothing changes, a meeting will take place between the Chinese and US defense ministers. Thus, the land of Angkor becomes a place of constructive dialogue and a good place for meetings.

Many defense ministers will be there, from Australia, Japan, South Korea and others. We are the host. Soon I got on the helicopter and fly to Siem Reap. That is why I brought a helicopter here [...] actually for this month of year, we should have cool weather. Instead, we are still having rain. That is climate change [...] I do not know how we will fly. Maybe we will take it to a high altitude a bit. Sometimes the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology does not allow flying for travel Cross the Tonle Sap too.

That's all I have to say and I apologize to my American friends that I owe (this explanation to my people and to clear the air). If not specified, they still use what it is not clear. It is not in the negotiation log. It is unknown at this time who had made this baseless information and get it out. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs always announces in its press releases what has been said. For this news, however, I did not hear (the dialogue partners say) and am unable to identify where suddenly came out the rumor [...]

pate in the election, and have their members (and/or supporters) should encourage them to register to vote to avoid any discontents later and complain about the problem that "s/he is supporting so and so party, but s/he do not have her/his name in the voters list" [...] I hereby once again call on all people of all political persuasions, including young people who have just reached voting age, to register to vote to exercise their rights [...]