

The 20th ASEAN Summit Press Conference

04 April 2012 (With Unofficial Translation of Selected Responses)

I would like to welcome all media representatives to this press conference. As you are already aware of, Cambodia has a great honor to host and chair the 20th ASEAN Summit on April 3-4, 2012 in this Peace Building.

The Chairman's Statement and other documents related to the outcome of the Summit have been circulated to all of you. Therefore, I think I do not need to go into detail all of the substance again. Taking this opportunity, may I highlight only some main points as follows:

As the Chair of the ASEAN in 2012, Cambodia has chosen the theme of "ASEAN: One Community, One Destiny" to joint determination and cooperation of the ASEAN people to work in chorus to build the ASEAN Community as a cohesive family, living in political, security, economic and socio-cultural harmony, which is rules-based, peaceful and economically strong.

Based on the theme, we had good and fruitful discussions both in yesterday's plenary session and today's retreat session. Overall, the Summit put the spotlight on reviewing the progress that we have achieved and identified challenges ahead to overcome in the implementation of the ASEAN Charter, the implementation of the three pillars of



03 April 12 - Samdech Techo Hun Sen posed for group photos with the ASEAN heads of states and Governments during the 20th ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh on April 3-4 (Kampuchea Thmey).

the Roadmap for the ASEAN Community (including ASEAN Political-Security Community, ASEAN Economic Community and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community), and the implementation of the IAI Work Plan II (2009 – 2015) as well as the implementation of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity. In addition, ASEAN leaders also had discussions on some important issues related to stability and security in the region, enhancement of the ASEAN's prestige and further drawing of attention from major partners to participate in ASEAN's effort in realizing a regional community building by 2015.

In the spirit of showing determination and concerted cooperation within the ASEAN in making it a great, cohesive, and harmonized family, Cambodia initiated the Declaration on "ASEAN: One Community, One Destiny". Moreover, to make the "Phnom Penh Declaration" a comprehensive and an actual statement, as the Chair of the

ASEAN, I requested the ASEAN leaders to consider and adopt "the Phnom Penh Agenda" which focuses on ways to address real challenges that ASEAN is currently facing and identify key measures which are the priorities for the realization of ASEAN by 2015.

All ASEAN leaders, with great sense of responsibility, have entered into detailed discussions on the two main documents and provided their full support and endorsed the two important documents. In addition, we reviewed and adopted the Declaration on Drug-Free ASEAN 2015. This will significantly contribute to enhancing the welfare of our people especially youths in the region.

During the discussion, ASEAN leaders took note with satisfaction of the success and achievements in all sectors. At the same time, we also acknowledged that ASEAN is continuing to face with some challenges on its path toward

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NR 68 Kralanh — O'Smaj Inaugurated

09 April 2012 (Unofficial Translation of Selected Comments)

Built by Cambodian Reserved Fund

I am so greatly honored and pleased to have come and shared with you the pleasure of inaugurating the National Road 68 – the segment that links up district of Kralanh of Siem Reap with O S'maj of Uddar Meanjei province. HE Tram Iv Toeuk, Minister for Transport and Public Works already informed us about the road and its construction background. Please allow me to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Ministry of Transport and Public Works as well as the Ministry of Economy and Finance for providing financial and technical resources to implementing agencies - the Samdech Techo Engineering Team of Siem Reap and the Chief of General Staff's Engineering Team included, for taking the task to build this road successfully. Also, equal thanks go to the Siem Reap and Uddar Meanjei provincial authorities and the armed forces stationed in the northern part of Cambodia.

Please allow me to remind us a bit about the background of this road segment. As far as our efforts to build this road is concerned, we could consider it one of the historic achievements. We have made tremendous efforts and overcome

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the realization of the ASEAN Community by 2015. We strongly believe that the measures agreed and laid down in the framework of “**the Phnom Penh Agenda**” will become an effective means for addressing our major challenges, including (1) the need for reducing development gaps in the region, (2) the need for successful implementation of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity by giving great importance to the issue of coordination to ensure consistency in the implementation of priority projects and mobilizing financing necessary to implement those priority projects, and (3) the need for promoting cooperation in other sectors such as the protection of the rights of migrant workers and the strengthening of disaster management and addressing its impacts so on and so forth.

We also took note of other progresses which are critically important for ensuring the effective implementation of the ASEAN Charter and building a people-centered community including the establishment of legal instruments for interpretation of the ASEAN Charter and addressing legal issues, progress of works of ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), and strengthening and expanding ASEAN’s international relations with ASEAN dialogue partners and so on and so forth.

In addition, we paid attention to some other important issues related to ASEAN’s stability and security, including the **Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia**, peace keeping cooperation, maritime cooperation, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM) Plus as well as elimination and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons so on and so forth.

In our discussion on regional and international issues, we took note of the positive changes, which have contributed to a better regional political environment, stability and security including the encouraging democratic development in Myanmar, good progress towards the implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in South China Sea (DOC), especially the positive steps which we have reached towards the formulation of a “**Code of Conduct in the South China Sea**”. During this discussion, we also reaffirmed our support for a peaceful solution to the nuclear issue in the Korean peninsula, especially calling for a resumption of the six-party talks as soon as possible.

In the spirit of enhancing ASEAN’s prestige and drawing further attention from major partners to the effort of ASEAN Community building by 2015, we agreed on the Cambodia’s initiative of organizing “**ASEAN Global Dialogue**” in November this year. At the same time, we also adopted the concept paper on Global Moderate Movement, and took note of the report by the Chair of ASEAN on the preparation for participating in the upcoming G-20 Summit in June, at the invitation extended by the Government of Mexico.

During the **20th ASEAN Summit**, ASEAN Leaders also had fruitful dialogues with the representatives of ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA), of ASEAN Civil Society, and of ASEAN Youths. We consider this process as an integral part of our effort to transform ASEAN into a people-centered and people-oriented community. In this sense, we highly appreciated the commitments expressed and constructive recommendations provided by the representatives of ASEAN Inter-parliamentary Assembly, of

ASEAN Civil Society and of ASEAN Youths, towards building an ASEAN Community living in peace, stability, prosperity and harmony.

Moreover, the 20th ASEAN Summit coincided with the celebration of the 45th Anniversary of ASEAN. To celebrate this anniversary, Cambodia, as the Chair of ASEAN, issued a **Statement on the 45th Anniversary of the ASEAN** in order to highlight major accomplishments of ASEAN over the past four decades. We were very pleased and noted with satisfaction the proud advancement of ASEAN since its founding, especially its active and influential role in regional and global affairs.

According to the ASEAN Charter, the Royal Government and People of Cambodia will be honored to welcome ASEAN leaders again in the 21st ASEAN Summit and related Summits scheduled in November this year.

These are the main points I want to highlight to all of you. Next, as we still have some more time, I would be happy to provide some more comments or clarifications on the questions that you may have. `

NHK TV: *Has there been a discussion about issue of the South China Sea?*

Response: Let me clarify this issue. Maybe many of you - the journalists think that in every ASEAN Summit and other meetings concerned, there is going to be a war between ASEAN and China on issue of the South China Sea. It is a complete misunderstanding since ASEAN and China already signed a Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DoC), a process that cannot be ignored or abandoned as it was started in 2002 in (the ASEAN Summit in) Phnom Penh.

Leaders of ASEAN and China, based on that framework, have made one step after another and finally we have reached through dialogue and negotiation an important legal instrument for peace and stability in the region. We have continued the discussion and issued a declaration which also includes the ASEAN Declaration concerning the issue of South China Sea, seeking ways to formulate the Code of Conduct on the South China Sea (CoC). The issue is included in the ASEAN Declaration on One Community One Destiny and the Phnom Penh Agenda.

Let me recall that before the actual summit started, certain circles have proposed that the South China Sea issue would not be in the ASEAN summit in Phnom Penh. It was a big misunderstanding to the (ASEAN) process of resolving each and every related issue. As it is for the ASEAN integration, which has to go on, the issue relating to the South China Sea is an on-going process. How could we discuss the issue in Vietnam and Indonesia but not in Cambodia or Brunei? It has to keep going till it reaches the end which is the Code of Conduct on the South China Sea itself.

I am so disappointed to see that incapable people, who designate themselves to be independent analysts, members of the National Assembly from the opposition parties, including also a bald man with Ph D, claimed that the President of China’s visit was to lobby Cambodia (as chair of the 20th ASEAN Summit) not to discuss issue of the South China Sea. May I advise them – both those holding and not holding Ph D degree, to learn more about the process that is involving with the ASEAN affairs or I would question their ability to govern a country. They seem to have made

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themselves childish politicians.

Well, relating to the claim that they said Cambodia would not bring the issue of South China Sea into discussion, I would clarify that there has been no hindrance of any kind whatsoever from the part of China on this issue. (Solving the) South China Sea is the issue between ASEAN and China and there could be no other forum to replace it. Let me tell you why. The issue was first signed (into agreement) by the ten ASEAN nations with China. With that in place, the issue cannot be allowed for discussion and solving by countries other than members of ASEAN and China at all.

Interference from outside has to be prevented. Cambodia plays a significant role in this prevention because it is to everyone's understanding that such intervention would further complicate the issue. Others that are not within the framework of agreement could only appropriately welcome or support progress made between ASEAN and China on this issue. Moreover, we are satisfied with the China's initiative for considering the negotiation of the Code of Conduct on the South China Sea. China has been actively involved in this process of negotiation.

It has been over a month that people made comments that Phnom Penh would not (dare) bring up this issue and even reduced Cambodia to goods tradable by China.

Let me clarify that the Chinese leaders never behave themselves in way of oppressing, lobbying and/or persuasion in this matter, whilst Cambodia – as a sovereign state and responsible member of ASEAN – also is not a piece of goods for anyone to trade it with. Cambodia in fact hosted the

ASEAN Summit that (worked out and) signed the DoC, which is in its ten-year anniversary.

What bothers me the most is the fact that a Cambodian national, some opposition members of the National Assembly also included, disgraced their own nation. While insulting the Royal Government to be under the Chinese pressure, it is ironical that on March 28, before the arrival of HE Hu Jintao for the state visit to the Kingdom of Cambodia, the president of the Sam Rainsy Party wrote him a letter in Khmer and in Chinese. I informed the ASEAN Summit about this in the presence of the Philippines President as this member of the National Assembly from the Cambodian opposition used to frequently visit Manila.

Mr. Sam Rainsy's letter states "*in its gratefulness, Cambodia should fully support China in implementation of national and international policies on the basis of One-China Policy in the defense of Chinese national sovereignty and territorial integrity.*" While it is in fact in accordance with the political guideline of the Royal Government of Cambodia, let me remind that prior to this statement, Sam Rainsy declared that he recognizes the one-China that is implementing liberal democracy and pluralism. However, today he praises China to the level of one-China policy implementation and acknowledged that two islands in the South China Sea belong to China undeniably.

He also calls on international community to understand that eventual maritime demarcation in the South China Sea must be carried out bilaterally and without interference from outside. This issue, he suggests, must be resolved directly between China and concerned coun-

tries.

What has been proposed by Mr. Sam Rainsy seemed to have ignored completely the Declaration of Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DoC) and no country has declared doing so with regard to the South China Sea issue. In so doing, he has ignored the ASEAN and China forum on the issue which has been approved by both parties. I doubt if he is capable of leading Cambodia in both domestic and foreign policies as a sovereign state and a member of ASEAN. I will make copies and send to every embassy. I call it an opportunistic politicking of a political party's leader.

Where would this policy lead to? It would lead Cambodia out of ASEAN and this is not what China wants. China wants to continue discussion in the ASEAN-China framework and does not want discussion between ASEAN and none other than China. Let me remind you of the DoC, signed by the ten ASEAN and China foreign ministers, that the Sultan of Brunei Darussalam and I – only two of us – still remain from the ASEAN Summit in 2002. In this consideration, what was presented by Sam Rainsy would tear the DoC apart and no credit would be given to international undertaking anymore.

I never for once thought that there is someone who could be this silly and his silliness would bring about dishonor on other Cambodians. Please let me assure the world that Cambodia is not in support of this silly gesture and those of his members of the National Assembly.

We are a nation with dignity and honor. We would not in any circumstances budge for the implementation of such opportunistic policy of the opposition. I am obliged to

respond to over one month of insults by these people – a bald-headed Ph D included – on me personally as Prime Minister and Chair of the 20th ASEAN Summit and on (the Royal Government) officials who have taken part in preparation for this grand event.

Vietnam TV: *How the ASEAN Summit evaluates the by-elections in Myanmar and/or the Open-door policy in this country?*

Response: All of the ASEAN leaders are so content with the by-election outcomes in Myanmar. How could it be unsatisfied when it is obvious that the opposition party in Myanmar won all 45 contested seats? According to what I have been informed by (President of Myanmar) HE Thein Sein, they are the most free, fair and just manner elections. In addition to that, as you know before the elections were held that HE Thein Sein came to Phnom Penh to invite observers of the ASEAN chair along with those of other ASEAN countries and partners in the region to observe the election – a preliminary statement by those observers has already been made.

As all the ASEAN leaders welcome the electoral results in Myanmar, they all are calling for embargo on Myanmar to be lifted so that Myanmar would be able to further its socio-economic development on democratic and pluralistic path.

China International Radio and China-Cambodia Friendship Radio: *How do you assess China's role – as important partner of ASEAN – in promoting development of all ASEAN countries in all fields, especially when Cambodia is taking its turn as chair of the 20th ASEAN Summit? What role would Cambodia*
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play to promote cooperation, change and understanding between China and all ASEAN countries?

Response: As I have said in previous instance that some analysts seemed to have thought and believed that China and ASEAN have readied for war in the ASEAN Summit. It is entirely wrong. In fact it is to a contrary that the Chinese and ASEAN leaders are getting themselves ready to further bolstering strategic partnership between ASEAN and China.

Let me recall that China is ASEAN's number one strategic partner in trade. China's development has brought about progress and development for countries in the region. I should remind you that there were two times already that China played historic roles in rescuing the region and the world (from the economic crisis).

In 1997, as the financial crisis occurred, China came in to rescue the situation in Asia. It was fortunate that China then did not suffer crisis or otherwise - because of its massive population - China would have pulled everyone down. Later, the crisis in 2008, 2009 and 2010, once again China played a rescuing role to save the world. Its contribution has been noted in helping solve debt crisis in Europe as well. While crisis and downturn hit America and Europe with impacts on Asia, China continues to keep economic growth momentum. Let's imagine what the world would be if China were to be suffering from the crisis too.

It is therefore important to see the role that China has played in achieving its economic development which is helping not only China itself but the whole world, especially those

developing nations. Particularly, for cooperation with ASEAN, China is a strategic cooperation partner. China maintains biggest trade volume with ASEAN, while in the 2011 ASEAN-China Summit in Bali, Indonesia, Premier Wen Jiabao provided a credit fund of 10 billion USD, 4 billion USD of which is preferential buyer's credit loan, for ASEAN. Cambodia has received a part of it for the development of its infrastructures.

It should be reminded that in recent years Cambodia has achieved from China a large amount of assistance in form of grant, non-interest and concessional loans for the development of infrastructures focusing on roads, bridges, irrigation and electricity. Many Chinese have taken part in making investments which has now added to between seven and eight billion USD.

This year in the forthcoming 21st ASEAN Summit and related meetings in Phnom Penh there will be meetings of ASEAN Plus - ASEAN + 3 and ASEAN + 1, which are very important mechanisms. I am sure that through the ASEAN-China partnering meeting, we will promote further the ASEAN-China relations, which includes also the confidence building that will further steps to conclude the CoC. What is more important is that while waiting for CoC, altogether we must determinedly abide by the DoC and relevant principles on implementation of DoC.

Next year Cambodia will celebrate the 45th anniversary of the foundation of bilateral relations with China. The Cambodian-Sino relations have been elevated since 2010 to a comprehensive strategic partnership after we became good neighbors, good friends and good partners. In light of the official visit to Cambodia of

President Hu Jintao of the People's Republic of China, the two countries - Cambodia and China issued a joint declaration which has become a roadmap for actions to be carried out altogether. The point of interest to be reminded here is the trade volume is to increase twice the 2011 size of 2.5 billion USD to 5 billion USD by 2017.

I may remind you that Premier Wen Jiabao and I had set a goal of only 2.5 billion US dollars by 2015. Seeing that the progress has been made in the fields of trade and investment relation, and the volume of trade has gone already to 2.5 billion USD in 2011, four years ahead of schedule, a new goal is worth. With outstanding increase of exports to China - whether it is rice, other agricultural crops and products from Cambodia to the People's Republic of China, both parties decided to reset the goal to a sum of 5 billion USD by 2017 and we have no doubt that it will be met.

In general, this is a good context for both China and ASEAN. Those benefits from early harvest scheme are country members of ASEAN. In the welcoming lunch, I said to HE Hu Jintao that if Cambodia received only 0.01% of the Chinese tourists, Cambodia would record 1.34 million of tourists from China per annum.

The Cambodia Daily: *After the morning session, have all ASEAN countries agreed on any point before ASEAN goes into discussion with China?*

Response: I wish that you take my response seriously before putting it in words in your paper as it has always been the case (that my speech has not been properly quoted). You are advised that there are many TVs here that record everything in real terms. You would lose your credibility if you misquote, understate or over-

state what I am saying.

As of now ASEAN has not yet come up with concept of related elements for drafting of the CoC. We have not discussed it in detail yet though of course our senior officials have seen drafts by this or that party. However, we have not yet reached a common point relating to this issue to bring it for discussion with China yet.

We are making further efforts to move it forward. However, China should be involved from the start. It is not necessary for ASEAN to get a consensus prior to involving China. What ASEAN and China want is a win-win and not lose-lose situation. It is important to note that as strategic cooperation partnership, no one should be left in a losing situation.

In its (ASEAN) chairmanship, Cambodia will celebrate the 10th-year anniversary of the DoC and continue to proceed according to what has been agreed upon between ASEAN and China. This is a process that both sides have to observe. It is not possible to have only either one of the concerned parties observing it.

Local Journalist: *Firstly, concerning Myanmar, as chair of ASEAN, when do you send Minister of Foreign Affairs to Myanmar and I doubt if you have planned a meeting President Thein Sein and Ms Aung San Suu Kyi? Secondly, concerning China, could you clarify as to why there was this official visit by the Chinese President Hu Jintao to Cambodia right before the ASEAN Summit?*

Response: Well the first question is now out of date. It is not necessary now for us to show the way for Aung San Suu Kyi to go see President Thein Sein anymore and more so to send such and such ministers to

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Myanmar. As of the moment of speaking Ms Aung San Suu Kyi and her colleagues are prepared to sit in the parliament already.

As for the second question (I would have you to think that) it was not a visit that was planned to have a repercussion on (the summit) as was thought and elaborated by half-baked analysts. They said that the visit of President Hu Jintao to Cambodia (prior to the ASEAN Summit) was to lobby and put pressure on Cambodia. It was totally wrong. The visit was a pre-arrangement of the Royal Government of Cambodia and the Government of the People's Republic of China and it had nothing to do with the ASEAN meetings.

If he does not come to Cambodia then, he would have to come later. However, the visit was part of the visits to Seoul and New Delhi, India. I urge you to be more professional and politically mature in your analysis. It was a normal visit by a head of friendly state to Cambodia. He had not said to me to do this or that as was suggested by some half-baked analysts at all.

(I assure you that) China has not got such political style as some other countries do. Working with China for twenty years I assure you I never come to hear it said by the Chinese leaders that Cambodia has got to do this or that. China is indeed a big country, but unlike some other countries, it always respects decision of a sovereign state.

There have been countries, according to Cambodian experiences, that cut off assistance because we refused to follow their instructions. I have a reason to be in (political) pain till today. They proposed that we sell off the custom admini-

stration. I disagree. Then one problem came after the other.

I accept it that they cut off their assistance. I can reveal the document. To my understanding selling off customs administration would be tantamount to trading off national sovereignty. The suggestion was brought to us by one of the biggest international organizations. I warned Cambodian officials to cease such negotiation immediately or I would strip them off their positions. I also wrote that so long as they want to buy it they may buy power from Hun Sen as well. I campaigned to get elected and to become Prime Minister. Should I sell you my service you would have more power to rule the armed forces and all services.

It is known to everyone that customs administration could be armed to fulfill its mission. How else they challenge us to sell it? When we do not abide by what they tell, they constantly bother us. I am sure if the person who committed all this listens to what I am saying, he would know what I am talking about. In total contrast, the Chinese leaders – despite assistance in forms of grant, none-interest and concessional loans they provided, I never hear a word about conditions attached. Cambodia has to come up with its own projects. Take for instance, Cambodia decides its own priority like which road to build first. In a completely opposite manner, some countries would tell us they offer a sum of money for building so and so road and it cannot be used to build a different road at all.

As a leader of a sovereign state it is totally difficult to accept it that everything will have to be done according to instructions. I do not buy it. In one of the meetings with donor countries I said bluntly to them that when Vietnam was in Cambo-

dia, I was more independent then because I had every right to decide on Cambodia's political and economic issues. You may be reminded that when Cambodia embarked on free market economy, Vietnam had not yet started it reform.

I have had to bring all this out because I could no longer be patient to the fact that Cambodia has been held in contempt. This is also disdainful to the Chinese leaders as well (because they are made public) to be the ones who buy out (other leaders) and oppress others. It is not true. The nature of Chinese leaders is to achieve equal right and footing as we all do too. It is in fact those who said that China has Cambodia under oppression are the ones who are actually doing it. I do not have the need to mention who they are. It is my duty to speak truly of China. It is so encouraging for small countries, Cambodia included, to be welcomed by China.

I sternly abhor the idea that Cambodia is under China's pressure. They went in great lengths to say that as chair of ASEAN, Cambodia would work out summit's agenda under China's influence. It is totally ridiculous.

Well, now I would like to thank my colleagues – Deputy Prime Ministers, ministers, secretaries of state, and those in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and other ministries concerned, who have combined efforts to put into a successful process the 20th ASEAN Summit.

I also reserve my sincere appreciations and thanks for the armed forces, including also traffic police, for providing the Summit with security and safety. I also have the need to express my sincere appreciation to the Municipality of Phnom Penh for keeping it up to the task to beautify the capi-

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their critical comments they said ASEAN is not a place to criticize others. So as Prime Minister and as the ASEAN chair, do I have my rights to speak stripped off? Excuse me, you said it again and again but when I respond you always have that to say.

If they dream of becoming the country leader, they would have to do the best in the coming July 28, 2013 general elections. Once they are elected, the Peace building at the Council of Ministers will be ready for them and so ready oneself to chair the ASEAN meeting in 2022.

By and large, all who would like to become Prime Ministers are older than I am. However, let's not count in the age as long as they could do to win the elections. They always claim that Hun Sen has been in power too long. I am telling you the same as I have been telling you all along "it is not a decision that I can make, it is those of the people, the voters. If they want me, they vote for CPP," If they do not want me, they just do not choose (CPP) as no one would peep at who they vote for...■

tal for the ASEAN Summit and hope that it will keep improving its image. It is a remarkable change as far as order, sanitation and beauty of Phnom Penh capital is concerned and credit should be given to the Municipality.

I also express my deep appreciation to various Universities for initiating a short break so that the authority could get thing ready in orderly manner for the summit. I am so grateful to our people and travelers at large for the fact that we have closed down some roads so as to get the traffic flow safely for all delegates to the Summit...■

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numerous impacts from the world financial crisis and economic downturn to get this job done. We used our saving and reserve – not our foreign reserve, which we had at the time 2,500 million USD - to finance this road segment construction. As of present we have increase the foreign reserve to about 3 billion USD.

In August 2006, when HE Thaksin Shinawatra, then Prime Minister of Thailand, visited Cambodia, I talked him to build Cambodian the National Road 68. HE Thaksin promised me that after the construction of the National Road 67 is finished, the proposal for building the national road 68 would be brought for consideration. He was later brought down from power by a military coup. The Thai Government led by HE Surayuth Chulanont visited Cambodia and promised that Thailand would give Cambodia loan to build the said road.

In the general election in 2008, the People's Power Party led by (the late) HE Samak Sundaravej was elected and he (led the Thai delegation to) visit Cambodia again. There was an agreement that a loan of 1,400 million Baht would be offered to Cambodia for the construction of the National Road 68. The Royal Government's Economy and Finance Ministry under the leadership of HE Keat Chhon already started the process. Unfortunately, then Prime Minister Samak had to step down. HE Somchai Wongsawat took over the Prime Minister position but also failed to go on. Then the time of Prime Minister Abhisit Vijijajiva came.

It was my intention indeed that the road project were to proceed under whichever Government would it be in Thailand. We were committed to carry the project on as it is of bilat-

eral relations. It was also my understanding that the two countries are interdependent and more so the Thais have been helping Cambodia in the construction of the national roads 67, 48 and 4.

It was, however, unfortunate that once more in 2009 that the (bilateral) relations had turned sour and the Thais had called home their Ambassador from Cambodia. Cambodia followed suit. Despite such developments, we did not plan to abandon the project. Even after we received a four or six-page confidential letter with ten points recommended by then Foreign Minister Kasit Phiromya to Prime Minister Abhisit, in which the Cambodian national road 68 was one of them, we continued to keep silent.

One day in November, I travelled to Siem Reap province to pay a call on the armed forces, to fulfill some of the tasks, and to get things ready for the forthcoming annual summit between the Cambodian People's Party and the Lao People's Revolutionary Party in Siem Reap, I sat smoking with HE Sieng Nam, a member of the National Assembly for Siem Reap constituency.

HE Sieng Nam told me that in several coffee breaks he had with people in the public, many motor taxi drivers said that "if I were Samdech Hun Sen I would organize a Kathina to gather money to build the national road 68." I was pulled through to my attention with this. It was obvious that the motor taxi driver could not accept the fact of being underestimated (by the Thais) and suggested that a Kathina would be a way to resolve the need for money.

To my surprise, I gave a call to Dr. Aun Poanmunnirath, President of the Supreme Economic Council and my advisor, to ask

him to discuss with HE Kiet Chhon, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Economy and Finance, to figure out if we could set aside between 35 and 40 million USD to build the said road. After about an hour, HE Aun Poanmunnirath replied to me that it could be done because it would not be one single withdrawal but in installments. I then ordered to start the procedure to inform the Thai side that Cambodia was not going to use the earmarked 1,400 million Baht for this project but to carry it through with own financial resource.

While meeting the Laotian guests with Samdech Chea Sim and Samdech Heng Samrin in Siem Reap, Prime Minister Abhisit called me from Songkla. It was on November 28. I could not receive his call because I was in the summit. I then called him back later at night. Prime Minister Abhisit asked why Cambodia does not use the loan. I told him it was too difficult in our communication. He then said we would exchange letters on November 29. On November 29, I went to golf. He then called to one of my assistants. Responding to my return call, Prime Minister Abhisit said the exchange of letter could only be done on December 2 as he was now in Songkla. On December 2 I went to one of the former Cambodian royal palaces – Hluong Preah Sdech Kan - in Kampong Cham province.

I talked about various issues and those related to the confidential letter and the national road 68 construction were also included. I said that Cambodia would build the road with its own money. We concluded the groundbreaking ceremony for the launch of the construction of the road on December 5, 2009. Let me share with you that in 2010, though learning that Cambodia built the road 68 with its own fund, Prime

Minister Abhisit, in his visit for a meeting in Phnom Penh, affirmed to me that the 1,400 million Baht has been earmarked for Cambodia. We will figure it out at some other time if or how do we go about using it.

This is the background of the national road 68. If we were to wait for foreign money, the road would not be done today. However, the tense situation between Cambodia and Thailand has now faded and the nightmare seems to have disappeared.

With the new Thai Government in place, good dreams seem to have come. We are not in any way interfering in Thai internal affairs but – as is said by the Chinese Premier HE Wen Jiabao in Nanning – having a good neighbor is like possessing a mine of gold. I agree and elaborate that we have to be careful if our neighbor has got a cunning leader. However, the situation between the two countries has now returned to normality.

Ending 42 Years of Impassability

Without decision and commitment to use our own money to build this road, our people would go on living and traveling in difficulties. As a matter of fact this road has been in worst condition for 42 years already. This road was in disrepair state and left in absence of care since 18 March 1970 – when the war broke out in the country, followed by the genocidal regime in between 1975 and 1979.

Though we have restored the country's peace almost completely in between 1979 and 1998, many of our roads were still in bad condition. Some of the travelers to Uddar Meanjei province in those days had had to travel through national road

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67 to Anlong Veng district and then to Samraong city. That situation is now over and one of the sisters somewhere there said to me “it is now all easy.”

The state that bicycle rides man is now over. While it is an important road for travelers to and from Uddar Meanjei and Siem Reap provinces, the road is also playing key role in bilateral trades between Cambodia and Thailand. In just days ahead, according to some sources of information, a large number of (Thai) people in provinces of Borei Ram and Surin would travel through this road to celebrate New Year with former Prime Minister Thaksin in Siem Reap province.

As he could not enter Thailand, Thaksin decides to come to Laos and Cambodia to celebrate the Songkran with his supporters. In addition to those coming through national road 68, those from Sisaket province will come by national road 67, and those in Srah Keo will come through national road 6.

It is my pleasure and pride indeed that this project has been conducted successfully and jointly by the military and civil engineering teams. The cost of building this road – including also impacts from de-mining, etc. has recorded a sum of 37.8 million USD, and ten per cent of the amount will be kept as quality liability for a period of one year.

It should be noted that 44.95 km of the road was built by the Samdech Techo engineering team of Siem Reap, 35.5 km by the Ministry of Transport and Public Works and 36.47 km – from the city of Samraong to O’smaj by the engineering team of the general staff.

Let me inform you also that in

just three years, the (Royal Government’s) financing in 2009, 2010 and 2011 allowed us to build also roads from Banteay Meanjei to Uddar Meanjei, to Preah Vihear and Stoeng Treng and to pave and to build lateritic roads of 1,287 km roads. As you can see we have been financing this part of the country with so much money.

We should also take into consideration the financing by two other foundations – CTN that built 5 km of concrete road and Bayon TV that built the current road access to Preah Vihear temple. We have accumulated funding from other parts of the country so as to invest in the northern part of the country, which as a result we link up Sisophon of Banteay Meanjei in the northwest all the way to Stoeng Treng province in the northeast.

According to the report I have here we still have 710 km of road to be built and I have approved the request for construction in stages. I would like to take this opportunity to affirm to all of our people that the construction of the national road 56 from Sisophon of Banteay Meanjei to Samraong city of Uddar Meanjei will soon begin. I have set it in my working program that on June 7 we will launch the construction and I am seeking understanding of our people who are living along the projected area for taking a bit more time in order to start the project.

We have a procedure to abide by as the project will be funded partly by the Asian Development Bank and partly by the Republic of Korea. They will have to approve in signing and then look for consultant agencies to be followed by bidding in the ADB’s headquarters at Manila, the Philippines.

Maybe I should explain it to our people as to why do we

need to make such a great effort on the construction of roads. We also have a road link NR 62 from Kompong Thom through to Tbeng Meanjei city of the province of Preah Vihear, and the national road 57 which is now done but I cannot preside over the construction yet because I have to attend to the health condition of my father.

On the national road 5 (northwest and west of the country), various roads are under construction that link Pailin province and city altogether by roads from Komrieng, Phnom Proek, Sampeoloun, Mealay, etc. The answer to the above question is because we are trying to fulfill the political platform of the Cambodian People’s Party which in fact became that of the Royal Government of Cambodia too.

After formulating and implementing the win-win policy with great success our country is securing full and lasting peace. What remains to be a stumbling block for us has been the effort to integrate internally. You may be reminded that one of the important elements of the policy is to transform former battlefields into development zones. This is one of the highest priorities we planned in our development platform.

Let’s now observe as we all agree that the border area of O’smaj was one of the last battlefields even after the (Khmer Rouge stronghold of) Anlong Veng already integrated. The last fight we had at O’smaj was with Nhek Bun Chhay, Khan Savoien and the remnants of the Tamok force.

What happens now? O’smaj is now a border market, from where we wire electricity to Uddar Meanjei and also an important border pass for trade and cooperation. As of now we

all can see that areas where formerly were battlefields – from Mom Bei area of Preah Vihear to Pailin and Koh Kong provinces - are now development zones of some kind. We no longer fight with each other but work together for our national development.

To achieve peace is not complete. Peace and development must go hand in hand. We would not be able to maintain peace if we do not develop. It is with that perception that I have declared on behalf of the Cambodian People’s Party that I will transform former battlefields into development zones and markets.

In reality, starting in Banteay Meanjei province all the way to Komrieng, Phnom Proek, Sampeo Loun and Pailin, casavas have been planted in large area and we had to negotiate with the Thai authority recently to allow trade to proceed in a timely manner. So you see, our people no longer have to displace on their own soil but station and settle down with production and trade activities, though road access and school for children are still issues to be resolved.

With exception of the armed clashes at the temple of Ta Moan, Ta Krabei and Preah Vihear last year, Cambodia ended internal armed clashes completely since 1998. We have evaded our people’s from being killed in and displacing for fighting but to live in peace, to enjoy sound of music and listen to Buddhist sermons.

Aside from this people benefit from development policy of the Cambodian People’s Party which has become entirely that of the Royal Government of Cambodia. It is indeed a vision in our policy of transforming former battlefields into development zones/market which is in fact aiming at alleviating
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poverty through the construction of infrastructures.

As a country in need of development it is prerequisite that we have to have roads, bridges, canals, and all the sorts so as to generate economic growth but also to redistribute equitably the growth while alleviating poverty as well as narrowing down the gap between urban area and countryside. There is no other way that is more equitable than to invest more money in rural infrastructures. This will bring rural areas closer to urban way of life.

Take for instance, when we built a road it is for everyone – rich or poor to travel on but first and foremost, the people who are living along way from the city. In another way this is like the Royal Government of Cambodia is saving time and resource for our people whenever and whatever they need to travel or transport.

In fact the money we have saved have been used to build a number of roads already and every coming years more public investment will be made by state funds on roads, bridges, canals, etc. Building school is also a way to equitably distribute the growth among our people too as children of all can study. As you can see connectivity is an important factor that we also have set it a main theme of the 20th ASEAN Summit which has just ended last week in Phnom Penh. As for Cambodia the element of local or internal integration has been a key in the concept of connectivity as it will allow us to integrate with neighboring countries and the region.

I mention always that it would be meaningless if we were to achieve only political and administrative integration without the physical integration. We ended the war in 1998 but the whole country was in sepa-

rate blocs with different forms of control and on top of that – not only on this part of the country, but even the northeast Monduliri and Ratanakiri - the absence of roads and bridges prevented physical integration.

With physical integration, we have reestablished capacity to transport, generate socio-economic development, redistribute the labor and also serve the need for defense as well.

It is with this in mind that you can see here a map in my hand that I have on it various lines representing roads that indicate in one color the ones that are already built, another that are under construction, and those that we need to find funding to build them.

That is why connectivity is the theme we deem important and internal integration is prime because if we could not integrate among ourselves how could we talk of integrating with others. Take for instance, the national road 68 not only integrates Cambodia in its own right but also with Thailand too.

In this connection, countries like China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand and ADB help Cambodia integrate with neighboring countries as flow of goods by 2015 within ASEAN will be without barrier. In order that Cambodia could take up the competitive challenge, as is stimulated by the Phnom Penh agenda, we will have to double our integration efforts.

Also in this effort, the national road 68 as well as other roads recently built in the Cambodian-Thai border areas has in fact illustrated our policy of building a border of peace, friendship and cooperation – as we already did with Vietnam and Laos - with the Kingdom of Thailand. (It is encouraging

to see that) the two countries' relations have now been restored and normalized after Thailand is led by the Pheu Thai Government. Days ago I met with Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra of Thailand and our discussion focused on increasing trade between the two countries where border trade is also included.

I told Prime Minister Yingluck that the border passes in the border areas of Uddar Meanjei and Preah Vihear which are bordering with Borei Ram, Surin and some other Thai provinces are open only few days a week. I proposed to her that these passes should be open for trade on a more frequent and longer schedule or as permanent markets. She promised to look into the issue and recommended the Thai Trade Minister to go into actual discussion with Cambodian Trade Minister. So it is promising that we will exchange goods with one another not bullets.

Last year, in early February, after the Chinese New Year, there were exchanges of fire at the temple of Preah Vihear, and again after the Khmer New Year, the exchanges of fire were at the temple of Ta Moan and Ta Krabei.

The situation has now changed, as I said earlier, to a more favorable stage, where confidence has been increased in the two countries' relations. I would urge close relations and communication between military commanders from both sides, local authorities along the border so that trade would blossom. Now the military is doing diplomatic work at the border while leaving the disagreement to the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

The Year of Dragon

We are approaching the celebration of the Khmer New

Year – the Year of Dragon. My birth date is on a full moon day of the Year of Dragon. My wife dislikes it that I reveal my true birth date as she is afraid some people might use black magic to change my luck. Not only could my luck not be challenged easily, but also those who would do it, would otherwise face with the misfortune themselves. I was safe from the (heinous assassination) attempt with four B-40 rockets. There has also been a report that two sniping guns have been brought in to Phnom Penh. I advise these people to seek change through elections.

Some people have warned that the Royal Government has got only two choices – to allow free and fair general elections or to face with people's uprising. Now I am telling them they should do their best in the forthcoming elections of 3 June. Winning or losing will depend on what and how you do it. What would you think? It would be democratic only if you win the elections? Or when you lose the elections, you'd rather instigate people to rise up and seek to downfall the Royal Government? In 2008, in alliance with one another, the Sam Rainsy Party and Funcinpec Party threatened me with what they called the great demonstration and were able to initiate a one-year stalemate.

I told them the Royal Government's side also had many people ready to make a demonstration in its own right too. It was not an empty threat at the time as up to 220,000 people were then ready. Now I am warning again not to play the trick of it being good election if you win but a bad one if you lose. In about one month that we were preparing the ASEAN Summit, there had been criticism and I had to be patient and waited till the event was over. When I responded to

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