

Special Economic Zone at SAP

01 May 2012 (Unofficial Translation of Selected Comments)



01 May 12 - Samdech Techo Hun Sen (Second from left) with Ambassador of Japan Inaugurates the Special Economic Zone at Sihanoukville Autonomous Port (Kampuchea Thmey).

First State Funded SEZ

It is indeed a great honor for me to join with all of our people here to celebrate two key events – the inauguration of the Sihanoukville Autonomous Port’s Special Economic Zone and the meeting with our staff and workers in commemoration of the 126 anniversary of the May 1 International Labor Day. Please allow me to take this moment to beg for the understanding of the leadership as well as staff and workers of the Sihanoukville Autonomous Port for my absence in three consecutive years – 2009, 2010 and 2011. There had been various reasons and one last but major reason of all was the fighting at the Cambodian-Thai border that commander could not leave his commanding post.

At this time last year, fighting erupted (between Cambodian and Thai troops) from April 22 through to May 5 at the province of Uddar Meanjei province’s Ta Moan and Ta Krabei’s temples. There was no other way but to reschedule my trip here to an-

other time. The defense matter does not relate only to Minister of National Defense and Chief of General Staff but also the decision of the Prime Minister, especially on what dimension should the war take and how to counter military move (from invading forces).

As is known to all, in between April 22 and 26, Cambodia had taken utmost patience up to 100 hours under heavy artillery shelling from the Thai side. We refrained from returning artillery weapons of similar scale so as to contain the dimension of war. In fact commanders in action requested for return fires since April 20 but (I) did not allow. After our patience had reached 100 hours, a heavy return fire was permitted. As a result, the situation had returned from total confrontation to negotiation. However, this year there is no war and as it is said these days to have good neighbors is like to have gold mines.

Now what I wanted to talk about
(Continued on page 6)

Buddhist Wise Men/Women Graduation

15 May 2012 (Unofficial Translation of Selected Comments)

Dialectical Relation between Buddhism, Secular World and Society

I am so happy that I have the chance to be with wise men/women who finished their training in the past six courses in the presence of Samdech Preah Sangha Niayuok (the Chief of the Buddhist Monks), Samdech Preah Sangha Niayuok Rong (the Deputy Chief of the Buddhist Monks) and of Buddhist monks, as well as Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen who are here present. Initially I thought maybe I should just have a few

words with the wise men/women so that to save some of the time. However, because of some misinterpretations so far about how and what consequences a wise man/woman may face if s/he would not abide by the rule, I think there is a real need for me to spend time with you today.

Rumors and improper interpretations should be averted and the whole of my discourse today will broadcast on TV and radio so that misunderstanding from
(Continued on page 2)

Bokor Mountain Resort Inaugurated

03 April 2012 (Unofficial Translation of Selected Comments)

BMR Achievements Despites Harsh Terrain and Financial Difficulties

I am so glad today to be able to join with all of you to inaugurate parts of the Bokor Mountain Resort (BMR) development project which consists of 49 km of road and a 418 room hotel. It is indeed a good start despite the mentioning in the reports of HE Khoy Khun Huor, Governor of Kompot province and the Sokha Company representative about the harsh terrain and financial difficulties during the construction period. For me I consider this investment a fast moving project compared to those difficulties mentioned. They deserve my praise and appreciation.

What is my main concern in the BMR investment which has so far spent 200 million USD upon the projected amount of 1 billion USD? When I first came here to preside over the launch of the project on January 19, 2008, the world hit with a financial crisis

and economic downturn which then led to conditions of uncertainty not only in Cambodia but throughout the world. Whatever impacts the crisis brought to other countries in the world would also result in correlative impacts on Cambodian economy too. I ask myself then if Oknha Sok Kong could survive the crisis and sustain his investment plan at Bokor.

There were doubts whether the project will succeed or fail since, because of the world financial crisis and economic downturn, many projects seem to have made no progress after the groundbreaking or launching ceremonies. This also includes some of the state projects. I concluded that the Sokha Company’s investment project in Bokor Mountain felt on the time of hard-hit world economy. This has proven they survive using their capital and those borrowed from the banks. Normally, deci-
(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 1)

rumors and misinterpretation will be averted and prevented.

First of all I would like to express the Royal Government's wholehearted gratitude for Samdech and every Buddhist monk in the whole country, especially the exemplary actions of Samdech Preah Sangha Niayuok to help the Royal Government deal with the disasters, albeit caused by foreign interference or natural disasters. It has been an encouraging example that our Buddhist monks from every hierarchy have actively participated in the movement, especially their visits to our soldiers at the fronts as well as those who have suffered from disasters.

While dealing with flood disaster in 2011, the Ketsana typhoon in 2009, and various other natural calamities, as reflected on the TV screens, the Buddhist monks either offered materials to the Cambodian Red Cross to deliver them to the victims or in various instances did it themselves.

I am so grateful equally to the Ministries of Religious Affairs and of Culture and Fine Arts for their collaborations under the leadership of Samdech Akka Moha Sangha Raja Dhibdei (the Chief Head of Buddhist Monks) as well as Samdech Preah Sangha Niayuok to set up and run what is known to be the Buddhism in relation to society. I see a great interest in that and its fruits will be not only for the present but also for a long time to come in the Cambodian society. I am to take this moment to express my gratitude to every participated monk in the program and I must assure them that I have gained so much interest listening to them on TV.

I am of the opinion that Buddhism is in fact doing a great deal to assist the secular society and also to orientate in a way for social development. Every social development, no matter what society it may be, could not achieve its goal if therein it there are plenty of sinful actions. This is not to deny difficulties and

sinful acts in our society, but effort like that to help cure the illness in our society is highly appreciated. I have a belief that wise men/women, together with the Buddhist monks, will fervently continue to do from their parts to help our society and I would urge all TV stations to provide them airtime as well.

As a result, having seen all this, I consider it to be what is called dialectical relation between the Buddhist and the secular worlds.

Wise Men/Women Properly Trained

As is said earlier the Ministry of Religious Affairs has organized six training courses for wise men/women already after I made my suggestion in 2008 for such courses to be conducted in face of what I called knowledge crisis of wise men/women.

It is commonly known to everyone that our country was destroyed by the Pol Pot's regime – not just in people's life and materials, but even tradition and custom. What remains under Pol Pot were only letters and language. In fact, for those Polpotists, if letters and language could be changed, they would also do it. They took everything from precedent society as their enemies and needed to be abolished.

It is in this note that I reminded that under that regime our tradition and custom were ruined to the core. After the liberation of the country in 1979, our people have regained their rights to restore and reestablish their customs and traditions. With that remark there came this issue of lacking of knowledgeable people of traditional and custom practices because of the regime's effort to uproot the previous society. It should be reminded that after the liberation the whole country has not got a Buddhist monk, not to mention the wise men/women to be working along with the Buddhist monk. That was Cambodia's reality.

In 1979 there was only one monk – Long Sim, whose wife

and children are under my care till the present. We could not find even a single monk to join then National Front for Salvation of Kampuchea (NFSK). Since Long Sim used to be monk, we then invited him to become monk at the time that we establish NFSK. Started with venerable Long Sim, we then have more people who became monks – Samdech Akka Moha Sangha Raja Dhibdei and Samdech Prah Sangha Niayuok also included. Particularly, Samdech Preah Abhiserei (from a different Buddhist sect) went abroad and becomes monk there before returning to the country in 1991.

As far as wise men/women, though there were some of them left they could not perform proper ritual or traditional ceremony because there were no monks to go along. However, under the leadership of Samdech Chea Sim and Samdech Heng Samrin around the NFSK, we got everything back on track. However, there is this issue of unity among their practice and/or the way they administer ceremony. According to the report of HE Min Khin, Minister of Religious Affairs, twenty lessons have been offered in the six courses conducted so far.

I am not a wise man. It would be wrong if I claim to know everything about being wise men/women and even more so if I have to instruct what a wise man/woman should do or act. However, as one among millions who pay attention to this issue of high traditional and customary values, and since I was the one to sounded out major concerns relating to this issue, and as one of the Cambodian leaders, I have a thing or two to suggest the way we go about dealing with this challenge. I would say even twenty lessons is not yet sufficient.

Keeping Local Traditional and Customary Values

While delivering appreciation I would give an early warning that please do not "make too much fire to burn stuff and too little fire to undercook it." It is a risky

and dangerous action. Any action along this line would cause our society to break apart. To adhere to a principle in negligence of local and sub-cultural traditional and customary values may lead to a complete disaster. Take for instance this small issue of whether a groom should be welcomed by the bride while he is delivering the "Pka Sla" (areca palm) at the bride's home in a wedding party has become a topic of misinterpretation and ill-propaganda among our people. They have exaggerated that any wise man/woman does not follow this rule set by the Ministry of Religious Affairs would stand to be fined. This could create a new animosity and disunity.

It should be known to all that Cambodia has got multicultural and multi-customary values which vary from one part of the country to another, one ethnic minority to another. There is a proverb in Khmer that goes "people learn to do things from different pagoda." It is true. Take for instance in matter of wedding or other religious ceremony, there has always been different requirement and instruction by different wise men/women, regions and practices. It should be noticed also that while giving sermon to similar religious ceremony, the Buddhist monks from different pagodas or regions would do it differently too.

Taking cultural element into consideration, while it is general practice that immediate relatives are crying when seeing a late person off to his grave or cremation ceremony, it is always not so for some regions in our country. They would have to dance and sing before sending their parted ones to the graves. In light of all this, how could we enforce everyone with only one way to practice it? It is even so when in our country we have the Mahanikaya and Dhammayuttikanikaya and the way the two give the Buddhist sermons are different too.

In current practice, in a wedding
(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

party, people find it popular to display a huge wedding cake for the bride and groom to finally cut it and share with people who come to bless their party. That is totally not Cambodian. However, the wise man/woman could not by any means tell the bride and groom not to do it at all. It has become a family intention matter. If the Ministry of Religious Affairs or the Royal Government were to issue any prohibition of such thing, people would see it as disrespect of their rights.

In another instance, also in a wedding party procedure, it has proven that the research result has shown a reasonable practice and view. It has been discovered that before the ceremony to pair them together, a groom may not be standing in any way to the right of the bride. Though it may not be my role to give judgment I can say it is reasonable because until they both are paired sitting together, the groom has not been considered fully as the bride's husband yet. Though reasonably it is so, with this discovery, wise men/women could not change their practice all of a sudden at all. To fine them for not following the discovered rule is even worse. That is what I term "do not make too much fire to burn stuff and too little fire to under-cook it."

With undue attention was given to this matter and decision is made, one may fall into making decision in favor of one and neglecting the other. It is a good thing that we follow research on tradition and custom by previous generation and I urge to keep going in this direction. However, it is important to clarify that there is no rule to force anyone to respect or even to accuse him/her for not respecting the researched material that we call the rule at all. What the research has discovered and compiled should be kept as a rule that every wise men/women should learn and introduce into their actions when they see fit. We cannot enforce a unity on all this overnight in the whole country

at all.

Misinterpretations Clarified

Over the time that the Ministry of Religious Affairs and related institutions provided the training for wise men/women, I have followed the development closely. In March this year, there was this ill-willed rumor that anyone (wise men or women) who disrespect the rule appears to be set by the Ministry would be fined. This was mentioned particularly with regard to the fact that in the Cambodian wedding tradition the bride would have to wash the groom's feet before allowing him to enter the house and pair-sitting with the bride.

Tradition and custom are indeed a major issue. As for wise men/women, it should be noted that they also have different expertise too. While some are specialized in wedding party, some are in funeral, or other Buddhist rituals. Take for instance we have the religious practice and belief in inviting the monks to bless when the old year ends and a new year comes. Would it be possible to tell the Head monk at the Saraong Andet Buddhist pagoda not to hose down water on bless seekers? You cannot and cannot fine him too though hosing water was not a practice during the Gautama Buddha time. It is not a practice that a wise man/woman performs in every function.

It is very important that the Buddhist monks and the wise men/women have to be in consistency with one another in every function they work together. It should be taken into consideration issue of multi-cultures, customs and faiths. We have to on the one hand do the research to compile what has been written and kept from old days and on the other we have to go according to the pace of our people's faiths. This should be carried out in such a way that further division is not the case. However, I am so glad that thanks to the cooperation of related ministries and institutions, we have compiled twenty lessons to start with.

There is one other matter of concern here. While having this booklet in hand, do we make a rule that the lessons should be lectured only by the monks or any lecturers who has the knowledge of this book? Anyone to be lecturer – monk or non monk – must have this book in hands. Teachers must come with documented papers and those who learn by him/herself could also depend on the book. One day we will eventually reach a unity.

CPP, the Reestablishment of Peace, Religion and Monarchy

I became foreign minister when I was 27 years old and Prime Minister when I was 32 years old. I bow in respect to everyone and everywhere. It was usually true that every time I was in Japan I found their Prime Minister older than I am. This time around I went to Japan the Japanese Prime Minister is younger than I am. So I have served for a long time. However, long or short service is not mine to judge and decide. It is the Cambodian people who will have to do so. Even among many wise men/women I noted that majority of them supports the CPP as one can judge through their petition letter.

It was because of the CPP that the country has got once again this business of wise men/women and Buddhist monks. That is frankly speaking. The CPP's role in the past is one thing to figure out but the role of future leadership is also another to think about as well. It is not so certain if leaders of other political parties would give similar consent on issue of Buddhism as when it is under the ruling of the CPP. As far as change is concerned, the Cambodian people may have remembered how change in many destructive ways has affected them in the past?

In the mean time, though our country is still poor and facing with hardships, we can admit solemnly that we have peace in hand. We are not at war or turmoil of any sort at all. In the war time, when there were heavy

bombardments, people cried out loud "may the Buddhist monks help us." The Buddhist monk summoned "how could I help you while I could not help myself too." Bombings know no Buddhist monks or Buddhism.

Some people even untruly claimed to be the one to bring monarchy to Cambodia. I just wanted to tell him that if it were without the Cambodian People's Party, monarchy could not be in Cambodia. According to the two-third ruling system of the 120 seats in the National Assembly then, though the CPP had only 58 seats, you needed 82 votes to adopt the Constitution. If the CPP were to not join force, would there be the monarchy? In 2008, it was campaigned that if the royalists were in disarray the monarchy would be finished. I wish them to note that while now the two parties claimed to be royalist have only four seats in the National Assembly and while they cannot defend themselves, who then protects the monarchy? Is it not the CPP?

I said it many times that if anyone wanted to overthrow the monarchy, they had to pass my dead body first. Having said so, please allow me to have your attention that for every activity conducted by His Majesty, there is always a responsibility of the Prime Minister, especially his safety. Some people like to make announcement in such a way that will give him benefit in any way. However, no matter what s/he says, HM and their Majesties the King-Father and the Queen-Mother are well aware of the fact. And it was because of their understanding that the three titles of Akka Moha were given to the leaders of the CPP – not for those who are against the monarchy at all.

Cambodia's Rich Cultural and Traditional Values

Having brought this issue up, I am so proud that the Ministry of Royal Palace, under the leadership of Samdech Kong Sam Ol, various great wise men and Chief monks, a great deal of

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

researches were carried out on tradition and custom relating to various ceremony to carried out by HM the King and the Royal Palace – royal plowing, water festival ceremony are included. Though some of the custom and tradition are not for public practice, because they are handed down by our ancestors, we have got to keep them up.

Looking at the way we present our protocol in the Royal Palace while HM the King hosts foreign dignitaries, I am so proud that Cambodia is rich with culture. We have a rich terminology, royal terminology also included, which needs to be maintained. There has been a song that is popularly narrated during the “Kat Khan Sla” or “dowry presentation” ceremony in a wedding party. It is my information seeking behavior to find out - though the poems are repeated by wise men/women or Japei (three string guitar) man, where does the poem come from?

Another reason why I am interested in all this is because I got married under Pol Pot’s regime – a session of 18 couples altogether – and I wanted all my children to get married for three days according to the tradition and custom. In the poem there are some clues about the Sloeung (perhaps the first Cambodian currency under Hluong Preah Sdech Kan – 1512 and 1524) and Baat (a reference to Thai currency) money. I really want to do a research on that. It was good that the National Bank of Cambodia has retrieved from Holland some of the Sloeung currency that we now mold them in gold and silver as presents for foreign guests.

With regard to the comment that washing the groom’s feet by the bride is a devaluation of a woman, I would urge us to be careful as a thorough research should be carried out or we may leave some important thing out because of lack of knowledge about it. According to research, the fact that washing the

groom’s feet was not obliged for the bride to do it but for the bride’s brother or close relative to do so. That was instructed so that the groom could join the bride with clean feet for pair-sitting ceremony. It is quite obviously reasonable as in rural wedding ceremony that the groom would not be allowed to go upstairs the bride’s elevated home. He would be summoned for some sessions and then go downstairs where he has a makeshift house.

That washing the groom’s feet is not a good thing to do could be elaborated to be a feeling not from the wise men/women but from the bride’s parents that they do not like to see their daughters being devalued for doing that. There was a poem, according to a research, that goes “*Pity young man, he walks across the plowing field, he steps on bamboo’s thorns and bleeds his feet.*” So it could be a connection to the fact that this groom coming from afar had to have his feet washed before joining the pairing ceremony. It is a nice story on which our tradition based on, if it is so, and we should not leave it out. Whether these traditional and customary values should be observed or not would not be a matter to coerce and/or to get fined at all.

All we are doing is to compile these values and keep it as a binding material so that the later generation would have something to depend on. It is for documentation value. We have had some documentation left on palm leaves from various generations. It would not be difficult for us to do so when we are now in the IT generation.

Deliberating Political Remarks

The people who truly defend the monarchy are here with 90 seats – with power to change the Constitution - in the National Assembly. What could the party with four seats do to protect the monarchy? It seems that many times they try to benefit from this issue. It was improper to link HM the King and Their Majes-

ties King-Father and Queen-Mother to the deal – “Loving Their Majesties, Voting for Funcinpec.” It has been several legislative terms already and this is still what they tell the people. Do they not understand that while saying so means it is a competition between Hun Sen and (Samdech Preah Norodom) Sihanouk?

The CPP has made it a deal with the voter that if the CPP wins the elections, Hun Sen will be Prime Minister or in reversal order, if voters like Hun Sen, they should vote for CPP. And when the other party says if voters love Samdech Sihanouk, they should vote for Funcinpec, then if less number of voters give supports, it would be a loss for HM the King-Father too. I would clarify that monarchy is a common object and does not belong to any particular political party. If it is made to think or believe that it belongs only to the royal family, they should consider that it is in danger.

Tomorrow is the starting day of the communal elections campaign and I would not make any discourses at all. I brought this issue up just now purely in good intention. I just do not want any politician to claim the monarchy all to him/her. Monarchy belongs to the nation and everyone. HM the King is for everyone and not for only the Royal family. It was a great achievement that we collaboratively bring the monarchy back on its feet but politicians should not create political fuss from it but to leave the Cambodian monarchy a neutral institution.

Some politician has even said “in fact, I did not agree to be King. I would stay on in politics and leave the King position to my brother.” I find this ridiculous. Early on when I first heard this I always send a message through some people that “since when has the throne belongs to the person? And since when the person has become king?” I may rebuke that the throne that is currently under HM the King Sihanouk’s reign is not an aban-

doned one. As a member of the Throne Council, together with others, the two Chief monks of the two Buddhist Sects, on 14 October 2010, at 4pm, I voted to elect the King. The throne is never a left-over from anyone.

Recommendations

Before coming to a close let me give some recommendations. Firstly, *the Ministry of Religious Affairs continues to cooperate with relevant ministries to organize more training courses to orientate the roles and tasks of wise men/women in the Cambodian tradition and custom so as to achieve a unified norm for the whole country.*

Secondly, *the Ministry of Religious Affairs continues to cooperate with relevant ministries to carry out further research activities so as to compile and formulate into instructions on rules and procedures of all kinds of ceremonies, while documenting and widely circulating it in the Buddhist studies curriculum.*

Thirdly, *the Ministry of Religious Affairs should further expand the alliance between the Cambodian Wise Men/Women Associations and organize regularly annual meeting so that they could exchange views, knowledge and experiences while listening to the people’s proposals or requests for thorough explanation.*

Fourthly, *the Ministry of Religious Affairs should pay attention to organizing the Buddhist nuns to pursue the roles and tasks to contribute to social development and cultural and traditional conservation of our nation.*

Fifthly, *both wise men/women must have good cooperation among themselves and with the Buddhist pagoda committees, the head monks, local authorities, and not to observe social discrimination. A collaborate among them is critical for the maintenance and conservation of the Buddhist heritage and Cambodian tradition and custom for a long time to come..*■

(Continued from page 1)

sions to give loan base entirely on the degree of confidence that the banks have on the company's record of performances. It is a great thing that with all financial ability and sources, the company achieved this project that we are joyfully celebrating the inauguration altogether ...

Three "Techo" Avenues

Then came the investment proposal of the Sokha Company of Oknha Sok Kong in which he proposed to build access road to top of the hill and for free public use. It is a domestic company. Shall we not approve the local company requesting to build the road for the state? Oknha Sok Kong even wanted to name three roads here after my name and that of my wife. Oknha Sok Kong proposed that the first road starting from the mountain's foot to top of the mountain is called "Vithei Kiri Techo" and because I see that there are trees along the road I name it "Rukha Vithei Kiri Techo" or "Mountain Avenue of Techo."

Please allow me to clarify a bit about the term Techo. In fact Techo is a title given not only to me. In the Cambodian history, as far as we could trace it back, the title of Techo was also given by HM to Mr. Meas and Yort too. So the road is named after Techo does not necessarily mean me – Techo Sen alone. In 1630, there were Techo Meas and Techo Yort at the district of Samraong Tomg of Kompong Speu. The two commanders did not conduct their activities in this part of the country ...

One other road that is a connection from the main "Rukha Vithei Kiri Techo" to the hill of circulating cloud (Popokvil) to enjoy the water fall, I name it "Vithei Kiri Techo Kungkea" or Mountain Aqua-Avenue of Techo" so as to link Mountain Avenue of Techo to the waterfall. I name the third road which is 11.4 km "Mountain Avenue of Techo Sen Jei." As we all could see that building these roads in this harsh terrain is not a simple job. Various parts of the

mountains had to be trimmed and large pieces of rocks had to be moved out or made as safety barriers.

Sokha Companies Requests

The fact that the company built the roads for the country is like being on the state's behalf to improve the country's infrastructure. It is indeed the state's gesture to reciprocate in kind to such an act. There have been various requests by the Sokha Company. I advise that some of the requests be channeled to the one-window service meeting and some can be settled right here. One of them is the request for delineation of the Preah Monivong National Park at Bokor so that the company could come up with a master plan to start building road along the line to prevent land encroachment and confiscation, illegal logging and hunting and/or forest fire. Such request does not have to go through the one-window service meeting. I would instruct relevant authorities and the Sokha Company to work out the delineation.

For one other request I think that the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Mines and the Electric Company can jointly take joint action to answer to the Company's call. The Company requests that the Cambodian electric company set up a substation and network of 115 KVA in the area so that the Sokha Company would be able to address the need for electric power. I think this issue does not need to go to CDC's one-window service meeting.

It is also my joy to see that the Sokha Company planted over one million trees in the site. I encourage them to go on doing that. We can say that this is a good gesture indicating that there is no forest destruction here. I encourage the Sokha Company, the Forest Administration and the Ministry of Environment to work together to continue to develop green coverage in this area. We cannot have a site without green coverage at all or the site would be meaning-

less.

I am also fascinated by not only the 418 room hotel up here but also the ability to store up to 400,000 cubic meters of water together with the ability to provide electricity to light up the mountain top. This means that the Sokha Company not only builds the country roads but also pays the country the electric bills too. I urge HE Sok Chenda to review all these and figure out the tax bills.

What is even more fascinating is, for me, the workers residential area, though it has yet to be completed. Like I said the other day at the SAP at the inauguration of SEZ there needs to have a residential area for workers in order for them to stay and work for the company. I wish to inform the Cambodians that we now have the resort of top of the Mountain Bokor. I noted that during the Khmer New Year there were some 5,000 cars up here while we had only 400 rooms to cater to the need. The company is considering building another 600 rooms more.

Kompot – Cambodia's South-West Rising Star

I am so grateful that this project has come out successfully. It has been anticipated to take longer time to get the project done but considering the terrain and financial difficulties in the world and the region, with its severe impacts also on Cambodia, I think the project completion is not simple or late. This is a large scale investment project as there has not yet other project of this scale in the field of resort. This phase of project completion cost 200 million USD already. I am of the opinion that the term "rising star of the Cambodian Southwest" is developing its true meaning. We all are going up by 1,075 meters (above sea level) altogether.

It was the case before that in a three day holiday people might spend only at the Sihanouville province and city but it is now not so. People might spend one night at Sihanouville, one night at Bokor and another at Kep. I

agree with the Sokha Company to postpone the projects on cable cars and golf to a later stage. Just now I told HE Sar Kheng that when it is Cambodia's turn to host the meeting of the Ministers of Interior and provincial governors along the Cambodian-Vietnamese border, we should bring them here for the meeting.

A few years ago I said the province of Kompot does not seem to make a move. However, at the later part of the first decade through to the early part of second decade of the 21st century, Kompot has enjoyed so many achievements. Here in Kompot we have what other provinces do not have – salt, cement, hydroelectricity, new national road 3 and 31, and now the BMR. Kompot is part of the southern corridor, and according to the Tokyo strategy, it includes Ho Chi Minh, Phnom Penh and Bangkok. Also counted in are the Vietnamese province of Kien Giang, Cambodian provinces of Kompot, Preah Sihanouville, Koh Kong and Thailand's Trat.

As far as salt is concerned I asked HE Roh Moo-hyun, former President of Republic of Korea, to help us improve the national road 3 as it will serve our purpose of widely distributing salt to all over the country. I noted also that more tourists like to come to Kompot as they could have meals in Kompot before they go up the BMR. Taking this opportunity may I seek our small scale traders and restaurant owners to exercise transparent business and adhere to reasonable pricing so that these tourists will come back to visit again with more friends. To advertize by online, TV or paper is a way to get to many people but it is even more important and widely effective when we could make those tourists to come back again and to bring with them many more. I wish to just add that in the future the province of Kompot will have a deep seaport of its own as we are conducting not only open sky and land but also water policy.

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 1)

is the creation of the Special Economic Zone financed by Japan as is reported by HE Tram Iv Toek, Minister of Transport and Public Works, and also by HE Masafumi Kuroki the Japanese Ambassador. It has been a complicated issue concerning the establishment of the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) at the Sihanoukville Autonomous Port (SAP). The talking about having the SEZ at the SAP had gone on for a long time but the investment site was for some time still in green. In the end a decision was made to buy 70 hectares of land from various people for the SAP.

In one of my meetings with former Prime Minister of Japan HE Koizumi, I proposed Japan help pay for the land. However, after a firm decision and commitment, thanks to the support of the Government of Japan and a thorough study conducted by JICA and various Japanese companies concerned, today we are putting into official use the SEZ at SAP, which is the *only one SEZ that is funded by the state*, unlike other SEZs in provinces of Svay Rieng, Koh Kong, the capital city of Phnom Penh, etc. which are built and managed by private sectors.

As Cambodia borrows money from Japan to build this SEZ at SAP, I share same belief with HE Kuroki that Japanese investors will start coming to the SEZ at SAP. As I noted, one cardboard box company from Japan has already come and since Cambodia continues to score economic growth in recent years, it seems more Japanese companies are showing their interest. I would take this opportunity to call on more interested Japanese investors to come to the Kingdom of Cambodia, in the SEZ at SAP for instance so as to help Cambodia improve its environment and boost up Cambodia's economic growth.

Correct Port Development Decision

I am so happy and sharing with you all the joy in noting the pro-

gresses made by the Sihanoukville Sea Port here. Maybe I should talk on whether it was correct or wrong decision that the Prime Minister has made (with regard to the port development) so that workers, staff and leadership of the SAP could review. In fact, in the first legislative term of the Royal Government of Cambodia (after the UN supervised general elections in 1993), when Cambodia then had two Prime Ministers, the SAP almost slipped out of the state's control.

I started to frequently visit the port from 1996. There was a tendency in those days to privatize the SAP and Kampuchea Shipping Agency and Brokers (KAMSAB). Noting the move I came down here and promised to the staff and workers that I would not allow that happen on my watch. Why was I against the private investment at the time? For me, investment in the port of any kind has to be the construction of a whole new port or to expand a small port to larger one and its peripheral services. I would not accept any investment where investors would only bring in lifting equipments.

Relating to KAMSAB, many investors were brought to see me and I asked what they have in their investment plan for KAMSAB. They told me that they would install and operate radio communication. I said if that is what KAMSAB needs there would not be a call for investors. Cambodia can do this business on its own. We can equip KAMSAB with advanced radio communication and KAMSAB ships can navigate leading way for foreign ships to enter its territory after mounting Cambodian flag on it. It is easy money.

As a matter of fact if we were to give the port to private investor, there would be no way that Japan offer to help. I am glad to note that with all these developments, with help from Japanese companies, the SAP is preparing to establish and trade its share in the CSX (Cambodian Securities

Exchange). As you can see now what I have promised the staff, workers and leadership of the SAP that its development plan is moving ahead.

It should be reminded too that thanks to the promise I made and decision not to privatize the port that Japan offered us 35 million USD in loan for extending first of all 240 meters of port to 11 meter deep area between 2002 and 2005. Japan offers Cambodia with more grant than loans. That fact that we could not borrow Japanese money is because we have had outstanding debt to Japan that its law does not allow more borrowing at all.

Talking about foreign debts, I would warn other politicians not to try to improperly make political gain from bringing this up as I would not hesitate to reveal to the people and the world as to who before me have made Cambodia get into debt. We younger generations have the burden to pay the debts, to like the Asian Development Bank, incurred from previous leaders. We still have foreign debts to be paid to another country and I would not mention this country by name here.

I have read a newspaper article somewhere that Japan, true or not I could not verify, at this stage, has erased some 70% of debt from Myanmar. As for Cambodia, in order to repay the Japanese debts – principal, interest and fine altogether, Japan brought us goods and we had to sell them and used the return from selling the goods to pay the debts. However, Japanese Government kept the payment as its assistance for Cambodia. Following completion of several years of payment and debt conversion of this sort, Japan allows us to borrow money again. I would share with all of you that the first loan we got from Japan was the 35 million USD for the SAP.

The loan of 39 USD in between 2005 and 2007 was for SAP to extend another 160 meters 11

meters deep port, a one window administration office and lifting equipments. Later we borrowed a sum of some 3.8 million USD for engineering project. In the short time to come we will be seeking loans of 85 million USD in 2012-15 for the construction of 260 meter multipurpose port at 13 meters deep and 300 meter port at 7.5 meter deep for oil and gas drilling service and supply. Our port now could allow the visit of only 20,000 ton ships but it is our plan that by 2015, the ships of 50,000 tons could do so too.

This is what Cambodia needs. Nowadays, because our port's depth could not welcome bigger ship, shipping goods from Cambodia has to unload and reload in ports in Vietnam or Singapore. Seeing this constraint, it is commonly purposeful to borrow money from Japan to extend our seep sea port service area so that heavy ships could visit our port directly. That would definitely we believe improve our edge of competition. Again, if it were to be given to private sector before, would we be able to knock on Japan's door for loans?

Special Personal Connection with the Port

I am so glad at everything that we have been working on and achieving together. As far as this SAP is concerned, I have developed a special personal connection to it from the early stage. (Right after the 7 January 1979 liberation) it was beyond belief that Samdech Heng Samrin, then President of the People's Revolutionary Council of Kampuchea and President of the State Council and Prime Minister, chose me to head a commission to relieve goods that were sent from Vietnam, former Soviet Union and India, and jammed in the port of Kompong Som (currently SAP).

With me in the commission those days were HE Taing Sarim, Men Chhan, Khun Chhi, etc. It was like what has been mentioned just now by HE Tram Iv Toek, transporting
(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

goods from the port to Phnom Penh could be conducted only from 7 am to 11 am on 24 hours basis due mainly to insecurity. We were so poor that at night we had electricity from a small generator. We ran out of gas at midnight. We used the small generator to provide power for pumping water during the day. I have so many souvenirs from my involvement with this port. I could recall that our people then wore no shoes or thongs.

One fascinating thing I could remember from our hardships those days was when our people who helped unload the goods tied their trousers' cuffs. Why? As you know that in those days we did not have lifting equipments so everything has to be carried off and on by human. There was this method that people tied each cuff to their foot making a bag so that they could pour rice into it. They stole rice. I then said to the port security and commission members that judging from the fact that everyone was in need of rice and because we needed labor to help us unload the goods, let's not bother too much on that but total prevention must be strict against stealing in truckload amount.

Having given you all the facts so far I am sure that you find this Prime Minister trustworthy. As I said it is now time for SAP to be prepared with the Japanese company for share trading. I would urge HE Kuroki to further encourage the concerned company from Japan to prepare the joining share with SAP to enter the CSX so that SAP could accumulate more funds for further development. It has been assuring seeing SAP Chairman and CEO Lou Kim Chhun's comparison of port activities from 284,000 tons of goods in 1992 to 440,000 tons in 2011. This has proven that some politicians' comments that Cambodia is getting poorer are wrong.

The Sihanoukville city is now getting bigger and more tourists are coming to visit and stay here. In fact I was invited by a US 7th

fleet commander to visit the ship. Unfortunately I have a prior engagement so I have delegated HE Tia Banh, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defense to board the 7th fleet, which has arrived from the visit in Vietnam, on my behalf. As I said earlier, formerly on the National Road 4 between Sihanoukville and Phnom Penh, we could travel only about four hours in a day because of security reason. For instance, though I had the news that it was raining from morning till evening, even at about seven in the evening I was tempted to change my mind to come at night, not to wait till this morning.

Dragon Shape for Growth and Development

I am sure our economy will continue to grow. Like what has been mentioned by HE Tram Iv Toek about a report on growing amount of rice for export to go through SAP as the country is making efforts to achieve its goal of exporting over one million tons of milled rice per annum by 2015. With this joy I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to board members, general directors, leaders of all levels, staff and workers, for their combined efforts to contribute to the overall growth of the country's economy.

Usually, in many discourses about future Cambodian economy, I always compare our economic growths and poles in the country to the shape of a dragon. (Looking at the Cambodian map) Sihanoukville is commonly understood to be the dragon's head, Phnom Penh to be the dragon's body, the provinces of Siem Reap, Ratanakiri and Mondulakiri to be its legs and Stoeng Treng to be the dragon's tail.

As we are today celebrating the 126th International Labor Day – May 1, I would like to take this opportune moment to express my sincere appreciation and thanks to the workers here as well as in the whole country, whose combined efforts have

effectively generated growth in our economy. As is noted in the speech of Ambassador Kuroki, despite financial and economic impacts, Cambodian economy is still making positive development. The economic growth in 2011, as is calculated on March 28, the previous predicted figure of between 6% and 7% has been upgraded to 7.1%.

However as is known to everyone, the Cambodian economy will finish its calculation only in June of the following year as we still have dry season rice to be harvested. The growth of between 6% and 7% is a good sign. It should be noted that this has been achieved thanks to the collective efforts, largely by the workers and farmers and investors. I have the information from HE Ith Sam Heng, Minister of Social and Veteran Affairs that over 12,000 workers in 172 factories in Phnom Penh are enjoying parties, while some also took their rights to the streets too.

Some Issues on International Labor Day

On this occasion I would like to call on people who are traveling or thinking of travelling to the Cambodian-Thai border to find jobs – some are even attempting to cross the border illegally, to return to their home provinces. Going to Thailand illegally is not a good solution. Those who illegally entered Thailand have not yet received official permissions so others must not be going there. I am calling you to find jobs in the country as we are now in need of labor too. Take for instance in this report, SAP has offered jobs for between 10,000 and 20,000 workers. It has been noticed that more workers are needed in agriculture, construction and industry too.

Migrating illegally to Thailand to find jobs, you are to work in the areas of agriculture like cutting and collecting sugar canes and cassava but you are not paid more than in Cambodia either. You may get higher pay there but you take several risks too like being there illegally, coping

with higher expenses and being separated from your parents and families. Taking all these conditions into consideration I am calling on you to reconsider and stay for local jobs that are also available. There is no place like home.

In similar instance I would urge investors to provide better settlements for workers. Here in SEZ at the SAP, I urge that necessary condition for workers to stay close to their workplace must be in place. Secondly, it is important to provide them with information and collaboration as far as job seeking and availability is concerned. I already advised on this issue in several Cabinet meetings. Factories in need of labor forces have to provide information so that workers in need of jobs are aware of the job availability. It is also important to inform workers of workplaces where they can find jobs. Thirdly, it is also critical for companies to readjust labor wages to be more competitive. However I warn that any demand for wage increment should not surpass agreeable term.

On April 28 I met with representatives of some 4,000 factory workers from 60 unions to figure out problems and identify ways to resolve. I would like to take this time to urge that coordination and abiding by labor law are the best ways to resolve all differences. It is important for us to understand that there would be no workers without factory owners and vice versa. It is therefore fundamental to balance interests between the two depending groups. The two groups need to be in harmony as there cannot be one without the other. To achieve this harmonious relationship, while making profit, owners of the factories should add a part of it into workers' benefit, not just as financial but also health and training incentives.

It is a two way relationship. However, taking the roles of the Ministry of Social and Veteran Affairs, Arbitrary Council,
(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

which is the conflict resolution mechanism, and local authorities into consideration, such relationship is a knot of so many strings together. You may think in a simple way that in case of violent conflict that leads to fire or destruction of factories of some kind, workers are the ones to lose jobs. Though the owner may suffer loss of property, they would still have homes and properties.

As you all can see, in the 2008 financial crisis and economic downturn, which has extended its impacts to the present, had brought about the closure of some 54 factories in Cambodia, causing job losses for tens of thousands of people. The state then was forced to spend money for skill retraining and new job creation for laid-off workers. However, thanks to combined efforts, in 2011, we have been able to put into operation some 80 factories, where tens of thousands of workers can resume their jobs. The Royal Government in this instance has made every effort on the one hand to maintain political and macroeconomic stability, security, social order, and on the other to attract foreign investments while expanding existing markets and accessing new ones.

In 2011, as a result, our export to Europe reached close to one billion US dollars and I am sure because of combined efforts we also will be hitting a new growth. It is in this perspective that I am calling on all to work to achieve win-win situation among workers, management and investors. You may ask for what purpose we need to invest some 45 million USD in SEZ at the SAP. It is for the attraction of foreign investors to come build factories. And who will work in those factories? In light of this, because more investments will be for higher-end and more sophisticated products, it is important that we have to have human resource training.

It is in this concern that in meetings with the Japanese compa-

nies, I learned of their explicit concerns about lack of high skilled labors. We have now come to a stage of lacking labors in household agricultural activities, small, medium and/or large scale rubber or sugar cane farms, construction, and in industry. Why our people migrate illegally for jobs in foreign country? My main point here is that those people do not have information about job availability in the country or nearby there residential areas. Tricked by some cunning labor trader could be another reason.

I would advise our people on reason that they could earn 300 Thai Baht per working day in Thailand as (the Pheu Thai's policy which has now become) the Yingluck's Government's policy is to be applied for Thai people and up to the present, it has not been applicable in throughout the country yet.

From May 15 – No More Public Discourse

Starting from May 15, I will not give anymore discourses as it is prohibited by the electoral law while we will be in the electoral campaign for the communal elections. We have to spend money on communal elections this year according to schedule. With or without financial assistance from other sources, we will have to carry the elections through. In 1998 we were short of money to carry out the elections. Japan and the European Union provided us with financial assistances. That is why I told HE Obuchi, the former Prime Minister of Japan, that Japan and European Union are midwives of the second term Royal Government of Cambodia.

I meant that only Japan and the European Union offered us financial helps to carry out the general elections. We did not have money at the time. We even did not have money to pay for our public officials and staff. Now we have some money but that does not mean that we rule out the help given by Japan at all. If Japan considers offering us help for the communal elections,

we will be most happy to accept. However, with or without the help, the elections will have to be conducted according to schedule as I already sign the paper to transfer money for the job already.

In 1993, the United Nations (Transitional Authority in Cambodia) or UNTAC paid completely for then general elections. In 1998, most of the money was provided by Japan and the European Union. In 2003, Cambodia covered 40% of the total amount of money needed for carrying out the general elections. In 2008, Cambodian share for the task reached 60%, while only 40% of the amount covered by foreign assistance. We also understand that it is a difficult time for some in this financial crisis.

Maybe I should add a little as we just finished the Japan-Mekong summit. Japan declares providing a fund of 600 billion Yen or 7.4 billion USD for a period of three years for the five Mekong countries. In bilateral meeting with HE Yoshihiko Noda, Prime Minister of Japan, I have proposed to him on the one hand to maintain the grant and on the other to increase the amount for concessional loans. The concessional loan from Japan has a loan-term of 40 years with 10 year grace period and 0.01% interest per annum. However, I did not mention anything about asking Japan to help with the elections.

Despite this, HE Sar Kheng, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Interior already sounded out the idea with friends. By and large, we should also scale down the culture of asking for help while increasing the share of self responsibility on issue of regularly developing democracy in Cambodia. Next year we will be conducting the general elections too. We plan to spend between 18 and 19 million USD for the communal elections and the similar amount will be spent in the general elections next year.

There are ten political parties to contest in the communal elec-

tions and I wish to appeal to all parties to act neutrally and freely so as to guarantee that we will have an acceptably fair and just elections. I would call on all political parties to accept the results of the elections as none of them now claims to be the weak but strong ones. I warn them not to complain when they lose as their party agents are going to observe the elections too. It is ridiculous that some in the opposition parties have called on the majority to respect the minority. Does this means that in the future we (the Cambodian People's Party) should aim for minority support in the next election to be respected? ...

(Continued from page 8)

Rotation of Leadership of Deity

I still have one more thing to share with our people today and I would also make it known to deities who look after the land, the forest and the air. In 2003, I also talked about this once in the province of Kompot. Then someone said it at Kandal's Koh Thhom that even the deities also rotate to take the leadership every year. They wanted to infer (to the Cambodian People's Party) that it should also change the candidate for the leadership. I would take this moment to tell them that if ever they rotate, it will be among their deities – like Sar Kheng, Pol Saron, Sim Ka, etc.

They all wanted to mean that I should be changed. So long as they have the rights to engage in politics, why am I not? So I am calling on all deities who look after the land, the forest and the air to figure these people out. What is ridiculous is that the ones wishing to replace me are even older than I am. Let me just summarize that staying long or short will depend on people's choice through the elections. They may think again as the CPP has up to 30 people in the permanent committee, over 200 in the central committee and many in the younger generation who hold Ph. D, MA or Sc., so do not mess with the deity...