

Cambodia New Vision

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03 March 2003 [Unofficial Translation] Launching 2002-5 National Poverty Reduction Strategy



On March 23, 2003, Samdech Hun Sen is warmly welcomed by people during the inauguration of the Hun Sen-Skun College, Choeung Prey District, Kompong Cham Province.

Today, I am very honored and delighted to join you all today to launch the Cambodia National Poverty Reduction Strategy 2002-2005.

On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia, please allow me to express my deep gratitude and sincere appreciation for the efforts made by the Council for Social Development, Working Group on Social Development of the Ministries/Institutions concerned, City-Provincial authorities, national and international organizations, civil society, private sector, and especially the World Bank, IMF, UNDP, CIDA, other donors who have provided technical assistance and actively participated in succeeding the Cambodia's NPRS.

I would like also to take this opportunity to thank the Council for Social Development and the World Bank for their efforts and supports in making this gathering possible.

As you already know, Cambodia is not the only country that has undergone the process of preparing a NPRS.

Over the last few years, such NPRS has emerged as an important aspect of the process of ensuring that there is consistency and synergy between the poverty alleviation programs of the government and its development partners, both national and international.

In Cambodia, we took the process of formulating the NPRS very seriously. We worked hard to have a fully open and participatory process, enabling many sectors of society to join in the discussions and consultations.

There were at least five national workshops on the NPRS, as well as many more sectoral and technical meetings and consultations.

With today's launching of the
(Continued on page 2)

24 March 2003 Inaugurating Cambodia's News & Communication Institute

It is a great honor and pleasure for me to participate in this ceremony with all of you to inaugurate the New Building of the Cambodia's News Communication Institute constructed with the assistance from UNESCO. This is the second time that I come to this institute since it was opened eight years ago in its old location within the Office of the Ministry of Information.

On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia and my own self, I wish to convey my sincere congratulation and appreciation to the Royal University of Phnom Penh and the Ministry of

Education Youth and Sports for their achievements in the development of human resources.

These efforts have enabled the improvement in the education of cultural and ethical knowledge within the Cambodian society and helped the dissemination of knowledge in sciences to young Cambodian people.

Thus all these are important contributions to the economic and social development especially for the poverty reduction and improvement in the living standard of our people, an ultimate
(Continued on page 3)

29 March 2003 [Unofficial Translation] Inaugurating Pongro and Roka Kaong Bailey Bridge

Speaking to the people in Koh Sotin district during the inauguration of the Pongro and Roka Kaong Bailey Bridges and a rural road, Samdech Hun Sen drew people's attentions on his memory of the past related to Koh Sotin area, issues of developments based upon the triangle strategy and works to be fulfilled by the Royal Government of Cambodia.

... I am glad to be able to return here one year after March 30, 2002, when the groundbreaking ceremony was organized for the constructions of the two Bailey Bridges – Pongro (96 meters) and Roka Kaong (75 meters). The 11 kilometre rural road is also inaugurated today. I learned that even if we have not yet organized the inauguration ceremony but our people have used

them already. We come here today to just announce officially the transfer of achievements for our people's use... Taking this opportunity I would like to express my sincere thanks to all military engineering teams for the efforts they made in implementing my orders. I wish to extend my appreciation to also the local authorities at all levels and our people living in this area for the supports they offered to the construction efforts.

... I learned that in this area our
(Continued on page 5)

In This Issue

- 1) Launching NPRS — P.1
- 2) Inaugurated CNCI — P.1
- 3) Inaugurated Bridges in Koh Sotin— P. 1
- 4) Dharma Hall in Kandal — P. 6
- 5) Kralanh's Referral Hospital — P.8

(Continued from page 1)

Cambodia NPRS, our joint efforts are being widely recognized. Several assessments of Cambodia's NPRS have been undertaken by international as well as national observers.

They all agree that the Cambodia NPRS is the product of an open and extensive participatory process that involved all agencies, sectors and stakeholders at all levels.

In this regard, the Royal Government initiated a link between Cambodia's anti-poverty strategies with the national budget plan and conducted an in-depth analysis on other sectoral issues. Furthermore, inter-ministerial coordination and monitoring mechanism has also been improved along with the work of the Council for Social Development and its General Secretariat.

It is true that we have produced a first good Cambodia NPRS, although it is not yet a perfect NPRS. Nevertheless, we will continue to work on its improvement by incorporating it with our five year Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP).

In particular, the Royal Government will continue to improve the economic and fiscal aspects of this strategy by focusing on the improvements of sectors related to the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework. Moreover, we will also include new visions including various important economic perspectives provided by the Supreme National Economic Council (SNEC) into the strategy.

The Cambodia NPRS for 2003-2005 which is launching now is of high significance, because it is evidence reflecting the commitment of the Royal Government towards the millennium develop-

ment goal which 147 heads of state and governments endorsed at the World Summit in September 2000.

The result of social-economic monitoring in 1999 showed that about 35.9% of the Cambodian population lived under poverty line. It is clear that poverty is a complex issue and has multiple dimensions related to high population growth, inadequacy of sanitary, education, opportunity, and safety, food insecurity, social exclusion, and vulnerability, etc.

The most important aspects of the poverty in Cambodia include:

- *High poverty incidence in the countryside and the highest rate is among the families whose household headed those who are employed in the agricultural sector;*
- *Poor families having a tendency to expand among big families whose household headed by young males;*
- *Most of the poor are those families in which the head of the household has had either no formal education or only some primary schooling; and*
- *The poverty has the lowest rate in Phnom Penh.*

The most challenge in development efforts faced by the Royal Government is poverty reduction and the improvement of the living quality of the Cambodian population which is rapidly growing.

The Royal Government clearly understands and considers poverty as a great economic loss and it is morally unacceptable which can lead to the destruction of the society.

Therefore, the poverty reduction in Cambodia has become the most important development goal of the Royal Government.

Based on this philosophy, we laid out the NPRS, which contains the following key components:

First, strengthening peace, stability and social order through concrete measures aims at enhancing the state of law, human rights protection, and democracy in order to create a favorable political environment and security for the long term sustainable development.

Second, ensuring long term sustainable economic growth with 6-7% annual growth.

Third, equitable distribution of economic growth between the rich and the poor, city and rural, and female and male.

Fourth, guaranteeing sustainable management and use of environment and natural resources.

As I mentioned above, we spent a lot of times and resources to arrange the discussions and consultations to work on the improvement of this important document until it was adopted by the plenary meeting of the Council of Ministers on 20 December 2002.

In this sense, our NPRS has been achieved through a wide participation and agreement from all stakeholders.

Thus, in addition to the SEDPII, the NPRS will play role as a compass and an instrument to guide and manage changes and reforms for the development, and for measuring the results of our implementation towards the

attainment of strategic motto of the Royal Government: *"Reducing people's poverty through long term high economic growth, sustainable environment and social equity"*.

Due to the reasons given above, I believe that there is no need for me to provide a detailed comment on the content of the NPRS again.

Nevertheless, I would like to underline some important pillars of the NPRS as the following:

First, maintaining macroeconomic stability to promote sustainable economic growth whereby the private sector should play the leading role.

Second, improving rural livelihoods through improving the possibilities of using local services by focusing on policy implementation, programs and concrete measures to ensure the increase of income to people living in the rural areas. Those focuses are: land reform program; water, agriculture, forestry and fishery policies as well as projects on construction and maintenance of rural transportation infrastructure system, etc.

Third, expanding job opportunities focusing on the efforts to create jobs and professions through private sector development, expanding exports, promoting the establishment of light and medium and manufactured industry, and expanding tourism as well.

Fourth, improving people's capabilities focusing mainly on the improvement of education, healthcare and nutrition.

Fifth, strengthening institutions and improving governance focusing mainly on the

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)
implementation of the Governance Action Plan (GAP) of the Royal Government.

Sixth, *reducing vulnerability and strengthening social inclusion focusing mainly on environmental sustainability and sustainable management of natural resources.*

There are also a number of important problems which need to be solved such as disaster management, especially flood, dry, land mine clearance; a legacy of long years of war, and the problem of vulnerable groups include the disabled, those affected by HIV/AIDS, orphans, street and abandoned children, the homeless, and food security, etc.

Seventh, *promoting gender equity focusing mainly on reducing gender-based disparities in all fields of the society.*

Eighth, *giving top priority to demography and ethnography through promoting the implementation of health reproduction program, family planning for the poor, increasing primary school education for the poor, increasing job opportunity for the poor, etc.*

Certainly, we still have a long way to go and to overcome uncountable obstacles. We all recognize that we cannot resolve all problems of poverty within one day, or one month or one year.

The poverty reduction is the core of the Royal Government's policy and is a topic which draws global attention. Therefore, may I appeal to all international partners of Cambodia and NGOs, senior officials and officials in all ministries/institutions, mili-

tary forces, local authorities at all levels and all citizens to render all forms of support and to cooperate with the Council for Social Development and to actively participate in implementing this strategy.

The Royal Government considers the NPRS as a blueprint for donors, coordinators to adjust their policy and cooperation activities in their support for Cambodia. It is clear that, the NPRS is not the only way to mobilize development assistance for supporting the national budget. Cambodia has been taking flexible approach in mobilizing international assistance, adding to project-based approach and program-based approach.

All these approaches have to be under the framework of the NPRS. Before I conclude, I would like to sincerely thank once again to the World Bank, IMF, UN agencies namely, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNESCO, GTZ of Germany and other donor partners who provided support for the formulation of the NPRS.

I would like also to express my sincere appreciation to H.E. Mr. Chhay Than, Minister of the Ministry of Planning, and all staff of the Council for Social Development, working groups on NPRS formulation, working groups on social development in ministries/institutions, Supreme National Economic Council, civil society, private sector, national and international organizations that actively participated in the formulation of the NPRS.

May I declare the official launching to the Cambodia's NPRS from now on. ■

(Continued from page 1)
 mate top priority goal of the Royal Government.

To take this opportunity, on behalf of Cambodian people and the Royal Government of Cambodia, I express deep gratitude to donors, NGOs and other international organisations for their valuable contributions of multifaceted assistance in both technical and financial support for the rehabilitation and building of Cambodia's education.

Special thanks are due to the UNESCO for its active and crucial role in mobilizing funds for the construction of this new building and the support for the training of journalists in the Royal University of Phnom Penh.

Indeed, we all recognize that any nation can progress unless it has a strong intellectual class those who play a leading role in rationalising issues of national interest, transferring knowledge and educating next generation through the various works, such as through their literature and academic and research papers, their efforts in conservation or preservation and development of national culture and other scientific findings.

Generally, the level of development may reflect in the availability of intellectuals and resource persons, the driving "thinking" force of any nation that is a determining factor of country's competitiveness.

Moreover, a prosperous nation is the one with libraries and "reading" lovers.

Thus in the new era of information technology, computer system and internet has provided excellent access to the great and dynamic reserves of knowledge.

As I have indicated many times already about key policies for education undertaken by the RGC, that quality human resource development and effective use of intellectual capital are our top priorities now and in the future.

Thus today, I would discuss, in addition to what I have talked before, some other critical issues and concerns of the RGC with regard to its Higher Education policies, especially the development of quality human resource and effective use of human capital.

I would emphasize that this is not just an effort to solve the employment issue for our people, but it is a long term development vision and an effective and timely response to the 21st century challenges posed by the globalization.

We can say that the 21st century is a "knowledge" and "information" era where human physical, intellectual and spiritual dynamics are the determining factors in transforming economic potentials and national comparative advantages into a reality, thus strengthening a real competitiveness of any nation.

In this sense, the RGC considers education and effective use of intellectual capital the utmost and current top priority. In all the institutions, human resources are key to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of works.

Thus first and foremost, the strengthening of institutional capacity should focus on development of human resource being highly skilled and appropriate; - with the establishment of a mechanism that ensures the optimal use of this very important resource. It is the RGC's philosophy to address this urgent need

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)
in giving the priority to strengthening capacity of institutions through human resource development.

In order to realize this utmost important objective, we need a partnership both national and international. The national partnership presents a mean of transferring the knowledge and know-how among institutions, such as training and exchanges of experiences among various academic entities and government ministries and institutions.

Given the importance of higher education in the development, I thus set out the "rehabilitation" policy for this sector since 1980s.

The government at that time was working very hard by calling on students and intellectuals surviving from Pol Pot regime to re-open up universities, faculties and institutes.

Then, I can say that we started and moved forward from almost nothing ("empty hands") with little helps from some friend countries.

At present, along with efforts to increase the budget allocation and mobilise foreign resources for education, I have also set a policy of "liberalisation" and "partnership" with private sector, both national and foreign, to improve the quality of higher education in Cambodia.

As a result, we all have witnessed there are plenty of public and privately owned universities and institutions that have been established and kept expanding.

With fully free access to information from foreign sources worldwide, the Cambodian young generation are grateful and enjoying in learning new

skills and knowledge tirelessly via the use of internet and emails.

The RGC is concerned about the quality of higher education, - that requires a thorough and appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanism of the quality.

However, the RGC is clear about the need for a response to the increasing number of graduate students and the need for streamlining the education system reflecting the changing needs of the labour market.

As I mentioned this is the only one of the many challenges; I have seen that though there have been around 200-230 thousands of our young Cambodians entered the labour market each year, they are of low or little skills.

Thus the RGC should have given priority to strengthening of vocational and other skills trainings making them a highly skilled and effective workforce.

Also, the RGC considers strategy to promote industrialisation up to another level toward the expansion of economic base, gradually reduce the dependency on the production of few export products and prepare for the production of higher value added goods such as electronic, household and kid appliances.

This will require highly skilled and well trained labors (graduates of vocational centers or university).

With the advancement on industrialisation absorbing greater labour force, we must also further promote the development of a modern agro-industry and related agricultural services.

As HE Secretary of State Im Sothy and HE Chancellor Pith Chamnan reported earlier, this

CNCI was established in 1994 within the Ministry of Information, and in 2002 the RGC decided to transfer the management of the institute to the RUPP.

Thus today, we all present here to officially inaugurate this institute and to celebrate its transfer into the RUPP management as well. Therefore, I wish to emphasise that the new building does testify not only the physical development and its relocation into the Education Center of RUPP, but also reflects the mental development, the interest on education and training of young Cambodian journalists.

The new achievement shows that Cambodia have moved to another level of development with the establishment of a training center for journalism and the continuation of its operation, and the interest for further development. This achievement is a proof to the national and international public of the RGC's commitment in the development of responsible and professional news communication skills.

Thus this will help contribute to the building of a sound democracy in Cambodia.

I believe that among all of you, - the journalists, who present here today excepting the new trainees, there are some who have undertaken courses in this institute.

Nevertheless, we still need more and more human resources, especially we need those capable and professional journalists who value the truth and who can provide comprehensive, timely and non-partisan news coverage.

In this context, I am convinced that the CNCI will develop itself into a strong and quality training center that helps improving the

mass media and news communication in Cambodia to be doubly effective and contributed to improvement of skills and professional ethics in journalism.

On this occasion, I urge all the young Cambodian journalists to study hard to improve your capacity with patience and resolve, - as the road you are travelling is extremely long.

Do not think that you have ever learned or known everything! The "knowledge" is unlimited, thus the study is also endless. Therefore, it is important that you continue your study and research and take this as an endless process which requires polishing and retraining of new skills and know-how.

This is the only way that we can appropriately respond to the development requirement of our country.

I wish to thank Denmark International Development Agency (DANIDA) who provided assistance for the construction of the buildings of this institute and has provided funds for training of Cambodian journalists during the past eight years.

I wish also, once again, thank the government of France who has provided initial support for the operation of the institute, the foreign embassies to Cambodia and other national and international organisations and NGOs who have helped contribute to the training programs for journalism that the institute has organised so far. I hope this support be continued!

Once again, I express my deep thanks to UNESCO, a major aid coordinator who has helped facilitate the other aid agencies to contribute to the functioning of this institute... ■

(Continued from page 1)

people could afford to cut off their trees for the enlargement of the road and they tended to do that before they were asked to because they believe that when Hun Sen said that he does something, he really means it. Most of our people did not ask for any compensation. They know that Hun Sen would not forget what he had said. Take for instance our people in Koh Thom, Saang districts of Kandal province said about road enlargement that their fruit trees could be re-grown anytime, but it would not be simple to have an asphalted road done through their villages. Despite the understandings from our people, in some places like in the Preak Tamak of Kandal province, we have to compensate for their losses as the road map runs on their homesteads. I am glad that the construction efforts have won tremendous supports as these achievements will serve our people's needs and help reduce poverty.

... Most of the bridges that were left from 1960's and 1970's, and after the liberation on January 07, 1979, were built in wood by our people. They could no longer resist floods or they could no longer support heavy traffic anymore. I also wish to thank the medical teams seconded to the military engineering teams for taking their time to provide treatment to about three thousand people here. Some patients were sent for more treatments in town. As General Kung Ieng mentioned, I would like to beg for your understanding and excuses on the engineering team's behalf, if any one of them had caused discontents among our people while operating in the area.

... Taking a glimpse into the past, in March, 1975 I was still in this area. Just now I came across a lady whom then I met as a kid

and she now is a grown up with three children already. Her father was killed in the battle of Kien Svay of Kandal province when we had to open a final assault on Phnom Penh. I arrived just days after her father died. This has been a memory when I travelled across here from Peam Pro Phnuos, Lve, Moha Leap, Chi He and some other communes. I also remembered that I heard an announcement on radio when I was in this area that the Lon Nol currency was no longer accepted and the new currency would be in place. We had information that the battle in Neak Loeung was over, so we had to liberate Phnom Penh. All commanders had to take to the battle. As I went out of this area, a few days later I was wounded in one of my eyes.

... We are actually approaching the Khmer New Year and once again I am pleased to return to this place today. We have made tremendous efforts and overcome lots of difficulties before we have a nice day as today. It took us great pains and efforts to liberate ourselves from the genocide and hundred of thousands of our people and soldiers died because of war. We have to start rebuilding our country from scratch. Up to today we have realized various achievements and I wish to reiterate some of our strategies for your knowledge. Prior to the Paris Peace Agreement, the Cambodian People's Party put out a range of strategies that were entirely and successfully implemented. The search for a complete and durable peace and national reconciliation on the basis of preventing a possible return of the Polpotists was the first strategy. The second strategy was to safeguard all social achievements that we had built from 1979. It was in the framework of these strategies that I conducted negotiations in search of political solution with

Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk, who currently is HM the King of Cambodia... Let's take a look in the implementation of the said strategies. We no longer have Polpotists, and their political and military organizations, and no threats of the return of the regime. On the contrary we have safeguarded social achievements that were built or rebuilt by our people on individual or communal basis... As for this term of the Royal Government, I personally issued on December 02, 1998, a triangle strategy, in which one of the angles is to pacify the remaining pockets of resistance for the sake of achieving internal peace. We have in fact realized this angle as 2003 is the fifth year in which our people are enjoying New Year in peace. The second angle of the strategy is to integrate Cambodia, the soonest we can, into the international community and to normalize relations with financial institutions. We have also fulfilled this strategy and the only institution so far that we have yet to realize our entry is the World Trade Organization. We have become a member of ASEAN and our country also hosted the Great Mekong Subregion Summit, the 8th ASEAN Summit, plus various ASEAN and partner/s forums in Phnom Penh. The third angle is that we make use of the achievements scored in the first two angles to focus our forces on socio-economic development and poverty alleviation among our people. In this front we also have conducted administrative, military, financial and legal reforms. We have encountered consecutive flood disasters in 2000, 2001 and 2002, but we continue to maintain our economic growth at 7% annually. We made 6.9% in 1999, 7.7% in 2000, 6.3% in 2001 and 5% in 2002. Despite tremendous hardships that we have encountered, none of the Cambodian people

died of hunger in times of flooding... We are now in the process of continuing a three-prong strategy, the first is to maintain internal security. We could realize no development if we were to have no peace, so we as a younger generation have to unite in maintaining peace. I was 18 years when war broke out in Cambodia so I could not be implicated as a war maker but on the contrary a peace maker. Secondly we have to make efforts to achieve economic growth between 6% and 7% and I have the confidence that we could do that. Thirdly we have to exercise equitable distribution of wealth and a sustainable use of our natural resources. This last point is very important as it is relating to the fact that how much money should we allocate for urban needs and development and how much should be given to education and health sectors, for example.

... I have seen here our people's slogan offering to support Hun Sen as Prime Minister in the third term. Maybe I should say a few things here. I wish to reiterate that this is our people's right in making their decisions. One thing I wish to have your attention here is that our people's decision is a power that could transform those speakers to doers, and vice versa. In addition to that doers -- when become speakers -- could be good in blaming. If those who do nothing win over those who do everything, we will have a situation in which speakers, while becoming doers, will continue to just speak and blame, for blaming make them win. Those who do, while becoming speakers, would also make efforts in just blaming as doing would make them lose. In this instance what will our people benefit? They would lose the opportunity to have roads, bridges, schools, etc. That is why

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

I said it depends totally on the people. Yesterday, a political party organized its congress in Phnom Penh and they said their party could work with CPP only when the latter does not have Hun Sen, and with Funcinpec only when the latter does not have Prince Ranaridh. I see this strategy as belonging to a villain, which could not reach its end. ... Maybe I should send a message that they should be careful with their strategy of firing an arrow to kill four birds. They seek a discontent between CPP and Funcinpec and a split within CPP but I would use none of my DIFID strategies (D for Divide, I for Isolate, F for Finish, I for Integrate and D for Develop or Destroy.) This villain strategy has called for a dismissal of Ranaridh and Hun Sen, but never of Pol Pot. So their strategy is wrong. Well I have to let them curse otherwise our country would not be classified as "democratic." It is like a Monosodium Glutamate for democracy. But I wish to make clear that in all the schools that I have built, there is no discrimination against children whose parents curse me or who support me as to their entry. They all deserve the rights to education. My mother used to say that "if one of your legs is bitten by a dog, do not use your mouth to bite the dog's leg for revenge." I wonder if scolding is Cambodian culture. Take for instance Pol Pot could be well known in cursing me and others. Now that Pol Pot died, maybe I have another one to do so. As for me, to be frank, no one would know Hun Sen, but because I was cursed I became famous. Tonight there will be a theatrical performance with traditional dances to welcome our bridges. I just wanted to add that we have more to be done in this area. Communication would not be complete with just one or

two roads, but many roads of different sizes interrelating with one another. According to our study, in this area we need one more bridge to link the area of Oraing Ov district to the Koh Sotin district. This bridge would facilitate travelling from Oraing Ov to Phnom Penh through Srey Santhor district of Kompong Cham and Khsach Kandal of Kandal province. We have to conduct a study in this coming rainy season. The bridge of 172 meters is to be built by the military engineering team of the Ministry of National Defence. While waiting for the study result, I order for the engineering team to provide ferry service for free. We already have Kizuna Bridge over the Mekong River at Kompong Cham. I have requested for one more bridge at Neak Loeung. Maybe the National Bank should inform the Japanese Embassy that to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Cambodia-Japan relations, we have printed new 500 Riel bank note with the Kizuna Bridge embossed in it. Talking about building bridges, roads and schools, all will depend on our people's decisions whether they wanted me to assist them in building them these infrastructures or not. If they do, they also have to make me Prime Minister again or they wait for someone else does it. July 27, 2003 is our elections day and our people have their rights in making decisions as to who to build them these infrastructures. If we have the support of our people, we should try our best to open the groundbreaking ceremony before rainy season in 2004.

On that occasion, Samdech Hun Sen offered to build a school building with five classrooms to the Primary School of Tunsai Kaong, a school building with five classrooms to the secondary school of Chihe, Riel five million for the pagoda of Koh Sotin. ■

11 March 2003 [Unofficial Translation]

Inaugurating a Dharma Hall in the District of Prek Phneo

At the above event, Samdech Hun Sen made an ad-lib address covering issues of progress made in Buddhism in Cambodia, abdication and power challenging allegations, and response to the people's demand for assistance in the Ponhealoeu district.

... I have a great pleasure for being able to join with all of you in response to the invitation cordially extended to me by Samdech Preah Udom Vongsa Muong Ra to inaugurate the Dharma Hall in the Muniprosithivong Pagoda today... As a Buddhist follower, I am proud to be present in the district of Pnhealoeu once again after I came here in his birthday anniversary. I gave him a present at that time a bridge for the Stoeung Hav (stream) in Sihanoukville at the initiative of Samdech Preah Udom Vongsa. I wish to also express my sincere appreciation and thanks today to Samdech Udom Vongsa Muong Ra for the efforts he has made in building up the Muniprosithivong pagoda 13 years already. The pagoda is not one of the oldest in Cambodia but it was named as such by Her Majesty the Queen Sisovath Munivong Kosomak Neary Rath Serei Vadhana. This area was under constant fights in the period between 1970 and 75. It was completely damaged and its soil was dug and moved to level some other places. Because of this, the pagoda was rebuilt late in 1990 compared to other pagodas. Up to now it has been 13 years of reconstruction... The fact that the Buddhist pagodas are growing in numbers in a period of twenty four years after the fall of the genocide clearly indicates that Buddhism was damaged only physically but spiritually it stays in their minds and souls. In 1979 we were

really poor and in some place people could not mobilize resources for a religious ceremony. We had only a few monks, one of whom is our current patriarch. But now we have many monks and take the number of pagoda in Kandal alone there are 373 pagodas with 6056 monks. This figure is bigger than that of soldier and police forces in the province itself. We also have many more meditation and Dharma Study centres. I have also contributed in all 389 school buildings to Kandal for the secular world. I used to say between the secular and the Buddhist worlds, it is a knot of two strings, the combination of which will help us foster national development.

... Under the leadership of the two sects' patriarchs our Buddhist parishioners have gradually refrained from committing sins but doing merits, while this also helps our administration in the secular world to educate the people on how to be law abiding citizen... More importantly, the Buddhist pagodas have extended their assistances to those in need caused by natural calamity such as flood or drought. The patriarch of the Mohanikaya sect has instructed all pagodas to bring up from 15 children in according to their resources. The Buddhist pagoda for us is not only a respectful place but also a shelter in which our custom and tradition are stored, especially in time when our country was under foreign colony.

... Pagodas were places where Buddhist bibles and knowledge are kept and except for women, all men of different generation could become monks and learn all those materials. Unlike in some countries, Cambodia could retain its Khmer characters and

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

the French could not Romanise Khmer letters at all.

... In the last few days there have been groundless interpretations on issue of abdication for which HM the King issued a message to make clear the matter. HM the King has been disturbed in the last days by report that HM the King is challenging power with Prime Minister Hun Sen. HM the King issued another message that HM would abdicate. The Constitution does not stipulate about how HM the King abdicates but HM the King will be head of state for one's whole life... Let's think why should HM the King, who presides over everyone abdicate and go to a position that is being criticized everyday. As long as one is in politics one is equal with others across the board. It is true that when HM the King issued a statement that any member of the Royal families who is doing politics is a normal citizen.

... HM the King is not just a King but a heroic King of ours. Some political parties who boast about accompanying HM the King, they actually do it in words. Like in one instance HM the King said to Samdech Krom Preah and me that a "grandpa" came to HM and proposed that HM take power and "the grandpa" will fulfil all duties on HM's behalf. HM mentioned that "he" wanted me to conflict with Samdech Krom Preah and Samdech Hun Sen for power and "he" will perform all duties for him. How silly is this. Prime Minister has to be a person from a winning political party and a member of the National Assembly. It seems that March is not a good month for Cambodia... On March 18, 1970, a coup was launched and today is March 11, 2003. Last year, also in March, there was a Ph. D. holder who

suggested that the Royal Government should be dismantled and a provisional Government should be set up in replacement under the leadership of HM.

... I thought this chap is thinking of a coup and I would order an arrest immediately as the coup is illegal. But he escaped right away. I would not be afraid to exercise the law, no matter who the person may be – a devada, a royal family member, etc. If they committed mistakes, they are as guilty as normal citizen or we could not guarantee democracy. HM the King, in response to all allegations about power challenging, said "I would not do such a cheap and illegal act."

... I have the courage to fulfil all of what I have promised and I would not hesitate to react when I feel something is wrong. Take for instance I have offered to guarantee three things for the former Khmer Rouge soldiers and staff. That is what I called the core of the win-win policy. First, I offered to guarantee safety and life protection to everyone; second, to guarantee that they could retain their ranks and occupations, and third, guarantee that their property will be recognized. The three promises have enabled them to live with us.

... What is then the cause of a conflict? With all of the venerable monks, I would argue that jealousy is the one. It has been a reason in various scenes – take the Chinese story of Sam Kok or the Hluong Preah Sdech Kan into consideration. One was jealous of the other and a war was waged... Because of jealousy HM the King was once overthrown...

... That is why we have to seek out the root cause of the conflict. HM the King issued one statement after another and I wish to make clear that a group of royal

(Continued from page 8)

land is calm with no more killings, we would consider further whether we should reopen the border or otherwise. If the two countries' relations have yet to normalize, it is unnecessary for our people to enter Thailand... Taking this opportunity I beg our people to have no anger on the people of Thailand and the people of Thailand should also bear no anger. We need friendly relations with neighboring countries, but it has to be on equal/fair ground. The Royal Government of Cambodia is waiting to be friend of equal status, as this only would nurture real and long lasting friendship. We are ready to solve all problems in bilateral relations on the basis of equality, friendship and mutual benefits. The Royal Government of Cambodia is pursuing a principle of mutual respect and we will act according to the Thai steps. If Thailand brings the diplomatic relations to ambassadorial level, we will respond accordingly. If they granted visas to Bangkok only, according to mutual respect procedure we will grant them visas to Phnom Penh as well... I beg that our people un-

family members could not protect Royalism, but only the whole people could. And I am sure the Royal Government is obliged to protect the throne...

On that occasion Samdech Hun Sen offered to renovate a dirt road of 4,934 meters for the villagers of Samraong Khang Choeung, a dirt road of 8,200 metres for the villagers of Kompung Hluong commune, and five small damn of a total length of 5,500 metres for the villagers of Tuol Ampil, Prey Lvea and Ponhealoeu. ■

derstand the situation and refrain from committing harm because what has happened so far is the result of working manner of a group of politicians in Thailand and not the whole Thai people. It is also true that what had happened in Phnom Penh (inflicting damages on the Thai Embassy) was committed by a group of extremists and not by the whole of our people. So the reason to close the border should first of all start from safety and life protection, dignity and honor of our people, from each individual person to the whole nation...

... There was this allegation that the portrait of HM the King of Thailand was stepped on but I told HE Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra that we investigate and searched for the said portrait but could not find any. Of course there are everywhere in Bangkok and in Websites. The scene brought about further anger of the people. May HE Cham Prasidh, Minister of Trade, examine and determine what replacements and from where should they come from in absence of Thai products... Some people comment that border closure is a loss for Cambodia, and I would argue what they would say when Cambodia was under embargo and sanction and we could still survive...

Samdech Hun Sen offered two school buildings with 12 classrooms and land leveling to the Secondary School of Kralanh, one school building of five classrooms to the Model Primary School of Kralanh, two computers, one printer, a photocopy and a TV with VCR and 20 calculators for the Referral Hospital of Kralanh, a Bailey Bridge of 31 meters to the people in Sranal commune and the renovation of five dirt roads for the people in the commune of Kompung Thkov. ■

06 March 2003 [Unofficial Translation]
Inaugurating the Kralanh Referral Hospital of Siemreap Province

During the above inauguration, Samdech Hun Sen addressed issues of national budget increment for and human resource training in health sector, road maintenances, and the closure of border trade with Thailand.

... My colleagues and I have great pleasures and honour to be able to participate in the official inauguration of the referral hospital of Kralanh in the province of Siemreap. As it has been mentioned in HE Mam Bunnheng's speech, health is in the prioritized package of the Royal Government of Cambodia. The hospital is another great achievement for our people in the health sector. I wish to take this opportunity to express my profound appreciation to the Ministry of Health and its officials of all levels, the local authority as well as our people as a whole for the efforts they made in producing such an achievement for the sake of checking-up and treatment of our people's diseases.

... According to historical records, the Kralanh hospital has gone through three stages of construction and reconstructions. It was first built in 1964 and there left four buildings. Three more buildings were built in the period of the State of Cambodia and as of today six more were built with the loans taken from World Bank and one building specialized in Tuberculosis was contributed by Action Nord Sud. We also have organizations like RACHA and JICA that provided necessary medical equipments and generous beings who built fences and levelled the hospital's courtyard. The Royal Government of Cambodia, as a contribution and start-up capital for the investment in such an achievement, paid a sum of Riel 103 million as counterpart fund. Let me draw a difference here

between loan and assistance. If we were to have no resources, and the Royal Government has to invest as counterpart fund, loans could not be disbursed for use.

... So this is another achievement of the Royal Government through external loans, for which we have to repay, and the counterpart fund, the national budget, that we have put down. The hospital will offer benefit for people in the districts of Kralanh itself, Srey Snam, Puok and a part of Preah Net Preah district in Banteay Meanchey province. If we were to neglect such a facility, our people will face with difficulties as they may die for curable diseases (could not find treatment). That is why the Royal Government has given health sector a priority and increased its annual budget in 2003 to 26% higher than that of 2002. Also we have increased 18% of 2003 budget higher than that of 2002 for the education sector. We have reduced a significant amount from the national defence and security sector. We hope that more soldiers will be demobilized and the resources spared from the action should be reserved for health and education sector as well.

... Currently we are in the process of luring our physical doctors and staff to come work in rural areas. So far we have been dealing with problem of having extra (in one lace) and having less (in another). What I mean is that we have more physical doctors than necessary in cities but less in rural areas. The Royal Government is considering means to give them improved living condition when they choose to work in rural areas. We may think of the method that we have implemented for teachers to go teach in rural areas as well.

... Because of drought and flood in 2002, the National Road 6 suffered bad damages and I wish to ask our people for an apology for what had happened and sent in the military engineering team for an immediate renovation. I have asked for apology twice already and today I order for a setup of a road building and renovating mechanism in Siemreap and in Banteay Meanchey so that they could monitor the road condition and provide quick repairs to potholes and damages of any sorts to the road. May the Ministry of Public Works and Transports as well as the local authorities look into this matter seriously and refrain by all means from what happened in 1996 and 2002. I would not accept to apologize on your behalf for the third time or the Governors of the two provinces will have to take them by their own... I wish to have your attention on issue of border closure with Thailand, March 05, 2003, as there have been comments by many European and Asian diplomats. The violence that happened and brought damages to the Thai Embassy on January 29, 2003 was in fact a regrettable event. I have made declarations in letters and verbally in public before the people in Kompot province. We have taken necessary measures as requested by the Thai authority. We have accepted to compensate without condition for the damage of the Embassy of Thailand. A procedure has been proposed for the compensation to be made for Thai companies and a number of people who involved in inflicting the incident have been arrested. We have also sent to the Kingdom of Thailand our Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Trade, while I met with Thai Prime Minister (in Malaysia). In general we have an un-

derstanding and calmness has been restored. I have requested to HE Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra to normalize as quickly as possible the two countries' relations. I could understand when Thai Prime Minister mentioned to me in Kuala Lumpur about his people's feeling but I also said to him that I also have the Cambodian people's feeling to be responsible for. We are leaders and we need to think of the two people's feelings and not for one and not the other. We have to have mutual respect... We have two main reasons to close the border with Thailand yesterday. First, Thailand is in its operation against drugs and over one thousand people were killed and tens of thousands were arrested. We have the concern that our people who cross to Thailand for business could be mistakenly affected by the campaign. In this incident I have reports about killings of Cambodians at the border yesterday.

... In my position as Prime Minister of a sovereign state I have the obligation and task to protect my people from danger. It is in this respect that I ordered for indefinite closure of the border. Second, there are also demands made internally for such a closure because of inequality in trade. The Cambodians were allowed to cross into Thailand to purchase Thai products but the Thais were not allowed to cross into Cambodia to buy Cambodian products. So trade between our two countries was not fair. It looks as if the Cambodians are going there to beg... This form of trade could not be accepted and as there were no changes of event, even after I have sent the Minister of Trade to Thailand and my meeting with HE Prime Minister of Thailand, an indefinite border closure is appropriate... Once the situation in Thai-

(Continued on page 7)