

Cambodia New Vision

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09 April 2003 [Unofficial Translation]
Addressing the Commune Councils' First Nationwide Conference



On April 12, 2003, Samdech Hun Sen is warmly welcome by the people and children during the inauguration of a Buddhist Temple in the Peam Ampil Pagoda of Rumduol District, Svay Rieng Province .

"... It is a great honor and pleasure for me to help bring to a close of this First Nationwide Conference of Commune Councils which is of great historical importance for the country and our Cambodian people.

On behalf of the Royal Government and my own self, I highly appreciate and congratulate the Ministry of Interior and the National Committee for Communes Support for organizing this conference on time that enables the sharing of experiences and taking stock of the achievements and the challenges resulted from our efforts to implement the decentralization policy with all stakeholders at national, provincial and municipal, district and local levels as well as with our international partners.

After the Commune Councils were elected on 3 February 2002, the new councils have

implemented their work in accordance to the principles of local governance by making improvements to the provisions of public services for all Cambodian people at all walks of life considering it as top priority. Through those activities, the implementation of decentralization policy during the first year is concluded with numerous achievements.

Along with those achievements, we though have had facing some problems and new challenges arising from the implementation of our work.

Thus it requires all of us together to strengthen our achievements as well as jointly solve the challenges and together prepare further strategies and action plan that will help expending the results even better. I consider such a forum as a most appropriate

(Continued on page 2)

19 April 2003
Inaugurating Achievements in Kompong Cham's Haan Chei

"... I am very grateful to be invited to participate with all of you here today to inaugurate a number of achievements at the initiation of both secular and Buddhist worlds. We have achievements in the pagoda of Cheikiri to be inaugurated with presence of so many people because the pagoda is one of the oldest and related to some historical sites since the 7th century. As in the secular world, we are putting into use a 20 Kilometre rural road with seven bridges of a total length 448 meters. The improvement of the road condition has provided good access to the pagoda for our people who

are here for the celebration today. Before we could imagine that in the past we may not have this number of population attending the ceremony as they would come only by engine boats. This indicates a meeting point between the Buddhist and the secular achievements.

... HE Governor Cheang Am has reported that the Dining Hall was built at US\$ 42,000, the Buddhist Library at US\$ 25,000, the Ceremony Hall at US\$ 32,000. I wish to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the wise leader-

(Continued on page 4)

21 April 2003 [Unofficial Translation]
Inaugurating the Phnom Sruoch's Rural Roads & Schools

"... I am glad to return to the district of Phnom Sruoch after my visit a few years ago to the commune of Mohasaing when the access to the area was in fact a dirt road for oxcarts. I will, with all of you today, inaugurate not only a rural road but various other achievements that were realized in the district of Phnom Sruoch. May I take this opportunity to give my appreciation to the Ministry of Rural Development and the Ministry of Economy and Finance for the efforts they made in realizing this project, which, improving the communication infrastructure in the rural area is a priority of the Royal Government of Cambodia and I am also grateful to the two companies that are implementing this project by their own funding and the state will refund them later.

... Just now HE Governor Ou Bun and HE Suos Kung of the Ministry of Rural Development have made reports on the various achievements in the Kompong Speu province as well as the situation in this area of Phnom Sruoch district before and after the construction of the road. It is true that this road never exists before and it has come into shape at the present time with our efforts under the locomotive of growth strategy of the Royal

(Continued on page 5)

In This Issue

- 1) Commune Council, P.1
- 2) Haan Chei's Achievements, P.1
- 3) Phnom Sruoch's Achievements, P.1
- 4) Prey Veng's Temple, P.6
- 5) Pearaing Buddhist Temple, P.7
- 6) Taing Krasaing College, P.8
- 7) Chamkaloeu's Buddhist Temple, P.8

(Continued from page 1)

ate mechanism for dissemination and sharing the above prospects thus seeking common solutions through an interactive and consultative process among all the stakeholders and our assistance partners.

Therefore, I wish to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation and profound gratitude to the UNDP Decentralization Support Project and the German Technical Cooperation Project (GTZ) for sponsoring the organization of this conference, providing the opportunity for all the stakeholders to get together sharing their experiences and activities after having implemented the first year decentralization program. Also, I wish to deeply thank the donor community, NGOs and the civil society for their continuous assistance in the implementation process of the decentralization policy in Cambodia.

According to the report on the overall results of this conference made by HE Sar Kheng, Deputy Prime Minister and Co-minister of the MOI, we learn that our meeting has reviewed and taken stock of the experiences from our first year work to improve policies and strategies for further implementation of the decentralization.

At the same time, the conference has also considered initiatives to establish an association of commune councils in the Kingdom of Cambodia. During these almost three days, you all have engaged in an open and frank discussion and came up with many recommendations for future actions.

The RGC is convinced that the decentralization is an interactive and forward looking process toward improvements in the

governance system that is to bring the "governance" closer to the people.

As we all are aware that the Royal Government in its second term of office has established a firm foundation for long term development through the implementation of the "Triangle Strategy", which consists of the following three elements:

First, achieve and strengthen sustainable peace, security and stability in the whole country;

Second, fast track a full integration of Cambodia into regional and world community;

Third, place utmost emphasis on economic reforms to promote growth and poverty reduction among our people, including the governance reform which is an integral part focusing on the implementation of decentralization and deconcentration policies.

If we have a look at what the RGC has achieved during one year period after the historical commune elections in February 2002, we all realize that there are many things have been achieved during this short period. Let me take this opportunity to make some comments on the key achievements as follow:

First, we have established decentralization policy and legal frameworks for the local authorities under a framework of inter-ministerial coordination efforts by the National Committee for Commune Support. The policy and legal frameworks have presented a gradual transformation of mandate, authority, roles and resources from the national government to communal levels.

Second, there have been coordination and facilitations for the communes to develop their long

term plans as mandated by the law during the first year term of the commune councils. Through these plans, it reflects the needs arising at the grassroots levels and the start for the communes to develop plans responding to those needs correspondently to their own efforts with the support from ministries/institutions, other agencies, NGOs, civil society, the private sector and our development partners.

Third, we have provided basic trainings on decentralization, development of local planning and financial management to all members of the commune councils. The trainings have generated a wide-range general knowledge on decentralization and local development among different stakeholders ensuring diversified participation in the reform process.

Fourth, we have already established the Commune Fund, though in the past one year only one third of communes have been receiving resources for development. However, the situation has been improved since 2003 on through increased resources from the national budget that enables resource allocation to all communes.

Thus, in the situation when the national budget needs to cover a list of spending priorities this transfer of funds from national level to communes testifies the efforts with resolved political commitment in moving the decentralization process forward.

Fifth, we have established a system for supporting communes/sangkats at national and provincial/municipal levels in order to improve the link between decentralization and deconcentration. At the initial stage, we recognize the limitation in capacity at all levels including the capacity of the sup-

porting system. Nevertheless, what we have achieved in this short period of time can be considered as a positive development.

In the subsequent years, the "commune support system" is required to be further improved and strengthened along with the developments of decentralization and deconcentration processes.

Finally, we have received general support from people and the trusts from our assistance partners in further providing support for the implementation of decentralization policy in Cambodia.

As with the above-mentioned achievements, I would like to draw your attention on the challenges which usually occur with our activities. Indeed, whenever we produce any result it will always generate a new challenge that we must solve it to further expand our achievements. In this sense, I wish to indicate the need for establishing medium to long term policies and strategies to pave the ways for our further journey.

Based on the inputs from the conference, we must consider for developing policies and strategies for medium and long term implementation of decentralization and it requires updating those policies and strategies every year.

Thus, we must focus on solving the issues with regard to the inconsistency in the existing policies that helps to create a consistency in the legal framework, promoting coordination and links between stakeholders at national, provincial/municipal, district and communal/sangkat levels.

Thus, the National Committee for Commune Support will not

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

only lead the dialogue to develop links between key stakeholders for appropriate medium and long term policies and strategies formulation, but also carefully prepare sequential policies and strategies that enable the reform process move forward smoothly and consistently.

Also, in the process of implementation, it is required that the coordination between the "horizontal" and "vertical" structure of governance at all levels be established, which is an efficient link between the central and the local authorities, by using provincial and district levels as coordinating agencies.

In developing of management systems at provincial and district levels, we must focus on fostering good governance with appropriate distribution of mandate, authority, resources and capacity to those administrative authorities for their effective coordination of the decentralization and deconcentration. In the decentralization process, in order to ensure the consistency in resource, function and responsibility distribution, it is required that further research, analysis and evaluation be conducted to determine appropriate sources of revenue for communes. So far, the RGC has established a "block grant" payment system for the communes, however, the provisions of their own source of revenue have not been specifically determined.

Thus, further we have to consider on gradually allowing the communes to have their own source of revenue that will reduce the dependency of the local authorities on the central government.

Another important issue in the decentralization process is to develop the capacity. The capac-

ity development must be implemented at all levels for proper functioning in efficiently providing services and having the capacity to review and monitor the activities, maintaining the quality of services and improving the "good governance" practices. Thus, I advise the National Committee for Commune Support and all the concerned agencies to carefully assess the different issues and start formulating an appropriate capacity development strategy to promote the process of decentralization.

In the implementation process of decentralization with the participation from people in the decision making such as planning, resource mobilization, prioritization of activities, implementation, service delivery and decisions on equitable delivery of services, the decentralization will effectively contribute to solving the issue of human resource development and poverty reduction. Thus, all the concerned players must recognize that citizens are the core stakeholders in any mechanism for decentralization. With this reason in mind, the policy of the RGC in its second term of office have focused on decentralization and deconcentration that will bring changes in behavior and practices at the grass root level in the reduction of poverty.

In providing services at local level, wills of people must be strictly met with the provision of effective services and development. Thus the progress of democracy and the development depend on the development of human resource, while the poverty will be reduced when the development of human resource moved to a higher level. This is the objective of the decentralization that contributes to the poverty reduction.

In general, through experiences

and practices in Cambodia the NGOs, civil society and communes should work as partners in order to ensure a proper implementation and serve people with a right target and effectiveness. In this first year, positive outcomes clearly demonstrated this relationship and partnership. Therefore, we must strengthen this partnership in the process of further implementation.

Taking this opportunity, on behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia and my own behalf, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the governors, deputy governors of provinces/cities and communes across country who have actively worked to support the commune councils in the first year. At the same time, I would like to welcome and highly value the achievements that the commune councils attained in the first year in spite of the fact that members of the commune councils are new to this new governance system. May I take this occasion to call on all commune councils to pay attention on the issue of coordination among all actors concerned and request the commune councils to ensure the effectiveness of their process, aimed at strengthening democracy at the local level and improving the delivery of key public services such as construction and repairs of roads, bridges, walls, schools and health centers.

I believe that the implementation of the decentralization and deconcentration policies sharing and transferring power to local levels will not only vigorously promote the strengthening of democracy at the local level, but it will also improve the livelihood of people and encourage people to actively move forward towards the attainment of progress in the future.

I am strongly convinced that all commune councils will continue to implement their tasks in accordance with the principles of "good governance" and will provide a model of "prioritizing the interest of citizens above an individual's interest", and they are fully ready to become good servants of people.

May I also take this opportunity to draw your attention on governance in urban areas and management of urban areas, which are the new challenges for Cambodia. The socio-economic development policy of the Royal Government of Cambodia together with the country's economic growth has made urban areas rapidly increase in Cambodia.

Thus, we have to be well prepared to solve the issue of urbanization in this 21st Century in order to accelerate our socio-economic development. May I request the National Committee for Commune Support and the Council for Administrative Reform to start studying on the governance of urban areas, especially to foresee three kinds of situations: *the areas which have many people such as Phnom Penh capital, provincial centers, district centers, and small urban areas* which are increasingly expanding. I welcome the discussions and initiatives of the conference on the establishment of the Association of Commune Councils in the Kingdom of Cambodia. I believe that this association will play role as an important partner in promoting the process of decentralization and the implementation of governance at the local level. In the process of forming the association, I would like to draw your attention on the linkages between the actual practice in Cambodia and its clear objective in line with responsibility and accountability... ■

(Continued from page 1)
 ship of the venerable monk and other monks in the pagoda of Cheikiri as well as all other contributors in making this pagoda one of the most respected places. The pagoda is 118 years old and there have been beliefs that this sacred place is left for us since the 7th century or before the Angkor period. We have in fact scored various achievements without helps from outside so as to break the chain of poverty. The year of the horse had gone and the year of the goat has begun and this period the last part of my term as Prime Minister. So I use this period to continue to inaugurate achievements that we have scored in the year of the horse, while a general election is approaching.

... The second term government will come to its end by the next election. The current Government would be dismantled only when a new Government swears in. The Government is not subjected to be dismantled by any power, except the National Assembly. I wish to mention just a few things on this matter as some people might be misled with ambitions concerning the mandate of the current Government. As long as the new Government is not in place, the current one will continue. There is no room for a trick to set up an interim Government and it would not be necessary for one in Cambodia. Any move in this direction is tantamount to a coup attempt. The constitution does not stipulate about interim Government but the establishment of a new Government, which, once it swears in, will eventually replace the old one. The current Government will not be replaced by July 27, which is the election day but by a new Government that is born after the election.

... We are today three days after the Khmer New Year and I wish

to take this chance to recall some of the historical events for our people today. This pagoda suffered a great deal of hardships in times of war. In the period of liberation war, this area was placed under region 304 and the Mekong River was marked as the borderline between region 304 and regions 203 & 204. Two islands were instead under the control of region 204 – the Samraong and Chrouk islands. The region 103 controlled the Treng islands. In the rainy season of 1974, three soldiers and I came from the Eastern region to the region 304 and we slept in the commune of Haan Chei. I crossed the next day into the island of Treng as the regiment 32 was there. The military force of region 304 later opened attacks on the eastern forces and Samdech Heng Samrin and Samdech Chea Sim stood up to fight against Ke Pork. Ta Mok then came in to fight the two on both the western and the eastern sides of the river.

... These are some memories of the wars that were started and left for generations of Cambodia to resolve. Maybe this is the first time that our people could travel to this part of the country in good road condition, when I was travelling along this area in those days I had to take an engine boat. This road was built totally with our own funding. We have a freeze account in which the money will be used only for improvements of infrastructure. We are considering the possibility to allocate fund to tarmac the twenty-Kilometer road – between Kompong Cham and the Haan Chei hill, possibly in 2004 and 2005. But this possibility depends on our people here if they wish me to tarmac the road or not. If I were to be voted out, I would not be able to fulfil the promise.

... Our people may remember

that there have been many people coming to promise our people with this or that, even before when we were born, but nothing had been done. As for us now we have linked up areas in this region together already. We have yet to build just three more bridges in the district of Prek Prasap, we will then connect the district of Kratie's Prek Prasap to the Khpop of Ta Nguon in the district of Stoeung Trang of Kompong Cham, and all the way to Haan Chei down from north. I wish to give some recommendations to HE Governor Cheang Am as I came by and saw that there are many signs of political parties on the roads but some were about to fall over because the plaque is so big that their tripods could not support them in face of wind. HE Governor should inform those political parties because if we were to let them go on like this we might be blamed for making their signboards fall.

... The Khmer New Year 2003 is a remarkable joyous and peaceful event but we should look back to 28 years ago. It was a completely different picture. Pol Pot chased our people out of Phnom Penh, but today our people celebrate traditional ceremony and enjoy the holiday with families. All this was possible because we have achieved complete peace, national reconciliation that provide us with complete security, while better infrastructure allows our people to travel to various domestic destinations. This year is also the best in 24 years after the liberation of Cambodia from the Khmer Rouge's Pol Pot and I wish to express my thanks to our armed forces of all levels for the efforts they made in keeping order and security during the Khmer New Year, to the authorities at all levels for organizing and creating opportunity for our people to rejoice. Comparing to other

countries that are also celebrating New Year at this time, in Cambodia we had not many deaths from traffic accidents, except some from natural calamity.

... As far as SARS is concerned, up to this moment we have not got any reported SARS case. Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong called to consult me, as the current Chairperson of ASEAN, on a possibility to discuss this issue within the ASEAN framework. Thailand will host the meeting at the initiation of Singapore and I will chair the meeting. SARS has badly affected tourism in the region, also in Cambodia, as many tourists come to Cambodia through Thailand, Vietnam, Hong Kong, China and Taipei, and these countries have all been affected by SARS already. As for Cambodia we should think of replacing absent foreign tourists with local tourists as we have better roads and more places of interests to attract our people.

Samdech Hun Sen offered Riels 46 million to the pagoda of Cheikiri, ten million Riels to the pagoda of Kul in the village of Koh Mit, solar energized lightings on the seven newly built bridges, a school building with six classrooms to the Primary School of Chreaneang, three school buildings with fifteen classrooms to the College of Haan Chei, a school building of six classrooms to the Primary School of Moan Hoer, Riels 17,2 million to two pagodas in the commune of Haan Chei, Riels 12 million to the pagoda of Rumchek, ten tons of cement to the Keanchrey Krao pagoda for the construction of a Primary Buddhist School and five tons of cements to the Keanchrey Khnong pagoda for the construction of its Buddhist temple, and materials for other pagodas in the commune.”■

(Continued from page 1)

Government of Cambodia. I have a strong belief that if we were to have no road connections, reduction of poverty would be just a nice phrase to speak. We would not be able to integrate among different parts of Cambodia, not to mention the region. We would not be able to talk about reducing gaps between old and new ASEAN states, as we could not close the gaps among our communes. Take for instance the communes and district of Phnom Sruoch would be disconnected from the town of Kompong Speu if the bridges and roads were not built yet.

... The district of Phnom Sruoch was in theory under the Government control ever since when the French was in Cambodia. But they mostly controlled the area only in the map. To be frank, the district was in fact one of the main areas of the anti-Government forces – to mention also the Government before 1970. Nuon Chea, Khiev Samphan and Ta Mok were in fact operating in this area.

... In between 1968 and 1969, an area from Koh Kong to Kompot, and some other places included, were named as a sub-provincial administration Sra Kar Neak. In between 1970 and 1975, this area was in fact a war place and after 1979 the people in this area were also living in an insecure situation. It has taken us in all 20 years since 1979 to bring our people in the district of Phnom Sruoch a durable peace.

... We now have a chance to transform this poor and unfortunate area into a developed one like elsewhere in the country. There has been a report of increasing traffics in this road and the travel expense has also gone down because of the good road

condition. This is in fact the policy of poverty reduction.

... I think you all may have heard in the last few days about my letter sent to HM the King for the verification of Mr. Ruom Rith's identity and address. And there were exchanges of letters between myself and HM the King and Mr. Ruom Rith. Mr. Ruom Rith has been writing to criticize the Royal Government, myself almost half a decade already. He has written that he hopes that Hun Sen no longer criticizes HM the King. I have kept this till after the Khmer New Year to ask who Ruom Rith could be. I would like his address so that he could be contacted for verifying his writing that I criticize HM the King. When I asked HM the King, HM replied that Ruom Rith is afraid of being assassinated like Haing Ngor in the United States so he declines to give the address. Mr Ruom Rith wrote me afterward a letter asking for an apology and said he is too old and loses conscience.

... Despite what he says about himself, Ruom Rith proved himself to be a famous writer, keeping abreast of the current situation of Cambodia as if he is somewhere with us. I accepted his apology and I would say this should be an end to the row. But I would not expect further hidden criticism at all. I would argue for justice and if as Prime Minister I could not get justice, who else could be secured with justice? I have to defend justice in this course because it is a matter of historical reality. Some people say Ruom Rith is in fact HM the King but HM confirms that Ruom Rith is in fact his friend from childhood. I believe that because if HM the King would need something to be done, he would instruct me to and the Prime Minister will abide by his instruction without

HM having to disguise in a fake name like that.

... This area used to be under war till peace is achieved in 1999 and now with peace we build schools, roads, hospitals. I have a great ambition and it is for the achievements of three priorities – irrigation, roads and schools. Where water is prime need, it is necessary to focus on irrigation system while development area in the western part of Phnom Penh two priorities have to be addressed – irrigation and roads. We also have to provide education to our children and I hope to see that in Cambodia everyone is literate and at least each Cambodian finishes a nine year education. ... My ambitions have proven to you all that they are not for me alone but for our nation. I hope Ruom Rith understands my wish and would refrain from making his article a chance for the opposition to base on in their fight against the Government. HM the King praises the Prime Minister for his good works and Ruom Rith rebukes the Prime Minister in HM the King's monthly bulletin. It is quite contradictory and would mislead readers that HM the King and the Prime Minister are in disarray...

Samdech Hun Sen offered three school buildings of fifteen classrooms to the College of Phnom Sruoch, a school building of five classrooms for the Primary School of Prey Klmeng, a school building of five classrooms for the Primary School of Sansam Kosal of Treng Trayeoung, ten million Rielss for the Pagoda of Bantoap to finish the construction of a Dharma School, ten million Rielss for the pagoda of Tuol Angkum for the construction of a Dharma Hall, two tons of steel for the pagoda of Kiriboeungchum, ten million Rielss for the pagoda of Damnak Trach, ten million Rielss for the pagoda of Banteaykuo, etc. ■

(Continued from page 6)

... CPP has managed its team as in a football match. Samdech Heng Samrin could be compared to a goal keeper, while me as a central forward. Samdech Chea Sim should deserve all the praise as he could be compared to a trainer. When the team is playing good and scoring points, no one would alter the team structure.

... So I wish that our people do not have concern about the two-day congress in Phnom Penh of the CPP on 24 and 25 April and should not be fooled by the media. We have seven members of parliament in this area and five senators. They have to take part in the congress for a few days and I wish to say in advance so that rumors could be prevented..."

Samdech Hun Sen offered 20 million Rielss to the pagoda of Samraong, 20 million Rielss to the pagoda of Angkhlok Thmei, a school building of six classrooms to the Primary School of Prey Krakhob, a school building of six classrooms to the Primary School of Samraong, a school building of six classrooms to the College of Mesaang, a school building of six classrooms to the Primary School of Prey Takub, a school building of six classrooms to the Primary School of Sra Mar, a school building of six classrooms to the Primary School of Svay Torng, a school building of six classrooms to the Primary School of Sanlong, a school building of six classrooms to the Primary School of Ampil Tuol, a school building of six classrooms to the Primary School of Sor, two school buildings of 12 classrooms to the College of Kandal Meanchei, a 15-metre Bailey Bridge to the people in the commune of Chi Phoch, 50 tons of rice for labour to the people in the commune of Prey Rumdeng. ■

**23 April 2003 [Unofficial Translation]
Inaugurating Samraong Pagoda's Temple, Prey Veng Province**

"... Today I have a great pleasure to join you all in inaugurating the temple in the pagoda of Samraong and I am honoured that our people here offered me this valuable moment for me to preside over the ceremony. I am very sorry that I have not been frequently visiting the district but I sent only my representative in time of hardship to see our people here. But coming late is better than never.

... I came here once in 1989 with the company of HE Cheam Yeap. Leaving Mesaang district that day I remembered being stopped by our people along the road as the news of my visit spread very fast. I offered in all about 100 million Riels and this amount in 1989 was reasonably big.

... After the ASEAN summit in Phnom Penh, in November, I flew over this area and I was shocked to see that there was water in rice field but there was no rice. Taking this opportunity I wish to thank the authority and our people, every individual for the efforts they made in coping with the drought situation. We thank rain for coming in the end.

... I thank CARE and WFP for their coordination and efforts in making food available to this area in the form of rice for work. I have also provided through HE Nhim Vanda, Samdech Chea Sim, HE Nut Sa An and others some rice and frying oil.

... According to forecast by the Ministry of Water Resources, rain will come by mid of May or the rainy season will start in Visakha month by the lunar calendar. But we could not depend only on the sky and we have to make use of all water reservoirs in irrigating our rice field.

... Wars left us nothing but difficulties and destructions of both materials and lives of our people. We have in the end come to the win-win policy, through which no one lost in the solution. Because of the policy we have achieved peace and lived peaceful lives. I wish that all political dignitaries and parties see it important to have only one Khmer and to refrain from secessions.

... I have said many times that we could have many political parties and they should not be a barrier between us all in uniting to construct the country.

... We will have a two-day congress of the CPP and our party members here will have to take part. The congress is not going to exert any substantial changes to our policy as CPP has already gone on the right track and I would declare today before anyone else that no one in CPP initiates the idea of collecting tax from our farmers. The idea of collecting no tax from our farmers has been the CPP's since 1979 and we will see to it at least another ten years to come. As far as fishing lot is concerned, the size of 56% of the total area that was cut and reserved for our people to fish will continue to be at our people's disposal.

... We will go on with reforms in all fronts – the armed forces, administration, court and economics. We also will continue to strengthen peace, stability and national reconciliation. We will maintain a coalition Government, even if we could set up a Government by our own. We will continue to see FUNCINPEC as partner as it has been partner with CPP five years already.

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 8)

1979. Our country was liberated on January 7, 1979 and we also organized the Khmer New Year afterward. But it was incomparable to that of 2003. Take for instance there was only one school building left in this college after 1979 but we have repaired it so that it stays here with us. Talking about poverty line, except the G7 countries that are defined as the most developed nations, anyone living in the developing countries who earn less than one US dollars a day would be defined as living under the poverty line. In other words, if one earned Riels 3500 a day in Cambodia s/he lived under the poverty line. But s/he is defined to be living above the poverty line, if s/he earned Riels 4000 a day.

... Taking Cambodia as an example, despite we had only about 800,000 hectares of land under cultivation in 1979 and many orphans were in our care, no one died of hunger. People who made the above remarks have not got a clue of what had happened in 1979. If we have poverty 100% in 1979, up to now we have brought the number of poor to only 36%, while 46% of them are better off. We will seek all means to bring it further down and poverty reduction has become a topic of discussion everywhere in our everyday life... I am grateful to HE Governor for his report of the use of my rice for work and I wish all provinces are keeping tracks on this as well. Take for instance a short report notifying me of the finishing of the construction of a school would also be helpful.

... I have learned from my party meeting the other day that in some villages there was a situation in which people's voting card have been collected for donation. I heard that people were asked to give their voting

cards in exchange for rice, and in some places, the cards never return and they never receive the rice, but a party member cards instead. It is a vital issue so I wish to appeal to our people not to give out their voting cards to whomever in whatever condition. Failing to do so would leave our people with no card to go to vote. So I have two things to appeal – 1) return the collected voting cards to their holders, as there are only 90 days from now to the electoral day on July 27, and 2) hand out rice to people if you are generous, not to collect their voting cards. I have to raise this matter in the name of the Royal Government as its tasks is to defend security and safety, neutral political atmosphere so that an election could be organized in free, fair, just and non-violence. If I were to have insufficient votes I would not argue but I will stand by to transfer all power to the succeeding Prime Minister and I request all members of the Royal Government to standby their institutions so that they could transfer all properties to elected ministers. I would wish only for a quick setting up of a new Government and I promise I would not disturb the incoming Prime Minister at all.

On that occasion, Samdech Hun Sen offered ten million Riels each to the pagoda of Taing Krasaing and the pagoda of Kraya, 03 computers, one printer, one photocopier, 03 14" colour TVs and 03 VCRs to the College of Taing Krasaing, a school building of five classrooms for the Secondary School of Kompong Thmar, a school building of six classrooms for the Primary School of Chambak Tbong, a school building of six classrooms for the Secondary School of Kraya and a school building of six classrooms for the Secondary School of Ti Por.

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07 April 2003 [Unofficial Translation]

Inaugurating a Buddhist Temple in Pearing District, Prey Veng

"... The pagoda of Chruoy Udom has been a newly built pagoda in 1987 and it responds to our people's difficulties in moving from flooded homes to pagodas that are far away...

... This made us think of Dharma instruction about the four scarcities. One of the four scarcities is that *we could not get born by the time Buddha gained enlightenment*. This could be resembled by giving respect to the Buddhist instruction in the form of building pagodas and others deemed necessary by the Buddhist instruction. The *second is that we may not have opportunity to pay tribute to our living Buddhas*, whom in fact is our parents and grandparents. This could be explained in part about the fact that we have built this pagoda so that our elders could go to practice Buddhist instructions in places closer to home. The *third scarcity is to have a chance to listen to the Buddhist Dharma teaching*. But presently we have done that because our people now enjoy opportunity in listening to the Buddha teaching offered by our Buddhist monks in every religious events. They also have time to listen to the teaching on radio and TV as well. The *fourth scarcity is to offer as donation of one's resources to the poor*. One good example of this is that we have raised orphan children left from the genocide and they all are alive and educated.

... In addition to various infrastructural investments in the district, I have intended to build the national road 8 through the district of Pearing from the commune of Prek Tameak, via the bridge of Sin Song to the national road 11. This road will be a connection that links Phnom Penh, Kandal, Prey Veng and Kompong Cham at

Koh Sotin. We all see that there is a need to build a bridge across the Toach (small) river in this commune. This bridge could be a connection to Kompong Leav and Pearing in Prey Veng and Lvea Em and Khsach Kandal of Kandal province. One Bailey bridge here will be a profit for four districts.

... I would instruct the Ministry of Rural Development to be principal financial officer and the project will be studied and built by the military engineering team headed by Gen. Kung Ieng. We might not have the bridge built before the end of this rainy season, but we surely will have it built before the next rainy season.

... We have built many bridges already but the Peante and Chhlong bridges have never been built before. Many people promised in the past to build these bridges but never have they made them happen. Talking about feasibility, the bridge construction could be impossible because of the canals' depths. But we now have built them and I would say that we might be having one more bridge built over the Mekong River – the Neakloeung Bridge. The Bailey bridge to be built across the Toach River must be built for the sake of traffics not only among the four districts mentioned, but for all over the country...

... Our strategy to reduce poverty has been to develop infrastructure, the achievement of which is no different to what some people said "Samdech no longer needs to bring rice to us, because Samdech already gave us canals and dikes making our rice cultivation fruitful and our lives improved." In other words peace that we have realized is invaluable as our people no

(Continued from page 8)

construction of Cambodia and second to thank for the implementation of the Royal Government's one-China policy. We have accepted only one Chinese flag which is the People's Republic of China's flag and this is our long-term policy. I wish to let you know that after PRC becomes a member of the World Trade Organization, PRC has offered its favour for three least developed countries of ASEAN – Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar.

... As for Cambodia alone, PRC has allowed Cambodia to export to PRC 297 tax-free favoured products. We have got not a single product to export these days. Here in the district of Chamkaloeu we have rubber, rice, soybean, banana, ground-

nut, and cassava and they could be of value to export to China. PRC is a big market. In short we have to adhere to a one-China policy and as for Taipei only trade, tourism and investment relations would be allowed and diplomatic relations will not be approved... I have spent most of my time last night reviewing our historical records "Eksar Mohaborus Khmer or Documents of the Khmer Heroes." I went through many times in my reading to find out exactly the size of Cambodia and under what reign that it was partially lost. The material is available everywhere in the market and we should buy and read them as they are very important documents about our history. Once we all know them well some people could not falsify the facts... ■

longer are afraid of wars and they could go to practice Buddhism. Wars serve interest of weapons sellers outside the country. This is what I used to tell our people that I am giving them fishing tackles instead of fish. Some ill-thought politicians did not see infrastructural development help in many ways to resolve our people's daily problems.

... Some people have dreamed of becoming Prime Minister and are preparing for working in the Council of Ministers. As of present CPP has 64 seats in the National Assembly and seven of them are currently in the province of Prey Veng. But some people said that CPP will have none in Prey Veng after the next election. Some parties say they have fifty seats or sixty seats.

... This means we, who have 64 seats, will have nothing. In relations to the forthcoming election, as I have seen written in the newspaper, regarding the spot time for broadcast by different

parties. I wish to say that the facilitation for broadcast by political parties that are guaranteed by law will be respected.

First, all campaigns will have to be protected from all disturbances by the local authorities, irrespective of political tendencies.

Second, broadcast by national TVK will be ten minutes for each party equally. I have recommended that TVK and National Radio, in addition to the equal spot time allocated for campaign purpose, they could also broadcast news of activities by each political party in their campaign action. Which party is winning the election is no longer important as safeguarding peace and political stability in Cambodia. If I were to no longer be Prime Minister it is not a problem but we have to have peace, only with peace we could make development. I would not promise our people as others would do, I will do what I see needs to be done... ■

22 April 2003 [Unofficial Translation]
Inaugurating a Buddhist Temple in Chamkaleu District

“... May I express my deep thanks to the venerable monk as well as our people in the district of Chamkaleu of Kompong Cham who offer me this valuable moment to inaugurate the Buddhist temple and I am grateful to see that our people have made efforts in realising this achievement. The pagoda is just 22 years old but it has gone through four venerable head monks already. I hope it will stay on to be a respected place by our people of many generations to come. This year of the goat could be said to be the year in which Buddhism has made great progress in Cambodia and I could say so because I have inaugurate so many temples already.

... Though we may follow different religions, still religion should in fact not stand as a barrier between us for a common effort to develop our country at all. Different political belief has in fact not separated us from one another in cooperating for the construction of our homeland. Take for instance Buddhism which is respected by all political parties and they could pray to the same Buddha. So this should not be a barrier to cooperation for development.

... It has been 24 years already since 1979 and we all have rebuilt our lives from scratch with difficulties but we have arrived at the present condition where, according to what I have seen, thatched cottages also have TV antenna above them. This indicates that our people have developed a reasonably good living condition and because they could improve their living condition they also could offer good food to our monks. The secular and Buddhist worlds are the two of complementary roles. If I were to sum up developments in

all pagodas throughout the country, I would say it is not less than one billion dollars. It is a great amount of money. As far as poverty is concerned, it has not got wings to fly away on its own, and we have to make efforts ourselves to evade it. Once we could do that with our own strength, we would be helped by others.

... We still have more to be done. Our people in Chamkaleu are waiting for the renovation of the national road 71 which is 30 kilometres between the National Road 7 at Troeung and the cross road to Speu. Now the construction site is under operation and the Mongrithy Company is implementing the project. The company has requested for imports of right-hand drive engines and I have accepted but they have to be exported elsewhere after the construction finished. We do not allow them to operate in Cambodia and/or to pay tax.

... As for the road requested by the Buddhist monks here I would say that the road has to be built and not just 33 kilometres but all the ways. I have to take this time to repeat my order the other day to the company of Oknha Srey Nguon to continue to build a nine kilometres road and two bridges between Haan Chei and the district of Stoeung Trang. I am glad that we have the presence of Oknha Duong Chhiv, who is the Head of the Chinese Association in Cambodia. We have lots of associations but we have mobilized them to support the one China policy as set out by the Royal Government. Oknha Duong Chhiv should remember what I recommended in the past and today I have decided to confer a medal to you for first to recognise your contribution to the economic

(Continued on page 7)

27 April 2003 [Unofficial Translation]
Inaugurating Taing Krasaing College, Kompong Thom Prov.

... Today I have a great pleasure to return to the province of Kompong Thom once again and above all to the district of Santuk, to inaugurate achievements in the College of Santuk. I am grateful to our people's generosity of inviting me for the inauguration ceremony of the college that is in response to our people's need for educational facility here or in the whole country to say in general. According to HE Nguon Nhel, second Vice President of the National Assembly and Madame, who used to be teachers in the district of Santuk in 1960s, by 1965 HM the King who was then Head of State came to inaugurate the College of Santuk. Currently there is only one building left and is in the state of requiring reconstruction after having gone through the period of genocides and wars. I wish to take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to HM the King for the various achievements – the school building of Santuk is also included – for our people.

... HE Chea Chanto, Governor of the National Bank, who used to be a student in the College of Taing Krasaing, has become a senior official of the Royal Government since 1979. He then paid 3000 Riels as subscription fee. As is reported by HE Governor Nou Phoeung, today we put into inauguration one school building of five classrooms that I offered in 1997, two school buildings of ten classrooms offered by HE Chea Chanto and Madame in 2002 and in 2003, a school office of five classrooms offered by me and a fence of 245 metres built as donation of the generous officials and staff of the National Bank of Cambodia. This is an effort that we collectively made so that our children could finish at least nine-year education as is stated

in the Constitution. We still need to build more schools as our children are getting born everyday and at this moment how many children have turned six years old? We calculate to have about 3,200,000 students and at least one million are studying in the school buildings that I have built. I am thinking of making efforts to build school for another half a million.

... I wish to take this opportunity to express my appreciation and gratitude to the efforts made by the provincial authorities and our people in overcoming an abnormal hardship caused by the natural condition. As in Santuk district, one side of it is under flood while another is under drought. The condition for Cambodia has been unique. Many countries have changed their regimes but their process is different from ours. Take for instance at the end of the 20th century, no country in this world that did not use money, while in other countries, despite the fact that the regime changed, they continued to improve the existing legal tender. Cambodia was reprinting its currency only in 1980. There is no country in this world that forbid religion, education and as our people in the ages between 35 and 40 would not forget what was called to be "a small bag of appropriate belongings," which was in fact a few pairs of clothes and a spoon. Our people possessed no lands, houses, etc...

... When the Royal Government issued its national strategy for the reduction of poverty aimed at bringing down further the number of people under the poverty line from the present figure 36%, some clans of people argued that our country is getting poorer. I could not accept this remark as we are not as poor as we were in

(Continued on page 6)