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25 July 2004 (Unofficial Translation) Inspecting the Construction of a Bailey Bridge in Koh Sotin District of Kompong Cham Province



25 July 04 - Samdech Hun Sen (centre) accompanies an old-age person in his wheelchair to cross the Tonle Touch River by the newly built Doeum Sdao Bailey Bridge at Koh Sotin district, Kompong Cham province (Photo: Virakmuny).

Following is the selected comments, aside from his prepared text, of Samdech Hun Sen during his visit to the Construction Site of a Bailey Bridge at Doeum Sdao crossing in the district of Koh Sotin, Kompong Cham Province.

“... I think everyone is pleased with a new achievement today – the Doeam Sdao Bridge, which ends difficult passage for people in the region. Those who have resettled here can go to Phnom Penh and return to Koh Sotin or the area together with family to visit the native village by land. Personally I am glad to see that the wish of our people has been realized. The bridge has been under construction for about 117 days and it is ready for our people to use.

... As the flood has come early

this year, the dike that was built for our people to cross while the bridge was under construction was blown away. As of today the situation where our people are facing difficulties in rainy as well as in dry seasons is over.

... In 1982 when traveling to Memot, Dambe and to O Raing Ov and returning to Koh Sotin, I had to cross the river with a small bridge. HE Preap Pichey was then the Governor of Kompong Cham. He would like me to travel along the river back to the city of Kompong Cham.

... There were then many illegal checkpoints and they even opened fire on our team. It was because of this incident that I have declared that all illegal checkpoints, which
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30 July 2004 (Unofficial Translation) Reconstructing the National Road 3 between Kompot Town and Tropeang Ropov

Following is the selected comments, aside from the prepared text, of Samdech Hun Sen at the groundbreaking ceremony to rebuild the national road three between Kompot Town and Tropeang Ropov, the last 32.7 kilometers length that is connected to another part that is constructed by the World Bank from Veal Rinh to Tropeang Ropov.

“... I am sure that today’s event is what we all have been waiting for. With the presence of HE Ambassador of the

Republic of Korea (RoK), who financed the project, I am pleased and thankful to the people and Government of the RoK for the assistance and support they have always provided for the Cambodian people and Government.

... The construction site here is one of the three projects that I have negotiated with RoK – (1) information technology project and (2) the construction of a large professional training centre, which is supposed to be ready by end of the year, (3)
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20 July 2004 (Unofficial Translation) Welcoming Comments for the In-Coming Minister for Rural Development

At the welcoming ceremony for the in-coming minister for Rural Development in the third-term Royal Government, Samdech Hun Sen made a speech on a wide range of issues relating to rural development in Cambodia and CNV is making an abridged and selected version here as follows:

... I am indeed honored and pleased to be able to join with all of you today to celebrate the welcoming ceremony for the in-coming minister, HE Deputy Prime Minister Lu Lay Sreng, for rural development.

... On this auspicious occasion I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the work fulfilled by the Ministry of Rural Development under

the leadership of HE Ly Thuch in the second term Government, which gives a great effects on the efforts to reduce our people’s poverty.

... My thanks also go to the office of rural development of all levels for the same efforts and achievements. Rural development was first under the leadership of HE Hong Sun Huot, and later of HE Chhim Seak Leng, HE Ly Thuch, and now of HE Deputy Prime Min-

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demand bribes from people, must be stopped. At that time I was a Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, so how difficult and scared it could be for the people in general. I was born in the countryside and I happened to see all this in my life and I am sure people in other places also encounter similar difficulties.

... I could foresee the construction of bridges for at least another 40,000 meters for the next ten years and by then I think we will be able to say that problems of passing across water ways and the connection of road access in the country is in a better condition. Otherwise our people would still be in a situation of market inaccessibility for the products they have produced.

... I may request HE Sun Chanthol of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport who is present here to make a rough estimate on how many bridges would need to be built across the Small River (a branch of the Mekong River that comes from Kompong Cham at Koh Sotin down to Peam of Prey Veng Province) as it stretches from Kompong Cham to Kandal and to Prey veng. According to my understanding I would like to have a bridge in between every four or five kilometers as nowadays the people have to go five to ten kilometers to get to the crossing point.

... Having said that does not exactly mean Hun Sen will build more bridges here right now because we have more bridges demand in Ratanakiri, Mondulkiri, Stung Treng, Kratie, and just for the road to Koh Nhek (of Mondulkiri) we need to build about 400 meters of Bailey bridges. For the 110 km road between Snuol and

Mondulkiri we need another 300 meters of Bailey bridges.

... I begged the Cabinet members during the first Cabinet meeting on July 16 that they must be patient with the small size meeting room because we have to save up money to build bridges for our people – like the Doeum Sdao Bridge here today. This is the Government's objective to narrow the gaps between the rich and the poor through an equitable distribution of the economic growth between rural and urban areas.

... This was the implementation of the second angle of the second-term triangular strategy, and infrastructural development has in this term become one angle. The cost of building four bridges – Doeum Sdao, Takao, Ta Koch and Pongro, would be more than enough to build a modern office of the cabinet but if we have done so our people would not have bridges to cross the river.

... I used to live in this area and I know full well how life-cost incident could happen because of the inability to travel across the river. People could talk to each other from one side of the river to another but they could not commute to one another as quick as they wish to.

... Take for instance a woman in labor may have some problems and needs to be taken to a hospital as quick as possible. But because of the lack of road and bridges, she may lose her life or baby, etc.

... HE Yu Hockry, having served as co-minister for interior for the last two terms and is today helping on issues relating to border, used to be Head of the District in 1960's and knows full well the situa-

tion here. In 1969, under the leadership of HM the King Norodom Sihanouk as Head of State, there was an intention to build the bridge right here but it was not happening because of man-made disasters – the coup and the war.

... As we now have achieved peace, we could not only secure that the bridges and roads can be built but also guarantee that no damages would be brought up because of wars.

... I often mention that those who join in the current Government are not being offered new cars, etc. because the Government needs to address the people's need like road, bridges, etc. It is true that sitting in the Cabinet Meeting is a little hot in such a small room, but it is far better than people working in the field... I am glad to hear that the military engineering team working here has enjoyed the hospitality from our people.

... I learned that some have brought for them the Khmer noodle or traditional sticky rice, etc. Though the amount is small but the heart of our people and monks are profound. We have two values here that meet one another.

... The value of the Ministries of National Defense, Public Works, and Economy and Finance is indeed reflected in their adherence to obligation. Our citizen and monks also have shown their value of sentiment and morale. Therefore the military engineering team feels encouraged.

... As the rain has come, a large part of the team need to be transferred to new tasks, and prepared for other demands. I have ordered that the bridge is open for small-size transport, while the heavy transport means should wait

until the bridge is completely finished...

... This means that the team will return to do some more works (paving a 100 meters concrete road on either side of the bridges of Doeum Sdao and Pungro) as soon as the flood recedes and I would suggest March 29, 2005 as the date of inauguration. The date was in fact the anniversary when I left this area in 1975.

... It is not a coincidence that I have come to launch the groundbreaking for the two bridges on March 29, and the inauguration also on March 29. I would like to suggest also the building of a woman statue with a traditional weaving loom which symbolizes the expertise of the women in this area.

... Today I am glad to see that the commune council which composed of 34 CPP and 17 FUNCINPEC members is present together. Our country has got numerous political parties but only two parties that playing the key roles.

... In the course of solving the political deadlock situation for the safety and security and wellbeing of our people, some politicians predicted us to be historical offenders. No one is and will ever become, as CPP and FUNCINPEC jointly do away with the deadlock situation and not a single drop of blood has shed.

... Cambodia is following the parliamentary system which means all decisions must be made by the National Assembly because this institution is given power by the people, the people voted for its establishment.

... As stipulated in Article 98, members of the Cabinet as

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the reconstruction of the national road 3 between the city of Kompot and Tropeang Ropov. The part between Tropeang Ropov and Veal Rin has already been done for almost 90% by the World Bank.

... I remember well that I brought up this proposal of reconstruction of the national road 3 to HE former President Kim Dae-jung during the third ASEAN Summit in Singapore. At the time RoK just came out of the financial/economic crisis in 1997-98. However, RoK provided Cambodia a special priority in its grant for the construction some of Cambodia's urgent needs such as the Ta Mork water reservoir, and many more.

... RoK also allows Cambodia to access its concession loan, for which it could be considered one of the great success in the field of diplomacy for that specified period of time between RoK and the Kingdom of Cambodia.

... Please allow me to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks for the former Presidents of Korea, HE Kim Young-sam, HE Kim Dae-jung, and the current President HE Roh Moo-hyun.

... One may recall that after the re-establishment of the diplomatic relations between the two countries – Republic of Korea and the Kingdom of Cambodia, in 1996, in 1997, during my visit to the RoK, the diplomatic relations between the two countries has been brought up to Ambassadorial level.

... In 2000, after our discussion in the Republic of Singapore, I conducted another visit to RoK, during which time the three projects I mentioned above were signed officially.

... As we all witnessing today the real beneficiaries of the relations are the people of Cambodia. I can summarize that though the two countries' relations started and developed from the representative to the ambassadorial level, Cambodia has been in the mainstream of bilateral as well as multilateral assistance (ASEAN + 3 and ASEAN + RoK) of RoK.

... Today's event is indeed being held under the presence of HE Sun Chan Thol, the incoming Minister for Public Works and Transports after the formation of the Royal Government in the third legislature of the National Assembly.

... This clearly shows that despite we have a change in the top position in the ministry, as HE Khi Taing Lim, out-going Minister and now Senior Minister and Minister in Charge of the Greater Mekong Sub-region, the vision of the Royal Government on issue of infrastructural development is constantly making progress.

... I wish to thank HE Ke Kimyan for the provision of the de-mining team to clear the area allowing for the reconstruction of this part of the national road 3. Construction of roads in Cambodia cost more than in other countries because on top of the construction cost, extra cost is being paid on de-mining and clearance of unexploded ordnances.

... This part of the national road 3 (Tropeang Ropov and Kompot) is 32 kilometers but the total cost of the construction is US\$ 21.3 million – US\$ 17 million is the loan with low interest rate from RoK and US\$ 4.3 million is the counterpart fund provided

by the Royal Government of Cambodia. The reason why the cost is so large is because the road size will be enlarged to eleven kilometers and asphalted.

... This road was badly destroyed during the war time, while many bridges have to be built including the bridge across the Kompot River of the length of 290 meters and twelve meters in width.

... I am grateful to HE Senior Minister Keat Chhun, who also is present here, for his ability to manage with the financial contribution from the Government pocket to fulfill its obligation of providing the counterpart fund for every project assisted by foreign countries and/or international financial institutions.

... Our people have been waiting for quite sometime for the road to get reconstructed and the construction itself will take 36 months or over three years.

... The interest the road will give us is immense as it is beneficial not only for the people of Kep City and Kompot province, but also is a part of the corridor along the coastal area that will connect Kompot city to the Sihanoukville on one direction and at the juncture of the national road 48 to Koh Kong province and the Thai-Cambodian border.

... All this is to wrap up what I have been saying that Cambodia will open its air, water and land accesses and we already have in Sihanoukville a seaport, one other port under construction in Kep Phos, and another in Koh Kong.

... Cambodia continues to welcome more investment in building more ports facilities,

especially in Kompot as we will in the future produce cement for export from the Kompot province and the goods should not take all the ways to Sihanouk seaport to do so.

... Aside from serving as a corridor of the coastal area, the national road three is also a connection among three countries (Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam) and ASEAN as a whole in terms of transports.

... Indeed the ASEAN plan of roads connection is going via the national road 1, for which we have to foresee building another bridge across the Bassac River as the current Monivong Bridge will not be able to handle the future load.

... As far as the railroad is concerned the plan will not go through the corridor but to extend rail connection to Snuol district of Kratie and continue to Kunming, Yunnan province of the People's Republic of China. However, as far as trade is concerned I am sure traders will take shortcuts for the sake of saving their expenses.

... Instead of going through the national road 1, for example, they may choose to travel, for example from Vietnam to Thailand, through Kompot to Koh Kong rather than having to come from Bavet (Svay Rieng) through to Phnom Penh and to Poi Pet.

... If we could realize the national road 3 in this term of the Government, I would propose the road be named "the road of friendship between Cambodia and RoK."

... I also have good news that the road length of 198 kilometers from Kratie to the border with Laos has been signed, while the road between Siemreap and Poi Pet is ready to

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start and also the national road 08 from Prek Tamak to Prey Veng has also been reviewed.

... Again this setup also illustrates an importance of integration between and among the neighboring countries.

... It is in this reason that I am saying Cambodia should not be satisfied with only one seaport. It is true that the reconstruction of the national road 3 up to this moment is not yet complete as we still have another part of 136 kilometers from Kompot to Phnom Penh to be built. Currently this part is under repair under the fund for flood relief projects.

... In this objective, I have proposed to HE Roh Moo-Hyun, the President of RoK in Bali three more projects:

- (1) *the 136 kilometer road between Kompot and Phnom Penh's Chaom Chao,*
- (2) *the water reservoir of Roleang Chrey for the effort to provide irrigation for cultivation to the northern part of Phnom Penh and parts of Kompong Speu, Kandal and Kompong Chhnang,*
- (3) *the extension of information technology to provincial level of Cambodia, in the form of grant and loan.*

... The assistance from RoK is a need and wish not only of Hun Sen but the whole people of Cambodia and HE Minister for Public Works and Transports Sun Chan Thol mentioned just now that the Ministry thanks Samdech Krom Preah and I for the breakthrough of the deadlock situation into the formation of the Royal Government.

... We could ask a question

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well as the whole Cabinet could be dissolved only by the decision of the national Assembly. Some sought the intervention from HM the King ... but on July 17, 2004, HM the King wrote back that HM the King could not stop decision of the National Assembly...

... If they want to see the Republican regime established, first of all we have to abandon the Constitutional monarchy regime or it means the Kingdom of Cambodia no longer has a King and we will see the

whether this is a wish only of Samdech Krom Preah and me.

... It is the nation's need that Samdech Krom Preah and I, with the advice of Samdech Chea Sim and Smadech Heng Samrin, have hammered out a solution without costing the nation any losses, but benefit for the people of Cambodia instead. I could conclude that what Samdech Krom Preah and I have done, or the leadership of the two parties have done so to speak, is for the protection of the best interest of the people and nation.

... We could not afford to let the stalemate on and on as many countries have knocked our doors and told us they have prepared to offer us helps with favorable conditions and a number of them have been waiting for the ratification from the National Assembly for their loans.

... Some made comments that Cambodia is deeply sinking in crisis. Is it because of the weight of the construction equipment? One would come to an end if one preaches things that are not the truth...■

post of Head of State.

... In between 1960 and 1970 it was accidental and unique that the Kingdom of Cambodia was ruled instead by a Head of State. Now we do not accept a mixed system like that. If you want to maintain the parliamentary system, power must be given to the parliament and the National Assembly will assume power in adopting laws, while HM the King would give his signature.

... Some politicians requested HM the King not to sign any laws (concerning the establishment of the new Royal Government) but criticized HM when HM signed them. It would be a tremendous sacrifice if they would opt for a presidential regime as first of all the Constitution would leave out the existence of HM the King.

... Whether the president has all the power or not depends on whether s/he is voted in by the people or not? If s/he is voted in by the parliament, s/he is the president symbolizing the national unity only.

... In the presidential regime, the president is elected by the people and the parliament cannot remove him/her from power. That is why when Lon Nol launched a coup in 1970 against HM the King, who was then the Head of State, it is said that the parliament got the right to remove HM and the US and some of the countries supported them. The Lon Nol group occupied the seat at the United Nations...

... But we cannot change the Constitution as in Article 98 stipulates that the Constitutional monarchy and the liberal pluralistic system, including also the parliament, cannot be amended. Prior to his

journey to Singapore, Samdech Krom Preah called me and said the other party does not accept the solution and I told Samdech Krom Preah that they should state it out clearly so that we can apply the new Article 153 of the Election Law that if a Party does not take part, the seats belong to that party must be given to the remaining elected ones.

... As far as the illegal militant organization is concerned, many have reported themselves in Banteay Meanchey, Phnom Penh. They called it Committee 14, but they all have been given military ranks. HM the King issued a message that "the party is facing a danger because of its words." I warmly welcome those who reported themselves. They are guiltless and are given some pocket money to go back to their families.

... Whether this military organization could become real one is just a matter of time and they can take two forms of appearance: (i) if they win the election they would seek the transfer of the structure or (ii) they use them as the support force and will take up actions in case of any incidental event.

... They all could fight right away because they all were formerly soldiers... The fact that they have come out is a good thing as they no longer have to pay their obligatory contribution and open the way for bringing the chieftain to justice.

... Those reported themselves to the authorities are indeed making a contribution for the defense of the national security. Those who went into hiding in the party headquarters should come out and should not try to seek asylum in any foreign embassies...■

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ister Lu Lay Sreng. As he is already 67 years old, I would request that his office is set up at the ground floor rather than having him going up to the third floor.

... Countryside is the source of resources and workforce supply for hotels, factories, etc. in the city. We have to exert efforts to provide rural areas with clean water, irrigation, good road condition, telecommunication, market opportunity, schools, etc. all of which aim to promote poverty alleviation through the narrowing of gap between rural and urban areas.

... Taking its complex nature into consideration, Samdech Krom Preah Norodom Ranaridh and I set up the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD) as a mechanism to help coordinate such a complex environment. For example, the Asian Development Bank has been providing its school assistance through two channels – the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Rural Development, an action that has to be coordinated so as prioritization and equal distribution of assistance and wealth could be managed. It is worth recalling what I used to say in relation to rural development. We need to focus on three factors so that rural area could jump out of its cycle of poverty:

First, it should be the **water supply** – drinking, irrigation, and I know that the Ministry of Rural Development has been doing a lot with the help from the People's Republic of China in digging water wells and reservoirs.

Second, efforts must be made to build more **rural infrastructure and transport facil-**

ity. From our experience, take for instance in the district of Snuol of Kratie province, water has been always sufficient for the cultivation of all sorts of crops but our people in the area do not grow major crops.

... The problem has been that the area does not have a workable road condition that transport of agro-products to the market would cost sky high. HE Ngy Chan Phal, Under-Secretary of State for rural development, has been conducting this wide-ranging topic study. In Siemreap, the betterment of road condition from rural areas to town and its market condition brought about a significant increase in the volume of products. I would therefore recommend that priority and investment should be given to and made on the betterment of infrastructure and communication in rural area. On July 25, 2004, I will visit the construction site of the Bridge of Doeum Sdao in the district of Koh Sotin of Kompong Cham.

... **Third, investment in the betterment of human resources** must continue to be a priority as well. Take for example more schools in rural areas need to be constructed. Requirement of school building will never be satisfied as the number of population is growing at a pace of about 2.4% per year. This indicates that more requirements of food, clothing, schools, health centers, etc are needed.

... The three factors – infrastructure, water supply and irrigation, and human resources are keys to rural development. Along with the three, we also need public health service in rural area too because children must all be vaccinated in prevention of

polio and other forms of diseases.

... People will tell you what they need in rural area. They will tell you they need school buildings, roads, water canals, etc. But we have to address these tremendous needs with our limited budget. We could not address those needs all in one at the same time.

... It is therefore necessary to coordinate with the Village Development Committee who have assumed their duties through the village election to allow our people to make their own judgment and decision as to what need to be dealt first and what could be left for later stage. It is indeed a decentralization of power or offering more power to the people. If they say they need water, it falls on the first factor I mentioned above and we could address the need right away. This would be the most appropriate decision making process as we address their needs according to their demands.

... I mention all this because I want all of us -- decision makers at the central level – to be aligned with the rights and demand of the people in the rural areas. I think we all have got to come close to the people to listen to their demands and it is easier to do so these days as we could commute to rural areas quicker and easier. Because of the better road condition, rural areas which used to be far remote is no longer so. Mondulkiri, a province in the far northeast is no longer out of reach. During the Khmer New Year this year, city dwellers stormed out of the cities to enjoy their rest and family get-together in rural areas. There are two reasons that make this possible:

First, the security has been improved in rural area because we no longer have fighting or threats as under the Khmer Rouge time. **Second**, good roads and bridges have city dwellers and rural villagers in close touch. Taking all these into consideration and judgment, I can say that our ministers and staff's departure in this term is in a better situation compared to the previous terms.

... As HE Lu Lay Sreng said in his speech that he needs the cooperation from all concerned departments, institutions, and especially from Secretaries and Under-Secretaries of State so that this task could be successfully implemented. More than that the success or failure of the Ministry of Rural Development is crucial for the priority action plan of the Government as a whole as it is one of the four prioritized ministries – Ministries of Rural Development, Education, Health and Agriculture.

... We must see that the objectives of the Government's priority action plan are implemented successfully. Those are *to guarantee the stability and public order so as to allow more favorable condition for general development, to achieve a long-term economic growth between 6% and 7%, to achieve an equitable distribution of fruit of the economic growth, especially with a focus given on rural areas and therefore narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor, women and men, and to make a stable and sustainable use of the natural resources*. It is in the aim of achieving this objective the Royal Government has allocated already about half a million hectares of fishing ground, about 56% of the total area of the country's fishing ground, for use by rural people...■

07 July 2004 (Unofficial Translation)

Where Does Cambodia Stand? Where Is Cambodia Going in the Future?

The prepared text in full for the International Conference is available at www.cnv.org.kh

“... Indeed my prepared speech does not respond directly to the issue of where Cambodia is standing. Where is it going to be? I think we have to put thing into perspective while making a precise statement rather than referring to it in a diplomatic way. It is true that the era of cold war and the confrontation between ideologies ended. Small countries have become more independent than in the time of cold war where they were prone to depend on powerful countries or countries belonging to this or that bloc. Whereas the powerful countries readjusted their strategies from confrontation to engagement and cooperation, small countries have resorted to reducing their dependencies on powerful ones while the latter also sized down their commitments to foreign countries as well.

... The move has brought about a need for an economic alliance among countries. Though the economic development is at different levels, they all have sought for a favorable position in the economic grouping. The move to such an alliance of economic cooperation has become a key requirement of each country to formulate its foreign policy. Particularly in South East Asia where a total hostility used to prevail between ASEAN and former Indochinese countries, and such conflicts had evolved from confrontation to engagement, and to this moment, to peaceful coexistence through the enlargement of the ASEAN (from six to ten). The same is true for Europe as it has evolved from two confronting blocs (WARSAW and NATO) to become big community.

... Unfortunately, when the

cold war came to an end, we observe that a hot one has occurred. Take for instance conflicts in Angola where the UN resolution has been adopted more or less at the same time with Cambodia issue still exist. We also notice problems in Sierra Leone, Congo and Zaire that are getting worse and worse. In the war against Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia was the base from where the US launched the fight. Now we all ask what Saudi Arabia has become. It has become as we all can see a nest of terrorism – in human and other resources, not only in Saudi Arabia but also for their links in other countries. This is the real situation.

... If one asks where one is, one has to take into consideration the position of where the world is. We all do not know exactly as to where the whole world is but say in general manner that the cold war and ideological confrontation are over, and the world is in the phase of globalization, start of regionalism and integration. In pursuit of the above target, we notice that wars occur in many places and terrorist activities are taking place at different levels in various countries. Therefore it is a must that all countries have to stand united and fight terrorism all together because the act of terrorism in one country would inflict problems to the others...

... It is my observation that while the terrorists strengthen their alliance, states have become less coordinating and, in my opinion, allowed gaps for insurgences by the terrorists. It is worth observing that the terrorists have made use of all

state and private structures and they are also educated and coordinated as they have links from the Middle East to Asia, and from there to Cambodia where we have arrested some of them the other day. In face of such cooperation among the terrorists, the states have parted away from one another at different levels. Take for instance in Europe, the claim of ownership between Turkey and Greece over Cyprus has put the two countries in the mood of lacking of coordination.

... We have spoken of alliance in the region but I seem to notice a lack of balance in this matter. The ASEM meeting – the Summit between Asia and Europe is about to take place in Hanoi, Vietnam. The EU wishes that their ten new member states be admitted without condition, but they have placed a condition (for ASEAN) to exclude Burma from the meeting. The problem has arisen and how do we solve this? In my view we have to move on in the win-win framework. Seeing this lack of balance, Cambodia could not afford to leave Burma outside alone. Cambodia would have to sacrifice this chance and to stay outside together with Burma as well. Our position is clear -- the EU's ten new members' entries should be corresponding with the entry of the ASEAN three states – Burma, Cambodia, and Laos. Otherwise, we all cancel the entry together.

... If we consider Burma as a problem for relationship between the ASEAN community and the European Union, I think that we are moving against the current of regionalism. Cambodia is sticking

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goal and a shared vision of the ASEAN+3 countries, at least for now. Therefore, it is important that we must work through this incremental process of community building, at a pace comfortable to all and on the basis of consensus-building. To realize the EAC, I think that we have to forge a sense of community building and an identity of the East Asia Community. ASEAN needs to contribute to the EAC, particularly through the building of ASEAN Community which comprises the three main pillars—the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), the ASEAN Security Community (ASC), and the ASEAN Socio-cultural Community (ASCC)■

into the policy of win-win solution. By saying so, Cambodia does not wish to interfere in any country's internal affairs or to offer any support to the violation of human rights. First Cambodia thought we must move ahead but we have to think of unity in ASEAN. If the European Union resorts to allow Burma to sit together with them, it would do a lot better than leaving Burma alone. It is in this reason that we have chosen to write a sentence “isolation no longer is a choice for any country”.

ASEAN has an objective and is in the process of implementing it – maintain unity of ASEAN and narrowing down the gap between old member states (developed) and new member states (least developed). So to leave someone alone or to let one walk in a rough terrain alone is inappropriate. We do not want a wrong signal for the ASEAN unity. In response to the question where Cambodia is standing, we should ask the same question as to where the world is standing now...”■

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region faced the common challenges, and it was not a matter of convenience but a matter of political and economic necessity that the ASEAN+3 cooperation emerged at the time.

While there is no doubt that the cooperation between ASEAN and the countries in Northeast Asia started much earlier than in 1997, the cooperation among these thirteen countries gained greater momentum, more significant political and strategic weight, and certainly more economic clout in the post-1999 when the ASEAN+3 Leaders began to launch their cooperation under the banner of "East Asia Cooperation" for the first time. As the ASEAN+3 Leaders continue to meet annually, review their cooperation, reaffirm their commitment to work together, strengthen their cooperation, and deepen their partnership. Indeed, when they meet each time, I believe that the present ASEAN+3 cooperation will contribute significantly to the East Asia Cooperation and certainly the East Asia community in the long-term future. After all, the ASEAN+3 cooperation is the most dynamic form of cooperation in Asia today, which ASEAN is in the driver's seat of this ASEAN+3 process.

Since the launching of the ASEAN+3 cooperation in 1997, the areas of cooperation have been widely expanded and so have the levels of dialogue between ASEAN and the Plus Three. In fact, the Joint Statement on "East Asia Cooperation," which was adopted by the ASEAN+3 Leaders in 1999, has laid down the vision and strategic goals of the ASEAN+3 cooperation as well as the contribution to East Asia Cooperation as a whole. Following this important Joint Statement, we have the study

of the East Asia Vision Group (EAVG) and the concrete recommendations of the East Asia Study Group (EASG), which initiated by President Kim Dae Jung of the Republic of Korea. At the same time, during the last ASEAN+3 Summit in Bali, Indonesia in 2003, the Leaders indeed reaffirmed their cooperation so that the ASEAN+3 process will continue to achieve greater synergy through broader and deeper cooperation so as to advance the ASEAN+3 partnership. The current ASEAN+3 Cooperation continues to cover mainly political and security, economic, and functional areas of cooperation. In my view, the ASEAN+3 Cooperation, as well as the ASEAN+1 cooperation with China, Japan, and RoK will continue to drive the East Asia Cooperation to a higher level, thus leading to the East Asia Community in the long-term future, which is ultimately the shared goal of the ASEAN+3. However, I would like to share my view on what, I believe, continues to constitute the main challenges for ASEAN+3 Cooperation or the East Asia Cooperation today.

First is the challenge of development gap within ASEAN and between ASEAN and the Plus Three countries. I think it is important that we continue to pay close attention to the development divide between ASEAN and the least developing country in ASEAN, which should not be allowed to continue to be marginalized by the impact of globalization. Certainly, ASEAN and particularly the least developing members should be encouraged under the IAI projects and other ASEAN schemes.

Second is the challenge of fighting terrorism and transna-

tional crimes such as human trafficking and drug smuggling. Since the September 11 event, terrorism remains a serious threat to the region as whole, let alone the entire world. Therefore, the threat of terrorism and other transnational crimes continues to pose great challenge to the ASEAN+3 countries, collectively and individually.

Third is the increasing challenge of energy security as the world oil prices continue to rise. The energy security undoubtedly has negative impact on the regional and global economies. To be sure, the least developing countries suffer greater impact and, therefore, it is vital that the ASEAN+3 Cooperation should make collective efforts to address this important issue. While there are other challenges that I can raise at this Forum, due to the constraint of time, I will focus only on the three issues of challenge above. Now, I would like to touch on two other issues—the East Asia Summit and the East Asia Community. We all remember that on the East Asia Summit, which is one of the seven medium- and long-term measures of the EASG, I believe that time has come for us to move ahead with the East Asia Summit in the very near future. In fact, this issue was raised by the Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong at the ASEAN+3 Summit in Phnom Penh in 2002.

At that time, he proposed the idea of having a paralleled ASEAN+3 Summit and the East Asia Summit. Today, the issue of the East Asia Summit has been raised to a higher level and it is important that we have to contemplate this issue thoroughly. While there have been a lot of discussions on the East Asia Summit, I

believe that ASEAN should take a common position in order to identify our important strategies, which include the following:

First, ASEAN should continue to remain in the driver's seat of not only the ASEAN+3 process but also the East Asia Cooperation, which includes the East Asia Summit. In this regard, perhaps it is in the best interest of the ASEAN+3 Cooperation that ASEAN will host the first East Asia Summit, with the co-chairmanship formula between ASEAN and one of the Plus Three countries. With this formula of co-chairmanship of the East Asia Summit, the Summit will provide more shared benefits to the Plus Three countries.

Second, the ASEAN+3 Summit will remain, and ASEAN will continue to host it among the respective member countries on a rotating basis. On the agenda of the East Asia Summit, I believe that we may not duplicate it with the ASEAN+3 Summit. But certainly the overlapping agenda between the ASEAN+3 Summit and the East Asia Summit is unavoidable. After the first East Asia Summit, the next East Asia Summit can be held in one of the Plus Three countries, rotating through an alphabetical order. Specifically, with regard to the East Asia Community, I believe that the process of this community building has begun as we continue to talk about it by raising issues and exploring the various factors that will shape the future of the EAC at an appropriate time. Certainly, the discussions have been carried out at various levels, including the government, the think tank, and civil society.

The EAC is no doubt a shared

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09 July 2004

Remarks at the Degree-Granting Ceremony of the University of Cambodia and the Launching of the East Asia Young Leaders' Forum on "Enhancing Cooperation and Prospects for Building the East Asia Community"

"... Today I am indeed pleased to be present here at these two important functions—the Special Program on Granting the Honorary Doctorate Degrees of the University of Cambodia and the launching of the First East Asia Young Leaders' Forum. The two events are in fact related to each other, which I am happy to take part in both of them. At the outset, I wish to take this opportunity to thank the University of Cambodia, particularly Dr. Kao Kim Hourn and Dr. Toshu Fukami, for honoring me and the other distinguished recipients of the University of Cambodia's honorary degrees this year. Before proceeding with my keynote address, I wish to put on record my acceptance of the honorary degree from the University of Cambodia. It is with great honor and pride that I accept the honorary doctorate degree.

Taking this opportunity, I am indeed grateful to Professor Dr. Michael Haas, former professor of political science at the University of Hawaii and currently the Chairman of the International Academic Advisory Board of the University of Cambodia, for reading my citation as well as the citation of other recipients from the University of Cambodia. I am also delighted to know that the granting of the honorary doctorate degrees by the University of Cambodia is the first initiative which has ever taken place in this country. The granting of the honorary doctorate degrees by the University of Cambodia is not only a symbol of growing confidence and academic excellence but also an increasing internationalization and recognition of Cambodia's higher education.

In fact, I had personally received eight doctorate and honorary doctorate degrees by the international universities, which had honored me for my work and my contributions to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Cambodia and humanity. Nevertheless, this is the first time that I have the honor to receive an honorary doctorate from a Cambodian university. This really reflects the improvement of Cambodia's higher education. Indeed, this achievement is the result of privatization policy in education and of the strengthening of the partnership with the private sector both domestically and internationally that I have launched nearly ten years back.

Indeed, as a Cambodian and as a prime minister of this country, there is nothing more makes me happy than to see the expansion and improvement in higher education in Cambodia over the past several years, despite the challenges facing Cambodia. Yet, I believe that our country has made tremendous progress in university education. The improvement in education, including higher education, has been one of the most important policies of the Royal Government of Cambodia, particularly in expanding opportunities for the people, building a more knowledge-based society, and advancing democracy in this country. Therefore, this granting of the honorary doctorate degrees to me and others will set important precedence in Cambodia's higher education and that it will set in motion a new process of academic excellence and quality education. Today, by accepting the honorary doctorate degree, I be-

lieve that Cambodia has taken a bolder step in order in internationalizing Cambodia's academic standardization, quality control, and education value. In doing so, Cambodia is advancing its quality human resource development to a higher level.

On behalf of the recipients of the honorary doctorate degrees from the University of Cambodia, I present profound gratitude to His Majesty the King Norodom Sihanouk and Her Majesty the Queen Norodom Monineath Sihanouk who always provide us with their wisdom. May I pray their Majesties with longevity. The honor that I have today is also to the Senate and the National Assembly, particularly His H.E. Samdach CHEA SIM, His Royal Highness Samdach Krom Preah Norodom Ranarith President of the FUNCINPEC Party, H.E. Samdach HENG SAMRIN, and H.E. SAY CHHUM, as well as the management of Cambodian People's Party who always provide me with advice and corrections in all of my activities. I wish to present this achievement to my advisors and assistants as well as public servants at all levels, armed forces and Cambodian people who support my leadership and from whom I have learnt a great deal. Let me dedicate this accomplishment to my mother who has passed away and to my beloved father; to my brothers and sisters who are my truly beloved family.

I would like also to share the happiness today to Lok Chum Teav BUN RANY HUN SEN, my beloved wife, all my children and grand-children

who always stay beside me in all good and bitter times. Once again, I profoundly thank the University of Cambodia, particularly Dr. Kao Kim Hourn and Dr. Toshu Fukami for honoring me and the others with this honorary doctorate degree."□

The East Asia Cooperation Today & Prospects for Building the East Asia Community"

I will now turn to my keynote address on the "The East Asia Cooperation Today and Prospects for Building the East Asia Community," which is an important topic for our region at present and the years to come.

At present, East Asia, which is comprising the ten countries of Southeast Asia or ASEAN and the Plus Three countries in Northeast Asia, namely China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, has been regarded as a truly dynamic region, which sets to become another important political and economic pole in the world. This region under the current process of the ASEAN+3 cooperation, which started in 1997, has been moving ahead very fast, consolidating the gains rapidly, and deepening the cooperation into many areas. The ASEAN+3 cooperation is based principally on the high political commitment of the ASEAN+3 leaders, which has laid down an essential foundation for the East Asia Cooperation today. When the ASEAN+3 cooperation kicked off at the time the region was in fact facing a serious financial crisis and the impact of globalization. It was against this backdrop that the

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