

Cambodia New Vision

Monthly Bulletin, Issue 9

August, 1998

**EXTENSIVE EXCERPTS OF
SAMDECH HUN SEN'S PRESS BRIEFING
AFTER THE CALL-ON BY THE UN GENERAL SECRETARY'S SPECIAL
REPRESENTATIVE, HE LAKHAN MEHROTRA ,ON AUGUST 31, 1998**



If sit-in remains peaceful, it can go on...

"... I can say that there have been many inquiries made to me on how much longer we should allow this illegal demonstration to go on. My response is that they can go on as long as three or six months more, if they wish to. Our concern is to provide the demonstrators with security and safety..."

"... There will be no reaction from the armed forces of the Government. Yesterday, I gave orders to the Deputy Prime Minister Sar Kheng, and the Minister of Defense Tea Banh to pay due attention to the forces on guard in various places, that in the presence of attacks from the demonstrators on certain targets, be it state institutions or private houses, the guards in those places should refrain from violent reactions. I also advised that rifles be withdrawn from them, and handguns be equipped instead. These measures are to pre-

vent any violence that could happen in case that the guards in those places could not contain themselves. Therefore, there will not be any uses of forces from the part of the Government to break the demonstration as it has been rumored... Since the current situation is different from that (the July incident) of last year, in which, if we had not taken timely actions, Tamok (the Khmer Rouge hardline commander) could have occupied Phnom Penh already. In the current circumstance, Tamok cannot enter Phnom Penh in that sense..."

Demonstrators insulted me using Polpotist language... I am used to them...

"... Considering the deterioration of sanitary conditions in the place of demonstration, on August 26, I gave orders to HE Sar Kheng to ensure that healthcare facilities and clinics are set up at their disposals. We

(Continued on page 4)

**EXTENSIVE EXCERPTS OF
SAMDECH HUN SEN'S INTERVIEW
TO RADIO AUSTRALIA
ON AUGUST 6, 1998**

"... I am very satisfied with the results (of the election). Not that it was the victory of CPP, but with what I have expected, i.e. it was a free, fair, and non-violent election. As every body is aware of, a year ago, the situation was so gloomy that somebody could not expect that we would be able to conduct such an election. As I said on July 11, the most important thing for me was that an election had to take place, no matter it would be a loss or a victory for any particular party. Afterwards, I made every effort in order to obtain this objective which also included my non-participation in the electoral campaign... This fact certainly exerted some influence on the number of ballots that would be casted for CPP. However, what I had anticipated was an election to be carried out without any murders, or injuries. My satisfaction of the elections lies on two factors: 1) the election proceeded smoothly with observations made by various groups of observers that it was a free, fair and non-violent election, and which was credible, 2) it is normal that a political party which enjoys the support of the people to take the leadership of the country in the next term. This is another victory..."

CPP-sole Government inapplicable..., a coalition unavoidable

"... Yesterday, the preliminary results were announced, with the sum total of nationwide ballots. The CPP

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

received 2,030,802 votes which is taking the lead by far among the political parties contested. As for the seats in the parliament, we would probably get 64 of the 122 seats, i.e. more than 50% of them. There would be no major changes in the figure, even though there would be investigations into some cases of irregularities to be conducted by the National Election Committee (NEC)... aimed at responding to the complaints filed by some political parties. Now that CPP achieved over 50% of the seats, it is sufficient for it to set up a government of its own if the National Assembly amends the constitution from two third to a simple majority adopting system (50% + 1)... However, we can not forget that in Cambodia, the National Assembly requires two-third of the votes to be eligible to set up a government. Therefore, although CPP is taking the lead, achieving most of the votes, and most of the seats, still a coalition government is unavoidable..."

The recounts resulted in no differences that would affect the overall outcome...

"... The allegations related to the election do not lie within the jurisdiction of the Royal Government of Cambodia, nor CPP. It is the jurisdiction of NEC, and after that, of the Constitutional Council (CC). I believe that the investigation of various irregularities should be conducted. For instance, the day before yesterday, there were recounting of the ballots of a number of communes in Takeo. The recounts proved no differences of the number of ballots which would affect the results of the election... Yesterday, I met with Mr. Neou Kassy... and I was very pleased to listen to his requests. Although, I am in the government, as a Prime Minister, I can only provide service to NEC, but cannot bear a hand in their business. I have the duty in providing security, TV and Radio services, materials

and finance for their work... As far as the party aspect is concerned, we are only one of the political parties contested in the election. I can not voice my opinion hereon what to do. For the time being, what is important is the fact that NEC, as well as the international community, has reaffirmed already that the election was free, fair, and acceptable..."

To have a government in time is always better for national reconstruction and development...

"... Besides, I also noted that some political parties said that it was rather early to think about setting up a coalition government, when the official results have yet to be announced, and the investigations of the election related irregularities have yet to be conducted... It is right, however, as a political party which won the most seats and has the duty to organize a government, we have to make beforehand preparation for a coalition... if we were to be late for a day, a week or a month, it would not be good for our national reconstruction and development..."

Possible exits from institutional crisis...

"... If the other two seated parties boycotted the National Assembly, there would be an institutional crisis, because the current National Assembly term will expire on September 24, 1998, so the situation would be bad, and would result in constitutional crisis. This situation could be put under control for the current government headed by HE Ung Huot and myself could continue running the country till a time when another election is conducted. Another possibility would be that these parties would take part to continue the current National Assembly. However, we foresee several possibilities: 1) a coalition government would be set up by two parties -- Funcinpec and CPP with a total seats of 107. It would not be difficult to do this, because in actuality, Funcinpec has its members in the

current government as the Deputy Prime Minister, Ministers, Secretaries of State, Under-Secretaries of State, who are re-elected; 2) the Sam Rainsy party would participate in the coalition, which will be a three-party government. However, I have the impression that a number of countries do not like to have this kind of solution. If the three elected parties were to take part in the government, the role of opposition would be deprived. Therefore, there are opinions that there should be opposition in the parliament. Recently, in a statement made by CPP, we have recognized the role of the opposition in the National Assembly. The opposition out of the parliament is less strong and less effective than that in the parliament; and, 3) the current government would continue to run the country in order to avoid the institutional crisis. This situation would be bad, so we would make every effort to avoid it through peaceful means and in accordance with the rule of law. Last but not least, the constitutional amendment would be conducted to swap from the two-third majority to a simple majority adopting system. This possibility is foreseen from two angles: 1. the new parliament would amend the constitution, because even if those partners do not take part in the coalition government, they should not let the country fall into crisis, and should therefore contribute to the constitutional amendment; and 2. under the force of circumstance, the current parliament could conduct the amendment of constitution... to apply a system of simple majority..."

Let's discuss the political platform...

"... Everybody can understand what has happened. I do not want to open the old wounds, but I wish to recall that I had no conflict with anyone during the five years (1993-98) of coalition government... If there were to be any problems here, they would be the problems between individuals

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

in relation to the law. I never consider anyone my enemy. What I did in the past was that anyone who committed wrongdoings had to deal with the law. It is not my personal conflict with anyone. Though some problems have surfaced, we have to note that the current parliament which is composed of four parties (CPP, Funcinpec, BLDP, and Molinaka) has never come to a standstill. The coalition government of the four parties is still continuing its work till the end of its term. In the coming term of office, I think that we have more favourable conditions, because there is only one prime minister who will lead the country in the next five years, and the participation of other partners in the coalition government. I think that (we all have) to get together to coordinate a political platform first, then submit it to the parliament for approval is of great importance. The issue as to who takes which position is not critical, but the one for the sake of an agreement by political parties to form a government on an acceptable political platform is more important... CPP wishes to play no dominant role in the platform. We respect our partners in the coalition government so as to be accountable according to the will of the people who casted their votes for various parties to lead the country..."

HM the King being satisfied with a coalition proposal...

"... I had an audience with HM the King on July 30, even when the counting of ballots had not yet been completed. My obligation, on behalf of the Royal Government, is to safeguard laws and orders, to provide good service to NEC with the presence of the international observers. My duty is to respectfully report about the process of the election to HM the King. It is fortunate that when I had an audience with HM the King, only four days after the election, the results of the election had already been partly released.

CPP was taking the lead. At the time, I had a chance to respectfully inform HM the King of my intention to set up a coalition government with the participation of all elected political parties. HM the King agreed and encouraged such a process... HM the King is very satisfied with the election. The role of HM the King is of great importance. Without his presence in the country, and without his appeal made in June to his subjects to cast their ballots, the election would not be a success like this. This is the pride of our HM the King, and that of our people as a whole. The election process has demonstrated that a country on the Mekong implements democracy on its own.

Free, fair, and credible... judged by international observers

"... Being free, this election is free because in Cambodia there are 39 political parties, and over five million eligible voters went to the polls, i.e. more than 90% of them. This is a very big figure, if we compare with some countries where only 50% to 60% of their eligible voters go to poll. All the 39 parties netted votes, by tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands or millions of votes... As far as being fair,... compared with the UNTAC election (in 1993), there were over 8000 ballots boxes, and 1000 of which noted with broken padlocks. Thousands of ballots were scattered along the roads. In Ba Phnom district alone (of Prey Veng province) 200 ballots were scattered out of the boxes. While the 1998 election, none of the padlocks of ballot boxes was found broken, nor any ballots being scattered along the roads..."

"... A year ago, only a few of us would believe that an election could be proceeded smoothly like this. Now, the international community as a whole has declared it a free and fair election. As one of the competitors, perhaps that is all I could say... I think that it is a good opportunity

to recognize the result of the election from the part of the international community. By beginning to recognize the result as free and fair, I hope that they will recognize a new government. I also believe that in the end Cambodia will have a chance to play its own role, harmoniously together with the international community, in the region as well as in the world..."

Coping with socio-economic condition, and livelihood of the Cambodian people... the platform of the new Government

"... People's needs differ from one stage to another. During the period when the people suffered from the genocidal regime, they needed survival and the non-return of the Pol Pot regime. At that time, CPP together with a number of patriots toppled this regime and made every effort to prevent its return. After then, the people's needs were an end to the war. CPP together with other parties in conflict negotiated with each other until a Paris Peace Agreement was reached... After the 1993 election, thanks to the win-win policy, we have been able to put an end to the seceded zones where they were under the illegal control of the Khmer Rouge. Those places are Pailin, Malai, Samlot, and Anlong Veng. For the time being, the most urgent need of the people is that their livelihood be improved economically and socially..."

"... The priority of the next government's platform concentrates on economic issues and the living conditions of the people. An economy-oriented government will certainly deal with issues of economy as a priority... What remains to be done for the sake of socio-economic development? Without peace and political stability, it is impossible to achieve this objective. They have dialectical relationship -- peace and political stability, and socio-economic development./■

(Continued from page 1)

have to pay attention to the fact that when any one demonstrator falls ill and is taken to the hospital, s/he may not receive adequate treatment. This situation would give them pretext to accuse the government of human rights (violation)..."

"... I am fully aware that the demonstrators have abused me with the foulest language. It is similar to those used by Pol Potists against me over the past years... They cannot instigate anger in me. Instead, I will pay attention to their safety and health..."

HM's message should be honored

"... Yesterday, HM the King issued a royal message, the content of which, I think, should be able to attract consideration and sympathy from the leaders of the demonstration, and the demonstrators..."

"... Hundreds or even thousands of protesters among the 11 million people is not a great number... In fact, it has disturbed the peaceful and normal lives of the 11 million citizens. Based on this reason, even if they do not care to sympathize with the Government, the Constitutional Council(CC), or the National Election Committee (NEC), I think they should at least respect and understand the messages of HM the King (there were two of them, oral one and written one)..."

The voted-in Premier for 1998-03

"... As for the appeal on me to step down, I would like to say "Yeah" I am going to step down. Legally, I will step down from my current position as the Second Prime Minister (of the 1993-elected Government) to become the sole Prime Minister(of the 1998-elected Government)... The new-term government will accept only one Prime Minister in accordance with the constitution... I do not cling to power, but I have been voted in by (the majority of) the people..."

"... Definitely, it is not by chance that since April-1998 CPP announced Hun Sen's candidacy for the post of Prime Minister. Thereby, the support for CPP could be interpreted as the support for Hun Sen to function as the Prime Minister. I have to respect the people's decision..."

On Election complaints...

"... (as far as the election complaints are concerned) I would make no comments. The Electoral Law which was adopted prior to the election should be a foundation for any discussions. Article 118 of the Law stipulates that the parliamentary seats would be allocated according to the "highest average calculation system."

".... Besides, NEC issued many pamphlets concerning seats allocation prior to the polling date... I would like to affirm that CPP as a whole, and I personally, will not accept any number of seats allocated by any formula that does not exist in the Electoral Law or that is modified at the post-election period. Even if the formula would be in favour of CPP..."

On racist rhetoric and violence...

"... The opposition's acts, like what they did yesterday (to the Cambodian-Vietnamese monument, the destruction of the public property), or the tone of violence in their speeches, warn us all of possible violence. I hope the demonstrators will refrain from repeating such actions..."

"... (As far as rhetoric of violence is concerned), I clearly see that several months ago. Firstly, they want some kinds of violence to stem from the part of the government. Secondly, they want me to engage in the quarrel..., I will not fall into their traps..."

"... As long as the demonstration proceeds in a peaceful manner like it

has been till today, I think they could go on for another period... Last August 26, I drove my car quietly into the capital... I noticed that daily life prevailed as usual, though, in fact, the demonstration did affect, one way or the other, on the living condition of the people and the confidence and interest of investors..."

Vision on the Cambodia's need for a coalition Government

"... I feel that Cambodia has no other choice, but to form a coalition government. I remember that during my first meeting with the then Prince Norodom Sihanouk in Fer-Entardenois on December 2, 1987, I realized that Cambodia needed a coalition government. From then on I always reiterated time and again that Cambodia would need a coalition government during the next ten or fifteen years. I see it as the best choice for Cambodia because this will help gather strengths, spiritual, physical, intellectual to reconstruct our nation... I think we are in the bargaining period. I think no one could avoid each other. One party (Sam Rainsy Party) could avoid me if it wishes to, but the other party (Funcinpec) needs to work with me..."

CPP calls on HM to convene the meeting of the new National Assembly

"... On September 3, Samdech Chea Sim, Samdech Heng Samrin, and HE Chea Soth will have an audience with HM the King in Siem Reap. The main topic of the discussion will be the date of the first meeting of the new National Assembly, which, according to Article 82 of the constitution, is to be convened by HM the King within 60 days at the latest after the election..."

"... May I finally have the attention of the demonstrators that the rainy season is bouncing back now. They should return to their places for daily life routine... for the sake of their families.■"