

Covid-19 Updates Press Conference

(07 April 2020 — Extensive Excerpt and Unofficial Translation)



A War against Covid-19 – Long-term and Strategic

Today I have the need to deliver a message to our people and to give the press a chance to ask me questions about what are we going to do next. As you know, we are in the stage of waging war against Covid-19 pandemic. As of this moment, we are fighting a war that we have no chance yet to launch offensive because we could not see where our enemy was [...] there would only be loss and no profit. The only chance we would have was to suffer big or small losses [...]

We must frame this war against Covid-19 long-term and strategic because we are seeing no sign that it has subsided yet, while the world has not yet found specific medicine to prevent or treat coronavirus disease [...] we therefore must frame this fight in a strategic and long-term war – not weeks or month. We have no way of

knowing yet how long it will last [...] we have noticed among our people that they are quick to fear but also to forget about it. It could be because they have seen that there are not many infected cases in Cambodia in addition to many have recovered from it. That has prompted me to rethink on a number of scenarios, including those initiatives suggested to me by the Commission to Fight against Covid-19 on what we need to do for the time to come [...]

Not Richer or Poorer, but Which Countries Have More or Less Deaths

(There have been comments about how ineffective and worrying the Cambodian health system was.) My response was that good governance would reveal at this time. Some countries have neglected their efforts causing many people to have infection and died. Rich or

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Selected Facebook Page Messages

(04–30 April 2020 — Extensive Excerpt and Unofficial Translation)

Storing Strategic Items Combating Covid-19, 29 April 2020

[...] Let me send this voice message to leaders involved in the fight against Covid-19 as well as relevant leading figures on the Royal Government and concerned sections (about storing items in strategic stock of the Royal Government).

So far, we have already stored and been prepared and there has not been a failure yet. While some foreigners downgraded us in the press, it is worth noting that their own countries failed to perform public health measures for their own people. For Cambodia, we are proud because the Ministry of Health and related sectors – such as food storage, etc. have fulfilled their tasks very effectively.

So far, I have issued order to purchase 5.2 million masks and 200,000 masks for medical staff, plus 5,000 sets of medical gowns with goggles and/or gloves, aprons, etc. – personal protective gears/equipment, we purchase either from local factories or from suppliers abroad. They are necessary. We would not risk having our medical staff infected because of lack of responsibility from our part. Let me now issue more orders to add on to storage of those materials of the Royal Government.

I have issued an order to store 10 million masks. We must refill the stock every time we used any number of them. The number on stock must stay 10 million at all time [...] we purchase more from abroad and the factory in the province of Preah Sihanouk must continue to produce for us. The number of masks that we have in stock must not be less than 10 million. If local factories could produce more, we also must purchase to add to strategic storage (of items) of the Royal Government.

As for the 5,000 sets of personal protective gears/equipment (PPG/E), we continue to place order from abroad and from local suppliers [...] while we had 34,000 N95 masks for medical staff in stock of the Ministry of Health, I have ordered a purchase of 200,000 more. This shall increase N95 masks in stock to 50,000. All 5,000 sets of PPG/E will be in stock of the Ministry of Health and they can use them as required [...]

As for alcohol, previously we had ordered to distill [...] we have noted current usage of about 3,000 to 5,000 liter per day. I have ordered to have in the Royal Government's

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poor is no longer an indication (of governance) because more died in rich countries and less in poorer ones [...] that would be my recommendation to World Health Organization in its effort to assess public health systems [...]

It has been annoying to see articles written by some commentators or press people who lack knowledge about and respect for poorer countries, while in their own, a big number of death recorded. A Cambodian died abroad (from Covid-19). My condolence to the death. People living abroad are in fear. Some wanted to return and live in Cambodia as they saw we had less number of infection. I beg them to stay wherever they are right now and abide by the rule set by countries they are living in [...]

This morning I have made an uneasy decision but I have no other choices [...] I am asking for understanding from the 150 Cambodians who were to take a flight home from Malaysia this morning [...] I contacted the source and asked them to stop the plan [...] Everyone must stay wherever they are [...]. Some may ask why we did not let them come back this time [...] we are now in the stage of preventing imported cases infection [...]

Taking this moment, I am appealing to our troops abroad – Central African Republic, Lebanon, Sudan, and South Sudan to take extra precautionary measures. Those in charge of peacekeeping troops must follow them up and file reports on regular basis about care provided by the United Nations to them [...] it is in the responsibility of the United Nations but we have our military officers in commanding

staff of the peacekeeping force. We are the country that sends the troop under the UN flagship. We must take responsibility on this matter too. While the troops could not talk to the UN, the Royal Government could communicate to the UN Secretary General on such matter.

Fighting Three Battles

Let me compare this fight against Covid-19 in military terms. We are fighting currently in three battles at once. *Firstly, we are fighting against imported cases.* As you can see that nearly all of the 115 infections so far have imported cases [...] it is in continuing this effort that I issued order to stop, for the time being, return of the 150 Cambodians from Malaysia. Should we let them return, we would have to quarantine them at the former Intercontinental Hotel. That would also cause more works for already-busy medical staff.

That they have been staying safe in Malaysia, they must stay on for a while. We are thinking of them but I am asking them to understand the people's difficulties in the country too. The Royal Government has had major concern about the more than 60,000 Cambodians returning from Thailand. However, we have done a good job. The returnees themselves, their families, and communities are heeding advices for their health [...]

I hope that our people, who have been staying in Thailand legally for jobs, will not return for the Khmer New Year. However, those who have been in Thailand illegally might try to sneak through unregistered border passes [...] I have decided to go with the fourth options suggested to me by the Commission to Fight against Covid-19 and that was to

allow return with inspection and transport them to their villages, where they would be under surveillance and control of local authority.

Secondly, we are preventing transmission from the infected to other people. We already have taken measures and fulfilled this already. We must continue with what we have been doing. We have introduced school break early. Probably, situation would not allow us to resume schooling after the celebration of Khmer New Year [...]. We called on our people to avoid organizing ceremonies that would bring in many people [...] there is no plan to close down pagodas, churches and/or mosques. However, we are asking them to exercise social distancing measures [...] we closed down nightclubs, Karaoke and concerts in public but we allow closed door (without spectators on spot) concerts and boxing show [...] in Thailand, it has been discovered that infection stemmed from there.

The best measure still is to educate and to raise awareness among our people to self-protection. It is now the time for our people to change their behaviors to practice more sanitation and hygiene [...] I am grateful to the media of all sorts for taking parts in such efforts. However, there are some spreading fake and misleading news [...] and frankly speaking, the authorities are after them [...] our strong point so far has been correct assessment leading to quick reaction.

We have what they called small cluster transmission [...] for instance, in the case of a Cambodian infected with coronavirus from a Japanese man we quickly got to him and those in his contacts [...] should we fail to take

quick responsive measures, this small cluster outbreak would expand to a community transmission level [...]. We have had two cases of cluster infections – firstly, with this young man in Siem Reap, and secondly, Cambodians returning from religious rites in Malaysia [...] we ramped them up and they responded well on voluntary bases (to place themselves in quarantine). Only ten left among those infected from this cluster.

We are not seeing large cluster or community infection yet. The Royal Government has no plan to close down factories, markets, shops, restaurants, etc. However, the Royal Government decided to cancel the Khmer New Year holiday [...] suggested to me by the Commission to Fight against Covid-19 on 30 March, the day I briefed the press at the National Assembly, there were two options. Firstly, to cancel Khmer New Year holiday and secondly to continue with the holiday but there must be a number of measures.

I did not reveal to the press my decision then. Initially, I decided to go with the second option. However, I changed my mind to go with the first option – to cancel the Khmer New Year holiday. State and private institutions are working as normal. We will think of making up at a later stage with a five work-day holiday [...] should we allow people to travel far and wide during the Khmer New Year, we would be putting ourselves in a high risk.

I hope our people see this as one difficult situation that we must take as a nation [...] people practice our tradition of welcoming angel [...] if Covid-19 subsides anytime by July, for instance, with the

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Khmer Buddhist holiday of Phchum Ben in September or October, we may celebrate a longer holiday – eight days altogether. If Covid-19 persists, we may have to wait because we will not allow crowded mobility [...]

Thirdly, we are fighting to offer effective treatment and recoveries. We have been doing a good job. A group of people, as far as I know, expressed their wish to write a letter to the World Health Organization demanding Cambodia revealing how to go about successfully treating patients of Covid-19 [...] my response has been it is for the World Health Organization to tell them [...]

Stocks of Medical Supplies/Tools

I wish to reiterate our preparation for this fight. So far, we have taken some effective measures. We have more than 3,000 rooms ready for quarantine and/or treatment. We have our medical staff running on the clock. That includes also medical volunteers who have had their training already [...] we are now working on having two stocks of medical supplies. Firstly, the stock of the Ministry of Health, which is responding to daily operation of hospitals. We are having now another one. (The second) stock belongs to the Royal Government. Some of the medical supplies I ordered already arrived. Some more would be soon. The Ministry of Health will take care of this stock. They can use it anytime by asking for my permission [...]

As for alcohol, the Ministry of Health is to sign an agreement with SKD Brewery (Société des Khmère Distilleries) as it can distill 15,000 liters of 95% alcohol per day and it can convert this

amount to 19,000 liters of 75% medical alcohol. We would receive, according to the agreement, somewhere between 5,000 to 8,000 liters (of 75% medical alcohol) per day. MX Bio-Energy has in stock 90,000 liters of alcohol 95%, convertible to 1,170,000 liters of 75% medical alcohol/disinfectant. We buy from it and let them keep it for us [...] besides we also have to increase working capacity to produce oxygen [...] and I have ordered more ventilators in addition to those we have in use [...]

Concerning rice/paddy, salt, and fish, we have issued order for the state company Green Trade and some private companies to store them for any immediate need by the state. I am calling our people, especially those in Kampot province, to continue to produce more salt as rain has not yet come [...]. We also ban exporting drinking water. People may resort to growing vegetables for local markets at this time of uncertainty [...] poultry is also a good job to go for [...] impacts on Industry and Tourism would be harsh but it would not be the same for agriculture.

The Ministry of Agriculture must provide people with seeds and help in growing them. Growth in agriculture had been low so far, while growths in industry and service had been high. In the forthcoming time, growth in industry and service would lower and in agriculture to take the uptrend. We can see it even from now [...]

RGC Exercised Cuts of Expenses

On another point, I am seeking understanding from national and sub-national institutions that the Royal Government has had to exercise cut on expenses two times.

Firstly, we saved back 444 million USD. Yesterday, for the second time, based on suggestion from Deputy Prime Minister Aun Pornomiroth – Minister of Economy and Finance, I ordered another cut of 475 million USD. From the two cuts, we have saved 918 million USD [...] we are taking back some earmarked fund, even those for the communes. Roads/water canals projects, however, would go on untouched [...]

One final point, I am calling on private sectors to exercise understanding for each other. As I said at the National Assembly on 30 March, some may have hired shops or buildings for business operations. As the business is in mode of making loss, rentees would not be able to pay what they have agreed to. I am asking them to reconsider working out their deals. Renters should think of lowering their rent fees. It is a matter between private business entities. There should not be measures to end contracts or to confiscate houses/lands in the time of Covid-19.

Banks have also taken so many measures to help but I am calling on them to do more. They may reschedule payment and/or exercise no fine for inability to pay interest. It is not an order. It is an appeal of the Royal Government to the private sector. However, some, who have had no impacts from the crisis, may use Covid-19 as a pretext to go free from his/her debts [...]

Law on State of Emergency

I am asking HE Pich Sros (a leader of a political party) not to talk too much [...] as he had twisted my words in his live show [...] measures taken has come from me and

not from you in the Supreme Council for Consultation and Recommendation. As the executive power, the Royal Government takes highest responsibilities [...] he should refrain from interpretation for political gains. He even misinterpreted original concepts [...]. Some hate communists but ask for the state to fix prices, interest rates, etc. They wanted the Prime Minister to act the communist way.

Some said that it is not time yet for a state of emergency. I am quite aware of it. However, what would I do when I had no law to enforce it? [...] when things go out of control, it must be possible to place a country general and/or particle state of emergency. Japan is to declare today its state of emergency. They have planned to place Tokyo and six prefectures under state of emergency. There would not need for me, for concern of economic performance, to declare state of emergency, unless it is necessary [...]

A foreign radio broadcast comments of some, who acted as if s/he is the United States of America, that the Royal Government should introduce rescue package. Have you not noticed? The National Assembly already adopted the law and the Royal Government has the power to exercise cuts on expenses [...] we do not have to go back to the National Assembly. We go to the National Assembly to discuss law on state of emergency. We are not going to declare it right after approval [...]

I hope that our people understand and approve what the Royal Government has suggested, especially to cancel the Khmer New Year holiday. Just to reiterate and clarify

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ify, people celebrate welcoming New Year at home. They should be careful with incense burning as well. TV stations will broadcast arrival of New Year according to lunar calendar at 8pm (of April 13) [...] while observing the Khmer New Year, companies, banks, ministries, etc. will continue its daily business normally. We do not take holiday. As for farmers, it would be up to them [...].

Selected Q&A

NICE TV: *I have two questions. First, World Bank predicted slow growth for Cambodia because of Covid-19 in 2020. What would be the strategy to prevent and/or restore national economy? Secondly, which is more serious between impacts from EBA and Covid-19?*

Thank you for your questions. No country in this world is safe and impacts-free, only how much and how far. We are not able to come up with assessment yet because we have no way now of knowing when Covid-19 will stop. However, Covid-19 has had impacts already on world economy. Every country is experiencing slow down [...] I think there is a group of beneficiaries from this situation, besides those who produce medical equipment and supplies. They are those in funeral business [...] I learnt from Fresh News that the family of a Cambodian who died in New York had had to pay 3,000 USD for cremation. I cannot verify if it is or is not true. Impacts on economy is huge [...]

Normally three economic sectors are in play – agriculture, industry and service. Impacts have been real in industry and service but agri-

culture has had an opportunity. What I am saying is the evaluations by economists who studies impacts and beneficiaries (from this Covid-19). Agriculture will benefit from this situation [...] I am not joking those in funeral business are making money too [...] besides, medical and food industry are reaping benefits too. Industry involved in producing cars, airplanes, etc. are not [...]

Camonomist: *What measures Cambodia take to ensure that Covid-19 will not have severe impacts on national productive force? What measures the Royal Government would take to help factories/enterprises to resume operations as quick as possible when Covid-19 subsided in the world, Europe, and in China.*

Measures taken by Cambodia would depend on external factors as well. Impacts (of Covid-19 on) markets in America and Europe are causing problems not only for Cambodia but also countries exporting to them. It has felt those impacts already. Some countries have produced according to what was agreed but buyers cancelled their orders. They could not export. That is the impact. I think we have prepared for rapid resumption of factories/enterprises when situation returns to normal. However, as I said, it would not depend only on us [...] we have plan to divert some factories/enterprises to produce for local consumption to replace imports. The Economic Policy Commission led by Deputy Prime Minister Aun Porn Moniroth, has had their hands on it [...]

In this time of economic impacts, incomes – not only or Cambodia but for every countries – has dropped. Unemployment rate in industri-

alized countries is much higher than in our country. Yesterday, we have come to over 100 factories closing down operation because of lack of raw materials or buyers, and buyers who breached contracts [...] the Royal Government, however, has taken strict measures to ensure that Cambodians are not starving. We are improving our rice stock, salt and instant noodle productions [...] we can stop exporting them and keep foods for local consumption demand [...]

Hang Meas: *(1) the 150 Cambodian workers stranded in Malaysia, are they placed in isolation or staying at home? They may face with lack of food as they are fishermen and construction workers. (2) If people fail to abide by postponement of Khmer New Year holiday, will there be punishment?*

As far as our people abroad are concerned, we are asking them to stay where they are for the sake of our nation. There is no other choice. It is not that I lack virtue. You may look at why every countries denied call of port of Westerdam, even in Guam, the US Island [...] it was because the US thought of a bigger interest of millions of them in the countries [...] we are asking them to understand the gravity of the situation and think about the 16 million people in the country [...]. I think it is not yet as difficult as when we were under the Pol Pot's regime. In Malaysia, I also think they would not let their people to die of hunger [...]

As for your second question, we are not closing down the country. We are not placing curfew. There is no law to do so yet. However, we are begging our people to limit their travels and stay home. We do not have right to fine them

[...] some lawyers suggested there is no need for law on state of emergency. Without that law, fine is impossible. The Royal Government needed to have such law at hand. If things go haywire, we have law that can enact order or exercise curfew [...] I am begging our people for understanding and it is for your own good. People do not trust each other anymore. We are afraid of each other because we could not know if the other person is Covid-19 free [...]

For this strange disease, there is a need to have social distancing and it is probably the most effective way to protect oneself and each other from infection. We should sit far and between. Let me reassure that there would not be any fines but I insist begging our people to understand the difficult situation that we are in [...] it is for your own good and each family [...]

Thmey Thmey: *(1) That Cambodia makes efforts to prevent Covid-19 outbreak while resolving economic problems for people, can we say it has been a new experience to help Cambodia self-strengthening? (2) Trade unions in Cambodia asserted that some factories closed operations and they had no ability to pay workers according to the formerly stated formula – 40% by factories and 20% by the Royal Government. What would be the Royal Government's solution?*

One must try to stand up right where one fell. We must try to stand up by ourselves. Every crisis brings about experience. It is not only for us to learn from it. The world also has to learn from it too [...] for instance, Cambodia has to make sure now about what we must

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have in stock. We cannot overlook this. Some countries, we are not finding their faults with, are rich but they failed to have enough masks for their patients and medical staff. I am sure they are going to learn from these experiences. We also will learn lessons from this crisis and strengthen our ownership and responsive mechanism in time of emergency [...]

As for the second point, it has happened like that. Yesterday, I just made a decision but I have not brought with me the paper. Previously, we asked the factories owners to share 40%, while the state will shoulder 20% more, for workers whose factories suspended. Now, factories said they are not able to cover the requested share. On this note, the state has had to give each worker 40 USD and the factories pay another 30 USD. This means anyone have their jobs suspended the state would pay them 40 USD, and the factories would add another 30 USD from their parts. We could not go to our goal of 90 USD. They could get only 70 USD (per month). However, workers are not required to enroll in re-training as planned [...]

Central China Radio and TV: (1) *this afternoon, the Chinese medical experts are returning to China. For their works more than ten days, has the Royal Government satisfied with their works? Would Cambodia have however more requests to the Chinese side to fight Covid-19?* (2) *China has realized major results in preventing Covid-19 and resumed its production, while engaging in international cooperation with many foreign countries. Would you give your remark on such international cooperation in the current circumstance?* (3) *On 30*

March, Samdech Techo said Cambodia would halt exporting rice and paddy. Vietnam and Russia also declared halting export of rice and wheat. This has led to Chinese people purchasing rice, instant noodle, etc. in large amount for stock [...] Has Cambodia any measures to halt exporting agricultural produce, such as banana, cassava, etc.,? What would be Cambodia's measures about visa? Chinese investors are concerned about it.

[...] Let me take on your last question. I said that Cambodia would halt exporting white rice and paddy but we continue to export aromatic rice. So far, Cambodia exported to China aromatic rice only. We are going to export according to our contact of 400,000 metric tons of rice – the quota allowed by China. We observe that. We also export aromatic rice to the European Union. Let me reaffirm, exporting aromatic rice to markets in China continues [...]

As for the second question, on international cooperation. China has been successful in curbing infection and preventing loss of life. No one could have expected such disaster. China has done it and become a country that provides assistance to more than 100 countries in the world. Many countries placed their orders (of medical supplies) to China [...] Cambodia congratulates China's efforts to overcome own difficulties and take victory on what happened in China. In addition to that, China assisted countries on the world with masks and medicines. It has provided 1,000 ventilators to New York. That has indicated a model of cooperation. This is no time of fighting each other but solidarity against Covid-19,

which is enemy of human-kind. WHO Director-General was right when he said it is time for no fight but for solidarity and cooperation to save this planet [...]

On Cambodia-China relation, everyone knows what Cambodia and China have done together. I have no regret whatsoever in my political decision towards China. Some attacked me for going to China in time of infection and blamed me for not evacuating Cambodian students from Wuhan. As a result, everyone could see now, no Cambodian student fell victim of the outbreak. I have trust that our friend China would take care of foreign nationals as they would to their own [...] I traveled to China with confidence [...] it would not be in Hun Sen's nature to affiliate only in time of happiness. We must share both happiness and distress [...] besides my journey to China assured Cambodian students to stay on [...]

As we can see now, China has provided Cambodia with civilian and military medical assistances. China state and private sectors sent us their contributions. Some said I kowtow China. Do I have to close flights and evacuate (Cambodian) people from China to satisfy their judgments? France, Spain, Italy, etc. needed assistances from China, why can I not? I am sure China would not leave Cambodia in distress without giving help. In fact, assistance had come to Cambodia even before (Cambodia had had its first case of infection). We have not even used supplies/tools from China yet. We still need them though. We have small number of ventilators. Please contact with the Chinese Embassy to ask them for more. China sent 1,000 ventilators to New York. We may need 50 more

[...]

[...] those involved in geopolitical policy development may want to think about it would it be a mistake to have relations with China. Would some countries call me friend only if I go against China? I have not and will never have to choose between China and the US or France or Europe. We are open to have contacts except the terrorists. As in the case of Kosovo, Cambodia would not give its recognition because it is a state separation from former Yugoslavia [...] we do not encourage state division. We do not recognize two small states created by Russia in Georgia as well [...]

[...] on China's sovereignty, Cambodia respect China's sovereignty as it respects own sovereignty. We implement one-China policy. Taiwan is a province of China. In 2012, Cambodia was rotating chair of ASEAN. Some had cause us so much trouble. They threw me a hot potato [...] they placed South China Sea issue on our shoulder. I would not shoulder it. In reality, after Cambodia's chair, which ASEAN member has succeeded on that matter? Unfortunately, they insulted Cambodia for its relation with China. They can have relation and do business with China why Cambodia cannot [...] in Chinese, they say – "only in a long journey would tell the horse's power" [...]. I said in Stoeung Trang, Kompong Cham, in 1995, the Khmer saying – "a friend in need is a friend in deed." What wrong does it make when Cambodia implements its policy of making friend with all in the world irrespective of political regimes, socio-economic status and races? [...]

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While the world is in trouble, the Cambodian-Chinese golden dragon military exercise took place as planned. May blamed us. Cambodia and China have not placed countries under state of emergency. Cambodia decided to go ahead with the plan. If any countries – the US, France, Australia, etc., would like to have military exercise with Cambodia, I would approve. We can still hold such exercise. We took temperature every day and finally no Chinese soldiers has Covid-19. No one of Cambodian soldier does too. At the same time, while the US military ship docked in Vietnam, how many (of their soldiers have) infected? [...] why the US navy can call on port in Vietnam and we cannot carry through military exercise we have planned long ago? [...]

In the context of Covid-19, they have dragged Cambodia into disgusted games of geopolitics [...] my only suggestion is that we do not take anyone as our enemy. Even countries without diplomatic relations with Cambodia, we are not taking them as our enemy. We do not establish diplomatic relation with Kosovo, for instance, is because Cambodia does not encourage state division/separation. It is a message to Kosovo and Serbia for that matter [...] let me reaffirm to you that the bond of friendship between Cambodia and China strengthened a step further. It is now a new stage after a setback. I hope our friend China will continue to help Cambodia [...]

VOA: *Two questions and one suggestion. (1) Relating to law on state of emergency, would in anywhere of the law stipulate as to what state would Cambodia implement the law? How serious would*

the state consider implementing it? In what situation, besides Covid-19, would the law be enacting? (2) The Constitution stipulated that HM the King would declare state of emergency. In case HM the King is absent, would acting head of state be the one to do the job in HM's place? (3) Concerning your elaboration about military exercise, about ten years ago Cambodia used to conduct military exercise with the US. It was postponed three years ago. What should the US do to resume the exercise? I have a request for the Ministry of Health to give a press conference on a daily basis (about Covid-19).

Which media are you? VOA? You may have my question but there should not edit it. Since 1998, I never talked to VOA. I gave them half an hour or so interview, they replayed three minutes of what I said [...] however, we have here today so many media outlets. Now I answer your question [...] in what situation would Cambodia declare state of emergency? I think we would not need a state of emergency for Covid-19. The probability of using this law is only 0.1%. However, it is wise to have such law at hand. In case the 0.1% probability is turning to be the opposite, we have the law we needed [...] the draft law defines each period of state of emergency no more than three months. In case of necessity, it would be a renewal of another three months [...]

The point here is that we must not allow loophole in law because declaring state of emergency would have impacts on many things [...] we look at a situation that words cannot ensure understanding, state of emergency is necessary and for a short period of time. Once the situation returns to normal, we

would quickly restore the country [...] as for the question on who to declare the state of emergency should HM the King is not in the country, according to the Constitution, I do not think acting head of state would be rightful to do it. That would be my understanding. I would leave this, however, to the Constitutional Council to interpret it [...]

On point three – military exercise. It was just a matter of time. (We cancelled the exercise because) it was close to the elections. We asked for provisional break. Later, they have made it a different story. Now, they can come. Whatever exercise would be on, they can propose what to do [...] they, however, must cover expenses. My topic of exercise would be to fight against terrorism and disaster management and rescue operation [...] I would not require exercise on fight against Covid-19 as I am concerned about further spread of infection. Well, let them so a proper test and place in quarantine before joining the exercise. Let them come. They should not make it a pretext that Cambodia rejected the US military assistance or cooperation. Cambodia is ready. I approved it in my power without having to seek permissions from the National Assembly, ten Senate, or HM the King [...]

VOA: *We may place country under the state of emergency for Covid-19. How about in other social insecurities or rebel, would you foresee that Cambodia come to it?*

We are talking about situation that are out of control [...] I think your question has been directed by someone [...] besides Covid-19, in other situations, would Cambodia also exercise state

of emergency? [...] it has been days now that some have attacked us on this matter. They said we disguise our move against political upheaval under Covid-19 to write this law [...] once situation goes out of control, no appeal heeded the time has come for it. Let me put it plainly like this for the sake of understanding. Once we cannot find a common point through talking, the Royal Government's appeal met with denial, there comes the state of emergency. Any country would do the same [...] we have not had the law yet. We needed to have one. It would not be useful only for Hun Sen's time. Whoever comes after me would decide if it would be useful to keep and use it or not [...]

Your question picked on this matter. The law has defined what would be public emergencies – war, etc. Under Lon Nol, when the US assisted the regime, in Phnom Penh alone, there were times that they enacted curfews and/or martial laws. Why Cambodia cannot do it this time. Why do they say we disguise other motive under Covid-19 and/or to do so to shut up freedom of expression? Let me restate my point that the probability of using the law would now be 0.1%. In reality, as you can remember, I allowed demonstration to go on for nearly one year in Phnom Penh. Demonstrators must not infringe upon other people's rights. When they expanded their scale to overthrowing (the legal Royal Government), even in absence of law on state of emergency, we could still bring the country back under control [...]

I think that we should have a regular press conference to give updates on Covid-19.

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strategic storage of at least 1 million liters of alcohol. For any usage that takes out from stock, we must refill it [...]

Let me affirm that orders are out for the 10 million masks, 5,000 sets of PPG/E and N95 masks. They all are in warehouses of the Ministry of Health. When they needed them, they just let me know so that I would oversee refill order. They are medical equipment and we must store them according to medical norm. We would leave storing of alcohol to the factories for concern of management. If factory could not distill enough for our demand, we could contact the Korean ethanol factory in the country to help produce it.

On another front, food stock, I have reports from (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Finance) HE Aun Pommoniroth and (Minister of Trade) HE Pan Sorasak already, I supported their initiatives about food stock besides rice and paddy. We are to consider higher producing capacity of our country of instant noodle. The Royal Government could guarantee buying a certain amount of them and the rest they could sell them in the market. This should also prevent the price from going up. We have four major noodle factories. We must figure out how much they are to produce for the state as obligation [...] this should also have Minister of Agriculture, HE Veng Sokhon, to jump in [...] we should also ban exporting fish abroad. We have not done that yet as we had only banned exporting rice/paddy. We should keep fish for local consumption.

I wish to assert that the more than 11 million USD contributed by generous people,

including some civil servants who cut a part of their salaries for the cause, I am using those money to help our people by purchasing masks, N95 masks, alcohol, and other necessary materials as required [...]

I am calling on (Minister of Health), HE Mam Bunheng and (Deputy Prime Minister) Aun Pommoniroth to think about increasing daily allowance for the frontline medical staff. It has been months that they have not been seeing their families. It is a huge sacrifice. To help them frame their mind on the job, and not to worry too much about their families, please increase their daily allowance. We must help them concentrate [...]

We have prepared any eventual influx of our people from Thailand. Over 50,000 or nearly 60,000 have so far returned. There will be more [...] should we go to the fourth option in the four scenarios that I listed earlier, we must bring our monitoring mechanisms to the border and inspect their health. We must think and act on what equipment needed for this task. The Ministry of Health must take up the jobs working with border working teams. We must provide them with sleeping materials such as blankets, pillow, mattress, etc. wherever they are to be kept in isolation – whether it be in hotels, schools, or other facilities [...]

Once they leave the isolation, they can bring those materials along. As for transportation, we can use military trucks of division 90 and 99 [...] to help take them to their home villages. Our local officials must continue to monitor them [...] We have done quite good job with the

first influx of more than 50,000 as there has not been any problem with public health so far. I am grateful to our subnational and national officials for their efforts in keeping our people informed and instructing our people what needed to fulfil to keep situation under control [...]

Besides food and everything that I have mentioned earlier, we must also discuss about how to cope with possible need for drinking water. We may ask factories that produce drinking water to supply a certain amount of it for the Royal Government. We have many of them, even Evian. They should be able to help us when something happened in certain location, and there was going to be need for drinking water. We must be able to answer to that need. Our medical staff and patients must use and consume clean water. People too must be our target of providing clean drinking water [...]

Today outcome has been good. There is no new infected case. We have 15 more recovered from Covid-19. Some who wrote about Cambodia's shortcoming have now seen that in their own countries hundreds, or even thousand, died per day, sometimes [...] I may have my Facebook page posting a Cambodian fellow in foreign country complaining about healthcare system there [...] the question does not rest on who has the mightiest services but who is truly capable in leadership.

They may have modern and up-to-date equipment, but they would not be able to do any better if they do not have advanced human resource. We are not modern, but we stick to our realistic measures. We are able to

save our people and answer to their concerns. Some said Hun Sen seemed to have paid not enough attention to the issue. They should monitor Hun Sen's arts of managing and resolving the problem. My way was to first addressing people's fear. Then, I am taking measures – one after the other to allay fear among them. When the Covid-19 is over, they would see who had strong leadership and who did not [...] that would be a major judgment. Foreign journalists, who downgraded developing countries such as Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, etc. in their writings, would lose their face because in their own countries, many died and they are heading to higher risks. In numerous cases, medical staff did not even have N95 masks to put on. They have been talking about “modern” governance.

We are in no position to advise them. However, we remind ourselves that we this time must pool our force to work for the interest of our people. We must leave no one of our people to die without our knowledge of him/her and making efforts to help him/her. This is bigger than Covid-19. We must make sure our people have enough food. If they do not, we must bring them in a timely manner. We must make sure our people have food no matter how things change abroad or inside the country. We must manage what we have in our country and administer use of our own resource to serve our people. Thank you for listening and I hope you all will best implement these instructions./■

People's Health protection Foundation, 25 April 2020

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Dear compatriots!

In defense, we have this people's foundation policy for national defense that connects the people with the armed forces. This time, in the fight against the Covid-19 epidemic, we are again committed to the backliners joining together in protecting people's public health and curbing the spread of this devastating disease.

For the contribution of charities led by HM the King and Queen Mother, USD 13,998,698 has been received to date. For the voluntary contributions through salary donation (of our officials) as of 17:00 of April 24, 2020, there has been 22,061 persons with the amount of KHR 28,814,025,000.

For activities aimed at helping local people, including migrant workers from Thailand, and a small number of workers visiting their hometowns on the occasion of the Khmer New Year, the Ministry of Health, Provincial/District/Khan/Communal officials, and Armed Forces have taken care and dealt with very well.

Each person contributes to stop the spread of the disease through personal and family hygiene, as recommended by the Ministry of Health. Migrant workers from Thailand and workers who visited their hometowns during the New Year were also given a 14-day medical checkup and isolation to ensure that no one is infected with Covid-19 and/or spread the virus to their families or their workplaces.

While our country has not had any deaths and new infections in the past few days and many have already been

cured, the challenges remain enormous. Should there be nothing to help the patients or the medical staff, please do not bring more burdens to the doctors, to the state, and especially to oneself and one's family, because it is the patient himself/herself who will suffer first.

People's health protection foundation is the key policy in the battle against such viciously infectious disease (of CoViD-19) [...].

Over 200 Cambodian Workers/Inmates to Return from Malaysia, 27 April 2020

I thank the Cambodian nieces/nephews in Malaysia for their understandings in our country's efforts to prevent spreading Covid-19 in Cambodia.

To this day, Cambodia and the whole world are actively fighting against Covid-19. And so far, the world has not found the cure for this deadly disease.

The Royal Government would thank the over 200 Cambodian workers including 73 inmates who were recently suspended from traveling back to Cambodia (from Malaysia) while our country was imposing strict travel restrictions.

However, as the travel ban has been lifted, the Royal Government of Cambodia decided that they could now return home. They must firstly give the Malaysian authorities time to do medical tests though to confirm that they have no positive sign of Covid-19. All of us, both at home and abroad, have to be careful not to bring in the disease and/or start any outbreak, since Covid-19 is extremely contagious.

Please do not worry, should you be not infected with Covid-19, you may return to Cambodia soon. On the other hand, should anyone of our workers is to be tested Covid-19 positive by the Malaysian health authorities, it is necessary that s/he will have to stay there until s/he is fully recovered before s/he is allowed to return.

For those who are returning, they will need to be in 14-days quarantine for follow-up, and another 14-days quarantine at their own home./.

Reinforcement of Traffic Rules, 29 April 2020

Drivers must abide by the traffic rules for safety

At present, traffic restrictions are under way across the country. Citizens, especially young people, before driving should have a valid driver's license. The vehicles, on the other hand, have to pay taxes and other fees properly before ordering the vehicle on public roads.

Traffic rules are being reinforced at the moment throughout the country. Our citizens, especially young people, should have valid driver's licenses. All vehicles, on the other hand, have to be subject to proper taxes and other charges before operating on public roads.

The reinforcement aimed at securing the lives of people across the country, and/or avoiding accidents that caused serious injury, even deaths. We do not want to see any traffic accidents happened in anyone's family.

Our Compatriots and young people must drive with caution and understanding for the sake of everyone's safety

nationwide./.

21st Anniversary of Cambodia's Membership to ASEAN, 30 April 2020

Today marks the 21st anniversary (30 April 1999 – 30 April 2020) that Cambodia is a member of ASEAN. Since becoming ASEAN member on April 30, 1999, Cambodia has worked closely with other members to build a people-centered community in the spirit of shared ownerships and overall responsibility. Indeed, ASEAN has become one of the cornerstones of Cambodia's foreign policy, which can be reflected by linking Cambodia's socio-economic development to regional integration and international cooperation.

While Cambodia committed to achieving its vision of becoming a high-middle-income country by 2030 and a developed country by 2050, it views the ASEAN community as a source of peace, security and prosperity for the Cambodian people./.

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Donald Trump comes out every day to update on campaign against it. The Ministry of Health already issued its statement on a daily basis. I suggested that the Ministry of Health organizes a press conference on a weekly basis. They may decide on one particular day – Thursday or Monday. In case of urgency, they may do extra ones.

As Prime Minister and Commander in Chief in the war against Covid-19, I will have to give briefing too. It could have been once a week now. There are more to talk about and I will meet you more [...].