

Press Briefing on SARS-Cov-2 Handover

(07 February 2021 — Extensive Excerpts and Unofficial Translation)



22 January 2021 - Samdech Techo Hun Sen: "... Sinopharm is to arrive (in Cambodia) this February ... when the vaccine arrives ... I will come to the airport to receive the vaccine myself ... the jabs are for free and on voluntary basis ..."

Though with Money Cannot Buy Vaccine

[...] Let us get back to this vaccine problem. I would tell you that now the world seems to be at war over vaccines, and especially in Europe. The problem is that so many people in the world are in need of vaccines, but the number of usable vaccines produced is less than they needed. I do not know if Europe has lifted the ban on the export of vaccines to outside of Europe. There are exceptions however for the provision of vaccines to COVAX. If the export of such vaccines is banned, it could become a case of dividing between the rich and the poor. This is a point that worries countries around the world, especially the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Director-General of the World Health Organization. For us, poor country ... we can afford it, but the issue here is even with money one cannot buy it (vaccine). (There have been many cases where) countries that have a lot of money cannot ensure purchase of vaccines. It

is because of this, Europe has banned the export of vaccines. Europe is a rich country that can afford to buy vaccines, but the vaccines production is not coping up with growing demand.

Good Cambodian-Chinese Cooperation Yields One Million Doses of Vaccine Aid

For us, we are one of the few countries that has received the vaccines (by now). What is the reason? This is the fruit of cooperation between Cambodia and China. This point needs to be noted. If we did not have good cooperation between Cambodia and China, we would not have received the vaccine today for the Cambodian people. Do not forget that China has a population of 1.4 billion people and that the Chinese government is responsible for producing (the vaccines and vaccinating) its people. But the Chinese friend still shared with us in the first step that Samdech Pichey Sena Tea Banh, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defense, sent a letter

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Clean Water for All — 1 of 4 Priorities

(01 February 2021 — Extensive Excerpts and Unofficial Translation)

"Clean Water for All" — One of the Four Priorities

Today, on behalf of the Royal Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia, I would like to announce my support to the slogan proposed by Senior Minister Cham Prasidh: "Clean water for all." This orientation makes us all think very carefully about the activities to provide clean water for all. This is also part of what I should remind you all about the 1987 proclamation (that I made) before I stepped into negotiations to find a solution to the Cambodian problem in Fère-en-Tardenois, France, with Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk. At that time, preparing the budget for 1988, in November 1987, I announced and issued the four priorities for investment – water, roads, electricity and human resource.

Now we continue to follow the four priorities, which we just shifted human resources to the first angle, but water is still (one of) our (four) priorities. The water I want to talk about at that time was not just about irrigation, but also about the water used for the livelihood of our people. We have been doing the right thing for over 30 years. I believe that these four priorities will be in place for at least another 50 years for our country. "Human, water, roads and fire" are the four corners prioritized for continued investment. Today, we open the construction site for Bak Kheng Water Treatment Plant. We also officially inaugurated the Chamkarmon Water Treatment Plant, which we have already built and put into operation [...]

Achievements of Cooperation between Cambodia and the French Republic, EU

It is true that HE Cham Prasidh raised this issue already and I highlighted a little bit more about our (project implementing) process. We now see that what we are trying to do today is the result of the cooperation between us Cambodia and the French Republic, as well as the European Union. As reported, the project consists of two steps mentioned in the report. In the first phase, we will produce clean water with a production capacity of 150,000 cubic meters/day, which will take 36 months to complete by the end of 2022. The first phase of the investment will cost US\$ 247 million, in which US\$ 155.5 million for the construction of a water treatment plant and US\$ 91.5 million for the distribution networks. This funding comes from the counterpart fund of the Phnom Penh Water Supply Authority of 47 million US dollars. The loan we borrowed from the French Agency for the Development (AFD) was US\$ 85 million. The loan we borrowed from the European Investment Bank was US\$ 100 million and the grant financing from the European Union was US\$ 15 million. The builders are the one who implemented the project in Chamkarmon, a well-known French company, VINCI, which has been our partner since 1995 on airport operations in Cambodia. We believe in the ability of the company to build and inspect by the French company as well [...]

Chamkar Mon Water Treatment Plant, Water Supply Distribution Networks

Today, we also congratulate the inauguration of the Chamkar

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Mon Water Treatment Plant, which has already been built with a production capacity of 52,000 cubic meters ... it was completed in October 2020. The cost of plant construction there is US\$ 47.1 million, and the budget for the construction of the factory is US\$ 25.2 million and the distribution network is US\$ 21.9 million, of which the government counterpart fund was US\$ 5.5 million. The contribution of Autonomous Phnom Penh Water Supply Authority is US\$ 8.9 million, and US\$ 32.7 million is the loan from AFD.

We should note our problem here. It does not just need to be produced (clean water), it needs a distributed system as well. Let me talk about the distribution network, which is what HE Cham Prasidh pointed out. The distribution network in Chamkarmon is a long distribution system, but its pipes sizes are small – 0.6 to 0.8 meters diameter pipes are 25 km long, and 0.06 to 0.003 meters are 548 km long. This distribution network means a network that connect the water into the houses. Today, the distribution network here needs up to 91.5 million US dollars. Distribution pipe with a diameter of 63-300 mm are up to 1,000 km. We need to see that when we started the water treatment plant, there will be needs for distribution system. Similarly, irrigation system, when we build a dam somewhere, we have to have distribution canals. Well, this is a requirement for the progress of the nation.

Incorrect Assessment of Cambodia's Progress

When I came to the inauguration of the Win-win Monument (and the Techo Heritage Stadium) sites for the upcoming 2023 SEA Games, I always reminded that the area was from where the Khmer Rouge shelled the city of Phnom Penh. In 1989, we were celebrating the 10th anniversary of the country's liberation from the Pol Pot regime. That day (there was) shooting from that area into Phnom Penh. When I was

both the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister, I even sent Foreign Ministry officials, staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and others from state institutions, to help cut down the (inundated) forest so that the Khmer Rouge could no longer hide. At that time, the land was not valuable. No one would take it even if given free of charge. I went to negotiate (a political settlement). Upon my return from the negotiations in SAINT-GERMAIN-EN-LAYE in January 1988, I came there. At that time, the negotiations in SAINT-GERMAIN-EN-LAYE, France, called the Sihanouk-Hun Sen talks. From FERE-EN-TARDENOIS to SAINT-GERMAIN-EN-LAYE. I came (to this area) with Thong Khon, who at the time was the mayor [...]

The border of the (Kandal) province and Phnom Penh is at the base of the Chroy Changvar Bridge, not here. I have signed no less than five sub-decrees to cut land from Kandal province and give them to Phnom Penh, which has now expanded from more than 300 square Kilometres to more than 700 square Kilometres. (Such expansion has made) the water supply and electricity challenges. Previously, both the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, the IMF and economists misjudged Cambodia's progress. They had estimated demand for electricity to increase by only 12% per year. In reality, electricity in Phnom Penh increased by more than 40% per year. In the past, after the liberation of Phnom Penh, we used about 30 megawatts, but now we use up to a thousand megawatts [...]

Victims of Genocide Punished by Democracies

Phnom Penh was miserable in that situation. No one dares to take a house even if given. Two or three families lived in one house together. Later, they started arguing. At that time, we were miserable. Some countries supported the Khmer Rouge at the United Nations. They punished us (like what) Eva (Mysliwiec) and Onesta (Carpene) wrote in a book

called "Punishment the Poor." We are victims of genocide, but we came under punishment by countries calling themselves democratic. Those countries supported the Lon Nol's military coup that overthrew the Head of State, Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk, and later supported the Khmer Rouge at the United Nations. Fortunately, they later provided assistance to the Khmer Rouge tribunal, which is now nearing its end. However, they have never expressed any remorse for past wrongdoing. This is the history of Cambodia [...]

Cambodia Does Not Comment on the Internal Affairs of Any Country

In Rangoon, things has already begun. The president and state adviser were detained by soldiers. Cambodia does not comment on the internal affairs of any country within ASEAN or any other country. As of now, His Excellency Prak Sokhon said that the Internet is gradually disconnected and reduced. (This is what has happened) about the current situation in Myanmar. That is the affairs of friends within the framework of ASEAN. We only publish news but do not comment.

Phnom Penh Needs 756,000 Cubic Meters/Day, 600,000 Cubic Meters Produced

The history of our (water supply efforts) construction is difficult. We have started from the time when as Prime Minister I was entitled to only 10 kg of rice, 6 kg of corn. Cham Prasidh then rode a bicycle to bring documents to my house. Later he had a Peugeot car. The Peugeot car left from Di Lamthol, and then Long Visalo, and then Sok An, and finally to Cham Prasidh. One after the other. In fact, Cham Prasidh did not need to drive, but the documents needed a drive to my house. It was our story. Now, the streets are crowded with cars. Well, now maybe people are complaining about the road closure. If we did not close the roads, I could not make it on time. They would ask me to ride my helicopter. Helicopters can fly down here, but doing so is a

waste. As the head does not reach the sky and the feet do not reach the ground, it is very risky [...]

I have yet to express my appreciation of the Ministry, of the Phnom Penh Water Supply Authority's efforts, and thank the French Republic, thank you to the European Union for providing loans and assistance for water supply development along with the Japanese assistance. In Phnom Penh, Japan helped us a lot, and now Japan plans to help in Takhmao, because the Phnom Penh Water Supply Authority covers both Phnom Penh and Takhmao. If we get another station in Takhmao, it will improve the water supply in Takhmao area. I am living in Takhmao. I use water that runs all the way there. We must not forget the law of supply and demand. We now look at our needs and supplies as we accelerate construction. If possible, (I wish) VINCI speeds up construction a bit. Currently, the demand for clean water in Phnom Penh is 756,000 cubic meters/day, while our supply capacity is only 600,000 cubic meters. We are lacking 150,000 cubic meters/day. This is a point that we need to work on [...]

In 2019, Cambodia Invested US\$ 594 Million; In 2020 US\$ 1,425 Million

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you once again on what has been happening on the territory of our poor Kingdom of Cambodia. In addition to raising funds for investment, we also invest with our own money every year. Let me just show the figures to our compatriots. In 2019, we invested US\$ 594 million, of which US\$ 415 million was direct investment and US\$ 179 million was counterpart fund. All projects require our counterpart funds, just like this project there is this counterpart fund from the Phnom Penh Water Supply Authority. All projects are subject to counterpart fund. The Chamkarmon project has had a counterpart fund from the Royal Government that we inaugurated today. In 2020, the COVID-

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19 era, we will invest 1,425 million US dollars. Increase direct investment, not foreign investment. Our direct investments of 1,215 million (US dollars) consists of the counterpart fund of 210 million (US dollars) that makes it 1,425 million US dollars. We do not earn only for salaries or ordinary current expenses. Every year we have money to build and repair roads, canals, wells, schools, hospitals. We do a lot.

Cambodia Plans Direct Investment of 1.4 billion USD in 2021

In 2021, our direct investment projects will be 1,400 million (US dollars), of which 1,189 million US dollars are of direct investment and 211 million US dollars will be counterpart fund. How much money does Cambodia need to have a road built. Impacts taken into account. What had caused the problem? The biggest is because we had much understanding. In the past, we had a decree defining the width of the road. At that time, people came to stay and asked for permission to set up temporary shops to sell noodle, etc. As time went by, they built houses. When time comes to widen the road, we had to offer them money so that they leave the required areas. (If our offer is not acceptable to them) s/he refused and took the protest to Phnom Penh. They went especially to the European embassy, the French embassy, the US embassy, the UN embassy. While in fact, it is a state land. Give her/him little money, s/he protests. We do not want to use the expropriation law. Just the third ring road for instance, I had instructed in writing more than 20 notes already. For one time, we spent 5 million (US dollars), again 4 million (US dollars), and then 6 million (US dollars), 7 million (US dollars), etc. However, that is what we (must) do to liberate traffic in Phnom Penh. Our country has to clear mines, no matter which road projects. We have to spend money to clear mines, because this country was at war. We must remove and destroy mines, shrapnel and unexploded

ordnances. The scars of war and genocide plague us. We try however to stand up from empty hands [...]

Clean Water Even in Rural Areas

I hope we will reach a stage where water supply is not just for people in Phnom Penh, but all cities and even the rural people, have access to clean water through various means, such as wells. In some places, the water supply could not reached people because they set up a village on the outskirts. Only the well water method will be possible and that is in charge of the Ministry of Rural Development. We need water and distribution system for irrigation to reach unused land and for increasing production from one time a year to twice a year. We have been (and will be) a country rich in rice or other agricultural products. That mentioned, the four priorities “human resource, water, roads, electricity” are still our correct priorities. I think even in 50 years from now. It is not a matter of taking risks. There are specific plans. Which year to which and we do what.

COVID-19 Remains a Regional and Global Challenge

Let me take this opportunity to say a few more points as it is a necessary to make a statement for our people. First of all, in relation to the management of COVID-19, which the whole world, as well as in the region has not yet recovered, including Cambodia, I would like to ask for understanding from the nation as a whole, especially more than 7,000 people who are in quarantine along the border areas in the seven provinces. The province with the most people in quarantines (is) Banteay Meanchey (where there are) 3,600 people. In Oddar Meanchey (there are) more than 2,000 people. In Battambang (there are) more than 1,000 people and other provinces – total of over 7,000 people who are in the process of being in quarantines.

COVID-19 14-Day Quarantine Observed

We must strictly practice the 14 -days quarantine either at the border or in Phnom Penh. I urge our people to do the same. We have sufficient experience to realize that we needed to observe the COVID-19 14-day quarantines strictly. We cannot reduce the quarantine period to 10 or 7 days. In fact, in today’s case of one COVID-19 infected person in Pailin province, the woman had been traveling to Pailin province since January 15, but because she was traveling with the COVID-19, she had to be tested. Taking result from the Pasteur Institute, she found herself to be positive. There are many such cases. Do not underestimate the need for quarantines. I beg the workers from Thailand and Cambodians who live abroad and who are coming home must do the 14 days quarantines. In the event that a person travelled along with those infected, further quarantine is a necessary to ensure that COVID-19 is not leaking into the community again.

I am willing to feed our people in quarantine at the border. Even this morning I order to deliver money to Banteay Meanchey and Koh Kong and am planning to transport clean water from Phnom Penh. Quarantined persons have three meals a day – three times better than daily food of the army, with clean water transported from Phnom Penh. Now that the Chinese New Year is approaching, we have to prepare to transport water to be stored at the quarantine centres, lest when the New Year comes, they will stop transporting, there will be no water for them. We feed them food and let them live in hygienic order to ensure prevention of diseases from transmitting.

Together Solve COVID-19 Problem

Cambodians and foreigners who have arrived in Phnom Penh must take the tests and have a quarantine period for 14 days without exception. This is not a time to rebuke or quarrel. It is time for all the countries of the world to work together to

solve this COVID-19 problem. Am not sure which country’s lessons to share to which country or which country to teach, but we can consult equally with the right to share experiences with each other. I saw an article drafter asking developed countries to share their experiences with poor countries. The developed countries has been so far the most infected and the most deadly ... Thai (COVID-19) infection in the community. Two days ago, more than 900 people were infected and yesterday more than 800 people were infected. Do not know how many people are today. We know that there have been 136 infected Cambodian workers who are being treated in Thailand. As for those who returned to Cambodia, there have been 70-80 (COVID-19) infected. If we do not control the border, allowing them to enter the country (without) the quarantines, it is likely that the disease will break out in the community as in Thailand. Vietnam also had an outbreak of (COVID-19 infection) in the community, which yesterday reached 50 (COVID-19 infection). We had 41 infected of (COVID-19) in a community outbreak. We have closed this community event. We now try to prevent the recurrence of this community infection.

Fighting COVID-19 Is Difficult

I used to be a soldier who entered the battlefields. My hands never shook when I was under shower of bullets. I negotiated with all the French presidents from the time of Francois Mitterrand to Jacques Chirac, to Nicolas Sarkozy, to Francois Hollande. And President Emmanuel Macron whom I just met in Brussels. Negotiations with the UN Secretary-General have been going on for generations since Javier Perez de Cuellar to sign the Paris Agreement, then to Boutros Boutros-Ghali, then to Kofi Annan, then to Ban Ki-moon and Antonio Guterres. With so many heads of state and government in the world that I have become a negotiating partner, I never feel
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shocked about it. As a combat commander with COVID-19 battlefield is a difficult thing. As the reporting time approached, my hands shakily hold the phone. First, they send me paper from the Institut Pasteur. I counted (COVID-19 infected people). Eight, 9 and 10 ... my hands shook ... Yesterday, there was one case of infection. HE Mam Bun Heng initially sent me before daybreak. At 5 o'clock, I get up and look at the report of HE Mam Bun Heng. Now I have the report in the evening instead so that I can sleep a little longer [...]

Do Not Forget Three Dos

I am begging again as the Chinese New Year is approaching. In Khmer, we used to say that the Chinese celebrate their New Year, the Khmer got drunk. The story is true. We Khmers do not care to know where (the foods and drinks) come from. They just have them. The celebration of the Chinese New Year really drunken the Khmers. As you enjoy, do not forget the three dos or protections – wear a mask, wash your hands, and keep a safe distance. This is an exercise of preparation. Work is still possible, but we ensure safety for all. I am a submissive person. The best way to win a COVID-19 is to be scared. Do not be panic. Be afraid of (COVID-19) because we do not know where it is. If it is in military warfare, we know from which direction artillery come from. For COVID-19, we cannot know where it is.

COVID-19 Mechanism and Source of Vaccines

People really want to know (about vaccines against COVID-19), because they have contributed to the purchase of vaccines and the fund has come up to US\$ 57 million. How far are we concerning the vaccines? The people and the monks really want to know. I would like to thank His Majesty the King and His Majesty the Queen Mother, the Buddhist monks, the charitable persons, and the compatriots who have contributed to show solidarity to solve the need for vaccines against

COVID-19 ... Armed Forces civil servants cut their salaries for the first time. Now comes the payroll donation. Some countries even issue regulatory instruction for payroll deductions. We leave it to individual voluntary contribution – some donate 30% of their salary for a few months. Some donate all for a few months. Thus, people have a right to learn about the management and operation relating to the vaccines.

Now we know that the first vaccine we would get was from China – one million doses, which arrived in February. The first leg will arrive with 600,000 doses, followed by supplementation will come from China. Then we get seven million doses from COVAX, which belongs to the World Health Organization, in addition, we buy from COVAX another one million doses. We got nine million doses then. The vaccine is not yet in our hands, but our plan is like that. After the meeting between the Australian Ambassador and HE Deputy Prime Minister Aun Porn Moniroth, we will receive from Australia three million doses which Australia decided to provide 28 million dollars to Cambodia for 2020 to 2023 via the Vaccine Initiative. With the first package provided in mid-2021, this grant will enable Cambodia to vaccinate 1.5 million people, or equivalent to three million doses. Well, if we add 11 million (people more for vaccination) we still lack nine million doses. Where can we get it?

I wrote a letter to the Prime Minister of China for further provision, and a letter to the Prime Minister of India. We have already considered buying the British vaccine AstraZeneca. (I may address to) the EU Ambassador (here that I) heard that the European Commission has now banned the export of the vaccines. If that is the case, such a barrier is not appropriate because the world considers vaccines common goods. If Europe keeps it for them alone, what would happen to the rest of the world? I hope Madame Ambassador sends a message on behalf of poor countries to

the European Union not to ban vaccine exports. There is information however that there is no prohibition for provision to COVAX. If so, it is a good thing. 200 million doses of AstraZeneca will be available to COVAX. If there is no prohibition, it will be a little easier for poor countries.

Why do we think of the British vaccine? This vaccine is can survive at 2-8 degrees above zero as the Chinese one. It costs between US\$ 4-5/dose. Chinese Sinopharm (costs) US\$ 20/dose. Well, we will ask for more from China and buy more from China in case of lower price and AstraZeneca vaccine may be produced in Thailand. If they made in Thailand, it may be easier for us to get the vaccine for injection. As far as the sources are concerned, we use vaccines from China and the UK. Even if we have to buy directly from the UK, at this price, we can afford. We have to prepare for 20 million doses. Previously, 26 million doses needed for 13 million people. Now, as we reduced the rate from 80% to between 60% and 70%, we needed 20 million doses for 10 million people. The vaccine team is now reviewing.

Welcome China Sinopharm at the Airport

I have already affirmed that the Chinese vaccine arrived first, I went to the airport to get it and I will get the first vaccine. However, the problem now is who will inject us. What happens if the ones to give us the jabs have not had the vaccination? This is the problem. Ask Singapore (and Indonesia), (for the cases of) the Prime Minister of Singapore and the President of Indonesia, have the doctors vaccinated themselves? If they have not vaccinated and they can vaccinated them, I will follow their examples. Take, for example, Indonesia's presidents Joko Widodo and Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

This vaccine does not work for a day or two as we can keep them at 2-8 degrees above zero and we have a delivery truck. In addition to the Ministry of Health's trucks, there are private

sector trucks that we can borrow to transport the vaccines to the destination for vaccination. Doctors in the army have already had training in vaccination, but the problem is they must have vaccinated themselves before they can apply the jabs to others. Would I be one among the medical team members or let doctors get the vaccine first and start vaccinating other people who are not doctors? We are still thinking about this issue. However, the vaccine is coming in February, and if it is required to be vaccinated. I am not afraid of vaccination, because this is a confidence-building measure and a model for people on vaccination [...]

“Look in All Directions” – Cambodia's Foreign Policy

I would also like to appeal to the European Union, if possible, to assist Cambodia. I would like to thank the French Ambassador (and please) tell President Emmanuel Macron that Cambodia also needs generous assistance from France. Please do not see that Cambodia only needs China. We needed from everyone. It is not that that Cambodia only looks to China. Cambodia looks at all angles. That means looking around, not just looking in one direction. India has a policy of looking east, and then Prime Minister Narendra Modi used the term action to the east. South Korean President Moon Jae-in uses the term action to the south. For me, look in every direction, not in one direction. This is our foreign policy. We would also accept if the United States provides, but the US vaccines to be stored at 70 degrees below zero would not be easy for Cambodia. If the US wishes to help, they can give money to buy AstraZeneca like Australia did. Well, we get it all. However, what we do know now is that one million doses of Sinopharm from China will arrive in February. (It will be) for the first time that Cambodia will jab the vaccines from China. Whatever comes first, we inject it first. For instance, if suddenly India ships in its vaccines first, we will have to get the jabs from India

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first. That is our vaccination policy [...]

The First Oil Well, AO1D, Gives 1,236 Barrels/Day

Our people really want to know how far have we proceed concerning the drop of oil. Since the announcement, they would say they have not heard anything. Today, I would like to affirm to our compatriots the issue of oil, which I announced we started to have the first drop of oil on December 29, 2020, coinciding with the 22nd anniversary of the end of the war through win-win policy. Our first well operated for 33 days. Our second well has just opened. Our first well, called AO1D, produced 1,236 barrels/day. In 33 days, the first well produced 40,788 barrels. The second well, which started on January 30, called AO4D, will be separating mud from oil because the pump was initially only mud. Once the mud is gone, only oil will come. We now have just extracted 41,056 barrels of oil in total, and the remaining third, fourth and fifth wells will be in action in 2021.

7 to 7.5 Thousand Barrels/Day – Does Not Affect the Economy Yet

In estimation, we will receive between 7,000 to 7,500 barrels per day, which is very small. It has not yet affected the economy. Nevertheless, it was a good start for the oil and gas industry in Cambodia. We will continue with other investment groups, including the French company TOTAL. When I was negotiating with Nicolas Sarkozy ... we made an oil block concession to the French company TOTAL, but it was in the overlap area between Cambodia and Thailand. In the overlapping areas between Cambodia and Thailand, we are making concessions to foreign companies. Thailand also makes concessions to foreign companies. Therefore, Cambodia needs to negotiate with Thailand, plus the concessionaire. We will push for negotiations with the Thai side to do business.

I agree with analysis of an arti-

cle “Can Oil in Cambodia Affect the Cambodian economy?” Not yet. According to His Excellency Suy Sem’s estimate at US\$ 55 per barrel, our annual revenue is less than US\$ 30 million. It is not equal to the non-tax revenue of one million tourist visas. The country cannot depend on oil. Countries that produce a lot of oil do not depend on oil alone. Some countries produced oil, but they also do other businesses. The United States is the largest producer of oil, but the United States is the largest producer of agricultural products.

Oil Pumped, No Oil-Refining Yet

It is a good thing that we now have oil, though. Some people may mistakenly think that from now on Cambodia is “comfortable to have its own oil.” No. Oil-producing countries also sell oil to their own people. Some countries produce oil, but people protest against rising oil prices, such as in Indonesia, where people often protested against rising oil prices. The same is true in Iran. Iran is an oil-producing country, but Iranians are protesting against rising oil prices. Extraction of oil required big investment because they needed to drill the seabed ... We do not yet have our own refinery. There are investment plans, but the project is not moving forward. Those who asked for it, we have approved to do it, but they do not go ahead. Even if they are going forward, our crude oil capacity is not enough to refine. If we have local oil production, we will get benefits. Part of it is oil, and the other part is stuff, it turns into fertilizer, into asphalts, and so on. We strive to make such investments, even if we needed to bring in crude oil to refine in our country. We have not been successful yet for what we tried so far.

Revenue of Oil Less Than Those from Taxes and Duties

Let our people know that the first well has been in operation for 33 days, the second well is in progress and will reach the third, fourth and fifth wells, where we estimate 7,000-7,500

barrels of oil per day. The revenue was only about US\$ 30 million, while our revenues yesterday (from taxes and duties) at the end of the month was over US\$ 400 million, of which 218 million USD from taxes and about 201 million from duties. We collected more than 400 million USD. The revenue is down, but it is in the range of over 400 million. That is why our economy continues to function normally.

Our earlier estimate for 2020 is that economic growth would fall within 1.9%, but our final estimate now is 3.1%. This decline is not limited to Cambodia. The only positive economies in our region are those of Vietnam and China, and the rest of the region is equally negative, just more or less. Cambodia initially estimated negative 6%, but we strive to remain at minus 3.1%. We expect the return to 4% growth in 2021. We have to work together to do everything. The next step is to prevent COVID-19. Together, we can solve this problem.

I seem to talk a little too much, but it is a political message for our people, in terms of water, in terms of COVID-19 and in terms of the oil that people are curious to know about. In terms of oil, we do not just have Block A. We still have many more blocks in our waters. Our mainland is also under researches. From areas overlapping with Thailand, we will be able to reap the benefits to be a part of economic growth. However, the size we are having does not yet have the effect of pushing the Cambodian economy to grow strongly. It is still very small compared to the size of the economy we have obtained so far. In the past 2020, we had an income of about 5.5 billion USD. Compared to 30 million USD (from oil), the oil revenue is still very small. Compared to this month’s taxes and duties, as of yesterday, there was more than 400 million. In this case, the oil revenue of 30 million USD would be very small.

No Cancellation of Tourist Visa Fees

In terms of non-tax revenue,

considering the visa fee, we used to have 6.6 million tourists. We lost them (because of COVID-19). One million tourists is equal to 30 million USD, because one VISA (fee is) US\$ 30. Well, I do not agree with any requests for Cambodia to stop taking visas to attract tourists. Cambodia has no alternative yet ... you have to charge US\$ 30 per person for the visa. France (charges a visa fee for) over US\$ 100. We charged only US\$ 30, why can they not come. The Ministry of Tourism and some countries always asks me to cancel visa fees. We will keep it until the number of tourists that Cambodia received (can provide income allowing us to) deduct the visas fees. Otherwise, for 6 million (tourists) multiplied by 3 (equal to) 180 million USD will be lost. It is a non-fiscal revenue that is now lost. The world economy hit hard.

No Emergency Placement in Cambodia

I am thinking that the COVID-19 is not over in 2021 as there are so many deaths a day. Most of the deaths are in rich countries. The United States is the country with the many deaths, followed by Europe, among which Holland, which is a member of the European Union, has had the highest death number. People demonstrated and set fire to shops. They say that is when democracy has reached the top. After democracy, they died. For our people, I declare once again that I do not place the country in a state of emergency (either) in the whole country or in parts. There is a law, but I do not use it. I guarantee in front of the people, I do not apply the law to the country in times of emergency, in whole or in part of the country. What I am asking from the people is the respect and participation, which is a good deed that does not need to apply the law for the country in an emergency. Once we put that law into effect, the economy will crash. All services will crash. Countries with better means state of emergency may be good for them, but for countries lacking means are difficult [...]

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(request) to the Minister of Defense of China. Through the letter, the Chinese friend decided to give one million doses (of vaccine), and 600,000 doses of which we received today. I also sent a letter to Premier Li Keqiang requesting more on behalf of the Royal Government. We hope to get response step after step.

Some of the World's Most Populous Countries Use Chinese Vaccine

Chinese vaccines are widely used and to date there are about 16 countries (used) Sinopharm vaccine, and they are not only in Asia. Now in ASEAN, there are three countries that have used the vaccine (and) the first is Singapore, which receives the vaccine from the United Kingdom, the second is Indonesia, using the Chinese vaccines, and the third is Cambodia. In addition, in the Middle East, in Latin America, including in Europe, although not a member of the European Union, such as Serbia has already used (the vaccines from China), and Turkey did too ... Hungary, which is a member of the European Union, also used Chinese vaccines. Some big countries like Pakistan, Turkey, Brazil, Egypt, etc., which are populous countries ... (have used the China's vaccine).

Urgent Jobs for Those Aged between 18 and 59 Years Old

As far as my vaccination is concerned, I was ready for the jab on the 10th (of February) which is on Wednesday (or) the next 3 days from today. The doctor (advised me) to fast on a few things before I could get the vaccine. In the Sinopharm vaccine presentation, it is true that it does not require pre-injection fasting, but to ensure my safety, the doctors who treat me personally, along with the technical staff of the Ministry of Health, suggested I refrain from doing/taking a few things such as some medications, seafood, and alcohol. I am not an alcohol drinker. Even for five years, I do not have a problem. I had been fasting for two days al-

ready.

However, we later received an official letter from the Office of the Economic and Commercial Consultation of the Chinese Embassy in the Kingdom of Cambodia stating that the vaccine was effective for people between the ages of 18 and 59. For those aged 60 and over, (concerned institutions) are still monitoring its effectiveness. Next, we also received a diplomatic note ... confirming this as well. That is why my first vaccination plan was impossible. I am not afraid of reactions. I can have the jab should I wish. It would not be a matter because Samdech Pichey Sena Tea Banh has already had the jab. Right now, he stands strong here. The problem is that it is not clear how effective it is for people in their 60s. Therefore, the Ministry of Health has made some adjustments about the standard, and decided to put it into use as a matter of urgency for those between the ages of 18 and 59. Thus, all planning of injections, both military and civilian, is still ongoing for people under the age of 59 [...]

I do not speak anymore. All I have to do is give you the opportunity to ask me some questions so that I can answer them. We have not seen each other for almost a year since my last press conference. I was preparing for the press conference on Wednesday, (February) 10 indeed, but we missed it. In this regard, we need to take this opportunity to talk here. Please ask your questions.

BTV

(1) [...] *Apart from Chinese aid, where else will the Royal Government seek the vaccine? How many million people are to receive the jabs? Is there a variation in the number of vaccine recipients [...]*

(2) [...] *So far, how has India responded (to the request for vaccine?) and if India will provide, how much would it be? [...]*

Answer: Thank you, the young lady from BTV ... (you) probably did a close follow-up

to what I said on December 15. I said (we needed to inoculate some) 80% (of our population or up) to 13 million people. I should clarify this a bit. According to the World Health Organization, up to 80% of inoculation would be necessary to achieve herd immunity. If we vaccinate 80% of the population, we will need (to do so up to) 13 million people, equivalent to 26 million doses of vaccine. Later (there has been a recalculation) that (the number of inoculation) can be reduced to between 60% and 70%. That is why we set out the initiative to strive for a vaccine for 10 million people, equivalent to 20 million doses. Please take note that I still maintain my desire to acquire vaccines for 13 million people. That is the ambition (I have) ... (to achieve) the herd immunity among our people.

We now see clearly that it is difficult to get vaccines for poor countries, even those with money cannot ensure its purchase. This is our concern. This is an assertion as to why we have reduced (inoculation percentage) from 13 million to 10 million. This is an arrangement by the COVID-19 Vaccines Commission, which is in regular consultation with the World Health Organization, who has instructed the number of injections to 80% population to achieve immunity [...]. I do want to reemphasize that I still want to inject 80% of our population, unless it is determined that people under the age of 18 cannot get the jabs, which would make the number adjust accordingly. If the injection reaches 80%, it will cover perhaps those in their 15, 16, and 17 years of age. If it is determined that people under the age of 18 cannot get the jabs, the number will be lower.

This is an ambition for our people to have a protection, whether old or young, rich or poor, and for the poor, we pay more attention counting in workers collecting garbage in the city, the motodup (motor taxi) drivers, the taxi drivers, the bus drivers who interacts with so many people every day.

... BTV asked where the vaccine would come from. According to my anticipation and the issuance of instructions I already did, now the clear source we have received is China, which is still a strategic source. I use this word because China has the capacity to produce. Although Sinopharm and Sinovac are now available, China has the ability to produce vaccines under the licenses of some countries. China is still the safest and most stable source of supply for us. This is the first thing we know and we have already received. Shipping is also easy. Transport in temperatures from 2 degrees to 8 degrees is easy. For the moment, as you can see, we are in a hurry (to send the vaccines brought her for symbolic ceremony) to put it back in a cool place. Well (the vaccine needs to be stored at) only 2 degrees to 8 degrees above zero. What if it demanded to be stored at 20 degrees or 70 degrees below zero, can Cambodia use it? Even if they give it free of charge, we would not accept it because the vaccines would not survive Cambodia's hot temperature.

I would also like to mention the source from where we find (vaccines, and one of them is) from COVAX, who promises to provide (vaccines for) 20% of the population. If 20% of the population is equal to 3.5 million people, we will get seven million doses. This is the source from where we hope to get the vaccine. As far as we know, 200 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccine were given to COVAX. Nevertheless, COVAX, one of the World Health Organization's institution, will provide us, albeit a little later, we will be able to get it. This is a gateway now. According to reports, we know that COVAX has the vaccines in hand now and will be distributing to the poorest countries in the world. As I mentioned in the session on the fight against COVID-19, we consider the vaccine a common commodity, not only for rich countries, but also for poor countries. In addition, we also have other sources of communi-

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 cation (on vaccines). Please note that the source from Australia is three million doses, for which they have already announced the amount of US\$ 28 million. So from these three (sources) we have 11 million doses in the data, but we just have 600,000 doses in hand and just arrived in our country.

Well, if we needed 20 million doses, we still lack 9 million doses. If we need (to vaccinate) 13 million people, however, we still lack 14 million doses. So where do we target this 14 million dose? Let me now respond to you about the Indian vaccine here. I wrote a letter to the Prime Minister of India asking for help in supplying the vaccine. The Indian friends also tried to share with us 100,000 doses, a form of supply by means of sales. I advised the Minister of Health and the vaccine procurement team to start negotiations with India. The 100,000 doses is a small amount for Cambodia's need. Since India uses British technology to produce AstraZeneca vaccine, I have suggested negotiating with India to buy between one and four million doses from India. India is producing for consumption in India and distributing to Nepal, to Bhutan, to Bangladesh, to Myanmar. If we start ordering now, I think this Indian manufacturer can share it with us. The 100,000 doses that India wants to sell to us is too little for our needs of about 9 million doses or up to 14 million doses. That is why I have to negotiate, and it may be starting tomorrow with the Indian Ambassador in Phnom Penh on how to order the British license vaccine (made in India) ...

Another way we can get the vaccine from is Thailand where, in May this year, they will release same AstraZeneca vaccine. We can also negotiate a purchase contract from now. This is another port for us. The vaccine is made in Thailand (a neighboring country) and the price of AstraZeneca is known to be around US\$ 4. If we buy 10 million doses, we would not even use all the money contrib-

uted by philanthropists, which is some US\$ 57 million [...]

We also need to consider the Russian vaccine, which is currently being approved by European countries ... I have discussed this with the Russian ambassador since last year that if Russia finds a vaccine, please share it with Cambodia. This morning, HE Aun Porn Moniroth (DPM and Minister of Economy and Finance) told me that there would be discussions with Russia. We will accept, not just any vaccine we can get, but the vaccines have to be in line with the reality of Cambodia. For example, the vaccine that survives at 20 degrees or 70 degrees below zero ... would be difficult for Cambodia to use.

On this note, any vaccine that can be (stored and) that we can supply, we will not only ask for but also we buy. I would like to confirm I have been giving orders since last night. We do not ask for money to buy vaccines. There have been suggestions that if we lack money, we can borrow money to buy it. I do not think Cambodia has such a need. We can release philanthropy's contribution fund and national budget to buy vaccines. I have one estimation left, though. That is the People's Republic of China. Why? During the Chinese Foreign Minister's visit last October, China signed a grant somewhere between US\$ 500 million and US\$ 600 million. Well, we can use Chinese aid money to buy Chinese vaccines. If China sells at a reasonable price. For the purchase (of vaccine produced by license) of the UK from India, Thailand and from Russia (we) use cash only. We can afford to do that. Although some humiliated the Royal Government of Cambodia about (the possibility of having no money to pay) salary of civil servants, as civil servants you (know) that the salary is on a regular every two weeks' basis and the private sector is not dead yet [...]

Fresh News

Respectfully Samdech ... in

order to give confidence to the people and those who need to be vaccinated, can Samdech determine which dignitaries or sons of yours, who are all popular individuals in Cambodian society, lead the vaccination to increase confidence to those who need to be vaccinated?

Question 2: Please clarify a little bit about persons of priority, not because I am a journalist and I am asking this, but I want to refer to other media people since s/he has many contacts in society doing her/his reports. So can journalists be a priority to get this vaccine, Samdech?

Question 3: I would like Samdech to give more clarification. The Royal Government of Cambodia has been harassed by COVID-19 for more than a year now. Recently, Samdech announced the donation (of personal salary). This is a charitable gesture to solve difficulties. There is still however some criticisms. Probably not in response to the critics, but to confirm the trust of the people that as of this moment the Royal Government of Cambodia, under Samdech's leadership, continues to stand strong and continue to move forward boldly to solve the national economic problem.

Answer: At the moment, I was about to say it, but (since) you asked about the issue of vaccination to journalists (let me) ask the Ministry of Health to consider this group of reporters (journalists) as vaccinated target because they search everywhere and not everyone knows what the risks are. I urge all journalists under the age of 59 to ... register online and look at the 14 conditions for getting vaccination. Of those 14 conditions, only a few require pay much attention, because first, it is for people under 18, but all of you who would apply for the vaccines are the within the age range and over. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to inform the media and (I instruct) the Ministry of Information work on this with the Ministry of Health. I think if an institution of journalists like Fresh News, Bayon, Hang

Meas, BTV, CNC, Apsara, National Television take the initiative with the Ministry of Health directly, maybe faster than with the Ministry of Information [...]

The second point is both a question and a suggestion. (Although) I cannot get the jab, I agree to mobilize children of leaders and as I have three sons, two sons-in-law, if they are qualified for the jabs, let them have it. Some of our young ministers, such as Hang Aun Naron, except for Aun Porn Moniroth because he had had a sickness and could not resist hair coloring substance because of allergies. Well, ministers under the age of 59, such as Hang Chuon Naron, Say Sam Al, Keut Rith, etc. Please reorganize and let Samdech Picheay Sena select some military leaders to get the jabs together at Calmette Hospital where we have prepared and broadcast live to show our responsibility. If the father does not get the jabs for age limit, why the children cannot? Tea Banh has a child as the provincial governor. He should come and get the jab. Gather children of leaders for the jabs. I agree. I will tell my children, but maybe they are watching too. The day before, Hun Many, my youngest son, asked to join me for the jab. At the time, Hun Manet was at the border ... I agreed to have my three sons and the other two sons-in-law vaccinated. Let our ministers and military and police generals, who is under the age of 59 get the jabs. This shows our attention and care.

On issue that you talked about moving forward without fear of criticism. I have previously advised everyone in Cambodia to stop responding to a group of vicious people. I do not talk about them myself, because this group, no matter what we do, dogs are still dogs. Therefore, it is not necessary (to talk with them) and everyone must understand that when Hun Sen stop talking and instructs people under him to stop talking, it means that the door is closed. We do not have, for that matter,

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to worry about what they say. Our concern is the well-being of the 16 million Cambodians in the country. We must maintain peace, political stability, socio-economic development and poverty reduction. (They are just a) small number of unhappy people. Leave them be. In this world, there are happy and unhappy people. The key question is there are more people happy than are unhappy. In Cambodia, there are very few people in prison or have fled the country. That they are in grief, let them be because they created the matter. I do not need to answer this question. Do not respond, no matter what you say. All I am doing is buying the vaccine. They talk about the (Royal Government's short of cash for) salary. In reality, we still have the salary. The matter rests on whether we actually have the money or not [...]

So, all of you who support me, support the Royal Government, do not speak (to or) with a group of vicious men/dogs. The best thing to do is never mentioning them on TV or Facebook, but talking instead together on how to fight COVID-19, to prevent road accidents, socio-economic development, poverty reduction, state reforms against corruption, and other negative activities in society. They need to understand this point clearly. It means that once (I) stop talking, I mean I do not talk to that person. Even though ... some may seek foreigners to intercede on their behalf for a negotiation with Hun Sen I will not respond. I do not have the need to talk to anyone about Cambodia or any individual. Let me confirm. Thank you. Please continue the question [...]

Chinese Journalist

My respect to you, Samdech Techo. I am a Chinese journalist in Cambodia. A moment ago, Ambassador Wang Wentian says that in the near future, the Chinese government will provide 10 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine to developing countries. Today, the Chinese vaccine has arrived in

Cambodia. On behalf of the Chinese people, I would like to ask Samdech Techo what evaluation you have on the Chinese vaccine, while the Chinese vaccine (is) widely acceptable in the world?

My second question is Since COVID-19 has become a new normal in the world, and I think that while the resistance to COVID-19 has improved in Cambodia as well as in China, what concrete measures the Cambodian government will take accordingly to open or adjust policy for the Chinese investors and tourists to Cambodia?

Answer: Thank you for this question. I still remember that during our meeting, even though I did not meet in person at that time as I was in quarantine, and HE Aun Porn Moniroth was representing me in the framework of ASEAN and partners' summits, including the ASEAN-China meeting. Chinese Premier His Excellency Li Keqiang announced the provision of vaccine assistance for developing countries, including the ASEAN region. In fact, some countries are now receiving vaccination assistance from China, and this is an important stage for China to fulfill its promise while it has a responsibility for its own population, which is about 20% of the world population. I consider this a responsible gesture as a country that has the capacity to produce (vaccines) and play a responsible role in this global framework. This is a fact where Cambodia received 600,000 doses (of vaccine) today. It symbolizes sympathy and commitment of the Chinese Premier to developing countries.

Second, Cambodia has the COVID-19 under control and China does too. In the past, we have partially coordinated our actions (on combating COVID-19). I am also trying to find a way to reach an agreement where we can coordinate to and from contacts in some way. This issue requires serious discussion. For example, when Cambodians go to China, do we have to continue put them in the

14-days quarantine and when the Chinese come to Cambodia, do we continue to do the 14-days quarantine too or we have to reduce it? All of these points have become sensitive topics and we needed to address them properly.

Now Cambodia is under pressure through which we have learnt that we cannot let go some of the points. The pressure that Cambodia has been receiving in the last month is from the west, the rapid community-to-community transmission in Thailand. Before, the outbreak in the Thai community recorded between 6,000 and 7,000 infected people. Today's figure seemed to have recorded at 23,000. On the eastern side, Vietnam is recording a rapid transmission and is reportedly to have infected with the new COVID-19 variant that has spread to a province bordering Cambodia, Ratanakkiri. That is why I have to declare an emergency so that there will be no crossing in the upcoming Vietnamese New Year period.

However, for the second day in a row, Thailand's infection figures declined. Today I see that the number of infections in Thailand has dropped from 900 or 800 to over 200. In Vietnam, there were dozens (but) there were five yesterday, and today there are only four. If this situation alleviates, it will be a relief to Cambodia. One of the difficulties Cambodia faces is to resist on one side at this airport (in Phnom Penh) and those that landed at the airport in Sihanoukville. This morning two infected persons found after they passed through. I would like to inform that workers arriving at the border (from Thailand) has reached a total number of 24,000, out of which, over 9,000 are in quarantines at the border.

I would like to emphasize that the Cambodian experience (required that we) should not exempt the 14-days quarantine or reduce it to 7 or 10 days because we have found that some are positive on their second or third test on 13th day of quarantine already. At this point, Cam-

bodia has a lot of experience. As far as I know and I am not giving them any advice, Malaysia, which reduced its quarantine period from 14 days to 7 days, has just put the country in a state of emergency. We have also found here that we found people COVID-19 positive on the 13th day of quarantine. S/he was ready to leave on the 14th day.

Based on this fact, regardless of the compromise between Cambodia and China, there must be some health measures, because in this case, we need to make sure that the disease is not brought from Cambodia to China and not from China to Cambodia. In reality, however, people have traveled to each other (already). Remarkably, more Chinese traveled by plane to Cambodia through the Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville airports than others foreigners. No Chinese have come with infection, except in the case of January 2020, which occurred in Sihanoukville. Next is another case of a Chinese citizen, but (he did not travel) from China. (He came) from the Philippines. My guess is that these non-infected travelers may have their jabs before coming. This gives Cambodia more confidence. This is where I say soon everyone will need to get vaccinated as they once did in Africa in the past, when anyone have not been vaccinated against yellow fever are not allowed to enter African countries. At a later stage, the journalists should have their vaccination record ready for their reportage trips could bring them to places where a certification of vaccination (against COVID-19) is a requirement. Well, HE Mam Bunheng, Minister of Health, can take care of this matter and vaccinate them, lest s/he reached the place where a vaccination is a precondition. We have printed vaccination cards, which would list information of type of vaccine given, what day the first bottle is given, and how many days from there the second bottle is given. Certificates are in Khmer and English for both domestic and international uses [...]