

Vaccination Campaign Press Briefing

(04 March 2021 — Extensive Excerpts and Unofficial Translation)



04 March 2021 - Samdech Techo Hun Sen: "... I would like to confirm that for the Asia-Pacific region, Cambodia is the first country to receive the vaccine (from the WHO), while the rest are countries in Africa ..."

COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign Launched

Today, I am very happy to be vaccinated with my wife and other leaders. I am taking this opportunity to launch the official COVID-19 vaccination campaign. Why should we take today as the official launch day of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign since we have already vaccinated more than 125,000 people using the People's Republic of China's Sinopharm vaccine. The thing is that when we started vaccinating on February 10, the vaccines does not cover the general population. The vaccine (Sinopharm) only covers people aged 59 and under. Today, with the advent of the AstraZeneca vaccine, which is available from the World Health Organization through COVAX, we are able to cover both those under the age of 59 and those over the age of 60.

Before Khmer New Year, 400,000 Doses More of Sinopharm will arrive

I would like to inform you that so far we have received two

types of vaccines, as you all know. Firstly, the vaccine from China called Sinopharm which we have 600,000 doses, and, according to the information we received, another 400,000 doses, making it all 1 million doses, will arrive before the Khmer New Year. There is a possibility to receive more than that number because I met with the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China on March 1 during the King's and Queen Mother's departure to Beijing, confirming that the 400,000 doses were already in hand and they are preparing more. So, it is possible to go beyond the said figure. Secondly, we received 324,000 doses of the vaccine from the COVAX Center, the World Health Organization vaccines pillar, which is considered the first of the 1 million doses that COVAX will give us in the first half of the year 2021.

Sinopharm Vaccine for People 59 Years and Under

I should remind you a little bit so that we can be clear together about why I did not get vac-

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Selected Audio Messages in March

(March 2021 — Extensive Excerpts and Unofficial Translation)

Audio Message to Compatriots Regarding the Growing Status of Covid-19, 08 March 2021

Today, the (Covid-19 infection) situation in our country has grown into an unusual stage. So far, up to 49 new Covid-19 cases have been detected in Phnom Penh, Sihanoukville and Prey Veng, and in certain parts of Kandal. This situation poses a major challenge for us to continue the fight against this deadly disease. In such a situation, I would like to issue an appeal and an order at the same time.

The issuance of the order is to **call on each institution of the Royal Government and to call on the legislature to suspend (working at) the institutions, but at least we need to have a small number of people to (continue) working (in offices). (We must let) most people work at home for at least for 7 days.** After 7 days, I will inform those institutions (again what to do). In this way we will avoid the risks as we do not know who is involved in time of so much confusion at the moment. There are infections in the police, civil servants and even artists. Therefore, the temporary closure of the institution is **not a complete lockdown, but to reduce the number of (working) people by at least 90% and only a few people are still working in the institution. For the private sector, I would like to suggest that if possible, reduce staff (coming to work in office) and/or taking turns to avoid overcrowding in the workplace and on the street.**

I would like to call on family to let no children go out and make sure they stay homes. For the elderly, adults, if not necessary, do not go out, and if you go out, please wear a mask carefully, because now we do not know who and where the real disease is. It is a big challenge. This is a necessary measure to protect the health of individuals as well as our families and our society. Of course, there is still a law that the Senate has not yet passed. I urge His Excellency the Acting President of the Senate to pass the law already passed at the National Assembly – either to hold online meetings and/or to have a meeting with as few people as possible – because this law is urgently needed. We can not use emergency law for this situation, but we need governing laws related to Covid-19 and other deadly diseases.

Taking this opportunity, I am calling for the suspension of all unnecessary gatherings. I would like to thank those who have postponed the wedding ceremony or gone on with wedding party but in reduced number of people to cut down the risk. The situation now requires more cautions and (we must judge between) what is not and is necessary. Let us suspend things unnecessary and wait for some other times. It is not too late. This is an urgent situation and we must be taking care to prevent the disease from spreading. The Preah Sihanouk province must further restrict the entry and exit of people, but not to obstruct the entry and exit of goods as it is our only economic gateway for imports through the waterway. **The movement of goods, both domestic and cross-border, must continue as usual to continue to drive socio-economic development, especially bilateral trade between our**

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cinated on February 10, when in fact I was already preparing for it. Some say Cambodian leaders avoid Chinese vaccines considering them risky or even dangerous. I would like to confirm that the Sinopharm vaccine is for people aged 59 and under. We have tried to clarify this issue through both the Ministry of Defense and through (the Ministry of Health by the Secretary of State) Madame Yuk Sambath to the Chinese company Sinopharm. What is even more substantiating is the letter from the Economic and Trade Office at the Embassy of the People's Republic of China sent to us about the effectiveness and inefficiency for those over 59 years old. We would like to ask the Chinese friend to withdraw this letter, but the Chinese friend not only did not withdraw, but also sent in another diplomatic note. Therefore, if we vaccinate, we have to take responsibility for ourselves. So on the one hand we have to respect the regulations regarding the country that makes the vaccine, the company that makes the vaccine and its embassy that provides information for us. That is why we decided to delay all people over the age of 60 for vaccination (of Sinopharm vaccine).

Vaccine First Arrived in Cambodia – PM Counterpart

Again, there have been comments around this vaccination. That I did not make my presence at the handover of vaccines assisted by the World Health Organization through COVAX and the UNICEF representative here (February 2), some considered it a discrimination from me. However, I would like to point out here that I consider the vaccine (regardless of the country or company they are from) that first arrives is my counterpart. As usual, I go out to the airport to welcome guests of Prime Minister's rank, the Crown Prince or the Prince. (There was) an immediate comparison between the fact that I went out to welcome the Chinese vaccine that arrived but I did not go out to get the World Health Organi-

zation vaccine. They criticized. I would like to emphasize that if the WHO vaccine arrived first, I would have gone out to get it for the first time [...]

China Never Asks Cambodia Not to Contact, Accept Help from Anyone

Another commented that Mr. Hun Sen would not dare to get the British origin vaccine for fear of offending China. These were some of the comments received but I would like to inform the Cambodian people that Cambodia never accepts anyone's advice. I have been working with China for almost 30 years and China has never said to me, "Please do not contact this country, please do not contact that country, or please do not accept help from this or that source." That is not the case. Some think that Hun Sen did not dare to accept the vaccine provided by the World Health Organization, which originated in the UK and made in India for fear of Chinese anger. In fact, this is very common issue. It is about science and technology, and nothing to do with politics. Obviously, I have already received (vaccination) this morning, and my wife too.

Thank People's Republic of China, Countries for Providing Vaccines

As we are launching this vaccination today let me take this opportunity to, once again, thank the People's Republic of China for providing us with 600,000 doses of vaccine for this first step and before the Khmer New Year, another 400,000 doses, making it 1 million doses will arrive. I am expecting more than 1 million doses to arrive in Cambodia, though. I would like to thank our partners, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, as well as the countries that have provided assistance through the World Health Organization for providing vaccine assistance to Cambodia. The United States, which has just returned to the World Health Organization, has provided up to 4 billion USD, giving COVAX, or the World Health Organization, more abil-

ity to purchase vaccines to provide them to about 92 poorer countries with difficulties.

Cambodia – First in Asia-Pacific to Receive Vaccine from WHO

One of the unique features of the Asia-Pacific region is that Cambodia is the first country to receive the vaccine (AstraZeneca from the COVAX center). According to my study, when Cambodia received the vaccine on the evening of March 2, the only five countries in the world received the vaccine, broadcast by Channel News Asia, were Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Angola, Congo and Cambodia. This morning I watched on television that Uganda, next to Tanzania, had also received the vaccine. I do not know how many countries, but I would like to confirm that for the Asia-Pacific region, Cambodia is the first country to receive the vaccine (from the WHO), while the rest are countries in Africa. Saying so, maybe some commentators think that because Cambodia is the poorest country in the world that they have decided to make the vaccines available before any other countries. Well, they may say whatever they wanted. I would like to thank the representatives of the World Health Organization, as well as the representatives of UNICEF and all development partners who have made it possible for Cambodia to have a vaccine that covers both those under 59 and over 60.

Cambodia to Receive 7 Million Doses of Vaccine from WHO

In the near future, we will be able to get the vaccine from the World Health Organization, which according to original plan COVAX will provide (vaccines for) 20% of the population. Twenty percent of the population means 3,200,000 people vaccinated, or equivalent to 6,400,000 doses. According to people working with the vaccine team, we can get up to 7 million doses of the vaccine in steps. We believe that in the first trimester we may receive more

than 1 million doses of the vaccine.

COVAX Vaccine Targeted Phnom Penh, Kandal and Sihanoukville

Next, I should start clarifying how to divide and work on this vaccine. Firstly, I would like to confirm that as of this evening, Cambodia has vaccinated 125,668 of its people, including 84,758 military and police vaccinated by the military (vaccination teams). The army (medical team) has the role of injecting both the army and the police force. There were 40,910 civilians and police injected by the Ministry of Health (medical teams). Our police force is divided into two groups – those working inside the country are got the jabs by the Ministry of Health medical team, while those along the border got the jab by the army (medical team). Now, with the arrival of the COVAX vaccine at 324,000 doses, we are targeting three main provinces, which are at risk of infection: Phnom Penh, Kandal and Sihanoukville. This morning, both vaccines – Sinopharm and AstraZeneca – went to (Sihanoukville) [...]

Vaccinating People and Local Officials Aged 60 Years and Over

[...] I have discussed with the Ministry of Health, this injection is not just for officials. I would like to request the Ministry of Health to provide emergency injections to people and local officials over the age of 60. According to my estimates, we can provide the jabs to around 100,000 to 130,000 people in Phnom Penh and some around Phnom Penh, Kandal and some in Sihanoukville, but only select people over 60 years old and above. People and local officials, they are also citizens, such as the village chief or commune officials, can have the vaccination. We select people over the age of 60 to be vaccinated first because we have a small number (of vaccines) and because this vaccine expires on June 27, 2021.

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... I am not a doctor, but at least, before I come to this place, I must know (what I am talking about). Sinopharm lifespan is one year, but AstraZeneca, according to what is written on the bottle, will be valid only by June 27, 2021. Well, I urge the urgency of the vaccination. Minister of Health, His Excellency Professor Mam Bunheng, asked for four weeks vaccination process. The difference here is that from the first to the second inoculation, AstraZeneca requires a gap between 4 weeks, 8 weeks and 12 weeks. As for me, I chose 8 weeks, which means that today is March 4, so I took the second dose on April 29. For the people, as we have to work in a hurry, we can reduce to 4 weeks to give our people the second dose for the people in the three provinces. This is our effort to make the vaccine process accessible to the public. I estimate that the number of vaccinated people and local officials in these three provinces can be around 100,000 to 130,000, equivalent to 200,000 to 260,000 doses.

Diplomats, UN, Financial Institutions, NGOs – AstraZeneca Vaccinated

In addition, we need to give priority to a number of officials, including diplomats, UN officials, financial institutions, as well as foreign NGOs currently in Cambodia. In this case, I would like to emphasize that there are exceptions in the case of diplomats, UN agencies in Cambodia, financial institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and some other NGOs who are unable to return for vaccination in their home countries are to receive AstraZeneca vaccine. Please inform the UN representative and make a plan for this vaccination without any age limit. I offer such a possibility because we, as hosts, provide courtesy to our development partners. Yesterday, I thought that if we set this, it would be discriminatory against our people. However, this morning I re-discussed with His Excellency Mam Bunheng that

because this number is not much, so let them choose between Sinopharm and AstraZeneca.

For the general Cambodian population, age must be determined. Those under 60 meaning 59 years and below, in the Royal Government and the Senate, the National Assembly [...] are to receive Sinopharm (and) those at 60 and above to receive AstraZeneca. My children do not take AstraZeneca. Yesterday, my youngest son who failed to get vaccination for the first time due to a cold and the doctor refused to give him the jab, and a child-in-law came here for injection. We did not give AstraZeneca vaccine. There are exceptions for foreigners who are diplomats, representatives of foreign NGOs, representatives of international financial institutions and other development partners such as JAICA or other organizations allowed to choose.

Locals and Foreigners in Cambodia Receive Same Vaccine and Free of Charge

... Let me confirm that we provide the jabs free of charge. I will announce the policy today. It is not just for diplomats, foreigners living and working in Cambodia are vaccinated like Cambodians free of charge. If we all only think of injecting Cambodians without injecting foreigners who are working and living in Cambodia, then it will create a discriminatory situation, plus we will not be able to get the immunity of this vaccine. Well, I would like to announce that all foreigners who have been living and working in Cambodia would receive vaccination in sequence with the Cambodian people. Diplomats and foreign NGOs will get first, and get the AstraZeneca vaccine [...]

Vaccination Key along with Implementation of Health Measures

Now, how do we go about solving this problem? Firstly, we need to talk about the strategic role and tips of the vaccine. Of course, I have already said that vaccines are not the only golden

solution, but vaccines are the first strategic solution, along with the implementation of the health measures we have put in place, such as three preventative measures and three things not to do measures. Strengthening the control of border crossings, testing, quarantine and treatment in the fight against COVID-19 to achieve success in the fight against the disease. It is clear that the current fall in communicable diseases in the world starts with the presence of vaccines. Now, reading the articles about this vaccine, there is no one that can answer how long it will be effective – 6 months or one year or one life. No vaccine can answer how long it is effective. Maybe soon, the international forums, which discussed about food security and energy in the past, I think if the vaccine is effective, the disease is not immune, in the future, they will be talking about the safety of the vaccine in addition to food security and energy.

This is my opinion on the situation that is happening. The world would do business only to buy vaccines, and reduce other expenses such as building roads, bridges, schools, hospitals. The world will raise money to buy vaccines. The situation would (improve) hopefully as it becomes a common disease like other flu [...] it is my pray and hope it will be like that. Vaccination is not a new problem. What is new is COVID-19 only. Vaccinations are very common. Children need to be vaccinated for a few months. We have been giving them vaccines. We have been successfully vaccinating against polio since the 1990s. That is why the vaccination campaign we have been doing so far has not been a strange thing since after the Pol Pot era [...]

Cambodia Cannot Live Alone

Now we have to figure out how to get more vaccines, and we have to recognize that if Cambodia alone survives the deadly disease, but the whole world is not safe, we cannot live alone. There has to be reciprocation. In the past few weeks, we have been concerned about the influx

of disease from Thailand (possibly) into Cambodia, where, as of this morning, more than 15,000 people are in the quarantine center along the border. We are also concerned that COVID-19 in Vietnam is contagious in communities spreading from north to central and south. Now Thailand and Vietnam have taken control of the situation and it erupted in Cambodia. Therefore, Thailand and Vietnam must also be careful of the flow from Cambodia to their countries. That is how it is. Therefore, it requires cooperation in which all stakeholders, both regional and global, work together. It is not a time to blame anyone, but as a time for cooperation to work together.

Many nationals were infected in Cambodia, starting from French, the American, all nationalities, but now the community outbreak has involved Khmer, Chinese, Vietnamese, Singaporean, Korean, etc. We must not discriminate. Whoever gets sick in our country, we have to treat them, including those who have been expelled from Cambodia, they must be treated before they can be deported. It is not possible to expel patients irresponsibly to infect their countries. This is our responsibility in the eyes of our nation and in the face of regional and global cooperation. The government's strategy to get vaccinated is what we want, but we also do not forget those who are in need. We do not just gather and collect (for our country), and countries, or especially the World Health Organization, do not allow countries to monopolize the vaccine. That is the reason why we got the vaccine.

According to Plan, about 4.2 M Doses of Vaccine Received in the First Half

... I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Vaccine Team, which has made great strides in moving Cambodia forward with a vaccine to address the frontline priorities, and now added AstraZeneca – a vaccine for people aged 60 years and over in addition to Sinopharm.

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So in the future, we will continue to live up to our expectations. Before this, the Indian side ... was ready to give us one hundred thousand doses. We will take them, but we offer to buy one million doses more this May. For China's Sinopharm, in addition to additional shipments (in the future), we also propose to purchase an additional one million doses. So if nothing changes in the first half of this year, both what we have now and the amount that we expect will come, we will have about 4.2 million doses of the vaccine, which we vaccinated more than two million people. By the second half, the supply situation could ease (depending on) the production chain. In addition to these two vaccines, Sinopharm and AstraZeneca, we are also looking at other vaccines, such as the Russian vaccine, Johnson & Johnson of the United States, Novavax of the United States, and especially the Johnson & Johnson that I heard would require only a single dose. If so, we should dare (buy) [...] because it is not a problem from who it is but importantly to have vaccine for inoculation.

Consistency in Ordering with Local Vaccination Process

I do not want to respond to anyone, but some say that this Chinese vaccine kills Cambodians. (Saying this like this) is quite unfortunate for some people, but I would like to say that if what they said was true, (it should be a) congratulation (for them), because the almost 200,000 soldiers and police of the Royal Government were going to die. Well, they can just walk in and take power at once since it has been your intention always to take power by overthrowing the government ... but this is just an irresponsible statement. In the future, I would like to suggest that concerned institutions pay attention to the issues related to the consistency of the order of vaccines with the local vaccination process. AstraZeneca is only valid for 6 months, and I heard there was even vaccine that can survive only for 3 months. 3 months is

difficult for us. As of now, in our country Sinopharm and AstraZeneca have the highest potential. Thus, the order and delivery must be consistent with the internal force required to do injection.

Otherwise, it would be a waste and an insult if we got a rare vaccine and it would be out of date if we did not inject them in time. This point needs to be clarified, which I think is to increase the capacity of the military doctors, who, in addition to injecting the army, must continue to contribute to the people, especially among the families of the army personnel themselves, and the police's. Now we have two teams at work. One group is the army plus the police. This group continues to vaccinate families of the military and police. They will be able to help vaccinating people as well. If there is a lot of supply, we need to strengthen the capacity of our team of doctors to vaccinate, to avoid damage to the vaccine, like overdue, and to check the supply chain from outside, the delivery and internal chain to match together.

In Addition to Vaccines, Implement Established Health Measures

What I wanted to say here is that one vaccine is not enough. The health measures we have put in place must be implemented. People participate. If there is only a vaccine and people do not get vaccinated (it does not work). Now the issue is not that the people are not interested in vaccination. People need vaccines now. Those who are unhappy (about vaccines or vaccination) may do whatever they wanted to. We set a voluntary principle. (In) Indonesia, they fine people for not getting vaccination. We set a voluntary principle. People who consider vaccines to kill people do not need to be vaccinated. However, we do not want them to fall into that misunderstood situation. Even though they are wrong, we should direct them to the right direction [...] I am not making insinuation at anyone, but they should not talk too much. In other words, I want to

explain to the people. Of course, though we mention the Russian vaccine, the American vaccine, but our real possibilities may be Chinese and British vaccines of British origin, but producing in India, maybe in Thailand, maybe in South Korea [...] fundamental for our search for further needs. They are long-term source of vaccines supply for us.

No Traveling to/from Sihanoukville; Phnom Penh Residents Stay Home

I call on the people to participate, especially at this stage. I call on the people of Sihanoukville to stay there where they are. Yesterday, I talked to the governor of Sihanoukville, we cannot close because it is a city with a port of entry and exit, but we must be careful. Call on people not to travel to Sihanoukville if unnecessary, while those in Sihanoukville, please do not leave to other places, because leaving would transmit (the disease) along National Road 4 or to Kep and Kampot provinces. So please keep calm there. In Phnom Penh, although we have taken control of the situation, if not necessary, our people should stay home. The number of infected people in this community increased by more than 400 in only a few days. In the past, our number was just over 400, but today it is more than 900. Please be careful so that we can control and close this event. Today we have up to 31 cases, 28 cases are community infections and three cases are imported cases. We will not close nationwide, but call on those in Phnom Penh, Kandal and Sihanoukville to avoid human mobility. When I arrived, the Minister of Education proposed to extend the closure of schools in these three provinces. I agreed. Not yet open, but schools in other provinces can resume normally.

Amend Sub-decree and Prepare a New Sub-decree

We are not sure if this February -20 community event will end before the Khmer New Year. This is an issue that we are more concerned as people from

Thailand would return to Cambodia continues. The numbers keep increasing. Though the number of people are leaving continues at 40,000 people, but now there are more than 15,000 people in quarantine center (along the border). Observing that there have been some violations in the past, we opted to amend the sub-decree and prepare a new sub-decree. However, this new sub-decree is not yet applicable. Therefore, the Royal Government must prepare a law on measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other deadly and dangerous infectious diseases. As in the case of the violation at the Sokha Hotel by two Chinese women colluding with the hotel security to allow them to go out, how to punish them? We do not have a law yet. We have to make laws. How much do we fine those violators, conspirators, and in addition to the fines, can there be any punishment for imprisonment? The sub-decree does not provide for imprisonment, only transitional penalty. The state of emergency law does not apply in the current situation. So on the one hand we use educational measures, on the other hand, we use administrative measures ... this is what I want to raise now. I provide an opportunity for journalists to ask questions ... and then I will try to answer your questions.

Fresh News

[...] *First, our brothers and sisters who are abroad made a request and asked That if s/he has already been vaccinated and if s/he comes to Cambodia, does s/he need to be in quarantine?*

Another is the request of our Cambodian student who is studying in China, who has returned from China ... since the birth of the first COVID-19. They say that their online education is lacking when learning technical skills is not available ... they asked if they could be a priority for the vaccination and have the opportunity to study in China [...]

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My other question ... Cambodia may have begun to think about a policy to prevent the spread of COVID-19, whether or not those who enter Cambodia are required to have a vaccination certificate. Samdech may have a policy to determine something like that [...]

[...] in the midst of the fight against COVID-19, the opening of the economy is also a matter of great concern ... so, is it possible that the market vendors will get the vaccine? As a priority, and especially business people who are doing business in Cambodia, may they be the first to get a vaccine [...]

Answer: Thank you for raising this question. **Firstly, related to the problem of our Cambodian brothers and sisters living abroad who have been vaccinated and whether they have arrived in the country to be vaccinated again or have to be in quarantine. So, the two are connected.** First, I am not a doctor, but I understand. If you have been vaccinated abroad, why do you need to do it again. There is no need to inject in Cambodia, and we do not have vaccines enough for people to come to Cambodia and do it here. If they had injection in their residential country and come to Cambodia, there is no need for a second injection here. With injections done, would there need to be a quarantine? This problem should be left for later. This issue must be within the common framework of cooperation. I think that for me, quarantine is necessary unless the World Health Organization declares that those who are vaccinated need not be in quarantine. Then maybe we can lift the ban based on suggestions or recommendations or agreements in the exemption of being in quarantine. Well, that is how much I can say. We do not know how effective the vaccine is, and how long it is effective. As far as the need for quarantine is concerned, I think we needed to set aside time for the health sector in the country and especially the World Health Organization to determine this.

As for the second issue regarding students studying in China, I would now like to take this opportunity to call on students studying in China (and returned to Cambodia) who have not yet been vaccinated, and must return to study in China to be vaccinated using Sinopharm. So inject them with Sinopharm. I take this opportunity to appeal. I think all Cambodian students who go abroad should be given priority in getting the vaccines. There are two types of vaccines. For AstraZeneca vaccine, between the first dose and the second dose takes from 4 to 12 weeks, while Sinopharm takes only 14 days. So students who go to schools may get it faster. They can get the vaccine from within the country for protection of themselves when they go to study abroad. Based on the principle of volunteerism, we should give priority to this group. Now, considering the number of users, there are more than 150,000, or 160,000 people even. Of the 300,000 doses we got earlier, we still have the vaccine. Soon, Sinopharm will add another 400,000, plus more than 300,000 AstraZeneca, so we can use it to give enough priority to students going abroad to have it as self-defense.

Regarding the vaccines card. I think, may be needed later. That is why the card in Cambodia is bilingual. Khmer and English to prepare in advance. I am not sure what definition a few days ago they talked about in Europe about a vaccine passport. I am not sure, but the EU is planning to come up with one. Well, maybe one day without proof of vaccination, one may not be able to enter the country, in case of such approval by the World Health Organization. As was the case with my visit to Africa. At that moment, I was reminded of Uganda, which had just received the vaccine from COVAX. When you go to Africa, you are not vaccinated against yellow malaria, you are not allowed to enter the country. We have to be vaccinated before we can travel. So in the

future, we have not yet concluded what it is, but for Cambodia, we will abide by the rules of the World Health Organization. If we adopt it alone, it will not work. We have to adopt this rule together.

For vendors, I would like the Phnom Penh City Hall to have recipients who are over 60 years old, some of whom are over 60 years old, but those under 60 years of age will receive Sinopharm injections. People over the age of 60 inject them with AstraZeneca, except for diplomats, UN representatives and some agencies that we give them priority to make their choices. Currently at risk are Phnom Penh city, adjacent to Phnom Penh, Kandal province, and Sihanoukville province, where vaccination is demanding. We are now taking steps to inject the frontline team, which we define as the Armed Forces, the medical team, the tax officials, the customs officers, the prison guards. We have our priorities, including the day before, to ensure that sportsmen/women preparing for the 2021 SEA Games in Vietnam are also vaccinated so that they can train and develop resistance to the disease. Teachers are also among the priorities. I think the next time we have the vaccines, after vaccinating the medical team and the armed forces, we will direct attention to teachers. In general, there is no discrimination. All those who stand on Cambodian territory will be vaccinated according to the same priority as the Cambodian people.

PNN TV

[...] previously, vaccinated with Chinese Sinopharm raised many questions about the health of those who were vaccinated. I would like to ask you how your health is after the AstraZeneca vaccine inoculation to you.

[...] Thailand, which is next to Cambodia, they get vaccines from China like us and their leaders Mr. Prayuth, they did not get the jab, the health minister did ... there is a lot of fabricated information against vaccination, etc., that makes some

people reluctant to get vaccinated ... I want Samdech to reiterate how effective and safe is the Chinese Sinopharm vaccine?

[...] The past strategy or hot plan of the Prime Minister to remove some relevant officials who have committed wrongdoing, making the quarantine management ineffective, etc., have received a lot of applause. Does the Samdech have any plans to further strengthen the implementation for the inactive officials [...]

Answer: **First, how do I feel after the injection? I did not even know that I had been injected because there was no pain, and the injection was like injecting vitamins ...** I inject my left arm. Most people inject their right arms. I injected it in my left arm because if I have a pain in my left arm, I have my right arm to sign papers. That is my winning device ... I told the doctor to inject my left arm to ensure that if there is a problem, I use my right arm. After the injection, it is now about two hours. Well, I do not feel a thing. Small children also get vaccinated. According to the Ministry of Health, they always get ones. As for us old people, we can accept as much. We are not afraid of the vaccine. **Second, political issues against China.** Now I would like to ask you to count all 10 ASEAN countries who use Chinese vaccine other than Cambodia – Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Laos, which means that (among the) ASEAN 10 (countries) uses Chinese vaccine more than those from other countries. Why not go and curse those, they only cursed Cambodia. The story is there. Yes, I stopped talking (about it because) they would not listen to reason. I did anything wrong. (You may) ask if the World Health Organization has declared against the Chinese vaccines in the world? In fact, more Chinese vaccines are being exported to other countries than AstraZeneca, if we mention other countries, but within the framework of ASEAN, even

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those who are allies with the west also use Chinese vaccines. Anyway, they are not at fault, and Cambodia is at fault. They say Cambodia vaccinated people to death and injected to paralyze people's limbs. I say it again because you wanted the pro-government forces to die, lose strength, so it is to your liking now. You should congratulate because Hun Sen is about to die and all of Hun Sen's children are about to since they received the Chinese vaccine. I do not insinuate it to anyone.

However, I would need to explain to our people that the effectiveness of any vaccine is the same, only a slight variation. Anti-Chinese politics in Cambodia is monopolistic while China is not against any country. We need help from all of them – China, Britain, and the United States – as long as they give and the gifts are adaptable to the situation of our country. We thank all the countries that support COVAX as well as bilaterally, such as Australia, for whom I would like to thank them once again. Australia gives us 28 million USD to buy the vaccine, and the philanthropist in our country, led by the King, Queen Mother, and the people, contributed more than 57 million USD.

Next, we will use grants such as from Australia and a loan from the Asian Development Bank, a budget loan from Japan ... now, do not care which vaccine to take, but whether there were vaccine or not. In fact, COVAX is not yet able to provide to all countries. If I am not mistaken, as I mentioned, all the countries I have been to were moving with vaccination. Ghana is a country I used to visit when I was the foreign minister [...] soon I will post messages from about a dozen countries that I have visited in the time since I was Foreign Minister [...]

(They pursue) shallow politics. Soon they will see because we lack vaccines, let those who advertise (against) Chinese vaccines not get vaccinated. Now, if they do not have faith, why

would we force them to get the vaccination while we are lacking vaccines? I pushed the boat along the water current. I believe, however, in this one prediction. When we got the vaccine from China, they tell people not to inject because this vaccine is used to kill the Cambodian people. Whenever we lack vaccines, they will find the Royal Government's faults for being irresponsible in finding vaccines for the people. This is their rule of opposition.

From the issue of removal of a police colonel (from position), this is why the law has to be drafted. I can only do administrative punishment, such as the colonel who caught the broker (who have committed crime defined as human smuggling) while knowing about the quarantine camp being set up ... without asking the provincial commissioner, the prosecutor, and instead released. It is within my jurisdiction to remove anyone from colonel and higher ranks. I sign the sub-decree or request the Royal Decree to the King. When it comes to me, I do not transfer to do this /that work ... but disqualifying. Get fired from the queue at once. Then handed the case over to the court so they continue to investigate. In the case of Sokha Hotel, they are not civil servants.

Uncle Mak Hoeun in the United States said that it must be punished. Because of the need to punish that we have to make the law. It is necessary to prepare the law when you have a conspiracy between the officials and the perpetrators, how to punish and punish in court. It is impossible to apply criminal law in every cases. There has to be a separate law governing the COVID-19 and other epidemics, as we may not know what other diseases there will be [...]

Anyone else has any question. I have fulfilled my first duty to vaccinate myself and also, together with the representatives of the World Health Organization and UNICEF and also symbolize the solidarity of the international community with Cambodia. I would like to thank

the World Health Organization and UNICEF, as well as the United Nations network of donors, for enabling the World Health Organization (WHO) to purchase vaccines for countries including Cambodia, as the first privilege in our Asia-Pacific region. I thank you for your cooperation with Cambodia, and Cambodia is fully open and willing to cooperate with each other.

Last year we tackled the Westerdam together ... not a trivial matter. As a question mark, if Cambodia does not accept entry, who would do it and what are the dangers on board the Westerdam? Cambodia is a small but generous country. (In the case of) Westerdam (we have) saved the lives of more than 2,000 tourists, there are still nearly a thousand crews and service people on the ship – in all nearly 3,000 people. Although Cambodia is poor, in some ways we have also contributed to Laos, Myanmar, Timor-Leste, Nepal. If I had more, I would have done more. Now our troops are in South Sudan, Libya, Mali, Central Africa, another life-threatening operation in which we have sacrificed our fighters. This is Cambodia's contribution. Cambodia is a poor country, but we never take a penny from foreigners who have (the COVID-19) treatment in Cambodian hospitals. When you go to quarantine, you have to pay for the hotel owner. Now there are foreigners being treated in our hospital and there is the wife of a diplomat, we have a VIP place for her. We do not take a penny. Though poor, we help friends and even if we get money from friends, we would not become rich.

We are poor, but we are the poor with rich spirit, rich in heart. Vaccination is now given to diplomats, UN agencies and other foreigners in this priority, free of charge, until later, foreigners living and working in Cambodia, we vaccinate free of charge. We are willing to spend money to buy and vaccinate them without taking money (as we would do) for the Cambodian people. This is our motiva-

tion. Some people can criticize us that while we cannot solve the problem for own people, we do it for foreigners. Sorry, that is what I am doing while I am in power. You may wait to become the Prime Minister to do it your way. But, (no body knows) what year. Maybe wait until February 31st every year because I am still there ... now that I am getting vaccinated, it would be not easy to die. I now stop announcing to run for 10 or 20 more years but run until I no longer want to do it. They do not stop preaching about me transferring power to Hun Manet, to this or that person. Now there is no need to transfer. June 5, 2022 commune elections after announcing yesterday. Then, in July 2023, I will be re-elected and I am still the prime ministerial candidate. Whoever wants to win may stand against me within the framework of the set rules. If you want to beat on the street, as you announced earlier, let the army, let the police, let the armed forces turn the cannon to beat by coup, what you would get would be your story.

We see the first stage of the war for masks and toilet paper. This person goes to order, that person goes to grab. The second stage is the war for the vaccine. Fortunately, China is the first to provide foreign aid to Cambodia. That is what China did to Cambodia. The World Health Organization provides within the Asia-Pacific region firstly to Cambodia. They would soon say Cambodia is a puppet of the WHO. That's good too. So what to do now? China was the first to issue 1 million doses of vaccine in foreign aid to Cambodia ... let us be honest, if you cannot listen anymore, do not need to listen, because I have a lot of people listening to me, and now dozens of channels, both TV and radio and online on Facebook [...]. At one time, they said, firstly, to withdraw money from the bank, secondly, do not repay the bank. I then immediately announced that whoever followed such an announcement I would encourage the banks to exercise their rights. They went quiet [...]

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country and our neighbors, as well as our country with other countries.

We must continue to make more efforts. My order is only for civilian institutions. **For the armed forces, the army, the police and the military police, they continue to operate normally. Doctors are still operating normally.** The reduction in the number of people working in these institutions ... (working) staff at the Ministry of Health should be reduced to a small number, but doctors can not be reduced. In Phnom Penh, Kandal, Sihanoukville, schools are closed. Therefore, the (reduced) number of students, teachers, and added by the (reduced) number of the civil servants of all institutions, will make our streets clear, not crowded.

For markets and factories, we do not close them because risk has not got there yet, but we ask for increased vigilance with protection in factories by measuring temperature, hand washing with alcohol, and monitoring the well-being of workers on a regular basis. In the market, you have to pay attention to the situation that is happening and also look at the sellers and the people who come to buy. This is another urgency that we need to address. As of this time, we have 49 infected people, how many more will be infected? since the machines at the Pasteur Institute and at the Institute of Public Health are still running. This situation is considered a serious one for us.

I am not talking about locking down Prey Veng province, but I am asking the governor of Prey Veng province to check the situation at the location of a doctor who has been infected and infected 11 other people in Prey Veng, should schools in the area be closed? I leave this authority to the Governor of Prey Veng to check whether the area should be closed. There will certainly be closures in certain parts, but with up to 11 infections today from an N8-infected doctor, there must be considera-

tion taken to contain the area with explosion (of the pandemic) in Prey Veng [...]■

Decision on Cremation in the Event of the Covid-19 Related Deaths, 09 March 2021

So far, because the situation was not serious, we have not come to the preparation of the last necessary measure, that is, the case of Covid-19 related deaths. The question arises as to whether we should cremate or give them burial. Moment ago, I have discussed with His Excellency Mam Bunheng and we are determined that those who died of Covid-19 disease must be cremated. This point is understandable. Although some ethnic traditions would not go for cremation, but in this special case for Covid-19, we have to make sacrifices because we do not have the land to place one corpse here and another there.

Many countries have buried the deaths two to three layers without (the presences of their) families. For us, we use burning measures, which is easy to manage. Please note that in Singapore, although the Chinese tradition is to bury the deaths, because of small land, Singapore does not allow burials. Even the Singapore's late Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, founding father of Singapore, was cremated.

We do not lack burial ground, but to ensure a measure for land management, such as not to be overwhelmed with the placement of corpses here and there, we need to use cremation method. A few days ago, we cremated a Chinese died in an event. The Phnom Penh Capital Hall authorized the cremation. City Hall is now building a crematorium for this purpose. I suggest that the provinces are also taking actions to prepare for such cases of Covid-19 related deaths. (They should) either to use the existing crematoriums, if any, or at the same time prepare an appropriate crematorium. Such crematorium may be prepared for cremation demand for the common people at a later date. To solve this problem, **I would like to ask all provincial capitals to work diligently and choose a loca-**

tion that is far away from the people.

Please enforce this measure everywhere. In the past, we have not thought about this issue because we see that the situation is not serious enough to take steps to address it. Now we believe that there is (such a service and place) better than there is not. On another front, (I am asking) HE Mam Bunheng (Minister of Health) and his associates, HE Koeut Rith (Minister of Justice) and his associates, who are in charge of drafting sub-decrees regarding legal measures, to prepare a sub-decree on the cremation of Covid-19 related deaths, with specifying number of participants.

In other countries, as we see on TV, when someone died, their family members do not have chances to see his/her faces. They buried them without their presences. We also need to determine how long after death that cremation will proceed. This is a health measure to avoid other epidemics that I am seeking your serious efforts on this issue [...]■

Converting Two Hotels into Hospitals ..., 10 March 21

Working all along, we have run out of strength, in addition to the rise of new diseases, and our civilian doctors are not just doctors for the treatment of Covid-19, but with their day-to-day duties to deal with other illnesses of our people. Due to the sharp increase in number of Covid-19 infection, we have converted and set up a (former) InterContinental Hotel as hospital, now administered by civilian doctor, after the army's help to reorganize it. (In addition to that) I have ordered the Phnom Penh Municipality and the Army Commander to set up two more hospitals, using the hotels as venues, which could have about 200 rooms or more.

Due to this situation, I discussed with Samdech Pichey Sena Tea Banh to release teams of army doctors to help civilian doctors. On the part of Samdech Pichey Sena Tea Banh, he also informed that he had organized

30 teams of doctors and doctors to help the civilian side. Therefore, I would like to ask Samdech Pichey Sena Tea Banh as well as His Excellency Mam Bunheng to discuss and assign this task. My suggestion for the two hospitals set up in Phnom Penh, if it is established, is to hand over to the army to organize and manage, using doctors and physicians from the army to assist the (mounting tasks faced by civilian doctors). The rest of the force must also be prepared to intervene in high-risk targets. According to Samdech Pichey Sena, as I have confirmed, since the Commander of the Army is already in the Inter-Ministerial Commission and the Sub-Committee on Quarantines, we should hand over the task to the Commander of the Army to manage, organize, and use in conjunction with other forces that are implementing measures to control quarantine and law enforcement interventions [...]

Separately, the regime for these forces directly provided by the Ministry of Economy and Finance. (I) requested that HE Aun Pommoniroth arrange this work with an operational team from the Army, where doctors from the Army involved in the treatment of Covid-19 will receive the same regime as those of civilian doctors.

I hope that this work will be done well, with three ministers involved, the Minister of Defense, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Economy and Finance. The Ministry of National Defense is supplying doctors and nurses. The Ministry of Health provides medical equipment for individuals who are doctors and for hospitals to be set up, while the Ministry of Economy and Finance provides rations, as received by the civilian doctors, for the army in addition to their salaries and army rations. Now is the time for the army to come out to help increase the strength of civilian doctors.

Of course, we need the army medical teams to continue to vaccinate (people), but the army

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may be able to share some medical teams to help treat Covid-19 patients, which may increase. If there is a decline (in number), we can still keep them in a state of reserve because the Covid-19 in our country is not over yet, while in other countries it is still happening too. Therefore, the force sent from the Ministry of Defense, under the army commander, must have training to be proficient in the prevention and treatment of people with Covid-19.

These trainings must be meticulous, the equipment must be available, and are same as provided to civilian medical teams. On the other hand, the provision of funding for livelihoods and allowances must go directly from the Ministry of National Defense, from the Ministry of Economy and Finance to the operation teams directly ... then, we conclude later so that the supply chain would not have interruption.

I would like to emphasize that for other means of transportation, it is not necessary to equip from the Ministry of Health to the Ministry of National Defense. They may only need the Ministry of Health to provide ambulances to transport patients. For other means of transportation, the Ministry of National Defense has to cover itself with both vehicles and fuel [...]

Or Vandin in Charge of Anti-Covid-19 Vaccination, 16 March 2021

So far, the procurement process (or search for) vaccines has been in full swing. At the same time, the vaccination process in this first step, we have achieved better results in both the military and civilian sectors. In order for this work to move forward (even better), I would like to propose the establishment of an ad-hoc commission to take up the responsibility in the provision of vaccination in both the civilian, military and police sectors.

Let me point out (the person we needed). **Let us appoint Lok Chumteav Or Vandin as the**

chairperson of the ad-hoc commission in charge of administering vaccinations across the country, which prepares the master plan that follows the steps we have taken so far. In the time to come, vaccines will be available one after the other and it is necessary to have a specific master plan, as I said in our meeting yesterday, on some of the target groups that we need to provide.

I request Lok Chumteav Or Vandin to be the chairperson of the ad-hoc commission. For this matter, she must be requesting the Minister or coming to me to appoint someone else in the Ministry of Health and in the relevant ministries such as the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Ministry of National Defense, and the Ministry of Interior to participate in this commission. If we do not do this, the work will be complicated and slow to implement. We have two units to organize. First, it is the unit that will lead the procurement for the purchase (of vaccines) and other assistance by asking for my advice, including the one today to purchase an additional four million doses.

The matter now is planning the master plan clearly and in line with the actual situation in happening. I am requesting His Excellency Mam Bunheng urgently discuss with Lok Chumteav Or Vandin on who else is needed to join the ad-hoc commission in this regard. **The Commission on this matter must also liaise with other relevant institutions ... His Excellency Mam Bun Heng may organize and set some of the Secretaries of State and Undersecretaries of State (tasks) to participate in any work related to the fight against Covid-19.**

Of course, the Ministry of Health is not only responsible for Covid-19, but also for treating other diseases and other issues. However, we should set aside a number of Secretaries of State and Undersecretaries of State to take up works specifically on Covid-19. In doing so, I think the vaccination process will go well with a specific

master plan. I am asking His Excellency Mam Bunheng to discuss with Lok Chumteav Or Vandin on the preparation of the decision to establish this commission, to which Lok Chumteav Or Vandin is the chairperson. **Lok Chumteav Or Vandin must recruit people in relevant institutions, and in the Ministry of Health, there must be someone to do this job. This is primarily the issue about which I am sending the message (because) otherwise our vaccination process will be slow.** In cases involving the provinces, we may have ad-hoc sub-commissions as indicated by Lok Chumteav Or Vandin, if necessary.

I am bringing this up so that each province and each institution sees and takes up responsibility. **This is about the Ad-hoc Commission for Vaccination Process ... (since) there are two (types of units involved in) Vaccination Processes here. One is relating to procurement, and the other one is about vaccination process. The national vaccination process/campaign by the ad-hoc vaccination commission headed by Lok Chumteav Or Vandin, if necessary, may establish sub-commissions at the municipal and provincial level to acquire specific responsibilities for the organization and registration of people/workers (for vaccination).** Institutions may also set up ad-hoc commissions for vaccination of their staff, especially the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training, which needs to provide injection in the future to workers and to prepare a list of factories in the affected areas, while deciding workers where to get the jobs first.

For the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, we have just decided to give teachers in Phnom Penh, Kandal, Prey Veng, Koh Kong and Sihanoukville the urgency (for vaccination). We need to make it clear that each institution must also be in charge, such as the Ministry of Education, which must be in charge of the teaching staff and the students. The

Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training is also responsible for the relevant issues of workers in factories, enterprises and workers in informal sectors, whom we also needed to give attention. As already happened, we have provided vaccination for those waste collecting workers. We still have a number of other workers to give priority in the injection.

The provincial and municipal (authorities) must keep in touch with fundamentally with, especially, the market, vendors, as well as the taxi, tricycle drivers and other priority groups. In my opinion, **in addition to the ad-hoc national commission, chaired by Lok Chumteav Or Vandin, there should also be ad-hoc commissions at institutions and sub-commissions at the provincial and municipal levels responsible for the vaccination campaign process. We plan to vaccinate at least 10 million people.** It is a large number that we needed to have specific responsibilities from the national level institution and for that I pointed out (the candidacy) of Lok Chumteav Or Vandin as the chairperson of the ad-hoc national commission (for vaccination).

Starting now, Lok Chumteav Or Vandin must take over the vaccination work in progress as we have done for all doctors/medical professionals, and their spouses. We have already set the principles. We must give vaccination priority to teachers in the risk areas [...]

We have no secrets with our people. We need to inject our population between 10 and 13 million. We have (already) signed contracts, and according to information we got, some 1.5 million doses (of vaccines) will arrive in the near future and more will continue to arrive. We still have the remaining amount of Sinopharm coming. Some 1.5 million doses of Sinovac will also be arriving. More doses of AstraZeneca will follow. We are also looking to buy US Johnson & Johnson. Let there be specific responsibilities on this issue [...]