

National Road 5—Battambang—Serey Sophoan, Banteay Meanchey Inaugurated

(10 January 2022 — Extensive Excerpts and Unofficial Translation)



Battambang-Serei Sophorn National Road 5 – Cambodia-Japan Cooperation Fruit

Today, I am very happy to join (the Japanese Ambassador) HE Mikami Masahiro, representing Japan, as well as Excellencies, Lok Chumteavs, Ladies and Gentlemen, who attended the inauguration of the northern section of National Road No. 5, which connects Battambang to Serei Sophorn city, 84.74 kilometers long. In consideration, this is the fruit of the cooperation between Cambodia and Japan in the Cambodian socio-economic development efforts. What (the Minister of Public Works and Transports) HE Sun Chanthol as well as HE Mikami Masahiro said just now, I think, was right [...] on June 26, 2018, I was here for the launch of the construction.

I would like to take this opportunity to seek an apology from our people in Battambang province. In 2020, we had severe floods. I traveled to Banteay Meanchey many times, then I have to make a second plan to go to Pursat and Battambang and I will go to Banteay Meanchey once again to provide assistance such as rice seeds and other crops for the restore (phase after the flood). Coincidentally, there was a

community infection breakout. I myself had had direct contact with the Hungarian Foreign Minister, who visited Cambodia, and was COVID-19 positive. Therefore, the schedules were interrupted and for Battambang province, Samdech Krala Hom Sar Kheng came in my place to distribute those assistances after the flood. During the flood, I was traveling in a part of Banteay Meanchey province on National Road 5 too.

NR 5 or ASEAN Highway 11 or South Corridor – Bangkok to Ho Chi Minh City

I observe that this road is a firmly built road, and I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the efforts of the two provincial authorities, the construction companies, and the cooperation that made this road possible. I would like to commend the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, the Ministry of Economy and Finance, as well as the demining team for implementing this road construction project without impacts from the operation, though indeed, in Battambang province, there are landmines. Now, Japan is also financing for demining in the northwestern

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Roads/Water Treatment in Sihanoukville

(02 December 2021 — Extensive Excerpts and Unofficial Translation)

New Year Groundbreaking Quality Improvement of National Road 48

Today is the third day that we have entered the year 2022 and the first Monday of the month that we launch the groundbreaking ceremony of the construction project to upgrade the quality of National Road 48 with a length of 148 km, which connects National Road 4 to the provincial town of Koh Kong – Khemarak Phumin. I am happy that today we have gathered here for a celebration at the beginning of our new year under the shade of peace, political stability and continuous development. A moment ago, (Minister of Public Works and Transports) HE Sun Chanthol has already made a report related to the construction of this road. I know that we have been waiting for this road a bit too long. The fact that it has taken this long is because there was a need for more fund.

We had to go through the financing agreement for National Road 48 twice. For the first stage, since there was a need to expand roads in some areas, we were in need of more than 20 million US dollars. Compared to the time set in the previous contract signed in March 2017, it was rather late. Later, we signed the new contract on November 30, 2020 to receive more than US\$ 87 million to upgrade the quality of this road making it strong, durable and widening its width. HE Sun Chanthol already made a report related to the construction of certain sections where there will be two lanes, four lines that two for each traffic direction, and (larger rods) in the provincial town.

These are the requirements that have slowed our process. For us who have been working to solve this problem, we thought it has been rather slow. However, I think that late is better than never. With some of the construction projects are already in action, today we officially launch the construction to expand and improve this road to become more durable that can serve the economic growth. According to forecasts and projects that have been happening now and in the near future, Koh Kong, in the southwest of the country, will have no less special economic zones than other provinces and Sihanoukville.

With Peace, We Connect and Expand Road Systems

The Ambassador of the Republic of Korea also mentioned the progress in the relations between Cambodia and Korea. Soon later, I will talk about progress made in relations between the two countries from 1997 to the present, or in other words, from the signing of the Agreement on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations in 1996 and my visit to the Republic of Korea in 1996 until now.

Let me turn to National Road 48. The connection between the Sihanoukville mainland to Koh Kong was by boat and it was very dangerous. I still remember the memories of my visit to Koh Kong province. Around the end of 1985 or the beginning of 1986, I traveled to Koh Kong province. Samdech Pichay Sena Tea Banh took a speedboat from Srae Ambel to Koh Kong. At that time, I also took a speedboat with Rong Phlam Kaisom [...] the only internal

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provinces, covering Battambang, Banteay Meanchey and Pursat. For National Highway 5, also known as ASEAN Highway 11 or South Corridor, Japan helped us connect Phnom Penh to Bangkok of Thailand on one side and to Ho Chi Minh City of Vietnam on the other.

We have seen that as we have achieved this section (of the NR 5), we still have more phases to go. HE Sun Chanthol mentioned in his report already about ongoing construction process. Today, we inaugurated the 84-kilometer-long section (of NR5) from Battambang to the provincial town of Banteay Meanchey, Serey Sophom. For the south section from Prek Kadam to Thlea MaAm (with a length of 135 km) we have just realized 64%, and we planned to finish it in 2022 [...]

Japan Builds National Road No. 5 and National Road 1 to Vietnam Border

On observation, the NR5, connecting between the Kingdom of Thailand (and the Kingdom of Cambodia) with links to the Vietnamese border, is one of the busiest roads. So, the Japanese friend helped in building a 366 kilometers long road, which has connection [...] to National Road No. 1, also built by Japan, and the Japanese built Tsubasa Bridge, which is the largest bridge to replace previously most difficult to road to transport, with a ferry crossing at night connecting Kandal and Prey Veng, Neak Loeng. It can be said that this southern corridor is supported by Japanese grants and financing.

I am taking this opportunity, through His Excellency Mikami Masahiro, to thank the Government and people of Japan for their continued assistance in offering grant and financing for the socio-economic development of Cambodia [...]. We have in Mongkol Borei district (of Banteay Meanjey) the Japanese buildings in the hospital, which I traveled with the former Ambassador HE Fumi Akita Kahashi in a helicopter for inauguration. Today (Ambassador

Mikami Masahiro and I) had the opportunity to fly a helicopter together and we have one more program left for the inauguration of a few of Japanese built bridges. We will do it in one place, and we can still travel by helicopter together. This has pointed to Japan's contribution to peace and development in Cambodia.

Japan Contributed to the Establishment of Paris Peace Agreement and SNC

(For) peace, I should remind a little. This morning, I handed over an article that His Excellency Cham Prasidh found in the Asahi Shimbun, since 1990, to His Excellency Mikami while we were in the helicopter. (The article) related to the search for peace in Cambodia, when the signing ceremony for the establishment of the Supreme National Council (SNC) held in Tokyo. HE Mikami was able to see former Japanese Foreign Minister Nakayama attending at the time. Both Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Chavalit Yongchaiyuth came from Thailand to attend [...] His Excellency Yukio Imagawa, former Japanese Ambassador to Cambodia organized a secret meeting for me, Chavalit and His Excellency Yukio Imagawa in Pattaya. Then the late King Norodom Sihanouk, the Father of the Nation, Preah Borom Ratanak Kaod and I signed the SNC establishment. This was an important part of the search for peace at that time.

Then again, every time I go to Japan for a medical check, it is not just about health. Health is one thing, but we (also went there) to discuss politics. The one who won my heart at the time was (Hisashi) Owada. He is Japan's Deputy Foreign Minister. At that time, I proposed to include in the Paris Agreement the point of non-return of the Pol Pot genocidal regime. I negotiated with (Hisashi) Owada from 7pm until 2:30 am. At that time (Hisashi) Owada said to me this way, "Saddam Hussein must be tried. Pol Pot must be tried. If, however we made it the point now, how can the

Khmer Rouge participate? How can the parties be involved?" That is why we have rephrased the clause to "do not let the deeds of the past return" instead of "do not let the Khmer Rouge return."

In other words, the Cambodian peace process has had a big share from the Japanese side. Japan hosted the preparation of negotiations to sign the Paris Agreement, leading to the establishment of the SNC. We also had help of Japan for the four (Khmer) factions to come together. At that time, the Khmer Rouge refused (and) boycotted. Only three parties participated in the signing. I do not care if it were three or four parties. I only care about us having two governments. A government led by me and a government led by Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk. From their side attended by Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk and Son San, the Prime Minister. Khieu Samphan, the Vice President and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Democratic Kampuchea at the time, was not present.

PKO Arrived in Cambodia; Welcomes Japanese Warship

Now, if we look at this issue, we should say that 2022 is the 30th anniversary of the Japanese peacekeepers, popularly known as the PKO or Peace Keeping Operation to operate outside Japan. Thus, the 30th anniversary of the day Japan first sent out (its peacekeeping troop) to Cambodia. Two Japanese died and buried in our territory. Therefore, 2022 is the 30th anniversary that we should do some activities to celebrate, including the visit of the Japanese warship to Cambodia's seaport. Since the depth is only two meters, the ship could not enter Ream port. This morning, I discussed with Samdech Pichay Sena Tea Banh and we have a choice.

Though construction is underway, we can still arrange for their visit. We can take Cambodian small ships that can navigate shallow water to take the Japanese troops from their big

ship to Ream, and then load them in buses and tour. We can arrange on one part a visit on waterway and then land, on the other [...] Samdech Pichay Sena Tea Banh received my phone call this morning. Before I came here, I was a little busy calling with him. We organize a little program to acknowledge the first operation of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces in peacekeeping operation.

On this peacekeeping operation, I should bring back to memory a little bit. At the time, I strongly supported Japan's role in maintaining peace. I was becoming the target of an attack. The Shimbun Akahata, the press of the Japanese Communist Party followed and asked me (about this). At that time, Yasushi Akashi (the head of UNTAC) asked me to go to Washington [...] to meet with relevant persons to mobilize the United States to help contribute funds to UNTAC. I traveled via Tokyo and left for the United States. (The) Shimbun Akahata (reporters) followed and asked me (about the Japanese PKO) in Washington and then another Shimbun Akahata came to Phnom Penh's Pochentong airport to ask me "why you support (peace operation force)."

There is one more thing. In addition to playing a role in bringing peace and sending self-defense forces called the Peacekeepers (Japan) to Cambodia, Japan organized the first ICORC (International Committee for the Reconstruction of Cambodia) in 1992. At that time, I had no idea why there were many Japanese bodyguards placed in my protection [...] HE Ieng Moly also went to the signing ceremony together that day. At that time, I asked the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, why did I have so many guards? He replied that Your Excellency supported the Japanese PKO to go on mission abroad, while some Japanese people do not agree on the issue. As of now, the people of Japan should be proud of Japan's role in peacekeeping in

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the framework of the United Nations [...]

Let us return to National Road 5. Those who travel between Prek Kadam to Thlea MaAm, those who travel from Thlea MaAm to Pursat may find it a bit difficult at this moment. Once we finished the construction, it will be one strong and safe road. No matter how safe it is, we must uphold traffic laws. A few days ago, I said there are a smaller number of people dying of COVID-19 than from traffic accident. Even with the new variant of COVID-19 Omicron infection these days, the death toll is zero. It has been few days in a row now. One case of Omicron infection infiltrated into the community yesterday. Yesterday there were three cases. I will talk about the problem down below.

Through His Excellency Mikami, I am delivering thanks to the Japanese generous assistance to the Kingdom of Cambodia [...] many roads – small and big roads, built for our country [...] Former Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi once visited Cambodia at the year that we had a huge flood. Sadly, when he returned to Japan, a few months later, he passed away. I asked the Japanese Prime Minister that I would like to build a road link from Takeo to Phnom Din on the Cambodian-Vietnamese border. He asked for a discussion on the issue. At the time of the great flood, I took the Japanese Ambassador with me to distribute (humanitarian) gifts to the floodplain. On National Road 2, I pointed out to him the road I wanted to expand. That is why we received the grant to build this road connecting Takeo town to Phnom Din at the border with Vietnam. There are more assistances and connectivity, which enable us to rebuild the country.

Former War Zone, War among Khmers

Do not forget that in our area, this is a fighting area. Excellencies and all Japanese friends, in the past, Japan only allowed

Japanese tourists to come to Siem Reap and Phnom Penh, and Japanese tourists were not allowed to leave those two areas. At that time, the hot war zone was in Battambang province, which we later divided into two provinces – Battambang and Banteay Meanchey. In the direction of Pailin, especially in the territory of Battambang, I think that Samdech Krala Hom Sar Kheng and HE Ke Kim Yan still remember the events that took place in that time. In a way, I said we were wrong in terms of military strategy. When the Vietnamese army was there, we got our army in so ad so positions. When the Vietnamese army withdrew, we stayed where we were. They broke our defense line. This is a management error [...] we all slept in one place together – Samdech Chea Sim, Samdech Heng Samrin, and I, and other leaders. The war in this area was very hot. It was a war among (us Khmer) each other. I remember one thing. We lost Pailin in September/October 1989. We later lost Thmor Puok on Pchum Ben Day in 1989. We lost Svay Chek later. Later, we fought back and retook it. It was a war among us Khmer.

War Cannot End War, a Political Solution Sought for

I never believed that a war could end the war. I must continue to seek a political solution that I began in 1987. Negotiations to resolve the issue are not trivial. In particular, the military aspect is the most complex issue. We focused efforts to reach for a ceasefire [...] but in order to achieve that, we have to go from one stage to another until we have this United Nations operation in Cambodia called UNTAC (United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia). UNTAC still cannot achieve end of war though. Once withdrew, Cambodia was still at war [...]

In the past, Cambodia was a country with many territories, but now we have become a country with one territory. The peace opportunity gives us socio-economic development and

infrastructure construction. Now, there are more paved roads in Battambang, Pailin and Banteay Meanchey. Peace has scored these achievements and peace is hard to find. We must be protective of peace. If peace cannot be maintained, people will die, have injuries, disabilities [...] we have had enough pain. We have had our lessons that we must strive to maintain this peace. If you cannot keep the peace, do not talk about anything else. Look at some of the countries that are at war, would they be able to talk about human rights, about democracy, about freedom of expression, under shelling and bombings. So, start with the right to live, the right live in peace without the threat of war [...]

90% of Former Battles Become Markets, Development Areas

I still remember that after the end of the war on December 29, 1998, I set two main goals, the first of which was to turn the former battlefield into a market and a development zone. Second, turn the border with neighboring countries into a border of friendship and peace, cooperation and development. We have made major achievement of these two goals. In that, turning the former battlefield area into a market into a development area, so far, we have realized more than 90 percent of the goal. The areas remain are still under landmines and unexploded ordnance that we have yet to destroy.

For Battambang and Banteay Meanchey, for this region, as the General Director of CMAC reported to me, Japanese friends have helped fund demining in the northwestern region, which includes provision of credit for Pursat. If we were to achieve in 2025 the goal of (having left) zero mines and UXOs, it would mean that we had successfully pursued a policy of successfully turning a former battlefield into a development zone, a market, production places and tourist sites.

On the border with our neighbors, we try to cooperate with

our neighbors, where people have always been afraid of fighting between neighbors. Now it has become an area of bartering goods. With Thailand, we have a trade volume of about 10 billion US dollars. Vietnam has more than 9 billion US dollars and last year more than 9 billion US dollars. We have agreed with Laos to work toward attaining more than 100 million US dollars. This size can be even more. From the beginning, it was a war zone. We became a region of socio-economic cooperation.

COVID-19 Hinders Us, We Go On

COVID-19 has destroyed us, but they have not been able to destroy our efforts. Take for instance the road construction is still going on. The Japanese friend continues to build National Road No. 5, which connects Kandal province, Kampong Chhnang province, Pursat province, Battambang province, and then continues to Banteay Meanchey, which connects to the Thai border [...] this is a commitment to move forward. Although the COVID-19 attack was devastating, we still have works at hand.

Today is the opening of the 2021-2022 school year with three million students. We have not yet come to the case that students are COVID-19 positive. This is a good (pandemic) management. I would like to express my appreciation to all stakeholders, as well as the people who accept the call of the Royal Government through the adoption of vaccines and self-defense. Previously, (for the yard of this size), we would put about 6,000 people. Now we only have more than 1,000 people. We keep the distance. We must continue to keep the distance, exercise “three dos”, and “three don’ts” further. We must hold on to masks, always clean hands with alcohol, and keep a distance to ensure we do not infect. If infected, it does not lead to seriousness that leads to death.

I have not received any infor-

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mation to clarify the one that there is now another variant of virus, which is a hybrid between Delta and Omicron. It is Deltacron. While Omicron is yet to go away, Delta is yet to go away, Alpha is yet to go away, there comes now another hybrid. When is it going to be over? Because of this invisibility, we as an individual and each family must continue the efforts to protect ourselves with alcohol and wear masks, and not to go to crowded places.

No Foreign Visitors Yet, Promote Domestic Tourism

It is very difficult to stop people from going to crowded places, though [...] however, we try to do as we did during the last three days holidays, when 460,000 people went out on January 7, a Friday, 8 and 9 – three days. According to the Minister of Tourism, in Battambang, there were about thirty thousand local tourists. Well, we needed our economy to keep working. When there are no foreign visitors, we continue to promote domestic tourists. Before COVID-19 arrived in Cambodia, about one million people went abroad for holiday. Now more than one million of them are visiting places in the country and provinces have big and small hotels catering to budget ability.

Purchase Five Million Doses in Addition to More Than 10M Doses in Stock

[...] I would urge us in this opportunity to accelerate the booster dose. I am taking take this opportunity to thank, through His Excellency Mikami Masahiro, the Government and the people of Japan for sending 1.3 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine to Cambodia [...] in my meeting with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, he said that he would give another 300,000 doses, which has already arrived. We are working to ensure that the vaccine is not overdue, as the AstraZeneca vaccine is short-lived.

Yesterday, I ordered for a purchasing order of another five million doses. Though we still

have 10 million doses left in stock, but taking into account the amount needed for booster doses, we still lack another eight million doses. Yesterday I asked for purchasing order of five million doses to add to the warehouse. We needed to ensure that our Cambodian people are not short of vaccines for the booster dose. I would like to ask each province, the Ad-hoc Commission for General Vaccination, to announce and make every effort to ensure that this third dose will happen in time for the Omicron infection, which is entering the community. There is no better option [...] as the five million doses arrived, we may need to consider placing order for another five million doses because we do not know when it will end? [...]

Rapid Operation Command: Vaccine for Everyone, No Matter Where They Come From

I have issued an order in Phnom Penh. It is difficult to move Pfizer out (as it needed to stay in the temperature of) 80 degrees below zero. Let us jab them in Phnom Penh. Some are worried that people will jostle for jabs in Phnom Penh. Now I would tell you that the best way is if they are willing to leave Battambang to have injection in Phnom Penh, give them the injection. We are all Khmer after all. Let us use all Pfizer. When we are out of Pfizer, there is no more. That is it [...] Lok Chumteav Or Vandin may announce it. People in Phnom Penh who wanted to have Pfizer injections, do it [...] the most important thing is to have vaccine in the body [...] I heard there was a meeting that concerned about the fact that people might go to Phnom Penh to compete for vaccine. I wanted them to. All I wanted is people get vaccinated [...]

Yesterday, I called (DPM and Minister of Economy and Finance Aun Porn) Moniroth why there is a need for [...] two weeks study [...] in the world, had we not known that there are only Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca, Sinovac and Sinopharm? Why study for two

weeks? I order immediate negotiations to buy five million doses to ensure that our people have vaccines and vaccinated for community immunity. As of now, we have seen clearly the immunity effect when among 115,000 students taking Bacca-laureate exams, there were only three infected cases [...] today, our children and youth go to school, and we continue to monitor and manage that problem.

HE Mikami Masahiro Supports Cambodia as ASEAN Chair

I would like to thank His Excellency Mikami Masahiro for supporting Cambodia as ASEAN Chair this year. (His Excellency wrote) *“I would like to express my respect to the Prime Minister for his immediate visit to Myanmar and for his initiative to improve the situation in Myanmar. Japan intends to provide strong cooperation for Cambodia to succeed as chair of ASEAN.”* I am grateful for Japan’s support for Cambodia’s ASEAN Chairmanship and will be committed to coordinating cooperation for the success. On the helicopter, we discussed issues related to the process of dealing with Myanmar. He asked for more information and confirmed that Japan cares about the issue of humanitarian aid.

Dialogue Bible with Myanmar: Five Consensus and ASEAN Charter

I just wanted to clarify to the Cambodian people as well as to the analysts, in fact, as there are too many comments. The bible that I am using for dialogue with the leaders of Myanmar are, firstly, the five-point consensus of ASEAN, and secondly, the ASEAN Charter. My bible is not anything far from ASEAN. As the time has not come yet, I do not act. I just threw a message. What we have achieved does not end with a joint statement on my visit to Myanmar. Here are the three main points: first, the ceasefire; second, the provision of assistance; and third, it is relating to the dialogue. His Excellency

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing ensured the facilitation of the envoy’s visit to Myanmar and meeting with all stakeholders, including ethnic armed groups, considering the actual situation in Myanmar. We need to create two mechanisms. This is not Cambodia’s thing. This is what ASEAN has to do.

Ceasefire Coordination Mechanism Consists of Troika and ASEAN Secretariat

I have instructed His Excellency Prak Sokhon to work for compromise in our ASEAN partners to establish two mechanisms, the first mechanism deals with ceasefire. We should have at least had (the ASEAN) Troika. Chaired by Brunei (former Chair), the current Chair is Cambodia, the future Chair is Indonesia, the Troika and the ASEAN Secretariat will coordinate the ceasefire. Ceasefire is implementable if there is an implementation mechanism. In doing so, the Myanmar side welcomed the participation of the ASEAN Special Envoy for Myanmar to participate in ceasefire talks with ethnic armed groups.

This important step is enshrined in the ASEAN Five-Point consensus. The first point of the consensus related to ending the violence. The first is the immediate cessation of violence in Myanmar, and all parties must exercise maximum restraint. At that time, we used the word “immediate cessation of violence” in Myanmar. This time we reached the issue of stopping all violence, in addition to the word “ceasefire.” Well, in order to be credible for all parties, ASEAN should play a role. This role, which was not previously available, is now available, and ASEAN has a role to play in mediating the conflicting parties to a ceasefire. It is very good. With the absence of violence, no armed war in Myanmar, it will create a favorable environment for a constructive dialogue and for the elections that the Myanmar side has scheduled to hold in August 2023. Well, if that (favorable

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environment for a constructive dialogue) does not happen, then elections will not be possible.

I hope that our ASEAN partners will work to create a mechanism, and this mechanism is not Cambodia's mechanism, only Cambodia is the chair now. The efforts will not end in 2022. This will be in the hands of the new ASEAN Chair, Indonesia, and then the Troika will be Cambodia, the former Chair, Indonesia the Chair in 2023, and the future Chair – Laos. Thus, such a mechanism should be proclaimed with reconciliation among our ASEAN. Myanmar itself also needs to have a mechanism to work with ASEAN. ASEAN cannot mobilize and bring on the force without the consent of Myanmar [...]

Would Japan Help Bring about a Ceasefire

While in Nay Pyi Taw, I thought if Japan could help in some way, such as cars to implement the ceasefire, it would be good. I depend on Japan because Japan supports this principle of humanitarian aid. I am asking His Excellency MIKAMI Masahiro to help look into this request. As there would be operation teams, whether they wanted it or not, there must be means of transportation to enter this area. If it is happening, it would be good. This is not a UN operation, but an ASEAN operation to help resolve armed conflicts in ASEAN member states. It is not an interference, but this is a provision by the Myanmar side for ASEAN actors to play a role. I do not think it is a separate issue of Cambodia and Myanmar.

“Opponents of Ceasefire Wanted Deaths and Injuries of War”

I know some of you are cursing me. Maybe they are blaming on Facebook again and they are the very same group. I believe in the group there are Myanmar and Khmer sitting together [...] they may be sitting together anywhere in Paris or in the US or in Thailand or in the Philippines, etc. [...] well, we know.

You are the very same extremist group. That is why I said, “those who are against the ceasefire, you want people killed and wounded in the war.” I do not have animosity with the Myanmar people [...] you have to see, however, that your life will be saved from the flames of war by the role of ASEAN in that (there are) initiatives in my visit to Myanmar. Myanmar leaders agree to do this is not too common. This is in the scriptures of ASEAN. Violence in Myanmar must stop immediately and all parties must exercise maximum restraint.

All parties must stop the violence because this is a killing spree, including the bombing of the Cambodian Embassy. You have to understand that Cambodia is suffering too much. We have had ample of experience. Death of mother/father and handicaps nationwide. All these happened because of the war. We have implemented successfully my win-win policy for 23 years already. We ended the wars that prevailed in the land, one after the other, for 500 years, since the reign of Preah Srey Raja. War began to tear up the territory. Finally, we united the territory. Due to the unification of territory, we got rid of polio, and moving towards zero malaria. We are now fighting with Covid-19.

Mechanism to Strengthen Humanitarian Assistance for Myanmar

[...] If all ASEAN joins, it will be up to ASEAN and Myanmar to agree. All ten countries may join with the ASEAN Secretariat together [...]. In capacity of ASEAN Chair, Cambodia just paved the way. Leave this works to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and to the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair. *The second point is to strengthen the provision of humanitarian assistance.* Humanitarian assistance must have specific mechanism. Some aid has now arrived in Myanmar but has not gone into distribution. The paragraph says – “the two leaders supported the meeting of stakeholders, including the Special Envoy of

the ASEAN Chair on Myanmar, the Secretary-General of ASEAN, the National Working Group for Coordination of humanitarian assistance through the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre), the Myanmar Red Cross and relevant UN agencies.” Both sides recognize the importance of establishing appropriate mechanism and infrastructure to implement the Covid-19 vaccination program in conjunction with the effective provision of humanitarian assistance to the needy people without discrimination. Nothing is more important than saving lives [...]

ASEAN Chair Does Not Aim to Meet This/That Person

Once the ceasefire is resolved and humanitarian aid goes everywhere, the dialogue can go together. Some people just say I did not meet with this/that person. I do not set a goal to meet anyone. What I wanted is two things: first, a ceasefire, and second, (humanitarian) aid. In the joint statement, the wording was (the Myanmar side will) facilitate and coordinate the special envoy's visit to Myanmar for meetings with all stakeholders, including ethnic armed groups. Well, the special envoy will continue to meet with this/that party. I cannot afford to meet with this/that party or this/that group. For that, those people considered my visit unsuccessful because of the opposite story.

I would like to highlight the five-point consensus. The fifth point is that “special envoys and delegates must visit Myanmar to meet with all stakeholders.” There had been efforts to implement Point 5 first. It was because of that the envoy could not go. As for my process, we take the first one first and connect the fourth with humanitarian aid. I think our ASEAN partners will understand. This process based on the five-point consensus. (When) we set the condition to take the fifth point (before anything else) it has become a constraint. Some says – “if there is no chance of meet-

ing this/that person, no pint of making a visit”. I am not an envoy. I am the Chair. I go and I did.

Cambodia Hands Its Share of ASEAN Vaccine to Myanmar People

When I got there, I was able to bring back a ceasefire. If shooting does not stop, whom to meet? I bring back chance for coordination of humanitarian assistance. The people of Myanmar needed lives saving first. Save lives from armed clashes and violence, and provide them with food, medicine, vaccines. I told Min Aung Hlaing at a meal that I would like to offer its part of the ASEAN Fund for Vaccines, about US\$ 1 million worth of vaccine, to Myanmar people. Cambodia does not take it and transfer its share to Myanmar so that the people of Myanmar can have them. Although Cambodia is poor, Cambodia's heart is not [...]

Yōhei Sasakawa as Advisor to ASEAN Chair 2022

Therefore, the humanitarian assistance mechanism should be set up with the relevant ASEAN stakeholders, the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair, the ASEAN Secretary-General, the AHA Center and relevant UN agencies, and with the help of Myanmar friends set up by Brunei. We can create that group, and in that group, the Japanese side can participate in it. I will meet Yōhei Sasakawa on January 31, and he is known to have made 131 visits to Myanmar. I would like to ask him to be an advisor to the ASEAN Chair in 2022 to help me mediate, because he knows Myanmar from almost all sides. Well, I hope he agrees and on the 31st, I will meet him. He is now the President of the Japan Foundation. He will come to see me. I hope he hears this and volunteers to be the advisor to the ASEAN Chair on Myanmar for 2022. In 2023, we are not the Chair anymore.

With Ceasefire and Distribution of Assistance, Dialogue Process Will Happen

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Well, I hope our people understand the process. It is not just a two-page announcement. The final stage is for Myanmar itself to announce that it will hold elections in August 2023. That is why implementation of the five-point unanimous consensus should be complementary to the five-point roadmap of the State Administrative Council. At this point, I want to connect with what not stipulated in the 5 points of the ASEAN consensus. The five ASEAN consensus does not mention elections. What we wanted to link there is for the elections to take place.

Look at the five points of ASEAN, nothing said about the elections. The so-called solution must end with the elections itself. I see Ong Keng Yong, former ASEAN Secretary-General, Singapore's diplomat, made his points. I would like to explain to you, Excellency, look at the five-point consensus. Were there any points that mention about the elections? Not at all. I still cling to first – the ASEAN Charters and second the five-point consensus of ASEAN. However, what interests me is that in the road map of Myanmar there is a date set for the elections – August 2023 [...]

I look forward to seeing more comments on that issue. Let the people of Myanmar know that Cambodia does not want anything. Cambodia is now in a situation where it is wrong either to do or not to do [...] if I remained silent about Myanmar, the situation will remain in limbo. When I do it, people say I was wrong. If I do not do it, they also say I was wrong. In that case, it is better to do it than not to do it. The results will come later. Only it will not happen in just one or two days. Cambodia held four years of negotiations before (elections). Myanmar set August 2023 for the elections [...]

With War, There Is No Human Rights, No Democracy, No Freedom of Expression

I think I talk a lot, but it is time to talk about the topic. I call on

ASEAN partners to understand and facilitate Cambodia to fulfill its role in 2022, and to understand that I am in a difficult situation [...] as I decided to do it I have achieved more than I wanted. At first, I just wanted a ceasefire, but did not expect him to give the ASEAN Chair's special envoy on Myanmar the opportunity to discuss with other armed groups to implement the ceasefire. This is a good point. Do not forget when there are armed clashes, nothing you could do. Do not talk about human rights, do not talk about democracy, and do not talk about freedom of expression, only shooting at each other [...]

Channel humanitarian aid to the survivors first and talk later. Things will proceed. Now, if we remain silent and a visit would take place only if a meeting with this/those person happen, it will not go anywhere. From April (last year) to January 7, 2022, no one was there and talked to the leaders of Myanmar, [...] (I) wrote on the plane and I posted in my Facebook page on arrival. "Whoever opposes the ceasefire means that you wanted people to die and sustain injuries of war. Anyone against humanitarian aid means wanting people to starve to death, to have no medicine, no vaccine to protect against COVID-19" [...]

If Approved, I Will Visit Japanese Troops on Board

Taking this opportunity, I would thank the two construction teams who worked hard to build on time, giving me the opportunity with HE Mikami Masahiro for today's inauguration. I would like to send a message to all the construction team who are building on National Road 5 with my friendly greetings between Cambodia and Japan. We will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Japanese PKO in 2022, and I promise that when the Japanese warship arrives in Cambodia, I will visit the Japanese troops on board if the Japanese side agrees [...] I wish long lasting friendship between Cambodia and Japan [...]

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especially with regard to financial management. RGC allows no one to borrow from this or that source. The only person in charge of borrowing is the Ministry of Economy and Finance, which represents the Royal Government in borrowing, whether from outside or inside the country. That you practice "build first and pay later" (you have gone through) a type of loan without permission and it is illegal [...]

There is only one hot spot today. Maybe the analysts can chew it three to four days about Mr. Hun Sen's tense about public financial management. Previously they talked about "internal intimidation." They should take a clear look inside of the Cambodian People's Party. In a Buddhist hierarchy, they are head and deputy head monks, or pagoda head monks. It is not a joke. How could anyone intimidate internally? Our interiors are united. However, it is good that (you think of it that way so that) you misjudged us. With misjudging, you cannot go ahead of me. I will give you more [...]

Economic Growth Will Be Around 3%; Customs and Tax Revenue of US\$ 4.5 Billion

The economy will function normally. Our end-of-year income is good. This year, although the revenue has decreased, but in terms of tax revenue, it has exceeded the plan [...] I just want to tell you a little bit, how could (anyone anticipate) the government's fall? Although our revenue fell, the Customs collected only 97.1%, the revenue in number is 2.294 million (US dollars). In terms of tax, it reached 124.02%, amounting to 2.243 million (US dollars). In that case, the two parts are equal to 4,500 million USD. Thus, it would not be possible for the Hun Sen government to collapse. Our recovery in earnings at the end of the year is good. Our economic growth will be around 3%. We will sum it all up in March, but in general, it will be around 3%.

We have to work together to prevent Covid-19. This is the driving force behind economic recovery. We only lose on tourists sub-sector. Domestic tourism, however, is also an important part. More than two million local tourists traveled to various destinations in the three-day holidays making our economy, both urban and rural, pacing up along with growths in industry and agriculture. We still have a lot of work to do [...] on January 8-9, I will go to Myanmar. Tomorrow morning I will talk to the President of Indonesia by phone and then I will go to Myanmar. When I am back, I will preside over the inauguration of National Road 5 on January 10, (2022) – the section between Battambang and Banteay Meanchey.

There are still many programs. There will be this or that programs for us to do altogether. Only with all our efforts can we make this country prosperous and only keeping peace can we develop. There was no development under bombs, shells and/or bullets. Do not talk about anything if there is no peace. Some people say that there is peace only when there is peace in the heart. The one who does not have peace of mind is the one who is guilty, like a thief, a robber, or committing an evil deed [...] what I want to focus on is that the bomb does not hit your head, because I guarantee that it is important this country does not have war [...]

Hope Beautiful Cambodia-Korea Friendship Bridge Will Happen Soon

Once again, via H.E. the Ambassador, I would like to thank the Government and people of the Republic of Korea for their assistance in constructing this building. We will continue together and launch the inauguration of National Road 21 [...] it is hopeful that the bridge across the Mekong River – the Cambodia-Korea Friendship Bridge, will be under construction soon [...] there must be a beautiful Cambodia-Korea Friendship Bridge across the Mekong River right in Phnom Penh [...] it will be perfect [...]

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connection was that we had to travel to Koh Kong on water. If there is a storm, heavy rain, we do not dare to travel. This is our starting point. It was full of difficulties. Later, our engineering team built National Road 48 stage after stage.

At a later stage, with the support and generous humanitarian gift of the Kingdom of Thailand, we have connected and paved this road along with four bridges [...] I may have the attention of HE the Ambassador, as well as the Korean friends, that we have had tremendous difficulties regarding internal connectivity. Thanks to our hard works and especially to the peace that we have brought about, we are able to expand the road system across the country. I am very proud to have contributed from scratch in 1979 to the construction of this land with my colleagues.

ASEAN Sanctioned Cambodia, Thailand in Business with Cambodians

There was a time when I did not agree with the wishes of some people who wanted Koh Kong to cut off business relations with Thailand. I had to struggle hard in the Cabinet as well as in the Cambodian People's Party. (That had in fact) confirmed internal democracy of the Cambodian People's Party at that time. As the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, which is the position of the Prime Minister, I often went to Koh Kong to see what the situation is like. In the meeting where present are Samdech Heng Samrin, Samdech Chea Sim, His Excellency Say Phu Thong, as well as other leaders, I said "no" in confronting the idea (of cutting off business relation with Thailand). Cutting off business with Thailand would be like killing the people in Koh Kong because we had to supply from Srae Ambel to Koh Kong, which takes at least 12 hours.

What would happened then if we closed business with Thailand? (We must be) wise in diplomatic relations with neighboring countries. At that time,

even though being within the framework of ASEAN countries that imposed sanctions on Cambodia, Thailand still has business with the Cambodian people, especially in Koh Kong province. When we catch crabs, lobsters, shrimps, fish, we sell to Thailand and we buy equipment from Thailand. Why do we have to hurt ourselves? [...] at some point, I will try (speak more). Of course, I have already talked and taped about 80 hours about the history (of national construction and development), but I will go into the details of each point, which may be no less 200 hours. For instance, just Koh Kong province will take a lot of time to talk about.

National Road 48 – Internal and Thailand and Vietnam via-Cambodia Coastal Corridor

(We have gone through uncountable efforts) to bring development and progress to Koh Kong. We started with infrastructural connectivity from dirt road and ferry crossing to paved road and concrete bridges. We are now expanding roads and bitumen them. This road becomes an important one. Do not forget that this road is a seafront corridor, as I have said before, and a coastal corridor that serves not only Cambodia's internal relations, but also the relations between Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam that pass through the corridor. If Vietnam wants to take goods to Thailand via this route, it is fast. Thailand can bring goods through to Vietnam via the road too [...] along the way, the coastal corridor has become an attractive tourist destination and production area. We called it the economic pole in our southwest. Previously, we only had Sihanoukville. Now we cover all sea bordering provinces of the southwest – Sihanoukville, Koh Kong, Kep, Kampot, associated with the growing economic potential in the time to come.

National Road 10 Connecting between Koh Kong and Battambang

This road also connects with

National Road 10, which we have been building from Battambang to Koh Kong. When they need to go to Battambang, people in Sihanoukville need not travel to Phnom Penh before going through Kampong Chhnang and Pursat to get to Battambang. Traveling from Srae Ambel to Koh Kong, and they will get on to National Road 10, from where it will be up to them to choose if they will go to Banteay Meanchey, to Pailin, or to Battambang [...] that we have set up a road system or road network. We have already connected the rest of the country and we remain to have this last link of what I called the "National Road 10".

Once built, National Road 10 serves as the last link that connects a road system surrounding the country. That would also count in the National Road 9 from Stung Treng to Preah Vihear. In the past, there were no roads. We already have built National Road 9. I have already traveled that road. I am waiting to travel on National Road 10, which connects Koh Kong to Pursat, to Battambang, to Banteay Meanchey and to Pailin. Travelling at that time will not take long [...] it is a huge benefit in terms of infrastructure. (One) may not expect (development to happen) if there were no roads, no bridges, no connections. We must strive to connect internally and with our neighbors within our regional framework. Well, this (National Road 48) is (probably) part of (the connection) of ASEAN, and (the connection within) our Mekong sub-region – the only seafront corridor we have had to work on [...]

Build Quick with Own Money

Through the Ambassador, (I am delivering our grateful thanks) to the Government and people of Republic of Korea, who have provided assistance as well as financial support for Cambodia's development. In particular, it provided financing support for the construction of National Road 48, which, if the construction of National Road 4 is not

yet in action, the National Road 48 is going to be in better condition than National Road 4. How far is the auction now? We have finished three packages of auction and there are two more packages to go [...]

Sometimes I think of putting own fund of hundreds of millions of US dollars into National Road 4. Use own fund to get away with those difficulties. It has taken too long [...] it is not that we do not want to build National Road 4, but the National Road 4 is the road helped by the United States. We do not know who would be more generous to help than the United States. We just waited. Now that the World Bank has offered to do it and signed the contract for almost three years, so far they have only auctioned three packages [...]

That is a complicated procedure. They say the procedure is transparent [...] it is but we are still walking in the mud waiting for them to say "OK" [...] it is on this note that there are times when you have to earn own money, make it ourselves, so that we can achieve quickly. Like we already put hundreds of millions of dollars to Sihanoukville, to Siem Reap, and working day and night, and we got our roads ready [...] I hope they would expedite their process. Otherwise, late is better than never.

RoK Financing for National Road 2, National Road 22 and National Road 21

The road construction in this place will take us only 32 months. In 2024, this road will be ready. Well, before long, it will be ready. We will benefit from this road network, which I would like to thank the Republic of Korea for its financing. Korea is not only building this road. They also helped us build National Road 2, 22 and 21, which we could have inaugurated but failed because of the (Covid-19 outbreak) event of February 20. We have not yet inaugurated the National Road 21 connecting Takhmao to the Vietnamese border. We should

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be able to arrange the launch time. We have not put it in the program yet.

Cambodia-Korea Friendship Bridge Phnom Penh-Svay Chrum to Happen

HE the Ambassador mentioned just now about my request and decision to build a Cambodia-Korea Friendship Bridge in Phnom Penh. Thank you very much. Congratulations to all of us on getting the bridge. This Cambodia-Korea Friendship Bridge connects Phnom Penh with Svay Chrum. Svay Chrum is in the commune with the Areykasat commune/Sangkat [...] however, that HE the Ambassador had dared to say it, we hope we can have this bridge built. Once we have the bridge, growth and development will come to the district of Lvea Em on the other side (of the Mekong River in Phnom Penh), which will become a satellite city [...]

Cambodia-Korea Relationship Born Late but Better Than Not

... Our relationship with Korea is growing. I would like to emphasize that we are a bit slow in the relationship between Cambodia and Korea [...] but it is better to be slow than not to happen at all. We have North Korea and South Korea. I am determined to sign a treaty with the Republic of Korea, after which I visited the Republic of Korea in 1996. I still remember when former President Kim Young-sam welcomed me. Once we finished the negotiation, (we) went have dinner. While walking together, he told me – “during your visit to Korea, the Korean side would like to donate two million US dollars to you. His Excellency may take anything you like worth the amount.” I said to him – “Korea has good equipment for building roads. Please, Excellency, help me prepare a set for road construction.” We have a set of road construction equipment that the military engineering team used to build a road connecting Siem Reap to Anlong Veng, the last Khmer Rouge

area in 1996.

Cambodian workers in Korea after Ambassadorial Level Diplomatic Relations

By 1997, we had established diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level with the first former ambassador, Pak Chung Tai. Since then, the scale of the development of Cambodia-Korea relations has been very good. We have a Cambodian-Korean vocational school in Phnom Penh. We have sent tens of thousands of workers to Korea, now more than 50,000 who are in Korea send remittances to families in the country as part of the normal course of business, Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, which send workers to Korea. Thus, Cambodia has also received more than 50,000 shares of employment for its citizens, and more than 50,000 of them have received income to send to their families in the country.

Cambodia-Korea Trade Volume Exceeds One Billion US Dollars

There are more aids provided by Korea to us. In addition, the trade volume has exceeded one billion US dollars. Now the free trade agreement between Cambodia and Korea will help with the increase. What we are proud of during the COVID-19 crisis is that Cambodia and Korea inextricably linked. Korea does not prohibit Cambodians from crossing to Korea, while flights from Korea to Cambodia still exist. There is a trip from the United States, Europe to Korea and then people take connecting flights to Cambodia. In Cambodia, we go abroad via Korea. (People are taking connecting flight there) to the United States and Europe. We work together without barriers to flying. Thank you for the efforts of both sides to further relationship, and today achievement is being a symbol of solidarity between Cambodia and Korea.

Nothing Lost, More Benefits Reaped

I hope the Korean friends will continue (to help us). Our hope is that we will have a bridge across the Mekong River from

Phnom Penh to Svay Chrum on the side of Lvea Em, considered as a symbol of solidarity between Cambodia and Korea. We also hope that the number of Cambodian workers going to work in Korea will continue to grow with increasing trade volume. This is the result of the Cambodia’s political-diplomatic relations efforts. We seal this relationship. Cambodia has lost nothing. The benefits that we have reaped are enormous. As the founders of Cambodia-Korea relations, we would like to see such progress.

To Fulfill Cambodia - Korea Wishes, and between ASEAN 10 and South Korea

When Cambodia first became a member of ASEAN in 1999, then under President Kim Dae-jung in 1999, I told him – “should I not try to establish diplomatic relations with Korea in 1996-97, during the ASEAN-Republic of Korea Summit, there would be a country without diplomatic relations with South Korea, and that country is Cambodia”. I have to overcome all sorts of obstacles for my national interest [...] I have fulfilled the aspirations of the two nations, Cambodia and Korea, and also fulfilled it all between ASEAN 10, which has diplomatic relations with South Korea [...] this is a historical thing, and it has reflected how the Cambodian national process has happened [...]

Public Financial Management Reform 2022

The second point I want to make is that I am taking the 2022 year to promote public finance management reform and strictly implement the laws and regulations on the use of the budget. I am asking all national institutions, especially at the sub-national level, to implement strictly the standards related to financial management. I was shocked when the Minister of Economy and Finance reported on the debt owed by the provinces to Li Chuang Company. I am overwhelmed. (It is a debt) in the practice of “do it first, pay later”. Now, I am telling the provincial governors whoever

dare do that again, that provincial governor must be responsible to the Royal Government. Ly Chhuong is like an eel company. They file me requests. I do not approve. They do it with the provinces. Now the provinces owed him a large amount of money.

I have issued an order, but lest it be too late. I ordered withdrawal of all projects not yet implemented, whether they are with Li Chuang or other companies. Clear the list. The money owed to Ly Chhuong is to be paid over a 20 years period. This is to teach them that they must never do that again. There is no (payment) for (now). You have to understand clearly. The Royal Government cannot accept such public debt. Not only it is unacceptable for a provincial governor to do that, but also s/he has to pay for it her/himself. Otherwise, he may lose his position because he took the money to collude with the company without bidding process [...] and then demanded that the Royal Government to pay for them. Have the governors themselves asked the Royal Government to build this bridge, this road, this building [...]

I urge the company to stop immediately otherwise I will put the company in a blacklist. I know that your company (Ly Chhuong) is doing well (with building) the Peace Palace, the National Assembly, etc., but you can never do this again. Other companies must not follow Ly Chhuong Company. I am placing a resolute order for all projects not yet implemented to remove immediately. Cancel the contracts and throw them away immediately. No one (at national level recognized/approved such) contracts. If I find out (they are going on), there will be more to do. For projects already implemented, they payment will spread for 20 years with the budget of provincial administration [...]

Let me be clear on this (that we are observing) decentralization, but (we do) not allow creation of a state within the state [...]

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