

## Preah Thaong Neang Niak Statues in Preah Sihanouk City Inaugurated

(16 April 2021 — Extensive Excerpts and Unofficial Translation)



### Statues of Preah Thaong and Neang Neak – a Tribute to Emergence of Territory

Today is April 16, 2022 and is also the third day of the Khmer New Year, Buddhist era 2566 [...] we have a wedding ceremony to install and officially celebrate the statues of Preah Thaong and Neang Neak in the city of Preah Sihanouk. I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to Deputy Prime Minister, His Excellency Chea Sophara, and his team, as well as our engineers and technicians who have carefully and comprehensively thought out the design and the infrastructure that represent the territory of Sihanoukville as well as the territory of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

It's not a coincidence and by chance that the development of the coastal area here happened with careful consideration of the leaders and working teams who have worked in the city associated with the former King Preah Borom Ratana Kaod, for whom there is also a statue of lion that represent him. These points clearly indicate our concern for the emergence of territory as well as the emergence of the Sihanoukville, which is now a multi-purpose developed province. I appreciate and admire the

work of Cambodian children, for whom, the words hanging behind our backs, "We Khmer Can Do It" is even more valuable [...]

### Four Meanings about Preah Thaong and Neang Neak in Khmer Wedding Ceremony

We know that this is a location where there are roads connecting with each other to different destinations. The point where we install the statue of Preah Thaong and Neang Neak, de-

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## Sending Sportspersons to SEA Games in Vietnam

(28 April 2022 — Extensive Excerpts and Unofficial Translation)

### Vaccines Prioritized for Sportspersons

Today, as before, I always have a meeting with sportspersons before sending you to the South East Asian Games. I would like to know, how many of our sportspersons had been infected with Covid-19? Please stand up. Do not be ashamed, because once you were infected with Covid-19, you are already safe. Those who are not yet infected are the one to worry. So, there are about 100 or so. Please sit

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## Siem Reap Roads Built, River Renovated

(04 April 2022 — Extensive Excerpts and Unofficial Translation)

### Covid-19 May Be Disruptive but May Not Stop Cambodia's Development Activities

Today, we are pleased to inaugurate officially 38 roads infrastructure in Siem Reap. I still remember that on November 30, 2020, right at this place, we started the construction of these 38 roads while on the other hand we gathered efforts to fight the outbreak (of Covid-19) on November 28 (in the community). It was the second event after the first one on November 23 [...], which also happened in Siem Reap. Covid-19 can hinder and disturb us, but it cannot stop our activities on building what we set out to achieve.

As Samdech Pichey Sena Tea Banh made a report just now regarding the construction process here, I am very proud of all the efforts of the Inter-Ministerial Commission chaired by Samdech Pichey Sena Tea Banh, with the great efforts of HE Deputy Prime Minister Chea Sophara, Senior Minister Sun Chanthol and the specialized units involved in the construction. Directly with the help of the local authorities facilitating the process here makes this achievement a reality and the fruit that comes directly of peace and development.

### "We Khmer Can Do It" – an Achievement of Peace

We talked about peace and we talked about development and we mean what we say – "we Khmer can do it". Everything we have achieved here are shaping using hands of all Cambodian children without any foreign skills and without a single cent of foreign budget. We adopt the method of finding a way for Cambodia to do

things for Cambodians. Through our annual economic growth, with the surplus that we saved, we used it to build the infrastructure in Sihanoukville. We take the opportunity that foreign visitors are not crowded as they used to in Siem Reap (because of the Covid-19) to build roads here and be ready. We expect that after Covid-19 disease subsides, tourists will return. What we have been doing will create a favorable situation for Siem Reap and tourism for our country.

Today, as I said (once already) yesterday, I would like to announce again that I would call (this achievement a foundation for another pole) called "the rising star of the north." We have laid down infrastructure in Siem Reap, plus, not just the road, but also the complex Siem Reap River system, which has been dormant for 40 years, along with the presence of the airport, to commission in 2023. It is now time for us to call (all achievements in) the North – the rising star of the north. I was proud when I inspected the Siem Reap's infrastructural development in the city yesterday. It was not easy, but the ingenuity of the leaders, and especially the young intellectuals as technicians, worked hard here.

### Streets Named after King, Former Kings, Dignitaries Contributed to Peace

I would like to take this opportunity to commend all the nephews who participated in the construction. The difficulties for construction in Siem Reap are different from those in Sihanoukville. Harmonizing the exist-

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spite what has been said in history, if we look closely, at least in the present time and also to the future, we will see that it associated deeply with our Cambodian wedding ceremony. Please take a look and check carefully at the time of the wedding, at least there are some points drawn from the story related to Preah Thaong and Neang Neak.

**Firstly, men asked women's hands.** Although in the past there have been stories that men had to do so because they failed to build a mountain higher than the one that women did, men had to be the one who asked women for their hands. However, the real meaning is that (this statue) associated closely with Khmer legends or Khmer weddings at the point that men asked the women's hands.

From what we have learnt on history, in the wedding, before coupling, **the woman has to hold the man's hand and lead him into the coupling session. That is the second point.**

**The third point, after the ceremony is over, the man holds the woman's veil and follow her – that where we called Preah Thaong and Neang Neak.** In this tradition, the wiseman Kun learned about it [...]

Another thing, the fourth point, is that in Cambodian wedding ceremony, there is this session of "Bok Lak" or invocation and dentistry ceremony. The wiseman Kun explained about this ceremony is to neutralize the poison of the dragon (Neang Neak). The invocation was not to brush a man's teeth, but to wash a woman's teeth, which means to demise the poison of Naga [...]

#### **Various Statues in Sihanoukville – Tourism Products**

The emergence of various statues in Sihanoukville is symbolic of the birth of the territory as well as the birth of Sihanoukville, but it has also become products that attract tourism. I saw postings of pictures from here, just take (Preah Thaong

and Neang Neak), a few days after they were mounted. Yesterday, a lot of people (came to take photos). Hopefully, our people who wanted to know and come to take pictures from here and statues in some other places, including the lion statue, which represents the statue of the former King Norodom Sihanouk, which is worthy of the province, will visit them [...]

#### **Peace and Vaccination Make Sangkranta Possible Everywhere**

Secondly, this New Year, people are happy. Today is the third day (of the last day of Sangkranta), the day of the ascension or entrance to the new year. I received a report from HE Thong Khon that from the first day we had 860,000 people going and visiting places. Yesterday, more than 1.5 million Cambodians turned out. Let us also not forget that people are also enjoying the Sangkranta in the villages, communes, pagodas, everywhere. (We have) Sangkranta by village, Sangkranta by commune, Sangkranta by district, Sangkranta by province and Sangkranta by high school or university.

Last year was a difficult year. What we did and the efforts we made last year was for what is happening this year. What we did in the last few months was for what is happening today. I have publicly announced that we are determined this year to celebrate the Khmer New Year. Our people have already missed the celebration for two years [...] and it was because we did not have enough vaccines to inoculate at the time. As (we have obtained sufficient amount of vaccines) and inoculated, or to put it bluntly, to blanket the vaccination (we have stepped towards) ensuring the immunity of our community.

#### **People's New Year Joy because of Peace, Vaccinations, Means and Roads**

Thanks to the fact that we have managed well the Covid-19 pandemic and with the peace that we have gained over the last 24 years, their means and better road infrastructure, peo-

ple have been able to travel everywhere to celebrate the New Year holiday. At this point, as I join the people to enjoy the holiday, I am wondering what will happen after this. I remain committed and have faith in our people. Yesterday, the second day (of the new year), the number of (Covid-19) infected people was only 19, and the figures from yesterday released today, the third day (of the new year), the number of infected people are only 12. At the same time, the Royal Government has marked four provinces – Ratanakkiri, Mondul-kiri, Stung Treng and Preah Vihear as provinces where people are not required to wear masks, or leave it up to the people whether to wear a mask or not.

#### **Cambodia's Pride – People Vaccinated and Enjoying the New Year Indiscriminately**

I find happiness and unity among the people in the villages, in the communes, and in every resorts, even though our country has 17 parties ready to compete in the future. We did not see any signs of discrimination among our people for the election to come. They dance and have fun playing together, regardless of whichever party they belong to. As far as vaccination is concerned, we noticed the same trend. In Cambodia, people do not discriminate against each other. No matter which party you belong to, you all get the vaccine.

This is the pride of Cambodia or of our Khmer people at the celebration of arrival of the new year, the year of Tiger, Buddhist era 2566 tomorrow. Today is the middle day (of the three days celebration), and tomorrow will come (the Buddhist era 2566). This year is a good year and hopefully our people will continue to enjoy the celebration [...] I think, though it is the last day, April 16, our people will continue to celebrate because today is Saturday and they would continue to Sunday, while some can go beyond because the usual practice of our people is to enjoy the celebration a week before and half a

month after the official ceremonial days.

#### **Apply No Covid-19 Management Law, No PCR Test on Oversea Khmer**

I do not intend to impose any restrictions on the celebration of (the Khmer New Year) and I ask the authorities at all levels not to enforce the rules governing Covid-19 and other infectious diseases. Please do not apply them during the New Year, unless there is a serious infectious situation, we will be able to announce to the people to suspend the celebration or cut down activities. Thus, in the villages, communes in the tourist areas continue to operate normally.

Although I still have concern, I would rather allow people to travel within the Kingdom. Cambodians living abroad are welcome to visit Cambodia, as there is no requirement for a PCR test for 72 hours, and there is no requirement to take the test here. We leave all these responsibilities to our people. If there is any sign of concern, let them seek testing and if positive, seek immediate medical attention themselves.

#### **Do Not Wait for War to Break Out to Seek and Shout for Peace**

Another point that I would like to convey and inform to my compatriots is that 47 years ago on April 16, 1975, today is the day that I have changed from a person without a disability to one with one eye loss. I fainted and did not know what happened after. That is the (consequence) of war. Our country lost peace because the war raged since when the March 18 coup that overthrew Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk. It is on this note that on the occasion that I have the chance to lead the country, I am determined to lead this country on the road for and of peace, and I sought peace for the people.

I do not want young people and children to have the same misfortune as I did, and become

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victims of war. We do not want anyone to destroy the peace of the country. It is with peace that we can have the opportunity to celebrate the New Year or celebrate everything required of all races residing in our country [...] that also indicates that peace is very precious. Do not wait for war to break out and shout for peace.

Do not wait until there is a war to think that peace is valuable. We need to see that peace is priceless to us now and in the past. We all have to defend it together, no matter which party s/he belongs to, there is a need for peacekeeping.

### Appeals to Continue Celebrating New Year and Prevent Covid-19 Infection

I would like to take this opportunity to call on our people to, *firstly, continue to implement medical measures to prevent Covid-19 infection.* If in doubt, take the test immediately. If you are positive, isolate yourself and seek immediate treatment to prevent the spread. Although we have allowed only four provinces to allow people to choose whether or not to wear a mask, in the past three days we have not seen many people wearing masks, except at this event [...]

*Secondly, get a third or fourth booster dose for everyone.* I know that from the beginning, people knew/understood that when vaccinated, they had to stay off bath for a day or a few hours. Well, even though we set up a lot of vaccination sites, but because the people needed to stay off a bath, and they needed to play splashing water, they did not get vaccinated.

Hopefully, today, the April 16th, tomorrow, the April 17th, before returning home, people get themselves the vaccination at the places at their disposals in the provinces, at the pagodas and in some other places, with the arrangement of the provincial authorities.

We will do this to ensure that Cambodia is sufficiently safe. While celebrating the Khmer

New Year, millions of people come out and some places are very crowded, the infectious situation has not been noticeably surging. We however have to wait and see the trend after the Khmer New Year for 1 week to 2 weeks before we can fathom how far the level of infection would be. We will then continue to take the necessary steps to respond to the situation. I hope that the people will accept this request by working hard to adopt the booster dose to ensure that our country is sufficiently safe.

*The third point is to call on everyone to respect the traffic law* so that happiness does not become sorrow. In the past few days, Covid-19 has not had any deaths (but the traffic accidents did). That's the point we all need to pay attention to.

*Fourth, the authorities at all levels, the armed forces of all kinds, continue to work hard to maintain security and social order for the safety of the people.* Everywhere there are organized forces (to look after security) and I take this opportunity to express sincere appreciation to the authorities at all levels throughout the Kingdom of Cambodia, as well as the armed forces of all kinds who have contributed to maintaining security and social order. People can travel day and night without fear of war and harassment by thieves and robbers. Keep up the good work.

### Tourism: New Year's Eve Tourists Exceeded Years Before Covid-19

In my understanding, not only today, but tomorrow, tomorrow or a few days later, the so-called New Year steam continues in the villages, communes or places that attract people from one place to another.

Although this year we still have the effects of the Covid-19 as well as the Russia-Ukraine war have pushed up gas prices, people are still determined to go out. Of course, some people cannot hang out. Looking at the number of people who travel places to celebrate, (we see) that there is a larger number. (The

Minister of Tourism) HE Thong Khon compares the number of this New Year visitors and those from the year before the Covid-19 strike, and considered this year turnout is bigger [...]

### People Encouraged to Take Third and Fourth Booster Doses for Free Everywhere

According to the original program, I was not supposed to give a speech, but I would like to send a message from here to people across the country through the live broadcasts of radio as well as television and through Facebook online a message that they enjoy the Khmer New Year celebration with attention given to the spread of Covid-19. Please note that the authorities are responsible for security and order and will not apply any fines related to the management of Covid-19 during the new year.

I will continue to monitor this work. Over the next week we will be able to assess the community immunity. However, whether there is an infection or not, I continue to call on our people to receive the third dose of the booster vaccine, which has so far given to more than eight million people. We still therefore have remaining six million people who have not taken it yet. Just over one million people have taken their fourth booster doses [...]

I humbly extend my best wishes to His Majesty the King, all the monks, Excellencies, Lok Chumteavs, our compatriots here as well as throughout the country, including our Cambodian brothers and sisters living in other countries and our armed forces, stationed in Central Africa, Mali, South Sudan, Lebanon, who may be watching live or watching live later, wishing you all peace and prosperity on the occasion of the Khmer New Year, the year of Tiger, BE 2566, which came for three days today.

May you be blessed with the five Buddhist blessings: longevity, nobility, health, strength, and wisdom [...]

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ing infrastructure with the new generation of technical equipment combined with considering nature is not easy. We develop new skills, but we respect the ancient infrastructure. On the other hand, making a drain to release clean water as well as sewage from the house to the streets so as not to fell the trees as consequence is not easy. It was difficult, but the technicians handled the issue smoothly. That is the work of Khmer children and we can say that we Khmer can anything anywhere.

In addition, we named the 38 streets in the provincial town of Siem Reap after HM the King, the former Kings and important people who had gone through the development and construction of this city and contributed to reaching peace process of the country [...]. We have a boulevard named after Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk, which connects Siem Reap city to Angkor Wat temple. The road is a big and long one, and it connects with many other roads. Along with HM the King, we also give the roads names of Acha Sva, Po Kambor, etc., who all fought against French colonization. That is the memory for younger generation about the previous generation patriots. I really appreciate the thoughts of His Excellency and Lok Chumteav who worked here.

### Siem Reap – Last Territory to End War and Its Bearing Fruits of Peace

The infrastructure built in Siem Reap is inseparable from the country's peace process. I have already said that Siem Reap is the last territory where we ended the war. Previously we called it Siem Reap Oddar Meanchey, but later we created a separate province of Oddar Meanchey from Siem Reap. The last (Khmer Rouge stronghold) in Anlong Veng at that time was in the territory of Siem Reap. That made Siem Reap the last territory to end the war. (As for) our ring road, which is now being used as the necessary infrastructure to serve the

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transportation of the people, the people of Siem Reap may still remember that it was not a road, but a city fence or a dam to protect the city from not floods but the Khmer Rouge's offenses.

The fruits of peace allow us to build things everywhere in the country, including in Siem Reap and here in Soat Nikum district, even the largest or giant airport that can accommodate all kinds of aircraft. The airport will have repercussion to development in the northern part of the country. The construction of road infrastructure and the improvement of the Siem Reap River are also inseparable from the participation of our people. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people who cooperated with the authority to solve obstacles related to road construction. Were there no cooperation from the people, we could not have achieved this. As we embarked on carrying this out, we can achieve two things at the same time – the roads and the people's daily life improvement [...]

I heard from (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction) HE Chea Sophara that when the project started, those living in unregistered settlement decided to leave. Firstly, we thought they could have land elsewhere to settle. We learnt later that they had moved out to live in pagodas' land. Their willing of participation has been respectable. With this knowledge, we set out the land policy for them in the area (Run Ta Ek Development Village). The people who settled along the Siem Reap River, the Royal Government has provided them land for them to live in as their property.

I would like to ask the Siem Reap provincial authorities, as well as the working team for Siem Reap to continue to pay attention to the lives of those people [...], this land along the river is state land and the area prohibits the construction of small and large buildings. When they volunteer to live

there, we also have to facilitate their way of life. If there is a lack of schools there, we also need to build more schools for them. In the past, their children studied in the city (Siem Reap), but now, though it is not far from the city, if there is a need, we have to build a school [...] increase the capacity for the children of our people to get an education.

#### **Royal Government Financed Sewer System for 12,999 Households**

Returning to talking about people in the city (of Siem Reap), some houses that stands beyond the limit and construction right, are willing to settle, and pull it back in solving the problem themselves. Let me again take this opportunity to thank all the people for their cooperation. We are involved also in solving problems with the people. Previously, we agreed that the RGC would only be responsible for the drainage system along the roads and people would have to be responsible for own wastewater to the street drainage. As the people of Siem Reap suffered from a serious Covid-19 infection that affected their income, Samdech Pichey Sena Tea Banh asked me for more money. We paid for the connection (of drainage system).

According to HE Sun Chanthol, there were 2,000 families who gave money to the Royal Government (to connect the sewer system), but we returned the money to him. There are 12,999 families in total. The remaining 10,000 families (who had not yet paid for sewerage connection) will receive coverage funding from the RGC. If we give money to the 10,000 families, what would the person who already paid to connect (sewer system) do? There is only one way to do. We had to get the money back to them so that it is fair [...] what makes me even happier is that the sewage that connects more than 12,000 households to main drainage are all underground.

#### **Fruits of Peace and Socio-Economic Development – a**

#### **Force for National Development**

We also set up a parking lot in front of the house. I rode (in a car) and observed the parking lot in front of the people's house. I saw a car parked there and there was a sign on the front of the house. That evening we saw some cars parked in front of the house. I can still imagine in the past our country had a bicycle parked in front of the house. Next, there is a motorbike parked in front of the house. Now is not the time to put bikes and motorcycles in front of the house and in that area, there is a car park in front of the house. The situation has changed drastically since we left the Pol Pot regime. At a time when we are both at peace and at war, and when we are at peace, our nation's economic growth is improving with the well-being of the people.

What did we have in 1979? What do we have so far? That some people used the language that "the more we do, the poorer people are" is it appropriate really to the reality? In 1979, I could not find shoes to wear. Then in the 1980s there were bicycles, there were motorbikes, now there are cars that they needed to spend money to build a parking lot in front of the houses. That is the point where we must see that this comes from the fruits of peace, from the fruits of socio-economic development, that we, both the state and the people, can create a strong force for the development of the nation. The state has the ability to invest, and people to contribute [...] previously, it was thought that the people would contribute together to build the place, but due to the declining income during the Covid-19 time, and to speed up the construction of this road, there was no better option than to give them money.

I still remember Samdech Pichey Sena's explanation to me, after which I ordered the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Finance, HE Aun Porn Moniroth to release the emergency budget to start implementing the connection

(sewerage system) from the people's houses to the main drainage and set up the parking lot. I saw for myself that cars parked neatly in front of their houses yesterday. The Ministry of the Royal Palace is renovating this area in parallel with the time we are building the infrastructure. Now the garden area in front of the Royal Palace improved, and the situation is much better altogether.

#### **The Siem Reap River, a Protected Area, Conditions of Cultural Heritage Respected**

I am pleased with all the efforts made and would like to point out that in Siem Reap, those who commit immorality or theft should stop because there is a full security camera service. Do not think that sometimes you destroy a security camera and think that they cannot find you. This system connects continuously to one another. I hope the safety of our people in Siem Reap is guaranteed through more modern technical equipment that enables the competent forces, especially the National Police, to control the situation at all times.

On this occasion, I would like to thank the technicians for maintaining the best of the old infrastructure, as well as the new infrastructure, including the Siem Reap River. Please note, compatriots can sometimes ask a question why not build a concrete embankment along the river of Siem Reap. There may be some people asking us such questions [...] we can afford to build concrete embankments. We made ones along some parts of the Mekong and Tonle Sap rivers [...]

Please note that this is a protected area. We must comply with the conditions of the cultural heritage. We moved people from the banks of the Siem Reap River where we could plant trees or have benches for people to sit and spend their leisure time, but we could not pour concrete on the shore. That is the part related to heritage. The question here, I should explain, since some people may

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say why we did not concretize the embankments [...] that we could, but the conservation techniques do not allow us to do so. We must continue to take care of the Siem Reap River naturally [...]

### Ten More Years with ICC Angkor (France & Japan) and UNESCO

I would also like to take this opportunity to clarify a bit. We should thank the ICC Angkor for its involvement in the conservation of Siem Reap, as well as the preservation of its historical heritage, Angkor Wat. We thank France and Japan, the co-chairs of the ICC, together with UNESCO, for being here as always and using the tripartite mechanism with Cambodia as the host country, plus the two co-chairs, France and Japan (for conservation work). We still have another important partner, UNESCO. We have a tripartite cooperation mechanism and a quadruple cooperation. On this note, I should say to our people who live in Siem Reap to continue to maintain order in accordance with the principles that protect the historical heritage.

Siem Reap has many temples that we must respect. Land acquisition for the airport has to find a location and not to touch heritage sites. It has been 30 years now. According to (Minister of Culture and Fine Arts) Lok Chumteav Pheung Sakona, we will sign an agreement to continue working with ICC Angkor with the participation of France and Japan, plus UNESCO for the next 10 years. It is rare for a commission that is already 30 years old to add another 10 years to join us in conserving the temples here. I would like to thank our partners – France and Japan, and UNESCO, for their continued cooperation in the region. ICC Angkor is also responsible for participating in the conservation and monitoring of the development of another heritage site at Sambo Prey Kuk in Kampong Thom province.

**Ancestral Treasures Pre-**

### served and Respected

I would also like to take this opportunity to say a few words to real estate investors who have previously commented (on issue relating to land property in certain areas of Siem Reap). I think they were wrong. Someone worded that property market in Siem Reap could not develop due to the obstruction by the authorities regarding height of buildings. I would like to emphasize that one cannot compare the real estate market in Siem Reap to those in other provinces. If we do that [...] Angkor Wat will be off the World Heritage list. I am calling on the real estate marketer look at the whole forest, not a single tree [...] this has not happened in Cambodia yet, but it has happened in other countries. Even developed countries that violate UNESCO technical requirements removed from the World Heritage list. Cambodia, too, if we violate the conditions set by UNESCO, we will lose our World Heritage status at Angkor Wat, at Sambo Prey Kuk and at the Temple of Preah Vihear.

We are preparing documents for accession of some other sites to the World Heritage list. There is no shortage of places for real estate, but do not come close to Angkor. One company has announced that it will make a pond bigger. Hearing of intention to enlarge and deepen the pond, UNESCO reacted [...] I asked the company to correct immediately [...] Dr. Kim Heang, guru of real estate, please do not continue to criticize the authorities working here [...] at that time, the first reaction came from Dr. Sok Touch, President of the Royal Academy, and then (Hun) Many. The Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, which represents the Apsara Authority, who controls over the Apsara Authority, also sounds out its reaction [...]

I urge international organizations – UNESCO as well as partner countries to agree to co-chair the ICC, namely Japan and France, who are now ready to sign for another 10 years, to have no hesitation. This is the

assertion of the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia to ensure that the ancestral property that we strive to preserve from the past to the present is always in respect. Not only do we respect Angkor Wat, we respect the infrastructure left from the ancient time along the roads. We did not cause damages and had not been naïve to remove existing things and put in new ones. Harmonize things that are old and new will serve for the development of Siem Reap.

I should emphasize this point to ensure that there is no violation of the requirements of UNESCO, such as criticizing the authorities for not developing, not allowing construction in height. The area allows no skyscrapers. There has area where they allow skyscraper building but in prohibited area, we are strict to allow no high buildings. Therefore, the price of land in that place does not go up. Do not think for a moment only about the rise in land prices, and forget the loss of the historical heritage of Angkor temples. I want to say this in general to demand abiding by the conditions set by UNESCO.

### April 4, 52 years ago, Entered the Marquis on Call of Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk

Thank you very much, Samdech Pichey Sena Tea Banh also wished me well on my birthday. I am also receiving blessings and wishes from the King, from Luang Mae, from my compatriots, as well as from the Buddhist monks to me. Today is my birthday. I have confirmed, however, that my actual birthday is on August 5. It came from the lunar calendar's date – Tuesday, the month of Srap, the year of Dragon, in 1952. As to why I celebrate the birthday on April 4, 1951, I have already explained. Today, if we look back 52 years ago, this morning I went to the Marquis to register for the army in response to the call of Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk on March 23, 1970, for his children to turn in to the Marquis to fight. That I went there, I could

not take anything and forgot about my birthday, I use April 4 as my birthday. This was what happened 52 years ago, on April 4, when our country fell into the beginning of the civil war after the March 18, 1970 coup. I would like to thank my compatriots for blessing me. Greetings are more than curses, but curses are not certain to fall on Hun Sen. If the zodiac sign is not good, the person who cursed may die or something bad happens before Hun Sen. That is something one must learn to believe.

### Temples Spirits Protect from Premeditated Life Attempt on September 24, 1998

(There had been an attempt on my life) when they set four B-40 grenades on my convoy in Siem Reap, and only one exploded. The other three did not explode. I thank the sacred objects governing the city of Siem Reap, as well as the temples spirits that saved my life on September 24, 1998. That gave me time to accomplish the historic mission of ending the war, bringing about territorial unity, and national unity. For the first time in the history of Cambodia, through win-win politics, it was also an opportunity for me to lead the Kingdom of Cambodia to develop from one stage to another, where so far, we have guaranteed the lives of the people.

What I must continue to do with my compatriots is to keep the peace. When there is peace, we must maintain it. Peace is hard to find. A war can happen in just 15 minutes, after issuing a command. Ending the war is difficult, though. In ASEAN, some countries still have armed resistances. Cambodia, divided into different areas of control in the past, has come agreement by different armed forces. I have already said that before 1970 we had up to four different armed groups, the Khmer Rouge, the Khmer Blue, the Khmer White, the three of which are all armed groups.

The Khmer Rouge was scattered throughout Cambodia, the

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Khmer White hid themselves along the Cambodian-Vietnamese border, the Khmer Blue on the Cambodian-Thai border, and the Khmer government, the popular socialist government. From 1970 to 1975, our country was divided into two parts – Lon Nol-controlled area and the liberated area of the Cambodian National United Front led by Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk [...] Cambodia has two areas of controls. From 1975 to 1979, we fell into the genocidal regime of Pol Pot. Even though Pol Pot was very strong, they could not completely control the territory. There were still armed movements.

### **Win-Win Politics Brings About National/Territorial Unification and Peace**

Cases like the one in Koh Kong (the resistance movement) in the northeast, the rebellion in the east, and my own forces. Thus, despite the brutality, Pol Pot could not completely control the territory. We ended up overthrowing the genocidal regime of Pol Pot, but then our country became one with four territories. The first area controlled by the Government of the People's Republic of Cambodia, later renamed the State of Cambodia. The other region ruled by a tripartite coalition government, dominated by different armed forces – Khmer Rouge area, FUNCINPEC area, Khmer People's Liberation Front area. From 1979 to 1993, Cambodia had four territories.

From 1993 to 1998, Cambodia had two areas of controls under two governments – those implementing the Paris Agreement governing most of the territory, and the Khmer Rouge who still had government, and control along the Thai-Cambodian border and a few areas inland – Takaen Koh Sla in Kampong Speu and some pockets of Tonle Sap.

Under a win-win policy, we have made our nation united, our territory unified for the first time in our history. It is difficult to find this peace. (Trading) life for peace is very fragile, espe-

cially if there were no sincere participation of different armed groups. That is why we continue to say that it is a hard-earned peace.

The instigator of the war was Lon Nol, who decided to stage a coup to overthrow Prince Norodom Sihanouk in just a few minutes. We ended the war in 1998. Millions died. Therefore, when there is peace, it is necessary to maintain peace, and do not wait until the war started to shout for peace. The threat of war in Ukraine (causing) Europe raising concerns about peace and stability (and they are under pressure) from millions of refugees.

During the time of our war, we also had Cambodian brothers and sisters fleeing abroad through Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, and there were people displaced in the country to flee from war zone, even in times of war and peace [...] our nation is at peace now. We must continue to protect it. Without peace, it is impossible to talk about development or to talk about democracy and human rights.

I would like to thank the people as well as the leaders of the Cambodian People's Party for supporting efforts to bring the country out of war and to peace. Through that peace, we have been able to build our roads and other needs step after step. I sincerely hope that with what has been done in the country for the future, our compatriots, regardless of party affiliation, must maintain peace. Those who destroy peace must not be tolerated because whenever peace is destroyed, many people die. In this sense, in order to save the lives of millions of people, do not be afraid to destroy those who destroy peace [...] this is not a warning to anyone. It is to clarify the need for peace for the country [...]

### **Discussing Income Milestone of Cambodians**

I am grateful for the opportunity given to me for more than 40 years that I have joined the leadership of the CPP and other political parties for development, peace and national recon-

struction, and socio-economic development. Of course, there is more works to do. We do not do just that. Discussions are now underway on issues related to the (income) milestones – either 2011 or 2014. (For) the correction here, they have found that the average income per capita for the population will exceed 2000 (US dollars) on average (in 2014) but if however, one takes the milestone in 2011, the average per capita income of the people is only 1,700 dollars.

Of course, when we are to take the new milestone, it will cause us to miss out some opportunities to attract foreign capital (because) loans (have) higher interest rates since the country approaches the stage of a high middle-income country. We are at a stage that they consider us a low-middle-income country and for that, we still enjoy favorable foreign borrowing through concessional interest rates. If per capita income goes high up, we will lose the opportunity to get concessional interest (and will) get (loan) in commercial interest. We are considering this. However, it is more accurate to take real facts to reflect the increase in people's income.

### **High-Speed Rail and Road from Siem Reap to Battambang in Consideration**

We are also considering whether, or not, to replace the existing rail infrastructure, which is an outdated system that travels only 20 or 30 kilometers per hour with a high-speed rail in both directions. With more arrangements, it will be a rail line for domestic transport and connections with neighboring countries.

We now have two-way trains from Poipet to Phnom Penh and from Phnom Penh to Sihanoukville. We are considering this and looking for a partner to build a high-speed rail line on the old railway line. Therefore, I am asking His Excellency Sun Chanthol to consider and propose a project to find a partner. If we leave our railway to go on like this, there will not be pro-

gress.

We cannot keep abreast with the situation. We also have to work on some infrastructures, like, we need to prepare the road that connects Siem Reap with Battambang by crossing the Tonle Sap, from Siem Reap at Sasar Sadom to Battambang at Otaki area – more than 70 kilometers. We are studying and finding construction funds. There is still a lot of works that we have to respond to the needs of the people [...]

### **Will Try to Stop Use of Masks in One or Two Provinces**

I am not testing people, but I want to know when we open up opportunities for travel from one area to another and we are going to try and allow dancing to see if the pandemic is gone or still there. This is not something that some may say I use people to test. Even if we prevent it, it will be difficult. Karaoke in Phnom Penh, I let the agent in to see. No one was wearing a mask, [...] I am thinking that at some point it will be possible to use the method of stopping the use of masks in one or two provinces to try out [...]

Suppose one province, takes Preah Vihear, for instance, let us walk in that province without wearing a mask. If you leave that province and enter the territory of Siem Reap or Oddar Meanchey, you must wear a mask. If we exclude both Oddar Meanchey and Preah Vihear, when crossing from Preah Vihear to Oddar Meanchey does not need to wear a mask [...] some countries have already lifted the ban on wearing masks in public places at a time when people are seriously ill [...]

I am very thankful to the people for the measures we have taken and achieved, because even though there is a vaccine, if the people refuse to get vaccinated, it will still not succeed. Our people are having vaccination, despite the fear that some people from some groups frightened them that vaccination will kill them. In the end, this vaccine has saved the lives of Cambodians [...] ■

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down. Covid-19 destroyed us, but we also tried to overcome it. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defense, Samdech Pichey Sena Tea Banh is in charge of this work and through HE Thong Khon, HE Hang Chuon Narun, vaccinations are given priority for our sportspersons, and they follow a regular vaccination interval. We need to focus more on training [...]

I hope that our sports leaders as well as our sportspersons will be experimenting there so we can properly host (SEA Games). Of course, we have studied step by step until now, which country manages how and it will be our (turn) to manage as well as others, or even better. We also need to prepare for this game with research on how to organize them to easily organize the 2023 SEA Games for Cambodia. Of course, it's very close, considering the match now and only one year to go. Vietnam did in May 2022, and we will be doing it in May too, we have one year only to do all that [...]

For going to the competition, I support the statement of His Excellency Thong Khon (Minister of Tourism and Vice Chairman of Cambodian SEA Games Organizing Committee (CAMSOC)), and as well as my previous words, that our sportspersons try to compete with the ability to avoid violation of the rules of the game and to avoid use of banned tonics [...] this is the uniqueness and dignity of the country. Sportspersons must know that going to this game is to carry the flag of the Kingdom of Cambodia. You have to know that with you is HM the the king, the legislature and the executive body, especially the nearly 17 million people. **Honor and dignity are very important for our nation. Therefore, this stimulant must not be used [...]** use of prohibited stimulants is intentional. So, if there is this problem, it is bad for the image of our nation. Never let this happen in our sports.

In this world, as I once said,

**only sports have a common standard. Do not talk about international standards on democracy, human rights, or on this/that issue. There is none.** At this point, we respect the role of sports, which is called the international standard and it only applies in sports. There are no international standards for politics, (governing) issues, democracy, (and) human rights. Some people, while hearing what I am saying like this, without thinking what would the standard be, may scold or attack me. But I do not care what they would say. This is my right to comment.

Let us talk about a country called the father of democracy. They apply different standards. For example, in the United States, with support of only 40% or even less become the president. Why? about 60% of the (total) population go to the polls, or we say 70%. When it comes time to go to the polls, the ballots are of course divided. If contestants are running neck and neck – one gets 36% and another 34%, then the one (who get elected has) only 36% of the 70% of voters. If we take into account the number of votes received, plus the population across the country, including those who did not turn out to vote, it means that the percentage is very low. That is democracy in America.

However, in France, there democracy is different. If contestant cannot win more than 50% (of the votes), the person cannot be president. France conducted two rounds of elections. In the first round, if you do not get more than 50% of the vote, the second round is voted on by the first and second place winners. So last Sunday, President Emmanuel Macron, who is due to end his second term, said, and I got the gist of it, that – among those who voted for him, there are those who may not like him, but they prevent extremist from coming to power. That is the direction [...]

**Global Supply Chain Crises Over Covid-19 and International Issues**

Sports is the only field where international standard is respected by all countries. Of course, in the future, there will be a need for that on some issues, for example: climate change, and even some public health issues may become common standards, but there are still problems. Example: Europe accuses Indonesia and Malaysia of cutting down too much forest to grow palm oil. They threatened not to buy palm oil from Indonesia or Malaysia for deforestation. Indonesia and Malaysia have said they will cut down forests that do not provide economic benefits but grow palm oil instead. They will be forest too. The interpretation is different on that issue.

We also replaced degraded forest by rubber trees/cashew trees, which provide economic benefits. Heard that now Indonesia is starting to suspend palm oil exports. Earlier, Europe threatened to stop buying palm oil due to deforestation. Suddenly, Indonesia, suspended the export of palm oil, creating market turmoil over the issue of palm oil. The so-called chaotic world due to different interpretations and misunderstandings, or the global supply chain is in crisis because of Covid-19 on the one hand, and due to some other international issues, on the other.

Now, the world is facing not only the Russia-Ukraine problem, but new issues are emerging recently in the Middle East also. Those countries are being affected by the inability to organize sports competition. There was a time when our team had had to have a competition against Iraq or Syria and they had to do that (in Bahrain). Some hosting countries – because of their security reason – do not guarantee safe organization of sports events and had to borrow sports venues from other countries. In public health too, if infectious diseases break out in countries, they may borrow sports venues from another country to compete. They can borrow from each other. We do not borrow from anyone, and we would delay. But 2023 is an obligation because we have

already prepared the ground-work.

**Transfer of Covid-19 Patients to Return Olympic Stadium to Sports**

Seeing the figures for our Covid-19 patients across the country, the figure that I received yesterday were just 93. Of these 93, only 26 were in Phnom Penh, and out of 26, eight were in normal condition and under normal oxygen. There were eight patients using one ventilator on a normal oxygen tank and nine are in ICUs. Well, I suggest you check and discuss. We still owe the Olympic Stadium, which has not yet been handed over to the sport. I think that HE Aun Porn Moniroth can also watch it through live broadcast or news (even though he is not here today). HE Mam Bunheng can also see and stakeholders too. We are now building a hospital with a capacity to ward more than 10,000 people, which will be completed early next year. At our Olympic Stadium we have already transferred a lot, and I do not want to keep the rest of them there anymore [...] patients can be transferred to Chak Angre center. Want to discuss this or go to Luang Mae Hospital or go to Chak Angrae Hospital so that we can hand over this stadium for repairs [...]

**HLuang Mae Hospital to Be Cancer Specialized Hospital**

At HLuang Mae Hospital, I think in the future we can turn this hospital into a cancer hospital. The day before, my daughter-in-law, the Doctor of public health, brought their children for dinner with us. She asked me, “father, the hospital (HLuang Mae) should be prepared to specialize in something, especially cancer.” I think it's appropriate. In the future, we can prepare the hospital for cancer, because now there are a lot of cancers patients, [...] I support such an arrangement. For the time to come, for the Covid-19 section, we will have a place of more than 10,000 beds that the city hall is working on [...]

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**We Have the Ability to Host SEA Games**

For next year, we have been freezing budget for four years in a row. A few days ago, I started freezing another 30 billion (Riel). We need 120 billion Riel or it is 40 million dollars (US) to prepare for next year's competition. We have to spend money. This is where we need to see (where the money we freeze is going). I used to tell people/sportspersons that I asked ASEAN leaders to be understanding. In 2011 in Indonesia, under former President Susilo Bambang, I asked for understanding of the ASEAN leaders that Cambodia cannot afford to host the (SEA Games) because we need funds to serve development, especially infrastructure to stimulate economic growth and reduce poverty. The president of Indonesia said that was a right move. In 2023, however, we have a strong foundation (to fulfil the role of hosting SEA Games), and our Chinese friends have provided a huge stadium for that matter, along with some of the bases we have already set up, as well as achievements such as the Olympic Stadium left by His Majesty King Preah Borom Ratanak Kaod, for whom, we, the next generation, are thankful to His Majesty, the King Father [...]

**Increase Salary of Retirees, Reduce Salary Gap between Retirees Before and After**

Basically, we put in a lot of effort through training, through which we provide [...] with regular allowances for training, despite the poor economy. If our economy is getting better beyond this, I think the sponsorship process will be more than that. I would also like to take this opportunity to apologize to the Armed Forces officials across the country who did not get the increment of their salaries in the last two years. Salary is stagnant. I suggest it was an urgent task to find a way to increase the salaries of veterans and former retirees who have (low) salaries [...]

Therefore, in the past, through the efforts of the Ministry of Economy and Finance, we have been able to reduce the salary gap by implementing the policy of reducing the gap between the previous retirees and the later retirees. Now, those retirees from before have reached 640,000 (Riels), while those retired later received 800,000 (Riels). It's close together. A little more push, they would get there. We all are happy together. At least those who retire later reach US\$ 200 (US)/month. We have to push this (salary increment) to the army, the police, the civil servants. This is one of the problem-solving programs for retirees.

**As of 27 April 2022, Tax Revenue Reached 53%**

As for the economic forecast, if the impact is not too great from Covid-19 and from the war (between) Russia-Ukraine, there is a possibility of a salary increase for 2023. Just how much, we have to think later [...] HE Kong Vibol reported to me that the revenue as of April 27, 2022 tax has already reached 53%. So, at the end of this month, we say 53%. We took 4 months to achieve 53%. Last year, the tax exceeded the plan by 124%. This year, judging by the pace of the revenue we are collecting, it will give us (the possibility) of relieving stress.

**US\$ 40 M/Month to Feed 700,000 Families**

We are spending US\$ 40 million a month to feed 700,000 families, or about 3 million people, so that they do not fall below the poverty line in the Covid-19 phase. The Royal Government dares to spend. We spend US\$ 40 million a month, US\$ 480 million a year, but this is a necessary expense. Not thinking about the cost of treating any disease, only thinking about feeding the people.

This is a social safety net. In difficult times, but we do not waste. For the army and the police, we have to sew masks for them [...] in one day, we use a lot of masks and sometimes they put on military T-

shirts but wear white masks. Must prepare the mask for the military, the police and the military police [...]

**Wearing Mask Is Not an Obligation but a Personal Decision**

True, now that wearing a mask is lifted, but I still observe our people (are wearing ones), and I'm happy. I asked around and some said wearing masks for two years have been comfortable. Every other year, they said, they had flu 3 to 4 times. He has not had a cold since he wore a mask. If so, continue to wear a mask, because wearing masks is a habit that we introduced since before the arrival of Covid-19. We see on the street some people riding motorcycles wearing masks because they stop dust from entering their mouth/nose. Therefore, wearing a mask is not an obligation and is an individual decision to protect (own) health. That's a good way to protect yourself. Let the people decide for themselves on health protection, take personal responsibility for success [...]

**How Will Russia-Ukraine War Affect Cambodia and the World**

Yesterday, I talked about Russia cutting off gas supplies to Bulgaria and Poland, who refused to pay in rubles. Suddenly after this decision, last night, there are three countries that open accounts to pay in rubles, fearing Russia's cut off. The politics of punishment is not hitting the target and boomeranging too. Now the country that was cut off by Russia must cut firewood to burn instead. In Germany, which used to emit gas to help heat, now has to reduce. Not a joke. The global supply chain is in trouble. We are waiting to see what effect it will have on us stemming from the war crisis in Ukraine.

IMF drops forecast while inflation is now happening in many countries. Thailand is in trouble with the baht depreciation. These are the common denominators that I have asked understanding from our Armed Forces and civil servants, who did not have increments of their

salaries in the last two years due to Covid-19. Now, in addition to Covid-19, we have this war situation. In terms of the economic framework, it has become World War III. In terms of economic impact, it has already begun. We need to redouble our efforts to ensure our macroeconomics while ensuring political stability [...]

**Do Not Wait for War Breakout to Call for Peace**

Peace is hard to find. Let's keep the peace. If you want to protect sports or other fields that are flourishing (today), you must protect the peace from destruction like after the coup d'etat of 1970 that created (war) and everything destroyed. Do not wait until you lose peace to shout for peace. Do not wait for war breakout to shout for peace.

Now, obviously, the Ukrainian people are fleeing. What the people of Ukraine need now is calling for peace, [...] just like our Cambodians did in the war era. In Iraq, in Libya, in Syria, in Yemen, peace is being strengthened after the wars. Our troops in Lebanon, in South Sudan, in Central Africa, in Mali, especially in Central Africa and Mali, are also facing rebel raids.

**Peace Foundation Boosts Two Consecutive Decades 7.5% Economic Growth**

This peace base, which gave us economic growth of 7.5% for two consecutive decades, moved Cambodia from the stage of a low-income country to a low-middle-income country, and we are ambitious to become a high-income country by the year 2030. According to the new milestone to be recalculated, the current income for each Cambodian is more than 2,000 US dollars, but according to the 2011 milestones, our income is just over 1,700 (US dollars). The higher our income, the more difficult it is to obtain external credit because we need to borrow only at commercial interest [...] we need to continue to develop, and for development to happen we needed to keep the peace [...]