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### **Cambodia and Spain Boost Relationship**

Deputy Prime Minister Hor Namhong, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, met in Phnom Penh on 25 February with Ms. Soraya Rodriguez Ramos, Secretary of State for International Cooperation of Spain.

A Memorandum on boosting the relationship and cooperation between Cambodia and Spain was also signed during the meeting.

The Deputy Prime Minister hailed the decision made by Spain to open its embassy in Cambodia and the signing of the Memorandum as the promotion of the relationship and cooperation between the two nations.

### **Cambodia to Host 6th General Assembly of Asia Pacific Political Parties**

Phnom Penh has been selected to host the 6th General Assembly of the International Conference on Asia Pacific Political Parties in December 2010, official news agency AKP reported on 2 March.

The decision has been made during the 12th Standing Committee Meeting of the International Conference on Asia Pacific Political Parties, Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister Sok An, Minister in Charge of the Office of the Council of Ministers, told reporters on 1 March upon his return from the meeting held in Katmandu, Nepal.

Around 100 political parties were expected to participate in the General Assembly, said Deputy PM Sok An, stressing that this would help increase Cambodia's prestige on the international arena.

During his stay in Nepal, Deputy PM Sok An met with Nepalese Prime Minister who invited Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen to pay an official visit to his country in an appropriate time.

## **Cambodia Rebuilds Railway with ADB, Australian Aid**

Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Finance Keat Chhon signed on 2 March with Director General of ADB's Southeast Asia Department Kunio Senga a loan agreement for the supplementary funding of the railway rehabilitation project in Cambodia, reported AKP on 3 March 2010.

The agreement consisted of a 42 million U.S. dollars supplementary loan from ADB and 21.5 million U.S. dollars grant from the Australian Government through the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). The total cost of the project is 141 million U.S. dollars.

The money will be invested to rehabilitate and reconstruct the 48 km of the track, which was destroyed during the country's civil war in 1970s, which links Cambodia to the Thai border and through Thailand with Malaysia and Singapore.

Cambodia will rebuild its entire railway system by 2013 with the help of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Australian government and others, Finance Minister Keat Chhon was quoted by Reuters as saying at a signing ceremony.

"The project began in 2007 and it will be completed in 2013," Keat Chhon said Keat Chhon, adding that the ADB had already provided a total of \$84 million in loans to help revive the 600 km (370 mile) network.

Another \$13 million had come from the OPEC Fund for International Development and Malaysia had contributed 106 km (66 miles) of track worth \$2.8 million, said Reuters.

"The railway has played a central role in Cambodia for more than 75 years and many Cambodians see it rightly as a symbol of development and a means of integration with Cambodia's neighbors in the Greater Mekong Sub region and the world beyond," Kunio Senga was quoted by Reuters as saying at the signing ceremony.

Australian Ambassador Margaret Adamson said railways would bring new investment.

"Good railways also help the environment and a community's safety by reducing carbon emissions and road accidents," Ambassador Margaret Adamson was quoted by Reuters.

Toll Holdings (TOL.AX: Quote, Profile, Research) of Australia signed a 30-year concession to operate the railway last June, she said.

"They will build Cambodia's human resources capability as well as deliver the railway services. Their presence, I am sure, will also encourage investment by other quality Australian and other foreign companies in Cambodia."

The joint statement by Cambodia and the ADB said it is expected that freight trains will began operation in 2011 which links the capital Phnom Penh to the Cambodian coastal province of Kampot, near the border of Vietnam, said AKP, adding that the entire system will be operated by 2013.

The new railway will connect to Cambodia's national highway network, to Cambodia's main seaport in Preah Sihanouk province, and to a major river port in Phnom Penh, fusing the rail network with road, sea and inland water transport systems connecting Northeast Cambodia and Vietnam's Mekong Delta.

## **Australia Stands by Cambodian Defence Cooperation**

"Australia will continue its defence cooperation programme with Cambodia, despite a controversial new policy which formally links business to Cambodian military units," according to ABC Radio Australia on 11 March 2010.

In another move in the framework of defence cooperation between the two countries, twelve senior military officers and defence civilians from the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies is planning to visit Cambodia from 9-12 June 2010.

The aim of the visit to Cambodia is to build on the Defence and Strategic Studies Course by expending participants' awareness of major social, economic, political and security issues within the region. Moreover, it will enhance [\(see page 3\)](#)

## **Australia Stands by .....**

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Cambodian's relationship to Australian defence as well as to gain the understanding of significant strategic issues affecting the country.

The delegation will make call on the Cambodian Defence University, elements of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces and the Cambodian Mine Action Centre.

## **Indian Concession Loan for Kratie-Stung Treng Transmission Line Project**

The Export-Import Bank of India has provided US\$15 million in concession loan to the Royal Government of Cambodia for Strengthening the Capacity of Transmission Line Project between Kratie and Stung Treng provinces (2<sup>nd</sup> phase), said AKP on 2 March 2010.

The loan agreement was signed in Phnom Penh on 1 March by Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Finance H.E. Keat Chhon and the Bank's General Manager Mr. Nadeem Panjetan.

H.E. Keat Chhon said this concession loan had resulted from the bilateral discussion between Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen and his Indian counterpart, Manmohan Singh, at the ASEAN Summit in Thailand in 2009.

The loan will be used to build a 135-kilometer and 230-kilovolt transmission line from Kratie to Stung Treng, along the National Road No.7.

According to the Ministry of Economy and Finance, this is the third time that India extended concession loans to Cambodia.

## **Final Phase of Regional Corridor Due to Start**

Cambodia will complete construction of the last stretch of a new road linking Thailand and Vietnam through the south of the Kingdom in 2012,

reported the Phnom Penh Post on 24 February 2010.

Var Sim Sorya, Director of Planning Department at the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, said Cambodia had almost finished its section of the highway.

"We only have left about 17 kilometres of road from Kampot to the Vietnamese border," he was quoted by the Post as saying.

Work on National Road 48 from Sre Ambel in Koh Kong province to the border with Thailand is already complete, he added, along with another road from Veal Rinh, Preah Sihanouk province to Kampot. The remaining 17-kilometre stretch to the Vietnamese border already existed but had not yet been standardised.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and South Korean government have already supplied funds for this section, said the Post.

Ouk Nida, senior project implementation officer at ADB in Cambodia, said the 17-kilometre road from Kampong Trach in Kampot to the Vietnamese border would be completed in 2012, continued the Post.

Tourism Minister Thong Khon said that the project would help attract greater numbers of tourists to Cambodian beaches and other sites including Bokor in Kampot province.

Vietnam's Thanh Nien Daily reported late Monday that the building of the 220-kilometre road through the south of the country in Kien Giang and Ca Mau provinces would get under way in March as part of a nearly 1,000-kilometre highway, the Thailand-Cambodia-Vietnam Southern Coastal Road Corridor, designed to boost economic activity in the region, reported the Post.

## **Cambodia Climate Change Alliance Launched**

Cambodian authorities and international development groups have launched on 25 February 2010 a new initiative, called the Cambodia Climate Change Alliance (CCCA), ([see page 4](#))

## **Cambodia Climate .....**

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aimed at addressing climate change in the Kingdom.

CCCA is a partnership between the government and international donors, who have provided US\$8.9 million in funding to support the effort.

The CCCA aims to help the Cambodian National Climate Change Committee to develop and coordinate policies on responding to the impact of climate change on agriculture and energy production and developing coastal areas in a sustainable way.

The initiative will raise the awareness of the Cambodian people on global climate change while providing senior government officials and representatives from social organisations with training and instruction on ways to deal with the threats posed by it.

The existing inter-ministerial Cambodian National Climate Change Committee will still oversee overall objectives, but the CCCA will be tasked with implementing the programmes.

The creation of the CCCA comes after Cambodian authorities last October called on international donors to provide funding that would assist the Kingdom in preparing for climate change's expected effects.

The CCCA, then, will help the Kingdom prepare for and study projected impacts.

## **New Road Circling Angkor Temple Complex to be Built**

Cambodia will build a new road that will circle the famed Angkor temple complex and reduce traffic in the area, officials said Monday.

The 13-mile (21-kilometer) road will be closed to trucks to reduce pollution, noise and vibrations that could damage the ancient ruins, said Soeung Kong, Deputy Secretary-General of the Apsara Authority, the government agency that oversees the temples.

South Korea has provided \$9.2 million to Cambodia for the construction of the road that will start this year and take three years to complete, he said.

It will be the second road in the Angkor area funded by South Korea.

## **Anti-Corruption Draft Law Approved**

On March 11, the National Assembly adopted unanimously the anti-corruption draft law, after one day and a half of debates, reported AKP 12 March 2010.

All the 82 lawmakers present voted for the nine-chapter with 57-article draft law.

Deputy Prime Minister Sok An, Minister in Charge of the Office of the Council of Ministers and government's representative to defend the draft, believed that the anti-corruption law would become an important "sharp tool" for combating corruption in the country.

The Embassy of Japan called the law "a step forward for good governance", according to VOA Khmer on 12 March.

Mr. John Johnson, a spokesman for the US Embassy, said "We trust that the implementing regulations will clarify and enhance the law's aim to detect and punish corruption according to international standards", reported VOA.

The law will take effect after receiving approval from Cambodia's Senate and promulgation from His Majesty Norodom Sihamoni, King of Cambodia.

## **Cambodia, US Discuss Cooperation on MIA**

Visiting Major General Stephen Douglas Tom, Chief of Staff for U.S. Asia-Pacific Region, accompanied by U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia Ms. Carol A. Rodley, met with General Pol Saroeun, Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF), reported AKP on 1 March 2010.

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## **Cambodia, US Discuss.....**

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The discussion focused on the cooperation in finding the remains of U.S. soldiers missing in action in Cambodia.

## **Cambodia, US Bolster Cooperation on Cross Border Crimes**

The Cambodian and American governments are committed to strengthen their cooperation in combating cross border crimes, including drug and artifact trafficking, and child sex tourism, announced John T. Morton, Assistant Secretary at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, reported AKP on 2 March 2010.

Mr. Morton told reporters on 1 March he had signed on that day a letter of intent with Gen. Neth Savoeun, Commissioner General of the National Police of Cambodia, to reconfirm the good cooperation between the Cambodian National Police and the U.S. customs and immigration law enforcement agencies in fighting cross border crimes and sex tourism, particularly child sex tourism, said AKP

The visiting Assistant Secretary concluded his two-day visit to Cambodia on 2 March at Siem Reap province where he had a meeting with Cambodian Heritage Police to discuss about measures against artifact trafficking.

## **US to Return Shipment of Looted Khmer Antiquities**

John Morton, Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security for US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, said American officials are working on the logistics of transporting a shipment of priceless antiquities, some of them very heavy, back to the Kingdom later this year, reported The Phnom Penh Post on 3 March 2010.

“In 2007, we returned small items,” Morton told reporters after a meeting with Cambodian officials in Siem Reap on 2 March.

“For this next repatriation, the items are very large and weigh several thousand pounds. We have to make special arrangements for them to be shipped to Cambodia,” said Morton, whose department includes the repatriation of stolen cultural heritage worldwide.

The US has pledged to work with Cambodian authorities to stem the flow of the illegal art trade. An ongoing memorandum of understanding between US authorities and the Ministry of Culture bans the importation of Cambodian artefacts.

## **US\$-10 Million Education Project Officially Launched**

The U.S. Embassy officially launched here on Mar. 11 a US\$10-million education project, in the presence of Education Minister Im Sethy and U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia Mrs. Carol A. Rodley, reported AKP on 15 March 2010.

The five-year project is designed to improve the quality and interests of the basic education and to increase the access to schooling of the underprivileged children, including minorities, girls and the very poor, said a news release of the U.S. Embassy on Friday.

Some 120,000 students in primary and lower-secondary schools in Kampong Cham, Kratie and Siem Reap provinces will benefit from the project, which will be implemented by the World Education Organization with the close collaboration with the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

## **U.S. To Help Train Cambodia's Peacekeeping Forces**

Visiting U.S. high-ranking military officer Gen. William Crowe has accepted a request by Cambodia's National Center for Peacekeeping Forces and ERW Clearance (NPMEC) to train Cambodian forces on peacekeeping mission, reported AKP on 15 March 2010.

The request was made by Gen. Sem Sovanny, general director of the NPMEC, during (see page 6)

## **U.S. To Help Train .....**

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a visit to the Oudong military training school on Mar. 11 by Gen. William Crowe who is in charge of South Asia and ASEAN affairs office under the U.S. Department of Defense.

The visit to Cambodia is made according to the advice by leaders of the U.S. Department of Defense after a meeting in Washington between a Cambodian military delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defense Gen. Tea Banh and the U.S. Secretary of Defense Gen. Robert Gate, said Gen. William Crowe.

The U.S. Secretary of Defense fully supported the activities of mine-clearance by the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF) and stressed that the mine-clearance mission is not only for Asia, but for the whole world, he said.

He said he will attend the GPOI-2010, which is due to be held in Cambodia in July this year, as a member of the UN high-ranking delegation.

## **More Japanese Support to CMAC's Activities**

The Japanese Government has provided a total of US\$676,537 to Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC) for the Project for Supporting Humanitarian Mine Clearance in three northeastern provinces.

The grant contract was signed here last Friday between CMAC Director General Heng Ratana and Japanese Ambassador to Cambodia Kuroki Masafumi, at the Embassy of Japan.

The project is aimed to clear minefields in the provinces of Preah Vihear, Kampong Thom and Oddar Meanchey for a one-year period, said Heng Ratana, adding that as many as 2,000 families will benefit from this project.

From 1992 to January 2010, CMAC has cleared some 265 square kilometers and destroyed over 1.9 millions of mines and UXO, Heng Ratana pointed out.

In his speech, the Japanese ambassador Kuroki Masafumi recognized the recent efforts of the Royal Government of Cambodia in reducing significantly the number of casualties, stressing that the Japanese Government has put particular importance on assisting demining activities in Cambodia.

Since 1998, Japan has extended more than US\$82 million to support CMAC's demining activities.

## **Cambodia Has Flourishing Civil Society, Free Press and Elections**

"In recent years Cambodia has sent peacekeepers to three African countries. It is poised to host a major multi-national peacekeeping exercise later this year. And although Cambodia has not yet achieved all its goals, professor of war studies at King's College in London and the author of a new book about peace-building says Cambodia's experience was a success", reported VOA Khmer on 12 March 2010. Mats Berdal is a professor of war studies at King's College in London and the author of a new book about peace-building.

He warns that peacekeeping goals can often be over-ambitious. But he said in the case of Cambodia, peacekeepers brought many benefits that should not be overlooked.

"Cambodia perhaps doesn't meet the standards of a mature liberal democracy, but it's a very different place from what it used to be. It has a flourishing civil society, it has a free press, it has had elections."

## **New Zealand's Project for Angkor Park**

An article "Cambodia's Angkor Park" in Currents, a magazine of New Zealand Government's international aid and development NZAID, issue 19 February 2010, said:

"Angkor Park is situated within Siem Reap Province and is home to some 112,000 residents who depend on the area's natural resources to survive. The temple earned the park World Heritage Status which paved the way for a tourism (see page 6)

## **New Zealand's Project .....**

(Continue from page 6)

boom within the park. In 2006, and impressive 700,000 people visited the park and in 2010 the number of visitors is projected to rise to 1.3 million.

“Many of the park’s residents have benefited from the growth in tourism through income received by being employed in tourism service or tourism driven construction industries. However, many more people within the park remain the poorest in Cambodia. The leap in tourist numbers and the park’s rising population is putting increasing pressure on the park’s natural resources, landscape and temples, threatening to damage the sustainability of both the local communities’ livelihoods and tourism.

“Since 2005 New Zealand has been working with the Association for the Protection of the Site and management of the Angkor/Siem Reap Region National Authority (ANA), the government agency charged with managing the park to help address the challenges it and the park communities face. The first phase of support produced a management plan for the park. The Second phase will pursue the overarching goal of poverty reduction in the park.

“Critical to the success and progression of the programme, and overall development of the park, is the relationship between ANA and the park communities. At times this relationship has been strained. Many people living within the park have found it difficult to adapt to the World Heritage Status conservation requirements such as the ban of fishing and collection of firewood in some protected areas of the park. An initiative implemented under the first stage of the programme between-May and October 2009 looked to strengthen this relationship, with promising results.

“A new team of seven community liaison officers

from ANA’s Department of Land and Habitat Management were given theoretical and Practical training in participatory planning and how to achieve productive two-way working relationships.

“The team worked alongside two pilot villages on the park, under the direction of a Cambodian NGO Vaddhanak, to help build the villages’ capacity to identify the future needs and vision of their communities. The steps required by the villages and ANA to make these visions a reality were all recorded as part of a village plan. This initial stage of the programme has set a foundation for real collaboration for ANA and the park communities to build on to help ensure the sustainability of the area.”

It should be noticed that the management plan for Angkor Park, initiated by the Thomas Fraser Society of New Zealand and financed by the government of New Zealand, offered visitors a chance to diversify their experience in Angkor Park to include not only the enjoyment of the monuments but also of village life and the natural environment, according to the information in the website of the Authority for Protection and Management of Angkor and the Region of Siem Reap (APSARA).

## **Bermuda Tourist Ship Docks at Preah Sihanouk Province**

A tourist ship carrying 2,627 multinational tourists called at Preah Sihanouk province’s autonomous seaport on 12 March 2010, reported AKP on 16 March.

Of the tourists, 1,073 are Australians, 612 Americans, 317 British, 247 Germans and other nationals.

The 288-meter long ship, named Diamond Princess, has traveled across Vietnam and Cambodia before proceeding to Thailand.

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