

NEWSLETTER
KAS
CAMBODIA OFFICE
42nd EDITION
June 2013

Allan Tran-Sam

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The following articles are a composition of the last two weeks' (16th-30th June, 2013) press releases in Cambodia. They give a review on current developments in the country.

Official Campaign for the General Election Kicks Off

After months of low blows, timely lawsuits, dramatic defections, empty chairs at policy forums, and questions marks hanging over everything from the voters list to whether the opposition would contest the election, the one-month long political campaign for the general election finally started on 28th June.



Source : The Phnom Penh Post

The two main contenders, the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) and the opposition's Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP), both held their first rallies in Phnom Penh and throughout the country, in an overall peaceful atmosphere. The CPP - simultaneously celebrating its 62nd anniversary - gathered more than a hundred senior party officials and about nine thousand supporters at Phnom Penh's Koh Pich island, before parading through

the streets of the capital in a great display of luxury cars and motorbikes. The same day, and in the absence of both of their leaders (Sam Rainsy in self-exile in France and Kem Sokha campaigning in Kandal Province), about eight thousand CNRP supporters met in Freedom Park, and listened to recorded speeches and patriotic music before taking it to the streets as well. The few reported incidents (government officials assuming campaign functions out of uniform, state vehicles used at provincial rallies) were deemed "not enough to obstruct the election campaign" by the Committee for Free and Fair Elections (Comfrel)'s Executive Director.

Smaller political parties are expected to launch their campaign later this month - some claiming to still be awaiting the authorities' approval.

Further reading:

Clean Start to Campaign

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/2013062866549/National/clean-start-to-campaign.html>

Parties Begin Campaigning for July 28 Election

<http://www.cambodiadaily.com/elections/parties-begin-campaigning-for-july-28-election-32527/>

Small Parties get Late Start in the Campaign

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/2013062866545/National/small-parties-get-late-start-in-the-campaign.html>

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An Unequal Playing Field: with no Laws, Fundraising Takes Different Role

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/2013062566469/National/an-unequal-playing-field.html>

Policy Forums See Little in the Way of Ruling Party Participation

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/2013062566466/National/policy-forums-see-little-in-the-way-of-ruling-party-participation.html>

Cambodia Downgraded on US Global Human Trafficking Ranking

The 2013 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report, released on 21st June by US Secretary of State John Kerry, criticises Cambodia for a lack of improvement regarding the situation of human trafficking and sexual exploitation in the Kingdom.

“The government prosecuted and convicted fewer trafficking offenders and identified fewer victims than it did in the previous year. The government did not make efforts to address trafficking-related corruption during the year, and complicity of government officials contributed to a climate of impunity for trafficking offenders and a denial of justice to victims,” the report says. The TIP report particularly points to the increase in the number of Cambodians being trafficked onto Thai fishing trawlers. It also denounces the situation in the Svay Pak brothels area outside Phnom Penh, where young children are exploited in the sex trade, and which continues to operate despite numerous attempts by the police to close it down.



Source: The Huffington Post

Cambodia was consequently moved from Tier 2, where it had been for the past three years, down to Tier 2 Watch list – a sublevel ranking that indicates a lack of evidence to prove the government has taken the anti-trafficking measures required for a Tier 2 status.

The Cambodian Ministry of Foreign Affairs called the report’s findings “untrue” and “ludicrous,” while some NGOs expressed their disappointment in what they saw as non-recognition of their efforts.

Further reading:

Cambodia Drops on US Global Human Trafficking Ranking

<http://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/cambodia-drops-on-us-global-human-trafficking-ranking-31423/>

Lost Ground in Trafficking

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/2013062166426/National/lost-ground-in-trafficking.html>

Cambodia Says Cultural Barriers Impeding Human Trafficking Fight

<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/cambodia/trafficking-06202013185022.html>

2013 Trafficking in Persons Report

<http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2013/index.htm>

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UNPO Denounces Khmer Krom Treatment amid Protests

More than a hundred monks and other demonstrators gathered in Phnom Penh's Freedom Park on 25th June, to protest against the continued incarceration and alleged torture of two monks in Vietnam. The two Venerables - initially part of a group of seven that was arrested at two Pagodas in Kleang Province on 21st May - are accused by the government of being affiliated with Kampuchea Krom. The crowd in the Cambodian capital held portraits of the monks and chanted slogans urging for the recognition of the Khmer Krom ethnic group.



Source: The Phnom Penh Post

Situated in southern Vietnam, in a region once part of the Khmer empire, the Khmer Krom people have reportedly been facing persecutions from the Vietnamese government, while remaining virtually ignored by the Cambodian authorities.

In a statement issued on the same day, the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation (UNPO) denounced this situation, largely unknown outside the region. The statement, which was sent to the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, comes as Cambodia is preparing to deliver its first progress report to the Human Rights Council in October, assessing how many of the 91 rights recommendations it accepted in 2009 it has managed to meet.

The statement also expressed concerns regarding the treatment of the Degar Montagnards, a Christian people from the central highlands of Vietnam. In early 2011, the Cambodian government announced the end of a memorandum of understanding signed between Cambodia, Vietnam, and the U.N. that oversaw the treatment of Montagnard asylum seekers, and shut down the U.N.-run refugee centre where dozens of Montagnards were staying.

Further reading:

UNPO Exposes Human Rights Abuses in Cambodia and Viet Nam

<http://www.unpo.org/article/16105>

Khmer Krom Protest Arrests

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/2013062666490/National/khmer-krom-protest-arrests.html>

Khmer Krom Testifies at US Hearing on Vietnam 'Repression'

<http://www.voacambodia.com/content/khmer-krom-testifies-at-us-hearing-on-vietnam-repression/1675921.html>

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EuroCham Holds First Annual General Meeting



A project inaugurated in June 2011, the European Chamber of Commerce in Cambodia (EuroCham) held its first annual general meeting on 20th June in Phnom Penh. A hundred and fourteen members elected the board of directors of the European Chamber. The Chambre de Commerce Franco-

Cambodgienne and the Arbeitskreis Deutsche Wirtschaft - both at the origin of EuroCham along with the British Business Association in Cambodia - also merged with it on this occasion. A move that the Dutch and Belgian Chambers are likely to announce in the near future as well.

The main objective of EuroCham is to create a better relationship between the government and European firms. A White Book summarising for the Cambodian government the key issues affecting the business climate for European businesses in the Kingdom is one of the tasks the organisation gave itself. The European Chamber of Commerce will also continue to support its members, providing them with the same preferential access to the business opportunities it already does.

Further reading:

EuroCham Holds First Annual General Meeting

<http://www.cambodiadaily.com/business/eurocham-holds-first-annual-general-meeting-31437/>

Business Chambers Merge with Eurocham

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/2013062066376/Business/business-chambers-merge-with-eurocham.html>

Pre-Election Economic Stability Shows Greater Confidence from the People

Pre-election periods usually stood for a sharp decrease in business activities in Cambodia. Violence, worries over the outcome of the elections and the uncertainty of a hypothetical political transition phase lead people to adopt a "wait-and-see" attitude until the results of the ballot.

This year's election seems to be different. As the outcome appears extremely predictable, professionals report no major disruption in their activities, and all seems "normal".



Source: The Phnom Penh Post

Further reading:

Election Time: Spend or Save?

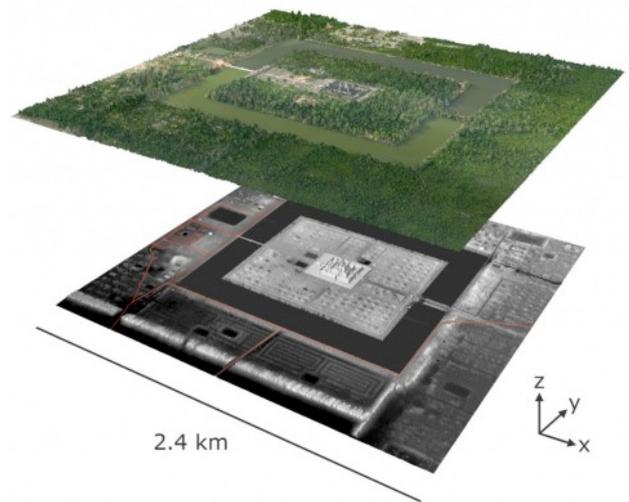
<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/2013062866537/Business/election-time-spend-or-save.html>

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www.kas.dewww.kas.de/kambodscha/**Unlike Past Elections, Property Investors Remain Buoyant**<http://www.cambodiadaily.com/elections/unlike-past-elections-property-investors-remain-buoyant-32542/>**World Heritage Site of Angkor in a New Light**

A team of archaeologists presented this month the findings of a scientific helicopter venture over Angkor, fifteen months after its completion. Using for the first time in Asia the Lidar (a combination of the words "light" and "radar") technology, scientists were able to confirm the theory that a whole population lived within the compounds of temples during the Angkorian times. What they also found, but might not have expected, is that a whole population lived right outside the walls of Angkor Wat and other major temples as well. Images show for instance that the meticulously ordained urban plan of Angkor Thom spread well beyond the walls of the city. The findings of this endeavour also lead an archaeologist to think that he may have found the exact location of the royal palace of King Jayavarman II, whose coronation has been considered the start of Cambodia's Angkorian dynasty.

*Source: Cambodia Daily*

It took scientists years of research to pinpoint exactly where to map, before being able to use the Lidar technology itself. The images it has produced are nevertheless worth it, as they confirm previous hypotheses, provide archaeologists with a detailed vision of the whole sites in which they are conducting research, and enable them to precisely target where to excavate. This project also interested the Cambodian authorities, as it provided an exact blueprint of the region's extremely advanced and complex Angkorian hydraulic system.

Further reading:**Shedding Light on the Empire**<http://www.cambodiadaily.com/selected-features/shedding-light-on-the-empire-31663/>**Laser-Scans zeigen versunkene Stadt bei Angkor Wat (in German)**<http://www.spiegel.de/wissenschaft/technik/khmer-imperium-laser-scans-zeigen-versunkene-stadt-bei-angkor-wat-a-906744.html>**The Hidden City of Angkor Wat**<http://news.sciencemag.org/sciencenow/2013/06/the-hidden-city-of-angkor-wat.html?ref=hp>