



NEWSLETTER



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A SELECTION OF THE LATEST LOCAL NEWS IN CAMBODIA

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Final verdicts in Case 002/01

The 23th of November is a remarkable day in the history of Cambodia. It is the first time senior Khmer Rouge leader have been officially recognized by the court as being guilty of crimes committed during the Khmer Rouge regime. In 2014 the regime's two top surviving leaders Nuon Chea, who was the second-in-command to Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot and Khieu Samphan, former president of the state and high ranked official during the Khmer Rouge time, have been found guilty of crimes against humanity by the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), a court established to try the most senior responsible members of the Khmer Rouge crimes during the Cambodian genocide. After



Nuon Chea (left) and Khieu Samphan (right) listen to the announcement of the appeal judgement at the Khmer Rouge tribunal this morning.

both appealed the verdict, a final decision in Case 002/01 has been taken. The Supreme Court Chamber rejected the appeals of those convictions and upheld their life sentences at the Khmer Rouge tribunal. Despite people in Cambodia were happy that the decision finally served justice, for many it did

not bring a full relief. Khmer Rouge survivors and relatives of the victims criticized that the process took too long by pointing out that some of the accused – like former foreign minister Ieng Sary and his wife, former social affairs minister Ieng Thirith – died before the trial could be finished, and many victims died before they could see the verdict. Also, whereas most of the convictions were confirmed, several in relation to the crimes against humanity of extermination and persecution on political grounds, as well as crimes against humanity allegedly committed at the Tuol Po

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Chrey execution site, were reversed lacking sufficient evidence. The defense counsel expressed also dissatisfaction with the verdict, accusing the court to base their decision more on people's expectations than the evidence. Nevertheless, Youk Chhang, director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia emphasized that the process does not mark an end but the beginning to restore the faith in the justice system of Cambodia.

Further Reading

KRT upholds guilty verdicts for Chea and Samphan

By Erin Handley | November 23, 2016

The Phnom Penh Post

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/krt-upholds-guilty-verdicts-chea-and-samphan>

Chea, Samphan life sentences upheld, though KRT 'errors' noted

By Erin Handley and Touch Sokha | November 24, 2016

The Phnom Penh Post

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/chea-samphan-life-sentences-upheld-though-krt-errors-noted>

Verdict Bittersweet for Victims

By Cheang Sokha and Mayuri Mei Lin | November 24, 2016

Khmer Times

<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/news/32366/>

Image Source

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/krt-upholds-guilty-verdicts-chea-and-samphan>

2017 National budget passed

The national budget for 2017 has been settled. On November 22nd Members of the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) voted in the National Assembly to spend \$5 billion for the next year, despite the lack of support from the opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), whose lawmakers chose not to vote in protest. The budget increase of 15.6 percent compared with 2016 and



Opposition lawmaker Son Chhay speaks to reporters after the vote on the 2017 budget.

makes seven ministries the main priority, which receive together about \$3 billion out of the budget. Especially the Education Ministry (\$667 million), Ministry of National Defense (\$459 million) and Ministry of Health

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(\$419 million) gained on financial resources. Nevertheless, CNRP chief whip Son Chhay said the spending remains too low to achieve high quality development. He emphasized this statement by pointing out that the neighbor countries such as Thailand and Vietnam spend nearly the double of their GDP for those sectors compared to Cambodia. Also, the high investment in defense meets incomprehensibility. Since the country is currently not facing war or conflicts, the money can be used more efficiently in other areas, according to Son Chhay. Hence, the planned education budget has more than doubled from \$335 million given to the ministry in 2014. Furthermore, by increasing the national budget for 2017 the financial resources were adapted to the economic growth as well as the needs of the country and is according to Mr. Von, chairman of the National Assembly's Foreign Affairs Commission, an important step to support the economy, create more jobs for people, reduce poverty by one percent a year, develop human resources, especially youth, and build infrastructure which facilitates transferring agriculture goods.

Further Reading

CNRP lawmakers end boycott but can't thwart budget's passage

By Meas Sokchea | November 23, 2016

The Phnom Penh Post

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/cnrp-lawmakers-end-boycott-cant-thwart-budgets-passage>

Budget Backed Without Support

By Chea Vannak | November 23, 2016

Khmer Times

<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/news/32306/>

Next Year's Budget Passed; CNRP Abstains

By Kuch Naren | November 23, 2016

The Cambodia Daily

<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/next-years-budget-passed-cnrp-abstains-120893/>

Image Source

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/cnrp-lawmakers-end-boycott-cant-thwart-budgets-passage>

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Crucial three-month voter registration period finished

During the registration process from September 1st to November 29th about 7.7 million citizens newly signed up to a digital voter databank. Not least because of the high efforts in promotion by the NEC and the political parties more than 76 percent of the 9.7 million eligible voters could be



A woman holds up her new identification card after registering to vote in Phnom Penh in September.

reached. Yet, still about 2 million have not been registered, including more than 1 million migrant workers living abroad. Presumably, there are different reasons which hinder people from registering to vote. For example, people, who had given their national ID card to a bank for deposit, could not get it returned short term for the registration. The registration was especially difficult for migrants, since the law requires everyone to register in their native commune or where they reside. Consequently, the creation of a mobile registration unit at the border is not allowed. To still secure the voting rights for people at locations, where it is more difficult to register, opposition party CNRP wants to prolong the registration period. Recently, CNRP asked for three-day extensions for communes where less than 50 percent of residents have enrolled to vote but where more than 50 people were still registering per day. Due to a high amount of last-day registrations, the National Election Committee (NEC) agreed to extend the sign up period national wide by one day.

Further reading

CNRP to meet NEC over voter registration 'problems'

By Meas Sokchea | November 25, 2016

The Phnom Penh Post

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/cnrp-meet-nec-over-voter-registration-problems>

Mammoth Voter Registration Effort Ends Today

By Kuhon Narim and Michael Dickison | November 29, 2016

The Cambodia Daily

<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/mammoth-voter-registration-effort-ends-today-121171/>

NEC to mull targeted extension of voter registration

By Bun Sengkong | November 28, 2016

The Phnom Penh Post

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/nec-mull-targeted-extension-voter-registration>

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Procrastinators Get Another Day to Register
By Khuon Narim and Michael Dickison | November 30, 2016
The Cambodia Daily
<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/procrastinators-get-another-day-register-121212/>

Image Source
<http://phsarpp.com/threads/no-simple-solution-for-2-million-lost-voters.13476/>

Opposition Party CNRP ended its six-month boycott of Parliament

Cambodia's opposition party, the Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP) ended its legislative boycott of the Parliament at Tuesday, November 22nd saying that the national interest takes priority. After six months of non-attendance, the majority of CNRP lawmaker decided to return to Parliament mostly in order to ensure a proper debate on the national budget for 2017 (see above). Additionally, CNRP spokesman Yim Sovann said that the end of boycott is a "gesture to show that we want a resolution to the political crisis", referring to the months-long political standoff in the country.

CNRP started the boycott in May 2016 after security forces tried to arrest Kem Sokha, the party's deputy leader, when he refused to appear as a witness in court over an alleged affair with a young hairdresser. For his no-show, he was sentenced to five months in prison and a U.S. \$ 2,000 fine. Thereafter, not only Kem Sokha but several CNRP members have been stripped of their parliamentary immunity and have been put on trial for a variety of offenses, most of them considered to be politically motivated.

It has not been the first time, CNRP was about to end its boycott. Nevertheless, the last time (at the beginning of October) it wasn't carried out due to unspecified threats that were made against opposition party officials. The threats were related to protests against Prime Minister Hun Sen's son, Hun Manet on an official visit to Australia,

allegedly linked to a group of CNRP in Adelaide. Despite announcing otherwise, Kem Sokha didn't leave the party's head quarter to join the parliamentary session, where he has been staying for the last half year to avoid the charges set up against him. Instead, he was one of more than a dozen opposition lawmakers absent when the assembly debated the next year's budget. Sokha only left the head quarter once within the last six months in order to register for the upcoming elections in 2017 (commune election) and 2018 (national election).



Opposition lawmakers attending a session of the National Assembly in Phnom Penh, ending their six-month boycott.

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Further reading

CNRP again points to National Assembly return

By Meas Sokchea | November 3, 2016

The Phnom Penh Post

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/cnrp-again-points-national-assembly-return>

Kem Sokha headed to National Assembly

By Meas Sokchea | November 18, 2016

The Phnom Penh Post

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/kem-sokha-headed-national-assembly>

Opposition to End Boycott

By Taing Vida | November 17, 2016

Khmer Times

<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/news/32072/opposition-to-end-boycott/>

Image Source

<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/next-years-budget-passed-cnrp-abstains-120893/>

Celebration of the Water Festival in Phnom Penh

One of Cambodia's most important national festivities has been back to Phnom Penh this November: The so called Water Festival. What used to be an annual tradition was held for only the second time in six years from November 13th to 15th in the countries capital. In the past years, the government mostly cancelled the festival due to weather conditions, whereas in the 2012 edition, the death of the late King Father Norodom Sihanouk was the reason for the cancellation.



People gathering on the bank of the Tonle Sap to watch the famous Water Festival boat races in Phnom Penh.

The Water Festival traditionally marks the end of the rainy season. The three-day celebration attracted approx. two million visitors, mostly from the rural areas. Its main activity consists of colorful dragon boat races on the Tonle Sap River. It's a traditional event, as stated by one of the participants: "Our ancestors also did boat racing and we are the next generation, so we need to continue our ancestors' traditions." This year, a total of 259 teams with approx. 17,750 racers from all across the country came to take part in the competition. Besides the boat races, lots of concerts and entertainment venues near the riverside were organized, as well as illuminated floats and fireworks. Like in 2010, when 353 people died in a stampede on a bridge to Diamond Island, this year's edition was also

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overshadowed by a tragedy. Two festival rowers died while practicing for the race, when their vessel collided with a cruise ship.

Further Reading

Win, Lose or Sink, Racers Revel in Tradition

By Ben Sokhean and Janelle Retka | November 14, 2016

The Cambodia Daily

<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/win-lose-sink-racers-revel-tradition-120548/>

Cambodia's water festival returns with a bang

By Gareth Bright | November 16, 2016

Al Jazeera

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/2016/11/cambodia-bon-om-touk-water-festival-draws-visitors-161116080055017.html>

Two Missing Festival Rowers Found Dead

By Ben Sokhean | November 14, 2016

The Cambodia Daily

<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/brief/two-missing-festival-rowers-found-dead-120554/>

Image Source

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/water-festival-attendance-down-significantly-past-years>

Impact of Trumps win in the U.S. Election on Cambodia

After the election victory of the Republican candidate Donald Trump on November 8th, people wonder in what way the U.S.-Cambodian relations will be impacted. Although it is too early to draw any conclusions, most analysts agree that a major shift in U.S. policy toward Cambodia by the Trump administration would be unlikely, partly due to the fact that Cambodia long ago dropped out of strategic significance for the US.

However, experts acknowledge that Mr. Trump is rather volatile and therefore, his policy is hard to predict. Only time will tell us, if that holds true.

The biggest possible threat for Cambodia is a rethinking of trade preferences by the Trump administration, as Mr. Trump announced an economic protectionism. Less trade with Cambodia would especially affect the garment sector, which relies heavily on the U.S. market: According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), the United States accounted for 34-36 % of Cambodian total garment and footwear exports in 2014;



People watching US election coverage in a bar in Phnom Penh.

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with a total export of \$5.817 billion, the garment sector was equal to 10.7 % of the GDP in that same year.

The spokesman of the ruling party, Sok Eysan stated that the CPP (Cambodian People's Party) was looking forward to Mr. Trump as U.S. president. Prior to the U.S. Presidential Election, Prime Minister Hun Sen had expressed he wanted the Republican nominee to win, because he believes that Donald Trump would bring peace to the world by improving the U.S.-Russian relations. On the other side, opposition leader Sam Rainsy said he firmly supports Hillary Clinton. However, their praises were unlikely a driving factor in the election.

Further reading

Praise of Donald Trump not an endorsement, says PM

By Touch Sokha | November 8, 2016

The Phnom Penh Post

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/praise-donald-trump-not-endorsement-says-pm>

Trump Wins. What Does It Mean for Cambodia?

By Sek Odom and Matt Surrusco | November 10, 2016

The Cambodia Daily

<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/trump-wins-mean-cambodia-120403/>

What Will Donald Trump's Asia Policy Look Like?

By Prashanth Parameswaran | November 10, 2016

The Diplomat

<http://thediplomat.com/2016/11/what-will-donald-trumps-asia-policy-look-like/>

Image Source

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/cpp-exultant-cnrp-circumspect-trump-victory>

Ban of Surrogacy

Following the example of some Asian neighbor countries, the Cambodian Ministry of Health announced a ban on surrogacy at the end of October. Article 12 of the Ministry's directive, or *prakas*, states: "Surrogacy, one of a set of services to have a baby by Assisted Reproductive Technology, is banned completely". While the Government works on drafting a law, the ban will remain in place during the transitional period.

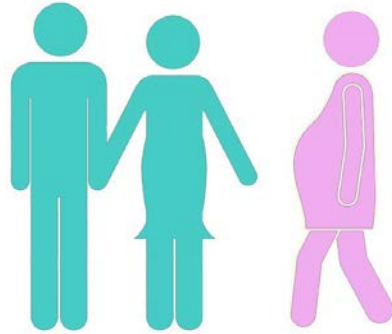
Commercial surrogacy became a topic in Cambodia after governments across Asia (like Thailand, India and Nepal) decided on a crackdown of this practice. Therefore, surrogacy agencies developed very quickly in Cambodia, as for many couples it has become their "last hope". Nevertheless, these agencies are often linked to scandals and concerns about exploitation. A surrogate mother in Cambodia receives approx. \$400 a month from the agency she works for, and about \$6,000 more after the baby's delivery.

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According to experts, about 50 surrogacy agents exist in Cambodia. The first case after the ban has been announced, has led to, the recent arrest of the Australian Tammy Davis-Charles, founder of a surrogacy agency along with two Cambodians accused of illegally matching surrogate mothers with potential parents, caused a stir. The trio has been charged under Article 332 of the Penal Code on the Infringement on Childhood that has been drafted originally to combat child trafficking. Meanwhile, the chief of the anti-human trafficking bureau, Keo Thea, assured that women who are already pregnant due to surrogacy arrangements, do not need to fear the law, but will be offered assistance: "The surrogate mothers are victims and those who want children



Pictogram: Surrogacy

are also not guilty," as stated by the Cambodia Daily.

According to the U.S.-based advisory agency Sensible Surrogacy, brokers who hired Cambodian women to carry the children of foreign parents before the ban of the practice are now looking to Laos and Malaysia.

Further reading

Surrogacy Ban Temporary as Government Drafts Law

By Sek Odom | November 4, 2016

The Cambodia Daily

<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/surrogacy-ban-temporary-government-drafts-law-120174/>

Surrogates left in limbo after arrests

By Kong Meta and Cristina Maza | November 22, 2016

The Phnom Penh Post

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/surrogates-left-limbo-after-arrests>

No Prosecution for Surrogate Mothers, Parents, Police Say

By Phan Soumy | November 23, 2016

The Cambodia Daily

<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/no-prosecution-surrogate-mothers-parents-police-say-120897/>

Image Source

<http://www.askthesheikh.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/24786-surrogacy-1415703886-651-640x480.jpg>