



NEWSLETTER



KAS HAUPTABTEILUNG
INTERNATIONALE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

79TH EDITION
DECEMBER 2016

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Newsletter: 1st – 31th December 2016

A SELECTION OF THE LATEST LOCAL NEWS IN CAMBODIA

Royal Pardon for Kem Sokha. Adhoc Officials still not released

A series of recordings with conversations between Cambodia's National Rescue Party president Kem Sokha and his alleged mistress, 25-year-old manicurist Khom Chandaraty, appeared on the internet by an anonymous source earlier this year, causing a "sex-scandal". After repeatedly refusing to appear before the court to answer questions about a "prostitution" charge related to his alleged affair, Mr. Sokha had been sentenced to five months in prison in September. Also four Adhoc rights group workers, the National Election Committee's Deputy Secretary-General Ny Chakrya and commune chief Seang Chet have been arrested since late April, after being accused of bribing the alleged mistress to deny an affair. During a questioning by the police and the court, they defended themselves, saying it was only an offer of financial support. Ms. Chandaraty denied first being the woman in the audio files and receiving money from the rights group, but later on changed her statement, confessing an affair. However, following a request from Prime Minister Hun Sen, King Norodom Sihamoni pardoned Kem Sokha on the 2nd of December. While short time later also Seang Chet, who was sentenced to five years of prison for delivering money to the mother of Khom Chandaraty, was freed from his punishment, the Adhoc and election committee officials remain in jail. The five have been prisoned for more than six months but have not yet received court dates for their trials. Therefore, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) has called for the immediate release, concerned about discrimination based on their status as human rights defenders.



Senior Adhoc officers Ny Sokha, left, and Yi Soksan are escorted into the Court of Appeal for a November hearing in Phnom Penh.

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Focus shifts to other prisoners

By Meas Sokchea and Lay Samean| December 05, 2016

The Phnom Penh Post

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/focus-shifts-other-prisoners>

CNRP Says Adhoc Prisoners Set to Be Freed

By Khuon Narim| December 8, 2016

The Cambodia Daily

<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/cnrp-says-adhoc-prisoners-set-freed-121673/>

Release of 'Political Prisoners' Uncertain, CPP and CNRP Say

By Khy Sovuthy| December 27, 2016

The Cambodia Daily

<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/release-political-prisoners-uncertain-cpp-cnrp-say-122498/>

Image Source

<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/release-political-prisoners-uncertain-cpp-cnrp-say-122498/>

Philippine leader visits Kingdom

On 14th of December Filipino President Rodrigo Duterte - accompanied by boxer and Philippine Senator Manny Pacquiao - arrived in Phnom Penh for a two-day visit. An audience with King Norodom Sihamoni was followed by a meeting with Kith Meng, president of the Cambodia Chamber of Commerce (CCC) to discuss about enhancing the economic relationship between Cambodia and the Philippines.



Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte and Prime Minister Hun Sen oversee the signing of agreements yesterday.

To present members of Cambodia's private sector and Filipino Investors with potential areas of investment in each country, especially promoting Cambodia's advantages with it's free-tax status in EU and America, both agreed on more meetings in the future. During his stay Mr. Duterte also took the time to speak to Filipino expatriates about the anti-drug campaign in his home country. Before the president's visit, six Filipinos demonstrated on his arrival with banners and placards at the Royal Palace, criticizing him over his war on drugs and calling to stop the drug-

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related killings. Several thousand suspected drug dealers or users have been killed during the anti-drug campaign since July. However, other interviewed Filipinos supported the actions in their home country. At the gathering Mr. Duterte defended the campaign, emphasizing the importance of the measure to protect country and youth, while also saying that rehabilitation was a necessary part of the solution. The president wrapped up his visit to Cambodia with meeting Prime Minister Hun Sen to sign four agreements to promote greater cooperation in labor, sports, tourism and in fighting transnational crime. Furthermore, the Philippine president promised to provide scholarships next year to 66 Cambodian University students to study in the Philippines in order to support the exchange of culture and knowledge.

Further Reading

Filipinos Protest Duterte's Arrival

By Ven Rathavong | December 13, 2016

Khmer Times

<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/news/33065/filipinos-protest-duterte---s-arrival/>

Duterte Defends Bloody Drug War on Arrival

By Colin Meyn and Kang Sothear | December 14, 2016

The Cambodia Daily

<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/duterte-defends-bloody-drug-war-arrival-121936/>

Manila-Phnom Penh Consensus

By Chea Vannak | December 16, 2016

Khmer Times

<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/news/33221//>

Image Source

<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/news/33182/duterte-promises-scholarships/>

Five more years of jail for Sam Rainsy

CNRP President Sam Rainsy received a five-year prison sentence by the Phnom Penh Municipal Court on 27th of December, adding to his two-year term he has evaded through exile. He was found guilty along with his Facebook administrators Sambath Satya and Ueng Chong Leang over a video posted on his Facebook page on 11th of August 2015. The video clip shows opposition Senator Hong Sok Hour presenting a "fake" version of a 1979 treaty that purportedly showed that Cambodia and Vietnam had agreed to dissolve their borders. The three, who have all left for France, were convicted of "incitement to commit a felony or to disturb social security", "participation in a conspiracy to commit offences" and "fraudulent

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modification of data". After Sok Hour was sentenced in November to seven years in prison for falsification and incitement to commit a crime, Rainsy, Satya and Chong Leang were found guilty for assistance at the end of this month. However, Satya's and Chong Leang's five-year sentences amount to three years each, with



Opposition leader in exile Sam Rainsy was yesterday sentenced to five years in prison along with two of his Facebook administrators.

two years being suspended, says presiding judge Leang Samnat. To avoid an arrest over a 7-year-old defamation case brought by former Foreign Minister Hor Namhong, Rainsy escaped the country in November of 2015. Later the government made the self-exile official, forbidding his return. Rainsy claimed on Facebook that the posted document was not only a false translation from Khmer to English and has been existing online even before the upload to his page but also that he was not involved in the actions, having been during that time in the US. According to Ministry of Justice spokesman Chin Malin the trio has the chance to return voluntary, otherwise the government would seek the extradition of Satya and Chong Leang from France to serve out their sentences. However, Rainsy as a French citizen, cannot be extradited. Nevertheless, the decision still affects Rainsy in terms of preventing him from participating in the political campaign, since he needs a pardon first before returning to Cambodia, says political analyst Ou Virak.

Further reading

Opposition leader handed five years over Facebook post

By Khy Sovuthy| December 28, 2016

The Cambodia Daily

<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/jail-time-piles-sam-rainsy-122536/>

Rainsy, 2 others get five years

By Lay Samean and Erin Handley| December 28, 2016

The Phnom Penh Post

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/rainsy-2-others-get-five-years?/>

Sam Rainsy Gets Five Years

By Pech Sotheary| December 28, 2016

Khmer Times

<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/news/33662/sam-rainsy-gets-five-years/>

Image Source

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/rainsy-2-others-get-five-years?/>

Internet: The most important source of information in Cambodia



Almost 20 million SIM cards have been sold so far in Cambodia.

The time, when television was the most relevant source of information in Cambodia, is over. The annual report on mobile phone use in Cambodia by the Asia Foundation and Open Institute revealed that for 30 percent of Cambodians Facebook and the internet are the most important source for news, followed by television (29 percent), word of mouth (23 percent) and radio (15 percent). This de-

velopment comes together with a significant increase in smartphone ownership. In 2016 about 48 percent of Cambodians had a smartphone, which is more than double the percentage of three years ago. Along with the rising use of Facebook, the study also showed an increasing of reading and writing, which indicates a higher engaged – but not necessary better informed – population in Cambodia, says Asia Foundation's country director Silas Everett. However, Moeun Chhean Narridh, director of the Cambodian Institute for Media Studies, is convinced that the growing social media contributes to the "democratisation" of news, since now more people are able to comment and criticize on social issues online. The fact that more than 19 million SIM cards are used by Cambodians, a number, which is higher than the actual population, was celebrated by Prime Minister Hun Sen, since in his opinion it indicates phone users also in very rural areas. A significant rise could as well be seen by the internet users, which decreased from 2.7 million in 2012 to 7.1 million in 2016, according to Minister of Posts and Telecommunications Tram Iv Tek. This result was supported by recent efforts in strengthening the network and service quality as well as the development of infrastructure by extending the optical cable to cover the provinces and connect to neighboring countries. However, Social Researcher and Political Analyst Meas Ny said that internet and email are still not even by 20 percent of people used in remote areas. Nevertheless, he also sees the big progress made by the increased number of Facebook users, having access to information in rural areas. Not only did Prime Minister Hun Sen celebrate at an inauguration for a new Posts and Telecommunications Ministry building but he also revealed his vision for Cambodia: A nation of "E-people" – Cambodians, who are able to find solutions for problems by using high speed internet.

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Facebook trumps TV
By Erin Handley | December 16, 2016
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<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/facebook-trumps-tv>

Internet Passes TV as Go-To News Source
By Matt Surrusco | December 16, 2016
The Cambodia Daily
<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/internet-passes-tv-go-news-source-122055/>

PM Calls For Internet Nation
By May Titthara | December 16, 2016
Khmer Times
<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/news/33237/pm-calls-for-internet-nation/>

Image Source

<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/news/33237/pm-calls-for-internet-nation/>

Government presents first official anti-drug campaign

On December 13, officials announced that the government will launch a six months anti-drug campaign, starting on January 1st, including measures for education, anti-trafficking, law enforcement and rehabilitation. To attack international organizations and drug trafficking networks, the campaign will work together with important authorities and neighboring countries as well as include increased inspections of the Cambodian-Laos border. According to Sar Kheng, leader of the campaign, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the National Committee for Counter Trafficking in Persons, Stung Treng, Preah Vihear and Ratanakkiri are the most popular provinces for drugs coming into Cambodia. The recent focus on drugs from the government has been caused by an increasing number of narcotic-cases in recent years. This year, police and military police had to deal with 4,191 drug cases. A government report showed that the number of crackdowns in 2015 and 2016 have increased two or threefold as have the number of offenders who have been arrested and convicted as well as the amount of drugs. The Reports indicates an improvement of law enforcement but also shows that drug traffick-



Authorities have been urged to crack down on officials who conspire with drug traffickers. Supplied

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ing in the country has not decreased, says Samdech Sar Kheng. Therefore, the main goal of the campaign is to increase measures for preventing narcotic related harm by working harder to crack down on small-scale drug users and dealers, better monitoring of the nation's borders and stronger sentences for police officials involved in with drug trafficking.

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Government Outlines Multipronged Approach to Fight Drug Use
By Khy Sovuthy | December 23, 2016
The Cambodia Daily
<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/government-outlines-multipronged-approach-fight-drug-use-122371/>

Top officials vow harder line with drugs initiative
By Lay Samean and Erin Handley | December 23, 2016
The Phnom Penh Post
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Officials Warned About Drugs
By Taing Vida | December 23, 2016
Khmer Times
<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/news/33518/officials-warned-about-drugs/>

Image Source

<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/news/33518/officials-warned-about-drugs/>

New Traffic Law released: No license for Small-Engine-Motorbikes

On 27th of December the National Assembly passed the 2016 Traffic Law with 93 out of 100 votes in favor of it. The nine amendments to the original traffic law, signed by King Norodom in January 2016, include a lowering of the minimum driving age from 16 to 15 years, increasing penalties for some driving infractions and eliminating a license requirement for drivers of motorbikes with 125cc engines and smaller. Especially the last change caused controversial reactions: Ear Chariya, founder of the Road Safety Institute, considers this decision as dangerous, since about 80 percent of all registered vehicles in Cambodia are motorbikes at 125cc or under, which means that the majority of drivers will be freed from license requirements. Emphasizing the need of driv-



Prime Minister Hun Sen (left) and Interior Minister Say Kheng make their point.

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ing licenses, he considers it as the only effective way of education to ensure that people understand the traffic rules before driving. However, Sun Chanthol, Minister of Transportation, insisted that eliminating licenses will not lead to more traffic accidents. He agreed that the lack of understanding traffic law's is the main cause for accidents, but claimed that there is no strong connection to having a license. In his opinion knowledge can also be provided through public education programs like television advertisements, while at the same time it is also crucial to make sure that vehicles fulfill a certain standard. Furthermore, Prime Minister Hun Sen said the new regulations are a result of the people's will. Concretized by Ou Chanrith, a Cambodia National Rescue Party lawmaker, who said that despite licenses are efficient for proper education, they cause problems for people living in rural areas. Those facing difficulties in applying for a license related to a lack of officials in the provinces, will benefit from the new law. Nevertheless, he called out to the citizens to study traffic laws to learn how to drive properly since now they do not need driving licenses. An almost one year-long report released in November by Stakeholder Engagement and Support into the law's implementation revealed that more than 60 percent of questioned citizens either knew little about the new law or nothing at all. However, according to the police, the traffic accidents this year have decreased compared to 2015 about 11 percent. Government officials consider this development as an evidence for the effectiveness of the new law.

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No licence, no problem

By Touch Sokha and Andrew Nachemson | December 27, 2016

The Phnom Penh Post

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No License Needed for Small-Engine Motorbikes—Officially

By KhY Sovuthy | December 27, 2016

The Cambodia Daily

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Assembly Passes Traffic Law Amendments

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Khmer Times

<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/news/33610/assembly-passes-traffic-law-amendments/>

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