



NEWSLETTER



KAS HAUPTABTEILUNG
INTERNATIONALE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

77TH EDITION
OCTOBER 2016

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Newsletter: 1st – 31st October 2016

A selection of the latest local news in Cambodia

First State Visit of Chinas President Xi Jinping

On October 13, Chinas President Xi Jinping arrived for a two-day-visit to Cambodia. Xi first paid a visit to King Norodom Sihamoni and Queen Mother Norodom Monineath at the Royal Palace, before meeting with



People stand next to portraits of Chinese President Xi Jinping and Cambodian King Norodom Sihamoni during Xi Jinping's welcoming ceremony in Phnom Pehn.

Prime Minister Hun Sen. During his stay, 31 agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoUs) have been signed, covering diverse fields (like e.g. a deal to stop human trafficking or an agreement on information sharing on internal security issues). Additionally, Xi pledged \$237 million in soft loans, erased \$89 million in Cambodian state debt and offered \$15 million in military aid.

Hun Sen expressed his gratitude for the economic Chinese support, while Xi described the Prime Minister as an "ironclad friend of China". China and Cambodia have grown increasingly closer within the last years. For Cambodia, China represents the largest trade partner and foreign investor. The volume of trade between the two countries reached \$2.34 billion only in the first half of this year. Both countries keep on strengthening their relation. For the President's visit, 7,000 security forces have been on duty and major arterial roads were closed for several hours. Care has also been taken to make Phnom Penh "beautiful and clean". That's why homeless people, beggars and sex workers were brought to the outskirts of the city.

Further Reading

China's President Xi Arrives Bearing Gifts

By Khy Sovuthy, Ben Paviour and Khuon Narim | October 14, 2016
The Cambodia Daily

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<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/chinas-president-xi-arrives-bearing-gifts-119274/>

China's Xi Jinping visits King, Hun Sen

By Vong Sokheng and Alex Willemyns | October 14, 2016

The Phnom Penh Post

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/chinas-xi-jinping-visits-king-hun-sen>

Xi Visit: 31 Agreements Reached

By Chea Vannak and Ven Rathavong | October, 14 2016

Khmer Times

<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/news/30823/xi-visit--31-agreements-reached/>

Image Source

<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-cambodia-idUSKCN12D0NV>

Official Banning of Self-Exiled Opposition leader Sam Rainsy

The President of the Opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), Sam Rainsy, has officially been banned from Cambodia. Sok Phal, the Interior Ministry's immigration chief, issued a directive on October 18 calling on his officials to use whatever means necessary to prevent Rainsy from entering the country through international



Opposition leader Sam Rainsy during a press conference in 2013.

airports or border checkpoints. Airlines were told not to let Rainsy board flights to Cambodia. If he somehow manages to, it was said that the plane will be forced to fly back to its original departure point. Rainsy has been in self-imposed exile in France since last November due to defamation charges against him, which are widely seen as politically motivated. Despite the ban, he has vowed to return before the 2018 national elections: "I will return to Cambodia even if it's not by airplane. I will go through roads or waterways." As the ban contradicts domestic laws and violates international conventions, the U.N.'s human rights office said that the government needs to immediately explain its decision to ban the opposition leader.

Further Reading

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I'll return by Road or Sea

By May Titthara | October 24, 2016

Khmer Times

<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/news/31166/rainsy--i---ll-return-by-road-or-sea/>

UN Calls for Immediate Explanation for Sam Rainsy's Exile

By Colin Meyn | October 25, 2016

The Cambodia Daily

<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/un-calls-immediate-explanation-sam-rainsys-exile-119690/>

Rainsy ban to protect airport, official claims

By Bun Sengkong | October 27, 2016

The Phnom Penh Post

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/rainsy-ban-protect-airport-official-claims>

Image Source

<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/un-calls-immediate-explanation-sam-rainsys-exile-119690/>

U.N. Envoy Rhona Smiths' visit Cambodia to review Human Rights

On Monday 10th U.N. envoy Rhona Smith arrived for her third fact-finding mission in Cambodia to review the situation of human rights, to check on the implementation of previous recommendations and to make suggestions for future changes. In a meeting with Justice Minister



Rhona Smith, the UN's special rapporteur on human rights in Cambodia, meets with Justice Ministry officials.

Ang Vong Vathana a number of diverse issues were discussed like punishments for violence against women and children, solutions for overcrowded prisons and strengthening the independence of the court. To lower the prisoner numbers caused by an increase in temporary detentions before trials, Ms. Smith suggested to contemplate a community service, where minor offenders work in their communities instead of being imprisoned. Another important step, proposed by Rhona Smiths, is the enforcement of strict sentencing for cases of violence against women and children. During the discussion with Cambodian Human Rights Committee

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(CHRC) head Keo Remy about the situation of human and civil rights in Cambodia, Ms. Smith particularly offered to help in drafting the law to regulate surrogacy to decrease the risks of couples from abroad breaking the arrangement. Remy had agreed to work together to find solutions to these problems.

Further Reading

UN Rapporteur to Visit Kingdom

By May Titthara | October 10, 2016

Khmer Times

<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/news/30568/un-rapporteur-to-visit-kingdom/>

Rapporteur holds series of meetings

By Ananth Baliga | October 12, 2016

The Phnom Penh Post

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/rapporteur-holds-series-meetings>

UN Envoy Offers Help With Surrogacy Laws

By Khy Sovuthy | October 12, 2016

The Cambodia Daily

<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/un-envoy-offers-help-surrogacy-laws-119167/>

Image Source

<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/un-envoy-offers-help-surrogacy-laws-119167/>

25th Anniversary of the Paris Peace Agreement

Precisely 25 years ago, on the 23th of October 1991, four years after Prime Minister Hun Sen and Prince Norodom Sihanouk met in the French village of Fère-en-Tardenois for their first dialogue on ending Cambodia's intractable civil war, the Paris Peace Agreement was signed. Main Content of the Paper was to implement a constitutional democracy and to ensure the exercise of the right of self-determination of the Cambodian people through free and fair election.



People wave flags and hold placards on the road in front of the CNRP headquarters yesterday in Phnom Penh during an event to mark the anniversary of the signing of the Paris Peace Agreement

A rally, planned by the CNRP at the freedom park to mark the 25th anniversary of the Paris Peace Agreement in Phnom Penh, was rejected by authorities out of fear of conflict between opposition supporters and other groups. So the CNRP decid-

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ed to use the headquarters as the new place instead, where more than a thousand people came to celebrate this special day.

Further Reading

We'll always have Paris

By Alex Willemyns and Mech Dara | October 21, 2016

The Phnom Penh Post

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/well-always-have-paris-peace-accords-25-years-later>

Hun Sen Says His Own Win-Win Deal Trumps Peace Accords

By Kuch Naren | October 21, 2016

The Cambodia Daily

<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/hun-sen-says-win-win-deal-trumps-peace-accords-119551/>

Still falling short of Paris pact, say NGOs

By Touch Sokha | October 19, 2016

The Phnom Penh Post

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/still-falling-short-paris-pact-say-ngos>

Image source

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/cnrp-rally-looks-accords>

Illegal timber smuggling: No penalties or arrests in most of the cases



Authorities examine timber found in northeastern Cambodia's Kratie province.

Cambodia has one of the highest deforestation rates worldwide, largely due to illegal logging. Most of the timber smuggling takes place in the country's eastern provinces along the border with Vietnam (like Monduliri, Ratanakiri or Stung Treng). Experts estimate that 95 percent of Siamese rosewood is exported to China. To address the problem of illegal timber smuggling

and deforestation, Prime Minister Hun Sen created a special task force, the so called *National Committee for Forest Crime Prevention* (NADC), in January this year. Despite official claims that the timber problem is largely under control by now or has even been effectively halted, the number of timber busts revealed in the media – not only this month – speak a

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different language: Since mid-January, 100 incidents were reported. While in 32% of these cases, suspects have escaped entirely, only one out of four ended with timber smugglers being arrested or fined, mostly "small people". To exemplify this, Environment Minister Say Sam Al has recently identified the country's three largest timber tycoons. One of them is Hun Sen's former adviser, Try Pheap. Sam Al said that he had agreed with the three magnates to stop their illicit operations, but declined to say whether they would face any charges. Instead, he told the reporters that the government was focusing on catching mid-level dealers. It is questionable if letting the big fish act with impunity helps to resolve the problem. Also, the NADC confiscated approx. 70,000 cubic meters of illegally logged timber, but none of those who were running and owning these timber businesses has been prosecuted so far. According to a report issued by the environmental rights group Global Witness in 2015, the low rate in penalties and arrests is owed to the collusion of local authorities, among others.

Further Reading

Interactive: Few arrests in timber smuggling crackdown

By Daniel Nass | October 17, 2016

The Phnom Penh Post

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/interactive-few-arrests-timber-smuggling-crackdown>

Minister Says Timber Barons Agree to Stop Illegal Logging

By Aisha Down | October 7, 2016

The Cambodia Daily

<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/minister-says-timber-barons-agree-stop-illegal-logging-118981/>

Infamous Timber Tycoon Arrested

By Buth Reaksmey Kongkea | October 14, 2016

Khmer Times

<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/news/30818/infamous-timber-tycoon-arrested/>

Image Source

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/interactive-few-arrests-timber-smuggling-crackdown>

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Minimum wages see only slight increases for the next year

During the 2016 Teachers' Day celebration at the Institute of Technology of Cambodia on October 5, teachers from all over Cambodia met to request an increase of their monthly salary to 1.5 million riel (about \$375). Right now, the minimum wage is



One of Cambodia's approx. 700,000 garment workers.

800,500 riel, or about \$200. Because wages do not match the cost of living, many teachers are forced to take second jobs. This affects the quality of education, as teachers have less time to prepare classes, etc. However, Hun Sen announced that the government will incrementally implement the wage increase, starting with a minimum of \$206 in January followed by an increase to no more than 953,500 riel (\$238) in April 2017. In other industrial branches like the garment sector, the minimum wage is even lower: For next year it will be \$153 per month, which means only a \$13 increase compared to this year, despite the rising housing, food and personal costs. Although workers hoped for a minimum monthly salary of \$171 and their disappointment is big, they mostly accept the choice. The Cambodian garment sector is one of the countries engines, providing livelihoods to 700,000 workers and approximately 2 million of their family members, as well as billions in export income.

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Protesting teachers call for salary boost

By Touch Sokha | October 6, 2016

The Phnom Penh Post

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/protesting-teachers-call-salary-boost>

Despite displeasure, no strikes over wage

By Sen David and Ananth Baliga | October 7, 2016

The Phnom Penh Post

<http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/despite-displeasure-no-strikes-over-wage>

Teachers' Salaries to Be Reviewed

By Pech Sotheary | October 10, 2016

Khmer Times

<http://www.khmertimeskh.com/news/30562/teachers----salaries-to-be-reviewed/>

Image Source

<http://www.dw.com/en/cambodia-raises-minimum-wage-for-textile-workers/a-35926002>