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90 Percent of Garment Workers in Phnom Penh Back to Work

By Jan. 8, about 90 percent of garment and footwear workers in Phnom Penh have returned to work as usual, while those in provinces all have gone back to work as well, according to local media reports.

Mr. Ken Loo, Secretary General of Garment Manufacturers Association in Cambodia (GMAC), said that only two factories in Phnom Penh had not yet resumed their operations after the recent deadly clashes in Phnom Penh.

He further said the garment factories in provinces had operated as usual since early this week.

In late December 2013, the Labor Advisory Commission decided to increase the monthly minimum wage for garment workers to US\$100 from Feb. 1, 2014, up from US\$80 currently. But, some trade unions did not agree and called for protests to demand for a double pay rise. The protests became more violent on Jan. 2-3, leaving deaths, injuries, and public and private property destruction.

Foreign Minister's Reaction to the Opposition Party's Planned Complaint to ICC

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation H.E. Hor Namhong compared the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP)'s planned complaint to the International Criminal Court (ICC) against the government over the recent deadly clashes as an air balloon.

Normally when we blow up a balloon, it will fly, and when there is no more air, it will fall down, he said this morning.

The Royal Government of Cambodia has exercised utmost restraint even though the CNRP-led mass protests violated the law as well as the agreement with the Phnom Penh Municipal Hall, said H.E. Hor Namhong.

For his part, H.E. Prum Sokha, Secretary of State for Interior said it is the CNRP's right [to sue the government], but the RGC has also enough evidences, so it is not afraid, said.

"We are very sorry for the clashes that led to deaths and injuries. The violence was not caused by neither the RGC nor police, but by those who incited violence," said H.E. Prum Sokha, adding that they were not demonstrators any more, but rioters – they used stones, gasoline bombs.

"It was not a peaceful demonstration, and this was the cause of violence. Police was not the one who used violence, but stopped violence," he stressed.

Garment Strikes Cost the Industry Some US\$275 Million

Cambodia's garment and textile industry lost some US\$275 million due to the two-week garment workers' protests to demand for a pay rise, Mr. Van Sou Ieng, President of the Garment Manufacturers Association in Cambodia (GMAC), said at a press conference on Monday.

The damage to property destruction cost about US\$75 million, while the loss on sales is estimated at US\$200 million, he pointed out.

The strikes did not only affect the existing investment, but also frightened five to ten new factories to leave Cambodia, while some others planned to export their raw materials back, he added.

The purchase order also would see a decrease from 20 to 30 percent this year due to the strikes, he added.

Garment and textile industry is a key pillar for Cambodia's economic growth. Currently, the country has over 500 garment factories, employing about 510,000 workers.

From January to November 2013, Cambodia has exported garment products with a total value of US\$5.07 billion, up 22 percent from US\$4.15 billion in the same period last year.

Cambodia Marks the 35th Anniversary of the January 7 Victory Day

Some 50,000 Cambodian people from all walks of life gathered here this morning at Koh Pich Convention and Exhibition Center in a meeting to commemorate the 35th Anniversary of the January 7 Victory Day 1979-2014 over the Khmer Rouge Genocidal Regime.

This auspicious event was presided over by Samdech Akka Moha Thamma Pothisal Chea Sim, President of the Senate and President of the Cambodian People Party (CPP); Samdech Akka Moha Ponhea Chakrei Heng Samrin, President of the National Assembly and Honorary President of CPP; and Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister and Vice President of CPP.

"Today the people of Cambodia in the whole country are energetically celebrating the great event of the 35th anniversary of the historic January 7, 1979 victory that overthrew the genocidal regime of Pol Pot, saved the Cambodian People's lives in a timely manner and maintained the country's existence and progress up to the present," Samdech Heng Samrin said.

Though 35 years have passed, the historic event continues to bear great significance for every generation to come as well as peace and justice loving people in the world, he underlined.

"We are meeting to commemorate the victory day with the spirit of deep respect for uncountable fallen combatants and patriots who fought and sacrificed bravely for the liberation of our nation from the genocide, defended the people's revival, and to remember always the great assistance rendered by every country-near and far, for the supreme cause. We all are bowing to pay respects to the souls of millions of people who died unjustly under the genocidal regime and pray for their souls to the rest in peace," he added.

According to Samdech Heng Samrin's speech, with the current development and achievements, January 7, 1979 cannot be forgotten. "January 7 victory is our second birthday and without the January 7 victory, we would not have everything we do today. In the past 35 years, stemming from the January 7, 1979, the Kingdom of Cambodia enjoys radical changes in all fields and appreciations and greetings from people all over the world," he said.

Samdech Heng Samrin also highlighted that in the year 2013, Cambodia realized numerous achievements in all fields in the course of its development. Cambodia has successfully finished its implementation of the political platform which guaranteed peace, stability, security, social order, democracy, development and national sovereignty.

In the context of the current political issues, the fact that the opposition party has attempted to put pressure to the Royal Government of Cambodia led by CPP, and demanded for Samdech Techo Hun Sen's resignation and for the re-run of the national election, is an action that violates the Constitution, democratic principles, and will of the overwhelming majority of the Cambodian people, stressed Samdech Heng Samrin.

U.S. Ambassador Optimistic about Cambodia's Economy

The U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia H.E. William E. Todd expressed his optimism about Cambodia's economy in 2014 which will be growing despite many challenges.

"Along with political progress, Cambodia's economy continued its strong growth this year, driven by the hard work of Cambodians seeking a better life for themselves and their families," said the U.S. diplomat in his weekly column.

A significant positive development in the labor field was the signing of a new agreement that will allow the Better Factories Cambodia program to make public its reporting on factory conditions, which holds great promise for improving the labor conditions for half a million Cambodian workers, he said.

“There was also progress on raising the minimum wage in the garment sector. Ongoing disputes between workers and business owners over basic pay, benefits, and safety, however, highlight the challenges that need to be addressed in 2014 to allow Cambodia’s economy to keep growing. I remain optimistic that mutually acceptable solutions to these and other challenges can be found, and I pledge to continue my own efforts to promote bilateral trade and investment to help Cambodians see a brighter future,” he stressed.

On July 28, the world watched as millions of Cambodians headed to the polls and exercised their right to vote, said H.E. William E. Todd, adding that the high turnout demonstrated the Cambodian people’s determination to play a leading role in shaping their country’s future, and the generally peaceful and open environment during the campaign period and on polling day represented a positive step forward in the country’s democratic development.

The ambassador also appreciated the Royal Government of Cambodia for providing the security and political space for citizens to exercise their freedoms of assembly and expression in an open and peaceful manner.

Phnom Penh Municipality Condemns the Violence Against Factories

Phnom Penh Municipality has condemned the violence and other unlawful acts caused by some anarchic groups on Jan. 2-3, 2014.

These above-said acts were not initiated by garment workers, but by opportunist groups, especially politicians who used workers’ will to provoke chaos, disorder and violence, which affect the legal interest of workers, investors, and security and social order, said Phnom Penh Municipality in a press release issued this evening.

Phnom Penh Municipality also appealed to all compatriots, especially the workers to remain calm and go to work in their respective factories as usual so as to

let the Royal Government of Cambodia, the trade unions and Garment Manufacturers Association in Cambodia (GMAC) discuss and resolve the minimum-wage-related issue, it added.

Phnom Penh Municipality also assured the workers of the RGC’s and competent authorities’ endeavors in protecting the legal interest and promoting the living standards of the workers.

The violence on Jan. 2-3, which included road blockade, tire burning, public and private property destruction, and stone hurling at police, left few dead, many injured and arrested.

China Loans US\$45 Million for Stung Chikreng Water Resource Development Project in Siem Reap



Cambodia’s Secretary of State for Economy and Finance H.E. Vongsy Visoth (L) and Mr. Sun Ping, Vice President of China Eximbank, sign and exchange the documents on a Concessional Loan Agreement on Stung Chikreng Water Resource Development Project in Siem Reap province (Phase I) worth up to 280.90 million Yuan (approximately US\$45 million), on Dec. 26 in Beijing, China.

Cambodia, Vietnam Sign Nine Cooperation Agreements

Cambodia and Vietnam have signed nine key cooperation deals to further boost their bilateral relations and cooperation in various fields.

The signing ceremony was held on Thursday in Hanoi under the witness of Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of

Cambodia, and his Vietnamese counterpart H.E. Nguyen Tan Dung following their bilateral meeting, according to the National Television of Cambodia (TVK).

The nine documents include the Arrangement for Bilateral Trade Enhancement between Cambodia and Vietnam for the period of 2014-2015, the Agreement on the Transit of Goods between Cambodia and Vietnam, the Treaty on Extradition between Cambodia and Vietnam, the Credit Agreement between Cambodia and Vietnam for Chrey Thom-Long Binh Bridge Construction, the Cooperation Plan between the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports of Cambodia and the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam, the Cooperation Plan on Information between the Ministry of Information of Cambodia and the Ministry of Information and Communications of Vietnam for the period of 2014-2015, the Cooperation Plan 2014 between the Ministry of Interior of Cambodia and the Ministry of Public Security of Vietnam, the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation Plan between the National Archives of the Office of the Council of Ministers of Cambodia and Hanoi University of the Ministry of Home Affairs of Vietnam, and the Agreement on Agricultural Fertilizer Purchase between the Nitrogen Chemicals and Fertilizer Cambodia Ltd. and the Dap Vinchen Limited and Petrovietnam Fertilizer & Chemicals Corporation of Vietnam.

During the bilateral talks, the two prime ministers spoke highly of the excellent relationship between the two neighboring countries, in particular the bilateral trade exchange which reached over US\$2.7 billion in 2013. They also expressed their optimism over the increase in the two-way trade, stressing that it would rise to US\$5 billion in 2015 as expected by both sides.

Samdech Techo Hun Sen asked the Vietnamese side to encourage more Vietnamese investors to do business in Cambodia, to help complete the construction of O' Yadav Road in Rattanakiri province, to promote the discussion of Cambodia-Vietnam Joint Border Committee, to share water sources along the common

border, especially to jointly examine the impact assessment of the construction of Sre Pok and Sesan hydro power dams.

In addition, the Cambodian prime minister requested the Vietnamese side to sell electric power at the amount agreed by both sides and to continue to help install seven more radio stations in different Cambodian provinces.

For his part, H.E. Nguyen Tan Dung asked the Cambodian side to protect the Vietnamese investors in Cambodia and informed Samdech Techo Hun Sen of the negotiations with the Chinese side over the construction of ASEAN-Kunming Railway, especially the section from Loc Minh (Vietnam) to Cambodia.

Both leaders also exchanged views on sub-regional, regional and global issues of mutual interests and discussed the joint celebration of the 35th "7 January" Victory Day of Cambodian national liberation from the Khmer Rouge genocidal regime.

Samdech Techo Hun Sen and his entourage arrived in Hanoi on Dec. 26 for a three-day official visit in Vietnam, at the invitation of his Vietnamese counterpart H.E. Nguyen Tan Dung.

For his part, Vietnamese Prime Minister H.E. Nguyen Tan Dung is scheduled to pay an official visit to Cambodia on Jan. 13-14, 2014 for the official groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of Chrey Thom Bridge and the inauguration of Cho Ray, a Vietnamese's hospital investment in Cambodia.

Cambodia and Vietnam established their diplomatic ties on June 24, 1967.

AFD Loans US\$26 Million for the Irrigation Sector in Cambodia

French Agency for Development (AFD) has provided nearly US\$26 million in sovereign loan for the rehabilitation of about 40 irrigated schemes and Preks in Cambodia.

The sovereign loan agreement was signed here this afternoon by Cambodian Minister of Economy and Finance H.E. Aun Porn Moniroth, French Ambassador to

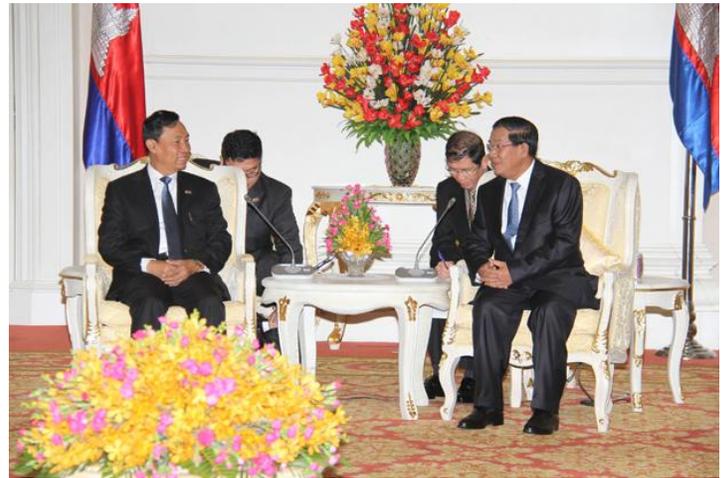
Cambodia H.E. Serge Mostura, and AFD's Representative Ms. Ninel Ulloa Maureira.

This is the first sovereign loan granted by AFD to the Kingdom of Cambodia, following a Memorandum of Understanding establishing the modalities of intervention of AFD for sovereign loans, signed by Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister H.E. Keat Chhon and AFD Chief Executive Officer on Mar. 11, 2013, according to a press release from the Embassy of France in Cambodia.

This credit facility complements a grant of US\$5.2 million, granted in March 2013 to the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology, which aims at strengthening the capacity of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders involved in the management of water resources, it added.

With this new financing, AFD continues to support hydro-agricultural and water resource management sectorial policy implemented by the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology. This project will allow, together with the Asian Development Bank, to carry on rehabilitation works of about 40 irrigated areas and Preks.

Since 1997, AFD has granted about US\$50 million to Cambodia for the rehabilitation of hydro-agricultural infrastructures and the reinforcement of the capacity of stakeholders in this sector, resulting in the rehabilitation of more than 50,000 ha of irrigated areas. The rehabilitation works carried out through these interventions led to a significant increase of "paddy" rice yields of Cambodia and represent a milestone towards achieving the government's target of exporting 1 million tons of rice by 2015.



PM Hun Sen Receives Myanmar's Speaker of the House of Representatives

Cambodia's Prime Minister Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen (R) holds talks here this morning at the Peace Palace with visiting Speaker of the House of Representatives of Myanmar H.E. Thura U Shwe Mann.