

Report on Parliamentary Watch for December 2004

I. Observation on performance of the National Assembly (NA):

1. NA Sessions:

After a closed discussion at the expert commission (finance and banking), the National Assembly held a 3-day and a half extraordinary session-20 to 22 December 2005-to pass 2005 National Budget Law with the proposed \$792 million by the government. Though there was heated question and answer session between the opposition lawmakers and Minister of Economy and Finance, the NA passed the draft, which allowed the government to use this budget for running the country's spending in 2005. In the last day of the session, there were 102 lawmakers, from which 64 CPP, 21 FUNCINPEC and 17 SRP participated.

In the 3-day discussions, there were 12 MPs who were speaking on the bill mainly related to the government, in which 5 from the FUNCINPEC, 5 from the SRP and 2 from the CPP (some of them spoke twice) took a total of 251 minutes for 16 times. The tone of speaking was notified that, neutral was for 101 minutes (40%), positive was for 80 minutes (32%), and negative was for 70 minutes (28%).

It should be noticed that, during the session, the two CPP lawmakers showed their points of supporting the government meant that the speaking tone was positively to the government for 35 minutes in total. Obviously, a CPP lawmaker, H.E. Ek Som Ol (Prey Veng constituency) spoke positively that, "Year 2005, is the better year for the Royal Government to implement its 73-point platform. The adoption of the bill is important and as a tool for 3-year more of the government." He additionally admired the government and the people that went well though there was a political deadlock in the last few months.

A part, the FCP lawmakers seemed to support the government but raised several concerns that the government should do to manage and increase the national budget, in which speaking tone was positively for 45 minutes, neutrally for 28 minutes and negatively for 15 minutes. For instance, a FCP representative from Pursat constituency, H.E. Ly Thuch expressed his opinion that, "I wish the government, but it should take action in war against corruption successfully.....the government has to collect maximum taxes from gambling business, especially from Cambo Six-a place of Soccer gambling...."

The opposition lawmakers, on the other hand, voiced the critic over the government's lack and corruption, in which negative speaking tone was taken about 55 minutes out of 128 in total. H.E. Eng Chhai Eang, a representative from Battambang, voiced his critic on the government that, "...when talking about the previous government's revenues and spending, it was not efficient.....The revenue should have been increased due to the war against corruption policy..." Even though, the opposition lawmakers showed their negative side on the government, some of them showed modest in supporting the government, like what H. E. Sam Rainsy said that, "I don't always oppose, I'll support only what the government do good, but I'll follow up it."

Though there was a long debate over the bill with some criticism from the opposition lawmakers, the discussion did not lead to make a tough revision on any article of the bill. As a result, the bill finally passed with 96 of 97 lawmakers present voting in favor.

Table 1: The parliamentary sessions on National Budget Law for the year 2005

Date	Agenda/draft law	Presence			Result of the session	Adoption
		CPP	FCP	SRP		
20/Dec/04	National Budget Law for	66	18	20	Completely done	96/97

21/Dec/04	the Year 2005	65	22	17	voted of favor
22/Dec/04		64	21	17	

MPs who spoke in the session on *National Budget Law for the year 2005*

No.	Name of MPs	Party	Duration of Speaking (minutes)
1	H.E. So Victor	<i>FCP (Svay Rieng)</i>	8
2	H.E. Sam Rainsy	<i>SRP (Kampong Cham)</i>	20+15
3	H.E. Son Chhay	<i>SRP (Phnom Penh)</i>	25
4	H.E. Ly Thuch	<i>FCP (Pursat)</i>	15+20
5	H.E. Yim Sovann	<i>SRP (Phnom Penh)</i>	20
6	H.E. Monh Saphan	<i>FCP (Kampong Cham)</i>	15
7	H.E. Pou Sothireak	<i>FCP (Siem Reap)</i>	20
8	H.E. Ek Sam Ol	<i>CPP (Prey Veng)</i>	15
9	H.E. Keo Remy	<i>SRP (Phnom Penh)</i>	15+3
10	H.E. Eng Chhai Eang	<i>SRP (Battambang)</i>	20+10
11	H.E. Pen Panha	<i>CPP (Prey Veng)</i>	20
12	H.E. Sim Soly	<i>FCP (Kampong Thom)</i>	10
Total			251 minutes

II. Observation of MPs' activities:

1. Visits to constituency:

Besides attending the NA Session, COMFREL observed the visits made by MPs in the constituencies including their own and other constituencies, and their interventions to address to the people's local issues.

1.1. MPs visited to constituency:

In December 2004, 50 MPs went to their constituencies made a total of 149 visits in which;

- 31 MPs (42% of the total CPP MPs) from the CPP, visited 55 times;
- 6 MPs (23% of the total FCP MPs) from the FUNCINPEC, visited 8 times;
- 13 MPs (54% of the total SRP MPs) from the SRP visited 86 times.

It should be noticed that, out of the total visits, the MPs acted as political parties 17%, government officials 6% and representatives 77%.

1.2. Purposes of visits/missions:

All the missions made by the MPs equal to 148 purposes which are classified in five main purposes as follows:

- Addressing in people's concerns: 22 times (15%)
- Visiting/gift giving and project inauguration: 80 times (53%)
- Strengthening party networks: 21 times (14%)
- Attending public forum: 4 times (3%)
- Accompanying their leaders: 22 times (15%)

Most MPs normally dealt with visiting and meeting with citizens in the constituencies. In this month, the SRP MPs was a leading one in visiting the constituencies and responded all 5 purposes.

Only the SRP MPs participated in the public forums, but COMFREL did not get the information from the MPs from FUNCINPEC and CPP attended such event.

1.3. Location of visit:

The constituencies where we observed in this month are 19 such as: Banteay Meanchey, Battambang, Kampong Cham, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Speu, Kampong Thom, Kampot, Kandal, Koh Kong, Kratie, Mondulhiri, Preah Vihear, Prey Veng, Pursat, Siem Reap, Sihanouk Ville, Stung Treng, Svay Rieng and Takeo.

2. Breakdown of reasons during the visits/missions:

These were some activities that MPs had been observed during their missions.

- ❑ Intervention to disputes between factory workers and employers.
- ❑ Accompanying government officials visiting the constituencies.
- ❑ Attending in 2 December Adversary.
- ❑ Visiting farmers and teachers in the local areas.
- ❑ Strengthening the authority's work performance.

3. People's requests:

Of 148 visits, people raised only 35 requests to MPs, which mostly concerning on resolving the local issues. Below is several requests made by citizens to their representatives.

- ❑ Building schools and other infrastructure in the village.
- ❑ Resolving land disputes especially land grabbing which often committed by the authority and powerful men.
- ❑ Taking action for terminating illegal fishing, forest cutting and robbery.

III. Conclusion:

In conclusion, the adoption of the National Budget for the year 2005 was voted in favor by the lawmakers from the three political parties though there seemed to be strong critics on government corruption and lack in performance by the opposition. The transparency and efficiency of national budget spending is a very important issue for the government to be committed to ensure its accountability for the nation.

On the other hand, COMFREL also acknowledged that many field visits made by MPs to 19 constituencies for 148 visits increasingly comparing to previous month besides the parliamentary session. There were 50 MPs visited their constituencies and addressed some people's local issues. MPs' visits made citizens in the constituencies felt so happy, but still their few concerns had been addressed. However, some MPs had committed to fulfill their promises by their field visits to the constituencies.

List of MPs who visited constituencies in December 2004

<i>Name of MPs</i>	<i>Constitution</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>In-const</i>	<i>Out-const</i>
1 - H.E Kuoy Bunroeun	Takeo	SRP	17	2
2 - H.E. Sok Pheng	Kampong Thom	SRP	16	2
3 - H.E. Kimsour Phirith	Banteay Meanchey	SRP	11	
4 - H.E. Nhim Vanda	Prey Veng	CPP	7	
5 - H.E. Cheam Channy	Kampong Cham	SRP	6	
6 - H.E. Mao Monyvann	Kampong Cham	SRP	6	
7 - H.E. Pal Sam Oeun	Banteay Meanchey	CPP	5	
8 - H.E. Roth Sarem	Mondul Kiri	CPP	4	
9 - H.E. Ahmad Yahya	Kampong Cham	SRP	4	
10 - H.E. Tes Heah	Battambang	CPP	3	
11 - H.E. Chan Cheng	Kandal	SRP	3	
12 - H.E. Mrs. Thak Lany	Kampong Cham	SRP	3	
13 - H.E. Chea Poch	Prey Veng	SRP	3	2
14 - H.E. Sam Rainsy	Kampong Cham	SRP	3	
15 - H.E. Mrs. Chuonh Sochhay	Battambang	CPP	3	
16 - H.E. Paing	Kampong	CPP	2	
17 - H.E. Sim Soly	Kampong Thom	FUN	2	
18 - H.E. Kong Sam Ol	Kampong	CPP	2	
19 - H.E. Vong Kan	Banteay Meanchey	CPP	2	
20 - H.E. Muy Chat	Battambang	CPP	2	
21 - H.E. San Inthor	Stung Treng	CPP	2	

22	- H.E. Chrea	Kandal	SRP	2	3
23	- H.E. Monh Saphan	Kampong Cham	FUN	2	
24	- H.E. Hem Khon	Kampong Speu	CPP	1	
25	- H.E. Kheav Horl	Kampong Thom	CPP	1	
26	- H.E. Som Chen	Kampot	CPP	1	
27	- H.E. Ney Pena	Kampot	CPP	1	
28	- H.E. Ek Sam Ol	Prey Veng	CPP	1	
29	- H.E. Than Sina	Kampot	FUN	1	
30	- H.E. Pok Sam El	Kampong	FUN	1	
31	- H.E. Pou Sothirak	Siem Reap	FUN	1	
32	- H.E. Mrs. Som Kimsour	Kampot	CPP	1	
33	- H.E. Min Sean	Prey Veng	CPP	1	
34	- H.E. Suos Kanan	Preah Sihanouk	CPP	1	
35	- H.E. Mrs. Troeung Thavy	Kratie	CPP	1	
36	- H.E. Sman Teath	Pursat	CPP	1	
37	- H.E. Suk Sam Eng	Preah Vihear	CPP	1	
38	- H.E. Nuon Sok	Kampong	CPP	1	
39	- H.E. Nguon Nhel	Kampong Thom	CPP	1	1
40	- H.E. Mey Nan	Pursat	CPP	1	
41	- H.E. Un Ning	Kampong Thom	CPP	1	
42	- H.E. Mrs. Ly Kim Leang	Battambang	CPP	1	
43	- H.E. Mrs. Men Sam An	Svay Rieng	CPP	1	
44	- H.E. Mrs. Ke	Siem Reap	SRP	1	
45	- H.E. Hul Savorn	Svay Rieng	CPP	1	
46	- Samdach Hun Sen	Kandal	CPP	1	1
47	- H.E. Ai Khon	Koh Kong	CPP	1	
48	- Samdach Norodom Sirivudh	Kandal	FUN	1	
49	- H.E. Sok An	Takeo	CPP	1	
50	- H.E. Ngor Sovann	Kandal	SRP	1	
Total				134	14