

# Greeting from COMFREL,

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[Weekly Democracy and Electoral Digest Cambodia](#)

07-11 January 2019

## **1. Election**

With 52 votes the Senate approved two amendments to existing laws on Friday, Jan.11; the number of sub national council seats are increased.

<https://bit.ly/2snyDV7>;

## **2-International Community**

Sens. Chris Coons, D-Delaware, and Ted Cruz, R-Texas, introduced the Cambodian Trade Act of 2019, which would require the administration to review the preferential trade treatment Cambodia receives under the General System of Preferences.

The US Senate returned the nomination of Patrick Murphy as Ambassador to Cambodia back to US President Donald Trump on Thursday, as the American government shutdown entered its third week.

<https://bit.ly/2AF82aK>; <https://bit.ly/2TlqpTg>; <https://bit.ly/2SO9777>; <https://bit.ly/2AIZjEv>;

Three Chinese warships arrived in Cambodia on Wednesday on a visit aimed at strengthening already close ties between the two nations. About 40 percent of the construction work on a China-funded new national stadium here has so far been completed, Thong Khon, president of the National Olympic Committee of Cambodia.

<https://bit.ly/2H8Z9Mi>; <https://bit.ly/2Frv5Jt>; <https://bit.ly/2QEY8zC>; <https://bit.ly/2VKSbQY>;  
<https://bit.ly/2M4dl2z>;

A senior Vietnamese official today met with National Assembly president Heng Samrin in a bid to further strengthen the countries' ties. Minister of Interior Sar Kheng on began a five-day visit to Ho Chi Minh City, on which border issues and the continued cooperation between Cambodia and Vietnam are to be discussed.

<https://bit.ly/2AE89Du>; <https://bit.ly/2Frtrri>;

## **3- Political Party**

With King Norodom Sihamoni having signed off on the amendment to Article 45 of the Law on Political Parties, 40 banned Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) officials have expressed their positions, with more than half vowing to not request the government return their political rights.

<https://bit.ly/2FkeYhv>;

FORMER politician Kong Korm said he is willing to appear before Phnom Penh Municipal Court to testify

in relation to the treason charge facing Kem Sokha, president of the banned opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP). He broke ranks with his colleagues and became the first to apply for a government-offered lifting of a ban on engaging in political activity.

<https://bit.ly/2AGuWi1>; <https://bit.ly/2FmTwrY>; <https://bit.ly/2QEwzle>; <https://bit.ly/2AFPSiB>;  
<https://bit.ly/2QDOBo3>;

Opposition leader Sam Rainsy asked to be charged with treason alongside his fellow Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) co-founder Kem Sokha. He also outlined seven points as to why the 118 banned former party officials should not seek a return of their political rights. Leaders of the Candlelight Party and the Human Rights Party are optimistic that the CNRP will eventually return to politics, despite its dissolution.

<https://bit.ly/2QCWUjW>; <https://bit.ly/2VDA1Aq>; <https://bit.ly/2QDNUEr>;

KHMER National United Party (KNUP) secretary-general Sok Visal said on Monday that his party will merge with Funcinpec and that talks had reached a deadlock only due to the illness of the latter's president Prince Norodom Ranariddh.

<https://bit.ly/2TKmjKs>; <https://bit.ly/2D2R6MR>;

A Khmer National Liberation Front member who fled to Thailand in December has signalled a return to Cambodia in order to further pursue the creation of the Khmer National Liberation Party.

<https://bit.ly/2AEVNuU>;

The Grassroots Democratic Party wants the government to keep Boeng Tamouk lake as the last large natural lake rather than having part of it filled for development.

<https://bit.ly/2FrFox9>;

#### **4-Legislative and Executive**

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, during a lavish ruling party celebration Monday to mark the 40th anniversary of the end of the bloody Khmer Rouge era, called for "wider political dialogue" in his country, but fell short of including the now-dissolved opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP). However, Prime Minister Hun Sen on Wednesday insisted he will not react to comments from a politician – seemingly Sam Rainsy – saying he had already made his position clear. Prime Minister Hun Sen has warned of factory closures and further unrest as garment workers continue to protest over unpaid annual seniority bonuses.

<https://bit.ly/2VFjPih>; <https://bit.ly/2RG4vTq>; <https://bit.ly/2D3m4Ey>; <https://bit.ly/2AH3q3Y>;  
<https://bit.ly/2H62ko3>; <https://bit.ly/2D2b7Ds>; <https://bit.ly/2SK4TgR>;

A spokesman for the Hun Sen government denied reports that fugitive former Thai premier Yingluck Shinawatra had been given a Cambodian passport, but a critic of the Cambodian strongman said it couldn't be ruled out in view of his ties to Yingluck's billionaire brother.

<https://bit.ly/2FnfmMe>; <https://bit.ly/2QGbWfo>; <https://bit.ly/2VFpFjH>;

A forestry administration spokesman on Thursday said the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries had recently created a new permanent secretariat to prevent all types of forestry crimes, with a

particular focus on illegal rosewood trading.

<https://bit.ly/2AHKFNG>;

### **5- Civil Society**

Civil society organizations are set to express their concerns in a second meeting with Minister of Interior Sar Kheng, according to prominent NGO leaders who will attend the gathering.

<https://bit.ly/2CkajrM>; <https://bit.ly/2TLo0ax>;

Deforestation in Prey Lang forest in the central plains of Cambodia continues to be a major problem that threatens the local economy, food security and biodiversity, and has the potential to accelerate climate change, according to a recent report by the Prey Lang Community Network (PLCN).

<https://bit.ly/2M3o2aZ>; <https://bit.ly/2SOu41X>; <https://bit.ly/2RkCz8j>;

Cambodian Confederation of Unions president Rong Chhun on Wednesday filed a complaint to the Appeal Court against the suspended jail term handed down by the Phnom Penh Municipal Court for his alleged role in 2014 Veng Sreng Boulevard protests that turned violent. GARMENT workers from W&D factory in Phnom Penh are due to protest again on Tuesday after the factory's owner fired some 1,200 employees last week as a result of protests calling for improved conditions. Some 500 workers on Wednesday protested in front of their factory at the GIGA special economic zone in Svay Rieng province's Svay Teap district to demand the reinstatement of three representatives who intended to form a trade union.

<https://bit.ly/2H6oTJ7>; <https://bit.ly/2D3vPTj>; <https://bit.ly/2M4YWIR>; <https://bit.ly/2TGnH0A>;

More than 10 family members and supporters of detained alleged filmmaker Rath Rott Mony gathered outside the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Phnom Penh for a third time on Wednesday, reiterating calls for his release.

<https://bit.ly/2FkYwxr>;

Four villagers filed complaints on Monday afternoon as an ongoing land dispute became violent in Sihanoukville town. A total of 106 families from Sihanoukville's Mittapheap district on Monday requested Preah Sihanouk provincial authorities allocate them land, claiming that although they have been living there since 2012, they do not have the right to build houses, while some other people have these rights.

<https://bit.ly/2RnaWLx>; <https://bit.ly/2RqKNMd>;

A prominent forest activist based in Kampong Speu province is set to launch a field investigation into alleged illegal logging at the Phnom Oral and Phnom Kravanh wildlife sanctuaries despite "threats of arrest" by rangers and military officers in the area.

<https://bit.ly/2Ci1n6g>;

Representatives of residents involved in land disputes in Kratie province's Snuol district yesterday expressed fear for their safety following warnings by authorities that legal action will be taken against those who lead protests in Phnom Penh.

<https://bit.ly/2VKft9t>;

## **6- Media**

More than three dozen journalists in Cambodia published an open letter on Thursday urging the Phnom Penh Municipal Court to drop all charges against two former RFA reporters who have lived under police surveillance for more than a year while awaiting a trial for “espionage.” Two journalists with an espionage case looming over their heads are calling for the court to either speed up its investigation or drop the charges against them.

<https://bit.ly/2M5v4MC>; <https://bit.ly/2skuMs1>; <https://bit.ly/2SQNNOy>;

Hundreds of journalists will today attend an annual solidarity dinner with Prime Minister Hun Sen in a move to boost relations between the government and media.

<https://bit.ly/2Qlvr0k>;

## **7-Judiciary, Authority and Military**

A Cambodian court has jailed a man for three years for insulting the king in [Facebook](#) posts, the second known conviction under a new lèse-majesté law enacted last year that rights groups fear could be used to stifle dissent.

<https://bit.ly/2RkMMRT>;

A Phnom Penh Municipal Court investigating judge has rejected a request from Kem Sokha’s lawyers that their client’s treason charge be dropped, ruling that further investigation was required.

<https://bit.ly/2AJ2c8a>; <https://bit.ly/2QDnVUf>;

A Phnom Penh Municipal Court document showed that Russia Today news fixer Rath Rott Mony was denied bail last week because the Investigating Judge deemed him a risk to an ongoing investigation into the sex trafficking film he helped produce.

<https://bit.ly/2svWLoV>;

## **8- Other**

Corporate filings in Hong Kong revealed Yingluck, 51, had used a Cambodian passport to register as the sole director of P.T. Corporation Company, a firm incorporated in the city on August 24 last year, almost a year to the day after she went into self-imposed exile ahead of a sentence for criminal negligence.

<https://bit.ly/2Rk8JAI>;

Vietnam’s exports to Cambodia exceeded 3 billion USD last year, setting a record high in a decade and opening up opportunities for local firms to capitalize on untapped potential of the neighboring market, statistics show.

<https://bit.ly/2VM6yUU>;

The European Union’s move to end trade preferences for Cambodia and Myanmar over human rights issues has spurred both countries to take drastic action. But while Cambodia has responded by easing

political restrictions, Myanmar has turned to economic reforms to blunt the impact.

<https://s.nikkei.com/2M5IXuf>;

Southeast Asian countries should be cautious in negotiating with China on its flagship Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to avoid being trapped in unsustainable debt, 70 percent of respondents said in a policy survey released on Monday.

<https://bit.ly/2AFazSu>;

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**Thanks,**