

Greeting from COMFREL,

Weekly Democracy and Electoral Digest Cambodia

04-08 February 2019

1.Elections/ NEC

NEC has informed national and international media to apply for registration as a reporter at the NEC if they want information on the electoral process of the upcoming sub-national council election.

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

2-International Community

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) warned on Tuesday of the dangers posed by online violence, cyberbullying and digital harassment for the 85.7 percent of young people aged 15 to 24 years old who are online in Cambodia.

<https://bit.ly/2TClang>; <https://bit.ly/2UJGl8g>;

The suggestion that Cambodia could move towards changing its constitution to facilitate growing Chinese military presence in the country led to another series of headlines about Beijing's rising influence in the Southeast Asian state.

<https://bit.ly/2Twtw0S>;

The World Bank's annual report 'Doing Business 2019' ranks economies based on how easy it is to do business. Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Bangladesh are the lowest ranked Asian countries in the ease of doing business report. Bangladesh has been ranked 176th, while Laos has been ranked 154th and Cambodia has been ranked 138th.

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

In the wrap-up session of the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) for Cambodia in Geneva, Switzerland, on Friday, 73 countries made a total of 176 recommendations to improve Cambodia's human rights record.

<https://bit.ly/2ShTmJj>; <https://bit.ly/2WNO9rk>;

Two Japanese naval vessels are to dock at the Sihanouk Autonomous Port for four days later this month to strengthen Japanese-Cambodian military ties, the Japanese embassy in Phnom Penh said.

<https://bit.ly/2WN76L1>; <https://bit.ly/2DZ7A9t>;

The Chinese Embassy in Cambodia issued a statement singling out the US' Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), not the US government itself, as the culprit in the 1970 Lon Nol coup d'etat, apparently mocking last week's denial by the US Embassy in Cambodia of its country's involvement.

<https://bit.ly/2Ggs280>; <https://bit.ly/2RPVPPd>;

French Senator François Grosdidier pledged to lobby European states to ease pressure on the government over perceived democratic setbacks and human rights violations, according to a government official.

<https://bit.ly/2taW8B9>; <https://bit.ly/2MUYxZX>

3- Political Party

In a Facebook post on Sunday, the “acting president” of the Supreme Court-dissolved Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) Sam Rainsy once again claimed he will return to the Kingdom this year. But critics derided his claims saying Rainsy had neither the ability nor the means to return to Cambodia. In his latest move to seize power in the Kingdom, Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) “acting president” Sam Rainsy has called for a rebellion to change the government.

Kong Korm, the former acting president of the defunct Sam Rainsy Party, dismissed his one-time opposition ally’s announcement that his planned return this year will lead to a rebellion and the arrest of Prime Minister Hun Sen.

<https://bit.ly/2HZmMaA>; <https://bit.ly/2MQAzz4>; <https://bit.ly/2Df0ZWA>; <https://bit.ly/2t94j0Y>;
<https://bit.ly/2Bn3PsA>;

The deputy president of the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), Mu Sochua, has written to the EU about alleged threats against CNRP acting President Sam Rainsy and other former party lawmakers and activists in Cambodia and abroad.

<https://bit.ly/2IOGNh0>;

The new “People Purpose Party” recognized by the government, with Ith Sarum as its president and founder, while civil society organizations expressed disapproval at the move, saying more political parties does not mean more quality.

<https://bit.ly/2WJw7GV>;

4-Legislative and Executive

Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen said on Tuesday that a large number of public servants in the kingdom celebrated the Chinese Lunar New Year or the Spring Festival.

<https://bit.ly/2UPXo8V>;

With the Kingdom set to conduct a nationwide census on March 3-13, using its own funding for the first time, Prime Minister Hun Sen appealed to the population to cooperate fully, insisting it does not involve politics.

<https://bit.ly/2SgAXN8>; <https://bit.ly/2Gmu6L3>;

A government official on Thursday criticised a report which ranked Cambodia as “not free”, saying it concentrated only on the political aspects while ignoring the fact that “freedom” had various other dimensions to it.

<https://bit.ly/2RMo8VV>; <https://bit.ly/2MWlxXw>;

5- Civil Society

Human rights and labor activists have urged Cambodian workers on Thai trawlers to be cautious amid concerns that the lifting of an EU warning on the Thai fishing industry for compliance following scandals over slavery could have a negative impact on their safety.

<https://bit.ly/2RKk20x>;

Alleged filmmaker Rath Rott Mony's supporters and wife, Long Kimheang, gathered outside the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Phnom Penh for a fourth time on Wednesday, reiterating calls for his release, after the Appeal Court rejected his plea for bail last week.

<https://bit.ly/2DZ8CC4>; <https://bit.ly/2UHfR7k>;

A Prey Lang Community Network (PLCN) member in Thmea commune, in Preah Vihear province's Chey Sen district, on Sunday claimed that authorities are unable to stamp out forest crime in the nature reserve, instances of which have been occurring for months.

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

6- Media

A local journalist was killed by a group of people while returning from a wedding party with two friends in Kratie province's Snuol district.

Kratie provincial police said they have some clues about the murder of a journalist in Snuol district's Pi Thnou commune and are working to identify the suspects.

<https://bit.ly/2RII6Rj>; <https://bit.ly/2E1DZft>; <https://bit.ly/2GgbGfw>;

7-Judiciary, Authority and Military

The son of Prime Minister Hun Sen who is the military commander, chided former opposition leader Sam Rainsy for ruining peace in Cambodia instead of contributing to the country's development. The General Immigration Department has ordered its officials to arrest former opposition leader Sam Rainsy should he return to the Kingdom.

<https://bit.ly/2tcDIFO>; <https://bit.ly/2BqOgzY>;

The Preah Sihanouk provincial authorities are working to identify the "mastermind" behind a violent confrontation between villagers and the armed forces over a land dispute in Prey Nop district's Bit Traing commune last month.

<https://bit.ly/2WNQ8Mp>; <https://bit.ly/2RFyh6A>;

Attorneys for Kem Sokha are pressing for Phnom Penh Municipal Court to release Kong Korm's questioning transcript in the former opposition leader's treason case.

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

8- Other and Political Opinions

Cambodia needs to recalibrate its relationships with the US and EU, or risk becoming overly reliant on China.

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

In Cambodia, the average loan size is now among the highest in the world, with around 2 million borrowers owing a record US\$2.8 billion. It's not a healthy situation, with experts warning of a bubble in the Southeast Asian nation of 16 million. Loan demands from Cambodia's banking industry had surged by 20.1 percent in 2018 said a central bank's annual report.

<https://on.china.cn/2TAKivZ>; <https://bit.ly/2URCCFZ>;

Cambodia's casino industry, once nothing more than a footnote in the global casino space, has grown significantly in the past year. There has been an increase of 53% in the [number of licenses](#) issued, leading to the country being viewed as the "New Land of Opportunity" by Casino Review Magazine (CR).

<https://bit.ly/2TzMrb5>;

Thanks,