



70th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic

Relations Between Thailand & Cambodia

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70th ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THAILAND & CAMBODIA

Special Supplement in Khmer Times Message of His Excellency Deputy Prime Minister PRAK Sokhonn, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia on the Occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Kingdom of Thailand



Dear readers of Khmer Times,

The auspicious day of 19 December 2020 marks the 70th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Kingdom of Thailand. Although our diplomatic relations was formalized on 19 December 1950, the interaction between our two peoples actually goes back centuries. Our two Kingdoms share not only common borders, but also similar traditions, culture and religion. For the past 70 years, our bilateral relations have grown from strength to strength, building on the solid pillars of close friendship and good neighborliness.

We owe to the Leaders of the two countries for their unwavering commitment to nurture our traditional bonds of friendship that enabled our bilateral relationship to thrive from one generation to another to greater height. All the while aspiring to lead a peaceful co-existence in a prosperous ASEAN Community, our two countries have solidified our broad based cooperation that spans a vast horizon encompassing many areas of mutual interest, namely political, security, economy, trade and investment, education, healthcare, connectivity and people-to-people exchanges. Our institutional cooperation mechanism, such as the Joint Cabinet Retreat, the Joint Commission for Bilateral Cooperation, the General Border Commission, has been refined and improved over the years to provide an effective support to deliver on the common vision of our two Leaders.

Our two-way trade exchanges have witnessed a notable increase from USD 3,446 million in 2018 to USD 3,738 million in 2019. Better yet, this volume has reached USD 5,570 million within only 10 months of 2020 amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Investment wise, our relevant authorities are collaborating closely to foster the development of the SEZs along the Cambodian-Thai border and to further facilitate the border trade.

Sharing 803-kilometers of borderline, Cambodia and Thailand have exerted their maximum efforts to ensure that all shared border areas are peaceful and stable. In the spirit of good-neighborliness, we have collaborated unceasingly to improve the physical connectivity linking the two countries through building roads, bridges, railways, and other infrastructure projects. In 2018, we have designated the Phnom Dei – Ban Khao Din as our new international check-point and we are in the process of upgrading three other regional check-points into international check-points. We have promoted new initiatives to further enhance connectivity as evidenced by the signing of the Agreement on Joint Traffic Working Over Railing in April 2019. Most significantly, on 22 April 2019, the two Prime Ministers have presided over the inauguration of the Cambodia-Thai Friendship Bridge Stuengbot – Ban Nong Ian and broke ground for the construction of the Customs Building and the General Checkpoint at Stuengbot.

In the area of education and health, Thailand has made significant contribution and support to the sectors, with the provision of thousands of scholarships and training opportunities under various schemes such as Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) and the Royal Scholarship granted by Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn.

Tourism exchanges between our two countries has shown considerable growth prospect year-on-year. To commemorate this 70th Anniversary, the ministries of Tourism of the two countries have revitalized the slogan “Two Kingdoms, One Destination” in a joint effort to attract more tourists to the two kingdoms. It is also heartening to note the deepening of people-to-people linkages between our two countries. While Cambodia becomes a popular tourist destination for Thai people, especially Angkor Wat, Siem Reap province, vice versa, Thailand has become one of the most favorite destinations for Cambodian people.

People-to-people relations go beyond the tourism exchange and cover as well those of migrant workers. True to the spirit of solidarity, the two countries have worked tirelessly to ensure the welfare and wellbeing of the migrant workers. Cambodia truly appreciates Thai authorities for facilitating the renewal of stay permit and work permit for Cambodian workers and increasing social benefits for suspended and unemployed workers. Other gestures of fraternal solidarity can be witnessed in Thailand’s humanitarian assistance to Cambodia in its fight against the spread of COVID-19 as well as to support the Cambodian people affected by the recent flash floods last October 2020.

On behalf of the Royal Government and people of Cambodia, I would like to seize this opportunity to express my heartfelt congratulations to the Royal Government and people of Thailand on their auspicious National Day that takes place on 5 December 2020. I am also honored and privileged to present my best wishes of happiness and prosperity to the Governments and peoples of our two Kingdoms.

Lastly, I would like to proclaim **long-live Cambodia-Thailand Friendship, and Happy 70th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Kingdom of Thailand.**

H.E. PRAK Sokhonn

*Deputy Prime Minister, and
Minister of Foreign Affairs and
International Cooperation of Cambodia*



70th ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THAILAND & CAMBODIA



Message on the occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the Kingdom of Thailand and the Kingdom of Cambodia, H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand

Dear readers of Khmer Times,

As we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Kingdom of Thailand and the Kingdom of Cambodia, I wish to convey the warmest wishes from the people of Thailand to the people of Cambodia on this very special occasion.

We, the Thai and Cambodian peoples, are tied together not only by history but also a shared sense of purpose. The close cooperation between our two countries is multifaceted and cuts across all levels and sectors. Together, we have worked to enhance our physical, institutional and people-to-people connectivity. Among others, we have made a difference for the young people through our long cooperation in education, especially at Kampong Chheuteal and Kampong Speu Institutes of Technology. In the face of emerging infectious diseases, including COVID-19, we have strengthened our cooperation to save our peoples through successive work plans on public health under the Thailand-Cambodia Development Cooperation Programme. Indeed, our collaboration in diverse areas has touched the lives of so many people.

Despite the current COVID-19 pandemic, I strongly believe that our two nations will soon emerge stronger from this unprecedented situation, and that we will further build on the past 70 years of achievements towards an even stronger future together.

H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand

KHMER TIMES



Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations Between Thailand & Cambodia

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Cambodia and Thailand are enjoying the best of bilateral relations

Khmer Times was given the opportunity to have a special interview with H.E. Panyarak Poolthup Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to the Kingdom of Cambodia for the publication of a Special Edition to mark this auspicious occasion. The following are excerpts in a Q & A format.

1. What is the level of diplomatic, trade and other forms of relations between the two nations?

At the outset and above all, Thailand and Cambodia are neighbours in the true sense. We share 800 km of land border. Our peoples share similar traditions, culture and religion. By being neighbours, we have a long history in this part of Southeast Asia together. Diplomatic relations were established in 1950, or exactly 70 years ago, making this year a milestone in our relations.

We are currently enjoying the best of bilateral relations due to the commitment of both countries' leadership to maintain and promote cooperation in all aspects. The political will is always there to resolve any issues that may arise. Both governments are making the people's well-being the priority and keeping dialogue open at all levels.

Last year, before COVID-19, more than 400,000 Thais traveled to Cambodia and more than 900,000 Cambodians traveled to Thailand. Thailand is among the top five countries that invests most in Cambodia according to data from the CDC in 2019.

2. How has the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic affected these relations?

COVID-19 has thrown the world economy and

international travel into disarray. Businesses in Thailand and Cambodia have also been affected, especially those in the hospitality sector. But it has shown the characters of both our countries that we had the courage to make difficult decisions, like border closure, business restrictions, and movement limits, to curtail the spread of COVID-19.

The ultimate aim is to protect people from this health calamity. Despite the unprecedented circumstances, our relations remain intact and will even grow closer and stronger as we understand each other's plight and try to help in whatever way we can.

The Thai Government and the Thai community in Cambodia have donated in cash and in kind and joined hands with the Cambodian Government in their efforts to combat COVID-19. Thailand has allowed medical patients from Cambodia to seek treatment in Thailand at a time when borders are otherwise closed to contain the spread of the pandemic.

The Cambodian government, in return, has given an amnesty for Thai citizens who have been unable to leave Cambodia due to travel restrictions to remain in Cambodia. The Cambodian government has also provided assistance to Thai nationals who wish to return to Thailand, as well as facilitating entry into Cambodia for Thai businessmen in line

with Cambodia's effective health precautions.

This spirit of solidarity and cooperation in times of hardship truly defines the solid bond upon which our neighbourly relations are built upon.

3. What is the level of two-way bilateral trade between the two countries for the current year and how has it fared when compared to last year?

The value of bilateral trade between Thailand and Cambodia has been growing Year-over-year. However, due to the setbacks by COVID-19 the value of bilateral trade during Jan-Oct 2020 sums up to \$6.074 billion which results in a 21.46% decrease when compared to the same period last year.

Most Thai exports to Cambodia comprise of refined fuels, beverages, livestock, motor cars, parts and accessories, precious stones and jewellery, and chemical products, whereas major products that Cambodia exports to Thailand consist of precious stones and jewellery, fruits and vegetables, metal ore, cable wire and ready-made clothes.

Border trade plays a crucial role in bilateral trade between Thailand and Cambodia during Jan-Sept 2020, the value of border trade stood at \$3.976 billion or around 70% of total bilateral trade in the same



H.E. Mr. Panyarak Poolthup, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to the Kingdom of Cambodia. Supplied

period (\$5.568 billion). I would say that this is an outstanding aspect of relationship between the two countries.

Apart from having each other's products to serve the market needs, when you think of how border trade is conducted, you will also see people earn a living in the supply chain, especially those along the border and in the local economy. In effect, border trade contributes to poverty reduction and address the inequality gap.

4. What would be your advice to would be Thai investors to Cambodia as with travellers who might be eager to return or visit Cambodia as soon as flight bans are lifted?

The initial phase of travel ban uncovered an underlying nature of the Cambodian market that investors should

be aware of: the dependence on imports. Hence, investors who plan to manufacture in Cambodia will contribute to the overall economic security of the country and thus are likely to be more than welcome by the Cambodian Government. Broadly speaking, there are two ways that Thai businesspeople conduct business in Cambodia: trading and manufacturing. I would suggest that in either case the newcomers might want to pay attention to what I call the 3Es.

The first E is to explore the market. Newcomers should explore if their products or investments meet the market demand and consumer behaviour. They might even have to take time to visit Cambodia for this purpose to obtain first-hand information rather than relying solely on their representatives.

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Ambassador presented the RTG's aid of USD 30,000 to support Cambodia's flood relief effort. Supplied



Border Trade before COVID-19 Supplied



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The second E is to expand the knowledge. Newcomers should study related Cambodian laws and regulations to have a thorough understanding of what to expect and be expected in conducting business in Cambodia, as well as to be able to comply with the laws and regulations accordingly.

The third E is to exchange experience. Newcomers will find it useful to get some insights from other businesspeople who came to conduct business in Cambodia before them and this is one of the most important first-hand information that would help them design their business model and become successful in Cambodia.

The Thai Trade Center, one of Team Thailand agencies, and Thailand Business Council in Cambodia (TBCC), an association of Thai businesspeople in Cambodia, are among the most useful and trustworthy sources of information which newcomers could resort to.

During the last few months there have been chartered flights, once or twice per month, organised by tour agencies which are catering to the demands of Thais and Cambodians who need to travel between both countries, including businesspeople. Travellers will have to comply with preventive health measures to make sure that they and those around them are safe from COVID-19 infection. It is a collective responsibility and it is in the interest of everybody.

5. Has there been any major setback on two-way trade between the two countries and if so, how were they overcome?

The Thai Government believes in the notion that neighbouring countries should seek common grounds and set aside differences in order to allow for economic prosperity and the well-being of people. That is why relevant Thai agencies, both at the national and provincial levels, have forged a close cooperation with their counterparts. Any issues that might hinder two-way trade will be addressed by the two sides without delay. As a consequence, the trade value between Thailand and

Cambodia continues to rise in the past decade.

With the arrival of COVID-19 and the urgent need to stop the spread of the pandemic across borders, the flow of goods between the two countries was disrupted for some time during the first few weeks of border closures, but the authorities of the two sides managed to quickly resolve the situation. It was an unprecedented moment, but with close cooperation, we averted a major setback for border trade.

6. Before the onset of the pandemic, how was the level of two-way exchanges in terms of technical and study visits, education exchanges, cultural exchanges as well as capacity building?

Exchanges of visit were constant, involving government agencies and academic institutions, which result in the sharing of knowledge and expertise in various fields. While physical exchanges were made difficult, if not impossible, at this time, modern communication technology is being used to save the day. Though it cannot totally replace in-person sessions, online classes and training surely provide the students and trainees an opportunity to continue with their learning.

One example is that Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) has organised various online courses for healthcare professionals from ASEAN and BIMSTEC member countries and Timor Leste to share experience on different aspects such as early childhood health promotion and public health measures.

During the first few months when COVID-19 forced countries to close borders, there were cases of essential travels that could not be deferred, such as patients in Cambodia who were in urgent need of treatment in Thailand, the Thai authorities were not reluctant to take a humanitarian view and granted special permission for cross-border travel, given that the patients and their travelling companions adhere to strict health protocols which were put in place by both countries.

Later, when the Thai Government permitted more types of travellers to Thailand,

our authorities have been working tirelessly to facilitate other types of essential travels, including Cambodian students who are enrolled to study in Thailand and eligible foreigners who were stranded in Cambodia. Hopefully when the situation is favourable, we will be able to resume physical exchanges of visit similar to the pre-COVID-19 level.

7. Is a travel bubble between Thailand and Cambodia under consideration or negotiation?

Not at this moment. However, the relevant authorities of the two countries realise the impact of COVID-19 on tourism, which provide significant revenue to the countries and indispensable income to the people, especially the low income earners, so they would look into any possibilities that would effectively address the issue.

8. In your opinion, what could be the key areas for further enhancing bilateral relationship between the two countries?

I believe any strong and resilient relationship must be built on a solid foundation. The most important underlying contributor that have characterised, and will always define, our bilateral relationship is people connectivity. The more people connect to each other with an open mind, the more they will understand each other better.

Thais and Cambodians have similarities and diversities, and as we are neighbours, it means that we tend to have more interactions with each other than with other countries. By having more interactions, there might be time when some issues unfortunately get blown out of proportion and make us feel uncomfortable with each other. If people try to understand one another and look for ways to address outstanding issues amicably, based on mutual interests, we will certainly be able to maintain the excellent bilateral relationship that currently exist between our two countries, and have a good chance to enhance it further. In the end, it is the people themselves who will benefit from the two countries having excellent bilateral relationship.

9. How have Thai investments in this country fared thus far and which are the major areas for these investments?

Thai investments in Cambodia are varied and can be distributed into many sectors such as food and agriculture, construction, hospitality, finance, among others. Major corporations have entered the Cambodian market for decades. They have established themselves and become household names to the Cambodian people. Actually, you can see their presence in your daily life from dawn to dusk, ranging from consumer products to different kinds of services. It is also because of the generous and continued support of the Cambodian government that have made Thai investments in this country a success.

The abundance of Cambodian workforce, in quantity and quality, is among the key factors that has allowed Thai companies to build up and grow from strength to strength. It is a win-win relationship as Thai companies, with sufficient and capable workforce, could plan for long-term investments while Cambodian employees would be provided with job security to ensure their well-being.

10. In terms of labour market, do Thai investments in Cambodia face any problems?

There have been no report of outstanding problems at the moment. I guess that Thai companies operating in Cambodia are happy with their Cambodian workforce. Many companies also have in-house trainings to upskill and reskill their employees, including during this time to prepare for the post-pandemic period.

One thing that could be an edge to the Cambodians who might want to seek employment with Thai companies, though, is the language skill. To be able to communicate in Thai will help in their work, especially when having to coordinate with their co-workers as there usually are both Thais and Cambodians working together in the companies.

So, people who know both Khmer and Thai languages are sometimes sought after

by Thai companies.

11. How much have the closed border gates impacted border trade between the two countries?

There is no denial that the closed border gates have disrupted a vibrant border trade that exists between Thailand and Cambodia. Statistics have shown a drop of around 17% YoY in border trade volume during the first nine months of this year. However, the local authorities from both sides have been in close coordination to minimise the effect of this border closure by allowing the transportation of goods under some restrictions, such as during certain hours of the day and through designated border gates only while the number of transport vehicles and the people who carry out the job are limited.

12. Any indication of the number of activities which had to be either scaled down or cancelled/postponed because of the pandemic?

It's rather difficult to pin a number to the question. But I've seen some activities cancelled, some scaled down, and some changed the organisation format. If I count only the Embassy's events related to the 70th Anniversary of the Establishment of Thailand-Cambodia Diplomatic Relations: we were lucky to have organised our concert very early this year, in February. We had to cancel our Film Festival because the cinemas were closed. The Photo Contest went on but we down-scaled the awarding ceremony. We managed to organise our Royal Kathina Ceremony, granted by HM the King of Thailand to Cambodia but no high-level representative could travel from Thailand due to quarantine requirements, so I was made the bearer of the Royal Kathina. Many bilateral meetings scheduled for this year, especially between line agencies, had to opt for online platforms to be able to proceed while some high-level meetings that warrant physical presence, including the 11th Meeting of the Joint Commission for Bilateral Cooperation (JC), have been deferred to next year. ■

70th Anniversary of Establishment of Diplomatic Relations Between Cambodia and Thailand

- H.M. Preah Bat Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk, H.M. Samdech Preah Mahaksatrey Norodom Monineath Sihanouk, H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej, and H.M. Queen Sirikit at Chitralada Royal Palace, 1982

- H.M. Preah Bat Samdech Preah Norodom Sihamoni, H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Great, and H.M. Queen Sirikit at the Grand Celebration of H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej's 60th Year Accession to the throne in June 2006

- H.M. Preah Bat Samdech Preah Norodom Sihamoni, H.R.H. Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn at The Grand Celebration of H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej's 60th Year Accession to the throne in Bangkok, June 2006

- H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn's visit to Cambodia in 2003 to inaugurate the Kampong Chheuteal Institute of Technology under Thailand-Cambodia Collaborative Development Project under the Royal Patronage of H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn.



Polishment of the Diplomatic in Thailand and Cambodia



- General Prayut Chan-o-cha visit to Cambodia in 2014
- Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo HUN SEN's visit to Thailand in 2015
- SQN.LDR. Prasong Soonsiri Thailand's Foreign Minister, With H.E. Hor Namhong During a visit to Cambodia in 1993



Thai Business Council's President speaks on Thailand's investments and businesses in Cambodia

1. Please provide us with an insight into the establishment of the TBCC in Cambodia, what led to its formation and how many members does it have now?

Answer: The establishment of Thai Business Council in Cambodia (TBCC) was inspired by H.E. Mr. Domdej Bunnag, Thai Ambassador at the time. Throughout more than 20 years TBCC has been providing information and guidance to Thai investors interested in doing business and/or invest in Cambodia. It also serves as communication channel between the Embassy and the Thai people residing in Cambodia on issues of importance and in emergency situation.

The Thai Business Council of Cambodia was first established on July 22, 1999 and later changed its name to Thai Business Council in Cambodia in 2014.

Currently, TBCC has an office located in the Royal Thai Embassy. There are about 150 active members.

2. What role does TBCC play in promoting Thai-Cambodia businesses and investments?

Answer: The establishment of Thai Business Council plays an active role in promoting Thai-Cambodia business and investments through these following activities;

- We represent Thai companies/enterprise and work closely with Thai and Cambodian authorities and the private sector to help Thai business in Cambodia run smoothly and benefit the Cambodian economy.
- We organize, join and participate in events relating to Thai-Cambodia businesses and investments such as business forums, trade fairs, exhibitions and academic seminars.
- We also give consultation, suggestion and guidance regarding law and regulation, procedure, business partners and other related information to Thai businesses/investors who might be interested to do business or invest in Cambodia and vice versa.

3. How does TBCC resolve disputes or help negotiate between Thai

entities and Cambodia's government authorities?

Answer: In accordance with the objectives of establishment TBCC, we try to prevent all disputes between Thai entities and Cambodian government authorities by arranging and organising the following;

- Give direct consultation to Thai entities.
- Organize seminars, forums and workshops related to business compliance for Thai business entities.
- Arrange consultative meetings between Thai entities and Cambodia's government authorities such as MOC, CDC, GDT, GDCE, MOLVT.

However, in case of any disputes, TBCC will collect details from Thai entities and consider on a case by case basis to find an appropriate resolution for them. We can also arrange meetings between Thai entities and Cambodia's government authorities to discuss and seek a solution.

If there are many Thai entities with similar disputes with the same Cambodia's government authorities, TBCC can represent all of them and speak to the authority as a single voice.

4. Has TBCC undertaken major investment road show initiatives from Thailand to Cambodia?

Answer: TBCC has not hosted any roadshow event by ourselves, but we always support all roadshow activities which we consider to benefit both Thais and Cambodians.

5. What is the size of Thai investments in Cambodia, both in terms of investments and trading?

Answer: Thailand is always among the top 10 foreign countries that invest in Cambodia. The amount of investment which has been approved by the CDC in the last 5 years adds up to 20-30 million USD.

In term of trade, Thailand is the second largest trade partner after China. The total trade volume in 2019 was USD 9.4 billion. During the first 10 months of 2020 it has added up to USD 7.3 billion.

In 2019, Thailand export to Cambodia reached of USD 7.1 billion, while imports

from Cambodia were to USD 2.2 billion.

6. How has COVID-19 affected TBCC's activities in Cambodia?

Answer: During COVID-19 pandemic, TBCC has postponed or cancelled events which involve gatherings of people such as seminars, business meetings and social networking events. However, we have adapted some of our events into online platform such as online seminars and meetings.

7. Is TBCC a member of the advisory working group with the Ministry of Economy and Finance?

Answer: TBCC is a member of IBC (International Business Chamber of Cambodia) who are co-chairs of the Working Group on Law Tax and Governance with Ministry of Economy and Finance.

Moreover, we are also joining with the Cambodia Chamber of Commerce and other international business organizations to work with the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training on labour issues.

8. What advice would TBCC provide to Thai investors on investing in Cambodia, especially on the pitfalls of such investments?

Answer: First, TBCC would advise them to check whether their investment is legal under Cambodian laws. Second, we would advise them to do a feasibility study by themselves or their representative. During this phase, we can provide them with reliable information and source of information. We stress that they should not decide to invest only on someone's words.

After having finished the feasibility study and decided to invest in Cambodia, we would advise them to follow all Cambodian laws and regulations to avoid any legal issues in the future, especially tax and labour issues.

9. What is the most attractive feature for Thai investors in Cambodia?

Answer: Cambodia is one of the fastest growing economies in the world with an open economy that welcomes all foreign investors and that also allows foreign investors to be the sole owner of the



Mrs. Jiranun Wangmongkol, TBCC President. Supplied

company in almost all business sectors.

Thailand and Cambodia are also good neighboring countries which share borders and similar cultures. We have good relation at all levels from government to government, and people to people.

10. How is TBCC's collaboration and interaction with the Royal Thai Embassy and Thai Investment Board?

Answer: As TBCC office is located in the Royal Thai Embassy, we always work closely and meet with each other to update and exchange important information related to Thai-Cambodia business and investment. We also co-organise events, participate in and help promote each other's events.

For the Board of Investment of Thailand, TBCC always supply information for their studies or research related to investment opportunity in Cambodia. We are also here to facilitate and organise their meetings with the Cambodian side and also cooperate as guest speaker for their delegation during their visit to Cambodia. ■



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As this year marks the 70th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Cambodia and Thailand, we will continue to play our part to support the trade, investment, and economic development of the two countries.

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Nurse by weekdays, Biker on weekends



Kampoo providing assistance and donations to the residents in Kampong Thom province during the Bikers' Charity Ride. Supplied

Rhea Mae Soco
rhea.soco@khmertimeskh.com

Amid the hardships of the COVID-19 plight in Cambodia, a 33-year old Thai nurse has found a way to bring joy to her life while helping people both inside and outside the hospital.

Her friends and fellow bikers call her 'Kampoo', but her real name is Saisunee Munjit. In Thailand, Kampoo means crab claws and her parents chose that as her nickname because her mother loved to eat crab while she was pregnant with her.

Kampoo has been in the Kingdom for six years, and has travelled throughout the nation, taking in the intoxicating scenery of the countryside and the beauty of its abundant natural treasures. She first started exploring Cambodia following her decision to work at the Royal Phnom Penh Hospital in March of 2016.

Royal Phnom Penh Hospital is a tertiary care hospital managed by Bangkok Dusit Medical Service Public Co., LTD (BDMS) that operates private hospitals in Thailand and Southeast Asia.

According to Kampoo, working at a Cambodian hospital was at first, a big challenge.

"I have multiple tasks at the hospital here, which is quite different from the way things worked in Thailand. In addition, the different languages and cultures surrounding me, make it more challenging, even though there are hardships in the job, I still love it."

She had started to ride motorcycles, big ones, not small moto "putt-putting" around for this adventurer, just a few months before moving to Cambodia.

"At the end of 2015, I decided I would like to buy a serious motorcycle as a combined Christmas/birthday gift to myself," she said, laughing.

After months of exploring Cambodia, she had met some biker friends who shared the same interests as her. Most of them were men but that did not intimidate her at all. Instead, she began to train herself to drive big motorcycles by going on road trips with her group of new friends on her days off from hospital.

Their group is called Everyone Can Ride and is composed of members from the Cambodia Bikers Club (CBC), the Harley Davidson Owners Group (HOG), the Sedarah Motorcycle Group, and some Cambodian Custom Bike (CCB), and BMW motorcycle owners.

Kampoo spends most of her time at work. She works five or six days a week from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm and goes to the gym after work three times a week. But every Sunday, she spends time with her biker friends who she considers her family here in Cambodia.

"What I like most about being in Cambodia are the friendly people, the beautiful nature I see and of course the cheap drinks (laughing)," she says. The province of Kampot is her favorite place to explore because of its beautiful natural resources, the mountains,

rivers, beaches and most of all, because of the great food (not to forget the delicious durian). Her favorite Khmer foods are Beef Lok Lak and Khmer noodles.

She has noticed how quickly Cambodia has developed over the past years. Kampoo has also seen the traditions the Khmer and Thai people share.

"I find it easy to live here — there are no big adjustments. I have adopted the culture fast. We pay respect to each other, share food and also share the same beliefs," says Kampoo. Her time in Cambodia has found her now understanding 70 to 80 percent of spoken Khmer but still admits to struggling with reading and writing.

Being a lady biker in a group of men does not make her feel insecure at all. She believes that no matter what the gender, everyone is equal. She is happy riding with them because she loves riding with people who love it as much as she does.

Before COVID-19 hit the world, she was used to going back home every three months to visit her family but now she is stuck, just like everyone else. She has not seen her family for a long time now.

She spends her time with her biker friends on her days off from the hospital. She rides with her friends most every Sunday, but their rides are not only for enjoyment and adventure. They also help Khmer people in need. The group conduct charity rides, donating foods and goods to



Kampoo on her bike. Supplied



Kampoo, the nurse biker. Supplied



Kampoo riding together with other bikers club. Supplied

Cambodians in the provinces, especially those who belong to marginalized groups. They had scheduled a charity ride for December 5 in aid of the Children's Hospital in Siem Reap however, it was postponed due to the COVID-19 community transmissions recorded in Cambodia.

"As a nurse or a healthcare provider, I always make sure to follow the health protocols in avoiding COVID-19 infection. In the hospital, we strictly process the screening of patients or customers before they come inside. The number of patients coming to the hospital has decreased due to the fear of the virus, but still, we remain alert and vigilant," Kampoo noted.

She and her biker chums still have their usual weekend rides but they make sure to protect themselves by wearing masks and maintaining proper hygiene, always washing their hands diligently. They also monitor government announcements about the implementation of measures to curb the spread of the deadly COVID-19 and follow any restrictions announced.

During the years she has spent travelling inside and outside of Cambodia on her bike,

she says she still has many dreams in life yet to fulfill. One of her goals is that five years from now she will still be helping people with their healthcare needs and still finding the time to ride to more and more places on her bike.

"My dream is to travel around the world on my bike," says Kampoo with a twinkle in her eye. ■



Kampoo in her uniform as a nurse in Cambodia. Supplied

70th ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THAILAND & CAMBODIA

A Thai Royal Project for better education in a remote area



HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn with Prime Minister Hun Sen during their visit to Kampong Chheuteal Institute of Technology. Supplied

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In 2000, HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn of Thailand, during her state visit to Cambodia, went on a tour at Sambo Prey Kuk, a cultural and historical site once an old capital named Isanapura, located in Prasat Sambo district.

The Princess was warmly welcomed by the local villagers, and at the end of her visit, she wanted to give the local people a gift, which would benefit them in a long term. Eventually, she decided to give them a school, and that was how Kampong Chheuteal High School, and later Kampong Chheuteal Institute of Technology, was founded.

Built on a plot of land which was a former military barrack and filled with landmines left over by the civil war, the learning institute was inaugurated on May 1, 2001, with the ceremony presided over by Princess Sirindhorn herself.

In the two decades that follow, the school, running on the funding provided by Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, has been a central part of the young people's education in the remote area, located some 35 kilometres from the

provincial capital of Kampong Thom.

"Before our school was built, the highest level of education one could get in this area was junior high school or Grade 12," Mr Pech Seang, PHD, Director of the Kampong Chheuteal Institute of Technology said, adding that at that time, many families there could not afford to send

local youths – in addition to the existing high school and vocational training programmes, which currently have more than 1,000 students. Currently, over 200 students are studying in the institute's bachelor degree programme, majoring in electricity, agriculture and animal husbandry.

"In addition to funding

economy with our students and staff at its core," he says. "And there are no more landmines here."

In September this year, Princess Sirindhorn committed to providing another five years of educational development funding and higher education scholarships to Kampong Chheuteal Institute of Technology and Kampong Speu Institute of Technology, which the princess also founded in 2016. Seang adds that he, the staff, students and the people in the area owe a debt of gratitude to Princess Sirindhorn, who wants equal education opportunities for all as she believes that education is the best cure for poverty.

"Even during the border dispute between Cambodia and Thailand in 2008, the Princess still provided us with full funding and support," he says. "Her charitable act has changed our lives, and we will never forget this."

According to a statement by the Cambodian Embassy in Bangkok, since 2005, some 2,124 Cambodian civil servants and students have been offered scholarships to pursue higher education in Thailand. ■

WE SEND AROUND 20 TO 30 OF OUR STUDENTS AND STAFF TO STUDY IN THAILAND EVERY YEAR.

their children to high schools in the provincial capital, which means that many students had to drop out by Grade 9.

"When Kampong Chheuteal High School started providing general secondary education as well as vocational training in electricity, mechanics, agriculture and animal husbandry free of charge, families in the area and the surrounding areas started sending their children to study here," he adds.

In 2014, Kampong Chheuteal High School was upgraded to Kampong Chheuteal Institute of Technology in order to provide the opportunity for higher education to the

and technical support, Princess Sirindhorn has also provided scholarships for students and teachers/professors in our institute to study at universities in Thailand," Seang says.

"We send around 20 to 30 of our students and staff to study in Thailand every year." In the past twenty years, the institute has helped thousands of young people get their families out of abject poverty. Furthermore, it has also contributed to the local economy and development of the areas.

"In the past years, our institute has drawn more and more people to live and do business in this area, thus driving the



The front gate of Kampong Chheuteal Institute of Technology. Supplied



Students in their computer labs at Kampong Chheuteal Institute of Technology. Supplied



Students studying electricity at KCIT. Supplied

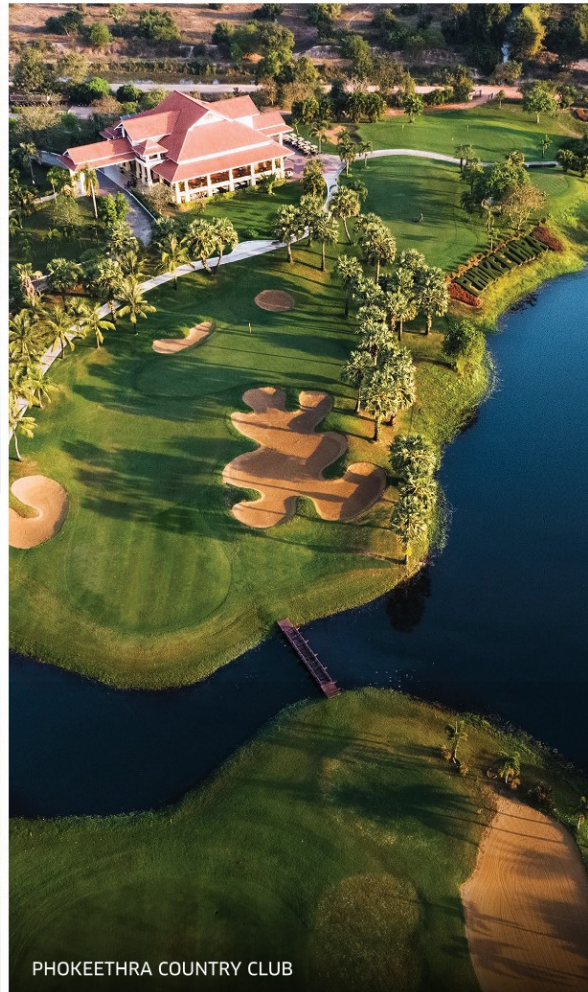


Congratulations

*for the 70th Anniversary of
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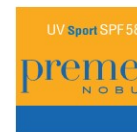
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ANGKOR WAT



Supachai Veerapuchong's spiritual investment mission in Cambodia

Khmer Times had a question and answer session with maverick Thai investor, Dr. Supachai Veerapuchong, whose investments in Cambodia range from luxury hotels and golf courses to pharmaceuticals and drinking water. We delved into his investments, his driving energy and belief in the country and on his investments. The following are excerpts from that interview.



Saplings of Bodhi Trees were planted in 5 Mekong countries during the second Dhamma Yatra. **Supplied**



Dr. Supachai Veerapuchong paying respect to His Holiness Samdech Tep Vong, Great Supreme Patriarch of the Mohanikaya Order of Cambodia. **Supplied**



Dr. Supachai Veerapuchong paying respect to the divine beings at Angkor Wat. **Supplied**

Q: What brought you to Cambodia?

Supachai: I first arrived in Cambodia in October 1991, when the Thai Government under General Chatchai Choonhavan declared the policy to "Change the Battlefield to Marketplace", to expand my father's Thai Nakorn Patana Company (producer and seller of medicine) to neighboring countries. Cambodia in 1991 was completely different from today. Phnom Penh had no water, electricity, telephones and not even a single private car. Cambodians were just starting to return to find work in Phnom Penh.

I remember fondly the first time Khunying Pankrua Yongchaiyudh (wife of then Army Commander-in-Chief General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh) introduced me to Samdech Techo Prime Minister and Samdech Kittiprithbandit Bun Rany Hun Sen. Khunying Pankrua asked Samdech Techo PM to kindly treat me as their family member. At that time, I had given them a promise that I would make investment in Cambodia to change the face of the country, by strictly adhering to good corporate governance and integrity. I also remember that it was Samdech Tea Banh who kindly gave me accommodation for three months.

Q: What was your first

business in Cambodia and how has it grown over the decades?

Supachai: My first business in Cambodia began in 1992, when the Ministry of Health gave approval to establish Thai Nakorn Patana Co. in Cambodia. That same year I also received permission from Samdech Tea Banh to rent a piece of '26 August' land on Sothea Boulevard along the Bassac River, which eventually became the Royal Phnom Penh Hotel to accommodate foreign investors and diplomats and to develop the hospitality business in Cambodia. In 2010, the hotel was rebuilt as the Sofitel Phnom Penh Phokeethra.

In 1996 I signed a contract to rent a 6-hectare piece of land adjacent to the road leading to Angkor Wat. In late 1999, Sofitel Angkor Phokeethra Golf and Spa Resort, with collaboration of Accor Group, was completed and inaugurated with Samdech Techo Prime Minister and Samdech Kittiprithbandit Bun Rany Hun Sen in attendance. At the inauguration, they suggested I open a country club too, and the Phokeethra Country Club was eventually opened in 2006.

In 2012 the Sofitel Phnom Penh Phokeethra was included in the golden list of Condé Nast and Travel & Leisure magazines, the top two world-leading travel magazines, and was listed in the top ten hotels in Southeast Asia.

The Sofitel Angkor Phokeethra Golf and Spa Resort was also listed in the top twenty best resorts in the Asia-Pacific. All credit goes to the staff members of both hotels who had been working tirelessly to achieve such high honour and recognition from foreign tourists, contributing to Cambodia's ability to offer world-standard hospitality service.

In the field of media, in 1995 my company received concession from the Ministry of National Defense to operate a TV broadcasting station, today known as Channel 5 Cambodia, a joint venture with Kantana Group in Thailand.

As for the food and beverages sector, we launched Lyon bottled drinking water in 2007 and now have a joint venture with Srinanaporn Group to produce snacks under the brand of SC Food Products. Furthermore, in cooperation with MPP Group from Thailand, we are building one of the world's largest ice factory with high production capability meeting all international standards.

Q: What has the journey been like in all aspects, from business, to challenges, to spiritual, to building business and personal relations to your diversified interests, from business to sports?

Supachai: My vision is to play a part in building trust

among the 5 Mekong Basin Countries (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam), in order to achieve our aspiration of creating an ASEAN Community with shared values and beliefs. Ever since I arrived in Cambodia on October 11, 1991, I dreamt that the Mekong basin countries will unite and work together for peace and stability under Buddhist guidelines.

Due to my experience as manager of a Football team in Thailand, I was invited by the Cambodian Ministry of National Defense to help manage the Cambodian Army Football Club. This was a great opportunity for me to give back to Cambodia and I was determined to manage the Cambodian Army FC using Buddhist virtues as a guiding light to elevate the players' minds.

I believe that physical and spiritual development must go hand in hand. Players should always be mindful of what is happening around them to be in control of everything and not allow emotions to dictate their performance. Similarly, the youth in Mekong countries can use their wisdom, mindfulness and concentration to achieve many things.

Having the opportunity to be close to Cambodian leaders, I discussed with H.E. Mr. Hun Manly, head of the Union of Youth Federations of Cambodia (UYFC), the importance of

educating the Cambodian youth to fully understand the basic teachings of Lord Buddha and develop a society that thinks and acts with virtue and integrity, being in control of their own emotions.

Q: What advice would you give other Thai entrepreneurs who wish to enter Cambodia for business and investments?

Supachai: One has to know the countries in which one works. Foreign entrepreneurs have to understand Cambodia's past and present. Cambodia is an open and welcoming society. I would advise them to do everything legally and with transparency. Being sincere and doing everything with good intention will form a safety net and good foundation for a sustainable business.

Entrepreneurs and investors should come to Cambodia to feel the pulse and dynamics. If their businesses face any unexpected problems, as businesses nearly always do, they should be there to solve problems without delay.

The population size in Cambodia makes it a good training ground for Thai entrepreneurs to test the market and add up their experience before exploring bigger markets. Sharing a long border and

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Dr. Supachai Veerapuchong and Lt Gen Hun Manith of the Ministry of National Defence during the second Dhamma Yatra. Supplied

similar ways of thinking has proven to be advantage for Thai investors.

Q: What would you say is your biggest achievement and also your most regrettable incident if there was one and if you were to look at it as a regret?

Supachai: I have no regrets investing in this country. Since I started my business in CLMV countries in 1991, I have spent almost 70% of my time in these countries and have visited almost every province in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. I have always conducted my businesses with righteousness and morality, regardless of political developments between these countries and Thailand.

During the Preah Vihear conflict, Samdech Techo Prime Minister explicitly asked Cambodians not to boycott Thai products or Thai investors, separating politics from business. Even when in conflict with other countries, the Cambodian leaders would stress that the businesspeople have nothing to do with the governments. This proves that Cambodian leaders give much importance to development and support foreign investors no matter where they are from.

Q: Over how many countries do your businesses extend? Are they all in the same line of business?

Supachai: Thai Nakorn

Patana Co. has been doing business in the Mekong countries for the past 30 years. Most of our investments are in Cambodia and Vietnam, and we have trading companies in Lao PDR and Myanmar to sell medicine from Thai Nakorn Patana Co. as well.

We are currently in the process of seeking license and approval to expand our medicine producing plant in Tuy Hoa province in Vietnam to an industrial zone in Ho Chi Minh City. It is expected that the construction of this new medicine producing plant could commence in early 2021. It will be one of the biggest medicine-producing plants in Vietnam.

Thai Nakorn Patana Co. has also been exporting its products to Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and the Philippines via other trading companies without establishing our own trading company in these countries.

Q: How have Thai-Cambodia business relations flourished over the years?

Supachai: Thai-Cambodian relations can be described as "tongue and teeth". As we live next to each other, there could be occasions when we may get entangled in each other's feelings that could lead to disputes and skirmishes.

At present, both countries enjoy the best state of bilateral relations. It would be ideal if the leaders, diplomats and armed forces of both countries

could build upon this excellent foundation bearing in mind that we are friends and relatives.

My dream is that civil servants from every agency from both countries work together hand-in-hand to achieve prosperity.

Q: What would be your legacy?

Supachai: In 1991 when I was ordained as a monk in India to seek merit for His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Great, my fellow monks and I founded the Bodhigaya 980 Club which later developed itself into Bodhigayaavijalaya 980 Institute in Kushinagar, India to bring the teachings of Lord Buddha back to Suvarnabhumi (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam). After that, I was invited by the Head of Dhammaduta in India and Nepal to lead the committee for the restoration of Wat Thai Buddha Gaya in India. Later, H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn graciously presided over the groundbreaking ceremony to construct Bodhigayaavijalaya 980 Institute at Wat Thai Buddha Gaya.

Around six years ago, a meeting of Thai Ambassadors and Consuls-General to the CLMV countries in Siem Reap under the topic of Buddhist Diplomacy led to the start of the Dhamma Yatra project in the five Mekong countries. The project is a Buddhist pilgrimage programme for monks to travel continuously to the five Mekong

countries with the support of each country's government and Buddhist clergy. It was the first time that Laos and Vietnam allowed for Buddhist events organised by Buddhist organisation from outside the country. I have organised Dhamma Yatra among the five Mekong countries twice already and look forward to organising a third one next year once the pandemic is over. As a Buddhist, I seek to apply Buddhist principles to my businesses, so that my businesses will bring stability to the people and not do any harm to damage the country. My dream is to use Buddhist diplomacy as a means to unite all Mekong countries. I consider myself lucky to have established friendships in every Mekong country and received blessings and cooperation from all the Supreme Patriarchs of the five Mekong countries in these project. I believe that Buddhist Diplomacy will create stability and prosperity in the Mekong region and bring about sustainable development.

Q: Kindly give us an insight into your spiritual journey.

Supachai: My life goal is to be a success in both worlds: a successful businessman in the material world and to accumulate virtue in the spiritual world for the long journey towards attaining enlightenment of nirvana when I cease to be stuck in the cycle of life and death.

From the first two Dhamma Yatras in the five Mekong countries, we performed a ceremony to pay respect to the divine beings at all levels that look after the human beings, including past monarchs that had reigned in the five Mekong countries with true beliefs in Buddhism as their guiding principles. I believe that the divine beings of the five Mekong countries also played their parts in the success of the first two Dhamma Yatras.

My dream of doing business in Cambodia is to see Cambodia return to its glory days like the time of Jayavarman VII under the leadership that embraces the four sublime states of mind which are loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity; a Cambodia

where everyone is prosperous, while strictly adhering to Buddhist principles. ■



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How young people can influence a good Cambodian-Thai relationship

In an exclusive interview with Khmer Times journalist Taing Rinith, prominent Cambodian historian Sambo Manara speaks on how young people in Cambodia and Thailand can improve the relationship between the two nations by learning from the lessons of what happened in the past.



Exchange programmes, according to Manara, are one of the methods to enhance mutual understanding between Cambodia and Thai youths. Supplied

Professor Sambo Manara, one of Cambodia's most prominent historians. KT

KT: *How do you describe the history of the relationship between Cambodia and Thailand?*

Manara: Like any two countries that share borders in the world, Cambodia and Thailand have what we call a "love-hate" relationship, characterised by both alliance and invasion throughout their ancient history. However, what we cannot argue is that the two countries are closely connected politically, socially, culturally and economically.

KT: *What are your findings about the recent development of the two nations' relationship, especially in the past few years?*

Manara: In recent years, Cambodia and Thailand have

seen a huge improvement in their relationship – never seen before in history. In addition to being Member States of ASEAN, the two countries have formed partnerships in almost all sectors, especially in economic development.

However, there is still some level of antagonism among their people which has been sparked by over-nationalism, which has already caused many problems in the past.

KT: *The youth makes up a majority of Cambodia's and Thailand's population alike. What do you think these young people can do in order to improve this relationship?*

Manara: In my own view, genuine and mutual respect and

understanding between the people of both nations should be cultivated and nurtured. In addition to efforts at the institutional and governmental levels to salvage the troubled relationship between the two countries, individuals, especially young people, will be the ones shouldering the countries' future.

Youths have crucial roles to play to promote respect and understanding. In order for them to be able to do that, they should stop dwelling on the historical antagonism; instead, they should use lessons from history to help them make informed and impartial judgments when dealing with issues concerning each other.

They also have to learn to embrace the similarities in their culture and traditions and

respect the differences between their nations. They should, moreover, focus on developing themselves by engaging in different forms of personal and professional development involving the two nations such as exchange programmes and relationship-building activities.

Meanwhile, studying each other's language can also help the two peoples enhance mutual respect and understanding, as when you study a language, you are not only learning words and grammar but also the context and culture in which the language originated.

KT: *How can the governments and politicians contribute to this process?*

Manara: The governments

must educate their young people for them to understand the value of peace and harmony between two countries, especially ones that share a border. Part of doing that is to promote studying history among young people while at the same time ensuring that the aims of the curriculum is to make them understand one another rather than feel the anger.

At the same time, politicians must not do anything to spark over-nationalism among young people, who still lack real-life experience. Adults and elders must bear in mind that young people are the ones who will carry the countries' destiny; therefore, they must do everything to prepare them for a shared peaceful and harmonised future. ■

70th ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THAILAND & CAMBODIA

Yosaya restaurant brings the true taste of Thailand to Cambodia



Yosaya Thai Food restaurant in Phnom Penh. KT/Chor Sokunthea



Tom Yum and Pad Thai - best sellers of Yosaya Thai Food Restaurant. KT/Chor Sokunthea



Tom Yum, best seller of Yosaya Thai Food restaurant. KT/Chor Sokunthea

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In the bustling streets of Phnom Penh, people are taken to Thailand by the spicy aroma of original Thai food served in Yosaya restaurant.

Wanapa Sumanus, one of the owners of Yosaya Thai Food, has been serving authentic Thai dishes to people in Cambodia for almost six years. A family business, the restaurant has two branches – on Street 105 and Street 432.

Sumanus proudly told Khmer Times that the secret for why people are loving their dishes is because of their home-made recipes. They import ingredients from Thailand in order to achieve the best results.

"We import our ingredients from Thailand. We don't use the ingredients here because they're different. We also use fresh vegetables everyday which we get from the local market here," said Sumanus.

She said that they do not like to stock too much in the restaurant for cooking, like the vegetables, because they want their customers to get the best

taste. She said she, her family and relatives have come to love Cambodia. Aside from being close to their homeland, they also find that it is easy to make connections in Cambodia and the language is easy to learn.

"Our language is similar to their language here. It only takes four months to learn," she added. She said that her local employees are happy to teach her to speak Khmer.

"When I learn a new word, I try to keep practicing it every day. When I talk to customers (in Khmer), they also converse with me. I now speak Khmer, Thai and English. I have learned a lot here. I can also answer questions in Khmer."

Her staff are all Cambodians except the chefs. They specifically chose a Thai chef to make sure that their food tastes 100 percent authentic. Right now, they have six chefs, three in each branch. According to Sumanus, it is a satisfying to hear customers say: "I feel like I'm in Thailand."

She also has foreign customers and most of them have been to Thailand. Although she changes some of her recipes like the level of spiciness,

customers still claim that the taste is similar. Some like a little spice while others request for the super-hot and spicy.

They have specific levels of spiciness. For Thai people, they normally use three or four chillies while for Khmer customers they only use one. Most of the other foreign customers (not Thai) also request for three to four chillies in their orders.

Sumanus said that chilli is part of her family's life. They use it a lot. She started to eat spicy food when she was five years old and now she normally consumes seven to ten chillies.

The most popular chili used in Thai food is prik kee noo suan. Then English translation is "mouse shit chili" because it is tiny and known as the spiciest chili in Thailand. Among the 100 Thai dishes in Yosaya restaurant, Tom Yum and Pad Thai are the best sellers.

Sumanus happily told Khmer Times that by next year, there will be more dishes for Khmer people.

"We live in Cambodia. We try some of the Khmer food. We adapt some to our style (of cooking) because we want to

cook our own signature style of food," she said.

She described Khmer's sauce as unique and they also wanted to mix and match it to their Thai cuisine to create a new dish.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the restaurant's supply chain. They get their fresh vegetables in the local market daily after closing for the night. Although the vegetables they get in Cambodia are of good quality, Sumanus says she still could taste the difference especially with the herbs. Herbs in Thailand like galangal are stronger compared to Cambodia. It is closely related to the common ginger.

The restaurant prefers importing their ingredients from Thailand including herbs and spices. However, border crossing is difficult right now because of COVID-19 so they alternatively use Khmer products. In times that the needed ingredients are not available in Cambodia, they have to tap to their transportation connection in Thailand to ferry the goods at an extra cost.

Sumanus and her family normally go back to Thailand

twice a year, during long holidays. But because of COVID-19, it has already been nine months since they last went home. When the pandemic hit Cambodia in April, they lost 80 percent of their sales. Now, they are able to slowly get back to normal but business is still 20 to 30 percent down.

"We tried making the chilli paste here by ourselves using local supplies in the market, but it is really hard to find the ingredients that match ours," Sumanus added.

Despite how COVID-19 has affected their business, she and the family are still standing strong in providing the authentic Thai cuisine in the capital of Cambodia. They also have learned to love not only the people but the country itself.

"What I like most in Cambodia is the lifestyle of the people because I am from Bangkok (Thailand). I have seen that everything is a rush there. Here, it is calm. Even though traffic jams are also a problem here, it is better compared to being stuck in the middle of the traffic in Bangkok," said Sumanus. ■



Sustainable and quality food production from farm to table

The agro-industrial and food industry sector are a potential business in Cambodia. Khmer Times reached out to C.P. Cambodia Co., Ltd., one of the leading agro-industry and food conglomerate, to share how they developed a successful company and further trade relations between Cambodia and Thailand.

KT: Please give us the history and background of CPF.

CP: CPF operates an agro-industrial and food business headquartered in Thailand, operating in 17 countries and exporting products to more than 30 countries. For CP Cambodia Co., Ltd., a subsidiary of CPF, it has been in business for almost 25 years, covering a wide range of industries such as animal feed production, animal husbandry, and food and processing production. In addition, we also do retail business namely FIVE STAR, STAR coffee, CP Fresh Mart, and CP Fresh Shop.

Our vision is to become "Kitchen of the World". We focus on the principle of sustainable development, adhering to the three benefits: the benefit of the nation, the benefit of the people and the company itself.

These principles are at the heart of sustainability, which promotes the growth of business and society at the same time and is an important foundation for the sustainable development of the nation and the world, both economically and socially, without compromising the environment. And that makes CP Cambodia a proud entity to this day.

KT: How would you describe the operations of C.P. Cambodia in brief?

CP: CP is the leading Agro-Industrial and Food Conglomerate business. We operate integrated agro-industrial and food business, including livestock and aquaculture such as swine, broiler, layer, and fish. The businesses are categorized into 3 categories, namely Feed, Farm and Food. The Company also operates retail and foods outlets.



KT: What are the main products and services of C.P. Cambodia? Are these products limited to local consumption or you also export to other countries?

CP: We provide a variety of products and services depending on types of businesses. For feed business, CP offers a good quality of animal feed (under the brand namely CP, HIGRO, HOG, and Safe Feed) for farmers, and also gives a consultancy for animal husbandry and veterinary services about performance and disease prevention.

For farming business, we provide the best breeders for farmer such as swine, broiler chicken, native chicken, layer chicken, and fish. CP offers the business in term of contracted farming and/or investor. Our team will advise about increasing performance and will be a market for farmers.

For food business, the company is committed to improve a health and well-being of consumer. We produce quality of food products under CP Brand and Super Chef.

Moreover, we offer business solution, such as FIVE STAR, STAR coffee, and CP Fresh Shop, for one who want to have their own business.

Currently, we focus on producing and supplying domestically to meet the demand of Cambodia consumption. For export, it will be our next priority.

KT: What makes C.P. Cambodia unique? What are its advantages over the competition?

CP: We aim to understand and solve a problem of customers and stakeholders. They are a key to success. With our technology and knowledge, we are able to offer the best solution for them with good satisfaction regarding to agriculture, animal husbandry, and consumer food products.

KT: What were the challenges that C.P. Cambodia faced early in its Cambodia operations? How did the company overcome them? Did the COVID-19 situation seriously affect the company?

CP: As for the situation, COVID-19 has had a profound impact on many sectors around the world physically, financially and psychologically. This situation is considered to be the worst crisis in history. For CP Cambodia, it was partially affected by the decline for consumers amid the COVID-19 outbreak.

We have established the management committee and done business continuity plan (BCP) for COVID-19. We have four key areas of concern for disease prevention which are: how to protect employees, how to sustain the operation, how to grow business in crisis, and how to communicate effectively. In addition, we also do a risk analysis to evaluate an impact and likelihood of each stakeholders. The reason is to ensure that all product in each process is safe. The consumer can trust in hygienic standard and food quality of CP products during this crisis situation.

KT: How does C.P. Cambodia

contribute to the development of the Kingdom?

CP: Over 25th years, CP Cambodia has shown great effort in contributing to develop an agriculture sector by buying domestic raw materials such as corn and casava. We offer careers for over 1,000 farmers in Cambodia. We provide great business opportunities for investors who are interested in improving agro-business. CP concerns about protecting and sustaining environment. In addition, we aim to transfer technology and knowledge with international standard in order to assist development in Cambodia.

KT: In addition to its business operations, C.P. Cambodia is also actively involved with the community where it operates. What CSR activities were undertaken by the company lately?

CP: There are three pillars for corporate social responsibility (CSR); food security, self-sufficiency society, and balance of nature.

Firstly, we would like Cambodian people to be able to access quality and hygienic food. Food for Lunch is one of our successful project. The company organized many activities for kids and communities such as blood donation, flood victims, sport competition, and government activation.

Secondly, CP aims to support and develop a sustainable community and society. With our "toilet for kids" project, we committed to build a toilet for school twice a year. Furthermore, we have educated children about sanitation to improve health and well-being.

Lastly, it is not only for business, but we are also concerned about the environmental friendliness. We create a project, called "We Grow Planting the Future". The purpose of this project is to reduce an impact of global warming, and increase green space in Cambodia. We initially implement this project in the company's areas around factories and farms. A total of 6,000 trees have been planted, including cypress, Chankiri or French tamarind and coconut trees.

We believe that a better life starts from good quality food. Think about food, think about CP. ■





Leading Agro-Industrial and Food Conglomerate

CPF operates integrated agro-industrial and food business, including livestock and aquaculture such as swine, broiler, layer, and fish. The businesses are categorized into 3 categories, namely Feed, Farm and Food. The Company also operates retail and foods outlets.



Product

Business



ក្រុមហ៊ុន ស៊ី.ភី. ខេមបូឌា បំប៉ន

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The fight against COVID-19: no one is safe, until everyone is safe

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FROM a country which was once characterized by poor health indicators and a very weak health infrastructure, especially at the local level, Thailand achieved Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in 2002 with its healthcare characterized by its accessibility. The country's public health capacity has allowed Thailand to successfully deal with a number of notable challenges during the past two decades, including SARS, MERS, Avian Flu, and other outbreaks.

Thailand's public health system was put to test again in 2020 when COVID-19 surfaced and the first cases were detected in Thailand in January, as it is a popular destination among Chinese tourists, including direct arrivals from Wuhan. But Thailand recorded fewer than 3,600 infections, 59 deaths, and just one locally transmitted case over the first 200 days. This is the outcome of successive Thai government's policies which have prioritized healthcare: subsidizing the healthcare system, funding the education in the field, and also granting awards of recognition to healthcare workers. But furthermore, it is also the synergy among Thais that

let public health authorities take the lead in the fight against COVID-19.

As WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said during the World Health Assembly on 13 November 2020: 'Thailand is an excellent example that with a whole-of-government, whole-of-society, comprehensive approach, this virus can be contained – even without a vaccine.' Since June 15, the Thai government has started to ease the measures to control the spread of COVID-19. Shopping Malls can once again open with correct measures in place. Creative technology is employed to facilitate keeping track of people's whereabouts and ensure that in case of new infection, contact tracing will be easier. Individuals are encouraged to follow health protocols.

The Joint Intra-Action Review (IAR), which is a review on how health system responded to COVID-19, highlighted that the Kingdom's strong leadership that responds to scientific evidence, strong public health system, the country's previous experience with other outbreaks, and a strong collaboration with the academic and private sectors are the factors that have allowed Thailand to successfully control



Visitors line up to enter the Grand Palace in Bangkok on June 7, 2020, as it reopened for visitors following restrictions to halt the spread of the COVID-19 novel coronavirus. AFP/Mladen Antonov

COVID-19 so far. However, as the spread of COVID-19 is a global concern, cooperation at the regional and international levels is key to tackle the pandemic. The notion that "no one is safe, until everyone is safe" cannot be disputed. That is why the Thai government has actively engaged in supporting the fight against COVID-19, especially of its neighbors, and so does the Cambodian government.

Sharing a similar view that public health security is a top priority and, indeed, a common responsibility at this time, the top leadership in Thailand and Cambodia, while implementing strict health measures domestically, have also

extended bilateral assistance in various forms to countries in the region. Financial contribution was made by the Thai government to neighboring countries, including to Cambodia, earlier this year and the Thai community in Cambodia has donated in cash and in kind to partake in the Cambodian government's efforts to combat COVID-19. On its part, the Cambodian government has recently donated face masks and other medical supplies to Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Timor-Leste.

When it comes to cooperation at the regional level, Thailand has proposed to establish a "COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund" and has

offered 10,000 RT-PCR test kits to each ASEAN Member States. These test kits are locally produced in Thailand through the cooperation between the Thai government, the private sector and universities. The test kits have arrived in Cambodia at the beginning of December 2020, in time to give a helping hand to the current situation. Although the incredible success in vaccine development has offered us a light at the end of the tunnel, it is really by working together and reinforcing each other's capacity, like what Thailand and Cambodia did, that we will be able to keep our peoples safe throughout this journey. ■



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Six months at Chulalongkorn: The story of a Cambodian exchange student

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In January this year, Oeung Hangbou, a junior at the Department of Media and Communication (DMC), Royal University of Phnom Penh, got off a plane in Bangkok, Thailand, with his heart full of excitement.

He had visited Thailand once before during a holiday, but now he was going to study at the prestigious Chulalongkorn University as an exchange student. He planned to get the most out of it in the next six months.

"Every year, Chulalongkorn University provides an exchange programme scholarship to DMC," Hangbou, 21, told Khmer Times about the public university renowned for its autonomous research.

"When it was announced that I was to be one of the recipients in November 2018, I was very excited. It is my dream to

experience studying in a foreign nation," he said.

Hangbou was surprised by the size of the university campus, which was originally founded in 1899 during King Chulalongkorn's reign as a school for training royal pages and civil servants at the Grand Palace of Thailand.

"Chulalongkorn is so much bigger than my university in Phnom Penh, with more than 10 faculties and a research centre," he said.

The second thing that impressed Hangbou was the

curricula, especially the level of freedom which students have regarding their education.

"At Chulalongkorn, students can choose the subjects which allows me to study my favourite subjects such as filmmaking and so on," Hangbou said. "A wide range of facilities such as studios on the massive campus also helps us learn better and improve our skills."

Despite not speaking Thai, Hangbou could attend lectures because he was in the international programme, which means that the classes are conducted in English. At the same time, he also befriended Thai students as well as students from other countries, which allows them to learn about their countries and culture, something which he describes as a priceless experience.

Meanwhile, he also got the chance to share the insights about Cambodia and its cultures with them.

"During my conversations with Thai classmates, I found



Hangbou with his classmates at Chulalongkorn. Supplied

they were surprised when I told them about some part of Cambodian culture," Hangbou said. "I, myself, was also surprised by this given that our countries are neighbours and share so many similarities."

"It was at that time that I realised there are so many things that we have to learn from one another," he said.

The semester which Hangbou spent at Chulalongkorn University also trained him to be more independent and communicative and he was able to learn some Thai.

Living in a dormitory near the campus, he acquired an important lesson of money management, as he was dealing with his scholarship allowance.

Eating was not difficult since Thai food is very similar to that

from his home country. Yet, the most memorable thing was the time he spent with his multinational friends there.

"When the pandemic struck in March, all classes were moved online, and I was spending most of my time with [friends] in my dorm room," he said. "My friends were great moral support for me during this difficult time."

After his return to Cambodia in July, Hangbou has been keeping in touch with those people, who have given him one of the best times in his life.

"I'm very thankful to Chulalongkorn University for giving me this opportunity," Hangbou said. "If I have this opportunity again, I want to pursue my studies or work in Thailand." ■



Oeung Hangbou at Chulalongkorn University earlier this year. Supplied



Hangbou with his classmates at Chulalongkorn. Supplied



EXIM Thailand Celebrates 70th Years of Thailand-Cambodia Diplomatic Relations

As Thailand and Cambodia marked 70th anniversary of diplomatic ties, **EXIM Thailand's Representative Office in Phnom Penh**, established in 2019, strengthens its role in benefiting Thai and Cambodian entrepreneurs, particularly SMEs, leverage on ample business opportunities in Cambodia.

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