

Cambodia independence day

Kingdom's growth built on peace, stability

Hor Monirath
AMBASSADOR OF THE KINGDOM
OF CAMBODIA

On Nov. 9, the Kingdom of Cambodia will celebrate the 56th anniversary of its independence from France.

On this auspicious occasion, I have the honor to convey the warmest greetings of His Majesty Samdech Preah Boromneat Norodom Sihamoni, king of Cambodia, Samdech Akka Moha Sena



Padei Techo Hun Sen, prime minister of Cambodia, and the people of Cambodia to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama and the people of Japan.

Taking this opportunity, I am also very pleased to extend my congratulations to the readers of The Japan Times.

After gaining independence from France on Nov. 9, 1953, under the wise leadership of His Majesty The King-Father Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk, the Cambodian people enjoyed peace and stability, and built up the country on

the basis of the international recognition of its independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and adherence to a neutral policy. Unfortunately, due to the impact of the Cold War, Cambodia descended into civil war, which began in 1970 and lasted nearly three decades. The war destroyed almost the whole of the country's economic and social infrastructure, including the human resources of the country, and took millions of Cambodian lives during the genocidal regime of the Khmer Rouge.

The Cambodian people were saved Jan. 7, 1979, by the Kampuchean United Front for National Salvation (KUFNS), whose leaders belong to the current government led by the Cambodian People's Party.

Until the Paris Peace Agreement was concluded in 1991, Cambodia was isolated and under an economic embargo that prevented the country from receiving funding from international financial institutions. The United Nations and the West were not only silent on the Khmer Rouge genocide but also decided to recognize them in the U.N. The decision to maintain a seat for the Khmer Rouge at



Prime Minister Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen

the U.N. led to deeper and unforgettable suffering for the Cambodian people.

Peace and stability

Due to the "win-win policy" of the Royal Government of Cambodia, the long civil war was ended after 1998 by Khmers themselves. All political and military organizations of the Khmer Rouge were eliminated, and integrated into the government. Despite the end of the civil war, the Cambodian government had to face a new war, the "war against poverty."

In order to achieve its ambitious goals, the government has set poverty reduction and sustainable economic development as the top priority policy for the sake of long-lasting peace, stability and prosperity. Within the last 10 years of peace and stability under the wise leadership of Prime Minister Hun Sen, the country is being transformed from a planning economy to a free market one and has undergone a steady restructuring that has brought significant change to the kingdom.

Cambodia's economic development has been moving well, with average growth of 9.4 percent during the last decade. In particular, from 2004 to 2007, despite facing some

unseen external factors such as a surge in oil prices and increase in the cost of raw materials, Cambodia achieved average economic growth of 11.1 percent per annum. This miracle growth has never been seen before and is well beyond the expectations of international economic institutions. GDP per capita income jumped from \$247 in 1994 to \$716 in 2008. The economic performance during these years underscored the increasing resiliency of the economy and showed that it was not accidental but reflected the underlying strength of the country's economic policy.

The government of Prime Minister Hun Sen has made impressive inroads in poverty reduction, from 45 percent in 1994 to approximately 30 percent in 2008, in line with the original plan of reducing poverty by 1 percent annually.

Taking this opportunity, on behalf of the government and people of Cambodia, I wish to express my heartfelt appreciation and deep gratitude to the government and great people of Japan for the continued assistance extended to Cambodia since 1991 through its grant aid and ODA programs. This assistance has contributed significantly to the reconstruction and development of Cambodia, particularly the country's remarkable economic growth over the last decade.

Enduring friendship

On this occasion, I am very pleased to note that last year Cambodia and Japan marked the 55th anniversary of their diplomatic relations, which were established officially Jan. 9, 1953. Nevertheless, relations between the two countries were suspended during the Cold War period from 1975 until 1992.

Japan has played an essential role in attempting to bring peace, reconstruction and socioeconomic progress to Cam-



Apsara Dance: Dance has been a part of traditional Khmer culture for more than a millennium. KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA MINISTRY OF TOURISM



National icon: Angkor Wat Temple has become a symbol of Cambodia, appearing on the country's flag, and it is the kingdom's prime tourist attraction. CAMBODIAN EMBASSY



World Heritage site: A Cambodian flag flutters over Preah Vihear Temple on the Cambodia-Thai border in Cambodia, about 245 km north of Phnom Penh. CAMBODIAN EMBASSY



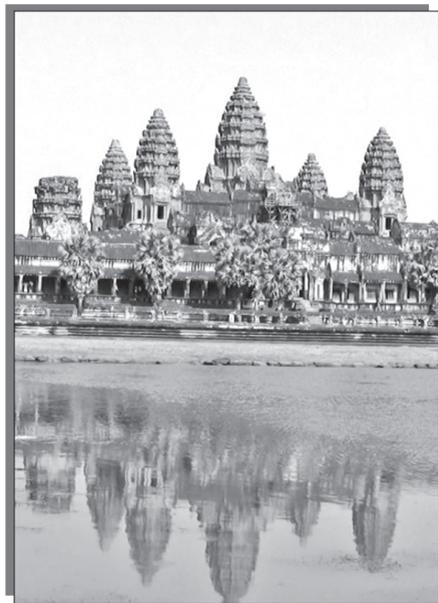
Set in stone: One of the many faces that decorate Bayon, a 12th-century Khmer temple at Angkor. KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA MINISTRY OF TOURISM

bodia. Following the Paris Peace Agreement in 1991, the UNTAC led by Japan monitored the first-ever general election in Cambodia in 1993, leading to the restoration of the constitutional monarchy and a multiparty democratic regime.

Ranking as the biggest ODA donor, Japan has provided substantial financial and technical assistance every year to Cambodia, aimed at rehabilitating and rebuilding the country's physical infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, roads, bridges, ports, power

supply systems and water-treatment facilities, etc. Japan has also continued providing every year scholarships to, and conducting capacity-building programs for Cambodian civil servants and students aiming to contribute to

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On the occasion of the Independence Day of the Kingdom of Cambodia on Nov. 9, the Honorary Consulate of the Kingdom of Cambodia in Fukuoka and its Honorary Consul Dr. Haruhisa Handa would like to extend our warmest wishes to His Majesty King-Father Norodom Sihanouk on his 87th birthday, His Majesty Samdech Preah Boromneat Norodom Sihamoni, King of Cambodia, Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Decho Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Cambodia, and the people of Cambodia.

We would also like to extend our most heartfelt welcome and sincere congratulations to Prime Minister Samdech Decho Hun Sen and his delegation to the Japan-Mekong Summit on Nov. 6-7, 2009, in Tokyo.

The Honorary Consulate of the Kingdom of Cambodia in Fukuoka, after completing its first year, is honored to have developed the following activities.

- ❖ Visa issuance
- ❖ Promotion of Japanese tourism according to the agreement between the Royal Government of Cambodia and the Honorary Consulate of the Kingdom of Cambodia in Fukuoka
- ❖ Organizing cultural events in Fukuoka to showcase Cambodian arts and culture
- ❖ Introduction of Cambodia to the young people in the Kyushu and Okinawa regions to promote their interest in building bridges between Japan and Cambodia



Haruhisa Handa
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Peace, stability

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human resources development in Cambodia.

I am also encouraged to note the economic and trade relations between our two countries have developed steadily. The governments of Cambodia and Japan signed the Agreement for the Liberalization, Promotion and Protection of Investment in June 2007, which aims to promote investment and strengthen economic relations between our two countries. The signing of this agreement marked the beginning of a new phase of strong ties, and the mutual conviction that both countries will endeavor to further strengthen our bilateral relationship, and address regional and global challenges together.

Under the agreement, the two countries held the first Cambodia-Japan Joint Committee Meeting on Aug. 11 this year in Phnom Penh, where both parties confirmed that they will continue to work closely to further facilitate the implementation and operation of the agreement for the purpose of promoting Japanese investment to Cambodia as well as Cambodian investment to Japan.

Although only ranked seventh among leading investor countries, with \$81.89 million in 2008, Japanese investment in Cambodia is increasing. A number of leading companies from Japan are investing in Cambodia, including Mitsubishi Corp., JOGMEC, Toyota Motor Corp., Mitsui Oil Exploration Co., Idemitsu Oil & Gas Development Co., Ajinomoto Co. and Maruhan Corp., etc. I, therefore, strongly recommend and welcome the Japanese business community to invest more in the kingdom and to look to this country as a major platform for exports to other countries.

In terms of foreign tourist arrivals, Cambodia attracted about 2.12 million visitors in 2008 alone, of which more than 160,000 came from Japan, ranking third among the leading numbers of foreign tourists to Cambodia. The visits have contributed enormously to strengthening the mutual understanding and friendship between our two nations and peoples.

On regional and subregional cooperation fronts, Cambodia

has benefited remarkably from Japan's active engagement in the frameworks of the ASEAN-Japan Dialogue Partnership, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), East Asia Summit (EAS), Mekong River Commission (MRC), Greater Mekong Subregion Cooperation (GMS), Cambodia-Laos-Vietnam Development Triangle and the newly established Japan-Mekong Cooperation.

In light of the above, I am proud to note that under the Japan-Mekong Region Partnership Program announced by the Japanese government in 2007, the first Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held in January 2008 in Tokyo. The ministers decided to celebrate 2009 as "Mekong-Japan Exchange Year." Several programs have been conducted this year in Japan and the Mekong countries, such as political dialogues, economic events, cultural exchanges, promotion of tourism and youth exchanges, etc.

The Mekong countries and Japan recently held their second Japan-Mekong Foreign Ministers' Meeting, hosted by Cambodia on Oct. 2-3 in Siem Reap, where the ministers held in-depth discussions on various issues of common interest, including the progress and the future direction of cooperation, in the spirit of friendship and mutual understanding to further promote cooperation for the sake of peace, development, and prosperity in the Mekong region. In this regard, the ministers of the Mekong region countries appreciated Japan's commitment to consider the region as a "priority area" in Japan's new initiatives.

In a speedy movement of mutual trust and cooperation, the five Mekong countries and Japan agreed to hold the first-ever Japan-Mekong summit in Tokyo on Nov. 6-7, which is being attended by Prime Minister Hun Sen. This summit demonstrates the strong conviction and political commitment of the leaders of the Mekong countries and Japan to develop, expand and strengthen the Mekong-Japan partnership and cooperation to the highest level.

In closing, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to The Japan Times for giving me this opportunity to address its many readers.



Cultural legacy: Phnom Penh, the capital and largest city in Cambodia, used to be called the "Pearl of Asia," and is famous for its traditional Khmer and French influenced architecture. KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA MINISTRY OF TOURISM



TO GREET
THE NEXT 100 YEARS

Congratulations
to His Majesty King-Father
NORODOM SIHANOUK
on His 87th Birthday
and to the People of the
Kingdom of Cambodia
on the 56th Anniversary of
Their Independence Day

A taste of the future.

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