



KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA

Nation Religion King

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

**COMMENTS ON ELECTIONS
ON 27 JULY 2003**

ISSUED BY INFORMATION DEPARTMENT

ADDRESS: N° 161, Preah Sisowath Quay, Phnom Penh - Kingdom of Cambodia

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- India: Cambodian Election Good and Credible
- Japan: Voters Generally Expressed Their Will Freely
- Francophonie: Election Process Meets International Standards
- EU: Cambodian Election Well Conducted
- Vietnam: Cambodian Election Free and Fair
- ANFREL: Cambodian Election Generally Peaceful with Real Improvements
- US-Based Fund for Reconciliation and Development: Ballot Confidentiality Ensured
- US: Cambodian Election In Generally Ordered Fashion
- Russia: Cambodian Election Without Any Serious Violations
- France: We Did Not See Any Irregularities
- Laos: Voting and Vote Counting Transparent and Fair
- Press Review

India: Cambodian Election Good and Credible

In a press release issued on 28 July 2003 by the Embassy of India in Phnom Penh, the Indian Election Observer Team hailed the Cambodian Election as good and credible.

Following are the excerpts from the press release:

“ The Observers noted that **the overall state of preparedness for the holding of the elections appeared to be satisfactory...**

“At the election centres visited by the team, it was found that **the polling was being held in a peaceful manner...**

“The poll personnel were handling the whole process in a confident and competent manner. There was a prominent presence of representatives of the major political parties, international observers, NGOs, national and international media at quite a few of the polling booths visited by the team. The enthusiasm of the electorate was apparent and indicative of their faith in the democratic process.

“The team of Observers visited number of counting centers today in Phnom Penh and found that **the counting of vote was in progress in a smooth, systematic and peaceful manner.** Here also, the team found considerable presence of the representatives of the political parties, international and national observers, NGOs and the media.

“The presence of the international observers and NGOs for a long period prior to the poll to assess the prevailing environment in the country was encouraging. Free access appears to have been provided to all those interested in observing the significant event of National Elections in the country.

“While it is difficult to make a decisive comment at this stage, ... the team of Observers, as of now, are of the view that, **on the whole, it has been a good and credible election, and the democratic process appears to be gaining strength in Cambodia.**”

Japan: Voters Generally Expressed Their Will Freely

The Japanese government 26-member Election Observation Mission headed by H.E. Mr. Yukio IMAGAWA, former Ambassador of Japan to the Kingdom of Cambodia praised the Cambodian polls and called on all political parties to pay the highest respect to the official result of the election.

Following are the excerpts from a Statement on the 2003 National Assembly Election of the Kingdom of Cambodia issued by the Mission on 29 July 2003:

“The Japanese Mission welcomes the well administered election process, which was conducted entirely by the Cambodian people. The mission members witnessed no serious violent activities, intimidation or irregularities that may undermine the overall credibility of the election in the period and areas, which they covered. The mission members also had interviews with a wide range of people (electoral officials, local authorities, political party activists, members of NGOs, voters and common people). The majority of those people share their feelings that the **general atmosphere of the election was much better than the previous ones and that the voters generally expressed their will freely**. The Mission believes that the 2003 National Assembly Election has paved the way for further democratic advancement in the Kingdom of Cambodia.

“The Mission expresses concerns on the reports of intimidation and violent activities collected by national and international organizations including the explosion in Phnom Penh on the Election Day. **Members of the Japanese Mission inquired the people concerned on concrete cases of intimidation and violence but have so far found very few serious cases**. It is highly expected that the Cambodian authorities, for the justice and credibility of Cambodia, continue its on-going investigation and release the findings soon.

“The Japanese Mission sincerely hopes that all political parties and the people of Cambodia will pay the highest respect to the official result of the election and that the allocation of seats in the National Assembly will be completed without delay. Furthermore, the Mission expects the Government of Cambodia to do its utmost efforts in maintaining a peaceful environment in the post-election period.

“The newly elected National Assembly will play a pivotal role for the future of the country. The Japan Election Observation Mission sincerely hopes that the new National Assembly members will grasp the opportunity and responsibility for social, economic and democratic development of Cambodia.”

Francophonie: Election Process Meets International Standards

A delegation representing 56 Francophone states said Wednesday (30 July 2003) that the election was handled in such a transparent and rigorous way that **the election results can only be called true and acceptable**, reported The Cambodia Daily of 1 August 2003

Not only did the process meet international standards, but also it was handled in a serious and meticulous manner “that one would like to see everywhere,” said French Senator Laurent Beteille, head of the delegation from **the International Organization of Francophone Countries**, which has monitored about 60 elections around the world in the last decade, said the report.

As for the Funcinpec and Sam Rainsy Party rejecting the results, “this is absolutely normal in the democratic process,” said Dheeraj Seetulsingh, president of the National Human Rights Commission in Mauritius and a delegate, continued the report.

People did not show any sign of voting under pressure, said Beteille. One reason could be that vote confidentiality was enforced at the polls, he said.

EU: Cambodian Elections Well Conducted

The European Union Election Observation Mission joined other local and foreign observers in praising the Cambodian election process as well conducted.

The Mission, through a Press Statement issued in Phnom Penh on 30 July 2003, said:

“The Election process so far has largely been well conducted. The overall pattern on Election Day itself was of a smooth process with voters participating peacefully. Good technical preparations overcame the challenges posed by the adverse weather. **A few minor irregularities were observed.**

“Compared with previous elections the atmosphere has been less tense and there have been fewer violent incidents, ...

“During the campaign, access of all political parties to the state media was a significant improvement, ...

“The transparency of the election process was enhanced by the presence of party agents and national observers in polling stations throughout the country. This could be further improved by a decision to display the results of each individual counting station immediately after the count.”

Vietnam: Cambodian Election Free and Fair

“The Team recognized and hailed the great efforts made by the Royal Government, the National Election Committee and the people of Cambodia during the election process and observed that **the election had been conducted in a peaceful, free and fair manner and**

without violence”, said the Vietnam Observer Team in its Press Release issued in Phnom Penh on 29 July 2003.

“ **The election reflected the aspiration and determination of the Cambodian People,**” continued the Press Release.

“It is confident that the successful conclusion of the election will facilitate the Cambodian people in their continued efforts for peace, stability and development of the country, thus contributing to stability and development in the region and in the world,” concluded the Press Release.

ANFREL: Cambodian Election Generally Peaceful with Real Improvements

In its “Polling and Counting Days Assessment” issued in Phnom Penh on 30 July 2003, the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) said:

“Their observation indicates that **the election was generally peaceful, and real improvements were made over previous elections in the country.**

“**ANFREL reiterates our admiration for the determination** of the millions of Cambodians who came forward to exercise their civil rights at the National Assembly elections. We are **especially pleased with the generally peaceful atmosphere.** We also **appreciate the work of the election officials who supported the proper conduct of the electoral process.** Importantly, this election witnessed an intense and increased level of campaigning and political activity in all provinces. Voters’ knowledge of the election process and their political awareness have generally increased, notably among women.”

To monitor the 2003 Cambodian National Assembly Elections, ANFREL deployed 65 international observers to 20 provinces of Cambodia before and during polling and counting.

US-Based Fund for Reconciliation and Development: Ballot Confidentiality Ensured

'Vote confidentiality was enforced at the polls' was a conclusion of the delegation from the US-based Fund for Reconciliation and Development, which included 36 volunteer observers from Australia, Canada, Indonesia, Switzerland and the US, reported The Cambodia Daily of 1 August 2003.

"Painstaking efforts [were taken] to ensure the secrecy of the ballot," said **Gordon Longmuir**, head of the delegation who served as Canadian ambassador to Cambodia from 1995 through 1999.

The tension that prevailed during the 1998 election was gone, Longmuir said. This time, **the atmosphere was relaxed at the polling stations-** even party representatives talked to each other, he said.

US: Cambodian Election In Generally Ordered Fashion

US State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said on 28 July 2003 that the Cambodian election **" was carried out in a generally ordered fashion."**

" So far, the election mechanics have gone smoothly. Ballot counting is underway," he said.

"The election campaign featured less political violence and greater opposition access to the media than in previous election. Technical problems with the voter registration list prevented some from voting," said Mr. Boucher.

"So, by and large, things went smoothly. The overall conduct of the elections was marked by less violence and more access to the media than in previous times, but there were

some election irregularities reported and we would expect those to be looked into and followed up by the National Election Commission,” concluded Mr. Boucher.

Russia: Cambodian Election Without Any Serious Violations

“By an estimate of the overwhelming majority of international observers, the general elections in Cambodia passed actively, in a calm atmosphere and without any serious violations,” said the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Phnom Penh in its Press Release issued on 29 July 2003.

“It is expected that the political parties that won in the elections will within a constitutionally established time form a new composition of the royal government which will continue work on the construction of civil society and the development of the country’s economy,” continued the Press Release.

France: We Did Not See Any Irregularities

French parliamentarians acting as election monitors **praised the polls saying they were impressive and rigorous** but added they did not have enough information yet to declare them free and fair.

" **We did not see any irregularities,** " said Paulette Guinchard- Kunstler. " They were impressive by the number of women voting and by how rigorous the process was."

Laos: Voting and Vote Counting Transparent and Fair

The team “recognized the **efforts made by the Royal Government of Cambodia, the National Election Committee and the Cambodian people in organizing the election process in a safe, fair and non-violence atmosphere,**” said a report made on 30 July 2003 by Lao observer team.

“**The voting was well proceeded, and vote counting also showed transparency and fairness,**” said the report.

The team called on all political parties to respect the result of the election.

“The election’s success will maintain and strengthen peace, stability, democracy and the development of the country, thus contributing to stability and development in the region and the world as a whole,” concluded the report.

Press Review

- Swissinfo (28/07/03):

- **The vote was qualified by international observers as generally positive** despite a grenade blast outside the headquarters of a party in the capital, Phnom Penh, and scattered reports of irregularities.

-AP (27/07/03):

- Prime Minister Hun Sen’s Party was expected to retain its 24-year hold on power in the elections, which **were generally peacefully** except for a small grenade explosion near the Royal Palace.

-AP (28/07/03):

- **International monitors gave a tentative thumbs-up for the voting process** despite the grenade blast in front of the Funcinpec Party office in downtown Phnom Penh that slightly injured one person.
- **International and local observers gave their tentative approval to Cambodia's most peaceful general elections ever** yesterday, saying they seemed to have gone well despite irregularities at some polling stations.

-AP (01/08/03):

- A delegation of EU poll monitors—the largest group of foreign observers—said Wednesday **the elections were generally “the freest and the most democratic” ever in the country.**
- Other independent observers also said **the elections were freer than previous ones.**

- AP (02/08/03):

- **Independent election observers generally rated the polling process acceptable.**

-Australia's national daily newspaper (28/07/03):

- Early vote counting in Cambodia's national elections tonight indicated Prime Minister Hun Sen would retain the leadership after **polls hailed as the most peaceful and orderly in the nation's history.**

-ABC Radio Australia News (28/07/03):

- **Election monitors and officials say Cambodia's national election on Sunday was peaceful and held in a business-like fashion.**
- Singapore's ambassador to Cambodia, Verghese Mathews told the AFP

news agency that for many Cambodians, these have been **the best elections yet.**

- ABC Radio Australia News (28/07/03):

- Cambodians went to the polls on Sunday, voting at 13, 000 polling booths around the country in what is being held by many as **the most peaceful election yet.**

- AFP (28/07/03):

- Ballot counting in Cambodia's national elections began Monday following **polls hailed by many as the most peaceful and orderly yet** as Prime Minister Hun Sen urged Cambodians to accept the results.

-Inter Press Service (29/07/03):

- Despite being one of Southeast Asia's poorest countries, **Cambodia succeeded this week in pulling off a general election** that could easily shame most of its regional neighbors, where democracy is either absent or skin deep.
- It was, furthermore, a **political accomplishment endorsed by the independent poll observers** involved at Sunday's election. **Reports trickling in from these independent groups point to the atmosphere on the Jul. 28 polling day being "free and fair."**

-Reuters (29/07/03 and 01/08/03):

- **The United States and other observers have expressed overall satisfaction with the conduct of Sunday's poll.**
- **Observer groups delivered broadly positive verdicts on the poll.**
- **International observers have given the election a general thumbs-up.**
