



AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY PHNOM PENH

MEDIA RELEASE

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AUSTRALIA CELEBRATES AUSTRALIA DAY AND 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN CAMBODIA AND AUSTRALIA

Last night, Australian Ambassador Pablo Kang welcomed His Excellency Ly Thuch, Senior Minister and First Vice President of the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority, friends and partners from government, the diplomatic corps, civil society and the private sector to an Australia Day celebration at his official residence. The event was well attended, including representation by eight Cambodian Government ministers.

Australia Day is the official national day of Australia which is celebrated annually on the 26th of January. Australia Day is a day to think about what it means to be Australian, to celebrate contemporary Australia and to acknowledge our history. It is an opportunity to reflect, respect and connect with all Australians.

Australia's story began over 60,000 years ago with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Annual celebrations now reflect our diverse inclusive society and are marked by community and family events, reflections on Australian history, official community awards and citizenship ceremonies welcoming new members from other countries to the Australian community.

This year, as Cambodia and Australia commemorate 70 years of bilateral relations, Australia Day is also an opportunity to reflect on Australia's relationship with Cambodia. Over 66,000 Australians of Cambodian descent now make a strong contribution to Australia's vibrant multi-cultural democracy. Ambassador Kang acknowledged their contribution as he officially launched our 70th Anniversary logo.

"At the start of our ties, as now, people links between Cambodians and Australians underpinned our relationship. We have been working with Cambodia to strengthen our relations, improve sustainable growth, and maintain stability and democracy" said Ambassador Kang.

Ambassador Kang also said Cambodia and Australia should celebrate our strong education and agricultural ties. He said that the first Cambodian scholarship students came to Australia in the 1950s under the Colombo Plan. Since 1994, Australia has offered over 945 Australia

Award scholarships to Cambodian students to study in Australia, and an estimated 21,800 Cambodians have enrolled in some form of study in Australia. Ambassador Kang also noted that the Australian Centre for Education, established in Phnom Penh in 1993, has also played a prominent role providing high-level English language training for Cambodians.

Ambassador Kang also said that Australia helped bring peace to Cambodia by playing a significant role in the 1991 Paris Peace Agreements and by contributing to the United National Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). He noted the role of Australian Lieutenant General John Sanderson, Force Commander of the 16,000 strong international military component of UNTAC, and the contribution of over 1,200 Australian troops that served with UNTAC.

Australia has also played a long-term role supporting Cambodia's agriculture sector, including by helping to establish the Cambodian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) and through subsequent agriculture programs which helped rehabilitate Cambodia's irrigation system and agricultural production. Ambassador Kang also thanked the Australian Chamber of Commerce in Cambodia, which links Cambodians and Australians in a range of sectors including finance, education, tourism, and agriculture.

Ambassador Kang also said that Australia is a long-term supporter of Cambodia's health system, including during the pandemic. Australia has committed \$35.7 million to assist with access to vaccines and support for the national vaccine roll-out in Cambodia. Our donation of 2.35 million doses of Pfizer-BioNtech which arrived last year is currently being rolled out to help protect Cambodians against the virus. We are also working with UNICEF, WHO and the Ministry of Health to share accurate information about COVID-19 and vaccines across the country, procure syringes, provide technical advice and ensure people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups are included in the vaccine rollout.

To help celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the relationship, guests at the event were entertained by Phare Circus, a Cambodian circus troupe whose business has been deeply affected by the decline in tourism during COVID-19. The Embassy hopes that this event will generate further business for Phare Circus, and we will be using events throughout the 70th anniversary to showcase Cambodian and Australian businesses as part of the economic recovery from the pandemic.

Ambassador Kang said "Looking back at how much Australia and Cambodia have achieved together over the last 70 years, the journey has been a long one. Australia looks forward to continuing this collaboration with Cambodia for the next 70 years, and well beyond that. This year we look forward to helping support Cambodia's priorities in its ASEAN Chair year. Beyond that, our story is one of progress, of very strong people links and an enduring, forward-looking relationship. There's a lot of great reasons to celebrate together."

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