



គណបក្ស សម រង្ស៊ី

SAM RAINSY PARTY
PARTI SAM RAINSY
សីលធម៌ - សម្បជធម៌ - យុត្តិធម៌

Phnom Penh, May 5, 1998

AS A DIRECT CONSEQUENCE OF RECENT AND MASSIVE DEFORESTATION FAMINE IS LOOMING IN CAMBODIA

Over the last four weeks, I have travelled all over Cambodia (Battambang, Pailin, Banteay Meanchey, Siem Reap, Kampong Thom, Kampong Cham, Prey Veng, Svay Rieng, Takeo, Kampot, Kampong Chhnang) and talked to thousands of farmers. All over the country, the situation in the rural areas is the same: there is an unprecedented and catastrophic drought as evidenced by the following facts:

- The weather is terribly and exceptionally hot in the current dry season; contrary to previous years, there has been no "fresh months" (normally November, December, January).
- The weather is terribly and exceptionally dry; normally some rains should have started to fall in the "mango season" (April) but this has not been the case this year. Coconut, banana and other trees die in large number, bringing desolation to countless villages throughout the country. There is a general and severe water shortage. Wells, ponds, streams, rivers, canals and reservoirs have dried up. People in the countryside have to carry water over unusually long distances from their homes to meet their daily needs. Many people, including the poorest, have to buy water.
- In areas where "dry season rice" is normally cultivated from January to March, near lakes, rivers and reservoirs – thus allowing two crops a year – farmers have hardly produced anything this year because of the exceptional drought.
- The "rainy season rice" (from May to around the end of the year) which makes up the bulk of rice production is jeopardised by the lack of rainfalls. There is fear that if the weather is as dry towards the end of this year as it was last year, in the months preceding the harvest, there will be a very poor crop.
- Over the last four weeks, rice price at the retail level has soared by fifty percent (50 %), on average from 800 to 1200 Riels per kilogram.

Many villagers are now facing food shortage which is likely to become more and more severe over the next few months. Famine is looming and, without adequate relief programmes, could turn into a tragedy.

Large scale and anarchic deforestation over the last few years has definitely disrupted the ecosystem. Deforestation dramatically accelerates soil erosion which in turn provokes the phenomenon of sedimentation/siltation which fills canals, ponds and natural reservoirs with mud and makes rivers and lakes shallower and shallower. In the rainy season, this tends to provoke flooding, while in the dry season it tends to provoke drought since water recedes and dries up more and more quickly. In the meantime, there is less and less forest to retain moisture in the soil and in the air. Water vapour produced by the forest is an important factor to bring about rains. Deforestation, by eliminating leaves, branches and roots that slow down falling and running rain water, also accelerates the flowing of rain water – once it touches the ground – towards rivers, thus allowing a shrinking quantity of rain water to filter down through the earth and to form/renew underground water tables: this explains why wells tend to dry up.

An old farmer in Battambang province told me that for the fourth consecutive year, and for the first time in his life, he has suffered from successive flooding and drought in the same year, leading to a sharp reduction of his farm production.

Deforestation is criminal because it triggers a desertification process leading to crop reduction, food shortage and increasing sufferings for the rural people who form eighty percent (80%) of the Cambodian population. Because of the currently unchecked deforestation Cambodia is going down the drain. The international community and donor countries should use all their influence to put an end to the deforestation which is associated with rampant corruption and the collapse of the rule of law.

Sam Rainsy

ទីស្នាក់ការកណ្តាល: ផ្ទះលេខ៧១ មហាវិថីសម្តេចសុធារស សង្កាត់ទន្លេបាសាក់ ខណ្ឌចំការមន រាជធានីភ្នំពេញ ព្រះរាជាណាចក្រកម្ពុជា

Headquarters : House # 71 Sothearos Road, Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia

Siège : Maison N° 71, Rue Sothearos, Phnom Penh, Royaume du Cambodge

Tel : (855-23) 215 375 / 211 336 Fax : (855-23) 215 374 / 211 336