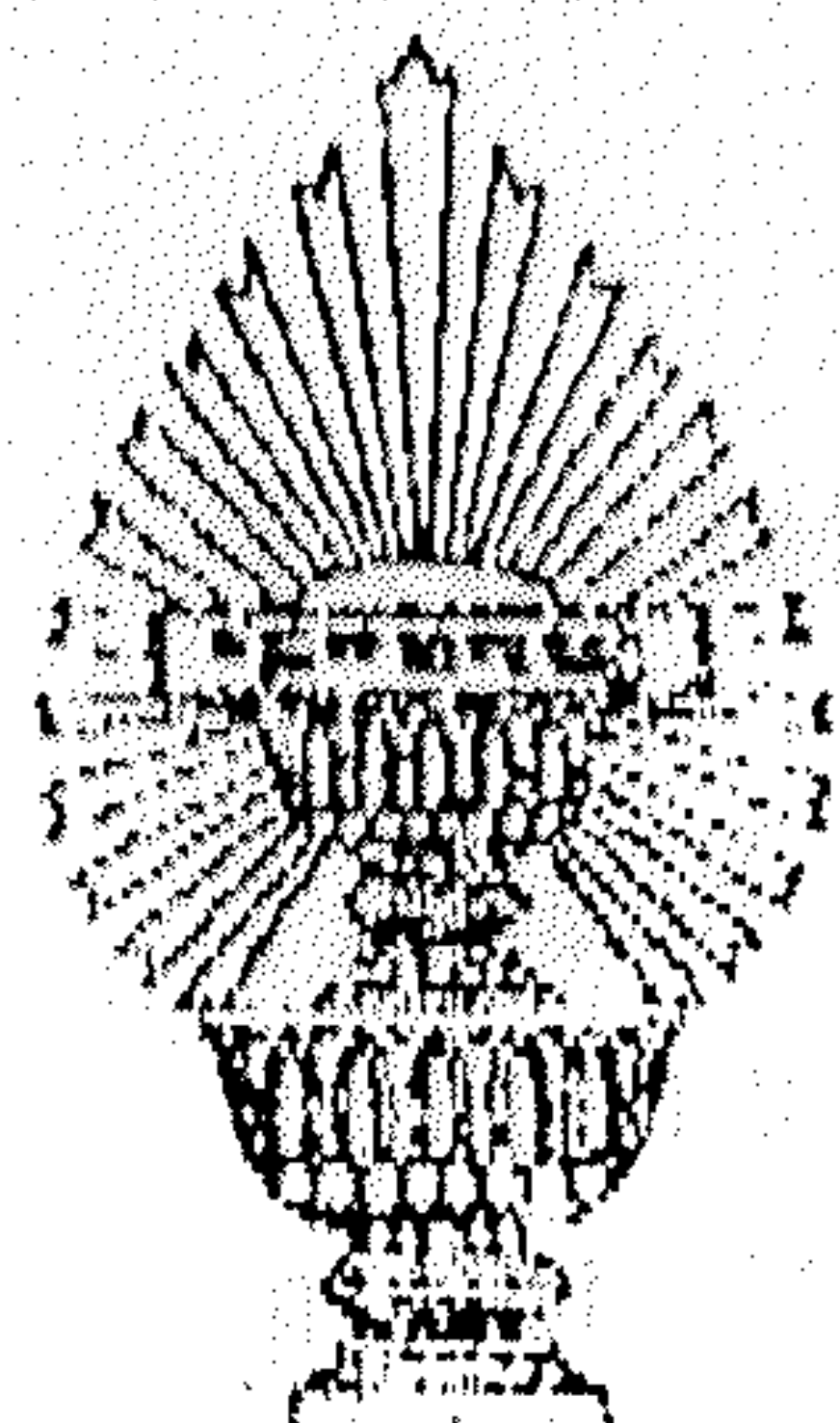


KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
Nation Religion King



NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Phnom Penh, December 31, 2000

**WISHES TO THE PEOPLE OF CAMBODIA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE NEW YEAR OF 2001**

On the occasion of New Year 2001, I would like to extend my best wishes of peace, success and hope to the Cambodian people. I send these wishes as a symbol of my undying commitment to this land and its people, and to convey my dream that Cambodia will one day become a prosperous nation where respect for human rights and dignity in governance are established. These are not merely words, but are a commitment on my part to fight with determination to ensure that the wishes I have for you will come true.

To all Cambodian people,

I extend my wish to the Cambodian people that they may achieve peace founded on justice. In this respect, I would urge that all Cambodian people reconsider their concept of destiny and fatalism. Misery and injustice in this life and in this world are not pre-determined and unavoidable, but are the result of poor leadership and social flaws that can and must be redressed. Only by fighting for true democracy and respect for human rights can we achieve a better society with improved governance based on non-violence and justice.

In our capacity as responsible citizens, we are entitled to pursue happiness in this life and in this world without waiting for an afterlife or accession to heaven.

To farmers,

I extend my wish to all farmers that they will not suffer from natural disasters that have destroyed crops and property. Therefore, I will encourage measures to effectively stop deforestation -- the dominant cause of successive floods and droughts that have ravaged the country in recent years.

I also wish that all farmers will secure ownership of their land and properties and that those victims of land grabs will have their assets returned to them. Therefore, I will strive to lobby for the creation of a law to implement land reform, which will ensure the effective use of land and will guarantee fairness in land distribution.

To fishermen,

I extend my wish to all fishermen that they will be given fishing rights for areas large enough to allow them to sustain a decent standard of living. Therefore, I will support demands from subsistence fishermen that fishing lots, which used to be accessible to all people during the Sangkum Reastr Niyum era (1955-1969), but are now controlled by private interests, be speedily returned to the public domain.

To government employees: civil servants, policemen and soldiers,

I extend my wish to all government employees, civil servants, policemen and soldiers, that they will receive sufficient and timely paid salaries in order to sustain a decent standard of living. Therefore, I will provide the government with data, information and proposals in order to curb corruption and redress irregularities in the implementation of the state budget. By doing so, the government will be able to respond to the legitimate demand by government employees that their salaries be increased to a minimum of US \$70 and that a forty-four hour workweek be instituted.

To traders, shopkeepers, vendors and artisans,

I extend my wish to all to all traders, shopkeepers, vendors and artisans, that they earn sufficient income to sustain a decent living. Therefore, I will promote the rule of law to prevent extortion. I am convinced that if government employees, and other workers benefit from salary increases, that this will in turn benefit traders, shopkeepers vendors and artisans through a trickle down effect.

To students,

I extend my wish to all students that they will have a successful education career in an improved education system that will adequately prepare them for the job market. Therefore, I will urge the government as well as non-governmental organizations to grant decent salaries to teachers and to provide adequate educational material to students. Moreover, I will strive to strengthen the rule of law, combat corruption, attract regulated investment, develop the economy and create jobs for all young people.

To victims of serious diseases,

I extend my wish to victims of serious diseases that they can recover in spite of their abject poverty. In particular, I reach out to the 300,000 Cambodians (nearly 3% of the population) who are infected with HIV. New medical treatments have been developed that can extend the life of HIV victims for more than five years, with more effective treatments expected in the future. Although these new medical treatments are costly, I will endeavor that the national budget prioritizes national health. I will also call upon the international community to provide financial assistance to help provide medicines to treat AIDS and other serious diseases.

To Cambodians living abroad,

I would like to extend my wish to Cambodians living abroad that you will play an active role in rebuilding this country. You are fortunate to live in countries that have attained high levels of development. I hope and I believe that you will take an increasingly active role in rebuilding our country. In this connection, I will attempt to convince the Cambodian Government that the some 500,000 Cambodians living abroad represent an invaluable asset to our country. Many people claim that Cambodia lacks human resources and therefore cannot develop. In fact, human resources are abundant due to the many Cambodian people living abroad who have benefited from high education or technical training. The Cambodian Government must encourage and attract those overseas Cambodians to return to help and develop our country as technicians to replace the foreign experts now working in Cambodia. It is my belief that Cambodians more capable than foreigners of rebuilding Cambodia, and I hope that in the future, Cambodians living abroad will have a more active role in developing this country.

Sam Rainsy
Member of Parliament