

Phnom Penh Post

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October 22, 1997

His Majesty Preah Bat Samdech Preah
Norodom Sihanouk
King of Cambodia

Your Majesty:

Since the coup in July and the subsequent drastic economic downturn the Phnom Penh Post has found itself in severe financial difficulties because of the drop in advertising revenue. If we don't secure some kind of outside funding it is likely that we will go bankrupt in a matter of months.

At the very least Kathleen Hayes and myself, as sole owners of the paper, would like to keep the Post open until the elections next year as we feel that we can play a key role in monitoring what happens in the lead up to the polls.

To do this I have to turn to the NGO community in an effort to raise funds. For the last five years I have studiously tried to avoid this, preferring instead to keep the paper open on ad revenues, paper sales and subscription fees. We feel proud that the Post was the only paper to be able to do this in Cambodia, to operate without subsidies. Regrettably, this will not be possible now, and I am in the process of writing a grant proposal for at least \$100,000 to enable us to keep publishing for the next year.

In this regard, I wonder if Your majesty would be willing to write an endorsement for the Post that I would attach to any grant proposal. I have spoken to the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Danish Aid agency and both are willing to entertain a grant request. The purpose of such a letter is to highlight to any potential donor the value of the Phnom Penh Post, as an independent and reliable publication, in covering election-related events over the coming months.

It is important to keep in mind that the Post is the only newspaper with a wide circulation around the world. We have subscribers in more than 40 countries which include key policy makers, international donors and human rights watchdog organizations who rely on the Post as a primary source of information on Cambodia.

If Your Majesty deems it appropriate, we would be extremely honored to receive under Your August Name a brief letter highlighting the critical role the Phnom Penh Post plays in covering issues related to the Kingdom's democratic development including human rights and election-related matters and how the demise of the Post would be a severe blow to the world's ability to monitor what happens here in the Kingdom in the next year. I have no doubt that such a letter would greatly facilitate my ability to secure some funding to help keep the paper open.

Please accept, Your majesty, the assurances of my highest consideration. Let me also wish Your Majesty a safe trip to Beijing and we

at the Post hope that Your Majesty will return quickly to the Kingdom as
Your presence here is critical to the well-being of the people of Cambodia.

Sincerely,

Michael G. Hayes


Publisher & Editor-in-Chief