

## Welcome Speech by

His Excellency IM Sethy, Minister of Education, Youth and Sport  
At the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Historical Opening Ceremony of New Academic  
Year, 24 September 1979 - 24 September 2009

National Institute of Education  
24 September 2009



***My respect to Her Excellency MEN Sam An, Stationed Deputy Prime  
Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia  
Excellencies, Lok Chumteav,  
Diplomatic Corps  
National and International Guests  
All Education Delegates from Municipalities and Provinces  
Ladies and Gentlemen,***

Today, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport is highly honored that we all the leaders and officials at all levels of the Ministry have greeted Lok Chumteav **MEN Sam An**, Stationed Deputy Prime Minister, on behalf of **Samdech Akkak Moha Sena Padei Techo HUN Sen**, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, who has made time in her hectic schedule to preside over the solemn ceremony held at the National Institute of Education to acclaim 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Historical School Year Opening, “24 September 1979- 24 September 2009”.

On behalf of all levels of the leaders, management officials, educational staffs, professors, teachers, students and myself, I would like to express our warm welcome and sincere gratitude to **Lok Chumteav Stationed Deputy Prime Minister** as well as the Royal Government for your attendance and attentions to educational sector under the wise leadership of **Samdech Akkak Moha Sena Padei Techo HUN Sen**, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

In the meantime, I honestly thank all Excellencies, Lok Chumteav, Ladies and Gentlemen, National and International Guests who have participated in this historical event in order to commemorate the 30 year anniversary of rehabilitation of the Cambodian education sector after devastation caused by civil war of more than two decades, especially by the genocidal regime of Khmer Rouge regime of Pol Pot, which is now being trialed by the Extraordinary Chambers in the Court of Cambodia in collaboration with the United Nations.

***Lok Chumteav Stationed Deputy Prime Minister,  
Excellencies, Lok Chumteav,  
Ladies and Gentlemen***

From 1979 to 2009, it is 30 years. Although a period of 30 years already passed, for Cambodian people, it seems to stay in our mind since each of us still remembers and tells our children and grandchildren about the devastation and crimes which were cruelly committed by genocidal regime of Pol Pot on our nation and its people and transforming of our lovely Angkor land to killing fields for only more than 3 years. From 17 April 1975 to 07 January 1979, Khmer Rouge of Pol Pot had killed millions of innocent people. In addition, all domains and sectors in the entire country, national spirit and national identities were almost completely destroyed. I feel horribly shocked when recalling this painful, bloody and teary event which had never historically happened to human history of this world. The pictures of Cambodian people who survived from death coming back to their own villages, districts and provinces after 07 January 1979 are still unforgettable nightmares in our minds today. In shabby clothes and with bony bodies, pulling oxcart and carrying belongings on shoulders and heads, everyone looked completely exhausted but we were very happy to be survived. It is because of the deep gratitude of the Victory Day of 07 January 1979 over the genocidal regime of Pol Pot. Cambodian people who were survived from death felt that they were reborn. All sectors in the whole country were rehabilitated and reconstructed from the destruction with empty hands. On the other hand, we had gathered and called for about 15% of survived professors, teachers, and other intellectuals to come and work together to rehabilitate education sector. Although we worked with empty hands and overcame many difficulties and challenges, we managed to establish the Ministry of Education on **15 February 1979** and put into operations the schooling and emphasize a slogan throughout the country, ***“the educated teaches the non-educated and the more educated teaches the less educated”***. The schooling activities at that time were not well organized but the Ministry of Education managed to gather and hold the first school year opening ceremony on **24 September 1979**. At that time, throughout the country there was a number of preschools, primary schools, lower secondary schools and was only one upper secondary school in Phnom Penh. There were only 22,098 teachers of whom were former educators and voluntary teachers. And there were about 900,000 students.

***Lok Chumteav Stationed Deputy Prime Minister  
Excellencies, Lok Chumteav,  
Ladies and Gentlemen***

Everyone in this meeting, except those who reach the age of 30 is the witness of re-existence of the country and each of us was well aware of initial establishment of Cambodian education sector after 07 January 1979. The first Minister of education at that time was His Excellency **CHAN Ven**, who currently is the vice secretary general of the National Assembly. In the process of schooling operations, recruitment of teachers was conducted from the people who were the oxcart pullers returning to Phnom Penh and among literate people without taking into account any training courses. As far as classrooms and schools were concerned, in addition to uses of broken schools leftover from the destruction of

the Khmer Rouge, teaching and learning were undertaken in monk temples, under the people houses, under the tree shadows, or on the rice-paddy dam to meet education needs of the children and grandchildren of the people, booming like the exploding ordnance, without taking into account of the selection or age limitation criteria. For curriculum and textbooks, they were developed by hand writing in an urgent manner day and night time using kerosene lamp, writing with stencil and scratched with Roneo with hands page by page for teachers and students in the time we had nothing and pieces of charcoals was sometimes used as chalks. The living standards of the teachers were very poor. A part from being teachers, farming was their occupations to produce more rice for their living in addition to husked rice assisted by the State. Salary was not available for the teachers as that of the teacher today. However, we were pleased and have been faithfully performed our roles and responsibilities. As a result, nationwide education system formerly followed 10 years education system “4+3+3” and then it was added for one more year, in total 11 years, “5+3+3” and currently it follows 12 years of education, “6+3+3”, meaning that 6 years for primary education, 3 years for lower secondary school and 3 years for upper secondary school, excluding preschool and higher education.

***Lok Chumteav Stationed Deputy Prime Minister  
Excellencies and Lok Chumteav,  
Ladies and Gentlemen***

When referring to the tragedy of Cambodian people in the period of 3 years 8 months and 20 days, the Pol Pot time and the 30<sup>th</sup> commemoration of reestablishment of education sector in Cambodia, it needs longer time to describe. I can say that it is longer than 1001 nights of Indian story and it cannot be told at this moment.

What was briefly mentioned is just a recall with an aim to remind all students and use the lessons learnt for their future as one slogan states, “Don’t forget poverty when you are rich, don’t forget frightening when you are glad”. Education achievement as well as other achievements of the nation as they are today stem from the great historical victory day of 07 January 1979 which all people throughout the country cannot ignore. In the past 30 years, we have been committed to rehabilitation, building and development of the country in all sectors. Cambodian people currently are living in peace, stability and national unity, enjoying full rights, freedom and democracy under the right and bright leadership of the government under **Samdech Akkak Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen**, prime minister of Cambodia. It is true that the education sector is proudly developed in terms of both quantity and quality with the support and assistance from the Royal Government of Cambodia, national and international communities, donors under shared responsibility policy by **Samdech Hun Sen**, the greatest leader. In the academic year 2008-2009, there are 1,798 public pre-schools, 90,036 pupils and 3,092 teachers. There are 6,565 Primary Schools, 2,262,834 students (of whom 1,073,292 are girls) and 45,511 teachers. There are

1,122 Lower Secondary Schools, 605, 707 students (of whom 287,105 are girls) and 23, 576 teachers. For Upper Secondary Education, there are 349 schools and 292,423 students (of whom 123, 334 are girls) and 9,171 teachers. In addition, there are 74 public and private higher institutions with 167,085 students at associate degrees, bachelor degrees, post graduate degrees and doctorate degrees. In total, out of more 13 million people, there are about 3 million students at all education levels. It can be concluded that one of every 4 Cambodian people attending school.

All of these are the outcomes for the 30 years of education starting with the empty hands in 1979 and it has gradually developed from one year to another till today. With these outcomes, there are many lessons learnt for us to develop education sector in Cambodia for high quality and effectiveness. In this regard, I would like to advise the leaders at all levels of education to organize the opening ceremony of academic year 2008-2009 on 01 October 2009 in the near future with a joyful manner by linking to the acclamation of 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first historical school opening day of 24 September 1979. Before I end this remark, I would like to take this occasion to express my sincere thanks to the older leaderships, education officials at all levels, professors, and teachers throughout the country who have cooperatively participated to rehabilitate, build and develop the education sector for 30 years with great success by overcoming the hardships and all kinds of challenges until we reach our today's status. At the same time, I would like to express my sincere thanks to parents and guardians of students, families, communities, national and international development partners as well as donors for their contributions to rehabilitation, building and development of education sector. For the future, I would like all of you to continue your support, involvement and assistance with the purpose of training quality human resources in Cambodia.

Finally, on behalf of the Ministry of Education and the whole ceremony, I would like to wish **Lok Chumteav Stationed Deputy Prime Minister** good health, strength, wisdom and longlife in order to lead the government for success. I would also like to wish Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen and all participants, Buddhist blessings: longevity, nobility, health and strength.

***Thanks.***