

Cambodia Ranks Third in Readiness To Enter AEC

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Mr. Sok Siphana: Cambodia is in good shape for the onset of AEC

PHNOM PENH, (Khmer Times) – Cambodia ranks third in term of readiness for ASEAN Economic integration by the end of 2015, said Dr. Sok Siphanna, Advisor to the Royal Government of Cambodia. Based on a survey done by the ASEAN Secretariat and ERIA, Dr. Siphanna positively believes the country will thrive once again, standing ready for the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) behind Singapore and Malaysia.

With the recent declaration from Indonesia, a much developed country among ASEAN community, stating that there is still a list of challenges to work on for the upcoming year; it is quite ambivalent for Cambodia to have everything in place.

Despite this announcement by Indonesia, Dr. Siphanna has a firm belief that Cambodia stands on a different end. The country will be able to capture and enjoy full benefits from the integration after the excitement effects its gets from entering WTO.

“Cambodia is not like Indonesia, in terms of size, population, geography, stage of development policies, economic pre-conditions. Emerging from scratch after Pol Pot Regime, the country has embraced open economic policy, as well as, aggressive trade liberalization policy to gain access to investment, capital, and to know-how,” he said.

He also said that with more than 1,400 meetings a year, Cambodia bureaucrats are strenuously working to ensure Cambodia is well-prepared whether its language proficiency, communication and technology, logistics, or human resource capacity.

“Cambodia is fortunate to have a language, which has so much tonality that makes learning foreign languages easy for Cambodians. English is spoken with a lot of ease to the majority of urban Cambodians including the working class in the services sector,” Dr. Siphanna said.

He added that with return of young Cambodian students from France, Cambodia witness a strong revival of French language, in addition to the other language preferences of Korean, Japanese, and Chinese by young generation learners.

Dr. Siphanna also applauds development of information technology, and logistics sectors in Cambodia.

He said, “Cambodia’s Information and Communication Technology sector witnesses the dynamic growth of very capable young software engineers and IT hardware and software specialists. Many Cambodian logistics companies have either started their own supply chain or at least became a part of regional and global supply chain. Free Trade Zones and integrated logistics are next and probably before the realization of the AEC.”

Vigorous effort has been put to equip the public and private sector staffs with the skills needed for 2015, but Dr. Siphanna considers that this is a building process, where it doesn’t stop at one point. “Much capacity has been built and strengthened in the last ten years within the public sector, while our private sector has benefited from serious business and technical exposure to the way of doing business from our fellow ASEAN countries,” he said.

“We should look at it as a progress toward a goal, a journey toward a destination. A clear comparison would be Water Festival with hundreds of boats racing down the Mekong River toward the finishing line in front of the Royal Palace,” he added.

“From the river bank we can see these boats rowing, some faster than others, some slower than others, but all in all, the flotilla slide through the water EXCEPT there is no finishing line. Our taskforce doesn’t stop there. They are a work in progress,” he said