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CAMBODIAN POLL / HUN SEN'S PARTY WINS MAJORITY

Opposition threatens agitation

PHNOM PENH (CAMBODIA), JULY 29. Cambodia's royalist and Opposition parties on Tuesday threatened to launch street protests after rejecting the ruling party's widely expected election victory as fraudulent.

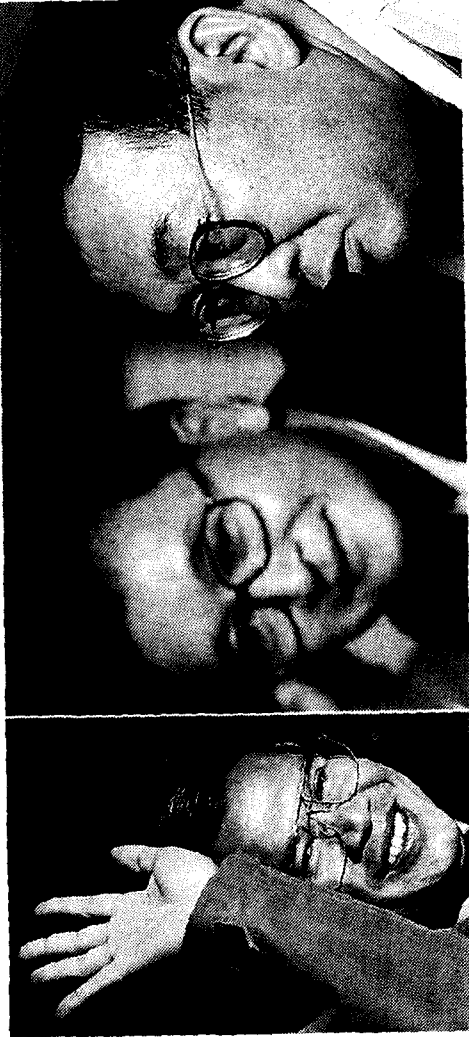
"We will protest, but we will use only legal, peaceful, non-violent, democratic means, and this includes street demonstrations," the Opposition leader, Sam Rainsy, told a joint news conference with the royalist Funcinpec party.

"Funcinpec will not accept the result of this unfair election," said the party's secretary-general, Prince Norodom Sirivudh.

The ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) of led by the Prime Minister, Hun Sen, won more than 50 per cent of votes in Sunday's election, according to an unofficial vote count released by independent monitoring groups. The official result is not expected until Aug. 8.

The CPP announced that the vote percentage would translate to 73 seats in the 123-member National Assembly, with the rest shared by Funcinpec and the Sam Rainsy Party.

But Sam Rainsy, who heads the self-named party, said that the CPP should not have announced the result prematurely



The Cambodian Prime Minister, Hun Sen (left), greeting his supporters in Phnom Penh on Tuesday. The Secretary-General of FUNCINPEC party, Prince Norodom Sirivudh, and the Opposition leader, Sam Rainsy (centre), announcing a programme of agitations at a press conference. — AP

and unilaterally through the state-controlled media. He and Prince Sirivudh said they suspect the Government's National Election Committee is hand in glove with the CPP and would rubber stamp its claims. "We reject results as have been announced through the press recently and signed by the CPP," Mr. Rainsy said, dismissing it as a "psychological war."

He said there's a possibility of street demonstrations in the

next few days depending on the type of result the NEC is going to produce." Mr. Rainsy said any party getting more than 50 per cent of seats "would be a distortion of the will of the people."

Although the CPP won the majority to form a Government on its own. Otherwise, it needs to form a coalition with Funcinpec or the Sam Rainsy Party. Failure to do so would raise the

spectre of a deadlock of the kind that followed the 1998 election, which lasted four months during which time the capital was rocked by anti-Government demonstrations. Mr. Rainsy and Prince Sirivudh said the elections were marred by irregularities and fraud, and demanded revoting in many places.

International observers have said that there were irregularities, but that they were generally fair. — AP

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CAMBODIAN POLL / VIOLATIONS REPORTED

Free and fair: observers

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PHNOM PENH (CAMBODIA), JULY 27.

A small grenade exploded on Sunday in Cambodia's capital, marring otherwise peaceful general elections that the Prime Minister, Hun Sen's party was widely expected to win to retain its 24-year hold on power. One person was slightly injured.

Two other grenades were discovered near the Royal Palace before they could explode. No one claimed responsibility and the motive remained unclear.

Despite the scare, Cambodian and international observers hoped that the third election in a decade would consolidate democracy and help further erase the memory of the Khmer Rouge's 1975-79 genocidal regime.

"It's a special day I cannot miss," said Nop Layhorn, 53, who woke up at dawn to be the first in line at her polling station in a town outside Phnom Penh. "I wish for national harmony with my vote."

Though irregularities were reported in several polling stations, such as missing names on voter lists, the observers said the elections appeared to have been generally free and fair.

"From our reports everything has gone well, from what we



The former Khmer Rouge leader, Khieu Samphan, at a polling station in Pailin in Cambodia's remote northwestern province on Sunday. — Reuters

have received so far. All our people are in place and they will follow tomorrow the counting," said Antonio Menezes, a spokesman for a delegation of observers from the European Union.

The front-runners in the polls for the 123-seat National Assembly are Mr. Hun Sen's party, a former Khmer Rouge fighter who has been in power since 1985; the royalist Funcinpec party of Prince Norodom Rana-

riddh; and the Sam Rainsy Party, named for a former Finance Minister and banker.

"While it is evident that the Cambodian people feel very strongly about their right to vote freely, we did see some activity of concern at a number of polling stations," said Christine Todd Whitman, a former administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency who led a team of about 50 American observers. — AP

Cambodia approves pact on Khmer Rouge tribunal

S. An
PHNOM PENH (CAMBODIA), MARCH 28. Moving a step closer to establishing a genocide tribunal, Cambodia's Cabinet on Friday approved a draft agreement with the United Nations on setting up a trial of former Khmer Rouge leaders.

Cambodian and U.N. negotiators on March 17 reached agreement on the guidelines for the trial after more than five years of difficult negotiations to establish a joint tribunal with Cambodian and foreign prosecutors and judges.

The document will enter into force once the U.N. General Assembly and the Cambodian legislature have ratified it. Human rights groups have voiced misgivings about the draft, saying it gives too much power to Cambodian judges.

An estimated 1.7 million Cambodians died from starvation, disease, overwork and execution when the communist Khmer Rouge held power in 1975-79. The movement collapsed in 1998, but none of its leaders have ever been tried for the group's atrocities. Many still live freely in Cambodia.

The Cabinet unanimously agreed to the draft agreement and "congratulates the success we have achieved in this affair," Cabinet spokesman, Penn Thol, told reporters.

He said Cambodia "is now waiting to hear news from the United Nations about the status of the document that we both have already concluded."

He said the government will forward the draft to the National Assembly for ratification only af-

ter the U.N. General Assembly has voted affirmatively on the draft.

Mr. Penn Thol said there will unlikely be changes made to the draft since it has been initialled by both chief negotiators, the Cabinet Minister, Sok An, and the U.N. Deputy Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, Hans Corell.

Mr. Corell has urged Cambodia and the U.N. to quickly ratify the document, warning that both sides, if failing to act quickly, will miss "the last chance" to try aging Khmer Rouge leaders for crimes against humanity.

However, some human right groups have expressed reservations about the agreement, which give Cambodian judges the upper hand over their international colleagues in legal rulings.

The groups consider Cambodia's judicial system too corrupt and vulnerable to political pressure to ensure justice.

The proposed trial court will have three Cambodian judges and two international judges. At least one international judge has to join in any judgment.

Amnesty International said last week it was deeply concerned about provisions in the draft agreement "that reflect a significant retreat from current international law and standards."

It said the agreement's deficiencies are so serious that it "would oppose the United Nations signing the agreement without major revision."
— AP

29 MAR 2003

Thailand suspends ties with Cambodia

Bangkok: Thailand on



T. Shinawatra envoy after fierce anti-Thai protests in Phnom Penh even as the Cambodian premier' blamed rumourmongers for sparking the riots.

Thailand has recalled its ambassador from the Cambodian capital and has closed all border checkpoints with the neighbouring country.

Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, angered by the protests that have reportedly left one Thai dead, has said all bilateral activities with Cambodia will be stopped.

An official Thai letter said all ongoing projects on technical and economic co-operation between the two countries will be suspend-

ed.

Thai Airways has also suspended flights to Phnom Penh. Violence in Phnom Penh was sparked by alleged remarks by a Thai TV star that the Angkor Wat belonged to Thailand. The TV star has denied making the comments.

While the origin of the supposed remarks, carried by the local media there, has not been confirmed, Prime Minister Hun Sen on Thursday blamed "a small group of extremists" and rumourmongers for the riots.

"The violence generated by a small group of extremists has created political instability for Cambodia," Mr Hun Sen said.

Meanwhile, the editor of a local newspaper, that published the alleged remarks on Angkor Vat, on Thursday reportedly said three persons gave the story to the paper, claiming to have seen the actress on TV "speaking badly about Cambodia." PTI

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THE TIMES OF INDIA