



Report on

The State of Press Freedom in Cambodia



April 2024

Report on the State of Press Freedom in Cambodia

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The State of Press Freedom in Cambodia

By the Ministry of Information

April 2024



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to extend our appreciation to **His Excellency Neth Pheaktra, Minister of Information**, for initiating and leading this report from the onset to the end of the study. We also thank the Report Committee, designated officials from MoInfoApp Team, the General Department of Information and Broadcasting, as well as Directors, Deputy Directors and officials of all Capital/Provincial Departments of Information, and other individuals involved for supporting the processes of gathering information, data analysis and report production. We also extend our appreciation to all journalists for participating in the survey. Taking this opportunity, we would also like to thank the senior government officials and prominent media representatives who took the precious time to provide insights and opinions on the subject of this study making this report comprehensive.

MESSAGE from

H.E NETH PHEAKTRA, MINISTER OF INFORMATION



The State of Press Freedom in Cambodia is the report that Cambodia has prepared as part of the Royal Government of the 7th Legislature, using data available at Ministry of Information and the study of the state of daily operation of the journalists in the capital and every province in Cambodia. This study is developed to meet the need in media sector while Cambodia, as well as other countries in the region, has embarked on the turning point of digital transformation. The government of the 7th legislature, under the wise and strategic leadership of **Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei Hun Manet, Prime Minister of Cambodia**, has paid high regard on promoting the freedom of the press and freedom of expression, building on the continued efforts and results achieved by the Royal Government's previous mandates led by **Samdech Techo Hun Sen, former Prime Minister and currently President of Senate and Chairman of the Supreme Advisory Council of the King of Cambodia**. It is within the above-stated context that the Ministry of Information initiated the study whose results will provide comprehensive information on the state of press freedom in Cambodia as a basis for management, formulation of strategic actions and implementation of activities in the Information Sector.

Since the inception of the new Royal Government in August 2023 under the leadership of **Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei, Prime Minister**, the Ministry of Information continues its mission to focus on key areas of reform, and strengthen good governance to ensure the quality and effectiveness of the works in order to transform the Ministry of Information into ***“the public relations institution of the Royal Government, with proactive, active, interactive, effective and quality roles”*** under the motto of ***“New, Fact, Fast, Comprehensive, Reliable and Professional to connect to all”***. The Ministry has formulated five strategic objectives that are to, ***i) Modernize the institution and establish modern administration; ii) Strengthen technical and professional responsibility; iii) Develop human capital and professional conscience; iv) Initiate systems and mechanisms to manage information space and information security; and v) Strengthen inclusive and efficient partnerships.***

We strongly believe that the Report on the ***State of Press Freedom in Cambodia*** will be a vital document for all actors, operators and stakeholders in media industry in Cambodia to serve their respective missions and activities, contributing to the promotion of media as the fourth estate that supports and actively participates in the sustainable development and safeguarding peace in Cambodia and the region.



BACKGROUND



*Senior government leaderships pay a visit to Agence Kampuchea Press (AKP), formerly known as SPK
and Kampuchea Newspaper © Agence Kampuchea Press (AKP) Archive*

Forty-five years ago, the right of access to information was regranted to the people of Cambodia when the state media was restored on December 3, 1978. Cambodia Press Agency (SPK), and Voice of Cambodian People radio were re-established a day after the formation of the National United Front of Kampuchea on December 2, 1978. Then on January 25, 1979, the Cambodia Newspaper (known as Kampuchea Newspaper) was also re-established to publish information at that time among Cambodian people and has continued to grow since. Media and information in Cambodia have been growing rapidly, especially in the last 30 years with diversity and pluralistic perspectives reaching out to people everywhere at all times. All of these positive progresses were possible thanks to the Government's high regard for media sector, upholding the right and respect of press freedom as guided by the kingdom's constitution.

As many other countries in the region, media sector in Cambodia has entered a turning point of digital transformation and the rapid evolution of technology in the world. This has led to noteworthy changes in the overall media landscape in Cambodia, with the significant increase in online media and citizen journalists providing additional options for access to information. In the face of this development, traditional media needs to be adaptive to digital integration to cover operating systems, workflow and business models. The rapid growth of online and social media of all kinds, due in part to the changing preference for people to obtain information access, has had a negative impact on traditional media,

including newspapers and magazines (print press), radio and television. These negative effects have led to a decline in the number of readers, viewers and listeners, and affected the sources of revenue usually generated from commercial advertising or services.

These key aspects have been the subject of discussion in almost all forums on media, which have clearly demonstrated the importance of the media in Cambodian society and are in line with the Royal Government's strong commitment to promote the respect for the right to press freedom, freedom of expression and access to information as guaranteed by the Constitution. On this note, to measure press freedom in Cambodia, the Ministry of Information has initiated the development of an annual report on the State of Press Freedom based on legal and regulatory aspects, diversity and pluralism of the media, and operational space of professional journalism. The leadership vision of the Royal Government and the Ministry of Information in the management of media sector, including the update of media organizations and practitioners in Cambodia in the last 7 years (2017 to 2024) also represents a key component of the study, with the expectation that the effort will further strengthen the media and information sector with diversity, quality, vitality, resilience and order, as well as promoting the development of human capital and the conduct of professional journalism.





Daily activities of the Agence Kampuchea Press (AKP), and the Kampuchea Newspaper

© Agence Kampuchea Press (AKP) Archive

STUDY

METHODOLOGY



The Report Committee of the Ministry of Information conducted a meeting with Representatives of 25 capital/provincial Departments of Information © General Department of Information and Broadcasting

Mixed approaches and methods, both qualitative and quantitative, were utilized to study the state of press freedom in Cambodia. The approaches and methods include:

1. Desk Review: The Report Committee carried out reviews of available data and existing documents. Sources of information for this study also include the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Law on the Press, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Covenants and conventions related to human rights, women's rights and children's rights and other relevant legal documents.

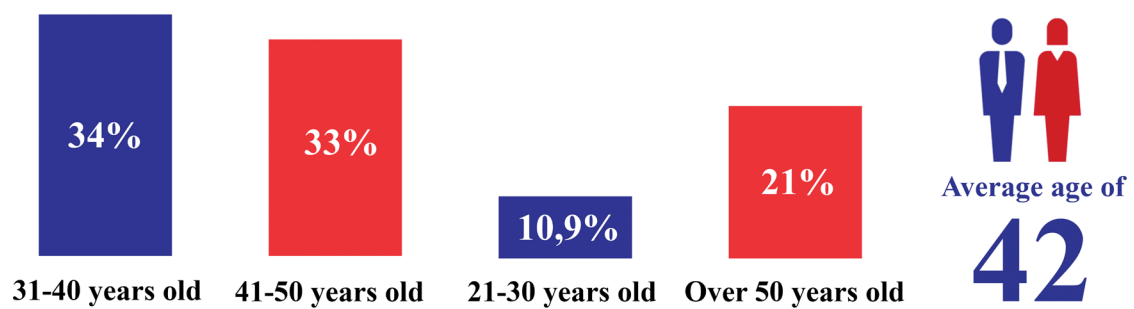
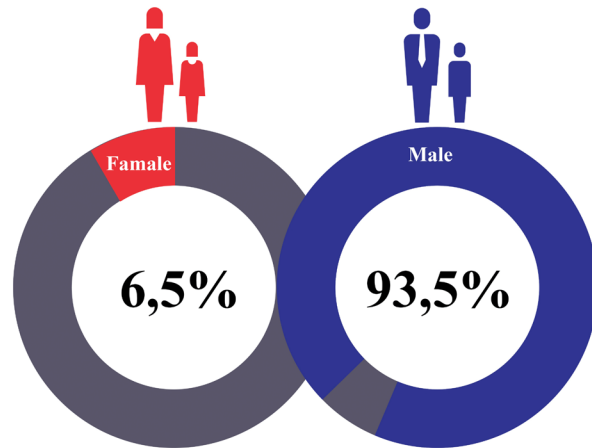
2. Field Survey: Survey on the perception of journalists towards press freedom was conducted. A total of 350 questionnaires were administered to 350 journalists in the 25 capital and provinces across Cambodia using Random Sampling approach. The questionnaire consists of two main sections, with the first section focusing on demographic information and the second section focusing on journalists' views on press freedom in Cambodia. Journalists who participated in the survey answered the questionnaires independently, and anonymously, based on their own will and personal opinion, without scrutiny or under the influence of anyone. Upon completion, all questionnaires were collected for data analysis. Of the questionnaires administered, 341 were valid for analysis.

3. Interviews: Perception and opinions from 11 prominent figures in the field of information were obtained through interviews with senior government personalities, presidents of journalists' associations, representatives from national and foreign press agencies, community media and higher education institution.

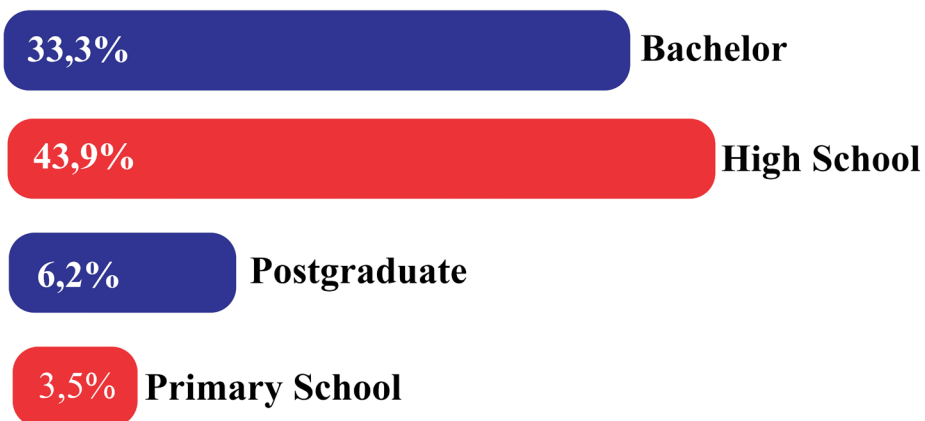


FINDINGS SUMMARY

PROFILE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS



Level of Education



According to the survey result, 79.8% of 341 respondents said the press freedom in Cambodia is Good, with 71% assessed the press freedom as Good, while 8.8% said it is Very Good. The study found that 95% of all respondents agreed that the current diversity of media in Cambodia contributed to promoting the press freedom, and that 79.8% claimed that they have full freedom to pursue a career as journalist, with convenience and safety in gathering information from various sources for writing, producing story reports and freely disseminating their works. In parallel, almost 100% of the survey respondents endorsed the importance of adhering to the ethics of professional journalism. However, the study also found only 33.3% of the total people surveyed hold a bachelor degree, while only 2.25% completed journalism courses from university.

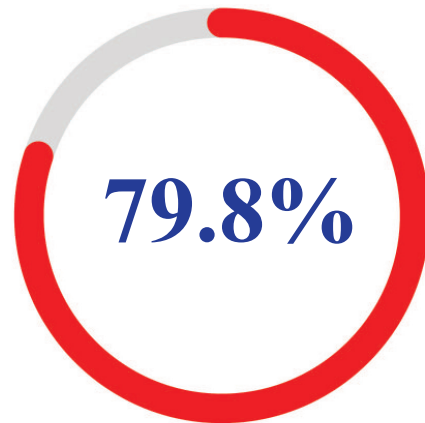


Samdach Thipadei Prime Minister of Cambodia met with social media practitioners in July 2023 © STPM



341

Journalists participated
in the survey



said the press freedom
in Cambodia is good



His Excellency Neth Pheaktra, Minister of Information, gave interviews to journalists

© Yousos Apdoulrashim



THE STATE OF PRESS FREEDOM IN CAMBODIA



National and foreign journalists attended the 40th and 41st ASEAN Summit in 2022, which Cambodia hosted and organized © Agence Kampuchea Press (AKP)

1. Media Landscape in Cambodia:

Developing and strengthening the media effectiveness are among the Ministry of Information's priority mission areas as part of the promotion of press freedom. The Cambodian News Agency (Agence Kampuchea Presse: AKP), Radio National of Kampuchea (RNK) and National Television of Cambodia (TVK), as well as private media, have been playing an active role in providing information, knowledge and entertainment to people in Cambodia and around the world. Moreover, Kampuchea Newspaper, a state-owned print media originally established in 1979, was re-launched on January 25, 2024, while some traditional media outlets were facing difficulties to survive and some have shut down. Today, as the national print media the 45-year-old Kumpuchea Newspaper represents the voice of the Cambodian nation, bringing true information about Cambodia to all people across the country and in the world. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Information has been encouraging the participation of the private sector in distributing news and stories to inform people nationwide in an effort to respond to the needs and development of society.

While the media technology has evolved rapidly, especially with the social media increase, state and private media entities have adapted to new trends by increasing their capacity to distribute information through social media platforms such as, Facebook, Telegram, YouTube, Twitter, TikTok and Instagram

on top of the existing distribution channels such as websites and apps. In addition, the state and private media continue to enhance the quality and efficiency of their news programs, talk-shows and other diversified entertainment programs to increase people's access to information in the form of audio, text and images, while embracing the new technology to advance their reporting meeting the today's needs.

The Ministry of Information's data shows 3,201 press cards have been issued in 2023, with 269 were women, accounting for 8.7% of the total number of journalists, and 113 were international journalists. Currently, there are more than 2,000 traditional and new media registered with the Ministry of Information, including 933 websites and TV Online, 447 newspapers, 52 press associations, 194 magazine outlets, 21 bulletin outlets, 113 printing houses, 22 book publishers, 27 foreign news agencies and representative offices, 2 advertising agencies, 283 FM radio stations, 01 AM radio station, 19 main TV stations and 165 relay stations, 12 digital TV stations and 10 online TV stations, 44 cable TV stations in Phnom Penh and provinces, 143 analog TV stations, 08 OTT (Over The Top) and 2 satellite TV stations. It is estimated that there are about 10,000 journalists in Cambodia. At the beginning of 2024, the Ministry of Information has continued its census campaign to register media organizations and provide press identification cards to journalists in order to maintain the order in this sector.



Mr. Leang Delux









Publisher

Thmey Thmey Digital News

“ Overall, Cambodia has a broad press freedom space including favorable modalities for establishing media outlets, the freedom of expression on social media and public networking space, the wide flow of information from the Government to the people and vice versa. The space or freedom of the press in Cambodia is however disturbed by a few undesirables that are undermining the value of press freedom.

”

Key Facts about Media in Cambodia

 Television Stations	▶  Analog TV	143
	▶  On Air	19
	▶  TV Live	165
	▶  Digital TV	12
	▶  Cable TV	44
	▶  Satellite TV	02
	▶  Over the Top (OTT)	08



Magazine outlets

194



Websites & TV Online

933



Newspapers

477



Radio Stations

FM 283

AM 01



Foreign News Agencies and
Representative Offices

27



Bulletin Outlets

21



Press Associations

52



Press Cards

3,201



Printing Houses

113



Book Publishers

22



Advertising Agencies

02

**His Excellency Pen Bona,
Minister Attached to Prime Minister
and Head of the Royal Government Spokesperson Unit**



“ With the Royal Government’s strong support to media sector, the current state of press freedom in Cambodia has flourished more than ever. The number of media outlets and journalists have remarkably increased, providing the citizens with diverse sources of information, and rich and convenient options for consumption in a timely manner. The quality of journalism is however growing slower than its quantity, leading to some challenges in the sector. The lack of professionalism in some journalists and the misuse of journalism to serve political agendas by some extremist groups have led their reporting to deviate from the path of professional ethics and even violate the law, abuse the rights of others, distort the truth with malicious intent, affecting the quality of information and the value of the press.

”

According to the Ministry of Information’s statistics in the last seven years, no journalist dies, has been fined or imprisoned for performing his or her duties within the boundaries of the law and in compliance with the code of professional ethics. The Ministry of Information however observed press career abuses by some groups of individuals, violating the code of professional ethics, exploiting journalist occupation to gain personal interest, and to some extent to commit criminal acts such as extortion and other crimes not prescribed in the press law. Any measures enacted toward this criminality must not be interpreted as a violation of freedom of the press or freedom of expression.

The Ministry’s data also showed that a total number of 34 former journalists and officials of the Ministry of Information died due to an old age and disease. Between 2020-2023, the Ministry has removed 20 media organizations from the list due to the violation of professional ethics and existing legal norms in force. In parallel, the Ministry has taken administrative measures to summon 50 cases involving professional misconduct to receive professional orientations with the commitment to not repeating those misconduct.

Other Key Facts

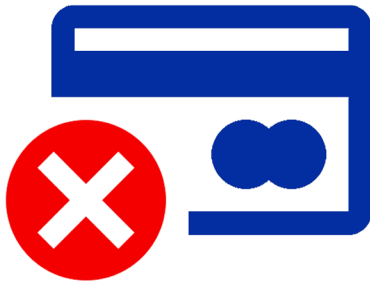


34 Former journalists and officials

of the Ministry of Information died
due to an old age and disease

50 Cases involving professional misconduct

received professional orientations with the commitment
to not repeating those misconduct from the Ministry of Information

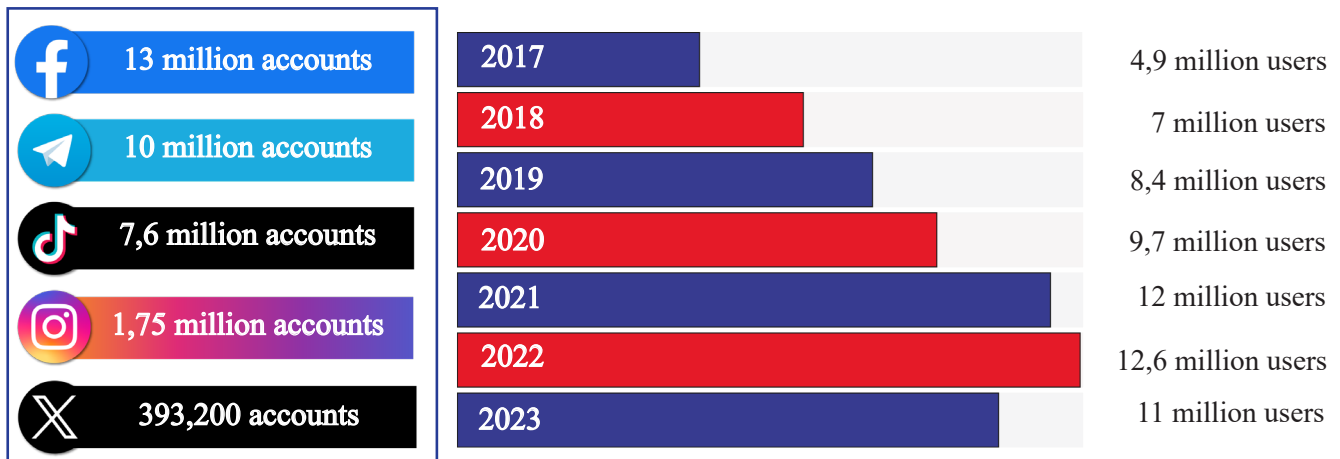


20 Media organizations

were removed from the list due to
the violation of professional ethics

2. Cambodia's Media landscape in the Context of Digital Transformation


In the last five years, the advent of digital systems and the constant advancement of modern technology have caused notable changes in Cambodian society and the world, especially in the field of information and broadcasting. Advanced technology has created new opportunities, providing greater convenience and friendliness to both users and media operators, boosting rich access and distribution of information. Like other countries in the region, Cambodian society is adapting to the trend of the digital age and the rapid evolution of technology. People's preference for advanced technology and the increase of internet uses in Cambodia have influenced information access behaviors, for example from no longer listening to the radio, watching TV, reading newspapers, newsletters or magazines to following feeds on social media or other digital platforms, which transmit information via smartphone, iPad, computer or other modern communication devices.



Most Used Social Media Platforms in
Cambodia as of 2023

Number of Social Media Users in Cambodia
Between 2017-2023

In 2023, Cambodia has a total of over 11 million social media users *, equivalent to about 65% of the total population, of which Facebook is the leading social network with total users of more than 13 million** accounting for over 75% of the total population. In parallel, Telegram attracts about 10 million users, making it one of the most popular information channels in Cambodia in addition to its messaging functionality. TikTok is another type of social networking that is gaining its popularity with 7.6 million users registered in early 2023.



His Excellency Khim Vuthy
Director General
National Television of Kampuchea (TVK)

“ The Royal Government of Cambodia is committed to protect the press freedom and freedom of expression in line with the Kingdom’s Constitution and Press Law. Everyone lives under the same Constitution and rule of law of Cambodia. Media organizations operated in the country must have operating license issued by the Ministry of Information. Training on professional journalism as well as courses/workshops orientating ethical media and information dissemination should be organized for building capacity of journalists and media operators. Media owners who violate the law and professional ethics should be deprived of the operating license. ”

*Data from DATAREPORTAL

**Data from Napoleoncat

The use of social media in Cambodia is rich and free, thanks to the freedom and access right to internet services are open all over Cambodia. According to a report from the Telecommunications Regulator of Cambodia, the number of internet users in Cambodia as of September 2022 was more than 18 million. These aspects constitute evidence showing that Cambodian society has the freedom to access a diverse range of knowledge and information, as well as convenient communications with family members, community members and people around the world.

Within the framework of this new opportunity, the traditional media organizations have explored new methods and ideas to enhance their quality and efficiency, as well as strengthening their day-to-day operations to ensure organizational competitiveness and sustainability. Meanwhile, new media has also started to gain momentum, with the number of online outlets and agencies increasing dramatically in the last five years. In addition, some social media users even create their own content by simply using a smartphone as a way to cater to their personal preferences or needs, or to share their own stories and other facts from the place where they live.



Mr. Nop Vy
Executive Director

Cambodian Journalists Alliance Association (CamboJA)

“

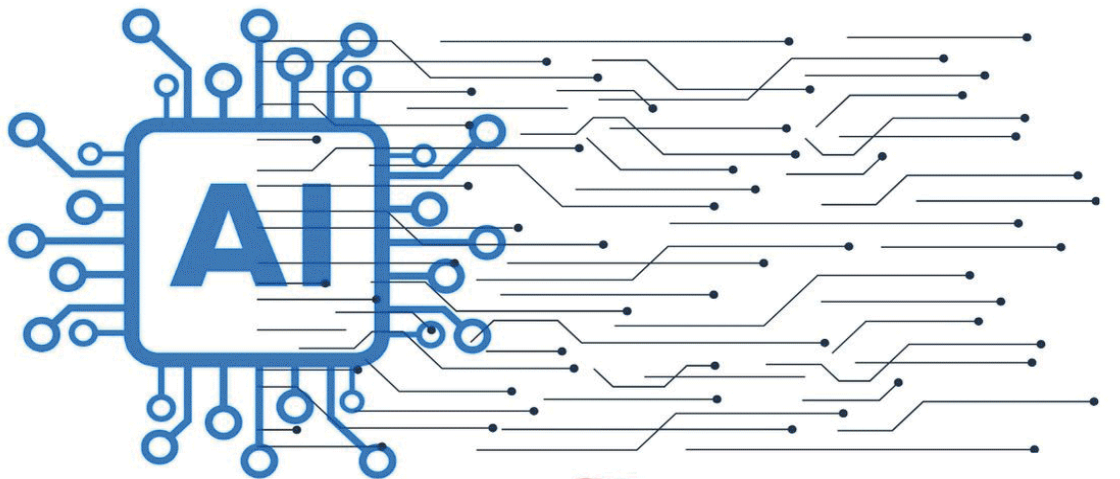
Press freedom in Cambodia is limited. Everyone should join in examination of existing laws in Cambodia to identify gaps, loopholes, areas that affect the practice, and needs for improvement to ensure the press freedom. There is also a need to build the capacity of government officials for corresponding with journalists, and create a favorable and convenient way to jointly inform the public. Moreover, ethics of professional journalism must be sensitized and strengthened.

”

These developments have opened up opportunities for people to have more options in accessing information, but they have also had a negative impact on the traditional media, such as causing a decline in numbers of readers, listeners and viewers of newspapers, magazines, radio and television, leading to the loss of some revenue that the traditional media used to gain from the advertisement of products or services.

Moreover, people, especially those who use technologies, are not well prepared in advance to face the arrival and continuous development of the digital technology, especially the evolution of the latest technology, Artificial Intelligence (AI) that offers both pros and cons, including the danger of fake news. In fact, the inter-ministerial mechanism for combating fake news, the Ministry of Information recorded in 2023 more than 3,000 cases of fake news, representing an increase of about 160% in the last four years if compared to the 2020 record with only 1,300 cases.

The dangers of fake news are having a devastating effect on our society today, creating chaos that can lead to social unrest. Victims lose time, money, and reputation because of defamation, as well as being exposed to the risk of crime. In addition, the dangers of fake news can lead to discrimination and hostility in society and can affect public order and national security.



**3,000 CASES OF FAKE NEWS
were recorded
by the Ministry of Information in 2023
representing about 160% INCREASE
in the last four years if compared
TO THE 2020 RECORD with only 1,300 CASES**



Mr. Puy Kea
President
Club of Cambodian Journalist
(CCJ)

“

I have been working as a journalist for 30 years and I have never had any problems. I have enjoyed my freedom of expression and writing due to my respect to professionalism and ethics. I understand that the freedom of expression in Cambodia will be better if we strengthen our ethics and respect our profession respectively. We also must continue to explore, gain experience and learn more about the latest developments in the field of journalism from other countries, especially from the West.

”



Mr. Penh Pheng
Representative
VAYO FM

“

Press freedom in Cambodia has been better although more attention is needed from all stakeholders on widening information dissemination to cover all issues without fear for public interest. To improve the press freedom in Cambodia, journalists must elevate their skill and ethical capacity to a professional level. Media institutions must promote opportunities for professional and ethical skills training for journalists. Citizens should prioritize sources of information for their consumption to obtain and share knowledge, while encouraging professional journalism.

”



His Excellency Khuong Sreng, Governor of Phnom Penh, gave interview to journalists

© Khem Sovannara / Agence Kampuchea Press (AKP)

Mr. Phan Phorp Barmey

Project Director

Women's Media Center of Cambodia



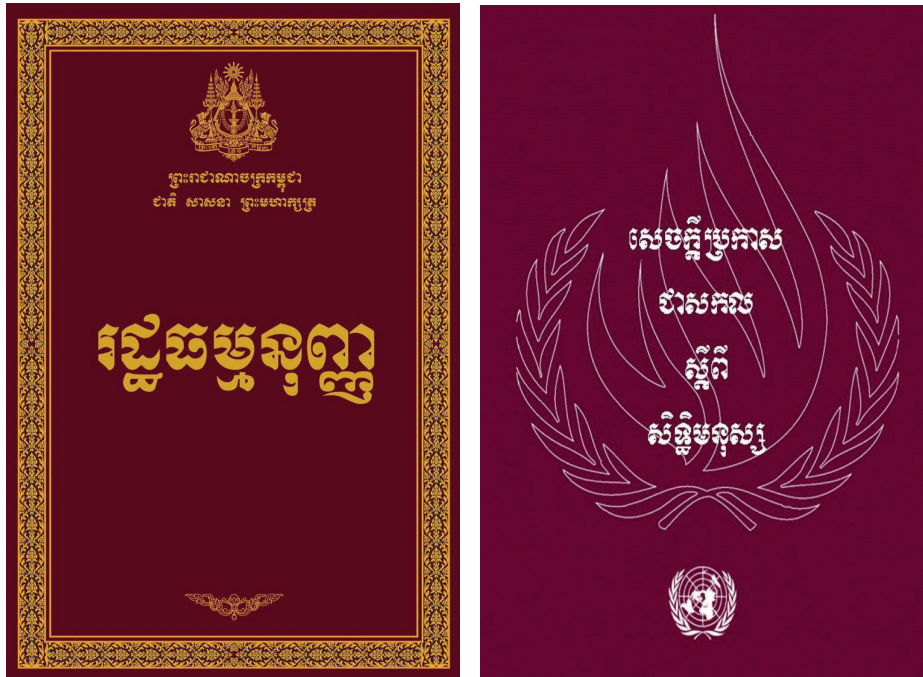
“ There is a rise in number of media outlets in Cambodia. But press freedom in Cambodia has not improved. Citizen journalists are able to express their opinions and disseminate information widely, including fake news. At the same time, there are unethical expressions. To improve the situation, the government needs to accelerate the work on access to Information law, develop specific regulations for journalists' protection, revisit laws that may affect press freedom, ensure an independent judiciary, enhance investigative mechanisms and holds government officials accountable for violation of press freedom and journalists' right.

”

3. State of press freedom within the legal framework

Freedom of the press and expression are fundamental pillars of democracy. These rights are safeguarded by both Cambodian legislation and international agreements, of which Cambodia is the signatory, reflecting the kingdom's commitment to upholding human rights and the rule of law, as articulated in Article 41 of its Constitution. Moreover, Cambodia diligently fulfills its responsibilities as a signatory to the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and various covenants and conventions aimed at protecting and promoting human, women's, and children's rights, alongside economic, social, and cultural rights.

Furthermore, the Royal Government of Cambodia, across successive mandates, has been actively engaged in advancing civil and political rights in alignment with the principles outlined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This commitment specifically includes safeguarding and upholding the right to freedom of expression, press, also covering right to information research, access and dissemination, transcending geographical boundaries.



ARTICLE 41:

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA

“

Article 41: Khmer citizens shall have the freedom to express their personal opinion, the freedom of the press, the freedom of publication and the freedom of assembly. No one can take abusively advantage of these rights to impinge on dignity of others, to affect the good mores and custom of society, public order and national security.

”

Journalists, whether local or foreigner, operate within an open environment in Cambodia, underpinned by the provisions of the 1995 Press Law, which ensures safe space. However, it is imperative for journalists across all sectors to fulfil their role and duties with integrity, precision, adherence to professional ethics, and a profound sense of responsibility, refraining from any misuse of their roles that could compromise the rights, honor, and dignity of individuals, while operating within the framework of existing laws and regulations.

Various covenants and conventions aimed at protecting and promoting human rights in the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

ARTICLE 2

and The press has the right to maintain the confidentiality of its sources.

ARTICLE 3

and To maintain the independence of the press, pre-publication censorship shall be prohibited.

ARTICLE 17

and No natural or fictitious person may own or possess more than two Khmer language newspapers in the Kingdom of Cambodia.

ARTICLE 18

and The total number of Khmer language newspaper owned or possessed by foreigners shall not exceed 20 percent of the total of all Khmer language newspapers published in the Kingdom of Cambodia. Once authorized to publish, newspapers owned or possessed by foreigners may not be subjected to closure because of the reduction of the total number of Khmer language newspapers.

ARTICLE 20

and Any act committed by an employer, editor or author of a text which violates the criminal law shall be punished according to the criminal law. No person shall be arrested or subject to criminal charges as the result of the expression of opinions.

ARTICLE 308

An insult committed through the media shall be subject to the provisions of the Press Law.



Mr. Raoul M. Jenner

Historian and Advisor to the Royal Government of Cambodia

“ Freedom of expression is altered by the lack of respect for people; the practice of using fake news; the lack of respect for institutions and for the law. Freedom of expression is not the freedom to insult and slander, to publish false information, to violate the law. The fundamental right to criticize government choices must be done with respect for facts and people. Not in the use of rumors and personal attacks. Anyone who speaks or writes must submit to the ethical rules of public speech that are in the law to protect those who use the freedom of expression while respecting these rules. ”

4. Survey on the State of Press Freedom in Cambodia

The survey was conducted in 25 capital and provinces of the Kingdom of Cambodia. A total of 350 questionnaires were administered to journalists using Random Sampling method. 341 valid questionnaires are used for analysis. All journalists responded to the questionnaire independently, and anonymously, based on their own will and personal opinion, without inspection or under the influence of anyone. The results of the survey showed that majority of Cambodian journalists are middle-aged men, with an average age of 42, of which 34% are between 31 and 40 years old and between 41 and 50 years old accounted for 33%. 10.9% of journalists participating in the survey are between 21 and 30 years old and 21% are over 50 years old. According to the survey, 43.9% of respondents completed high school while 33.3% completed bachelor's degree, and 6.2% completed their postgraduate degree. However, 3.5% of surveyed journalists have only primary education. The results of the survey also showed that 91.2% of surveyed journalists received training in journalism, but the majority of them, i.e. 97.1%, completed short courses organized either by the Ministry of Information or press association, while only 2.25% received training from universities and 0.65% were trained abroad.

Regarding the freedom of the press and the media space in Cambodia, 79.8% of surveyed journalists said that Cambodia has a good press freedom, with 71% having rated “good” while 8.8 % rated “very good”. However, 3.5% of respondents felt that press freedom was still “poor” and 16.7% did not comment. 79.8% of the surveyed journalists felt that they were completely free to report from various sources and had full freedom to publish their report, with 77.1% saying that there is no article censorship by authority prior to publication. 94.4% of the surveyed journalists viewed that Cambodia has rich and diverse media that reach-out to people everywhere, while 95% supported the following fact: rich and diverse media contributes to the promotion of press freedom in Cambodia.



Journalists on duty © Heng Chivorn Phnom Penh Post

The findings of the study showed that 99.7% of respondents agreed on the importance of adherence to the professional ethics of journalists, of which 81.8% rated the adherence to the professional ethics “very important”. Regarding to this professional ethics, 92.1% of the surveyed journalists supported the application of legal procedures on those violating the professional ethics, and 99.4% supported the training program for journalists to improve their professional quality. In the context of fighting fake news, 99.4% of respondents said that journalists play an important role in combating fake news, with 81.2% saying that journalists have a “very important” role in combating fake news.

The information and results of this study will be widely published and used as a source of information, serving as baseline data for future efforts to monitor and evaluate the state of press freedom in Cambodia in the coming years, in order to strengthen the foundation for continued development of the information sector and the promotion of press freedom in Cambodia.



Mr. Sles Nazy

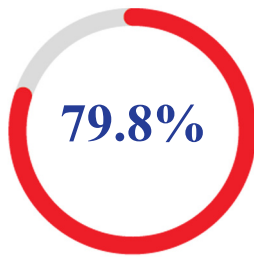
President

Cambodian Muslim Media Center



Press Freedom in Cambodia is getting better and better as there are a variety of media outlets which actively provide news to the public everywhere. Journalists are respected and protected by the law, specifically the press law. In parallel, the diverse minority communities in Cambodia are able to access information about their communities, beliefs, and religious education through reporting with their respective native languages. The Cambodian Muslim community in particular, gain access to information in Cham language via radio, website and social media channels.





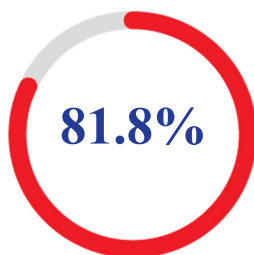
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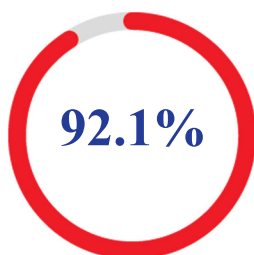
**of the surveyed journalists viewed that
Cambodia has rich and diverse media that
reach-out to people everywhere**



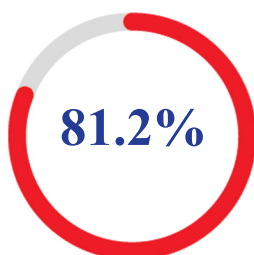
**of all respondents agreed that the current
diversity of media in Cambodia contributed to
promoting the press freedom**



**rated the adherence to the professional ethics
“very important”**



**of the surveyed journalists supported
the application of legal procedures on those
violating the professional ethics**



**saying that journalists have a “very important”
role in combating fake news**



**of respondents said that journalists
play an important role in combating fake news**

5. Social care and protection in the field of information, and public services

Ensuring the welfare of journalists through social protection programs stands as a primary objective within the policy and developmental frameworks of the Royal Government of Cambodia across all mandates. Irrespective of race, color, or political allegiance, every journalist operating within the Kingdom of Cambodia benefits from the comprehensive protection programs initiated by the Royal Government. Amid the global COVID-19 pandemic, special attention was given to the health and safety of journalists. Stringent vaccination protocols were meticulously implemented, with every journalist receiving careful vaccination during each session. This proactive measure was essential to guarantee that journalists continued to be pivotal in reporting true and accurate facts, amidst the challenges of the global health crisis, both domestically and internationally.



National and foreign journalists from media organizations in Cambodia received free-of-charge Covid-19 vaccination at the Ministry of Information on April 1st, 2021, as part of the free nationwide vaccination campaign by the Royal Government of Cambodia © Agence Kampuchea Press (AKP)



Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo HUN SEN, former Prime Minister of Cambodia, during the Annual Meeting with journalists in January 2023 © Agence Kampuchea Press (AKP)

Under the distinguished leadership of **Samdech Techo Hun Sen, former Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia**, the Royal Government of Cambodia has achieved commendable recognition on the global stage for its adept management of the health crisis. Cambodia stands as a beacon of success, being the first country in ASEAN to effectively curb the epidemic through the implementation of a comprehensive, timely, and free vaccination campaign spanning across the nation. This remarkable achievement reflects the government's unwavering commitment to the well-being of its people. Notably, the vaccination campaign left no population unattended, including 6,116 national and international journalists prioritized for vaccination. Such proactive and inclusive measures underscore the visionary leadership of **Samdech Techo Hun Sen**, setting an exemplary precedent for healthcare leadership in the current seventh mandate.



National and foreign journalists from media organizations in Cambodia received free-of-charge Covid-19 vaccination at the Ministry of Information on April 1st, 2021, as part of the free nationwide vaccination campaign by the Royal Government of Cambodia © Agence Kampuchea Press (AKP)

For instance, through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Information and the Biomedic Diagnostic Center, all stakeholders in the information and broadcasting sector, whether public or private, along with officials at various levels of the Ministry, both national and sub-national, as well as their families, are eligible for a 30% discount on specific health services provided by the Biomedic Diagnostic Center. This initiative aims to incentivize regular health check-ups and maintenance, thereby mitigating public health hazards and enhancing productivity.



*Memorandum of Understanding Signing Ceremony between
the Ministry of Information and the Biomedic Diagnostic Center © Agence Kampuchea Press (AKP)*

Additionally, following the strong endorsement of **Samdech Techo Hun Sen, former Prime Minister**, and the significant attention of **Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei Hun Manet, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia**, toward ensuring legal protection for journalists facing accusations or challenges in the lawful exercise of their profession, a commendable initiative has been undertaken. This initiative involves the provision of legal assistance by volunteer lawyers dedicated to supporting journalists. In line with this endeavor, on February 5, 2020, the Ministry of Information took a decisive step by establishing a **“Media Dispute Resolution Coordinating Committee.”** Subsequently, through the effective implementation of this mechanism, the Ministry has actively engaged in mediating numerous successful cases, while also offering legal counsel and services with the collaborative support of **Samdech Techo Hun Sen’s** and the Ministry of Information’s volunteer lawyers. In 2023, the Ministry effectively resolved 43 media disputes in which the Ministry offered lawyer to defense 11 court cases successfully and provide legal consultation to media outlets on 50 occasions.



Meeting to review and update the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Information and the Royal Government's lawyers on legal protection for journalists on October 5, 2023

© Khem Sovannara / Agence Kampuchea Press (AKP)

Concurrently, recognizing the financial constraints faced by registered media organizations within the Ministry of Information and the aim to foster competitiveness in the digital era, the Royal Government initiated a five-year exemption from patent taxes spanning 2023 to 2028 for small online newspapers, with the state assuming the tax burden. Furthermore, the Royal Government reduced the fee for applying for a media license by 50%, aiming to streamline the establishment process. Meanwhile, to support freelance journalists and those lacking a permanent office, the Ministry established a provision allowing them to access reasonably fast internet connectivity within the Ministry premises at no cost, facilitating their professional endeavors.

As part of its commitment to enhancing the accessibility of public services, the Ministry of Information has revamped the One Window Service Office situated within its premises, officially reopening it on December 1, 2023. Presently, the Ministry offers a wide array of public services, including the application processes for various licenses related to public relations, businesses (such as publishing and printing houses), radio and television associations, electronic broadcasting, monitoring ventures, newspapers (both national and foreign language), magazines, newsletters, as well as requests for alterations in newspaper names or control transfers. Moreover, to expedite and streamline service provision to media professionals,

the Ministry has decentralized the media license application process to sub-national administrations. Additionally, efforts have been made to facilitate online access to these public services, ensuring greater convenience for stakeholders in the broadcasting domain.

In its ongoing commitment to fostering positive relationships with journalists from diverse backgrounds, the Ministry of Information has consistently facilitated the involvement and coverage of both national and international journalists in various significant events, spanning both domestic and international arenas. These events include notable gatherings such as the 13th Asia-Europe Summit, conducted in a hybrid format comprising live and online components, as well as pivotal meetings like the 55th ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting and the 40th and 41st ASEAN Summits and Related Summits.

Additionally, the Ministry has supported media coverage of significant historical events such as the 43rd ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA), the 32nd SEA Games, the 12th ASEAN Para Games, and the 7th National Assembly General Election. Moreover, the Ministry has played a crucial role in facilitating media coverage of official events attended by dignitaries, heads of state, government leaders, and representatives from various ministries and institutions. This concerted effort underscores the Ministry's dedication to promoting transparency and facilitating informed public discourse through comprehensive media coverage of significant national and international events.



Journalists collected their newly issued press cards with attached QR Code and received public services at the Ministry Of Information's One Window Service © Long Devith



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His Excellency Neth Pheaktra, Minister of Information visited the One Window Service Office, while explaining the benefits of QR Code on press card © Long Devith

CONCLUSION



Freedom of the press and freedom of expression have been promoted as priority areas of the Royal Government and have received greater attention in this seventh mandate under the leadership of **Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei Hun Manet, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia**, as a continued approach from **Samdech Techo Hun Sen, the former Prime Minister**. This is a testament to the firm position of the Royal Government of Cambodia in protecting and promoting the freedom of the press and freedom of expression in accordance with the Constitution and the principles of existing law. Freedom of the press and freedom of expression in Cambodia are assessed as good, and have been steadily making positive progress in line with the development and progress of Cambodian society. Overall, all key actors and stakeholders in the information sector have taken stock of the positive changes and applauded the progresses made during the last eight months under the new leadership of the Ministry of Information, in cooperation with relevant public and private stakeholders. These efforts paved favorable ways for:

1. Modernization of institutions and building modern administration.

2. Strengthening technical norms and professional responsibilities.

3. Development of human resource and professional conscience.

4. Establishing system and management mechanism for information space and information security.

5. Enhancing inclusive and effective partnerships. In the context of organizing and strengthening the media disciplines, the Ministry of Information has set out its work plan for the establishment of system and management mechanism for information space and information security as well as combating fake news by promoting the accuracy and effectiveness to ensure the rights to access information with high quality and safety in information consumption.

Based on available data administered by the Ministry of Information and the results of this study, journalists and media outlets in Cambodia have fully fulfilled their roles and responsibilities in all parts of the country. About ten thousand journalists, five thousand of whom have applied for press cards, have been producing and distributing diverse forms of news and stories through both traditional and new media platforms, and reporting news freely and safely at any time throughout Cambodia, in compliance with the professional ethics of journalism. However, the Ministry of Information is concerned about a declining trend of traditional media, especially with some print and radio stations have recently shut down their operations, with the closure of Rasmei Kampuchea and Phnom Penh Post in Khmer and English as examples. This dire situation is a consequence of the emerging of digital transformation that Cambodia and all other countries in the world are facing.

In this seventh mandate, the Ministry of Information, as well as the Royal Government of Cambodia, have paid great attention to providing support and protect the rights of journalists registered with the Ministry of Information when facing troubles during the rightful performance of their duties with adherence to professional ethics. Journalists and media organizations that have received legal support and protection from the Ministry of Information have expressed their satisfaction and gratitude for the Ministry of Information and the Royal Government of Cambodia with the ultimate aim at promoting professional values, protecting the profession of journalists and upholding the freedom of the press in Cambodia.



Mr. Suy Se

Cambodia's Representative
Agence France Presse (AFP)

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To improve the press freedom in Cambodia, all relevant institutions should understand the importance of news dissemination and the role of professional journalists. There is room for progress from state institutions and local authorities when asked by journalists to cooperate in providing information in a timely manner.

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Journalists collect information for their reporting © Phnom Penh Post



Mr. Ung Bun Y

Head of

Department of Media and Communications (DMC)

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Press freedom in Cambodia is still limited. In this context, the capacity of journalists must be enhanced, while promoting the effort to increase the number of professionally trained journalists. In parallel, a reform on the current press law should be prioritized to guarantee the press freedom in line with international norms and evolving media, while law on access to information must be adopted to facilitate the process of collecting and disseminating information. Media and information literacy should be strengthened among the public.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

With the rapid development of the technologies, the Ministry of Information encourages all stakeholders to further develop their capabilities and make full use of technological advancement to promote their media coverages with high qualities, competitiveness and their respective identities. For the implementation of this important mission, it is required all stakeholders to continue their efforts to develop human resources, technical skills, knowledges and know-how in supporting information field with merits, efficiency and inclusiveness, which include the promotion of cooperation inside the country, in the regions and with other countries throughout the world in order to strengthen their working qualities and resilience to combat fake news as well as contributing to maintain peace, political stability and sustainable development in Cambodia.

The Ministry of Information, as public relations institution of the Royal Government of Cambodia, will continue to fulfil its roles and mission responsibly, focusing on strengthening and expanding the scope of its media coverage through its national traditional and new media as well as private sector to ensure the comprehensive access to information for people throughout the country in timely manner, meeting the societal need, based on the Ministry's motto ***“New, Fact, Fast, Comprehensive, Reliable and Professional Manners to connect to all”***. The effort also aims at readying the country's integration into digital economy and the 4th Industrial Revolution. In order to contribute to successful implementation of the political programme and the first phase of Pentagonal Strategy of the Royal Government of Cambodia, the Ministry of Information has set out its work plans for 2024 with five strategic priorities:

1. Modernize the institution and establish modern administration.

2. Strengthen technical and professional responsibility.

3. Develop human capital and professional conscience.

4. Initiate systems and mechanisms to manage information space and information security.

5. Strengthen inclusive and efficient partnerships.

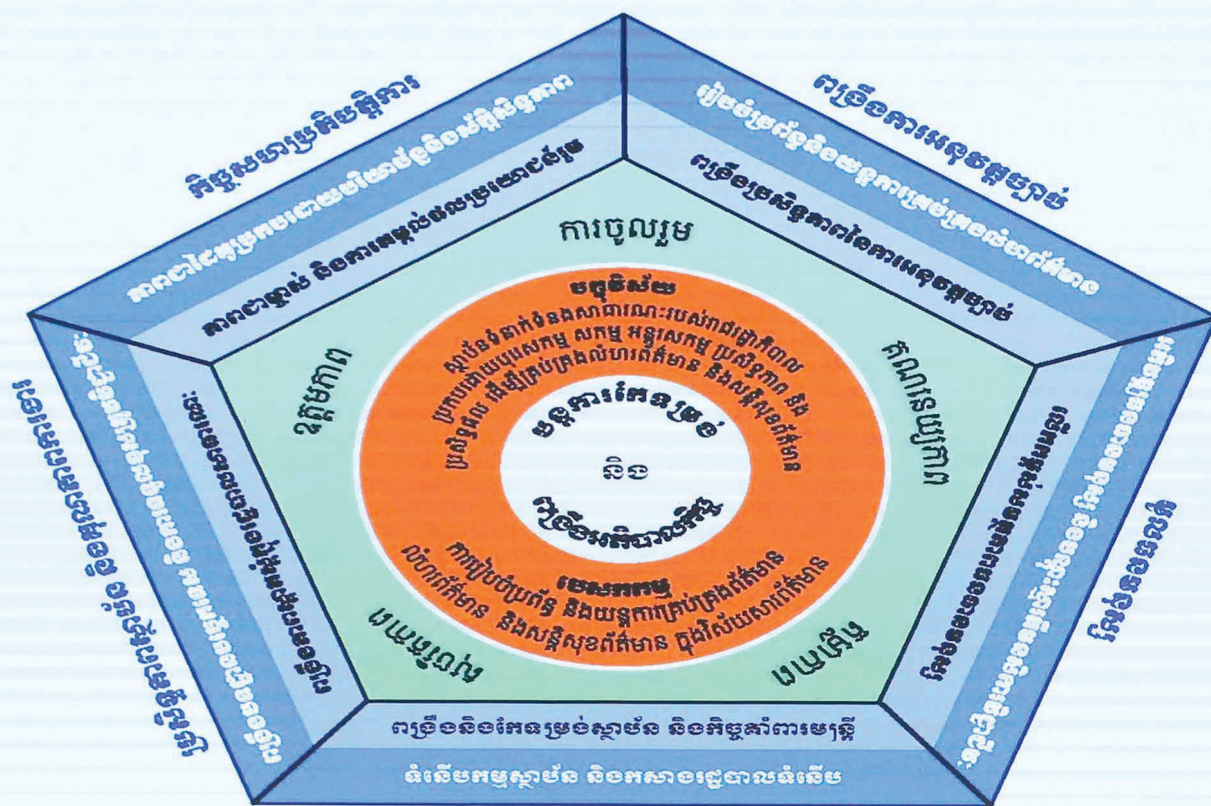
In the context of organizing and strengthening the media disciplines, the Ministry of Information has set out its work plan for the establishment of system and management mechanism for information space and information security as well as combating fake news by promoting the accuracy and effectiveness to ensure the rights to access information with high quality and safety in information consumption. The Ministry of Information is in the process of reviewing draft laws and regulations to ensure its compliance with the social context. The review covers the amendment of press law to be adaptive to current and future trends, the amendment of the sub-decree on the organization and the functioning of the Ministry of Information and associated legal frameworks, the development of a ***“Charter of Professional Journalism”*** to serve as SoP for institutional efficiency, quality journalism and strengthening ethical broadcast and advertisement, and review of procedures for media licensing and online issuance of press cards for journalists with legal and secure QR Code. The Ministry of Information will update its database system and media statistics to increase the effectiveness in procedures for applying for media and broadcasting business licenses. In addition, the Ministry of Information will continue to organize public forums, including the annual meeting between Samdech Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia and journalists, forums with journalist associations and media representatives in order to exchange views and promote partnerships for media and information development, while fostering professional conscience and admiration for journalism by promoting ethical values of the Cambodian journalism for more recognition from national and international circles.

The Ministry of Information calls on all media outlets and journalists to continue to promote professional ethics, perform their roles and responsibilities in accordance with the Law on the Press, as well as building and maintaining good relations with information sources, including government and ministry spokespersons, competent authorities and other stakeholders, fulfilling their duties within the boundaries of the law and must not overstep the scope of journalism duties. In addition, journalists and media outlets must actively promote factual, comprehensive and balanced reporting with quality and clear sources, to earn the trust from people and the society as a whole, while promoting the information sector as the fourth estate in contribution to protecting and maintaining peace in Cambodia and the sustainable development of the country. The Ministry of Information continues to foster the quality of professionalism and is ready to cooperate with all press associations to strengthen professional capacity through training for writing, production and publication/broadcasting skills, as well as courses on professional ethics of journalism.

The Ministry of Information also urge all donor countries that are cooperating in Cambodia or planning to establish partnerships in the form of technical assistance or through the provision of fund, to respect Cambodia's sovereignty and independence and to embrace cooperation aiming at providing support and contribution to the implementation of the strategy and priority action plan of the Royal Government of Cambodia in the information sector, for the benefit of the people and nation as a whole. The Ministry of Information also urges donor countries to adhere to integrity, neutrality and high responsibility in their project cooperation, without linking such assistance, either in the form of technical support or funding, to other agendas that could influence Cambodia's ownership and independence, and that could derive media as a way to serve its political agendas. Cambodia wants honest, quality and responsible participation and cooperation that advance the support toward sustainable growth and development in Cambodia's information sector.



Journalists cover a workshop on “Effectiveness of Spokesperson’s Role, and Information and Public Opinions” at the Royal Academy of Justice © Phnom Penh Post



គោលការណ៍គ្រឹះនៃការគ្រប់គ្រងមធ្យម

VISIONS FOR MEDIA MANAGEMENT IN CAMBODIA

The results of study clearly showed that advances have been made in Cambodia's information sector, with positive developments in media and broadcasting under the leadership and management of the Royal Government of Cambodia from one mandate to another. Journalists in Cambodia have been fully and actively fulfilling their jobs and responsibilities throughout the country in covering, producing and disseminating all forms of news reports to the publics, with their free rights in transparent reporting at anytime, safely and professionally, gaining trust and supports from the general public in all milieus. Both public and private medias are playing crucial roles and as mirrors in reflecting social realities by contributing to ensuring the rights of access to information and knowledge, and helping assist local authorities in resolving their local issues timely for the benefit of national interests and people of Cambodia.

The Ministry of Information has defined its vision as ***“the public relation institution of the Royal Government of Cambodia by being active, proactive, interactive, effective and upholding quality conducts”***, contributing to maintaining peace, political stability, and development. In order to achieve this vision, the Ministry of Information has laid out a number of strategies and mechanisms covering comprehensive reforms, with the focus on institutional and administrative modernization, strengthening institutional efficiency and quality of works, human capital development in the field of information and broadcasting, law enforcement, cooperation with partners, and provision of social protection for Ministry's officials promoting merit incentives. Likewise, the Ministry of Information has been working actively to maintain disciplines in the field of information and broadcasting, and strengthening information security by focusing on ensuring people's rights to access information, information quality and information safety. Information safety is an important pillar for strengthening information security and promoting the information sector in Cambodia in order to prevent and combat fake news, and for reinforcing the adherence to the code of professional ethics in journalism, while the new media has been acting as an important source of information for the public.

In this 7th mandate, the Ministry of Information is committed to building on the current achievements in the information sector to further promote and protect the freedom of the press, freedom of expression and the right to access information as guaranteed by the Constitution, which is the supreme law of the Kingdom of Cambodia, as well as other laws and regulations in force. At the same time, the Ministry of Information will pay close attention on ensuring and maintaining safe environment for the operations of media and professional journalism in Cambodia by undertaking full respect for the freedom of the press on the basis of equality, non-discrimination, non-intimidation and irrespective of political affiliation,

while updating laws and regulations in information sector to ensure the rights, orders, management of information quality and safety. Furthermore, the Ministry will further promote diversities in media functions and careers by promoting women's rights and their participations through the creation of a quota system for women in journalism. In addition, the Ministry will continue to stimulate vocational training for journalists, while creating a favorable environment for better communications and professional working relations between journalists and public sectors, as well as continuing the supports to journalists and all registered media outlets with legal and welfare assistance, and public services in relation to the information sector. With its vision, priorities and mechanisms set out to orientate implementation, the Ministry of Information is taking part actively in achieving the missions and commitments of the Royal Government to protecting the right to freedom of expression and freedom of the press, by promoting media organizations and practitioners as indispensable partners of the Royal Government for socio-economic growth and further democratic development.

Journalists are spokespersons and the source of conveying true information about Cambodia to people across the country and around the globe. In this regard, the Ministry of Information further encourages all journalists and media institutions in Cambodia to play their role in monitoring the implementation of Government policies based on their professionalism and a sense of responsibility adhering to full respect of journalism ethics to deliver their reporting to inform the public and authorities, while contributing to the Government's effort in addressing issues timely for the benefit of people and the nation as a whole. Likewise, in the context of digital information society, journalists play an important role in combating fake news by increasing the dissemination of true, comprehensive and quality news and stories, with clear sources, balanced and reliable reporting that provide necessary knowledge and education to help reduce polluted information and fake news from the media space, thus contributing to information security protection in Cambodia.



អគារលេខ ៦២ មហាវិថីព្រះមុនីវង្ស សង្កាត់ស្រះចក ខណ្ឌដូនពេញ រាជធានីភ្នំពេញ
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KHAN DAUN PENH, PHNOM PENH