

Country Background Notes

CAMBODIA:



FLAG OF CAMBODIA: Three horizontal bands of blue (top), red (double width), and blue with a white three-towered temple representing Angkor Wat outlined in black in the center of the red band; only national flag to incorporate a building in its design.

BACKGROUND: Most Cambodians consider themselves to be Khmers. Cambodia became independent within the French Union in 1949 and fully independent in 1953. A December 1978 Vietnamese invasion drove the Khmer Rouge into the countryside, led to a 10-year Vietnamese occupation, and touched off almost 13 years of civil war. UN-sponsored elections in 1993 helped restore some semblance of normalcy and the final elements of the Khmer Rouge surrendered in early 1999. Factional fighting in 1997 ended the first coalition government, but a second round of national elections in 1998 led to the formation of another coalition government and renewed political stability. The July 2003 elections were relatively peaceful, but it took one year of negotiations between contending political parties before a coalition government was formed. Nation-wide local elections are scheduled for 2007 and national elections for 2008.

GEOGRAPHY: Area: 181,040 sq km.

Capital: Phnom Penh.

Terrain: Mostly low, flat plains; mountains in southwest and north.

Climate: Tropical; rainy, monsoon season (May to November); dry season (December to April); little seasonal temperature variation.

PEOPLE: Nationality: *noun*: Cambodian(s), *adjective*: Cambodian.

Population: 13,363,421.

Religions: Theravada Buddhist 95%, other 5%.

Literacy: *total population*: 69.4%.

Health: Infant mortality rate 73.67 deaths/1,000 live births. Life expectancy is 58.41 years.

Work force: Tourism, garments, rice milling, fishing, wood and wood products, rubber, cement, gem mining, textiles.

Ethnic groups: Khmer 90%, Vietnamese 5%, Chinese 1%, other 4%.

GOVERNMENT: Independence: 9 November 1953 (from France).

Constitution: Promulgated 21 September 1993.

ECONOMY: Currency: Riel (KHR)

Per capita income: \$1,900

Trade: Clothing, timber, rubber, rice, fish, tobacco, footwear.

AGRICULTURE: Rice, rubber, corn, vegetables, cashews, tapioca.

LANGUAGE: Khmer (official) 95%, French, English.