

**News and Current Events :: PRAYER FOR CAMBODIA****PRAYER FOR CAMBODIA - posted by lwpray (), on: 2004/6/22 10:01**

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**NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER FOR CAMBODIA  
THURSDAY, 1 JULY, 2004**

International participation and support is being requested for Cambodia's first fully nationwide National Day of Prayer on Thursday, July 1, to stand with the church at a crucial crossroads time of political, moral and economic crisis.

Cambodia needs to experience a move of God that has been washing over so many other countries of the world. The National Day of Prayer is a call to the Christians to pray for their nation – and for Christians world-wide to uphold this young church that God may complete the work He began and bring it to maturity and unity in love. It is time for the widely scattered Cambodian church to rise up in unity to repair the breaches in the wall and to release God's blessings and power to bring about positive change in society.

The Cambodia economy is in a state of crisis, with high unemployment in both the city and the countryside and a widening poverty gap between city and the largely rural population. Farmers work the fields but do not produce enough rice to feed themselves and around half the population live under the official poverty line. Many farmers leave their families to find work in the cities and family life is difficult with widespread marital and social problems and a subsequent HIV/AIDS epidemic affecting whole families—the worst in Asia.

Children under 15 years of age make up 43 per cent of the population, and the number orphaned as a result of AIDS is now estimated at 140,000 – a huge increase from the 50,000 of two years ago. Many thousands of homeless children and widows live on or “work” the streets of the few main cities.

Other social ills such as prostitution, trafficking in women and children, drug abuse also abound. The World Bank says in a draft report just released that official corruption in the Government and business sector is the biggest obstacle to the nation's progress and recovery, with the levels of bribes businesses are forced to pay to operate at a very high level.

The number of evangelical Christians in the country has been variously estimated at between 120,000 and 200,000 – a big increase from the estimated 200 believers left 12 years ago after the Khmer Rouge genocide years and subsequent Vietnamese communist occupation and military and political unrest. The nation has had an acrimonious democratic government of sorts since the UN-sponsored elections of 1993, but still carries the legacy of generations of turmoil which has created widespread poverty, mistrust, an independent though resourceful survival mindset, corruption and misuse of funds at every level of society government, and an ongoing reliance on international donor assistance.

A political crisis is ongoing, in spite of recent attempts to resolve the present impasse. A government has yet to be formed even though the national elections were held in July 2003. The elderly, ailing King Norodom Sihanouk has refused to get involved in the political deadlock, closeting himself in North Korea until the parties co-operate. Political commentators have suggested it amounts to an act of abdication.

The majority Cambodian People's Party, led by the long-time strongman Prime Minister, Hun Sen, does not have enough seats to run the country without a coalition partner, but the minority parties refused to co-operate until recently, and are holding out for a 50 per cent share of the Government ministerial posts. Human rights organizations claim that there were more than 40 politically-motivated killings so far this year – more than in the whole of last year – election year, a reflection of the atmosphere of fear and intimidation across the nation at grassroots level as various factions jockey for position preceding a new government being formed and the inherent instability of the political scene.

If a government is not put in place soon, all Cambodian exports will be taxed, meaning that many factories making garments and footwear for large export markets will be closed and operations moved to other countries where labour is cheaper and taxes are lower. A deadline for ratifying a World Trade Organisation deadline is fast approaching. A host of other problems will ensue should this happen, and a raft of much-needed legislation is waiting in the wings to be debated and enacted by the new government.

China is gaining an increasing influence over the nation, causing unease in this strategically placed country on the SE Asian mainland sandwiched between the communist nations of Vietnam, Laos, and on the left independent, Buddhist Thailand. Relations between all of them have been acrimonious and historically violent, but relations are thawing, with Cambodia well placed to have a positive influence if its progress is maintained and political impasse resolved.

Tourism, particularly to the ancient Angkor temple sites near Siem Reap, is a key player in the economic recovery and there are moves to boost the country's agricultural production through new development initiatives and diversification.

The 800-seat Chenla Theatre at the capital city of Phnom Penh's new cultural centre will be the main venue for the fourth national day of prayer, an annual event where Christians, both foreign and local, come together for a full day of fasting and intercession for the nation.

The first National Day of Prayer for Cambodia was held in 2001. Christians from all over Phnom Penh, both missionaries and Cambodians, gathered together to stand in the gap for Cambodia. It was an unprecedented show of unity among Christians. Since then, 1 July every year has been designated as the National Day of Prayer.

For the last three years, the event has been confined to Phnom Penh. Christians in the city gathered in one location to seek the face of God. However, this year, the organizers desire to see Christians all over Cambodia gather together in their respective provinces, villages and towns to pray in one accord. Prayer is being mobilized nationally so that Christians can unite at venues across this largely (80 per cent) Buddhist nation of 13.4million.

Around 200 foreign non-governmental organization (NGO) aid agencies including religious organisations running various programmes, operate in Cambodia, and at least half the population of around 5000 expatriate workers is thought to be Christian missionaries or project workers largely involved in helping to rebuild the country's infrastructure, services, education, health and economy and to train up a generation of young church planters and leaders.

The Cambodian Church is comparatively young and immature, most having come to faith well within the last decade, and many are young people seeking answers to life in the turmoil and uncertainty of their newly liberal existence and lack of moral direction and exposure to the excesses, temptations that others nations have.

The Cambodia Prayer Council, formed only 18 months ago to promote national unity through prayer mobilization and networking, invites all Christians who love Cambodia to set aside July 1 to join in prayer for the nation, whichever part of the world you are in, and for the church.

Above all, pray for a strong, united prayer movement to be established that will target the nation's strongholds, for faith, wisdom and understanding of how to pray effectively, to foster national church renewal and revival as it brings together the various independent church movements and denominations to stand and fight against the common spiritual enemy.

Pray through the scriptures of Isaiah 60, 62 and Isaiah 9 as relating to Cambodia.

From the news flow of Intercessors Network