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29th

ANNIVERSARY

THE PHNOM PENH POST

❖ — 10 JULY 1992 - 10 JULY 2021 — ❖



CEO's message

Relevant and vibrant after 29 years – and still going strong!

I AM extremely proud to share my thoughts on this milestone anniversary as The Phnom Penh Post turns 29 today.

The Post continues to uphold the core principles of journalism to bring quality news to our readers and contribute to the profession and nation-building, something we have consistently strived for in the almost three decades since the publication was first launched.

We have thrived because we believe in our editorial integrity which is centred on objective, factual and unbiased principles; we have survived because we remain as a relevant mirror to society; we have succeeded because we see beyond the headlines to capture the news, rather than sensationalism.

And we continue to explore new methods of improving our news production and distribution to keep pace with the shifting contours of the media landscape.

Unexpected wake-up call

Undoubtedly, 2020 was by all measures a testing year. Our lives, routines and businesses changed dramatically after the Covid-19 outbreak early in that year, which also exposed our strengths, weaknesses and vulnerability to unforeseen risks.

The new environment we are living in forced us not only to reconfigure our business model but to look earnestly at the way we



Post Media publisher and CEO Ly Tayseng.

deliver news to our readers.

Organisational restructuring was introduced across the newsroom and other departments as they became the need of the hour to function in the "new norm".

Staff redeployments, employees placed on rotation, working from home and physical distancing rules were quickly enforced as the management remained

vigilant in safeguarding health.

This enabled us to continue publishing the daily news for our readers – at home and abroad – without major interruptions.

Looking beyond 2021

We are reinventing and innovating to be more competitive in bringing authentic and reliable, fresh and unbiased

news to our audiences – both in print and digital formats.

Keeping abreast within a changing tech-driven media landscape, particularly during the pandemic, The Phnom Penh Post has enhanced its digital competitiveness by capitalising on social media platforms such as Telegram and Facebook to attract greater audiences.

'People's paper'

We are constantly sharpening our skills to continue understanding the needs of a fast-changing society to meet the high standards demanded by our advertisers and, more importantly, our loyal readers who insist on quality news – and to function as a trustworthy and respected newspaper in a dynamic environment.

Today we have reached another significant landmark in Cambodia's media industry – *The Phnom Penh Post and Post Khmer* combined have some nine million viewers on Facebook – making us a recognised leader in both traditional media and the digital space.

We are evolving without losing our core values – we want to remain the "people's paper".

Our editorial team continues to highlight society's challenges, from climate change, labour woes and people's predicaments during the Covid-19 outbreak, to poverty and human rights, among others.

We have been part of the historic changes that the Kingdom has witnessed and we will continue to be a tool for change for social good. We are confident

in continuing this incredible journey because we believe we are up for the challenge – the numbers say so too!

It is not only the numbers and the numerous media awards we have won that make us proud, but also for being part of the journey that has witnessed joy and success as well pain as the nation has progressed.

A big thanks!

These achievements would not have been possible without the unwavering confidence and support of our staff, advertisers, business partners and readers over these many years of success.

In this regard, I also appreciate the Royal Government of Cambodia, particularly the Ministry of Information, for creating an enabling environment for The Phnom Penh Post and other traditional and modern media to operate freely under the Constitution and relevant laws of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

I express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to everyone for their support and collaboration.

As we celebrate this milestone, our thoughts go to all our friends and families who have suffered hardship or lost relatives due to the Covid-19 outbreak, and we salute our health-care workers and all relevant officials who have been working tirelessly for months to care for those in need during this unprecedented health crisis.

I wish you all good health – happy anniversary!



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An epic journey: From a source seeker to a source for the seekers

IT HAS been more than 10 years since I ended my former career as a journalist. I spent over a decade working as a professional journalist across the full-range of traditional media outlets – from printed newspapers to radio and television.

I was then given the opportunity to use my knowledge of the media and skills as a communicator to work as a spokesperson and then head of public affairs at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), a tribunal established with the mission of seeking justice for crimes committed during the Khmer Rouge genocidal regime.

Today, I am proud to serve as secretary of state and spokesman for the Ministry of Environment.

My last job working as a journalist was at *The Phnom Penh Post*. I joined this newspaper in November, 2008, after the Khmer-English bilingual newspaper I was editing – *The Mekong Times* – went bankrupt.

I was deputy chief of staff and then managing editor of *The Post Khmer* before embarking on a new career in public relations as a spokesman for the Khmer Rouge tribunal on June 1, 2011.

Although I ended my career in journalism a decade ago and no longer an employee of *The Post*, a portion of my heart and soul will always belong to this newspaper, which now feels like an old friend or member of my family.

My attachment to *The Post* may be due to the fact that I – along with many talented colleagues – gave birth to the Khmer edition of *The Post* – the aptly named *Post Khmer*.

It came into being as the result of our long hours of hard work, toiling away together to realise our vision from the earliest concept development to details like logo and page design to hiring and training the staff and formulating a marketing strategy.

The creation of *The Post Khmer* was a grand exercise in team building and a greatly rewarding professional experience – one that I'll never forget.

The Post Khmer printed its pilot issue on August 8, 2009, and then officially launched in competition with other newspapers on September 9, 2009. Both dates continue to serve as important milestones

for myself personally and for *The Post* as a news organisation.

My bias



Neth Pheaktra during the launch of *The Post Khmer* on September 9, 2009. POST STAFF

in this regard is obvious, but I do feel I can truly say with pride that is warranted that *The Post Khmer* goes hand in hand with *The Post English* as the most authoritative and trusted sources of information available to the Cambodian public as well as the world at large.

As one of the founders, I am very proud of this newspaper, which continues to stand tall in the Cambodian media market by focusing on its primary strength, which is its leading role as Cambodia's most steady and consistent source of factual, balanced and reliable news information.

The Post is where I reached the apex of my career in journalism and accomplished my proudest achievements. It also provided me with opportunities to apply what I had learned about the theoretical underpinnings of journalism while studying in France to real-life work experiences and to hone both my writing and management skills in the process.

And it must be said that *The Post* was a place of warmth and solidarity, productive partnerships and lasting friendships – it was not merely a job, but a community.

I have so many memories working there with a small army of unforgettable colleagues, some of whom are still with *The Post* today including Sam Rith, Vong Sokheng, Sok Visal, Prum Pheak and Pan Simala.

We went through difficult times together, sometimes working through the night, but also having fun together and taking pride in our work and our mission under the motto "*The Phnom Penh Post: Serving Cambodia*".

Even though our personal views at times differed, we all felt a spirit of brotherhood as we laboured shoulder to shoulder, helping each other uphold our common interests and serve the greater good by keeping our readers informed, always working hard to build and maintain the

sterling reputation the newspaper.

The Post is now a historic institution in the field of journalism in the Kingdom. This is true in general when one examines the history of *The Post* itself as a newspaper serving the cause of truth in Cambodia.

Looking back on my time with *The Post*, I won't claim to have realised this at the time, but it is now apparent that the paper really played an important role as the voice of Cambodia during the Cambodian-Thai conflict over the Preah Vihear temple.

Thailand could marshal much greater media resources to amplify its messages, but *The Post* was able to balance that by providing accurate information about Cambodia and its views as other nations looked on, unsure of what the situation might portend.

The tragic Water Festival stampede on the Koh Pich bridge on November 22, 2010, also stands out as a powerful recollection from my years as a journalist for the deep sorrow experienced by everyone involved in covering it at the time.

The stampede taught me important lessons about the need to be flexible and adaptable in our writing so that we may choose words that are both accurate to the situation while also showing respect for the gravity of such a terrible event.

The stampede confirmed to me how important it is for journalists to approach their reporting with a deep sense of responsibility and judicious caution when emotions are running high and rumours are multiplying. And I learned a great deal about how a spokesperson should act in the event of a crisis in order to shape public opinion and channel it in a constructive direction without resorting to omissions or deceptions.

And of course I can't help but feel immense happiness

when the leadership – especially Prime Minister Hun Sen – mentions *The Post* in one of his speeches or holds up the front page of the newspaper to reinforce his words, like he did with an article on Grandpa Ruam Rith, a purported friend of His Majesty the late King Father.

The Post has in recent years played an important role in contributing to national stability and people's understanding of Cambodian politics by providing accurate, fast and reliable information based on clearly sourced information.

After working in the media for over 10 years and then as a spokesperson for over 10 years after that, I am really grateful for the time I spent in my career as a journalist, starting from the French-language news programme *Rendez-vous* on TVK, then writing for outlets like *The Mekong Times*, Radio France International, Khmer Mekong Production, and most recently – and finally – *The Post*.

Journalism provided me with challenging and rewarding work experiences and proved to be a strong professional base to advance in my career when I decided to move forward in a new direction.

These days, I have gone from being a "source seeker" to a source for the seekers, as a large part of my job is providing information to journalists in my role as an official spokesperson, initially for the ECCC and now for the environment ministry.

That may seem like a contradiction to some. I firmly believe, however, that both of these careers that I've pursued – journalist then and government spokesperson now – are fundamentally about finding a way to serve the greater good, promote the public interest and contribute to building a healthy and prosperous society. ■

Neth Pheaktra is currently Ministry of Environment secretary of state and spokesman



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Tracey Shelton: *The Post* shaped who I became as a journalist and as a person

Tracey Shelton

I WAS a young, wannabe photo-journalist when I walked into *The Phnom Penh Post* office in 2005. My portfolio consisted of photos from my Dad's farm back in Australia, portraits from a studio I'd briefly worked in and random pictures from across the globe from several years as a cruise ship photographer.

Still, it was enough to score me my first freelance photography assignments – breakdancing street kids and a “magic” turtle that had wandered into a pagoda – and eventually a job in the newsroom.

My dream was to make a difference in the world, and I saw journalism as my chance to use my skills to expose what was wrong, fight prejudice and misunderstanding and celebrate diversity.

Cambodia was already my second home. I had volunteered there when I was even younger and more naive. This time around, I hoped I was returning with something more to offer.

Back then, the newsroom was a cluttered labyrinth in the home of founder and managing editor Micheal Hayes. I'll admit, at first, his gruff exterior made me nervous, but over my years at *The Post* and beyond I came to admire him greatly as a friend and as one of Cambodia's most dedicated and ground-breaking media icons.

Within weeks, I was not only taking photos, but I had already begun to write my own stories with the encouragement and teaching of editor Charles McDermid, followed by Susan Postlewaite and Seth Meixner. I eventually became an editor myself, leading the best team of photographers in town (I may, however, be slightly bias on that topic!).

In addition to my wonderful photographers, I had the privilege of working with some awesome foreign reporters. Many have remained my friends to this day, but my biggest inspirations were my first Khmer colleagues who taught me what real journalism was all about.

My own interview techniques grew from watching Sam Rith, whose manner put everyone at ease. Survivors would open up with personal stories, while others, unaware they were in the hot seat, would be caught off guard with tough questions that would often elicit telling answers.

Vong Sokheng had incredible networking skills, and I especially loved working in the field with Cheang Sokha. We covered stories together right across the country, but the most memorable trip was to Preah Vihear on the remote northern border with Thailand.

A long-running stalemate between Thai and Khmer soldiers had erupted into fighting and within minutes of receiving the news, Sokha had secured us a ride with AP photographer Heng Sinith. But we had to leave immediately, directly from the office.

I was dressed in heels and office attire and I only had one battery for my camera and no charger, but the guys insisted there was no time to stop by my house. I was not impressed when we stopped past Sokha's house – which was apparently on the way – to get him supplies.

We drove through the night and slept on hammocks we found under a tree at the base of the mountain before making our way up to catch



Tracey Shelton (right) started at *The Post* in 2005 as a young, wannabe photojournalist. She later became an editor, covering stories right across the country. The most memorable trip was to Preah Vihear to cover the long-running stalemate between Thai and Khmer soldiers, which had erupted into fighting over the world-famous temple. SUPPLIED

my first glimpse of the breathtaking, fog-covered Preah Vihear temple at sunrise.

Despite having completely inappropriate attire for a tropical jungle front line – and having to be extremely selective when it came to using my lone camera battery – I was in my element as both a reporter and a photographer.

As the monsoon rains fell and the mud clogged around my broken heels, I didn't complain until some days into the trip when the guys came back freshly showered with clean clothes and invited me to join them for a beer. My usual extreme tolerance for these situations cracked and I demanded to know where they'd found a shower when I hadn't even cleaned my teeth in four days!

My uncharacteristic tantrum must have caught them off guard as I was soon showered with gifts – a bottle of babyshampoo, a hand towel and, from Sinith, a fresh shirt – white of course.

Among the wonderful memories were many valuable lessons and many firsts; my front-page photo, my first investigative report, my first close call – during a riot, a young protester pulled me from the path of an incoming burning plank of wood before muttering, “sorry ma'am”, raising a fist and running back into the crowd.

Career builder

These experiences formed the foundation of my career and after almost five wonderful years at *The Post*, I moved on to become a foreign correspondent covering war and human rights abuses in the Middle East.

I have returned to Cambodia to visit my second home and my second family every year since and never miss the chance to catch up with the guys and reminisce about those wonderful memories.

But this year, amid Covid-19 travel bans that prevented me from being there in person, we were devastated by the loss of our beloved friend Sokha, who was taken from his young family by a sudden illness.

While we all miss him dearly, he will always live on in our hearts, in our

stories and through the many reporters he taught and inspired, like me.

The experience I gained and the people I met during my years at *The Post* shaped not only who I became as a journalist but also as a person.

As a young journalist staring at the photographs that adorned the walls from war correspondent greats, revelling in the occasional chance to pick the brains of Tim Page or Al Rockoff over a beer, I never would have imagined I'd go on to write history myself.

I was there on the front lines when Muammar Gaddafi was captured and told the world of his death in Libya. I had the privilege of documenting the resilience and pain of families and fighters caught up in Syria's war. I was there at the most holy site of the Yazidi faith in Iraq when the Islamic State overran their villages – kidnapping, killing and devastating an entire community.

Still, some of my proudest achievements and fondest memories come from the years I spent at *The Post*. ■



Tracey Shelton (centre) with the late Cheang Sokha (left) and Sam Rith, who has continued to stay with *The Post* and now serves as its Managing Editor. A respected veteran journalist, Sokha was taken from his young family by a sudden illness. SUPPLIED

Bou Saroeun: Reporters channels of information, not anyone's enemy

TIME really flies. It has been almost 20 years since I left *The Phnom Penh Post*, but it feels like it was just yesterday. As a former reporter for *The Post*, I am delighted to contribute to this celebration of the paper's 29th anniversary.

Now, in this age of social media and viral "news" that misinforms more often than it informs, I am hopeful that *The Post* still has an important role to play in providing balanced stories to readers both in Cambodia and further abroad.

I started at *The Post* in 1996 as an office manager. My role then was just to ensure there were enough notebooks, pens, tape recorders and other supplies to keep the place up and running, but I also volunteered to summarise the police blotter – one of *The Post*'s most popular columns.

Office manager was certainly not my favourite job in the world, but I quickly discovered that being a reporter definitely was, or soon would be, if I had my way.

Ever since I was a little boy growing up in a remote village in Svay Rieng province – back when there was no radio and no TV, never mind the internet – I had wanted to be a storyteller.

I saw people holding microphones on stage at gatherings and festivals and I wanted to do that too. When I played with the other boys and girls, I was usually holding a stick as my microphone and telling the other children stories or reporting to them on events both real and imaginary.

I looked for any opportunity to fulfil my dreams of becoming a reporter. As office manager, I watched how the reporters at *The Post* chose their topics and wrote their stories and I talked to them about journalism every chance I got and asked them for advice on how to become a reporter.

In mid-1997, my opportunity arrived. Michael Hayes, the former publisher of *The Post*, asked me to go with him to Choam Ksan district of Preah Vihear province – a place where active fighting was underway between the Khmer Rouge and the Coalition Government forces.

It was a wonderfully exciting experience and when we returned from the battlefield he agreed to sponsor me through a one-on-one crash course in journalistic skills. I became an apprentice to Moeun Chhean Nariddh, to whom I will always be so grateful for the excellent training he gave me that helped me finally realise my dream of becoming a full-time professional reporter.

Given my background and my childhood spent in the war zones between the US and Vietnam in the early 1970s and then between Pol Pot and Vietnam in the mid-70s – and then the nature of my first trip out into the field with Michael Hayes – my first beat was reporting on security, war, political violence and armed conflict – particularly on the Khmer Rouge, but also on the factional fighting that took place in July of 1997.

When the civil war ended, my focus shifted gradually to reporting on topics like human rights, social and political issues, and ultimately ended up with a focus on agricultural and environmental topics.

I left my position as a journalist in mid-2002 and became an external affairs officer at one of the UN agencies in Cambodia. I am still very thankful to *The Post*, Michael Hayes, Kathleen O'Keefe (who, sadly, passed away in 2014) and to all *The Post* editors and journalists who gave me



Bou Saroeun (right) started at *The Post* in 1996 as an office manager. In mid-1997, *The Post* former publisher Michael Hayes (not in picture) asked Saroeun to go with him to Choam Ksan district of Preah Vihear province – a place where active fighting was underway between the Khmer Rouge and the Coalition Government forces. After returning from the battlefield, Hayes agreed to sponsor him through a one-on-one crash course in journalistic skills. SUPPLIED

opportunities and supported me throughout my career in journalism.

So, what can I take from journalism and apply in my current role as a World Bank Cambodia external affairs officer? On this 29th anniversary of *The Post*, I would like to share just three of the many lessons I learned as a reporter with *The Post*'s readership, but especially with any media colleagues and journalists who may be interested.

First, you must build trust and have

reliable sources. For journalists, building trust and having reliable contacts is the only way to get accurate information. When sources trust us, they feel safe talking and sharing information.

Trust here means you must respect your sources and safeguard their rights, security, confidentiality and conditions, among others.

In my current work I have to similarly build trust among diverse networks that include government offi-

cial, the private sector, civil society organisations, the media, young people and rural communities.

Second, shatter the old notions about journalists being enemies or troublemakers. When people hear a reporter is calling or asking questions, they are like, "Oh my god! There must be some problem! We're in trouble!" They panic because they may think that journalists only come around when there is a negative issue to expose or exploit

in a sensational manner.

Actually, media workers can give people the opportunity to clarify issues that are important to them and offer them a channel for getting positive news out about people's accomplishments or achievements as well.

Professional reporters are not anyone's enemy. They are highly-skilled investigators who act as conduits for gathering and disseminating information out to the public.

Third, build a balanced point of view. This is important. When you write your story from a balanced angle, it will lead you to think about balanced views when performing other tasks.

Part of my work in external affairs involves providing advice to the management. When your management receives unbiased views and gets a full picture of a given situation, they can make informed decisions that better support the country and serve its people.

When you lead consultation meetings, for example, having a balanced view will enable you to think broadly about who should be invited to these consultations. Then you will think of representatives from all walks of life – rural communities, vulnerable groups, women and children, LGBTI community members and so on.

Once again, I emphasise my fervent hope for a future where *The Post* can continue playing an important role in providing balanced and factual stories about Cambodia.

My best wishes go to all of the staff at *The Post*. Stay safe!

Bou Saroeun is currently external affairs officer at the World Bank Cambodia office. The opinions expressed here are entirely his own and not representative of any institution or organisation.



Bou Saroeun is currently an external affairs officer for the World Bank Cambodia office. SUPPLIED

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Since it first began operations until today, the newspaper – in Khmer and English – are still popular among readers from all walks of life in the country. HENG CHIVOAN

The Post at 29: Diverse viewpoints from readers on 29th anniversary

Long Kimmarita

THE *Phnom Penh Post* published its first edition in July 1992, marking its 29th anniversary this month.

Since it first began operations until today, the newspaper – in Khmer and English – still stands at the top among the rich sources of media in Cambodia providing factual, accurate, independent, high quality and reliable information.

The following are diverse viewpoints from our readers – including analysts, government officials and journalism experts – about *The Post* on the occasion of our 29th anniversary celebrations.

Pen Bona, president of the Club of Cambodian Journalists who has been following *The Post* since its inception, says: “Before, I used to get a print newspaper, but now ... mostly I get the news through *The Post*’s Facebook page. The news I like to read from *The Post* is the latest breaking news and economic news.

Frankly speaking, newspapers now have a lot in common with exclusively-online news outlets, bearing in mind that print publications also offer electronic editions ... On the other hand, some material, such as economic reporting by *The Post* is accurate and unique.

“*The Post* began as an English-language newspaper. In my opinion, I want *The Post* to be a newspaper that can be a reference for other papers in the region and the world and that can be quoted as an argument for their news.

“If possible, *The Post* should continue to improve its quality level. For example, we should have analysts who are capable of analysing local, regional and global issues because we are a foreign language newspaper with both Cambodian and foreign readers and we must provide knowledge to both,” he says.

Phos Sovann, director-general of the Ministry of Information’s Department of Information and Broadcasting who has been following the news via *The Post* since before 2007, says: “I mostly get my information from

The Post through Telegram because I use it regularly. I need to verify a lot of information, so I follow the headlines and read the newspaper that is always on my desk every morning.

“As for convenience, it is easy for me. I like to follow a variety of information ... I still need a print newspaper because I can work with it on my desk to review some parts of it as there are too many articles on the internet.”

Regarding topics or types of news that he would like to see published, Sovann says: “Not just me, but also the information minister wants to see [positive news]. Those who excel at something should be featured on the pages of the newspaper.

“Meaning a feature that shows people doing what they are best at: A good teacher, a good commune chief, a good

governor or a good worker. A page telling your readers about role models on a regular basis that we would like to know about,” he says.

Cambodian Institute for Democracy president Pa Chanroeun, who regularly reads *The Post* and is also a frequent interviewee for the paper, says he regularly reads *The Post*’s news through various channels such as its Telegram or Facebook page.

“I have been reading *The Post* ever since I studied for my bachelor’s degree. But I did not buy it myself back then, I went to the school office to read it. It was a long time ago and our internet was not as fast as it is today, so we were only reading *The Post* as a newspaper,” he said.

“I always read economic, social, cultural, political and educational news

that matches my interests. I am satisfied with *The Post*’s viewpoint. Despite the change of ownership and politics, *The Post* remains more neutral than other newspapers in Cambodia. I hope that *The Post* will stand as an independent newspaper and maintain its position as a true news organisation to provide factual information to citizens and all stakeholders,” he said.

Chanroeun also says he would like to see *The Post* publish some news articles related to cultural and social morality that provide some good examples for people to use as role models and that showcase a positive outlook on Khmer society.

Minister of Civil Service Prum Sokha, a fan of *The Post* since its inception, welcomes the continued operations of *The Post* and hopes that

the newspaper will continue to disseminate information to contribute to Cambodia’s development.

“The information published by *The Post* is what readers can use with clear sources for reference. *The Post* has stood the test of time and that means it has contributed to the democratic process in Cambodia and served its readers by spreading diverse information.

“I still receive a lot of information from *The Post*, whether it is the print newspaper or through other channels of *The Post*, I get everything.

“I consider the print newspaper to still be useful and I support the Khmer language publications for the Cambodian people, who previously only had foreign language news to rely on, so for those who know less English, they can read in Khmer,” he says. ■



People read *The Post* during breakfast at a cafeteria in Phnom Penh. *The Post* published its first edition in July 1992, marking its 29th anniversary this month. HENG CHIVOAN



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The Post's 29 years of culture, arts, travel & leisure and food varieties

Lifestyle Team

BACK in the early 1990s, when *The Post* first began publishing, there were just a few notable restaurants, like Hang Neak and Heng Lay – both located on Nation Road 6A in Phnom Penh's Prek Leap commune.

As far as leisure destinations went, there was little more than the lawn in front of the Royal Palace, the ocean-side beaches near Sihanoukville and Kep and the majestic ruins of Angkor Wat in Siem Reap.

Eco-tourism in the modern sense had yet to be conceived of or attempted – at least not in Cambodia way back then, with its tragically abundant landmines and the presence in some remote areas of Khmer Rouge guerrilla hold-outs at that time putting a little too much “wild” in much of Cambodia's wilderness for all but the most adventurous outdoors enthusiasts.

As the economy has surged in its growth and the forces of development have been at work relentlessly here year to year, the lifestyle of the average Cambodian has rapidly grown in sophistication and developed to keep pace with modernity, too.

Cambodia now has a diverse array of restaurants, entertainment options, cultural events, resorts and eco-tourism sites to experience and enjoy alike for citizens, expatriate foreign residents and the ever-growing horde of tourists.

Over the past three decades, *The Post* has not only played an important role in publishing national, political, world and economic news in Cambodia, it has also introduced Cambodia to a variety of new developments in its local culture and charted the steady progress made over time in order to reach today's modern lifestyle.

The Post has travelled to every corner of the Kingdom, charting its transformation over the years from an 'off the rails' tourism backwater to a country capable of comfortably hosting millions of visitors each year – pre-Covid-19 and perhaps post-Covid-19 too



Tourists visit an old plane crash site on Oral Mountain in Kampong Speu province. HONG MENEHA

From the heart of the capital city to its suburbs and reaching out across Cambodia to every province of the nation, *The Post's* travel features have introduced hundreds of new leisure places to Cambodians and the world.

“Local media publications like *The Phnom Penh Post* are important for tourism in the sense that they have the responsibility to let people know where it is safe and enjoyable to travel – especially at a time when this changes often,” says David-Jaya Piot, president of the Cambodia Hotel Association's Siem Reap chapter.

He says he is thankful for the travel section because it was always a great place to showcase new and popular destinations all across the country.

“People doing interesting things and our most beautiful places deserve attention and the travel section is a great place for that,” Piot says.

With hopes that a revival of Siem Reap tourism will be coming soon, Piot says his organisation is working with the government to forge a good reopening policy that will properly welcome vaccinated travellers back to Cambodia in a way that is safe, comfortable and attractive.

He told *The Post*: “It is ex-

tremely important to find the correct balance between safety restrictions and an enjoyable tourism experience.

“When tourism returns it will be important that [tourists] are updated on what's out there that is interesting and ready to receive visitors,” says Piot, a French-Cambodian who speaks fluent Khmer and is also the co-founder of Kulen Elephant Forest.

Before the pandemic, community-based tourism and eco-tourism were increasing in popularity as tourists tried to escape from crowded places and the expectation is that trend will resume post-pandemic. The promotion of those alternative destinations and their increased popularity has been partly thanks to coverage by *The Post*, according to Piot.

Chhem Chhim, chief of the Srae Ken community founded in 2004 in Trapang Chhou commune of Kampong Speu province's Oral district, says that since the government lifted travel restrictions there have been many more people hiking to Oral Mountain – between three and five groups per week.

They trek to the waterfall and to an old plane crash site because some visitors remain curious about the accident and they normally spend two or

three nights on the mountain.

“Of course – with the help of publications like *The Post* – tourists are far more aware of eco-tourism sites and we've seen a big increase in visitors. Now, we've added face masks, social distancing and disinfectant sprays – but it's not that different than what we were doing before the pandemic,” Chhim says.

The Post explores food in its vast variety of forms – from the local Khmer delicacies to an ever-expanding feast of foreign cuisines imported to Cambodia from around the world

Countless restaurants serving local Khmer food as well as those featuring the neighbouring Thai and Vietnamese cuisines, in addition to food from every corner of the globe – from Indian and Pakistani to Turkish to Mexican as well as European eateries from all points of the continental compass from Italy in the south or Britain in the west or Belgium in the north or Ukraine in the east – have all been featured on the pages of *The Post*.

Recently profiled in *The Post*, the owners of the wildly popular mom and pop fast food eateries Burgershack – located in Boeung Keng Kang

district's Boeung Keng Kang I commune and Kampot province – say they appreciated *The Post's* professionalism and positivity.

“Furthermore, we loved that it was printed in both Khmer and English. Due to this we had a lot of our family, friends and customers contacting us and saying how proud they were of us and what a fantastic write up it was,” says Luke Macdonald, the restaurateur/entrepreneur and chef who founded Burgershack along with his wife Holly Churchill, who also thanked *The Post* for supporting local businesses.

Princella Anum Gill moved from Pakistan to Phnom Penh and opened a restaurant, Princella Flavors of Saffron, in Tuol Tom Pong to serve up her tasty Pakistani and Indian dishes to the denizens of the capital.

“We really appreciated your review and profile of our restaurant. It was a great experience to work with the team from *The Post*. The article brought about positive outcomes for our business and we are thankful to you and the whole Lifestyle team,” she says.

The Post has featured every form of art imaginable – from classical to pop, from the time-tested classics

to the latest cutting-edge creations – in short, from high concept to lowbrow and everything in between

Lauren Iida, director of Open Studio Cambodia, says *The Post* has been great at covering art events and openings and highlighting artists in Cambodia.

She says *The Post* has given crucial help to artists, art galleries and art spaces in raising awareness about the thriving arts scene in Cambodia and informing the general public about the importance of supporting local artists.

“We hope *The Phnom Penh Post* will continue to spotlight the artists and events of Open Studio Cambodia and all the other amazing artists and art entities in Cambodia,” she says.

Chea Sopheap, executive director of Bophana Centre, says *The Post* has been great about actively covering art events and cultural happenings and the newspaper always keeps the public informed and aware of what's happening in the arts and culture scene throughout the country.

“With their staff of professional journalists, *The Phnom Penh Post* is a reliable, truthful and objective news source for readers who want to keep up with cultural developments here.

“Bophana and other art organisations always welcome the boost to publicity provided by the enthusiastic arts coverage in the *Phnom Penh Post* when we want to share our activities and plans with the public,” Sopheap says.

Poy Chhunly, an artist and animation and video instructor at Phare Ponleu Selpak, says the arts and cultural aspects of *The Post* as a publication make it one of the best sources of support and encouragement for artists in the community and it is doing a great job of spreading awareness of the arts scene to the younger Khmer generations.

“Thanks to *The Post* for their continuous coverage of the arts and artists in Cambodia and all aspects of our culture. Hopefully, with their help we can continue to ensure that Khmer arts and culture will survive and thrive for each successive generation of artists and audiences,” Chhunly says. ■



Visitors at the FT Gallery in Phnom Penh Factory. HEAN RANGSEY



Luke Macdonald founded Burgershack along with his wife Holly Churchill. HONG MENEHA

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