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Botum Sakor becomes first mine-free district in Koh Kong

Som Sotheary / Khmer Times



(L-R) The Indian Ambassador to Cambodia Vanlalvawna Bawitlung, Senior Minister Ly Thuch, First Vice-President of Cambodian Mine Action & Victim Assistance Authority and Mithona Phouthorng, Governor of Koh Kong province, participate in the celebration of the declaration of Botum Sakor district as mine-free. Koh Kong Provincial Administration

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Botum Sakor district in Koh Kong province was officially declared mine-free yesterday, marking a historic milestone as the first district in the province to be cleared of landmines—restoring safety to local communities and paving the way for future development and investment.



The declaration of Botum Sakor district as mine-free took place yesterday, with the participation of Senior Minister Ly Thuch, First

Vice-President of the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA), Indian ambassador to Cambodia Vanlalvawna Bawitlung, as well as provincial officials and the local community.

During the event, Thuch said, “Although mine clearance operations in Botum Sakor district, have been completed, accidents can still occur due to remnants of war that remain scattered throughout the district and certain areas that requires all of us to remain highly cautious,”

Thuch expressed gratitude to the government of India for its support in Cambodia’s humanitarian demining efforts in the province.

In 2023, the Embassy of India in Phnom Penh and the CMAA signed a grant agreement worth \$426,709 to support mine clearance in Botum Sakor, Sre Ambel, Thmar Baing districts, and Trapaing Rong commune in the province.

So far, a total area of 2,396,138 square metres for mine clearance are either completed or still underway with the support of the Government of India.

Botum Sakor is the first district in Koh Kong to be declared mine-free, and other districts, including Sre Ambel, Thmar Baing, and Koh Kong, are expected to be declared mine-free in succession by the end of the year.

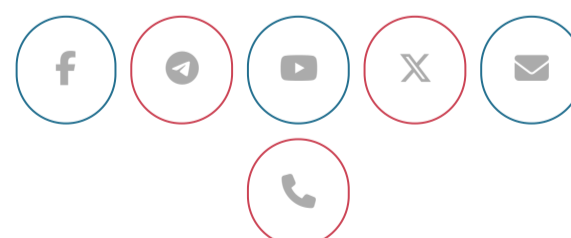
“I hope that India’s support for mine clearance efforts will help boost further investment by ensuring safe access and use of land, as well as enhancing safety for tourists visiting the natural areas of the province. This, in turn, will contribute to improving the livelihoods of the local people,” he said.

From 1992 to 2024, Thuch pointed out, some 3,297 square kilometres of the landmine-contaminated areas have been cleared for use and cultivation, however, Cambodia still has around 1,697 square kilometres of land that remains contaminated with landmines and explosive remnants of war.

“Despite the significant achievements already made in mine action, the remaining contaminated land areas are vast and highly complex, requiring continued and strengthened efforts in mine clearance, along with enhanced cooperation from all relevant stakeholders,” Thuch said

Ambassador Bawitlung said yesterday that this achievement marks a tangible result of the enduring partnership between India and Cambodia, grounded in trust, goodwill, and a shared humanitarian commitment.

“Today, it gives me immense pride to witness that vision taking shape with the successful clearance and official mine-free declaration of Botum Sakor,” he said. “This is not only a milestone in our bilateral cooperation but also a testament to what we can achieve through shared purpose and dedicated partnership.”



India has been engaging Cambodia in both military and civilian demining.

Along with assistance towards demining activities, India was also involved in helping the victims of land mines, with a month-long artificial limb fitment camp in Banteay Meanchey province, organised under the India for Humanity Initiative in March 2023 benefitting 650 Cambodian nationals.

“With Botum Sakor now mine-free, thousands of lives stand to benefit from safer schools and farmland to more robust infrastructure and eco-tourism potential,” Ambassador Bawitlung said.

“We are proud that our efforts have complemented Cambodia’s tremendous national progress in mine action.”

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