

Embassy of India

Phnom Penh

Ambassador's speech for

**Mine-Free declaration of Botum Sakor District of Koh Kong
Province**

April 29, 2025

Namaskar! Chum reap sur, Good morning,

H.E. Dr. Ly Thuch, Senior Minister and First Vice-President of CMAA

H.E. Sreng Hong, Deputy Governor of Koh Kong Province

H.E. Major General Sem Ratana, Acting Director General, NPMEC

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, and Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to stand before you today, to witness and celebrate the declaration of Botum Sakor District as mine-free—a milestone not only for Koh Kong Province but for Cambodia's broader journey toward a safer, mine-free future.

This achievement marks a tangible result of the enduring partnership between India and Cambodia, grounded in trust, goodwill, and a shared humanitarian commitment. I would like to convey my warmest congratulations to the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA), National Center For Peacekeeping Force Mine and

ERW Clearance (NPMEC) and the Royal Government of Cambodia, and all those who have worked tirelessly to make this day a reality.

As you may all recall, during the visit of our Hon'ble Vice President to Cambodia in 2022, a grant assistance was announced as part of India's broader commitment to mine action. This support was aimed at declaring three districts—Botum Sakor, Srae Ambel, and Thma Bang—and one commune, Trapeang Rung—mine-free.

Today, it gives me immense pride to witness that vision taking shape with the successful clearance and official mine-free declaration of Botum Sakor. 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 consistently stood by Cambodia throughout its post-conflict recovery journey. Our involvement in mine action dates back to the early 1990s, when the Indian Army's Corps of Engineers served under the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), playing a key role in laying the foundation for Cambodia's national demining framework. Indian officers also established a demining school to train local volunteers, empowering them with the skills and knowledge needed for a sustainable, long-term response to the threat of anti-personnel landmines.

India has been engaging Cambodia in both military and civilian demining. Military demining assistance initiatives include the provision of \$1.5 million grant for demining equipment to RCAF and 19 sniffer dogs which have been gifted by India.

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 benefited 650 Cambodian nationals.

Under the Quick Impact Project (QIP) scheme of the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation framework, the Government of India, in collaboration with CMAA, successfully implemented a demining project that has resulted in four villages—Tam Kan, Prolean, Chamkar Leu, and Thma Sa—in Koh Kong Province being declared mine-free. This achievement has directly benefited more than 7,000 residents, enabling safer living conditions and improved access to land and infrastructure.

Building on this success, a new QIP is currently underway this year to clear landmines in Kaoh Pao village, also in Koh Kong Province. The project is expected to significantly enhance livelihoods and expand economic opportunities by enabling increased agricultural activity and safer access to fertile land for the local community.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Clearing landmines is more than removing hidden dangers from the ground—it is about restoring dignity, enabling development, and securing a better future for communities. 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.

We are proud that our efforts have complemented Cambodia's tremendous national progress in mine action. With 15 provinces already mine-free and many more close to that goal, the day when the last mine is cleared from Cambodian soil is not far.

In closing, I would like to reaffirm India's enduring support for Cambodia's peace, progress, and prosperity. We remain committed to working closely with the Royal Government of Cambodia, CMAA, and other stakeholders as your journey continues.

Thank you. Orkun chraen.