

## **Lessons from Taiwan**

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I would like to begin my remarks by thanking Taiwanese Government and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) for hosting this visit of the strengthening democracy and overseeing the legislative election process in Taiwan. Foreign observers and CALD members have been brought there together not by regional proximity, economic alliance, or wealth. These nations have been brought together as a partner of sharing democracy and overseeing the election process.

Many in the international community have thought that Taiwanese people obtained successfully democracy as other countries by peaceful means. However, behind the scene many democrats and DPP supporters were arrested, imprisoned, and murdered under the dictatorship regime. This lesson of deep hurt and tears has being occurred in Cambodia, which the Opposition Party (SRP) activists have been threatened and assassinated by pro-CPP authorities.

I felt the shock while I met representatives of DPP in Tainan; they told us about vote buying in the election process, made by the opposition party Kuomintang and its alliance. These reminded me of the situation in Taiwan, before DPP won the presidential election in 2000, was similar to the current situation in Cambodia, that the Cambodia People's Party (CPP) has being used vote buying, intimidation, violation, ingenious tricks as forcing citizens to swear party loyalty oaths before a statute of Buddha, controlling all National Election Committee (NEC) members--from grassroots level up-- to be subservient to ruling party (CPP), administrative harassment (flawed voter lists and changed polling station at the election day) in order to get more votes in every election levels, commune and parliamentary. Taiwanese Central Electoral Commission (CEC) is impartial, not vested interests to any group in rule of the game. Every political party is allowed to appointed nominees to the election commission. It also set up a rule, not permit candidates or political parties offer any kind of gift, or compensation cost more than NT\$30 to voters during election campaign and at the election's day.

Every DPP candidates were elected from primary vote in each county party and they ran election campaign by themselves that is the way to empower the grassroots level through decentralization system in the democratic one. Financial sources were funded by candidates, their members and supporters. Each member is required to contribute to the party amount NT\$300 per year, or more than that. SRP has also committed to undertake a reform of its structures and organization so as to strengthen internal democracy by empowering party members-from the grassroots level up-in the internal decision making processes, but we still face many problems for implementing this process, it is hard to force our members to contribute fund to the party, because their living conditions are already bad.

I also got an impression that opposition party in Taiwan has been funded by the government, according to the number of seats in the legislative institution. This has never happened in Cambodia, even opposition party was the second in popular votes after the 2003 National Assembly Election; the opposition members were excluded from the Assembly's nine commissions, being responsible for debating and revising draft laws, and are facing lifting the parliamentary immunity.

Finally, I was surprised when I knew the resignation as the chairman of the DPP party of President Chen Shui-bian on December 14, after DPP did not reached a majority in the legislative election; even it increased of two more seats from the last 2001 election. His decision made pride for all democrats in the world. It was also a strong message to all the dictators being aware that power is absolutely less than full responsibility. I thought that the democracy in Taiwan leads to good governance, economic development, equity, citizen rights and social justice, at the end of the story, Taiwanese people meets their needs and prosperity, even at the present, even in the future, Taiwan continues to develop in term of economy and politics. From this visit, I also had a good opportunity to share my experiences in politics with all friends at all corners of the world. These made me learned more about the relationship among CALD members.

On behalf of Sam Rainsy Party, I thank Taiwanese people and government, DPP, CALD, and all friends for your supports, sharing ideas and experiences, constructive comments. I am deeply grateful to all of you.