

Read all interviews here:
the-report.com/reports/cambodia/newsweek/

Cambodia

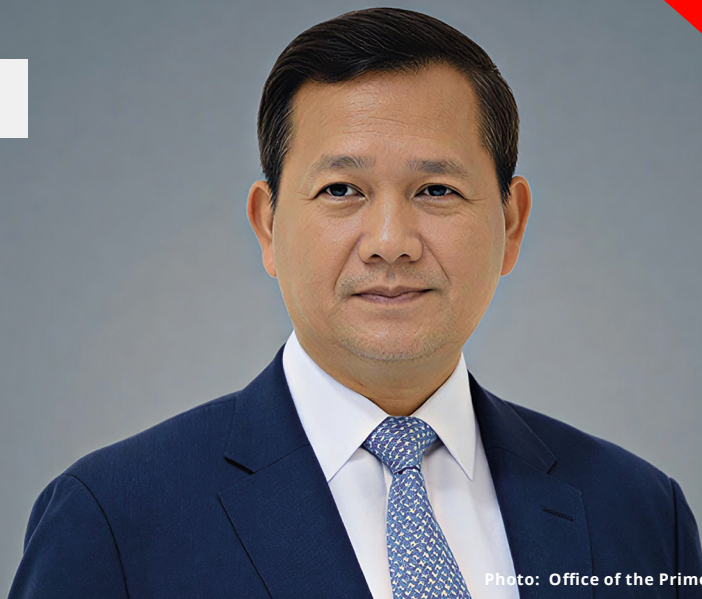


Photo: Office of the Prime Minister

A New Chapter for U.S.-Cambodia Ties

Cambodia's economic transformation offers significant opportunity for U.S. investors. **By Rod Reynolds**

Cambodia's growth story is one marked by agility. Emerging as one of Southeast Asia's most dynamic economies, the government adapted swiftly to changing U.S. policy by reaching agreement on a reciprocal trade deal in October 2025. The pact formalized tariff reductions and improved market access, paving the way for growth in trade flows that exceeded \$15.7 billion in 2025.

Textile and footwear exports to the U.S. are a pillar of the economy, but under Prime Minister Hun Manet—the first Cambodian to graduate from West Point—the country is diversifying through major infrastructure projects, including the \$1 billion Sihanoukville Port upgrade and the \$1.7 billion Funan Techo Canal.

Aimed at boosting connectivity, the plan bolsters Cambodia's role as a strategic gateway to ASEAN markets. Here, Manet explains why his policy agenda and demand for U.S. expertise in sectors including energy, healthcare, security and agriculture have Cambodia primed for investment.

Q: What is your vision for Cambodia's development?

We have come a long way. Maintaining peace, stability and national unity is essential. We must build strong foundations and create opportunities. The role of the private sector is crucial in our policies—sustainable growth does not come from government alone. We provide support by creating a conducive environment and clear regulations. Ultimately, the market and private sector respond to supply and demand within that framework.

Competing globally requires us to improve transparency, accountability and responsiveness. We must also promote our strengths and contributions to the world. Cambodia is committed to this path.

Q: What is your ambition for expanding relations with the United States?

We are committed to working with the U.S. to improve ties. Any trade friction affects American business interests in Cambodia too. That is life. It cannot always be sunny; there are rainy days too. But ultimately, we set the direction of the relationship to move forward. We will not disconnect.

There are Americans living in Cambodia and Cambodians with U.S. citizenship. Our ties are deeply connected. We must build on that. This is the foundation of our relationship with the U.S.

“We are committed to working with the U.S. to improve ties.”

HUN MANET,
 PRIME MINISTER OF CAMBODIA

Q: How has the presence of U.S. companies helped shape Cambodia's economy?

When I was in high school, nearly all finished products were imported. Now, thanks to investment and growth, we produce not only for domestic use but also for export. This includes consumer goods, food, agricultural products, textiles and even high-tech items like semiconductors, medical products and solar equipment. Despite tariffs, we continue to export significantly, a testament to our capabilities.

Our focus now is on strengthening the value chain in Cambodia. Instead of just assembling final products, we are offering incentives and attracting companies to

produce components locally. This is a shift in our industrial strategy.

Q: How does investment in Sihanoukville Port support that strategy?

Sihanoukville is a strategic location. Compared to Singapore, Cambodia offers geographic advantages. However, a major limitation is the shallow port depth. Currently, most cargo must pass through Singapore or other regional hubs, increasing costs.

We aim to complete the first phase of port expansion by 2030, with an estimated cost of over \$900 million, allowing larger global ships to dock directly. This will reduce costs and improve connectivity. The expansion will also drive manufacturing. We have a master plan to transform four coastal provinces into a logistics and manufacturing hub, using the port as a focal point. By interconnecting these systems—port, transport, agriculture and industry—we build internal economic integration. Through roads, water and rail links, we aim to establish a competitive and resilient economy. We hope that in the next 20 years, this strategy will be fully realized and drive Cambodia's future growth. ■

Government Perspectives

“We have the capacity and the conditions to attract more investors.”



H. E. SUN CHANTHOL,
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND FIRST VICE PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CAMBODIA

Sun Chanthol is a central architect of Cambodia’s economic openness, anchoring investor confidence in peace, predictability and partnership. As Deputy Prime Minister and First Vice President of the Council for the Development of Cambodia, he oversees a liberal investment framework that offers transparent legal protections, competitive incentives and coordinated services through a one-stop platform. Under his stewardship, Cambodia continues to strengthen regional integration, enhance market connectivity through ASEAN and RCEP and expand infrastructure and special economic zones to support industries. His mandate emphasizes the importance of sustainable growth.

“We have to develop our cities in a sustainable and inclusive manner.”



H. E. DR. SAY SAM AL,
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF LAND MANAGEMENT, URBAN PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTION

Say Sam Al is a driving force behind Cambodia’s sustainable development agenda, advancing long-term economic resilience, social inclusion and investor confidence. As deputy prime minister, he plays a central role in shaping policy coordination across government, aligning infrastructure and housing reforms with broader growth priorities. “We have to plan and develop our cities in a sustainable and inclusive manner, where all citizens can enjoy urban life aligned with culture, civilization and tradition,” he said, speaking at the Second Cambodia Urban and Housing Forum. His leadership blends regulatory modernization with strategic international partnerships.

“Combating fake news and cyberbullying is a key part of our mission.”



H. E. NETH PHEAKTRA,
MINISTER OF INFORMATION

Neth Pheaktra positions Cambodia’s information sector at the center of national development, prioritizing access, digital reform and a media ecosystem grounded in accuracy. “Combating fake news and cyberbullying is a key part of our mission to protect society and uphold responsible communication,” he says, underscoring campaigns that build media literacy and safeguard public trust. His vision for the sector is shaped by a belief that truth and transparency are essential to lasting peace, guiding efforts to protect audiences and reach out to new generations. “We aim to modernize both our institutions and media outlets to meet the demands of the digital era.”

AWESOME PICK

Awesomepick Unites Quality With Purpose

Awesomepick is dedicated to bringing Cambodia’s natural products to the world stage. *By Rod Reynolds*

The brainchild of former banker Akiva Lavoncio, Awesomepick brings Cambodian staples together under a premium brand name. Emphasizing healthy living and wellness, the company has grown through word-of-mouth marketing and distribution in high-traffic locations such as airports and hotels, including the Shangri-La. Here, Lavoncio outlines how product quality and social impact drive his ambitions for Awesomepick.

Q: What is the strategic vision behind Awesomepick?

The idea behind the Awesomepick name is to create an umbrella brand that brings to-

gether the best of Cambodia’s products, rather than focusing on a single item, such as cashews. Through this brand, we want to show the quality products the country has to offer. It’s not just about doing business; we also have a social responsibility to create change and make a positive impact in the market and the community. I find this work deeply meaningful.

Q: How do you select which products to focus on?

We have three different series: cashews, antioxidants and honey elixir or wild honey. Our company focuses on products that are associated with preventive treatment because we believe

in the notion of ‘you are what you eat’. I wanted to provide a product that benefits all people.

“We want to show the quality products Cambodia has to offer.”

Q: How do you differentiate Awesomepick products?

We want our clients to enjoy a healthier life, and we empower them to make more nutritious choices. We’ve worked hard to spread awareness that our products are 100 percent made in Cambodia and highlight their health benefits. My goal was to create an ecosystem that con-



AKIVA LAVONCIO,
FOUNDER, AWESOME PICK

nects Awesomepick, agriculture and Cambodia into a cohesive lifestyle solution. ■



www.awesomepick.co