

= Norodom Chakrapong =

Norodom Chakrapong (born 21 October 1945) is a Cambodian prince , politician , military commander and businessman . He is the fourth son of Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia and also a half @-@ brother of the current king , Norodom Sihamoni . Chakrapong started his career as a military pilot in 1963 . After Sihanouk was overthrown in 1970 , Chakrapong spent time under house arrest and living overseas before he joined the Funcinpec Party in 1981 . In 1991 , Chakrapong left Funcinpec to join the Cambodian People 's Party (CPP) and served as the Deputy Prime Minister of Cambodia between 1992 and 1993 . When the CPP lost the 1993 general elections , Chakrapong led a secession attempt in 1993 and another coup attempt in 1994 which led him to be sent into exile . After Chakrapong was pardoned in 1998 , he founded a private airline company , Royal Phnom Penh Airways . The airlines later went bankrupt in early 2006 .

In 2002 , Chakrapong established a royalist party , the Khmer Soul Party . When the Khmer Soul Party failed to win a single parliamentary seat in the 2003 general elections , Charkapong rejoined Funcinpec and briefly served as the First Vice President of the Senate in 2005 . In 2006 , Chakrapong was expelled from Funcinpec and joined the Norodom Ranariddh Party . When the Cambodian government pursued legal investigations on the debts Chakrapong accumulated from his airlines , Chakrapong quit politics in 2007 . Chakrapong was subsequently appointed as a privy councillor to the Supreme Privy Council and dedicated himself to humanitarian work and supporting royal activities .

= = Early life = =

Norodom Chakrapong was born at the Khemarin Palace in Phnom Penh , Cambodia to Sihanouk and Sisowath Pongsanmoni . As a young boy , Chakrapong was trained as a ballet dancer at the Royal Ballet of Cambodia , and performed at several state functions when Sihanouk attended or hosted foreign dignitaries when he was Prime Minister . In 1958 , Chakrapong was sent with his half @-@ brother Ranariddh to Marseille , France , where they attended high school . After graduating in 1963 , Chakrapong returned to Cambodia and became an officer cadet with the Royal Cambodian Air Force where graduated at the top of his class . After completing his cadet course , Chakrapong was sent back to France for a year where he received extensive training in flying MiG @-@ 21 jets . He returned in 1967 and was later commissioned as a lieutenant . When Lon Nol launched a coup against Sihanouk in March 1970 , Chakrapong was arrested and kept under house arrest until November 1973 . After his release , Chakrapong went to Beijing , China , where he joined his father and served as his father 's Chief of Protocol between 1973 and 1975 . In 1975 , Chakrapong travelled to Yugoslavia at the invitation of Josip Broz Tito . He spent a year at the Yugoslav Air Force Staff College , before he moved to France with his family as political refugees in 1976 . Chakrapong settled in Marseille and lived close to Ranariddh until 1981 . During this time , Chakrapong ran a small enterprise to provide a source of income for his family .

= = Political career = =

= = = First time in Funcinpec = = =

Chakrapong joined Sihanouk in helping to form the Funcinpec Party in March 1981 . He was appointed a commander of the Armee Nationale Sihanoukiste (ANS , informally known as the Funcinpec army) . The following year , Chakrapong was made a committee member overseeing Health and Social Affairs for the party , a position that he held until 1984 . In March 1985 , Chakrapong became the deputy Chief of Staff of ANS . During this time , Chakrapong defended ANS military bases against Vietnamese incursions . In 1989 , Ranariddh made Chakrapong to represent Funcinpec in negotiations leading to the 1991 Paris Peace Accords . Chakrapong was against the decision to co @-@ opt the Khmer Rouge into playing any role in future Cambodian

governments , a stand that came into conflict with Ranariddh and other senior Funcinpec leaders .

= = = Cambodia People 's Party , secession and coup attempt = = =

In October 1991 , Chakrapong held secret talks with the Khmer Rouge commander , Ta Mok , to explore the possibility of joining the Khmer Rouge . Ta Mok rejected his request , and he approached Hun Sen on the possibility of joining the CPP . The following month , Chakrapong quit Funcinpec to join the CPP at Hun Sen 's invitation . He was given a seat in the party 's politburo , and in January 1992 Chakrapong was appointed Deputy Prime Minister in charge of civil aviation , tourism , industry , culture , education , and social welfare affairs . Shortly after he was appointed to the post , Chakrapong was appointed director of Kampuchea Airlines . He also encouraged foreign investment in Cambodia and provided support to investors that established financial institutions and enterprises in the country .

When the 1993 general elections were held , Chakrapong campaigned for a Presidential system of government for Cambodia with Sihanouk as president . After Funcinpec won the elections in May 1993 , he enlisted Sin Song , the minister for national security , to jointly pressure Hun Sen to protest the election results . When Hun Sen did not agree to Chakrapong 's plans , a brief attempt was made to arrest him which ended in failure when the rest of the CPP politburo expressed solidarity to Hun Sen. Subsequently , Hun Sen issued a directive to strip Chakrapong and Sin Song of their status as Members of Parliament . On 10 June , Chakrapong led a few senior CPP allies , including Sin Song and Bou Thang , to declare the secession of seven eastern Cambodian provinces bordering Vietnam from control by the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) . The region was renamed the " Samdech Euv Autonomous Zone " . UNTAC staff personnel were ordered to leave , and Chakrapong issued orders to soldiers under his command to ransack UNTAC and Funcinpec offices in these provinces . Three days later , Ranariddh returned to Cambodia to preside over an emergency parliamentary meeting to reinstate Sihanouk as the country 's Head of State . At the same time , Tea Banh issued a directive to the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces to restore order in the seven eastern provinces . When Chakrapong received news of these developments , he fled across the border to Vietnam on 15 June . Sihanouk made a formal request for Chakrapong to drop his secessionist movement and return to Phnom Penh . Chakrapong obeyed his father 's request to return and was awarded the military rank of Major @-@ General for the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces .

After a permanent government was formed in September 1993 , Chakrapong and Sin Song appealed to the CPP politburo to be reinstated as Members of Parliament . The CPP made several motions for this purpose , but faced strong opposition from Funcinpec members of parliament under Ranariddh 's instructions . In May 1994 , the CPP was able to secure support from Funcinpec to outlaw the Khmer Rouge in exchange for an agreement not to pursue any further motions to reinstate Chakrapong and Sin Song as Members of Parliament . A month later in June , Chakrapong and Sin Song approached Sin Sen ? Sin Song 's colleague in the ministry of national security to plot a coup and overthrow the government . On 2 July , Sin Song commanded twelve APCs and three hundred police troops from Prey Veng and marched towards Phnom Penh . General Nhek Bun Chhay sent his troops to intercept and disarm Sin Song 's troops before they reached Phnom Penh .

Hun Sen ordered soldiers to arrest Sin Song , Sin Sen , and Chakrapong . When Chakrapong heard that Sin Song was arrested , he became worried for his life and safety , and sought refuge at Regent Hotel in Phnom Penh on 3 July . Chakrapong called American journalist Nate Thayer for help , who assisted him to negotiate with government ministers and diplomats for safe passage out of Cambodia . Thayer had initially sought asylum in the United States but was unsuccessful in contacting US Ambassador Charles Twining . After several hours of negotiations , the government allowed Chakrapong to leave Cambodia for Malaysia . Chakrapong issued a statement to deny his involvement in the coup attempt , and sent a letter to then @-@ Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim for long @-@ term asylum in Malaysia . Anwar turned down Chakrapong 's request after Ranariddh expressed disapproval , and Chakrapong subsequently sought long @-@ term

refuge in France where he was to stay for the next four years .

= = = Subsequent political career = = =

Chakrapong received a royal pardon from Sihanouk in November 1998 and returned to Cambodia in early 1999 . He subsequently rejoined Funcinpec as an ordinary member in March 1999 at Ranariddh 's invitation . Chakrapong abstained from playing an active role in the party to avoid renewing tensions with his brother , and focused on his business career . In April 2001 , Chakrapong shared the idea of forming a new party with Funcinpec party members . In May 2002 , Chakrapong launched the Khmer Soul Party . After the Khmer Soul Party failed to win any seats in the 2003 general elections , Chakrapong dissolved the party and returned to Funcinpec in March 2004 . In May 2005 , Chakrapong was appointed to the newly minted party post of general @-@ inspector . In January 2006 , Chakrapong was elected senator for Prey Veng Province , and was subsequently appointed the first vice @-@ president of the senate . Two months later , Ranariddh nominated him to run for the post of secretary @-@ general , but faced opposition from some senior party members such as Nhek Bun Chhay and Lu Laysreng . Within a week of Chakrapong 's nomination , the finance ministry issued a bill calling for him to pay up due taxes from a failed airline business venture , prompting Chakrapong to withdraw his candidacy for the secretary @-@ general post .

In May 2006 , an anonymous letter from the Ministry of Information was circulated within the party , stating Ranariddh 's purported intention to form a new royalist party . Nhek Bun Chhay followed the issue closely and provided a list of party members who were planning to defect from Funcinpec , which included Serey Kosal and Chakrapong . At the same time , Nhek Bun Chhay appointed Nouv Sovathero party spokesman , while re @-@ designating the then @-@ incumbent party spokesman Chea Chanboribo the personal spokesman for Ranariddh . The cascade of incidents from Nhek Bun Chhay stoked anger from Serey Kosal and Chakrapong who threatened to sue him . When Ranariddh was fired from his position as the president of Funcinpec in October 2006 , Chakrapong was also expelled from the party and senate the following month .

Within days after his expulsion , Chakrapong joined Ranariddh to form the Norodom Ranariddh Party (NRP) , and was in turn appointed the party 's vice president . Ranariddh had been issued two lawsuits over embezzlement of property and adultery , and Chakrapong publicly defended Ranariddh , saying that the lawsuits were politically motivated . After Ranariddh sought exile in Malaysia in March 2007 following his conviction over his embezzlement charges , Chakrapong served as the party 's acting president . In the same month , Hun Sen reopened the case on Chakrapong 's debts and filed legal charges against him . When the commune elections were held in April 2007 , Chakrapong led the NRP to secure 472 out of 11 @, @ 459 commune councilor seats available . Following the commune elections , Chakrapong resigned from the NRP in June 2007 .

= = Business career = =

In October 1999 , Chakrapong founded Royal Phnom Penh Airways . Chakrapong raised US \$ 2 million from personal savings and bank loans , which he used to acquire one 52 @-@ seater Antonov @-@ 24 and another 100 @-@ seater Yakovlev Yak @-@ 42 airplanes . The airlines flew domestic routes within the first year of operations and most of its customers were Chinese , Taiwanese , and Japanese tourists . By May 2001 , Royal Phnom Penh Airways secured three tenders to fly between Phnom Penh ? Bangkok , Phnom Penh ? Ho Chi Minh City as well as Ho Chi Minh City ? Siem Reap . The airlines attempted to secure two additional routes from the Cambodian government ? Bangkok @-@ Siem Reap in August 2001 and Siem Reap @-@ Bangkok in August 2002 ? but lost both bids to other airlines . Chakrapong accused the government political bias in awarding the deals due to his political affiliations . In October 2003 , the director of Battambang Airport , Prum Chantha , reported that Royal Phnom Penh Airways had accumulated \$ 1 million in unpaid taxes . Chakrapong suspended domestic flights between Phnom Penh and Battambang as foreign tourists opted for land transport options to provincial capitals which were cheaper than air

transport . Royal Phnom Penh Airways had already become bankrupt by March 2006 when the government presented Chakrapong a bill of \$ 1 @. @ 36 million in unpaid taxes , navigation , and landing fees . When Chakrapong failed to repay the taxes to the government , Hun Sen issued a lawsuit in March 2007 against him .

= = Palace relations = =

= = = Awards and appointments = = =

Chakrapong was bestowed the title of Sdech Krom Khun in February 1994 , which translates as " The Great Prince " . Chakrapong was given the royal title of Samdech Preah Mohessara in August 2004 by Sihanouk shortly before the latter handed over the throne to Sihamoni . After Chakrapong announced his retirement from politics in 2007 , Chakrapong was appointed as a privy councilor of the Supreme Privy Council of Cambodia with the rank equivalent to Deputy Prime Minister . He also established a foundation named after his older brother , the Norodom Racvivong Foundation , to support charitable and humanitarian initiatives for the poor .

= = = Succession debates to the throne = = =

In the 1990s , a public debate on ensued in Cambodia over the succession to the royal throne after Sihanouk was diagnosed with multiple health problems . Unlike Ranariddh or Sihamoni , Chakrapong was not a popular candidate , and a poll in 1995 by the Khmer Journalists ' Association showed that only 6 % out of 700 respondents supported Chakrapong 's candidacy to the throne . Julio Jeldres , Sihanouk 's official biographer , expressed in 1999 that Chakrapong had little chance of becoming the next king due to his involvement in the 1994 coup attempt . In August 2002 , Chakrapong raised the idea of holding national elections to choose a successor , and expressed concern over political interference in the Cambodian throne council . Chakrapong 's proposal had the support of Jeldres and Son Chhay , an opposition member of parliament who expressed similar concerns , but was opposed by Hun Sen.

= = Family = =

Chakrapong 's mother , Sisowath Pongsanmoni , was the younger half @-@ sister of Sisowath Kossamak . Kossamak is the mother of Sihanouk , and both Pongsanmoni and Kossamak had the same father , Sisowath Monivong . Pongsanmoni died in 1974 . Chakrapong has six full siblings , consisting of three brothers (Yuvaneath , Racvivong and Khemanourak) and three younger sisters (Sorya Roeungsi , Kantha Bopha and Botum Bopha) . Khemanourak , Sorya Roeungsi and Botum Bopha were killed by the Khmer Rouge , while Racvivong and Kantha Bopha died young of illness . Yuvaneath is Chakrapong 's sole surviving full sibling , and Chakrapong has six other half @-@ siblings by Sihanouk 's unions with different wives .

Chakrapong married seven times and had thirteen children . Between 1963 and 1967 , Chakrapong married three times and remained in three separate polygamous unions into the 1970s : Hun Soeun , a ballet dancer from the Royal Ballet of Cambodia ; Kethy Tioulong , the daughter of Nhiek Tioulong ; and Duong Diyath . In 1974 , Chakrapong married Duong Yany in Beijing , while in the 1984 and 1990s Chakrapong married Charuwan Duangchan (a Thai national) , and Monirem respectively . Chakrapong married Kanchanipha , another Thai lady after his divorce from Duangchan .

In December 2005 , Thai journalists reported that Charuwan Duangchan had sought refuge in Thailand . Duangchan alleged that Chakrapong had kept her in confinement since 1993 , and she was not allowed to go out without escort by other family members or guards . She stated that the confinement started shortly after she filed for divorce from Chakrapong . When news reached Chakrapong and their son Charuchak , both of them refuted the allegations . In June 2007 ,

Charuchak was arrested and briefly detained by police for allegedly participating in organised crime and gang violence . The then @-@ second deputy president of NRP , Sisowath Thomico suggested that Charuchak 's arrest might have been politically motivated .

= = = Children = = =

HRH Prince Norodom Buddhapong (born 1966 , by Hun Soeun)
HRH Princess Norodom Nanda Devi (born 1966 , by Kethy Tioulong)
HRH Prince Norodom Amarithivong (born 1967 , by Hun Soeun)
HRH Prince Norodom Naravong (born 1970 , by Hun Soeun)
HRH Princess Norodom Vimalea (born 1969 , by Diyath)
HRH Princess Norodom Bophary (born 1971 , by Diyath)
HRH Prince Norodom Narithipong (born 1972 , by Hun Soeun)
HRH Princess Norodom Ithipong (born 1972 , by Diyath)
HRH Prince Norodom Ravichak (born 1974 , by Hun Soeun)
HRH Prince Norodom Rindra (born 1975 , by Duong Yany)
HRH Prince Norodom Charurak (born 1985 , by Charuvan Dounchan)
HRH Princess Norodom Pongsoriya (born 1997 , by Monirem)
HRH Prince Norodom Pongmonireth (born 2000 , by Monirem)