

Developments in Cambodia

Why in news?

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Cambodia is gaining attention for its actions of political repression and risking democracy.

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What are the recent developments?

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- Prime Minister Hun Sen is in power in Cambodia for the last three decades.
- As Cambodia runs up for elections, Hun Sen is aware of the **anti-incumbent sentiments** among all sections of the population.
- Thus Cambodia is witnessing a series of **dictatorial actions** by the Prime Minister so as to suppress the opposition factions.
- These include -

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1. The recent arrest of his main rival, the leader of Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) for charges of treason.
2. Cambodia Daily, one of the most respected publications in Southeast Asia, was forced to close on allegations of not paying taxes.
3. closing of 15 independent radio stations broadcasting programs from Voice of America and Radio Free Asia.
4. recent promulgation of a law that enables the banning of political parties with connections to criminal convicts.

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- These actions are more like **criminalisation of the opposition** and the media.
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- Opposition politicians, rights groups and independent media have thus come under growing pressure.
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- This will make it impossible for bringing out true information out in the public during the upcoming election.
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Why is this a cause of concern?

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- This slide into political regression is particularly troubling, as the country is still recovering from the memory of the genocide in the 1970s.
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- Notably Cambodia has cancelled its annual joint military exercises with the U.S, and it is increasing its engagement with China.
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- The developments bring out the realities of **deteriorating democracy** in Cambodia and the changing dynamics of big power diplomacy in Southeast Asia.
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- It is for the international community to keep a sustained focus on the developments in Cambodia.
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Source: The Hindu

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