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NOTICES

# Late bloomer reinvents herself as Cambodian computer pioneer

**Anne-Laure Porée** | Publication date 29 January 2009 | 15:00 ICT

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At 35, MekongNet CEO Sok Channda gave up selling fake flowers to build an IT empire.

Photo by:

Anne-Laure Poree

If at first you don't succeed, work harder and more creatively until a breakthrough comes, says MekongNet CEO Sok Channda.

VIEW FROM THE TOP PROFILE

Sok Channda, CEO of MekongNet

Born 1958 in Kompong Cham.

Education Sok Channda never graduated from university - in fact, she never went to university. She began working when she was very young and learned everything by doing.

Career She tried her hand at a range of jobs when she was young, including face massage, embroidery and knitting. At 35, while earning a living selling plastic flowers at Central Market, she enrolled in a computer training course and ended up selling computers to the school. That led to the launch of Anana Computer in 1995 and, more recently, AngkorNet and MekongNet.

Sok Channda is the founder and CEO of internet service provider MekongNet. The company, which was launched in 2007, meets the internet needs of corporate customers through fibre-optic and wireless networks.

By the time Sok Channda launched the company, she already had an impressive reputation as a pioneer in Cambodia's information technology world, dating back to 1995 when she opened Anana Computer. She is also a partner in AngkorNet, which provides internet connectivity to small companies and individual users.

In the early 1990s, the then-35-year-old was making her living selling plastic flowers when she enrolled in a beginners' computer course at Banana School. She could not speak English and relied on a dictionary to find her way around the Windows programs she was being taught to use. Bit by bit, step by step she learned by doing.

Her one advantage was that she owned the most modern computer at the school, which she had bought from Vietnam. After the course she began selling computers to the school, and her career in IT was under way.

Tell us about your job. What do you do in an average day?

I work from 8am to around 7:30 or 8pm at the office. In fact, most of the day I have meetings with the staff in the different departments. I can help them because I have experience in finance, technical areas and sales. And I strictly control the finances. At night time I often search the internet in order to look for new products and to read the

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news of the day.

Could you describe your management style?

The staff have a very clear job description, and our work policy is clear, too. That makes it easy to work here. We monitor the staff closely and if there is something they cannot do, we train them. Two times a year we do performance appraisals in order to measure each one's performance and to analyse how they can better complete their tasks. Now I want to share benefits with them and give them an incentive to keep developing a better quality of service. We will work together to grow the company.

How did you get to where you are today?

I learn fast. Whether it is a small or big job, I want to do it properly. I am also very self-disciplined and I think everything is possible. My idea is not to follow others but to have my own way. My philosophy of business is not to always be in the first position but to provide the best to the customers. They will evaluate the business by themselves.

How do you ensure you continue to grow professionally?

In business I always think ahead. I like new technologies. I always want to find something new, and I keep moving to be prepared for future competition. Even though Cambodia is a small market - it is still behind Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore in terms of technology - Cambodia will need more and more technical solutions, so I focus on technologies that can be adapted and implemented in a developing country. Technologies keep growing. There are many things to do in the future - e-learning, internet related products.

What advice do you have for young people who want to follow in your footsteps?

I have three main pieces of advice. First, when something seems impossible, try to break through; work hard enough to see the real problem and be more creative to overcome the difficulties. Second, do not take losses as a personal affront. When the glass is broken, it is broken. Discouragement makes you unhappy. Keep it aside and try something else. Third, self-learning, self-development and learning new abilities are very important to get a better job.

What do you put the most importance on - study or experience?

University trains the basics but experience comes from work. And to solve problems you need experience. If a young person applies for a job in my company and I see that this person has had many different jobs in many different places, I will not hire him because to have experience, at least you have to stay somewhere for a while.

of meeting loan repayment obligations might pose a risk to both loan



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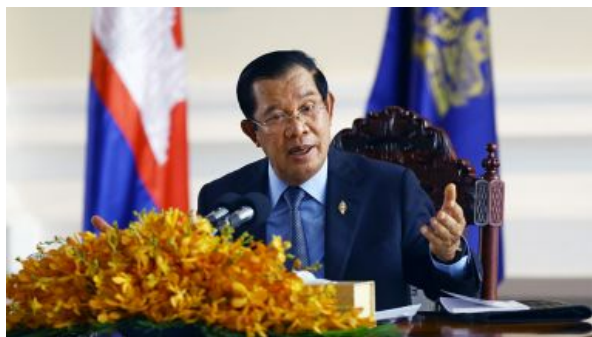


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### Phnom Penh placed in two-week lockdown

The government has decided to place Phnom Penh in

lockdown for two weeks, effective April 14 midnight through April 28, as Cambodia continues to grapple with the ongoing community outbreak of Covid-19, which has seen no sign of subsiding. According to a directive signed by Prime Minister



### **Cambodia on the verge of national tragedy, WHO warns**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) in Cambodia warned that the country had reached another critical point amid a sudden, huge surge in community transmission cases and deaths. “We stand on the brink of a national tragedy because of Covid-19. Despite our best efforts, we are



### **Hun Sen: Stay where you are, or else**

Prime Minister Hun Sen warned that the two-week lockdown of Phnom Penh and adjacent Kandal provincial town Takmao could be extended if people are not cooperative by staying home. “Now let me make this clear: stay in your home, village, and district and remain where



### **Businesses in capital told to get travel permit amid lockdown through One Window Service**

The Phnom Penh Municipal Administration has issued

guidelines on how to get travel permission for priority groups during the lockdown of Phnom Penh, directing private institutions to apply through the municipality's One Window Service and limit their staff to a mere two per cent. In



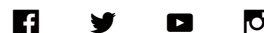
### Vaccination open to foreigners in Cambodia

The Ministry of Health on April 8 issued an announcement on Covid-19 vaccination for foreigners residing and working in Cambodia, directing the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training and local authorities to register them. Health minister Mam Bun Heng, who is also head of the inter-ministerial



### Ministry names types of business permitted amid lockdown

The Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training singled out 11 types of business that are permitted to operate during the lockdown of Phnom Penh and Takmao town, which run through April 28. Those include (1) food-processing enterprises and slaughterhouses; (2) providers of public services such as firefighting, utility and



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