Hierarch of Russian Orthodox Church visits Cambodia



On 13 February 2015, Archbishop Feofilakt of Pyatigorsk and Cherkessk arrived in Cambodia, accompanied by Archimandrite Oleg (Cherepanin), representative of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Kingdom of Thailand, and Mr. Dmitry Petrovsky, a staff member of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate.

At the Phnom Pen airport the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church was met by Mr. Dmitry Tsvetkov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Kingdom of Cambodia; Hieromonk Paisius (Ipate), who is taking pastoral care of the Russian Orthodox Church's communities in Cambodia; and diplomats of Russia's Embassy in Phnom Pen.

That same day, at the Royal Palace, Archbishop Feofilakt of Pyatigorsk and Cherkessk met with Mr. Kong Sam Ol, Deputy Prime Minister of Cambodia's Government and Minister of the Royal Palace, whom King Norodom Sihamoni had commissioned to receive the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The head of the delegation conveyed to the King and people of Cambodia greetings and best wishes

from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. Archbishop Feofilakt expressed gratitude to the Cambodian authorities for giving in-principle consent to the construction of a Russian Orthodox church in Phnom Pen. He also expressed his hope that it would help bear witness to moral values in the modern world and contribute to the strengthening of Russia-Cambodia friendship.

Archbishop Feofilakt handed over to Mr. Kong Sam Ol a personal message from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill to King Norodom Sihamoni and, on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church and her Primate, expressed condolences over the demise of King Norodom Sihanouk, whom His Holiness had met in 2001 during his visit to Phnom Pen in the capacity of chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate.

The Minister of the Royal Palace expressed his deep gratitude for Patriarch Kirill's message, saying, "It shows that religious communities of Russia and Cambodia are bound by good relations and cooperation."

That same day in the evening, the head of the diplomatic representation in Cambodia gave at his residence a reception in honour of Archbishop Feofilakt of Pyatigorsk and Cherkessk.

On 14 February 2015, the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church met with the head of Cambodia's Buddhists, Tep Vong, who warmly greeted the Orthodox hierarch and expressed his hope for the development of friendly relations and cooperation between Russia and Cambodia. On behalf of the Royal Government and the Cambodian people, the majority of whom profess Buddhism, the head of the Buddhist Sangha expressed his gratitude to the people of Russia for the support they rendered to Cambodia in the revival of the country after the political tempest of the 20th century. He especially noted the assistance that the Russian Orthodox Church provided to Cambodia within the framework of international religious organizations and shared his reminiscences of his visits to various Russian regions.

His Eminence Feofilakt conveyed to the head of the Buddhist community greetings from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, who had met with Tep Vong in 2001 during his visit to Phnom Pen, and expressed appreciation for his constructive participation in the World Summit of Religious Leaders which took place in Moscow in 2006. The hierarch also expressed gratitude to the King, the Government and the head of Cambodia's Buddhists, Tep Vong, for offering support to the communities of the Russian Orthodox Church in Cambodia.

That same day, Archbishop Feofilakt of Pyatigorsk and Cherkessk met with Mr. Min Khin, Minister of Cults and Religions of Cambodia.

Mr. Min told the guest from Russia about the religious situation in the Kingdom of Cambodia, where 95% of the population consider themselves Buddhists and where Buddhism is the established religion. There are also Muslims and Christians (Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox) living in Cambodia, Mr. Min noted. The Constitution of the country ensures equal rights of all religious groups, which maintain active cooperation with the state in social sphere, education, etc.

Mr. Min Khin, who is heading the Cambodia-Russia Friendship Association, also dwelt on the development of friendly relations between the Russian Federation and the Kingdom of Cambodia. He told the guest about the assistance that Russia rendered in the revival of the country. For instance, thousands of the Cambodian specialists who are now working for the benefit of their homeland have been trained in Russia.

Archbishop Feofilakt of Pyatigorsk and Cherkessk greeted the Cambodian statesman on behalf of the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church and told him about the experience of peaceful coexistence of religions in Russia. The Orthodox hierarch also expressed gratitude to the Cambodian authorities for giving consent to the construction of an Orthodox church in the capital of the Kingdom.

That same day Archbishop Feofilakt and his suite returned to Bangkok to complete the program of church celebrations in the Kingdom of Thailand.

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