



**EXPECTED OUTCOME.** A Cambodian woman turns in a ballot for the senate election at Takhmau polling station in Kandal province, southeast of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The ruling party of Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen claimed a sweeping win in elections for the country's senate, a victory that it assured itself by eliminating any serious opposition. (AP Photo/Heng Sinith)

## Cambodia's ruling party claims sweeping win in senate vote

By **Sopheng Cheang**  
The Associated Press

**P**HNOM PENH, Cambodia — The ruling party of Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen claimed a sweeping win in elections for the country's senate, a victory that it assured itself by eliminating any serious opposition from the contest.

Sok Eysan, a spokesman for the Cambodian People's Party, said it won a landslide victory. Privately, the party claimed to have won all 58 of the seats that were voted on by the country's 11,572 commune councillors.

Two additional senators are appointed by the National Assembly and another two by King Norodom Sihamoni.

The vote was seen as a foretaste of a scheduled July general election for the National Assembly that is also expected to affirm Hun Sen's rule.

The only opposition party in parliament, the Cambodia National Rescue Party, was dissolved in November after aggressive legal challenges by the government were sustained by the politicized courts.

Government supporters then replaced the party's members of parliament and its commune councillors — the voters in the polls.

Hun Sen has been in power for three decades, and while maintaining a framework of democracy, tolerates little opposition. His grip seemed shaken by 2013's general election, when the Cambodia National Rescue Party mounted a strong challenge, winning 55 seats in the National Assembly and leaving Hun Sen's party with 68.

The opposition party also made a strong showing in last year's commune council elections, capturing 5,007 of the 11,572 councillor positions.

After last year's commune council

elections, Hun Sen's ruling party then stepped up its steady offensive against critics and opponents. Media outlets seen as critical of the government were forced to shut down and most senior members of the Cambodia National Rescue Party fled the country.

"Without the presence of the main opposition that has 55 (members of parliament) and 5,007 commune councillors representing the will of the people, there will be no real free and fair competition as determined by the principles of free, fair, and inclusive elections," said a pre-election statement on the senate election from the Cambodia National Rescue Party, e-mailed by Mu Sochua, its former deputy president, now in exile.

"We urge the United Nations and the international community to denounce the holding of the senate election ... and to take immediate and stringent measures including sanctions as a signal that it will not condone dictatorship," it said.

The United States and Germany have banned issuing visas to certain Cambodian officials considered responsible for the deterioration of democracy. Rights groups have also been highly critical.

"Unfortunately, the Cambodian senate will continue to stand as yet another sad reminder of Cambodia's unmitigated descent into outright dictatorship," said Charles Santiago, a member of the Malaysian parliament and chairman of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) parliamentarians for Human Rights, comprising Southeast Asian lawmakers.

Only three small parties with no national followings ran candidates against the ruling party for seats in the senate, which has no significant decision-making powers.

## Mystery cloaks Japanese dad of 13 born from Thai surrogates

By **Mari Yamaguchi**  
The Associated Press

**T**OKYO — A Japanese businessman who won legal custody of his 13 children born from surrogates in Thailand is virtually anonymous in his home country.

Mitsutoki Shigeta, who was granted sole custody by a Thai court, is the son of the founder of Japanese telecom and insurance company Hikari Tsushin. As a major shareholder, he earns millions of dollars a year in dividends. But in Japan, he keeps an extremely low profile.

Aggressive tabloid reports after the babies were discovered in a Bangkok condominium in 2014 quickly faded, allegedly after defamation lawsuits and pressure were applied by his father's company. Japanese-language media refer to him now as an anonymous 28-year-old man.

Information from the court decision and doctors and a fertility clinic has done little to lift the veil of mystery over Shigeta.

A Japanese lawyer who reportedly represented Shigeta refused to discuss the case, and officials at Hikari Tsushin were not available for comment.

The company started as a business phone and office equipment sales firm and now is listed on the first section of the Tokyo Stock Exchange and has more



**SURROGACY SCANDAL.** Members of the media attend a press briefing at which Thai police displayed projected pictures of surrogate babies born to a Japanese man at the center of a surrogacy scandal during a press conference at police headquarters in Chonburi, Thailand, in this file photo. The Japanese father of the surrogate babies, Mitsutoki Shigeta, is the son of the founder of Japanese telecom and insurance company Hikari Tsushin. As a major shareholder, he earns millions of dollars a year in dividends. (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit, File)

than 180 subsidiaries. Shigeta is the oldest of founder Yasumitsu Shigeta's three sons and has businesses in Thailand and Cambodia, where he arranged the surrogate pregnancies.

Japanese tabloids reported in 2014 that Shigeta said he wanted to produce 100 to 1,000 children and that if he were successful it would cost millions of dollars. He was seeking to purchase equipment to freeze and preserve his "high-quality" sperm at home to allow him to keep producing children even in old age, according to Japanese reports.

Thai authorities have ruled out human trafficking and other criminal motives.

Mariam Kukunashvili, founder of the New Light

clinic in Thailand that recruited some of the babies' surrogate mothers, told The AP in 2014 that Shigeta told her "he wanted 10 to 15 babies a year and that he wanted to continue the baby-making process until he's dead." She said Shigeta also told her that he wanted to run in an election and win by using his big family for voting.

Shigeta's case, along with several others, prompted Thailand to ban commercial surrogacy for foreign clients. That law sent foreigners seeking surrogate mothers to Cambodia, which also later banned it.

Japanese tabloids have reported that Shigeta's parents were spotted

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### 2017 Exemplary Community Volunteer Award Recipient: Chinese American Citizens Alliance



The Chinese American Citizens Alliance (C.A.C.A.) was founded in 1895 in San Francisco as a social club and a national non-partisan organization advocating for Chinese-American empowerment and community service. The Portland chapter — which was established in 1921 — has a membership mailing list of 175. C.A.C.A. Portland has a three-fold mission: to develop leadership, serve the community, and promote civil rights. To this end, the organization hosts the annual Asian American Youth Leadership Conference as well as an annual retreat; awards scholarships to high school seniors; promotes civic engagement with voter registration, ballot measure education, and translating ballots; offers alcohol-server education classes in Mandarin and Cantonese; supports youth basketball with two teams, the Dragons and Tsunamis; donates gift cards to seniors at the Asian Health & Service Center; and many other community-oriented activities. To learn more, visit <www.cacaportland.org>.

**The Asian Reporter Foundation is accepting nominations for its 2018 "Exemplary Community Volunteer" awards.**

The recognition banquet will be held Thursday, April 26, 2018 at southeast Portland's Wong's King Seafood Restaurant.

Nomination forms and award guidelines are available for download at <www.ARFoundation.net>.

The nomination deadline is Thursday, April 4, 2018 at 5:00pm.

**The Asian Reporter Foundation's 20th Annual Scholarship & Awards Banquet features:**

Most Honored Elder Awards	Cultural entertainment
Exemplary Community Volunteer Awards	Ethnic dinner
College Scholarship Awards	Silent auction



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