

Hun Sen Scoffs at Invitation From The Economist

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Prime Minister Hun Sen said Monday that he was puzzled to receive an invitation to attend a summit hosted by The Economist magazine, less than a month after the magazine's business intelligence unit rated Cambodia as a high risk for political instability.

During his opening remarks at the Asia Economic Forum, Hun Sen said he did not know how to respond to an invitation to attend The Economist's Emerging Markets Summit scheduled for Sept 17 and 18. In March, the magazine's research wing, the Economist Intelligence Unit, rated Cambodia as the fourth-highest risk worldwide for unrest caused by global economic decline.

"They looked down on me a day before yesterday, and today

[the Economist] invited me to London in September. Are they crazy or not?" the prime minister asked. "Should I go or not? Should I reply to the letter or not?"

He joked that the EIU should really be renamed the "Stupid Economists."

Although the magazine is hosting the summit, such events and conferences are not connected with the research conducted by the EIU.

Hun Sen reiterated his claim that the EIU had hidden motivations for rating Cambodia so severely in the assessment.

"It's a political intention to interrupt the flow of investment into Cambodia," he said, adding that he was not seeking a retraction from the EIU, despite a letter from Cambodia's ambassador to the United Kingdom demanding the maga-

zine retract its comments.

On Saturday, the China, Hong Kong and Macau Expatriate and Business Association of Cambodia sent a statement to Cambodian media denouncing the EIU assessment. "The EIU's report is miscalculated, misleading in nature and does not reflect the reality in Cambodia," the statement said.

Last week, the Phnom Penh-based International Business Club issued an open letter criticizing the EIU's assessment.

SRP lawmaker Yim Sovann said Monday that Hun Sen should participate in the September meeting and try to work toward solutions for the global economic crisis. "If [Hun Sen] won't go it means that he is afraid to face the questions of economists," he added.

(Additional reporting by Bethany Lindsay)