

The 15,000 Riel Commemorative Banknote Issued 29 October 2019

The 15000 Riel produced at the Banknote Printing Works of the National Bank of Cambodia and issued in October 2019, marks the 15th anniversary of the coronation of His Majesty Norodom Sihamoni, the King of Cambodia – and symbolises the importance of the King, as the focal point of the whole Royal Household, for the newly reborn unity of the Cambodian people, which has only recently emerged pursuant to decades of civil war and unrest that had plagued the country since the late 1960s.

Based on an original in-house(!) design, the banknote also signifies a major technological milestone for the indeed very young Cambodian banknote industry.

The note is printed on Landqart's Durasafe® substrate, the first time it is used in Cambodia - and, indeed, the first time it is used for a circulating note in Southeast Asia. Moreover, the actual specification of the Durasafe substrate chosen for the note is one of the most sophisticated to date, encompassing the full range of hi-tech features the innovative substrate has to offer.

Making full advantage of the capabilities of the “full option” Durasafe involved, the note's design emphasises public recognition features by incorporating a see-through window and two half-windows. The ornamentally shaped full window, with distinctly varying contours on the two sides of the note, contains an intaglio-embossed inkless feature (a floral pattern encompassing diversely directed lines) – while the two ornamental half-windows at the back are used to expose the 4mm-wide demetalised security thread with Cleartext, supplied by Hueck Folien, delicately overprinted with an intaglio illustration and a minitext intaglio tint. As with all Durasafe notes, the thread is encapsulated by the polymer layer to ensure that it can withstand the rigours of circulation while remaining clearly visible and anchored in the substrate.

Another feature making its world debut in the note concerned is a TRILUMIC® applied holographic stripe from Hueck Folien. It expands the range of level 1, public recognition, features of the hologram to level 2 features for tellers and cash professionals. Hidden in daylight under the complex holographic image, an extremely brilliant, true-colour halftone image, perfectly registered on the holographic stripe, becomes visible under UV light.

The above UV fluorescence within the holographic stripe is further complemented with the total of 4 different UV-fluorescent inks involved with various parts and features of the banknote.

Composition-wise, the note represents the first attempt ever – and a remarkably successful one indeed – to adapt the innovative Durasafe substrate to a fundamentally classical banknote design – which, in addition and as a result of the outstanding concept design effort, also fits perfectly into the already existing family of the Cambodian circulation notes (so far printed on paper).

The headline Royal portrait, commanding a notably perfect degree of facial resemblance despite its comparatively modest size (which was executed by Jura JSP in software-assisted classical linear engraving technique) blends very harmoniously with the surrounding graphic environment dominated by elements encompassing a variety of sophisticated patterns (linear and contour, including multi-colour ones, coming in different line densities and thicknesses), as well as a number of screens and relief elements in both offset and intaglio – which, combined together in the design, also fine-tuned and rasterized with top-notch Corvina software, all give the banknote its voluminous, “depth of field” appearance.

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Designed with prioritized social responsibility in mind – especially in view of the still widespread blindness and other severe eye disorders in post-war Cambodia – the note abounds in highly tactile elements to facilitate recognition and authentication thereof by the populace with impaired vision. Apart from the 100-Mcn blind marks on the front lower left per se, width-modulated parallel intaglio lines at the left and the right edges, also highly tactile contours of the major numerals and inscriptions on the front side – all have been designed to serve the above purpose, pushing the intaglio groove depths (supplemented, in certain spots, with the groove profiles' modulation as well) towards the upper end of the applicable range – hence making the overall high tactility of the note's intaglio contents very distinctly pronounced, especially on the obverse side.

The remarkable characteristics of the banknote's in-house design also include the following features, namely:

A unique see-through perfect register: comprised of the elements printed with three different UV-fluorescent inks (inclusive of one invisible in daylight) and involving some extra invisible ink elements on the reverse in particular, the register is fully (and correctly) readable under the UV light on both sides of the banknote – whereas a “more conventional” see-through register would only offer a mirrored readability of the feature on the reverse side under any lighting conditions.

A uniquely rare effect of a very gradual colour transition in intaglio, which is most evident within the ornamental background of the headliner Royal portrait on the front. The said effect has been achieved by using as many as overall 66 (sic!) planes of intaglio colour splits among the intaglio chablons on the obverse side only (and the total of 80 on both sides combined) – which makes up a very remarkable number in itself, let alone the visual effect so clearly emerging as a result.

A rare-to-come-by two-colour serial number combining two different numbering inks, each fluorescent differently under the UV light, also involving a unique quadruple (2+2) prefix comprised of:

- a variable part in one Khmer alphabet letter and one traditional Khmer numeral, and
- a permanent part, namely the “15” Arabic numerals signifying the anniversary to which the banknote is dedicated.

Especially worthy of some particular attention (and of, accordingly, an indeed high degree of extra appreciation) is the fact that all three of the above-listed unique features of the Cambodian note had also been developed in-house by the Phnom Penh-based designer team.

The design and the security contents of the note concerned are further complemented with intaglio depth modulation (particularly visible in the lower right Arabic denomination on the front and the lower left denomination on the reverse), intaglio printing over the holographic stripe, numerous finely done formations comprising the total of 8 various kinds of micro- and minitexts in both offset and intaglio, a meticulously executed latent image in intaglio disguised within an intricate traditional Khmer ornament at the lower right corner of the front side.

Last but by no means least, yet another notable component of the note's security contents is formed by a proprietary covert design feature from Jura JSP, named ICI® (Invisible Constant Information), which has been embedded into the offset print on the

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left coupon of the reverse side – namely, a portrait of HM King Sihamony - alternating, at the focal area, with a “15” numeral in traditional Khmer digits. Each of the two images is made clearly visible with the help of special decoding devices meant primarily for verification by the relevant competent authorities – however, also available to accredited currency professionals.

The dominant colour of the print design is an eye-pleasing lavender, also ensuring that the banknote fits well and remains clearly distinguishable within the rest of the current family of the Cambodian notes.

A series of symbolic Cambodian images and traditional ornaments based on ancient Angkorean bas-reliefs – all crowned by the National Coat of Arms of the Kingdom of Cambodia – give the banknote an unmistakably national flavour. At the same time, the illustration on the reverse, depicting a most touching image of an intimate moment of His Majesty’s coronation with his parents, gives the note an unparalleled humane and homely feel.

Putting out this remarkable note in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, is a strong statement made by the National Bank of Cambodia. The merits of the banknote – noteworthy as they are – definitely look even stronger in view of the fact that the note has been brought into being without any involvement from any other major commercial banknote printer whatsoever – manifesting undeniable achievements attained by the still very young banknote printing industry of Cambodia.

