Developments in Cambodia

Why in news?

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Cambodia is gaining attention for its actions of political repression and risking democracy.

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What are the recent developments?

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- Prime Minister Hun Sen is in power in Cambodia for the last three decades.
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- As Cambodia runs up for elections, Hun Sen is aware of the **anti-incumbent sentiments** among all sections of the population.
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- Thus Cambodia is witnessing a series of **dictatorial actions** by the Prime Minister so as to suppress the opposition factions.
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- These include -
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1. The recent arrest of his main rival, the leader of Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) for charges of treason.
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2. Cambodia Daily, one of the most respected publications in Southeast Asia, was forced to close on allegations of not paying taxes.
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3. closing of 15 independent radio stations broadcasting programs from Voice of America and Radio Free Asia.
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4. recent promulgation of a law that enables the banning of political parties with connections to criminal convicts.
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- These actions are more like **criminalisation of the opposition** and the media.
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- Opposition politicians, rights groups and independent media have thus come under growing pressure.
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- This will make it impossible for bringing out true information out in the public during the upcoming election.
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Why is this a cause of concern?

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- This slide into political regression is particularly troubling, as the country is still recovering from the memory of the genocide in the 1970s.
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- Notably Cambodia has cancelled its annual joint military exercises with the U.S, and it is increasing its engagement with China.
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- The developments bring out the realities of **deteriorating democracy** in Cambodia and the changing dynamics of big power diplomacy in Southeast Asia.
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- It is for the international community to keep a sustained focus on the developments in Cambodia.
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Source: The Hindu

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