

— RESEARCH BRIEF · POLITICS

How a Law Is Made in Cambodia

How does an idea become a law in Cambodia, and who takes part?

THE SHORT ANSWER

From a ministry desk to the King's signature.

How does an idea become a law in Cambodia, and who takes part?

In short, a **ministry** usually writes it, the **cabinet** approves it, and **both houses of parliament** vote on it. The **Constitutional Council** may check it, and the **King** signs it.

— KEY NUMBERS

Four numbers that tell the story



24 days

from cabinet approval to
signed anti-scam law,
2026 (our calculation)



125

members of the National
Assembly, term began
2023 (IPU Parline)



62

senators: 60 indirectly
elected, 2 appointed,
2024 (IPU Parline)



4 days

Assembly vote to
signature, July 2025
amendment (our
calculation)

01

WHAT HAPPENED

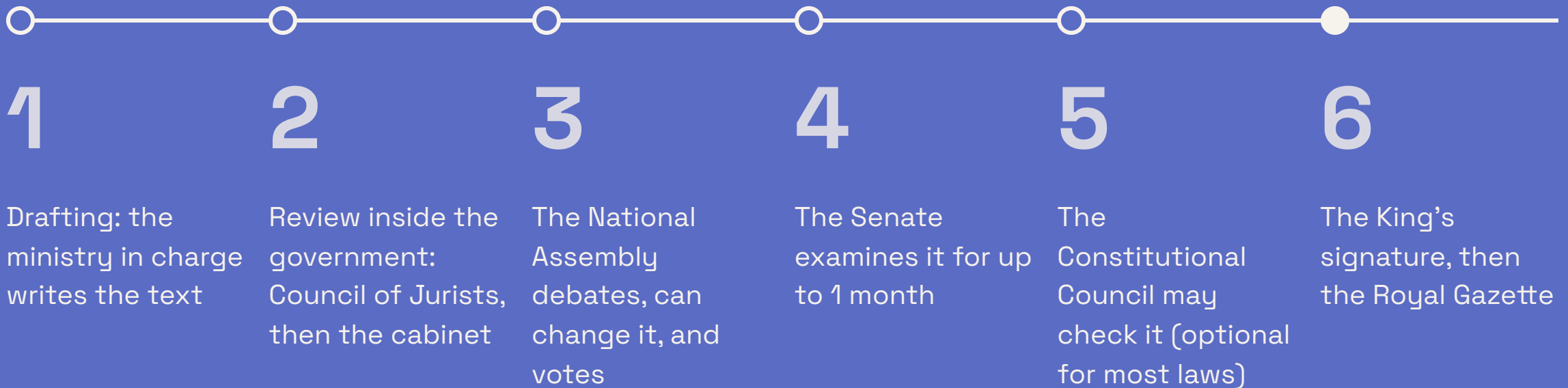
Who can start a law?

Cambodia's Constitution says **3 groups** can start a law: senators, members of the National Assembly, and the Prime Minister (Constitution, Article 91, OHCHR English translation).

In practice, most new laws come from the government. The government's version is called a **"draft law"**. A version started by lawmakers is called a **"proposed law"** (Open Development Cambodia, 2021).

— WHAT HAPPENED

Six steps from draft to law



— WHAT HAPPENED · STEPS 1 AND 2

Inside the government



Step 1, drafting

The ministry in charge writes the text. Since 2013, **Circular No. 03**, an official government instruction, sets one common drafting method (Open Development Cambodia). Open Development Cambodia describes **2 rounds of consultation** here, with ministries, local officials, civil society and businesses.



Step 2, review inside the government

The **Council of Jurists**, a body of legal experts set up in 2020, checks the legal quality of the draft. Then the **Council of Ministers**, the cabinet, approves it in a full meeting (Law on the Council of Ministers, 1994).

— WHAT HAPPENED · STEPS 3 TO 5

Parliament, and an optional check



Step 3, the National Assembly

Members of the elected lower house debate the draft, can change it, and vote.



Step 4, the Senate

The upper house has **up to 1 month** to examine the law, less if it is urgent. It can approve the law, suggest changes, or reject it. Suggested changes go back to the National Assembly, which decides whether to accept them (Constitution).



Step 5, an optional check

For most laws this step is optional. The **Constitutional Council** may check if the law fits the Constitution. It must answer **within 30 days** (Constitution).

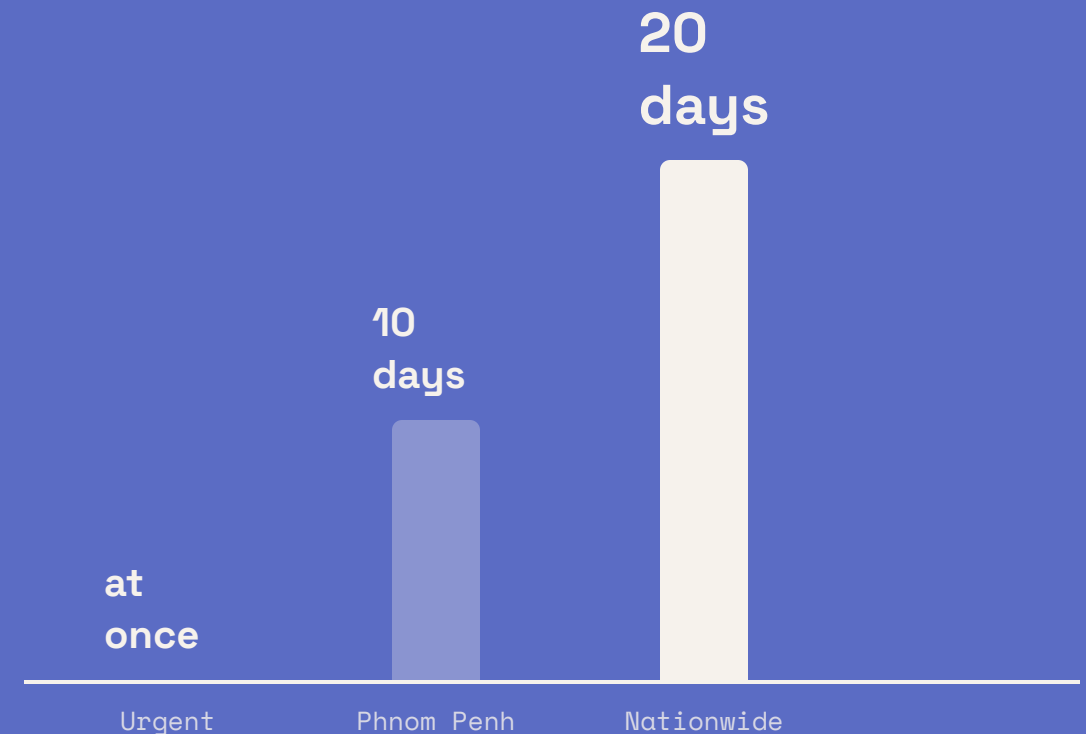
— WHAT HAPPENED · STEP 6

The King's signature

The King signs a **Royal Kram**, a royal act officially announcing the law. When the King is abroad, the Senate President signs as Acting Head of State.

The law is published in the **Royal Gazette**, the official record of laws (Hap, 2022). It takes effect in Phnom Penh after 10 days and nationwide after 20 days. A law marked urgent takes effect at once (Constitution).

WHEN A SIGNED LAW TAKES EFFECT



Days after the law is published, Constitution (OHCHR English translation)

— WHAT HAPPENED · A REAL EXAMPLE

An anti-scam law in 24 days

In a real example, on **13 March 2026**, the cabinet approved a draft law against online scams (CamboJA News, 2026).

On 30 March, the National Assembly passed it, **112 votes to 0** (Asia News Network, 2026). The Senate approved it on 3 April. On 6 April, the Acting Head of State signed it, and it took effect at once (Fresh News, 2026).

That is **24 days** from cabinet to law (our calculation).

DRAFT LAW AGAINST ONLINE SCAMS, 2026



13 Mar

30 Mar

3 Apr

6 Apr

13 Mar Cabinet approves the draft

30 Mar National Assembly passes it, 112 to 0

3 Apr Senate approves it

6 Apr Signed; takes effect at once

24 days

from cabinet to law (our
calculation)

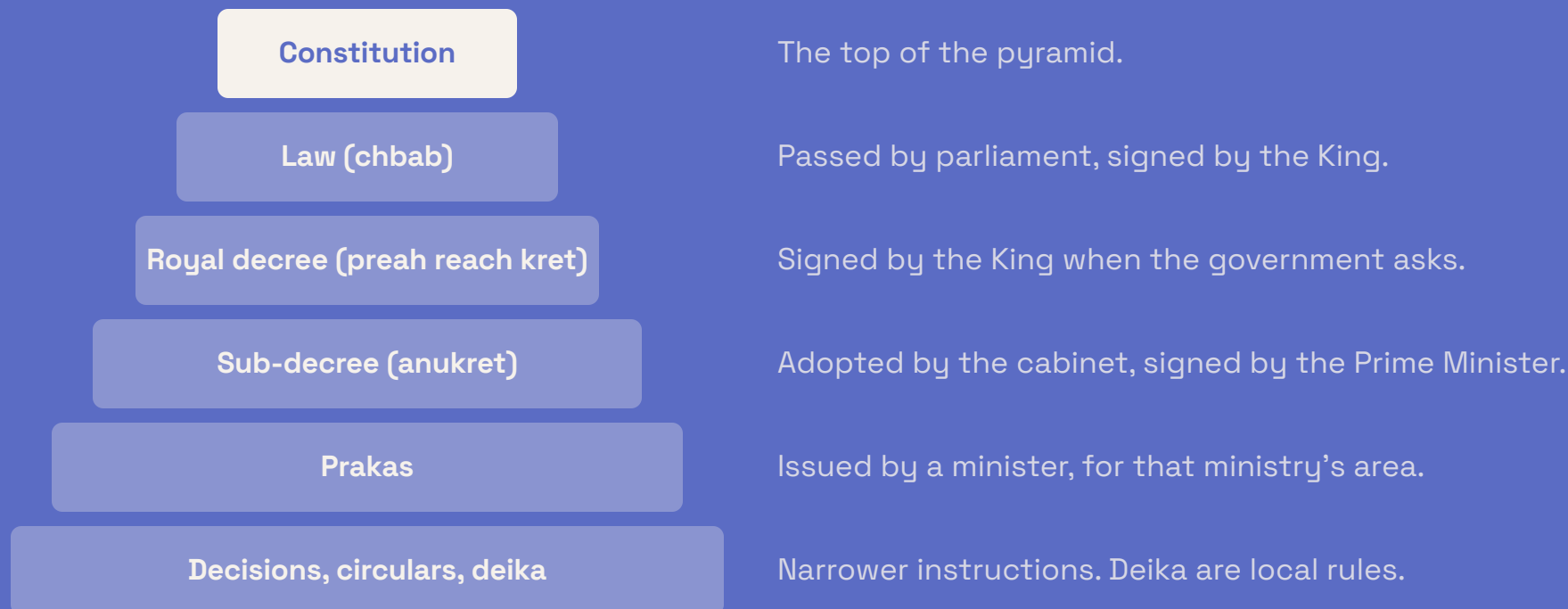
02 WHY IT MATTERS

Many everyday rules sit below laws.

Tax rates, traffic fines and business licences often come from rules below laws. Think of a **pyramid** (Council of ASEAN Chief Justices; Hap, 2022).

— WHY IT MATTERS

The pyramid of rules



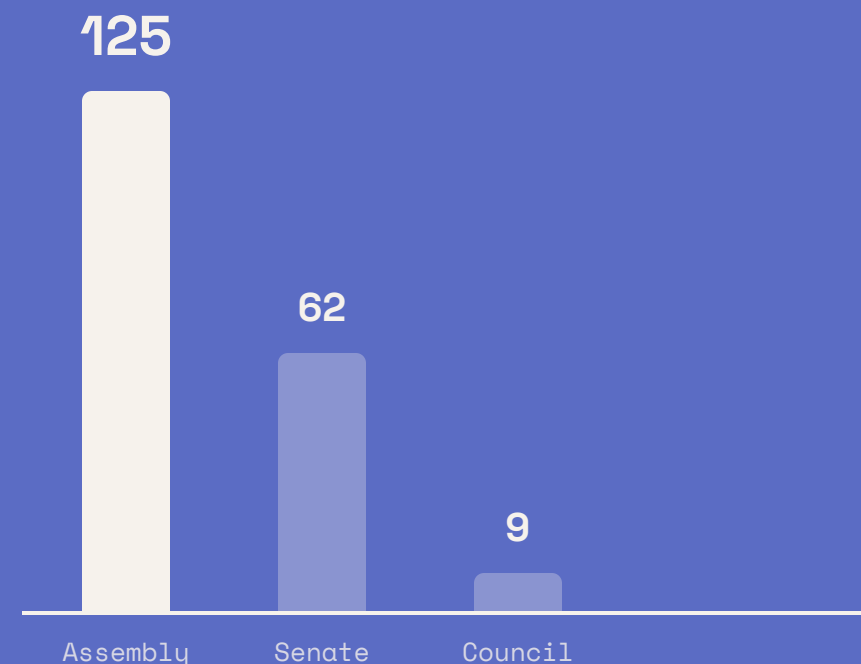
Each lower rule must follow the rules above it (Hap, 2022; Council of ASEAN Chief Justices).

— 03 · WHO IS INVOLVED

Who is involved

- **The National Assembly** has 125 members, for the term that began in 2023. 17 are women, or 13.6% (IPU Parline, 2023). Each member speaks for about 139,392 people (estimate, our calculation: 17.424 million people divided by 125, IPU Parline 2023 data).
- **The Senate** has 62 members, for the term that began in 2024. 60 are chosen by indirect election, not directly by voters. 2 are appointed by the King. 12 are women, or 19.4% (IPU Parline, 2024).
- **The Constitutional Council** has 9 members. The King, the National Assembly and the Supreme Council of the Magistracy each name 3, for 9 years. The King, the Prime Minister, or the president of either house can send a law to it. So can 1/10 of Assembly members, or 1/4 of senators (Constitution).

MEMBERS



Constitutional Council: 9 members (Constitution)

SOURCE IPU Parline, 2023 and 2024 · Constitution (OHCHR English translation) · people per member is our estimate

— 04 · RISKS AND OPEN QUESTIONS

Speed has two sides

Speed can help the state respond to urgent problems, like online scams. But it also leaves less time for the public to read a draft.

In July 2025, the Constitution itself was changed, on citizenship. The Assembly voted on 11 July 2025, with **125 votes** (Office of the Council of Ministers Press Unit, 2025). The Senate voted 3 days later, with **58 votes** (AKP, 2025). It was signed the next day (Open Development Cambodia, 2025). That is **4 days** from Assembly vote to signature (our calculation).

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ON CITIZENSHIP, 2025



11 Jul National Assembly votes, 125 votes

14 Jul Senate votes, 58 votes

15 Jul Signed

4 days

from Assembly vote to
signature (our
calculation)

05

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU

Know who signs a rule.

Knowing who signs a rule helps you know whom to ask.

Citizens can also ask whether a law fits the Constitution. They do this through their **representatives, senators**, or the **president of either house** (Constitution).

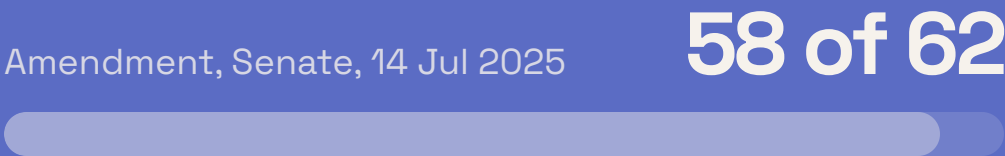
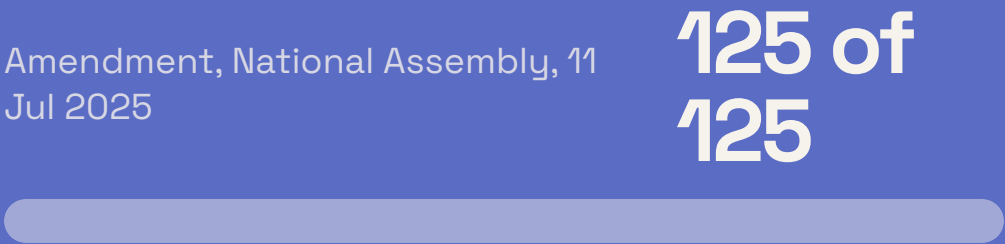
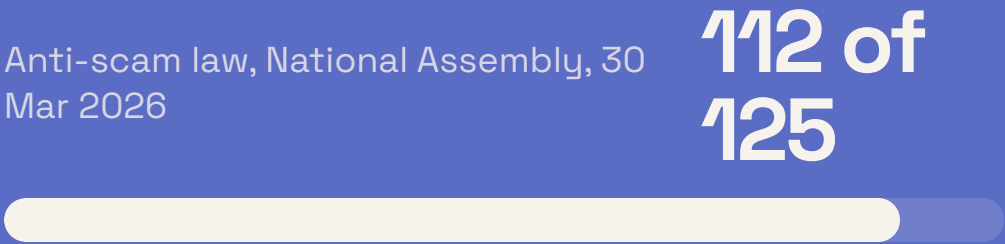
— 06 · DIFFERENT VIEWS

On speed

Both recent examples passed with **no votes against** (Asia News Network, 2026; Office of the Council of Ministers Press Unit, 2025; AKP, 2025).

Some see this as broad agreement on urgent issues. Others may ask if short timelines leave enough time for public reading.

VOTES FOR, WITH 0 AGAINST (SHARE OF SEATS)



Each bar is votes for as a share of that chamber’s seats: Assembly 125, Senate 62 (IPU Parline).

— DIFFERENT VIEWS

On consultation



The government view

In October 2025, Cambodia's envoy spoke at the UN Human Rights Council. On the environment, he said Cambodia meets challenges "through law, consultation and reform". He said civil society joins "open forums twice a year" (Cambodianess, 2025). Businesses can raise problems through the Government–Private Sector Forum, running since 1999. Its latest report counts issues raised since November 2023. By the end of 2024, **115 issues** had been raised and **79 were resolved**, about 69%. These are the government's own figures (Council for the Development of Cambodia, 2025).



Other views

The UN Special Rapporteur, an independent expert, issued a report in 2025. On natural resources, it calls for more "localized participation and inclusivity". It also asks for "people-led checks and balances" (OHCHR, 2025). The legal group ICNL (International Center for Not-for-Profit Law) tracks draft laws that affect civil society. A draft **Access to Information** law has been discussed for years. As of August 2025, it had not been formally introduced (ICNL, 2025; CamboJA News, 2024).

ABOUT THE DATA

Read these numbers carefully

- Legal rules come from one English translation of the Constitution, as amended in 1999 and hosted by OHCHR. Translations of the Khmer original differ slightly, so we do not give the Senate's urgent deadline.
- Membership counts come only from IPU Parline. People per member is our own estimate.
- The 24-day and 4-day timelines are our calculations from reported dates.
- The forum figures (115 raised, 79 resolved) are government-reported, not an independent audit. They cover issues raised from November 2023 to the end of 2024, not totals since 1999.
- The vote counts in the charts come from Asia News Network (2026), the OCM Press Unit (2025) and AKP (2025). The days on the timelines are placed by the dates in those reports.

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Sources and accuracy

Figures in this brief are compiled from public sources believed to be reliable at the time of writing (October 2026). Data can differ between sources and may be revised later. Always check the original source before you rely on a number.



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THE CAMDEX LAB

If you could comment on one draft law before the vote, what topic would it be about?



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