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Lon Nol Family Back in Politics

PHNOM PENH — The son of Lon Nol, who overthrew then-prince Norodom Sihanouk in a 1970 coup before losing power to the Khmer Rouge, has announced he would return his family to the Cambodian political arena, local media said Tuesday.

The Khmer-language Rasmei Kampuchea newspaper quoted a spokesman for Lon Rithi's newly registered Khmer Republican Party as saying the party would compete in the 2008 national elections.

"Lon Rithi will put his leg back into Cambodia," the newspaper quoted Nhean Preah as saying.

Propped up by US aid, the Lon Nol government held out nearly five years until Phnom Penh was overrun by the Khmer Rouge in April 1975 and he fled to Hawaii. He died in exile in the United States in 1985, and Lon Rithi, 47, is a resident of Long Beach, California.

Against the backdrop of a war in neighbouring Vietnam, Lon Nol's regime was widely blamed for sanctioning some of the worst purges of ethnic Vietnamese in the history of the country prior to the Khmer Rouge's brutal Democratic Kampuchea regime.

The political platform of his son's party was not immediately clear.

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