

The Phnom Penh Post

KRT judges urge action on graft

Georgia Wilkins

September 2, 2008

Judges to the Khmer Rouge tribunal urged Monday that "troubling" allegations of corruption within the UN-backed court be fully dealt with, publicly acknowledging for the first time issues of graft among Cambodian staff.

The accusations that employees on the Cambodian side of the court were forced to kick back significant portions of their salaries to their bosses, however, are not likely to appear on the agenda of the fourth plenary session of judges, which runs through Friday, one court official said.

"One of the major issues that has been troubling for all the judges is that of corruption within the ECCC," said New Zealand Trial Chamber Judge Silvia Cartwright at the opening of the plenary.

"We welcome all efforts to ensure that the allegations are dealt with fully and fairly.... These historic trials, which are so important for the people of Cambodia, must not be tainted by corruption," she added.

The session was opened by one of court's the newly nominated "ethics monitors", Judge Kong Srim, who did not mention corruption but expressed concern at the continued need for funding at the tribunal, which is facing a US\$40 million shortfall.

"We still face some financial uncertainty," he said, adding that the Cambodian side was funded through March 2009.

The UN Development Program, which has managed millions of dollars for the tribunal, froze funding after the kickback allegations re-emerged earlier this year.

The UN is currently reviewing the accusations.

Amid the scandal, judges confirmed that this plenary would be devoted mostly to a review of the court's internal workings, such as "scope of appeals and legal representation of civil parties".

The Cambodian Human Rights Action Committee called Friday on the plenary session to "not limit or preclude" civil party participation, despite concerns that they delay proceedings.

It said the judges "must be mindful that any amendments adopted relating to victim participation reflect the scope of victims' rights under Cambodian law."