

THE CAMBODIA DAILY

Volume 32 Issue 21

Wednesday, July 20, 2005

Hun Sen Says KR Fueled by Class Warfare BY PIN SISOVANN AND MICHAEL COWDEN

Prime Minister Hun Sen said Tuesday that tension between social classes enabled the Khmer Rouge leadership to commit the atrocities that took place under the Pol Pot regime.

Speaking before students and dignitaries at Pannasastra University, the prime minister also said that cutting the income gap between the urban rich and the rural poor was essential in order for Cambodia to prevent future unrest.

"How could Pol Pot—with 20 powerful men and 5,000 cruel men—kill three million Cambodians?" the prime minister asked, using his own estimate for the number who died during the Khmer Rouge regime.

"Five thousand men could not easily cut three million chickens' throats in a short time," he added.

Hun Sen went on to say that cutting the income gap between urban rich and rural poor is an urgent issue for his government. He also said he had read a paper written by Pol Pot in 1966, "The Social Classes and Their Struggle in Cambodian Society," and that the problems it outlines live on today.

The prime minister also encouraged students to study agriculture and rural development and told them that the rural poor are a "never-dried-up source of knowledge" from which they can "learn forever."

He also praised Prince Norodom Ranariddh and Funcinpec for cooperating with the CPP to aid the rural poor. He said he planned to give the prince pumping machines for Funcinpec to give to the poor.

Koul Panha, director of Comfrel, in a telephone interview Tuesday, said hatred between social classes was only one factor contributing to Khmer Rouge atrocities. Political leadership, communist doctrine and foreign interventions were the main factors, he said.

Sok Sam Oeun, executive director of the Cambodian Defenders Project, blamed the Khmer Rouge for teaching people to hate in order to wage war but failing to check the hatred once the war was over.

"They trained people to hate rich people, to hate the educated," he said. "It is not because of social classes but because of Khmer Rouge doctrine."