

Gov't Slashes KR Tribunal Contribution
The Cambodia Daily
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The government is seeking international support to help fulfill the bulk of its \$13.3 million contribution to the future Khmer Rouge tribunal, saying it will only be able to contribute \$1.5 million in cash to the needed \$56.3 million costs.

The request for additional assistance was made on Friday and comes on the heels of today's Khmer Rouge tribunal pledging session at the UN Headquarters in New York chaired by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. So far the UN has received pledges to totaling some \$29 million. At today's meeting, foreign governments will be asked to pledge funds to cover the shortfall in the tribunal's projected three-year operating costs.

"Complementary to the [UN] Secretary General's appeal...we are appealing to interested states to assist Cambodia in meeting its allocated share of the budget," Om Yentieng, adviser to Prime Minister Hun Sen, said at a meeting with foreign diplomats on Friday.

Om Yentieng said that Cambodia's contribution will actually amount to \$6.7 million as the government will contribute an additional \$5.2 million as in kind expenses for the trial. The \$5.2 million tribunal budget will include security costs and the cost of providing premises for the trials.

Om Yentieng also defended the relocation of the planned tribunal from the Chaktomuk Hall in Phnom Penh to the yet to be opened RCAF High Command Headquarters in Kandal province's Ang Snuol district.

He cited the need to provide better facilities such as access to the Internet for the media and NGOs.

Reacting to concerns of possible intimidation due to the holding of a court of law at a military installation, Om Yentieng maintained that the new RCAF headquarters was just an ordinary building and that there were no troops or weapons on the site.

"It is not a torture center or a base that keeps tanks," Om Yentieng said. "That building is just like the office of the Council of Ministers."

In December, National Assembly President Prince Norodom Ranariddh said

that to ensure a truly international standard of justice "any place outside the military barracks must be better."

Om Yentieng also said that if today's meeting raises the required funds, Cambodia would be ready to start the tribunal with in three months. But the speed of the tribunal start time depends on the UN, which would likely be slowed by its bureaucracy, he said.

"Cambodia cannot say how long it will take for the trial to be held. But we imagine that the UN [will be] slower than us because it has a more complicated bureaucracy than ours. Its ship is much bigger, and it cannot turn like ours," he added.

Youk Chhang, director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia, said that the government was responsible for providing its share of \$13.3 million but that the method by which the government raises those funds is immaterial.

"Whatever methods it uses to collect those funds is irrelevant. They are responsible," Youk Chhang said.

Sean Visoth, head of the Khmer Rouge tribunal Task Force, left Saturday to attend the UN pledging ceremony and was not available for comment.

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Cambodia appeals for more foreign aid to cover its genocide trial expenses

By KER MUNTHIT

Associated Press Writer

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) - Cambodia's government said Friday that it will be able to contribute only US\$1.5 million (euro1.2 million) of its expected US\$13.3 million (euro10.3 million) share of expenses for the planned U.N.-assisted genocide trial of former Khmer Rouge leaders.

At a meeting with foreign diplomats, officials asked aid donors to make up the shortfall.

An agreement between Cambodia and the United Nations ratified last year set a US\$56.3 million (euro42.2 million) budget for the planned three-year tribunal of surviving leaders of the now defunct communist group, which ruled the country in the late 1970s.

Donations from foreign countries were supposed to cover about

US\$43 million (euro32.7 million) of the total, with the remaining US\$13.3 million to be paid by Phnom Penh.

But a Cambodian government spokesman said Friday that foreign aid donors will also have to fund most of Cambodia's contribution as well.

"We are appealing to interested states to assist Cambodia in meeting its allocated share of the budget," Om Yentieng, a member of the government's Khmer Rouge tribunal task force, said at the Friday meeting with foreign diplomats. He said the shortfall was US\$11.8 million (euro9.1 million).

Some 1.7 million people died from starvation, disease, overwork and executions during the Khmer Rouge's four-year rule, yet none of the regime's leaders has been brought to justice.

Khmer Rouge chief Pol Pot died in 1998, but many of his deputies, aging and infirm, still live freely in Cambodia.

The government's appeal for extra funds came just ahead of a scheduled meeting at U.N. headquarters in New York March 28 to raise funds for the tribunal.

About US\$39 million (euro29.2 million) so far has been pledged for the United Nations share by Japan, Australia, Britain and France.

Om Yentieng, who is also a senior adviser to Prime Minister Hun Sen., said Cambodia's contribution will actually amount to US\$6.7 million (euro5.2 million), because in addition to the US\$1.5 million (euro1.2 million) in cash, it will provide contributions in kind amounting to an estimated US\$5.2 million (euro4 million).

He said the contributions in kind covered "many indirect costs," such as security and premises, that were not included in the overall US\$56.3 million (euro42.2 million) budget.

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