



Cambodian schools to hang to anti-genocide banners to help teach Khmer Rouge history

June 22, 2010

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia — Giant anti-genocide banners will be displayed at Cambodian schools starting next year as part of an ongoing quest to educate the young about the country's painful history.

The Education Ministry approved a request to hang two banners at all 1,700 high schools nationwide, according to the country's leading independent Khmer Rouge research group, which proposed the idea and made the ministry's approval letter public on Tuesday.

The banners are part of an ongoing effort to fill a knowledge gap among the young about the Khmer Rouge's brutal 1975-79 rule that left 1.7 million dead through hunger, disease and executions, said Youk Chhang, director of The Documentation Center of Cambodia.

One of the slogans will say: "Learning about the history of Democratic Kampuchea is to prevent genocide," he said.

The other slogan reads, "Talking about experiences during the Khmer Rouge regime is to promote reconciliation and to educate children about forgiveness and tolerance."

The Documentation Center of Cambodia published the country's first Khmer Rouge textbook, which is still being distributed to high schools, and provided a multitude of documents about the regime's 1975-79 reign of terror to the ongoing U.N.-backed tribunal.

"Having these slogans at school will help remind students about the important history of their country and also to help them remember and commemorate those who died," Youk Chhang said. He said the larger banner would be roughly 6 feet by 13 feet (2 metres by 4 metres) and the other would be about half that size.

The first and long-awaited verdict from the U.N.-backed Khmer Rouge tribunal is expected next month. The tribunal will hand down its verdict July 26 against Kaing

Guek Eav, better known as Duch, the Khmer Rouge prison chief accused of crimes against humanity, war crimes, murder and torture.

Trials of four other aging Khmer Rouge leaders are expected to begin late this year or early next year.