



Japan gives 2.26 million dollars to cash-poor Khmer Rouge tribunal July 2, 2010

Phnom Penh - Japan handed over 2.26 million dollars to Cambodia's cash-strapped Khmer Rouge tribunal Friday, weeks before the court rules on its first case.

The money is to be used to pay staff salaries, which have been unpaid since April. Japanese Ambassador Masafumi Kuroki said his government had acted because the tribunal 'was facing a critical financial shortage' at a key stage of the judicial process.

Judgement in the tribunal's first case was due to be handed down July 26 in the case of Comrade Duch, the former head of the torture and execution centre in Phnom Penh known as S-21.

Duch, whose real name is Kaing Guek Eav, is charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity for his alleged role in the deaths of more than 12,000 people at the prison from 1975 to 1979.

'The Khmer Rouge trials are the completing stage of the Cambodian peace process as measures to prevent the recurrence of atrocities committed during the Khmer Rouge regime,' Kuroki said.

The envoy added his hope that the cash would improve both morale and the court's straitened financial circumstances.

Japan remains the largest donor to the tribunal, which is a joint UN-Cambodian court set up to try senior surviving leaders and those considered most responsible for crimes committed by the Khmer Rouge during the movement's 1975-79 rule. Japan has provided around 56 million dollars to the court since it was established in 2006.

The four surviving senior leaders of the Khmer Rouge are in detention for their alleged involvement in the deaths of 1.7 million people. Their trials were expected to begin early next year.

The four are former Brother Number Two Nuon Chea, the movement's ideologue; former head of state Khieu Samphan; former foreign minister Ieng Sary; and his wife, the former social affairs minister Ieng Thirith.

Around a quarter of Cambodia's population is thought to have died from execution, disease, starvation and overwork during the Khmer Rouge's rule. Its leader, Pol Pot, died in 1998 on the Thai-Cambodian border.