



Cash-Strapped Khmer Rouge Court Gets New Funds March 1, 2012

Cambodia's UN-backed war crimes court said that it had secured much-needed new funding from Japan, allowing it to pay hundreds of workers who have not received a salary since October.

The tribunal has been frequently cash-strapped since it was set up in 2006 to find justice for the deaths of up to two million people under the hardline communist Khmer Rouge regime in the late 1970s.

The tribunal's more than 300 Cambodian employees are expected to get their wages within three weeks thanks to a Japanese pledge of \$6 million, court spokesman Neth Pheaktra said on Friday.

Other countries such as Australia and Britain were expected to also announce funding pledges soon, he said, following talks between court officials and donor nations in New York last month about the 2012-2013 budget.

"The pledges offer a morale boost for national staff at the court," Neth Pheaktra said.

While the more than 130 international employees at the court receive a salary from the United Nations, the Cambodian workers are paid through voluntary contributions from donor nations.

The Japanese embassy said in a statement, dated March 1, that \$2.5 million would go to the UN side of the court, while the Cambodian side will get \$3.5 million.

Japan is the tribunal's largest donor, having contributed so far a total of \$76.64 million.

The latest financial woes came as the UN and Cambodia are locked in a very public standoff over the appointment of a new foreign judge who has resumed probing a new case without support from his Cambodian counterpart.

The tribunal has long been dogged by allegations of political meddling by the Cambodian government and has also been criticised for proceeding too slowly, adding to donor reluctance to stump up more cash, say observers.

The court, which has spent around \$150 million since it was set up, has so far completed one trial, convicting a former prison chief whose sentence was increased last month to life in jail on appeal.

A second trial involving the regime's three most senior surviving leaders is ongoing.