



KRT introduces video-link

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Cambodia's war crimes tribunal has adopted amendments to its internal rules ahead of the coming trial of four senior Khmer Rouge leaders whose advanced age and fragile health will add an additional layer of difficulty to the already complex proceedings.

In pre-trial hearings, defendants in the court's second case have appeared frail and unable to sit in court for long periods of time.

At a hearing last month for former Khmer Rouge head of state Khieu Samphan, social action minister Ieng Thirith and Brother No 2 Nuon Chea, only Khieu Samphan did not leave the proceedings early.

At a plenary session that concluded today, the court moved to address this issue, authorising judges to continue trial proceedings even without the physical presence of the defendants in the courtroom.

"One of the provisions [adopted during the plenary] allows that where due to ill health or other serious concerns, an accused cannot attend the Chamber, the Chamber may continue proceedings in the absence of the Accused with his or her consent," the court said in a statement today.

"Where the absence causes substantial delay to proceedings and the interests of justice so require, [judges may] order the Accused's participation by audio-visual means."

In a filing last month, defence lawyers for former Khmer Rouge foreign minister Ieng Sary requested that the court conduct half-day hearings in Case 002 due to their client's health problems.

The team rejected the possibility of Ieng Sary following the proceedings via audio or visual link, claiming it would deprive him of his full right to participate in his trial and communicate with his lawyers.

Also during this week's plenary, the court adopted rules allowing judges to separate charges or hearings against the various accused, as well as rules on applications to disqualify Trial Chamber judges.

The four accused in Case 002 face a raft of charges including genocide, crimes against humanity and grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions.

Their trial is expected to begin within the next four months