

KR radio evidence comes home from UK

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Mekong Times
June 17, 2008

The Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) has received thousands of pages of Khmer Rouge (KR) -era radio transcripts from the University of Hull, a donation which its director said will be significant in strengthening the Khmer Rouge Tribunal's case against former KR leaders.

The documents consist of transcripts of programs and speeches broadcast on the KR's Radio Phnom Penh, intercepted by the US government's Foreign Broadcast Information Service, along with some microfilms and other media clips, said DC-Cam Director Youk Chhang.

"Cambodia's history is like a shattered stained glass window. We need every piece to put it back together," he said, adding that it's sad that these documents have taken almost 30 years to come home.

Many important documents were handed to Western countries in the 1980s for safekeeping. "Cambodia then had no effective archiving system - they could have ended up wrapping deep fried bananas," said Youk Chhang.

The evidence will now be catalogued, digitized and archived, he said.

Youk Chhang added that the design for a large new DC-Cam headquarters, covering six hectares in Phnom Penh's Boeung Trabek area, will be finalized in three weeks and that construction will begin in 2009.

The center has also had "very positive" meetings with the National Institute for Education over teacher training as a DC-Cam initiated KR history program will soon be starting in the Cambodian curriculum. "Its time to fill the gap in Cambodia's education system. This will be our [DC-Cam's] legacy," he said.

Radio Phnom Penh regularly broadcast party propaganda and events throughout the KR's brutal 3-and-a-half-year reign, with its leaders Pol Pot, Khieu Samphan and Ieng Sary often making speeches.

"More than 2,000 years of Cambodian history have ended," said one triumphant broadcast from late 1975.