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Lack of Cash, Coordinators Stalls KR Trial

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The government is still waiting for international donors to cover Cambodia's \$11.8-million Khmer Rouge tribunal budget shortfall and for the UN to appoint a deputy coordinator before moving forward, a government official said at a conference on the tribunal Thursday.

"Once we get news from the UN [on who will be the deputy coordinator], then Cambodia will look for its own coordinator," said Sean Visoth, secretary for the government's Khmer Rouge tribunal task force. "We are waiting for the UN."

The world body posted an advertisement for the deputy coordinator position in April to replace former coordinators Hans Corell and Karsten Herrel. Applications were due by May 8.

According to officials, the UN received more than 100 applications. Japanese Ambassador Fumiaki Takahashi said at Thursday's conference, held at the University of Cambodia, that it was in the "final stage" of deciding who would get the job.

The tribunal's Cambodian coordinator will oversee the court's administrative requirements while the foreign deputy coordinator will also serve as the UN's point-person during the tribunal.

Takahashi said the UN was in the process of selecting judges and prosecutors to be nominated for the tribunal, though he did not explain further.

After the nominations are finalized, they will be forwarded to the Supreme Council of Magistracy, which will choose and appoint the successful candidates.

Thirty Cambodian judges and prosecutors, which many feel represent the pool from which those who will preside over the tribunal will be chosen, have already undergone two rounds of UN Development Program-funded training.

However, the government has not made any public moves to say which judicial officials will participate in the tribunal.

Observers and monitors have expressed concern over the government's secrecy in explaining how the judges and prosecutors will be selected, saying the wrong

decision could undermine the entire tribunal.

Sean Visoth also said the government had not entered into an agreement with the Japanese government to use bilateral aid to cover its share of the tribunal budget.

"There is no agreement or [Memorandum of Understanding] for the Japanese funding," he said. "Japan doesn't want to monopolize the trial."

Last year, Cambodia and the UN agreed that the international community would contribute \$43 million of the tribunal's \$56.3-million budget. Cambodia was to contribute \$13.3 million, but in March announced it would only be able to afford \$1.5 million and would need help from other sources.

Despite several proposals on securing the money from other sources, the government had maintained it would continue appealing to donors—many of whom have already made pledges to secure the rest.

During a visit to Cambodia earlier this month, Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura said his country could not cover the government's \$11.8-million Khmer Rouge funding shortfall.

Instead, he said there was a possibility Japanese aid already given to the Cambodian government could be used for the tribunal.

Later that month, Deputy Prime Minister Hor Namhong told reporters the government would use the aid but Japanese officials said the government had not made any moves to do so. Instead, Sean Visoth said Thursday that the government is continuing to appeal to donors for help. "We are still appealing for contributions," he said, adding the government is always willing to accept donations from the public. "We are trying to find other channels. [The Japanese offer] is a last resort."

The government has said the tribunal cannot move forward until the full \$56.3 million has been secured, even though UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced at the end of April that enough money had been pledged.

Takahashi encouraged countries and NGOs that have not pledged money to do so. But he and two other diplomats who spoke at Thursday's conference reiterated previous statements from the international community that the government has a responsibility to pay its own share.

"We think it is imperative that Cambodia take the initiative and raise its own funds," said Australian Embassy Charge D'affaires Guy Ruediger.

Ruediger also called the need for qualified, independent personnel to work on

the tribunal the "key factor" that will determine whether the trial meets international standards.

Takahashi and Ruediger said their countries were considering nominating personnel to the tribunal.