

Britain Vows \$2.6 Million For KR Trial

By William Shaw

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Britain will contribute about \$2.6 million to the long-awaited Khmer Rouge tribunal, Ian Pearson, Britain's Foreign Office Minister for Trade, said Monday, following a meeting with Prime Minister Hun Sen to discuss the trial.

Pearson told reporters he came away from the meeting at the prime minister's office, where he also discussed good governance and Cambodia's future economic development, feeling optimistic that the tribunal will take place.

"We've said we'll commit [\$2.6 million] over the next three years...to the international side of the tribunal," Pearson said at a news conference. "Prime Minister Hun Sen said very clearly to me that he's keen to make early progress in setting up the tribunal, and I understand that he's said that previously."

Youk Chhang, director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia, said Britain has played a key role in the lead up to the tribunal, adding that it was the first country to encourage other nations to contribute financial support to the tribunal through the UN trust fund.

"Britain has been very consistent in its vision for the tribunal," Youk Chhang said. "[Cambodian Minister of Foreign Affairs] Hor Namhong recently stated they have enough funding," he said, adding that Britain made known its contribution at the UN several months ago.

"The next step is logistic recruitment," he said. On June 30, the UN approved the newly constructed RCAF headquarters on the capital's outskirts as the location for the tribunal.

The decision was made during a closed-door meeting in New York between the UN and representatives from countries that are involved in the tribunal, a diplomat said on condition of anonymity on July 18.

Pearson said he also met Monday with co-Minister of Interior Prince Norodom Sirivudh to discuss combating child sex tourism. He added that in October, Britain and Microsoft will co-fund a two-week training program for Cambodian law enforcement officials covering how to investigate online abuse and computer crime against children.

Microsoft will deliver the training in partnership with officials from Britain's National Criminal Intelligence Service and National Crime Squad, Pearson said.

"Things can be done [to combat sex crime] if the political will and organization is there," he said.

The British Trade Minister also discussed Burma and the possibility of it chairing Asean.

Referring to Burmese opposition leader and political prisoner Aung San Suu Kyi, as well as other political prisoners, Pearson said:

“Clearly the decision on the chair of Asean is a matter for Asean,” but added, “It would be very difficult, not just for the UK but for other countries, to deal with Asean if Burma was to hold the chair under the current circumstances.”

Ahead of an April visit to Cambodia by Burmese Prime Minister Lieutenant General Soe Win, Hun Sen threw his support behind Rangoon’s military dictators, and said that Asean members should not deny the country’s ruling generals their right to take the governing chair of Asean.