

Leaders from Cambodia's Past Face Trial for War Crimes

Welcome to As It Is from VOA Learning English. India wants to increase production of electricity to meet the demands of a growing population and industrial development. But the country has been slow to meet its goals for increasing nuclear energy production. Today, we hear about some of the issues affecting India's nuclear energy industry. But first, we learn about a United Nations supported tribunal that is trying two former Khmer Rouge leaders for war crimes.

Two Former Khmer Rouge Leaders Await a Tribunal's Verdict

The genocide trial of the last two surviving leaders of the Khmer Rouge movement in Cambodia ended last week. Prosecuting lawyers asked for life sentences to be given to the aged defendants. June Simms has more from a report by VOA's Robert Carmichael.

Nuon Chea was once called Brother Number Two for his position as the deputy to Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot who died in 1998. The 87-year-old defendant said he had not received a fair trial. He said he had nothing to do with the crimes of which he is accused. An interpreter translated his words for the court.

"Through this trial it is clearly indicated that I was not engaged in any commission of the crimes as alleged by the co-prosecutors. In short, I am innocent in relation to those allegations."

The former Khmer Rouge leader spoke for more than an hour while seated in a wheelchair. He said he loved his people and would not have let them suffer. He blamed Vietnamese and American agents whom he said had sought to weaken the revolution. Nuon Chea said he had no executive power during that time and had only learned the truth after 1979.

Two years ago, judges divided the complex case into a series of smaller trials. The charges include genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The first trial heard evidence related to three suspected crimes. One was the forced removal of people from Phnom Penh in April 1975 when the Khmer Rouge, also called the Communist Party of Kampuchea, took power. The second crime involved the forced movement of people around Cambodia during the following two years. The third crime was the mass execution of hundreds of soldiers and officials from the defeated Lon Nol government in 1975.

Nuon Chea's lawyer, Victor Koppe, said that during the evacuation of Phnom Penh there was no policy of killing people. He said later forced movements of people were carried out at the request of local leaders, not Khmer Rouge officials. He called for the charges against his client to be dismissed.

The other defendant, Khieu Samphan, is also in his 80s. His lawyer said he was tricked into his actions for the Khmer Rouge and that he did not know what was going on.

But international lawyer William Smith rejects that idea. He says many documents show that the Khmer Rouge had a policy to kill former members of the defeated Lon Nol regime.

A decision in this first of a series of trials is expected next year. It is estimated that 2 million Cambodians died from execution, starvation and disease during the rule of the Khmer Rouge between 1975 and 1979. I'm June Simms.

India Struggles to Attract Investment in its Nuclear Power Industry

For many years, India has sought to increase its ability to produce electricity from nuclear power. However, a number of issues including an Indian law have slowed progress. Jim Tedder has more on the story from reporter Anjana Pasricha in New Delhi.

A Russian-built nuclear power station started generating electricity in southern India last week. The Kudankulam nuclear plant is expected to produce 1,000 megawatts of electricity once it is fully operational.

But in October, hopes of increasing the plant's ability to generate even more power were put on hold. Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was recently in Moscow for talks with Russian officials. Nuclear power activists hoped he would sign a deal to purchase two new nuclear reactors. But the two sides failed to reach an agreement because of a civil nuclear liability law. The measure took effect in India in 2010. That is a year before the nuclear disaster in Fukushima, Japan. The nuclear cleanup is still taking place and has cost Japan billions of dollars.

Foreign suppliers of nuclear technology worry that the Indian law places too much financial liability, or responsibility, on them if there is an accident. They also say that India's liability law is in disagreement with international nuclear policies.

Even with a delay, Indian officials believe they will get reactors from Russia. They say they will ease any differences within the coming months.

G. Balachandran is with the Institute of Defense Studies and Analysis. He says India has wanted to deal with some of the concerns by setting limits on the liability of foreign suppliers if an accident takes place.

India has hoped that nuclear energy would help the country meet its electricity needs. An agreement reached in 2008 with the United States lifted a 30-year ban on nuclear trade between the countries.

The deal was expected to create nearly \$150 billion dollars of investment in India's nuclear energy industry from Russia, France and the United States. But, so far, little progress has been made.

In September, India signed a preliminary agreement with Westinghouse Electric, based in the United States, to buy reactors. Still, many experts blame the liability law for slowing negotiations. G. Balachandran says foreign companies are concerned that other countries will follow India by passing similar laws.

India had sought to increase its nuclear energy capacity from less than 5,000 to 63,000 megawatts in 20 years. But legal issues and growing local concerns about safety have made nuclear power unpopular. India's Supreme Court ruled in May that the Kundankulam nuclear plant was safe and necessary for the country's economic growth.

I'm Jim Tedder.



And that is our show for today. Thank you for listening. To hear more of our programs and for English teaching lessons go to our website at learningenglish.voanews.com.