

Cambodia awaits Khmer Rouge verdict

Robin McDowell

PHNOM PENH: Hav Sophea's father was killed by the Khmer Rouge just after she was born and she spent a lifetime trying to make him feel real. She even took the single photo she had of him – a black-and-white mugshot snapped at the regime's notorious prison – and used it as a memento to insert him into family portrait.

But nothing helped as much as testifying before a United Nations-backed war crimes tribunal, which is due today to issue a landmark verdict in its first trial.

In the dock is the Khmer Rouge's chief jailer and torturer, Guek Eav – better known as Duch – who ran Tuol Sleng, the secret prison reserved for "enemies of the state". He admitted overseeing the deaths of up to 16,000 men, women and children who passed

through its gates and has asked for forgiveness during his 77-day trial.

After giving evidence, Hav Sophea, 34, said: "That night, for the first time ever, I had a dream about [my father]. He was holding my hand and we were running out of Tuol Sleng prison."

More than 1.7 million Cambodians – roughly a quarter of the population – died from forced labour, starvation, medical neglect and executions under the Khmer Rouge from 1975-79.

But it was not until the trial of Duch that the traumatised nation started to speak out about those atrocities. More than 28,000 people attended the hearings in the capital, Phnom Penh, and millions more watched on TV.

As part of outreach programs in the countryside, emotional villagers have gathered beneath coconut trees to tell stories about lost loved ones. Some angrily ask for answers: why did Cam-



Duch ... confessed, but asked the judges to acquit him. Photo: Reuters

bodians turn on one another and where was the international community then? "One of the beauties of this process ... is that it is breaking the taboo, pioneering the topic of trauma," said Theory

Seng, a human rights lawyer and a victim. "People hear others talking about these issues on the radio, or in daily life, and they think, 'Oh I'm not crazy. I'm not the only one.'"

Four other senior leaders of the Khmer Rouge are expected to go on trial next year.

Because Duch is the only one to acknowledge responsibility (though he upset many on the final day of his hearing by asking the judges for an acquittal), few doubt he will be found guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Now the problem, experts and victims say, is the sentence. Duch faces a maximum life in prison, but because the 67-year-old has confessed and already spent 11 years in detention, there is a chance he will get less than that, perhaps even one day walking free, said Heather Ryan, who has been

monitoring the trial for the Open Society Justice Initiative.

Some outreach workers said they had noticed stress levels rising as the verdict approached.

"More and more they remember traumatic events," said Judith Strasser, a clinical psychologist with the Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation in Phnom Penh. "They have extreme headaches, nightmares. They can't eat and they feel they are alone."

One of the people who is worried is Chum Mey. He too was sent to Tuol Sleng, but his life was spared because he was an engineer and his captors needed him to service the generators.

"I am having trouble sleeping," he said, adding that Duch's last-minute acquittal plea is haunting him. "Duch must be convicted and sentenced as an example to the younger generations."

Associated Press

Artworks come straight from the source

Matt Wade
HERALD CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: The Ganges holds a special place in a billion Indian hearts. But a Melbourne-born artist has become the first to paint the river from source to mouth.

Kevin Pearsch travelled by foot, boat and land vehicle, from the river's source waters in the Himalayan ice cave of Gaumukh to the sprawling delta where the Ganges flows into the Bay of Bengal, to create an acclaimed series of 21 oils on canvas.

The painter, who lives in France, completed his journey in three stages in 2006 and 2007, keeping a comprehensive travel diary of sketches, notes, photographs and watercolours – all painted with Ganges water.

"I did it in three parts to try to absorb the vision," he said. "But I didn't start any of the 21 paintings until I had finished the whole journey. It was only then that I felt I could begin."



Kevin Pearsch ... has created a series of 21 paintings inspired by the Ganges. Photo: Brian Siodki

It took Pearsch 2½ years to complete the paintings at his studio in Gurgaon, where he has been based for 25 years.

A Varanasi boatman called Deepak, who accompanied Pearsch for the entire journey, acting as interpreter and assistant, suggested he do 21 paintings because it was an auspicious number in Hindu astrology.

The large-format canvases depict an array of scenes along the 2500-kilometre river, including the point at Devprayag where two mountain streams meet to officially become the Ganges, bathers at the holy city of Haridwar, complex reflections in the waters off Varanasi, working river boats in West Bengal, the famous Howrah Bridge in Kolkata and Ganga Sagar, where the sacred river finally meets the sea.

One of the most popular works features a solitary boy sitting on a wall contemplating the vast expanse of the river in the state of Bihar.

"I often felt just like that little boy – sitting on the edge of a wall with all the space of the Ganges in front of me," Pearsch said. "We all have those sorts of moments."

The Ganges is sacred to Hindus and millions of Indians bathe regularly in its waters. But humans are incidental, or missing completely, in most of Pearsch's paintings.

"The Ganges holds its own presence and I didn't feel the need to always depict activity along it," he said.

The collection, called *Ganga 21*, is on show for the first time in New Delhi and moves to Kolkata early next month.



Pearsch, who has paintings in many well-known collections including the Tate gallery in London, was anxious about how his Ganges series would be received in India.

"I felt the only way to know if I had got it right, or was at least on the right track, was by the reaction of the Indian public," he said.

"But it has been absolutely phenomenal ... They have never seen the Ganga in paint as a journey."

Padam Talwar, the program director of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, which is hosting the exhibition, said Pearsch's work has been enthusiastically received.

"They are beautiful paintings so thoughtfully and vibrantly done," he

said. "It is the first time we are seeing such paintings of the Ganges."

Ashok Raisingham, a visitor to the exhibition, said Pearsch "has accomplished what Indian artists could not achieve".

Pearsch, who has travelled and painted extensively in India since the late 1970s, said one of the unexpected highlights of his river journey was encountering the unique Ganges River dolphin.

"Sleeping on a boat every night was extraordinary because you see and hear these wonderful creatures," he said. "They would come up and you could hear a puff of air and they would go under again."

The Ganges journey has had a big impact on Pearsch's art.

"I didn't realise this journey would have such an influence on my painting," he said. "There was an extraordinary sense of light, a wonderful transparency, that I was able to bring into the paintings. It has really changed the way I look at things now."

Neighbours uneasy with Afghan pact

Rajiv Chandrasekaran

NEW DELHI: Recent moves by Afghanistan and Pakistan to improve their once-frosty relationship have prompted deep concern in other countries in the region and led some to consider strengthening ties to the political rivals of the Afghan President, Hamid Karzai.

The US government considers the Afghan-Pakistan overtures essential to combating insurgencies racking both nations. But India, Iran and Afghanistan's northern neighbours fear they are a step towards fulfilling Mr Karzai's desire to negotiate with Taliban leaders and possibly welcome some of them into the government.

These nations think Mr Karzai's plans could compromise their security and interests by lessening the influence of Afghanistan's Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara ethnic minorities, with whom they have cultivated close links, diplomats and government officials say.

The apprehension, recently voiced by senior Indian officials, has emerged as yet another challenge for the US, which seeks to encourage new initiatives to stabilise Afghanistan while minimising fallout on the already tense relationship between India and Pakistan.

In an attempt to assuage those concerns, the US special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke, went to New Delhi last week to meet the Indian national security adviser and the Foreign Secretary.

The chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, also arrived last week for two days of meetings with military and civilian leaders.

India has been angered by recent meetings involving Mr Karzai and Pakistan's top two security officials, General Ashfaq Kyani, the army chief, and Lieutenant General Ahmed Shuja Pasha, the intelligence director.

Afghanistan and Pakistan have signed a trade agreement that allows Afghan trucks to drive through Pakistan to the Indian border. Indian officials had wanted to send their trucks through Pakistan to Afghanistan, but the Pakistani government insisted they not be included in the negotiations.

Compounding India's resentment is that it believed it had cultivated close ties with Mr Karzai. India has opened four consulates in Afghanistan, even though relatively few Indian citizens live there, and invested \$181.3 billion (\$1.45 billion) in development projects, far more than Pakistan has.

"The Indians are shell-shocked," said a Western diplomat. "They went in with more than a billion dollars, and now Pakistan is eating their lunch."

The Taliban have offered to exchange the body of a US Navy member they said was killed in an ambush on Friday in exchange for insurgent prisoners, an Afghan official said.

US and NATO officials said two US Navy personnel went missing in their four-wheel-drive on Friday in the eastern province of Logar. Afghan officials believe one was killed and the other captured when they took a wrong turn into a Taliban-held area.

The Washington Post, Associated Press

Pandas get lessons in survival skills

BEIJING: Four pregnant pandas bred in captivity have been released into an area of forest in south-west China to prepare their cubs for life in the wild.

The pandas, aged four to five, have been taken to a tract of forest at a training base in Sichuan province that was built to help them adapt to the wild, the official Xinhua news agency said on Saturday.

They are expected to give birth to their cubs in the woodland, which covers two hectares, and live there until the young animals turn three or four.

"All of the carefully chosen pandas have experience of living in the wild and three of them ... have given birth to cubs," said Tang Chunxiang, an expert at the Wolong panda reserve, which is leading the initiative.

"We hope the mothers can teach their cubs life skills to help them survive in the wild."

There are only about 1590 pandas left in the wild in China, and authorities would like to increase that figure to save the endangered species.



Traffic end ... Xiang Xiang on his release in Sichuan in 2006. Photo: Reuters/China Daily

But the only attempt so far at releasing a captive-bred panda into nature ended tragically.

Xiang Xiang, a male cub who was trained to adapt to the wild and released in 2006, was found dead 10 months later, apparently killed by wild pandas native to the area.

This new attempt aims to see the four pandas give birth and raise their cubs on their own, while workers keep watch through surveillance cameras.

"If they need help, the workers will show up dressed in costumes that make them look like giant pandas, in order to reduce the animals' reliance on humans," Dr Tang was quoted as saying.

The workers will also simulate the sounds and smells of the panda's natural enemies, in an attempt to improve their vigilance and raise their chances of survival, the report said.

Agence France-Presse

Iran studies fusion

Iran's nuclear agency has started research into building an experimental nuclear fusion reactor, something no nation has yet achieved. Nuclear fusion has so far been mastered only as a weapon, producing the thermonuclear explosions of hydrogen bombs. It has never been harnessed for power generation. Asghar Sediqzadeh, the head of the new fusion research centre, said Iran would take two years to complete its studies and then another decade to design and build a reactor. AP

Korean manoeuvres

A massive nuclear-powered US supercarrier, the USS George Washington, yesterday began manoeuvres with South Korea in a potent show of force, four months after the sinking of a South Korean warship. North Korea has threatened the exercises could lead to nuclear war. The military drills, set to run until Wednesday, involve about 8000 US and South Korean troops, 20 ships and submarines and 200 aircraft. AP

Dwinding dimension

Hollywood's faith in 3D movies has been jolted by US box office figures. The proportion of cinemagoers who opt to see new films in 3D has fallen steadily over recent months. In December, 71 per cent of Americans who saw *Avatar* on its opening weekend did so in 3D. In March, when the animated fantasy *How to Train Your Dragon* was released, the figure fell to 68 per cent and by May it was 61 per cent. For *Shrek Forever After*, which opened only 56 per cent saw *The Last Airbender* in 3D. Telegraph, London

Mexican graves

At least 51 bodies have been discovered in nine unmarked graves in northern Mexico, linked to drug gang violence. Many of the victims, found last week in a suburb of Monterrey, the capital of Nuevo Leon state, had their hands bound and showed signs of torture, investigators said. Officials said the victims – all but two male – had probably been dead for about 15 days. Work has begun on exhuming the bodies, several of them bearing tattoos. AFP

GOLD COAST SALE

GOLD COAST \$49

ONE WAY JETSAVER LIGHT* FARES – CARRY-ON BAGGAGE ONLY. FOR TRAVEL FROM 18 JANUARY TO 23 MARCH 2011. NOT AVAILABLE ON ALL FLIGHTS OR DATES.

HOLIDAY PACKAGES

STAY 2 NIGHTS AT VIBE HOTEL GOLD COAST

Stay 2 nights in a Standard Room
Return JetSaver Light* airfare to the Gold Coast
Carry-on baggage only
Price per person, twin share
For travel from 18 January to 23 March 2011

\$191 pp

STAY 3, PAY 2 AT SEA WORLD RESORT AND WATER PARK

Stay 3 nights in a Superior Room
Return JetSaver Light* airfare to the Gold Coast
Carry-on baggage only
Price per person based on 4 paying passengers (2 adults, 2 children (2-12 years) sharing)
For travel from 18 January to 23 March 2011

\$260 pp

STAY 4, PAY 3 AT HOLIDAY INN SURFERS PARADISE

Stay 4 nights in a Standard Room
Return JetSaver Light* airfare to the Gold Coast
Carry-on baggage only
Price per person based on 3 paying passengers (2 adults, 1 child (2-12 years) sharing)
For travel from 18 January to 23 March 2011

\$266 pp

STAY 4, PAY 3 AT MANTRA SUN CITY

Stay 4 nights in a One Bedroom Apartment
Return JetSaver Light* airfare to the Gold Coast
Carry-on baggage only
Price per person, twin share
For travel from 24 January to 23 March 2011

\$346 pp

THEME PARK DEAL

UNLIMITED THEME PARK ENTRY

One entry to Sea World, Warner Bros Movie World and Wet'n'Wild Water World with the VIP PASS.

Price is per person and valid until 30 June 2011, on sale until 30 September 2010. Does not include entry to special events conducted outside the advertised park trading hours.

\$99 pp

Gold Coast Airport

Very GOLD COAST
Very GC

JETSAVER FARES WITH 2XK CHECKED BAGGAGE ALLOWANCE CAN BE BOOKED FOR \$10 MORE PER PASSENGER. PER DOMESTIC FLIGHT SECTOR (SEE MORE PER PASSENGER, PER HOLIDAY PACKAGE). FARE AND PACKAGES ARE ON SALE UNTIL MONDAY 22 SEP 2010. MONDAY 22 JUL 2010, UNLESS SOLO OUT PRIOR. SALE MAY BE EXTENDED. FOR MORE DETAILS AND TO BOOK VISIT JETSTAR.COM

jetstar.com Jet

Full card payments on an additional \$3.50 per passenger, per domestic flight sector (\$7 per passenger, per holiday package) will apply, unless you pay with Jetstar MasterCard or Jetstar Platinum MasterCard. *Carry-on baggage limits, including size restrictions, will be strictly applied. Passengers with more than the applicable carry-on baggage will need to check in baggage, and charges will apply. Flight only important information: \$20 extra per passenger for domestic bookings through telephone 131 538. Flights depart Sydney or Newcastle airports. Fares are web only, one-way and non-refundable. Limited changes are permitted, charges apply. Availability is limited. Limited availability on public holiday weekends. Holiday packages important information: \$40 extra per passenger for domestic bookings through telephone 131 538. Package prices include accommodation and airfare, Sydney to Gold Coast and return on Newcastle to Gold Coast and return. Transfers not included unless otherwise stated. Availability is limited, not available on all flights or days. Hotel rates are Best Available Rates, non-refundable. All travel must be completed within travel period specified. JetStar Light fare rules apply. Fares are non-refundable. Limited changes are permitted, charges apply. Cancellation Policy: cancellation fees up to 100% apply, see Jetstar Holidays Booking Conditions for full details. All travel is subject to the Jetstar Conditions of Carriage and Jetstar Holidays Booking Conditions. See jetstar.com for more details. Jetstar Airways Pty Ltd ABN: 33369 720 243 - Licence No: VIC 22696 JET4697/555