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The Ground Breaking Ceremony for the Project for the Improvement of the Telecommunication Network in Phnom Penh

February 20, 1996

The Ground Breaking Ceremony for the Project for the Improvement of the Telecommunication Network in Phnom Penh will take place on site at Central Telephone Office (corner Preah Sihanouk Blvd and Preah Monivong Blvd) on the 20th February 1996 at 08:30 in the presence of H.E. **SO KHUN**, Secretary of State for Posts and Telecommunications. Mr. **Shigenobu KATO**, Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of Japan will also participate in this ceremony.

Under the Exchange of Notes which was signed between H.E. Yohei KONO, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan while on an official visit to Cambodia, and H.E. UNG HUOT, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation on August 23, 1995, the Government of Japan has decided to extend a Grant Aid of ¥ 1,703,000,000 (approximately equivalent to US\$ 18 million under the current exchange rate) which will enable the Royal Government of Cambodia to implement Phase I of a high priority project in the telecommunication sector.

Background of the project: The underground phone system in Phnom Penh and its surrounding areas has deteriorated after many years of neglect. Of the 13,000 phone lines being used today, approximately 90% are located in the city, 10,000 of these are mobiles phones and 3,000 are cable. The mobile networks are relatively expensive to use, so that users are generally limited to businessmen and foreigners, besides their service areas are limited. In short, not a service widely available to the public. The aim of this project is to provide a better, more affordable phone service as telecommunication holds the key for the development of Cambodia.

Outline of the project: The project (Phase I and Phase II) is to construct three new telephone exchange offices (West Office, on street 253, next to Santhor Muk school; Central Telephone Office, on the corner of Preah Sihanouk Blvd. and Preah Monivong Blvd. ; and Airport Office, near Pochentong Airport) and to install digital exchanges, subscriber cables and digital transmission equipment for about 16,000 new phone underground lines.

This project is one of many that shows Japan's commitment to the reconstruction and development of Cambodia.

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Editors are invited for reporting and photo coverage.