



PRESS RELEASE

Cambodian Official Among Recipients of 2006 Ramon Magsaysay Award

The Board of Trustees of the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation (RMAF) announced on 31 July 2006 that an official from the Kingdom of Cambodia is among this year's recipients of Asia's premier prize, the Ramon Magsaysay Award.

Mr. Ek Sonn Chan, General Director of the Phnom Penh Water Supply Authority (PPWSA), will be awarded the 2006 Ramon Magsaysay Award for Government Service. He is being recognized for his "exemplary rehabilitation of a ruined public utility, bringing safe drinking water to a million people in Cambodia's capital city." He joins five other individuals from South Korea, the Philippines, Nepal and India, and a Filipino organization, as Ramon Magsaysay Awardees.

"The Magsaysay awardees of 2006," says RMAF President Carmencita T. Abella, "continue this tradition of *greatness of spirit in selfless service to the peoples of Asia* through their courageous initiatives and passionate concern to assure every person, especially the disadvantaged, a life of dignity and efficacy. In a world grown increasingly complex, divided and cynical, these remarkable Asians persist in addressing longstanding, painful social issues. Mobilizing many others to join their efforts, their accomplishments bring to the world inspiring news of progress, justice, generosity, reform and hope. The Foundation is uniquely privileged to be the bearer of such inspiring news from Asia."

The Ramon Magsaysay Award is Asia's highest honor and is widely regarded as the region's equivalent of the Nobel Prize. It celebrates the memory and leadership of the third Philippine President, and is given every year to individuals or organizations in Asia who manifest the same sense of selfless service that ruled the life of the late beloved Filipino leader. The Award is given in six categories: Government Service; Public Service; Community Leadership; Journalism, Literature and Creative Communication Arts; Peace and International Understanding; and Emergent Leadership.

Mr. Ek Sonn Chan is the third Cambodian to receive the Ramon Magsaysay Award since the Award was established in 1957. Cambodia's previous awardees were Mr. Nuon Phaly for Community Leadership in 1998 and Ms. Oung Chantol for Emergent Leadership in 2001.

Mr. Ek Sonn Chan took over a water system barely capable of providing safe and usable drinking water to Phnom Penh residents and an inefficient and bloated organization that

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could hardly deliver services. He professionalized the PPWSA's workforce, building its technical capacity and instilling in its employees the ideals of discipline, competence and teamwork, and led his team in the repair of the water system's myriad leaks, the installation of thousands of water meters and the closing of illegal connections. With assistance from France, he installed a computerized billing program and persuaded other international lenders to look at the PPWSA as a good risk. The World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the Government of Japan answered his call and provided loans that helped in the overhaul of the PPWSA. Mr. Ek Sonn Chan's efforts paid off when, in 1997, the PPWSA became an autonomous public enterprise.

Today, the clean water provided by Mr. Ek Sonn Chan's PPWSA reaches virtually all of Phnom Penh's inner city and its availability in the outer reaches of the city is close to being realized. Mr. Ek Sonn Chan was able to put in place 1,500 kilometers of new pipelines and expand the water authority's output by 600 percent. By 2003, the PPSWA was achieving a 99% collection rate while implementing pricing policies that generate strong revenues and to pay off the PPSWA's debts ahead of schedule. In 2004, the World Bank cited PPWSA for its "dramatic improvement in organization, profitability and organizational performance".

Now 56 years old, Mr. Ek Sonn Chan attributes his drive to "work for the country" to the traumas of Cambodia's recent past. Patriotism also explains his preference for public utilities over private-sector ones. "The profit made by us", he says, referring to the Phnom Penh Water Supply Authority, "will be profit for our country".

This year's Magsaysay Award winners will each receive a certificate, a medallion bearing the likeness of the late President and a cash prize. They will be formally conferred the Magsaysay Award during the Presentation Ceremonies to be held on 31 August 2006 at the Cultural Center of the Philippines in Manila.

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