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Gov't Unlikely to Meet Target to Reduce Road Deaths

by Simon Henderson and Khuon Narim | April 9, 2014

Without more efforts to punish traffic violators, the government is all but certain to miss its goal of cutting traffic deaths by 20 percent in 2014 and by 50 percent in 2020, road safety experts said at a forum Tuesday.

There were 1,910 deaths due to traffic accidents last year, according to the government. This figure has remained relatively stable in recent years.

The government's 2014 National Policy on Road Safety doesn't have enough funding to succeed, said Ear Chariya, road safety program manager for Handicap International Cambodia, one of 70 civil society groups that attended the event.

"I have no hope that deaths from traffic accidents will be cut by 20 percent because there is not enough money," he said.

Last year, the government allocated \$1.7 million, significantly less than the \$10 million required to make an impact, Mr. Chariya said of government spending on reducing road deaths.

Without real enforcement of road laws, Mr. Chariya estimated that the number of road fatalities will actually increase, to 3,200 per year by 2020—double the government's target of 1,600.

In a study conducted last year across five provinces, 51 percent of respondents admitted to driving their vehicles drunk, noted Lim Sokchea, executive director of the Coalition for Road Safety.

"The government needs to have an alcohol policy in order to reduce traffic accidents caused

by drivers under the influence of alcohol, such as increasing tax on alcohol," she said.

Delayed passage of new traffic laws also hampers efforts to reduce road deaths, said Kong Sovann, country program manager for the Global Road Safety Partnership.

"But without effective implementation, even the new law will not be effective," he said. "The more the government enforces the law, the more the government confirms that they do in fact respect life."

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Correction: *An earlier version of this story said the government is all but certain to miss its 2020 goal of cutting drunk driving deaths by 50 percent. It is all but certain to miss its goal of cutting traffic deaths by 50 percent in 2020.*

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