

The CAMBODIA DAILY

Volume 35 Issue 32

Monday, September 25, 2006

1,200 riel/30 cents

Bin Laden's Death Is Still Unconfirmed

BY ARIANE BERNARD
THE NEW YORK TIMES

PARIS - French officials said Saturday that the government could not confirm intelligence information published in a French newspaper that the terrorist leader Osama bin Laden died in Pakistan last month.

On Saturday, L'Est Republicain quoted an internal memorandum from France's foreign intelligence service, the DGSE, as saying, "Saudi intelligence services seem to be sure that Osama bin Laden is dead. The elements gathered by the Saudis indicate that the head of al-Qaida was the victim, while he was in Pakistan on Aug 23, 2006, of a strong case of typhoid fever that led to a partial paralysis of his lower limbs."

A senior French intelligence official confirmed that the document was authentic but said the information was "absolutely, absolutely not verified." The official said the memorandum had been sent to the president, prime minister and some ministries as a regular report on terrorism-related intelligence traffic.

President Jacques Chirac responded to questions from reporters by saying, "This information is in no way confirmed, in no way whatsoever." The defense

Continued on page 2



FEELING FEVERISH - A nurse assists a patient with symptoms of the mosquito-borne dengue fever at a government hospital in Manila on Sunday. There have been dengue fever outbreaks worldwide this year, and health officials have recorded more than 100 deaths throughout the Philippines as well as Cambodia.

Islamists Calm Somali Capital With Restraint

BY JEFFREY GETTLEMAN
THE NEW YORK TIMES

MOGADISHU, Somalia - As the sun begins to sink over this broken city, work crews swing their axes over their shoulders and head home.

Young couples take to the waterfront, mingling openly in the salty breeze. Thousands of children flock to football fields in

the city center, with a backdrop of beautifully crumbled ruins from battles now over.

It is hard to imagine that this is Mogadishu, the same Mogadishu where clans have fought during 15 years of anarchy. But over the past three months, the Islamists in control here have defied international expectations—in many ways. Not only have they pacified

one of the most dangerous cities in the world, they also seem to have moderated their message.

Instead of acting like the Taliban and ruthlessly imposing a harsh religious orthodoxy, as many feared, the Islamists seem to be trying to increase public support by softening their views, at least officially, delivering social

Continued on page 6

About Cambodia

- Report: Weight of US Bombs 5 Times Greater Page 12
- Thomica-Party Defector Forms His Own Group
- Thomica Claims His Home Is Under Police Surveillance
- Fewer Thais Cross Border To Gamble After Coup
- 2 Pchum Ben Celebrants Drown While Intoxicated
- Kitchen Fire in K'Thom Destroys Eight Homes
- Officials Quash Rumors of Princess Taking Over Funcinpec Presidency Page 13
- Thai Coup Will Not Affect Hun Sen's Trip to Australia
- Fewer Traffic Accidents Reported During Pchum Ben Page 15
- Letter: Gov't Officials Should Assure Ferry Safety

Cambodia Greets an Invasion of Foreign Cash

BY DON LEE
LOS ANGELES TIMES

US diplomats made a big splash early this year when they opened an embassy near Wat Phnom, the hill dominated by a holy temple where, according to legend, Phnom Penh was founded.

US Ambassador Joseph Musomeli trumpeted the four-story marble-and-granite outpost as a "powerful symbol" of US interests in Cambodia.

On the other side of the capital, the Chinese also are giving their embassy a makeover. But they're doing a lot more in Cambodia.

The Chinese are digging up minerals and exploring for oil. They are cutting down forests and in some places planting saplings. And across Cambodia, they are building garment factories, power plants, bridges and roads, some into neighboring Laos.

For centuries, Cambodia has tried to fend off greater powers such as Thailand and Vietnam. But today Phnom Penh is welcoming the Chinese with open arms, praising Beijing as a government that offers its largess unconditionally.

By Phnom Penh's tally, Chi-

nese state-owned and private companies plowed more than \$450 million into Cambodia last year—a 460 percent increase over 2004—making China by far the nation's top foreign investor. Beijing says it is also giving hundreds of millions of dollars in loans and aid to Cambodia, easily surpassing the \$62 million in loans and aid from the US.

Some Western diplomats see China's growing influence here as a threat to US political interests in the region.

Washington has tried to exert influence on Cambodia through

Continued on page 2

AND ALSO

\$32,000 Too Much for a Fondle

REUTERS

HELSINKI, Finland - A fee of \$32,000 is way too much for a woman to charge a man for fondling her bosom, a Finnish district court ruled.

The court jailed a couple in their 20s for more than a year for charging a 74-year-old man who suffers from dementia the equivalent of \$32,000 to enjoy the woman's breasts on 10 occasions.

"Based on general life experience alone, it is indisputably clear

that [the \$32,000] charge is disproportionate to the compensation in question," said Judge Hasse Hakki.

But he said the court in Kokkola, about 480 km north of Helsinki, would not decide "the proper financial value of the compensation."

The retiree filed charges against the couple, who were convicted of extortionate overcharging, even though he told the court he paid the price willingly at the time.

NEWSMAKERS

■ Former US President **BILL CLINTON** announced the results of this year's Clinton Global Initiative from a circular stage in a hushed ballroom filled with more than 1,000 people. "As of now, we have 215 commitments from two times that many people and the value, my staff swears, is \$7.3 billion," he said. **SIR RICHARD BRANSON**, the British entrepreneur, had promised to invest an estimated \$3 billion of his personal profits from airlines and a rail company over the next decade in renewable energy sources. Clinton yesterday asked Google's wealthy founders, **LARRY PAGE** and **SERGEY BRIN**, who he said "barely looked old enough to shave," to stand and accept his thanks for giving free advertising on their search engine to any non-profit group or charity that made a commitment through the Clinton Global Initiative. Clinton's wife, Senator **HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON** of New York, was the moderator at a panel yesterday morning on women's role in development. Former Secretary of State **COLIN POWELL** spoke at another of the panel discussions. (Reuters)

Cambodia...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

its aid, which is earmarked mostly for health and education. But as Chinese support increases, some US officials worry that it will ease the pressure on Phnom Penh to fight pervasive corruption and build democratic institutions.

Cambodia has embraced the Middle Kingdom because "China has proven different from other donors. They don't impose conditions," Cham Prasidh, the minister of commerce, said in an interview. "Others say, 'You have to do this with human rights, you have to do that with democratic reforms.' China doesn't do that."

China's interest in Cambodia is largely driven by the same need that is sending the Chinese to remote regions in Africa, Central Asia and South America: to secure natural resources to fuel its expanding economy and enhance its global political muscle.

China's trek is often secretive, as banker John Brinsden has learned.

The Briton is vice chairman of locally owned Aceda Bank. A field representative in a tiny farming village eight hours north of Phnom Penh recently called by shortwave radio to tell him that a

potential client had moved to the remote area.

Brinsden drove along mostly dirt roads to the village, which is surrounded by jungle and landmines.

Next to the bank's outpost, Brinsden could see that a mining company was setting up offices behind a corrugated fence. But in his research later, he could find no permits or other records of the company. To the veteran banker, this was the Chinese way of doing business in Cambodia.

"They're very low-key," he said.

China's spending spree has helped Cambodia's economy come out of the doldrums. Tourism and garment production are growing briskly. The country's banks hold 30 percent more in deposits than a year ago.

The cash is certainly flowing at Phnom Penh's NagaCorp casino. A construction firm from China is building a 500-room hotel by the gambling hall for its Chinese Malaysian owner.

"The big rollers are from mainland China," said Michael Nen, a former policeman in Long Beach, California, who now runs security for Naga Resorts & Casinos in Phnom Penh.

Yet many Cambodians are wary of China's growing presence in their homeland. Some talk bitterly about Beijing's support for Pol Pot.

only on condition of anonymity. "I think it ought to be treated with a great deal of skepticism."

Tony Snow, the White House spokesman, said he could not confirm the report.

According to the account in L'Est Republicain, the French memorandum said the Saudis first heard Sept 4 that bin Laden had died, but were awaiting further details, including the location of the body, to announce the news. The information was passed from Saudi Arabia by a

Other Cambodians complain that the Chinese, along with other foreign companies, are plundering the nation and buying up vast swaths of land in secret deals with corrupt local officials. Such trade has uprooted families and made life harder for many people, they say.

Companies are racing to exploit oil and natural gas deposits found beneath Cambodia's waters last year. Chevron has locked up key drilling sites, but Chinese enterprises, including state-owned CNOOC Ltd are jockeying for an advantage in Cambodia.

Chinese officials in Beijing and Cambodia declined to talk about China's presence here.

Chinese academics said Beijing had good reason to extend its hand toward Cambodia.

"China needs Cambodia's cooperation on many important issues, such as Taiwan, Tibet and human rights," said Shen Shishun, director of Asia-Pacific studies at the China Institute of International Studies in Beijing.

Throughout Phnom Penh, hundreds of storefront signs are written in both Khmer and Chinese. Ethnic Chinese account for just 1 percent of Cambodia's population, but as in other Southeast Asian countries, they play a significant role in commerce.

Chinese businesspeople are

helping to build a \$10-million Chinatown near the French Embassy.

Pung Kheav Se, who is ethnic Chinese and was born in Cambodia, is the founder of Canadia Bank, which holds one-fourth of the nation's bank deposits. He fled the country in the late 1970s and made a fortune trading gold bars in Montreal, Canada, before returning to Phnom Penh in 1991.

Pung Kheav Se said China Development Bank officials recently paid him a visit to discuss aid to Cambodia. "I see a lot of change for the better," he said.

On a recent weekend, the city of Chongqing in central China was recruiting students for its schools at a domed conference center in Phnom Penh. Across town, behind the gates of Universal Apparel Co, a red banner welcomed governors from China's Fujian province.

Cham Prasidh said the Chinese were not given preferential treatment. If the US has lost economic influence in Cambodia to China, the minister suggested, Americans have only themselves to blame.

"The investors from the US say they want more transparency. They don't understand the Asian mentality; they are not flexible in negotiating," he said. "The Chinese feel very much at home in Cambodia."

Bin Laden...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

ministry, which oversees the DGSE, said it would investigate how the memorandum had been leaked.

In Washington, an American intelligence official expressed strong doubt about the report, which he noted was not the first rumor of bin Laden's death. "We can't confirm this," said the official, who discussed the matter

non-Saudi who had proved reliable in the past, said the French intelligence official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

According to Reuters, the Saudi Arabian Embassy in Washington issued a statement saying: "The kingdom of Saudi Arabia has no evidence to support recent media reports that Osama bin Laden is dead. Information that has been reported otherwise is purely speculative and cannot be independently verified."

Pierre Taribo, the editor in

chief of L'Est Republicain, a regional daily, defended his newspaper's decision to publish the unconfirmed memorandum. "It's a note that exists, and from this point on we consider that we did our job, which is to inform," he said in a telephone interview.

Several reports of bin Laden's death have surfaced since he went into hiding in 2001. His last confirmed videotaped message was released in late 2004; several audiotapes attributed to him have been released this year.