



Floods, storms in Cambodia have left 600,000 homeless

BY TINI TRAN
ASSOCIATED PRESS

HANOI, VIETNAM—Unprecedented floods have killed nearly 100 people across Southeast Asia—including a teenage boy who drowned Thursday in front of the royal palace in Cambodia as hundreds watched from the riverbank.

palace in Phnom Penh when he was flipped out by the turbulent waters as hundreds of people watched from the bank, said a cousin, Nou Chan Pisit. "He tried to grab me because he could not swim. I was trying to grab his hand but had no luck," the cousin said, weeping. "There were many adults around, but they did not help."

but it is impossible for me to stop the natural disaster," the Cambodian leader told reporters.

About 600,000 people have lost their homes and farmland to the floods engulfing the region, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said in Geneva.

"Millions of people have been affected by this year's unusually widespread monsoon floods," it said in a statement.

The water level at the meeting point of Mekong, Tonle Sap and the Bassac rivers in Phnom Penh is expected to reach 37 feet on Friday. Officials say Phnom Penh's streets could be flooded if the level reaches 38 feet.

Seija Tyrninoksa, the Cambodia director of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Federation, said 500,000 people need emergency assistance such as clothes, food, plastic sheets and blankets. Another 100,000 people required similar aid in Vietnam, the Federation said.

The aid agency appealed for \$1.13 million in international aid, with \$904,000 needed for Cambodia alone.

Heavy rain began in the region in July, 45 days ahead of the normal monsoon. The rainfall continued, swelling the Mekong, which flows from Cambodia to Vietnam to form the Mekong Delta

'Millions of people have been affected by this year's unusually widespread monsoon floods.'

International Federation of Red Cross

The floods have forced 600,000 people from their homes in Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos. Rescue workers were distributing drinking water Thursday, and naval boats evacuated people stranded by high water.

At least 89 people have died in Cambodia and eight in Vietnam since the floods began in July, officials said. Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen said the level of the Mekong River, one of three that meet in Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh, is higher than any time in the past 70 years.

Nou Vibol, 14, was playing with an inner tube with two cousins in the Tonle Sap River in front of the royal

State television in Vietnam showed thousands of houses flooded in Dong Thap and Long An, provinces bordering Cambodia, after the Mekong overflowed there, turning vast areas of surrounding rice fields into huge lakes.

Soldiers, sailors and other rescuers used boats to pick up stranded villagers from houses built on stilts.

Hun Sen, touring a district about 25 miles from Phnom Penh, warned merchants against profiteering from the floods, saying many businesses have increased the prices of rice and gasoline.

"I have participated to stop the killing fields, the genocide of Pol Pot ...

Schools sell ads with little oversight

BY ANJETTA MCQUEEN
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON—With little state oversight, schools short on cash and long on needs are making commercial deals—soda machines in hallways, football scoreboard ads, in-house television spots—in return for financial support from businesses, congressional investigators report.

One of the lawmakers who requested the study said he did not want to force states to adopt or tighten laws against commercial advertising in schools. Rep. George Miller, worried that the ads may promote unhealthy or inappropriate activities or products for schoolchildren.

"It's not like Americans are advertising-deprived; maybe schools should be a little bit of a sanctuary," said Miller, D-Calif.

The report by the General Accounting Office, the investigative arm of Congress, said little about whether the school ads were appropriate.

Sen. Christopher Dodd, D-Conn., said Thursday that the most troubling findings were that many companies were gathering such information as addresses, ZIP codes and purchasing habits from students and that sometimes the school officials who contracted with the companies told GAO they were unaware of the data gathering.

"All we're trying to do is put up a warning sign," said Dodd, adding that no state regulates market research in schools. "The three R's should not stand for retail, resale and rebate."

Most state laws pertaining to school ads were found to be weak enough that the decision of whether to promote a product on school grounds was left to school boards and principals.

School officials struggling with limited budgets and a need for equipment and lessons often are entering agreements with businesses that are attracted by the growing buying power of America's youth, the report concluded. Also, the officials rarely needed permission from parents or others to use commercial products, the report said.

Only California, New York, Florida, Illinois and Maine specifically limit certain types of advertising and other commercial activity within their public school buildings, the report said.

Researchers said only 19 state laws even address school-related advertising. The report looked at how states reg-

Israel, Palestine attempt peace

France urges countries to show courage

BY EDITH M. LEDERER
ASSOCIATED PRESS

UNITED NATIONS—France, the current head of the European Union, is calling on Israel and the Palestinians to show maximum "political courage" to reach a settlement in the next few weeks, warning that failure will inevitably trigger a backlash.

The French comments came Wednesday, shortly before a Palestinian Cabinet minister announced that Israel-Palestinian talks would resume Thursday in New York. The sides are coming at the invitation of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright for a round of negotiations that Israeli Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami called "incred-

ibly difficult but also promising."

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat held separate talks with President Clinton and Albright at last week's U.N. Millennium Summit. But talks stalled again over the critical issue of East Jerusalem, which both sides claim.

"We simply must leave no stone unturned to take advantage of the short time we have ahead of us," French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine told a news conference. "To pull this off, we will have to be extremely inventive when it comes to Jerusalem."

U.S. officials, who have been trying to broker an agreement, have said only a few weeks remain to secure a peace treaty—first because the U.S. Congress, which would have to fund a treaty, adjourns in early October, and second because Israel's parliament reconvenes in late October and could vote to topple Barak.

If there is no agreement, Vedrine said, both sides will have to "wait for

Gore denies fund-raising phone call

BY PETE YOST
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON—In the four years since Vice President Al Gore was asked to make a fund-raising phone call to a Texas trial lawyer, the attorney and his law firm involved in tobacco industry litigation have funneled \$790,000 to the Democratic Party.

Memos being reviewed by Justice Department investigators suggest Democratic officials were concerned that the donor, Walter Umphrey, wouldn't begin writing six-figure checks until after President Clinton vetoed limits on liability lawsuits.

An aide to Gore dismissed the matter Wednesday night, saying the vice president never made the suggested phone call to Umphrey.

Gore was asked to make the call in 1995 by a Democratic National Committee official after having had dinner in Texas with trial lawyers—at a time when they were concerned with Republican legislation that would have put limits on lawsuit awards.

The recent interest of the Justice Department fund-raising task force in



the call sheets was described by a federal law enforcement source, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The task force is headed by Robert Conrad, who previously recommended a special counsel to investigate Gore in connection with his statements about fund raising. Attorney General Janet Reno declined to appoint one.

At her weekly news conference, Reno refused to say Thursday whether the task force had begun a preliminary inquiry into the call sheets and the donations. But she advised caution about any such allegation during an election campaign.

"As we approach the election, I think there will be more issues like this raised, and we should be very careful," Reno said. "We're going to review everything that comes up. ... I'm

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Lower gasoline taxes rejected in Europe

BY LAURA KING
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON—Prime Minister Tony Blair, joined by leaders in Belgium and Germany, on Wednesday defiantly rejected demands to lower fuel taxes, despite spiraling protests that have left gasoline pumps bone-dry and disrupted schools, businesses and transport across Britain.

"Real damage is now being done to real people," Blair said on nationwide television, blaming protesters for fuel shortages that triggered school closings, delayed non-vital surgery in hospitals and even threatened deliveries by Britain's famously reliable Royal Mail.

Late Wednesday, the National Blood Authority went on alert, saying it feared its blood supplies soon could be affected. The government put military fuel tankers on standby in case they are needed to get deliveries through, and banks reassured worried customers they would still be able to get cash.

William Hague, leader of the opposition Conservative Party, urged that Parliament be called back from its summer recess to deal with the crisis, as Blair prepared for more urgent meetings Thursday with top advisers.

Europeans—Britons especially—pay some of the highest gasoline prices in the world. British pump prices average \$4.31 a gallon, with taxes accounting for three-quarters of the cost.

Because of heavy levies, public anger has been largely aimed at the government rather than at the protesters who last week began tying up traffic and strangling fuel supplies with refinery blockades and go-slow convoys.

Other European countries, including France, Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands, have experienced traffic-snarling protests in recent days, but Britain was by far the hardest hit.

As the flow of gas dried up, so did rush-hour traffic on normally busy London streets. Undertakers said they might have to halt funerals if they can't find fuel for their hearses. School closures were expected to affect thousands of pupils Thursday.

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Lobbyists defend movie marketing

BY MATT KELLEY
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON—Showing rough cuts of R-rated movies to test audiences that include 10- or 12-year-olds is wrong and will stop, Hollywood's top lobbyist promised senators concerned that the movie, music and video game industries are marketing sex and violence to children.

But that was one of the few concessions entertainment industry representatives made Wednesday as they defended the way they market their products.

Movie industry lobbyist Jack Valenti told the Senate Commerce Committee that it was "unavoidably wrong" for movie executives to show R-rated movies to focus groups including children as young as 10. The studios use such groups to see how a target audience will react to a particular version of a film.

"Some marketing people stepped over the line of what is acceptable," Valenti said of the children's focus groups, which were detailed in a Federal Trade Commission report this week.

Valenti and other entertainment executives balked, however, at suggestions that they further police them-

self debate following up on the Millennium Summit. Arab ministers have backed the current peace effort but insisted that Israel withdraw from occupied Arab territories—including East Jerusalem. In return for a full Israeli withdrawal from occupied Arab territories, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa said, Israel will "be integrated as a partner in the Middle East, enjoying rights to security, peace and cooperation."

But Moussa warned that if any Arab territory remains under occupation or if any settlement is "inconsistent with the principles of right and justice, then that would constitute a time bomb ready to explode at any time."

Moussa said flexibility over Jerusalem "cannot by any means mean accepting Israeli sovereignty over the Holy Mosque—Haram as-Sharif—but could instead mean arrangements for the new Palestinian state to respect the holy sites, and guaranteeing free access to them, and their protection."

At this week's U.N. General As-

selves to keep violent or vulgar material out of the hands of kids.

"I do not believe either government or any entertainment industry committee has any business telling me and my wife what entertainment our children should be exposed to," said Danny Goldberg, president and chief executive officer of Artemis Records. "So-called self-regulation achieved by political intimidation is the equivalent of censorship."

Lawmakers at Wednesday's hearing, including Democratic vice presidential hopeful Sen. Joseph Lieberman, denounced the nation's movie, music and video game makers in the wake of the FTC report.

Senators said the voluntary labels each industry uses should be made clearer, companies that market violence to children should be sanctioned and the tax deduction for marketing might be removed for ads that inappropriately target children.

"The day is fast approaching when the American people may be willing to accept some restriction of freedom of expression in order to protect their children," said Sen. Chuck Hagel, R-Neb. "The entertainment industry must understand that we are closer to that day than they may realize."

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NEWS BRIEFS

Alleged Mexican drug cartel leader charged with murder

EL PASO, TEXAS—The alleged leader of a powerful Mexican drug cartel has been charged with killing 10 people, seven of whom were found dead last year at ranch sites near a Mexican border city, the Justice Department said Thursday.

Vicente Carrillo Fuentes, believed to be in control of virtually all drug trafficking in the border city of Ciudad Juarez and nearby El Paso, ordered the killings to silence the victims, Justice Department officials said.

Carrillo Fuentes, who was already wanted by the federal government for a 1997 drug trafficking indictment, is still at large.

Children's Web sites say new law hurting business

SAN FRANCISCO—While federal officials work out the kinks of implementing a law aimed at protecting children from online pornography, at least one major Web site for kids is saying the measure is hurting its legitimate business.

Steven Bryan, CEO of Zeeks.com, said Wednesday the costs of complying with the 1998 Children's Online Privacy Protection Act are simply too high. Zeeks.com, the 15th most popular entertainment site for children according to Media Metrix Inc., will pull its e-mail and chat-room services Oct. 1, and try to make up for the predicted 20 percent loss in traffic with additional games.

LA Times cuts 125 editorial jobs, 45 advertising jobs

LOS ANGELES—The Los Angeles Times eliminated about 125 editorial jobs in its community news operations and announced plans to close 14 local news-section inserts that had been a cornerstone of its former publisher's plans to boost circulation.

In addition, 45 jobs were cut as part of a reorganization of the Times' advertising department. The cutbacks are the first to hit the Times since Tribune Co. bought its parent, Times Mirror Co., in June.

The Our Times sections, launched two years ago by then-publisher Mark Wiles in a plan to increase daily circulation to 1 million, never attracted enough advertising to make them a success, Times officials said.

Police discover human remains, search for possible mob burial location

BOSTON—Police combed through the sand of a city beach for a second day Thursday after finding human bones in a suspected mob burial site.

The remains of one person were found in the course of a federal investigation into a gang once headed by fugitive James "Whitey" Bulger and Stephen "The Rifleman" Flemmi. Bulger has been a fugitive since 1995, and Flemmi has been in prison awaiting trial on a number of charges.

Playskool recalls Klackeroo infant toys

WASHINGTON—About 550,000 infant toys are being recalled because their small parts may pose a choking hazard to young children.

Pawtucket, R.I.-based Playskool, in cooperation with the Consumer Product Safety Commission, is recalling its Klackeroo toys.

The company has received 10 reports of the toy's knobs detaching to release small parts, including four reports of a small part from the toy being found in the mouths of infants and young children. There have been no reported injuries.

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