

All the News Without Fear or Favor

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Bangladesh Mulls Ban on Islamist Party

BY SYED ZAIN AL-MAHMOOD
THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

DHAKA, Bangladesh - The Bangladeshi government said Sunday it was considering banning an Islamist party that it blames for the death of an online activist who helped organize the mass protests that have swept the nation's capital.

Ahmed Rajib Haider was found hacked to death late Friday in front of his home, police said. The 26-year-old blogger helped coordinate protests to demand harsher punishments for Islamists accused of committing atrocities in the country's 1971 war of independence from Pakistan. The demonstrations are Bangladesh's largest in two decades.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, speaking on television after visiting Haider's home Saturday evening, blamed Jamaat-e-Islami, the nation's largest Islamist party, for his slaying.

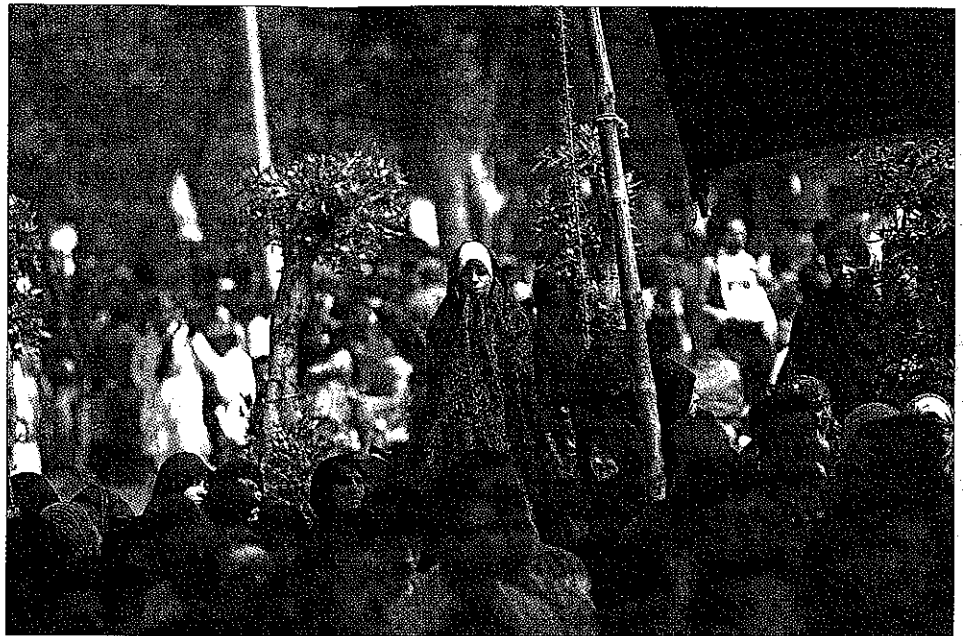
Shafique Ahmed, the law minister, said Sunday that the government was considering banning Jamaat-e-Islami because of its "violent tactics."

"The parties which practice killing people cannot be allowed to operate," he said at a news briefing.

Jamaat-e-Islami denied involvement in Haider's death and accused the government of a "massive propaganda campaign."

"Neither Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami nor [its affiliates] has anything to do with this horrifying crime,"

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A Shiite Muslim girl offers afternoon prayers yesterday in Karachi, Pakistan, during a sit-in protest against Saturday's bombing in Quetta that killed 85 people. Reuters

French Judge to Investigate Death of Family

BY KHY SOVUTHY
AND ZSOMBOR PETER
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

An investigating judge from France will arrive in Cambodia next month to probe the deaths of a Frenchman and his four children, whose decomposed bodies were recovered from a pond at their home in Kompong Speu province early last year, court and embassy officials said yesterday.

The remains of Laurent Vallier, 42, and his four young children, aged 2 to 9 years old, were found inside the Frenchman's submerged car when police discovered the vehicle at the bottom of

a man-made pond behind their Kompong Speu house in January 2012.

Laurent Vallier's family in France suspects foul play and has lodged a court complaint there alleging that he was involved in a bitter land dispute with his late wife's Cambodian relatives—a claim the in-laws have strenuously denied.

"A French investigating judge is coming to Cambodia and will work on the Vallier case; she is arriving on 10 March," French Embassy First Secretary Nicolas Baudouin said yesterday in an email.

"She is the one in charge of the investigation and therefore she

will decide on its schedule while staying in Cambodia," Mr. Baudouin said.

"She will go to Kompong Speu and work closely with her Cambodian counterpart in charge of the case and all the services dealing with the investigation."

In their initial investigation, Cambodian police said Laurent Vallier had killed himself and his four children by intentionally driving his car into the deep pond. Police characterized the murder-suicide as an act of despair by a man in financial difficulties. However, close friends and family of Laurent

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Porsche Joins Cambodia's Luxury Car Race

BY BEN WOODS
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

Though still one of the poorest countries in the region, Cambodia's recent economic growth has birthed a new class of consumer. And waiting in the wings is German automaker Porsche, which intends to sell its distinctive sports cars directly to Phnom Penh's wealthy within a year.

Following hot on the heels of rival BMW, Porsche will begin construction on a \$1.5 million showroom and service center in

Phnom Penh shortly after mid-year, said Graeme Hunter, Cambodia general manager for Hong Kong-based automobile retailer Lei Shing Hong Limited, which will build and operate the facility on behalf of Porsche.

"The timing is right," Mr. Hunter said yesterday. "BMW is coming... Mercedes is here already, so it makes sense for Porsche to be here as well."

Lei Shing Hong—which is also Porsche's authorized distributor in Vietnam and South Korea—

will invest an initial \$2 million in Cambodia, and hopes to import between 40 and 50 vehicles by early 2014, Mr. Hunter said. With tax, the company's range of iconic 911 coupes, Panamera sedans and Cayenne SUVs will sell for between \$100,000 and \$200,000.

Mr. Hunter conceded that marketing the luxury cars won't be easy.

"It's going to be tough.... The brand awareness is not what it would be in other countries," he

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NATIONAL

Hun Sen and EU Ambassador Talk Elections, Land Reform

BY NEOU VANNARIN
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

The European Union's ambassador to Cambodia raised issues of judicial reform, land reform and the upcoming national elections in a meeting with Prime Minister Hun Sen yesterday morning.

Speaking with reporters after the meeting at the prime minister's office, Mr. Hun Sen's personal assistant, Eang Sophalleth, said that E.U. Ambassador Jean-Francois Cautain had offered his support for the July 28 national elections but made no mention of the E.U. sending observers to the polls.

"He [Mr. Cautain] said all 27 countries in the European Union and the European institutions will support and help Cambodia in

the upcoming parliamentary elections. He expressed their support and urged free and fair elections," Mr. Sophalleth said.

"In response, [Mr. Hun Sen] said regular elections in Cambodia were very important to push Cambodia toward development and democracy," he added.

After the country's last national elections, in 2008, the E.U. concluded that they had failed to meet international standards, and in October the European Commission said Cambodia's electoral system still had "major flaws."

Mr. Sophalleth said the E.U. ambassador yesterday also praised Cambodia for passing recent laws on the Penal Code and Civil Code and for establishing the Anti-Corruption Unit, but

also urged passage of laws addressing the independence of lawyers, judges and the Supreme Council of Magistracy.

"Jean-Francois also raised land issues," Mr. Sophalleth said. "In reply, [Mr. Hun Sen] explained the land reform in Cambodia and the student volunteers who are helping measure land for people."

Since June, thousands of student volunteers have been fanning out across the country in an initiative launched by the prime minister to supply hundreds of thousands of Cambodians with private land titles.

The European Commission's directorate-general for trade is currently reviewing a report by the U.N.'s human rights envoy to Cambodia, Surya Subedi—which

blamed the country's policy of economic land concessions for serious and widespread human rights violations—to decide whether to launch its own investigation of the government's land policies.

Human rights groups want the E.U. to end the duty-free access granted to Cambodian sugar currently being grown on government-awarded land concessions.

A brief statement from the E.U. about the meeting said the ambassador and prime minister had "addressed some of the key political issues of the moment, namely the incoming legislative elections, the legislative and judicial reforms, the land reform and the education sector."

Mr. Cautain declined to make any additional comment.

With Better Emergency Care, Thousands of Lives Could Be Saved

BY DENISE HRUBY
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

Tens of thousands of lives could be saved each year if Cambodian hospitals had staff better trained in providing emergency care, U.S. medical experts said yesterday, the first day of a training workshop on such essential treatment.

Currently, the majority of hospital staff lack proper training to treat basic emergencies such as snakebites, heart attacks and burns, which if not treated quickly and correctly can lead to serious infections, poisoning and even death, one of the workshop's organizers said.

"A lot of times, they [the doctors] don't have a lot of training and

we are trying to focus on things that can be easily treated and that the hospitals have the staff and capacity to do," said Dr. Joan Woods, hospital improvement leader for University Research Corporation in Cambodia, the U.S.-based health organization that put together the four-day workshop.

"There are simple interventions to save someone's life," she added.

One example, said Dr. Beau Brise, one of the five medical experts from Stanford University in California who took part in the training yesterday, was to directly ask a patient if he or she is suffering from chest pain—a symptom of a heart attack—and immediately treating them with an aspirin tablet.

Asking such a question is not the norm in most local hospitals, but following the right line of enquiry would mean that 10 to 20 percent of patients who would otherwise die could receive proper treatment, Dr. Brise said.

"It's inexpensive and easy, and it's the treatment that saves lives in heart attacks," he said.

Workshop participants also learned the five steps of primary survey in trauma patients, which includes checking the patient's airways and looking for possible bleeding. They also practiced putting on a neck brace.

Teaching local physicians such basic skills can have a dramatic impact for many Cambodians, Dr.

Brise said.

"One of the great opportunities about Cambodia is that with a few very basic interventions tens of thousands of lives could be saved in emergency rooms," he added.

Dr. Oum Nhel, deputy director of Battambang province's referral hospital and one of the 65 participating local doctors, admitted that his staff lacked training to treat certain emergencies properly.

"We need to improve the treatment in our hospital. At the moment, the staff doesn't have enough knowledge in emergency treatment," Dr. Nhel said, adding that he would endeavor to teach his 60 physicians everything he learned during the workshop.

Better Factories Cambodia Slammed by Stanford Researchers

BY DENE-HERN CHEN
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

The International Labor Organization's (ILO) Better Factories Cambodia program (BFC) must employ more transparency in their monitoring of Cambodia's factories in order to effectively bring change to the country's working and wage conditions, a report launched yesterday says.

Funded in part by the U.S. government and U.N. Development Program, the ILO's BFC program was launched in 2001 to monitor working conditions in the country's garment factories, and publishes biannual "synthesis reports," which track the labor compliance of factories operating in the industry.

According to "Monitoring in the Dark," a new report by research-

ers from Stanford Law School, wages and basic job security have actually declined for Cambodian garment workers in the past decade, and during the time the BFC has been in operation.

"Wages in Cambodian apparel factories have fallen significantly in real terms over the past ten years, while garments workers in some other apparel-exporting countries in the region have seen their wages rise, including in China, Indonesia and Vietnam," the report says, adding that none of these three countries have the equivalent ILO program in operation.

Publication of individual reports on garment factories who are repeat labor law offenders was recommended by the researchers, as well as communicating these violations to the

workers and unions in the factories, said Stephan Sonnenberg, a lecturer at the International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic in Stanford, California, who oversaw the research process last year.

"The theme of transparency comes up over and over again, from the workers, unions and the consumers," Mr. Sonnenberg said, adding that interviews conducted with workers showed that they did not know how to communicate their grievances to the ILO.

"They [ILO] also need to do a better job communicating with the workers," he said.

While the Better Factories program is "handicapped" by its institutional design as a tripartite organization—composing of the ILO,

the manufacturers, and the government—the Stanford researchers proposed that the ILO could work with the brands on trying to create incentives for factories who do a good job.

Jill Tucker, chief technical adviser for BFC, agreed that her program needed more transparency, but noted that it was not an advocacy group.

"We also want transparency and we are working to get more transparency and we are working with our partners," Ms. Tucker said.

"Because we are tripartite, we play a role as an intersection of employers, government and workers. We also find that each one of those stakeholders feels that we are not meeting their needs."