



**SCHOOLS SEEK GOV'T MEET TO REOPEN, IN LAST-DITCH GAMBIT**

NATIONAL - PAGE 3



**KHMERSME WEBSITE LAUNCHES THIS YEAR, IN SUPPORT OF SMES**

BUSINESS - PAGE 6



**VIETNAM PANGOLIN DEFENDER RECEIVES 'GREEN NOBEL' PRIZE**

WORLD - PAGE 10

## Minister calls for Swedish investors

Thou Vireak

MINISTER of Commerce Pan Sorasak on June 15 urged the outgoing Swedish ambassador to encourage investors of the Scandinavian country, such as multinational furniture retailer IKEA and automaker Volvo, to explore business opportunities in Cambodia.

The minister made the request at a meeting with Swedish ambassador to Cambodia Bjorn Haggmark to discuss and exchange views on promoting the multilateral trading system operated by the World Trade Organisation.

Sorasak pitched tropical foods and fruit processing as viable areas for investment, and highlighted the significant growth recorded in auto-parts processing, as well as furniture and components in recent years.

Data from the Ministry of Commerce shows that in 2020, Cambodia exported electrical equipment and electronic equipment worth a total of \$755.34 million, up 31.49 per cent from \$574.44 million in 2019.

The Kingdom also exported furniture and lighting equipment worth a total of \$631.88 million in 2020, up 50.63 per cent from \$419.48 million in 2019, the data showed.

The minister voiced confidence that, during Haggmark's successor's tenure, the Swedish embassy in Phnom Penh would "continue to cooperate well with the Ministry of Commerce in order to promote Cambodia-Sweden dialogue and trade relations".

Cambodia Chamber of Commerce vice-president Lim Heng noted that trade and investment relations between the two countries were still low, suggesting further cooperative work to build mutually-rewarding partnership opportunities.

He said the Kingdom's bilateral free trade deals with China

CONTINUED - PAGE 6



## Out of hand

A Palestinian woman confronts Israeli security forces outside the Damascus gate in east Jerusalem on Tuesday, ahead of the March of the Flags which celebrates the anniversary of Israel's 1967 occupation of the city's eastern sector. Israel's new government faced an early test as Jewish ultranationalists prepared to march into annexed east Jerusalem, stoking tensions the UN has warned threaten a fragile Gaza ceasefire. Rallies by far-right Jewish groups in Arab neighbourhoods have raised tensions in recent months, prompting a police intervention in the flashpoint al-Aqsa mosque compound that triggered the deadliest flare-up of Israeli-Palestinian violence since 2014. AFP

## N Korea's Kim sounds alarm over food pinch

KIM Jong-un has admitted that North Korea's food situation is "tense", state media reported on June 16, sounding the alarm in a country that suffered a devastating famine in the 1990s in which hundreds of thousands died.

The impoverished country, which is under multiple sets of international sanctions over its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes, has long struggled to feed itself, suffering chronic food shortages.

And last year the coronavirus pandemic and a series of summer storms and floods added yet more pressure on the flagging economy.

At a plenary meeting of the central committee of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea, Kim said the economy improved this year, with industrial output growing 25 per cent from a year earlier, the official Korean Central News Agency reported on June 16.

But "the people's food situation is now getting tense as the agricultural sector failed to fulfil its grain production plan due to the damage by typhoon last year", Kim said. AFP

# Capital issues guidelines for factories, enterprises

Niem Cheng

THE Phnom Penh Municipal Administration has introduced guidelines for factories and enterprises to follow after determining that the transmission of Covid-19 there is largely caused by five main factors.

In a six-page document titled "Planned Measures to Contain the Spread of Covid-19 at Factories and

Enterprises in Phnom Penh" and signed by governor Khuong Sreng on June 15, it said one of the primary factors was that many workers employed by different factories are sharing their living spaces and transportation.

Other factors include workers buying food from disorderly or unhygienic places and flouting health measures.

Despite the ongoing community outbreak, Sreng said only a small number of factories and enterprises

had suspended their operations, while many others have been up and running as usual.

As of the first half of this year, there are 746 factories and 4,985 small-scale enterprises in Phnom Penh, providing 476,359 jobs and indirectly benefiting hundreds of thousands of other people. The municipal investment commission has officially registered 34 new factories this year.

To contain the spread of the virus,

he said the municipal hall has put into place many health, administrative and social protection measures as well as an accelerated vaccination campaign that utilised much of the government's resources.

In the medium term - within the next year - the administration requires all factory owners to organise emergency exits at the factories,

CONTINUED - PAGE 2



**FISH CONSUMPTION IN CAMBODIA RISES, MINISTRY REPORTS**

NATIONAL - PAGE 5



**S REAP REAL ESTATE PLAYERS UPBEAT ON REVIVAL OF TOURISM**

BUSINESS - PAGE 8



1 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 9

## National

# Floating home owners seek assistance

Khouth Sophak Chakrya

**O**VER 1,500 floating houses and fish farming cages have been dismantled and evacuated from the rivers in Phnom Penh, according to Phnom Penh municipal police spokesman San Sok Seyha.

Sok Seyha told *The Post* on June 16 that so far the owners of 1,537 of the 1,741 floating houses and fish farming cages in the river had voluntarily complied with the removal orders and dismantled the structures or moved them from the area.

"At this time, our police forces have been assisting with the removal of some of the illegal constructions, boats, floating houses and fish farming cages as advised by the Phnom Penh Municipal Administration," he said.

He added that the constructions were located in five districts along the river – 82 floating houses and 179 fish farming cages were dismantled in Prek Pnov; 145 of 201 floating houses were pulled down in Chroy Changvar while 85 of the 129 fish farming cages there were removed; 366 floating houses and fish farming cages were dismantled or removed from Russey Keo; and in Chbar Ampov, 210 of the 249 floating houses are now gone along with 247 of 293 fish farming cages.

"At this time, police forces have been continuing to cooperate with those from the five district administrations to keep a close eye on



Vietnamese residents dismantle floating home in Prek Pnov commune of Phnom Penh's Prek Pnov district on Monday. HONG MENEA

things and follow legal procedures," Sok Seyha said.

Authorities of Kandal province's Loeuk Dek district and Prey Veng province's Peam Chor district told *The Post* on June 16 that more than 150 floating houses and fish farming cages owned by Vietnamese settlers had moved from the waters in Phnom Penh and are now parked

near Khpok Ateav Island, about 20km from the border with Vietnam.

Peam Chor district police chief Chea Heng told *The Post* that 15 floating houses and fish farming cages from the river in Phnom Penh had moved to the river in the district. The settlers have been trying to dock them there, but they were prevented from doing so by the district police.

"Our forces have been moving the Vietnamese settlers with floating houses and fish farm cages towards Vietnam," he said.

Loeuk Dek district governor Chab Chanvichea also told *The Post* that Phnom Penh municipal authorities required them to remove the houses and cages from the river to reduce navigation jams and improve wa-

ter quality and now some of these structures were attempting to dock in Kandal, closest to the capital.

"On the orders and instructions of the Kandal Provincial Administration, we do not allow them to dock for whatever reasons. So, they have to leave our waters," he said.

Sem Chi, head of the Khmer Vietnamese Association in Cambodia, told *The Post* that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Vietnamese government announced the temporary closure of the borders so they could not travel back to Vietnam by land or water.

He said his association and officials of the Vietnamese embassy in Cambodia have been coordinating with the Cambodian authorities to ask for sympathy and compassion for the Vietnamese-Cambodian people with the hope that they will allow them to temporarily dock for now pending the Covid-19 situation improving, at which time they will be allowed to go back to Vietnam.

"At this time, we've received the news that nearly 300 Vietnamese-Cambodian people living in the floating houses have moved from the capital to the Khpok Ateav Island of Kandal province's Loeuk Dek district, only 15km from Vietnam. However, they still cannot enter Vietnam," he said.

Chi said the association requested that the Cambodian authorities, especially the Phnom Penh Municipal Administration, help provide them with food and some makeshift accommodations until the borders are opened. ■

## Governor eyes SEZs for factories and enterprises

Continued from page 1

prepare information counters, and make available appropriate resting and dining areas. They must also carry out daily disinfections and have places for testing, quarantine and treatment.

The factories must all have rapid test kits, an updated information list for their workers and all new workers must undergo a rapid test.

"It is not permitted to sell food and drink and other materials in an untidy manner inside and around the factories, except for the food services that the factories have contracted to prepare daily meals for the workers," said the document.

All areas of the factories must be set up to allow for 1.5m of social distancing and all gatherings of workers outside of working hours are forbidden.

Also for the medium term, workers have to rent accommodations close to their factories and must not share rooms with those from other factories.

The municipality urged workers to reduce travel and reliance on shared transportation. If this is not possible, they have to follow health preventive measures like wearing masks and sanitising their hands frequently. They must not eat while commuting on shared transport. Transportation providers should reduce the number of workers in their vehicles to half-capacity.

"Workers have to get [real] information to avoid falling for incitement and rumours spread by ill-intended groups who intend to cause social chaos and should instead trust the government, specialised ministries, institutions and local authorities," it said.

In the long-term plan of between one and five years, Sreng said factories should follow standard operating procedures with each having its work buildings separated from each other; providing accommodations for staff and workers; offering daycare and medical services; and building dining facilities, food stalls, parking lots and a garden.

If factories cannot afford to meet the above-mentioned standards, they should sign contracts with landlords who can provide proper accommodations in the vicinity of the workers' workplace. All factories should organise shared transportation for their workers with costs split between employees and employers.

All factories must work closely with the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training to update workers' contact information through the One Standard Database and work with the local authorities to maintain order near their compounds.

"Factories and enterprises should relocate to the special economic zones if possible, because they are best equipped to provide services for general industry such as export processing, production, free trade centres, service centres, accommodations and tourist areas which ease the production process for workers and the management," Sreng said.

He said the municipality will discuss the development of more special economic zones in Phnom Penh with the Council for the Development of Cambodia with the

goal of concentrating all factories in one place, improving public order, reducing traffic congestion and accidents and improving health and environmental issues.

The governor said the best area for investing in factories and enterprises should now be northwest of Phnom Penh.

Pav Sina, president of the Collective Union of Movement of Workers, said the municipal plan was good but hard to implement because it is not legally binding. He said the reduction in capacity on transportation by half will not work because it will require workers to pay more when they only get \$7 for transportation from their employers each month.

"Factories already give workers \$7 for travel and accommodation as stated in the existing law and the factories have no duties to grant more

subsidies than this. I don't think it will work," he said.

"If we recommend that factories should do this and that, they will not do it. But if it is stated in the law, then they will," he said.

Recommending workers stay close to their factories may not work because they are not living in a standard building constructed primarily for them; instead they stay in buildings with around 10 rental units in each. The workers can stay nearby their factories only if the owners prepare such accommodations for them, he said.

Sina saw benefits to placing factories in special economic zones where there are administrative services in the zone to meet all needs. But he said it may pose difficulties for workers and unions in the event of any disagreements. ■

**ANNOUNCEMENT**

UNDP is the leading United Nations organization fighting to end the injustice of poverty, inequality, and climate change. Working with our broad network of experts and partners in 170 countries, we help nations to build integrated, lasting solutions for people and planet. Learn more at [undp.org](http://undp.org) or follow at @UNDP.



---

Request for Proposal : **Expert Consulting in Bringing Solar Water Pumping (Readvertised)**

Deadline : **21 June 2021 by 09:00 am, Cambodia time**

Download Link : [https://procurement-notice.undp.org/view\\_notice.cfm?notice\\_id=79665](https://procurement-notice.undp.org/view_notice.cfm?notice_id=79665)

---

Proposal submission address: <https://etendering.partneragencies.org>

Business Unit code: **KHM10** and Event ID: **KHM44677**



A security guard sprays disinfectant on workers at their factory in Phnom Penh's Por Sen Chey district. HENG CHIVON

## CPP nominates Prach Chan as chairman of electoral commission

Lay Samean

THE ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) nominated Prach Chan, head of the National Assembly's (NA) First Commission, as the new chairman of the National Election Committee (NEC).

The nomination will now be forwarded to the NA Plenary session for a vote of confidence.

NA spokesman Leng Peng Long told *The Post* that the CPP had decided to send their nomination to the NA on the morning of June 16.

He said that after receiving the list of official candidates, the NA will convene a plenary session next week, though it has yet to set a specific date.

"The official period that the CPP is required to nominate a candidate is three days from June 15-17. Then the NA will convene a meeting of the Permanent Committee and set the agenda for next week's plenary session, including voting on nominated candidates."

He added that on June 16, Chan resigned as chairman of the NA's First Commission and the NA's human rights commission for investigation and relations.

Chan used to serve in the

cabinet of the CPP's Central Committee. He is also a former governor of Battambang and Tbong Khmum provinces as well as a member of the NA representing Tbong Khmum. He declined to comment on his candidacy when reached for comment on June 16.

Sam Kuntheamy, executive director of the Neutral and Impartial Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia, said although the selection process for the new NEC chairman was not yet comprehensive or transparent, he hoped the new NEC chairman would implement the law in accordance with the Constitution.

"Now that the CPP has decided to select a candidate, I have a request for the new NEC chairman: Abide by the Constitution. The law establishing the NEC requires that the NEC be independent, not under the influence of any party. Otherwise, other political parties will file complaints during the elections," he said.

The selection of a new NEC chairman came about after former NEC chairman Sik Bun Hok – who had been the NEC chair since 2015 – resigned from the post, citing poor health as the reason for his departure. ■



Heng Vanda (centre), head of the Cambodian Higher Education Association, during the virtual meeting on June 15. CAMBODIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

## Schools seek gov't meeting to find ways for reopening

Youn Dara

**M**ORE than 100 private educational institutions have decided to request a meeting with the government to find ways to reopen schools as many of them are facing bankruptcy and on the brink of closing. The decision came during a virtual meeting among them on June 15.

Vanda Institute director Heng Vanda, who is also chairman of the Cambodian Higher Education Association, told *The Post* after the meeting that Covid-19 has been around since early 2020 and has severely affected schools for more than a year.

"The meeting to request the government's help is to ensure that private education institutions can survive. They

can no longer endure and decide to appeal for the reopening of schools because we do not know when the Covid-19 pandemic will end," he said.

Vanda said Covid-19 infections are currently spread as a cluster which could be managed by authorities. Relying on online learning does not improve the situation because parents or guardians do not pay school fees and young students cannot study online. Without tuition fees, schools will go bankrupt or shut down.

Reopening schools will depend on following preventative health measures and guidelines from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. Some students will study in class while others online (Online Plus) to reduce the number of students in the classroom, he said.

"We will collect the results

of this meeting and write a letter requesting to meet with relevant ministries to express our problems and concerns," he said.

Pech Bolen, president of the Federation of Education Services in Cambodia who also attended the meeting, said most private education institutions have asked the education ministry to consider reopening schools and discuss measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in schools.

"What we want the most is to reopen schools, if possible, in August or September, but we also need to discuss any acceptable mechanisms, such as continuing education in class and online study at home, and follow the guidelines of the education and health ministries," he said.

He said the other reason

for the request is that Phnom Penh residents are nearly fully vaccinated against Covid-19, including teachers.

Education ministry spokesman Ros Sovacha said on June 16 that the ministry encourages private education institutions and stakeholders to talk and find solutions as everyone is affected by the crisis.

He added that schools, both private and public, will remain closed until further notice.

"Public and private institutions need to continue teaching and learning online according to the new normal of the education sector," he said, adding that the ministry has already issued guidelines on distance and electronic teaching and learning for public, primary and secondary schools for the 2020-2021 academic year. ■



Prach Chan is ex-governor of Battambang and Tbong Khmum provinces as well as a National Assembly member representing the latter. NA

## Fires claim at least 10 lives in first five months of 2021

Khouth Sohpak Chakrya

AT LEAST 10 people have been killed and 16 injured in fires across the country in this year's first five months, according to data obtained by *The*

*Post* from the National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM).

The data on the impacts and damage caused by the fires shows that during this period, there were 234 fires that damaged 231 houses, 67

market stalls, eight warehouses, eight factories, 17 public administration buildings and three schools. Fires also destroyed eight plantations and damaged seven forests.

Kampot province is considered a "model" province for fire prevention, with only one fire this year that damaged one house. Phnom Penh has the highest number of fires and the most damage in the country, followed by Battambang, according to the document.

The province with the highest number of fatalities was Kampong Chhnang with five dead and one injured, while Phnom Penh has two dead and 12 injured.

The Ministry of Interior's Department of Fire Prevention, Extinguishing and Rescue director Neth Vantha said: "Most of the fires are caused by explosions, electrical problems and carelessness by landlords, plantation owners, unit owners and business owners."

"The rescue operations of our fire fighters are still limited due to the lack of modern fire trucks and safe-

ty equipment for them," he said.

The national police on June 14 provided a fire engine to the fire department to help the fire fighters carry out their duties, especially in putting out fires at warehouses, factories, enterprises and highrise buildings in Phnom Penh.

The national police also provided another fire engine to the Phnom Penh municipal administration for rescues and general fire fighting operations.

According to Vantha, these fire engines have more capacity than the engines that Cambodia has used in the past. They can hold 8,000 litres of water and spray water quickly from a height of more than 30 metres.

He called on residents and authorities to remain vigilant in the event of fires, which can occur during the rainy season or the dry season, noting that every house should have first aid kits and basic equipment such as fire extinguishers.

"In order to prevent fires, we should regularly inspect and repair any part of the electrical wiring that is defi-

cient or not up to technical standards. Turn off lights and unplug devices when they are not in use and turn off gas stoves, and thoroughly extinguish fires after cooking or burning grass and kitchen waste," he said.

Two warehouses belonging to Cambodian traders in Rong Kluea Market at the Thai border were destroyed by fire on the night of June 14.

According to Thai authorities, the fire was most likely caused by an electrical fault. But Thai police were still investigating at this time according to Cambodian market vendors there.

"The warehouses that caught fire were K72 and K73. Cambodian traders rented them to store carpets and clothes," said Bun Heng, a clothing trader in the market.

He said the damage was estimated at over 5 million baht (\$16,000), but it is unknown whether Thai authorities, market owners or any other party will compensate the Cambodian traders should they be deemed responsible. ■



Fire destroyed a warehouse of Cambodian traders at Rong Kluea Market in Thailand on June 14. POLICE

## National

# New immigration bill targets illegal foreigners in Kingdom

Lay Samean

GENERAL Department of Immigration (GDI) officials are discussing revisions to the new draft law on immigration to prevent foreigners from entering Cambodia illegally and to supervise those living in the Kingdom more effectively. The revisions draw wide support among civil society organisations.

GDI director-general Kirth Chantharith said the main content of the bill focused on preventing foreigners who had committed offences from entering Cambodia and imposing penalties on offenders.

"The draft law also improves control of foreigners living in Cambodia, both foreign investors and immigrants," he said, adding that this law was of prime importance to the nation.

Poly Da, undersecretary of state at the Ministry of Interior, said the draft law seemed complete, but the meeting was held to garner opinions and input from specialists to bring the entire content in line with the current situation.

"I encourage GDI specialists to further examine the content and wording so that the new draft law is accurate," he said.

Am Sam Ath, deputy director for rights group Licadho,



A total of 106 Vietnamese are deported for working without a permit on June 1. GENERAL DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION

said the new draft law is timely and warranted as many foreigners are residing and working in Cambodia.

"In fact, we already have an immigration law, but it seems inadequate for controlling immigrants in Cambodia. So, the law should be amended to respond to the current situation and new developments in the modern digital age," he said.

Sam Ath said Cambodia

must have a good law to seriously control immigration because the old law had a lot of loopholes.

"Since 1979, immigration issues have remained an unsolved problem. The law was put in place, but its implementation was not effective. So, immigration problems still persisted until now. If we have a standard law, I think it can control immigrants more effectively," he said.

He said that currently some immigrants had not only lived in Cambodia illegally but had also committed offences.

"Other countries used both technological systems and the law to control immigration. If immigrants commit cybercrimes, they managed to

control them," he said, adding that the draft law should be receiving more input from relevant stakeholders to make it comprehensive and effective.

In a report on June 15, the GDI said it had regularly enforced the immigration law on illegal foreigners. It had detained them, built case files for referral to court and deported them.

"Since 2014 until May of this year, the GDI had deported 18,470 illegal foreigners of 104 nationalities including 3,060 females," the report said.

According to the GDI, more than 140,000 immigrants, mostly Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese and US nationals, were residing in Cambodia as of the end of 2020.

## Australia to support piped water supply

Long Kimmarita

THE Australian government will support Cambodia's effort to provide piped clean water to rural areas as its Provincial Investment Plan study revealed that less than 50 per cent of villages in the country were connected to piped water in 2020.

The study showed that while only 47 per cent of villages had piped water, this figure can increase quickly with public-private partnerships to increase private sector investment in clean piped water.

"This study was conducted by Australia's AUD49 million (US\$38 million) investing in infrastructure [3i] Programme in Cambodia," the Australian embassy said in press release on June 15.

The study looked at the supply of piped water in 22 provinces, calculating the cost of bringing piped water to unconnected villages.

During a meeting on June 15 with Minister of Industry, Science, Technology and Innovation Cham Prasidh to increase bilateral cooperation on access to clean piped water, the embassy's Chargé d'Affaires Luke Arnold said Australia would work with the Cambodian government to develop

the country's water sector.

Arnold said this is because of the effect access to clean water has on people's health and livelihoods. This study shows opportunities for increasing access such as with public-private partnerships.

"The embassy's contribution to Cambodia's piped water supply was consistent with Australia's wider approach to infrastructure development in Cambodia, including prioritising initiatives that finance sustainably and deliver benefits to Cambodian households," Arnold said.

Prasidh said the government's aim is to provide 100 per cent clean water to urban areas by 2025, and access for all Cambodians by 2030.

He also said the 3i database was developed with the General Directorate of Water Supply.

"We believe that we are on the right track. I thank Australia for all the assistance they have provided to the ministry," he said.

Through 3i, Australia has given over A\$19.8 million in investment subsidies to nearly 80 private water operators to set up and increase piped water supply to rural homes in the Kingdom.

Once finished, the programme will provide piped water to more than one million people. ■



Workers are digging a trench for water pipes along a road in Bak Kheng village of Phnom Penh's Chroy Changvar district in February. HONG MENEA



### Job Announcement

The World Bank's Social Accountability and Service Delivery Trust Fund (SASD-TF) provides financial support to both Supply side (NCDDS) and Demand side (World Vision International) to implement the Implementation of Social Accountability Framework Phase II (I-SAF-II) 2019-2023. The World Bank is looking for a qualified Cambodian candidate to fulfill the position of ISAF CSO Coordinator.

The Coordinator will be under supervision of World Bank Trust Fund Task Team Leader and s/he will:

- Ensure all CSOs involved in the Demand-side implementation of I-SAF are working in consultation and collaboration among all CSOs involved in the implementation of inclusive ISAF
- Facilitate communication and coordination between CSOs and the NCDDS
- Coordinate and support demand side to explore innovative approaches to implement I-SAF II, especially in the context of Covid 19
- Support the demand side for capacity development and learning events to I-SAF implementors and related stakeholders
- Collect and consolidate the monitoring and evaluation data from all CSOs and use it to develop semi-annual reports and annual reports

#### Qualifications

- Advanced university degree in development, political science or related field.
- At least 5 years of experience working with relevant international and/or local CSOs and/or government departments, preferably in Cambodia.
- Knowledge and experience on social accountability, decentralization and governance programs.
- Excellent leadership, communication and interpersonal skills are required.
- Fluent written and spoken communication skills in English.

#### Duration of assignment:

The duration of the assignment will be initially for 50 working days spread across the period of August 1, 2021 to June 25, 2022 with possibility of increasing up to 150 days depending consultant performance.

#### Deadline of application:

Interested applicants may request a full term of reference from and submit their CV and cover letter to Ms. Maly Prak, Program Assistant, mprak@worldbank.org. Closing date: June 25, 2021.

## K Speu set to enforce littering fines

Orm Bunthoern

WARNING against littering at Kirirom National Park in Kampong Speu province has seemingly faltered as rubbish continues to mount, prompting provincial environmental officials to impose fines.

Om Mak Theary, provincial environment department director, said visitors to the park and the locals are leaving rubbish everywhere. To address the issue, he

has sent a team to educate the public and display banners promoting environmental protection as well. If repeated attempts at education are unsuccessful, he said legal action would be taken.

"We will attempt education, not only for visitors but also vendors. We will advise them to separate solid, liquid and plastic waste. We will instruct people to use banana or lotus leaves because plastic does not decompose easily," he said.

Hem Odom, an environmental expert, said people still do not dispose of rubbish in the proper place, even though the park has some bins in place.

"If possible, all relevant institutions should create a programme that can prick their conscience and prompt them to act more responsibly, for example on TV or in the media," he said.

Heng Yon Kora, founder and executive director of the Community Sanitation and Recycling Organisation in Cambodia, said there have actually been a lot of educational videos but some people ignored them. Most people, he said, watch those videos as if they were watching entertainment without thinking about the educational message being conveyed.

According to Yon Kora, the reason people litter is that there is a lack of rubbish bins and slow waste collection, while the authorities have yet to enforce fines.

"I have observed that there are no monitors for fines. If there are ones to punish offenders, people would be deterred and change their habit. We can warn them once or twice first before imposing fines. We can place educational slogans in the park," he said.

Odom agreed that strictly enforcing the law might prompt people to comply, but only when authorities are present. Littering at resorts or other public places damages the environment and pollutes the environment, affecting biodiversity and fresh air for people, he said. ■



A garbage pile at Kirirom National Park on June 13. FACEBOOK

# Cambodia's fish consumption up despite supply, market challenges

Nov Sivutha

**T**HE Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries announced that fish consumption in Cambodia has increased, with one person consuming on average 52.4kg of fish per year.

Fish consumption by people in low-lying areas has also increased, with the population there consuming 75.6kg of fish on average per person each year. The increase came despite challenges related to fish supply shortages and market demands in the country.

In a press release on June 15, the ministry said that based on preliminary figures from the general census completed on March 3, 2019, the Cambodian population was 15,288,489 – an increase of 14.1 per cent over 11 years since the last census in 2008.

The larger population has increased demand for fish even further, and during the Covid-19 pandemic the government encouraged people to implement aquaculture projects in 11 target provinces, including four provinces hit by flooding.

The government encouraged the raising of catfish and frogs in plastic bags because the method is cost-effective.

The ministry has also cooperated with the Cambodian Aquaculturist Association to implement the National Strategic Plan for Aquaculture Development 2016-2030. As a result, aquaculture production in 2020 increased more than 30 per cent compared to 2019.

"Human resources related to aquaculture work are sufficient for the aquaculture sector in Cambodia currently. Aquaculture specialists have received training at home and abroad and in turn have trained farmers in these skills so that they can raise fish in almost every province," it said.

The ministry acknowledged that fish supply in Cambodia had not proven sufficient to meet market demands without the use of imports.



Agriculture minister Veng Sokhon visits a fish farm in Kampong Chhnang province's Rolea Bier district on June 16. FACEBOOK

The challenges with supply could not yet be addressed because of a few factors including a decline in natural fish populations, differences in managing fish markets in Cambodia and competition in domestic markets.

The other challenges included complicated inspection mechanisms for fish imports and the rules related to quantity, quality and other obligations for importers. Also, the private aquaculture investment sector in Cambodia still had a lack of capital and knowledge regarding market demand research at home and abroad.

Domestic transport prices for imports, service prices in production, expensive processing and stocks were also ongoing challenges, the ministry said.

Aquaculturist Song Dina, who raises fish and frogs in five ponds on 3ha in Dauntei commune of Tbong Khmum province's Ponhea Kraek district, acknowledged that fish consumption had increased year after year. But he said the fish being supplied to the market by Cambodian producers was not in demand because of the fish imported from Vietnam.

He said fish imported from Vietnam cost only 4,000 riel (\$1) per kilogramme, while Cambodian fish farmers had to price their fish higher and that if fish imports from Vietnam were banned, then fish raised in Cambodia would sell for higher prices.

Dina noted that it took only two months to raise fish in Vietnam, but Cambodian fish farmers spent up to five to seven months to grow

the same fish which required a lot more feed for them.

Agriculture minister Veng Sokhon told *The Post* on June 16 that relevant institutions must join the ministry in addressing the issue.

"There are many intricacies involved in solving these problems. How can the agriculture ministry be expected to fix this alone? It is not possible. Several ministries [and stakeholders] must work on this together," he said.

Sokhon said his ministry had the role of teaching farmers the techniques for raising fish, while other ministries had the role of developing a market for the farmers to sell their produce. He noted that the agriculture ministry had often been expected to step into this role and provide assistance as well. ■

## Hit-and-run drivers in the crosshairs of point system

Khouth Sophak Chakrya

THE National Road Safety Committee (NRSC) has instructed specialists from the Ministry of Public Works and Transport and traffic police to work together to research hit-and-run accidents that cause deaths and implement a system where offenders have points taken from their driver's licence.

The committee gave the instruction on June 15 during a meeting attended by public works minister Sun Chanthol and National Police chief Neth Savoeun to establish a system that deducts points from a driver's licence for road accident offences.

Chanthol, who is also NRSC permanent deputy chairman, said that to solve problems related to road accident offences, the ministry is planning to set up a point deduction system but needed the cooperation of police, especially traffic police who enforce road laws.

"The public works ministry enforces the law on people who commit offences, but fines are issued by police officers. What the ministry wants is to work with those officers and learn how many offences police have fined and where offences were committed," he said.

Chanthol added that many offences had been captured on automatic detection cameras.

Neth Savoeun said that for the work to be effective both sides have to cooperate, and the ministry and police have to study past offences and learn from experience.

He also requested that specialists and information technology experts from the ministry assist in training law enforcement officers in IT focusing on smartphone data management systems and a driver's licence point deduction mobile app, especially for law enforcement officers on the ground.

"All law enforcement officers on roads should have data systems to record offences on smartphones to collect and manage data safely and efficiently," Savoeun said.

The programme will be launched early next year. ■

# ADB publications available in CDRI's online catalogue

Ry Sochan

THE Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI) on June 16 launched a pioneering partnership to make ADB digital publications available in CDRI's online catalogue.

They also released their flagship book titled "Asia's Journey to Prosperity: Policy, Market, and Technology Over 50 Years" to mark the launch of the collaboration.

ADB said in a press release on June 16 that CDRI is the first knowledge centre selected as a partner for the ADB depository library programme.

It said Cambodia is among the 15 countries across Asia and the Pacific selected for the programme, which aims to promote knowledge and innovation to address national development issues.

Founded in 1966 and owned by its 68 member countries, ADB said it is committed to achieving prosperity, inclusiveness, resilience and sustainability in the Asia-Pacific region in line with its efforts

to eradicate extreme poverty.

ADB country director Sunniya Durrani-Jamal said the bank's operations go beyond providing financial assistance, including providing knowledge for solutions that are the best way to ensure sustainable growth and development.

"This role is even more important as Cambodia is recovering from the public health and economic crisis caused by Covid-19," she said.

ADB said that quarterly, they expect to share at least 50 publications with CDRI, including documents on economics, finance, transportation, trade, environment and natural resources, gender, education, agriculture and innovation.

The flagship book provides an overview of growth and change in Asia over the last 50 years, as well as discusses key policy lessons drawn from regional experiences.

"This morning we launched a new book to bring public attention to the library," CDRI acting executive director Eng Netra told *The Post* on June 16.

Netra said the book will be one

among many ADB-provided sources of knowledge in digital form available in the CDRI online library.

"CDRI believes that the e-library partnership will contribute significantly to building Cambodia's human capital," she said.

CDRI has plans to host more than 1,000 ADB publications in its online library, available at [library.cdri.org.kh](http://library.cdri.org.kh) free of charge to the general public, educational institutions and researchers, government agencies and private sector companies and non-governmental organisations.

ADB is currently carrying out \$2.1 billion in investment projects in Cambodia through its country partnership strategy for 2019-2023, incorporating comprehensive technical assistance and knowledge programmes.

This year, it plans to publish 27 knowledge papers and organise 11 events, including documents and programmes to support Cambodia's economic development and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. ■



Students browse through books at the National Library in Phnom Penh. HONG MENEHA

# Business

The rates are for indicative purpose only and subject to change without prior notice. Please contact info@ababank.com or call 023 225 333 for further details.

USD / KHR	USD / CAD	USD / CNY	USD / JPY	USD / MYR	USD / SGD	USD / THB	AUD / USD	EUR / USD	GBP / USD
↓ 4,093	↓ 1.2180	↓ 6.3973	↓ 109.96	↑ 4.1175	↓ 1.3262	↑ 31.17	↑ 0.7706	↓ 1.2124	↑ 1.4117

ABA NATIONAL BANK OF CANADA GROUP

## TRADING INFORMATION ON CAMBODIA SECURITIES EXCHANGE

Date: June 16, 2021

Auction Trading Method (ATM)

NO	STOCK	CLOSING PRICE	OPENING PRICE	HIGH	LOW
1	ABC	14,600	14,600	14,600	14,600
2	GTI	4,260	4,220	4,260	4,020
3	PAS	14,480	14,680	14,700	14,380
4	PEPC	3,270	3,280	3,290	3,200
5	PPAP	15,220	15,000	15,500	15,000
6	PPSP	2,160	2,220	2,220	2,120
7	PWSA	6,980	7,160	7,200	6,860



Where Financial Investment Begins...  
www.goldenfxlink.com | 023 22 6666

## Khmer SME site launches this year

Thou Vireak

THE Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology and Innovation plans to launch KhmerSME by the end of this year. The new website is designed to provide small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) access to comprehensive business information, as well as ASEAN and global markets.

Plans for the site coincide with the ASEAN Access Small and Medium Enterprises website, launched on June 16 to serve the ASEAN region.

Ministry director-general for Small and Medium Enterprises and Handicrafts Chhea Layhy likened KhmerSME to a national news website for the Kingdom's SMEs.

He told *The Post*: "The creation of the KhmerSME website aims to meet the challenges of small and medium enterprises in Cambodia. We found that they lacked access to business information."

He said the website would be used as a "core place" to provide information to Cambodian business owners, and invited the public to visit



As of end-2019, there were 52,154 formally registered small- and medium-sized enterprises (SME) in the Kingdom, with 824,245 employees. HENG CHIVQAN

Telegram groups @tme and @msmeskh to stay up to date with the latest information.

"In the first step, we won't yet be able to sell products on the website, but only provide information to business owners. If they want to look up information related to markets, financing, technology transfer, export-import,

start-ups, they'll be able to find the information on this site," he said.

Thaung Thyda, managing director of Kampot-Kep salt processing firm Thaung Trading Co Ltd, hailed the website, stressing that it would help all entrepreneurs, especially the women, who need to build and enhance their capacity

for emerging markets.

"We've seen some of the challenges of entrepreneurship, involving our supply and value chains, especially in moving towards a more competitive market, so it'll be a great opportunity for everyone to learn more," she said.

Layhy said KhmerSME would be linked to the ASE-

AN Access website to support the start-up and business development of Cambodian micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises.

"ASEAN Access provides comprehensive information on trade and access to markets in ASEAN and other parts of the world," he said.

Through ASEAN Access, SMEs can read up on trade-related events, new products, and business and partnership opportunities, as well as obtain the latest information on doing business and trade in the ASEAN region.

ASEAN Access is backed by the "Strengthening Structures for the Promotion of Small and Medium Enterprises in ASEAN" project, which is supported by Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, and implemented by German international development organisation Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

As of end-2019, there were 52,154 formally registered SMEs in the Kingdom, with 824,245 employees, according to the latest industry ministry figures. ■

## Sino-US trade disputes, FTAs bring investors

Continued from page 1

and South Korea would transform it into a more compelling investment destination.

"This is an opportunity for these companies seeing as Cambodia has a number of bilateral free trade agreements, which present a suitable prospect for investment here and now," Heng said.

While concrete processes to allure international investors into the Kingdom have been a bit sluggish in recent months, the Council for the Development of Cambodia continues to approve a host of new investment projects, especially garment factories, he said.

"I believe that more companies will come to invest in Cambodia. We have still more trade preferences available for our country, and the Sino-US trade dispute is also an opportunity for investors to invest in Cambodia after Covid-19 can be controlled," Heng said.

According to ministry data, Cambodia-Sweden trade last year was worth \$64 million. Bilateral trade value in the first five months of this year failed to match 2020's pace, reaching just \$23 million. ■

## Cambodia-South Korea trade passes \$302M in Jan-May

Hin Pisei

GOODS trade between Cambodia and South Korea in the first five months of 2021 was worth \$302.231 million, up by 2.66 per cent from \$294.397 million in January-May last year, according to data from the Cambodian Ministry of Commerce.

Of that, the Kingdom exported \$75.369 million worth of merchandise, down by 0.47 per cent year-on-year from \$75.727 million, and imported \$226.861 million, up by 3.75 per cent year-on-year from \$218.670 million.

The trade deficit widened by 5.98 per cent, from \$142.943 million to \$151.492 million.

Cambodian exports include finished textile products, components for electronic equipment, rubber and agricultural products, and the greater part of imports comprise vehicles, electronic and electrical equipment, beverages and plastics.

Hong Vanak, director of International Economics at the Royal Academy of Cambodia, noted that trade

activity and value remained in growth territory, despite Covid-19.

He told *The Post* on June 15: "The two countries still have good trade relations with each other, and it will be even more special when the bilateral free trade agreement [FTA] between the two countries enters into force."

Vanak argued that the decline in Cambodian exports to South Korea was not a cause for concern, and occurred at a time when every country in the world has restricted travel and reduced unnecessary spending.

"A decline of this level is not an issue, but what is a problem is the imbalance in exports of goods between Cambodia and Korea, which is about a three-fold gap now," he said.

The value of South Korean exports in January-May was 201.00 per cent larger the Cambodia's shipments to the East Asian economy.

Vanak stressed that even with an FTA between the two countries expected to enter into force at the end of this year, Cambodia needs to make more efforts to become a more diversified producer and export not only to Korea, but all



The Kingdom exported \$75.369 million worth of merchandise to South Korea in the first five months of this year, down by 0.47 per cent year-on-year. HONG MENEHA

markets across the world.

Export diversification will enable Cambodia to excel in international trade, he said.

On February 3, Minister of Com-

merce Pan Sorasak and his South Korean counterpart Yoo Myung-hee signed the agreed minutes on the conclusion of negotiations over the FTA via video link, with both sides scheduling

an official signing ceremony in June.

Cambodian ambassador to South Korea Long Dimanche said the trade deal would encourage foreign investors, especially Koreans, to venture into the Cambodia, a country he said was endowed with political stability, good diplomatic relations, strong economic growth and a large, affordable and skilled workforce.

In addition to garnering more interest among investors in Cambodia, Dimanche said he and his team in South Korea regularly promote the investment potential of the Kingdom. "After the global Covid-19 disease eases, Korean tourism and investment in Cambodia will definitely increase," he said.

Last year, bilateral trade value between Cambodia and South Korea amounted to \$729.13 million, up by 17.31 per cent over 2019, according to ministry data.

The Kingdom's exports were to the tune of \$185.02 million, an increase of 12.61 per cent over 2019, while imports totalled \$544.11 million, up by 18.79 per cent year-on-year. ■

# More Aceda shares set for CSX

May Kunmakara

STOCK-LISTED Aceda Bank Plc (ABC) on June 15 announced that ASA Plc, an institutional stakeholder, will divest 16.16 per cent of its holdings in the bank – or four per cent of total outstanding ABC shares – to be made available for trading on the Cambodia Securities Exchange (CSX) this year.

The move was revealed in a notice filed by Aceda to the bourse, addressing the 11,488 individual shareholders who currently hold ASA's 107,204,547 shares, or 24.7492 per cent of the bank's outstanding shares.

Affirming compliance with the relevant measures, laws, and regulations of the Securities and Exchange Regulator of Cambodia (SERC), Aceda noted that ASA would retain 89,878,026 shares, or 20.7492 per cent of outstanding ABC shares.

CSX Market Operations Department director Kim Sophanita told *The Post* on June 16 that the "regularisation" would allow Aceda employees to own their shares in the bank and to trade them directly within their own accounts.

The 11,488 employees could not trade their ABC shares because they owned ASA's shares, and not Aceda's, she said.

"More importantly, the regularisation is also intended to enable stock trading among Aceda's employees prior to the listing – then non-compliant –



Aceda Bank Plc raised \$17.5 million in its initial public offering (IPO) on the Cambodia Securities Exchange (CSX). HENG CHIVOAN

to be compliant with the law on the issuance and trading of non-government securities.

"They can now enjoy trading their shares in a much bigger market freely and legally. So I expect the market to be more active with their presence and additionally the

more than 17 million floating shares," Sophanita said.

Aceda executive vice-president and group chief legal officer Buth Bunseyha told *The Post* on June 16 that ASA's move would overall boost trading volume on the CSX.

"It's good to increase the

trading volume of the Cambodia Securities Exchange as well as an opportunity for investors who want to invest in Aceda Bank – they could take this rare opportunity to invest," she said. Aceda raised \$17.5 million in its May 24, 2020 initial public offering (IPO) on the

nascent CSX, becoming the first commercial bank to issue on the bourse with a total of 4.34 million shares for sale – one per cent of its more than 433 million total shares. Price per share started at 16,200 riel (\$4.05) and closed at 16,500 riel on its first day of trading. ■

## VN policy set to lift agriculture investment

VIETNAM'S Ministry of Planning and Investment is drafting a decree to support the development of enterprises investing in agriculture and rural areas in a bid to draw investment into the sector.

According to the ministry, new policies are needed to encourage enterprises to invest in agriculture and rural areas and take advantage of new opportunities for Vietnamese agricultural products under the EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA).

The new decree, which will replace Decree 57/2018 on mechanisms and policies to encourage enterprises to invest in agriculture and rural areas, is also aimed to ensure compliance with recently issued laws like the Law on Public Investment in 2019, the Law on Investment in 2019 and the Enterprise Law in 2020.

In addition, the decree is expected to help respond to emerging problems in agricultural production, including a sharp increase in domestic pork prices – four-to-five times higher than the pork price in the US – and serious impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the draft, the ministry estimates the investment capital demand of the agricultural industry in 2021-2025 is 107 trillion dong (\$4.6 billion), of which 8.6 trillion dong is slated to come from the state budget to implement roughly 800 projects. The investment capital from the state budget is expected to help attract about nine trillion dong from enterprises investing in agriculture and rural areas as a domino effect.

The ministry expects the aid from the state budget to bring many economic, social and environmental effects. If 100 agricultural enterprises with an investment capital of about 100 billion dong each are set up yearly, at least 10,000 direct jobs and 30,000 indirect jobs will be generated, the ministry estimated.

The projects are expected to help build processing establishments for agricultural produce with waste treatment technologies in rural areas to protect the environment and create jobs and incomes for rural labourers, towards sustainable rural development.

Under the draft decree, the state aid will focus on farming and processing of agricultural products; forestry and fishery products; planting and protecting forests; making salt; producing plant seeds, livestock breeds and biotechnology products.

The incentive policies will also aim to expand the market for stable consumption of agricultural products, contributing to the speedier restructuring of the agricultural industry. VIET NAM NEWS/ASIA NEWS NETWORK ■

# S'pore exchange may boost carbon market

A FINANCIAL exchange offering carbon credits and investments in conservation projects is set to launch in Singapore, but it may struggle to convince sceptics of the value of controversial carbon offsets.

Climate Impact X (CIX), backed by the Singapore stock exchange, the city-state's main investment fund and biggest bank, aims to help the growing number of firms seeking to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

From oil majors to tech giants and airlines, companies are lining up to make net-zero pledges, but face challenges to hit their targets.

Firms sometimes turn to buying "carbon credits" – which allow them to keep polluting in exchange for reductions made elsewhere or investing in projects like protecting rainforests – to offset emissions.

But such methods are controversial as environmentalists accuse big business of paying for a quick fix rather than seeking to truly overhaul their operations, while some botched offset projects have failed to deliver.

Nevertheless demand for offsets is skyrocketing, leading to greater efforts to boost carbon markets – and fix their poor reputation.

CIX, which is expected to launch by the end of the year, joins a small number of such exchanges that have sprung up in recent times.

But it is betting on Singapore's

status as a leading financial hub, as well as its location in Asia, to boost its chances of success.

The region still relies heavily on coal for power, making a high-quality carbon market vital for emissions reductions, said Monetary Authority of Singapore managing director Ravi Menon, as the CIX was announced last month.

In addition, Southeast Asia is "fertile ground to harness the potential of nature-based solutions", with abundant mangroves, and large areas suitable for re-forestation, he added.

The exchange will offer investments in certain conservation projects, as well as trading in carbon credits –

one credit represents a reduction of one tonne of carbon dioxide emissions.

Mindful of criticism that it is notoriously difficult to police whether such transactions are getting carbon out of the atmosphere, CIX will use technology such as satellites and blockchain to monitor their system.

The exchange is part of the so-called "voluntary" carbon markets, as opposed to mandatory initiatives such as the EU's Emissions Trading Scheme, where caps are set on certain industries.

Voluntary markets have boomed in the past year, but industry figures say they will have

to grow faster to support investment required to meet the goal in the Paris climate accord of capping global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius.

A private-sector taskforce established last year to boost voluntary markets, unify them and strengthen oversight, estimates they will need to expand 15-fold by 2030.

But scepticism abounds, with critics questioning whether playing the financial markets can help.

"Trading a carbon credit back and forth does not benefit the climate," Gilles Dufresne, policy officer from non-profit group Carbon Market Watch, told AFP.

"Speculating on carbon credits – acquiring credits and holding them with the plan to sell them in the future – does not benefit the climate."

Investing in conservation projects to offset emissions is also "far from ideal" as it can be "extremely difficult" to measure their true impact, he said.

Adding to concerns, there have been myriad horror stories of projects aimed at offsetting emissions that critics say ended up doing more harm than good.

These range from a Ugandan forest planting initiative that blocked villagers' access to vital land, to Latin American hydroelectricity projects that worsened conflicts over land rights, according to a study by Carbon Market Watch.

Still, some experts believe carbon offsets can contribute, particularly for polluting industries struggling to hit net-zero targets – but only combined with serious efforts to overhaul business models.

Benjamin P Horton, director of the Earth Observatory of Singapore at Nanyang Technological University, said investing in conservation projects could contribute to combating global warming.

But he warned this should be "not instead of, but in addition to, a lot of hard work that needs to happen to decarbonise energy, transportation, agriculture and other sectors of the economy". AFP ■



Climate Impact X (CIX), backed by the Singapore stock exchange, aims to help the growing number of firms seeking to cut greenhouse gas emissions. AFP

## Property

# Siem Reap real estate players upbeat for revival of tourism

Hin Pisei

**R**EAL estate players are quite excited by the market opportunities that lie ahead for Siem Reap province, amid an ambitious road construction project and preparations for the gradual reopening of tourism in the fourth quarter of 2021, with an initial focus on welcoming fully-vaccinated international visitors to the Angkor area in the north-western province.

In November, the government disbursed about \$150 million to build and revamp 38 roads in the province, with a total length of 108.74km. The project also covers development of rainwater drainage network and flood protection systems, sidewalks for the disabled, bicycle lanes, car parks, traffic and other signs, security camera systems, trees, gardens and light poles.

And early in April, Minister of Tourism Thong Khon asked Prime Minister Hun Sen to consider opening the door to the Angkor area in October-December for international tourists who have been vaccinated against the novel coronavirus.

Key Real Estate Co Ltd founder and director Sorn Seap told *The Post* on June 16 that the real estate market in the province, especially in Siem Reap town, will recover from the end of 2021 onwards, though at a pace dependent on the status of the Covid-19 pandemic.

He contended that a rapid improvement in the pandemic would lead to a simultaneous rebound in transaction activity and prices, but if the situation continues for too long,



Preparations are underway for the gradual reopening of tourism in the fourth quarter of 2021, with an initial focus on welcoming fully-vaccinated international visitors to the Angkor area in Siem Reap province. HONG MENEHA

the price recovery will precede the pick-up in transactions.

"The real estate market in Siem Reap will improve from the end of this year, as road and infrastructure activities, as well as the opening-up to welcome foreign tourists, influence this market," Seap said.

In a research report released last month, Key Real Estate said Covid-19 has reduced transaction volumes in Siem Reap town, and brought down land prices to an average of \$1,520 per square metre as of end-2020, down by about 5.0 per cent year-on-year from \$1,600.

Global Real Estate Association president Sam Soknoeun said prices and transactions had seen some resurgence

as the 38-road project forges ahead, and that growth will accelerate from end-2021, fuelled by the project's completion and the expected return of international tourists.

This, coupled with the construction of a new airport and lower market prices that in Sihanoukville could bring a swift recovery, he said. "Transaction volumes and property prices in Siem Reap town will pick back up by the end of this year," he said.

Ministry of Public Works and Transport spokesman Sotheayuth Heang said the 38-road project was 56.59 per cent complete as of June 16, with work continuing at a steady rate and on track to be completed by end-2021, even as the

Kingdom grapples with Covid-19 and goes hammer and tongs to close the "February 20 community event" – the Kingdom's third community outbreak first identified on this date.

"All road construction projects of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport are progressing according to plan," he claimed, adding that Siem Reap town's roads will play an important role in attracting many tourists and investors to the epicentre of traditional Cambodian culture.

Cambodia Association of Travel Agents (CATA) president Chhay Sivlin said growth in the tourism industry sparks gains in other sectors. "We really want the sector to resume," she said.

## Management of off-plan property enhanced in VN

VIETNAM'S Ministry of Construction has asked localities to enhance the management of sales of off-plan property.

The ministry made the request due to recent reports of legal violations in the development and transactions of off-plan property, causing disputes, creating risks for buyers and harming the real estate market.

The construction ministry requested localities to publicise information about off-plan property projects. Such projects eligible for transactions would be integrated into the national public service portal.

Provinces and cities must check to ensure compliance with laws about procedures and conditions for transactions of off-plan properties, especially payments and mortgages.

The rules for buying and selling off-plan property were included in the Law on Real Estate Business in 2006.

Despite this, transactions of off-plan property remain complex, forcing several provinces to urge buyers to be cautious and send warnings about law violations from developers.

The Quang Nam provincial Department of Construction

in mid-May issued a document to better manage the real estate market in the central province. The department asked developers of real estate projects to put their developments for sale only when meeting requirements in the Law on Real Estate Business and other legal documents.

The northern province of Bac Giang's construction department recently announced a list of urban and residential projects which were not eligible for transactions, urging citizens to study projects carefully before purchasing.

Early this year, Son La province's construction department announced 11 commercial housing projects not eligible for capital raising or transactions as of March.

A lawyer said the transactions of off-plan properties had not been put under property management, resulting in violations from developers such as using buyers' advance payment for the wrong purposes, especially developers with weak financial capacity, and not following commitments about project quality or progress. VIET NAM NEWS/ASIA NEWS NETWORK



The information about the off-plan housing projects that are eligible for transactions will be made public. VIETNAM NEWS AGENCY

# Low-priced apartments still scarce in Vietnam

VIETNAM has less than half of the low-income houses it targeted for last year, according to Ministry of Construction data.

According to the statistics, the total area of more than 5.1 million square metres of built social housing accounted for only 41.4 per cent of the target of 12.5 million square metres of proposed housing in the National Housing Development Strategy by 2020.

According to realty insiders, the supply of low-priced apartments was still very scarce. The affordable segment, which was more expensive than the low-income segment, was also not easy to find while the need to improve the accommodation for people with limited income was growing.

The ministry said that since 2016 there have been about 1,040 projects to build social housing for low-income people in urban areas and industrial park workers, including 507 independent housing projects and 533 social housing projects built on 20 per cent of the land fund of commercial housing and urban development projects.

Up to now, only 248 projects have been completed with a construction

scale of more than 103,500 apartments in a total area of more than 5.1 million square metres. Another 264 projects with a construction scale of about 216,500 apartments and total area of about 10.8 million square metres were being built.

While the segment of low-priced apartments dominated in terms of total number of transactions on the market, the supply will not be further improved until the end of next year.

A ministry representative said: "The tightening of administrative procedures in project construction and development limited the new supply of real estate projects."

The ministry's latest report on the real estate market showed that affordable apartments are priced below 25 million dong (\$1,100) per square metre in big cities while prices for each square metre of a low-income house far from the centre was below 25 million dong.

The report also said as there was little supply of low-income houses, the prices increased from less than 20 million dong to less than 25 million dong per square metre.

Professor Dang Hung Vo told local

media: "The state's affordable housing developers can only meet 15 per cent of the housing supply for immigrants and the rest of them have to take care of themselves.

"These people are in need of cheap commercial housing, ranging from 700 million to one billion dong each."

He calculated that the supply of cheap houses was nowhere near the demand.

Due to the lack of supply, according to most insiders, social housing has never experienced a crisis in transactions and the liquidity was always the most stable in the market.

The latest data and reports from realty research firm Savills Vietnam said household size in Ho Chi Minh City has tended to decrease over the past 10 years. The household size was 3.5 people per household in 2019, much lower than the rate of 3.9 people per household in 2009.

The firm also said 66 per cent of households have from two to four members, and there is a trend of separating households, which led to an increase in housing demand.

According to Savills Vietnam, the

number of apartments offered for sale on the market with a value of two billion dong each or less accounted for about 10 per cent of the total number.

Many investors and developers are following the trend of reducing the area to fit the needs of small families and make the value suitable for buyers. However, the number of apartments of less than two billion dong, from 50-60sqm, was not many.

Vo Thi Khanh Trang, deputy director of Savills Research Department in Ho Chi Minh City, said that as the land fund was limited and the price of construction materials was increasing, the prices of houses would rise.

Trang said that in order to increase the supply for the low-price and affordable housing segment, "it is necessary to have cooperation from local authorities with policies to support businesses to quickly solve administrative procedures and businesses which build such projects".

On April 15, ministry representatives met with Korean housing experts in Ho Chi Minh City to share experiences in the social housing development of South Korea, as part of a project on the building of a master

policy on Vietnam's social housing development for the 2021-2030 period, carried out using non-refundable official development assistance (ODA) from the Korean government via the Korea International Cooperation Agency (Koica).

Moon Hyogon, director of South Korean research organisation Land and Housing Institute, said that in the current economic growth context, relying on government support alone cannot provide enough housing to meet people's needs, especially in the low-income segments.

Moon opined that using money from the private sector in housing provision should be a solution, saying: "As more Vietnamese businesses can earn profits from low-income household building, they should put a certain amount of the revenues to increase development funds for developing low-income housing."

The Korean expert said the formation of such a fund was expected to carry out the unified, systematic management of many aspects including financial resources, thereby achieving successful results for Vietnam. VIET NAM NEWS/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

## World

## Israel strikes Gaza Strip after incendiary balloons launched

ISRAEL carried out air strikes on the Gaza Strip early on June 16 after militants in the Palestinian territory sent incendiary balloons into the south of the country, in the first major conflict between the two sides since a flare-up last month in which hundreds were killed.

The strikes were the first under the new coalition government headed by Naftali Bennett, who took over on June 13 after ousting former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

And they come as more than a thousand ultranationalist demonstrators bearing Israeli flags poured into Jerusalem's flash-point Old City on June 15, with scores of police deployed and international monitors urging calm.

According to Palestinian sources, Israel's air force targeted at least one site east of Khan Yunis in the south of the Gaza Strip, which is home to some two million people.

An AFP photojournalist in Khan Yunis saw the explosions.

The Israeli Defence Force said that in response to the "arson balloons", its "fighter jets struck military compounds belonging to the Hamas terror organisation".

It added that "facilities and meeting sites for terror operatives" in Khan Yunis were targeted. There was no indication of casualties so far.

Local firefighters said the incendiary balloons caused around 20 fires in southern Israel.

The violence marks the first major flare-up between Israel and Palestinian militants since a ceasefire came into place last month, ending 11 days of heavy fighting that killed 260 Palestinians, according to Gaza authorities, and 13 people in Israel, the police and army there said.

In annexed east Jerusalem, more than one thousand people took to the streets in a delayed and controversial march by nationalist and far-right activists.

The US and UN had called for restraint before the march, which Bennett's new administration had authorised.

With tensions high, Israeli police were deployed in heavy numbers, blocking roads and firing stun grenades and foam-



The Wednesday air strikes are the first under the coalition headed by former Israeli defence minister Naftali Bennett ousting Benjamin Netanyahu after 12 years in power. AFP

tipped bullets to remove Palestinians from the main route.

Medics said 33 Palestinians were wounded and police said two officers were injured and 17 people arrested.

The demonstration triggered protests in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and prompted rebukes and warnings from Israel's allies.

The so-called March of the Flags celebrates the anniversary of the city's "reunification" after Israel captured east Jerusalem from Jordan in 1967 and annexed it, a move not recognised by most of the international community.

June 15's demonstration was originally scheduled for early May but cancelled twice amid police opposition and threats from Hamas, the Islamist group that controls the Palestinian enclave of Gaza.

Throngs of mostly young religious men sang, danced and waved flags at the Damascus Gate entrance to the Old City that was cleared of its usual Palestinian

crowds.

Some chanted "Death to Arabs" before others quieted them.

The march comes just two days after Netanyahu was ousted after 12 straight years in power, toppled by an ideologically divided coalition including, for the first time in Israel's history, an Arab party.

Bennett is himself a Jewish nationalist but Netanyahu's allies accused the new premier of treachery for allying with Arabs and the left.

Some demonstrators on June 15 carried signs reading "Bennett the liar".

Yair Lapid, the architect of the new government, tweeted he believed the march had to be allowed but that "it's inconceivable how you can hold an Israeli flag and shout, 'Death to Arabs' at the same time".

Mansour Abbas, whose four-seat Raam Islamic party was vital to the coalition, called June 15's march a "provocation" that should have been cancelled. AFP

## Radiation levels 'not abnormal' near nuke plant: China ministry

CHINA on June 15 said radiation levels remained normal at one of its nuclear power plants and there were no safety concerns, after the station's French operator reported a gas build-up.

Foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said: "There is no abnormality in the radiation levels around the nuclear power plant, and safety is guaranteed."

CNN reported earlier that the US government was assessing a report of a leak at the Taishan nuclear power station in the populous southern Chinese province of Guangdong.

The US broadcaster said the French company, Framatome, warned of an "imminent radiological threat".

Framatome said in a statement to AFP that it is "supporting resolution of a performance issue" at the plant but that according to "the data available, the plant is operating within the safety parameters".

Powered up in 2018, the Taishan plant was the first worldwide to operate a next-generation EPR nuclear reactor – a pressurised water design that has been subject to years of delays in similar European projects in Britain, France and Finland.

There are now two EPR power units at the plant in the city of Taishan, which sits close to the coastline of southern Guangdong and the financial hub of Hong Kong.

EDE, the majority owner of Framatome, said in a statement that it had requested an extraordinary meeting of the power plant's board.

Zhao added on June 15 that "China's nuclear power plants have maintained a good oper-

ating record, and there have been no incidents affecting the environment and public health".

The website of Chinese regulator the National Nuclear Safety Administration website has only outlined one incident at Taishan in recent months – an incident on April 5 when it says a "small amount of radioactive gas unexpectedly entered" the water-sealed pipeline in the plant's first unit.

The statement said the incident had been inspected and the total amount of gas discharged accounted for 0.00044 per cent of the annual emission limit.

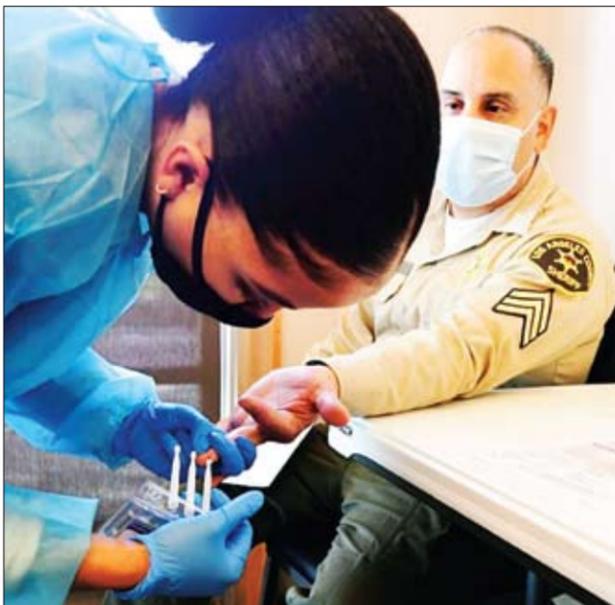
It is not clear that the April incident relates to the recent situation flagged by Framatome.

Zhao Tong, senior fellow in the nuclear policy programme at the Carnegie-Tsinghua Centre for Global Policy in Beijing, told AFP that based on the information provided by the Chinese government agencies, he said "the current level of radiation near the Taishan plant is slightly higher than near other plants in China but still remains in the normal range of general environmental radiation level in Guangdong".

China has dozens of nuclear plants – the world's third highest after the US and France – and has invested billions of dollars to develop its nuclear energy sector.

But Zhao warned the fallout from this incident "will continue driving the two sides to become even more divided in the future and to undermine their willingness and capability to jointly address shared risks if a real and serious nuclear incident indeed breaks out". AFP

## Coronavirus 'likely present' in US from December 2019



A phlebotomist takes blood through a finger prick during a Covid-19 antibody test. AFP

A NEW antibody testing study published on June 15 has found further evidence that the coronavirus was present in the US from at least December 2019, weeks before the first confirmed case was announced on January 21, 2020.

The National Institutes of Health study analysed 24,000 stored blood samples contributed by volunteers across the country from January 2 to March 18, 2020.

Antibodies against the SARS-CoV-2 virus were detected via two different serology tests in nine patient samples, according to the paper, which was published in the journal *Clinical Infectious Diseases*.

The participants were outside the major hotspots of Seattle and New York City, thought to be the key entry points of the virus to the US.

The first positive samples came from participants in the states of Illinois and Massachusetts on January 7 and 8, 2020, respectively, suggesting that the virus was present in those states in late December.

"Antibody testing of blood samples helps us better understand the spread of SARS-CoV-2 in the US in the early days of the US epidemic, when testing was restricted," said lead author Keri Althoff, an associate professor of epidemiology at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

The research builds on a similar investigation published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in November that reached the same conclusion.

But since there are uncertainties surrounding serology testing, further confirmation builds

extra confidence in the finding.

To help minimise the possibility of false positives, the team used two separate tests on each sample, searching for antibodies that bind to different parts of the virus.

The types of antibodies they were looking for are called Immunoglobulin G, or IgG, which "neutralise" the virus' ability to invade cells and do not appear until two weeks after a person has been infected.

It therefore follows that study participants with these samples were exposed to the virus at least several weeks earlier.

Limitations include that the number of samples taken from many states was low – just a few dozen or hundred in some cases. Having a low number of samples increases the odds of a methodological error crowd-

ing out a true signal.

The authors also do not know whether the participants became infected during travel, or within their own communities, and would like to see their work confirmed in further study.

Finally, there is a possibility that the antibodies they detected were formed against infection to other coronaviruses, such as the four that cause common colds.

But since other research has shown that "cross-reactivity" between these coronaviruses is low, the team estimated that the probability all nine samples were false positives was one in 100,000.

The US death toll from Covid-19 surpassed 600,000 on June 15, according to figures from Johns Hopkins University.

AFP

## ASEAN

# Calls for Philippine drug war murders inquiry 'erroneous'

PHILIPPINE President Rodrigo Duterte on June 15 slammed a call for a war crimes court to probe his bloody drug war as "legally erroneous and politically motivated".

Duterte's spokesman Harry Roque told a news briefing that the president's crack-down on the narcotics trade was not a "widespread systematic attack against civilians".

"Did you target civilians? Did you kill them willingly, knowing they were civilians? Obviously, the answer is no," he said.

That being the case, he argued, the "extrajudicial killings" that resulted from the drug war could not be considered "crimes against humanity".

In one of her last acts before stepping down as chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) this week, Fatou Bensouda sought a full investigation into Duterte's purported crimes against humanity for a drug war that has left thousands dead since he took office in 2016.

"I have determined that there is a reasonable basis to believe that the crime against humanity of murder has been committed ... in the context of the government of Philippines 'war on drugs' campaign," she said in a statement.

In her 57-page report to ICC's judges, Bensouda said "there is a reasonable basis to believe" that security forces and state-sanctioned "vigilantes" killed between 12,000 and 30,000 drug suspects from July 1, 2016 to March 16, 2019.

She said security officials "paid police officers and vigilantes bounties" to execute people suspected of being involved in the drug trade.

"State officials at the highest levels of government also spoke publicly and repeatedly in support of extrajudicial killings and created a culture of impunity for those who committed them," she said.

She said the investigation should include allegations of torture and other "inhumane acts" dating back as far as 2011, when Duterte was mayor of Davao City.

Duterte was elected to office in 2016 on a campaign promise to get rid of the country's drug problem, openly exhorting the police to kill drug suspects.

But he has repeatedly denied links to



Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has repeatedly denied links to the killings. PHILIPPINES: PRESIDENTIAL PHOTOGRAPHERS DIVISION/AFP

the killings, insisting that most resulted from rivalries among drug gangs.

He has also backed police accounts that most of those killed were on "drug watch lists" who had been armed and resisted arrest.

While Bensouda concluded that as many as 30,000 had been killed, the latest official data showed just 6,000 suspects had died in over 200,000 anti-drug operations.

The Philippines officially withdrew from the ICC in 2019 on Duterte's order after multiple complaints were filed against him.

Bensouda, however, said previous cases showed that "the court retains jurisdiction over crimes that are alleged to have occurred on the territory of that state during the period when it was a state party" to the ICC.

But Roque insisted that the ICC lacked jurisdiction in the Philippines. "We are no longer a member of the ICC," he said.

He added that the court could not intervene as long as the Philippines had "independent and competent courts" that

were already investigating the killings.

Should the court decide to probe him for war crimes, Duterte would "never cooperate" as long as he is president, Roque added.

He said the ICC should also not allow itself to be used by Duterte's political enemies harbouring ambitions for higher office.

He said among those who filed complaints before the ICC was former senator Antonio Trillanes, a former soldier and fierce critic of Duterte, who has announced his intention to run for president next year.

The ICC's judges have up to four months to issue a decision on Bensouda's request. But pursuing it would be up to Bensouda's successor, Karim Khan, who was due to be sworn in on June 16.

In a statement, the Philippines' foreign ministry said Bensouda's "midnight announcement" tied Khan's hands.

The ministry said Bensouda had "undercut the attractiveness" of joining the ICC for some nations. THE STRAITS TIMES (SINGAPORE)/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

# Malaysian PM lays out four-step plan for post-Covid exit

PRIME Minister Muhyiddin Yassin on June 15 unveiled a four-phase, post-pandemic exit plan for Malaysia, on the eve of a crucial meeting among the country's monarchs that could decide on his political future.

Muhyiddin, in a televised address, unveiled the National Recovery Plan, which projects that Malaysia from September might gradually open up its economy, social sectors and also Parliament.

The federal Parliament and the 13 state legislatures have not sat this year.

"We cannot continue like this. We need to exit this crisis as soon as possible," Muhyiddin told Malaysians, indicating that the current lockdown is costing the government one billion ringgit (\$240 million) a day.

Muhyiddin said much of the country's economy is expected to reopen by the end of October, based on current projections.

The country is undergoing its third nationwide lockdown to tame the latest Covid-19 surge.

Muhyiddin described the current lockdown as the first phase of the exit plan, and outlined several factors that would allow the country to move on to a more relaxed phase.

The second phase, where Covid-19 curbs will be slightly relaxed while retaining social sector and travel bans, will start once Malaysia's daily new infections dip below 4,000 cases, and also after 10 per cent of the population has been fully inoculated. This is expected to take place in July and August.

The third phase, earmarked for the beginning of September, will see most sectors of the economy allowed to open by default, while some curbs on social sectors remain. For this, daily cases have to dip below 2,000 a day and 40 per cent of the population has to be fully vaccinated.

A full reopening is projected from November onwards, once 60 per cent of the population has been fully vaccinated and daily cases dip below 500 a day, he said.

"The continuous lockdowns have badly affected our livelihoods. Now, we can begin to

see the light at the end of the tunnel," Muhyiddin said, while expressing his confidence that the exit plan would succeed when matched with the pace of vaccinations.

Malaysia has been struggling to bring down its Covid-19 infections this year, with daily cases hitting a record 9,020 on May 29.

Daily infections have gone below 1,000 a day only once this year, at 941 cases on March 29.

Muhyiddin in January gained the King's consent to declare a state of emergency that suspended Parliament and state legislatures, and also postponed several by-elections, to allow the government to focus its efforts in battling the pandemic.

But Covid-19 cases have only worsened during the emergency, with Malaysia imposing movement curbs for the third time last month, which was also the deadliest month since the pandemic began in January last year.

Muhyiddin imposed a total lockdown nationwide from June 1, and it has now been extended to last until June 28. He said on June 15 that the total lockdown had helped Malaysia "avoid a catastrophe".

Malaysia recorded 5,419 new infections on June 15, bringing total infections to 667,876.

The country is accelerating its vaccinations. On June 14, Malaysia registered its highest vaccination rate to date, administering 197,963 doses in one day.

The country has now given at least one dose of the vaccine to 10 per cent of its 33 million population, while 59 per cent of its adult population have registered to receive Covid-19 vaccines.

Malaysia's Drug Control Authority (DCA) on June 15 approved two single-dose vaccines, China's CanSino and the US' Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Malaysia currently uses three two-dose vaccines, namely Pfizer-BioNTech, Sinovac and AstraZeneca.

The DCA on June 15 also approved the use of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for those aged 12 years old and above. THE STRAITS TIMES (SINGAPORE)/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

# VN's pangolin defender earns top honour

AVIETNAMESE conservationist working to save pangolins from the devastating multi-billion-dollar wildlife trade won a prestigious award on June 15 for his role in rescuing over a thousand of one of the world's most endangered creatures.

Highly prized in China and Southeast Asia for their flesh, pangolins are seen as a delicacy for the mistaken belief

that they can cure anything from impotence to cancer.

SaveVietnam's Wildlife (SVW) director Nguyen Van Thai has been at the forefront of efforts to raise the alarm internationally about the serious problems Vietnam faces as a major hub for wildlife trafficking.

He was awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize – known colloquially as the "Green Nobel" – which hon-

ours grassroots environmental leaders who have made "sustained and significant efforts" to protect and enhance the natural world.

"Helping people to understand these problems will be an opportunity to attract young people and the Vietnamese community to join the work in protecting the forest, wildlife and the environment," Thai, 39, told AFP in an interview ahead of the announcement of the six winners of the prize.

Pangolins – often described as "scaly anteaters" – are defenceless in the wild, curling up into a ball when they are frightened, allowing poachers to easily gather them up.

"Based on figures from investigations and images from camera traps, we can say that pangolins in the wild in Vietnam have decreased more than 90 per cent in the last 15 years," Thai said.

At SVW's rescue centre in Vietnam, a team of staff and volunteers work long hours nursing pangolins back to

health, before releasing them back into the wild. They have now saved nearly 1,600 of the vulnerable creatures.

Of the two types – Sunda and Chinese – the latter is faring worse, and faces a "high risk of extinction" in Vietnam, according to Thai.

But his centre is developing a breeding programme for the Chinese pangolin, with the hope that they can later be released into the wild.

The Goldman Environmental Prize's recognition of SVW's work could go a long way in helping boost the rescue centre's work, he said.

"My first feeling when I found out I won this award was pride," he said. "Since I founded Save Vietnam's Wildlife, my aim was to see Vietnamese become leaders in conservation in their own country."

"There are not many Vietnamese role models that we can follow," he explained. But "an individual or an organisation cannot do it alone – we need to work together". AFP



Nguyen Van Thai checks a pangolin at his centre in Vietnam's Ninh Binh province. SVW



Malaysia has been struggling to bring down its Covid-19 infections this year. AFP

# Can new Israeli administration unite despite widely disparate members?

Opinion  
Editorial

A COMPLETELY unprecedented coalition government has been united solely in its opposition to Prime Minister Netanyahu. The question will be whether it can maintain unity within the Cabinet, transcending differences in position and implementing policies smoothly.

In Israel, eight opposition parties with greatly different policies and ideologies joined together to form a new administration. Naftali Bennett, the leader of the extreme right-wing party Yamina, became prime minister.

In addition to the centrist parties that led the coalition agreement, a wide range of groups, including left-wing parties, have joined the administration. A Palestinian Arab party has also entered power for the first time in Israeli history.

Israeli politics are separated into small parties, and it is difficult for the leading party to secure a majority, usually resulting in the formation of a coalition government. Over the past two years, there have been as many as four general elections due to a series of unsuccessful coalition talks and the collapse of administrations after they were formed.

The new administration's intention to give top priority to breaking the political stalemate can be deemed appropriate.

The opposition parties rallied under the banner of departing from Netanyahu's administration, which lasted 15 straight years and 15 years in total.

Netanyahu was prosecuted for corruption two years ago, which accelerated the decline in his leadership. Although he has achieved good results



Outgoing Israeli President Reuven Rivlin (centre) is flanked by Prime Minister Naftali Bennett (left) and alternate Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Yair Lapid during a group photo with the new coalition government on June 14. AFP

in economic development, his authoritarian political style and hard-line stance toward Palestine and Iran have intensified internal divisions in Israel and estranged his coalition partners.

Increased public demand for change as a result of the growing negative impact of his long-term administration may have led to the unexpected inauguration of a new administration.

The most difficult element for Bennett in steering the new government for the present will likely be how to deal with Palestine, with which Israel has barely maintained a cease-fire since the military clash in May.

Far-right parties do not accept the establishment of a Palestinian state and support the promotion of Jewish settlements in Israeli-occupied territories. There is a wide gap between the coalition's far-right parties, and its Arab and centrist parties.

Bennett should avoid getting too deeply involved in issues that could lead to disagreements within the Cabinet. If results are achieved on matters directly related to people's lives, such as the economy, this will likely lead to national reconciliation, restoration of political trust and stable management of the administration.

The focal point of foreign policy will

be how to deal with Iran, which has a hostile relationship with Israel. The Netanyahu administration was working to establish an encircling net around Iran by improving relations with Arab countries that also see Iran as an enemy.

Former US President Donald Trump led efforts together to encircle Iran, but US President Joe Biden is trying to hold dialogue and ease tensions with Iran. It is hoped that the Bennett administration will promote a moderate policy that will contribute to the stability of the Middle East, while fully taking into account US moves. THE YOMIURI SHIMBUN (JAPAN)/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

## Medical workers' infection exposes blind spot

ON JUNE 13, authorities in Guangzhou city, South China's Guangdong province, issued a statement saying two local medical workers who underwent nucleic acid tests on Friday had tested positive for the novel coronavirus.

That is alarming news, as instances of medical workers testing positive had not been reported with the country bringing the outbreak largely under control.

Besides, hospitals are well-

protected spaces where doctors and nurses are more conscious about protecting themselves, which makes them less vulnerable if they do their precautions well.

Also, medical workers themselves getting infected hampers the fight against the virus. That's why hospitals need special protection; the infection of medical workers cannot be taken lightly.

The cases in Guangzhou show how the novel corona-

virus is entering China from overseas and how medical workers are still at risk, underlining the need to better protect doctors and nurses and other health workers.

The hospital must find out if there are some problems with its epidemic prevention and control mechanism. The monitoring departments in Guangzhou, too, must run a check of their epidemic prevention and control mechanism to find out how the virus

entered the hospital and infected the two medical workers.

It is also advisable that they regularly test their medical workers.

The actual cause of the infection has to be ascertained and if it is a case of human negligence or carelessness, those responsible should be made answerable.

China brought the novel coronavirus outbreak largely under control sometime last year. Complete victory over

the virus might take longer, but we are confident of achieving that because we have ample supplies of equipment and well-trained medical workers.

Of course, that requires us to take strict measures. It is time the local government in Guangzhou checked for loopholes and if any are found, it plugs them, so that no more medical workers get infected again. CHINA DAILY/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

### SUBSCRIPTION FORM

SUBSCRIPTION PERIOD	PRINT EDITION			POST DIGITAL INCLUSIVE OF E-PAPER
	THE PHNOM PENH POST	POST KHMER	DUAL SUBSCRIPTION	
	All subscription fees include VAT			
1 MONTH	\$18.70	\$8.25	\$26.95	\$10.00
3 MONTHS	\$52.80	\$22.00	\$74.80	\$27.00
6 MONTHS	\$99.00	\$38.50	\$137.50	\$50.00
1 YEAR	\$192.50	\$66.00	\$258.50	\$96.00
2 YEARS	\$374.00	\$121.00	\$495.00	\$180.00



FREE DELIVERY TO YOUR HOME OR OFFICE

FOR ALL INQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT:  
087 888 854 / 017 666 181

SUBSCRIBER'S NAME:  
ADDRESS:  
TEL:

EMAIL:

The Phnom Penh Post  
www.phnompenhpost.com

EDITORIAL PERSONNEL

Publisher & Chief Executive Officer

Ly Tayseng

Managing Editor

Sam Rith

Deputy Managing Editor

Phuon Chansereivuth

Chief of Staff

Phak Seangly

Business Editor

May Kunmakara

Deputy Business Editor

Sangeetha Amarthalingam

Deputy Head of Lifestyle Desk

Pan Simala

Senior Reporters

Meas Sokchea, Niem Chheng, Mom Kunthea

Reporters

Khouth Sophak Chakrya, Kim Sarom,

Long Kimmarita, Hin Pisei, Hong Raksmei,

Pann Retha, Voun Dara, Roth Sochieata,

Orm Bunthoern, Ry Sochan,

Lay Samean, Thou Vireak, Nov Sivutha

Photographers

Heng Chivoan, Hong Menea, Hean Rangsey

Web Editor

Leang Phannara

Digital Team

Sous Chanthy, Pang Vichea, Suy Sovandy

Desktop Publishing

Suon Savatdy, Chum Sokunthy, Danh Borath,

Than Veasna

SIEM REAP BUREAU

Office Manager

Sophearith Blondeel

PRODUCTION & PRINTING

Nhim Sokphyrak

Commercial and Graphic Designer

Teo Theoun Thyda, Tim Borith

POST MEDIA

HEAD OFFICE

Post Media Co., Ltd.

The Elements Condominium Level 7,

Hun Sen Boulevard, Phum Prek Talong,

Sangkat Chak Angre Krom, 12353, Phnom

Penh, Cambodia

Tel: 023 888 161, 023 888 162

Cellcard: 078 555 166, 078 555 133

Smart: 086 822 999, 086 277 999

SIEM REAP

No 629, Street 6, Dangcum Commune

Tel: 063 966 290, Fax: 063 966 590

COMMERCIAL DEPARTMENT

Chief Operating Officer

James Ong Soon Teck

Advertising Department

Chap Narith, 017 996 241

Hun Channet, 017 578 768

Prach Monnyreak, 015 239 293

Keo Puthy, 012 966 605

Paing Patrya, 081 872 202

Jessa Piastro, 092 445 983

CIRCULATION & DISTRIBUTION

Acting Distribution Manager

Thenh Rithy, 087 888 854

Circulation Supervisor

Nou Chanthy, 096 999 2828

Yim Veasna, 015 814 499

ADMINISTRATION

Admin & HR Manager

Pich Socheat

Assistants Admin & HR Manager

Nhel Soaphea

Financial Director

Heang Tangmeng

Chief Accountant

Sren Vicheka

Treasurers

Sok Sophorn, Yon Sovannara,

Cheam Sopheak, Huy Hamsovannary

IT & Networking

Vong Oun

TO CONTACT US

newsroom@phnompenhpost.com

advertising@phnompenhpost.com

subscription@phnompenhpost.com

webmaster@phnompenhpost.com

www.phnompenhpost.com

© Post Media Co., Ltd

The Phnom Penh Post is wholly owned

and printed by Post Media Co., Ltd. The

title The Phnom Penh Post in either

English or Khmer languages, its associ-

ated logos or devices and the contents of

this publication may not be reproduced

in whole or in part without the written

consent of Post Media Co., Ltd.

www.phnompenhpost.com

# Lifestyle

## Disabled musician inspires others

Roth Sochieata

**D**ESPITE having spent more than two decades lying on his stomach on a wheeled cart almost constantly, musician Brak Sophanna, 30, has never been one to spend much time at rest. He prefers to stay busy writing songs, helping with charitable causes and inspiring hope in everyone he meets.

For more than twenty years Sophanna has struggled with his disability. He is entirely dependent on his customised wheeled cart to get around, which makes mundane things like typical household chores or most regular employment difficult for him to do.

Sophanna's special talent is sharing hope with others through his music. He writes uplifting songs and performs them as well as giving music lessons to children and participating in charitable work to assist the elderly.

Sophanna is the third of four children in his family. He was orphaned at the age of eight along with his siblings due to his parent's tragic deaths during a robbery.

At age 10 or so, Sophanna's life took an even darker turn. He fell ill and his legs became paralysed, leaving him unable to walk.

"Back in 2000, I started to get sick. I had a high fever and a doctor in Battambang told me that I had a spinal cord problem that affected my legs," Sophanna says.

Due to his health problems, he was forced to drop out school in the fifth grade. After the death of his parents, he was placed in the care of foster parents from Thailand for a while before he was sent to the Nehemiah Orphanage in Siem Reap.

Sophanna recalls "I only studied until the fifth grade because I was often sick. And it was difficult to ride on a wheelchair back and forth to school from home over such a long distance. So I had to drop out."

Sophanna admits that there were times when he felt hopeless and disappointed in life. He says that for a time in Siem Reap, he was the only person he knew with a disability and the isolation devastated him.

When he was younger he would dream about life as a "normal" person and being able to study and hang out with friends with ease like most kids, but those dreams felt like a smack in the face a few moments later when he would have to wake up and face reality.

However, things began to change for him when he went to stay for two years at the disability centre run by the organisation Handicap at Battambang.

While there, his eyes were opened when he met many other disabled people – some with far more serious or tougher conditions than he was dealing with – and began to understand that life as a disabled person had just as much potential for happiness, fulfilment and achievement as anyone else's.

"I realised that actually in this world there are many people who are going through what I've been through. I started to pull myself together and refresh my mind so that I could move on. I wanted to work on myself to be productive and live a valuable life for me and the people surrounding me.

"Never again do I want to go back to where I was, being passive and just living life from day to day. I am no longer allowing my disability to limit my potential. I refuse to live and die uselessly without helping others," Sophanna says.

With a natural born talent in music, Sophanna is now an original composer who sings and plays guitar as well as a music teacher.

He saves what he earns daily to help people who are in tougher situations than he is.

"From giving music lessons and singing in the market in Siem Reap, I have been able to earn some money. I have set



On his wheel cart, Brak Sophanna cooks, plays guitars and sings despite his disability. SUPPLIED

aside some income for charitable purposes. I've gotten some from generous people as well as from my godfather, who has always encouraged me to continue doing this work," Sophanna says.

Unfortunately, during the Covid crisis and lockdowns, he could not go out and earn anything, so he instead stayed home and raised chickens and grew plants in his garden to make a living.

He had to temporarily stop his charity work as well, but with a firm commitment that when everything is back to normal he would resume that too.

Sophanna's life experiences have given him the ability to compose songs that are uniquely encouraging and inspiring to others. When he sings about going through hard

times or overcoming obstacles there's an authenticity and sincerity to it that he brings because he really has been there and done that himself.

One of Sophanna's songs is called "Failure is a Lesson," and he says it's something he figured out throughout the course of his own life. He says he used to think he was a loser and that everything he would do would be unsuccessful.

This wasn't an unreasonable line of thought given that he was orphaned at age 8, disabled at age 10 and then forced to quit school shortly thereafter. That's a rough start for anyone to overcome.

The turning point for Sophanna was the realisation that whatever he's been through, no matter how hard, still had value because it was

a life lesson that he could learn from as he worked towards greater success in the days ahead of him.

"Failure is a Lesson" is one of ten original songs that Sophanna has now recorded and released. He is now increasingly being recognised for his music and he has set-up a home recording studio to continue to work on new compositions.

Eventually, in 2015 Sophanna decided to leave the disability centre, saying that "I wanted to learn living independently. I want to live my own life and strive hard to be able to make it on my own."

Whether living at the disability centre or living on his own in the world, he has always done volunteer work for various organisations like The Global Child, helping to take

care of children and offering a helping hand with their English and music lessons.

Sophanna says that he has been inspired and uplifted to keep working hard on his goals because he is a Christian. He says his faith and the words of the Bible have shown him the way forward.

"I want to encourage everyone – whether they are disabled or they are addicted to drugs or maybe just depressed – anyone who thinks their life is valueless, please take a look at me. I can't even sit or stand up, but I still have enough hope to keep on living. I know you do too. There will be days you feel disappointed but don't let that determine your future. Get up and get on with your lives," Sophanna says. ■



Sophanna holds on to his friend's motorbike to get around the city when he needs to. SUPPLIED

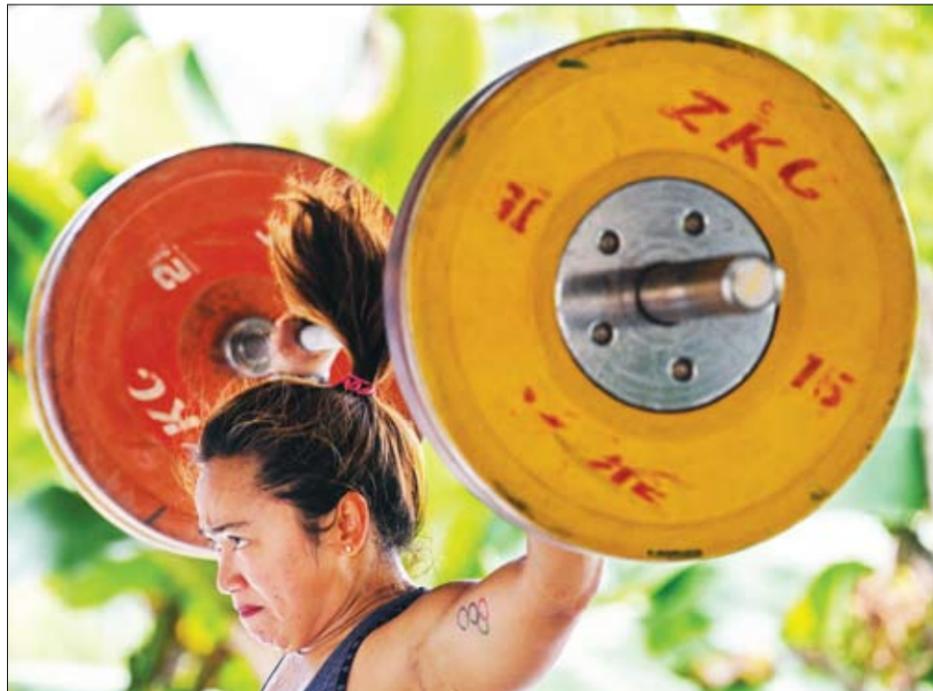


Sophanna is hoping that the pandemic is over soon, so that he can carry on his personal humanitarian mission to help other people. SUPPLIED

# Far from home: Weightlifter's quest for 1st gold



Olympic weightlifter Hidilyn Diaz of the Philippines jogging past banana trees during a training session. AFP



Hidilyn Diaz, who took silver at Rio 2016, has been stuck in Malaysia since February last year. AFP

**F**ILIPINA weightlifter Hidilyn Diaz grunts with the effort of hoisting a barbell over her head in an outdoor makeshift gym ringed by banana and rambutan trees as trucks thunder past – an unlikely training base for a shot at Olympic gold in Tokyo.

Diaz, 30, who took silver at Rio 2016, has been stuck in Malaysia since February last year because of the coronavirus pandemic but has remained determined to realise her dream of becoming the first Olympic gold medal winner from the Philippines.

"I'm ready. I can't say at what per cent, but I'm there – my mind is there, my heart is there, physically it's there," Diaz said during a break from her long hours of final preparation in energy-sapping heat and humidity for her fourth, and probably last, Olympics.

Diaz is already assured a place in her country's sporting folklore, alongside the likes of boxing icon Manny Pacquiao, as the only woman from the sprawling archipelago ever to win an Olympic medal – her surprise silver in Rio breaking a 20-year medal drought for the Philippines.

Her stature grew two years later when she struck gold at the Asian Games in Indonesia and repeated the feat at the Southeast Asian Games on home soil in December 2019.

Diaz had then been firmly on course to take her chance at Olympic glory just a few months later, but the coronavirus changed everything as the Games were postponed by a year.

## 'Anxiety, fears, worries'

"It's difficult to have a goal and have it extended by how many months and at the same time you know you



Diaz using her computer after a training session in Jasir in the Malaysian city of Malacca. AFP

have plans after the Olympics," said Diaz, who serves in the Philippines Air Force and will compete in the 55kg class in Tokyo.

The daughter of a tricycle driver in a poor village near the port of Zamboanga on the southern island of Mindanao, Diaz has not seen her family since December 2019.

"I have to sacrifice time with my family, sacrifice time with my friends, sacrifice time with studying ... my work at the Philippines Air Force."

She initially went to train in Malaysia in February 2020 because her Chinese coach, Gao Kaiwen, thought it would be better for her as she fo-

cused on qualifying for Tokyo.

But within weeks came Covid-19 restrictions leaving Diaz to battle gym closures, lack of access to weightlifting equipment and the grinding uncertainty of whether the Games would be held at all.

"At first there was a lot of anxiety, fears, worries because we're in Malaysia – we didn't know where to stay, we didn't know where to train," said Diaz.

For months Diaz and her coaches – "Team HD" – were stuck in an apartment block in the capital Kuala Lumpur where they had to be careful not to crack the tiled

floor while training with weights.

But the tireless Diaz still managed to find time to raise money through online training sessions to distribute food packages to poor families back home who were suffering during coronavirus lockdowns.

In October, Diaz and her team relocated to a rural area in the southern coastal state of Malacca where they have been living in the house owned by a Malaysian weightlifting official.

She began using a nearby gym but restrictions were tightened again forcing her to work out in the house's car port, sweating profusely in the tropical heat.

"Whenever there's a lockdown our world really stops and you don't know what to do and you're shocked," she said.

"If I didn't have Team HD, I admit I wouldn't be here, I would have gone home to the Philippines."

## 'Everyone's expecting'

The disruption has affected Diaz, who was only fourth at the Asian Championships in Tashkent last month, her first competition for more than a year. It was enough to secure her Olympic berth, but far from her best, she admitted.

Diaz endured 10 more days quarantine on her return, six confined to a hotel room with the final four back at the house, using an exercise bike, dumbbells and rubber power bands to maintain her fitness and strength.

She is fiercely determined to be in the best shape for the Olympics, which open in under two months on July 23.

"The pressure is high because of course ... everyone's expecting me to win the gold medal in Tokyo," she said.

"I have embraced it. I just tell myself to focus on the technique, focus on the work ahead.

"I don't want to promise to win gold, I just want to do it."

Training alongside a busy road, Diaz is often joined by local children eager to learn how to lift weights.

"I'm happy when children join weightlifting and they get curious because that's how I started," said Diaz, who began by carting 18 litre jugs of water for her family as a child.

"They say I'm not smiling," she said. "But I need to focus. We need to train." AFP



A Libyan musician plays his violin during a rare cultural event in the eastern city of Benghazi on June 14. AFP

## Libya's Benghazi hosts rare 'week of culture'

LIBYA'S eastern city of Benghazi is hosting a rare "week of culture" featuring art, music and theatre, as the country attempts to turn the page on a decade of violence.

"It's an honour to have an exhibition for the first time in Benghazi," said Elham el-Ferjani, an artist who travelled from the capital Tripoli in the country's west specially for the event.

Benghazi was the first city to rise up against longtime dictator Moamer Kadhafi in 2011 in a NATO-backed revolt.

The situation deteriorated into a complex war involving Libyan armed groups, foreign mercenaries and foreign powers,

and an ensuing political crisis saw the oil-rich country split in recent years between rival authorities in the east and west.

An October truce set in motion a UN-sponsored process that led to the creation of an interim government tasked with preparing the country for elections this December and unifying its institutions.

Ferjani, whose work is inspired by Libyan desert rock art, Amazigh (Berber) culture and the North African country's decade of conflict, is displaying her paintings at the Barah cultural centre in the heart of Libya's ancient second city.

The opportunity to meet with artists who have travelled from all over the coun-

try was "a source of joy", said Ferjani, whose show kicked off the week's events.

Other activities include workshops on glass painting, photography and sculpture, as well as roundtables and conferences, said organiser Hazem el-Ferjani, who is not related to the artist.

The aim of the cultural week, which runs until June 19, was "to revive the artistic and cultural life of Benghazi", a city long associated with violence, he said.

The programme also features debates on Libyan cinema, a concert of Arab-Andalusian music and a play performed by a Libyan theatre troop. AFP

Lifestyle



Trang Nguyen, founder of local conservation group WildAct, poses with her book *Chang Hoang Da - Gau (Saving Sorya, Chang and The Sun Bear)*. AFP

# Vietnamese art book to be released in UK

**A**N ART book about wildlife by writer Trang Nguyen and painter Jeet Zdung will be released in the UK in September following a copyright agreement signed by the book's publisher, Kim Dong Publishing House, and its partner, Pan MacMillan.

The book, *Chang Hoang Da - Gau (Saving Sorya, Chang and The Sun Bear)*, features the journey of Chang, a young girl with big dreams of saving endangered wild animals. It tells the stories about animals that are close to extinction.

Chang's adventure begins when she meets Sorya, a sun bear who was saved from traffickers by the Bear Rescue Centre. She is determined to return Sorya back to nature.

Chang and her new friend, Sorya, help readers discover the beauty of nature and the life of wild animals through their stories.

*Chang Hoang Da - Gau* includes 120 water-colour paintings by Jeet Zdung. The pictures are the result of a two-month field trip into the wild.

The 120-page book was released in Vietnam in March, 2020. Profits from the book's sales

will be sent to wildlife projects in Vietnam.

It has been issued by Pan MacMillan in five countries, China, South Korea, Norway, Turkey and the US.

"I hope the book can touch readers' hearts and encourage and inspire people to dream and protect nature and the Earth's vitality," said the book's writer Trang, 31, who has a PhD in Biodiversity Management from the University of Kent in England.

In 2013, Trang founded WildAct, an NGO which focuses on monitoring illegal wildlife trade markets, and provides conservation education programmes for Vietnamese youngsters. She also received a scholarship for wildlife conservation from Cambridge University.

In 2019, Trang was included on the BBC's list of the top 100 inspiring and influential women around the world.

Artist Jeet Zdung, whose real name is NguyenTien Dung, was born in 1988. He has won prizes for his illustrations. His works were shown at the Cartoon Festival organised by the Wallonie - Bruxelles Delegation in Vietnam in 2012. VIET NAM NEWS/ASIA NEWS NETWORK ■

# Restaurants in US struggle with large increase in diners: survey

AMERICANS are dining out in record numbers as pandemic restrictions lift, with restaurants struggling to keep up with demand amid a labour shortage, data released by review site Yelp showed on June 15.

Yelp data showed more than 3.7 million diners seated using its app in May 2021, the highest number ever, surpassing pre-pandemic highs, according to Yelp restaurant marketplace manager Devon Wright.

The number of diners was 48 per cent higher than in May 2019, according to the data.

The surge comes with a growing number of Americans having been vaccinated, and local governments gradually lifting mask mandates and limits on indoor dining. "As diners head back into restaurants, new restaurants and food businesses are opening at near pre-pandemic levels," Wright said in a blog post.

"Nearly 6,600 new restaurant and food businesses opened in May 2021, a 42-per-cent increase from May 2020 and down by only 21 per cent from May 2019."

Yelp also counted 16,500 re-openings in April 2021, with that number dipping to 5,000 in May.

The jump in restaurant dining has been especially pronounced in some cities seeing more tourism such as Honolulu (up 853 per cent) and Las Vegas (up 589 per cent), Yelp said.

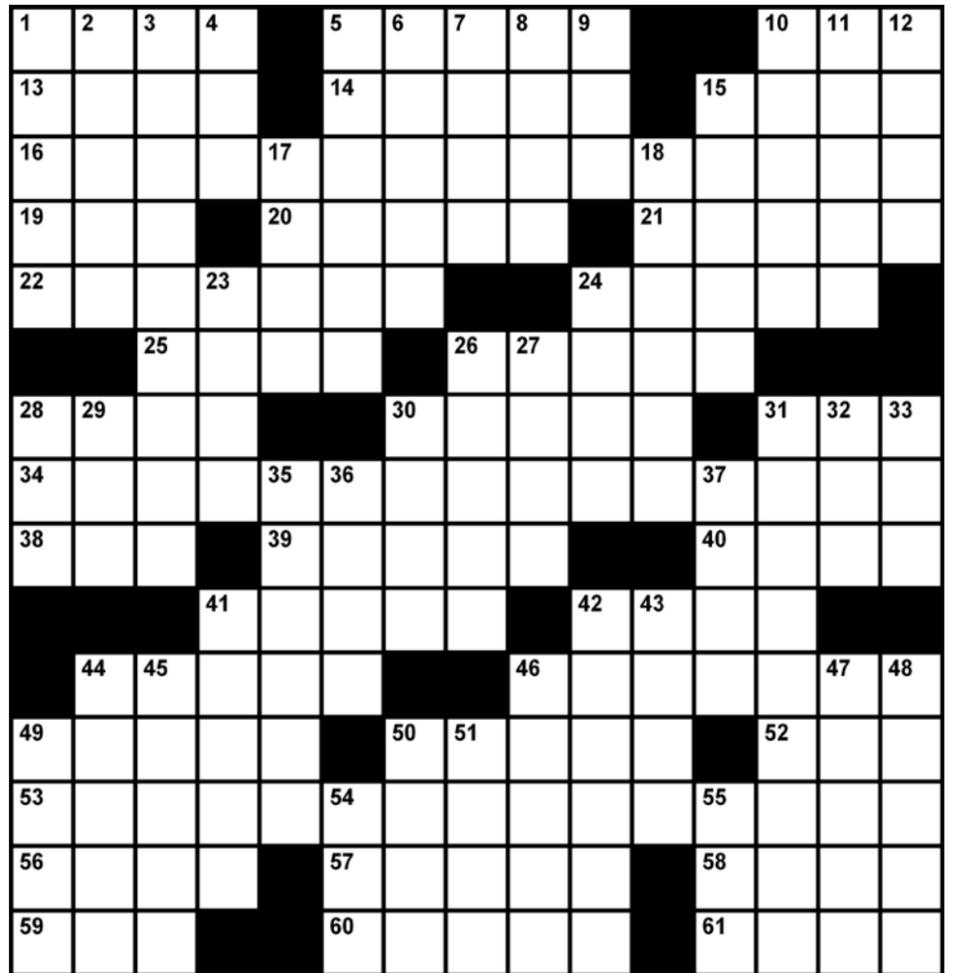
Wright said restaurants are increasingly turning to technology to help manage the spike in light of difficulties in finding workers. This includes more use of digital menus, contactless payments, smartphone waitlists, reservations and table management.

Pandemic restrictions have been gradually lifted in the US with just over 52 per cent of the population, or 174 million people, have already received at least one dose, according to health officials. AFP ■



A couple dines indoors at the Hard Rock Cafe in New York City, which reopened in May after being closed for more than a year. AFP

## Thinking caps



### "ON CALL"

#### ACROSS

- 1 Study at the last minute
- 5 Part of a chronicle
- 10 Aerobics center
- 13 Brain section
- 14 Fresh as a \_\_\_
- 15 Carpenter's leveling device
- 16 Responds to a ring
- 19 Words spoken in front of witnesses
- 20 Easily confused (Var.)
- 21 "Hammerin' Hank" in Cooperstown
- 22 Humiliate
- 24 Become edible
- 25 Felt-making material
- 26 Put up with something
- 28 Brother of Cain
- 30 Army glitch
- 31 Auto for hire
- 34 Low-tech communication device
- 38 Bon \_\_\_ (witticism)
- 39 Pertaining to a sovereign
- 40 Overly pretentious
- 41 Halloween quaff
- 42 Abrasive particles
- 44 Black card

#### DOWN

- 1 Forty-niner's workplace
- 2 Sonata movement
- 3 Like paper towels
- 4 Persian plaint
- 5 Floating aimlessly
- 6 Harsh, as weather
- 7 Faultfinder's finds
- 8 Covered with soot
- 9 Bleaching solution
- 10 Sandcastle site
- 11 Assign, as the blame
- 12 Revival response
- 15 Configuration
- 17 Change copy
- 18 Current, as accounts

- 23 Chalky mineral
- 24 In widespread use
- 26 Proximate, to poets
- 27 \_\_\_ and chain
- 28 24-hr. banking convenience
- 29 Book jacket info
- 30 Eyelid trouble
- 31 Shot for a sore pitcher
- 32 Aardvark snack
- 33 Turkish title of respect
- 35 Having less rainfall
- 36 Lymph \_\_\_
- 37 Call to a cabbie
- 41 Chocolate bean tree
- 42 Shames, as into doing something
- 43 Coarse sound or tool
- 44 Go bad
- 45 "Absolutely Fabulous" character
- 46 An Allman brother
- 47 "Ho ho ho" crier
- 48 Aviary sound
- 49 Gives guns to
- 50 Experiencing jitters
- 51 Opera-house level
- 54 Run off at the mouth
- 55 Sandwich meat

## Sudoku Pacific

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.

				8	4	9		6
				2				7
6			1	9		3	8	
		3			8			4
	7			4				2
9			2			6		
	1	2		5	9			8
	9			7				
5		7	8	3				

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

### Wednesday's solution

L	E	A	R	F	A	C	T	D	E	L	I	S				
A	N	N	A	E	C	R	U	I	N	U	R	E				
I	N	T	H	E	W	I	T	N	E	S	S	B	O	X		
R	U	E	L	E	D	A	N	C	I	E	N	T				
D	I	S	M	I	S	S	O	L								
				E	S	T	W	E	I	W	E	R				
S	W	A	T	H	S	A	N	G								
M	A	K	E	A	S	T	R	O	N	G	C	A	S	E		
T	U	R	I			H	E	N	S	Y	O	K	E	L		
G	E	N	E			T	S	B	R	A						
A	N	I	M	A	T	E				G	R	A	T	I	F	Y
G	I	V	E	S	O	N	E	T	H	E	S	A	C	K		
E	L	A	T	E		G	L	U	M		A	G	U	E		
O	E	N	T	S		R	I	P	S		W	E	S	S		

### Wednesday's solution

2	6	7	8	3	9	4	1	5
4	9	3	7	5	1	2	8	6
5	1	8	4	2	6	3	7	9
7	2	5	3	1	8	6	9	4
1	3	6	2	9	4	7	5	8
8	4	9	5	6	7	1	2	3
6	8	2	9	7	3	5	4	1
9	7	1	6	4	5	8	3	2
3	5	4	1	8	2	9	6	7

# Iran, UAE and Saudi march into third phase

**I**RAN, Saudi Arabia, the UAE topped their respective groups to ease into the third phase of Asian qualifying for the 2022 FIFA World Cup on June 15.

On a frantic day of action across Asia, with 14 matches played, Iraq, Oman, China, Vietnam and Lebanon also made it through after finishing among the five best second-placed teams.

Syria, Japan, South Korea and Australia had already clinched their spots in the deciding round, from which four countries will advance to next year's tournament in Qatar.

Qatar, who topped Group E, will not play in the final phase as they qualify automatically as hosts.

On June 15, Iran pipped Iraq 1-0 in Bahrain to top Group C while the UAE edged Vietnam 3-2 in their final Group G match in Dubai.

To qualify, both Iran and the UAE needed to topple the teams that went into the final round of matches leading their groups. They did it in contrasting styles.

Sardar Azmoun fired Iran ahead in the 35th minute at the Sheikh Ali bin Mohamed al-Khalifa Stadium in Muharraq.

The Zenit Saint Petersburg striker, who has played a pivotal role for his team since the qualifiers resumed, tapped in from close range after captain Ehsan Hajsafi made his way up the left flank and sent in a cross.

Both teams fluffed chances later but Iran hung on to their lead to take their tally to 18 points from eight



Japan's forward Takuma Asano (right) and Kyrgyz Republic defender Aizar Akmatov fight for the ball during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Asian zone group F qualification football match on Tuesday. AFP

matches, while Iraq finished on 17.

Meanwhile in Dubai, Vietnam wasted their two-point advantage at the top as they were beaten by the Emiratis with Ali Salmeen and Ali Mabkhout finding the net in the first half.

Mahmoud Khamis made it 3-0 five minutes after the break, and while Vietnam pulled two late goals back

through Nguyen Tien Linh and Tran Minh Vuong it wasn't enough to keep top spot.

China's also needed to win their last match and they did that comfortably with a 3-1 victory over Syria.

Zhang Xizhe, Wu Lei and Zhang Yuning scored for China in Sharjah. Syria's goal was scored by Aias Aosman.

Elsewhere, Salman al-Faraj scored a brace as Saudi Arabia thrashed Uzbekistan 3-0 to clinch top spot in Group D.

Ali al-Hassan added a third in the second half as the Saudis took their tally to 20 points from eight matches.

Already-qualified Australia edged Jordan 1-0 to record their eighth con-

secutive win in the second phase. Harry Souttar scored the only goal.

## Quick-fire Onaiwu

Earlier striker Ado Onaiwu bagged a six-minute first-half hat-trick as Japan confirmed their dominance in Group F with a crushing 5-1 win over the Kyrgyz Republic in Suita, Japan.

Manager Hajime Moriyasu made five changes to the side that beat Tajikistan 4-1 a week ago and opted for Onaiwu to lead the attack in the absence of Takumi Minamino, who withdrew from the squad last week "due to club circumstances".

With qualification already secured, Minamino, who had netted in all seven of Japan's previous group matches, reportedly left after playing in the 1-0 friendly win against Serbia on Thursday, to sort out a move from Liverpool to Southampton.

In his place, Onaiwu opened the scoring from the penalty spot in the 27th minute after a handball by Aizar Akmatov.

Onaiwu tapped in his second four minutes later at the far post after good work down the right by Kawabe Hayao and completed his quickfire treble in the 33rd minute with a towering header.

Takuma Asano and Sho Sasaki added two more after the break while Kyrgyz captain Mirlan Murzaev scored their consolation penalty in first-half stoppage time.

In the other Group F match, Tajikistan beat Myanmar 4-0 in Osaka to seal second place. AFP

## Memories of Tiger's epic 2008 US Open victory spice Torrey return

**M**EMORIES of Tiger Woods winning the 2008 US Open at Torrey Pines on a broken leg inspire major winners as they return for another US Open at the oceanside course.

At Torrey Pines 13 years ago, Woods sank a clutch 12-foot birdie putt on the 72nd hole to force a playoff with Rocco Mediate, then battled level through an 18-hole June 14 showdown before winning his 14th career major with a par on the first sudden-death playoff hole.

"It was pretty impressive. It was exciting to watch," four-time major winner Brooks Koepka said. "That's got to be up there for him. Definitely one of the top ones."

Woods had played with a broken leg, doctors discovered later, and he skipped the remainder of the year. He battled injuries for years after and wouldn't win

another major until the 2019 Masters.

Woods is not playing this week after suffering severe leg injuries in a February (2021) car crash. He's recuperating at home in Florida with no timetable for a return.

Yet the memories of his Torrey Pines triumph left an indelible mark on several golfers inspired by him.

"The putt on 18 was very memorable," defending US Open champion Bryson DeChambeau said June 15. "Making that putt knowing he had to make it, and there was nothing more to it. You just had to make it, and he was able to do it."

The shot still astounds DeChambeau, whose trademark long drives have delivered their share of dropped jaws.

"I'd say the amount of times that human being has willed golf balls into a hole, it goes beyond conscious comprehension,"

DeChambeau said. "It's beyond miraculous what he can do with the golf ball and what he can do for the game of golf in general."

"I wish he was here, but I think that we're all keeping him in good spirits and pumping him up when we can. His memory, my thought of him out here, will keep pushing me forward to play my best."

### 'Inspiration for all'

Three-time major winner Jordan Spieth found the achievement of playing Torrey Pines with a broken leg amazing even before taking the spectacular shots Woods made into account.

"Something you shouldn't be playing golf on, then he went and won the US Open on it, which if you're having to hack out of this rough, and it's one of the tougher walks as well, that's something else," Spieth said.

"The up and down on the 72nd hole from the rough, obviously one of the most memorable putts in major championship history. I remember where I was watching it, and it was just so exciting."

"He was an inspiration for all of us younger generation out here to go out and practice a putt like that the whole next week to try to pretend it was to tie or win a US Open."

World number two Justin Thomas was shocked Woods won, but after seeing a replay last week he noted clutch par saves Woods made that set the stage for his dramatic 18th-hole putt.

"I still don't know how he won. He had no business winning that tournament," Thomas said. "Rocco played better than he did. He just hit some key drives when he needed to or just little things here and there, but just kept making those putts. That's what you do to win US Opens."

"I just didn't remember the amount of four- and five-footers he made that really seemed to be irrelevant... that was something that stuck out to me." AFP

## Michel Platini to come back as FIFPRO member

**F**ORMER UEFA head Michel Platini confirmed on June 15 that he is to become the French representative on the board of FIFPRO, the world players' union.

"This makes me very happy," Platini said in a statement.

Platini is due take up his post in November, a source close to the triple Ballon d'Or winner said.

The Frenchman, who was ousted as president of European governing body UEFA and banned by global body FIFA in 2015, will be making his return to football administration.

"I always said I would come back where I could be useful," said Platini in his statement.

"I have also always said that football belongs to the players and the fans. I am coming back to my people, the players, so that their role is fully defended and recognised, and above all to build the future of this sport with them."

Platini, now 65, was suspended

from all football-related activities for four years at the end of 2015 over a 2 million Swiss franc (\$2.2 million) payment from FIFA in 2011 which was approved by then-president Sepp Blatter without a written contract.

The case is still being investigated by the Swiss judiciary for "disloyal management", "breach of trust" and "swindling".

Platini has fought the accusations. He has claimed he was the victim of a "plot" to prevent him succeeding the disgraced Blatter as FIFA president.

Platini's return is being sponsored by the FIFPRO's current president, 78-year-old Frenchman Philippe Piat, who plans to hand over his seat in November.

"I would like Michel Platini to sit on the board in my place," as representative of the French players' union, Piat told French sports daily *L'Equipe*. AFP



Tiger Woods drops to his knees after missing a birdie putt on a sudden death hole following an 18-hole playoff round for the 108th US Open championship against compatriot Rocco Mediate at Torrey Pines Golf Course on June 16, 2008. AFP



Former UEFA head Michel Platini confirmed on June 15 that he is to become the French representative on the board of FIFPRO. AFP

# EURO2020

WWW.PHNOMPENHPOST.COM/SPORT

## TUESDAY'S RESULTS

Hungary  0-3  Portugal

France  1-0  Germany



## TONIGHT'S MATCHES

**GROUP C**  
8PM, 17 June  
Bucharest  North Macedonia

**GROUP B**  
11PM, 17 June  
Copenhagen  Belgium

**GROUP C**  
2AM, 18 June  
Amsterdam  Austria

# France down Germany as Ronaldo makes history in Portugal victory

**W**ORLD champions France beat Germany in a blockbuster Euro 2020 clash on the night of June 15, after Cristiano Ronaldo became the all-time top European Championship goal-scorer as holders Portugal started their campaign with a 3-0 win over Hungary in Budapest.

In Munich, a 20th-minute Mats Hummels own goal proved enough for 2018 World Cup winners France to beat 2014 World Cup winners Germany in Group F.

France deserved the win, with both Kylian Mbappe and Karim Benzema having second-half goals disallowed for tight offside calls, while Adrien Rabiot also hit the post for "Les Bleus".

"I knew my players would be ready and they were up for the fight," France coach Didier Deschamps told broadcaster M6. "It's our first match, but this is a game that could have been a semi-final or a final, and to take these three points in a group like this was important."

The win was savoured by a small band of French fans among the crowd in the Allianz Arena, which was limited to just 20 per cent of capacity because of Covid-19 restrictions.

It was also enjoyed by fans back home in France who packed into bars to see their team kick off their bid to add the European crown to the World Cup they won in Russia three years ago, despite the game ending just before the 11pm nationwide coronavirus curfew.

Germany's defeat turns up the pressure on them in what is coach Joachim Low's last tournament in charge before he steps down.

"France have shown they are one of the favourites and now we have to prove that too in the next game," Germany's Joshua Kimmich said.

Germany's next game is against Portugal on Saturday night, and the Euro 2016 winners got off to the perfect start in Group F as Ronaldo netted his 10th and 11th goals at European Championships, surpassing



Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates after scoring Portugal's second goal in their Euro 2020 Group F match with Hungary at the Puskas Arena in Budapest on Tuesday. AFP

the previous record of nine held by France legend Michel Platini.

Portugal appear to have a much stronger squad than when they won their first major title five years ago, yet they laboured for long periods in Budapest before Raphael Guerreiro made the breakthrough in the 84th minute.

Ronaldo then slammed in a penalty shortly afterwards before tapping home in injury time.

The 36-year-old has now scored at five different European Championship finals tournaments and has 106

goals for his country in total, leaving him just three away from matching Iranian Ali Daei's all-time international scoring record of 109.

"I am really grateful to the team for helping me to score twice and be named man of the match," Ronaldo said.

#### Full house in Budapest

He broke the record before by far the biggest crowd of the tournament so far, with Budapest the only Euro 2020 venue not to limit fan capacity due to Covid-19.

The Puskas Arena has a capacity of almost 68,000 fans.

"We didn't deserve a 3-0 defeat – with a bit of luck it could have been a point each – but it was an experience of a lifetime," said Hungary goalkeeper Peter Gulacsi.

Hungarian newspaper *Nemzeti Sport* said the crowd of around 65,000 was the biggest at a game in the country since a World Cup warm-up against Brazil in 1986.

Back in Munich, a disaster was narrowly averted before the game when a Greenpeace activist crash-

landed on the pitch after his powered parachute microlight struck spidercam cables.

The pilot flew over the pitch with "Kick out oil" written on the canopy of his parachute, but when the pilot hit television cables above the pitch, it knocked his microlight off balance and he landed on the turf after clipping one of the stands.

"This inconsiderate act ... caused injuries to several people attending the game who are now in hospital and law authorities will take the necessary action," UEFA said. AFP ■

## Denmark look to 'emotional' crowd for Belgium visit

DENMARK can take heart that Christian Eriksen is recovering and will be cheering them on along with the rest of the country as they try to salvage their Euro 2020 campaign against fancied Belgium in Copenhagen on the night of June 17.

Kasper Hjulmand's talented side know that their qualification from Group B will be in jeopardy if they get the same treatment that leaders Belgium dished out to Russia on Saturday, and they need to bounce back from their traumatic 1-0 defeat by Finland.

Eriksen told the world on June 15 that he was "fine – under the circumstances" following his sickening mid-match collapse and said he

will be right behind the teammates who rallied to his side as medics rushed to save his life.

Those players were still dazed when, after what Uefa called a "crisis meeting", they returned to the field some two and a half hours after kick-off to finish a match which had long since been overshadowed by Eriksen's plight.

That loss came after what Kasper Schmeichel described on Monday as "a position, that I personally feel that we shouldn't have been put in" as Denmark were offered the choice to complete the game that evening or on Sunday afternoon.

However, coach Hjulmand

on Tuesday said Eriksen was in daily contact with the rest of the team and was trying to gee up his friends before they face the world's top-ranked team.

Hjulmand said that "no one can replace Christian" but his side will be looking to harness the emotions of the home crowd at the Parken Stadium, where Denmark will have the backing of some 25,000 fans after the Scandinavian nation relaxed Covid-19 restrictions.

The 16,000 home fans present for the Finland match created a wall of noise in the first half as Denmark piled on the pressure, and the "Roli-gans" will be in even fuller voice to cheer on their country on Thursday.

Some have taken to spray-painting murals in honour of their missing star around Copenhagen.

"It will be emotional for sure. But we should use these emotions for the match, and get ready to fight," Hjulmand said.

#### Ominous Lukaku looms

They will need all the support they can get against Eriksen's Inter Milan teammate Romelu Lukaku, whose ominous double in Belgium's 3-0 win over the Russians showed why at the age of just 28 he is by some distance Belgium's all-time record scorer with 62 goals.

Belgium top Group B on goal

difference ahead of Finland and can seal their passage to the knockout stage with a game to spare at the Parken.

Roberto Martinez's side were hugely impressive in their opening match and have been further boosted by the news that Borussia Dortmund midfielder Alex Witsel is available again after recovering from an Achilles tendon injury which had kept him out of action since January.

Witsel only began running again around a month ago but Belgium's physiotherapist Lieven Maesschalk, who guided the player's recovery, said "he isn't scared" about his return.

"He is ready to play even if

the risk of a relapse isn't zero," said Maesschalk on Tuesday.

Team doctors suggested that the 32-year-old should get some playing time against the Danes even if he is unlikely to start the match.

The news comes after playmaker Kevin De Bruyne trained with his Belgium teammates for the first time at the Euro on Monday, sparking hopes he could too play a role against the Danes.

The Manchester City playmaker missed the Russia match after having surgery for nose and eye socket fractures caused by a collision with Germany defender Antonio Rudiger in the Champions League final. AFP ■