



ONLINE REGIONAL MINISTERS OF DEFENCE MEETS COME TO CLOSE

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GDP growth forecast 4.0%: World Bank

May Kunmakara

WORLD Bank on June 17 projected Cambodia's economic growth to accelerate to 4.0 per cent this year after contracting 3.1 per cent in 2020, thanks to a fast rollout of Covid-19 vaccines and the revitalisation of global demand.

However, the Washington-based multilateral lender also offers a downside scenario, in

which the job drive loses too much steam and is accompanied by frequent, prolonged and nationwide lockdowns. Under this scenario, the economy is projected to grow by just 1.0 per cent in 2021, it said.

In its latest Economic Update for Cambodia entitled *Road to Recovery* launched at a virtual press conference, the World Bank cautioned that recovery in the Kingdom remains une-

ven and volatile, due in part to a lockdown imposed to control the spread of Covid-19.

"Cambodia's growth outlook remains highly uncertain, with the shape and pace of recovery largely dependent on the course of the virus and the speed at which vaccines can be rolled out," it said.

World Bank senior economist for Cambodia Ly Sodeth told the press conference that

goods exports have adapted, growing by 12.2 per cent year-on-year during January-April, or 31.8 per cent year-on-year in April alone, as external demand improved.

He said a contraction in exports of garments, footwear and travel goods (GFT) was "partly offset by rising electrical/vehicle parts and bicycles, agricultural, and other exports, boosted in part by the Cambo-

dia-China Free Trade Agreement [CCFTA]".

The CCFTA was signed on October 12, allowing the Kingdom to export a wide range of goods to the Asian juggernaut at a zero per cent tariff rate.

According to Sodeth, garments accounted for 45.6 per cent of total goods export value in the first four months of

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A Long March-2F carrier rocket, carrying the *Shenzhou-12* spacecraft and a crew of three astronauts, lifts off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in the Gobi desert in northwest China on Thursday, the first crewed mission to China's new space station. AFP

First astronauts arrive at China's space station

THE first astronauts arrived at China's new space station on June 17 in the country's longest crewed mission to date, a landmark step in establishing Beijing as a major space power.

The trio blasted off on a Long March-2F rocket from the Jiuquan launch centre in northwest China's Gobi desert, and their craft docked at the Tiangong station around seven hours later, where they will spend the next three months.

State broadcaster China Central Television (CCTV) showed a live feed from inside the spacecraft during the journey, with the three astronauts lifting their helmet visors after it reached orbit as one smiled and waved at the camera.

Another floated a pen just off his lap in zero-gravity as he browsed the flight manual.

Around seven hours after lift-off, space officials confirmed that the craft had docked with Tianhe, the core module of the country's new space station.

The *Shenzhou-12* craft has "successfully docked with the forward port of the core module" of the Tiangong station, said the China Manned Space Agency, as state TV showed live footage.

The mission's commander is Nie Haisheng, a decorated air force pilot in the People's Liberation Army who has already participated in two space missions.

The two other members are also members of the military. AFP ■

US redirects Prey Lang aid

Ry Sochan

THE US embassy in Cambodia announced an end to assistance to government entities under the US Agency for International Development's (USAID) Greening Prey Lang project.

This assistance will instead

be redirected to various other stakeholders concerned with the conservation of Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary.

The embassy said although Cambodia had made some important strides in environmental protection, the US had repeatedly expressed concerns about persistently high deforestation rates in

protected areas, particularly in the sanctuary where USAID had previously invested significant resources.

A senior Ministry of Environment official, however, countered the claim, saying that only small-scale offences remained in Prey Lang.

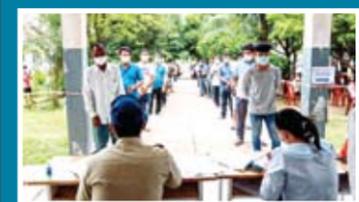
In a statement, the embassy said: "We have urged increased

cooperation between the Cambodian government and local communities and civil society organisations to find solutions to protect Prey Lang and the natural heritage of the Kingdom for the benefit of all Cambodians and the world."

Unfortunately, it said, the situation is worsening. Since 2016, despite USAID's sup-

port for increased ranger patrols, training of law enforcement and development of a national protected area management system, the Prey Lang sanctuary has lost approximately 38,000ha of forest, or nearly nine per cent of its forest cover.

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Provinces gear up for Covid-19 job campaign

THE PHNOM PENH POST

National

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National

P Sihanouk, S Rieng gear up for vaccination drive

Nov Sivutha

THE Preah Sihanouk Provincial Administration plans to start a large-scale vaccination drive for people 18 and over from June 21, while Svay Rieng is also planning the rollout of vaccines.

Preah Sihanouk Provincial Hall spokesman Kheang Phearom told *The Post* on June 17 that many vaccination sites had been set up. Small scale vaccinations started from June 17 and the process has run smoothly with people getting jabs in an orderly fashion due to prior preparations by authorities, especially the preventative measures.

"Vaccinations are for people from the age of 18 and older, factories workers, and all foreigners residing in this province," Phearom said, adding that more than 4,000 people in the province have contracted Covid-19 linked to the February 20 community outbreak, with 22 deaths.

According to the announcement by governor Kuoch Chamroeun on June 16, the province initially prepared five locations for vaccinations which started on June 17.

He said the province has more than 200,000 people aged 18 and over, but around 10,000 of them have already been vaccinated. The remainder will start receiving vaccinations from June 21.

"To avoid large gatherings of people who come for the vaccine, we have set up 19 locations – five each in Sihanoukville and Prey Nop dis-



People wait for their turn to get vaccinated against Covid-19 in Preah Sihanouk province in April. PREAH SIHANOUK PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION

trict; four in Kampong Seila district; two in Koh Rong town; and a location in Stung Hav district. The other locations are in the Special Economic Zones," he said.

He added vaccinations will be administered by medics from the provincial health department, Ream Naval Base and Brigade 70.

In Svay Rieng province where many workers have recently been tested, authorities held a meeting on June 17 to plan the vaccination campaign. The meeting was attended by provincial governor Men Vibol and Lieutenant General Chab Pheakdey, the com-

mander of Paratrooper Brigade 911.

According to the provincial administration, the vaccination drive will focus on factory workers and the general public, though the actual vaccination plan is yet to be finalised, said provincial administration chief Hem Sina.

Separately on June 17, Royal Group chairman Kith Meng donated \$3 million to the government for the purchase of Antigen Rapid Test Kits for Covid-19.

He said the rapid test kits will help the government reduce transmission risks. ■

Ministry takes steps towards digital gov't

Ry Sochan

THE Ministry of Interior has set up a digital government working group to focus on the use of information technology to speed up the ministry's work and make it more efficient.

The working group has 15 members and is chaired by Sak Setha, the ministry's permanent secretary of state, and has an assistant secretary headed by the information technology department under the general-secretariat.

"There are many related departments and sections within the interior ministry and they all need to be integrated into a digital government system," Setha told *The Post* on June 17.

He said that today the use of a paper system resulted in multiple workloads, and it was too slow. Having a digital government would not mean that the use of the paper system would be abandoned entirely, however.

"In the past, we always used physical paperwork. Now we've got a working group within the ministry preparing a strategic plan to achieve the goal of finally organising our system to be modern and electronically advanced," he said.

He said paperwork is still used because it is a necessary component of the technology they are using so they are interconnected, but the government's working procedures will make progress with the advent of digital systems.

"We already have had a gradual shift to electronic systems, but we want to set up a system that is easier and

more efficient. For example, to create a website or to respond to people's concerns electronically," Setha said.

He said this digital system will help his ministry work speedily and accurately. He explained that previously population registration was done by paper, but now electronically.

"With the digital system, a person's data is accurate. It cannot be corrected or changed by mistake or without authorisation," he said.

According to the ministry's decision regarding the establishment of digital governance for information, communication and technology (ICT) released on June 16, this working group has the role of managing the ICT project in the ministry's general departments and units and developing a master plan for ICT and human resource capacity building training.

The working group is tasked with managing connectivity integration between the ministry's ICT systems and those of other relevant ministries and institutions.

The working group is also responsible for managing updates and evaluating the quality of the ICT systems and equipment in line with the evolving state of technology in the world, doing professional work and providing more effective public services.

"The working group must also develop policies and legal documents to ensure the implementation of the ICT systems, digital government, digital citizens and digital business within the interior ministry," said the announcement. ■

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Ministry to pursue conservation missions in 'responsible manner'

Continued from page 1

The embassy said well-documented illegal logging continues in and around the sanctuary and Cambodian authorities have not adequately prosecuted wildlife crimes or put a stop to these illicit activities.

It alleged that the government continued to silence and target local communities and their civil society partners who are justifiably concerned about the loss of their natural resources.

"As a result of these unresolved concerns, the United States is ending assistance to government entities under the USAID Greening Prey Lang project.

"This US assistance will instead be redirected to support civil society, the private sector and local efforts to improve livelihoods and expand climate sensitive agriculture," the statement said.

The US, it noted, will continue to engage with the Cambodian government on climate change and environmental issues of mutual and global concern, including through the Mekong-US Partnership.

"As we celebrate World Environment Day this month, we are reminded that effective environmental management requires transparent and accountable governance.

"The United States affirms the indispensable roles that freedom of expression, peaceful protest, and government accountability to citizens play

in maintaining strong democratic practices in all development sectors, including the protection of the Kingdom's valuable natural resources," the statement said.

Ministry of Environment spokesman Neth Pheaktra told *The Post* on June 17 that the end to the project at this time would give the ministry an opportunity to show that its officials are capable of performing its roles and duties by protecting and conserving natural resources based on the laws currently in force.

He added that the ministry would continue its missions in a responsible manner and professionally manage and conserve the Prey Lang sanctuary and other natural protected areas in Cambodia for the benefit of future generations.

"We respect the decision by this development partner and we are thankful for contributions they have made to Cambodia to provide technical assistance, protect and conserve natural resources in the Prey Lang area.

"Both sides have agreed to divert this funding to other opportunities for cooperation in order to continue serving the best interests of the Cambodian people," he said.

Pheaktra claimed that large-scale natural resource offences in Prey Lang and other natural protected areas no longer occurred, save for small-scale offences which he said was still a concern to address. He said the ministry and police

forces would continue to enforce the law and work to prevent such incidents.

"With full peace having been achieved, Cambodia now has the opportunity to fully concentrate on conserving its natural resources," he said.

Pheaktra noted that with better protection and conservation, Cambodia had successfully sold carbon credits to the voluntary market abroad. Community member livelihood conditions had begun to improve as links to natural or eco-tourism were forged and new choices for occupations were created.

San Mala, advocacy officer of Forest Defenders Project at Cambodia Youth Network and environmental activist, told *The Post* on June 17 that the decision was a difficult one, but the embassy must do this to respond to the calls made by communities, activists and civil society in Cambodia.

Mala claimed that the ministry had imposed restrictions on and prevented their groups from patrolling the forest and ignored their reports of logging violations.

"This Greening Prey Lang Project has so far been implemented jointly by the ministry and USAID staff, with communities and activists excluded. Now the environment ministry should reconsider allowing activists, communities and civil society to carry out some of their work in the Prey Lang area," he said. ■

UN: Workers' plights need addressing

Lay Samean

THE UN in Cambodia expressed concerns about the long-lasting impacts of Covid-19 on the socio-economic rights of garment workers.

In a press release on June 15, the UN said job losses and reduced income have made many workers struggle to meet their basic needs and many had taken out loans in the interim as a coping strategy.

"Many workers lack access to an adequate social safety net such as unemployment benefits, which place them at risk of falling into poverty and even hunger. The toll extends to garment workers' families and the informal economy around factories.

"The [UN] is also concerned about conditions in quarantine facilities for garment workers who test positive, including a lack of information, hygiene supplies and PPE," it said.

It noted that the pandemic and efforts to slow the spread of the virus led to factory closures, layoffs and unpaid absences, affecting the livelihoods of over 900,000 garment sector workers, 80 per cent of whom are women.

Since the pandemic began, garment exports dropped by around 9.9 per cent, leading to a 3.4 per cent reduction from the 11 per cent it contributed to gross domestic product (GDP) in 2019.



Garment workers leave their factory in Phnom Penh's Toul Sangke commune. HONG MENEA

Through research conducted in May last year and in May and June this year, the UN said most workers have shown heightened concerns regarding personal finances, including being unable to pay back loans. They also had barriers to reporting Covid-19 symptoms because of fear of quarantine and the resultant loss of income.

It said it welcomed the Cambodian government's efforts to prioritise Covid-19 vaccinations for the garment sector, the \$40 monthly cash assistance to workers whose workplaces are suspended due to the pandemic and the

recent one-time post-lockdown emergency cash assistance for workers.

The UN noted that it had provided support for this sector including assessments for factories, capacity development and virtual workshops that convened industry stakeholders together to discuss issues related to the sector.

It said it also engaged with factories and industry players on issues including occupational safety and health, gender equality, Covid-19 prevention, emergency preparedness and many others.

Cambodian Labour Confed-

eration president Ath Thon agreed with the UN's assessments, saying the government should pay more attention to women workers in this sector.

"Women workers already face many challenges at their work. When the pandemic happened, they faced even more challenges related to their livelihoods and their family burdens," he said.

He recommended that the government provide assistance to every worker in the locked down areas, without any conditions attached. He said each worker should get at least \$100 to enable them to

survive this difficult period.

"The government provided workers with \$40 and that's good, but it should be more than that because each worker spends between \$100 and \$200 a month just to live. Moreover, this [\$40] was just for some workers, not for everybody," he said.

Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training spokesman Heng Sour could not be reached for comment on June 17.

Samheng Boros, secretary of state at the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, on June 17 thanked the UN for providing technical support to Cambodia in helping those in need and especially with identifying poor households for government support.

However, he said the government needs to pay attention to other people as well.

"During the lockdown, the government has also helped other businesses that faced challenges.

"But we did pay special attention to garment workers by not only providing them with cash assistance, but we also paid for their electricity and water bills and rental fees," he said.

According to Boros, the government has provided cash assistance to more than 50,000 poor households in Phnom Penh and adjacent Takmao town in Kandal province as well as Preah Sihanouk province. ■

Environment authorities detain 3 over illegal wood

ENVIRONMENTAL rangers from Pursat province's Phnum Samkos Wildlife Sanctuary are building a case against three suspects who hid illegally logged rosewood in Thma Da commune's Sangkum Thmei village of Veal Veng district. The case will be referred to the provincial court.

Wildlife sanctuary director Phan Sophearin told *The Post* on June 15 that his rangers had worked with Thma Da commune and border police to seize 108 pieces of kronhuong, known by its scientific name *Dalbergia cochinchinensis*, and detain the suspects.

He identified the trio as Pich, 28, the owner of the house that stored the rosewood, and his wife Chib Nary, 22. The third is Vanny, 52, the father of San Vandeth. Vandeth owns the wood and is known as a military officer of the Border Guard Unit 501 at the Thma Da border checkpoint.

He continued that in late May, Vandeth had phoned Pich and asked him to store the wood in a plantation house, which the couple had left vacant, for a few days. But Pich refused as he realised the wood was illegal. But Vandeth allegedly hid the wood in the house without their knowledge. NOV SIUTHA



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National

Regional defence ministers' virtual meetings wrap up

Youn Dara

THROUGH the 15th ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) and the 8th ASEAN Plus Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM-Plus) from June 15-16, an agreement was reached to adopt a number of conceptual documents related to strengthening cooperation.

Minister of National Defence Tea Banh said the Kingdom will include a number of strategic perspectives when hosting the events in 2022.

Tea Banh led the Cambodian delegation to attend the virtual meetings at the invitation of the Minister of Defence of Brunei Darussalam, this year's host for the meetings.

According to a press release issued by the Cambodian defence ministry on June 16, at the 15th ADMM, the ASEAN defence ministers approved a total of nine concept, discussion and standard operating rules documents.

Among them, four conceptual documents were adopted focusing on improving the telecommunications infrastructure in ASEAN, strengthening ASEAN links with external partners, increasing cooperation in the field of information security and establishing an information technology centre for the ASEAN defence sector.

The ASEAN defence ministers also adopted the Bandar Seri Begawan Joint Declaration on the 15th Anniversary of the ADMM, which aims to increase readiness for a future of peace and prosperity in ASEAN with a focus on strengthening ASEAN and enhancing defence operations among ASEAN member states.

Tea Banh praised the efforts of the ASEAN defence ministers and their working



Minister of National Defence Tea Banh led the Cambodian delegation during the virtual 15th ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) and the 8th ASEAN Plus Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM-Plus). DEFENCE MINISTRY

group to overcome all obstacles to achieve consensus on all documents.

"As Cambodia hosts the 2022 ADMM, we will include a number of strategic perspectives, including strengthening the role of the armies of ASEAN member states in responding to cross-border dis-

Meeting from November 2021.

At the 8th ADMM-Plus, the ASEAN defence ministers exchanged views on the regional and international security environment in line with each country's priorities, such as the Indo-Pacific issue, the South China Sea disputes, the situation in Myanmar, terrorism,

full unity in the country – a topic of particular relevance this year given the conflict occurring in Myanmar.

"Cambodia supports the peacekeeping sector within the UN framework, to which it has been actively involved since 2006. Cambodia has also committed to promoting greater women's participation in peacekeeping operations," he said.

According to a press release from the ASEAN-China Informal Meeting of Defence Ministers, the Chinese defence minister and his ASEAN counterparts praised the achievements and successes of ASEAN-China cooperation over the past three decades.

The meeting also reviewed proposals for national defence cooperation on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the ASEAN-China Dialogue. ■

Cambodia is committed to promoting greater women's participation in peacekeeping operations

ease outbreaks and strengthening mechanisms to support ASEAN women in peacekeeping operations," he said.

The meeting also approved the principles of the annual ADMM-Plus and the ASEAN-Australia Informal Meeting of Defence Ministers and the ASEAN-Republic of Korea Informal

the Korean Peninsula, climate change and regional rivalries.

Tea Banh shared his views throughout the meeting, highlighting a number of security issues such as the fight against Covid-19, terrorism, and especially the value of Cambodia's win-win policy to end the civil war and bring

Domestic workers face challenges, in need of protection

Nov Sivutha

DOMESTIC workers in Cambodia face a number of challenges ranging from low wages to risk of trafficking, the Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA) said in a statement marking the 10th International Day of Domestic Workers under the theme *Our Values, Our Rights*.

IDEA president Vorn Pov said on June 16 that Cambodia had yet to ratify the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention No 189 for decent work for domestic workers and the Kingdom's labour law also did not specifically address the workers.

In 2011, ILO adopted Convention No 189, which recognises the rights of all workers. This includes leave, working hours, overtime pay, and appropriate protection against all forms of violence and harassment.

This recognition has become a historic day for domestic workers around the world to celebrate on June 16 every year.

But according to Pov, relevant policies the government has issued did not mention capacity building and any clear mechanism for protecting domestic workers, especially child labourers. Also, a standard employment contract for domestic workers has not been developed.

"So far, domestic workers have not received full coverage and benefits from social protection programmes such as healthcare and occupational risks. At the same time, the strengthening and capacity building of domestic workers is still limited, as domestic workers are not required to be highly skilled like others," he said.

According to the 2018 ILO study, there were an estimated of 240,000 domestic workers in Cambodia, most of them

women who work in cleaning, cooking, care services and gardening, among others.

Pheng Srey, 38, a domestic worker for more than 10 years in Phnom Penh, said domestic workers are still discriminated against and not valued by the outside world and the employer. She said the government seemed to not place high value on them.

"For domestic workers, regardless of the government or the outside world, they give us less value, unlike factory workers. Some employers also do not give us value and rights, such as holidays, no time off and use us whenever they want," she said.

Srey requested that the government provide a National Social Security Fund (NSSF) card and value domestic workers the same as factory workers and make sure people respect their rights and not to discriminate against workers.

The Post could not reach Heng Sour, spokesman for the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, for comment on June 16.

According to the ILO report 2015, the domestic worker sector is an important part of the informal economy, covering 67.1 million workers worldwide (above 15-year-old), most of whom were women (83 per cent).

In 2019, Prime Minister Hun Sen urged the public to understand the predicament of female domestic workers and allow them to have a holiday.

"Because they are poor, some of them have left their husbands and children at home and come to work for us. When they have good food, they think about their husbands and children at home. Do you know this feeling?"

"I think it's time to consider their feelings and have sympathy for those who are close to us," he said at the time. ■

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ANNOUNCEMENT

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UNDP is committed to achieving workforce diversity in terms of gender, nationality and culture. Individuals from minority groups, indigenous groups and persons with disabilities are equally encouraged to apply. All applications will be treated with the strictest confidence. All selected candidates will, therefore, undergo rigorous reference and background checks.



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Happy Birthday

To Her Majesty Queen Mother

NORODOM MONINEATH SIHANOUK

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National

Over 4.5 tonnes of drugs seized

Khouth SophakChakrya

MORE than four and a half tonnes of drugs were seized in crackdowns on illegal drug trafficking and production across the country in the past 18 months, according to the National Authority for Combating Drugs (NACD).

NACD secretary-general Meas Virith told *The Post* on June 16 that their efforts in combating drugs remain active despite the country being in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Since the beginning of January 2020, our anti-drug forces across the country have seized more than 4,500kg of drugs and drug-related substances and arrested many foreign criminals for prosecution in court," he said.

Virith said the drug trafficking networks within an international and regional framework were evolving quickly and posed a serious risk to national security.

The trend towards the production and trafficking of synthetic drugs continues to grow. The market for methamphetamines has especially expanded, while the opium and heroin crops have declined significantly.

Most drug production activities in the region are undertaken by armed groups of criminals and funded by international drug gangs, he said.

"Assessing the international and regional drug situation, maritime geography remains an important factor for determining the routes for large-scale drug trafficking to the global drug market," he added.

He said that in response to the current drug situation, permanent coordination officers from the six



Two Laotian men were apprehended with nearly 5kg of drugs in Preah Vihear province's Chheb district on June 16. POLICE

Safe Mekong Coordination Centre (SMCC) member countries – Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, China, Vietnam and Myanmar – have been actively cooperating.

Through the SMCC mechanism, the six countries in the Greater Mekong Subregion have agreed to launch operation 1511 to increase law enforcement efficiency and put pressure on criminals to prevent and suppress drug production and trafficking in the Golden Triangle and the circulation of chemicals into the area.

To strengthen this cooperation, Cambodia has made efforts to implement the drug-free border village mechanism by training personnel in

border communities to educate local people, especially young people, about the risks of drugs and participate in the fight against drugs through reporting on the network of drug criminals that they know to the authorities so they can intervene in a timely manner.

Separately on the night of June 16, the specialised forces of the anti-drug department in cooperation with the Preah Vihear provincial police and border guards busted two Laotian men who had imported drugs to Cambodia by waterway. The sting took place in Kampong Sralao I commune's Kampong Po village in Chheb district.

Sun Julona, director of the Preah

Vihear provincial police's anti-drug bureau, told *The Post* on June 17 that the two Laotians, both aged 37, were arrested along with five large packages of methamphetamines weighing nearly 5kg. Police also seized one boat used for drug transportation and have sent the duo to the provincial police.

"Currently, the two suspects are being charged with the crime of cross-border drug trafficking from Laos to Cambodia. They are under investigation by officials from the anti-drug bureau of the Preah Vihear provincial police who are preparing a case to be sent to the provincial court for prosecution in accordance with legal procedures," he said. ■

Two fined for possession of Covid vaccines

THE Koh Kong Provincial Court on June 17 released two Chinese nationals after they paid a fine for the illegal possession of Sinovac Covid-19 vaccines without permission.

Nuon Vutha, provincial Military Police deputy commander, told *The Post* on June 17 that joint forces from the provincial health department and Cham Yeam border checkpoint officers arrested the duo on June 16.

The two, aged 42 and 53, resided in Cham Yeam village of Mondul Seima district's Bak Khlang commune.

"In the operation, 65 doses of Sinovac vaccine, a cooler box, 45 syringes, 11 packages of cotton swabs, three pairs of gloves, three bottles of alcohol sanitiser, and a car were confiscated," he said.

He said the court freed them after questioning and deciding that their offences were not serious enough for imprisonment.

Eng Chan Pheara, the provincial court deputy prosecutor who coordinated the operation, told *The Post* on June 17 that the two were initially charged under Article 10 of the Law on Pharmaceutical Management.

"Under this article, suspects are obliged to pay a fine of between five and 10 million riel (\$1,250 and \$2,500). All related offences can incur a fine from one to 10 million riel, and the Ministry of Health reserves the right to impose an interim penalty.

"This is the reason the court decided to release the two after they had paid the fine," Chan Pheara said, adding that the vaccines were handed over to the provincial health department for destruction. KHOUTH SOPHAK CHAKRYA



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.

Pursat seeks gov't help to combat forestry crimes in Cardamom park

Orm Bunthoern

LAND encroachments in the Central Cardamom National Park number in the hundreds and have overwhelmed local authorities trying to prevent forest crimes, prompting the Pursat Provincial Administration to submit a report to the government requesting assistance.

Provincial deputy governor Khoy Rida told *The Post* on June 16 that according to actual sightings, people who occupied forest land seized from 3ha to 5ha per family and in some cases 6ha to 7ha. Some perpetrators cut down trees in the nearby mountains to sell.

"Their plan is to sell the trees and not use the land for agriculture. If cultivation was the aim then there is enough land for farming. But, if the goal is to grow crops then they will find a buyer to purchase the land and move elsewhere," he said.

"Authorities do not harm people. We clearly separate the perpetrators from others in a principled way. We are investigating the perpetrators who have fled and will prosecute them when they are caught," he said.

The deputy governor said that sub-national authorities work continuously to instruct and guide people to be aware and participate in the protec-



Officers inspect an area that has been cleared in Pursat province's Veal Veng district. Officials said people who occupied forest land seized from 3ha to 5ha per family and in some cases 6ha to 7ha. FACEBOOK

tion of the park. Provincial authorities have also taken back forest land as well as planted trees on the mountains to restore the area.

According to Rida, the team on June 16 revisited the encroachment area and divided into two groups. One group went to instruct each household not to encroach on land and the other group went to confiscate state land that people had illegally occupied. But, he said provincial authorities needed assistance.

"It is beyond the capacity

of sub-national authorities. We have to report to the national level for their consideration, recommendation or do something further," he said.

Sam Chankea, provincial coordinator for the rights group Adhoc, said on June 16 that authorities were correct. If the encroachers are more powerful than local authorities, provincial authorities should send a report to the national level and disclose the problem.

"If the Pursat provincial authorities ask for intervention, I believe that the national au-

thorities will take preventative action," he said.

Chankea called for an investigation into those behind forest crimes and arrest them for prosecution. Otherwise, only the people who are hired to cut down trees would be caught and such arrests will not end.

"Not until the people paying others to commit the crime or corrupt officials who facilitate forest land clearing are identified and punished can we prevent further crimes," he said. ■

Business

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TRADING INFORMATION ON CAMBODIA SECURITIES EXCHANGE Date: June 17, 2021
Auction Trading Method (ATM)

NO	STOCK	CLOSING PRICE	OPENING PRICE	HIGH	LOW
1	ABC	13,140	13,140	13,140	13,140
2	GTI	3,990	4,200	4,200	3,840
3	PAS	13,700	14,480	14,500	13,100
4	PEPC	3,000	3,280	3,280	2,950
5	PPAP	15,000	15,200	15,220	15,000
6	PPSP	1,950	2,150	2,150	1,950
7	PWSA	6,680	6,980	6,980	6,660

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WTO to host tourism contest

Hin Pisei

THE Ministry of Tourism on June 17 invited tourism start-ups to apply for the World Tourism Organisation's (WTO) UNWTO Rural Tourism Startup Competition.

The event will provide participants a chance to get technical and business mentoring to scale their businesses and improve their products and services, as well as the opportunity to present their business models at the WTO General Assembly in October, it said via social media.

It stressed the merits of taking part in the WTO's "Young Entrepreneurs in Rural Tourism" contest for aspiring businesspeople in tourism or those with start-up ambitions that could potentially help rural communities recover from the Covid-19 crisis.

"The competition aims to recruit outstanding young entrepreneurs from WTO member countries to stimulate the creation of tourism businesses, especially in rural tourism destinations, and support the livelihoods of locals towards more sustainable, inclusive and resilient tourism development, especially in re-tort to the blows dealt by the Covid-19 crisis," the ministry said.

Winners of the competition will become members of the World Young Entrepreneurs Network, receive technical assistance from the WTO to strengthen their businesses, and have the opportunity to take the stage and pitch their businesses to the management of World Tourism from 159 countries and major world organisations at the 24th WTO General Assembly in October, in the major Moroccan economic centre of Marrakesh, it said.

To qualify, candidates must demonstrate the uniqueness of their businesses, highlight the level of innovation, address their bearing on the livelihoods of people affected by Covid-19, and show how they contribute to sustainable develop-



The Kingdom boasts vast natural and rural areas with great prospects for tourism development. HONG MENEA

ment at the grassroots level, it added.

It invited those interested in the competition to visit the website unwto.org/unwto-global-rural-tourism-startup-competition

Cambodia Association of Travel Agents (CATA) president Chhay Sivlin told *The Post* that young people are the main driving force behind the promotion of the ecotourism and rural tourism potential resting in the Kingdom, emphasising that their participation in "such a world-class competition" is very important to extend their abilities and gain new experiences.

Pointing out that the Kingdom boasts vast natural and rural areas with great prospects for tourism development, she said the competition offers a rare and special opportunity for young Cambodians to attract foreign tourists to the

Kingdom, especially after the situation surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic has been subdued.

"This event is being held at a time when Cambodia is studying the possibility of reopening to foreign tourists, so it is an opportunity for young people to promote Cambodia's rural tourism," Sivlin said.

On April 7, tourism minister Thong Khon said he had 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.

The appeal came amid improvements in community management in the Angkor area and a sped-up vaccination process for civil servants and key players in the tourism industry, as well as other sectors, he said.

Cambodia vaccine rate one of region's highest

Continued from page 1

this year, down from 52.2 per cent last year and 57.6 per cent in 2019.

He said the US was the largest market for Cambodian GFT products, buying up \$3.5 billion in 2020 (surging by 3.6 per cent year-on-year), which accounts for 36.7 per cent of total GFT exports last year.

In contrast, GFT shipments to the EU market fell significantly, contracting by 35 per cent year-on-year, to \$2.6 billion in 2020, accounting for 27.5 per cent of total GFT exports, he added.

He said wholesale and retail businesses managed to slowly recover, supported by a gradual revival in domestic consumption. "This helps as consumption expenditure accounts for more than two-thirds of GDP [gross domestic product]"

However, he said, the rate of contraction in imports of consumer and durable goods – except foodstuffs, moderated in the first four months of this year as market confidence improved.

World Bank country manager for Cambodia Inguna Dobrasa said: "Like many countries in the region, Cambodia has been hit hard by the global demand shock brought on by Covid-19. But the good news is that Cambodia has now vaccinated more than three million people, one of the highest rates in the region."

"The World Bank is working

with Cambodia to provide further support to combat the pandemic and help the country's resilient economic and social recovery."

The Cambodian government is set to vaccinate more than 1.2 million people in five additional provinces after finishing up in Phnom Penh and neighbouring Kandal province.

On June 14, the Kingdom reached a significant milestone, having inoculated three million people against SARS-CoV-2, or 30 per cent of the 10 million target for this year or early 2022.

An additional 4.5 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines are expected to arrive in June along with another batch a month later.

The World Bank recommends that the Kingdom take immediate steps to shore up market confidence by urgently accelerating its vaccination programme, while simultaneously continuing to take measures to contain infections.

"Given the country's relatively wide fiscal space, the government can support relief, recovery, and growth by improving the business and investment climate, providing social assistance programmes, and boosting public investment and pro-poor growth."

"To maintain financial sector stability, it also important for the authorities to closely monitor vulnerabilities that can arise from a prolonged property boom and increased credit provided to the construction sector," it said.

Prasac logs share capital increase

May Kunmakara

BOND-LISTED Prasac Microfinance Institution Plc on June 17 said it increased its registered share capital to \$300 million from \$230 million to achieve a sound financial position to gain the public's confidence.

The increase is distributed among four shareholders – KB Kookmin Bank in South Korea, The Bank of East Asia Ltd (BEA) in Hong Kong, Lanka Orix Leasing Company Plc (LOLC) in Sri Lanka, and Prasac Staff Co (PSCo), Prasac said in an announcement.

Prasac executive vice-president Say Sony said the capital increase "proves" that Prasac has a strong position to sustain its robust growth of customers, investors and public trust.

"Prasac is pleased for the official approval obtained from the National Bank of Cambodia and the Ministry of Commerce on the increment of the registered capital."

"The additional capital is the key to build more public trust and stems from our strong business growth through offering full-fledged financial services according

to customers' needs as well as the flexibility of terms and conditions of products and services and digital financial services," he said.

Sony told *The Post* on June 17 that since 2008 Prasac has raised its registered capital eight times, to \$3.75 million in 2008, to \$20 million in 2012, to \$47 million in 2014, to \$72 million in 2015, to \$110 million in 2016, to \$168 million and then to \$230 million in 2019, and now to \$300 million.

As of March 31, Prasac's total assets amounted \$3.74 billion, total loan portfolio totalled

\$3.22 billion and outstanding deposits reached \$2.15 billion, he said.

"We hope that clients will feel more secure and confident in us. The robust liquidity and capital position ensures that Prasac is able to weather any stress arising from changes in the operating environment, such as the ongoing Covid-19 situation," Sony said.

In mid-April last year, KB finished paying \$603.4 million for a 70 per cent stake in Prasac and plans to buy the remaining 30 per cent stake in Prasac two years after the transaction



A Prasac branch in Kiri Voan commune's Phsar Trapaing Kraloeng village of Kampong Speu province's Phnom Sruoch district. NAROT PHAN VIA FACEBOOK

and finalise the acquisition.

On May 5 last year, Prasac listed a corporate bond on the Cambodia Securities Exchange,

allocating 1,272,000 shares in the public offering, with a total issue amount of 127.2 billion riel (\$31 million).

ON THE OCCASION OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN MOTHER
NORODOM MONINEATH SIHANOUK'S
BIRTHDAY ON JUNE 18, 2021



WE WISH HER MAJESTY A VERY HAPPY BIRTHDAY
MAY HER MAJESTY BE BLESSED WITH GOOD HEALTH,
HAPPINESS AND A LONG LIFE

FROM THE MANAGEMENT AND STAFF OF WING BANK (CAMBODIA) PLC.

**Wing**



The retail selling prices of regular petrol and diesel in the Kingdom have been set at 3,900 riel (\$0.95) and 3,550 riel per litre for June 16-30. HONG MENEA

Jab drives fuel domestic rise in petrol prices

Thou Vireak

RETAIL petrol prices in Cambodia have been steadily rising since the beginning of 2021, with experts saying that widening Covid-19 vaccination rollouts have led to a sharp, sustained rise in international crude oil prices.

The retail selling price of petrol in the Kingdom from June 16-30 has been set at 3,900 riel (\$0.95) per litre of regular EA92 – with an octane rating of at least 92 – and 3,550 riel per litre of diesel, according to an announcement from the Ministry of Commerce.

Compulsory for licensed petrol service stations but not for street vendors, the pricing serves as a tool to facilitate and enhance cost control nationwide and is calculated semi-monthly by the ministry using data extrapolated from fluctuations in crude oil prices on the international market.

Following a meeting with some of the Kingdom's fuel distributors, the government agreed to reduce this fortnightly pricing by 0.4 US cents per litre to safeguard people's livelihoods, the ministry said.

Petrol prices have been trending higher since the start of this year, with EA92 pinned at 3,200 riel, 3,350 riel, 3,400 riel and 3,500 riel per litre for each of the four bi-weekly periods to February 28, and diesel pegged at 2,950 riel, 3,000 riel, 3,050 riel and 3,200 riel for the corresponding intervals.

During the first April period, the rates for EA92 and diesel were 3,700 riel and 3,550 riel, respectively, according to the announcement.

Nhim Kosol (pictured, supplied), business manager of derivatives broker Golden FX Link Capital Co Ltd, explained that oil demand is expected to recover as more people are inoculated against the novel coronavirus, and that members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec)

plan to increase production to meet the surge of orders.

He told *The Post*: "Investors in the oil sector expect oil demand to recover, so they will stockpile oil. The rise in domestic oil prices is related to international rates ... soaring to \$70 a barrel now. Usually importers buy high-priced oil, so they can't sell it to us at the original price."

From June 1-15, the international per-barrel retail price of EA92 and diesel averaged \$77.20 and \$77.84, respectively, according to the ministry.

Moeung Sopheak, owner of a Tela filling station in Kampong Chhnang province, said he sells fuel below the prices set by the ministry, as an approach for "more customers, even at less profit".

He noted that the current per-litre rates at the station are 3,800 riel, 3,200 riel and 4,100 riel for EA92, diesel and 95-octane-rated Super petrol, respectively.

Brent crude oil futures dipped 41 US cents, or 0.6 per cent, to \$73.98 a barrel at 0400 GMT, while US crude futures receded 39 US cents, or 0.5 per cent to \$71.76 a barrel, Reuters reported on June 17.

The General Department of Customs and Excise's (GDCE) revenue collection plummeted 15.2 per cent to \$614.8 million in the first quarter of this year compared to the corresponding period last year.

Petroleum and energy – including regular and super petrol, diesel and lubricants – accounted for 22.8 per cent of total revenue, according to the GDCE. ■



KOICA
Korea International
Cooperation Agency

RE-NOTICE OF TENDER For Construction Work

Date: 18 June, 2021

- The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) Cambodia Office invites prospective bidders for the Construction of "Project for Strengthening Maternal and Child Health in North-Eastern Region, Cambodia".
- The Project is to be constructed with the grant aid of the Government of Republic of Korea

Brief of Bidding

- Bid Title:** Project for Strengthening Maternal and Child Health in North-Eastern Region, Cambodia.
- Contract Duration:** 13 months from the effective(contract) date
- Estimated Budget:** Approx. USD 1,022,588 (VAT excluded)
- Summary of Construction Services**
 - Type: New construction
 - Construction outline
 - Gross Floor Area: approx. 1,325.32 m2
 - Generator Room, Water Tank, Moto Parking (2 Site), Groundwater Development, Delivery Room, Newborn Baby Room and etc.
 - Construction Duration: 13 months from the contract of construction
 - Location: Ratanakiri Province (4 Site) & Mondulkiri Province (1 Site)
- Time zone:** Cambodia time

- Employer: Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) CAMBODIA Office
- Bid Type: International Open Competitive Bidding with Qualification
- Receipt and submission of tender documents
 - **Interested applicants should obtain the bidding documents by visiting KOICA Cambodia Office or sending E-mail till July 2, 2021, 17:00 (Applicants wishing to participate in the bid must submit an application for bidding of the distributed documents by 17:00 on 2 July 2021.)**
 - **Bidding documents can be received by E-mail.**
 - **All documents submitted must be notarized.** (Submission quantity is specified in the RFP distributed.)
- Selection of the Successful Bidders:
 - Selection by Lowest Bidding Price with Eligibility Evaluation.
 - Only bidders eligible to bid for [Bid Eligibility] below are eligible to bid.
 - Eligibility Evaluation consist of Bid Price Evaluation of Seventy (70) Points and Performance Ability Evaluation of Thirty (30) Points. Total of One hundred (100) points
 - The details of the successful bidder selection are described in the tender distribution document.
- The Request For Proposals (RFP): RFP is provided as part of the Bid distribution document.
- Instructions and Schedule:**

[Bid Eligibility]

- As of the deadline for submitting bids, it is a company that completes registration in Cambodia, a local subsidiary, and submits related evidence documents with companies that can carry out construction project.
- A company that has more than 300,000 USD in completion performance of single construction of Medical facilities over the past 10 years (2011 – 2020). (However, at least one project meets the requirement is acceptable.)

[Pre-Bid Meeting]

- A Pre-Bid Meeting shall not be held and shall be substituted by the distribution of tender documents.
- Site Visit: Site Visit is not required

[Bid]

- The distribution of bids and answers to questions about bids will be held from 18 June 2021 to 17:00 on 2 July 2021.
- Place for Bid Submission: **at KOICA Cambodia Office**
- Bid Closing (Submission): July 12, 2021, 17:00 at **KOICA Cambodia Office**
- Bid Opening: July 14, 2021, 14:00 at **KOICA Cambodia Office**

- Currency of Financial Proposal (Bid Price): **United States Dollar (USD)**
- Currency of Contract: **United States Dollar(USD)**
- Consortium or Joint Venture is **NOT** allowed for this Bid.

- Price proposal shall be equal or less than the 'Estimated Price' and equal or more than the 'Minimum Price'. Any

bid exceeding the above limitation may result in rejection of its bid.

- 'Estimated Price' will be announced at the Bid Opening by a random draw and 'Minimum Price' will be determined based on the announced 'Estimated Price'.
- Detailed information on the selection of successful bidders, eligibility assessment, 'estimated price' decision, and 'minimum price' decision will be explained in the tender documentation distributed.

- Price proposal by bidders and final contract price shall be exclusive of VAT.

As this bid is a part of ODA (Official Development Assistance) project between the Government of Republic of Korea and Kingdom of Cambodia, this project benefits exemption of Value Add Tax (VAT) according to MOU between countries, and the Record of Discussion (RD) between KOICA and MOH. Thus, KOICA Cambodia office is not responsible for any VAT discharge or refund. All inquiries regarding VAT exemption or tax refund shall be referred to MOH in case needed.

- The Request for Proposal (RFP) includes following documents but not limited to:
 - * **Note: RFP including below documents will be provided to the bidder when distributing the bidding documents.**
 - ① Instructions to Bidders
 - ② Conditions of Contract including Contract Form
 - ③ Bidding Forms
 - ④ Attachment (Technical Specifications, Design Drawings, Unpriced Bills of Quantity (BOQ)-the statement must be submitted at contract)
- Language of Proposal: All documents shall be in English except the documents delivered by the government administration, bank, educational and professional organizations for the proof of Bid Evaluation Criteria.
- The **KOICA Cambodia Office** requires that Bidders and Contractors observe the highest standard of ethics during the procurement and execution of such contracts. In pursuance of this policy, KOICA:
 - (a) will reject a proposal for award if it determines that the Bidder recommended for award has engaged in corrupt or fraudulent practices in competing for the contract in question.
 - (b) will recognize such a Contractors as ineligible, for a period determined by KOICA
- The **KOICA Cambodia Office** will receive sealed price proposals from bidders.
- All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security of amount equivalent to Two point Five percent (2.5%) of the "**Bid Price**" with its guarantee period from no later than Bid Closing Date (before July 12, 2021) to not earlier than Thirty Days (30Days) after the Bid Opening Date (after July 13, 2021)

***Note: For more information regarding the submission and restoration of Bid Security will be included in RFP and its supplementary documents.**

- KOICA Cambodia Office shall not be responsible for any costs or expenses incurred by Bidders in connection with the preparation or delivery of bids
- All bidders are expected to examine all instructions, forms, terms and specifications of the bidding documents. Failure to furnish all information required by the bidding documents or submission of a bid not substantially responsive to the bidding documents in every respect shall be at the Bidder's risk and may result in the rejection of the bid.

12. Contact Information

KOICA Cambodia Office

Address: Boritra Building 4th Floors, #61-64, Preah Norodom Blvd(41), Corner of St.306, Sangkat Boeng Keng Kang 1, Khan Chamkar Mon, Phnom Penh Cambodia.
Tel: +855 23 964 150/1/3, Fax: +855 023 964 152
E-mail: koicakim@koica.go.kr / gkdud0109@koica.go.kr / saodonainfo@gmail.com / CM: pjwoo312@heerim.com

Attention: Kim Kwang Wook, Deputy Country Director of KOICA Cambodia Office (bidding no. 2021-05)

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SOCIAL WELFARE



Field workers use tablets to expedite the process of identifying those in need of financial assistance. SUPPLIED



The government's efforts have meant cash has been delivered to recipients within minutes. SUPPLIED

Instant cash transfer model lessens financial burden during pandemic

A GOVERNMENT-TO-PEOPLE cash transfer programme using digital platforms has benefited some 2.7 million people during the Covid-19 outbreak – testimony to how the Kingdom is successfully reaching out to vulnerable groups during this crisis.

The social assistance initiative providing money directly to poor households has proven successful, with some \$322 million disbursed to 693,000 households over a one-year period – averaging \$30 million per month.

Main agenda

“Our objective in this new cash transfer programme is to reduce the burden on poor and vulnerable households, and not to replace income lost during the pandemic.

“The package is designed for three groups – those in Phnom Penh, urban areas outside Phnom Penh and for people in rural areas.

“This is called a special social assistance programme as it is outside the regular assistance programme, mainly aimed at providing relief during the Covid-19 outbreak,” secretary-general of the National Social Protection Council under the Ministry of Economy and Finance Chan Narith told *The Post*.

The ministry launched the “Cash Transfer Programme for Poor and Vulnerable Households during Covid-19” as a relief measure in June last year to cushion the social-economic effects of the pandemic on IDPoor Card holders.

Around two-thirds of IDPoor-qualifying households suffered a 31 per cent drop in their incomes due to the fallout of the coronavirus pandemic.

Households with IDPoor Card 1 and IDPoor Card 2, and people affected by Covid-19, including those who have lost jobs or income and could slip below the poverty level are eligible under the programme, said Narith.

The IDPoor Programme – the national poverty identification



IDPoor Card holders are eligible for the programme. SUPPLIED



National Social Protection Council secretary-general Chan Narith. HEAN RANGSEY

and properties, and sources of income.

Once the households were identified and vetted by officers in villages and communes, money was then transferred directly from the National Treasury to the eligible recipients using Wing agents.

“We have had the poor household identification programme in place for the past 13 years, and social assistance programmes such as cash transfers for women and children under the age of two.

“When the new assistance was needed during the Covid outbreak, we fine-tuned the existing programme to make it more comprehensive and rolled it out. This is what social protection means for a country, to have the right structure ready, though ours was still at an infant stage.

“It is an unprecedented project rolled out countrywide with the collaboration of many ministries, including the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation.

“It really was a challenge – we had three weeks to identify the recipients for the programme. But the independent evaluation showed we achieved a 9.8 satisfactory score out of 10,” said Narith.

The cash transfer programme helped increase the expenditure level of each recipient to 87 per cent, otherwise their spending would have fallen during the lockdown period, he added.

“The money was mostly spent on food, healthcare and clothing, and some recipients even managed to save some of it,” said Narith.

Around 88 per cent of beneficiary households received their first benefits within the same month after their eligibility check.

The new method of delivering social security is proving a real success – swiftly identifying genuine recipients, while removing bottlenecks in the distribution of money and increasing the speed of doing so using digital delivery solutions. ■

system established in 2006 by the Ministry of Planning – is an ongoing effort to reduce poverty and support socioeconomic development nationwide.

Methodology

Using existing government-run social assistance structures to reach out to vulnerable groups, devices such as tablets for quick registration and verification, and mobile payment systems to deliver money quickly, the ministries were able to roll out the programme efficiently, said Narith.

Field workers and officials involved in the project worked around the clock to identify vulnerable households needing assistance, not only based on their income, but on housing conditions, family assets

US' Biden sets red line for Putin over 'Russia-backed' ransomware attacks

US PRESIDENT Joe Biden delivered a stern warning on June 16 to his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin over ransomware attacks emanating from Russia, saying he was prepared to retaliate against any cyber assaults on US infrastructure.

Speaking after the two leaders' first summit in Geneva, Biden said he laid down the line on Moscow not taking action against hackers who have extorted hundreds of millions of dollars from western governments, companies and organisations, purportedly from the safety of Russian soil.

In a separate press conference following the three-and-a-half hours of discussions, Putin rejected the allegations and insisted that the US itself was behind a large number of cyberattacks.

But he acknowledged that the issue was "extremely important" and said the two sides agreed to hold formal consultations on it. "We need to drop all insinuations, sit down at an expert level and start working in the interests of the US and Russia," Putin said.

Experts claim that Russia and neighbouring countries have become the hub of what is called "ransomware-as-a-service", in which different groups work together to hack and then export a target, promising to free up blocked computers after being paid off.

US victims include hospitals,



US President Joe Biden (left) told his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin (right) in their Geneva summit that he would not tolerate attacks on US infrastructure from Russia-based ransomware extortionists. SPUTNIK/AFP

school systems, police departments and myriad businesses.

Washington officials say they don't believe the Russian government is directly involved, but say it harbours hackers that should be arrested.

Assistant Attorney General John Demers told a conference held by the Cyberscoop media group on June 16: "There is a lot of ransomware activity that is coming from [within] Russian borders, which isn't being conducted by Russian

government officials, but is being tolerated by the Russian government.

"They're not just tolerating this – they are actively getting in the way of US law enforcement efforts to combat this type of hacking," he alleged.

The subject was ripe for discussion at the Geneva summit after apparently Russia-based hackers hijacked the computers of a major US oil distribution network, Colonial Pipeline, on May 7 and demanded

millions in ransom.

Weeks later, a different group of seemingly Russian hackers did the same with JBS, one of the world's biggest meat processors, which paid \$11 million in bitcoin to regain control of its information technology systems.

Both hacks had significant economic impact in the US – Colonial was forced to shut down fuel pipelines, forcing gas prices to soar, and beef prices rose as JBS had to cur-

tail production.

Biden has fielded political criticism domestically for not taking any visible action in retaliation, though the US military's Cyber Command declines to make public any actions it takes against adversaries.

The US leader said he delivered to Putin a list of 16 areas of crucial infrastructure like energy and water that are "off limits" to attack, drawing a red line for Moscow. AFP

New coating can capture air droplets

US SCIENTISTS on June 16 said they had developed a sticky wall coating that repurposes ingredients used in hair conditioners to trap aerosolised droplets, and hope it will become another tool in the fight against Covid and other airborne diseases.

The substance can be applied to surfaces such as plexiglass dividers to capture respiratory droplets, rather than allowing them to bounce off and remain in circulation.

"Droplets collide with indoor surfaces all the time," said Northwestern University engineering professor Jiaxing Huang, senior author of a paper on the subject that was published on June 16 in the journal *Chem*.

"Right now, plexiglass dividers are deviating devices – they deflect droplets. If a surface could actually trap droplets, then every single droplet effectively removed from indoor air would be a successful elimination of a potential source of transmission."

Covid-19 is primarily transmitted through respiratory fluids – including large droplets and fine aerosols – when an infected person speaks, sneezes or breathes.

The main way to remove these from the air is to open windows and to use high-filtration devices that capture fine particles and change out the air at high rates.

To build extra protection on top of that, Huang and colleagues came up with the idea of using PAAm-DDA, a polymer which is commonly used in hair products and other cosmetics to lock in moisture, as the main ingredient of their coating.

They applied the substance with a brush to a variety of surfaces and performed tests to compare coated and uncoated surfaces.

A coated plexiglass barrier captured nearly all aerosolised microdroplets, and 80 per cent of large droplets, compared to a barrier that was uncoated.

The coating did not become visibly soiled after use, and the scientists said it would not require cleaning more often than non-coated barriers. Once saturated, the substance should be wiped down with water and reapplied.

Since it can be applied to a variety of surfaces, including concrete, metal and fabric, Huang said it could be used on low-touch areas such as walls or curtains to turn those into "functional devices" that would help capture aerosolised particles.

Many more research steps are required to confirm the coating's utility before it can be authorised for use.

"We understood that the current pandemic may end before this concept is implemented," Huang said. "It may or may not be used now. But next time, when an outbreak like this happens, I think we will be better equipped." AFP

How jabs work against Delta Covid variant

THE Delta variant of the coronavirus, first identified in India, is a cause for global concern with studies showing it is more contagious and resistant to vaccines than other forms of the virus.

But there is also evidence that vaccines retain important effectiveness against Delta after two doses.

A British study published in the *Lancet* medical journal early this month looked at levels of neutralising antibodies produced in vaccinated people exposed to the Delta, Alpha (first identified in Britain) and Beta (first identified in South Africa) variants.

It found that antibody levels in people with two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech shot were six times lower in the presence of the Delta variant than in the presence of the original coronavirus strain on which the vaccine was based.

The Alpha and Beta variants also provoked lower responses, with 2.6 times fewer antibodies for Alpha and 4.9 times fewer for Beta.

A French study from the Pasteur Institute concluded that neutralising antibodies produced by vaccination with the Pfizer/BioNTech jab are three to six times less effective against the Delta variant than against the Alpha variant.

Although they represent an essential marker, the levels of antibodies measured in a lab are not enough to determine the efficacy of a vaccine.

In particular they do not take into account a second immune response in the form of killer T cells – which attack already-infected cells and not the virus itself.

As a result, real-world observations are crucial to measuring vaccine effectiveness – and the first results are reassuring.

According to data published on June 14 by Public Health England, vaccination with Pfizer/BioNTech and AstraZeneca is as effective at preventing hospitalisation in the case of the Delta variant as it is in the case of the Alpha variant.

Two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech jab prevent 96 per cent of hospitalisations due to the Delta variant, while AstraZeneca prevents 92 per cent, according to a study involving 14,000 people.

Previous data released by British health authorities at the end of last month come to similar conclusions for less serious forms of the illness.

The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is 88 per cent effective against symptomatic Covid caused by the Delta variant two

weeks after the second dose, while the jab is 93 per cent effective for cases caused by the Alpha variant.

AstraZeneca shows efficacy of 60 per cent against cases caused by the Delta variant and 66 per cent in the case of Alpha.

Scottish authorities published similar data on June 14 in the *Lancet*.

The team behind the Sputnik V jab meanwhile tweeted on June 15 that theirs was "more efficient against the Delta variant ... than any other vaccine that published results on this strain so far".

They did not publish results but said the study by the Gamaleya Center, a Russian research institute, had been submitted for publication in an international peer-reviewed journal.

Among authorised vaccines only one – developed by Janssen – is given in one dose instead of two, and not enough data exists to determine its effectiveness against the Delta variant.

For the others, lab and real-world tests both conclude that one dose of any vaccine only gives limited protection against the Delta variant.

"After a single dose of Pfizer-BioNTech, 79 per cent of people had a quantifiable neutralising antibody response against the original strain, but this fell

to ... 32 per cent for B.1.617.2 [Delta]," says the lab study from this month.

The Pasteur Institute found that a single dose of AstraZeneca would have "little to no efficacy" against the Delta variant.

Data from the British government confirms the tendency in real-world scenarios – both vaccines were 33 per cent effective against symptomatic cases caused by Delta three weeks after the first dose compared to around 50 per cent effectiveness against the Alpha variant.

In the UK – where the Delta variant is now responsible for 96 per cent of new cases – these findings pushed the government on June 14 to reduce the waiting period between doses from 12 weeks to eight for people over 40.

In France the wait has been reduced to three weeks from five for a second dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines.

The Pfizer/BioNTech jab does however offer very high (94 per cent) protection against hospitalisation due to the Delta variant after one dose.

Scientists agree that the best defence against the Delta variant is to get a full two-dose vaccination against coronavirus. AFP



**ON THE OCCASION OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN MOTHER
NORODOM MONINEATH SIHANOUK'S BIRTHDAY ON JUNE 18, 2021**

WE WISH HER MAJESTY A VERY HAPPY BIRTHDAY

**MAY HER MAJESTY BE BLESSED WITH
GOOD HEALTH, HAPPINESS AND A LONG LIFE**

FROM THE MANAGEMENT AND STAFF OF

The Phnom Penh Post

Maternity protection: The key to dignified life for all women in Cambodia and ASEAN

Opinion

Solinn Lim

IMAGINE you are Sovann. You are raising your daughter alone. When the Covid-19 pandemic begins, your pay as a domestic worker is cut in half. Despite people's judgement and serious safety risks, you decide to work at night as a tuk-tuk driver to cover rent and daily expenses. You are still waiting for the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) to offer some support to workers like yourself. Until then, you work hard and bring your eight-year old daughter with you in your tuk-tuk because no one is at home to take care of her.

Even though I am a full-time working mother of two small children like Saovann, it is hard for me to imagine her situation and put myself in her shoes and those of most Cambodian working mothers in the informal sector. Unlike them, I have the privilege of having access to paid childcare as part of basic employment benefits. I cannot imagine such daily struggle and many would say I should count my blessings. My blessings? Is paid childcare God given or is it a right that all working mothers like Sovann and I should have?

Many women workers in Cambodia can relate to elements of Sovann's story. Like her, these women take their role as mothers and caretakers seriously. Like her, they work hard to provide for their children and often for other family members. However, because of their informal labour status, they cannot access maternity protection benefits, such as childcare, that may support them during pregnancy and maternity. Approximately 90 per cent of women in the labour force in Cambodia are in this position, making them vulnerable to joblessness, debt, poverty, work-related injuries, and sickness, which reduce their ability to care for themselves and their children.

We cannot overstate the importance of maternity protection. As a fundamental labour right, it guarantees the security and health of women and their children and is key to achieving gender equality and underpinning economic growth. The Covid-19 pandemic has increased the vulnerabilities of informal women workers in ASEAN to surges in unemployment, domestic violence, unintended pregnancies, and financial insecurity while taking on more responsibilities to care for the sick and to educate their children due to school closures. For this reason,



Sovann works as a domestic worker during day time and a tuk-tuk driver at night. As a single mother, she has to take her eight-year-old daughter with her in her tuk-tuk since no one can take care of her at home. OXFAM

maternity protection is more critical than ever.

While progress has been made to extend social protection in Cambodia, informal women workers continue to be left outside the system. At present, the Labour Law in Cambodia only provides maternity protection benefits to women workers who have formalised work arrangements and contracts and have met the eligibility requirements for contributory social insurance or social assistance. Unfortunately, most informal women workers cannot meet these requirements, as they work in informal working arrangements, and work too irregularly to afford to make regular contributions to social insurance.

The problem is rooted in gaps in national legislation and social norms and attitudes about the role of women in Cambodian society. Like in other countries in the region, Cambodian women in their prime reproductive years (ages 25-34) are overrepresented among the poor because they are expected to perform more domestic chores and care work than men, leaving less time to work and earn. Businesses, meanwhile,

still have a long way to go to create changes and working environments that empower and protect women and acknowledge the economic value they offer.

In light of the immense challenges of pregnancy and maternity for all women workers, Oxfam urges the Cambodian government to better align labour legislation and regulations with ILO Maternity Protection Convention No 183, which establishes benchmarks in five core areas: maternity leave; cash and medical benefits; health protection at the workplace for mothers and their children during pregnancy, and breastfeeding; employment protection and non-discrimination; and breastfeeding arrangements. Oxfam also urges the business community to support women workers better by providing maternity protection, challenging stereotypes that categorise women as primary caregivers, and promoting family-friendly policies and better distribution of unpaid care work in households.

Informal women workers like Sovann are the backbone of our families and society and economy. They

made up of 90 per cent of informal economy workforce which is accounted for about 650 per cent of Cambodia's GDP. Thus it is imperative that the Cambodian government achieve Universal Social Protection coverage for all its citizens and more importantly universal maternity benefits for all mothers by 2030. It is not a charitable act but sound economic policy and duty of care owed to every citizen. Holistic maternity protection will unlock Cambodia's trajectory to achieve its objective of being a higher middle-income economy.

I hope by 2030, all women workers, be they domestic or seasonal migrant workers, will no longer refer to maternity benefits as blessings but their rights.

This month of June, please join Oxfam and partners as we continue to campaign for better maternity protection for all women workers. You can follow the campaign on the Facebook page of Oxfam in Cambodia. Every mother counts and all women should be protected, including those in the informal economy. ■

The writer is Oxfam Cambodia country director.

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Lifestyle

Jelly cake bakery goes digital with online ordering and video lessons

Roth Sochieata

CLOURFUL pastel flowers, a pair of cute bunnies and the name of some lucky person whose birthday is being celebrated in big and bold lettering – all perched on a wobbly square – looking both festive and delicious.

The texture of this cake might look like that of a sugar-coated buttercream cake, but the KBSH bakery's cakes are all made entirely of jelly.

Once considered just a retro dessert, now Instagrammable jelly cakes are making a comeback for birthday celebrations in the Kingdom. This traditional and universal dessert never fades in popularity and only keeps improving in presentation.

These cakes come courtesy of Kok Sothya, who quit her job in the tourism industry, turned herself into a pastry chef and started teaching people how to make eye-pleasing desserts including jelly cakes.

"By the end of 2014, I quit my job and at first I opened a modern laundry. At the time I had a lot of people working for me so that gave me more free time and I came across jelly cakes while scrolling on my phone," Sothya tells *The Post*.

"I saw a jelly cake in a display case with a cute little duck on it. I was impressed and I searched for more information on how I could learn to make them myself and I found someone in Thailand who gave lessons and I went straight to their house for a one day lesson, one-on-one."

She continued to learn online from her teacher in Thailand until she mastered the jelly arts. Now that she's opened her bakery she specialises in jelly creations and so far customers have been enthusiastic about the concept.

Most Cambodians are more familiar with cakes made from flour with cream frosting and find her jelly cakes to be a nice change of pace. They are also popular among those who don't have a sweet tooth but would still like a dessert option, just one with less sugar.

"Customers tell me the taste is delicious and one said that their granny loves it so much they are ordering it for her every week now. We are getting a lot of repeat business," Sothya says.

She founded KBSH bakery (Kiri Baitong Bakery Supply House) in 2015, at first only selling jelly cakes but later also offering affordable courses on making jelly cakes to people who are interested in learning the skills.

Sothya had a lot of people contacting her and telling her that they wanted to learn, but some of them were abroad and some were in the provinces or just too busy with work and household chores to travel to her bakery.

Sothya decided to go online with her jelly cake courses, especially now in light of Covid-19, but she actually began offering them in 2018. Her students don't have to travel and it also allows her to charge lower fees.

"I just created a private group chat and I send videos of the lessons to the group. This gives people all of the detailed lessons I've prepared and allows them to learn at their own pace whenever they have spare time. I



Former tourism worker, Kok Sothya, started her jelly cake shop a few years ago and currently teaches students mainly online for a small fee. SUPPLIED



A birthday cake made from jelly has everything edible and adjustable sugar level. SUPPLIED



Jelly in a cup is available in different delicious designs. SUPPLIED

cover everything from ingredients to recipes to basic and advanced techniques," Sothya says.

She also sells supplies and ingredients that her students might not be able to easily source for themselves elsewhere.

"The students try things out on their own and then I will be there to help them with any mistakes until they can confidently do it all on their own. Right now I have ten different groups with different lessons," she says.

Sothya believes that Cambodians haven't quite gotten the hang of online studying yet and are still adapting to this new method of learning. Some students chat to her before trying the lessons and express their

doubts about being able to learn effectively this way.

She says she typically responds by sending them sample videos and a trailer that highlights some of the things that her students have created by following her lessons, reminding them that unlike YouTube they can be sure that she'll cover every piece of information they need to know and furthermore they'll have access to her to ask questions and get help any time they need it.

"If you are still wondering about anything or want to ask questions you can message me anytime. I will personally answer every message that is sent to me," she says.

The jelly cake courses are \$100 per

session. If patrons want access to all three jelly cake courses, the price is only \$150. Other courses cost \$50, such as the banana cupcakes course and more.

"I teach because I want Cambodians to have delicious food that is affordable. I also want to share these skills with women who are considering running their own businesses. They don't need to own a shop – all they need to do is make delicious food and then sell it online," she says.

Out of the ten courses currently available, three of them are for charitable purposes with all proceeds donated to Kantha Bopha children's hospital.

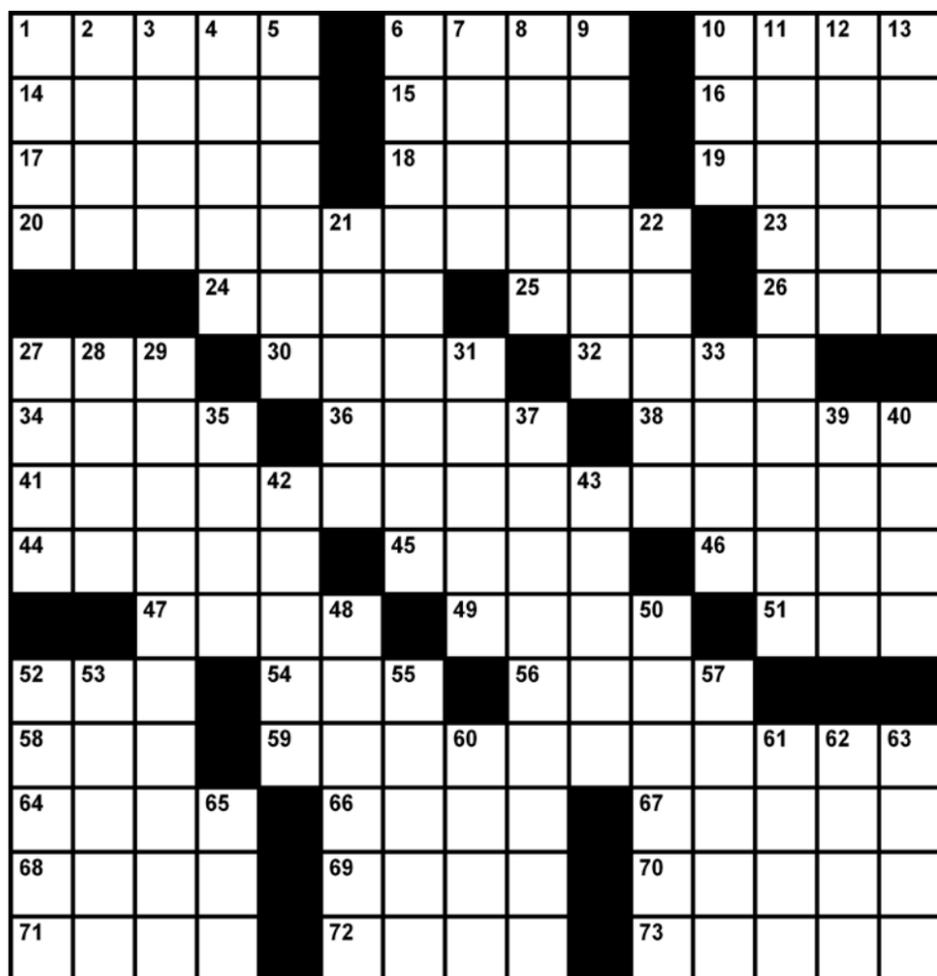
As for the cakes she's selling on-

line, the price of jelly cakes starts from \$20. Other cakes range from \$1 to \$5 depending on the type and the packaging.

"I want to tell anyone reading this – and especially housewives – don't limit yourselves because each person's ability is unlimited as long as you work hard. Anyone can do this to earn extra money to support their family. You need to be patient, though, because food-related businesses are all about retaining customers over time. Always keep trying – if you try once and fail, then try again," Sothya says.

For more information go to KBSH bakery's Facebook page @kbsb-bakery. ■

Thinking caps



"A CROOKED PUZZLE"

ACROSS

- 1 Campground abodes
- 6 Public scenes
- 10 Partly open
- 14 Open-eyed
- 15 "Citizen ____" (film)
- 16 Yield
- 17 Cut into smaller pieces
- 18 Felt sorry about
- 19 Some flock members
- 20 Wild West outlaw
- 23 Inventor Whitney
- 24 Meat cut
- 25 Grand ____ (wine label word)
- 26 Dawson or Deighton
- 27 And so forth (Abbr.)
- 30 Platoon leaders (Abbr.)
- 32 Ornerly mood
- 34 Castle's watery defense
- 36 Sounds of discovery
- 38 A wise beginning?
- 41 When to be saved from the theme entries?
- 44 Knee-to-ankle bone
- 45 "____ all else fails..."
- 46 Trompe l'____ (optical illusion)
- 47 Cold War foe, briefly

- 49 Go for ____ (take a nice run)
- 51 Cook an egg, in a way
- 52 Road covering
- 54 Brewed beverage
- 56 Individualized atmosphere
- 58 Fix, as a game's outcome
- 59 Fingernail filer, among criminals
- 64 Sea-girt land
- 66 Wine bottle feature
- 67 Socially smooth
- 68 Lively spirit
- 69 Work on one's muscles
- 70 Las Vegas attraction
- 71 Arid
- 72 "Don't expunge that!"
- 73 Shouts

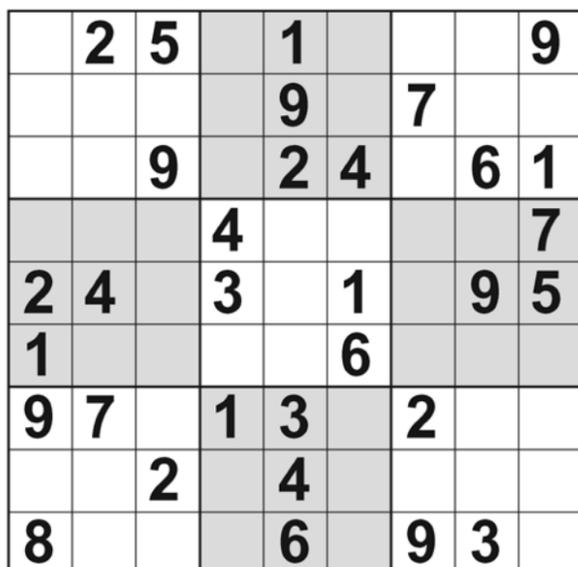
DOWN

- 1 Like a lemon
- 2 Large pitcher
- 3 "The Eagle has landed" recipient
- 4 Biker's path
- 5 Like some patches
- 6 LeBron James' birthplace
- 7 Apply crudely, as paint
- 8 Year before A.D. began
- 9 Passover dinners
- 10 Expert fighter pilot
- 11 Crook interested in rock

- collections?
- 12 "Chasing Pavements" singer
- 13 Pine exudation
- 21 "Costa" or "Puerto" follower
- 22 ____-the-mill
- 27 Give off
- 28 "Beloved" novelist Morrison
- 29 Stealthy stealer
- 31 Spinal vertebrae
- 33 "Leave ____ Beaver"
- 35 "With ____ ring..."
- 37 Common sight in Aspen
- 39 Arabian bigwig
- 40 Show faith in (with "on")
- 42 Bridge-seat occupants
- 43 "Days ____ Lives"
- 48 Responds to stimuli
- 50 Like an infamous Dallas knoll
- 52 Takes a stab at
- 53 Airline-seat locale
- 55 Like the game, to Sherlock Holmes
- 57 Type of angle
- 60 Eagle of the coasts
- 61 "Communist Manifesto" co-author Marx
- 62 Definitely not good
- 63 Salespeople, briefly
- 65 67.5 degrees, direction-wise

Sudoku Pacific

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

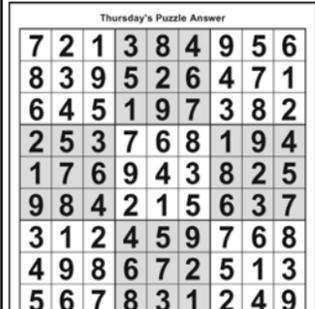


DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Thursday's solution



Thursday's solution



Yemeni fishermen moor their boat in Aden after fishing off the coast of Yemen's southern port city. AFP

Yemeni fishermen hit jackpot with \$1M find in the belly of a whale

FOR Yemeni fisherman Fares Abdulhakeem and his friends, the day was like any other as they headed out to sea to earn a living in the war-torn country – until they hit the jackpot in the belly of a whale.

Abdulhakeem related how he was among 35 fishermen who stumbled upon a floating sperm whale carcass in February, about 26km off the coast of the southern city of Aden.

He said they dragged the dead mammal back to shore, where they sliced it open and struck "floating gold", or ambergris, a rare substance formed in the whale's digestive system which is traditionally used in making perfume.

The 127kg lump of ambergris was sold to an Emirati businessman for more than \$1.5 million – an unimaginable sum for many living in what the UN says is one of the world's poorest countries.

Some of the money was used to help those in need in the community, while the rest was split among the group of fishermen.

'Our lives changed'

Yemeni fishermen have traditional knowledge that ambergris – a waxy substance used to stabilise the scent in perfumes – can be found in sperm whales, but actually coming across one is a vanishingly rare event.

The discovery has transformed their lives.

"I head out to sea every day in search of my daily catch, and on one of those days we found a dead whale. It turned out to be whale

full of ambergris," Abdulhakeem said. "From one moment to another, our lives changed," he said.

"There are those who bought boats, others built or fixed their houses. I built my house, I built my future... the circumstances here are already difficult."

Salim Sharf, another one of the fishermen, said the discovery has allowed him to "lay foundations for the future".

"We are simple people, fishermen looking for our catch every day. If you found your catch for the day, you thank God. Suddenly, the Most Merciful gave us this," he said.

Life is not easy in Yemen, where millions have been pushed to the brink of famine amid a years-long civil war.

The country has been embroiled in a bloody power struggle since 2014 between the government – supported by a powerful Saudi-led military coalition – and the Iran-backed Huthis.

The UN says Yemen is suffering the world's worst humanitarian crisis as its civil war rumbles on, with tens of thousands killed, millions displaced and two-thirds of its 30-million population dependent on some form of aid.

For Abdulhakeem and the group of fishermen, it is back to the sea.

"This ocean I will never do without. The love for the sea runs in my veins," Abdulhakeem said.

"The sea is a better neighbour to you than a king," he said, reciting a popular Yemeni saying. AFP



In 2013, a British man was offered \$60,000 for a strange-smelling rock his dog found on a beach, which is likely a rare form of whale vomit used in perfumes. AFP

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WEDNESDAY'S RESULTS

Finland	0-1	Russia
Turkey	0-2	Wales
Italy	3-0	Switzerland



TONIGHT'S MATCHES

Sweden	GROUP E	Slovakia
Croatia	GROUP D	Czech Republic
England	GROUP D	Scotland

8PM, 18 June
St Petersburg

11PM, 18 June
Glasgow

2AM, 19 June
London

Scotland's 'wee superstars' look to become heroes against England

SCOTLAND'S return to the major tournament stage may be off to a slow start, but a visit to Wembley tonight to face England offers Steve Clarke's men the chance to write themselves into folklore for generations to come.

A 2-0 defeat by the Czech Republic at Hampden on Monday night leaves Scotland realistically needing to avoid defeat against the Three Lions to maintain hopes of making it out of the group stage for the first time.

On paper there appears a gulf in class for Clarke's side to bridge against the side ranked fourth in the world, who harbour ambitions of conquering Europe for the first time.

But no game means more to Scotland than beating the old enemy.

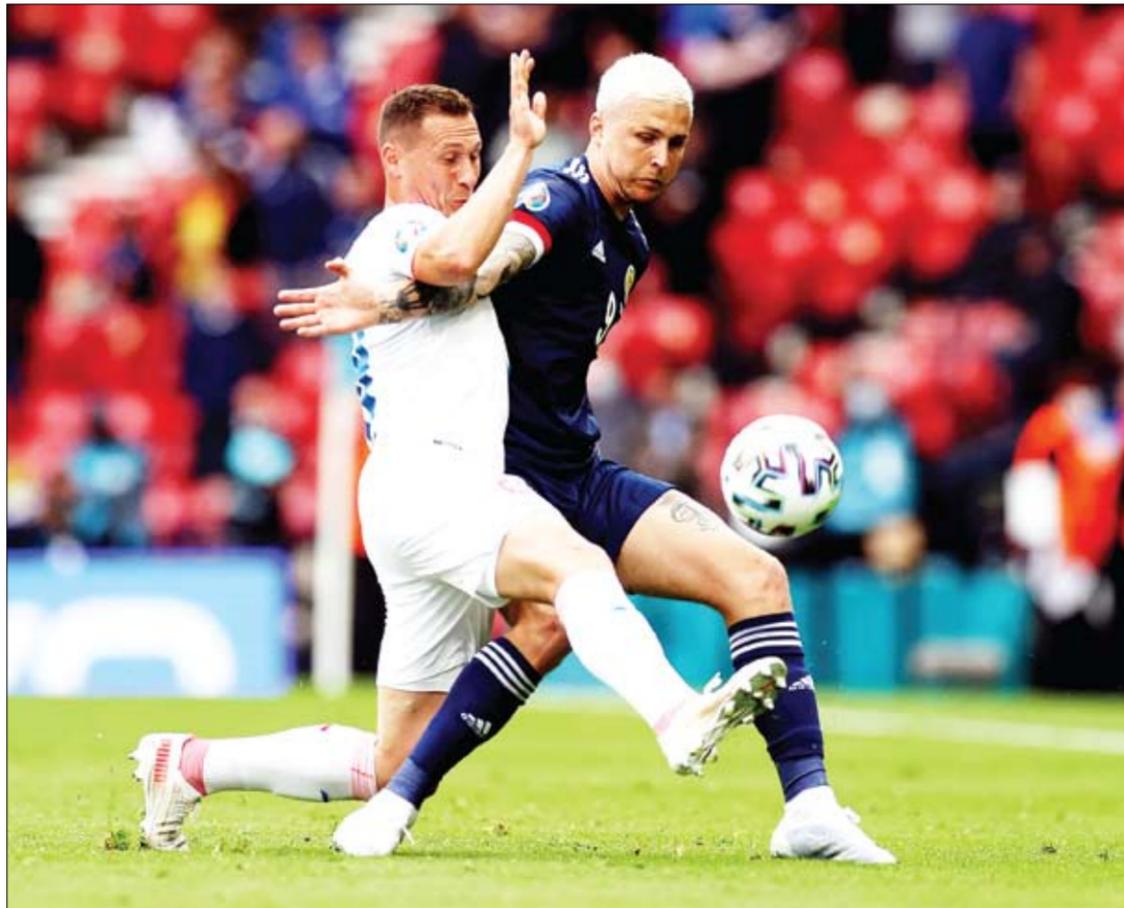
The Scottish sides of 1967 and 1977 are still fondly remembered for victories at Wembley in the old British Home Championship.

Doing so at their first major tournament for 23 years would make the Scottish players legends back home.

"The English media would have you believe the gap is humongous," said Aston Villa midfielder John McGinn on Wednesday. "It's up to us on Friday to prove that wrong."

McGinn is one of a batch of proven Premier League players in Clarke's squad that have helped guide Scotland back from the wilderness in international football.

Andy Robertson has won the Champions League and Premier League at Liverpool, Scott McTominay has established himself as a regular at Manchester United and there



Scotland forward Lyndon Dykes (right) vies for the ball with Czech Republic defender Jan Boril during their Euro 2020 Group D match at Hampden Park in Glasgow on Monday. AFP

are hopes Arsenal's Kieran Tierney could be fit to play.

"We've got a population of five million, they've got a population of 55 million," added McGinn.

"They've got worldwide superstars throughout their team so

we're always going to be underdogs, but we've got a few wee superstars ourselves."

In total, 14 of the 26-man Scotland squad ply their trade in England.

Rather than be starstruck by their more illustrious opponents, McGinn

believes many of the Scottish team have already proven they can go toe to toe with the best England has to offer.

"We compete against the majority of these guys week in, week out, and we seem to hold our own," he said.

"We know if we play to our capabilities we'll give England a lot of problems."

If Scotland are to pull off the upset of the tournament so far, Clarke has a number of big decisions to make.

Tierney's return would be a huge boost as his presence on the left side of a back three was badly missed with and without the ball against the Czechs.

'Still got a chance'

Despite never starting a previous international, there is also a clamour for Chelsea's Billy Gilmour and Nathan Patterson of Rangers to be thrown in at the deep end after impressing in pre-tournament friendlies.

Southampton's Che Adams is almost certain to start up front after being surprisingly left on the bench for the opening game.

Clarke is another of the Scottish contingent to have made his name in England, firstly as a player and then a coach at Chelsea as part of Jose Mourinho's backroom staff.

Never one to get too high in victory, or low in defeat, the 57-year-old has dismissed the reaction to losing to the Czechs as unnecessary "doom and gloom".

"You have to look only forward, there is no point looking back and thinking: 'If only this, if only that.' We move on," he said.

"We said before the tournament we need to get the points to get out the group - we've still got a chance to do that."

Getting out the group via victory at Wembley would be the sweetest way for Scotland. AFP

Locatelli and Immobile fire Italy into the last 16

MANUEL Locatelli scored a brace and Ciro Immobile added a late third as Italy sealed their place in the Euro 2020 last 16 on June 16 with a game to spare after a rampant 3-0 win over Switzerland in Rome.

Sassuolo midfielder Locatelli put the Azzurri ahead on 26 minutes in the Group A clash, adding a second just after the break with Immo-

bile scoring for the second consecutive game a minute from time.

Roberto Mancini's side are top of Group A with six points from two games, with six goals scored and none conceded, two points clear of Wales, who beat Turkey 2-0 earlier.

The Welsh downed the Turks through goals from Aaron Ramsey before the break and

Connor Roberts in the 95th minute.

In Wednesday's early game, Russia saw off Finland with a goal from Aleksei Miranchuk just before half-time.

"The matches are all difficult, some may seem simpler but they are always to be played and to be won," said Mancini.

"Switzerland are a strong team. It was a hard game. We could have scored earlier, but it is a well-deserved victory."

Italy will advance as Group A winners if they avoid defeat against surprise Euro 2016 semi-finalists Wales at the Stadio Olimpico on June 20.

"Up to now the lads have been good but the road is long," Mancini added.

"There are national teams that are ahead of us in the work of growth, but in football anything can happen."

Switzerland will likely have to beat Turkey in Baku this weekend to have a chance of reaching the knockout phase.

"Everyone deserves to be disappointed tonight, but tomor-

row from the first training session we move on," said Swiss coach Vladimir Petkovic.

"I spoke to the team and told them there's a match left, and three points could get us to the next round."

Record run in sight

The only bad news for the Italians in a game they dominated was the loss of captain Giorgio Chiellini who hobbled off the pitch with a muscle injury in the first half.

The 36-year-old Juventus defender had a 20th-minute goal ruled out for handball by VAR and four minutes later asked to be replaced, holding his thigh.

"We hope that there is nothing serious, we will see tomorrow," said Mancini.

Lazio defender Francesco Acerbi took his place, making his debut in a major international tournament at the age of 33, with the captain's armband handed to Juventus teammate Leonardo Bonucci.

Italy gave the Swiss no space

in another commanding display, having beaten Turkey 3-0 five days ago in Rome.

Lazio forward Immobile once again led Italy's three-man attack, flanked by wingers Lorenzo Insigne and Domenico Berardi.

Immobile missed several chances to add to his tally, sending a header over the bar early from a Leonardo Spinazzola cross.

After Chiellini's exit, Locatelli started the move which reaped the opener, combining with Sassuolo teammate Berardi, who weaved into the area and steered across for the former to the finish off.

Swiss keeper Yann Sommer denied Immobile and an Insigne follow-up was cleared off the line after half an hour.

Another well worked move resulted in Italy's second, Nicolo Barella teeing up Locatelli to drive in from 20 metres.

Locatelli, who replaced injured Marco Verratti, brings his tally to three goals in 12 appearances for Italy since

his debut last September.

"I hope very much that Marco will be able to come back, he's a very strong player who makes the difference," said Locatelli.

"But I'm proud to be part of an incredible group and happy to be here. Let it continue."

Switzerland had few chances with Liverpool's Xherdan Shaqiri blasting over after an hour, while Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma kept out their best effort from Steven Zuber minutes later.

For Italy it was a 10th consecutive win with a clean sheet, extending their unbeaten run to 29 matches since September 2018 - just after failing to qualify for the last World Cup.

Italy have now scored two goals or more in each of their last 10 international matches.

Mancini, meanwhile, moves within one game of Italy's two-time World Cup-winning coach Vittorio Pozzo's record of 30 unbeaten games between 1935 and 1939. AFP



Italy's Manuel Locatelli (front) celebrates after scoring his side's first goal in their Euro 2020 Group A match with Switzerland on Wednesday. AFP