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HOW PCHUM BEN WILL  
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## Competition committee law makes inroads

May Kunmakara

PRIVATE sector actors and experts have welcomed the promulgation of the new competition law, to create a fair-playing field and attract more investment.

The Law on Competition was endorsed by the King for immediate promulgation on

October 5 after the Senate reviewed and approved it on September 20.

Composed of seven chapters and 41 articles, the law is aimed at shaping fair business practices; promoting economic efficiency and shoring up new businesses; protecting the national economy from harmful anti-competitive behav-

iours; and assisting customers in procuring a broader range of diverse, high-quality goods and services at lower prices.

Ministry of Commerce secretary of state Mao Thora told *The Post* on October 13 that he had a hand in the already-drafted sub-decree on the functional role of the law and the establishment, composi-

tion and duties of the associated committee.

"Our minister will review the sub-decree of the law and then put it to the Council of Ministers for approval. The law is very important to build trust among both local and foreign investors and businesspeople – so it creates a fair-playing field," he said.

"Once we have the law, I think our local investors will also be happy to expand their investments too, as they'll feel more confidence."

Anthony Galliano, group CEO of financial services firm Cambodian Investment Management Co Ltd, said Cambodia has been committed to the development of a competition

law since 2006, especially as the other nine ASEAN countries would enact similar laws before the Kingdom did.

He said the Kingdom was motivated to fulfil its commitments to the ASEAN Competition Action Plan, and as a member of the World Trade

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## New M'kiri, R'kiri heads vow rule of law, order

Voun Dara

**M**INISTER of Interior Sar Kheng instructed the newly-appointed governors of Ratanakkiri and Mondulkiri provinces and their administrations to focus more of their efforts on conservation of the environment, stewardship of natural resources and protection of state lands and forests from encroachment by anyone.

He mentioned that there had been cases where government officials had been found encroaching on state lands resulting in their dismissal from their positions.

Sar Kheng made these remarks while presiding over the appointment of Nhem Sam Oeun as the governor of Ratanakkiri province and Thong Savun as the governor of Mondulkiri province on October 12.

Sam Oeun was previously the deputy governor of Ratanakkiri province under Savun, scoring his promotion when

Savun was transferred over to fill the governorship of Mondulkiri province.

The interior minister noted that Ratanakkiri and Mondulkiri provinces both have abundant natural resources and that the provincial authorities must maintain control over those resources, especially the forests, to keep them sustainable and available for future generations.

"It is regrettable, to say the least, that some officials – as we here are all aware – recently have violated the public trust and abused their powers by illegally occupying state lands and other properties. That's corruption caused by the greed of a few of our provincial officials, and it is most regrettable," Sar Kheng said.

This issue takes on even more importance, he said, due to the fact that these officials – in their capacity as public servants – often have a direct hand in solving ordinary people's legitimate land disputes.

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### Enduring legacy

Police shadow members of the Hispanic Movement of Peru marching in historic downtown Lima on Columbus Day bearing the Borgoña Blade flag commemorating the 529th Anniversary of the arrival in America of the navigator Christopher Columbus, on Tuesday. AFP

## Daily aspirin regimen not advised: US

A US government expert panel on October 12 said it no longer recommends a daily dose of aspirin to reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke in people aged 60 and over.

People aged 40-59 who are at a higher risk of developing cardiovascular disease but have no history of it, should consult

with their doctor and make an individual decision on whether to start taking the medicine.

The statement was a major reversal in the US medical field, where taking aspirin daily is a widespread practice. The medication thins blood, helping prevent blood clots and reduce the risk of heart

attack or stroke.

Since 2016, the Preventive Services Task Force, a US government medical expert panel, has recommended a daily dose of aspirin for people in their 50s who have a 10 per cent or greater risk of having a heart attack or stroke in the next 10 years.

On October 12, experts said that aspirin's benefits were not enough to offset the increased risk of bleeding, especially in the brain or intestines, in older people.

These new recommendations are not yet final. They will be open to public debate until early November. AFP ■



**MULTILATERALISM  
COMMITMENTS ANEW  
AT NAM CONFERENCE**

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**PHNOM PENH CONDO  
SUPPLY HITS 30,000 IN  
THIRD QUARTER 2021**

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## National

# Activist says Mondulkiri state land bought, sold illegally uninterrupted

Continued from page 1

Any corruption on their part then totally undermines the public's confidence in any other land dispute resolutions implemented no matter who is involved and no matter how fair or correct the terms are.

"The most important thing now is that you have to control the natural resources in Mondulkiri. That is the biggest issue. Although some officials have now been sent away due to their involvement with this mess, the problems have not yet ended. You have to pay more attention on this, especially in the protected areas where there are potentially lucrative carbon credits up for sale," Sar Kheng said.

As Ratanakkiri and Mondulkiri both share borders with Laos and Vietnam, Sar Kheng said the two provinces have to maintain good relations with those neighboring countries' governments and people so all sides mutually benefit.

"To uphold the law and for the national benefit, we urge all officials to take border duties seriously. We must combat all of the crimes that borders create opportunities for like human trafficking, drug trafficking or customs and tax evasion – no matter which side of the border the perpetrators originate from – or else we'll rightly lose the good cooperation we currently have with our neighbouring officials, and we need to work together with them on these tasks," he said.

New Mondulkiri provincial governor Savun said that no matter whether the cause was corruption or negligence he was intent on putting a stop to all land encroachment in Mondulkiri and to bring public order to every corner of the province however remote it might be.

"I am committed to enforcing the principles of the safe village and commune effec-

tively in order to protect the peace, ensure political stability, uphold security and maintain public order. I will not tolerate any criminal activity by anyone and we will be especially vigilant against natural resource crimes, illegal forest encroachment, drugs trafficking and illegal weapons possession.

"And we will crack down hard on anyone acting with bad intent who seeks to profit from land disputes over state lands or with the local people," he said.

Environmental activist Kroeng Tola said that he had heard similar promises made by many high-ranking officials on these very same topics in the past as they were taking office, but his observation was that the deforestation, illegal land encroachment and other natural resource crimes just kept on happening much the same as before.

To effectively protect the remaining natural resources the law must be equally enforced against both the ordinary citizens who are guilty of these crimes and against the government officials who are committing them now with relative impunity in some places.

"Today you don't see much deforestation taking place anymore in some regions because deforestation can only take place when you actually still have forests left and in many places there is simply no more forest left to chop down – so the absence of loggers in places where there is no longer any forest isn't exactly an accomplishment officials should brag about.

"And in Mondulkiri the usurpation of state lands by private owners through illegal encroachment and sales is an everyday occurrence and not just in one single protected region but all of them. The buying and selling of state lands is happening all throughout the province every single day," he said.

# PM: Worse natural disasters outcome of climate change

**Mom Kunthea**

PRIIME Minister Hun Sen instructed his subordinates to strengthen natural disaster management mechanisms with an increased focus on risk mitigation as a means of reducing the overall level of damage caused by such events.

He said the authorities need to be ready to respond to an increasing number of natural disasters and to be ready to deal with natural disasters of unusual severity because of the impacts of climate change, with particular attention paid to planning in advance the means to protect vulnerable people such as the poor, elderly, children and those with disabilities as well as building the capacity to launch fast-reaction rescue missions when necessary.

Hun Sen offered his commentary in a letter written to commemorate National Disaster Management Day on October 13, which was held this year under the theme of "Increasing Disaster Risk Preparedness for the Safety and Resilience of Villages and Communes."

Hun Sen wrote that the entire world – with Cambodia no different – has had to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic for the past two years while other kinds of natural disasters were also happening – in some places at previously unforeseen rates and alarming intensity – such as wildfires, storms and floods all bringing the destruction of property and loss of lives those events entail.

He noted that the government hadn't remained idle in response and that much work had already been completed in areas like water resource management and the restoration of irrigation and drainage systems like reservoirs, canals, dams and flood gates.

The government has also improved its mechanisms for the prediction of severe weather events and modernized



Residents try to save their belongings from floodwaters in Dangkor commune of the capital's Dangkor district in October last year. HENG CHIVOAN

our technological systems for disseminating this information to the public. As a result we can say that our ability to make weather predictions that are both accurate and timely in order to reduce the impacts of disasters caused by flooding or droughts has improved greatly.

"The government also has had some successes with research on improving our methods for cultivation of rice and other crops and developing types that are capable of adapting to climate change," he said.

Hun Sen urged the public to be aware of their local situation by communicating with local authorities often and to take care of the environment's hygiene and health as they would their personal health through orderly and appropriate management of rubbish and solid waste.

He emphasized the need to reduce the nation's overall usage of plastic products because of their environmental impacts and specifically the problems that plastic and rubbish are causing in

Cambodia's flood drainage systems.

"I urge the private sector, development partners and civil society organizations to continue to cooperate with the government and with each other to mobilize resources necessary for effectively mitigating disasters and increasing resilience to climate change," he said.

He also urged the media to widely broadcast news of emergency weather forecasts and to prominently feature any information or official warnings that could be of immediate impact to public safety anywhere in the nation, such as the level of the waters in Stung Sre Pok River, for example.

According to the NCDM's figures for the first eight months of this year, 94 people have died and at least 158 others have been injured by natural disasters including fires, storms and lightning strikes.

The report said 7,800 residential homes and 220 schools, factories and public administration buildings have also been destroyed by these disasters. ■

# ANA's forest cover campaign goes on

**Lay Samean**

MILLIONS of small trees grown in the Angkor area since 2004 have been distributed by the Apsara National Authority (ANA) to people who requested the plants for pagodas, schools, private land and other locations throughout Siem Reap and other provinces to participate in expanding Cambodia's forest cover.

ANA spokesman Long Kosal told *The Post* on October 12 that the purpose of the programme is to promote distribution of trees and create a sense of caring for the forest and to expand forest cover.

"We have been planting seedlings since 2004 in the Angkor area. We are not only planting luxury trees, but also traditional trees such as tamarind, palm, and rattan. In general, all kinds of seedlings and we have more than two million trees.

"The reason why we continue to provide seedlings to the public is to expand forest cover in Cambodia, and we also want to cultivate the spirit of participation in planting and caring for seedlings. These are the key reasons why we continue to distribute seedlings," he said.

Kosal also said that every year, ANA plants tens of thousands of



Volunteer carries saplings provided by ANA on Monday. ANA

small trees in the Angkor area and continues to distribute them to people who request them, but there are conditions.

"The conditions are not much; we just want to know if they will actually plant the seedlings. When a request is made for seedlings, people need to send the location of where they want to plant trees to our officials who will check if the place is nearby, and our team will inspect the location.

"Secondly, they have to send pictures to ANA after they have planted the trees," he said.

ANA said that from October 1-11, mixed saplings, totalling

100 kulen and 40 mak prang (*Bouea macrophylla*).

ANA provided 1,200 trees to Preah Indokosey pagoda to be planted in Chub Romdeng primary and secondary school in Chub Romdeng village of Svay Leu district's Kantuot commune and planted on both sides of the road in Stung village of Prasat Bakong district's Bakong commune. It included 300 Siamese rosewood (*Dalbergia cochinchinensis*), 300 thnong (*Pterocarpus macrocarpus*), 200 beng (*Afzelia xylocarpa*), 300 koki and 100 romduol.

Another 440 saplings were given to the representative of the ANA's Department of Public Order to be planted in front of Angkor Wat and at the department itself. These saplings include 300 chheuteal, 100 romduol and 40 kngok (Royal poinciana).

ANA provided 34 trees to Chin Mardy, a resident of Phnom Penh, to plant on his own land in Chbar Ampov district's Prek Aeng commune.

Apart from that, there are many more saplings that ANA continues to provide to the public to plant in the provinces.

ANA said that from August 23 to October 11, ANA has distributed more than 10,000 mixed seedlings to the public. ■

**Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA)**

**Project: Clearing for Results IV**

**VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT**

**FOR INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANT ON SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION**

(From 1<sup>st</sup> January to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2022 with possibility of extension)

1) The Royal Government of Cambodia, represented by the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA) now invites international qualified consultants to submit the Letter of Application and Curriculum Vitae (CV) for the position of International Consultant on South-South Cooperation.

2) Detailed information of the TOR with requirements can be obtained from the address given below or from CMAA website: [www.cmaa.gov.kh](http://www.cmaa.gov.kh).

3) The submission deadline is at 10am on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

4) The address for obtaining the TOR and for submission is:

Human Resource Unit, CMAA  
Street 273 Corner 516,  
Sangkat Toul Sangker, Khan Russey Keo, Phnom Penh,  
Cambodia

Tel: 098 581 009 Email: [moulekachea@gmail.com](mailto:moulekachea@gmail.com)

## Kingdom hosts 13th ASEM Covid-19 style

**Ry Sochan**

PRIME Minister Hun Sen is set to lead the 13th Asia-Europe summit (ASEM13), which Cambodia will host via video conference due to the pandemic on November 25-26.

Luy David, secretary of state for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, told reporters on October 12 that Hun Sen had already sent invitations to the 52 ASEM partner leaders, 14 of whom have confirmed their participation. He said Cambodia would receive confirmations from other leaders around a month prior to the summit.

"So the confirmations are still coming in because we have about a month and a half left. Among the leaders who have already confirmed are prime ministers and presidents of Asia and Europe. The presidents of the European Council and European Commission have also confirmed their participation," he said.

According to David, the meeting will be arranged via a video system and will not require a lot of preparation.

"We have a video system, we use the Zoom platform. In the past I have chaired all the ASEM senior officials meetings via Zoom as well. It went smoothly. Therefore, I think it's not a problem for our summit next month," said David.

David said at a press conference on ASEM13 hosted by the Club of Cambodian Journalists via video on September 16 that Cambodia had prepared three documents to be adopted at ASEM13 – the Phnom Penh statement on

socio-economic recovery after Covid-19, the ASEM13 chair statement, and the ASEM13 statement on connectivity.

He said the Phnom Penh statement was authored by Cambodia's senior leadership and was aimed at confirming the broader Asia-Europe leadership's commitment to assist the developing world with socio-economic recovery post Covid-19.

He mentioned that the meeting would also discuss managing the challenges posed by Covid-19 and quickening economic recovery after the pandemic.

Cambodia will host the ASEM13 via video conference under the theme "Strengthening Multilateralism for Shared Growth" for two days from November 25-26 following two prior postponements in 2020 due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

International Relations Institute of the Royal Academy of Cambodia director Kin Phea said Cambodia's hosting of the meeting demonstrates the country's important role in regional and global affairs within the framework of multilateral roles. Cambodia can also show its capabilities in terms of roles and human resources, as well as information that can be spread about Cambodia's image on the international stage.

"Through this meeting, we see that the most important thing is that we can benefit from joint efforts to fight Covid-19 and economic recovery, and it is also an important driving force for multilateralism in the region as well as in the world today," he said. ■



Prime Minister Hun Sen delivers a speech in Phnom Penh. SPM

## Kingdom urges NAM states to commit to multilateralism

**Ry Sochan**

A SENIOR Cambodian diplomat called on Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) countries to renew their commitments to multilateralism and to find solutions to common challenges that all nations can support as no single country can address these global issues alone.

Ouch Borith – minister attached to the prime minister and permanent secretary of state for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation – made the call during the High-Level Commemorative Meeting to Mark the 60th Anniversary of the First NAM Conference in the Serbian capital Belgrade on October 11.

Borith pointed out that Cambodia had proved to be one of the few nations able to vaccinate nearly its entire population already, both citizens and resident foreign nationals alike.

The reason for Cambodia's success, he said, was its commitment to diplomacy and dedication to a policy of maintaining friendly relations with all other nations – both large and small, whether near or far.

"Our country extends thanks for the support given to us by our friends around the world, which was based in the true spirit of vaccine multilateralism. As of October 10, overall, more than 84 per cent of the Kingdom's total population of around 16 million has been vaccinated against the disease.

As the chair of ASEAN in 2022, he said Cambodia will endeavour to promote an action-oriented multilateral approach that will effectively address the common challenges facing the region with the urgency they require.

"And as we all know, NAM stands for multilateralism as we always strive to find solutions to common challenges because we know that no single country can address these



Ouch Borith – minister attached to the prime minister – delivers remarks at the High-Level Commemorative Meeting to Mark the 60th Anniversary of the First NAM Conference in Belgrade on Tuesday. FOREIGN MINISTRY

issues alone," he added.

He said that with the support and the strength derived from the solidarity of ASEAN member states and with their external partners, Cambodia will seek to ensure tangibility of benefits for all of the peoples across the whole ASEAN region with a firm resolve to fulfill the pledge of leaving no one behind.

"Let me conclude by reiterating Cambodia's strong commitment to the Bandung principles enunciated in 1955: Unity in action – based on multilateralism – in our pursuit of peace and sustainable development for the world," he said.

He also called on NAM countries to stand firm together against illegal, unilateral, extrajudicial and extra-territorial sanctions imposed on any NAM member states.

The challenges the NAM member countries faced 60

years ago, he said, are still relevant today as superpower rivalries have once again heated up and the bifurcation of the world order is once again becoming a reality, referencing the former US-USSR superpower rivalry and comparing it to current developments between the US and China.

He noted that the division of nations into blocs and alliance-building with a geopolitical agenda lately expressed through technological or trade wars and in the cyberspace domain has now been extended into the realm of public health with discriminatory policies based on the origins of some vaccines even when those vaccines are approved by the World Health Organisation.

Borith called on all NAM countries to be resolute in their rejection of all politicisation, discrimination and division between nations for purposes of geopolitical competition that are contrary to the spirit of the principles and objectives outlined in the UN Charter.

Kin Phea, director of the Royal Academy of Cambodia's International Relations Institute, said both regional and global trends have been shifting further towards multilateralism for some time.

"The world has entered a heavily interconnected and interdependent phase – economically, politically and even culturally – where regional and global issues need joint diplomatic mechanisms to effectively solve them.

"This has meant an increased importance for multilateral relationships for most nations as strength for most can only truly be achieved that way. For example: ASEAN or the EU. There has been a lot of progress working within that context lately," he said. ■

## German farming project assists 900 poor households

**Lay Samean**

THE Oddar Meanchey provincial Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries will continue to distribute frog, fish and chickens to poor and newly unemployed Cambodian migrant workers who have just returned from Thailand. The assistance will help about 900 households during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Department director Sot Si Sok Kheang said that while people are experiencing economic difficulties due to Covid-19, the agriculture ministry has always provided food and taken care of people's livelihoods.

The ministry is currently implementing Germany's Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) project to

improve people's livelihoods by providing the animals.

"The project will run for four months from June to October with animals distributed to 900 families who in three sectors: frogs, chicken and catfish farming," he said.

Through the GIZ project, of the 900 families receiving assistance 300 raised frogs, 300 run chicken farms and 300 families grew catfish. Each family received 250 frogs, 450 fish and 12 chickens.

He pointed out that in addition to providing seeds, he also provided a bag of feed, tent for raising fish as well as providing technical training to assist in understanding the techniques of raising and feeding the animals, and changing water.

However, he said that in this GIZ project, only 600 families were given

frogs and catfish, while the chickens have not been distributed yet as they need to be vaccinated.

"The remaining 300 families have not received the chickens because they have not been vaccinated yet, but we will finish vaccinations this week. We cannot give unvaccinated chickens to farmers as the chickens could die and farmers will lose money," he said.

Si Sok Kheang added that the animals given to the people are all good options for food or can be sold.

"Because frogs grow fast, they can be sold in just over a month and about two months for catfish. While chickens can be eaten or sold after two or three months," he said.

In addition, the agriculture department has organised for people to buy chickens from the community. ■



Farmers receive fish and frogs from Oddar Meanchey provincial Department of Agriculture in cooperation with Germany's GIZ on Tuesday. INFORMATION MINISTRY

## National

# 'Wait and see' the only option for post-holiday Covid plans

Mom Kunthea

**M**INISTRY of Health spokeswoman Or Vandine reiterated that the overall spread of Covid-19 over the Pchum Ben holiday last week would be fully assessed within one to two weeks after the holiday.

Vandine, who is also head of the national Covid-19 vaccination committee, made the remarks at the closing ceremony for the Kampong Chhnang jab drive on October 12.

"Only after we're seven to 14 days past the holiday can we make any real assessment because it takes some time for people who are infected to develop symptoms or be detected through testing and we still need to look at each case closely to determine whether they contracted the disease during the holiday or not before we can conclude whether transmission is lower or higher as a result," she said.

She said that the evaluation of the situation would also need to take place on a national level and after discussions and evaluations, the conclusions will then be submitted to Prime Minister Hun Sen and other officials who can then use that information to inform their decision-making



People travelling to their hometowns on National Road 6 ahead of the Pchum Ben public holiday. HONG MENEA

process, Vandine explained.

Vandine called on the public once again for vigilance even for those who had already been vaccinated with two doses, reminding everyone that many people – especially those who are vaccinated – can actually be positive for the disease and infectious to others while being totally asymptomatic and feeling healthy.

Hun Sen said on October 6 that Pchum Ben holiday could prove to be a trial and a decisive period in determining whether the country will face renewed disaster or gradually improved safety in the coming weeks because – contrary to the advice they were given – people flocked

to their hometowns for family reunions over the holiday.

He said that if the Covid-19 situation remains stable or shows decline for 15 consecutive days from the last day of Pchum Ben on October 7, then Cambodia will reopen fully – albeit with local adjustments made by sub-national authorities to take the pandemic account, such as rules about vaccination cards.

Meanwhile, Vandine noted that some people have said that they lost their vaccination cards and the vaccination committee was planning some system for providing new cards to people in those cases.

"According to the information I received, some people

have claimed they lost their cards but when we looked into it we discovered that they hadn't all really lost their cards and they were trying to obtain a duplicate, possibly to sell it to someone who was refusing to be vaccinated without legitimate reasons for exemption because that person had decided – once again – that they should be free of all consequences for their choices, unlike everyone else around them.

"I'd like to emphasize that anything that is easy to get is also easy to lose. If it is easy to obtain then it is of lesser value. And if it isn't valuable, then why be careful with it? If we give you replacement cards for free you won't value them or be careful with them and so you'll lose those too," she said.

She noted that the government had spent a lot already on producing the cards, including purchasing the machines for producing the cards in large numbers and the materials for the card machines as well as training staff to produce the cards and employing them to do it on an ongoing basis.

"You can safely assume that you will be required to pay a fee – exact amount yet to be determined – for any replacement vaccination cards," she concluded. ■

# Station owners elude fuel inspections, get hit with obstruction

Long Kimmarita

KANDAL provincial police have sent three suspects who are owners of gas stations to court in connection with offences concerning the destruction or covering up of evidence and obstruction of an investigation after they had been arrested on October 12 after failing to cooperate with police who wanted to inspect their gas stations.

The three suspects were identified as Tho Sophat, Huy Sok Heang and Nuot Van Doeun, and operated the Mak Mim iand Chan Thoeun gas stations in Roka Khpos commune's Prek Khsev village in Roka Khpos commune, Takhmao town.

"Because they did not cooperate with us, we asked the prosecutor to impose fines in the first instance," he said. "But they did not agree and they insulted public officials, so we followed the law and suspended their operations, but they destroyed the seal."

Chao Koy continued that according to the law on consumer protection, the two gas stations were still subject to a fine of between 10 and 20 million riel (\$2,500 to \$5,000), even if they were taken to court for breaking the law. ■

erations of the gas stations, but they tore up the police seal."

Toch Chao Koy, branch manager of Consumer Protection, Competition and Fraud Repression (CCF) in Kandal Province, said that on October 11, CCF officials in the province inspected the gas stations and found the operators had deceived customers by swapping regular gasoline for super gasoline.

He added that the officials had also found that the two stations had short changed consumers in violation of the laws on consumer protection designed to protect consumers and promote fair competition.

Lak Meng Thy, provincial police minor crime bureau chief, told *The Post* on October 13 that after the arrest on October 12, a case file for the three suspects was compiled in connection with the offences for destruction and covering up of evidence on the evening of October 13.

"We sent them to court after questioning because they did not cooperate with police. When the incident occurred, officials inspected the gas stations and found that the gasoline failed to comply with legal provisions," he said. "The officials later suspended the op-

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## Job Announcement

The Education Global Practice (GP) has a wide range of activities, including project preparation, project implementation and supervision, trust fund implementation, scientific research, technical assistance and a large range of advisory services. Our operational work program includes Higher, Secondary and General Education Improvement projects. In addition, our work contains programmatic studies, including the research study to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the education sector and identifying practical approaches to building a resilient education system.

### Duties and Responsibilities:

**Operations:** The Specialist will participate in the supervision, development, and appraisal of projects. Special emphasis will be placed on supervision efforts to ensure that ongoing projects and programs achieve their development objectives and that funds are used to support specified objectives. Specifically, the Education Specialist is expected to; (a) support implementation and supervision of ongoing projects including Secondary Education Improvement Project (SEIP) and Higher Education Improvement Project (HEIP); (b) support the formulation process of a new IDA-financed General Education Improvement Project (GEIP); (c) undertake field visits to oversee the progress and create back-to-office reports with recommendations for subsequent steps; (d) liaise internally with Country Management Unit /Global Practice team and externally with UN agencies/civil society organizations/any other partners on implementation matters, (e) engaging and contributing to the policy dialogue with government officials and Education Sector Working Group (ESWG), and (f) perform any other related tasks that may be required.

**Analytic and Technical Assistance:** You will lead the day-to-day management in and advancement of analytical activities from Phnom Penh, in close contact with and under the guidance and direction of senior colleagues and expert consultants. The main activities are to advance workplans for the high-quality completion of analytical tasks listed in the previous paragraph. In addition, you will facilitate dialogues with government counterparts on education issues, promote efficient communication between Bank staff and local counterparts (including non-governmental organizations, education institutes and other donor agencies), promote and participate in, review and comment on key social sector strategy documents, participate in analytic and advisory services with other colleagues in the country team, and pursue up-to-date statistics and policy references on education/HDI issues.

### Selection criteria

- Education – Doctoral (preferred) or Master's degree in education, economics, and/or related fields required, preference given to research conducted in Cambodia.
- Experience – Minimum of 5 years of relevant professional experience or equivalent combination of education and experience; focus on Early childhood development, learning poverty, learning assessment, and demonstrated ability to lead policy dialogues and design programs for comprehensive education reforms.
- Conceptual and analytic skills – Experience of production or contribution to education related analytical work and/or studies and demonstrated creative approach that can help clients and team members analyze situations, set priorities, and develop innovative programs.
- Excellent written and oral expression abilities in Khmer and English.

Details (Requisition #13408) are available in the World Bank Careers website:

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/about/careers> or via this link:  
<https://worldbankgroup.csod.com/ats/careersite/JobDetails.aspx?id=13408&site=1>

Closing date is October 27, 2021.



## Job Announcement

The Phnom Penh Post, the oldest independent media company in Cambodia, is seeking full-time candidate for the following position:

### SUB-EDITORS: 02 POSITIONS

#### Main duties and responsibilities

- Report to Deputy Managing Editor PE/Managing Editor
- Lay out wire/National pages and manage layouts using InDesign/InCopy
- Communicate closely with reporters

#### Qualifications/experience required

- Bachelor's degree in journalism or other related fields (preferred but not a must)
- Excellent command of English is a must; proficiency in Khmer an asset
- News/business reporting experience
- At least one to two years' experience as sub-editor
- Familiar with names of state institutions
- Familiar with specific language used in court, business and politics
- Sound understanding of local politics and business atmosphere
- Cambodians preferred but foreign nationals are encouraged to apply

Interested candidates are required to submit a photo attached CV and cover letter with expected salary to the Human Resource and Administration Department at the following address no later than October 30, 2021.

Address: The Elements Condominium(Residence 9) Level 7, Hun Sen Boulevard, Chak Angre Krom commune, Meanchey district, Phnom Penh.

Tel: +855 (0) 23 888 161 -162

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# CMAA enlists Hungarian help to make Kep first mine-free province

Voun Dara

**L**Y THUCH, senior minister and first vice-president of the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA) requested the government of Hungary continue its support for demining operations in two villages of Kep province's Damnak Changaur district – an area with 10 minefields covering 625,319sqm.

According to Thuch, once these two villages are cleared then Kep will have the distinction of being the first completely mine-free province in Cambodia and an important milestone for the demining operator community and the Cambodian people will be achieved after decades of hard work trying to end mine-related accidents.

Thuch made this request during a planning meeting held at the CMAA headquarters with Istvan Bakos – charge d'affaires at the Hungarian embassy office in Phnom Penh – on the morning of October 12.

Thuch thanked the government and people of Hungary for their generous recent contribution of \$28,570 to the CMAA through their Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the Hungarian foreign affairs minister's visit in November 2020.

Thuch informed the Charge



CMAA first vice-president Ly Thuch [centre right] and Istvan Bakos – charge d'affaires at the Hungarian embassy office in Phnom Penh – to discuss landmine clearance in Kep province on Tuesday. SUPPLIED

d'affaires that the CMAA used the grant money to implement two projects in Kep and Koh Kong provinces.

The first project over in Prey Thom commune of Damnak Changaur district in Kep province would check an area of approximately 46,000 sqm to determine its clearance status, while the other project would verify the presence of minefields in a separate area of Kep

and Koh Kong provinces.

"The CMAA received permission from [Hun Sen] on September 6 to make Kep the first mine-free province in the Kingdom with support provided by the Hungarian government and the Cambodian Mine Action Centre the agency charged with directly implementing the necessary measures. Together we will achieve this historic-first and

bring safety to the people of Kep province and pride to all of Cambodia," he said.

On October 1, Thuch led a technical team to inspect the demining work carried out by CMAC and funded by the Hungary grant project which resulted in the discovery of six land-mines and hundreds of explosive remnants of war along with over 3,000 pieces of ammunition.

The two villages that CMAC has identified as the last remaining locations in need of clearance in Kep province are Chamkar Bei and Chamkar Chek villages, which are believed to be contaminated with 10 minefields covering an area of 625,319 sqm.

Istvan stated that the Hungarian government was a long-standing friend of Cambodia with a well-established history of positive relations that included Hungary's frequent provision of scholarships to Cambodian students to attend schools in Hungary.

He then went on to state that it would be his pleasure and the Hungarian government's honour to assist Cambodia in achieving this historic victory over the tragedies of its war-torn past. He noted that this was the first meeting between a Hungarian official and the CMAA on the topic and he suggested they make plans to travel together to Kep and inspect the area where the demining work would take place.

Nousamnath, a deminer working in Kep province, told *The Post* on October 12 that he estimated that the portion of the demining project in Damnak Changaur village that he was familiar with to be carried out over an area of 46,000 sqm would likely take at least one month to clear. ■

## ANA keeps close watch on Angkor home fixes

Ry Sochan

IN THE first nine months of this year, the Apsara National Authority (ANA) allowed more than 1,000 families in the Angkor resort area to renovate their homes and build small structures to improve their lives.

The ANA's report said on October 12 that "For the first nine months of 2021, the five community secretariats and the ANA's team outside the park continued to inspect the houses of 1,874 families. The team allowed 1,162 families to renovate their homes and build small structures."

Among the 1,162 families, 174 families are in Prasat Bakong district and 263 families in Angkor Thom district, 180 families in Puok district, 269 families in Siem Reap town, 244 families in Banteay Srei district and 32 families are outside the park.

Home improvements and construction of small structures included repairing or replacing roofs, walls, pillars, stairs, terraces, flooring, and building toilets, chicken coops, landfills, cowsheds, and pig pens, which are essential items for daily life.

The authority confirmed that permission was given after ANA's community team inspected the houses and some relevant documents as a technical basis to determine how long they have live in the Angkor area. The residents were clearly identified by village and commune authorities and there was a real need to improve living conditions.

The report states that "ANA not only provides for the renovation of old houses and building small structures, but also for solving challenges, assisting distressed people, and disseminating heritage awareness to people."

The report adds that these activities are ANA's contribution to bring the state's public services closer to the people and reduce costs, time and travel.

ANA established the community team to facilitate the livelihoods of people in the Angkor area, which covers 401 sqm in five districts, 21 communes and 11 villages.

ANA spokesman Long Kosal told *The Post* on October 12 that some families were not allowed to renovate their homes as they did not possess all the documents needed to prove they lived in the Angkor Archaeological Park, besides their request was beyond the authority of the community working group.

"When a case is beyond the working group's authority, it is passed to another group [Department of Land and Housing Management in the Angkor Archaeological Park], which has greater authority," he said.

According to Kosal, if people want to dismantle a house and build a new one or repair a structure, the working group does not have the authority, but must send their request to the department of land and housing management, which is responsible for reviewing any request to replace an old house. ■

## High seas alert on coasts, stormy week ahead

Khouth Sophak Chakrya

THE Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology on October 12 issued a warning that rainstorms and dangerous sea conditions will continue in coastal areas and the central lowlands, which could present risks for people, especially for fishermen.

The warning came after weather officials said that the season's 18th Typhoon Kom-pasu in the South China Sea would produce a depression and the southwest monsoon was intensifying as a high pressure system and winds from China were moving down to affect northern Cambodia.

According to the forecast, from October 13-19 the capital and seven provinces in the country's central and southern areas bordering Vietnam, including the provinces next to the Cardamom Mountains, will receive heavy rainfall and high winds which can pose a risk to people.

Um Rina, director of the ministry's meteorology department, told *The Post* that from October 13-15, coastal provinces will receive heavy rainfall, strong winds and heavy seas. Everybody must take extra precautions during these weather conditions.

"In this situation, people, especially fishermen, must be more careful about these nat-

ural disasters," he said.

At the same time, coastal provincial authorities have continued to inform locals by preparing measures to deal with any disaster that could be caused by the weather.

Preah Sihanouk provincial water resources department director Heng Sophornrith told *The Post* that the provincial administration had temporarily prohibited waterway traffic because it was now raining and there were big waves.

"At this time, there are no strong winds at sea, but the sky is cloudy due to several days of rains and there are big waves. In this situation, the provincial administration requested fishermen and tour boat operators to temporarily suspend operations to avoid accidents," he said.

Sophornrith added that specialists are now monitoring water levels on the Samrong River in Kampong Seila district as levels have risen significantly. As of the afternoon of October 12, water levels were 4.75m, and an emergency is declared when levels reach 6m.

He continued that if the weather forecast for the next three days continues, it will make the river to rise further or cause floods in certain areas near the river, especially at O'Bak Roties village.

Similarly, Kampot provincial Fisheries Administration chief Sar Sorin told *The Post* that

fishermen had suspended fishing two days ago due to heavy rains. However, some fishermen continued to fish in areas around small islands to support their families.

"With modern technology, they can get up-to-date information about the weather and they know exactly where they can fish," he said. "But we also need to remind them to be extra careful to avoid potential danger."

Mak Brang commune chief

Seng Chhay said that on the afternoon of October 11, Kampot provincial authorities decided to open sluice gates at Kamchay hydropower dam to release water from the reservoir. Water from the dam has flooded parts of Teuk Chhou district's Mak Brang commune, downstream of the Teuk Chhou area. But the water did not affect any farmers' homes or crops.

"The lower part of the Teuk Chhou creek in Mak Brang commune was flooded, but

did not affect people's homes and crops," he said. However, authorities were continuing to monitor the situation in the creek and were ready to assist people in case of floods.

Seng Chhay added that technical officials from the Kampot provincial Department of Mines and Energy were cooperating with technical teams from the Kamchay dam company to gradually release water from the reservoir to avoid flooding. ■



Koh Kong provincial authorities prepare to evacuate people and animals to a safe place in Koh Kong district's Traapaing Roung commune on Tuesday. FACEBOOK

# Business

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## TRADING INFORMATION ON CAMBODIA SECURITIES EXCHANGE

Date: October 13, 2021

Auction Trading Method (ATM)

NO	STOCK	CLOSING PRICE	OPENING PRICE	HIGH	LOW
1	ABC	11,160	11,340	11,100	11,100
2	GTI	4,400	4,400	4,200	4,120
3	PAS	13,260	13,440	13,200	12,200
4	PEPC	3,140	3,140	3,140	3,090
5	PPAP	14,960	14,960	14,600	14,960
6	PPSP	2,040	2,040	2,010	2,030
7	PWSA	6,900	6,900	6,820	6,940



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# Mondulkiri airport behind time: SSCA

May Kunmakara

**D**EVELOPMENT of a domestic airport in Mondulkiri province, in the northern economic corridor of Cambodia, backed by an \$80 million investment is behind schedule as the latest outbreak of the novel coronavirus remains active.

State Secretariat of Civil Aviation (SSCA) spokesman Sin Chansereyvutha told *The Post* on October 13 that the latest community outbreak, ensuing lockdown, and tightening of travel curbs have all contributed to work delays.

He emphasised that Cambodia and China have two-week coronavirus quarantine requirements, and that returning Chinese specialists are obliged to undergo Covid-19 tests "recognised by the Chinese embassy here" and spend a third week at home after the initial fortnight of isolation.

These prolonged self-isolation demands "make it difficult for Chinese experts to come and work in and out of our country and China. We hope that once the restrictions are eased, they will resume the work", he added.

In a December 31 letter, the



The Mondulkiri airport will be built on a 300ha site and may break ground as soon as next year, according to an aviation official. SUPPLIED

Council of Ministers, or Cabinet, said the government had decided in principle to allow PowerChina International Group Ltd (PIG) to study and develop a proposal to build the project, adding that the Chinese company would have to foot the bill for the project's initial feasibility study.

The government also authorised the SSCA to lead the preparation of a Framework Agreement with PIG in accordance with applicable procedures. PIG has since completed a feasibility study report for the development of the airport and nearby industrial park.

The airport will be built on

a 300ha site and may break ground as soon as next year, Chansereyvutha said earlier.

Former Mondulkiri governor Svay Sam Eang previously told *The Post* that provincial authorities are demarcating a 600ha plot for the new airport some 22km south of Sen Monorom town

in O'Raing district's Sen Monorom commune.

In late August, the central government approved the draft Mondulkiri Tourism Development Master Plan 2021-2035, amid a wider initiative to attract about three million domestic and international tourists annually to the re-

gional verdant biodiverse powerhouse in northeastern Cambodia by 2035.

The master plan will complement a 2021-2025 three-phased national tourism roadmap and a 2021-2035 Siem Reap provincial tourism development master plan – formally approved by Prime Minister Hun Sen on April 1 – to navigate the sector's emergence from the Covid-19 pandemic and support its recovery, the Cabinet noted in a letter on August 12.

In a letter on August 9, Hun Sen asserted that tourism in Mondulkiri is in a period of growth, with broad potential for development, and that the master plan would greatly accelerate economic growth in the province and the rest of the Kingdom.

"With all this potential, and under long-term and comprehensive deliberation, the Royal Government has prepared and launched the Mondulkiri Tourism Development Master Plan, as a compass to indicate the key mechanisms and strategic directions for tourism development in Mondulkiri province, in connection with the vision of national transformation over the 2021-2035 period and the years to come," he said. ■

# Fourth Covid wave bites VN labour market

THE severe and prolonged fourth wave of Covid-19 has seriously affected the Vietnamese labour market, pushing the rate and number of underemployed people in the third quarter this year to the highest level in the past 10 years.

The information was released at a seminar held on October 12 in Hanoi on the labour market in the third quarter of this year, by the General Statistics Office (GSO).

"More than 1.8 million people of working age were underemployed in the third quarter of this year, an increase of 700,000 compared to the previous quarter and an increase of 620,000 over the same period last year," said Pham Hoai Nam, director of the GSO's population and labour statistics department.

The underemployment rate of people of working age in urban areas is higher than in rural areas, reaching 5.33 per cent and 3.94 per cent, respectively.

"This is different from the common trend observed in our country with underemployment in rural areas often more severe than in urban areas," Nam said.

According to the GSO, more than 1.7 million people of working age were unemployed in the third quarter of 2021, an increase of 532,200 compared to the previous quarter and an increase of 449,600 compared to the same period last year.

Unemployment is a situation when a person seeking a job is unable to find one. Underemployment is a situation when a person is working but isn't working at his full capability.

Nam said that the complicated developments of the fourth wave of Covid-19 and the prolonged social distancing period in many localities had pushed the unemployment rate in the third quarter far beyond the usual two per cent figure.

The unemployment rate of people

of working age was 5.54 per cent, up 2.18 percentage points from the previous quarter and 1.6 percentage points over the same period last year.

In particular, the unemployment rate of young people aged 15-24 in the third quarter was 8.89 per cent, an increase of 1.42 percentage points compared to the previous quarter and an increase of 0.75 percentage points over the same period last year. That rate in urban areas was 12.71 per cent, 5.56 percentage points higher than in rural areas.

In the first nine months of 2021, the number of unemployed people of working age was more than 1.3 million people, up by 126,5000 compared to the same period last year. The unemployment rate of people of working age was 2.99 per cent, up 0.35 percentage points over the same period last year. The unemployment rate in urban areas was 4.02 per cent, 1.64 percentage points higher than in rural areas.

In nine months, the unemployment

rate of young people between 15-24 years old was 7.9 per cent, up 0.13 percentage points over the same period last year. That rate in urban areas was 10.79 per cent, up 0.26 percentage points over the same period last year.

"The labour market is facing a serious crisis with a series of negative records being set, millions of workers have lost their jobs, their incomes have been cut. It is now more difficult for workers to find jobs than ever before," said Nam.

"This fact has posed great challenges for the government in its efforts to achieve the growth targets for 2021."

"The government needs to focus on promoting a wide-scale vaccination strategy, using all resources to provide enough Covid-19 vaccines for the people to create a community immunity mechanism as soon as possible. Support packages for businesses and workers need to be rolled out soon to help them recover from the pandemic." VIET NAM NEWS/ASIA NEWS NETWORK ■

# Law 'monumental step to develop market economy'

Continued from page 1

Organisation (WTO).

Now that the King has approved the promulgation of the law, Cambodia can now get to work on execution, he added.

"The law establishes provisions and procedures applicable to unlawful practices of restraint of competition and promotes and protects the benefits of the competitive market economy of Cambodia, particularly prohibiting Horizontal Agreements, Vertical Agreements, and Abuse of a Dominant Position.

"It is a further monumental step in the development of a market economy system in the Kingdom, and will help boost competition on production, productivity, trade and services. It should also improve the international perception of 'ease of doing business' in the Kingdom," Galliano said. ■

# IMF warns supply snarls slowing global recovery

**W**ORLDWIDE supply chain disruptions are driving price increases and draining momentum out of economies recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) warned on October 12.

The ongoing hit from the pandemic and the failure to distribute vaccines worldwide is worsening the economic divide and darkening prospects for developing nations, the IMF said in its latest World Economic Outlook.

The global economy is expected to grow 5.9 per cent this year, only slightly lower than projected in July, before slowing to 4.9 per cent in 2022, the report said.

But the overall figures mask large downgrades and ongoing struggles for some countries, including the US, Germany and Japan that are feeling the impact of supply bottlenecks, IMF chief economist Gita Gopinath said.

"This recovery is really quite unique," she told AFP on the sidelines of the annual meetings of the IMF and World Bank.

Despite a strong return in demand, "the supply side has not been able to come back as quickly", hampered in part by the spread of the Delta variant

of Covid-19, which has made workers reluctant to return to their jobs.

Those labour shortages are "feeding into price pressures" in major economies, she said, slowing growth expectations this year.

Energy prices have hit multi-year highs in recent days, with oil above \$80 a barrel, weighing on households.

But Gopinath said she expects energy prices to begin to retreat by the end of the first quarter of 2022.

In low-income developing countries, the outlook "has darkened considerably due to worsening pandemic dynamics", she said in a blog post on the new forecasts.

The setbacks, which she blamed on the "great vaccine divide", will impact the restoration of living standards, and a prolonged pandemic downturn "could reduce global GDP [gross domestic product] by a cumulative \$5.3 trillion over the next five years", she warned.

"The dangerous divergence in economic prospects across countries remains a major concern," Gopinath said.

Advanced economies are expected to regain "pre-pandemic trend path in 2022 and exceed it by 0.9 per cent in 2024", she said.

However, in emerging market

and developing economies, excluding China, output "is expected to remain 5.5 per cent below the pre-pandemic forecast in 2024".

Amid the danger of long-term scarring, "the foremost policy priority is therefore to vaccinate at least 40 per cent of the population in every country by end-2021 and 70 per cent by mid-2022", she said.

The world's largest economy has benefitted from massive fiscal stimulus, but the Delta wave and the supply issues have undermined progress, prompting the IMF to slash the US growth forecast for this year to six per cent, a full percentage point off the July figure.

US growth is expected to slow to 5.2 per cent next year, slightly faster than previously expected, but policymakers will face a delicate balancing act amid risks of rising inflation and lagging employment, the fund noted.

Wages also threaten to rise as employers compete for scarce workers, Gopinath noted.

While inflation is expected to return to "more normal levels" by mid-2022 in most countries, it could take longer in the US, she told reporters.

"There is tremendous uncertainty, we have never seen a recovery of this kind," she said, noting labour



International Monetary Fund (IMF) chief economist Gita Gopinath. AFP

shortages plaguing employers even amid high unemployment, and supply unable to meet demand.

US consumer prices rose 5.3 per cent annually in August, more than double the Federal Reserve's two-per-cent goal. Markets on October 13 were watching for the government's September inflation report.

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said she believes the price increases

will be "transitory".

"But I don't mean to suggest that these pressures will disappear in the next month or two," she told CBS News. "This is an unprecedented shock to the global economy."

However, if higher inflation becomes entrenched, it could force central banks to respond aggressively, and rising interest rates would slow the recovery, the IMF cautioned. ■

## Laos plans to lower debt to 64.5% of GDP by 2023



Last year, Laos' total public and publicly guaranteed debt stock stood at \$13.3 billion, accounting for 72 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). KHAMMUN PROVINCIAL OFFICIAL/VIENTIANE TIMES

THE Lao government has vowed to reduce the total public and publicly guaranteed debt stock to 64.5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) by the end of 2023.

This is a major goal as outlined in the National Agenda to address the country's economic and financial difficulties.

The agenda is being implemented after it was approved in August at an extraordinary session of the National Assembly's ninth legislature.

Part of this goal is to reduce external public debt to 55.4 per cent of GDP, according to the National Assembly's Resolution on the adoption of the national agenda.

Last year, total public and publicly guaranteed debt stock stood at \$13.3 billion, accounting for 72 per cent of GDP, according to the Ministry of Finance's public debt bulletin.

External public debt stood at

\$10.6 billion, representing 57.2 per cent of GDP. Meanwhile, domestic public debt stood at \$912 million, making up 4.9 per cent of GDP.

To reduce the nation's debt as targeted in the national agenda, the government will put in place a number of measures.

First, create clear budget expenditure including a plan to repay debts owed to private companies which undertook state investment projects. Define sources of revenue to repay debts and reduce external loans to repay debts.

Formulate a plan for state investment projects that reflects the reality of the national budget. Competitive bidding is essential for state investment projects while austerity will be encouraged. Reduce spending on administrative affairs.

Second, address financial leaks and boost revenue

earned from mineral exports, land and land concessions, and online trade.

Third, invest in priority projects that guarantee high economic returns and create favourable conditions for private investment.

Fourth, focus on the management of foreign currencies, exchange rates, foreign currency income, and foreign currency transactions through the banking system.

Fifth, accelerate the reform of loss-making state enterprises by restructuring management and strengthening capacity-building of staff to enable these enterprises to make a profit in the future.

Sixth, inspect and review land concessions for agricultural production, animal husbandry and mining.

Seventh, seek ways to reduce electricity imports to reduce foreign currency expenditure.

Concentrate on high-quality hydropower projects, solar power and wind, in parallel with the expansion of the national grid to ensure energy security.

Eighth, conduct pilot projects on the excavation of metals while ensuring reduced impacts on the environment and people's livelihoods.

Ninth, push for greater commercial production to reduce imports and boost exports along economic corridors.

Tenth, promote small- and medium-sized enterprises (SME) and ensure that they have access to low-interest loans and markets, creating a stronger supply chain in Laos.

Eleventh, reduce unemployment among university graduates and migrant workers returning from Thailand by focusing on skill development to suit the needs of the job market. VIENTIANE TIMES/ASIA NEWS NETWORK ■

## Global energy crunch a boon to crude oil prices



Crude oil prices on Monday reached a record high of \$82.14 per barrel after hovering around \$61 since August 2021 – showing a strong long-term uptrend.

The surge came as global fuel demand rebounded after a lull

in demand to support economic recoveries amid power and gas shortages in economic powerhouses such as China.

Reuters reported that: "In China, where coal production had been curtailed to meet climate goals, officials have ordered more than 70 coal mines in Inner Mongolia to ramp up production by nearly 100 million tonnes or 10 per cent, as the world's largest exporter battles its worst power shortages in years."

CNBC reported: "Power prices have surged to record highs in recent weeks, driven by wide-

spread energy shortages in Asia, Europe and the United States. Soaring natural gas prices have encouraged power generators to switch to oil.

"Analysts have estimated that switching from natural gas to oil could boost crude demand by anywhere from 250,000 to 750,000 barrels per day.

"In India, some states are experiencing electricity blackouts because of coal shortages. The Chinese government ordered miners to ramp up coal production as power prices surged."

Based on technical analy-

sis, crude oil is still enjoying a long-term uptrend, so investors should consider continuing to buy around the current price or wait to buy the first supporting price at \$79.50, the second at \$78 and the third at \$77.50, with the stop-loss function at \$75 and the take-profit at \$85.50 to \$90 for the long term. ■



Analysis by Golden FX Link Capital business manager Nhim Kosol

## Property

# Phnom Penh condo supply hits 30,000 in third quarter

**Hin Pisei**

**T**WO large condominium projects were completed in the third quarter of this year, adding 1,586 units to Phnom Penh's supply, 5.6 per cent more than in the previous quarter, raising the total to about 30,000 as of September 30, according to a new report published on October 12.

CBRE Cambodia, the local affiliate of US commercial real estate services and investment firm CBRE Group Inc, listed the projects as The Peak – near Koh Pich Island – and The Gateway – along Russian Fed-

eration Boulevard (Street 110).

Compared to April-June, occupancy rates in the third quarter saw a "sharp decline", sales prices fell an average of 1.8-to-three per cent and rental rates of 5.6-7.8 per cent, the real estate firm said, pinning the downswing on the Covid-19 crisis.

CBRE Cambodia categorises condominium projects as "high-range", "mid-range" and "affordable".

It said the average per-sqm prices of condominium units in July-September were \$2,750 for "high-end", \$2,050 for "mid-range" and \$1,460 for "affordable".

For reference, a July 6 CBRE Cambodia report indicated that the equivalent rates in the January-June period were \$2,802 for "high-end", \$2,113 for "mid-range" and \$1,492 for "affordable".

On the third-quarter rental market, "high-end" units averaged \$11.40 per sqm per month, "mid-range" units went for around \$9.40, and "affordable" units were around \$7.90.

The earlier report listed the equivalent rates in the January-June period as \$12.30 for "high-end", \$10.10 for "mid-range" and \$8.40 for "affordable".

Kim Kinkesa, senior manager of research and consulting at

CBRE Cambodia, told *The Post* on October 13 that it would take at least six months after the reopening of the broader economy for condominium prices and the overall market in the Kingdom to rebound.

She highlighted that Covid-driven restrictions on cross-border travel have severely affected the domestic condominium market, shocks further intensified by its heavy reliance on foreign clients.

"The slowdown in global economic growth and travel constraints have led to a steady decline in the Cambodian condominium market during the Covid-19 crisis," she said.

The study revealed that four other projects scheduled for completion in the third quarter have been postponed to next year.

CBRE Cambodia Residential Sales and Leasing director David Pen said: "Construction delays caused by disruption to regional supply chains have meant many project completions again face delays."

"Considering the current fragility of the rental market these delays can be seen as positive, allowing time for the possibility of a recovery of demand to materialise."

"Attention has now turned to the potential implications of the disruption caused by the possible collapse of Chinese real estate developer, Evergrande, and the potential knock-on effects to construction financing in a market already facing weakened investor demand," he said.

INDONESIAN home prices will see strong growth in 2022 and 2023, financial intelligence firm Moody's Analytics has predicted, following a long period of muted growth exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Moody's expects the country's home price index to grow five per cent next year and six per cent in 2023. This year, the index is expected to post only about 1.5 per cent growth.

This year, the country's home price index will fall below the 4.42 per cent average growth among selected Asia-Pacific countries, but the index is expected to beat the forecast regional averages of 3.45 per cent and 3.64 per cent growth for 2022 and 2023, respectively.

The housing price index has seen sluggish growth since at least 2015, growing by less than five per cent year-on-year on a quarterly basis, Bank Indonesia (BI) data showed. On an annual basis, growth above six per cent was last seen in 2014.

Moody's Analytics economist Sonia Zhu attributed the

expected rise in house prices to pent-up demand and favourable real estate investment policies, including low interest rates, tax incentives, and relaxed restrictions on foreign ownerships, all of which would raise demand in 2022 and 2023.

"However, the projected high growth is also due to the low-base effect from 2021. The Delta surge in the third quarter of 2021, lockdowns, and the weak labour market are weighing on the house price index for 2021," she wrote in an

email to the *Jakarta Post*.

The central bank is expecting housing prices to creep up still more slowly in the July-September period, largely as a result of Covid-19 restrictions imposed in response to a July case surge. THE JAKARTA POST/ASIA NEWS NETWORK



An urban housing project in Vietnamese capital Hanoi. VIETNAM NEWS AGENCY

## Vietnamese property market expected to stage strong rebound

VIETNAM'S real estate market has seen positive signs for recovery following the economic reopening, experts have said.

Vietnam Real Estate Brokers Association secretary-general Nguyen Van Dinh told the conference "Vietnam Real Estate: New Normal-New Trend-New Demand" last week that in the three Covid-19 outbreaks in 2020, after the pandemic was controlled, the real estate market rebounded very quickly and became more active till the beginning months of this year.

The proof was that in many localities at that time, the land "fever" continued.

"Considering the current fragility of the rental market these delays can be seen as positive, allowing time for the possibility of a recovery of demand to materialise."

"Attention has now turned to the potential implications of the disruption caused by the possible collapse of Chinese real estate developer, Evergrande, and the potential knock-on effects to construction financing in a market already facing weakened investor demand," he said.

"In the context of the pandemic, the property market was affected, but there was no freeze. The market has not stopped. That shows the health and internal strength of the local estate market is very good," he said.

According to a recent report by the Vietnam Real Estate Association, in the third quarter of 2021, there were still tens of thousands of real estate transactions taking place.

Although in the period, many localities implemented social distancing according to the Prime Minister's Directive 16 to prevent and control the Covid-19 pandemic.

Dinh added that the real estate sector has adapted to the pandemic, applying technology to introduce products and conducting transactions with customers.

Former Vietnam Institute of Economics director Tran Dinh Thien said experience shows that, every time the economy is in trouble, the real estate market recovers clearly and takes the lead in the recovery process.

"This time I think it will happen again, when we return to the new normal. The property market will recover initially," Thien said.

Another reason was that the global real estate market is recovering, which will bring positive signals to the domestic market.

"The number of transactions in the last quarter of this year is showing signs of increasing. Developers not only choose the time to launch at the end of the year, but buyers are also more confident when they

pour money into the market," he said.

Institute for Brand and Competitive Strategy director Vo Tri Thanh also said that real estate investment will have many prospects when it returns to a "new normal". In the past two years, in many countries around the world and Vietnam, real estate has been still a bright spot, with good liquidity and prices.

"From a consumer perspective, it is difficult because of the increase in real estate prices. This reflects the shift in lifestyle, living green, living well, happily, safely, leading to the trend of real estate relocation," Thanh said.

Nguyen Manh Khoi, deputy director of the Housing and Real Estate Market Management Department under the Ministry of Construction, said that despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the property sector still had positive signals, especially in the first half of the year with 55,000 successful real estate transactions. There were only 43,000 transactions for the whole last year.

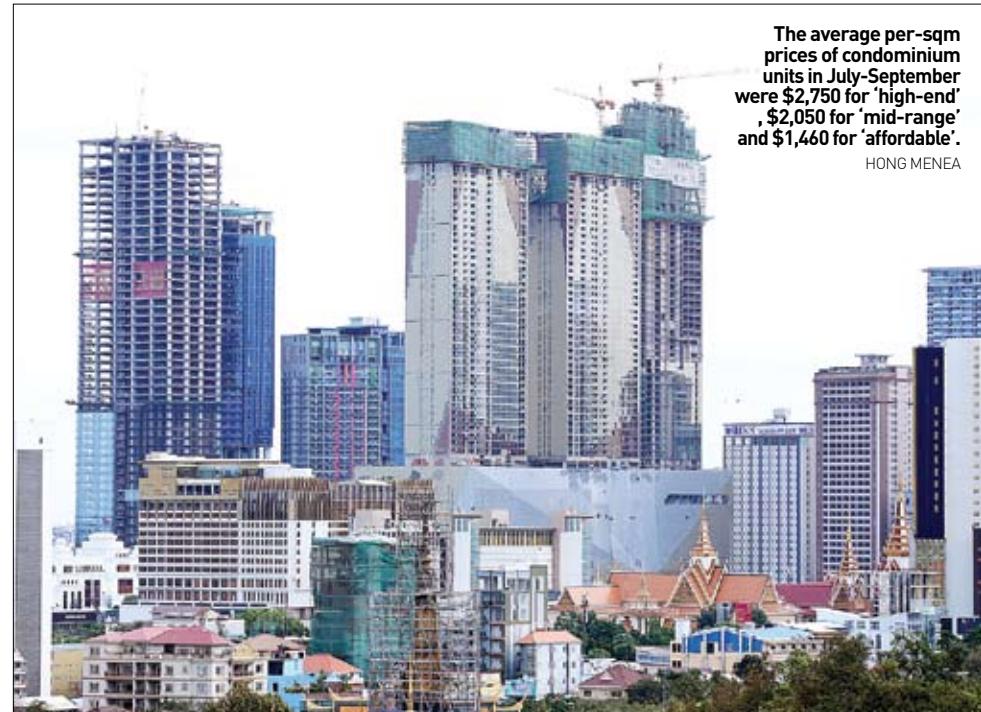
"Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the real estate market has received great attention. In the past three years, real estate prices have still increased. Some areas have recently seen surging prices in the land segment. However, this increase was due to a number of groups of brokers, speculators, and demand stimulus, so the price quickly dropped," Khoi said.

However, in recent years, out of nearly 5,000 real estate projects implemented, there are thousands of projects under construction. Many of which have problems related to legal procedures and long waiting times for resolution. This shortcoming impacts the development of new projects.

He said that the construction ministry is working with other ministries and sectors to facilitate real estate trading by amending the Investment Law 2020 and the Law on Construction.

Accordingly, in 2021, the Decree guiding the Law on Real Estate Business and the Decree on the real estate market information system will be issued.

"We forecast these two documents will have a great impact on the market," Khoi added. VIETNAM NEWS/ASIA NEWS NETWORK



## Indonesia home prices to trend up over next two years, Moody's says

INDONESIAN home prices will see strong growth in 2022 and 2023, financial intelligence firm Moody's Analytics has predicted, following a long period of muted growth exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Moody's expects the country's home price index to grow five per cent next year and six per cent in 2023. This year, the index is expected to post only about 1.5 per cent growth.

This year, the country's home price index will fall below the 4.42 per cent average growth among selected Asia-Pacific countries, but the index is expected to beat the forecast regional averages of 3.45 per cent and 3.64 per cent growth for 2022 and 2023, respectively.

The housing price index has seen sluggish growth since at least 2015, growing by less than five per cent year-on-year on a quarterly basis, Bank Indonesia (BI) data showed. On an annual basis, growth above six per cent was last seen in 2014.

Moody's Analytics economist Sonia Zhu attributed the

expected rise in house prices to pent-up demand and favourable real estate investment policies, including low interest rates, tax incentives, and relaxed restrictions on foreign ownerships, all of which would raise demand in 2022 and 2023.

"However, the projected high growth is also due to the low-base effect from 2021. The Delta surge in the third quarter of 2021, lockdowns, and the weak labour market are weighing on the house price index for 2021," she wrote in an

email to the *Jakarta Post*.

The central bank is expecting housing prices to creep up still more slowly in the July-September period, largely as a result of Covid-19 restrictions imposed in response to a July case surge. THE JAKARTA POST/ASIA NEWS NETWORK



A subsidised housing development in Bogor, West Java, Indonesia on January 6, 2020. ANTARA

# World

## EU vows \$1.2B in aid at talks with US, Taliban

THE Taliban held their first face-to-face talks with a joint US-EU delegation on October 12 in Qatar, as Brussels pledged €1 billion (\$1.2 billion) in aid for Afghanistan.

At the Doha meeting and a conference of the world's major economies, the Group of 20 (G20), the message for the Taliban was the same – the world is committed to humanitarian aid for Afghanistan's suffering people, and the country must not become a base for militants.

The EU opened the virtual G20 summit by pledging the €1 billion aid package, including money for urgent humanitarian needs and Afghanistan's neighbours taking in Afghans fleeing the Taliban.

The hardline Islamist Taliban are seeking recognition, as well as assistance to avoid a humanitarian disaster, after they returned to power in August following the withdrawal of US troops.

EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the assistance meant "to avert a major humanitarian and socio-economic collapse".

She stressed the funds are "direct support" for Afghans and would be channelled to international organisations, not to the Taliban's interim government, which Brussels does not recognise.

"We have been clear about our conditions for any engagement with the Afghan authorities, including on the respect of human rights," she said.

Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi, who hosted the G20 talks, said they agreed to work together to



The Taliban delegation sits down for talks in Qatar with EU and US envoys as the hardline Islamists pursue their push for international recognition and support. AFP

provide humanitarian help for the Afghan people and that this must involve contacts with the Taliban.

"It's very hard to see how one can help the Afghan people ... without some sort of involvement of the Taliban government," he said.

The G20 includes the US, EU, China, Turkey, Russia, India and Saudi Arabia, among others.

"Instead of responding and arguing ... we now have an awareness of this emergency and of the enormous responsibilities that the G20 has to

wards the Afghan people," he told a post-summit press conference.

US President Joe Biden was among leaders attending the summit. A White House statement said the leaders "discussed the critical need to maintain a laser-focus on our enduring counterterrorism efforts, including against threats from Isis-K".

That was a reference to Islamic State-Khorasan, the Islamic State group's offshoot in the region, which is a bitter rival of the Taliban and has staged deadly attacks.

G20 leaders reaffirmed a commitment to providing humanitarian assistance directly to the Afghan people through independent international organisations, and "to promote fundamental human rights for all Afghans, including women, girls and members of minority groups", the US said.

International aid has been blocked to Afghanistan since the Taliban returned to power following the withdrawal of US and other international troops after 20 years of war.

The country's assets held abroad

have been frozen, while food prices and unemployment are rising, prompting warnings of a humanitarian disaster once winter arrives.

EU states are wary at the prospect of a surge of Afghan asylum-seekers trying to enter the bloc, as happened in 2015 with Syrians fleeing their country's war.

Brussels' calculation is that donating money to help stabilise Afghanistan and assist countries between it and Europe could stem any flow.

While the virtual summit took place, direct talks were held in Doha. That meeting was facilitated by Qatar, which has long hosted a Taliban political office.

"I think engaging with them [the Taliban] is the most important now," said Mutlaq al-Qahtani, a special envoy to Qatar's foreign minister, who brushed aside the question of whether to recognise a Taliban government.

"A priority as we speak now is the humanitarian [situation], is education, is free passage" of people wishing to leave, he told the Global Security Forum conference in Doha.

US Department of State spokesman Ned Price said the US was looking at "pragmatic, practical engagement", rather than recognition.

The relationship "will be determined by the conduct of the Taliban and any future government", Price told reporters in Washington.

EU spokeswoman Nabila Massrali described the meeting as "an informal exchange at technical level" that "does not constitute recognition of the 'interim government'". ■

## Indonesia fail ups scrutiny for UN deforestation plan

THE collapse of a \$1 billion deal to curb Indonesian deforestation has highlighted the pitfalls of a UN-backed global initiative, which critics say has been ineffective and trampled on indigenous communities' rights.

Protecting trees is key to meeting ambitious climate goals, with tropical rainforest loss accounting for about eight per cent of annual carbon dioxide emissions, according to monitoring platform Global Forest Watch (GFW).

"This is make or break for the global climate," said Frances Seymour, a forestry expert from US environmental think-tank

the World Resources Institute.

A key tool in the fight has been the UN-backed REDD+ mechanism, a framework where public and private funds are paid to developing countries to curb emissions by reducing deforestation.

Hundreds of projects have sprung up worldwide under the initiative over the past decade and major donors include Norway, Germany and Britain.

Projects range from national-level schemes supported by foreign governments to smaller, private ones, which generate "carbon credits" to be sold to firms seeking to offset emissions.

But the initiative has been dogged by controversy, with environmentalists saying projects in some places, including Cambodia, Peru and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have failed to involve local communities and deliver on promised benefits, in some cases leading to conflict.

Last month, Indonesia, home to the world's third-largest expanse of tropical forest, walked away from the \$1 billion deal with Norway, having received only a tiny fraction of the money.

Globally deforestation has only escalated in recent years – destruction of pristine rainforest was 12 per cent higher in 2020 than the year before despite a global economic slowdown, according to GFW.

Rainforest Foundation UK executive director Joe Eisen said REDD+ is fundamentally flawed: "The architecture is wrong. It reduces forests down to their carbon values, rather than the intrinsic other values they have – like the people and nature."

"Forests are so much more than the amount of carbon they absorb."

For the initiative's detractors, the collapse of Indonesia's deal with Norway, which was agreed in 2010 in a bid to reduce the Asian nation's rampant deforestation, has under-

lined REDD+ weaknesses.

The agreement outlined steps Jakarta needed to take, including developing a strategy to combat forest loss and come up with a monitoring system with the bulk of the payment to be based on deforestation reduction results.

But changes "advanced more slowly than expected" and deforestation actually increased initially, according to a 2015 report by the Centre for Global Development.

And while figures show forest loss slowed in Indonesia in the past five years, authorities say they did not receive the expected first payment of \$56 million for this success.

Indonesian officials told the *Jakarta Post* they terminated the deal because Norway had shown "no goodwill" and set additional requirements such as documentation on how the cash would be spent.

But Norway's ministry of climate and environment told AFP that they believed the "few issues that remained could have been resolved relatively quickly".

Environmentalists fear the unravelling of the agreement is a blow to Indonesia's climate efforts.

"Does this rejection of Indonesia's most prominent international partnership signal a

lack of ambition to reach ... emissions reductions goals?" said Greenpeace forests campaigner Kiki Taufik.

According to GFW, Indonesia in 2001 had 93.8 million hectares of primary forest – ancient forests which have largely not been disturbed by human activity – an area about the size of Egypt.

By 2020, this figure had decreased by about 10 per cent, meaning the archipelago lost virgin forest cover the size of Portugal.

Although the rate of forest loss has slowed since 2016, experts are sceptical that the Norway deal played a substantial role, pointing to other factors, such as slower economic growth and higher rainfall.

Another major criticism of REDD+ is that schemes often fail to consider indigenous groups, whose lands and rights are often affected, or to properly compensate them for their role in protecting forests.

In the DRC, local communities were not consulted before projects began, leading to violence and bloodshed, according to a Rainforest Foundation UK report.

A report by NGO Fern found villagers in one Cambodian project said they had received little if any of the money for their work patrolling lands to help



Protecting trees is key to meeting ambitious climate goals, with tropical rainforest loss accounting for about eight per cent of annual carbon dioxide emissions, according to monitoring platform GFW. AFP

prevent trees being cut down.

"REDD+ has so far been pursued without really paying attention to [indigenous communities'] rights," said Alain Fréchette, from the Rights and Resources Initiative, which has studied some REDD+ schemes.

The Amazon Fund set up in 2008 to pay for curbing deforestation in Brazil, to which Norway contributed \$1.2 billion, has been hailed as a REDD+ success by some.

Seymour said: "It was definitely a thumb on the scale in terms of getting international recognition and finance that solidified political support."

But deforestation has escalated sharply since President Jair Bolsonaro came to power and rolled back environmental policies.

Seymour – who is also chair of the Architecture for REDD+ Transactions, which certifies national and provincial-scale credits under the mechanism – says the system should not be dumped but overhauled to focus on large-scale initiatives.

Referring to the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius compared with pre-industrial levels, she said: "There's no way you can meet the Paris temperature targets without stopping tropical deforestation." ■



A resident gets a Covid-19 vaccine in Ho Chi Minh City. All 21 districts and Thu Duc City have been able to contain the outbreak based on health ministry parameters. VNA

## HCMC districts 'contain outbreaks'

**A**LL of Ho Chi Minh City's (HCMC) 21 districts and Thu Duc City have contained the Covid-19 outbreak as defined by the Vietnamese Ministry of Health, municipal authorities said.

Pham Duc Hai, deputy head of the city Steering Committee for Covid-19 Prevention and Control, told a press conference on October 11 that the southern metropolis had lifted most lockdown restrictions and reopened its economy.

Binh Chanh and Binh Tan were the last districts to meet the pandemic containment criteria, he added.

The ministry describes the outbreak as under control when the number of cases falls for two straight weeks and is at least 50 per cent lower than during the week with the highest number of cases.

Besides, the rate must decrease continuously for 14 days and there should be no new infection chain for seven days in a district.

Last month, districts 7 and Cu Chi became the first to control the outbreak.

Hai said most people had been able to adapt to "living safely with the virus" under "new normal" conditions after the city relaxed the measures.

Businesses and traditional markets had reopened, he said.

He admitted the city now faced some challenges.

"Some people have failed to implement the ministry's 5K prevention measures such as gathering in large numbers, not wearing masks and not keeping social distance."

The number of businesses reopening was low, and travel by people between HCMC and other provinces remained difficult due to the inconsistent travel and quarantine regulations, he noted.

The city has recorded more than 400,000 cases since the fourth

wave began in late April.

As of October 10, more than seven million people or 98 per cent of people aged 18 or over had received the first vaccine dose and more than 5.2 million were fully immunised.

The city will continue to speed up vaccination while the country plans to vaccinate children aged 12 to 18, according to city authorities.

The country's Covid hotspot is treating 15,198 patients, including 1,141 under 16 years of age, with 533 people being on ventilators and 15 requiring extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) intervention.

Viet Nam News/Asia News Network ■

## Retreat set to discuss Aukus impact on SEA security



Malaysian defence minister Hishammuddin Hussein speaks during Ministerial Question Time in Parliament on Tuesday. BERNAMA

THE Malaysian government's stand on Aukus is clear as it views the regional security pact between Australia, the UK and US as having the potential to undermine peace and stability in Southeast Asia, according to defence minister Hishammuddin Hussein.

"It could also provoke other powers to act more aggressively in this region, particularly the South China Sea," the Senior Minister (Security) said during Ministerial Question Time in Parliament on October 12.

He was responding to Mohammad Nizar Zakaria, a Barisan Nasional member of parliament for Parit constituency, who asked about the stance of the defence ministry towards the controversial Aukus pact.

Hishammuddin said he had recently met with Australia's special envoy Vice-Admiral David Johnston and defence minister Peter Dutton.

"In both discussions, I stressed that Malaysia does not want to be dragged into the geopolitics of superpowers," he said.

Hishammuddin said that during his meetings with Johnston and Dutton, he informed his foreign counterparts that special approval must be obtained from the Malaysian government if Australia intends to enter Malaysian waters, dock at Malaysian ports, or conduct joint-military exercises.

"A special agreement must first be obtained and it will be considered on a case-by-case basis," he said.

The minister said the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) retreat next month would be an important platform to strengthen regional defence cooperation in light of the Aukus pact.

The ADMM retreat, which will be held in Brunei, will be deliberating on the stance

of ASEAN countries towards Aukus.

"In fact, I'm sure this issue will also be discussed there, which will help to strengthen understanding among ASEAN countries over the Aukus pact," he added.

Hishammuddin said he would also be calling Cambodian Minister of National Defence Tea Banh and his Philippine counterpart Delfin Lorenzana.

"I hope what was bilaterally formed between Malaysia with Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States will help us find ways to balance global superpowers in the region," he said, adding that the Aukus pact must be collectively addressed by ASEAN countries as a 10-country bloc.

Aukus is a trilateral security agreement for the Indo-Pacific region that was announced on September 15. THE STAR (MALAYSIA)/ASIA NEWS NETWORK ■

## Myanmar president recounts coup's early moments

MYANMAR'S ousted president on October 12 described turning down a deal to vacate his seat and save himself in the early moments of the February coup that snuffed out his country's short-lived democratic experiment, his lawyer said.

Win Myint, who was detained along with civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, made the comments as he testified for the first time at his trial for incitement in a junta court.

The 69-year-old recounted how two senior army officers entered his room in the early hours of February 1 and "urged him to resign from his post of the presidency, giving the reason of ill health", lawyer Khin Maung Zaw said.

"The president turned down their pro-

posal, saying he was in good health. The officers warned him the denial would cause him much harm but the president told them he would rather die than consent," he said.

Similar dawn raids took place across the capital Naypyidaw, taking key civilian leaders into custody and ending the army's brief flirtation with democracy.

Win Myint – a longtime ally of Suu Kyi – faces a raft of charges, including incitement and sedition.

The junta – officially known as the State Administration Council – has threatened to dissolve Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party and continues to wage a bloody campaign against opponents to its rule.

Win Myint and Suu Kyi will call no defence witnesses in their incitement trial, their lawyers said last week.

Suu Kyi is scheduled to testify for the first time later this month.

Junta leader Min Aung Hlaing has justified his power grab by citing alleged electoral fraud in the November poll won by the NLD.

The military has cracked down brutally on dissent – shooting protesters, arresting suspected dissidents in night raids, shutting down news outlets, and rounding up journalists.

More than 1,000 civilians have been killed, according to a local monitoring group. AFP ■



Myanmar's ousted president Win Myint described the events around the February coup in a courtroom on Tuesday. STR/AFP

# Coal challenges an opportunity for Cambodia's solar sector

## Opinion

Courtney Weatherby

DURING the global pandemic, Cambodia's direct neighbours Thailand and Vietnam have made significant progress in the deployment of new solar technologies, utilising floating and rooftop solar to complement existing power supplies.

Their experiences provide Cambodia with a clear pathway to replace coal projects – which are increasingly unfeasible amid clear signals of future price volatility and in light of China's announcement that funding for new coal projects is off the table – with renewable alternatives.

Cambodia already has an existing baseload of hydropower and coal, and it has readily available alternatives to future coal projects in the form of under-utilised solar power resources. While the government has expanded solar power from 10 megawatts (MW) in 2017 to 305MW in 2021, there are thousands of megawatts of untapped potential.

In August 2021, the first of nine planned large-scale floating solar projects came online at Sirindhorn Dam in Thailand. The floating solar project provides 45MW of renewable capacity, the same as the dam's hydro-power capacity, but covers only one per cent of the reservoir surface and has no additional land-use impacts.

The cost of electricity produced by the floating solar project is estimated at approximately \$0.045 per kilowatt-hour (kWh). Like ground-mount solar costs – which in Cambodia have committed to producing electricity for as little as \$0.0388/kWh – this is significantly cheaper than the cost per kWh for electricity from a new dam or coal plant. For comparison, the Lower Sesan 2 dam sells electricity for approximately \$0.0695/kWh.

Cambodia has significant opportunity to consider floating solar. The Mekong Infrastructure Tracker shows that there are four existing hydropower dams in Cambodia – the Lower Sesan 2, Stung Atay, Stung Tatay, and Kamchay dams – which have sizeable reservoirs of over 10sq km. Each of these could potentially support floating solar plants.

These hydropower projects are already tied into the national grid to provide hydroelectricity, and floating solar on those projects could potentially utilise existing lines and provide dry-season electricity production at times when hydropower production



A floating solar farm is pictured in Kampot province in 2019. HENG CHIVOAN

drops due to low water levels.

Another clear opportunity for Cambodia to pursue is consideration of rooftop solar, which has taken off rapidly in Vietnam. Like Cambodia, in 2017 Vietnam had almost no solar generation apart from some small-scale pilot projects. However, Vietnam's installed solar capacity has since skyrocketed: as of 2021 Vietnam had approximately 16,000MW of solar power, which is nearly a quarter of Vietnam's total installed capacity. Approximately 60 per cent of Vietnam's solar capacity is from rooftop solar.

This was the result of a clear strategic choice: facing projections of potential shortages due to delays with fossil fuel projects and rapid demand, the government of Vietnam set out clear policies to allow and regulate individual consumers – industrial, commercial, and households – to install rooftop solar projects and connect them to the grid.

Rooftop solar has many benefits for industrialising countries like Vietnam and Cambodia which face rapidly growing electricity demand: it provides on-site electricity, which can reduce demand on the national utilities from major users like the industrial zones for manufacturing or commercial retail like malls.

Rooftop solar requires local connections to the distribution grid, but unlike large power plants it doesn't

require new transmission lines because it's located directly on the roof of the primary user. When the electricity produced locally exceeds the needs of the building owner, the government can purchase the excess electricity to help meet needs elsewhere.

By reducing demand on the national grid during mid-day when air conditioning demand and thus electricity demand peaks, the widespread adoption of rooftop solar can help ease crunches in the power supply that have historically led to brownouts. If the cost is below market rate for purchases from the grid, it can also save fuel costs – particularly for energy-intensive manufacturing industries. In 2020 alone more than 100,000 stakeholders in Vietnam installed rooftop solar projects at their own expense, adding 9,500MW of solar to Vietnam's grid.

Cambodia's energy market could benefit significantly from adoption of a more supportive rooftop solar policy that provides very modest rewards rather than penalties for connecting rooftop solar to the grid. Industry is a major driver of Cambodia's long-term energy demand growth projections and therefore a key driver of the expansion of new hydropower and coal projects.

Industrial users are also increasingly sensitive to the source of electricity used in their supply chain, as consumers and shareholders push for brand commitments to carbon neutrality. As

Cambodian policymakers review the national power development plan, it is well worth considering a scenario which would expand not only utility-scale solar projects but also to consider whether some of that national electricity demand could be more cost-effectively and sustainably managed through supporting rooftop solar.

While the impacts of Covid-19 have negatively impacted many elements of the economy, the resulting reduction of Cambodia's electricity demand growth in 2020 and 2021 provides policymakers with the time and flexibility to thoroughly explore alternative options in response to market shifts like a loss of Chinese coal financing or spiking coal prices that reveal problematic volatility.

As the realities of climate change become increasingly visible throughout the region and impact global supply chains, investing in domestically available renewable energy sources now will pay long-term dividends for energy security and help maintain Cambodia's attractiveness as an investment hub for major international brands.

**Courtney Weatherby** is deputy director of the Southeast Asia Programme at the Stimson Centre, a think tank based in Washington, DC, in the US which promotes international security, shared prosperity, and justice through applied research, independent analysis, deep engagement, and policy innovation.

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# Lifestyle

## Harvesting sunshine at Farmhouse retreat

Hong Raksmey

**A**S ITS name suggests, the eco-resort Farmhouse Smiling Gecko is situated in a rural village in the southernmost portion of Kampong Chhnang's Samki Meanchey district, about a one-and-a-half-hour drive from Phnom Penh.

The Khmer-style resort is one of Smiling Gecko Cambodia's projects with guesthouse-like accommodations which visitors can stay at in relative luxury despite the remote and rustic surroundings.

There amidst the peace and quiet of the resort they can explore several seasonal vegetable farms which are all planted in eco-friendly ways that help to maintain the health of the natural environment.

Visitors can enjoy the home-grown produce from the farms while sampling authentic local cuisine, go on cycling excursions around the farms and village, go fishing at any of several ponds in the area or take a closer look at traditional arts & crafts in the village by visiting the blacksmith workshop.

Farmhouse had been struggling to overcome electricity shortages in the area for the last several years but now they've been able to connect all of their facilities to their solar power grid, which has also allowed them to consider expanding many of their other activities as well.

The eco-resort campus consists of 17 Khmer-style rustic wooden houses divided into 34 rooms and a restaurant, spa, workshop and even a school for the children of the village – all courtesy of SGC

– and all powered by green approaches to energy and construction that seek to reduce their ecological footprint.

"Green energy is important for the Farmhouse not only to maintain its own green footprint, which is something that every organisation should be held responsible for these days, but also to create awareness among the customers, employees and local community," says Benjamin Lehmann, Farmhouse's general manager.

Farmhouse's 228 kilowatt-peak (kWp) of energy is provided by a 1000 sqm solar-array installed next to the seasonal vegetable farms, but the solar power is just part of the overall green package and experience offered there.

"It is an important part of the



A 1,000sqm solar farm provides 228 kilowatt-peak of green energy to the Farmhouse eco-resort. SUPPLIED

whole operation but still just one part of many," said Ng Soleap, SGC's executive director and one of the founders of the Farmhouse resort.

Soleap obtained degrees from both the Royal University of Law and Economics and the Institute of Foreign Languages at the Royal University Phnom Penh years back and he then met Hannes Schmid – a professional photographer and artist from Switzerland – and they launched SGC in 2013.

Their intention was to start harnessing some of the goodwill and financial resources of Schmid's homeland of Switzerland in order to channel it into making a positive impact on Soleap's still-developing and impoverished homeland of Cambodia.

After some tough lessons learned early on, that's just what they've managed to do with Farmhouse and the many projects attached to it.

Soleap and Schmid founded the SGC originally to pursue a range of projects from agriculture to hospitality and education, but lately they've had an increased focus on environmental, ecological and green issues.

Soleap says that this was the natural result of paying closer attention to his organisation's own environ-

mental impact and green footprint and using that as a starting point to make changes and improvements in their operations.

"Now the solar grid allows us to operate independently despite being in such a remote location and we can control our operating costs to a much tighter degree since we can fine-tune our power bill rather than suffer at the whims of the public energy utility and markets," says Soleap.

The green energy infrastructure at the Farmhouse can save the eco-resort a lot of money and it could actually earn the eco-resort profits in the future if they are able to sell power back to the national grid.

"We want to be a role-model for green tourism and sustainable hospitality. Our industry still can do more and needs to do more to contribute to a better environment," he says.

Money is not going to be the obstacle that prevents Cambodia's greening process if Soleap has any say in it, however, because the true costs of ignoring the damage to the environment and squandering Cambodia's natural resources will be too horrific in his estimation to even consider checking the figurative price tags on.

"We aim for total conversion to

sustainable green energy. We want to contribute as much as we can, and all that we have, to saving the environment in Cambodia and the world as a whole," Soleap tells *The Post*.

Farmhouse is a practical expression of idealism being run by people who have the courage of their convictions and the deep sincerity of their efforts are apparent-to and appreciated-by their like-minded clientele.

Soleap adds that "as a rurally-located organisation that focuses on community agriculture as an aspect of eco-tourism we are obliged to acknowledge the 'elephant in the room' – or perhaps it's better thought of as a cow?"

He quickly notes the negative impact that raising livestock is having on all areas of the environment and especially with the looming water-scarcity issues – there just doesn't seem to be any possible way the status-quo can continue on much longer.

Go vegan, in other words? Yes and no. But partly, yes. What sounds absurd for lok-lak loving Cambodia today may be required by absolute necessity in the hypothetical water-scarce Cambodia of tomorrow – an uncertain and challenging future

that seems well on its way to being present day across much of the globe.

**Farmhouse: Social distancing before that was even a thing**

Situated on an undeveloped stretch of rural land and rolled out sparsely over more than 130 hectares, Farmhouse Smiling Gecko is a guesthouse and eco-resort that had social distancing baked-in regardless of pandemic health regulations or the local vaccination rates.

Farmhouse has a feel to it that is both wild and tame. It has the humid tranquillity of a tropical jungle with its densely forested wall of trees running up to the edges of fields that abruptly transition into the cheerful rusticity of orderly rows of tilled-soil for vegetable farming, the placid waters of fish ponds or even the wooden decks of Instagram or selfie-worthy swimming pools.

Indeed, it must be said that the pool-side view at Farmhouse is as scenic as any ocean-side beach, with walls of verdant lush-green foliage on all sides that break off at the horizon into the vast emptiness of Cambodia's surreally bright and sunny pale-blue skies.

There are of course abundant outdoor activities available in addition to swimming, including private cycling and hiking trails that cut through the dozens of hectares of heavily foliated landscape. Visitors who are especially keen on gardening or organic produce can learn all about eco-friendly farming or just sample the many fruits of the land being cultivated there.

That sampling of land fruits (i.e. eating) is always best accomplished by visiting the Farmhouse's excellent open-air restaurants. Or just the one restaurant, with one kitchen and one head chef – but you can pick where you eat from a few different spots spread about the property.

"Of course, our guests always immensely enjoy our farm-to-table food by Mariya UN Noun, our chef, and served at three different main dining area locations on our grounds with plenty of space for distancing," Soleap assures.

The restaurant's dining areas rest on elevated platforms with views out to the horizons and diners can enjoy top-notch versions of authentic Cambodian dishes all made from ingredients that come fresh from the surrounding farms.

"All standard operating procedures for preventing Covid-19 are in place and we have the space to allow our guests and groups and families to experience their own excursions or activities outdoors such as hiking or cycling."

"Now would be a really great time to visit us, actually, if you want a trip you can take without running any unknown risks for infections, because you will have as much of your own space as you want," Soleap says.

Farmhouse Smiling Gecko is located in Tbeng Kplos commune of Samaki Meanchey district in Kampong Chhnang province – only 70 km or so from central Phnom Penh – but with the natural ambience to it of a place far more distant, secluded and remote.

Visit their Facebook page:  
@FarmhouseSmilingGecko



Farmhouse Smiling Gecko where mother nature provides social distancing for visitors and tropical jungle surrounds vegetable farms and fish ponds. HONG MENEA



Workers install solar panels on part of the 130ha of land at the Farmhouse in Kampong Chhnang province's Samki Meanchey district. SUPPLIED

# South Korea's Squid Game craze hits China

IT IS not available in China but Netflix's global sensation *Squid Game* has already built up a huge following in the country, with fans dodging strict internet controls to stream the show and snapping up merchandise such as its unique outfits.

The dystopian South Korean thriller has become the most popular Netflix series launch ever, the streaming giant said on Tuesday, but it is unlikely to pass China's censors because of its brutally violent content.

Yet it is already a hit in cities such as Shanghai, where a crowd formed on Tuesday at an eatery selling dalgona – the crisp sugar candy featured in one episode – with customers gathering at its *Squid Game*-themed sign to take photos.

"People were sending jokes related to the show in group chats when I started watching," a customer surnamed Li said.

"It's rather fast-paced and therefore, quite thrilling," the video producer said of the series.

After buying the candy, Li and his friend filmed their attempt at a challenge from the show, where contestants try to cut shapes from the snack without cracking it.

The series features a group of society's most marginalised and indebted people who are forced to compete in a series of children's games until all participants are dead except one. The "winner" gets \$38 million.

As the show became an international hit, China's ever-nimble manufacturers raced to tap into demand, with products – including the bright pink uniforms and

eerie masks worn by anonymous guards – popping up across the giant online shopping platform Taobao.

Vendor Peng Xiuyang said his sales had spiked by around 30 per cent thanks to demand for the programme's merchandise.

He had never heard of the show when a customer asked last month if he sold the masks – a plain black full-faced covering printed with squares, triangles or circles.

But now vendors like him and plastics manufacturers in the eastern hub of Yiwu are all rushing to meet demand – from both domestic and international buyers.

"Our customers are those who have seen the series and want to join in the trend," he added.

With Halloween coming up, the spine-chilling masks have become his most sought-after product.

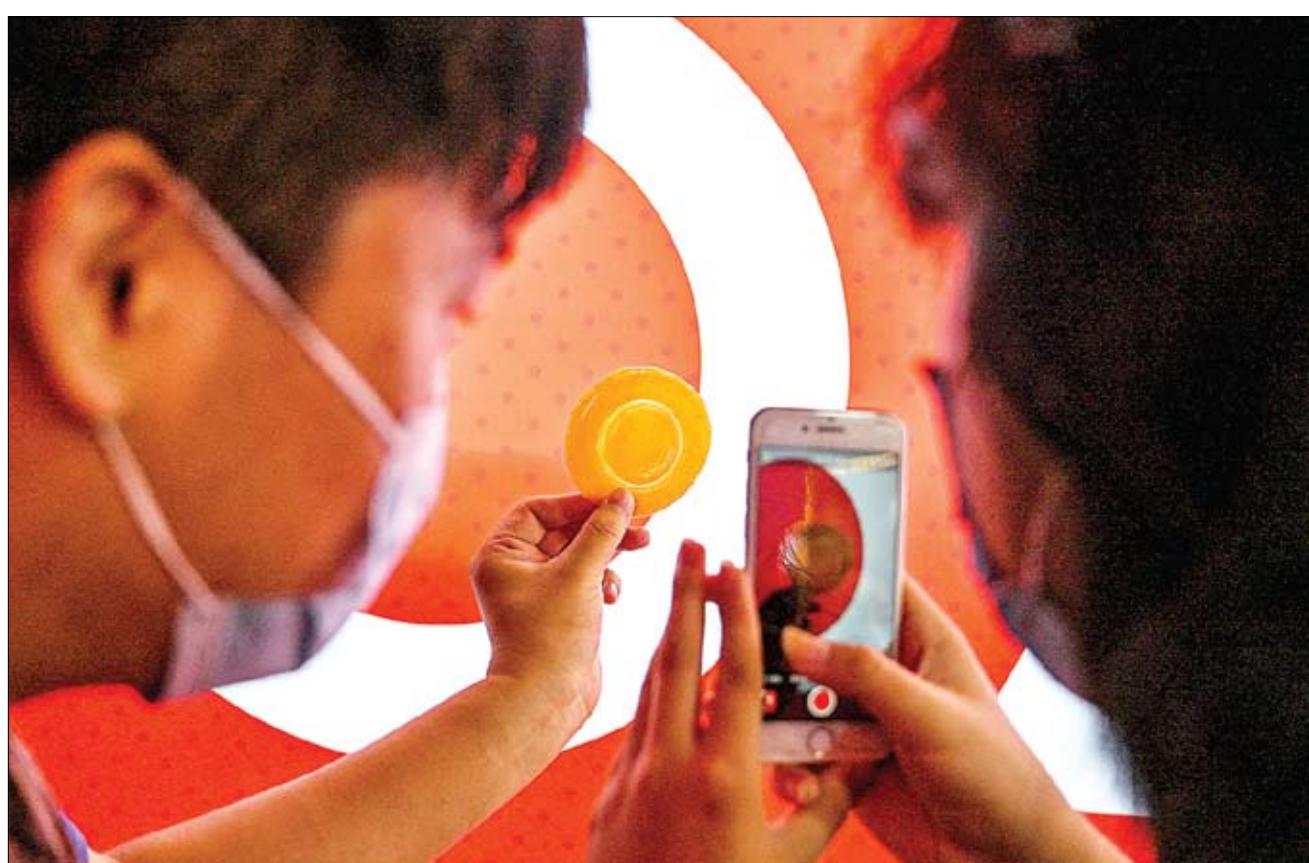
#### Illegal distribution

The lack of official availability has not stopped Chinese audiences from finding ways to watch the show – including easily available unofficial streaming sites or file-sharing.

The piracy problem is so widespread that South Korea's ambassador to China, Jang Ha-sung, recently told a parliamentary audit that he had asked Chinese authorities to take action.

"Our assessment is that *Squid Game*, which is gaining global popularity, is being illegally distributed on around 60 sites in China," Jang said, testifying remotely from Beijing.

As fascination with the show swirls among China's tech-savvy youth, the hashtag *Squid Game* got nearly two



Customers take photos of a dalgona, the crisp sugar candy featured in the Netflix series *Squid Game*. AFP

billion views on social media, and related topics have been trending for weeks.

Users discussed how they would pass the challenges featured in the show, and wondered what a Chinese version of the series would be like.

But one user said: "It's not like it would pass censors if we made such a show ourselves ... if it were too violent, it would just get taken down."

For now, fans just want to have fun.

A customer in Shanghai surnamed Yang said: "I've seen [the snack] being sold online, but it's my first time finding it in real life." AFP



Customers wait at a small shop for dalgonas, a crisp sugar candy featured in *Squid Game*, in Shanghai. AFP

## Fake love, fetishes: the next-generation dating shows

BONDAGE, threesomes and sex in the back of a van: dating shows are dialling up the raunchiness as they look for love – and viewers.

This year's Mipcom TV festival in Cannes demonstrates that the dating show format is still a hot proposition for producers, particularly in Britain.

#### For love of money

Britain's Channel 4 is about to launch *The Love Trap*, in which 12 candidates compete to win the affections of a singleton. The sting is that only half are really looking for love.

The rest are only in it for the prize money, and it is up to the contestant to spot who is lying and eject them via a hole in the ground.

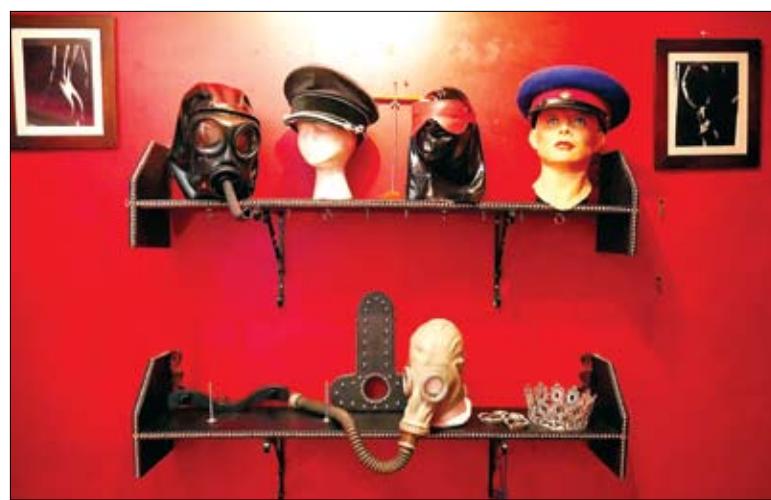
France's TF1 loves the idea and has already bought the rights.

Germany already has a similar concept in *Date or Drop* in which an undesirable response gets the unfortunate candidate dumped, literally.

#### Threesomes and bondage

In another Channel 4 show, *The Love Triangle*, couples try to convince a third party to join their bedroom antics: "a pointless, painful hour of attempted threesomes", wrote the *Guardian* newspaper's reviewer.

Channel 4's third indecent proposal



A view of one of the rooms at the Hoxton Dungeon suite in central London on May 23 last year. Dating shows are dialling up the raunchiness as they look for love and viewers. AFP



A man looks inside his camping car. Bondage, threesomes and sex in the back of a van: dating shows are dialling up the raunchiness as they look for love and viewers. AFP

is *Kinky Daters*, in which singletons are paired with people who enjoy unusual kinks and fetishes.

That covers everything from "splashing" [smearing the body with messy substances] to "shibari" (Japanese-style bondage).

#### Sign language

*Sexy Hands* is a Swedish programme about love among the deaf.

Hidden behind "a wall of love", the contestants can only see each other's hands – their sole weapons of seduction. The "inclusive dating show" debuts in November.

**Dirty dancing**

The BBC is shooting for something halfway between its primetime hit *Strictly Come Dancing* and *Dirty Dancing* with its latest reality show, *I Like the Way U Move* which launches on Sunday.

It hopes to set sparks flying by pairing a professional dancer with a nov-

ice who matches their dating profile and then sending them off to get up close on the dance floor.

They are likely to have some success given the number of unplanned liaisons that have occurred between similar pairings on *Strictly*.

#### Love voyages

"It's not the destination that counts but how you get there" is the abiding spirit of Canadian show *Love Van*.

It packs six young singletons together

in a van who must choose a new companion at each stage of their journey.

Those who make the grade get to carry on the voyage, while the rejects are literally dumped on the side of the road.

And the Netherlands has *B&B of Love*, which aired this summer on RTL4.

Here, the owners of bed and breakfast hotels from across Western Europe welcome suitors searching for a warm welcome. AFP

## Lifestyle



Wilson Ovwiroro is seen collecting sap obtained from the tapping of the raffia trees whose produced fermented sap will turn into palm wine, in Sapele on September 15. AFP

# Nigeria's palm tappers face uphill wine battle

**E**VERY morning, Wilson Ovwiroro leaves home early to paddle a wooden canoe into thick rainforest in southern Nigeria, where he taps raffia trees, making palm wine from their fermented sap.

The 50-year-old tapper also distills the alcoholic juice into a kind of gin known locally as "ogorogo" or "Sapele water," named after the nearby town where it reputedly originated.

Once the delight of traditional ceremonies, the local beverage is suffering a decline in popularity, battered by modern breweries.

With more than 200 million people, Nigeria is Africa's most populous nation and a huge market for beer.

Deep-pocketed players are vying for Nigerians' drinking money, including local giants International Breweries and Nigerian Breweries, as well as Ireland's Guinness.

The competition may seem unequal, but small-scale tappers and brewers like Ovwiroro still hope to keep their local beverages alive.

"I have been doing this work for 30 years. I started in Ondo state, came to Edo and spent 10 years before coming to Sapele here where I have now spent 15 years," Ovwiroro said inside a wooden shed, which also serves as a mill for the father of eight.

The tapper learnt the skill from his father, and said his wife and brothers assist him in the job.

"I produce original ogorogo here. When you drink it, you know it is original. I don't mix it with ethanol. My own is the real special one. When I cook it, even rich people buy from me," he said.

The alcoholic content of ogorogo is unknown, although one glass, say those who drink it, is enough to make you feel intoxicated.

Ovwiroro also claimed the drink, which is often infused with herbs, had medicinal properties although he offered no evidence.

"When you drink it, you don't get infections."

It cures malaria and fever," he claimed, sipping from a cup of fresh palm wine.

#### Stepping on snakes

Ovwiroro said that he boils palm wine over firewood and distills it to make ogorogo, letting it cool before pouring it into jerry cans.

"I have many customers that buy from me. I have up to 15 customers. I sell [a] 25kg jerry can for 15,000 naira [\$38]. I can produce two in a day if I get enough palm wine," he said.

But he admitted that the job was "strong" – tough work – adding that he usually climbs at least 30 trees everyday.

"I come here as early as 6:00am every day. Most times, I don't go home. I sleep in this bush. At times, you will step on snakes. The work is not easy. I work every day. On Sundays, I don't go to church," he said.

"I won't allow my children to do the work because it is too strong."

Ovwiroro wants the government to assist local tappers and brewers to expand their business, adding that the plantation from where he taps was on lease.

"I acquired this place last year. I pay 3,000 naira monthly to the community. I used to tap from another forest but the trees are no longer producing."

Ovwiroro said the government should encourage investments in local gins.

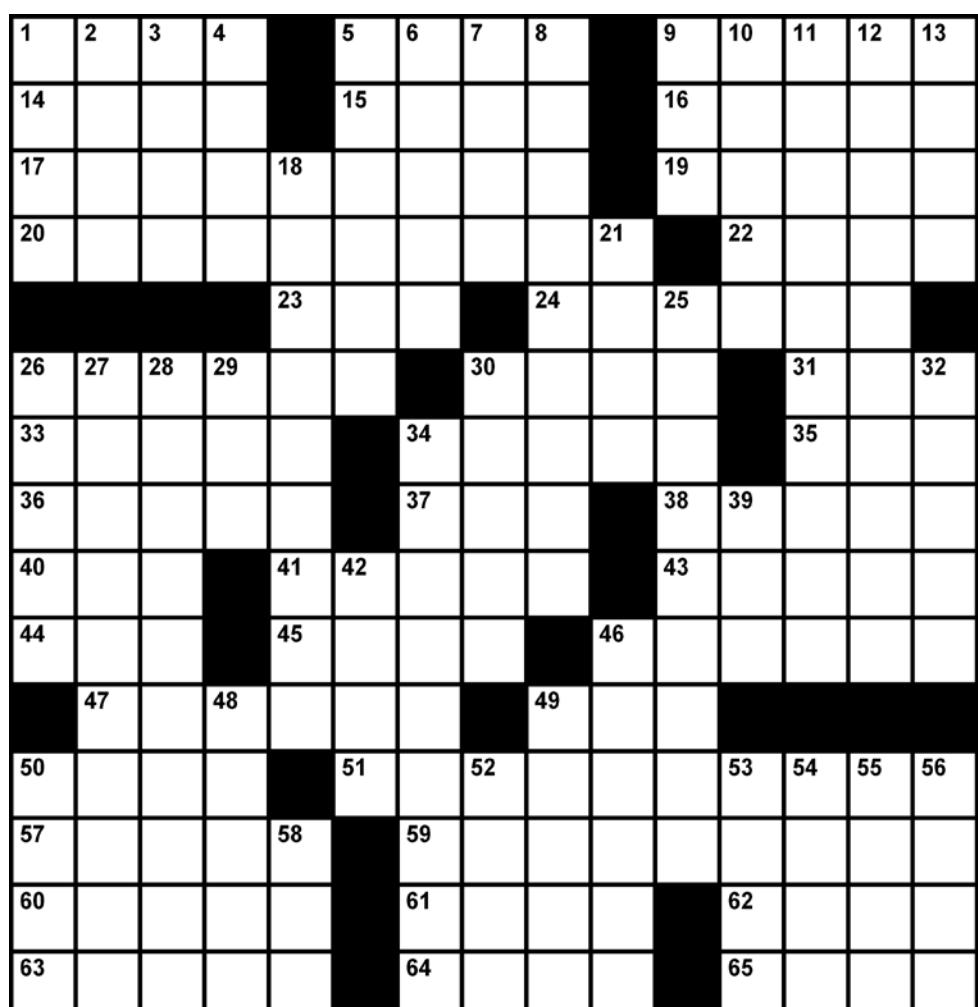
And locals agree.

"This is what we take to clear all our sicknesses and diseases away," claimed Kingdown Arugbo, a 66-year-old businessman who said he had been taking the local speciality since he was born.

He added that lovers of good and strong spirits should come to Sapele to taste local brews.

"If any company from abroad wants it they should come to us and we will give them the well-brewed original ogorogo from the source." AFP

## Thinking caps



## "THUMBS DOWN"

#### ACROSS

- 1 Speck
- 5 Legal prefix
- 9 Middle ear part
- 14 Celebrity couple, slangily
- 15 Over yonder
- 16 Sierra \_\_\_
- 17 Removing paint layers
- 19 Jouster's jabber
- 20 Exact opposites
- 22 Bygone autocrat
- 23 Carry a balance
- 24 Snack eater
- 26 Summaries
- 30 Ticklish person's shout
- 31 Apr. busybody
- 33 Redress a wrong
- 34 Express one's view
- 35 Increase motor speed, briefly
- 36 Of musical quality
- 37 A scam and this puzzle's theme
- 38 Make happy
- 40 \_\_\_ and outs
- 41 Singer Lenya
- 43 Get in the way of

- 44 10 of calendars, briefly
- 45 Some fraternity letters
- 46 War horses
- 47 Offshore sight
- 49 Cause of inflation?
- 50 A chorus line
- 51 Reduced in size
- 57 Cheek makeup
- 59 Eyeglasses feature
- 60 Fast finisher?
- 61 Prayer's end
- 62 Container weight
- 63 Vera Wang creation
- 64 Grasslands
- 65 Flightless flock

#### DOWN

- 1 Catchall category (Abbr.)
- 2 Gridiron great Graham
- 3 Beach bird
- 4 Send out
- 5 Trees with purplish flowers
- 6 Going up in smoke
- 7 Princess of India
- 8 Buenos Aires resident
- 9 Sick
- 10 Poet's "below"
- 11 Sanctify
- 12 Like hardwood floors
- 13 Merlin, e.g.
- 18 Boat mover
- 21 "Any day now ..."
- 25 Concern for one in the fast lane?
- 26 7:1, e.g.
- 27 Feature of some jackets
- 28 Make up
- 29 Santa \_\_\_, Calif.
- 30 Cheetah characteristics
- 32 Declares to be true
- 34 Like stop signs
- 39 Wrangler rival
- 42 Auditory
- 46 Ambulance attachments
- 48 Suffers defeats
- 49 Baffled
- 50 Still snoring
- 52 Iditarod's finish line
- 53 Single out for praise
- 54 Athletic unit
- 55 Brownish shade
- 56 Bad marks
- 58 Parts of a day (Abbr.)

## Sudoku Pacific

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

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

## Wednesday's solution

P	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
P	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
P	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
P	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
P	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20</																																																																																



England's captain Eoin Morgan (left) and India's captain Virat Kohli before the start of the final Twenty20 international cricket match in March. AFP

## England narrow favourites in bid for T20 double champions

Five years after losing a heart-stopping T20 World Cup final to the West Indies, Eoin Morgan's England start as narrow favourites in their bid to become double world champions despite the absence of Ben Stokes.

Not far behind though are Virat Kohli's India, an ever-lethal West Indies and World Test champions New Zealand – not to mention South Africa, Australia, former winners Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and fairytale outsiders Afghanistan.

Postponed and moved twice because of the pandemic, the tournament's seventh edition kicks off on October 17 with Oman – joint hosts with the United Arab Emirates – taking on Papua New Guinea in a first qualifying round.

The top nations will join the event – played in stadiums 70-per-cent full – on October 23 with Australia and South Africa playing the opener of the Super 12 stage and England up against holders West Indies.

England, ranked as the world number one nation in T20 cricket, beat New Zealand to win the 50-over title at Lord's in 2019 and victory in the shortest format's showpiece event will further cement their white-ball dominance.

Morgan's team will, however, be without Stokes and Jofra Archer, who played a key part in their one-day World Cup triumph, but vice-captain Jos Buttler insists the team is "certainly one of the favourite teams."

"I know we are missing Ben and Jofra, who are two superstars of the game, but I still look down that list and see

some real match-winners in our side."

England had to defend 19 runs in the last over of the 2016 final at Kolkata's Eden Gardens but Carlos Brathwaite hit Stokes for four straight sixes, giving the Caribbeans their second world T20 title.

Many of that winning team will be back, led by Kieron Pollard and old war horses Dwayne Bravo, 38, and 42-year-old Chris Gayle.

Asian giants India will begin their campaign against arch rivals Pakistan on October 24 with Kohli looking to go out with a bang before stepping down as captain of the T20 side after the tournament.

Kohli will look to repeat India's triumph in the inaugural tournament in 2007 with the then skipper MS Dhoni joining the team as mentor.

Swashbuckling opener Rohit Sharma is widely tipped to be Kohli's successor and will be key to the team's chances along with yorker king Jasprit Bumrah.

KL Rahul, meanwhile, hit the most sixes – 30 – in the Indian Premier League, which wraps up just before the T20 World Cup and which has allowed many stars the chance to get used to the UAE pitches.

Glenn Maxwell, for example, scored 513 runs including six half-centuries in the world's most popular cricket league, a performance that will boost Australia's hopes of a maiden T20 title.

Australia's white-ball captain Aaron Finch said he and David Warner will open the batting despite his left-handed partner twice being dropped by Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL.

Trans-Tasman neighbours New Zea-

land, led by Kane Williamson, will also be eyeing two successive world crowns after they won the inaugural Test championship, beating India in the final in June.

"We're in a tough pool, I genuinely think there are six-seven teams that could win this tournament and I guess that's good for world cricket as well," said Kiwi coach Gary Stead.

New Zealand are clubbed with India, Pakistan and Afghanistan in Group 1. England, Australia, South Africa and West Indies make up Group 2.

South Africa and former champions Pakistan remain underdogs while Sri Lanka and Bangladesh need to fight it out with associate nations to join the heavyweights in the Super 12s.

A few weeks after the country's takeover by the Taliban, the dream winners would be outsiders Afghanistan, all of whose players are based abroad.

Their South Africa coach Lance Klusener recently boasted of his team's "best spin attack in the world" comprising Rashid Khan, Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Mohammad Nabi.

The tournament was originally meant to take place in Australia at the end of 2020 but was called off because of the pandemic.

Then it was slated to happen in India and was finally moved to the Gulf, but with the Indian cricket board, the BCCI, still hosts.

The matches will be held across four venues – the Dubai International Stadium, the Sheikh Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi, the Sharjah Stadium, and the Oman Cricket Academy Ground – with the final scheduled for Dubai on November 14. AFP

## NBA Irving sidelined by Nets for refusing to get vaccinated against Covid

THE Brooklyn Nets decided Tuesday to bar star guard Kyrie Irving from practice as well as games in the NBA season that starts next week because he refuses to be vaccinated against Covid-19.

"Given the evolving nature of the situation and after thorough deliberation, we have decided Kyrie Irving will not play or practice with the team until he is eligible to be a full participant," Nets general manager Sean Marks said.

"Kyrie has made a personal choice, and we respect his individual right to choose."

"Currently, his choice restricts his ability to be a full-time member of the team, and we will not permit any member of our team to participate with part-time availability."

Irving, 29, is part of the Nets' star trio that also includes Kevin Durant and James Harden.

Because of the ongoing pandemic, New York has implemented new health and safety regulations which do not allow unvaccinated athletes to take part in practices and games.

He could theoretically have played in road games without being vaccinated, but Marks' statement rules that out.

At a video press conference later Tuesday, Marks agreed with a suggestion that the Nets had been left with "no choice" but to leave Irving on the sidelines.

"Ultimately yes," Marks said. "He has a choice to make and he made his choice. My job here is to make what we deem

is the best decision and the best choices for the organisation as a whole.

"They're not always ones that are going to be met with open arms and a thumbs-up. These are hard decisions."

"Just like I'm sure it wasn't easy for Kyrie either to have to make that [decision] to not be around his teammates."

Marks said he made the decision in consultation with Joe Tsai, the Nets' billionaire owner.

"We had everything on the board. We looked at everything. When you make a decision like this it's not one you want to make hastily," Marks said.

"Again, involve all the parties, think about the variety of different outcomes. They're never easy decisions but at the end of the day we're looking at putting a group of people out there that are going to be able to participate fully. That's what this comes down to."

"And we're not looking for partners that are going to be part-time. I don't think it's fair on the team, the staff, the ownership and the fans, but also it's not fair on Kyrie either."

The Nets begin their regular season at the NBA champion Milwaukee Bucks next Tuesday.

Golden State Warriors swingman Andrew Wiggins had also refused to get the vaccine but relented to keep playing.

Wiggins said after getting the one-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine last week: "I guess you don't own your body." ■



Kyrie Irving (left) of Team Durant drives to the basket during the 70th NBA All-Star Game against team LeBron James at State Farm Arena in Atlanta, Georgia, on March 7. AFP

## Wenger says offside calls could be automated by 2022



French coach Arsene Wenger reacts on stage during The Best FIFA Football Awards last year. AFP

OFFSIDE calls could be "automated by 2022", when the World Cup will be held in Qatar, Arsene Wenger, director of the development of the world soccer at the FIFA, said on Tuesday.

The former Arsenal manager also said he understood the opposition of many in football to his recommendation, which FIFA has embraced, to stage the World Cup every two years.

Speaking to the press in Paris on Tuesday, Wenger said he could not give details of how the technology would work.

"There is a strong chance that the offside will be automated in 2022," Wenger said. "I'm bound to secrecy, but it will be the next big development in refereeing."

Close offside calls are currently decided by video-assisted refereeing (VAR), but FIFA has been working to develop "advanced offside technology".

The governing body of world football said in August that "the goal is to develop a supportive tool similar to goal-line technology: Not designed to make the decision, but to provide evidence instantly to the referees".

Wenger, talking ahead of the French multisport Refereeing Days, of which he is the figurehead, suggested that the timetable could be accelerated in the run-up to the World Cup in Qatar, which starts on November 21, 2022.

Wenger has already suggested changing the offside rule so that players are onside if any part of their body that can score a goal is behind or level with the relevant defender.

His proposal last month that the World Cup should be staged twice as often was met with a storm of opposition from leading football figures.

He said that he understood the reluctance to change "because there is an emotional aspect" but, he added, the plan was part of a wider reform.

"The reform I am proposing is part of a reform of the calendar. I want to reduce the number of qualifying matches," Wenger said.

"We could have a big competition every year," he said, with the World Cup alternating with continental tournaments like the Euro or the Copa America, "with 25 days of rest guaranteed afterwards" for players.

"If prestige is linked to the gap between the competitions, it would be necessary to organise the World Cup every eight years," he added.

FIFA plans to publish a report in November, before a "global summit" by the end of the year. AFP

# Sport

## Cap on golf club length permitted

TOP-LEVEL golf tournaments will be given the option of imposing a 46-inch (117cm) limit on club length in an attempt to restrict driving distances – a move that could curb players such as big-hitting Bryson DeChambeau.

The 2020 US Open winner, known for his prodigious distances off the tee, has previously practised with a 48-inch driver.

Phil Mickelson, who used a 47.9-inch driver when he won the US PGA Championship earlier this year, branded the proposed rule change “pathetic” in a tweet in August.

But limiting club length is one way the game’s lawmakers believe advances in the distance of ball-striking can be kept in check.

The R&A and the US Golf Association (USGA) announced proposals to limit clubs to 46 inches in February.

They confirmed on Tuesday that this will be an optional choice as a “model local rule” for tournaments at professional or elite amateur level. It excludes putters.

The R&A, based at St Andrews in Scotland, and USGA have announced the new rule will be available from January 1, 2022. The two bodies govern the sport of golf worldwide,

Martin Slumbers, chief executive of The R&A said: “We have taken time to consult fully with the golf industry, including players, the main professional tours and equipment manufacturers, and have considered their feedback carefully.”

“We believe this is the right thing for the game at this time and it will provide tournament organisers with the flexibility to choose for themselves within the framework of the rules.”

USGA chief executive Mike Whan said: “Admittedly, this is not the ‘answer’ to the overall distance debate/issue but rather a simple option for competitive events.”

“It’s important to note that it is not a ‘rule of golf’, and as such, it is not mandated for the average, recreational golfer. Rather, this is an available tool for those running competitive events.”

Further proposals relating to the testing of golf balls and the “spring-like effect” on club faces remain under consideration. AFP ■



The move could curb players such as big-hitting Bryson DeChambeau. AFP

## Denmark book World Cup ticket

DENMARK became the second team to qualify for the 2022 World Cup finals when they beat Austria by a single goal on Tuesday as England were frustrated by Hungary at Wembley.

Joakim Maehle scored in the 53rd minute to send the Danes to Qatar as they build on their surprise run at Euro 2020 this summer when they reached the semi-finals.

“You can only dream about things like this,” said Denmark midfielder Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg. “It’s crazy. This is huge for me, it’s huge for the team, for Danish football and for Denmark. With the age and quality we have, we will only keep growing.”

The Danes join Germany, who qualified on Monday, in the finals. Host nation Qatar qualify automatically.

England sputtered as a combative Hungarian side held them to a 1-1 draw. The match was marred by ugly scenes at Wembley as Hungarian supporters clashed with stewards and police.

Gareth Southgate’s side fell behind to Roland Sallai’s disputed first-half penalty before John Stones stuck out a boot to score the equaliser in the 37th minute from Phil Foden’s cross.

Harry Kane failed to score in a qualifier for the first time in 16 games and was substituted as Hungary’s resolute defence kept a disjointed England side at bay.

“We did not play at the level



England's defender John Stones (second right) jumps unsuccessfully to header the ball at goal during the FIFA World Cup 2022 qualifying match against Hungary on Tuesday. AFP

we need to, simple as that,” said Southgate.

England defender Tyrone Mings called for harsher punishments for racism in football after it emerged the trouble at Wembley had flared after police had moved in to arrest a Hungarian supporter for what police called a “racially aggravated public order offence”.

Mings said: “Every time we speak on racial abuse the punishments that follow never seem in line with what has happened.

“I sincerely hope that if that

is the case, the punishments fall in line with what happened this time.”

England will be sure of reaching next year’s finals if they take four points from their final qualifiers against Albania and San Marino in November.

### Ronaldo hat-trick

Poland are second behind England in Group I after a stormy win in Albania.

Play was halted and the teams left the pitch as fans threw bottles after Karol

Swiderski scored the winning goal in the 77th minute. The teams later returned to complete the game.

Cristiano Ronaldo scored two penalties in six minutes and completed the 10th international hat-trick of his career in the 87th minute as Portugal thrashed Luxembourg 5-0.

Bruno Fernandes and Joao Palhinha were the other scorers in the romp, but Portugal remain a point behind Serbia in Group A after the Serbs beat Azerbaijan 3-1 at home.

Dusan Vlahovic, the 21-year-old Fiorentina player who is starting to attract the interest of Europe’s biggest clubs, scored twice and Dusan Tadic hit Serbia’s third goal.

Sweden stayed two points ahead of Spain in Group B thanks to a 2-0 win against Greece.

Scotland got a desperately-needed 1-0 win over the Faroe Islands, meaning they need one more victory from their last two games to secure a playoff spot as they seek to reach a World Cup finals for the first time since 1998.

Lyndon Dykes scored for the Scots for the fourth game running, as he connected untidily with a Nathan Patterson cross to finally break the resistance of the minnows.

Switzerland stayed in contention for Qatar when they eased to a 4-0 win in Lithuania with Breel Embolo scoring twice.

The Swiss are equal with Italy on 14 points in Group C, but second on goal difference.

Ukraine were held to a goalless draw by Bosnia-Herzegovina and lie second in World Cup holders France’s Group D, just a point ahead of Finland.

Teemu Pukki scored twice as the Finns beat Kazakhstan 2-0 to become his country’s all-time leading international goalscorer with 33 goals, overtaking Jari Litmanen.

France, who won the Nations League on Sunday by beating Spain, will not be in action again until November. AFP ■

## Japan revive World Cup hopes with Oz win

JAPAN manager Hajime Moriyasu urged his side to build on the 2-1 win over Australia that jolted their World Cup qualifying campaign into life as Son Heung-min scored in South Korea’s 1-1 draw with Iran on Tuesday.

Japan went into the crunch home match having lost two of their opening three games in Group B, but took three crucial points thanks to an 85th-minute own goal from Australia’s Aziz Behich.

Japan still trail Australia and Saudi Arabia in the battle for the group’s two automatic spots for Qatar 2022, but the win blew Group B wide open and ended the visitors’ record of 11 straight victories in one World Cup qualifying campaign.

Group A is tight though after Tottenham star Son Heung-min scored for South Korea before they conceded with 14 minutes remaining against Iran.

Embattled Japan boss Moriyasu said: “We kept fighting until the end and never gave up. We are determined to get to the World Cup and we showed that tonight.

“It was a great win but we still

have a lot of tough games to come. We have to make sure we use this win and build on it.”

Japanese media had speculated that Moriyasu could lose his job unless his side beat inform Australia, and the manager made a special point of applauding fans after the final whistle in Saitama.

“It was a very difficult game, but the fact that the players kept going to the end was down to the support they got from the crowd,” he said.

Ao Tanaka gave Japan the perfect start in the eighth minute, only for Australia’s Ajdin Hrustic to equalise with a 69th-minute free-kick.

But Behich turned the ball into his own net with five minutes remaining, after Takuma Asano’s shot hit the post.

Takumi Minamino played a cross that Behich failed to cut out for Japan’s opener, and Tanaka was on hand to drill the ball past goalkeeper Maty Ryan.

But the Socceroos hit back in the second half, and thought they had been awarded a penalty when Hidemasa Morita tripped Hrustic.

The referee changed the deci-

sion to a free kick on the edge of the box after a VAR review, but Hrustic slammed the ball past Shuichi Gonda regardless.

Japan went in search of a winner, with Ryan denying Junya Ito and substitute Kyogo Furuhashi before Behich scored an own goal.

### Saudis in control

There was no stopping Saudi Arabia as they pipped China 3-2 for their fourth straight victory to take a three-point lead over Australia atop Group B.

Sami al-Najei netted a first-half brace for the Arab giants in Jeddah while Firas al-Birakan added a third in Jeddah.

Second-half goals from Aloisio and Wu Xi gave the Chinese little consolation as they crashed to their third defeat and remain a spot ahead of bottom-placed Vietnam who fell 3-1 to Oman on Tuesday.

Nguyen Tien Linh stunned Oman with a 39th minute strike but the hosts hit back with three goals in a span of seven minutes to clinch their second win with Issam al-Sabhi, Mohsin al-Khalidi and Salah al-Yahyaei on Target.

In Group A, Lebanon rallied from a goal down to shock Syria 3-2 with Mohamed Kadouh scoring twice in first-half stoppage time.

Omar Khribin put the Syrians ahead in the 20th minute before Kadouh’s twin-strikes and Soony Saad’s 53rd minute goal saw Lebanon take an 3-1.

Star striker Omar al-Somah gave the Syrians some home with a 64th minute strike but Lebanon defended stoutly for their first win in four matches.



Japan's midfielder Takuma Asano (centre) celebrates with his teammates after Australia's defender Aziz Behich scored an own goal during the 2022 Qatar World Cup Asian Qualifiers group B match on Tuesday. AFP