

Help us build better, PM says at China bridge launch

Ry Sochan

PRIME Minister Hun Sen urged the Group of Seven (G7) nations – US, UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan – to provide increased development assistance to Cambodia instead of criticising the country for its close relationship with China.

The G7 is an international diplomatic forum consisting of the seven countries that are the world's most developed democracies with representative governments.

Hun Sen made the remarks on November 23 during the inauguration ceremony for the Stung Trang-Kroch Chhmar Cambodia-China Friendship Bridge, which connects Kampong Cham province east across the Mekong River to Tbong Khmum province.

"Now, I am looking forward to the arrival of BBB or Build Back Better. I welcome it and hope that the foreign ministers of ASEAN and G7 – the seven richest countries – will give some opportunities to Cambodia to receive some projects," Hun Sen said, referring to US President Joe Biden's post-pandemic recovery legislation.

"We still lack bridges and roads," he said.

Hun Sen praised the Chinese

government for providing development support to Cambodia, saying China always agreed to the Kingdom's requests for support without any strings attached.

"The best thing about having China as a friend is that if Cambodia makes something a priority that it must accomplish, then we can submit that plan to China. China then provides us with loans according to our actual needs.

"That is what's special about China and different from other sources [of funding]. The others tell us that we must spend development money on one thing when we actually need to invest it in something else entirely," he said.

He continued that China has provided financial assistance to construct at least four long bridges across Cambodia's rivers and to construct 3,000km of roads across the country.

He further stated that using foreign loans for infrastructure was the most equitable way to spend those funds because everyone – rich and poor – travels on the roads and bridges and benefits from schools and hospitals.

The prime minister said he regarded China as the most reliable source for Covid-19

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Forging links

Breaking ground in February 2018 and costing \$56 million to build, the 1.131km-long, 13.5m wide Stung Trang-Kroch Chhmar Cambodia-China Friendship Bridge will link Stung Trang district's Prek Kak commune of northeastern Kampong Cham with northwestern Kroch Chhmar district's Trea commune of northwestern Tbong Khmum. PUBLIC WORKS MINISTRY

US set to release 50M barrels of oil

PRESIDENT Joe Biden on November 23 announced that he has ordered the release of 50 million barrels of oil from the US strategic reserves in a coordinated attempt with other countries to tamp down soaring fuel prices.

"This release will be taken in parallel with other major energy consuming nations including China, India, Japan, Republic of Korea and the United King-

dom," the White House said. A senior administration official told reporters this was "the first time we've done something like this in parallel with other" countries.

As the world emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, oil production has not kept pace with rocketing demand, pushing prices up.

In the US, an associated rise in

petrol prices is one of the main culprits in a surge of inflation.

Biden's announcement comes as people across the US prepare for the holiday season, when travel ramps up.

Average fuel prices at filling stations are \$3.41 a gallon (\$0.75 a litre), the highest level since 2014, according to latest figures from the AAA motorists' association. This represents an increase of \$1.29

over petrol prices a year ago. The US reserves, held in underground depots in the states of Texas and Louisiana, are the largest emergency supply of oil in the world.

A senior administration official said the releases would start in mid- to late December, and that further intervention was possible to steady the market, "responding to a once-in-a-century pandemic". AFP

Virus control key in run-up to travel return: PM

Hin Pisei

THE effective control of Covid-19 community transmission right now is crucial for Cambodia to welcome fully-vaccinated international tourists from the end of this month, Prime Minister Hun Sen affirmed on November 23.

Hun Sen is convinced that plans to fully reopen the economy will be set in motion by November 30 as sched-

uled, as the first-dose vaccination rate in the Kingdom tops 88 per cent.

The prime minister made the remarks during the inauguration ceremony for the Stung Trang-Kroch Chhmar Cambodia-China Friendship Bridge, which connects Kampong Cham province east across the Mekong River to Tbong Khmum.

He said the reopening of tourist spots and heightened domestic travel during the Pchum Ben and Water

Festival holidays did not lead to a significant increase in new Covid cases or infection rates. Official figures support the prime minister's assertion.

"In a few days, I think tourism services will be back on track, as we now start with local tourists, including the more than 10,000 foreigners who have made trips across the Kingdom. In the near future, we'll have [international] tourists come to our country, and we won't require them to quarantine.

"But there are pre-conditions: to get two vaccine doses in one's own country, and confirm to be free of the Covid-19 virus, with a test.

"Secondly, travellers must undergo an antigen rapid test and receive a negative result before they can gain entry into the Kingdom anywhere," he said, noting that PCR tests upon arrival are no longer required.

And in a likely call for observance of Covid-19 prevention measures, Hun Sen

said the government has handed over a list of "responsibilities" to the people, as well as travellers to Cambodia.

The ongoing global Covid-19 crisis has greatly reduced the number of foreign tourists visiting Cambodia, to 131,674 in January-September, representing an 89.4 per cent year-on-year nosedive from 1,247,680, as indicated by Ministry of Tourism statistics

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National

Hun Sen will never bow head and submit to any external pressure: PM

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vaccines and the other sources as backups. Cambodia, he noted, has purchased at least 28 million Chinese vaccine doses, while less than one million doses have arrived in Cambodia through Covax – a global initiative aimed at ensuring equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines.

A native of Kampong Cham province's Stung Trang district, Hun Sen also had a message for his political opponents, saying he will stay in power as long as he wants to because it is the will of the people that he wins re-election.

"At all costs, Hun Sen must never bow his head and submit to any external pressure which would lead to instability and the loss of peace in this country. Hun Sen would like to declare this once again at my birth place.

"No matter how long I extend my mandate – it is up to me. If the people vote for me, I will be prime minister forever. Don't look for any weakness in Hun Sen's health. I can cycle at least 80 minutes a day without a break," he said. "I will continue to take the field against the extremists in order to protect peace."

Hun Sen was apparently directing his message at long-time political foil Sam Rainsy, the former leader of the Supreme Court-dissolved Cambodia National Rescue Party who lives in self-exile in France and remains under indictment in Cambodia.

The prime minister even dared his political opponents to "mobilise their forces" to go and protest against him at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, which he plans to attend in-person from January 17-21.

"Hun Sen will attend the World Economic Forum. Please get ready to protest against me there," he said. "If you want the International Criminal Court to



Prime Minister Hun Sen inaugurates the Stung Trang-Kroch Chhmar Cambodia-China Friendship Bridge on Tuesday. PUBLIC WORKS MINISTRY

arrest me, then they can do it there. That would be easier for them [because] Cambodia is an independent country."

Thong Mengdaiv, a research fellow at the Mekong Centre for Strategic Studies at the Asian Vision Institute, said that although the Covid-19 pandemic is not over quite yet, Hun Sen has a great track record so far with public health policy.

"Chinese vaccines are acknowledged by the World Health Organisation and they are available at lower prices and are easy for us to access with rapid transportation here as compared to the other makes of vaccines," he said.

Mengdaiv said the excellent diplomatic relations between Cambodia and China ensures that the Kingdom receives Chinese vaccines and other medical assistance and equipment before it is offered to other nations.

"Chinese assistance has even enabled Cambodia to turn around and donate vaccines to other countries in the region to aid with their recovery efforts, which is of great benefit to Cambodia diplomatically and a demonstration of the Kingdom's good will towards neighbours," he said. ■

China gives Covid-19 testing equipment to defence ministry

Mom Kunthea

THE Chinese Ministry of National Defence has provided medical equipment to its Cambodian counterpart to be used to test samples for Covid-19.

The donations included Covid-19 testing equipment, vaccination supplies and two types of Chinese medicines.

Speaking during a handover ceremony at the Phnom Penh International Airport on November 23, Minister of National Defence Tea Banh said the testing equipment was an important contribution to the campaign to fight the spread of Covid-19 in Cambodia and that it was done in the spirit of friendship and solidarity.

"Good friends help each other in times of emergency and our Chinese friends always support the Cambodian army during its hardships unconditionally and in the traditional spirit of friendship to strengthen and deepen our relations in all areas," he said.

"These medical supplies from the Chinese defence ministry come in addition to the Covid-19 vaccines they have sent and their medical experts who shared their experience and knowledge with us in our cooperative efforts to fight this disease. These donations contribute to the implementation of our core strategies that are the keys to



Defence ministry officials receive medical supplies provided by China on Tuesday. HENG CHIVONAN

protecting public health and saving the lives of Cambodians," Tea Banh said.

The assistance will further enhance the capacity of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF) to improve its technical skills with testing for the coronavirus, he said.

The minister confirmed that the success of the national vaccination campaign showed that the RCAF could contribute significantly to the welfare of the nation even in the peaceful era now being

enjoyed by the Kingdom.

Chinese ambassador to Cambodia Wang Wentian has stated that the Cambodian and Chinese armies are like brothers with a friendship forged from steel and are as indispensable to the two nations and each other as hands and feet are to the human body.

"In recent years, the government under the direct leadership and full support of Chinese President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Hun Sen has strengthened the two armies'

cooperative efforts and taken steps toward improvement in all areas," Wang said.

He added that after the outbreak of Covid-19, the people and armies of the two countries have always helped each other with donated medicines and that this cooperation not only forms a model relationship for international military cooperation but also contributes significantly to the building of a Cambodia-China community of common destiny. ■

More Cambodians studying in US

Lay Samean

THE number of Cambodian students studying at US colleges and universities in 2020-21 increased by 14.3 per cent over the previous year despite the Covid-19 pandemic, according to a recent US government report.

The 2021 Open Doors report on International Educational Exchange showed that 848 Cambodian students studied higher education in the US – an increase from 742 students in 2019-20 – continuing a positive trend over the past seven years.

US ambassador to Cambodia Patrick Murphy said in the report that he was proud to see Cambodian students choosing to study in the US. He said that from his own experiences he knew that studying abroad can be enriching and life-changing.

"It is gratifying to see how much Cambodian students value American higher education as an important means to acquire new skills, knowledge, and experience to bring back for further advancements in the Kingdom's development," he said.

He noted that the US embassy had promoted American educational opportunities for Cambodians through its EducationUSA Centres and American Spaces in Phnom



Cambodian students ask questions about studying in the US at a recent event. US EMBASSY

Penh and the provinces of Siem Reap, Battambang and Kampong Cham.

"This includes the AmCam Exchange at the Exchange Square mall in Phnom Penh," he said.

Ngin Lida, who currently heads up the marketing department for an online business, received a scholarship to study in the US from 2017-2021.

She told *The Post* that studying in the US had given her a lot of knowledge and experience that helped with her personal and professional development.

During her four years of study in the US she earned two graduate degrees – an MA in Public Relations and Development Studies and an MA in Public Administration.

She said that her first scholarship was awarded by the Open Society Foundation and the second by the University of Ohio.

She added that what motivated her to study in the US was that she had already had a great experience in the country in 2016 through the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative founded by former president Barack Obama.

She said that in addition to being one of the most developed countries, the US is culturally rich and very free and that it has excellent education programmes. She said that she acquired a lot of knowledge inside and outside of the classroom in her time there.

"I have learned about Amer-

ican culture, traditions, politics, working environment and communications. I saw many beautiful and wonderful landscapes in the US. I also experienced a lot of advanced technology and met a lot of great people there," she said.

As a Cambodian who studied in a developed country and earned degrees there, Lida said that she can bring knowledge and experience to help develop Cambodia in areas such as innovation, education, work experience, communications and especially in the relatively new concept of social entrepreneurship.

"Entrepreneurship has completely changed my goals and future direction and it is where I will go with my career path because I believe that – in addition to education – entrepreneurship will be the key to sustainably enhancing the economy and livelihoods of Cambodians," Lida added.

The Open Doors Report said that the US is the number one destination in the world for international students with 914,095 of them enrolled in US schools in 2020-21.

"The pandemic contributed to an overall 15 per cent drop from 2019-20 numbers, but the number of Cambodian students studying in the US has increased again," the report added. ■

ANNOUNCEMENT

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PM: No post-holiday Covid case jump

Mom Kunthea

PRIME Minister Hun Sen said the number of new Covid cases did not significantly increase due to the reopening of tourist spots and heightened domestic travel during the Water Festival and Pchum Ben holidays.

He made the remarks on November 23 at the inauguration ceremony for the Stung Trang-Kroch Chhmar Cambodia-China Friendship Bridge at Prek Bakk commune's Boeung Deng village in Kampong Cham province's Stung Trang district.

The bridge connects to the eastern bank of the Mekong River at Trea commune's Kdol Kandal village in Tbong Khmum province's Kroch Chhmar district.

A groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of National Road 71C also took place.

"With more than 88 per cent of the population vaccinated across the country, we've reopened now and this was the first time that the people were allowed to take a break. After Pchum Ben, the number of infected people went up slightly but then the numbers decreased," he said.

He said he also told the public to take a break during Water Festival to promote domestic tourism and over the holiday more than one million people travelled to destinations across the country.

"I am extremely proud of the Cambodian people. Although some feared that vaccinations would kill them, over 14 million people have now been vaccinated. I'm even more proud that our people have changed their attitudes. We must acknowledge and encourage these brave changes in attitude and make it a habit of our people," he said.

He added that during the Water Festival, authorities had widely noted that people were wearing masks, using hand sanitisers and maintaining physical distance and the rate of new infections was still under 50 per day after the holiday.

"I would like to ask that our people continue to have a cautious attitude. For whom? Not for me, but for each individual. Every family has to protect themselves. I am happy to continue to reopen



People enjoying the last day of the Water Festival at the riverside area of Chroy Changvar district in Phnom Penh on Saturday. HONG MENEHA

this country without looking back," he said. "I am confident that the opening of the country at this time will not be reversed because the situation is not the same as before when we did not have protective vaccines."

Hun Sen also noted that the \$2.3 billion in reserve funds that the government had to spend on Covid-19 prevention and mitigation efforts would have been enough to build 20 bridges like the one he was opening that day.

World Health Organisation (WHO) representative to Cambodia Li Ailan told *The Post* on November 23 that the Kingdom has been making calculated risk-based decisions about saving lives and protecting people's health while planning for and implementing the safe and sustainable reopening of the economy and society, especially the re-introduction of safe tourism.

She said the Water Festival would provide a great opportunity to test how well Cambodia's systems and society – including local government, the tourism industry, individuals and communities – are prepared to learn and adjust in order to sustain the re-

opening efforts.

"It becomes even more important now to follow Covid-19 preventive measures and ensure good compliance with them because it is not too late to prevent a big surge that may overwhelm the health-

care system. The pandemic is not over. Together we must aim to avoid crossing the red line and to protect the vulnerable within the context of a safe reopening," she said.

Ministry of Health spokeswoman Or Vandine said on

November 23 that she had observed that a lot of people had travelled to different tourist attractions over the holidays and they were careful to protect themselves and had changed their habits.

"According to the ministry's

report there has been no increase in cases of Covid-19 yet. But we will continue to monitor this situation and see what happens in one or two weeks," she said.

Li said it was commendable that the government, health workers, community and partners have all worked together to achieve world-leading vaccination rates and ensure that the vulnerable such as the elderly are protected.

"Even when fully vaccinated we can still get infected and still infect others. Therefore, it is important that we all stay vigilant, especially to protect the vulnerable. We are entering the 'new normal' phase of the Covid-19 pandemic and we must maintain physical distancing and the wearing of masks when needed," she said.

She added that while vaccination is necessary and effective at reducing severe disease and deaths, it is not enough on its own.

"The virus is still circulating and will continue to be here. We don't want to see a large increase in cases that might overwhelm our healthcare capacity. We may still see some targeted closures and measures to maintain community safety. This is to be expected, and we must stay prepared for it even as we are returning to work, school and community life.

"We will be living with the virus from now on," she said. ■

The Country Coordinating Committee (CCC) for the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (GFATM) in Cambodia

2 VACANCIES for CCC Secretariat

The Cambodia Country Coordinating Committee (CCC) is a multi-sectoral national platform to coordinate and facilitate the Global Fund activities to fight HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria. This governance structure must demonstrate high level of performance to maintain country's eligibility for the Global Fund financing. A CCC Secretariat was established to execute daily CCC functions as delegated by CCC and further described in the CCC Governance Manual.

Vacancy 1: CCC Oversight/Transition Officer:

- 1) Facilitate and support analytical data-driven discussions and decision-making;
 - 2) Provide support to oversight planning and implementation; and
 - 3) Provide technical and administrative support to the CCC oversight committee.
- The successful applicant will start as soon as possible, and the contract duration will be 18 months

Required Qualification, Experience and Skills:

- Bachelor's degree required, with social science, public health, population studies orientation highly desirable and advanced degree preferred.
- At least 2 years of experience in monitoring & evaluation or oversight of projects/programs.
- Experience in project-level or state/national-level monitoring and evaluation system implementation.
- Familiarity with the Global Fund CCC Policy and Oversight Function is desirable.
- Familiarity with the country's health system structures.
- Familiarity with epidemiological indicators for HIV, TB and malaria and financial indicators.
- Experience working in a multi-stakeholder governance environment.

Skills

- Proficiency in data collection and information analysis.
- Policy decision-support, strategic analysis and reporting.
- Proficiency in the use of Microsoft Office, particularly Microsoft Excel.
- Ability to work effectively with staff and organizational stakeholders.
- Strong inter-personal skills and proven ability to communicate and interact with high-level officials from the government, NGOs, UN agencies and the private sector.
- Strong writing, presentation, facilitation and communication skills.

Vacancy 2: National consultant to support Cambodia Country Coordinating Committee (CCC) Positioning

The national consultant will identify existing national health structures, governance mechanisms and platforms responsible for coordinating the health

sector and disease-specific issues. For the transition context, this should have an added focus on key national stakeholders that are most appropriate for strengthening transition planning, preparedness, implementation, and overall efforts to strengthen sustainability.

The consultant will be contracted for 25 days of work over a period of 2 months, starting ASAP.

The consultant will map each identified platform's position within the national systems and in relation to the CCC. The consultant will also support the CCC in developing a Positioning plan based on three main phases (refer to the [Positioning Guidance Note](#)):

- Knowledge
- Coordination
- Sustainable Structure.

Qualifications, Experience and Competencies:

A. Qualifications

Essential:

Bachelor's or Advanced degree in public health, finance, public administration or business administration, or related field.

B. Experience

Essential:

- Solid experience in developing partnerships in political environments and in mediating complex issues and deliverables at country, regional and international levels.
- Rich professional experience, including a track record of working in strategy and policy analysis, program planning and management, and/or equivalent experience.
- Solid understanding and experience of strategic, organizational, financial and management issues.
- Solid understanding of the Global Fund processes and of its funding model.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills.

Desirable:

- At least 3 years of professional experience (international or national) working in planning and management in the humanitarian sector.
- Experience in public health and disease program management with focus on HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.
- Documented experience of coordination across multiple stakeholders.

C. Competencies

Languages:

Working level of English as well as knowledge of the local language (Khmer) are a requirement for this role.

Technical skills: desirable knowledge of the software Visio.

How to Apply: Full Term of Reference will be provided upon request by email to cccadm@ccmcambodia.org

Interested applicants should submit their CV and Cover Letter (with 3 references) by email to cccadm@ccmcambodia.org by COB 15 December 2021



Heavy traffic on the streets of Chroy Changvar district on the last day of the Water Festival. HONG MENEHA

National

Kingdom, Laos talk security Cambodia, Thailand to discuss border reopening

Voun Dara

THE Ministry of Interior and the Lao Ministry of Public Security have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on security cooperation for 2022 and agreed to continue to foster increased links between them.

According to a press release from the interior ministry, the agreement was made at a virtual meeting between interior minister Sar Kheng and his Lao counterpart Vilay Lakhamfong. The two also evaluated the two countries' cooperative efforts on security for 2020-21.

Sar Kheng and Vilay both had words of praise for the good relations between the two countries' leaders and pledged to move forward together in the same spirit of traditional friendship, solidarity and good neighbourliness.

The press release stated that a significant increase in the volume of bilateral trade between Cambodia and Laos in 2020 made a significant contribution to the economies of both countries and was to the mutual benefit of everyone.

They also noted the mutual support between Laos and Cambodia in combating Covid-19 and dealing with the difficult circumstances caused by the pandemic.

"In the spirit of strengthening and expanding the relation-



Interior minister Sar Kheng and his Lao counterpart Vilay Lakhamfong sign an MoU on security cooperation for the coming year on Monday. INTERIOR MINISTRY

ship and active cooperation between these parties, [Sar Kheng] and [Vilay] signed the MoU on security cooperation for 2022 and agreed to continue to invest time and attention into working together productively," the press release said.

Both parties have agreed to further enhance and strengthen the cooperative mechanisms necessary for suppression of drug trafficking activities and to expand the scope of their information exchanges to further suppress drug trafficking along the border.

They agreed to increase the level of management and

control in place along the border within their respective jurisdictions and to take timely measures to prevent and suppress all kinds of cross-border crimes, especially smuggling, deforestation, poaching and hunting, and other activities that are contrary to the laws of either country or violations of their border regulations.

Both parties agreed to continue to monitor and facilitate the transit of people across the shared international border in accordance with the laws and procedures, including cross-border trade and tourism exchanges, medical

examinations, family visits and participation in various traditional ceremonies.

They pledged to cooperate to resolve problems along the border based on the spirit of friendship, solidarity and mutual respect for sovereignty.

The two sides also expressed appreciation for the efforts of the border authorities and law enforcement officers stationed there who continued their work despite the complex situation caused by Covid-19 and pledged to work closely together in maintaining a good security environment along the border. ■

Voun Dara

CAMBODIAN authorities from provinces along the Cambodia-Thailand border will meet with Thai counterparts to discuss reopening border checkpoints to facilitate travel, transfer of products and cross-border trade between the two countries.

Banteay Meanchey provincial deputy governor Ly Sary said on November 22 that the provincial administration would hold a meeting with the Thai side on November 25 to reopen the Poipet International Border Checkpoint and other border crossings to facilitate cross-border trade.

"According to the meeting's plan, we want to discuss reopening border checkpoints as normal. [We] will also open a new international border checkpoint called Stung Bot checkpoint, and discuss drug and human trafficking prevention," he said.

He added that the Thai side requested Cambodian officials meet in Thailand's Sa Kaeo province for the discussions and requested inspection on construction progress of the new Stung Bot International checkpoint.

He said talks on reopening the border came after the situation of Covid-19 had improved in Cambodia, with people in border provinces having already received two doses and also booster shots.

Ly Sary said the remaining challenges on the border concerned human trafficking where

Cambodian people have been deceived by brokers to illegally cross the border in search of work in Thailand. Such crossings were dangerous for them.

Deputy Governor of Battambang province Soeum Bunrith said reopening the border must first wait for agreement from both sides, as the Covid-19 situation in Thailand was still more serious than Cambodia.

"Since June, the provinces along the Cambodian-Thai border have opened to normal exchanges of goods. But the resumption of normal travel for residents is not yet allowed, pending the agreement from the Thai government.

"Our side agreed to reopen the border as usual with permission from the Royal Government [of Cambodia]. But the Thai side has yet to grant permission. So usually, the two sides must agree with each other first," he said, adding that his provincial administration is waiting for a decision from the Thai side.

Samkhit Vien, Koh Kong provincial deputy governor said the border checkpoints in Koh Kong province have been opened for the transport of goods as normal, but the official reopening of the border has yet to be discussed.

"So far, we have not yet received information from the Thai side regarding the request to reopen the borders. Our side has no problem with reopening the border, but agreement from the Thai side is needed," he said. ■

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Anti-plastic waste campaign offering discounted drinks

Ry Sochan

A GROUP of 25 students from the Royal University of Phnom Penh's Department of Media and Communication (DMC) have launched a 60-day campaign to encourage people to reduce their use of plastics. Throughout the campaign, customers who buy coffee from partner stores and cafes will get a 10 to 50 per cent discount if they bring their own bottle or container.

The campaign entitled "60 days: Bring a Bottle, Get a Discount" kicked off on November 22 and will run until January 20, 2022, in collaboration with various cafes and restaurants in Phnom Penh, reducing the prices on beverages for all customers who bring their own bottles for them.

Over 20 cafes and restaurants in Phnom Penh have partnered with the campaign so far and they are working on signing up more.

The DMC students are also currently running a project called "Re-Five" a digital campaign to educate people on overuse of plastics and promote reductions in plastics use in their daily lives by implementing the 5R principles of Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Remediation.

Sao Dalen, a fourth-year DMC student, told *The Post* on November 21 that the campaign was designed to encourage customers as well as shop owners to reduce their use of plastics. The campaign has a website that lets customers know about the partner cafes that are collaborating with the campaign.

"If you bring your own container to our partner cafes you will receive a discount but it's up to the businesses whether it's 10 per cent or 50 per cent or in between," she said.

The campaign is being run with support from the Ministry of Environment and the Japanese government, UN Development

Programme (UNDP) in Cambodia and the National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD), according to Dalen.

Environment ministry spokesman Neth Pheaktra told *The Post* on November 21 that the ministry always supports any action to reduce plastic use and reduce plastic pollution and that it is the policy of the government to encourage a reduction in the use of plastics.

"The environment ministry encourages consumers to switch to cloth or paper bags rather than plastic. They should also use drinking straws made from metal or some biodegradable material," he said.

According to Pheaktra, people are now more aware about plastics and have contributed to some reductions in their use in Cambodia. The environment ministry continues to work with the sub-national administration to manage urban solid waste and control the plastic problem by requiring residents to separate their waste by type.

As of 2020, he said the amount of waste generated in Cambodia is over four million tonnes per year and 20 per cent of that is plastic waste.

Phnom Penh produces the largest amount of waste at about 3,000 tonnes per day, including around 600 tonnes of plastic waste.

He said the capital uses more than 10 million plastic bags a day, followed by Preah Sihanouk province which has about 700 tonnes of waste in total per day and Siem Reap which has about 400 tonnes per day.

Citing a recent study, Pheaktra said one urban resident uses more than 2,000 plastic bags a year. The amount of rubbish increases by about 15 per cent per each year due to factors like population growth, economic growth, lifestyle changes and packaging changes. ■

Court charges senior military officers with gun trafficking

Kim Sarom

FOUR of the six military officers arrested for arms trafficking were remanded into custody by the Phnom Penh Municipal Court investigating judge on November 23, while the other two were still being questioned regarding the trafficking of over 100 weapons – including military-grade heavy weapons.

The weapons – and ammunition for them – were discovered stashed in Battambang province in October and November.

Municipal court spokesman Plang Sophal confirmed on November 23 that the four have been charged and are now awaiting trial.

"After investigating, the prosecutor charged them with the trafficking, export and stockpiling of weapons, explosives and ammunition without authorisation under articles 488 and 20 of the Law on the Management of Weapons, Explosives and Ammunition," he said.

Sao Sokha, commander of the National Military Police, told *The Post* on November 22 that the gendarmerie had arrested six military officers on the court's orders while another officer – whose identity has not been revealed – was detained by the National Police.

He said the six included a two-star Major General in charge of a weapon maintenance and repair workshop and a one-star Brigadier General who is the deputy commander at the workshop. Two other high-ranking officers – Lt Colonel and Captain – whose job at the workshop was repairing military-grade weapons were also charged.

The other two military officers charged were the deputy commander for the Kamrieng district Military Police and a warrant officer from the



Police in Battambang province found dozens of AK-47 assault rifles hidden at a fruit plantation in Phnom Preok district on November 12. FACEBOOK

Phnom Preok district Military Police. Both districts are located in Battambang province.

According to Sokha, one suspect was arrested in Siem Reap province on November 19, two more on November 20 and 21 in Battambang and

three others in Phnom Penh on November 22.

Sokha confirmed that the first incident related to this case was the ammo cache found in Kamrieng district on October 19.

The second incident was the

stash of weapons found in Battambang province's Phnom Preok district on November 12 and 13, where the Military Police confiscated 100 AK-47s, two 12.7mm heavy machine-guns and three M-79 grenade launchers. ■

94% pass Grade 9 exam in capital

Voun Dara

OVER 94 per cent of students in Phnom Penh who recently took their Grade 9 examination have passed, while results for candidates in most provinces are set to be finalised on November 23.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports has also established rules and regulations for candidates sitting for their high school diploma examination scheduled for December 27.

Hem Sinareth, director of the Phnom Penh municipal education department, said on November 22 that the results of the lower secondary diploma exam held on November 15 at 63 testing centres across the capital revealed that 13,709 out of the total 14,506 candidates who took the exam, or 94.5 per cent, passed. There were a total of 15,313 students registered for the exam, 7,832 of whom were females. And of the 13,709 candidates who

passed, 7,186 were females.

"The Grade 9 exam this year went as planned at all centres. No significant problems were noticed with each centre following the instructions. All entrances to centres had alcohol sanitisers and thermometers," he said.

In Tbong Khmum province where more than 7,000 students sat for the exam, over 94.66 per cent passed, according to results released by the provincial education department.

Ministry spokesman Ros Soveacha said on November 22 that results were published on November 22 at each testing centre and online. He said the ministry will release all results after it has collected them from across the country.

He said that in general, the exam process on November 15-16 went well and ended with acceptable results as planned and similar to previous years. Nevertheless, he said a small number of candidates were absent during the

exam for personal reasons.

He said the examination continued to follow the principles of the law, justice transparency and acceptable results in accordance with health safety measures.

According to Soveacha, the total number of candidates who sat for the Grade 9 exam nationwide was 162,589, of whom 87,871 were females. There were 1,722 examination centres and 7,327 examination rooms.

Separately, education minister Hang Chuon Naron on November 22 issued regulations and discipline for candidates taking the Grade 12 exam, also known as the baccalaureate exam or "Bac II", which falls on December 27.

The announcement aimed to maintain order during the exam and to improve health and safety for the exam committee and candidates in the context of Covid-19. It specified permitted activities for candidates during the exam. ■

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Business

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| USD / KHR | USD / CAD | USD / CNY | USD / JPY | USD / MYR | USD / SGD | USD / THB | AUD / USD | EUR / USD | GBP / USD |
| ↑ 4,096 | ↑ 1.2736 | ↑ 6.3881 | ↑ 114.77 | ↑ 4.1990 | ↑ 1.3660 | ↑ 33.11 | ↓ 0.7221 | ↓ 1.1259 | ↓ 1.3376 |

ABA NATIONAL BANK OF CANADA GROUP

TRADING INFORMATION ON CAMBODIA SECURITIES EXCHANGE

Date: November 23, 2021

Auction Trading Method (ATM)

| NO | STOCK | CLOSING PRICE | OPENING PRICE | HIGH | LOW |
|----|-------|---------------|---------------|--------|--------|
| 1 | ABC | 10,940 | 10,900 | 10,940 | 10,880 |
| 2 | GTI | 4,260 | 4,220 | 4,260 | 4,220 |
| 3 | PAS | 13,480 | 13,600 | 13,600 | 13,460 |
| 4 | PEPC | 3,150 | 3,150 | 3,150 | 3,150 |
| 5 | PPAP | 14,660 | 14,660 | 14,660 | 14,420 |
| 6 | PPSP | 2,010 | 2,000 | 2,020 | 2,000 |
| 7 | PWSA | 6,900 | 6,860 | 6,900 | 6,860 |



\$250M set for agri financing in 2022

Hin Pisei

THE government has set aside \$250 million for direct financing in 2022 through two state-owned financial institutions at low interest rates, and is resolved to encourage commercial banks and microfinance lenders to provide additional credit to support agriculture and other priority sectors, according to Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Veng Sakhon.

The state-owned banks are Small and Medium Enterprise Bank of Cambodia Plc (SME Bank) and Agricultural and Rural Development Bank of Cambodia (ARDB).

The move was revealed at a virtual closed-door meeting last week to review and discuss preparation of a "Draft Strategic Framework and Programme to Restore and Stimulate Cambodia's Economic Growth in Living with Covid-19 in the New Normal", which was presided over by Minister of Economy and Finance Aun Pornmoniroth.

Sakhon said in a statement that the document is designed to reform and introduce measures to rehabilitate the agricultural sector, which it flags for its apparent continued high potential to support food security, underpin economic growth and create jobs.

He noted the government has rolled out fiscal and financial support measures and incentives to inspire investment in agriculture and develop the agro-processing indus-



Agricultural products play an important role in creating jobs and improving family economies, especially during the Covid-19 crisis. AGRICULTURE MINISTRY

try, a move he said has helped the Kingdom enhance local agricultural products to meet consumption demand and further increase exports.

The minister added that the direct loans from SME Bank and ARDB under the financing mechanism set for 2022 would have "low interest rates of around five to 5.5 per cent for key

segments such as cultivation, animal husbandry, agricultural product processing and ecotourism".

"At the same time, the government will encourage commercial banks and microfinance institutions to increase lending by revising the credit guarantee conditions of the Credit Guarantee Corporation of Cambodia

[CGCC], by expanding the scope of guarantee coverage in conjunction with other favourable terms," he said.

Mostly unscathed by Covid shocks, agriculture and agro-industry were considered high-potential sectors during the crisis – as demand for food increased – for the alleviation of the burden and impact shoul-

dered by other sectors, by providing employment and income for families and the national economy.

Cambodia Rice Federation chairman Hun Lak told *The Post* on November 22 that the agriculture-centred financing mechanism would provide many benefits to growers and lead to investments that prop up production, to meet demand for domestic consumption and exports.

Agricultural products play an important role in creating jobs and improving family economies, especially during Covid, he said.

"In the past, government financing for agriculture had been for the rice sector, but since the Covid-19 crisis, the government has considered a lot of other segments such as crop growing, livestock raising and agricultural product processing."

He noted that processing and packaging were not so much an issue when it comes to exports, but that matters concerning the procurement of fresh fruits and vegetables require further discussion and government-supported agreements on phytosanitary rules that cover the entire supply chain, from cultivation to packaging and transport.

Citing the agriculture ministry's National Phytosanitary Database, Sakhon previously reported that Cambodia exported 6,364,607.24 tonnes of agricultural products in January-October, surging by 87.53 per cent year-on-year from 3,393,915.64 tonnes, valued at \$4,071,571,098.37, to 68 countries and territories. ■

Pay taxes or face public shaming, court, GDT warns

Hom Phanet

THE General Department of Taxation (GDT) has said it will take strict action against business owners who do not pay their tax debts – including public shaming – and that repeat offenders could face court action.

In a notice issued on November 17 targeted at tax debtors, the GDT underlined that paying taxes is the obligation of all citizens, and contributes to national economic development in all fields.

The department, under the Ministry of Economy and Finance, said it "had previously observed that most enterprises would come and pay their tax debts with a high sense of responsibility".

"But there are still some that have not come to pay their tax debts, even though the GDT has repeatedly issued invita-

tions, as reminders to come and pay."

Eng Ratana, director of the GDT's Large Taxpayer Department, affirmed that a large share of enterprise owners had yet to pay their tax arrears despite numerous "invitations".

He told *The Post* on November 23 that the GDT would take a series of measures before seeking any court action as a final resort, which he said could potentially lead to closure. "This is a joint notice to confirm that they are still in debt and let them come and solve the problem."

"We can let them pay in instalments if they lack the ability to avoid tax evasion."

He believes that the notice will prod business owners into promptly settling their tax dues, and avoid legal action by the GDT.

The GDT notice went on to say that offenders could face other actions

such as public name disclosure, suspension or termination of business activities, a freeze on imports and exports or bank accounts, or the suspension of ownership transfer of movable and immovable property.

The department said it will also work with the Ministry of Commerce to suspend the registration of new companies and the transfer of shares.

The GDT may also seek collaboration with the National Police to bring the involved individuals to pay tax debts, arrest them or confiscate property, and forward cases to the judiciary.

The department has said it collected more than \$2.3 billion in revenue in the first 10 months of this year, down by 5.05 per cent year-on-year, noting that this represents 103.23 per cent of the annual target of \$2.24307 billion, as outlined in the Law on Financial Management for 2021. ■



The General Department of Taxation (GDT) says it collected more than \$2.3 billion in revenue in the first 10 months of this year, or 103.23 per cent of the annual target of \$2.24307 billion. POST STAFF

Doosan to develop car hydrogen power pack

SOUTH Korea's Doosan Group on November 21 said it will develop a hydrogen power pack for commercial vehicles, signalling its entry into the hydrogen bus and truck markets.

"We will develop a hydrogen power pack for land vehicles. We are also reviewing a total charging solution at bus depots that can charge both hydrogen and electric buses," an executive at Doosan Fuel Cell, a hydrogen business unit of Doosan, told the *Korea Herald* while declining to be named.

A hydrogen power pack is a type of generator. It's equivalent to an engine of an internal combustion engine vehicle. Inside a hydrogen power pack, fuel cells are installed to generate electricity and power an electric motor.

Doosan previously manufactured hydrogen power packs for drones only and this is the first time to develop one for cars.

Doosan's hydrogen power pack has a competitive edge in the drone market, as it is lighter and offers a shorter charging time than batteries. The commercialised product has created synergies with its sister company Doosan Mobility Innovation, which manufactures drones.

Doosan's development of hydrogen power packs for cars follows the government's aggressive push for the hydrogen economy.

According to its hydrogen blueprint announced in 2019, the government aims to switch public buses to hydrogen buses and adopt 2,000 units by next year. The goal is to put 40,000 hydrogen buses on the road and export 20,000 units by 2040. In



Doosan's hydrogen power pack for drones. DOOSAN

the case of hydrogen trucks, the target is 30,000 units for domestic use and 90,000 units for export.

According to the official, Doosan's ambition isn't limited to just manufacturing components for hydrogen vehicles.

The ultimate goal is to create an entire ecosystem. The conglomerate focused on industrial equipment is reviewing to install its hydrogen fuel cell system Tri-gen at bus depots and use it as a charger for both electric and hydrogen buses.

Doosan's Tri-gen, which looks like a giant container, can generate hydrogen, electricity and heat all at

once with natural gas. It can produce up to 220km of hydrogen per day and generate between 350-450kW of electricity, which is powerful enough to quick charge Hyundai's Ioniq5 in 10-12 minutes.

As Tri-gen doesn't require additional grid infrastructure, it is deemed as one of the cheapest charging solutions for the early stages of the hydrogen economy.

As Doosan makes a foray into the hydrogen bus and truck markets, competition with Hyundai Motor seems inevitable.

To take initiative in the hydrogen truck market, Hyundai Motor has

already partnered up with major logistics firms.

In September, Hyundai Glovis and CJ Logistics agreed with Hyundai Motor to purchase two units of the automaker's hydrogen truck Xcient and test them in the field. Starting this month, Coupang will also operate one Xcient and test its feasibility.

Hyundai Motor aims to establish an annual production capacity of some 20,000 hydrogen trucks by this year and export more than 60,000 units – 25,000 to Europe, 12,000 to North America and 27,000 to China.

Fierce competition is also expected in the domestic hydrogen bus mar-

ket. Since July, Hyundai Motor began mass production of a hydrogen bus with a driving range of 450km. Also, the carmaker is preparing to mass produce an express bus model, called Universe.

But industry watchers say that Doosan has a chance, as Hyundai Motor's presence in the commercial hydrogen vehicle market is relatively weak compared to its dominant standing in the passenger vehicle market.

Kim Pil-soo, a professor of automotive engineering at Daelim University, said: "Hyundai Motor is struggling to take control of the domestic electric bus market because the company has yet to achieve economies of scale compared to Chinese electric buses.

"Of course, Doosan is unlikely to directly manufacture hydrogen buses or hydrogen trucks, but it can create a consortium with partners and supply its hydrogen power packs for the vehicles."

According to Kim, Hyundai Motor could struggle to achieve price competitiveness for its hydrogen buses and trucks, just like its situation in the electric bus market. This could open up a window for Doosan to find outside partners and supply its hydrogen power packs, just like foreign automakers and Korean battery manufacturers form strategic partnerships.

A domestically made hydrogen bus costs around 400 million won (\$336,000), which is 100 million won more expensive than a Chinese-made model. In the case of Seoul, of 352 electric buses the city plans to purchase this year, 117 of them are from Chinese brands. THE KOREA HERALD/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Vietnam banks race to increase charter capital in fourth quarter

VIETNAMESE state-owned and private joint stock banks have been racing to increase charter capital in the last months of this year to boost financial strength and meet the State Bank of Vietnam's (SBV) regulations on capital adequacy ratio.

On November 22, BIDV announced it would close the list of shareholders for collecting written opinions on a plan to increase capital through issuing shares to pay dividends. According to the approved plan, the bank will increase its charter capital by 8.3 to 48.52 trillion dong (\$360 million to \$2.1 billion) through distributing dividends in shares and issuing additional shares.

SHB has recently also planned to increase capital from 19.26 trillion dong to more than 26.674 trillion dong.

Meanwhile, ABBank has announced during the period from November 18 to December 8, the bank will receive capital from the issuance of more than 114.26 million shares to existing shareholders at the price of 10,000 dong per share.

ABBank has also completed the application to the State Securities Commission to carry out the issuance of more than 11.426 million shares to employees under an employee stock ownership plan (ESOP).

Notably, right after completing the offering to existing shareholders and issuing ESOP shares,

ABBank will continue to distribute bonus shares at the rate of 35 per cent from the undistributed profit source and the reserve fund worth a total of nearly 2.44 trillion dong to raise its charter capital to nearly 10 trillion dong.

Some other banks planning to significantly increase charter capital in 2021 are Sacombank with a rise of nearly 32 per cent, VIB (44.2 per cent), SCB (32.8 per cent), OCB (31.8 per cent), ACB (25 per cent) and HDBank (25 per cent).

To date, more than 20 banks, such as Vietcombank, VietinBank, BID, SHB, VPBank, TPBank and OCB have increased charter capital to meet the central bank's regulation. Banks must have their capital adequacy ratio (CAR) to meet Basel II standards as prescribed in Circular 41/2016/TT-NHNN by January 1, 2023. Up to now, 16 out of 35 banks have met the requirement.

Besides meeting the central bank's regulation, capital increase will also contribute to improving banks' financial strength and helping them increase medium and long-term capital source to expand business activities. Therefore, the race to increase charter capital among banks is forecast to continue strongly next year.

After the first nine months of this year, VietinBank surpassed BIDV to become the bank with the largest charter capital in the country's banking system. After issuing nearly 1.1 billion shares to pay dividends at the rate of more than 29 per cent, VietinBank's charter capital increased to 48.01 trillion dong.

The bank has planned to ask for approval to continuously raise charter capital to 54.13 trillion dong at its general meeting of shareholders this year.

It was followed by VPBank with nearly 45.05 trillion dong after the bank completed the issuance of shares to increase charter capital by nearly 19.75 trillion dong.

However, VP Bank's position is forecast to change as Vietcombank's board of directors has recently approved a plan to increase charter capital by 10.23 trillion dong to more than 47.32 trillion dong. VIET NAM NEWS/ASIA NEWS NETWORK



A BIDV office in Vietnamese capital Hanoi. BIDV will increase its charter capital by 8.3 to 48.52 trillion dong (\$360 million to \$2.1 billion). SUPPLIED

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The Phnom Penh Post

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

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

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Business



Siem Reap province is gearing up to welcome fully-vaccinated international tourists. HENG CHIVAN

Siem Reap calls on businesses to apply for Covid-19 SOP audit

Nov Sivutha

SIEM Reap provincial authorities called on owners of hotels, accommodation services, beer gardens and tourism-related businesses to apply for a “new normal” Minimum Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) compliance audit, as the province gears up to welcome vaccinated tourists.

The Siem Reap Provincial Administration said in a November 22 statement that owners of these businesses must apply at the provincial Department

of Tourism for the audit before accepting travellers.

The administration also instructed them to obtain a valid tourism business licence at the provincial hall or the Ministry of Tourism’s One Window Service Office.

Neither Siem Reap Provincial Administration spokesman Ly Samrith nor provincial Department of Tourism director Ngov Sengkak could be reached for comment on November 23.

Pacific Asia Travel Association Cambodia chapter chairman Thourn Sinan acknowledged the announcement, but

noted that many hotels, guesthouses and tourism businesses have already opened their doors, even during lockdown.

He said on November 23: “The entire country is reopening now – the Siem Reap administration’s announcement should have been made much sooner, and not as late as it was.”

“Coming out now, it is not useful. It is not befitting at all.”

Pov Makara, general manager of Hotel Phila Siem Reap, told *The Post* that the management “had not received” the provincial administration’s latest statement, but said the hotel and

guests are abiding by the Ministry of Health’s Covid measures.

The hotel had a large number of guests stay during the Water Festival holiday, he said, noting that the occupancy rate dipped afterwards.

He expects hotels and tourism businesses to normalise after the government reopens the country to international tourists, which he said will provide income to businesses and locals.

Makara shared that he had applied for a massage business licence and had received a letter, but that authorities had yet to conduct an inspection. ■

Kratie plant boosts sugarcane growing, prepares to export

Hom Phanet

AFTER a nearly 10-year production hiatus, a joint venture sugarcane factory in Kratie province’s northernmost district plans to start exporting, and is pushing to increase cultivation to maintain the sustainability of its supply chain, a senior provincial official told *The Post* on November 23.

Kratie provincial deputy governor Pen Linat said the plant reopened last year following investment by local and Vietnamese investors and now employs more than 500 workers, and that 3,000ha of sugarcane on a planned 10,000ha have been planted at an attached plantation.

Located in O’Krieng commune in the northern reaches of Sambor district, the operation is a collaboration between Camden Novcher and Svay Rieng Youth Agricultural Co.

Linat said the sugarcane factory is the only one of its

kind in the province, and was set up by an Indian investor nearly 10 years ago, but later went bankrupt.

The Vietnamese company last year expressed interest in the factory and plantation, he said, adding that the plantation’s sugarcane would be harvested in the coming months.

He noted that the factory would “in the past” process the sugarcane into raw sugar – which has a beige tint from its molasses content – but not commercial-grade granulated sugar.

According to the deputy governor, about 90 per cent of the plant’s production line is automated, which he said requires a lot of capital investment.

He said that bringing the site up to full operation could pave the way for the production of alcohol and electricity generation from sugarcane byproducts.

Kratie provincial Department of Agriculture, Forestry



The Kingdom exported more than \$18.95 million worth of sugar and confectionery items in the first half of this year, down by 43.9 per cent year-on-year from \$33.79 million. FRESH NEWS

and Fisheries deputy director Ork Darun noted that the perennial grass could be grown in any locality of the province, “but because private companies are investing in sugarcane factories in Sambor district alone, the crop is only grown in that area”.

But the joint venture is not the only sugar producer in the Kingdom.

In December 2019 during a visit to a Phnom Penh Sugar Co Ltd factory production line in Kampong Speu, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Veng Sakhon said the plant has the daily capacity to

refine 1,000 tonnes of granulated sugar and produce 1,000 tonnes of brown sugar.

Today, Sakhon said, the domestic market and Vietnam are the company’s largest destinations. “The company plans to further ramp up exports to overseas markets,” he said.

The Kingdom exported more than \$18.95 million worth of sugar and confectionery items in the first half of this year, down by 43.9 per cent year-on-year from \$33.79 million, according to the General Department of Customs and Excise of Cambodia. ■

China warns firms on Taiwan island against ‘backing independence’

CHINA has warned Taiwanese firms against supporting the island’s independence, hours after state media said a Taiwanese conglomerate was fined by mainland regulators as tensions flare between Beijing and Democratic Progressive Party-led Taiwan authorities.

Analysts said the move could ratchet economic pressure on Taiwanese companies operating in mainland China – and the local firms that invest in them.

Beijing claims Taiwan as part of its territory to be re-taken one day, by force if necessary.

It has intensified military, diplomatic and economic pressure on Taiwan authorities since President Tsai Ingwen’s 2016 election, as she sees the island as “already independent” and not part of its “one China”.

Beijing “would never allow people who support ‘Taiwan independence’ and damage cross-strait relations to make money on the mainland”, the Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) said in a statement issued late on November 22.

It was responding to a report on the official Xinhua News Agency that Taiwan’s Far Eastern Group was fined in the mainland over its investments in several Chinese provinces for violating local regulations.

“The vast number of Taiwanese companies need to tell the right from the wrong, stand firm on their position while drawing the line against ‘Taiwan independence’ split-tist forces,” said the statement by spokeswoman Zhu Fenglian.

TAO this month listed several of the island’s top politicians as “Taiwan independence diehards” and warned that the authorities would “pursue criminal responsi-

bility” effective for life.

When asked if the fine was related to the list, Zhu reiterated that the “diehard” politicians, their affiliated businesses and financial backers “will be severely punished in accordance with the law”.

Two Far Eastern units confirmed they were fined more than 88 million yuan (\$13 million) in mainland China for violating environmental protection, fire safety, taxation and other regulations.

“Looks to me like another small ratchet up, moving from targeting Taiwanese individuals to firms,” Kharis Templeman, a political scientist with the Hoover Project on Taiwan, wrote on Twitter.

“I’d imagine there will be significant resistance to this. The local partners are also making money,” he added.

While relations between the Chinese government and Taiwan authorities are at their lowest in decades, Beijing has largely avoided punitive measures against Taiwanese companies that might impact mainland Chinese investors.

Margaret McCuaig-Johnston, an expert at the China Institute at the University of Alberta, said the TAO’s warning suggests that might have changed.

“Like Canadian and Australian businesses, Taiwanese firms are now finding that doing business in [mainland] China carries a much higher risk than other countries,” she wrote on Twitter.

“Those who can’t afford their business to be suddenly hit by malign & fabricated accusations should diversify to other countries.”

Far Eastern is one of Taiwan’s largest conglomerates with businesses from textile, construction, hotels to the Sogo department store chain. AFP ■

Tourism restart offers ‘a light’ for foreigners to take Cambodia trip

Continued from page 1

released on November 22.

Of these, 63,050 (or 47.88 per cent) entered the Kingdom by air, and 68,624 (52.12 per cent) by land or waterways.

Thailand was the top source market for travellers to Cambodia, at 64,459 or 48.95 per cent of the total, followed by mainland China (37,197), Vietnam (7,649), Indonesia (4,211), South Korea (2,989), the US (2,934), the Chinese island of Taiwan (2,434), France (1,624), Malaysia (1,336) and Japan (1,220).

In September alone, 9,967 foreign tourists visited Cambodia, dropping by 52.8 per cent year-on-year from 21,137.

Cambodia Association of Travel Agents adviser Ho Vandy told *The Post* on November 23 that Covid concerns were the predominant reason for the dip

in international tourist arrivals.

However, he believes that number will recover gradually after the government scrapped quarantine requirements for all arrivals who are fully-vaccinated against the novel coronavirus.

“This is a light for foreigners who want to travel to Cambodia and for those in the tourism sector,” Vandy said.

He added that through concerted efforts, international flights have gradually begun to take off again, but asserted that “for the sector to be sustainable, both the government and the people must be involved in the implementation of measures to combat Covid-19”.

In 2020, Cambodia received a total of 1,306,143 foreign visitors, a decrease of 80.2 per cent compared to 6,610,592 in 2019, according to the ministry. ■

World

Sudan frees civilian leaders held since putsch

SUDANESE authorities have released several civilian leaders detained since last month's military coup, a former captive said on November 22, amid efforts to restore a fragile transition process towards full democracy.

Last month's coup drew international condemnation and punitive measures, with the US on November 22 urging more progress before resuming millions of dollars of suspended aid.

"I was released late yesterday evening," following a deal to reverse the military takeover, the head of Sudan's Congress Party, Omar al-Degeir, who was among civilians arrested in the army's October 25 power grab, told AFP.

"I was in solitary confinement and completely cut off from the world throughout this period."

The Congress Party, however, slammed November 21's deal, saying it "explicitly legitimised the continuation of the coup regime".

Other civilian politicians were also released, including Sadeeq al-Sadiq al-Mahdi of the Umma Party, Sudan's largest political group.

Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok's adviser Yasser Arman, a

leading figure of Sudan's main civilian bloc, the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC), was among those freed, according to Degeir.

But other key civilian figures and ministers deposed in the coup have yet to be freed.

On November 22, 12 out of the 17 FFC members in Hamdok's dismissed government, including foreign minister Mariam al-Mahdi, announced their resignation, refusing to collaborate with the coup leaders.

"We don't question his integrity as a patriot or as a leader ... but what happened yesterday was a setback, a setback in the trust," Mahdi told the US think-tank, Atlantic Council, after Hamdok met with his cabinet.

Top general Abdel Fattah al-Burhan last month declared a state of emergency and ousted the Hamdok government, in a move that upended a two-year transition to civilian rule.

The move sparked international condemnation and punitive measures, and provoked a wave of mass street protests and clashes with security forces.

At least 41 people have been killed, the latest of them a teenager shot dead by security forces on November 21, according to pro-democracy doctors.



A Sudanese protester waves a flag during a rally in the capital Khartoum following a deal-signing ceremony to restore the transition to civilian rule on Sunday. AFP

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told Sudanese leaders that November 21's deal to reverse the military takeover was only a first step, the state department said.

"This is the first step. It's not the last step," department spokesman Ned Price told reporters in Washington.

He said Washington, which has suspended \$700 in aid to

Sudan, wanted to see more progress towards democracy in the African country.

Hamdok, who had been under effective house arrest for a month, emerged to sign the 14-point deal with Burhan under which the premier was reinstated and political detainees freed.

However, analysts warn the move simply "whitewashes"

the coup, as it remains unclear how much power Hamdok's team will yield.

The cabinet will remain under the oversight of a ruling council led by the military.

Thousands of demonstrators in multiple rallies on November 21 rejected the deal, shouting, "No to military power" and demanding that the armed forces fully

withdraw from government.

Whereas Hamdok had previously been hailed as Sudan's sole "legitimate" leader, protesters tore up posters of the premier and decried him as a "traitor" to the 2019 revolt that ousted autocratic ruler Omar al-Bashir.

The Sudanese Professionals' Association, an umbrella group of unions that was also instrumental in bringing down Bashir, described the deal as "political suicide" for Hamdok.

The deal was welcomed by the UN and African Union, as well as the so-called Troika of Britain, Norway and the US.

It was also greeted by Saudi Arabia and Egypt, which have strong ties with the Sudanese military.

Burhan on November 22 renewed a pledge to lead Sudan to "free and transparent elections" on July 23.

The deal raises hopes the country will be able to return to its tenuous transition process since the ouster of Bashir following months of mass street protests.

But analysts voiced scepticism, stressing the general had satisfied the international community while at the same time consolidating his control over the transition process. AFP

N Korea: UN rights resolution result of 'hostile policy'

PYONGYANG "strongly" condemned the recent passage of the UN draft resolution on human rights violations in North Korea and reiterated its call for the UN to investigate the US for human rights abuses, state-run media reported on November 21.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), or North Korea, claimed that the US and other "hostile forces" forcibly adopted the draft resolution, in a press statement issued by an unnamed Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson.

The press statement was released four days after the EU-led draft resolution was passed at the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly on November 17 for the 17th consecutive

year by consensus, with more than 60 countries joining as co-sponsors.

The ministry "strongly denounces and categorically rejects the anti-DPRK human rights resolution of the hostile forces", the spokesperson said, echoing North Korean ambassador to the UN Kim Song's remarks during November 17's meeting.

The spokesperson dismissed the resolution as a "product of anti-DPRK hostile policy and double standards as well as a grave infringement upon the sovereignty aimed at tarnishing the prestigious image of our state".

Pyongyang also pledged to firmly respond to any attempts to violate its sovereignty.

"To us, human rights are, after all,

state rights," the statement, which was carried by state-run Korean Central News Agency primarily targeting external audiences, read.

"We will never tolerate any attempts that violate the sovereignty of our state, and we will continue to resolutely counter to the end the ever-worsening moves of the hostile forces against us."

In November 21's statement, Pyongyang also specifically urged the UN to look into human rights violations associated with the US, which participated in the UN human rights resolution as a co-sponsor.

The spokesperson said that the UN should put the "inhumane crimes committed by the US" on the agenda and bring the US to account for killing

"a large number of civilians in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan under the pretext of democracy and protection of human rights".

The condemnation is in line with the trend of the country's foreign ministry releasing statements addressing US human rights issues more frequently since this August on its official website.

November 21's denunciation is not fresh, but it is notable given that the Biden administration places human rights issues and democratic values at the centre of US foreign policy, mainly to counter China.

Washington has reversed the Trump administration's decision to withdraw from the UN Human Rights Council (HRC). The Biden administration is

set to return to the HRC in January after regaining a seat on the council last month.

On November 19, the ministry also called for eradicating the US "double-dealing standards" over human rights issues in a statement uploaded on its online website.

In a separate statement, the ministry denounced the UN on the same day for arbitrarily addressing human rights issues in specific countries including Syria and Iran.

Pyongyang also complained that the US and other western countries have been excluded from the target of UN investigation into violations and abuses of human rights. THE KOREA HERALD/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

India hopeful for \$500M Bangladesh defence credit

INDIAN defence minister Rajnath Singh on November 22 expressed hope that India's \$500 million line of credit to Bangladesh for defence equipment will spur joint activities not only in acquisition of assets but also in co-development and co-production of defence material.

He said India is keen to continue working closely with Bangladesh, helping and supporting each other's defence and security concerns.

The credit line was first announced by India during

Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to New Delhi in 2017.

Rajnath made the remarks when he visited the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi on the occasion of the country's Armed Forces Day, which falls on November 21.

"India is deeply sensitive to the security and development concerns of its neighbours and hopes for reciprocal level of sensitivity on the part of the neighbours towards the concerns of India.

"In this context, it is critical for

our armed forces to remain engaged with each other for mutual capability enhancement, to respond to contingencies and to realise the shared goals of providing security and prosperity to our people," he said.

The minister expressed satisfaction that the close defence cooperation between India and Bangladesh, which started during the Liberation War, is continuing apace.

"Defence cooperation between the two countries has grown steadily in the last few years by way of several activi-

ties - defence dialogue, staff talks, joint training, exercise and high-level exchanges.

"It is remarkable that all three service chiefs of Bangladesh have visited India this year and from India, the chiefs of army and air force visited Bangladesh this year," Rajnath pointed out.

The event was organised by the Bangladesh High Commission. High Commissioner of Bangladesh Muhammad Imran, ambassadors and heads of missions, officers from Armed Forces of Bangladesh and other friendly countries

and war veterans were among those present.

The defence minister appreciated the gesture of the Bangladeshi government of erecting a memorial for the Indian soldiers at Ashuganj town in the eastern part of the country, a *Daily Star* correspondent in New Delhi reported.

Rajnath said India and Bangladesh are strong partners in bringing progress and prosperity for the people of South Asia.

"Both are facing challenges which are similar. Today, we are

fighting shoulder to shoulder against common challenges such as poverty and hunger, surge of terrorism and extremist ideologies and climate change," he said.

Rajnath lauded the progress achieved by Bangladesh over the years and said that it is currently one of the fastest growing economies in the world.

He said India is "privileged" to be one of Bangladesh's major development partners with a total portfolio of close to \$10 billion. THE DAILY STAR (BANGLADESH)/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Duterte condemns South China Sea flare-up

PHILIPPINE President Rodrigo Duterte on November 22 condemned the latest flare-up in the disputed South China Sea after Chinese coastguard ships fired water cannon at Filipino boats.

Duterte made the remarks at an Asian regional summit hosted by Chinese President Xi Jinping, who vowed his country would “never seek hegemony, and certainly not bully the small”.

China claims almost all of the waterway, through which trillions of dollars in trade passes annually, with competing claims from Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Taiwan authorities led by the Democratic Progressive Party.

Beijing has ignored a 2016 ruling by The Hague-based Permanent Court of Arbitration that its historical claim is without basis.

Tensions over the resource-rich sea spiked last week when Chinese coastguard vessels fired water cannon at Philippine boats delivering supplies to Filipino marines on Second Thomas Shoal, in the contested Spratly Islands.

Manila expressed outrage at the incident, but Beijing said the Philippine boats had entered its waters without permission.

“We abhor the recent event in the Ayungin Shoal and view with grave concern other sim-



Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's remarks were unusually strong for a leader who has fostered warmer ties with Beijing. RTVM

ilar developments,” Duterte told the virtual ASEAN-China Special Summit to Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations, using the Filipino name for the shoal.

“This does not speak well of the relations between our nations and our partnership.”

Duterte's remarks were unusually strong for a leader who has fostered warmer ties with Beijing since taking

power in 2016 in the hope of extracting promised investment and trade.

It is not clear if Xi was participating in the meeting when Duterte spoke.

For his part, Xi told the gathering “we must jointly maintain the stability of the South China Sea and build the South China Sea into a sea of peace, friendship, and cooperation”.

Meanwhile, Myanmar's junta said it was not represented

at the summit after some ASEAN members blocked an invitation from China for its chief to attend.

It was the second time in weeks that Min Aung Hlaing had been excluded from an ASEAN gathering, deepening the regime's isolation after it took power in a coup on February 1.

The renewed tensions over the South China Sea have drawn international concern. The US on November 19

warned China that an armed attack against Philippine public vessels would invite a US response under its treaty obligations to the Southeast Asian nation.

The EU also called on “all parties to respect freedom of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea”.

At the summit, Malaysian Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob warned against actions that could “further

complicate the situation and escalate tensions in the area”.

Duterte said the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 2016 arbitral ruling against China – which he set aside after taking office – should be “fully” utilised to resolve the disputes.

He urged China to “remain committed to the early conclusion of an effective and substantive Code of Conduct in the South China Sea”.

“There is simply no other way out of this colossal problem but the rule of law,” he added.

Philippines defence secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the supply boats would resume their mission to Second Thomas Shoal after China's ambassador to the Philippines gave assurances they would not be impeded.

China controls several reefs in the South China Sea including Scarborough Shoal – which Beijing seized from Manila in 2012 – just 240km west of the main Philippine island of Luzon.

It has asserted its stance by building up small shoals and reefs into military bases with airstrips and port facilities.

After China occupied Mischief Reef in the mid-1990s, the Philippines marooned a derelict navy vessel atop the nearby Second Thomas Shoal to assert Manila's territorial claim. Members of the Philippine marines are based there. AFP

Five Vietnamese rescued from life of slavery in UK

FIVE Vietnamese nationals have been rescued from a life of slavery by the authorities in the UK.

Police say they were living in “appalling conditions” and forced to grow and guard millions of dollars' worth of illegal drugs.

They were discovered in cramped living conditions following a two-year investigation into modern slavery and drug supply across the county of Essex – the same place where 39 Vietnamese nationals died in the back of a lorry as they tried to illegally enter the UK two years ago.

Anonymity laws in the UK prevent details of victims of slavery from being released to the media, so information

about the ages or sex of the five Vietnamese has not been published.

Last week at Basildon Crown Court in the south of England, five men were sentenced after admitting the crimes.

Four were jailed for a combined total of 15 years and six months. A fifth man was given a suspended prison sentence.

A spokesman for the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Unit of Essex Police said: “I'm extremely proud of all of the teams who have been involved in the investigation, whose hard work and dedication has helped sentence five men for their crimes and prevented a substantial quantity of cannabis from entering the illegal market.”

“Not only did the men capitalise

on the growing and selling of illegal drugs, they threatened and exploited five vulnerable people into doing their bidding.

“Not one ounce of care was shown for their welfare and had they not been safeguarded, they would have been worked into the ground.

“People trapped in modern slavery have their freedoms taken from them and often have to endure terrible working and living conditions.

“Although we often associate modern slavery with international enterprises, the sad truth is that there are victims across Essex who need our support and perpetrators that need to be brought to justice.”

This specialist police unit investigates organised crime groups who are exploiting vulnerable people by forcing them to ‘garden’ and guard cannabis growing.

Officers carried out warrants in four locations across Essex and London between November 2019 and July 2020.

At one industrial park in Essex, eight units had been converted into cannabis growing facilities and here police discovered a total of 1,015 plants.

At a recycling factory a further 850 plants were discovered and at two more addresses raided by police, 387 plants were seized.

In total, police say more than 2,000

plants were found with an estimated street value of more than \$2.6 million.

Last week, two years after the investigation began, those responsible were sentenced after pleading guilty to conspiracy to produce cannabis.

Ringleader James Jacobs, 39, was sentenced to five years, Danny Hicks, 41, jailed for three years and eight months. Gary Calder, 43, got three years and six months and 37-year-old David Hall was jailed for three years and four months.

A fifth man, Terrence Green, 34, received a suspended sentence of two and half years was ordered to complete 100 unpaid hours of work.

VIET NAM NEWS/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Latest cyberattack on Indonesia gov't ‘steals’ cop data

A RECENT alleged police data breach shows that not only is the Indonesian general public susceptible to having their data stolen and traded online amid the absence of data protection laws, but also law enforcement officials.

In a Twitter post on November 17, user @son1x777 claimed to have hacked into the National Police system and stolen the personal data of thousands of police officers, from their dates of birth to badge numbers. By November 20, the account had been suspended for violating Twitter rules.

National Police spokesman Inspector General Dedi Prasetyo has said that the police were still looking into the

alleged data breach, Kompas.com reported.

Wahyudi Djafar from the Institute for Policy Research and Advocacy (Elsam), which has been advocating for personal data protection laws for years, said the police must act fast to mitigate further data leakages and identify security vulnerabilities in their system.

“The police must also notify the subjects [police personnel] whose data has been compromised,” Wahyudi told the *Jakarta Post*.

He said the alleged incident underlined the urgent need for the personal data protection bill to be passed into law, which will provide guidelines for law enforcement agencies to

impose stern penalties against the illegal use of personal data.

The bill's deliberation at the House of Representatives has been slow due to a lack of consensus among the government and lawmakers over the design of a data protection agency.

House Deputy Speaker Sufmi Dasco Ahmad from the Gerindra Party previously said lawmakers would see to it that the bill was passed into law during the current sitting period, before lawmakers go into recess in mid-December.

Pratama Persadha from think tank Communication and Information System Security Research Center (CISS-ReC) found two different sets of leaked information, includ-

ing data related to internal police investigations on alleged police misconduct.

“There is a possibility that the attack was a form of hacktivism that will help the hackers build a reputation or introduce them to the world,” Pratama said.

He noted several other past cyberattacks on the police, including website defacement and hacking. He said another set of data on police personnel was currently still up for sale on online hacking forum Raid-Forums by an account with the username Stars12n.

The alleged police data breach occurred only weeks following cyberattacks on state agencies last month – one

related to the National Cyber and Encryption Agency (BSSN) and another that puts child victims of abuse at risk.

The latter centred on the hacking of the Indonesian Child Protection Commission's (KPAI) database of the personal information of people who had filed reports on alleged child abuse cases, like bullying, kidnapping, violence against children and rape.

The breach also exposed the names of the children and their guardians, as well as ID card numbers, mailing and email addresses and phone numbers of the persons who reported the alleged abuse.

“Low cyber security awareness is also one of the reasons

why government websites often become targets of hacking,” Pratama said, urging policymakers to immediately enact the data protection bill.

A member of the House Commission I overseeing defence, foreign affairs, information and intelligence, Irine Yusiana Roba Putri from the Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), said policymakers could not wait for another data breach to get serious about deliberating the data protection bill.

“We need to have proper regulations and competent regulators so the personal data of citizens and those managed by state institutions can be properly protected,” Irine said. THE

JAKARTA POST/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

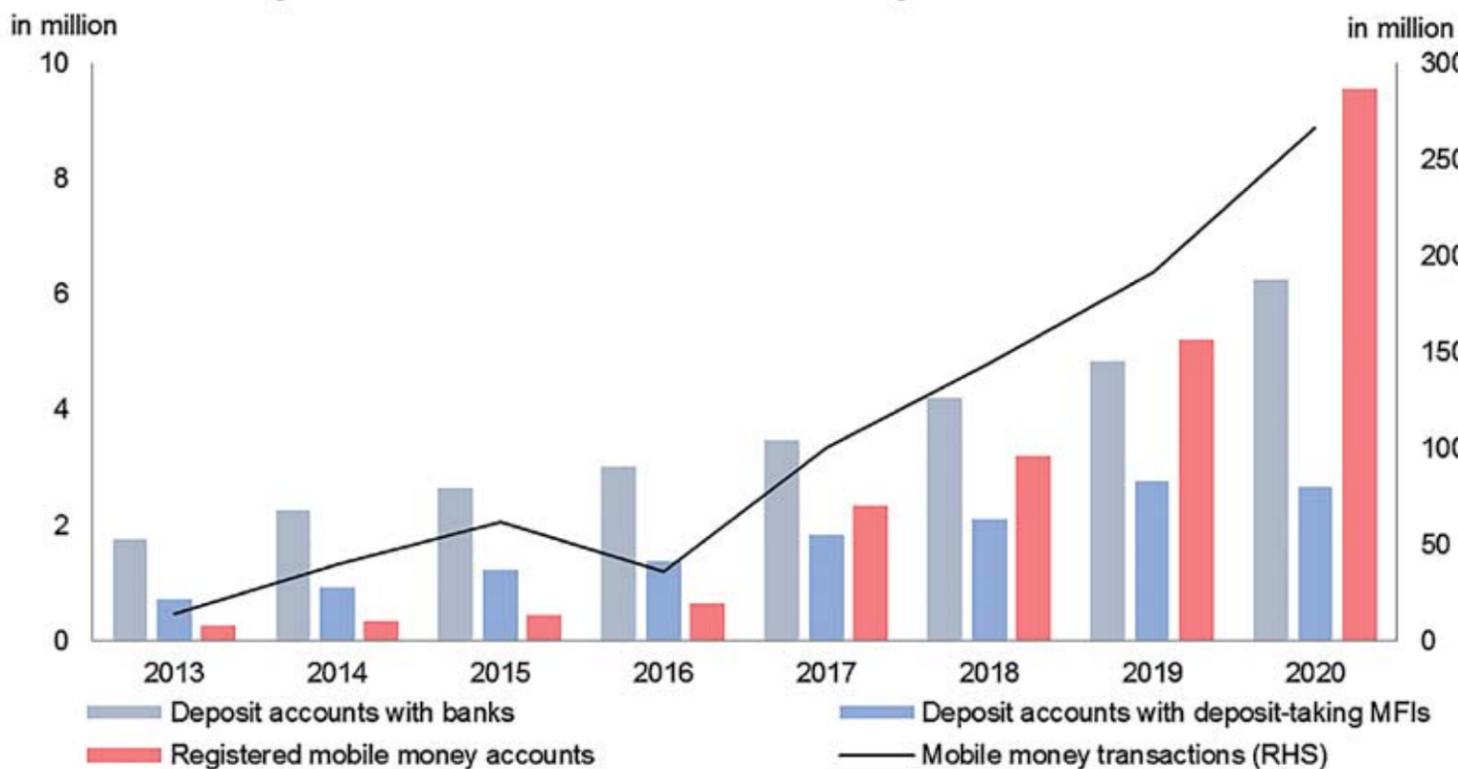
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Number of Deposit Accounts and Mobile Money Accounts and Transactions



Source: NBC; IMF Financial Access Survey

Promoting fintech development to achieve financial inclusion in Cambodia

Opinion
 Yuthan Chea

THE fintech ecosystem in Cambodia has expanded remarkably in recent years, particularly in digital payments and transfers. The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated this trend as many services moved to cashless transactions.

The National Bank of Cambodia (NBC) has encouraged and supported innovation and the provision of digital financial services to reduce costs, improve interoperability and promote financial inclusion.

More than 70 per cent of Cambodia's population is below 40 years of age, with a median age of 27. This young population, coupled with high mobile phone and internet penetrations at more than 100 per cent of the total population, have attracted fintech firms to introduce innovative e-wallet and mobile money services with their agent networks across the country.

The rise of digital and mobile banking has given more unbanked people access to formal and user-friendly financial services at lower charges. Banks and microfinance institutions (MFIs) have also leveraged on partnerships with payment service institutions to lower their operational costs, and developed their own mobile and internet banking services to be more convenient, secure, and attractive.

Rapid growth

Despite a late start, mobile money services have been growing rapidly as the number of mobile money agents has increased mark-

edly, reaching 400 agents per 100,000 adults in 2020, from only 34 in 2015.

Over the same period, the number of registered mobile money accounts increased more than 20 times to 9.6 million in 2020, accounting for more than 80 per cent of the adult population, which is higher than deposit accounts with commercial banks or deposit-taking MFIs (Figure 1). Moreover, the number and value of mobile money transactions have also expanded rapidly to 266.5 million transactions in 2020, with the total value amounting to 168.6 per cent of GDP.

This extensive network of mobile money agents has enabled the government to deliver in a timely manner digital cash transfers to a large number of workers and households during the Covid-19 pandemic. The NBC and financial institutions have also encouraged the use of cashless transactions via e-wallets and digital banking platforms to combat the spread of Covid-19 disease through paper-based instruments.

The NBC has developed new payment and settlement systems to support the country's rapidly expanding digital

financial services, including the National Clearing System (NCS), FAST Payment System (FAST), Cambodian Shared Switch (CSS), Retail Pay, and Bakong (Figure 2). The recently added Retail Pay aims at improving electronic payments and fund transfers between participating financial institutions. Meanwhile, using blockchain technology, Bakong is a backbone payment system that enables interoperability among financial institutions, enhances efficiency in payment systems, promotes financial inclusion and encourages the use of cashless payments in local currency.

Nikkei Asia recently reported that as of June 2021, the number of Bakong wallet users reached 200,000, doubling in a mere three months. Also, almost six million people have benefited from this system, including those accessing indirectly through mobile apps of member institutions. In the first half of this year alone, a total of 1.4 million transactions worth around \$500 million were recorded.

Challenges remain

While Cambodia's fintech ecosystem has seen rapid

development, some challenges remain, as highlighted in AMRO's 2021 Annual Consultation Report on Cambodia.

First, a low level of financial and digital literacy can be one of the main obstacles in expanding the reach of innovative financial services, especially to the elderly and low-income people living in rural areas.

Second, cybersecurity threats could affect public confidence and undermine the ability of regulatory authorities to maintain financial stability. With the advancement in digitalisation, Cambodia becomes more exposed to cybersecurity risk that can cause material disruption in the financial system and result in a loss of public confidence.

Lastly, the presence of various payment services in the market offered by similar service providers could lead to inconvenience and confusion among users with limited knowledge of digital and market developments.

Going forward, all stakeholders need to continue their efforts to reap greater benefits from fintech development. Promoting financial and digital literacy is crucial

to putting innovative financial products within the reach of the public, and in enhancing the likelihood of their adoption. Policymakers and market players can focus on young adults who are keen to embrace digital services, and who can then share their knowledge with peers and family members.

Meanwhile, regulators and financial institutions need to establish and adopt proper cybersecurity and consumer protection protocols and best practices to ensure stability in the financial system. In addition, further development of supportive and innovative infrastructures, such as payment systems that enable cross currency and cross border transactions, will promote the growth of fintech adoption in the country.

With adequate policy support and risk management, the fintech ecosystem could be a game changer in enhancing financial inclusion in Cambodia during and beyond the Covid-19 pandemic. ■

The author is an associate at the ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office (AMRO), an international organisation established by ASEAN+3 members to contribute to safeguarding the region's macroeconomic and financial stability.

NBC's Payment Infrastructures



Source: NBC

Lifestyle

The White Building is gone but Kavich's *White Building* proves he's here to stay

Hong Raksmeay

NEANG Kavich packed up his belongings and loaded them onto the moving truck before saying goodbye forever to the home where he spent his childhood, knowing that it would soon be no more than a memory.

Everyone called the White Building a slum because of its notorious reputation for prostitution and drugs starting in the 1990's, but Kavich had always called it his home.

"I have a lot of good memories of the White Building. The thing I remember the most just off the top of my head is playing in the corridors there with my friends," says Kavich.

His home may have been a slum but it was also a building populated by an unusually large number of talented artists. His father was a sculptor and his father's friends were all artists of one sort or another, whether it was painting or playing music.

Later on the building began to change or maybe Kavich just began to notice the things he'd overlooked as a child, but to him it seemed like over time there were more prostitutes, drug addicts and thieves and fewer artists.

"[Back in 2017] some of my friends had already moved but I felt like all of my memories were trapped inside the White Building somehow and once it was certain that the building was going to be demolished I had to ask myself deep inside what the White Building meant to me and what 'home' even meant to me," he says.

The White Building – demolished in 2017 – was built during the final years of Cambodia's brief 20th century "golden age" period of cultural awakening after it gained independence from France and before decades of war and misery overtook the Kingdom.

Originally dubbed with the generic name "Municipal Apartments" – for the 468 apartments inside, along with stores and offices – the building was situated on Samdech Sothearos Blvd near the famed Khmer architect Van Molyvann's Grey Building. Thus – given its white exterior – the name White Building probably just made sense.

It was accidentally damaged by the Khmer Rouge during their evacuation of Phnom Penh but it became home to hundreds of families after that regime fell in 1979 and urban life began again anew in the capital.

Like many of the former residents of the White Building, Kavich and his family were heartbroken by its destruction and still miss the community that existed there despite all of the poverty.

"My family hired a truck to transport all of our belongings to a new house. For a while we stood there outside looking at the building but then it started raining and we knew it was time to go. Everyone was overcome with emotion as we pulled away in the truck because we knew that we were leaving our home forever," he says.

Kavich turned his memories of life in the White Building into a feature-length film with a plot focused on a young man and his dreams of artis-



Kavich accepts the award at the 78th annual Venice Film Festival. FB



Kavich directs the filming of *White Building* on location in Phnom Penh. PARK BYUNG-HOON

tic success – dreams just like Kavich's – which seem to be coming true for him now in real life.

"When I heard that the White Building would be demolished I was very sad thinking about my childhood memories, my friends, the places that I had played. As a filmmaker, I wanted to capture those feelings and that atmosphere and to record all of my memories and put it into a feature film," Kavich, 34, tells *The Post*.

Kavich admits that as a child he was often embarrassed to tell people where he lived and was sometimes made fun of or looked down upon by people who considered the White Building to be nothing more than a

slum, brothel and den of drugs.

As Kavich grew up and gained more knowledge he understood the value of the White Building and how it was historic and how the artistic community there really was special and unique.

"Telling my friends – especially foreigners – that I was living in the White Building didn't embarrass me once some of them began to show their appreciation for what it meant, particularly people who were visiting Cambodia for the first time.

"Take a look at other buildings and you can see that they don't have that something special like the White Building did. I value our history and the building was designed by Cambo-

dian architects and inside it had a long history of Cambodian artists and performers who lived there," Kavich says.

Kavich didn't grow up wanting to be a filmmaker but it eventually became his obsession in the years after he finished high school. He was learning dance and music at Cambodian Living Arts which had a studio for recording songs along with some video editing equipment.

He started out recording sounds and making videos then editing them together, but his initial inspiration was documentary films rather than fictional narratives.

"I started making documentaries and I got to take part in festival events abroad and that was amazing. But then I started thinking of doing a fictional movie with a story and I knew right away that it would have to be about the White Building," said Kavich.

His film *White Building* – selected as the Cambodian entry in the category of Best International Feature Film at the 94th Academy Awards – portrays the life of 20-year-old Samnang and two of his friends who all live in the eponymous tenement.

The characters in the film share the common dream of becoming hip-hop dance stars and every evening they ride their motorbikes out to beer gardens or discotheques where they can dance and earn a living.

"One day one of Samnang's friends informs him that he's managed to find a way to leave the country and go overseas and it makes Samnang frustrated and filled with despair because he thinks that his dream is dying and that he's being left behind," says Kavich.

Samnang is a fictional character, but Kavich says he's written about him based on his experiences and the experiences of friends who had very strict parents who didn't approve of the dreams they wanted to pursue.

Earlier this year *White Building* was selected for the 78th annual Venice Film Festival – the longest running film festival in the world and one of the most prestigious. Not only that, but the actor who portrayed Samnang – Chhun Piseth

– won the festival's Orizzonti Award for Best Actor.

Piseth's best actor Orizzonti is the biggest international acting award ever won by a Cambodian aside from Haing S Nor's Best Supporting Actor win at the Academy Awards for *The Killing Fields*.

Piseth was unable to attend the ceremony in person so Kavich – as the producer, director and screenwriter – stepped onto the stage to accept the award on his behalf.

"I was very excited for [Piseth] but honestly also for myself and for everyone who worked on the movie. It's such a big achievement and making a movie is a team effort so it was an award that not only reflected his incredible performance but it also reflected all of the teamwork between all of the actors and the technical crew and the producers," Kavich tells *The Post*.

Kavich says that as the film's producer from the very beginning when he started work on it he had high hopes for its success but he didn't really expect that it would be selected for the Venice festival and he certainly didn't expect it would win one of the festival's top awards.

With his film career only just beginning, Kavich already has more projects in the works and exciting new opportunities resulting from *White Building's* success at the Venice film festival. That includes the possibility that *White Building* could make it to the shortlist of nominees in the Best International Film category for the upcoming Oscar's in 2022.

"When Piseth won the best actor award, for me, it meant that even though we come from the developing world that doesn't matter. It changed our mindset and encouraged us to do more and to think bigger," Kavich says.

After all if it's possible that someone who grew up in a notorious "slum" – only to be evicted and see it destroyed in the name of progress – can then go and make a movie about it that gets shown at the biggest film festivals in the world while winning awards?

"Then really anything is possible! Anything is possible but only if you go out there and try," says Kavich. ■



Kavich at an old building in Phsar Tapang that stood-in for the title location. STEVE CHEN



Traditionally, Paris button mushrooms are grown in former quarries, with ground limestone added to the compost. AFP

Paris mushroom producers struggle to preserve heritage

TWO centuries ago, French farmers revolutionised mushroom production by moving into the maze of limestone quarries underneath Paris, but today only a handful still cultivate a heritage at risk of fading away for good.

The bitter irony is that demand for traditionally grown white button mushrooms, and their more flavourful brown-capped cousins, is as high as ever.

"It's not a question of finding clients, I sell everything I can produce," said Shouamoua Vang at Les Alouettes in Carrières-sur-Seine, a short drive from the bustling La Défense business district west of the capital.

Vang runs the largest underground mushroom cave in the Paris region, spread across one and a half hectares of tunnels in a hill overlooking the Seine river.

He counts Michelin-starred chefs as well as supermarket chains and local markets among his customers, even though he deems his

mushrooms "expensive" at €3.20 (\$1.65) per kilogramme wholesale.

But dank trays loaded with hundreds of kilogrammes of fungi were going to waste during a recent visit, because Vang lacked enough hands to pick them all.

Just five of his 11 workers were on the job after the others called in sick – and Vang was doubtful that all of them would actually return.

"People these days don't want to work all day in the dark like vampires," he said, estimating that this day's production would top out at 1.5 tonnes instead of his usual 2.5 or even three tonnes.

He is one of just five traditional producers of what the French call "champignons de Paris" located around the capital, along with an even smaller number in abandoned quarries north of the capital.

That's down from around 250 in the late 19th century, when farmers flocked to a "royal" mushroom variety that the Sun King, Louis XIV, had made popular by having

it grown at Versailles.

They had discovered that *Agaricus bisporus* would grow year-round if placed in a manure-based substrate deep underground, where temperatures and humidity could be controlled and the dark would encourage growth.

It also turned out that the caves' earthy atmosphere, reinforced by covering the compost with ground-up limestone, imparted a nutty, almost mineral taste while preventing the mushrooms from becoming over-saturated with water.

Even the macabre tunnels of the Paris catacombs, now a top tourist attraction, were once filled with mushroom beds.

Revival in view?

Rapid urbanisation and in particular the construction of the Paris metro began pushing growers out of the capital in the early 1900s, though around 50 were still in quarries under Paris suburbs in the 1970s, often run by new generations of the same family.

The arrival of cheaper imports from industrial hangars in the Netherlands, Poland and later China, which use peat instead of limestone to boost production rates, proved too much for most.

"It's hard to find people who want to take over because there's no mushroom cultivation programmes in agriculture schools," said Muriel Le Loarer, who is working to revive the Paris mushroom tradition at the SAFER rural development agency.

Vang, for example, had worked 11 years at the quarry owned by Jean-Louis Spinelli, whose children declined to follow in their father's footsteps, before taking over in September 2020.

"Finding people to pick the mushrooms is complicated, it's hard to find good compost, and people don't want to invest when you don't know if producers are going to make it," Spinelli said.

"We're promoting the sector, helping to find financing and working with local authorities to open quarries back up," said Le Loarer, noting the growing interest in local produce and the farm-to-table trend.

For now, though, Paris mushrooms are just a tiny fraction of the 90,000 tonnes produced in France each year, according to figures from the Rungis wholesale market south of the capital.

Officials say it's too late to create a distinctive "Paris mushroom" certification under France's AOP food appellation rules, since the name has been used generically for decades.

That means producers face a marketing challenge to ensure people realise when they're buying the authentic, quarry-farmed fungi.

"Here our mushrooms grow naturally, I don't boost them by spraying water because that fills them with water," Vang said. "These mushrooms from the huge hangars are basically grown by computers." AFP



Salmon fish eggs, also known as red caviar in Russia, are pictured in Moscow on Monday. AFP

Russian caviar prices hit historic highs ahead of New Year holidays

RUSSIANS looking to indulge in their traditional winter holiday treat of red caviar will be disappointed this year as prices have hit historic highs, official figures showed on Monday.

With Russia battling surging inflation, state statistics agency Rosstat said the market price for one kilogramme of red fish roe has surpassed the 5,000 ruble (\$68) mark, the highest price since monitoring began in 2000.

Caviar with butter on bread or pancakes is typically served for dinner on New Year's Eve, Russia's biggest annual holiday.

Over the course of the last two decades, the price of caviar at the end of the year has increased by seven times.

Prices jumped this year contrary to expectations and despite an increase in salmon

fishing, most of which is carried out on the Kamchatka peninsula in Russia's Far East.

Salmon fishing has been up 30 per cent since January compared to the same period last year, according to the Federal Fishery Agency cited by news agency TASS.

Business daily RBC reported that prices are being raised by producers – with the whole market concentrated in the hands of 10-15 companies in the Far East – ahead of the holiday rush.

Rising inflation has led to a surge in food prices in Russia, like in other countries where economies are quickly recovering from the pandemic.

In October, the inflation rate in Russia reached 8.1 per cent year-on-year, a record since 2016. AFP



South Korean band BTS accept the Favourite Pop Duo or Group award onstage during the 2021 American Music Awards at the Microsoft Theatre in Los Angeles on Sunday. AFP

K-pop kings BTS win Artist of the Year AMA in amazing Asian first

K-POP sensation BTS on Sunday became the first Asian group to win Artist of the Year at the American Music Awards.

The septet also scooped awards for Favourite Pop Duo or Group and Favourite Pop Song for their hit *Butter* at the glitzy Los Angeles ceremony hosted by Cardi B.

South Korea's biggest band, who now have nine AMAs, joined British rockers Coldplay for the world television premiere performance of *My Universe* at the star-studded show, and tweeted a picture of the groups together.

BTS's Twitter feed later paid tribute to their fans, known as

the "ARMY".

The trailblazing stars cemented their place in US chart history last year when their hit single *Dynamite* entered the Billboard Hot 100 at number one, making them the first South Korean act to top the rankings.

Doja Cat and Megan Thee Stallion joined BTS with three awards each, while Taylor Swift took home gongs for Favourite Female Pop Artist and Favourite Pop Album *Evermore* and Ed Sheeran won Favourite Male Pop Artist.

The AMAs is the world's largest fan-voted awards show. AFP



For now, though, Paris mushrooms are just a tiny fraction of the 90,000 tonnes produced in France each year, according to figures from the Rungis wholesale market south of the capital. AFP

Lifestyle



Commuters ride past a poster of late Indian film star Puneeth Rajkumar posted up to pay tribute to his recent death from a heart attack, in Bangalore on November 1. AFP

Star's death sets India's sights on eye donations

MOURNING fans of beloved Indian film star Puneeth Rajkumar are pledging to give up their eyes after the actor's untimely death brought his post-mortem organ donation into focus. The "Powerstar" – so named for his boisterous action roles – died of a heart attack in Bangalore last month at 46, with thousands of grief-stricken admirers thronging the city's streets to hug, cry and commiserate. News reports in the days following revealed that Rajkumar had willed the donation of his eyes, with enough ocular tissue salvaged to restore sight for four people. The tradition runs in the actor's family – both his parents made the same pledge before their deaths – and doctors say the example has now been taken up in earnest around Bangalore. "He sort of reminded people that you should donate eyes ... instead of burning or burying them," Rekha Gyanchand, medical director at the Lions International Eye Bank, said. "We see a lot of people coming forward to donate," she

added. "The awareness has really increased." At the nearby Narayana Nethralaya hospital, vinyl posters and pamphlets showed Rajkumar's smiling visage, along with a message urging prospective donors to give the gift of sight. A queue of young men waited in front of a trestle to speak to staff and fill in pledge forms. More than 7,000 members of the public have committed themselves to post-mortem eye donations since Rajkumar's death, said the clinic's managing director K. Bhujang Shetty. "In the days after Puneeth passed away, we have had 112 eyes collected" from the recently deceased after relatives agreed to transplants, he added. **'Somebody will benefit'** Among those donating was Subramani, a driver who lost work after his vision deteriorated but received a transplant just two weeks ago. He was offering the eyes of his recently deceased brother. "We didn't want to waste his eyes, and would like to donate them to someone like

the person who donated eyes to me," he said. Rajkumar first made a name for himself as a child actor and went on to star in around 30 films, with his debut action-comedy flick "Appu" being one of the biggest hits. He had established himself as one of the most recognizable stars of the Kannada-language film industry centred on Bangalore, better known to the world as India's main tech hub. News of his death sent the city into shock, with a crowd chasing the ambulance carrying his body from the hospital, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi describing the loss as a "cruel twist of fate". Rajkumar is survived by his wife Ashwini Revanth and two children, along with the fanatical devotion of his fans. Among them was Bangalore housewife Uma Aravind Kumar, who resolved to donate her own eyes. "After the [example] of Puneeth, our son pledged his eyes without our knowledge," she said. "I liked it and I wanted to donate too. Somebody will benefit from this." AFP



Staff of the Narayana Nethralaya eye hospital look on as a volunteer fills an eye donation pledge form during an event organised in memory of Puneeth Rajkumar in Bangalore on Thursday. AFP

Thinking caps

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1 | 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 | | | | |
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| 51 | 52 | 53 | | | | 54 | | | | | 55 | 56 | 57 | 58 |
| 59 | | | | | | 60 | | | | | 61 | | | |
| 62 | | | | | | 63 | | | | | 64 | | | |
| 65 | | | | | | 66 | | | | | 67 | | | |

"MEASURED RESPONSE"

- ACROSS**
- 1 Sound enhancer
 - 5 Hard to rattle
 - 9 "Little" Chaplin role
 - 14 "It ___ what you think!"
 - 15 Facial-tissue additive
 - 16 Projections from a hub
 - 17 Dog's bone
 - 18 Small carps
 - 19 Give off, as perspiration
 - 20 Needing to watch every penny
 - 23 Hereditary unit
 - 24 Has the power to
 - 25 Holders of conferences?
 - 29 Unit of solar radiation
 - 33 Argentine plain
 - 34 Old Testament book
 - 36 It's found in a lode-bearing wall
 - 37 "If You Could Read My Mind" singer
 - 41 Revelation response
 - 42 Fit for the task
 - 43 Delhi tongue
 - 44 Small spreads, in Mexico
 - 47 Analyzes grammar
 - 48 Her mate
 - 49 Good fruit with an unattractive name
- DOWN**
- 1 Offend slightly
 - 2 Spot of land
 - 3 Patella's place
 - 4 And others, in a bibliography
 - 5 Film festival site
 - 6 Join with others in a cause
 - 7 Lehmann or Lenya
 - 8 Engage, as gears
 - 9 Boring tool
 - 10 "___ Bull" (DeNiro film)
 - 11 Yemeni port
 - 12 Catchall abbr.
 - 13 Crux of the matter
 - 21 Cold-water flat?
 - 22 Internet payment method
 - 25 "Pomp and Circumstance" composer
- 26 Coming-or-going word
 - 27 Wrap handle
 - 28 Conclusion
 - 29 Expensive seating
 - 30 Crying divers
 - 31 Gradually deteriorate
 - 32 Bigfoot relatives
 - 34 Fathers' robes
 - 35 Grand squared
 - 38 Ruth's mother-in-law
 - 39 Bangkok denizens
 - 40 Source of needles
 - 45 Alpine cottage
 - 46 Backpackers
 - 47 Metal-coated
 - 49 Of practical value
 - 50 One lacking hope
 - 51 Let the cat out of the bag
 - 52 Safety installation
 - 53 Edible tuber
 - 54 Indian flatbread
 - 55 Frame of mind
 - 56 Like a squid's defense
 - 57 What Italians used to spend
 - 58 Airport guesses, for short

Sudoku Pacific

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

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Tuesday's solution

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

Tuesday's solution

Tuesday's Puzzle Answer

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

Lyon ordered to play behind closed doors, Payet files complaint

Lyon were on Monday ordered to play home games until at least December 8 behind closed doors after their Ligue 1 fixture against Marseille on the weekend was abandoned after Dimitri Payet was hit in the head by a bottle.

The Marseille captain required treatment after being struck on the side of the head as he prepared to take a corner for the visitors in the fifth minute of Sunday's match at Lyon's Parc OL stadium, prompting both teams to return to the changing rooms.

Payet, who did not train on Monday, has lodged a complaint with the Lyon public prosecutor investigating the incident, a Marseille club official said.

"He was very scared and he's fed up," the official said.

The French professional football league (LFP) said that "in light of the serious incident that occurred during the

match", its disciplinary committee had opened an investigation and, as a precaution, ruled that all games at the Parc OL stadium be played behind closed doors until a ruling is made, which will not come before December 8.

It means there will be no fans for Lyon's home Ligue 1 match against Reims, scheduled on December 1. Lyon are away to Montpellier and Bordeaux in Ligue 1 action on November 28 and December 5 respectively, with a trip to Denmark to take on Brøndby in the Europa League on Thursday.

France's Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin and Sports Minister Roxana Maracineanu will meet Tuesday with representatives from the LFP and the French football federation to see "what must be done".

LFP chief Vincent Labrune, the former president of Marseille, said he was "shocked and furious".

"It's urgent to launch a big national consultation concerning violence in stadiums. This gangrene is going to kill us," he said in an interview with French sports daily *L'Equipe*.

Recurring problem

It is the latest incident in a Ligue 1 season that has been rocked by incidents involving spectators.

An individual was arrested and taken into custody after being identified by stadium security cameras following the Payet incident, police said.

Lyon added that the 32-year-old male protagonist was neither a member of a fan club nor a season ticket holder.

He will appear in court on Tuesday after being remanded in custody.

Payet, who had been heckled by Lyon supporters while warming up before kick-off, was also hit by a bottle during a game at Nice in August.



Marseille midfielder Dimitri Payet (centre) leaves the field after receiving a bottle of water from the grandstand during the French L1 football match against Olympique Lyonnais on Sunday. PHILIPPE DESMAZES / AFP

Nice were docked a point after the incident with Marseille, who last week were ordered to play their next home game behind closed doors after trouble during last month's clash with Paris Saint-Germain.

Payet had called for calm from supporters ahead of the match against PSG on October 24, but his appeal fell on deaf ears as both Neymar and

Lionel Messi were targeted by projectiles.

"He's the only player who's put himself forward over this issue [of crowd trouble] and he did it on his own initiative," said the Marseille club official.

The game between Nice and Marseille in August was halted with 15 minutes left and replayed in its entirety two months later on neutral ground in Troyes and without fans.

Nice were also ordered to play three games behind closed doors. Lens incurred a similar punishment following a pitch invasion during September's northern derby against Lille.

"I don't imagine we won't replay the match," said Lyon president Jean-Michel Aulas, calling demands for the club to face a point deduction as being in "bad faith". AFP

Sri Lanka spin bowlers put West Indies on the ropes

The West Indies were on Monday in deep trouble in the first Test against Sri Lanka as they collapsed to 113 for six at stumps on day two in reply to the

hosts' first innings total of 386 all out. The tourists, hunting their first ever Test win in Sri Lanka, trailed by 273 runs with four wickets in hand in Galle.

After Sri Lanka's quicks failed to take a wicket, the spinners made hay as off-spinner Ramesh Mendis claimed three wickets and left-arm orthodox duo Praveen Jayawickrama and Lasith Embuldeniya shared three wickets between them.

Openers Kraigg Brathwaite and Jermaine Blackwood had added 46 runs for the first wicket before Embuldeniya provided the breakthrough trapping Blackwood leg-before for 20.

Jayawickrama was operating from the City End and Nkrumah Bonner gloved one to first slip where Dhananjaya de Silva took a low catch. He made one.

Mendis came into the attack in the 32nd over, replacing Jayawickrama and claiming two wickets in two balls to put the West Indies in all sorts of trouble.

He struck in the last ball of his first over when Brathwaite was caught at leg-slip.

Brathwaite had looked solid on his way to 41 off 115 deliveries with seven fours and had successfully over-

turned a decision before tea.

"Personally disappointed not to go on after getting a start," he told reporters. "Hopefully I will make up next time."

Mendis struck again in the first ball of his second over when Shai Hope was well caught by Oshada Fernando at short leg. He made 10.

Hope had come in as a concussion substitute for Jeremy Solozano. On his Test debut, Solozano was taken to hospital on the first morning when a full-blooded pull shot from Dimuth Karunaratne smashed into his helmet.

He spent the night under observation but scans revealed no serious injuries other than concussion and he returned to Galle and spent time in the team hotel after being discharged.

'Breathing space'

Jayawickrama changed ends and came on from the Dutch Fort End to pick up a second wicket as Jomel Warrican edged to wicketkeeper Dinesh Chan-

dimal and then exhausted a review as the West Indies middle order collapsed, losing four wickets for 20 runs.

Earlier, the West Indies bowled out Sri Lanka for 386, Roston Chase claiming a five-wicket haul.

Among his victims were Karunaratne, whose classy 147 came to an end when Joshua da Silva completed a smart stumping.

The West Indies still need 74 runs to avoid the follow-on, but Karunaratne wants to play it safe.

"I don't think it's the most sensible thing to do. Nobody wants to bat last in Galle," he said.

"We need to first bowl them out and then put some runs on the board. It will give bowlers some breathing space too," he added.

Karunaratne was involved in two hundred-plus stands with Pathum Nissanka (56) and Dhananjaya de Silva (61). Chandimal chipped in with 45 runs. AFP



West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite (centre) plays a shot as Sri Lanka wicketkeeper Dinesh Chandimal (right) looks on during the second day of the first Test cricket match on Monday. AFP

PGA Tour to boost 2022 prize money

The PGA Tour said Monday it plans to increase prize money at its most lucrative events in 2022, pumping millions more dollars into limited-field tournaments in a move that comes amid reports of a new Saudi Arabia-backed golf series.

In a memo sent to players on Monday, PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan outlined plans to boost purses for players across the board.

"Financial rewards and other benefits – not just for the top players but for the entire membership – are growing at an extraordinary pace," Monahan wrote adding the tour is "stronger than at any time in our history."

The FedEx Cup bonus pool for 2022 has increased by \$15 million to \$75 million, while

the FedEx Cup champion will receive a whopping \$18 million – up from the \$15 million scooped by Patrick Cantlay earlier this year.

The opening two events of the FedEx Cup playoffs – the St Jude and the BMW Championship – will each increase their purses by more than \$5 million to \$15 million.

The Players Championship prize money has been increased from \$15 million to \$20 million, making it the richest event in golf.

The PGA Tour's three invitational events – the Genesis Invitational, the Arnold Palmer Invitational and Jack Nicklaus's Memorial will now offer \$12 million each in prize money – an increase of nearly \$3

million per tournament.

The annual \$10 million bonus pool on offer for the Tour's top 10 players during the regular season has also been doubled to \$20 million.

The tour will also increase money distributed via its Player Impact Programme, the controversial initiative launched this year designed to recognise and reward players whose impact and influence is measured by different metrics such as social media engagements and media coverage generated.

The Player Impact Programme prize pool has increased from \$40 million to \$50 million.

Although Monahan's memo made no mention of rival tours, details of the boosted prize money come just weeks after

former world number one Greg Norman announced plans to launch 10 new events with the Asian Tour over the next decade.

The partnership comes with financial backing from PIF – the Saudi sovereign wealth fund involved in the recent takeover of Premier League side Newcastle United – and a commitment of more than \$200 million.

The new events will be staged across Asia, the Middle East and Europe and the series will be added to the Asian Tour schedule starting next year.

Asian Tour commissioner and chief executive Cho Minn Thant said earlier this month that Norman and his Saudi backers harbor ambitions to start a "super league." AFP



US golfer Billy Horschel poses with the trophy after his victory in the PGA Championship at Wentworth Golf Club in Surrey, southwest of London on September 12. AFP

Sport

FIFA names finalists for Best Men's Player award

ROBERT Lewandowski is in the running to retain his Best FIFA Men's Player award after he was named Monday on an 11-man shortlist alongside Karim Benzema and Jorginho.

Perennial candidates Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo feature among the nominees, with Neymar, Mohamed Salah and Kylian Mbappe also up for a prize first awarded in 2017.

Erling Haaland, N'Golo Kante and Kevin De Bruyne complete the list of potential winners.

Four Barcelona players are included on the women's best player shortlist – Alexia Putellas, Jennifer Hermoso, Aitana Bonmati and Caroline Graham Hansen.

Chelsea, beaten by Barcelona in last season's Women's Champions League final, also have four representatives with Sam Kerr, Ji So-yun, Magdalena Eriksson and Pernille Harder.

Lucy Bronze, who took home last year's award, was nominated with fellow England international Ellen White.

Canada's Olympic gold medalist Christine Sinclair is in contention too, as is Stina Blackstenius of Sweden.

Thomas Tuchel is a frontrunner for best men's coach after leading Chelsea to the Champions League title. He faces competition from Roberto Mancini, the mastermind of Italy's Euro 2020 triumph.

Other nominees are Hansi Flick, Pep Guardiola, Antonio Conte, Diego Simeone and Argentina boss Lionel Scaloni.

The prizes for the best men's and women's player, coach and goalkeeper are voted for by the captains and coaches of all national teams around the world, as well as an online ballot of fans and a select number of journalists.

Voting will run from November 22 to December 10.

The three finalists in each category will be revealed in early January, with the awards ceremony to be held virtually from FIFA headquarters in Zurich on January 17.

The separate Ballon d'Or award ceremony will be staged in Paris on November 29. AFP



Bayern Munich forward Robert Lewandowski. AFP

How Gareth Southgate's courage and communication changed England

FIVE years after being thrown in at the deep end to tackle the chaos engulfing England, Gareth Southgate on Monday extended his time in charge of a team that is going places.

Southgate has been rewarded with a contract extension until the end of 2024 after leading the Three Lions to a first major tournament final in 55 years at Euro 2020, three years after a first World Cup semi-final since 1990.

Initially appointed on an interim basis, Southgate was seen as the squeaky-clean role model the Football Association needed after his predecessor, Sam Allardyce, was brought down by a newspaper sting that alleged he offered advice on how to "get around" rules on player transfers.

A three-year spell at Middlesbrough, which ended in relegation from the Premier League, and mixed results with England's under-21s was all Southgate had to offer on his coaching CV when he was appointed.

However, his calm presence has proved to be the perfect fit for a richly talented generation of players who have made England a force to be reckoned with again at international level.

AFP Sport looks at how the 51-year-old has transformed his country's fortunes.

Courage

For decades, England managers have bowed to the will of media and fans to cram the most talented individuals into the starting line-up, even at the expense of the overall



England's coach Gareth Southgate celebrates after winning the UEFA EURO 2020 semi-final football match against Denmark at Wembley Stadium in London on July 7. AFP

structure of the team.

Paul Scholes retired from international football after years of being stuck out of position on the left wing to make room for Frank Lampard and Steven Gerrard as a "golden generation" failed to progress beyond the quarter-finals of major tournaments under Sven-Goran Eriksson, who was in charge from 2001 to 2006.

By contrast, Southgate has been happy to leave an abundance of attacking talent on the bench.

With captain Harry Kane and Raheem Sterling his tried

and trusted pair up front, there were limited opportunities for Bukayo Saka, Jack Grealish, Phil Foden, Jadon Sancho and Marcus Rashford at the postponed Euros, staged earlier this year.

A crowd favourite, substitute Grealish even had to suffer the ignominy of being replaced after just 36 minutes of action as England made adjustments to see out their extra-time victory over Denmark in the semi-finals.

"There is a nasty side to Gareth and he was spot-on to do that," said former England

captain Alan Shearer.

Master communicator

Southgate has been the perfect leader for a squad with a social conscience who are not content to let their football do the talking.

Under his reign, England players have had to cope with racial abuse in Montenegro and Bulgaria.

They began the tournament being booed by sections of their own fans for taking the knee as a protest against racial injustice.

"The most important thing

for our players is to know we are totally united on it, we are totally committed to supporting each other," Southgate said at the time, standing up to complaints from leading politicians about "gesture politics".

That moral stance will be under the spotlight in the coming year, given the concerns raised by human rights groups over the staging of the World Cup in Qatar.

"We will take the time to educate ourselves," Southgate said after sealing qualification last week. "If we feel that there are areas that we can highlight and help, then clearly we've always tried to do that, and we would do that."

Tactical flexibility

Southgate's tactical nous has consistently been questioned, but he has shown a willingness to adapt to what is required to win.

In Russia three years ago, the switch to a back five protected an inexperienced goalkeeper and defence.

Since then he has largely used a 4-3-3 to make the most of the wealth of attacking options at his disposal.

But he has also been willing to revert to the back five when needed to thrust forward his wing-backs to good effect.

The selection of a 5-3-2 for the Euro 2020 final quickly paid off when one wing-back, Kieran Trippier, crossed for another, Luke Shaw, to give England the perfect start in the second minute.

All that is left for Southgate to prove is that he can go one step further in delivering England's long-awaited major tournament win. AFP

Cuban woman claims Maradona raped her

A 37-YEAR-OLD Cuban woman, who had an affair with Diego Maradona as a minor 20 years ago, accused the late Argentine idol and his entourage on Monday of violence and abuse, including rape and holding her against her will.

Mavys Alvarez Rego, who now lives in Miami, told the press in Buenos Aires how she met Maradona at 16, when the star, then in his forties, lived in Cuba, where he was undergoing drug treatment.

"I was dazzled, he won me over ... But after two months everything started to change", she said, claiming that Maradona, who died from a heart attack a year ago at the age of 60, had pushed her into trying cocaine, in turn making her dependent.

"I loved him but I hated him too, I even thought about suicide," she said.

Maradona is widely consid-

ered to be one of the greatest footballers in history and inspired Argentina to the 1986 World Cup.

He died last year after undergoing brain surgery on a blood clot, and after decades of battles with cocaine and alcohol addictions.

Alvarez Rego, a mother of two children aged 15 and four, said her relationship with Maradona lasted "between four and five years" but that she was subjected to abuse.

She claimed that during a trip to Buenos Aires with Maradona in 2001, she had been held against her will for several weeks in a hotel by Maradona's entourage, banned from going out alone, and forced into a breast augmentation operation.

She also claimed that Maradona had "raped" her on one occasion at their home in Havana and mentioned sev-

eral other episodes of physical violence.

Alvarez Rego has not filed a complaint herself but is giving evidence this week in Buenos Aires to an Argentine prosecutor in connection with a complaint brought by an Argentine NGO.

The organisation, called "Foundation for Peace," filed the complaint after seeing her confessions in the American media in recent weeks.

The complaint relates in particular to human trafficking, deprivation of liberty, forced servitude, assault and battery.

Alvarez Rego said she was speaking out after so many years of silence in order to balance some of the stories that were being told in a TV series about Maradona in the run-up to the first anniversary of his death on November 25.

She suggested that she would not be initiating further proceedings.

"I have done what I had to do, the rest I leave to the courts," she said.

"I achieved my goal: to say what happened to me, to prevent it from happening to others, or at least so that other girls feel the strength, the

courage to speak up."

Five members of Maradona's entourage who have been implicated have all denied the allegations via their lawyers. One has filed a counter-complaint against the NGO for slander. AFP



Cuban Mavys Alvarez, who had a sentimental relationship with the late Argentine football star Diego Maradona when she was a minor, gestures during a press conference to international news agencies on Monday. AFP