

Cambodia primed to host virtual ASEM13

Ry Sochan

PRIME Minister Hun Sen is set to chair the 13th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM13) hosted by Cambodia on November 25-26 via videoconference from the Peace Palace in Phnom Penh.

Held under the theme “Strengthening Multilateralism for Shared Growth”, the ASEM13 will provide a timely opportunity for leaders from both Asia

and Europe to affirm the importance of ASEM cooperation in tackling global and regional issues of mutual interest, including the Covid-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impacts.

“Hosting the ASEM13 reflects Cambodia’s commitment at its highest level to the advancement of multilateralism as much as its active engagement with the international community to tackle current and emerging global challeng-

es,” the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation said in a press release on November 23.

Representatives from the ASEM13 side conferences will deliver their statements ahead of the summit. They include National Assembly president Heng Samrin for the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting; Minister of Commerce Pan Sorasak for the Asia-Europe Business and

Economic Forum; Minister of Women’s Affairs Ing Kantha Phavi for the Asia-Europe Forum on Women, Peace and Security; as well as representatives from the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) Young Leaders Summit and Asia-Europe People Forum.

During the two-day meeting, the ASEM leaders will discuss their role in promoting multilateralism as well as focusing on a number of other topics

including revitalising multilateralism for global peace and stability; strengthening the rule-based trading system; inclusive and sustainable growth and developments; connectivity; women, peace, and security; and climate change.

The ASEM leaders will also discuss Covid-19 socio-economic recovery and development, which focuses on

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HEALTH MINISTRY SAYS WAITING ON SCIENCE BEFORE SETTING JOB PLANS

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HOUSING PROJECT IN TAKHMAO STILL SET FOR DEC 31, DEVELOPER SAYS

BUSINESS – PAGE 8



EUROPE MAY LOSE 700,000 PEOPLE MORE TO COVID BY MARCH: WHO

WORLD – PAGE 9



FATHER RACES TO MAKE MEDICINE FOR DYING SON, AT JUST 2 YEARS OLD

LIFESTYLE – PAGE 12



End of an era

German Chancellor Angela Merkel (left) receives a bouquet of flowers from German Finance Minister, Vice-Chancellor and the Social Democrats (SPD) candidate for Chancellor Olaf Scholz prior to the Cabinet meeting at the Chancellery in Berlin, Germany, on Wednesday. Merkel was given flowers as this was probably her last Cabinet session as German Chancellor with negotiations underway to form a new government after elections were held in September. POOL/AFP

PM calls on Asia, Europe to fortify trade relations

May Kunmakara

THE spread of Covid-19 has brought a slew of challenges for the world, but also created huge opportunities, requiring all Eurasian leaders to join hands in the pandemic fight and to bolster investment and trade relations for the common interest, according to Prime Minister Hun Sen

on November 24.

The prime minister was speaking via video link at the 1st Asia-Europe Economic and Business Forum (AEEBF1), a side event of the virtual 13th Asia-Europe Summit (ASEM13), which the Kingdom is due to host from November 25-26.

The themes for the AEEBF1 and ASEM13 are, respectively, “Transitioning to a New Normal: Leveraging Global Value

Chains, Multilateralism and the 4IR [Fourth Industrial Revolution]” and “Strengthening Multilateralism for Shared Growth”.

Hun Sen listed some of the challenges as: the decline of global value and production chains, the emergence of a multipolar international system and geopolitical tensions, an upsurge in social inequality and poverty, greater and faster

momentum in factory relocation caused by fallout from ongoing trade and tech wars, and increasingly dangerous threats posed by climate change.

“We all know very well that Asia-Europe cooperation has contributed significantly to the strengthening of the people-to-people and economic ties for the common development.

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China birth rate falls to lowest level in decades

BEIJING reported a plunge in birth rate to a record low last year, highlighting a looming demographic crisis in China caused by a rapidly ageing workforce, a slowing economy and the weakest population growth in decades.

China relaxed its “one-child policy” – one of the world’s strictest family planning regulations – in 2016, allowing couples to have two children. Earlier this year that was extended to three children.

But the changes have failed to result in the hoped-for baby boom, as the cost of living rises and women increasingly make their own family planning choices.

The 2021 Statistical Yearbook released in the past week indicated that there were 8.52 births per 1,000 people in China – the lowest figure since the yearbook data began in 1978.

It is a marked drop from the previous year’s 10.41, and the lowest figure since Communist China was founded in 1949, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

In addition, the yearbook showed the number of marriages registered in 2020 reached a 17-year low, with only 8.14 million couples tying the knot last year.

The number of divorces fell for the first time in at least 30 years, after a mandatory 30-day “cooling-off period” for divorcing couples was implemented at the beginning of 2020.

The results of a once-in-a-decade census announced in May showed that China’s population grew at its slowest rate since the 1960s.

Amid official efforts to boost birth rates, Beijing in September called for a reduction in terminations that are not “medically necessary”. AFP ■



CAMBODIA SETS OUT TO FIND EMPLOYMENT FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

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GOV’T RAKES IN \$3.9B OF REVENUE IN FIRST NINE MONTHS OF 2021

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National

'High-profile role for Cambodia at forum will give image boost'

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addressing issues caused by Covid-19 and advancing shared growth to rebuild for a resilient future, the press release noted.

"During the retreat session, the ASEM leaders will have an opportunity to express and exchange their points of view in a free, frank and constructive manner on global and regional issues," it said.

The ASEM13 will adopt the ASEM13 chair's statement, the Phnom Penh statement on the post-Covid-19 socio-economic recovery and the way forward on ASEM connectivity, according to the press release.

Heng Kimkong, a PhD candidate at the University of Queensland and visiting senior research fellow at the Cambodia Development Centre, told *The Post* on November 24 that Cambodia hosting the ASEM13 will give the Kingdom an image boost and showcase it as a peaceful and secure country capable of hosting high-level meetings.

Cambodia may also have the opportunity to discuss with European countries some important issues affecting the country and the region as a whole as well as issues of importance to Europe and the wider world, he said.

"The meeting is vital to Cambodia's post-pandemic recovery – particularly for reviving its tourism industry," Kimkong said. "No doubt, ASEM13 will make headlines. This puts Cambodia in international news reports in a large number of countries potentially, which is great for the nation's tourism."

"Hopefully, after the meeting, Cambodia will be able to attract more tourists and foreign direct investment needed to drive its economic growth in the post-pandemic world," he added.

Thong Meng David, a research fellow at the Mekong Centre for Strategic Studies at the Asian Vision Institute, told *The Post* on November 24 that the ASEM13 this year will be focused on promoting multilateralism, which is fundamental to building an international community with peace, prosperity, sustainable development and promoting cultural and educational exchanges between the peoples of the two regions.

"The meeting process will further [inform] the EU about Cambodia – a small but capable country – that plays a vital role in connecting the two regions and promoting multilateral solutions to the economic, social, cultural and security of the region," he said. ■



Prime Minister Hun Sen gives a speech online to open the first Asia-Europe Business and Economic Forum on Wednesday. AKP

Ministry to establish Covid-19 jab plan according to science

Mom Kunthear

THE Ministry of Health is awaiting the outcome of Covid-19 vaccine research studies in order to determine whether people will need to be vaccinated annually, every six months or on some other schedule from 2022 onwards.

Or Vandine, ministry spokeswoman and chair of the national Covid-19 vaccination committee, said on November 23 that although the first Covid-19 vaccination campaign is technically closed, free vaccinations continue to be administered to all who request them nationwide.

"We are also conducting a study as well as a technical review and are in discussions with the World Health Organisation on this matter, but there is no clear indication yet of how often we will need to vaccinate in 2022," she said.

"Whether booster doses should be administered like flu shots are and as some of our people have already been getting every year is uncertain. It's still an open question whether the Covid-19 vaccines should be given every year or every six months," she said.

The ministry is waiting for conclusive research from reputable scientists before making the call. Once a clear result is obtained and Prime Minister



A girl gets her Covid-19 vaccination at Chbar Ampov referral hospital in Phnom Penh in August. HENG CHIVOAN

Hun Sen gives his approval, then the committee will follow those instructions, she added.

Vandine also called on those who have not been vaccinated against Covid-19 to get the jabs immediately – especially women who are pregnant, even if they are breastfeeding, and people who have recovered from Covid-19 infections more than four months ago now.

"We must work together

to prevent transmission of Covid-19 in the context of the new normal. We have to work together to maintain the sustainability of our healthcare system because we do not want to see lockdowns again or have people once again be afraid to go places," she said.

She added that whether a future large-scale outbreak of Covid-19 occurs will depend on people's personal behaviour because this situation

demands changes in people's attitudes and habits in order to live in the new normal, which means that everyone must learn to live with Covid-19 and adhere to the proper preventive health measures.

According to a report from the health ministry, the Covid-19 vaccination rate in Cambodia as of November 23 stands at 88.17 per cent of the total population of around 16 million. ■

Vocational learning app launched

Long Kimmarita

THE Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training has officially launched the National TVET E-Learning Platform to address distance and online teaching and learning in the event that

it may be needed again during the Covid-19 pandemic and to prepare for any future disruptions in classroom learning.

The launch ceremony for the National TVET E-Learning Platform was held online on November 24 with more than

800 people in attendance from the ministries, provincial training committees, technical and vocational education and training institutions, the private sector and various development partners.

According to the announcement by the ministry about the official launch stated that the platform they developed is a national system of remote technical and vocational education and training that can be used on both tablets and smartphones.

Development of the platform was supported in part by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

The announcement added that national system was set up to address challenges with distance and online teaching and learning for professors, technicians and students during the pandemic as well as to open up another new learning channel in the field of technical and vocational education and training that will prove useful regardless of Covid-19.

"This national system contains content like lessons, videos, tutorials, e-lessons, self-assessment tests, study materials and other general knowledge information related to technical and vocational education and training in Cambodia," the announcement stated.

Pich Sophoan, permanent secretary of state at the labour ministry, told *The Post* that all

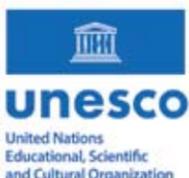
trainees, student, parents and the general public can access the TVET E-Learning program for free via the Android Play Store, the iOS App Store and the App Gallery or they can visit: www.tot-elearning.com

Sophoan said Cambodia has 57 technical and vocational education and training institutions under the purview of the ministry that can make use of this national system for teaching and learning online.

Sophoan said 31,529 students were already enrolled in the national system with 3,522 lessons and video lessons available now and nearly 10,000 people have already downloaded the app.

Houy Muy, a first-year student at the Institute of Industrial Technology, has begun studying through the TVET E-Learning app. She said the system was convenient for her and for other students studying technical and vocational training because it provides a lot of lessons and learning content including information that they are interested in learning about but isn't part of the official curriculum for their programme.

"It makes it easy for students to read their lessons in advance whether the school is open or not. We also benefit because the platform has all kinds of lessons from many different schools so we can explore different topics and learn about them on our own," she said. ■



Call for Proposal for Rapid Assessment of the Non-Formal Education (NFE) Sub-Sector in Cambodia

with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Announcement Description

We are looking for request tender notice as below.

Bid Components

Call for Proposal for Rapid Assessment of the Non-Formal Education (NFE) Sub-Sector in Cambodia
Call for Proposals

Location: Phnom Penh
Closing Date: 10-Dec-2021

Submission Requirements

We wish to inform you that the UNESCO Office in Phnom Penh is inviting interested firms to submit proposals to undertake a Rapid Assessment of the Non-Formal Education (NFE) Sub-sector in Cambodia. The deadline for submission of proposals is **10 December 2021 (18H00 Phnom Penh time)**. More information may be found in the following [link](#).

ANNOUNCEMENT

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

Consultancy : **National Consultant for Gender Responsive Budgeting and Institutionalization**

Contract Type : **Individual Contractor (IC)**

Duration : **30 working days**

Deadline : **Extended to 08 December 2021**

Download Link : https://jobs.undp.org/cj_view_job.cfm?cur_job_id=103191

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

New French envoy visits *The Post* to absorb Kingdom's media landscape

Lay Samean

FRANCE'S new ambassador to Cambodia Jacques Pellet visited the offices of the *Phnom Penh Post* on November 24 to get a better understanding of Cambodia's media landscape and potentially pave the way for future collaborative efforts.

Pellet visited the offices of *The Post* in Chak Angre Krom commune of Meanchey district with two of his colleagues from the French embassy. The group was warmly welcomed by Post Media publisher and CEO Ly Tayseng and the entire staff.

In an hour-long meeting with Tayseng and Post Media's management team, Pellet said he wanted to increase his understanding of the media in Cambodia and explore possibilities for cooperation on future publications on subjects like the economy and culture and perhaps in tandem with events organised by the French embassy.

Pellet also praised Cambodia for its expedited speed of development over the past 10 to 20 years.

Tayseng said *The Post* was happy to welcome the ambassador and would be greatly interested in pursuing any



Post Media publisher and CEO Ly Tayseng (fourth from left) and new French ambassador to Cambodia Jacques Pellet. HONG MENEA

opportunities for future cooperation.

He said *The Post* would welcome the cooperation of his and other embassies with publications on events related to the fields of culture, socio-economy, politics and Cambodia's development programmes.

Given that Pellet is new to his posting here, Tayseng recounted for him some of *The Post's* history in Cambodia as

the longest-running newspaper in the country publishing in both Khmer and English and covering all aspects of the news.

"*The Post's* readership includes everyone from the top leaders in government and international institutions – as well as diplomats from the embassies and the UN – to ordinary people such as teachers or business owners. Our audience's wide range of demographics is reflected by *The Post's* large number of print subscribers and daily readers online," Tayseng explained.

He added that as the oldest newspaper in the country, *The Post* had earned the public's trust and would continue to uphold journalistic principles and provide accurate news without any sensationalism in order to combat the growing problem of fake news, especially online.

"*The Post* focuses on high-quality reporting of the news. With all of our publications, we maintain focus primarily on providing news that is accurate and correct in order to serve the public interest of our nation and people and to meet the needs of our readers. We never publish fake news and we strongly avoid reporting questionable items that could be construed as slanderous," he said. ■

ANA unearths metal tray at Angkor Park

THE archaeological working group from Apsara National Authority (ANA) has unearthed a metal tray at the Angkor Archaeological Park. It was found between the terrace and the library south of Angkor Wat on November 23.

According to the ANA, the tray is 62cm in diameter and 3cm deep. It has a round bottom and the surface is slightly flattened with a lip in the shape of flower petals. There are no decorations or letters on the tray that indicate its exact age.

The authority added that the inventory team of the Department of Conservation of Monuments and Preventive Archaeology are temporarily storing the tray at the ANA's headquarters where they will register it in their catalog of artifacts and work on identifying it before cleaning and restoring it.

ANA spokesman Long Kosal told *The Post* on November 24 that the ongoing discovery of sculptures and artifacts helped the nation connect to its heritage and understand its past.

"This discovery is an important part of something we used to think was lost to us. However, when we uncover these artifacts we experience joy as conservationists because what was lost is found again and these discoveries contribute to promoting the value of Cambodian culture and heritage," Kosal said. LAY SAMEAN

Mine casualties in B'bang top 15,000; 96,605ha next target

Youn Dara

OVER the 42-year period from 1979 to 2021, there were 15,289 people in Battambang province who were killed, disabled or injured by landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO), according to Battambang provincial governor Sok Lou.

Lou provided the figure as he accompanied Senior Minister Ly Thuch – who also serves as first vice-president of the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA) – to inspect a minefield in Dounba commune's Kouk Roka village of Kors Kralor district on November 24.

Lou noted that Battambang province was a frontline battlefield for over two decades of war and a big portion of its land was covered by landmines, UXO and explosive remnants of war (ERW), all of which have had deadly consequences for the area's residents and the province's development.

Lou added that a lot of the landmines and ERWs were scattered among inhabited areas and land cultivated by farmers and they continued to threaten people's lives.

According to Lou, in Battambang province the exact figures on victims of landmines, UXO and ERWs from 1979 to 2021 was 15,289 – 12,350 peo-

ple to mines and 2,939 to other causes – with 3,859 killed, 8,794 injured and 2,636 permanently disabled.

"In October of 2021 alone, there were nine victims, seven from landmines and two from ERW," he said.

Lou said the province has employed five different demining operators in the past: Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC), Mines Advisory Group (MAG), HALO-Trust, Cambodia Self Help Demining (CSHD) and Mine Clearance Unit of the National Centre for Peacekeeping Forces, Mines and Explosive Remnants of War Clearance (NPMEC).

Today, however, there are only three demining operators working in the province – CMAC, MAG and HALO-Trust.

According to the report of the provincial mine action plan working group, operations to clear mines and ERW in Battambang started in 1992 with 46,599ha cleared resulting in the destruction of 202,451 anti-personnel mines and 3,990 anti-tank mines along with 113,422 ERW and 3,973 UXO.

The report further states that the size of the area suspected of having mines and ERW in Battambang province that remains in need of clearance is 96,605ha. ■

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

National

Official rebuffs 'corrupt judiciary' claims

Lay Samean

MINISTRY of Justice spokesman Chin Malin has rejected recent statements by Cambodian Confederation of Unions (CCU) president Rong Chhun criticising Cambodia's courts.

Chhun, who was recently released on bail after being charged with the crime of inciting serious social unrest, alleged that the Cambodian judiciary is a market for selling people their freedom, implying that defendants can buy their way out of trouble through corruption and bribery.

The outspoken unionist said he would remain committed to demanding respect for human rights and the rights of the other activists who were released at the same time as him.

Speaking at a street-side press conference on November 23, Chhun said he spent over a year in prison and during that time he claimed to have witnessed prisoners experiencing injustice due to corrupt court proceedings.

"I was in there for over a year and I saw a lot of injustice," he said. "The courts are like a mirror showing us their own actions and the government leaders' actions."

"I say this because I've seen the court act as a marketplace for selling freedom. There was a case where a charge of theft with aggravating circum-



Rong Chhun speaks at a street-side press conference in Phnom Penh's Chamkarmon district on Tuesday. HONG MENEHA

stances was changed to just petty theft after the defendant paid \$5,000 or so," he alleged.

He said many prisoners also suffered injustices due to the lack of a thorough investigation by the court or where the court did not conduct a thorough investigation but issued a warrant anyway because the judicial police referred

them to court.

"It's very unfair, not just for us, but in general. The judiciary must be reformed within the next three to five years because there aren't enough prisons in the Kingdom to hold all of Cambodian youths."

Chhun also asked the court to drop the charges against him and other environmental

activists. He said he had been released on bail but was placed under a three-year court supervision order, which would limit his freedom.

Chhun was arrested in July of last year for posting claims to Facebook that Cambodia had lost land to Vietnam, citing comments by villagers who live near the border. He

was sentenced to two years in prison but was released on November 12 and placed under judicial supervision.

"We want to see Cambodia respect human rights and give full freedom to its citizens," he said.

Malin countered that apprehended perpetrators are usually angry with the authorities

and the courts but Chhun, he said, should only level such accusations if he has clear evidence to support them or he could face legal action.

"These are baseless accusations and he arguably concocted them with malicious intent since he apparently did so without evidence. It is slanderous and it undermines the dignity of our national institutions and he could be held legally liable for that," Malin said.

Other released activists have echoed Chhun's claims, saying there were severe problems with Cambodia's prisons. In response, the General Department of Prisons issued a statement on November 16 claiming that the minimum basic rights of all prisoners were respected and guaranteed.

It said prison is a place where people go to be punished for their crimes and to be rehabilitated into law-abiding citizens and is not meant to be a hotel or vacation resort.

It elaborated that the management of all detainees was carried out in accordance with the Law on Prisons, the prison's internal administrative rules and the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. The prisons are inspected frequently by the Cambodian Human Rights Committee (CHRC), the National Committee against Torture and the Ministry of Interior. ■

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

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

LIFESTYLE SUB EDITOR: 1 POSITION

Main duties and responsibilities

- Reporting to lifestyle editor on all day-to-day matters
- Selecting, translating, and editing the stories of the lifestyle output
- Leading reporters to generate ideas and produce appealing content
- Managing page layouts using InDesign and InCopy softwares
- Developing own story ideas, covering, and writing article and features where time allows

Qualifications/experience required

- A Degree in journalism or a Bachelor of Arts (preferred but not vital)
- Good knowledge in art, culture, entertainment, food, travel and lifestyle-related topics
- Passion to explore and cover digital, tech and innovation related story
- Language fluency and ability to write well in English and Khmer
- Good collaboration and able to grow as a team
- Previous experience in lifestyle desk or newsroom is a plus

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

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

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

Email: jobs@phnompenhpost.com

www.phnompenhpost.com // www.postkhmer.com

Post Media Co., Ltd is an equal opportunity employer.
Only short-listed candidates will be contacted for interview.
Application documents will not be returned.

Teacher training centres fully renovated under STEPCam

Youn Dara

THE Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and UNESCO officially inaugurated 11 newly upgraded provincial pedagogical/vocational teacher training centres on November 24 as part of the Cambodian Teacher Education Programme (STEPCam), which guarantees that every year 249 trainers of educators and 1,277 primary school teachers will receive enhanced job skill training.

According to the ministry's press release, these pedagogical and vocational schools serve as training centres for primary school teachers in Cambodia and provide a favourable environment for teachers to strengthen their teaching skills through practice which it said is key to ensuring quality teaching.

The renovated provincial pedagogical and vocational schools are located in Banteay Meanchey, Kampong Speu, Kampong Thom, Kratie, Preah Sihanouk, Preah Vihear, Pursat, Stung Treng and Svay Rieng provinces.

Education minister Hang Chuon Naron and UNESCO representative to Cambodia Sardar Umar Alam presided over the inauguration ceremony in Kampong province.

Chuon Naron thanked UNESCO for its support repairing the 11 pedagogical schools and praised the efforts of Cambodian teachers in the past in



Education minister Hang Chuon Naron (right) and UNESCO representative to Cambodia Sardar Umar Alam inaugurate the renovated provincial teacher training centres on Wednesday. MOEYS

the field of education. He said he hopes that the establishment of computer labs in these 11 schools will help the trainers and students access additional resources for their studies and that the programme will help develop Cambodia's education sector further.

"Improving the qualifications of our trainers is a priority. We will implement new teaching methods to strengthen the capacity of teachers to teach science and technology classes as well. We will use this new teaching method to promote 21st century skills to Cambodian youths," he said.

The press release added that the renovation of the 11 provincial pedagogical schools

included infrastructure improvements such as new roofing for classrooms and dormitories as well as general facilities upgrades such as power supply generators and sewage connections.

It also said that study areas – including libraries, science labs and computer labs – have also been upgraded or constructed and high-speed internet connections have been installed.

A total of \$3.4 million has been invested in the STEPCam programme to ensure the highest quality equipment and training at these pedagogical schools with a total of 111 classrooms and 258 dormitories fully renovated, according to the press release. ■

Ministry, NGO join hands to divert children away from jails

Voun Dara

THE Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation and the NGO This Life Cambodia signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) regarding "programmes to divert children away from prisons".

The programme will attempt to intervene in the lives of youths who are in conflict with the law and give them an opportunity to change their ways through continuing education, vocational training and life skills.

The MoU was signed on November 22, but the programme will not be implemented until next year, according to a press statement released on November 24. This juvenile diversion programme will focus on reforming minors who are in conflict with the law and the sponsors said this will carry a wide range of benefits for the individuals, their families and their communities.

The press statement said the majority of 14-18 years old currently residing in Cambodian prisons are there due to accusations or convictions for minor non-violent offences like petty theft, drug use or selling small quantities of drugs to peers.

"Children are the future of our society and they need dedicated support and encouragement to play a valued and positive role in the community," it said.

"If these children are not given the support they need during this early and formative crucial stage in their development, they will likely repeat the offence in the future as they drift away from their family and community ties.

The diversion programme aims to ensure that juveniles in conflict with the law have access to dynamic personal development support as an alternative to custodial sanctions.

"These methods will allow minors to continue their educations or receive vocational training and life skills. These are essential elements in providing hope for a job, career and legitimate income in their future," it said.

This Life Cambodia execu-

tive director Billy Gorter said that for the past 12 years, his organisation has been implementing programmes that work with young people who are serving custodial sentences which have directly helped reduce recidivism rates down to below two per cent within six months post-release.

"However, we have always known that there were prevention-based opportunities that could help keep children stay out of prison in the first place. The collaboration between This Life and the [social affairs ministry] will enact provisions within the juvenile justice laws and provide alternative pathways away from jail," he said.

According to Gorter, a body of evidence and several meta-reviews of the results of a large number of studies suggest that diversion is a much more practical and productive solution for children in conflict with the law than incarceration. Diversion achieves significantly lower rates of recidivism compared to formal court proceedings.

"Our approach has been overwhelmingly successful, with 86 per cent of programme participants finding jobs after their release. The recidivism rate dropped from 60 per cent to just two per cent for offences committed within six months after release," the press statement said.

Touch Channy, spokesperson for the social affairs ministry, said the ministry will open a new juvenile rehabilitation centre for incarcerated minors in Kandal province's Kandal Stung district by year's end.

The centre will divert juvenile detainees to this facility, which can accommodate more than 1,000 children.

However, he said that as a first step the ministry plans to send about 50 minors to the centre to begin the implementation of the diversion programme. By next year, the number of juveniles being transferred from prisons to the centre will increase to about 400 or more.

According to the General Department of Prisons, there are currently 1,449 juvenile detainees nationwide. ■



Labour minister Ith Sam Heng (centre) meets with Magnus Saemundsson, first secretary of the Swedish embassy in Phnom Penh, at the ministry on Tuesday. LABOUR MINISTRY

Project aims to help disabled find jobs

Long Kimmarita

PHNOM Penh and Stockholm have teamed up with some NGOs to collaborate on a new project that will promote equal access to jobs and employment for people with disabilities.

The project was announced on November 23 when Magnus Saemundsson, first secretary of the Swedish embassy in Cambodia, met with Minister of Labour and Vocational Training Ith Sam Heng.

According to the ministry's press release, the project runs from September 1, 2021, to December 31, 2023, and will promote the idea of opening the job market to all people by supporting job seekers with disabilities—particularly youth and women.

Sam Heng said at the meeting that the government of Sweden has always provided support and training in technical skills based on the data from surveys regarding skills shortages and gaps in the job market in Cambodia.

Sweden has also supported the ministry's National Employment Agency (NEA) on its market predictions regarding job opportunities in Cambodia using computer modelling.

"The NEA job search process is carried out online to minimise gatherings in light of Covid-19. Our services are still a work in progress. Those who lost their jobs can be interviewed for new jobs," he said. "NEA can be considered a new but successful service and it exists thanks to the ongoing support of the Swedish government."

Sam Heng said Cambodia also has laws on the rights of persons with disabilities because it is very important to protect the vulnerable in society but many issues remain that require everyone to take part in finding a solution for people with disabilities to get better job opportunities.

The ministry's undersecretary of state Ngoy Rith said that Sweden will continue to support the labour ministry so that they can establish at least one job centre in every province. Cambodia currently has 13 job centres and three mobile job centres.

"We also discussed an inclu-

sive labour market project in Cambodia, focusing mainly on providing employment opportunities for people with disabilities. We see that our law provides opportunities for people with disabilities to have access to employment in both public and private institutions," he said.

Mak Monika, executive director of the Cambodian Disabled People's Organisation, applauded these efforts to support access to employment opportunities for people with disabili-

ties. She said they could also focus on providing job skills and easier access to workplaces for people with disabilities so that they can compete in the general labour market.

"As for the job market, I think that the private sector should encourage people with disabilities who have professional skills to apply for jobs with their firms.

"We have to consider providing more opportunities for people with disabilities who have the ability to work regu-

larly," she added.

According to Cambodian law, the government must recruit two per cent of people with disabilities for social work and private enterprises must recruit one per cent.

Monika said the recruitment of people with disabilities to work in government institutions is a good policy and some state institutions have provided more employment opportunities for people with disabilities than the required two per cent. ■



REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST Endline Impact Assessment of Rice Farmers in Cambodia

IFC—a member of the World Bank Group—is the largest global development institution focused on the private sector in emerging markets. We work in more than 100 countries, using our capital, expertise, and influence to create markets and opportunities in developing countries. In fiscal year 2021, IFC committed a record \$31.5 billion to private companies and financial institutions in developing countries, leveraging the power of the private sector to end extreme poverty and boost shared prosperity as economies grapple with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information, visit www.ifc.org.

IFC proposes to hire a consulting firm from January 3, 2022 to April 30, 2022 to collect data for impact assessment.

The objectives are to assess the attributable impacts of the projects on farmers participating in the IFC projects in the following areas: 1) Income from rice sales, 2) Adoption of SRP and other farm management practices recommended by IFC project and impacts of the adoption on average yield, 3) Financial literacy and farm management practices and 4) Gender related outcomes, particularly relating to women's roles and empowerment.

SCOPE

The consultant firm will collect quantitative and qualitative data which IFC will use to evaluate the two projects with activities implemented in Kampong Cham, Battambang, Banteay Meanchey and Kampong Thom provinces. In-depth analysis of the quantitative data collected by the consultant firm will be done by IFC.

It is required that the survey data will be collected and entered in digitally coded questionnaire on a tablet or android device through an online survey tool, preferably SurveyCTO.

- Sample size of the first project: 700 farmers (in Battambang, Kampong Cham and Kampong Thom Provinces), should be surveyed, 400 of which should be participating (treatment) farmers that are benefiting from the IFC program, whereas the comparison group farmers (300 farmers) will not be part of this program.
- Sample size of the second project: 700 farmers (in Battambang and Banteay Meanchey Provinces), should be surveyed, 400 of which should be participating (treatment) farmers that are benefiting from the IFC program, whereas the comparison group farmers (300 farmers) will not be part of this program.

KEY STEPS AND DELIVERABLES

All deliverables must be approved by IFC in writing before they are considered finalized, and payment is made. The deliverables will be submitted for each of the 2 projects are: 1) Inception report, 2) Questionnaires, (3) Enumerator manual, 4) Cleaned and coded data files and 5) Fieldwork report. All deliverables must be in English. The consulting firm must be available after submission of cleaned datasets to explain any datapoint that IFC may have question during the data analysis.

QUALIFICATION:

Firms participating in this competitive tender process must possess the following qualifications:

- Demonstrated prior experience in similar impact assessment studies with appropriate in-country knowledge; experience with agricultural data collection is strongly preferred.
- Experience (at least 2-3 completed assignments) with the use of tablets for interviews preferred.
- Strong capacity in data management.
- Knowledge of the key agricultural value chain: Rice in Cambodia.
- Good spoken and written English as well as local language skills of key staff.

Interested consulting firms are hereby invited to submit expressions of interest must provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform the services. Expressions of Interest should be submitted in English, electronically through World Bank Group eConsultant 2 by December 02, 2021. (<https://wbgeconsult2.worldbank.org/wbgec/index.html>) - Selection number 1277693.

NOTES

Following this invitation for Expression of Interest, a shortlist of qualified firms will be formally invited to submit proposals. Shortlisting and selection will be subject to the availability of funding. Only those firms which have been shortlisted will receive notification. No debrief will be provided to firms which have not been shortlisted.



A programme for juvenile detainees conducted by This Life Cambodia in Siem Reap provincial prison. THIS LIFE CAMBODIA

Business

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TRADING INFORMATION ON CAMBODIA SECURITIES EXCHANGE Date: November 24, 2021

Auction Trading Method (ATM)

NO	STOCK	CLOSING PRICE	OPENING PRICE	HIGH	LOW
1	ABC	10,980	10,920	11,000	10,900
2	GTI	4,200	4,260	4,260	4,200
3	PAS	13,480	13,420	13,520	13,420
4	PEPC	3,100	3,100	3,150	3,100
5	PPAP	14,640	14,660	14,660	14,600
6	PPSP	2,010	2,010	2,020	1,990
7	PWSA	6,900	6,880	6,900	6,880



ABC, int'l card schemes join forces

May Kunmakara

THE Association of Banks in Cambodia (ABC) has entered into a partnership with three digital payment firms to extend the access of contactless EMV chip standards, strengthen the domestic payment ecosystem, and support the central bank's Cambodian Shared Switch (CSS) network as well as CSS Co-Badge.

At a ceremony on November 23 presided over by National Bank of Cambodia (NBC) assistant governor Chea Serey, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was penned to this effect by ABC chairman In Channy and local executives of Visa, MasterCard and UnionPay International – a subsidiary of Chinese state-owned UnionPay.

These were Visa country manager for Cambodia Monika Chum, MasterCard Cambodia country business development director Tek Sophal and UnionPay International Cambodia country general manager Leang Chenda.

Originally standing for "Europay, Mastercard and Visa", the three companies that created the standard, EMV cards store data on integrated circuit chips rather than on traditional magnetic stripes, making them far

more difficult to counterfeit. Maintained by the NBC, the CSS mechanism is purportedly designed to improve interoperability between banks and microfinance deposit-taking institutions (MDI), modernise and optimise payment systems and services, remove cash in circulation, and promote inter-bank transactions.

ABC's Channy said the MoU conforms to the government's National Strategy on Financial Inclusion 2019-2025 and Cambodia Digital Economy and Society Policy Framework 2021-2035.

He said the government aims to lay the foundation for the promotion of digital adoption and transformation in all parts of society – the state, citizens, and businesses – to build a "vibrant" digital socio-economic ecosystem that stimulates new economic growth and improves social welfare in the "new normal".

"The MoU ... marks a big milestone toward the adoption and the implementation of a digital economy and the transformation to a cashless society.

"The ABC and the three international card schemes have been actively collaborating to promote the digital agenda in Cambodian society," Channy said.

Visa's Chum said: "Providing our technology for co-badging



The Association of Banks in Cambodia (ABC) and digital payment firms Visa, MasterCard and UnionPay International inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on Tuesday. ABC

by commercial banks and microfinance deposit-taking institutions is a testament to Visa's commitment to the market.

"This will allow the entire payments industry to benefit from our world-leading technology, supporting the local payments ecosystem to grow more robust," she added.

MasterCard country manager for Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos Winnie Wong said: "Across

the world and even in Cambodia, consumers are adopting a digital-first approach to how they live, work and pay.

"Mastercard is honoured to be part of this MoU that will play a pivotal role in enabling Cambodia's ambition of becoming a leading digital economy," she added.

Meanwhile, UnionPay's Chenda said the corporation is "fully aligned" with the NBC

on fostering a cashless society in the Kingdom and making financial services more inclusive and efficient.

"We are delighted to collaborate with ABC to help modernise Cambodia's payment infrastructure and encourage more innovation in payment products and services.

"Outside Cambodia, UnionPay customers can use the cards internationally through

network across 179 markets," she said.

The NBC's Serey said payment systems play "a crucial role in contributing to the economic development through providing efficient payment for trade and fund transfer".

She said that with the rapid development of technology, banking and financial institutions have leveraged innovative technologies such as ATMs and point-of-sale (POS) terminals, as well as contactless, mobile and QR payments to facilitate operations and meet market demand.

"The MoU signing today will further address remaining challenges by enabling faster adoption of [the] CSS system for members of institutions, providing the convenience to customers to use payment cards and [the] CSS system, and improve the NBC's implementation of its Notification.

"Promoting safety and efficiency of the payment systems is the main objective of the National Bank of Cambodia in order to support [the] financial inclusion agenda of the government and move toward a cashless economy.

"To achieve this, it requires the commitment and collaboration between authorities and private sector, not only in Cambodia but also in the region," Serey said.



The government reaped in around \$3.9 billion in revenue from taxation and customs in January-September. HONG MENEHA

Gov't revenue reaches \$3.9B in first nine months of 2021

Nov Sivutha

THE government collected about 15.895 billion riel (\$3.9 billion) in revenue from taxation and customs in the first nine months of 2021, achieving 75 per cent of the target set in the national budget law, up from the 63 per cent reached by the same time last year.

The Ministry of Economy and Finance on November 24 noted continued solid progress in the modernisation of information technology systems, the set-up and improvement of other apparatuses, and the preparation of the core legal

standards for the supervision of the Public Financial Management reform programme in the next phase.

Government spending as of September 30 had reached 61 per cent of the 27.425 billion riel target set for this year, the ministry said, adding that by the same day last year, that figure stood at 57 per cent – of the 27.285 billion riel 2020 target.

Royal Academy of Cambodia economics researcher Ky Sereyvath told *The Post* on November 24 that revenue collection is on track to exceed the target in the last quarter, propelled by the resumption

of economic activity and improved financial flows as the Kingdom emerges from the Covid-19 crisis.

He also argued that current expenditure allocations this year have been made "meticulously and precisely" with Covid uncertainties taken into account, leading government spending to fall below targets.

"I believe that once the Covid-19 situation in Cambodia has improved, state spending will be in line with the plan. Thus, boosting public spending by the end of 2021 will have an impact on the economy at the beginning of 2022," Sereyvath said.

India plans major crypto ban

INDIA'S government will introduce a bill to ban private cryptocurrencies and create a framework for a central bank-backed digital money, parliament said in a shock announcement late on November 23.

The proposed bill "seeks to prohibit all private cryptocurrencies in India", the Lok Sabha said, and comes after Prime Minister Narendra Modi warned last week that Bitcoin presents a risk to younger generations and could "spoil our youth" if it ends up "in the wrong hands".

It is the latest such move by a major emerging economy, after China declared all cryptocurrency transactions illegal in September.

India's crypto market has boomed since the country's Supreme Court overturned a previous ban in April last year, growing more than 600 per cent over the past year according to research by Chainalysis.

Between 15 and 100 million people in Asia's third-largest economy are estimated to own cryptocurrencies, with total holdings in the billions of dollars.

Their investments will now face an uncertain future.

India's central bank announced in June that it is working to introduce its own



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi last week warned that Bitcoin presents a risk to younger generations. AFP

digital currency by the end of the year, while warning it has "serious concerns" about private cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin, Ethereum and others.

The bill, to come before the new legislative session, will allow for some exceptions to promote cryptocurrency technology, according to parliament's bulletin of upcoming business, but no further details about the proposed legislation were released.

The market price of Bitcoin appeared unaffected and was up 1.67 per cent in November 23's trade.

But the phrasing of the proposed bill sent alarm bells ringing among local traders and enthusiasts.

"The wording has created a panic," Kashif Raza, founder of crypto-education platform Bitinning, said, adding that the industry expected the government to take a more favourable view after recent consultations with the industry.

"Obviously there will be a shutter-down on the industry," he added. "The industry will die in its natural way. Intellectual capital will move away, investors will face losses."

Cryptocurrencies have been under scrutiny by Indian regulators since first entering the local market in 2013.

A surge in fraudulent crypto transactions following the Modi government's demonetisation of nearly all banknotes in 2016 led to the country's central bank banning crypto transactions in April 2018.

The Supreme Court lifted the ban two years later and investments have surged in the time since.

Indians have been bombarded in recent months with advertisements for CoinSwitchKuber, CoinDCX and other home-grown crypto exchanges across television channels, online streaming services and social media.

These platforms spent more than 500 million rupees (\$6.7 million) on advertising spots during the recently concluded T20 cricket World Cup, research by TAM Sports showed, with viewers subjected to an average of 51 cryptocurrency advertisements per match.

Analysts say regulation would be central to addressing security risks, with crypto exchanges increasingly targeted by cyber criminals as virtual currency prices soar. AFP

Substantial room for improvement in trade with EU bloc: pundits

Continued from page 1

"At the same time, this cooperation still holds more potentials that we need to capture to promote socio-economic development of Asia-Europe.

"International trade is a key locomotive for promoting economic growth and job creation. With the new trend of changes in trade and global supply chains, I am of the view that both regions need to pay more attention to supporting [the] multilateral trading system," he said.

Political leaders must place a greater emphasis on "the removal of trade and investment barriers so as to capture the potentials of Asia-Europe trade cooperation", in furtherance of "liberalisation and trade facilitation", he noted.

European Chamber of Commerce in Cambodia (EuroCham Cambodia) chairman Tassilo Brinzer remarked that Eurasian leaders would finally be able to attend ASEM13, after Covid-related delays.

He told *The Post* on November 24: "The ASEM13 is finally coming to Cambodia, and although laden with delays and the Covid-19 burden, I am glad that this event and the side events, such as the [AEE-BF1] held today, on the 24th of November, and two related EuroCham Cambodia events, are held now."

He noted that the events come as the Kingdom begins to emerge from the pandemic, "just as regional trade agreements such as the RCEP [Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership] or the China-Cambodia FTA become effective in January 2022, and just as Cambodia chairs ASEAN next year".

"Even with all the delays, the event is held and is a good exit to the year 2021."

Anthony Galliano, the CEO of financial services firm Cambodia Investment Management Co Ltd, said that although the EU bloc is ranked the Kingdom's third biggest trade partner, trade in goods between the two partners was just €4.3 billion (\$4.8 billion). He did not provide a timeframe for reference.

As single country trading

partners, the US (30.1 per cent of the global total), Singapore (14.8 per cent), China (6.1 per cent) and Japan (six per cent) are Cambodia's largest, according to Galliano.

In continental rankings, he said, 40.1 per cent of the Kingdom's exports by value were delivered to Asian countries while 34.7 per cent was sold to importers in North America, and 23.4 per cent worth of goods to Europe.

Trade with the US is surging, as exports to the North American market climb 27 per cent year-on-year, accounting for approximately 40 per cent of Cambodian exports this year, he said.

"Therefore there is substantial room for improvement in bilateral trade with [the] EU bloc. The 13th ASEM Summit positions the Kingdom in the spotlight as host and is an excellent opportunity for Cambodia to promote its image, especially in the areas of economic development and prosperity, poverty reduction and income distribution, and peace and stability," Galliano said.

According to the prime minister, Eurasian countries account for about 65 per cent of the global economy, and around 55 per cent of global trade while the EU was Cambodia's largest trading partner in 2018, accounting for 45 per cent of the Kingdom's exports that year.

Most of those exports (95.7 per cent) entered the EU market under Everything But Arms (EBA) tariff preferences, the European Commission (EC) reported. Overall, Cambodia was the second largest user of EBA preferences, behind only Bangladesh, it said.

However on August 12, 2020 the EC partially withdrew the EBA scheme from Cambodia. The suspension affects one-fifth or €1 billion of the Kingdom's annual exports to the EU's 27-nation bloc.

Hun Sen added: "As Covid-19 crisis is expected to subside in the near future, promoting the normalcy of trade flow, business and investment corresponding to the new global trends is an essential and urgent task to revive and enhance the socio-economic development of Asia-Europe."

\$17B Samsung chip plant set for US

SAMSUNG on November 23 said it will build a microchip factory in the US state of Texas, a \$17 billion investment that comes as semiconductor shortages are causing supply chain delays across many industries.

"Welcome to Texas, Samsung!" tweeted Texas' Republican governor Greg Abbott, who called the planned factory "the largest foreign direct investment in Texas EVER".

The new plant, which is supposed to be operational by the end of 2024, is expected to create more than 2,000 skilled jobs and "lay the groundwork for another important chapter in our future", said Kinam Kim, CEO of the South Korean giant's electronics division.

The chips manufactured on the site will have applications in mobile technologies, 5G or

even artificial intelligence, the group said. The plant will be built in the town of Taylor, near the capital Austin.

The news was welcomed by the administration of President Joe Biden, whose economics and security advisers Brian Deese and Jake Sullivan said in a statement that the plant would go a long way to "helping protect our supply chains, revitalising our manufacturing base, and creating good jobs right here at home".

Samsung, the world's biggest memory chipmaker, has aggressively stepped up its investment in its semiconductor business as the world battles shortages of chips that have hit everything from cars and home appliances to smartphones and gaming consoles.

Samsung joins its rivals Taiwan Semiconductor Manufac-

turing Co Ltd (TSMC) and Intel of the US in expanding chip manufacturing capacity in the US, which sees the sector as an area of strategic competition with China. TSMC and Intel are building such plants in Arizona state.

The two presidential advisers stressed that November 23's announcement was in large part the result of discussions between the heads of state of the two countries.

Samsung, which has been operating in the US for 25 years, had filed documents for the project with Texas last January.

The Texas plant announcement came as Lee Jae-yong, the de facto leader of the wider Samsung conglomerate, visited the US, looking to further boost its footprint in the world's biggest economy.

Samsung has enjoyed soar-

ing profits in recent quarters on the back of strong pandemic-driven demand for electronics and chips.

Since coming to power, Biden has tried to rally industry around the need to produce vital components in the US.

A number of firms have announced new plants in recent months. TSMC announced it would build a plant in Japan in partnership with Sony. China's biggest chipmaker said in September that it would build a new factory in Shanghai.

US semiconductor giant Intel announced this year that it will invest \$20 billion in two new plants in Arizona and that it plans to allocate between €20 and 80 billion (\$22.4 and \$89.7 billion) to manufacture microchips in Europe over the next 10 years. AFP

Crude oil price slips as US plans emergency stockpile release



Crude oil price is likely to dip as the US is moving towards releasing 50 million barrels from its national strategic reserve.

The WTI crude reversed from its record high of \$84.97 per barrel on November 10, to around \$78 per barrel as of Wednesday. WTI on Tuesday fell to \$75 per barrel - a record low since October 10.

Tuesday's fall was linked to talks that

the US, Japan and India would release crude reserves to tame prices despite the threat of faltering demand as Covid-19 cases flare up in Europe, CNBC reported on Tuesday.

"The United States is expected to announce a loan of crude oil from its emergency stockpile on Tuesday as part of a plan it hashed out with major Asian energy consumers to lower energy prices..." said CNBC.

However, Oilprice.com on Tuesday: "Oil prices erased losses and jumped on Tuesday morning following the announcement from the US Administration that it would make available 50 million barrels of oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) to lower said

oil prices.

"The headline for the oil market on Tuesday morning was the announcement of US President Joe Biden that the Department of Energy would release 50 million barrels of oil from the SPR in a bid to lower high gasoline prices in a coordinated effort with other major oil-consuming nations.

"Despite the seemingly big number, 50 million barrels, the US release actually equals around two and a half days of American petroleum consumption, which was at 20.5 million barrels per day in the pre-pandemic 2019."

For technical analysis, oil price is creating a short-term down trend and long-term uptrend. However, investors

can see signals of reversing back to \$65 per barrel based on strong support at \$65 per barrel.

Moreover, other indicators such as Fibonacci and MACD are also indicating short-term reversing to \$65 per barrel. Therefore, for this week's trading recommendation, investors should consider selling crude oil at \$78 per barrel, setting a take-profit function at \$66 per barrel and a stop-loss at \$86 per barrel.



Analysis by independent analyst Cheng Daravuth.

Property



Satellite Serei Mongkul City is set to deliver 2,457 units. SUPPLIED

Affordable housing project gunning for Dec 31 target

Hin Pisei

BLOWBACK from the third wave of coronavirus infections has thrown construction of a \$100 million affordable housing project in Kandal province's Takmao town be-

hind schedule, but the developer says it is bending over backwards to finish the task by December 31.

Breaking ground in January 2017, "Satellite Serei Mongkul City" is the first affordable housing development in Cambodia, and is developed

by WorldBridge Group subsidiary Worldbridge Home Co Ltd, which has delivered other major projects, including The Bridge and The Peak in the capital.

Located on a 45ha plot in Roka Khpos commune's Koh Kor village, 14km south of the

Monivong Bridge in the capital, Satellite Serei Mongkul City is set to offer 2,457 units.

Worldbridge Home general manager Yuk Sothirith told *The Post* on November 24 that work on the project is picking up pace, to make up for lost time due to Covid travel restrictions and business closures, which he said hampered the construction process.

"During the intensifying Covid-19 outbreak, construction in some areas was temporarily suspended, and now we are working to speed up construction," he said, adding that the target was still to complete the project by end-2021.

Lucky Realty Co Ltd CEO Dith Channa noted that affordable housing projects are attracting a lot of interest from low- and middle-income people, and that developers are engaging with the government to increase access to the units.

Such developments could improve their chances of success with the right location, affordable rates and easy payment terms, he said, adding that Satellite Serei Mongkul City "is in a good location and has already achieved a degree of success, with some buyers already having moved in".

Channa approved of affordable housing projects, saying they provide more options for the middle class to find a convenient place near work or school.

As of end-2020, Cambodia had five affordable housing projects – two in the capital, two in Kandal province and one in Banteay Meanchey province – comprising 8,331 landed units and 7,256 strata units, according to the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction.

In 2014, Cambodia adopted a national policy to promote the development of housing projects. The Kingdom will need an additional 50,000 homes a year until 2030, the policy states. ■

Land prices climb in suburban Hanoi due to planning rumours

THE Hanoi property market is once again seeing a wave of increased land prices in suburban areas, thanks to rumours of some of the Vietnamese capital's districts being developed under the model of "city within a city".

The first land price rise in those districts, including Dong Anh, Soc Son and Me Linh, happened in March after information came out about the Red River urban planning project.

The project is still in the planning phase and is expected to be approved at the end of this year. However, land prices are now increasing again in those districts because of rumours of further development in those areas.

A plot of land near Dong Do Lake in Soc Son is currently valued at 12 million dong (\$530) per sqm, much higher than that the five million dong evaluation last year, according to locals.

Land prices in Soc Son's Minh Phu commune have risen by 30 per cent year-on-year, and surged to 10-12 million dong per sqm in Minh Tri commune, from seven-to-eight million dong at the beginning of this year.

However, according to locals, most of the land on sale in those villages lies in protected forest areas. Careless buyers could buy forest land and be unable to build on it, the Vietnam News Agency reported.

The property market in Me Linh has been frozen for a few years because of the development of 50 urban projects, invested by private capital. However, the projects, over a total area of 1,905ha, have been suspended due to a lack of capital.

But real estate brokerage centres have returned to Me Linh due to rumours that the district is slated to be converted into a city, pushing land prices up by 30-40 per cent.

Me Linh-based real estate broker Nguyen Nam said: "Every time there is new information relating to the Red River urban plan, land prices in those districts increase."

"Investors are interested in regional planning; if there is investment potential, they will visit the land areas and quickly make investment decision."

Meanwhile, Dong Anh has always had a busy real estate market thanks to its location near inner-city districts. The district has promoted infrastructure development for many years.

Thanks to rumours of the development of a 'city within the city', investors are paying more attention to land investment in Dong Anh, causing land prices in some communes like Vinh Ngoc, Hai Boi and Xuan Canh to increase 15-20 per cent, and even 40 per cent in some places.

A representative of the Me Linh District Land Fund Development Centre said land

prices in Dong Anh, Soc Son, Me Linh and Hoa Lac are increasing, but there have not been many successful transactions.

In the future, Me Linh will enhance site clearances and build infrastructure to continue auctioning land plots in the district. The district will also publicise planning information and progress on infrastructure development projects, to prevent further rumours concerning land prices and speculation.

Regarding the rise in prices of land in those districts, Vietnam Real Estate Brokers Association chairman Nguyen Van Dinh said people tend to pursue investment opportunities in suburban districts such as Soc Son, Dong Anh and Me Linh, due to low property supply in the inner districts.

Along with the rumours relating to the Red River urban planning, land prices in those markets too have been pushed up to very high levels, Dinh said.

However, as few investors seek long-term investments, land prices usually shoot up over a short time period before falling back to their usual levels, according to Dinh.

Hanoi plans to develop the five suburban districts of Hoai Duc, Dong Anh, Thanh Tri, Gia Lam and Dan Phuong into inner-city districts by 2025. With a large land fund, these districts will be key residential development regions in the future, Dinh said.

This year, the four districts of Hoai Duc, Dong Anh, Thanh Tri and Gia Lam account for 30 per cent of apartment supply. This figure is expected to increase to 36 per cent by 2023.

Savills Hanoi advisory services senior director Do Thu Hang said that "when the land fund in the inner city becomes limited, investors also tend to expand to the suburban areas".

"In addition, improved infrastructure also contributes to promoting the tendency of people moving away from the city centre," Hang said. "When the future supply is in remote areas, it will bring more options in terms of location and price."

Experts note that investors looking to buy real estate in the Vietnamese capital today need to consider the lifetime of the investment, especially in suburban districts, all of which have planning and large projects in the pipeline, even though transport infrastructure connecting to the inner city is still developing. Hence such investments will not be profitable in the near term.

Before deciding to invest, buyers need to look into planned projects and land prices. This will help them avoid buying land plots without legality and abandoned projects, according to Le Trung Kien, the de facto leader of Dong Anh. VIET NAM NEWS/ASIA NEWS NETWORK ■

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World

WHO warns Europe may lose 700K more to Covid by March

EUROPE remains “in the firm grip” of Covid and the continent’s death toll could top 2.2 million this winter if current trends continue, the World Health Organisation (WHO) warned on November 23.

Europe is battling an upsurge in the pandemic that saw Austria return to lockdown this week while Germany and the Netherlands are poised to announce new restrictions.

A further 700,000 people in the 53 countries that comprise the WHO’s European region could die by March 1, the global health agency said, in addition to the 1.5 million who have already succumbed to the virus.

It expects “high or extreme stress in intensive care units [ICU] in 49 out of 53 countries between now and March 1, 2022”.

Europe’s return to the pandemic’s epicentre has been blamed on sluggish vaccine uptake in some nations, the highly contagious Delta variant, colder weather moving people indoors again and the easing of restrictions.

In the EU, 67.7 per cent of the population is fully vaccinated.

But rates vary widely between countries, with low levels in many eastern countries. Only 24.2 per cent of Bulgarians are fully vaccinated, compared with 86.7 per cent in Portugal.

According to WHO data, Covid-related deaths in Europe increased last week to almost 4,200 a day, doubling from 2,100 a day at the end of September.

It said evidence was growing that vaccine-induced protection against infection and mild disease was declining.

Several countries, including Greece, France and Germany, are moving towards requiring a third booster shot for someone to be considered fully vaccinated.

Chancellor Angela Merkel



People wearing face masks stand in a long queue to get the Covid-19 jab in the northern German city of Hamburg. AFP

has warned that Germany is not doing enough to curb its “highly dramatic” fourth wave of the pandemic.

With intensive care beds swiftly filling up and its weekly incidence rate at an all-time high of 399.8 new infections per 100,000 people, Germany’s worst-hit regions have ordered new shutdowns.

The German military is expected to add coronavirus jabs to the list of mandatory vaccines for soldiers “soon”, a defence ministry spokesman said.

The move would make troops the first German public servants to be obliged to be jabbed against the virus.

It comes as the army is preparing to deploy soldiers to help local authorities with vaccinations, tests and other efforts to counter soaring infection rates expected in the weeks ahead.

The state department has urged US citizens not to travel to Germany or neighbouring Denmark because of the surging Covid case numbers.

The rise in cases and hospi-

talizations have ignited a fierce debate in Germany about whether to follow Austria’s example and make vaccination mandatory for all citizens.

Austria meanwhile closed shops, restaurants and festive markets on November 22, the most drastic restrictions seen in Western Europe for months.

Israel, which is part of the WHO’s European region, on November 23 rolled out vaccinations for children aged five to 11, one of only a handful of countries to inoculate minors that young.

About half of its recently confirmed cases were among those below the age of 11, it said.

And France’s fully vaccinated Prime Minister Jean Castex went into isolation late on November 22 following a positive test, after his daughter caught the virus.

The regional director for WHO Europe, Hans Kluge, said Europe and Central Asia “face a challenging winter ahead”.

He called for a “vaccine plus” approach, consisting

of a combination of vaccinations, social distancing, the use of face masks and hand washing.

The WHO said face masks reduce Covid incidence by 53 per cent according to a recent study, and “over 160,000 deaths could be prevented [by March 1] if universal mask coverage of 95 per cent was achieved”.

But the prospect of a winter under renewed restrictions has sparked unrest in several countries.

Belgium, the Netherlands and France’s Caribbean islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique were on November 23 still reeling from violent protests against new anti-Covid measures.

Dutch police arrested at least 21 people during a fourth night of clashes, which Prime Minister Mark Rutte labelled “pure violence” by “idiots”.

His Belgian counterpart Alexander De Croo called violence at a 35,000-strong protest in Brussels “absolutely unacceptable”. AFP

Beijing calls for end to ‘malicious hyping’ of tennis star controversy

CHINA on November 23 said the controversy surrounding Peng Shuai was being “maliciously” hyped up, after the Chinese tennis star made sexual assault claims against one of the nation’s most powerful politicians.

Peng, a Wimbledon and French Open doubles champion, was not seen for more than two weeks after she made the accusations against former vice-premier Zhang Gaoli.

The 35-year-old Peng reappeared in public for the first time at the weekend when she was seen attending a Beijing tennis tournament.

“I think some people should stop deliberately and maliciously hyping up, let alone politicise this issue,” said foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian in response to a question on whether the case affected China’s international image.

Beijing will host the Winter Olympics in February.

“I believe you have all seen that she recently attended some public events and had a video call with IOC [International Olympic Committee] president Thomas Bach,” Zhao added.

The comment was the most direct response from the Chinese government to Peng’s case.

Until November 23, Beijing had repeatedly brushed off questions about her whereabouts and welfare – calling them “not a diplomatic issue”.

Evidence of her claims have also been scrubbed from China’s highly censored Internet.

The Women’s Tennis Association (WTA) has threatened to end lucrative contracts with China unless it gets word of Peng’s safety.

Peng appeared in a 30-minute video call with the IOC chief on November 21.

The organisation said in a statement that during the call, “Peng Shuai thanked the IOC for its concern about her well-being”. AFP

“She explained that she is safe and well, living at her home in Beijing, but would like to have her privacy respected at this time,” it said.

Earlier on November 21, Peng was seen attending a Beijing tennis tournament, in official photos of the event.

But human rights groups and sporting authorities overseas have continued to voice concern about Peng and whether local authorities will act on her allegations.

“This video does not change our call for a full, fair and transparent investigation, without censorship, into her allegation of sexual assault, which is the issue that gave rise to our initial concern,” the WTA said, when asked about the IOC call.

Human Rights Watch also slammed the IOC and called for them to explain how the video call with Peng had been organised.

“The IOC has vaulted itself from silence about Beijing’s abysmal human rights record to active collaboration with Chinese authorities in undermining freedom of speech and disregarding alleged sexual assault,” said Yaqiu Wang, senior China researcher at Human Rights Watch.

“The IOC appears to prize its relationship with a major human rights violator over the rights and safety of Olympic athletes.”

Peng, a two-time Grand Slam doubles champion, alleged earlier this month that Zhang, now in his 70s, “forced” her into sex during an on-off relationship spanning several years.

Following a global outcry, including from tennis superstars and the UN, Chinese state media reporters have released a flurry of footage purporting to show all is well with Peng.

Peng’s claims against Zhang were the first time China’s #MeToo movement has touched the highest echelons of the ruling Communist Party. AFP

Poor diets imperilling people and the planet: report

NEARLY half the world’s population suffer from poor nutrition linked to too much or not enough food, a global assessment said on November 23 with wide-ranging impacts on health and the planet.

The Global Nutrition Report (GNR), a yearly survey and analysis of the latest data on nutrition and related health issues, found that 48 per cent of people currently eat either too little or too much – resulting in them being overweight, obese or underweight.

At current rates, the report finds, the world will fail to meet eight out of nine nutrition targets set by the World Health Organisation for 2025.

These include reducing child wasting (when children are too thin for their height) and child stunting (when they are too short for their age), and also adult obesity.

The report estimates nearly 150 million children under five years old are stunted, more than 45 million are wasted and nearly 40 million are overweight.

It also finds more than 40 per cent of adults (2.2 billion people) are now overweight or obese.

GNR Independent Expert Group chair Renata Micha told AFP: “Avoidable deaths due to poor diets have grown by 15 per cent since 2010 and poor diets are now responsible

for a quarter of all adult deaths.

“Our global findings show that our diets have not improved over the last 10 years and are now a major threat to people’s health and to the planet.”

This year’s GNR is the first to look at global diets and how food choices are affecting people and the planet.

It finds people are failing to consume enough health-promoting foods like fruits and vegetables, particularly in lower-income countries.

Higher-income countries had the highest intake of foods with harmful health impacts like red meat, dairy and sugary drinks.

Consumption of harmful foods is on the rise, the report found, with red and

processed meat already at almost five times the maximum recommendation of one serving a week.

The report notes that current global nutrition targets do not mention diet, with the exception of limiting sodium, and recommends new, more holistic targets.

“The science supports a food-based approach or diet-pattern approach in assessing the impacts on health and the environment,” Micha said.

In line with other estimates, the GNR calculated global food demand generated some 35 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions in 2018.

“Animal-source foods have generally higher environmental footprints

per product than plant-based foods,” the report said.

“Consequently, they were responsible for the majority of food-related greenhouse gas emissions and land use, with particularly large impacts from beef, lamb and dairy.”

The report called for urgent funding to improve nutrition across the globe, particularly as Covid-19 has pushed an estimated additional 155 million people into extreme poverty.

The GNR estimates the nutrition spending will need to increase by nearly \$4 billion annually until 2030 to meet stunting, wasting, maternal anaemia and breastfeeding targets alone. AFP

Indonesia officials in Natuna to gird frontier

ABOARD a navy hospital ship, Indonesia's chief security minister and home minister embarked on November 23 on a two-day tour of the nation's outermost islands adjacent to the South China Sea, in a move reaffirming the state's commitment to developing the outlying region and safeguarding its maritime borders.

Mahfud MD, the coordinating minister for political, legal and security affairs, set sail alongside home minister Tito Karnavian aboard a Makassar-class landing platform dock to the Natuna island chain, Riau Islands province, to check on the progress of development at its furthest frontier.

The ministers were also scheduled to tour the archipelago's northernmost outpost, Laut Island, by helicopter on November 24. The island is close to the site of Indonesia's exclusive economic zone (EEZ), which has in recent years seen an uptick in illegal incursions by foreign vessels.

But Mahfud insists that his voyage there has more to do with the state's plan to fortify the nation's border regions. "It has nothing to do with China," he said at a joint press briefing with journalists aboard the *KRI Semarang-594*.

"We're developing our borders; there's nothing being done that is specifically geared to any one country," Mahfud previously drew a red line on the need to consult with Beijing on Jakarta's exclusive rights in the area, part of which China claims to be its traditional fishing grounds, based on claims in the South China Sea.

He also led a meeting in the North Natuna Sea aboard the same ship a week after President Joko "Jokowi"

Widodo symbolically visited the area in January last year after a tense maritime skirmish with Chinese Coast Guard vessels set off a diplomatic row.

Tito, who was leading the tour in his capacity as the leader of the National Border Management Agency (BNPP), acknowledged that Natuna regency was a strategic border area where there were overlapping EEZ rights with Vietnam, which are overshadowed by China's claims.

"In Natuna, we have overlapping claims with Vietnam in our EEZ ... Secondly, we know that China also has what it calls the Nine-Dash Line as [markers for] its traditional fishing grounds, which is why there are a lot of [Chinese] fishing boats in our waters, and we don't accept that," he told reporters after meeting Natuna authorities on November 23.

An EEZ covers waters 200 nautical miles (370km) out from a nation's coastline, conferring it with exclusive rights to exploit marine resources in the column of water within the designated area, according to the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (Unclos). Both Indonesia and China have signed the treaty.

China has claimed that based on "historical rights" in the South China Sea, its activities in the Natuna waters were meant to assert its sovereignty over the Spratly Islands, another contested maritime feature in the area, as well as sovereign rights and jurisdiction over "relevant waters" nearby.

An international tribunal invalidated those claims in 2016. Jakarta has also reintroduced the waters as the North Natuna Sea, further drawing the ire of Beijing.

The coordinating minister's visit to



Indonesian coordinating political, legal and security affairs minister Mahfud MD (centre, in white) and home minister Tito Karnavian visit the North Natuna Sea aboard the *KRI Semarang-594* naval hospital ship on Tuesday. THE JAKARTA POST

Natuna comes off the back of a virtual ASEAN-China Summit on November 22, in which Chinese President Xi Jinping told his counterparts that Beijing would not seek "hegemony" in Southeast Asia.

At the same time, tensions over the resource-rich waters of the South China Sea continued to spike in recent weeks after Chinese coast guard ships fired their water cannon at Philippine boats delivering supplies to the Spratlys.

Manila's defence minister accused the Chinese ships of "intimidation and harassment" on November 23, while Beijing insisted that its permission was not sought, AFP reports.

The two countries are locked in a decades-long territorial dispute over the global trade waterway, with competing claims from Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam and Taiwan as well.

Meanwhile, talks on a set of guidelines on the rules of engagement at sea have moved at a glacial pace.

President Jokowi told Xi and other ASEAN leaders on November 22 that it was "our collective responsibility" to ensure regional peace and stability and that international law was respected, Indonesian foreign minister Retno LP Marsudi said in a pre-recorded briefing after the summit.

Indonesia insists it is not a claimant in the South China Sea territorial dispute.

In order to address such concerns in the national security context, Tito said the state needed to strengthen its border regions and the nation's claim to sovereignty, both through traditional means like constant military presence, but also through other means such as bolstering local economies.

The minister said he "acutely understands" that the Natuna regency does not have sufficient means to develop and achieve national development targets, which is why the central and regional governments are "ready to assist".

He revealed plans for the government to construct new border outposts (PBLN) at Selasan Island and said construction had already reached 60 per cent progress. Once ready, the outposts will be operated by the BNPP, which oversees 27 state bodies and 17 provincial administrations in the management of border regions.

BNPP secretary Restuardy Daud previously said the visit was meant to "encourage the accelerated development of state boundaries and border areas, as well as improve defence and security infrastructure in the outer islands".

On the first day of the Natuna tour, Mahfud and Tito's entourage visited the marine and fisheries hub at Selat Lampa Port on Natuna Besar Island.

Led by former maritime affairs and fisheries minister Susi Pudjiastuti, the facility was built to accommodate fishing activities in Fisheries Management Area (WPP) 711, which covers the Karimata Strait, the Natuna Sea and the North Natuna Sea.

The hub is equipped with cold storage systems and other facilities to support export activities that help develop the local economy.

The ministers also met Riau Islands governor Ansar Ahmad and Natuna Regent Wan Siswandi to discuss development in the region, alongside officials from the Indonesian Navy (TNI-AL) and the Maritime Security Agency (Bakamla). THE JAKARTA POST/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

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The Phnom Penh Post

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Philippine presidential bet Marcos takes drug test after Duterte claim

THE son and namesake of the Philippines' former dictator Ferdinand Marcos on November 23 said he took a cocaine test after President Rodrigo Duterte accused an unnamed presidential candidate of using the illegal drug.

Marcos Jr, who is among the frontrunners seeking to succeed Duterte in 2022, said in a statement he was tested on November 22 and had submitted the result to three police agencies.

He told a local broadcaster he had tested negative.

"I really don't feel that I am the one being alluded to," said Marcos Jr, popularly known as "Bongbong".

"In spite of that, I believe it is my inherent duty as an aspiring public official to assure my fellow Filipinos that I am against illegal drugs. This is why I took a cocaine test yesterday."

Duterte, who has waged a deadly war on drugs that has killed thousands of people, has not identified the candidate he claims uses cocaine.

At times he has referred to them using male pronouns.

"There's a candidate who was using cocaine—you can ask the rich people," Duterte said on November 22. "Why did I not arrest that person? You don't know the rich, they go on a yacht or in the air, that's where they snort."

A leaked survey conducted last month by respected polling outfit Social Weather Stations reportedly showed Marcos Jr as the top preference for presi-

dent with 47 per cent of voter support.

He was followed by incumbent vice-president and leading opposition candidate Leni Robredo (18 per cent) and celebrity mayor Francisco Domagoso (13 per cent).

Retired boxing champion and senator Manny Pacquiao was fourth with nine per cent, followed by Senator Panfilo Lacson with five per cent.

Lacson on November 23 said he and his vice-presidential running mate, Senator Vicente Sotto, had voluntarily undergone "multi-drug testing" on November 22. He said they had "passed".

Pacquiao, who has admitted using marijuana and crystal meth in his youth, said he supported mandatory drug testing for those seeking a government post.

"Although I'm not in a position to judge anyone on this issue, I am willing to undergo a drug test anytime and anywhere," Pacquiao said November 19, suggesting a hair follicle test offered "better results".

Domagoso on November 19 also denied using drugs.

Duterte has been an ally of the controversial Marcos family, which had gone into exile in the US after the patriarch's humiliating downfall in 1986.

But recently Duterte has been publicly critical of Marcos Jr, describing him as a "weak leader ... saddled with baggage".

Sara Duterte-Carpio, his daughter, had been widely expected to run for president, and potentially protect him from criminal charges in the Philippines and International Criminal Court prosecutors over his deadly drug war.

But she has filed her candidacy for vice-president, a position which holds very little power, and formed an alliance with Marcos Jr.

In the Philippines, the president and vice-president are elected separately.

Duterte-Carpio told a rally of supporters on November 21 that "we need to protect our candidate. Let us protect BBM ['Bongbong' Marcos]".

Duterte's chosen successor is now his close aide Senator Christopher Go, who made a last-minute entry into the race on November 13.

Many analysts consider Go unlikely to win. AFP



Ferdinand Marcos Jr is among the frontrunners to succeed Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte in 2022. AFP

Putting gender equality first

Opinion

Josep Borrell, Jutta Urpilainen et al

RARELY in the world have women's and girls' rights been challenged in such a concerning way as they have been in Afghanistan. The EU has made it clear that future EU development assistance will depend on the respect for norms on human rights, including women's and girls' rights. The EU will continue to support women and girls worldwide, sticking to our values and beliefs.

Human rights, freedom and democracy, and equality represent core values that make the EU what it is. It enriches our societies and strengthens resilience. Gender equality is key for peace, security, economic prosperity and sustainable development.

That is why working on all levels to promote and safeguard progress on gender equality is a political priority and objective for the EU. The EU Gender Action Plan III and the new EU external action budget provide a roadmap for global action towards a gender-equal world. We work closely together with multilateral, regional and bilateral partners, including civil society organisations, to achieve those objectives. We still have a long way to go; there is no room for complacency.

In many countries, the pandemic has exacerbated existing gender inequalities across different areas: education, vocational training, health, security and safety, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and economic opportunities. In addition, the Covid-19 lockdowns have often led to an increase in gender-based violence, in particular domestic violence. At the same time, a significant part of the care burden has fallen on women and girls. Workers in the informal economy and in low-skilled jobs (most of whom are women), migrants, and those belonging to minorities, have been more at risk and face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

Moreover, school closures have exposed girls to an



Women wait in line with their children during a World Food Programme food distribution on the outskirts of Kabul on November 6. AFP

increased risk of sexual exploitation, early pregnancy, child labour, and forced marriage. The Malala Fund estimates that 20 million more girls risk dropping out of school, adding up to a total of 150 million girls – equivalent to a third of the EU population – without educational prospects.

According to a recent UN report, military spending in 2020 still outpaced the worldwide expenses on health, even in a year that was dominated by the coronavirus pandemic. For a sustainable recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, we need to redouble our efforts to promote gender equality.

Now is the time to do more

This challenge now requires a global response, when we are building the future we wish for our children and grandchildren to grow up in a post-pandemic world that is more equal, more diverse, and where equal opportunities are a reality. We need to address the root causes of gender inequality and discrimination in order to

achieve sustainable change.

The EU and its member states, as well as the European financial institutions have stood with the women and girls of the world throughout the pandemic. As Team Europe, we have already mobilised €46 billion (\$51.5 billion) in support of over 130 partner countries, with a particular focus on women and youth.

Three examples as an illustration: In Nepal, we helped one million girls and boys continue their education through radio-based learning. In Togo, we supported the creation of a universal income scheme and the appointment of women to head new municipalities. Worldwide, the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative has helped 650,000 women and girls prevent or address violence against them, and educated 880,000 men and boys on positive masculinity, non-violent conflict resolution and parenting.

Still, to meet the growing challenges, we need to do more. That is the purpose of the Gender Action Plan III. It

promotes leadership and meaningful participation of women, girls and young people in political, economic, social and cultural life, as well as in all matters related to peace and security.

We work to get human development back on track

We are now making this plan a reality with the help of the new €79.5 billion NDICI-Global Europe instrument that will support the EU's external action for the next seven years.

Support for education and particularly girls' education will have a central role. Just as we support education in emergencies, the EU has worked with partner countries throughout the pandemic to minimise its impact on children, and to facilitate a safe return to school.

We already provide more than half of all global aid to education as Team Europe. But we will increase funding further to promote gender equality through quality education at all levels. Our joint €1.7 billion pledge to the Global Partnership for Education

in July – to transform education for girls and boys in up to 90 countries and territories – is part of this new beginning.

We are multiplying our efforts, from supporting women and girls' education and economic opportunities to improving their access to sexual and reproductive health services. By 2025, 85 per cent of all the EU's new external actions – across all sectors – will contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment.

This is now being finalised with our partner countries based on close consultation with civil society organisations, women's rights activists, and youth.

We need to put human development back on track and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, leaving no one behind.

It is crucial we get it right. ■

Josep Borrell, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission; Jutta Urpilainen, European Commissioner for International Partnerships; and EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Development from 24 EU member states



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Lifestyle

Grammy awards see leading crop of pop stalwarts get nominations



JUSTIN Bieber, Billie Eilish and Olivia Rodrigo are leading a crop of pop stalwarts and newbies nominated for this year's Grammy awards.

But it's Jon Batiste – the jazz and R&B artist, television personality and band-leader, whose prizes include an Oscar for his soundtrack to the movie *Soul* – who has the most chances at Grammy gold, snagging 11 nominations including in the top categories.

Megastar Bieber will vie for eight prizes at the January 31 gala in Los Angeles, as will R&B favourite HER and singer-rapper Doja Cat.

Grammy darling Eilish is in the running for seven, as is Olivia Rodrigo, a former Disney channel actress who exploded onto the pop scene this year with her breakout *Drivers Licence*.

The 64th annual show has once again expanded the number of nominees in its prestigious general categories, taking the count from eight to 10, in the wake of perennial criticism that it lacks diversity.

Lady Gaga and Tony Bennett, the 95-year-old crooner beloved for his big band and show tune standards, posted a strong showing with six nominations for work related to their album *Love For Sale*.

And rap mogul Jay-Z – a regular critic of the Recording Academy, the body behind the Grammy awards – is now the most nominated artist in the show's history, with 83.

He was previously tied with legendary producer Quincy Jones, who had 80.

Kanye West meanwhile scored several nominations for his album *Donda* – facing off with longtime nemesis Taylor Swift in the best album category, where she has her sole chance at a 2022 Grammy for her record *Evermore*. AFP

Dad desperate to save son

TWO-YEAR-OLD Haoyang has likely just months to live – but the only medicine that can help his rare genetic condition is not found anywhere in China and closed borders due to the Covid-19 pandemic mean he cannot travel for treatment.

Instead, his desperate father, Xu Wei, has created a home laboratory to create a remedy for the boy himself.

"I didn't really have time to think about whether to do it or not. It had to be done," the 30-year-old said from his DIY lab in a high-rise apartment building in southwestern Kunming.

Haoyang has Menkes Syndrome, a genetic disorder that impacts how copper – which is crucial for brain and nervous system development – is processed in the body.

Sufferers rarely survive beyond the age of three.

But Xu, who has only high school education and ran a small online business before his son became ill, is determined to give him a fighting chance.

"Even though he cannot move or speak, he has a soul and feels emotions," he said, holding Haoyang in his lap to give him honey mixed in water.

After being told the disease was incurable and the only medication that could help ease symptoms was not available in China, he began researching and teaching himself pharmaceuticals.

"My friends and family were against it. They said it was impossible", he remembers.

Most online documents on Menkes Syndrome were in English, but undeterred Xu used translation software to understand them, before setting up a home lab in his father's gym.

On discovering copper histadine could help, he set up the equipment to create it himself, mixing copper chloride dihydrate with histidine, sodium hydroxide and water.

Blocked by Covid

Xu now gives Haoyang a daily dose of homemade medicine, which gives the child some of the copper his body is missing.



Xu Wei holds his son Xu Haoyang – who likely only has months left to live due to a rare genetic disorder – at his home laboratory in Kunming. AFP

The amateur chemist claims that a few of the blood tests returned to normal two weeks after beginning the treatment.

The toddler can't talk, but he gives a smile of recognition when his father runs a gentle hand over his head.

His wife, who didn't want to give her name, cares for their five-year-old daughter in another part of the city.

Menkes Syndrome is more prevalent in boys than girls, and it is estimated one in 100,000 babies are born with the disease globally according to organisation Rare Diseases.

There is little information or data available but Xu said pharmaceutical companies have shown little interest as the treatment "does not have commercial value and its user group is small".

Under normal circumstances, he would have travelled abroad to bring back treatments for Haoyang from specialist centres overseas, but China has largely closed its borders since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Xu felt he had no choice but to make it himself.

"At first, I thought it was a joke," said Haoyang's grandfather Xu Jianhong.

"[I thought] it was an impossible mission for him."

But six weeks after throwing himself into the project, Xu produced his first vial of copper histidine.

To test it he first experimented with rabbits and then injected the treatment into his own body.

"The rabbits were fine, I was fine, so then I tried it on my son," he said.

Reassured, he then started

gradually increasing the dosage.

But the medicine is not a cure.

Professor Annick Toutain, specialist of rare diseases at the Tours University Hospital in France, said the copper treatment "is only efficient against certain genetic anomalies and if it is administered very early on, in the first three weeks of life".

She said that after that the treatment will alleviate symptoms, "without leading to recovery".

Xu has accepted that it can "only slow down the disease".

Gene therapy

His work has led to interest from VectorBuilder, an international biotech lab, who are now launching gene therapy research with Xu into Menkes syndrome.

The company's chief scientist Bruce Lahn described it as "a rare disease among rare diseases" and said they were inspired after learning about Xu's family.

Clinical trials and tests on animals are planned for the next few months.

Xu has even been contacted by other parents whose children have been diagnosed with Menkes, asking him to make treatment for their relatives too – something he has refused.

"I can only be responsible for my child," he said, while health authorities have said they will not intervene as long as he only makes the treatment for home use.

Huang Yu of the Medical Genetics Department at Peking University said that as a doctor he was "ashamed" to hear of Xu's case.

He said he hoped that "as a developing country, we can improve our medical system to better help such families".

With a full-time role as an amateur chemist, Xu has little income and relies mainly on his parents.

Friends tried to talk him out of his medical efforts but undeterred, the young father is planning to study molecular biology at university and do everything he can to protect his son.

"I don't want him to wait desperately for death. Even if we fail, I want my son to have hope." AFP



Starting early in the morning the villagers bring out thousands of rice-covered panels (phen) and stack them along the village streets and alleys. VNA/VNS

Village's claim to fame is rice paper and crackers

LOCATED close to the peaceful Cau River, Tho Ha Village in the northern province of Bac Giang has developed a name for itself thanks to its original ancient architecture and specialty products – rice paper and crackers.

The rice paper made in the village has been so renowned and favoured that it has appeared in meals from the north to the south, and even abroad.

Arriving at the village, visitors might be overwhelmed seeing rice paper dried in every corner.

From the early morning, villagers bring out thousands of rice-covered panels (phen) and stack them along the village streets and alleys. The rice paper is evenly dried on the ground of

communal houses, pagodas, on the roofs and trees.

The whole village is permeated with the aromatic scent of flour while local ladies are seen toasting crackers over fire burners in the streets.

According to the locals, the rice paper must be dried in the thin mist in the air so that it can be high quality and have a delicious flavour.

The village has more than 600 households involved in making rice paper. The special features of Tho Ha rice paper is its thickness and flexibility. When soaked in water, it remains tough while not breaking like some other types of rice paper. Furthermore, the producers do not use additives to ensure food safety and hygiene.

As an indispensable ingredient of Vietnamese famed spring rolls, Tho Ha rice paper has been introduced to markets nationwide and even exported to Taiwan, Korea, Japan and European countries.

During Tet (Vietnamese Lunar New Year), the production of rice cakes in the village is insufficient to meet demand. The time to buy the specialty starts from September till the end of February of the following year.

On average, one household produces about 250-300kg of rice cakes per day and earns an average income of about from VND7 million to VND10 million (\$310-\$440) per person per month, which is the main source of income for Tho Ha villagers.

VIET NAM NEWS/ASIA NEWS NETWORK



A digital artist works on creating renders of a newly launched virtual influencer called Bangkok Naughty Boo at their design studio in Bangkok. AFP



Online influencer Mutchima 'Friend' Wachirakomain has her photo taken outside a cafe in Bangkok, part of a global phenomenon of fictional characters blurring the lines between virtual and reality. AFP

Virtual influencers offer metaverse glimpse

SPORTING neon hair and flawless skin, Bangkok Naughty Boo is one of a new generation of influencers in Asia promising to stay forever young, on-trend, and scandal-free – because they are computer generated.

Blurring the lines between fantasy and reality, these stars are hugely popular with teenagers in the region and will yield increasing power as interest grows in the “metaverse”, industry experts say.

“I’m 17 forever, non-binary, with a dream of becoming a pop star,” Bangkok Naughty Boo – who uses they/them pronouns – said in an introductory video.

Created by fashion designer Adisak Jirasakkasem and his friends, who envisioned a gender-fluid persona to hang the ideals of the artist community, the character is one of a tribe of “Made in Thailand” virtual influencers borne from Covid-19 pressures.

In September, Ai-Ailynn made her debut – she was created after her agency became frustrated by the “limitations on human influencers” during Covid-19 lockdowns.

Virtual influencers “are suitable for the new normal”, SIA Bangkok said.

Artificial intelligence creations are establishing a foothold worldwide in the lucrative influencer market, which is expected to be worth \$13.8 billion in 2021, according to data giant Statista.

But industry analysts say Asia is where the industry will really boom in the coming decade.

“We think Asia will be an area of rapid growth in the sector of vir-

tual influencers. Generation Z is the largest group of internet users in Asia, and it is a digitally adept generation that is highly familiar with social media and all things virtual,” explained Nick Baklanov, a marketing specialist with Hype Auditor.

‘First metaverse inhabitants’

The number of virtual influencers has more than tripled to 130 in two years, according to Baklanov, who predicted Facebook’s investment in the metaverse – dubbed a VR version of the internet – will mean an industry boom.

“Virtual influencers are better suited to the role of the first inhabitants of the metaverse than anyone else,” he added.

The biggest virtual earner is believed to be Lil Miquela, the LA-based “robot It-Girl” who has worked with Prada and Calvin Klein, and makes an estimated \$7,000 per post.

The World Health Organisation recruited Knox Frost, a 21-year-old AI “universal adapter” from Atlanta, to spread coronavirus safety messages to his 700,000 followers.

In Asia, computer-generated pop stars including Japan’s Hatsune Miku and Luo Tianyi from China, as well as virtual K-Pop groups Eternity and K/DA, have paved the way for newer “stars” as technology improves.

To create Bangkok Naughty Boo, Adisak photographed a model in different locations across the Thai capital before creating the character’s face online.

He merged the computer-generated face and the real life model’s

body to make his virtual idol.

Bangkok Naughty Boo has already been signed to a leading Thai – human – modelling agency, while Ai-Ailynn has already secured a deal to be the face of a major mobile operator.

“Influencers yield more power in the East and provide more lucrative brand and engagement opportunities, as the idol and fandom concepts are more rooted in culture,” Saisangeeth Daswani, a fashion and beauty industry analyst at market intelligence company Stylus, explained.

Scandal-free, controlled lives

With trouble-free pasts, a round-the-clock work ethic, and easily controlled public personas, the fictional avatars are also respite for companies weary of reputational damage.

“Some brands enjoy the safety of associating with [virtual] influencers who have a pre-defined backstory and future,” commented Christopher Travers, the founder of Virtual Humans, a website tracking the industry.

And with authorities in some Asian nations policing freedom of expression, businesses may prefer the ability to control everything.

“The Chinese government’s recent crackdown on exorbitantly paid, ‘vulgar’ and ‘immoral’ influencers is likely to further boost the appeal of virtual influencers,” explained Chen May Yee, APAC director for Wunderman Thompson Intelligence.

“They won’t make impolitic comments or be embroiled in sex scandals.”

SIA Bangkok say there has been

huge interest in Ai-Ailynn with businesses in pandemic-ravaged Asia looking to “innovation and a new world order”.

A shake-up of the status quo may have some flesh-and-blood content creators worried, but human influencer Mutchima Wachirakomain welcomes the newcomers.

“They are freaking cool,” exclaimed the 25-year-old, who shares glamour shots alongside “no filter” makeup-free looks to her 21,100 followers on Instagram.

“People still yearn for authenticity, the realness of a real-life influencer,”

she said as she prepped for a shoot at an avocado-themed cafe.

“The characters can’t replace the intimate connections humans have with each other.”

But Bangkok Naughty Boo is prepared to try.

Their Instagram is a mix of cheeky ensembles shot against the backdrop of Thailand’s concrete jungle capital as well as daily life snippets like getting a first vaccine shot and spilling bubble milk tea.

“I hope I can meet you all in person one day. Love you!” they said, signing off with a kiss. AFP



This image released on October 28 by influencer agency SIA Bangkok shows Thai digital influencer Ai Lynn. AFP

Pompeii online: Italy launches cultural streaming platform



The new ‘ITsART’ (Italy is art) platform launched on Tuesday in the spectacular surroundings of the Colosseum in Rome. It already has more than 100,000 registered users. AFP

ITALY’S top cultural institutions are happily welcoming back visitors after months of online-only events, but digital skills learned during the pandemic are being repurposed into an innovative national streaming service.

The new “ITsART” (Italy is art) platform, launched on Tuesday in the spectacular surroundings of the Colosseum in Rome, will offer a mix of live and on demand events, from plays, concerts and films to virtual tours of museums and monuments.

Institutions from Milan’s Scala theatre to the Pompeii archaeological park are among those involved in the scheme, backed by about €19 million (\$21 million) from the Italian government.

“Our aim was to provide a common platform that can reach a growing audience of consumers of Italian art

and culture around the world, while importantly, supporting the performing and visual arts sector,” said the project’s director general, Guido Casali.

A beta version of the service has been running in Italy and Britain since May, but is now open to all the countries in the EU, accessible on the official site and an app.

Italy’s cultural treasures, coast, lakes and mountains made it the world’s fifth-most visited destination before the coronavirus pandemic hit in early 2020.

Deprived of their public, as elsewhere, many museums and institutions developed online offerings for visitors stuck at home, including the Uffizi galleries in Florence, and Pompeii.

“I made little videos, short videos

just talking about the site or what we were doing, how it was being there without visitors ... and it had such great feedback,” said Gabriel Zuchtriegel, the director of Pompeii.

He was not keen on using existing commercial platforms, “where you as a user are not really a client, you’re a product, they’re selling commercials ... so I thought it would be great to develop our own platform”.

ITsArt, which already has more than 100,000 registered users, is free to access although there is some pay-per-view content.

It is divided into three sections: “Stage”, with concerts for example at the Scala; “Sites”, with virtual visits including of iconic monuments and “Stories” with documentaries and films such as Bernardo Bertolucci’s 1987 *The Last Emperor*. AFP

Lifestyle

Mexico's indigenous textile artists fight off fashion 'plagiarism'

MEXICO is fighting back against what it calls the plagiarism of indigenous textiles, bringing together traditional artisans and international designers for dialogue aimed at creating a more equitable fashion industry.

Dozens of indigenous weavers and other artisans are gathering this weekend at the Los Pinos former presidential residence in Mexico City for the "Original" fair hosted by the culture ministry.

Alongside an open-air market selling clothes and accessories such as the huipil, a traditional white cotton blouse with finely embroidered patterns, there are fashion parades resembling indigenous pride marches.

The goal is to end what Mexico's leftist government denounces as cultural appropriation of the motifs, embroidery and colours of indigenous communities by foreign fashion houses.

"Plagiarism is not a tribute. Theft is not the fruit of inspiration," Culture Minister Alejandra Frausto said at the fair's inauguration.

She denounced the "modern-day pirates" who "take what they like and label it as any kind of merchandise".

'Lack of communication'

Mexico won an apology a year ago from French designer Isabel Marant after Frausto demanded an explanation for Marant's use of the traditional patterns of the Purepecha community in her collection.

Similar complaints have been lodged against major clothing brands, including Zara and Mango.

Marant said future designs would properly "pay tribute to our sources of inspiration."

A representative of her company was due to meet directly with indigenous artisans at the Mexico City fair, as was one for the Spanish designer Agatha Ruiz de la Prada.

'It's theft'

On Friday, two young designers from Paris sat down



A model wearing an indigenous garment at the Centro Cultural Los Pinos during the Original Fashion Week in Mexico City. AFP

with craftsman Ignacio Netzahualcoyotl and his partner Christian Janat at their workshop in the state of Tlaxcala east of Mexico City.

"Plagiarism is the result of a lack of communication," Netzahualcoyotl said afterward.

"We ask that our work be paid for fairly," he added.

"The price must take into account the design, the patterns, the number of hours worked," he said after presenting his fabric to the two Parisians.

"We want to come to an agreement with the artisans with whom we are going to work," said French designer Theophile Delaeter, co-creator of the Calher Delaeter brand with his Franco-Mexican co-creator Alonso Calderon Hernandez.

Indigenous artisans at the fair complained of discovering copies of their fabric on the internet.

"A few months ago, we fought

because we found a computer-reproduced huipil," said Candy Margarita de la Cruz Santiago, a young weaver from the southern state of Oaxaca.

Legal measures are being put in place to tackle the problem.

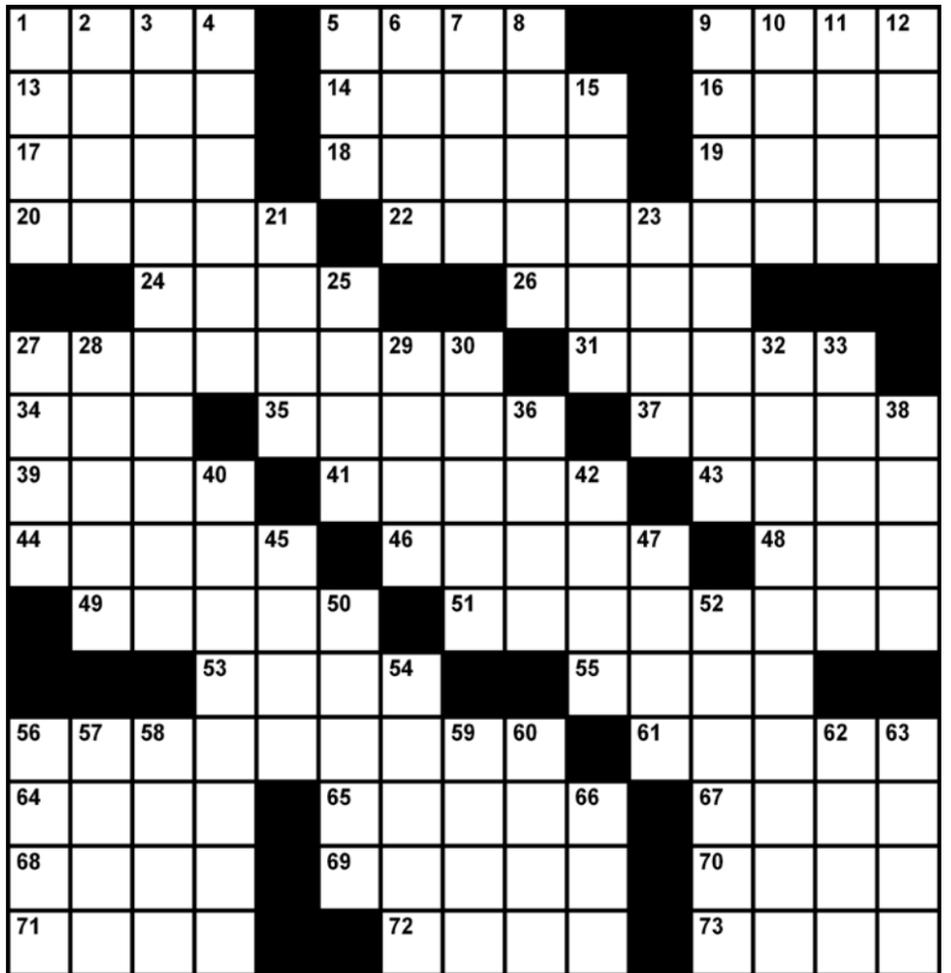
"Under new provisions that we've had since last year, written consent of the communities is necessary when this kind of textile art is going to be used for profit," said a representative of the National Institute of Copyright, Marco Antonio Morales Montes.

Mexico is also asking for a discussion within the World Intellectual Property Organization about the issue, he added.

Artisan weavers like Marta Serna Luis, 58, hope the steps will bring them the recognition they are seeking.

"We must apply the law against the perpetrators of plagiarism. It's theft," she said. AFP

Thinking caps



"HUE ARE YOU?"

ACROSS

- 1 Newborn
- 5 Sink obstruction
- 9 Wearing loafers, e.g.
- 13 Crow's-nest sighting
- 14 Hindu gentleman (Var.)
- 16 Balcony section
- 17 Athletic group
- 18 Wild animal track
- 19 Invisible thing around a person
- 20 Be silent, in music
- 22 Angered
- 24 Stomach tightness
- 26 "Awright!"
- 27 Get rid of pests, in a way
- 31 Feudal lord
- 34 Biochemistry abbr.
- 35 Hanging loosely
- 37 The "L" of XXL
- 39 Blows it
- 41 This puzzle's theme
- 43 Andean land
- 44 "This is terrible!"
- 46 "Paradise Lost" character
- 48 Always, in verse
- 49 Song of David
- 51 Assailed

DOWN

- 1 Deck post for cables
- 2 Cruising the Pacific
- 3 Reputation stainers
- 4 Saudi's neighbor
- 5 Items used by good buddies?
- 6 Drinks, as a cat
- 7 Shawm successor
- 8 Like a hot fudge sundae
- 9 Coal mining waste
- 10 Word with "witching" or "happy"
- 11 Horrifying beast
- 12 Like some batteries
- 15 Projecting window design

- 21 Clothing, informally
- 23 Ammunition for a carpenter's gun
- 25 After-bath powder
- 27 Eagles' Glenn
- 28 Tear open, ironically
- 29 New Mexico art community
- 30 Critical success
- 32 Rookies
- 33 Bird with long plumes
- 36 Japanese 13-stringed instrument
- 38 100 cents
- 40 Crashing waves site
- 42 Roast beef request, sometimes
- 45 ___ gin fizz
- 47 Tide level
- 50 Finish a task completely
- 52 Big white sheet
- 54 Rome's river
- 56 Any thing
- 57 Finger, in a way
- 58 Barber's job
- 59 ___ of the above
- 60 Philosopher Immanuel
- 62 Nicknames for moms' moms
- 63 Police jacket acronym
- 66 Baseball's Williams

Sudoku Pacific

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

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Wednesday's solution

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

Wednesday's solution

Wednesday's Puzzle Answer

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



Alongside an open-air market selling clothes and accessories such as the huipil, there are fashion parades resembling indigenous pride marches. AFP

Peng Shuai to Xinjiang – the issues dogging Beijing Games

FROM human rights to coronavirus and now tennis star Peng Shuai, preparations for February's Beijing Olympics have been overshadowed by several controversies.

China's ruling Communist Party is however determined to frame the Winter Games as a chance for the country to showcase its prowess and help the world unite in the face of the pandemic.

The International Olympic Committee has lauded Beijing for making history in becoming the first host of a Summer Games, in 2008, and now a Winter one.

With just over 70 days to go, AFP Sports takes a look at the issues hanging over the Olympics:

Peng Shuai

There was grave international concern for former world No1 doubles player Peng after she made sexual assault accusations on social media against a former top Communist Party politician.

The 35-year-old – a three-time Olympian – was not heard from for more than two weeks and her claims were rapidly censored. The UN, US and Peng's fellow tennis stars all voiced fears for her whereabouts.

The Women's Tennis Association threatened to end its lucrative business in China unless it was assured of her safety.

Peng later appeared on state media in several videos and held a video call with IOC president Thomas Bach on Sunday in which she said she was safe and well, however concerns remain.

Xinjiang

Campaigners say that at least one million Uyghurs and other Turkic-speaking, mostly Muslim minorities have been incarcerated in camps in China's north-western region of Xinjiang.

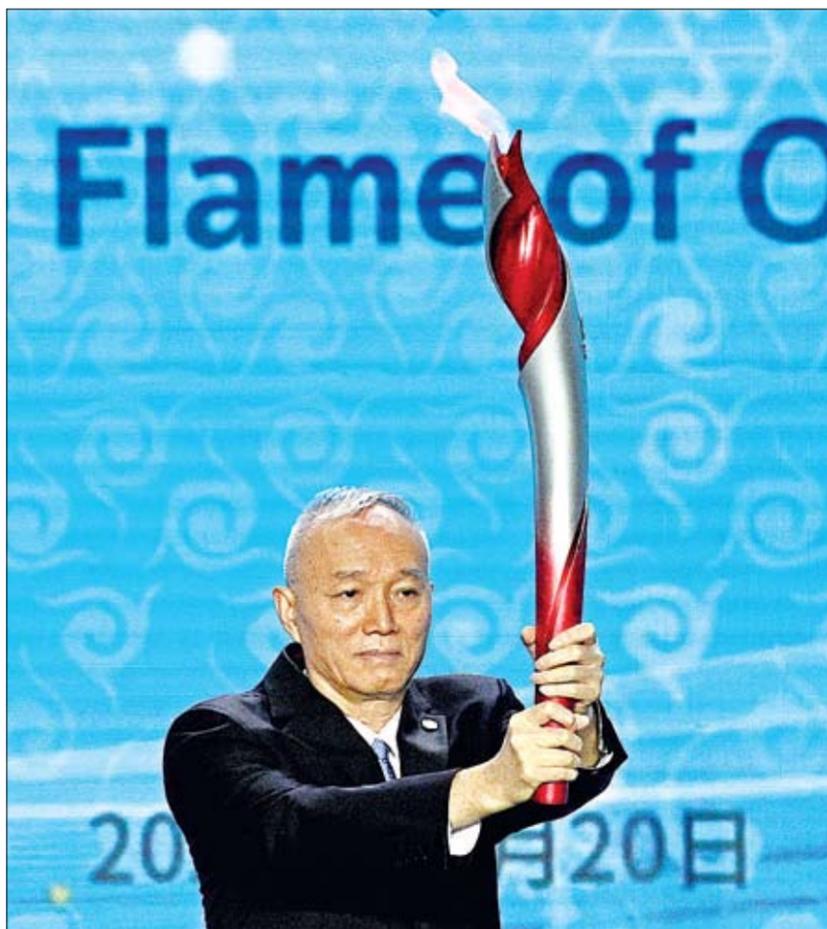
Human rights groups and foreign governments have found evidence of what they say is mass detentions, forced labour, political indoctrination, torture and forced sterilisation.

Washington has described the situation as genocide and banned all cotton from Xinjiang. US President Joe Biden has said he is considering a diplomatic boycott of the Olympics.

Several major fashion brands have announced they would no longer use cotton from Xinjiang for fear it has been produced by forced labour.

After initially denying the existence of the Xinjiang camps, China later defended them as vocational training centres aimed at reducing the appeal of Islamic extremism.

In response to the boycott calls, Chi-



Communist Party Secretary of Beijing Cai Qi holding the torch on October 20 before lighting the cauldron during the Olympic flame welcoming ceremony ahead of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics. AFP

na has consistently railed against what it calls the "politicisation of sport".

Tibet, Hong Kong

Human rights campaigners and exiles have accused Beijing of religious repression and massively curtailing rights in Tibet.

Activists unfurled a Tibetan flag at the Olympic flame-lighting ceremony in Greece.

Tibet has alternated over the centuries between independence and control by China, which says it "peacefully liberated" the rugged plateau in 1951 and brought infrastructure and education to the previously underdeveloped region.

But many exiled Tibetans accuse the Beijing government of religious repression, torture and eroding their culture – part of broader fears for human rights in China.

There has also been international concern about a clampdown in Hong Kong, which China is remoulding in its own authoritarian image after huge and

often violent democracy protests in the city two years ago.

Coronavirus

The coronavirus has loomed large over the build-up to the Beijing Olympics, which take place just six months after the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Summer Games.

China has managed to restrict domestic infections to small clusters through aggressive lockdowns and mass testing, but Beijing organisers have admitted that protecting the Games from the coronavirus is their "biggest challenge".

The Winter Olympics will be held in a "closed loop" – a strict bubble insulating athletes from the outside world for the whole Games. Only people living in China will be allowed to attend as spectators.

The estimated 2,900 athletes must be fully vaccinated or face 21 days in quarantine upon arrival. They, along with media and others in the bubble, will also be tested daily.

Entry into the Chinese capital has already been tightened. AFP

Golf's Asian Tour back on tee after 20 months

GOLF'S Asian Tour returns after 20 months of pandemic inaction in Thailand this week, buoyed by a \$200 million cash injection from Australian legend Greg Norman into 10 new lucrative tournaments from next year.

When the \$1 million Blue Canyon Championship tees off on Thursday on the idyllic Thai island of Phuket, it will see the first shots played on the Asian Tour since the Malaysian Open on March 7, 2020.

The restart comes just weeks after Norman shook up the world of golf by announcing his new Saudi-backed series of 10 events from 2022, triggering speculation that it could be the first step towards the Great White Shark's oft-touted dream of a golf "super league".

Asian Tour Commissioner and CEO Cho Minn Thant insists Norman's move is not a takeover of the circuit and his priority is to finish the 2019-2020 campaign which ground to a halt to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

"This week will help us to finally begin the process of completing our season, following the most difficult period in our history," Cho told *asiatour.com*.

Australia's Wade Ormsby has led the order of merit since winning the Hong Kong Open in January 2020.

He will head a strong field for back-to-back events in Phuket which will also feature home favourite Jazz Janewattananond and American John Catlin, fresh off a top 10 finish in the \$9 million DP World Tour Championship in Dubai on Sunday.

Jazz, the 2019 order of merit champion, will be joined by Asian Tour luminaries such as Scott Hend of Australia and

Shiv Kapur of India in the 144-player field.

Players will make the short journey next week to the Laguna Phuket Championship, followed by two more \$1 million events slated for Singapore in January to round off the longest season in Asian Tour history.

Both Thai events will be played in "bubble" conditions, without spectators, and players have to be fully vaccinated to compete.

Resuming play in Asia had been complicated by the variation in Covid rules across different countries.

But Thailand dropped its strict quarantine requirements for fully vaccinated visitors, allowing the Tour to stage the back-to-back tournaments in Phuket.

The 2022 season schedule is yet to be announced but will begin with the \$5 million Saudi International in early February, which is not part of 10-event series funded by the Norman-helmed LIV Golf Investments.

The company is majority owned by the Saudi Public Investment Fund, one of the world's largest sovereign wealth funds, which was behind the recent takeover of Premier League football side Newcastle United.

The Gulf kingdom's move in to sport has brought allegations of "sportswashing" – buying positive publicity to distract from its human rights record.

But Cho said the new partnership would help the Asian Tour recover from the covid shutdown.

"To have 10 tournaments with prize money above \$1 million each has basically never before been seen on the Asian Tour," Cho said.

"It's very likely to be the Asian Tour's most lucrative season." AFP



Australia's Wade Ormsby kisses the champion's trophy after winning in the final round of the Hong Kong Open golf tournament at the Hong Kong Golf Club on January 12 last year. AFP

Former champion Bernal confirms Tour de France return



Egan Bernal of INEOS Grenadiers rides during the first-ever Giro d'Italia Criterium race at Expo 2020 in Dubai on November 6. AFP

COLOMBIAN cyclist Egan Bernal will bid to reclaim the Tour de France title in 2022, the Ineos rider confirmed to press in his homeland on Tuesday.

Bernal won the Tour de France in style aged just 22 in 2019, but the climbing sensation withdrew injured half-way through the 2020 edition and skipped the following year to race and win the Giro d'Italia.

In his absence the even younger Slovenian Tadej Pogacar of Team UAE Emirates won back-to-back Tour de France titles and is now considered the man to beat.

But the prospect of seeing Bernal try to wrestle the title from Pogacar's iron grip is a mouthwatering proposition.

When cycling magazine *Mundo Ciclistico* asked Bernal, who turns 25 in January, if he would race the Tour de France in 2022 he confirmed he would.

"The answer is yes," said Bernal, who

emerged from the shadow of teammate Welshman Geraint Thomas over the culminating high-altitude Alpine peaks to win his Tour in 2019.

"That is clear. We will focus all our training, preparations and force on getting ready for the Tour de France this year," he said.

"It's time to go back, to return to the paths we found in 2019, and which I moved away from slightly," said Bernal.

As the Giro d'Italia finishes less than three weeks before the Tour begins in 2022 the news suggests he would likely miss the Italian race, of which he speaks so highly.

"Winning the Giro was of enormous personal and sporting significance for me personally, my team and for Colombians," said the man who raced as a neo-pro in Italy.

"It took huge physical and mental strength to win the Giro, and I'll never forget it."

"I think I'm over the back injury but the results on the bike will show if that's right," he said of the niggling back complaint that came to the fore during his Tour de France defence.

"I'll be starting my season in Europe," he said.

The 2022 Tour starts with three stages in Copenhagen and, in the words of its designer Thierry Gouvenou, will suit only 'complete riders' who can thrive on any surface and in any conditions.

Bernal, who grew up in the Andes can look forwards to five finishes at high altitude, one of them at 2400m.

But given his slight frame, he may struggle more on the windy 17km bridge over the sea in Denmark, on the 19km of cobblestones in France's northern mining region, or on the 40km of time-trialling. AFP

Sport

Ronaldo sends Man United into last 16

MANCHESTER United booked their place in the Champions League last 16 as Cristiano Ronaldo scored in a 2-0 victory at Villarreal on Tuesday, while holders Chelsea also reached the knockout phase by thumping Juventus.

Three-time European champions United went into their first game since sacking Ole Gunnar Solskjaer at the weekend needing a win to confirm a top-two finish in Group F.

But they were under massive pressure as defeat would have left their fate out of their own hands.

David de Gea made two crucial saves and United, with Michael Carrick in caretaker charge, took advantage through Ronaldo's 78th-minute lob.

Jadon Sancho, so often a peripheral figure since his big-money move from Borussia Dortmund in the close-season, capped a fine individual display with his first goal for the club late on.

"It's not an important result for me personally. It's an important one for the players and the club," said Carrick.

Ronaldo's goal was the 799th of his career, his 140th in the Champions League and his sixth in the competition this season.

The other qualification spot in the group remains up for grabs after Young Boys and Atalanta played out a thrilling 3-3 draw in Bern.

Late goals from Vincent Sierro and Silvan Hefti gave the Swiss champions a 3-2 lead,



Manchester United forward Cristiano Ronaldo (left) celebrates after scoring a goal during the UEFA Champions League Group F football match against Villarreal CF on Tuesday. AFP

but Luis Muriel struck in the 88th minute for the visitors.

Atalanta face a winner-takes-all match against Villarreal in Bergamo next month.

Chelsea thrash Juve

Chelsea romped into the last 16 and to the top of Group H with an impressive 4-0 thrashing of Juventus at Stamford Bridge.

Thomas Tuchel's men knew that qualification would be secured if they could avoid defeat or if Zenit Saint Petersburg failed to beat Malmo.

The Blues dominated the early stages and took the lead through young defender Trevoh Chalobah's third goal of the season.

Chelsea's defenders were

consistently a menace from set-pieces, and Thiago Silva saw a header saved by Wojciech Szczesny early in the second period.

It was a defender who doubled Chelsea's lead in the 56th minute.

England right-back Reece James hammered a fine volley into the bottom corner to net for the fifth time already this term.

Chelsea grabbed their third goal less than two minutes later, Ruben Loftus-Cheek prodding the ball to Hudson-Odoi, who smashed home from close range.

There was still time for Timo Werner, making his first appearance since an injury layoff, to come off the bench

and score in added time.

"We did really well, it is so tough to score goals against Juventus and we created so much," said Tuchel. "Full credit for an amazing performance and a fantastic result."

Zenit drew 1-1 with Malmo to secure a spot in the Europa League knockouts.

Barcelona stutter

Barcelona were held to a goalless draw by Benfica at the Camp Nou in Xavi's second game as coach, but remain above the Portuguese side in Group E.

However, the Catalan club will have to beat Bayern Munich in Germany in their final group game to be sure of making the next round.

Benfica host already-eliminated Dynamo Kiev in their last match, trailing Barca by two points.

Barcelona endured a nervy first half which saw Gavi waste the only clear opportunity, blazing over from close range when Memphis Depay was waiting in the middle for a tap-in.

Xavi's men improved after the interval, though, with Frenkie de Jong's header forcing Benfica 'keeper Odysseas Vlachodimos into a flying save.

But it was Benfica who almost took a huge step towards the last 16 deep into injury time, only for Haris Seferovic to shoot wide when he should have scored.

"We played well but there's a bitter aftertaste because we were here to win tonight," Barca defender Ronald Araujo told uefa.com.

"In front of our fans, our people – and now we simply must go and win in Munich."

The other game in Group E saw Bayern Munich wrap up top spot with a 2-1 victory at Dynamo Kiev.

Robert Lewandowski lit up a snowy evening in the Ukrainian capital by scoring a magnificent overhead kick, with Kingsley Coman also on the scoresheet for the six-time winners.

In Group G, Lille made Salzburg wait to reach the last 16 as Jonathan David scored a first-half winner in a 1-0 victory in France.

All four teams in the group can still go through, after Sevilla saw off Wolfsburg 2-0. AFP

Hameed hits unbeaten 53, England start Ashes prep

HASEEB Hameed hit an unbeaten 53 and Rory Burns 39 as England began their Ashes tour in a low-key and rain-hit intra-squad warm-up game Tuesday, played against the backdrop of a racism scandal back home.

Test superstars Joe Root, Stuart Broad, Jimmy Anderson and Ben Stokes were among the first wave of players to land in Brisbane on November 6 with their Twenty20 World Cup contingent jetting in later.

They have completed 14 days quarantine at a Gold Coast resort and experienced their first real taste of Australian conditions in the informal three-day game against England Lions at Peter Burge Oval.

But rain restricted the opening day to just 29 overs.

Hameed struck eight boundaries and Burns found the ropes four times as an England XI made 98 without loss after winning the toss and opting to bat.

Zak Crawley is scheduled to come in at three followed by skipper Root, Stokes then Ollie Pope.

While Broad was on the team sheet, his veteran fast-bowling partner Anderson was not.

Other absent Ashes squad members included Johnny Bairstow, Jos Buttler, Dawid Malan and Mark Wood, who all played at the T20 World Cup.

The five-Test tour got under way amid a growing racism scandal surrounding the treatment of Root's former Yorkshire teammate Azeem Rafiq.

Pakistan-born Rafiq told a parliamentary inquiry this month how racist language was "constantly" used during his two spells at the county club.

He made several allegations against high-profile individuals, including former England players Gary Ballance, Tim Bresnan, Matthew Hoggard and Alex Hales.

In comments from England's Gold Coast base on November 12, Root demanded change but claimed he had not witnessed racist incidents during his time at Yorkshire.

He has not spoken publicly since and there have been no media opportunities with the England squad.

Australia have their own problems heading into the first Test at Brisbane on December 8 – Tim Paine quit as captain last week over a sexting scandal. Pat Cummins or Steve Smith is expected to take the reins.

England are due to play a second three-day, intra-squad warm-up from November 30, while the Australians have their own fixture from December 1 – the only red-ball preparations for either side ahead of the opening Test. AFP

Al Hilal sweep past Pohang Steelers to win title

NASSER Al-Dawsari scored the fastest ever goal in an Asian Champions League final as Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal swept past South Korea's Pohang Steelers 2-0 to win the continental title for a record fourth time on Tuesday.

Both teams were aiming for an unprecedented fourth tri-

umph but it was the hosts who made history with Al-Dawsari and Moussa Marega on target at the King Fahd International Stadium in the Saudi capital.

Al Hilal's victory came a year after they suffered the ignominy of being thrown out of the event following numerous

cases of Covid-19 infections within their squad.

But on Tuesday night those bitter memories were banished as the Saudi giants dominated their opponents in front of 50,000 fans.

"I am proud of the team, they are a fantastic group of players," said Al Hilal coach Leonardo Jardim, the first Portuguese coach to win the Asian title.

"Winning the tournament was our target from the beginning and I'm happy we have achieved that."

Al-Dawsari sent the crowd into raptures with a fantastic strike from over 25 yards out after just 16 seconds.

The Pohang midfield failed to clear the ball, allowing al-Dawsari space and the 22-year-old's thundering left-foot shot found the top corner of the net despite Pohang goalkeeper Lee Jun's despairing dive.

The previous fastest goal in an AFC Champions League final was scored by Saudi side Al Ittihad's Sierra Leonean star

Mohammed Kallon in the second minute against the UAE's Al Ain in 2005.

"The early goal made the difference, the players didn't concentrate and that goal impacted us hugely," said Pohang coach Kim Gi-dong.

"I had a strong feeling that we can turn it around but then they scored the second goal."

Profligate Pohang

Al-Dawsari, who had been impressive throughout the tournament, was once again the key for Al Hilal with his impressive touches in midfield creating plenty of opportunities for his side.

Pohang, too, had their opportunities and could have levelled in the 12th minute but Sin Jin-ho's shot hit the woodwork and the rebound from Lim Sang-hyuk was kept out by Al Hilal goalkeeper Abdullah Al-Mayouf.

Frenchman Bafetimbi Gomis sent his shot across the face of the goal later on from a Marega pass and Al-Mayouf was

once again alert to thwart an effort from Pohang's Kwon Wan-kyu.

Gomis had gone close again in the second half but made up for his miss with an excellent pass for Malian international Marega who outwitted Jeon Min-gwang before shooting past Lee in the 63rd minute.

Al Hilal could have scored one more with 10 minutes remaining but Gomis fired wide and despite some frantic attempts by Pohang, the Saudis held firm to lay claim to being the most successful club side in Asia.

Their previous wins came in 1991 and 2000, when the tournament was known as the Asian Club Championship, and in 2019.

Al Hilal can now look forward to the Club World Cup early next year.

"Our objective is to win every game," added former Monaco boss Jardim. "The top teams from the world will be there but we will do our best as the champions of Asia." AFP



Hilal's midfielder Nasser al-Dawsari prepares to shoot during AFC Champions League final football match against South Korea's Pohang Steelers on Tuesday. AFP