



FIRST-EVER BENGAL FLORICAL BREEDING FACILITY IN S REAP

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Cambodia, Shanghai bourses strike key MoU

Hin Pisei

THE Cambodia Securities Exchange (CSX) and Shanghai Stock Exchange (SSE) are joining forces to explore cooperation on information sharing, personnel exchanges, and joint research for financial product development.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was inked to this effect on November 26 by CSX CEO Hong Sok

Hour and SSE president Cai Jianchun.

In June 2019, the Securities and Exchange Regulator of Cambodia (SERC) and the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) entered into an MoU on “Cooperation in Securities and Futures Supervision”, the SSE noted in a statement.

In October that year, Sok Hour attended the “2019 International Workshop for Stock Exchanges” hosted by

the Shanghai International Centre for Communication and Cooperation between Exchanges (SICCCE), it added.

In a separate statement, the CSX said the newly-signed MoU would lay the foundation for cooperation between two parties.

Established in 1990, the SSE is one of the largest stock exchanges in the world based on total market capitalisation. The bourse provides various types

of financial instruments, including stocks, bonds, fund and derivatives.

As of October 31, over 2,000 companies were listed on its Main Board and sci-tech innovation board, commonly known as the Star market. The daily average trading value of the two boards combined is around \$70 billion this year.

To date, the CSX has signed MoUs with more than 10 local and international institutions.

There are 14 companies listed on the bourse, eight of which have issued stocks and six of which have bonds on the market.

As of September 30, 2020, the then-13 listed companies had raised a combined \$253 million. The stock index increased more than 57 per cent in 2019 compared to the previous year, only to dip 14.93 per cent in 2020, CSX data show. ■

PM: Do not defile Tonle Sap swamp forest or else

Long Kimmarita and Orm Bunthoern

PRIME Minister Hun Sen ordered police to arrest anyone—including government officials—involved with the deforestation of the flooded forests surrounding the Tonle Sap Lake because it is an area important to the spawning of many species of fish, among other reasons.

Speaking in a special audio address to the nation on November 28, Hun Sen said large-scale deforestation had occurred anarchically in the provinces adjacent to the Tonle Sap Lake, especially in Kampong Chhnang province.

“Anarchic deforestation is unacceptable and unforgivable for those officials who have exercised their territorial authority to facilitate it at the provincial or district levels or any other officials who are involved in encroachment upon flooded forests to occupy the land,” he said. “The same goes for the general public. We cannot accept any encroach-

ment upon the flooded forests in the Tonle Sap area.”

He said he had received information on this matter from Royal Academy of Cambodia (RAC) president Sok Touch who had researched and investigated criminal encroachment in the area surrounding the lake and determined that thousands of hectares of flooded forests have already been destroyed.

Hun Sen ordered that the areas that have already been deforested be reclaimed as state property and that the provincial governors act in cooperation with the police and military forces to crack down on these crimes.

“I use the words ‘crack down’ not ‘educate’. We don’t have time for education anymore,” he said.

He ordered Minister of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction Chea Sophara to lead an urgent meeting with other relevant ministries as well as the Tonle Sap Authority and National

CONTINUED – PAGE 2



A booster of confidence

A total of 188,160 doses of Moderna’s Covid-19 vaccine provided by the Covax Facility arrive in Phnom Penh on Sunday. HENG CHIVOAN

Prince Ranariddh passes away at 77

Mom Kuntheart

Prince Norodom Ranariddh, the second son of the late King Father Norodom Sihanouk and former First Prime Minister of Cambodia, has passed away in France at the age of 77.

“Samdech Krom Preah Norodom Ranariddh has passed away this morning in France just after 9am Paris-time,” confirmed Oum Dara-vuth, adviser to the secretariat of Queen Mother Norodom Monineath Sihanouk.

Born in 1944, Prince Ranariddh was the leader of the

royalist FUNCINPEC party and served as the First Prime Minister from 1993 until 1997 following Cambodia’s first democratic elections organised by the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia.

Prime Minister Hun Sen—who served as the Second Prime Minister during that four-year period in a two-party coalition government—wrote a letter of condolences to the Prince’s family, friends and supporters on November 28.

Prince Ranariddh then went on to serve as the president of the National Assembly from



Prince Norodom Ranariddh. HENG CHIVOAN

1998 to 2006, following the 1998 elections when his party was runner-up in the vote to the Cambodian People’s Party.

In later years, the Prince had

mostly retired from politics and his party’s political base was gradually eroded by the rise of other more active opposition groups. He also suffered injuries in a traffic accident in Preah Sihanouk province in 2018 in which his wife Ouk Phalla was killed.

In January of this year, Prince Ranariddh began an apparent political comeback as president of the FUNCINPEC party—though it proved to be short-lived—after returning from medical treatment in France to take over the reins from his eldest son Prince Norodom Chakravuth. ■



KEM SOKHA CALLS ON RAINSY TO STOP USE OF HIS NAME, PHOTOS

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INDONESIANS INVITED TO CAPTURE SLICE OF LOCAL AGRI MARKETS

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National

Ministry, WHO warn of Omicron variant

Mom Kunthear

THE World Health Organisation (WHO) in Cambodia warned that the two newly-flagged variants of SARS-CoV-2 – the coronavirus that causes Covid-19 – formally known as B.1.640 and B.1.1.529 (Omicron) could possibly reach Cambodia soon. The Ministry of Health has also urged public vigilance ahead of its potential arrival.

“There is high risk that Omicron will be imported and soon found in Cambodian communities in this highly interconnected world,” said the WHO Representative’s Office in a press statement on November 27.

It said Omicron is worrying because it has a large number of mutations, some of which are concerning. Preliminary evidence suggests increased transmissibility and an increased risk of re-infection by this variant, as compared to other strains of concern.

In South Africa in particular, Omicron has grown as a percentage of cases detected at a faster rate than previous surges in infections even from the Delta variant, suggesting that Omicron may be more transmissible and able to infect people more easily.

“We do not know about the current vaccines effectiveness on this variant. Researchers are looking into potential impacts its mutations have on vaccines and other tools. They are also working to understand more about the mutations and what they potentially mean for how virulent this variant is,” it said.

The only positive news regarding this new strain is that it can be



Health ministry spokeswoman Or Vandine. HENG CHIVAN

detected through polymerase chain reaction (PCR) diagnostics which enable the tracking of its spread.

“Cambodia should be concerned about the newly detected variant of concern Omicron despite the country’s high Covid-19 vaccination coverage,” said Li Ailan, WHO representative to Cambodia. “Everyone should be ready for a possible surge and we should continue to learn and adjust our response measures.”

“The most effective way to protect yourself, your loved ones and the

Cambodian community at large is to continue effective public health and social measures. Cambodia’s ‘three dos and three don’ts’ guidelines remain crucial,” said the press release.

Health ministry spokeswoman Or Vandine first cautioned the public about a potential threat to the Kingdom from the two variants on November 27.

She noted that B.1.640 was first reported in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. European and British health authorities have classi-

fied the strain as a “variant under monitoring”, which indicates that it could pose a risk but evidence of phenotypic or epidemiological consequences remains inconclusive.

B.1.1.529 was first reported in South Africa on November 24 with the earliest sample testing positive for it there dating to November 9. It was then detected in neighbouring Botswana and then in Hong Kong in a traveller arriving from South Africa.

There are also reports of suspected cases in the UK, Belgium,

Germany, Denmark and Israel.

The ministry’s Vandine noted that scientists are voicing concern over the transmissibility of Omicron and the high number of mutations on its spike proteins which could help the virus evade immune and antibody responses induced by Covid-19 vaccines.

“The WHO is monitoring its behaviour to see how easily it can be transmitted, how much damage it could cause and its implications for our antibodies,” she said.

She called on the public to increase their level of vigilance, reasoning that the strain could potentially be brought into Cambodia by travellers.

“When there are people coming in from everywhere, the possibility of transmission exists,” she said. “We must remain extremely cautious and vigilant at all times.”

She urged the public to avoid crowded places and follow the other “three do’s and three don’ts” guidelines, pointing out that the Kingdom is moving towards living with an endemic Covid-19 in the “new normal”.

The “three do’s” are to wear a face mask, wash hands frequently and keep a safe distance of at least 1.5m from other people. The “three don’ts” are to avoid confined and enclosed spaces, stay away from crowded places and refrain from touching others.

“Please don’t forget, don’t panic and don’t be too reckless. Everyone has to be responsible for their own health and that of their families and communities and hold fast to the ‘three do’s and three don’ts’ in order to make our return to the ‘new normal’ sustainable in the long-term,” she said. ■

Former Kampong Chhnang governor denies involvement

Continued from page 1

Military Police Commander Sao Sokha.

“For Kampong Chhnang, I’ve just heard that the former provincial governor who just left his position had deforested more than 2,000ha of flooded forests in recent months. I don’t care if the land actually belongs

to the former provincial governor – who is currently an undersecretary of state at the Ministry of Interior – or whoever it is [that owns it] at whatever level. All of the land must be confiscated and reclaimed as state property,” he said.

“[Commander] Sao Sokha has to take action immediately and lead forces into these

areas using the waterways and by helicopter to solve this problem and protect these flooded forest areas. Soon, the water levels will decrease and the [perpetrators] will start growing crops or resume their destruction of the forest. We won’t allow any planting of crops on the land and it will all be confiscated,” he said.

He ordered the police to arrest anyone involved and also instructed Anti-Corruption Unit chief Om Yentieng to investigate any officials involved in these crimes, build cases against them to refer to court and have all of them arrested.

“The government is so exhausted. We don’t have time to educate offenders again and again on the same problems that they are causing. You must keep it in the forefront of your minds that we don’t have time for education any longer. Only full enforcement of the law can solve this issue,” he said.

He instructed Sokha to take the lead in the operation followed by the joint forces from relevant ministries and institutions.

“By all means and at any cost we must take the land back. The land must be reforested and protected as habitat for the spawning of fish in the Tonle Sap Lake like in the past. The perpetrators must be held accountable before the law without any excuses,” he said.

Hun Sen urged any officials who were involved in the deforestation or encroachment to come forward and make their confessions now



Prime Minister Hun Sen speaking from his office. SPM

before the authorities take action by confiscating their properties and arresting them. He said he could not forgive any opportunist officials who had taken advantage of Covid-19 to grab state land.

“These people do not deserve to be officials anymore. They should be spending the night in prison rather than even one more night as a government official,” he said, adding that he apologised to the public for not having gotten this issue under control sooner, begged their forgiveness and fully accepted any public criticism for the situation.

Reached by *The Post* on Sunday, RAC president Touch declined to give further details about the crimes.

“This is a huge issue that I cannot explain at this time because it is related to my secu-

urity. If they decide to shoot me, I can easily be killed,” he said.

However, Touch had posted many images of himself and his investigating team working in Kampong Chhnang province.

“Real researchers need to find the truth and they don’t make up useless stories. We need to go where the problem is in order to solve the problem,” he said in a Facebook post on November 27.

Reached for comment on Sunday, former Kampong Chhnang governor Chhuor Chandoeun – who was singled out for blame in Hun Sen’s speech – said he did not own any land adjacent to the lake.

He said that in the past, encroachments upon flooded forests had happened in the villages and communes and as the provincial governor at the time

he had worked with those local authorities to prevent these crimes and had not issued ownership titles to any individuals.

“Speaking for myself, I don’t have land near the Lake. Let’s wait and see what the intervention group that [Hun Sen] sent out to investigate finds. I for one am looking forward to it,” he said.

National Military Police commander Sokha told *The Post* on November 28 that he began implementing the prime minister’s orders immediately after receiving them and that he would lead a meeting before going down to the areas in question.

“We have the means and our forces are ready to go. If our forces at the provincial and district levels are not enough, we have additional intervention forces that can respond if necessary,” he said. ■

JOB VACANCY
AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY PHNOM PENH

Senior Infrastructure Technical Advisor (Economic and Development Cooperation)

The Australian Embassy is seeking applications for a Senior Infrastructure Technical Advisor (Economic and Development Cooperation) - Partnerships for Infrastructure (P4I). P4I is supporting the region's resilience and economic recovery through infrastructure partnerships with Cambodia, other Southeast Asian countries and ASEAN.

The successful candidate will have at least eight years' experience, or equivalent expertise or qualifications, in the infrastructure sector in Cambodia through implementing programs, research or consulting on infrastructure issues. Areas of particular interest include transport, digital infrastructure, energy, and public investment management.

The Senior Infrastructure Technical Advisor will provide expert policy advice and program management on Australia's engagement on infrastructure in Cambodia, covering a range of infrastructure sectors, as well as cross-cutting issues of public investment management, infrastructure financing, climate resilience and gender and inclusion.

The role will include complex tasks under limited direction while identifying, developing and managing relationships and opportunities to deepen Australian cooperation. This will include contributing to priority setting, undertaking expert research, anticipating emerging issues, and strengthening linkages and cohesion between infrastructure programs. It will involve applying judgement, flexibility, innovation, and managing risks to achieve results.

The role involves supervising and managing junior staff, building team capacity, and producing high quality written materials. The applicant will have strong relationship building, teamwork, and written and verbal communication skills.

A competitive salary package is offered, including participation in a performance management and bonus scheme. The basic monthly salary range for the position is between USD3,128 and USD 3,653.

For a full description of the role, selection criteria and information on how to apply, please visit the Embassy website: <http://cambodia.embassy.gov.au/phenh/Vacancy.html>. Only applications which address the selection criteria will be considered. Applications must be submitted by email to PHNH.IHR@dfat.gov.au with "Application for Senior Infrastructure Technical Advisor" as the subject line, by close of business on **Friday, 10 December 2021**.

The Australian Embassy is an equal opportunity employer. Women and people with disability are strongly encouraged to apply. The selection committee does not require personal information such as date of birth, marital status, height or weight. We do not require a photo.

Only short-listed applicants will be contacted for interview.

No.168, National Assembly Street, Sangkat Tonle Bassac, Khan Chhnang, Phnom Penh City, Kingdom of Cambodia

Embattled Sokha distances himself from Rainsy

Nov Sivutha

FORMER Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) President Kem Sokha called on his former colleague Sam Rainsy and his group to stop abusing his reputation by using his name and photos in connection with their political ambitions.

Sokha said what Rainsy and his group had done proved that he and Rainsy are not one and the same person in the manner that Rainsy used to describe.

"Obviously Sam Rainsy and his colleagues walked away from our original principles and spirit of unity by creating various other political movements and taking new positions themselves, especially recently, they have returned to openly supporting their old Candlelight party," Sokha said in a Facebook post on November 28.

"The actions prove that Sam Rainsy and Kem Sokha are not united as one person because all of these activities have no support from me nor are they my positions."

Sokha – who remains under court supervision on charges of treason and banned from involvement in any political activities – urged them to stop misleading public opinion.

"I would also like to confirm that I am not involved with nor am I responsible for the activities of Sam Rainsy and his followers," he said.

Rainsy – the self-declared acting president of the Supreme Court-dissolved CNRP – has frequently used the slogan "Sam Rainsy and Kem



(From left to right) Former leaders of the Supreme Court-dissolved Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) Sam Rainsy and Kem Sokha. AFP

Sokha are as one" since the election in 2013 in order to rally his supporters. Even after the CNRP was dissolved in 2017 and Sokha was later arrested on treason charge, Rainsy has continued to use the slogan at events abroad.

At a recent rally in California, he called on all former CNRP leaders to be open-minded and not show any divisions under these circumstances, saying it did not benefit the nation.

Thach Setha, first vice-president of the Candlelight Party – which was formerly known as the Sam Rainsy Party – declined to comment on the issue, saying it was their

personal decision and that he was focused on his work strengthening the reconstituted Candlelight Party.

Political analyst Seng Sary was of the view that Sokha had violated the court's ban on his involvement with politics with this latest message and that he would gain nothing by it while Rainsy would just keep using the old slogans to claim that there is not any division.

He said Sokha and Rainsy are in very different positions. If Sokha is to stay out of politics he has to renounce any membership in the CNRP because the party is dissolved.

This is the opposite of what Rainsy is doing as he is sticking with the CNRP name despite the legal dissolution of the party, he said.

Sary added that keeping the core loyalties of the dedicated CNRP membership would make Rainsy more popular than Sokha when Rainsy joins with any party – such as the Candlelight Party – which

he already used to lead.

"So far we have seen that [former opposition party officials] that stay close to Sokha are all getting lost on the battlefield," he said.

The Candlelight Party organised a congress on November 27 to modify the party's bylaws and set up a new party structure in advance of next year's commune council

elections. They selected some former CNRP officials and some people new to politics such as NGO workers to serve on their party's board.

Kin Phea, director of the Royal Academy of Cambodia's International Relations Institute, said the Candlelight Party's congress is the latest intriguing development in Cambodian politics involving former CNRP officials who are looking for ways to participate in the upcoming elections.

Phea said the reformation of the Candlelight Party indicates a final breakup of the CNRP's political coalition because the former belonged to Rainsy and that although Rainsy is not publicly showing any involvement with the party, his influence over it is obvious if one looks at the people joining it.

"This shows that there is a split among them regarding the rebirth of the CNRP. However, the Candlelight Party's congress is a clear sign showing that the political atmosphere in Cambodia is moving towards a better environment where opposition parties can operate in a more open and unrestricted manner," he said.

Reached for comment on November 28, Rainsy said: "This is the result of threats from Hun Sen who dreads the unity among Cambodian democrats and who holds Kem Sokha hostage." ■

Koh Kong aims to develop province's coastal islands

Lay Samean

KOH Kong provincial authorities are compiling detailed data on the 23 islands in the province to facilitate the development of them as the number of tourists is on the increase and businesses continue to show interest in investing heavily in the islands.

Provincial deputy governor Ouk Pheaktra chaired a meeting on November 25 to compile a report with detailed data on Koh Kong's islands with the participation of officials from relevant departments and units in the province.

He laid out some follow-up plans for each officer and unit so that they can assign staff to inspect and collect the data for each island including up to date geographical surveys and taking images and videos to promote tourism and attract investors.

He ordered the provincial Department of Land Management, Urban Planning, Construction and Cadastral Affairs to ensure that the officials doing the island border demarcations have DGPS.

Pheaktra said the detailed schedule for visiting each island

will be determined later.

Heang Bonna, office head of the provincial cadastral affairs department, said on November 28 that the team will hold another meeting with relevant officials to determine who will travel to the islands and collect the necessary data.

"Currently there's interest in Pineapple Island and Koh Smach and there are investment companies looking at other islands. As long as the islands are big enough there will be some investment companies interested in them like Koh Kong Krao," he said.

Koh Kong Krao is an island in the Gulf of Thailand in the coastal waters of Cambodia around 10km south of Koh Kong town in Koh Kong province. It is Cambodia's largest island.

He added that according to preliminary data, out of the total of 23 islands in the province, the only one where the government has granted a licence to a private investment company is Koh Sdach.

"Most of the 23 islands have populated areas. Unlike Koh Sdach – which is densely populated – they typically have just a few populated areas but with

many families there. But there is room to develop them into tourist destinations," he said.

He said that if there are investors who want to develop businesses on the islands they have to rent the land from the government and they have to comply with the arbitration or mediation policies when dealing with the residents of the islands.

Bonna said the islands have to be arranged as the provincial authorities observed that after the government announced the reopening of the country, many tourists travelled to visit the islands in Koh Kong province. The construction and land sectors in the province continued their activities normally before and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Ho Vandy, co-chair of the Public-Private Sector Working Group on tourism, said the preparation of the master plan was very good to attract both domestic and foreign tourists.

"In this case, we prepare a clear master plan and data, and providing information to the public as well as tourists as well as those who earn a living in the sector has brought a lot of benefits to their areas," he said ■

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National

Siem Reap's Angkor Chum district plans to improve its sanitation use

SIEM Reap province has identified Angkor Chum district as the first area to end open defecation by the end of this month. There are currently only 70 households in the district still practicing open defecation.

The provincial Department of Information, citing deputy provincial governor Ngan Phirun, said on November 27 that improving sanitation in rural areas is an indispensable part of improving people's standard of living.

Phirun said during the 12th National Day for Rural Sanitation held in Angkor Chum district on November 26 that supplying clean water and promoting rural sanitation was an important task.

"It is the plan of the provincial administration to identify Angkor Chum district as the first district to end open defecation at the district level by the end of November, 2021," said Phirun.

He added that currently, four of the seven communes in the district have stopped open defecation while the three remaining communes are in the process of ending it. However, the sanitation rate covers 99 per cent of the district and only 70 household still practice open defecation.

According to the information department, in 2020 Siem Reap supplied water to 75 per cent of the province and sanitation covered 79 per cent. In 2021, the province had 255 out of 909 villages and 15 out of 100 villages that had stopped open defecation. RY SOCHAN

First-ever Bengal florican facility set up

Mom Kunthea

THE first Bengal florican breeding facility in the world has been set up at Angkor Centre for Conservation of Biodiversity (ACCB) in the Kbal Spean archaeological site of Siem Reap province's Banteay Srei district.

Banteay Srei district governor Khim Finan on November 25 said the facility would provide a safe environment for the endangered terrestrial birds to nest and raise their young, and potentially mount a comeback.

Known scientifically as *Houbaropsis bengalensis*, the Bengal florican is a member of the bustard family and is listed on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species as "critically endangered".

Finan said Bengal florican eggs found in the forest will be hatched under artificial conditions, and that the chicks will remain in the facility until they reach laying age and are added to the breeding programme.

The idea is to eventually release all chicks into the wild, he said, stressing that the bustards are only found in Cambodia, India and Nepal.

He underscored that the facility "is a source of pride for Cambodia and a crucial first step which raises hopes of al-



The Angkor Centre for Conservation of Biodiversity at the Kbal Spean archaeological site in Banteay Srei district. KHIM FINAN VIA FACEBOOK

tering the fate of this rare bird.

"As Cambodians, we all have to be involved in safeguarding this species."

The grassland birds are known in Khmer as "khsoep" and called "kngok tep" (divine peacocks) or "tromeak andoeuk" (turtle drivers) by some locals, the governor shared.

Ministry of Environment spokesman Neth Pheaktra told *The Post* on November 26 that his ministry and conservation partners have jumped through hoops to ensure biodiversity persistence, above all when it comes to rare species such as the Bengal florican.

"Setting up these Bengal florican breeding grounds is

part of efforts to protect and conserve rare and threatened species to be perpetuated and remain viable for generations to come," he said.

Experts estimate that there were 119 Bengal floricans in the Kingdom in 2019, down 68 per cent from 376 in 2005, despite extensive conservation efforts, according to Pheaktra.

He said the environment and relevant ministries and NGO partners are actively engaged in the preservation of the bustard, strictly enforcing applicable laws and ordinances, and protecting their breeding grounds and habitats located primarily in lowland areas around Tonle Sap Lake.



A Bengal florican at the Angkor Centre for Conservation of Biodiversity. ACCB

A recent review estimated the global population of Bengal floricans at fewer than 500, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) reported in June, noting that the subspecies *Houbaropsis bengalensis blandini* breeds exclusively in the Kingdom.

Experiencing a particularly sharp population decline in recent years, birds of this subspecies are mainly found in Kampong Thom province, with fewer numbers found in neighbouring Siem Reap province to the northwest, and a handful persisting in Banteay Meanchey, Battambang and Pursat provinces, according to WCS Cambodia.

More alarming still, Cambridge-based BirdLife International in 2013 predicted that the subspecies would become extinct by 2023, in a study published in quarterly peer-reviewed journal *Bird Conservation International*.

The Bengal florican is the sole member of its genus *Houbaropsis*, and the rarest member of the bustard order, *Ortoidiformes*, according to the Edge of Existence programme.

"Two thirds of the global population breed in the floodplain of the Tonle Sap Lake, Cambodia – they migrate up to 100km annually to escape the floodwaters in the non-breeding season," it said. ■

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

2 VACANCIES for CCC Secretariat

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

Vacancy 1: CCC Oversight/Transition Officer:

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

Required Qualification, Experience and Skills:

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

Skills

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Knowledge
- Coordination
- Sustainable Structure.

Qualifications, Experience and Competencies:

A. Qualifications

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

B. Experience

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

Desirable:

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

C. Competencies

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

Technical skills: desirable knowledge of the software Visio.

ANNOUNCEMENT

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Consultancy : **International Consultant to Conduct Action Learning on Adaptive Programming: Improve the Capacity of UNDP Cambodia to Identify New Signals and Design Solutions for Complex Development Challenges Managing Uncertainties**

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

Duration : **40 days from December 2021 to February 2022**

Deadline : **05 December 2021 (New York Time)**

Download Link : https://jobs.undp.org/cj_view_job.cfm?cur_job_id=103450

Consultancy : **Partnership and Knowledge Management Specialist (International Consultant with residence in Cambodia)**

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

Duration : **120 days from January to June 2022**

Deadline : **09 December 2021 (New York Time)**

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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



CP Cambodia has opened two CP Fresh Marts – in Battambang and Siem Reap. SUPPLIED

CP Fresh Mart enters modern retail food sector with quality products

CP FRESH Mart has joined Cambodia’s food retail sector with two outlets – in Siem Reap and Battambang – offering consumers another option to buy locally grown fresh produce and ready-to-eat products.

The two marts – located in Prek Mohatep village in Svay Por commune, Battambang and St Lok Taneuy, in Slor kram commune’s Dokpo village in Siem Reap – offer high-quality finished foods, fresh meat and vegetables, and groceries.

CP Cambodia Co

Ltd – under the flagship of Thai leading agro-industrial and food business CP Food – launched the retail stores to promote quality, fresh products at affordable prices – selling both wholesale and retail. CP Fresh Market is a large supplier and distributor of items ranging from pork, chicken, eggs, vegetables and finished products.

CP Cambodia deputy department manager Sat Borey said the company is committed to expanding its CP Fresh Mart business to meet the needs of the evolving local market, which demands fresh

and quality food products.

“CP has expanded its fresh mart business by focusing on supply and distribution of all high quality CP products, both at wholesale and retail. If we eat good, we can live a healthy life.

“Our products come with good quality and meet all hygienic standards, and we provide a good service to our customers, whether they are purchasing for their own consumption or to resell, and our prices are competitive, similar to the prices in the local markets. “We have a strong support from our customers and CP Cambodia

plans to expand its fresh mart to other provinces in the future,” said Borey.

Its business operations are in line with its parent company’s “Kitchen of the World” philosophy, which centres on sustainable development by giving top priority to local development, livelihoods and the environment.

In 2020 it branched out into food retailing to serve the growing demand for modern retail outlets to serve the changing lifestyles of customers who prefer to shop conveniently in a hygienic environment.

At CP Fresh Mart customers can

select products that are produced using modern farming in Thailand and Cambodia using the minimum of chemicals.

Both marts also offer ready-to-cook foods and ready-to-eat food like sausage, ham, bacon, frozen and dim sum.

A regular customer, housewife Pok Sophorn from Battambang, said “all products sold in CP Fresh Mart are of good quality, fresh, hygiene and reasonably priced. In the store products are well organised and it is easy to walk around, and staff are very friendly too.” ■



CP Cambodia deputy department manager Sat Borey. SUPPLIED



The first CP Fresh Mart was launched in Siem Reap in 2020. SUPPLIED



Products are neatly arranged in all CP Fresh Mart outlets. SUPPLIED

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Business

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USD / KHR → 4,098	USD / CAD ↑ 1.2756	USD / CNY ↑ 6.3899	USD / JPY ↓ 114.16	USD / MYR ↑ 4.2390	USD / SGD ↑ 1.3713	USD / THB ↑ 33.60	AUD / USD ↓ 0.7134	EUR / USD ↑ 1.1265	GBP / USD ↓ 1.3315
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ABA NATIONAL BANK OF CANADA GROUP

TRADING INFORMATION ON CAMBODIA SECURITIES EXCHANGE

Date: November 26, 2021

Auction Trading Method (ATM)

NO	Stock	Closing Price	Opening Price	High	Low
1	ABC	10,940	10,940	10,980	10,920
2	GTI	4,200	4,200	4,200	4,200
3	PAS	13,480	13,480	13,580	13,480
4	PEPC	3,100	3,140	3,140	3,100
5	PPAP	14,600	14,400	14,680	14,400
6	PPSP	2,010	2,020	2,020	2,000
7	PWSA	6,900	6,900	6,900	6,880

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Indonesians invited to get slice of local agri markets

Hin Pisei

WITH agricultural production on a steady growth trajectory, even in the face of Covid-19, Phnom Penh welcomes Indonesian businessmen to invest in the Cambodian agricultural market, in hopes of bolstering capacity in response to an ongoing surge in domestic and international demand.

Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery Veng Sakhon extended the invitation on November 26 during a meeting with Indonesian ambassador to Cambodia Sudirman Haseng.

Sakhon said the agricultural sector is recognised for its constant progress and ability to not only fulfil domestic demand but allow for more

exports to the world market. He ascribed the upswing to the government's meticulous attention and enhancements. On behalf of "agricultural leaders with good collaboration between Cambodia and Indonesia", the minister voiced hope that Indonesian investors would be keen to enter the Kingdom's agriculture and agro-processing markets in the near future, or develop the associated value chains.

"The agricultural situation in Cambodia is evolving quickly, especially in the times of the Covid-19 pandemic," he said. "We are looking forward to welcoming Indonesian private sector actors looking to invest in the agricultural sector."

According to Sakhon, some of the agricultural products with the greatest market potential are milled rice, banan-



Agriculture minister Veng Sakhon (third right) and Indonesian ambassador to Cambodia Sudirman Haseng (third left) at the meeting on Friday. AGRICULTURE MINISTRY

as, fresh and dry cassava, raw and processed cashew nuts, and fresh mango.

Citing the National Phytosanitary Database, the minister previously reported that the Kingdom shipped out 6,364,607.24 tonnes of agricultural products in January-October, up by 87.53

per cent year-on-year from 3,393,915.64 tonnes, valued at \$4,071,571,098.37, to 68 countries and territories.

At the meeting, the ambassador vowed to make an effort to strengthen and further expand promotion to Indonesian investors of the potential opportunities offered by

Cambodian agriculture.

Sudirman said he would encourage Jakarta to prepare a memorandum of understanding on agricultural collaboration between the two counties.

In September, Indonesia launched a trade office in Cambodia, aiming to strengthen and expand economic, trade

and investment cooperation.

In January-August, the Kingdom's exports to Indonesia reached \$21 million, down by \$3 million from the same period last year, and imports were to the tune of \$402 million, declining by \$50 million or 11 per cent year-on-year, according to the Ministry of Commerce. ■

Maybank joins forces with CGCC to undergird SMEs

Hom Phanet

MAYBANK (Cambodia) Plc on November 26 announced a strategic collaboration with the government-initiated

Credit Guarantee Corporation of Cambodia (CGCC) to support local small- and medium-sized enterprises (SME).

The partnership aims to build long-term competitive advantages for

smaller enterprises through the Building Capacity and Capability (BCC) programme for SMEs, and will be complemented by the two parties' strategic collaboration on the Business Recovery Guarantee Scheme (BRGS), as part of broader efforts to prop up SMEs in the Kingdom.

In a statement, Maybank Cambodia Mohd Hanif Suadi said the collaboration is part of the bank's continuous efforts to ensure SMEs are able to leverage on opportunities within the rapidly changing business environment, equipping them with the right tools that will help them prosper in the "new normal".

"Getting a business to run is even more challenging during these critical times. We understand the difficulties faced by SMEs and it is crucial that we support them during this time by offering financial solutions, such as much-needed stimuli, in order for them to sustain their businesses and contribute to strengthening the economy", he said.

The CGCC's BRGS aims to improve access to finance for local SMEs by providing third-party credit risk cover to lenders.

CGCC CEO Wong Keet Loong said the BRGS "will help SMEs to enhance their access to formal loans for both working capital and investment or business expansion to support the survival and economic recovery during the Covid-19 pandemic".

In addition, Maybank and CGCC aim to develop the SME market through capacity building efforts and community outreach initiatives under the BCC programme for SMEs.

Maybank deputy CEO and Community Financial Services head Rath Sophoan said the programme is designed to provide business support instruments and relevant technical advisory services based on international best practices.

This aims to support SME growth, productivity and innovation; enhance competitiveness and productivity; and

raise awareness of the BRGS, he said.

"In line with our mission of humanising financial services, our support to SMEs is not only limited to financing, we also offer other financial services to ensure that SME players remain competitive and make the most of growth opportunities," Sophoan added.

The CGCC is the Kingdom's first credit guarantee corporation, established by sub-decree No 140 ANKr BK on September 1, 2020 as a state-owned enterprise under the Ministry of Economy and Finance's technical and financial direction.

According to the ministry, the CGCC's primary mission is to provide credit guarantees to participating financial institutions (PFI) to support and assist financially-viable businesses that lack collateral to secure loans.

CGCC's guarantee will act as collateral or security for 70-80 per cent of the loan amount borrowed from PFIs and hence reduce the physical collateral required from borrowers, it has said. ■



Maybank Cambodia and CGCC on Friday unveil a strategic collaboration to support local small- and medium-sized enterprises (SME). SUPPLIED

Berlin eyeing local mangoes

Nov Sivutha

CAMBODIA is slated to export fresh and dried mangoes to the European market, Germany above all, as Berlin investigates the possibility of export.

On November 24, officials from the German embassy and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) visited Kirirom Food Production Co Ltd (KFP) and other growers, in search of potential suppliers of fresh and dried mangoes to respond to the robust European demand for the fruit.

KFP sales manager Meas Holy told *The Post* on November 25 that ambassador Christian Berger and the delegation discussed providing support for the firm's processing plant and facilitating the purchase of mangoes for export to Germany and other European countries.

Although no specific estimates for the volume of mangoes considered for import were given, the officials did say they would support and enhance cooperation between EU buyers and local firms geared towards exports, he said.

"Now they've come to see if we are capable of supplying them. My company doesn't source enough fresh mangoes to export, we plan to remedy that in about two years, but on the other hand, we do have enough dried mango to ship," Holy said, claiming that KFP products fit the bill in terms of quality.

He believes that the German and other EU markets are wide-ranging and boast strong demand for fresh and dried mangoes, and are ripe for Cambodia to expand its market presence.

Holy shared that KFP has ex-



Cambodian mangoes could soon be directly exported to Germany and elsewhere in Europe. HENG CHIVAN

ported fresh and dried mangoes to 10 major markets across the world, including Japan, the Philippines, China, Thailand, the UK and Japan. He highlighted that Germany could provide value opportunities for further expansion.

Chheng Kimlong, an economist at the Asian Vision Institute, underlined that boosting Cambodia's export diversification in all sectors, especially agricultural and agro-industrial merchandise, is the single most important factor of economic development today, in line with the Kingdom's drive to boost its economic base.

An accelerating outbound flow of mangoes and mango products, notably to destinations such as China, South Korea or Europe, would signal

a significant interest in Cambodian goods, he said, noting that the Kingdom's agricultural products are inexpensive and of relatively high quality, "equal to or better than" those of neighbouring countries.

"Most of Cambodia's agricultural products are competitive and superior to the those of some countries in the region, especially our neighbouring countries, and we use the least amount of chemical fertilisers. That's why most countries, especially Germany, want to export mangoes from us," Kimlong said.

He pointed out that mangoes are an incredibly versatile fruit that can be consumed fresh, or processed into starch or other products, including canned drinks, soaps, or ice cream. ■

New project lifts VN's pepper exports to EU

THE Plant Protection Department (PPD) under the Vietnamese Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Vietnam Pepper Association (VPA) and the IDH Stitching Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH) on November 25 introduced a programme supporting exports of quality black pepper from Vietnam to the EU.

The "Scaling sustainable production and trade of Vietnamese pepper" project, co-financed by the EU and IDH, is under the framework of the Arise Plus initiative aimed at supporting the Vietnamese government to benefit from bilateral trade agreements and promote the export of high-quality products and services from Vietnam to the EU.

Vietnam is the world's largest producer and exporter of black pepper (*Piper nigrum*) accounting for 60 per cent of the world's trade and roughly 45 per cent of the pepper imports into the EU.

The EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) which entered into force on August 1, 2020 has already generated significant opportunities for Vietnamese companies in pepper production, processing, and trade. However, certain challenges exist, such as meeting strict quality requirements, especially limiting residues of toxic chemicals.

The project is designed to build a sustainable supply chain connecting smallholder farmers with producer or trader small- and medium-sized enterprises (SME) and EU buyers.

Project activities include training, raising farmers' awareness, compa-

nies' support in training and supervising the application of sustainable farming practices, in parallel with the efforts of responsible agrochemical management of state agencies.

The project will contribute to an increase in the volume of sustainably grown peppercorns and ensure stable incomes for pepper farmers.

At the workshop, PPD deputy director Nguyen Quy Duong said: "It is high time that the Vietnamese pepper industry shifted from quantity production to quality production and to improve the production system for better quality pepper while helping farmers with a sustainable income."

"The EU's support to this project is of high importance and at the right time, playing a vital role in bridging domestic and European companies to jointly meet common targets for sustainable pepper development."

Matthieu Penot, Attache for Trade Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Vietnam, said the EU would support the pepper supply chain and would contribute to sustainable growth in the sector.

"Our objective is to improve the lives of 10,000 pepper smallholder farmers in the Central Highlands and increase the productivity of pepper processors. Vietnam provides almost half of European pepper for consumption."

"It is only natural that the EU and its member states invest heavily in the pepper supply chain for a stronger Europe-PPD's deputy director partnership," Penot said. VIET NAM

NEWS/ASIA NEWS NETWORK ■

ATIC SUPPORTS GOVERNMENT TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT NEW PICTORIAL HEALTH WARNING ON CIGARETTE PACKS



OLD PICTORIAL HEALTH WARNING



NEW PICTORIAL HEALTH WARNING



The Association of Tobacco Industry in Cambodia (ATIC) supports the Cambodian government in raising awareness on the implementation of printing new Khmer textual and pictorial health warning (PHW) on cigarette packs among traders and vendors across the country.

According to directives from the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Economic and Finance, new PHW will cover 55 per cent of a tobacco product pack and consist of texts and images about smoking that could lead to heart disease and fatal emphysema. The implementation will start from December 1, 2021 while the existing legally compliant and tax paid tobacco products are allowed to be sold until they are depleted in the marketplace.

ATIC President Roy Manalili said that its association members comprising international tobacco companies – such as JTI, BAT, Imperial and PMI – have produced a trade announcement poster about the new directive and their salespeople have distributed the posters to more than 20,000 retail outlets across the Kingdom.

"Our members have printed the new textual and graphic health warning on our product packs. The association is pleased to follow and support the authorities in this process to promote public health and strengthen fair competition," said Manalili.

A well-known international research agency Kantar study on illicit tobacco trade across Cambodia last year found that the estimated number of total cigarettes stock accounted for 4.7 million cigarette packs with 3.4 million compliant packs and the 1.3 million non-compliant packs (27 per cent) lacking valid PHW.

A further analysis was drawn that among those non-compliant cigarettes, 18 per cent was identified as illicit products that did not print Khmer textual and pictorial health warnings and tax stamps on the cigarette packs. This figure is remarkably a high number that poses a great challenge to law enforcement agencies in promoting public health in the country.

"It was believed that the ministry's prioritised action to enforce and strengthen the existing regulations on the tobacco products with no pictorial health warning would be a much more important step than releasing new pictorial health warning or enlarging it. Better enforcement would increase the level playing field in the market for a transparent business environment in line with the latest government's policy reform," said Manalili.

Prepared by



POST SECURITIES BASIC MARKET GUIDE

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2021 WWW.PHNOMPENHPOST.COM



DBD Engineering's public listing on the CSX was held in September last year. SUPPLIED

DBD's public listing gives boost to its engineering operations in Cambodia

DBD Engineering Plc became the first small and medium-size enterprise (SME) to be listed on the Growth Board of the Cambodia Securities Exchange (CSX) following its listing in September this year.

The CSX's Growth Board was set up in 2015 to assist SMEs in raising capital to expand their business.

Founded in 1995 and one of the oldest engineering and construction companies in Cambodia, DBD provides design, construction, installation and maintenance services to national and international companies.

Backed by around 700 employees and its track record, the company is also involved in building reputable shopping malls in the Kingdom.

DBD was one of the companies that benefited from the first Securities and Exchange Regulator of Cambodia's "Excellence Programme", which was organised in 2017, followed by the second in 2020.

The programme is geared towards providing professional consultations to budding business entities to help them achieve sustainable business growth.

The listing exercise has brought benefits to DBD – from the injection of additional capital, to an increased ability to attract talent and contribute to the national economy.

Seven main advantages of an IPO

Long-term and large-scale capital financing

Local companies can raise capital from investors through an initial public offering (IPO), which is a better and safer source of financing compared to bank loans.

Bank borrowing requires collateral, while in an IPO exercise, a company's



DBD Engineering conducts an IPO roadshow prior to its listing on CSX's second board this year. SUPPLIED

assets, reputation and revenue-generating capacity are essential.

Moreover, the company must pay interest even if it does not make any profits.

While in the issuance of securities, the company is obliged to pay dividends only when it makes a profit.

This does not mean that companies should not rely on bank loans, both options are good if they are used effectively.

Tax incentives

The government offers tax incentives to a listed company, including the exemption of tax liability and the reduction of tax on profits.

Good governance with better management

Going public ensures companies – even family-run concerns – have a standardised governance framework, with clear committee structures one of

the most necessary elements for the issuance of equity.

Transparency

Public listing allows for financial integrity, with the reporting of figures and financial statements made transparent to protect investors.



DBD Engineering is one of the Kingdom's oldest engineering and construction companies. SUPPLIED

Even business owners who are reluctant to open up their books or disclose financial statements to the public and tax authorities are required under the laws to do so once they are listed on the bourse.

Companies can face penalties or may even have to cease operations if they flout the laws.

Trust and reputation

A listed company can leverage its public listing status to bid for major projects as it will have established a stronger reputation and built greater trust among investors, giving it an edge over its competitors.

Tapping potential investors

Compared to a non-listed company of a similar size, a listed company can find it easier to source investment partners or strategic investors.

They are more transparent, have a clear management structure, practise good governance, make financial information available and ensure the proper payment of tax.

These factors make it easier for investors to make an investment decision.

The issuer's shares have more liquidity than those of the non-issuer because investors can buy shares in a company that is already listed on the CSX – such DBD Engineering's shares – or the shares the company will additionally issue.

Promoting the national economy

Raising capital through the issuance of equity securities can also fuel a country's economic growth due to revolving capital flows through the optimal utilisation of idle capital.

In this regard, those who have less capital can also invest in the stock market rather than keeping their money unused, thus creating more job opportunities for locals.

These are the main benefits that have taken DBD Engineering to the next level after the IPO. ■

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World

New Covid variant looms large

SEVERAL European nations on Saturday announced their first cases of a highly infectious new coronavirus strain, as governments worldwide began pulling down the shutters to contain the new Omicron variant.

Britain, Germany and Italy confirmed their first cases of the new Covid-19 strain, while Dutch authorities quarantined 61 passengers from South Africa who tested positive for Covid-19.

South Africa complained it was being punished with air travel bans for having first detected the strain, which the World Health Organisation has termed a "variant of concern".

A series of countries across the world began restricting travel from the region, to try to head off any threat to global efforts against the pandemic.

Scientists are racing to determine the threat posed by the heavily mutated strain, particularly whether it can evade existing vaccines. It has already proved to be more transmissible than the dominant Delta variant.

Travellers thronged Johannesburg international airport, desperate to squeeze onto the last flights to countries that had imposed sudden travel bans. Many of these people had cut short holidays, rushing back from South African safaris and vineyards.

"It's ridiculous, we will always be having new variants," British tourist David Good said, passport in hand. "South Africa found it, but it's probably all over the world already."

Worrisome variant

The virus has already slipped through the net, with cases discovered in Europe, Hong Kong and Israel and in southern Africa.

Britain on Saturday announced tougher entry rules for all arriving passengers and the return of a mask mandate, after confirming



A healthcare worker conducts a PCR test on a traveller at OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg on November 27. AFP

its first two cases of the new Omicron strain of Covid-19.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said face masks would again be required in shops and on public transport.

A hospital in the Czech Republic confirmed a case of the Omicron variant in a female patient who had travelled from Namibia.

Germany confirmed its first two cases in travellers who arrived at Munich airport from South Africa.

Italy announced its first case of the new Covid strain in a traveller from Mozambique.

And Dutch officials said the Omicron variant was "probably" among 61 passengers who had arrived on two flights from South Africa a day before and tested positive for Covid-19.

People on the two KLM flights, which took off before the Dutch announced their ban on travellers from the region, were being kept quarantined in a hotel.

In the US, a White House official said President Joe Biden had been briefed on the Omicron situation and that health officials were monitoring events.

Already on Friday Belgium announced its first case in an unvaccinated person returning from abroad.

The WHO said it could take

several weeks to understand the variant, which was initially known as B.1.1.529. It cautioned against travel curbs while scientific evidence remains scant.

'Draconian' measures

South Africa called the travel curbs "draconian" and on Saturday said the flight bans were "akin to punishing South Africa for its advanced genomic sequencing and the ability to detect new variants quicker."

"Excellent science should be applauded and not punished," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

The main countries targeted by the shutdown include South Africa, Botswana, Eswatini (Swaziland), Lesotho, Namibia, Zambia, Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe.

But US Secretary of State Antony Blinken "praised South Africa's scientists for the quick identification of the Omicron variant and South Africa's government for its transparency in sharing this information, which should serve as a model for the world", a State Department statement said.

The statement was a thinly veiled slap at China's handling of information about the original outbreak in Wuhan, which the US government has criti-

cised as being uncooperative.

Biden said richer countries should donate more Covid-19 vaccines and give up intellectual property protections to manufacture more doses worldwide.

"The news about this new variant should make clearer than ever why this pandemic will not end until we have global vaccinations," he said.

But with memories still fresh of the way global air travel helped the spread of Covid after it first emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019, countries clamped down swiftly.

Australia and Belgium became the latest to act, banning all flights from nine southern African countries.

And Australian health authorities said they were undertaking "urgent genomic testing" to look for the Omicron strain in two passengers – whose trip originated in southern Africa – who had tested positive for the virus after arriving on a flight from Doha to Sydney.

South Korea and Thailand restricted flights from eight countries, as did the US, Brazil, Canada and Saudi Arabia.

EU officials agreed in an emergency meeting to urge all 27 nations in the bloc to restrict travel from southern Africa. Many members had already done so.

The World Trade Organisation called off a ministerial conference, its biggest gathering in four years, at the last minute Friday due to the new variant.

Vaccine manufacturers have held out hope that they can modify current vaccines to target the Omicron variant.

Germany's BioNTech and US drugmaker Pfizer said they expect data "in two weeks at the latest" to show if their jab can be adjusted.

Moderna said it would develop a booster specific to the new variant. AFP

UK snubbed as France hosts talks on stopping illegal Channel crossings

FRANCE hosts a meeting of European ministers on Sunday to discuss ways to stop migrants crossing the Channel in dinghies, but without Britain, which has been excluded following a row last week.

Ministers from France, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium will meet in the northern French port of Calais on Sunday afternoon to discuss how to tackle people-smuggling gangs that provide boats to migrants seeking to cross the narrow waterway.

The talks were called following the shocking deaths of 27 people last Wednesday as they attempted to cross from France to England in a dinghy that began losing air while at sea in cold winter temperatures.

The aim of the meeting is "improving operational cooperation in the fight against people-smuggling because these are international networks which operate in different European countries," an aide to French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said.

The main focus had been set to be talks between Darmanin and his British counterpart Priti Patel after both countries vowed in the immediate aftermath of the mass drownings to cooperate more together.

Working more closely would require Paris and London to overcome years of ill-will caused by Britain's departure from the European Union, as well as often frosty ties between their governments.

Within 48 hours of the accident, French President Emmanuel Macron had accused British Prime Minister Boris Johnson of being "not serious" in unusually personal criticism that pushed relations to fresh lows.

France was irked by Johnson's initial reaction, which was seen as deflecting blame onto France, and then by his decision to write a letter to Macron which he published in full on his Twitter account before the French leader had received it.

Patel's invitation to Sunday's talks was promptly withdrawn, with an aide to Darmanin calling Johnson's public letter "unacceptable".

Cross-border crime

Without the participation of Britain – the destination country for the thousands of migrants massed in northern France – there are limits to what can be achieved.

The invitation to France's other northern neighbours reflects concern about how people-smuggling gangs are able to use Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany as bases to organise their operations.

Many migrants are believed to travel to launch sites in northern France from Belgium, while inflatables and life jackets can be bought in other

countries such as the Netherlands and Germany without raising suspicion.

One of the five men arrested in connection with the accident last Wednesday was driving a car with German registration, according to French officials.

"Let's not forget that the real problem on illegal migration flows is the EU has no border protections whatsoever," Patel said in the middle of November, referring to the EU's border-free Schengen zone.

While France and Britain agree on the need to tackle people-smugglers more effectively, they remain at odds over how to prevent people travelling to northern France to seek passage to the UK.

In his public letter to Macron, Johnson again pressed for British police and border agents to patrol alongside their French counterparts along the coast – something rejected in the past as infringing on French sovereignty.

More controversially, he also proposed sending back all migrants who land in England, which he claimed would save "thousands of lives by fundamentally breaking the business model of the criminal gangs".

The European Commission's vice president on Saturday bluntly told Britain it needed to sort out its own migrant problems after its decision to leave the EU following a 2016 referendum.

"I recall well the main slogan of the referendum campaign is 'we take back control'," Margaritis Schinas told reporters during a trip to Greece.

"Since the UK took back control it's up to them now to find the necessary measures to operationalise the control they took back."

France has suggested Britain should process asylum requests in northern France.

Mourning

Investigations into last week's accident continue, with French police giving no details officially about the circumstances or the identities of the victims.

A total of 17 men, seven women and three minors died, with migrants living along the coast saying that the deceased were mostly Iraqis, Iranians and Afghans.

One of the victims has been identified as Maryam Nuri Hama Amin, a woman in her twenties from Soran, a town in Iraq's autonomous region of Kurdistan.

She was travelling to England to join her fiancée and in search of "a better life," her father Nuri Hama Amin said in an interview at her family home.

"We have no information on the smugglers," he added. "Their promises turned out to be lies." AFP

Second US delegation slated to visit Taiwan

A GROUP of US lawmakers arrived in Taiwan Thursday, the second such delegation this month and a fresh sign of American support just days after President Joe Biden invited Taipei to a democracy summit.

International sympathy for Taiwan having a place on the world stage is growing, especially among western nations, as Chinese leader Xi Jinping takes an increasingly bellicose approach towards the island.

China claims self-ruled democratic Taiwan as its territory, to be retaken one day by force if necessary, and has stepped up efforts to diplomatically isolate it.

"When news of our trip broke yesterday, my office received a blunt message from the Chinese Embassy, telling me to call off the trip," Congresswoman Elissa Slotkin, one of the delegates, wrote on Twitter.

Nancy Mace, the only Republican in the group, tweeted her arrival with a selfie and the words: "Just touched down in the Republic of Taiwan".

That choice of wording is significant, because Taiwan's official name is the Republic of China – but those who favour independence often use the

phrase Republic of Taiwan instead.

Beijing balks at any use of the word "Taiwan", or any references to the island as a "country" and diplomatic gestures that might lend a sense of international legitimacy to the island.

Taiwan is only recognised by 15 other nations but it maintains de facto diplomatic relations with multiple countries.

The latest visit by the lawmakers came after Taiwan was invited to join Biden's planned democracy summit, a move which led to an angry rebuke from Beijing.

It also comes days after China downgraded diplomatic relations with Lithuania because Vilnius allowed Taiwan to open a de facto embassy.

Wantonly challenging

China's foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian on Friday protested the visit and warned of consequences for "US politicians wantonly challenging the One-China principle".

"Let me offer a bit of advice to some Americans: don't play the Taiwan card. Because that's a bad one. You won't win. You will only hit a wall and suffer the con-

sequences of your own actions," he said.

The US delegation touched down overnight after celebrating Thanksgiving with US troops in South Korea.

It is led by Mark Takano, chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and includes Colin Allred and Sara Jacobs, as well as Slotkin and Mace.

"Taiwan will continue to step up cooperation with the US in order to uphold our shared values of freedom and democracy, and to ensure peace and stability in the region," said Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen when meeting the delegation.

In the US, support for Taipei and its 23 million inhabitants is a rare issue on which there is cross-party consensus.

Washington has remained a key ally and its biggest arms supplier, despite switching recognition to Beijing in 1979.

Since her election in 2016, President Tsai has tried to assert the island's distinct identity, provoking China's anger.

Beijing has ramped up military activities near Taiwan in recent years, with a record number of planes intruding into the island's air defence identification zone in early October. AFP

Myanmar's Suu Kyi due to hear first verdict

OUSTED Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi is expected to hear the verdict in her incitement trial on Tuesday, the first in a catalogue of judgements to be handed down in a junta court that could jail her for decades.

The Nobel laureate has been detained since the generals ousted her government in the early hours of February 1, ending the Southeast Asian country's brief democratic interlude.

More than 1,200 people have been killed and over 10,000 arrested in a crackdown on dissent, according to a local monitoring group.

Suu Kyi faces three years in jail if found guilty of incitement against the military – just one of the charges that analysts say are aimed at removing the democracy icon from the political arena for good.

But the junta's plans for Suu Kyi remain unknown, they add, and authorities could also delay the verdict.

Journalists have been barred from proceedings in the special court in the military-built capital Naypyidaw and her lawyers are banned from speaking to the media.

Days after the coup Suu Kyi was hit with obscure charges for possessing unlicensed walkie-talkies, and for violating coronavirus restrictions during elections her National League for Democracy (NLD) won in 2020.

The junta has steadily added a slew of other indictments, including violating the official secrets act, corruption and electoral fraud.

Suu Kyi now appears most weekdays at the junta courtroom, with her legal team saying last month the hectic schedule was taking a toll on the 76-year-old's health.

"I think it's almost certain Suu Kyi will get a harsh sentence," said David Mathieson, an analyst formerly based in Myanmar.

"The question is what will her incarceration look like? ... will she get average convict treatment in a crowded women's cell block, or privilege in a VIP statehouse?"

Isolated

Suu Kyi's long spells of house arrest under a previous junta were spent at her family's colonial-era mansion in Yangon, where she would appear before thousands gathered on the other side of her garden fence.

Min Aung Hlaing's regime has confined her to an undisclosed location in the isolated capital, along with a small staff.

Her link to the outside world has been limited to brief pre-trial meetings with her lawyers, who have brought her news and relayed messages to her supporters.

At her first court appearance, she used them to send a message of defiance, vowing the NLD would endure and



Detained civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi (left) and detained president Win Myint (right) during their first court appearance in Naypyidaw on May 24. Suu Kyi will hear the verdict in her incitement trial on Tuesday. AFP

asking the party faithful to remain united.

On her 76th birthday in June supporters across the country posted pictures on social media of themselves with flowers in their hair – long a signature Suu Kyi look.

Two days later, her legal

team passed on a message from Suu Kyi thanking them for the gesture.

But in October her team were hit with a gag order after they relayed vivid testimony from deposed president Win Myint describing how he rejected a military offer to resign to save

himself during the coup.

Meanwhile, the trials of other ranking members of Suu Kyi's NLD have wrapped up, with the junta doling out harsh sentences.

A former chief minister was sentenced to 75 years in jail earlier this month, while a close

Suu Kyi aide was jailed for 20.

The generals could later reduce any sentence pronounced on the higher-profile Suu Kyi, said Mathieson, although he cautioned against expecting clemency from the junta and its leader.

"How much mercy does Min Aung Hlaing possess?" AFP



KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
Nation Religion King

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
Secretariat General

Request for Bids Works

Date: November 12, 2021
Grant No: GA04102019¹
Project: Construction of new administrative building of the National Assembly of Cambodia
Employer: Secretariat General of the National Assembly of Cambodia
Contract No: 002/2021/VNAB022
Contract Title: Construction of new administrative building of the National Assembly of Cambodia
Issued on: November 12, 2021
Deadline for submission of Bids: December 27, 2021 at 9 hours (Cambodia standard time)

- The Kingdom of Cambodia has received a 25 (Twenty-five) million USD grant² from the Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam toward the cost of the Project of Construction of new administrative building of the National Assembly of Cambodia, and intends to apply part of the proceeds toward payments under the contract for the construction of new administrative building of the National Assembly of Cambodia.
- The Secretariat General of the National Assembly of Cambodia now invites sealed Bids from eligible and qualified Bidders for the construction of the new administrative building of the National Assembly of Cambodia, located on the premises of the National Assembly.
- Procurement will be conducted through international competitive bidding, ICB in accordance with Single stage, one envelope procedure using Request for Bids (RFB) as specified in the RGC Standard Operating Procedures on Procurement for All Externally Financed Projects/Programs and under the laws and regulations governing public procurement within the Kingdom of Cambodia.
- Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information and inspect the bidding document during office hours at **Kohke room of the Secretariat General of the National Assembly of Cambodia from 08:00 to 11:30 and 14:00 to 17:00 hours** at the address given below: Rathasaphea Street, Sangkat Tonle Bassac, Khan Chamcarorn, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- The bidding document may be purchased by interested eligible Bidders **upon the submission of a written application** to the address: **Kohke room**, Rathasaphea Street, Sangkat Tonle Bassac, Khan Chamcarorn, Phnom Penh, Cambodia and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of the ICB documents: 250US\$. The method of payment will be cash. The document can be collected in designated person of BEC. No liability will be accepted by the Secretariat General of the National Assembly of Cambodia for late delivery.

1 Grant Agreement between the Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on the Project of Construction of New Administrative Building for the National Assembly of Cambodia
2 A 25 (Twenty-five) million USD grant to implement all items of the Project, including: a. Hiring Consultant, b. a twelve (12) Storey Administrative Building, c. Equipment.

- Bids must be delivered to the address at **Kohke room of the Secretariat General of the National Assembly of Cambodia on or before the deadline: December 27, 2021 at 9 hours (Cambodia standard time)**. Electronic Bidding will not be permitted. Late Bids will be rejected. Bids will be publicly opened in the presence of the Bidders' designated representative who chooses to attend at the address: Rathasaphea Street, Sangkat Tonle Bassac, Khan Chamcarorn, Phnom Penh, Cambodia on **December 27, 2021 at 9 hours (Cambodia standard time)** at **Bayon room**, the Secretariat General of the National Assembly of Cambodia.
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Laos hopes for economic boost from China railway

A NEW \$6 billion Chinese-built railway line opens in Laos this week, bringing hopes of an economic boost to the reclusive nation, but experts are questioning the benefits of a project that has seen thousands of farmers evicted from their land.

The 414km route, due to open on December 3, took five years to construct under China's trillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative, which funds infrastructure projects aimed at increasing Beijing's clout globally.

Struggling strawberry farmer Anouphon Phomhacsar is hoping the new railway will get his business back on track.

His farm usually produces up to two tonnes of the red heart-shaped fruits a year, but the pandemic has hit the 2021 harvest hard.

It currently takes Anouphon three to four hours to send his strawberries to Vientiane by road, but he hopes the new railway will cut this delivery time in half.

And he says it will also be easier for tourists to travel to camp under the stars and pick berries.

"In the future, foreign tourists coming to the farm could be in the tens of thousands," he said.

The train route will connect the Chinese city of Kunming to the Laos capital, with grand

plans for high-speed rail to ultimately snake down through Thailand and Malaysia to Singapore.

Infrastructure-poor Laos, a reclusive communist-run country of 7.2 million people, previously had only 4km of railway tracks.

But now sleek red, blue and white bullet trains will speed along the new line at up to 160 km/h, passing through 75 tunnels and across 167 bridges, stopping at 10 passenger stations.

Despite registering only dozens of Covid cases until April, Laos' economy took a pandemic battering – economic growth declined to 0.4 per cent in 2020, the lowest level in three decades, according to the World Bank.

Hopes for a 2021 rebound were dashed – Laos locked down as it clocked up roughly 70,000 infections in the past eight months.

And while the railway could boost tourism, freight and agriculture, according to a World Bank report, the government needs to undertake substantial reforms, including improving border clearance processes.

"The new railway is a major investment that has the potential to stimulate the Lao economy and allow the country to take advantage of its geographical position at the heart of mainland Southeast

Asia," Sombath Southivong, a senior World Bank infrastructure specialist, said.

The tourism industry is desperate for a pick-me-up after the pandemic caused an 80 per cent downturn in international traveller numbers in 2020 – 4.7 million foreign tourists visited the previous year.

Pre-pandemic young nomads crammed on to buses at Vientiane for the four-hour ride to adventure capital Vang Vieng – a journey that will now take about an hour by train.

The town, which has a former CIA airstrip, was notorious for backpackers behaving badly at jungle parties before it re-branded as a ecotourism destination.

But the kayaks, river rafts, ziplines and hot air balloons have been empty of late.

Inthira – a boutique hotel nestled on the banks of the Nam Song River – shifted from a full occupancy rate to only a trickle of domestic travellers on weekends, says general manager Oscar Tality.

Tality hopes the railway and reduced travel times will give the industry a shot in the arm.

"Along the way people will see magnificent views of the mountains and will cross over bridges and tunnels. It will be a wonderful trip for those on the train," Tality said. AFP

A social shielding toward a more equal, equitable society: Street vendors inclusion

Opinion

Sophoan Phean

A FORMER factory worker, Pov Chandary, 30, is now a street vendor and her husband is a tuk-tuk driver – their jobs are usually referred to as “informal”, because they are not regulated and protected by law and the state.

Chandary, a mother of two, could see the differences and recalled the benefits that she, as a formal worker, used to be entitled to from the social protection schemes available to her, including healthcare, sickness and employment injury benefits, maternity leave and compensatory allowance. She wants to see street vendors and other informal economy workers enjoy the same benefits.

In Cambodia, a street vendor like Chandary faces significant challenges, including income insecurity, poor sanitation, lack of social protection benefits, and different forms of harassment and discrimination.

Street vendors receive limited legal protection from labour rights, face poor working conditions, are unable to receive state-level support for formal training and education, and are less likely to secure loan assistance to expand their businesses.

Sometimes, they are harassed by house owners, police or local authorities to leave their selling space. The hit of the global Covid-19 pandemic has added another layer to their existing hardship, making them more vulnerable and exposed to health, socio-economic risks and uncertainties.

In addition to the absence of income security and safety, street vendors are not registered in the national social security system and are not recorded in the official data collection, and their contribution to the economy is underestimated and often excluded, which leads to limited representation and policies options to address their needs and improve their situation.

The hardship Chandary experienced is neither new nor exceptional in Cambodia, but the situation remains unchanged and has even worsened in the wake of the pandemic.

If we look closer, street vendors are the ‘invisible’ entrepreneurs – unfortunately without protection nor recognition despite their huge contributions to the local and national economic development, including paying taxes. Street businesses, man-



Pov Chandary, a street vendor and a mother of two, who calls for equal social protection benefits for all workers. OXFAM

aged by street vendors – majority of whom are women – provide millions of citizens, in low middle-income countries like Cambodia, more affordable food and goods in public places, primarily streets, pavements and sidewalks. They move from place to place to trade their products and goods conveniently, saving many people’s busy time to go to markets. Street vendors evidently absorb labour force into the urban economy and help reduce risky migration.

Despite their contribution, in many lower-middle-income countries, effective social protection provision remains a key challenge, as many are excluded from social protection system.

We can find street vendors in every city and capital of the world, especially in Asia. Cambodia has perhaps one of the largest presences of street vendors in the region. Approximately, about 62,780 (3.8 per cent) Street Business (Vendors) of the 1,673,390 registered persons engaged in different forms of business (NIS/EC2011). About 16,419 (one per cent) are based in Phnom Penh, and 75 per cent are women.

The International Street Vendors

Day is proof that street vendors are gaining visibility and this is an opportunity for Cambodia to lead the way in recognising and protecting street vendors in the region.

This year, on the 9th International Street Vendors Day, Oxfam, together with the Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA) and other stakeholders, jointly celebrated this occasion to mark the importance of street vendors in social inclusion and their contribution to national economic development.

Let’s use this opportunity to advocate for a more inclusive understanding of informal economy workers, greater recognition of the social and economic needs of the street vendors and their continuous contributions to Cambodian society.

Like other types of labourers, street vendors share equal value and deserve to enjoy equal rights and access to the social protection provisions and freedom of association so that they too can enjoy the same benefits as other formal workers in Cambodia.

Instead of washing them away from the street, Cambodia should provide them with access to social protection

schemes including health insurance, access to affordable childcare services, provision of proper locations for street business and clean working places, access to affordable financial services, and information on public health and food safety.

We envision a society that leaves no one behind. Cambodia has set its goal toward an equal, equitable and inclusive society. However, this will only happen when we clearly commit to more inclusive, equitable social protection policies and practices for every Cambodian citizen.

Oxfam and partners stand ready to work closely with the government to make social protection goals a reality so that street vendors like Chandary could once again access the protection benefits she once had. We will continue collaborating with other key development partners to make this a reality.

Sophoan Phean is Oxfam country director. She is a Cambodian who possesses rich international experience and networks. She is also Oxfam’s Gender Justice Lead. Like many women of her generation, she was born and raised during wartime, poverty, and in a patriarchal society, experiences that strengthen her commitment to gender and social justice.

The Phnom Penh Post

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Lifestyle

SYA, Def Jam's taboo-breaking Malay woman hip-hop artist

Wearing sunglasses and a tiger print dress as she raps into a mic, Malaysian hip-hop artist SYA calls for empowerment while taking a sledgehammer to stereotypes of Muslim women.

The first female signing for label Def Jam – the label behind superstars from Jay-Z and Rihanna to BTS and Justin Bieber – in Southeast Asia, her debut single *PrettyGirlBop* tackles misogyny and acceptance in her Muslim-majority homeland.

"I just want women to feel more comfortable in their own skin," SYA, whose long dark hair is uncovered, said.

"I don't have to pretend to be somebody else just to fit what society deems is good."

The track, which also features up-and-coming Singapore artist Yung Raja, includes scenes of SYA dressed in white, and stroking a cat wearing a pearl necklace in a lavish bedroom.

Underlining her desire that women should not be pigeon-holed, it then switches to her holding a snake and wearing a leopard print jacket, as she defiantly raps: "I wanna be like me."

She is among a crop of young artists from Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines who have been signed by global music giant Def Jam's Southeast Asian arm.

Lauded by the industry as a rising star, the 25-year-old says she faces online abuse from those who believe her behaviour is not appropriate for a young Muslim woman.

"I've had a lot of disturbing comments," the rapper reveals, adding that she has been accused of being a prostitute and had her faith questioned.

"Is she a Muslim? How much per night? Why is she showing so much skin?"

'Imposter syndrome hit me'

While Malaysia is a relatively affluent country, society remains largely conservative, with critics saying women's rights are not sufficiently protected and harassment is common.

SYA says she is facing down the "patriarchal mindset" and "sexualisation" of those who don't conform to the cliched expectations of Muslim women.

Most members of Malaysia's ethnic Malay Muslim community follow a moderate form of the religion and while the majority of women wear a headscarf, there is no law requiring it.

But conservative Islam has been gaining ground, pushed by hardline politicians and preachers, accompanied by growing criticism of any activities and behaviour seen as undermining the faith.

For SYA – real name Nur Batrisya Mohammad Nazri – art and religion should be kept firmly separate, however.

"What does [religion] have to do with me as an artist, and what I create?" she said.

The artist, who spent much of her childhood overseas, burst onto the music scene almost by accident when she posted some of her work online, drawing the attention of well-known local rapper SonaOne.

He connected her with Def Jam, which had started a push into Southeast Asia, seeking to capitalise on a new wave of regional stars and a youthful demographic with increasing disposable income.

"First and foremost, I consider myself a writer... writing was the reason I am doing all of this... I had never planned to be an artist," says SYA.

The star confesses she was plagued by "self-doubt" and taken aback by her success.

She recalls: "Impostor syndrome really hit me hard. There are other people out there, especially indepen-



Malaysian hip-hop artist Nur Batrisya Mohammad Nazri, known as SYA, speaks during an interview at a studio in Kuala Lumpur. AFP



Wearing sunglasses and a tiger print dress as she raps into a mic, Malaysian hip-hop artist SYA calls for empowerment while taking a sledgehammer to stereotypes of Muslim women. AFP

dent artists, who make music 24/7 and are still struggling to get signed."

'Be your own person'

Growing up, SYA took part in talent shows and listened to artists such as

Britney Spears and Michael Jackson.

She later drifted towards hip-hop as it was "such an outspoken type of genre".

Her parents are "getting used to the idea" of her becoming a star, she

said, adding that her mum was her "biggest supporter".

After months of only doing online shows due to a lengthy coronavirus shutdown in Malaysia, she now plans to return to live performing.

SYA has yet to run into trouble with authorities but artists regularly do in Malaysia.

Rapper Namewee, from the country's ethnic Chinese minority, relocated to Taiwan after controversy over videos he made that critics allege insult Islam.

Despite this, SYA still thinks male artists have far more freedom to rap about sensitive subjects in the conservative country without fear of being criticised.

"For the boys, there are no limitations. If they want to rap about sex or weed, it is a pass," she said.

"But for women, if you are Malay, you don't want to insinuate you are doing all of those things."

SYA hopes her music inspires other women – not to emulate her, but to be more confident in themselves.

"I don't want to be the perfect role model," she said.

"You can take inspiration from me [to] be your own person." AFP



Students interact with a 24.5cm tall 'Alpha Mini' robot who can dance, lead sing-alongs, recite stories and even teach kung-fu moves. AFP

South Korea trials pint-sized robots as teaching assistants

SEOUL has started trialling pint-sized robots as teaching aids in kindergartens – a pilot project the city government said would help prepare the next generation for a hi-tech future.

The "Alpha Mini" is just 24.5cm tall and can dance, lead sing-a-longs, recite stories and even teach kung-fu moves as children mimic its push-ups and one-legged balances.

"The robots help with the kids' creativity," teacher Byun Seo-yeon said during a visit to the bright and busy Maru nursery in Seoul.

The robot's eyes wink and blink – and its pupils become heart-shaped during conversation.

With a camera on its helmet, it takes photos that are instantly sent to a tablet for viewing.

"In the future, knowing how to manage AI and related tools will be very important," Han Dong-seog, from the Seoul government's childcare division, said.

The robots are being trialled in 300 Seoul nurseries and childcare centres, with the government recommending the programme for

children aged three to five.

"We believe having this experience in nursery schools will have a lasting effect throughout their youth and as adults," Han said.

The Alpha Mini has been adopted as part of a daily schedule for the class of four-to five-year-old students at Maru, with its ability to "fart" on command being a highlight during playtime.

"When I tell it to sing, it sings well. I tell it to dance and we dance together," said five-year-old Lee Ga-yoon. AFP

Thinking caps

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9	10		11	12	13
14					15								16	
17				18									19	
20										21		22		
23				24				25		26				
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32	33	34						35		36		37		
38					39	40		41		42				
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58	59				60		61				62			
63				64		65								
66				67							68			
69				70							71			

“WOOD YOU MIND?”

ACROSS

- 1 Doe's dear
- 5 Reach for the stars
- 11 Big ___ (London landmark)
- 14 Hawaiian city
- 15 Trumpet relative
- 16 "... ___ he drove out of sight"
- 17 Question for a Canadian tree?
- 19 Id's counterpart
- 20 Truthfulness
- 21 Cleric ranking below a priest
- 23 N.Y. summer setting
- 24 A Kennedy
- 26 Cheerleader's cheer
- 27 Like some cakes
- 29 Support in chicanery
- 32 Entree fowl
- 35 Not one card short of a deck
- 37 Scene of the William Tell legend
- 38 Starting points
- 41 Nighttime visitor of folklore
- 43 Ms. Taylor
- 44 Saroyan's "My Name Is ___"
- 46 View from an overlook
- 47 Knock silly
- 49 Startled
- 52 Massachusetts cape

DOWN

- 1 Get rid of a five o'clock shadow
- 2 Tuckered out
- 3 On one's toes
- 4 "The Duchess of Alba" painter
- 5 Sharpness of perception
- 6 Apply balm to
- 7 What God hears
- 8 Type of stain
- 9 Swamp thing
- 10 It put people to sleep, once
- 11 Lazy trees?
- 12 "Cogito, ___ sum"
- 13 Advertising sign

ACROSS

- 18 South and central Pacific islands
- 22 Not quite the majors
- 25 Shepherding areas
- 27 Fire fuel
- 28 Genetic material
- 30 Latin I word
- 31 Rocking Turner
- 32 More than cool
- 33 Pavarotti solo
- 34 Delivered tree?
- 36 To make poisonous
- 39 Large lobbying grp.
- 40 Famed vaccine developer
- 42 "How ___ this happen?"
- 45 Drags through the mud
- 48 Unpopular slice
- 50 Fail to keep a promise
- 51 Title that's usually abbreviated
- 53 Jack Sprat's dietary restriction
- 55 Rankle
- 56 Electron tube
- 57 Not fashionable
- 58 Helen of Troy's mother
- 59 "Potpourri for 400, ___"
- 60 Donate
- 62 Canasta term
- 65 Stimp's cartoon friend

Sudoku Pacific

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

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ☆☆☆☆☆

Friday's solution

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

Friday's solution

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



(From left to right) Bollywood actors and cast members Rajat Kapoor, Aahana Kumra, Ayush Mehra, Soni Razdan posing for pictures with director Shaad Ali (top) during the promotion of the Indian drama web series *Call My Agent: Bollywood* which is based on the French TV series *Dix Pour Cent*, in Mumbai. AFP

‘Love and hate’: India’s Bollywood spotlight on *Call My Agent* spinoff

THE director behind a biting look at India's entertainment industry says the backroom dealings and bold personalities of Bollywood have proven a rich target for satire.

Shaad Ali's latest venture is a local adaptation of a runaway hit Netflix series that follows four hapless French talent agents as they wrangle and coddle their celebrity clients. *Call My Agent: Bollywood* trades Paris for Mumbai, the sprawling port city home to India's most lucrative production houses and its most famous megastars.

Ali's is the third makeover for the Emmy award-winning *Dix Pour Cent* – a nod to the traditional 10 per cent cut taken by agents in the movie business – after earlier incarnations in Britain and Turkey.

"It was very easy for me to be seduced by the show," he said, crediting a career spent observing the conduct of actors, their entourages and his fellow filmmakers for inspiration.

But getting the show from the script to the screen was tough, with last year's Covid outbreak in Mumbai upending the production schedule.

One French critic branded Ali's version a "disaster", while Indian reviewers have also given hostile verdicts.

But Ali, who before this was best known for romantic dramas starring some of Bollywood's most recognisable male heart-throbs, says he has remained "peacefully unaware" of the bad press.

"I keep hearing from people that there are mixed reactions – some love it, some have hated it – which I prefer," he says.

"I don't like in-between reactions ... that's what is scary."

Nor has he shied away from poking fun at the airy and sometimes oblivious personalities often found in any celebrity milieu.

"My intention was never bad, and I am part of [the industry] really, so if I am making fun, I am included in that," he says.

"All the celebrities who appeared on the show were very supportive in making fun of each other ... it was just natural."

'We're self-absorbed'

Lead actress Aahana Kumra plays the headstrong Amal, one of four celebrity talent managers fighting to keep their

flailing agency alive after the sudden death of its founder.

Pushed into the role by her own agent, Kumra became an obsessive fan of the original French series, which even prompted her to take a critical look at her own industry. "We're self-absorbed," she said.

"That is the nature of the job – we are so about ourselves that we completely forget that there is an agent who has a life of their own."

A recurring subplot through *Call My Agent* is Amal's relationship with another woman, culminating in an onscreen kiss – a rarity in Indian cinema and television, where prevailing mores keep depictions of romantic intimacy at a minimum.

Kumra believes India is moving towards more candid portrayals of same-sex relationships and was indifferent to the prospect of criticism from audiences.

"For me all that really matters is what my parents think of a certain performance," she says.

"It is really nice to hear from them that they were very happy to see it." AFP



(From left to right) Bollywood actors and cast members Soni Razdan, Ayush Mehra, Aahana Kumra and Rajat Kapoor pose for a picture on the set of the Indian drama web series *Call My Agent: Bollywood*. AFP



New French envoy commends Kingdom's development during visit to The Post

New French Ambassador to Cambodia Jacques Pellet said during a 90-minute visit to The Phnom Penh Post newsroom on Wednesday evening that it was an honour to be back in the Kingdom. "I keep Cambodia close to my heart," he told Post Media publisher and CEO Ly Tayseng. "I am very honoured to return to Cambodia. We [France] are close to Cambodia. My first visit was in 1995, when I was a Cambodia desk officer in Paris. There were a lot of diplomatic missions between 1995 and 1998 during the peace agreement. "Twenty-five years later, I am back, and I am very impressed with Cambodia's growth - there are so many young people and now many modern buildings. I will have to adapt to the new environment," said Pellet. A broad range of current issues - including regional ties, the role of journalists, France-Cambodia relations and French non-public sector contributions to the Kingdom - were touched upon during the courtesy call. Managing editor of The Phnom Penh Post Sam Rith was also present to welcome the ambassador.



PHOTOS HONG MENEA

Metropole Underground, Phnom Penh's very first underground bar



Inspired by a cosmopolitan lifestyle, the early twentieth century Paris metro-themed bar is a stylish spot to socialise and unwind over drinks. Dubbed as Phnom Penh's very first underground bar, Metropole Underground is the latest addition to Cambodia's capital night scene. Designed by the award winning SCDA Architects, the interiors are simply captivating and picture-perfect making it an iconic bar in the heart of the city. Discreetly located at Hyatt Regency Phnom Penh's basement, the venue offers on bottle service, crafted beers, regional spirits and light bites. Perfectly paired with nightly live entertainment that combines band and DJ performances, Metropole Underground is ready to offer unexpected fun and unforgettable night out. The opening hours are from Thursday to Saturday starting from 7pm onwards, where monthly special guest DJs perform to colour the vibe.

PHOTOS SUPPLIED



Phnom Penh set for fine dining revolution

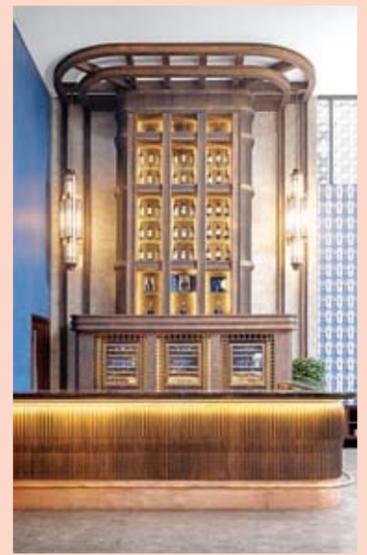
Phnom Penh is set for a fine-dining revolution with the grand opening of the Ox Club Restaurant in BKK1, Phnom Penh; and, if the set menu is anything to go by, guests are going to be in for a real treat. The Ox Club Restaurant was formerly a mainstay of Siem Reap, and is now launching in the capital after a year of intense planning, sourcing of the best ingredients, and training the best staff available in the Kingdom.

Led by head chef, Chef Rann who has spent the past decade working in some of the most renowned kitchens in the United Arab Emirates, the team is trying to do something that has never before been seen in Cambodia and will be the most opulent restaurant in Phnom Penh. How do you become the most high-end restaurant in Phnom Penh? Well it is all about the dishes and ingredients, with the Ox Club Restaurant serving everything from Wagyu steak to the finest of caviar as epitomised by their à la carte and set menu.

The restaurant's exterior and interior both exude class and grandeur, with restaurant manager Sam stating that staff members are trained and ready to be the best in Phnom Penh. Despite the current restrictions, the sheer size of the premises means that it will be able to deal with a capacity of 100 guests, as well as five private rooms available for VIP clients. Currently the Ox Club Restaurant is offering set menus, a tasting lunch menu, seasonal à la carte menu and hosing special Jazz nights every Saturday and Sunday.

Future plans for the Ox Club Restaurant are vast, including seasonal à la carte menus, up-scale afternoon tea, there is also continuous experimentation and innovation behind the kitchen door as they aim to be the best restaurant in Cambodia. The restaurant is now taking bookings that will change the fine dining scene in the Kingdom for good.

For reservations: +855 15 509 222 | reservation@oxclubrestaurant.com



PHOTOS SUPPLIED

Amret-FMO sign million-dollar loan facility



Amret PLC on Thursday signed a \$50-million loan facility with FMO - Entrepreneur Development Bank, a Dutch development bank that supports sustainable private sector growth in developing and emerging markets by investing in businesses, projects, and financial institutions. Amret MFI CEO Dos Din and FMO chief risk and finance officer/management board member Fatoumata Bouaré, along with other senior management staff from both institutions witnessed the virtual signing ceremony. Dinn said at the event, "FMO has been one of our key shareholders and cooperative partners for more than 15 years in supporting Amret's development. Today's event is an essential milestone that demonstrates the strong cooperation between Amret MFI and FMO. With this \$50 million facility, Amret will continue to provide financial solutions to support the agricultural sector; especially to budding women entrepreneurs through Amret's Innovative Women Entrepreneur Loan."



PHOTOS SUPPLIED

Sport

Inter on leaders' heels after Venezia win, Zapata sinks troubled Juventus

INTER Milan moved to within one point of the Serie A summit on Saturday thanks to a 2-0 win over Venezia, while Duvan Zapata piled on the misery for Juventus who are reeling from a probe into their accounts.

Hakan Calhanoglu continued his fine recent form in the 34th minute when he collected the ball and fizzed the opening goal through a crowd of players, and Lautaro Martinez added the second from the penalty spot deep in stoppage time.

Inter have won seven of their last nine matches in all competitions – drawing the other two – and are on a high after ensuring passage to the Champions League last 16 after a decade away midweek.

"The only negative thing was that we should have scored the second goal earlier," said Inter coach Simone Inzaghi.

"People said this was meant to be a transitional season, one focused on just saving the club, but I found a club that supports me totally and has an extraordinary bunch of lads in the squad."

It was another composed display from the champions which puts them right on the heels of league leaders Napoli and AC Milan, who are level on 32 points and both play on Sunday.

Inter only had one real scare when Samir Handanovic, who saved Inter with a miracle save in the previous weekend's win



Inter Milan midfielder Ivan Perisic (left) heads the ball next to Venezia defender Mattia Caldara during the Italian Serie A football match on Saturday. AFP

over Napoli, had to be at full stretch to tip over Mattia Aramu's long-range drive.

Promoted Venezia meanwhile stay six points above the relegation zone in 15th.

Zapata sinks Juve

Atalanta strengthened their hold on fourth place and Serie A's final Champions League spot thanks to Colombian Zapata's seventh goal in as many games in all competitions in the 28th minute in Turin.

Atalanta are six points ahead of their closest rivals for fourth

spot Roma, who host Torino on Sunday, while Juve sit a further point back in eighth after the latest uninspiring display which led to them being whistled off by furious fans who watched their team lose for the fifth time this league season.

Massimiliano Allegri's Juve have only scored 18 goals in their 14 league matches, the lowest total in Serie A's top 10, and rarely looked like pegging back Atalanta until Paulo Dybala clipped a free-kick off the crossbar in stoppage time.

"We need to be realistic. If

we're in this position after 14 matches it means that for now that's how good we are," said Allegri.

Juve's defeat comes after a difficult week in which they were humiliated by European champions Chelsea on Tuesday and then had police search their offices on Friday as part of a probe into suspicious player transfers.

Transfer probe

Juve confirmed late on Saturday that chairman Andrea Agnelli was among the cur-

rent and former directors under investigation for "false accounting" and "issuance of invoices or other documents for non-existent transactions".

Prosecutors in Turin had announced on Friday the police search over what Sky Sport Italia report are some €282 million (\$319.2 million) of suspect capital gains from transfer deals.

Last month the Italian Football Federation had launched an investigation into the alleged inflating of the value of certain players for accounting purposes, or using player exchanges to help balance the books.

On Saturday news agency ANSA quoted a source from football supervisory commission COVISOC as saying that since autumn last year it has identified dozens of deals that do not just concern Juve – who are listed on the Italian stock exchange.

Earlier Dusan Vlahovic firing his way to the top of the Serie A scoring charts was not enough for Fiorentina as Empoli came from behind late to snatch a 2-1 Tuscan derby win.

Serbia striker Vlahovic slid in his 11th league goal of the season after 56 minutes to move above Italy forward Ciro Immobile but the Viola threw away the win in the final few minutes with Filippo Bandinelli and Andrea Pinamonti netting for the hosts.

AFP

Mayer leads Austria 1-2 in men's WC downhill race

TWO-time Olympic gold medalist Matthias Mayer powered to victory in the opening men's World Cup downhill at Lake Louise, Canada, on Saturday, leading Vincent Kriechmayr in an Austrian one-two.

Mayer clocked 1min 47.74sec to win, dislodging Kriechmayr who had set a target with the first run of the day of 1:47.97.

Switzerland's Beat Feuz, the four-time defending World Cup downhill champion, was third in 1:48.09.

Saturday's race was originally meant to be one of two downhills at Lake Louise, but heavy snow forced the cancellation of Friday's race.

The men are scheduled to race a super-G on Sunday to cap the speed weekend in the Canadian Rockies.

The 31-year-old Mayer, who won Olympic downhill gold at Sochi in 2014 and super-G gold at Pyeongchang in 2018, signalled he's got plenty left in the tank with the 2022 Beijing Winter Games approaching.

He captured the seventh World Cup downhill victory of his career with his latest success at Lake Louise, where he won the super-G in 2019 before the coronavirus pandemic caused the North American fixtures to be dropped last season.

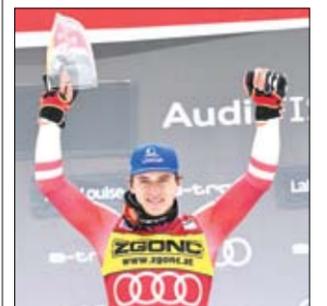
Mayer professed himself "completely satisfied" with the victory.

"The slope was rough, visibility was poor, it was relatively fast and really difficult," he said in comments posted on the Austrian team website. "I am overjoyed with the win."

In a season that will be highlighted by the Olympics he was also delighted to see three Austrians in the top five, with Max Franz (1:48.30) finishing fifth behind Swiss Marco Odermatt.

"The team performance is excellent, our skiing is good and we can go into the next races free," Mayer said.

While Odermatt didn't make the podium, the 24-year-old winner of the opening giant slalom in Soelden in October posted the best downhill result of his career and took the solo lead in the overall standings with 150 points. Mayer and compatriot Christian Hirschi are in second on 100 points each. AFP



Matthias Mayer of Austria celebrates on the podium after placing first during the Audi FIS Ski World Cup Mens 2021 downhill skiing championship race on Saturday. AFP

'Lewy' tipped for Ballon d'Or as Messi eyes 7th

ROBERT Lewandowski threatens to deny Lionel Messi a record-extending seventh Ballon d'Or title as the prestigious awards ceremony returns Monday after it was cancelled last year because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Bayern Munich and Poland striker pilfered a Bundesliga record 41 goals in just 29 games last season to eclipse the long-standing mark set by the late Gerd Mueller.

Lewandowski, 33, scooped FIFA's prize for best male player of 2020 and has the backing of both coach Julian Nagelsmann and Bayern team-mate Thomas Mueller after a prolific start to the new campaign.

"Lewy' has to win the thing on Monday when you see the way he is playing at the moment," Mueller said of a player who has already scored 25 times in 20 appearances this season.

Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo have combined to win 11 of the past 12 editions of the Ballon d'Or, the lone exception in 2018 when Luka Modric helped Real Madrid to another Champions League triumph and inspired Croatia to the World Cup final.

"Robert deserves to win it, because in my view he has been more unbelievably consistent than any other player," Nagelsmann said last month in an interview with Munich newspaper Abendzeitung.

While Messi has endured a stop-start beginning to life at Paris Saint-Germain, the Argentine bagged 30 league goals in his farewell season at Barcelona and also won the Copa del Rey.

Seventh heaven?

Further strengthening his case was a first major international trophy in July, as Argentina beat rivals Brazil to win the Copa America at the Maracana – ending the country's 28-year wait for the title.

"My biggest prize was what I was able to achieve with the

national team," Messi told Catalan daily Sport recently.

"After having fought and fought so much for that achievement, it was the best given all that it cost.

"If the Ballon d'Or were to arrive, it would be extraordinary for what it would mean to win one more. The seventh would be crazy."

Ronaldo last took home the trophy in 2017. The Champions League's all-time top scorer has struck in all five games in Europe during his second spell at Manchester United but appears an outside contender for a sixth Ballon d'Or.

Karim Benzema received support from Thierry Henry, Zinedine Zidane and tennis star Rafael Nadal following a tremendous year with Real Madrid.

However the France star last week received a one-year suspended sentence for complicity in a bid to blackmail his former international teammate Mathieu Valbuena with a sex tape. He was also given a €75,000 (\$84,000) fine.

Five members of Italy's Euro

2020-winning squad feature on the 30-man shortlist, including Chelsea midfielder and Champions League winner Jorginho.

Kylian Mbappe, Erling Haaland – viewed as Ballon d'Or winners of the future – also feature alongside Neymar and Liverpool striker Mohamed Salah, the leading Premier League scorer this term.

Barcelona captain Alexia Putellas, the UEFA women's player of the year, is a leading candidate to succeed 2019 Ballon d'Or winner Megan Rapinoe. The American was not among the 20 nominees.

Putellas is joined by Barca team-mates Jennifer Hermoso and Lieke Martens following their Champions League triumph, with Australia's Sam Kerr among five Chelsea representatives.

Christine Sinclair, of Olympic gold medal-winning Canada, is also in the running.

The Kopa trophy will be handed out to the best young men's player, while 10 goalkeepers are shortlisted for the Yashin trophy. AFP



Bayern Munich forward Robert Lewandowski celebrates scoring the 2-0 goal during the German first division Bundesliga football match against SC Freiburg on November 6. AFP