NATIONAL page-3 Hunt intensifies for large-scale safrole traffickers

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Clijsters hailed as a role model as she prepares for final grand slam SPORT PAGE 27

Shifting sands

A sand dredging operation on the Mekong River has allegedly resulted in the collapse of riverbanks in Kandal province's Kien Svay district. PHOTO SUPPLIED

Story - page 3

Supplier of Gap in spotlight

Mom Kunthear and Claire Knox

WORKERS striking at Ocean Garment factory say they still fear for their safety after being ordered back to work on Friday, where a manager accused of sexual harassment continues to work.

More than 2,500 workers at the Phnom Penh factory – which supplies retail giant Gap – rallied behind six female employees, who accused their Bangladeshi manager, Faruk Ahmad, of sexual abuse, in an August 11 protest that has stretched on for nearly two weeks.

The women lodged formal criminal complaints to the police and municipal court last week; however, investigations are still pending, president of the Collective Union of Movement of Workers, Pav Sina said.

He said the workers had continued their strike inside the factory's walls yesterday, and would gather again today in support of five worker representatives, suspended by Ocean despite all workers being ordered back to the factory in a Phnom Penh Municipal Court injunction on Thursday.

According to Sina, Ocean Garment suspended the five worker representatives when the employees returned to work on Friday.

"The court released the protection warrant and asked all workers to return to work in 48 hours on Friday, and we agreed with the court order. But the

Continues on page 6

Fretting 'ASEAN-alisation'

Students fear losing jobs to skilful neighbours

Justine Drennan

THE vision regional leaders have for an ASEAN Economic Community by 2015 may become clearer after this week's Economic Ministers meeting in Siem Reap, but not everyone has a rose-coloured view of what such integration might mean for Cambodia.

"My peers are really concerned that other countries have many more skills and higher study levels," National Institute of Business student Chan Kakada, 22, said yesterday, ahead of Prime Minister Hun Sen officially opening the meeting today.

Students who have not mastered the English language also fear employment opportunities will fade into the ether in the face of stiffer competition for English skills, Kakada, who hopes to one day open her own travel agency, said.

"If Cambodian students can't compete with other ASEAN countries, maybe in the future [Cambodians] will be jobless after 'ASEAN-alisation'," she said, using a term coined by one of her professors, who urges students to study hard and choose their subjects carefully so they can compete in a regional labour market when the AEC's free movement of skilled labour agreement comes into effect.

The AEC's proposed labour agreement – to facilitate work permits and relax foreign worker quotas – being discussed at the economic minister's meeting only includes certain skilled sectors: architecture, engineering, accounting, surveying, medicine and tourism.

University students may have reason to fear, experts say. But, ultimately, few Cambodians have technical skills that will be impacted under the AEC labour agreement, Kang Chandararot, head of the economics unit at independent analyst group Cambodia Institute of Development Study, said.

"The issue is how many skilled labourers we can produce when 80 per cent of labour in the economy is in rural areas," he said.

"Because of seasonal unemployment and the dependence on a subsistence economy of Cambodian rural households, it is very difficult to promote the benefits of acquiring more skills," Chandararot said, emphasising that for

Continues on page 5

BUSINESS page-7 ASEAN's financial gap highlighted

WORLD page-13 Hollande sends message to Greece

National

Is it the start of the end for Vietnam's ruling party?

Regional Insider
Roger Mitton

THE media was awash last week with stories about Vietnam's dire economic situation, which, as the *Wall Street Journal* noted, "is going from bad to worse".

On Tuesday, the local *Tuoi Tre* newspaper revealed that the powerful banking mogul, Nguyen Duc Kien, had been arrested for financial violations.

Kien is among Vietnam's 20 richest and best-connected businessmen – he is close to Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung and co-founded the Asia Commercial Bank, one of the nation's largest.

News of his jailing caused Vietnam's already moribund stock market to suffer its biggest drop in four years and resulted in panicky depositors mobbing ACB branches to pull out their savings.

Some $400 million was withdrawn over the next two days and the central bank had to dispatch truckloads of cash to prevent commercial banks from running out of funds.

A brief semblance of calm was then shattered on Thursday when news outlets like the Agence France Presse headlined: "Second tycoon arrested amid bank run in Vietnam."

Ly Xuan Hai, the ACB's chief executive, joined Kien in the slammer for alleged financial irregularities and that led to yet more bank runs and a disastrous $4-billion slide in the stock market.

The picture was darkening ominously, as was evident from a front-page *New York Times* article headlined: "In Vietnam, Growing Fears of an Economic Meltdown."

Those fears were reinforced when the official Vietnam News Agency reported midweek that prices had begun to creep up again.

Not long ago, in order to curb rampaging inflation which had hit 30 per cent, the government radically curtailed credit and restrained growth.

It worked and the rate of inflation came down to single digits this year; but the cost was severe.

Youth unemployment soared, infrastructure projects were postponed or scrapped, serious power shortages ensued, wildcat strikes spread and the property market slid into its current comatose state.

As the *New York Times* article reported: "Vietnam's major cities are now scattered with hundreds of abandoned construction sites."

As well, after multiple currency devaluations and rising prices, people pruned their spending; the sale of produce and general goods in stores, for example, has recently plummeted by 20 to 30 per cent.

Making matters worse, foreign investment for the first half of this year was only one-quarter the amount during the same period three years ago.

As a result, with GDP growth now down to barely 4 per cent and falling, Vietnam has the region's worst-performing economy and faces the harrowing prospect of an inflationary depression.

As the Associated Press reported, there are now "doubts about the financial stability of a country once seen as an emerging Asian tiger economy".

Last week's jailings follow the conviction of Pham Thanh Binh, formerly head of state-owned shipbuilder Vinashin, whose financial misdeeds saddled the company with debts of $4.5 billion.

Concurrently, Duong Chi Dung, the ex-boss of state-owned shipping giant Vinalines, recently fled into hiding after racking up debts of $2 billion.

Both Binh and Dung were political acolytes of senior party men, none of whom have been punished, of course, just as none of the mentors of Kien or Hai have been targetted – as yet.

But political storm clouds are growing, as discontent over the nation's economic mismanagement mounts, even within the ruling Vietnam Communist Party itself.

PM Dung, whose daughter Nguyen Thanh Phuong partnered Kien in banking endeavours, is now openly being challenged by his long-term rival, President Truong Tan Sang.

Sang is supported by party boss Nguyen Phu Trong and Deputy PM Nguyen Sinh Hung, which means the PM's days could be numbered.

In a devastating article last week, Sang slammed both the inefficient state-owned enterprises and the corruption, irresponsibility and moral degradation of Dung's government. He could well have aimed his criticism at the party as a whole.

To paraphrase Winston Churchill, the economic debacle may not herald the end of the VCP, but it is perhaps the end of the start of the party's demise. ■

rogermitton@gmail.com

A farmer works in a parched rice paddy in Kampong Speu province's Kong Pisei district earlier this month. HENG CHIVOAN

Improve yields while the sun shines: NGO

Khouth Sophak Chakrya

THIS year's dry spell could be an opportunity rather than a disaster for farmers, Cambodian Center for Study and Development in Agriculture (CEDAC) officials said yesterday.

Although drought has destroyed several thousand hectares of crops in the past two months, Cambodia's largest agricultural NGO is encouraging farmers to use the dry times to improve their yields.

"We want all farmers to see [the drought] not as a crisis but a chance to double their yields and income," Him Khortieth, communication officer for CEDAC, said yesterday.

CEDAC's president, Yang Saing Koma, said farmers should plough and collect natural fertilisers to prepare their fields for end-of-season rains.

"Farmers should not feel hopeless, but should start to grow rice and other crops," Koma said.

"The rainy season will continue for about two more months," he said, adding that during this time, farmers should supplement their rice yields with other crops like sweet potatoes.

The advice extends beyond this year, Khortieth said, pointing out that most rainy seasons have a dry spell in the middle.

Ou Ith, a farmer in Banteay Meancheay's Thma Puok district, who had planned to find work in Thailand after his rice crop was hit by drought, said he will now grow another crop.

"My family relies on the rice crops so we will grow another in the last of this rainy season," he said. Khortieth said the advice applies more to upland areas. ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY JUSTINE DRENNAN ■

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Chaos-causing elephant tranquilised in Koh Kong

Khouth Sophak Chakrya and Claire Knox

A WILD male elephant trampling around the fringes of National Road 48 in Koh Kong province was tranquilised on Saturday by a team of forestry officials and conservationists after "causing disturbance" and destroying crops and rice fields, said Ratanak Pich, director of Takeo province's Tamao Zoological Park and Wildlife Rescue Centre.

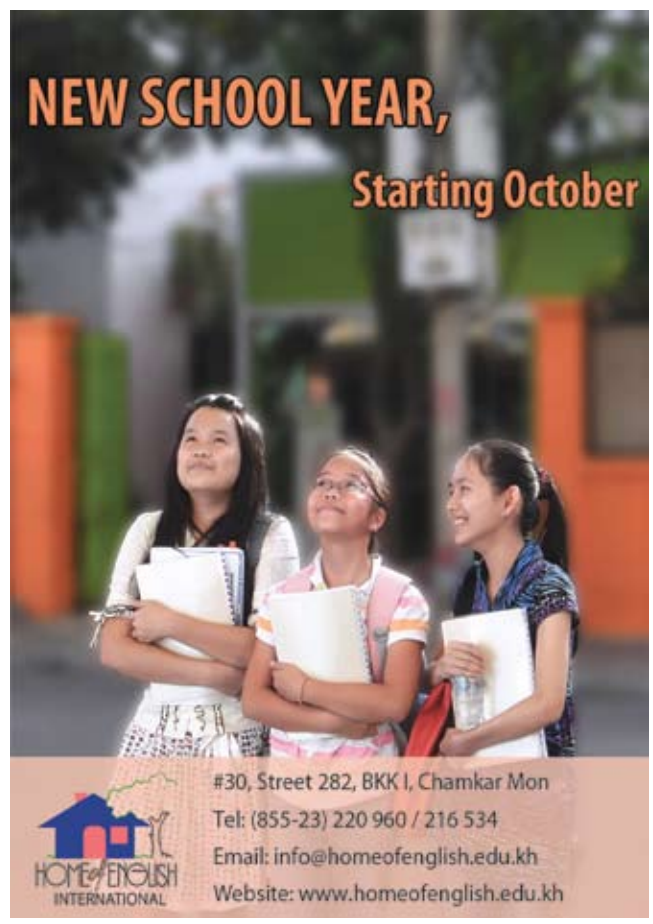
The elephant, about 30 years old, was being readied for transportation to the zoo, where it was to get treatment and mate with three female elephants, he said.

"It will arrive no later than tomorrow or the day after tomorrow," he said.

Sam Saeoun, deputy police chief of Botum Sakor district, said although the elephant had not hurt anyone, it had damaged valuable crops and caused chaos on local roads.

Sarah Brook, a flagship species officer for the NGO Flora and Fauna International, said that although relocating wild elephants to zoos or rescue centres was not a long-term solution to human-elephant conflict, this particular animal had a badly injured leg.

"It is possible that human-elephant conflict incidents will increase in Cambodia in the near future, with increasing land-use changes," she said. ■



Sinking feeling on river's edge

Buth Reaksmey Kongkea

ABOUT 50 villagers in Kandal province protested yesterday in an attempt to halt the activities of a Vietnamese sand-dredging company, which they said has caused a huge swath of their land to slide into the Mekong River.

Residents of Kien Svay district's Koh Prak village said that over the course of the company's first month of operations, a length of shoreline more than 500 metres long and five metres wide has collapsed into the river, taking crops with it, and threatening the homes of those living nearest the river.

According to village representative Tuy Phy, 51, villagers began their protest yesterday morning at the Koh Prak port – where the dredging barges dock – then piled into five motorboats and sailed over the barges to ask them to stop their work.

"The activity of sand dredging of this Vietnamese barge company has severely affected our villagers' lands and houses," he told the *Post*. "To protect villagers' lives, their houses and their lands from collapsing into the river, we asked the barge to stop dredging sand from Koh Prak village from now on."

A portion of the river bank in Kandal province's Kien Svay district allegedly collapsed recently as a result of sand dredging on the Mekong River. PHOTO SUPPLIED

The barges obliged until just before midday, Phy said, but when the protesters returned home, they resumed dredging.

Villagers don't even know the company's name, he added, since none of the employees speak Khmer, but its six to seven barges had been operating on a daily basis.

Phok Dara, 52, a farmer in Koh Prak village, said that his house and land were on the Mekong's banks, just 15 metres from where the barges dredge.

"I am afraid that my house and land will slide into the river some day," he said, adding that according to villagers' reports, the company's activities directly affected 46 families, and over 100 more indirectly.

Im Sarom, 54, another resident, said villagers have submitted a complaint asking Phoum Thom commune officials to intervene but have not yet received a response, adding that villagers will stage a protest at Prime Minister Hun Sen's house if a solution is not found.

Kien Svay district police chief Var Samath said the "issue is a matter for the Kien Svay district governor, who issued [the company's] licence".

Samath said he had personally observed the loss of shoreline in Koh Prak, but maintained that much of the erosion was due to natural forces.

Neither representatives of the company, nor Kien Svay district governor Heng Theam could be reached for comment. ■

Suspect net widens in safrole oil bust: police

Phak Seangly

THREE more suspects and numerous additional safrole oil harvest locations are being pursued by Pursat provincial police after the biggest safrole oil bust this year took place on Thursday.

Over the weekend, provincial anti-drug officials questioned Vietnamese-Cambodian Keo Thou, who turned over new information about his accomplices and the large-scale safrole oil-producing racket.

Thou was charged by Pursat Provincial Court with stockpiling 114 barrels of the illegal compound, which can be used as a pre-cursor for MDMA, commonly known as the party drug ecstasy, at his dilapidated house near the base of the Cardamom Mountains in Pursat.

"The suspect admitted that he guarded and prepared to transport the 114 barrels of safrole," provincial court prosecutor, Yu Yeunny, said, adding the suspect was being held in pretrial detention while authorities continued to question him.

Questioning of Thou revealed a growing network of drug traffickers who worked separately and secretly, speaking mostly over the phone and using code names in communication, said Si Savin, chief of the anti-drug office in Pursat.

Savin said that two Vietnamese nationals and another Cambodian were involved in the smuggling of the safrole across Thai and Vietnamese borders.

"The three other suspects rarely went to the safrole harvesting sites and always lived in mobile locations," Savin said.

Authorities also learned that the harvesting was not isolated in a single location but deep in the forest at various locations along the border of Koh Kong and Pursat, as well as Battambang. Once the root of sassafras trees growing in those locations were harvested, they were bought to a sophisticated cooking operation near Thour's house to distill the valuable safrole oil from the vegetation.

According to Savin, Thou's only duty was to guard the safrole stock location in Pursat.

Thou could offer police few details of the other suspects involved in the trafficking and production of the oil but said five to 10 barrels at a time would be moved to Phnom Penh for further processing. ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY RACHEL WILL ■

National

General arrested
Senior army official linked to drug bust

A TWO-STAR general and one other man were arrested in Phnom Penh by a joint force of police and military police, led by the anti-drug department at the Ministry of Interior, on suspicion of drug trafficking, police said yesterday.

According to department director Khieu Saman, General Chan Rithydy, the deputy chief of staff of the army's infantry division and an unnamed associate were arrested at a luxury villa located in O'Andong 1 village, in Meanchey district's Prek Pra commune. In the raid, police seized more than one kilogram of crystalline ecstasy, and nearly 85,000 pills of an amphetamine-type stimulant known as WY.

Rithydy isn't the first high-ranking military officer to be linked to drug busts this year.

In May, an assistant to the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces Cabinet of General Command was caught with a cache of various drugs. Last month, a former major general and a Ministry of National Defence deputy commander were sentenced to 12 and 16 years in prison, respectively, for drug trafficking and illegal weapon possession.

Ky Bunnara, the deputy municipal prosecutor, would not comment in detail, but said the decision to arrest Rithydy was made after a lengthy investigation. LIENG SARITH

More corruption cases heard

Buth Reaksmey Kongkea

THE Court of Appeal on Friday continued to hear the appeals of former anti-drugs chief Moek Dara, his second in command Chea Leng and fugitive Morn Doeun in the seventh of 25 criminal cases against them.

In the fifth day of hearings focused on corruption charges against Leng and Doeun who have been convicted for allowing two drug traffickers to escape detention and subsequently seizing the traffickers' real estate properties as their own in 2009.

The presiding judge at the Court of Appeal, Chay Chandaravann, read aloud Banteay Meanchey Provincial Court's documents that on May 31, 2009, Chea Leng's anti-drug police forces began a series of large-scale crackdowns leading them from Phnom Penh to Siem Reap to Banteay Meanchey.

At each step of the crackdowns, illicit substances, cash and property were confiscated from arrested suspects.

"Later, after their questionings, Chea Leng and Morn Doeun had released [some of the suspects] in exchange for receiving bribes," Chandaravann said.

"And during doing their activities, Chea Leang and Morn Doeun has also seized a total of 36 items of the suspects' real-estate properties and their bank accounts," he added.

"With these 36 items of documents seized, Chea Leng and Morn Doeun bribed the suspects to purchase three luxury motorbikes for them to secure return of the seized property," the judge read.

Their appeal hearings will continue on September 4. ■

Former anti-drug czar Moek Dara (right) is seen at the Appeal Court in Phnom Penh last week. HONG MENEA

Salvation Party sets million-dollar goal

Meas Sokchea

THE newly launched Cambodian National Salvation Party (NSP) is setting aside a financial war chest for the upcoming 2013 national election by creating a foundation with the goal of raising US$1 million.

The money, said Mu Sochua, a senior lawmaker and president of the NSP secretariat, will go toward the party's campaign costs.

The National Rescue Foundation was established earlier this month, and according to an online tally, has raised about $26,000.

Most of the donations have poured in from Cambodians living abroad, with the bulk of the cash deriving from the US Cambodian community.

"We are very sure that we will collect at least $1 million," said a confident Sochua. "They hate oppression; they want to have a change."

Even if the NSP reaches its goal, however, it can't begin to compete with the financial might of the Cambodian People's Party, said Koul Panha, head of election monitoring organisation Comfrel.

Panha estimates that the CPP spent roughly $10 million in the June commune elections.

He added that to make elections truly fair, there should be a ceiling on campaign spending.

Cheam Yeap, a senior lawmaker for the ruling CPP, did not agree, saying the amounts of money spent is a decision better left to each party. ■

Ancient riches uncovered in Takeo

Kim Sarum

AUTHORITIES have covered over what they believe is an ancient burial site in Takeo province's Angkor Borei district after residents were finding gold and pearl jewellery in dirt dug up by road workers, officials said yesterday.

Hundreds of people had flocked the area in Prek Phtorl commune's Kampong Pou village, where a new road is being built, after villagers reported stumbling upon the treasures.

Villager Chea Peuy, 35, said the area was not known for its natural minerals, but he was more than happy to enjoy the treasures being found.

"I've been able find a small amount of gold and can sell it for tens of thousands of riel," he said. "Others have been able to find even more."

Angkor Borei District Governor Sav Hor said human bones had also been unearthed at the site, which authorities believe was a former royal palace site.

"We also found clay pots there from hundreds of years ago."

Moul Huon, district police chief of Angkor Borei, said that villagers were left disappointed yesterday after authorities made the decision to fill in holes at the site. ■

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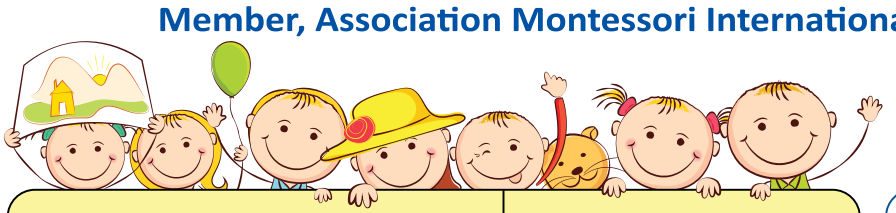

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Carlsberg promises support

Shane Worrell

DANISH brewer Carlsberg has vowed to improve the working conditions of Angkor and Carlsberg beer promoters in Cambodia as it tries to stamp out coerced workplace drinking.

The company announced late last week it had joined forces with the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) to confront issues beer promoters specifically in Cambodia face, such as pressure from customers to drink while working and sexual abuse.

"We are pleased with the cooperation agreement with LO that will help us in our goal to provide our sales promoters with decent, dignified and safe employment," Carlsberg Group spokeswoman Anne-Marie Skov said in a statement dated Thursday.

The company and the union group will also work to erode the negative stigma attached to beer promoters and encourage freedom of association and collective bargaining, the statement adds.

The *Post* reported on Wednesday that 85 per cent of the 1,660 beer promoters surveyed by Ian Lubek, adjunct professor of psychology at the University of Guelph in Canada, between 2004 and this year drank regularly at work to earn tips from demanding customers.

An Angkor Beer promoter protests at the Cambrew headquarters in Phnom Penh last year. MENG KIMLONG

"Our research shows that beer promoters are consuming on average 1.5 litres of beer per night – that's six glasses of beer, 27 nights a month," Lubek said.

The promoters' average wage of $75 and their monthly expenses of $180 made many desperate for money, he added.

Lubek yesterday welcomed international unions' interest in working conditions in Cambodia, but wanted LO to verify whether workers for Carlsberg or Cambrew, which produces Angkor Beer, could join whatever union they chose.

"At the time of the 2011 strike [over beer promoters' overtime payments], Carlsberg executives in Denmark suggested I contact the large, 'in-house' union that they said represented many of the Angkor beer sellers, headed by a former HR director of Cambrew," he said, adding that it was actually the external Cambodian Food and Service Workers' Federation that had organised the strike.

Lubek said he hoped the gap between what beer promoters were paid and their living expenses would be addressed. ■

Drug-resistant malaria in health officials' sights

Claire Knox and Sen David

A CONSORTIUM of health officials from Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand and Laos met in Siem Reap on Friday to develop a strategy on how to contain drug-resistant strains of malaria.

Although efforts to combat the disease by the government's National Malaria Centre appear to have proved successful country-wide, Chor Meng Chuor, director of the National Center for Parasitological Entomology, said the government was increasingly concerned about the forested areas fringing the country's border with Thailand.

"Fighting [drug-resistant malaria] is a huge concern for us. We have educated the community via the media, television and radio and our community education programs, including urging people to sleep in mosquito nets," he said, adding that the Cambodia model was going to be used in the neighbouring countries to combat drug-resistant malaria.

Chuor said that in the first seven months of this year, Cambodia had 42,000 cases of malaria and at least 30 deaths – a decrease of 23 per cent compared with last year, which had 55,000 cases in the corresponding period.

In Pailin, however, about 26 per cent of malaria cases were drug-resistant in 2012, up from 10 per cent in 2010.

WHO epidemiologist Steven Bjorge said it was crucial to keep in mind that the overall number of cases had dropped and monitoring of the disease had increased.

> **You can't just sit on one drug. We have a very good idea which drugs are resistant**

Bjorge said Falciparum, the prevalent species along the Thai-Cambodian border, had shown a high resistance to a number of drugs.

"It is monitored very closely by the WHO, and is a changing situation. You can't just sit on one drug. We have a very good idea of which drugs are resistant, and drugs are changed following a very strict protocol," he said.

Resistance to drugs had gradually risen, not only on the border but also in other parts of Thailand, he said. ■

In brief

Restaurants raided for liking their meat rare

CONSERVATIONISTS from the group Wildlife Alliance took part last week in raids on seven restaurants in Ratanakkiri's Banlung town, and found that three were serving meat from legally protected animals. The raid, which was carried out with the military police, resulted in the confiscation of more than 30kg of rabbit, wild pig, deer and porcupine meat, Wildlife Alliance official Prum Nol, who joined the operation, said. One of the raided restaurateurs criticised officials for singling out his business so harshly. "If they really want to stop the wild-animal trade, please go to the forest to arrest the hunters. Do not come to my restaurant," he said. PHAK SEANGLY

Hundreds of pregnant women get diet advice

ALMOST 500 pregnant women from in and around the capital met with health officials yesterday to glean advice on the impact of iron in their pre-natal diet. The meeting marked the end of a government-funded study that provided the women with iron, a crucial nutrient many Cambodians failed to take, health official Hem Sokhon said. "If the mother does not use it, the baby faces the chance of death during pregnancy and a 20 per cent chance of disability," he said. Long Vanrun, 32, said she had benefited from the iron she had taken. "I want to see my baby healthy. I want to give my baby a good future," she said. SEN DAVID

NEC to rid lists of ghost voters

Khouth Sophak Chakrya

VOTER registration errors, which occur because citizens do not inform commune clerks of migration, incarceration or deaths of family members, had led to 130,000 incorrect listings that the National Election Committe planned to cancel, NEC officials said on Friday.

The officials are appealing to government institutions to carefully examine voter registration lists for errors and to increase citizens' knowledge of election mechanisms in the lead-up to the 2013 parliamentary elections.

"All ministries, departments and relevant institutions must take a highly collaborative approach to ensure the triumph of this affair," NEC president Im Sousdey said.

The NEC was calling on the ministries of interior, culture and arts, education and cults and religion to inform officials, celebrities, monks and students about registration procedures for the September 1 to October 12 registration period, he said.

> **The current registration system is not accountable for inaccuracy**

Election watchdog representatives confirmed the need to correct registration lists but noted that until now, the NEC had failed to purge repetitions and dead voters from the lists.

Koul Panha, executive director of election monitor COMFREL, said the registration system was "not accountable for inaccuracy" and commune councils and the NEC tended to blame each other for mistakes.

250 COMFREL representatives will monitor voter registration at a sampling of the 1633 registration locations, Panha said, but he forecasts that "not too much [will] improve," because the NEC has "no political commitment" to change.

Sousdey estimated that the number of eligible voters in the next July's parliamentary election would exceed nine million. ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY JUSTINE DRENNAN ■

Top monk back home

Kim Yuthana

SUPREME Patriarch Nun Nget, the leader of Cambodia's Kanak Mohanikay branch of Buddhism, had made a full recovery after receiving medical treatment in Singapore, his personal assistant said yesterday.

"His health has recovered," aide Roth Sophal said, adding that the 90-year-old had left on Saturday and returned last night. "It is not serious; he only had a stomach problem."

Medical treatment in Singapore is the choice of many high-ranking Cambodia People's Party officials such as Senate president Chea Sim, Deputy Prime Minister Sok An and Prime Minister Hun Sen's father Hun Neang, who have been recent in-patients in the prosperous ASEAN country.

Supreme Patriarch Nun Nget left for Singapore on Saturday. SAM RITH

Nget has been in the news recently for his purported role in silencing activist monk Loun Savath. Savath told the *Post* he had been "forced" to thumbprint an agreement in Nget's presence to no longer engage in political protests. ■

Students fear losing jobs to skilful neighbours

Continued from page 1

Cambodians to upskill into technical fields like surveying or medicine, there needed to be a tangible incentive to do so. Without such an incentive, the Cambodian labour market will "not be able to absorb benefits from integration", he said.

In a country where 50 per cent of the workforce has not finished primary school, AEC integration will be a challenge for Cambodia, but also a chance to catch up, according to Sok Siphanna, adviser to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

But Moeun Tola, head of the labour program at Cambodian NGO Community Legal Education Centre, said, "What I can see at the moment is Cambodia has not done anything yet in terms of improvement of human resource quality, in terms of skilled workers and knowledgeable people, in order to pick up good jobs."

Under current conditions, as ASEAN economies integrate. Cambodia may get stuck supplying other countries with unskilled labour, which current agreements don't regulate or protect, while foreign workers take skilled jobs, Tola said. "2015 is a little bit early for Cambodia [to integrate] if you look at the situation," he said.

Even professionals from sectors included in the labour integration agreement said they were unaware of the pending changes.

"Especially private businesses, they just think of themselves, not with respect to ASEAN or 2015," Koam Sinoun, who is a dentist in private practice and also a Ministry of Health official, said.

"[Private practices] are working to improve, not with respect to the ASEAN plan, but just separately, for the needs of the country," Sinoun said. However, this two-steam approach is ultimately counterproductive in the face of regional integration and the Asian Development Bank and labour and education ministries are trying to encourage private businesses to implement regional standardised certification toward an AEC "common framework for quality assurance", said Mar Sophea, ADB senior social sector officer.

> **2015 is a little bit early for Cambodia [to integrate] if you look at the situation.**

A Labour Ministry and ADB initiative, for example, offers technical and vocational education and training certification to secondary level students at 38 sites across the country.

This program, which focuses on construction, car repair and internet technology with business applications, faces a tough task, since even aspiring professionals tend to pursue administrative rather than technical skills, according to ADB and ministry materials.

ASEAN programs like the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI) also are encouraging skills acquisition in Cambodia, said director of ASEAN's integration monitoring office Aladdin Rillo. The IAI's investment and development programs broadly seek to close the "development gap" between the original "ASEAN-6" and the less-developed member states of Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Myanmar.

"But these are actually national issues," Rillo said. "If countries are not able to implement these changes, they will still have the same problems." For this reason, he said, "I think realistically there will be some short-term adverse effects of the economic integration." ■

National

In brief

Hun Sen to meet with non-aligned countries

PRIME Minister Hun Sen and a delegation of senior officials will leave for Iran on Wednesday to attend the 16th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement to be held in Tehran on August 30-31, according to a press release from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Hun Sen will hold talks with the presidents of Iran and North Korea. The trip comes ahead of the October 18 United Nations Security Council vote. Cambodia is campaigning for a non-permanent seat for 2013 to 2014. Koy Kuong, spokesman at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said he could not comment on whether Hun Sen will lobby countries of the non-aligned movement to support Cambodia's candidacy. VONG SOKHENG AND CHEANG SOKHA

Cash crisis at tribunal averted for now: official

THE Khmer Rouge tribunal's international arm will have funds to sustain operations through until October after two donor countries make good on their pledges in the coming weeks, a senior UN official said yesterday. David Scheffer, the UN-appointed Special Expert for the Khmer Rouge tribunal, said in an email to the *Post* that two major donor countries will make good on their pledges of financial support. Australia's offering of almost $1.5 million should arrive at the end of this month, and a $1.1 million donation from the Norwegians will be paid "as soon as possible", he said. The financial reprieve will expire at the end of October, when the court will face a US$4 million shortfall for the rest of 2012. JOSEPH FREEMAN

PM gives pro-dolphin decree

Chhay Channyda

PRIME Minister Hun Sen on Friday approved a new sub-decree geared toward increased protection of the endangered Mekong river dolphin through a series of fishing and motorised transport restrictions in the Mekong river in Kratie and Stung Treng provinces.

The Council of Minister's sub-decree, obtained on Friday by the *Post*, sets out to meet management and conservation obligations on Cambodia for the species.

"There are approximately between 155-175 Mekong dolphins remaining in Cambodian Mekong River under the conservation efforts of the government throughout the last six years," the sub-decree reads.

Conservation efforts for the Mekong dolphins have increased after the species was listed in International Union for Conservation of Nature's endangered species list in 2004. The sub-decree bans the use of all kinds of fishing grills and motorised transport exceeding 30 kilometres per hour.

The clearance of forest and large-scale construction of infrastructure along the island near Kratie in the protected zone is also prohibited under the 12-point sub-decree.

Michelle Owen, acting country director of World Wildlife Fund in Cambodia, applauded the decree's role in Mekong River conservation.

"To be effective the sub-decree must be supported by local communities along the Mekong river," said Owen during Friday's meeting.

"The Dolphin Commission and the Fisheries Administration will also need strong backing from the Cambodian government and international donors to support enforcement of the sub-decree."

The Mekong river dolphin protection zone covers 7,630 square metres and stretches 180 kilometres from Laos into Cambodia. ■

Irrawaddy dolphins swim in the Tbong Klah pool, in Stung Treng province, last year. WORLD WILDLIFE FUND/HANG SEREYVUTH

Suppliers of Gap in the spotlight

Continued from page 1

company then announced to suspend us five workers representatives – that's why all workers decided to strike again," worker representative Keo Kim Heang added.

Sina said the company yesterday agreed to accept the five back to work, but the workers remained distrustful of management and wanted the move verified in a letter.

He told the *Post* Ahmad was still working at the factory, but that he had not made contact with the workers.

Ocean Garment and Ahmad did not immediately respond to the *Post*'s requests for comment.

One of the six to allege the sexual harassment, 27-year-old Heng Samphors, said she was terrified for her safety with the knowledge Ahmad was still employed at the factory. She alleged he called her frequently and propositioned her for sex, offering $50 for the act, and when she refused, he threatened her with termination.

"I told the president of the union and the police chief officials about my concerns and they said that if I was still scared and keep it a secret that he will do the same to other workers, so I decided to sue him," she said.

Meanwhile, Dave Welsh, country director of the American Center for International Labor Solidarity, said the court's move to reinstate the worker representatives suggested it could be on the strikers' side.

He said he also believed Ahmad was still working at the Dangkor district site and the story was spreading around the world.

"International press … have a hold of it – this is what major brands try to resist, this would be a major concern for Gap now," he said. ■

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POLICE BLOTTER

Mob attacks innocent man in broad daylight

A GANG of misinformed vigilantes set upon an innocent 30-year-old man on Saturday while he was being held at gunpoint by police who suspected him of stealing a motorbike in Phnom Penh's Daun Penh district. An eyewitness said that a police officer was pursuing the man when he drew his gun and pointed it at him, prompting an unruly mob to punch and kick the suspected thief. After a short time, however, police announced that the man was not involved in any crime. KAMPUCHEA THMEY

Police find machetes in car of local joy-riders

MILITARY police in Poipet town in Banteay Meanchey province arrested two men, both 24, on Friday for disturbing the peace. Police said the two were habitual troublemakers, and locals feared them. One resident, however, got up the nerve to report the two for blasting loud music from their car. Police stopped the joy-riding pair, and when officers did a search, they found a stash of machetes. KAMPUCHEA THMEY

Gang of six snatch cell phone in Phnom Penh

THREE men, aged 18 to 24, were apprehended on Thursday after allegedly snatching a cell phone in the capital's Chamkarmon district. Military police said that three suspects, along with three others, colluded to grab the phone from the 26-year-old victim at about 11pm, before fleeing on motorbikes. The arrested men confessed to the crime, and were sent to court, but police are on the lookout for other suspects. NOKORWAT

Police: stolen motorbike used to steal necklace

A 26-YEAR-OLD man was arrested on Saturday for allegedly snatching a necklace from a woman in Kampong Chhnang's Kampong Chhnang town, police said. After purloining the pendant, the thief escaped on a motorbike, and the victim filed a complaint with police who located and arrested the suspect. The suspect confessed not only to stealing the necklace, but to stealing his getaway motorbike. Police said the suspect had already sold the goods. NOKORWAT

Security guard killed in motorbike accident

ONE security guard was killed and another seriously injured in a traffic accident on Friday in Kampong Chhnang's Samaki Meanchey district. Police said the victims, both 22, worked at a garment factory, and were taking a motorbike home at around 6:30pm when a speeding truck tried to pass a car and collided with their motorbike head-on. The driver escaped on foot, and the truck was taken into police custody. KOH SANTEPHEAP

Translated by Phak Seangly

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Business

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ANZ Royal

Senior economic and trade officials from the 10 ASEAN member states attended the SEOM preparatory meeting on Sunday. PHOTO SUPPLIED

ASEAN's newest look for cash

May Kunmakara
Siem Reap

YOUNGER Southeast Asian countries will look for a means of filling the financial gap between poorer mainland ASEAN members and more developed states this week during the 44th ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting, which kicked off today.

At the five-day meeting which Prime Minister Hun Sen was expected to address this morning, Cambodia will also push for a higher degree of accessibility for businesspeople traveling within the 10-member economic bloc, according to officials.

While Cambodia's ASEAN Economic Minister Cham Prasidh said the Kingdom was well prepared to lead the meeting, insiders will watch carefully the cohesiveness of the region's top economic policymakers after the bloc's foreign ministers failed to issue a joint communiqué at the ASEAN Summit in July.

Cham Prasidh, who will host the meeting, expressed confidence in finding new sources of development funding for Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam – ASEAN's newest members collectively known as CLMV countries – from the region's economic and financial powerhouses such as Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia.

"We are meeting here today to raise the projects and ask [the more developed countries] for help in order to lessen the gap between us," Cham Prasidh said yesterday during a game of golf held for the ministers.

"I do believe that the meeting will seek more donations from other country members to help the four younger member of ASEAN."

ASEAN leaders hope to meet a 2015 deadline for integrating many aspects of the region's trade and finance regulation, a goal some experts have called improbable.

Fear of global economic recession and its potential effects on the region's weaker states echoed among ministers from mainland countries yesterday. Nam Viyaketh, Laos PDR's Minister of Industry and Commerce, said poor economic conditions outside the region would hurt countries such as Laos and Cambodia without a stronger partnership between older and newer states.

"Therefore, it requires us to enhance cooperation [with more advanced countries]," Nam Viyaketh said at the 4th CLMV Economic Ministers Meeting, which was held yesterday.

Trade liberalisation will be an overarching theme of the meeting, and commerce leaders in Cambodia said they will push for easier business access to neighbouring states. Ngoun Meng Tech, director general of the Cambodia Chamber of Commerce, told reporters on the sidelines of the 10th ASEAN-Business Advisory Council that the private sector will seek approval for special travellers' card for businesspeople from member states.

"Of course, we have a lot of proposals for the ministers, but what we are eagerly requesting from them is an agreement on issuing special travellers' cards for businesspeople," he said.

"This would make it easier for us to travel – no wasted time queuing. Special cards would be issued for businesspeople so they would be able to quickly get through security and that the ASEAN governments would recognise them. We hope that we will get a reply from them by November." ■

44th ASEAN Economic Ministers meeting schedule

The 44th ASEAN Economic Ministers meeting is taking place in Siem Reap this week and will include representatives from all ASEAN countries in addition to those from the US, Russia, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, Canada, India and New Zealand. The meeting began on Saturday, August 25.

The schedule for the rest of the week is as follows:

Monday, August 27 -

- Opening Ceremony to be presided over by Prime Minister Hun Sen.
- 26th AFTA Council Meeting
- 15th AIA Council Meeting
- AEM Working Dinner

Tuesday, August 28 -

- AEM Plenary
- AEC Council Meeting

Wednesday, August 29 -

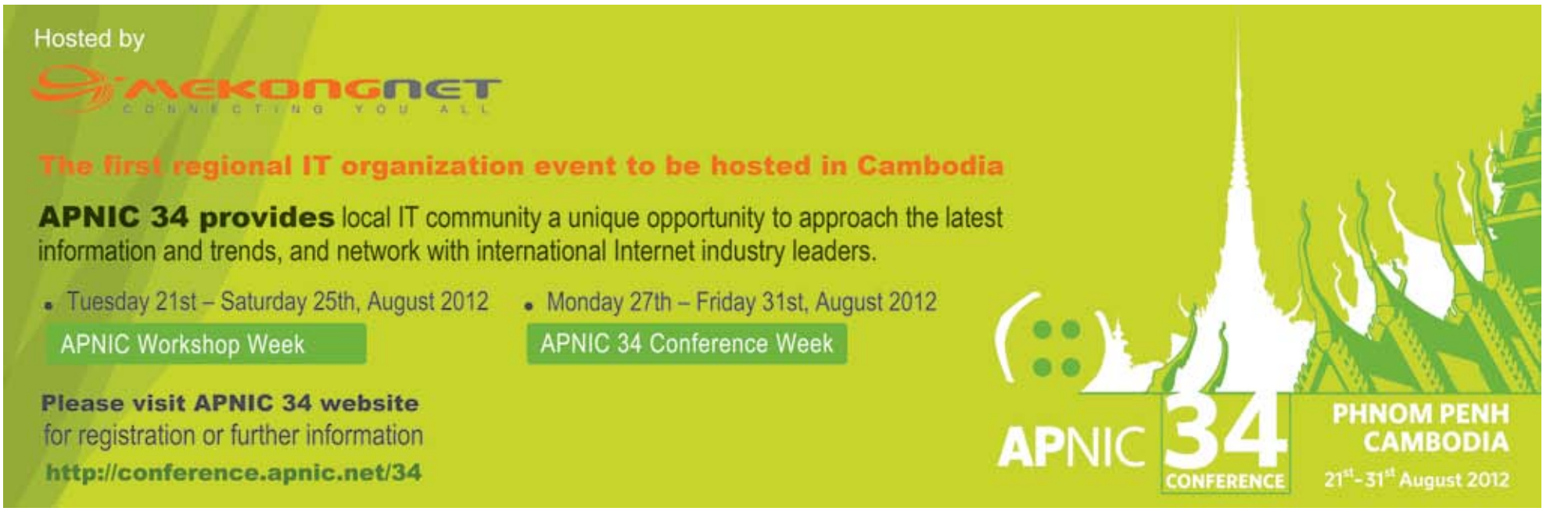
- 11th AEM-MOFCOM Consultations
- AMBDC Ministerial Meeting
- AEC-ROK Consultations
- 15th AEM Plus Three Consultations
- Gala Dinner & Fashion Show

Thursday, August 30 -

- Breakfast for all Economic Ministers, SG of ASEAN and spouses, SEOM Leaders and DSG of ASEAN
- AEM-USTR Consultations
- ASEAN Economic Ministers Plus ASEAN FTA Partners Consultations
- 4th Mekong-Japan Economic Ministers Meeting
- 1st EAS Economic Ministers Meeting
- 18th AEM-METI Consultations

Friday, August 31 -

- 2nd AEM-Russia Consultations
- 10th AEM-India Consultations
- 17th AEM-CER Consultations
- 1st AEM-Canada Consultations
- AEM Dialogue with AFTEX
- Media Conference



Business

DIARY THIS WEEK

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 29 TO SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 1: ASEAN GARMENTS AND TEXTILES FAIR

THE fair will be held at the Angkor COEX (exhibition hall), Siem Reap, from August 29 to September 1, 2012. The fair is organised by the Cambodian Inter-Ministerial Committee for International Exhibitions and Word Exposition Affairs (Chaired by the Ministry of Commerce of Cambodia), in co-operation with the Garment Manufacturers Association in Cambodia (GMAC) as well as the ASEAN member countries. This year's fair will not only feature the best of Cambodian and ASEAN based manufacturers but will also host two other exciting events, namely the ASEAN Garment & Textile Conference and ASEAN Fashion Show. For more information visit: http://sourceasean.com/safsa-full-service/safsa-news/the-asean-garment-textile-fair-2012-cambodia/

THURSDAY, AUGUST 30: ASEAN-US BUSINESS SUMMIT

THE summit will focus on innovation and the digital economy. It will bring together the US and ASEAN business communities to discuss how technology can be used to enhance business competitiveness, facilitate trade and contribute to economic growth. Following the discussions, business leaders will share the results with ASEAN trade ministers and US trade representative Ron Kirk. The summit will take place at Le Meridien Angkor on Thursday, August 30. Registration is closed. For more information, visit aseanus.businesssummit.asean.org/

FRIDAY, AUGUST 31: MEETING OF ASEAN FEDERATION OF TEXTILE INDUSTRIES

THE meeting will take place at the Angkor Conference I Room, First Floor, of Apsara Angkor Resort and Conference centre. At 5:30pm the ASEAN Economic Ministers and AFTEX will hold a second meeting to discuss the state of the garment and textiles industries across Southeast Asia.

EVN may have massive debts

Stuart Grudgings

FROM the rural heartlands to traffic-choked cities, Vietnam Electricity Group is hard to miss. It builds apartments, runs a bank, oversees a stock brokerage, provides electrical power to millions of homes and employs 100,000 people.

Today, Vietnam's sole retail power supplier, known as EVN, looks badly over-extended, according to a senior industry official with knowledge of its business. It is the latest state behemoth to face scrutiny in the wake of debt blowouts that have shaken investor confidence and symbolised the decline of a country once tipped as Southeast Asia's next economic star.

Some fear that the debt problem at EVN could dwarf that at shipbuilder Vinashin, whose default on a US$600 million loan damaged Vietnam's reputation among foreign investors, although the monopoly has garnered far less international attention.

"I can tell you that its debt is far worse than Vinashin, maybe hundreds of trillions dong," said the industry official with first-hand knowledge of EVN's debts who asked not to be identified. The arrest this week of high-profile tycoon Nguyen Duc Kien, the multi-millionaire founder of Vietnam's fourth-most valuable bank, Asia Commercial Joint Stock Bank (ACB), adds to deepening fears of financial malaise in the Communist-run country of about 90 million people.

Workers repair an electric grid operated by state utility group Vietnam Electricity in Hanoi last year. REUTERS

His detention inflamed worries about a sector strained by ties to debt-laden state companies, including many like EVN that have strayed well beyond core businesses as policymakers sought to build world-beating conglomerates in the mould of South Korea's "chaebol".

The central bank was forced to make a rare public assurance that funds in ACB were safe as depositors queued up to withdraw their money, while Vietnam's main stock index has fallen about 9 per cent this week.

The near-collapse of Vinashin in 2010 and deep troubles at shipping line Vinalines this year, with combined debts of $6.5 billion, prompted a government vow to redouble reforms of state firms, which take up a third of the economy and crowd out private investment.

But the latest proposals announced in July appear to fall short of tackling the cronyism and muddled priorities that have allowed the 100 largest state-owned enterprises (SOEs) to run up debts of $50 billion – equal to nearly half Vietnam's annual economic output in 2010.

The problems, say bankers and industry experts, extend well beyond Vinashin and Vinalines.

"They are the tip of the iceberg," said David Koh, a Vietnam expert at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore.

A failure at EVN, for example, could have a far bigger impact on the overall economy by disrupting the cheap energy supply that is the lifeblood of the its manufacturing sector.

A report in the *Saigon Times* in May citing a State Audit body document said that EVN had debts of 240 trillion dong (US$11.5 billion) at the end of 2010, nearly three times that of Vinashin at the same time.

The *Tuoi Tre* newspaper reported in December that EVN had losses from production of 8.4 trillion dong, more than 12 times the amount reported by EVN itself, according to the same report. REUTERS ■

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**** Washing machines:** <Model> NA-148VG3 <Testing Institution> TÜV Rheinland (Shanghai) <Test Condition> – "Cold Wash" programme – Up to an additional 45% energy savings – Comparison made with ECONAVI operation (clothes amount: 2kg/water temperature: more than 35°C) against operation without ECONAVI (clothes amount: 8kg/water temperature: less than 25°C) – Test was conducted based on IEC60456 other than water temperature.

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Business

Chinese bank loans seek to aid rice millers

Rann Reuy

CHINA'S Export-Import Bank officials proposed to provide loans of up to US$70 million for rice milling in an effort to aid Cambodia's efforts to export a million tonnes of rice by 2015, government officials said yesterday.

The bank's officials visited Cambodia last week to met with Cambodian government officials and rice millers to study the feasibility of providing loans to the rice processing sector to aid exports of rice to China.

Son Kunthor, president of the Cambodian state-owned Rural Development Bank, told the *Post* that his Chinese counterpart proposed the establishment of $70 million in loans for rice milling, which would enable the production of between 270,000-450,000 tonnes of unmilled rice.

The $70 million would be but a fraction of the $200 million that Cambodia seeks to improve the nation's rice milling facilities as it aims to accellerate its exporting of rice in accordance with Prime Minister Hun Sen's wishes.

Kunthor, said that of the 270,000 tonnes of milled rice, 210,000 tonnes of milled rice would be exported to China, 50,000 tonnes would be exported to world markets, while the final 10,000 tonnes would be distributed to the domestic market.

Under the proposed loans rice mills would be established in the Battambang, Banteay Meanchey, Prey Veng or Takeo province.

"This is their plan. We don't know how much about it or if it will come to fruition, because first there are some conditions the government needs to ensure," he said.

A woman dries paddy rice in Prey Veng province. DEREK STOUT

When an agreement will be reached was not disclosed because Kunthor's Chinese counterpart requires the Cambodian government to insure the loan, while the government needs more time to examine the proposal and before making a decision. Approval must also be sought from the National Assembly as well, he said.

"The government is examining the proposal, but when a decision will be made is unclear," he said, adding that the the discussed loans would have an annual interest rate of one per cent, with the interest rate jumping to 2.5 per cent for loans to the private sector.

Sen Rith, president of Siem Reap's Rice Milling Association, said the private sector also met with the bank officials, but for any agreement to be made they need the government's guarantee on the loans.

Interest rates between three and three per cent annually are fine for the producers, and better than any interest rate received from domestic banks, which are between eight and 10 per cent a year, he continued. "Our private sector always looks to cooperate with the government and to have low interest rates, so the government should insure it," he said.

Lim Sokundarun, director CEDAC's enterprise, said Cambodia's challenges for the rice sector include the lack of the capital to purchase paddy rice for stocking and processing. Inevitably there is some loss from the processing of rice, more rice would enable the producers to meet demand.

"It is very good that there are foreign investments coming into Cambodia, in order to push us to meet the Prime Minister's rice exporting target."

Prime Minister Hun Sen has set the goal of exporting a million tonnes of rice a year by 2015, when Cambodia will join the ASEAN Economic Community. Cambodia is currently not on track to meet this years goal of exporting 250,000 tonnes of rice due to the drought that is affecting many regions of the country. ■

Fixed Deposit Interest Rates

Cambodian Financial Institutions	On Deposits					
	3 Months		6 Months		12 Months	
As of August 24, 2012	USD	RIEL	USD	RIEL	USD	RIEL
PRASAC	5.50%	6.50%	6.50%	7.50%	8.00%	9.75%
ABA Bank	3.50%	N/A	4.50%	N/A	5.50%	N/A
ACLEDA Bank	2.50%	5.00%	3.75%	6.00%	5.00%	7.00%
ANZ Royal Bank	1.45%	3.50%	2.75%	4.00%	3.75%	5.50%
Bank of India	2.25%	N/A	3.00%	N/A	4.00%	N/A
Cambodia Asia Bank	3.50%	N/A	4.50%	N/A	5.50%	N/A
Cambodia Mekong Bank	2.75%	N/A	3.25%	N/A	3.50%	N/A
Cambodian Public Bank	2.50%	N/A	3.50%	N/A	4.25%	N/A
Canadia Bank	2.50%	5.00%	3.50%	6.00%	4.75%	7.00%
Maybank	2.25%	N/A	3.25%	N/A	4.25%	N/A
OSK Indochina Bank	2.75%	4.00%	3.75%	5.00%	5.00%	6.00%
SBC Bank	3.00%	N/A	3.50%	N/A	4.50%	N/A
Union Commercial Bank	3.50%	N/A	4.50%	N/A	5.50%	N/A
MARUHAN Japan Bank	2.00%	2.00%	3.00%	3.00%	4.50%	4.50%

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Earning money and making a difference

Gregory Pellechi

SOCIAL enterprise may be more than just a buzzword if last Saturday's attendance at Cambodia's second-ever conference on the matter was anything to judge by.

The 350 person-plus crowd of attendees consisted predominately of Cambodians, for whom doing business appears to be about more than merely creating jobs and turning a profit. These aspiring entrepreneurs also want to do good.

Lina, a fourth-year chemical engineering and food technology student from the Institute of Technology of Cambodia, said that she attended the conference at the Cambodia-Japan Cultural Centre to learn how to make any future business she may run socially benefit the community.

"This conference is about social enterprise and I'm interested in participating, because maybe in the future I will run a business and somehow help the community. I want to know what are the things we can repair before running a business."

Her definition of a social enterprise was much the same as the others at the conference: a business that can both make money and help the community.

Lina's idea of help from business was in line with the models described by Alissa Caron, country co-ordinator for Population & Development International Cambodia, who in her speech discussed the various models on which social enterprises could be based and emphasised the need for them to be businesses first.

Caron saw a need at the conference to dispell the notion that social enterprises and NGOs are one and the same, even when they may share similar goals.

"[There is] this attitude which I heard this morning in the questions of still thinking of social enterprises as NGOs or not being able to separate in one's mind the NGO mentality from the business mentality," she said.

"I think that is really critical when starting a social enterprise. People really have to focus on the profit maximisation and not lose sight of the social goal, but drive the business forward and not think we need to pay our workers extravagant salaries just because they come from this really vulnerable community," she continued.

The lack of profit maximisation is what Caron feels has limited the growth of social enterprise investments in Cambodia and around the world.

"I think it ultimately comes down to this misconception that some investors feel like social enterprises just really are NGOs trying to help people and they're not looking to maximise profit. They're not thinking about the economic aims as much as the social aims. So therefore, they wouldn't be good on their investment, they wouldn't be able to repay a loan. They're just going to lose money. Perhaps that's because some social enterprises do, but I don't think for the most part it's a fair assumption to make.

And just as a social enterprise needs a thought-out business model, it also must have a clear message, she said.

"Your social message has to be integrated or your customers won't be interested," she continued, emphasising the importance for a social business to be clearly more than just a business. ■

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Released on 27 August 2012

World

Syria opposition say Assad forces massacred hundreds

Khaled Yacoub Oweis

SYRIAN opposition activists accused President Bashar al-Assad's forces yesterday of committing a massacre of scores of people in a town close to the capital that the army had just retaken from rebels.

More than 200 bodies were found in houses and basements around Daraya, a working-class Sunni Muslim town to the southwest of Damascus, according to activists who said most had been killed "execution-style" by troops on house-to-house raids.

Due to restrictions on non-state media in Syria, it was impossible to independently verify the accounts.

"Assad's army has committed a massacre in Daraya," said Abu Kinan, an activist in the town, using an alias to protect himself from reprisals.

"In the last hour, 122 bodies were discovered and it appears that two dozen died from sniper fire and the rest were summarily executed by gunshots from close range," Abu Kinan said.

The activist said he witnessed the death of an 8-year-old girl, Asma Abu al-Laban, shot by army snipers while she was in a car with her parents.

"They were trying to flee the army raids. Three bullets hit her in the back and her parents brought her to a makeshift hospital. Nothing could be done for her," he said.

The official state news agency said: "Our heroic armed forces cleansed Daraya from remnants of armed terrorist groups who committed crimes against the sons of the town and scared them and sabotaged and destroyed public and private property."

The Local Coordination Committees, an activists' organisation, said Assad's forces killed 440 people across Syria on Saturday, including dozens of women and children, in one of the highest death tolls since the uprising against his rule broke out in March last year.

The organisation, which monitors Assad's military crackdown, said 310 people were killed in Damascus and its environs, including Daraya, 40 in the northern province of Aleppo and 28 in Syria's Sunni tribal heartland region of Deir al-Zor.

A member of the Free Syrian Army holds an unexploded shell as he eats during clashes with Syrian army soldiers in Aleppo. REUTERS

The rest were reportedly killed in the Idlib, Deraa, Hama and Homs, outlying provinces where poverty and discontent with Assad's minority Alawite rule have been building up since bloody repression by Assad's father, the late President Hafez al-Assad, killed tens of thousands of people in the 1980s.

Video footage from activists showed numerous bodies of young men side-by-side at the Abu Suleiman al-Darani mosque in Daraya, many with what looked like gunshot wounds to the head and chest.

"A massacre," said the voice of the man who appeared to be taking the footage. "You are seeing the revenge of Assad's forces ... more than 150 bodies on the floor of this mosque."

The southern fringe of Damascus is a frontline in what has snowballed over the last 17 months from anti-Assad protests into a sectarian civil war.

Tanks deployed on the Damascus ring-road shelled the southern neighbourhoods of al-Lawwan and Nahr Aisheh late into Saturday night and fighting raged in the eastern Ghouta suburbs of the capital, residents said.

The army overran Daraya, one of a series of mostly rundown Sunni Muslim towns that surround Damascus, on Saturday after three days of heavy bombardment that killed 70 people, according to opposition sources and residents. They said most of the dead were civilians.

The activist Daraya Coordination Committee said in a statement that among those found with gunshots to the head were eight members of the al-Qassaa family: three children, their father and mother and three other relatives.

UN investigators said in a report this month that both sides in the conflict had performed summary executions – a war crime – but that Assad's troops and militia loyal to the president had committed many more offences than the rebels.

The report said government forces and militiamen loyal to Assad committed a massacre of more than 100 civilians in the town of Houla in May that the government blamed on Islamist "terrorists".

The United Nations estimates that more than 18,000 people have been killed in the conflict that pits a mainly Sunni opposition against a ruling system dominated by the Assad family for the last five decades.

Assad is an Alawite, an offshoot of Shi'ite Islam, and the sectarian nature of the conflict has already had an impact on neighbouring countries.

A Lebanese man who was abducted with a group of 10 other Lebanese Shi'ite pilgrims in Syria in May, triggering tit-for-tat kidnappings of Syrian activists in Lebanon, arrived home on Saturday, hours after Syrian rebels released him as a "goodwill gesture". REUTERS ■

Iran defies US by opening summit

Yeganeh Torbati

IRAN welcomed a group of 120 developing nations on Sunday to a summit it says proves that Washington has failed to isolate it from the rest of the world.

Opening the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) meeting in Tehran, Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi said he hoped for a show of solidarity against sanctions the West has imposed to punish Iran for its nuclear activities.

"The non-aligned (movement) must seriously oppose ... unilateral economic sanctions which have been enacted by certain countries against non-aligned countries," Salehi told the summit's opening session.

Western diplomats have sought to downplay the importance of the summit and the start of Iran's three-year presidency of NAM, a body set up in 1961 to counter big power domination of international relations.

But 80 countries are participating in the summit at the level of minister or higher, Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said, with 50 sending their heads of government.

And the expected attendance of big players including UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and Egypt's new president, Mohammad Mursi – the first Egyptian leader to visit Iran since the 1979 Islamic revolution - will give the meeting diplomatic heft.

Since the toppling of Egypt's Western-backed President Hosni Mubarak last year, non-Arab Iran has hoped for a thaw in relations with the regional power, but Cairo has appeared less eager to embrace Shi'ite Muslim Iran which is viewed with suspicion by its Sunni Gulf Arab neighbours. REUTERS ■

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World

In brief

Road crash, fire claims 36 in northwest China

A BUS collided with a methanol tanker in northwest China early yesterday and burst into flames, killing 36 people, state media said, in the latest incident to highlight China's dangerous roads. Three of the 39 bus passengers travelling around 2am on a highway near Yan'an in Shaanxi province, survived the crash and were being treated in hospital, the official Xinhua news agency said. Traffic accidents are among the leading causes of death in China, according to public health officia. REUTERS

Thai minister claims foreign-policy success

THAILAND'S Foreign Ministry has been particularly successful in restoring relations with neighbouring countries during the first year of the government under Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, Foreign Minister Surapong Tovichakchaikul said yesterday. With Cambodia, there had been no more cross-border clashes. The government was able to separate the dispute over the Preah Vihear temple from trade and investment co-operation with Cambodia, he said. REUTERS

Israeli soldiers speak of abuse

Harriet Sherwood

MORE than 30 former Israeli soldiers have disclosed their experiences of the treatment of Palestinian children during military operations and arrests, pointing to a pattern of abuse.

A booklet of testimonies, published by Breaking the Silence, an organisation of former Israeli soldiers dedicated to publicising the day-to-day actions of the army in the occupied territories, contains descriptions of beatings, intimidation, humiliation, verbal abuse, night-time arrests and injury. Most of the children are suspected of stone-throwing.

The witness statements were gathered to show the "common reality" of acts of violence by soldiers towards Palestinians, including children, in the West Bank, said Yehuda Shaul of Breaking the Silence. "Sadly enough this is the moral consequence of prolonged occupation of the Palestinian people," he said.

One of the ex-soldiers describes serving in Hebron in 2010: "You never know their names, you never talk with them, they always cry, shit in their pants … There are those annoying moments when you're on an arrest mission, and there's no room in the police station, so you just take the kid back with you, blindfold him, put him in a room and wait for the police to come and pick him up in the morning. He sits there like a dog …"

A cat walks behind Palestinian children inside a cave in the shepherd community of Al-Mufaqara, near the West Bank city of Hebron earlier this month. REUTERS

Children frequently soiled themselves, according to the testimonies. "I remember hearing him shitting his pants … I also remember some other time when someone pissed in his pants. I just became so indifferent to it, I couldn't care less. I heard him do it, I witnessed his embarrassment. I also smelled it. But I didn't care," said another.

Another soldier describes an incident in Qalqiliya in 2007 in which a boy was arrested for throwing stones. "At the end of the day, something has to make these kids stop throwing stones on the road because they can kill," he said.

"That specific kid who actually lay there on the ground, begging for his life, was actually nine years old. I think of our kids, nine years old, and a kid handling this kind of situation, I mean, a kid has to beg for his life? A loaded gun is pointed at him and he has to plead for mercy? This is something that scars him for life. But I think if we hadn't entered the village at that point, then stones would be thrown the next day and perhaps the next time someone would be wounded or killed as a result."

Some of the statements illustrate the disjunction between the Israeli military and Palestinians. One soldier said: "You put up a checkpoint out of boredom, sit there for a few hours and then continue on. Once I saw kids passing, and one of the guys, a reservist who spoke Arabic, wanted to ask them what they study. He didn't mean it in any bad way. Then I saw how the kid nearly peed his pants as the guy tried to kid with him, how the two worlds are simply disconnected. The guy was kidding and the kid was scared to death." THE GUARDIAN ■

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Untested Socialists leading Dutch polls

AN untested leftist party is taking the lead ahead of the Dutch election next month, reflecting resentment over austerity and signalling that one of the euro zone's core northern countries could reject German demands to tighten public deficits.

Opinion surveys show the Socialist Party could out-poll the pro-business Liberal Party on September 12, suggesting it can win between a fifth and a quarter of the seats in parliament.

That would put the Socialist Party and its leader, Emile Roemer, in a position to form a coalition where they can influence policy on Europe despite having no experience of government beyond the local level.

The appeal of Roemer, a 50-year-old former teacher with a toothy smile and a down-to-earth manner, lies in his very ordinariness. He takes his holidays on the Dutch island of Texel, enjoys Italian food and says he's "no bookworm". A favourite movie of the man who could be the Netherlands' next prime minister is *The Silence of the Lambs*.

"Of course at local level it's about roads and schools, and at national level it's much harder, you are dealing with Europe. But he understands compromise," Gijs Moes, a Liberal politician who worked with Roemer in local government, said.

One area where the two parties differ and where the Socialists are making waves is Europe.

The Socialist Party opposed the euro before it was introduced, although it does not want to scrap it now, and defied a europhile consensus by successfully campaigning against the European constitution in a 2005 referendum.

Roemer wants to preserve welfare benefits for the poor at a time when Prime Minister Mark Rutte of the Liberals is pushing for spending cuts to bring the Netherlands' ratio of public debt to gross domestic product under three per cent, in line with European rules.

> **The idea was not to run too big a deficit ... the deficit should tend towards zero**

"Three per cent is not a holy percentage," Tiny Kox, a Socialist powerbroker, told Reuters, expressing a view that resonates with left-wing parties elsewhere in Europe.

"The idea was not to run too big a deficit. In the long run, the deficit should tend towards zero," Kox said, interviewed at party headquarters, a modernist building in the city of Amersfoort.

The party rejects austerity – at home and elsewhere in the euro zone – and all charges of extremism.

"This is a normal, Krugman view of how to get out of the crisis," Kox said, referring to the Nobel Prize-winning economist who has criticised European countries for focusing more on deficit reduction than on economic growth. REUTERS ■

Hollande sends message to Greece

Elizabeth Pineau

FRENCH President François Hollande said Greece's leaders must demonstrate their commitment to reform and Europe must decide on how to help the country as soon as possible after it receives a progress report from Athens' international lenders in October.

Greece must also stay in the euro zone, he added after a meeting with Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras on Saturday, echoing comments by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who held similar talks with Samaras on Friday.

But Hollande, who has taken a softer line than Germany on the need for austerity to help the euro zone rein in its deficits, added that Greece, where unemployment has hit a record 23 per cent, must not push its people too far.

"It [Greece] must demonstrate again the credibility of its program and the will of its leaders to go through with it to the end, whilst ensuring it's bearable for the population," Hollande told reporters.

He said that once the "troika" of the European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund lenders have handed in their next report on Greece's fiscal situation, Europe should not hesitate to act.

"Once we have this report, once the commitments ... are confirmed, Europe has to do what it has to do," he said. "That means after the troika report at the European summit in October."

Samaras, whose conservative-led government took power in June promising to fulfil the austerity pledges Greece made to receive its bailout, wants European leaders to give his country more time to push through the unpopular reforms.

He has been hoping for a two-year extension to the budget targets promised under Greece's second, €130 billion (US$163 billion) bailout from the European Union and International Monetary Fund, as the country struggles through its fifth year in recession.

Germany's finance minister reaffirmed his opposition to giving Greece more time in an interview with the *Tagesspiegel on Sunday* newspaper, according to advance excerpts.

"More time generally means more money, and that very soon means a new [bailout] program," Wolfgang Schaeuble was quoted as saying. "That would not be the right way to solve the fundamental problems of the euro zone."

Schaeuble said extending the period of the program so soon after it was agreed at the end of 2011 would send a bad signal.

"If after just half a year that were no longer to be sufficient, that would not be a confidence-building measure," he said.

Samaras said in a German newspaper interview earlier this week that Greece could stay afloat if it received its next tranche of aid later than October, but will be broke if the money does not arrive.

The Eurogroup of euro zone finance ministers will meet in Luxembourg on October 8 and may discuss the troika's report on Greece and any plans to loosen its bailout terms. EU heads of state and government will then meet in Brussels on October 18 and 19. REUTERS ■

France's President François Hollande (right) welcomes Greece's Prime Minister Antonis Samaras at the Elysee Palace in Paris on Saturday. REUTERS

APPROVAL RATINGS DROP FOR PRESIDENT, PRIME MINISTER

FRENCH President François Hollande's approval rating fell to 54 per cent in August, continuing a steady decline since he came to office, according to a poll released on Saturday. The declining ratings reflect the challenges Hollande faces in tackling high unemployment and a stagnant economy as he seeks to slash €33 billion from next year's budget to meet deficit targets, part of a drive to restore faith in the euro. The poll, by Ifop for *Le Journal du Dimanche* newspaper, marked a slide from 61 per cent who were satisfied or very satisfied with Hollande's performance in May, the month he became president, to 59 per cent in June and 56 per cent in July. The popularity of Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault also declined, falling by four percentage points to 57 per cent in August, according to the survey. This compares with an approval rating of 65 per cent in his first two months in the job. The poll was based on the views of 920 people aged 18 and over, interviewed by telephone on August 23 and 24. REUTERS

Armed group bulldoze a Sufi mosque in Libya

Taha Zargoun

ATTACKERS bulldozed a mosque containing Sufi Muslim graves in the centre of Tripoli in broad daylight on Saturday, in what appeared to be Libya's most blatant sectarian attack since the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi.

Government officials condemned the demolition of the large Sha'ab mosque and blamed an armed group who, they said, considered its graves and shrines to Sufi figures un-Islamic.

It was the second razing of a Sufi site in two days. Ultra-conservative Islamists wrecked Sufi shrines with bombs and another bulldozer and set fire to a mosque library in the city of Zlitan in the early hours of Friday, an official said.

Libya's rulers have struggled to control armed groups who are competing for power in the north African country a year after Gaddafi's fall.

The president of Libya's newly elected National Congress, Mohamed al-Magariaf, called the prime minister to an emergency meeting yesterday.

"What is truly regrettable and suspicious is that some of those who took part in these destruction activities are supposed to be of the security forces and from the revolutionaries," Magariaf told reporters on Saturday night.

He did not elaborate on how security forces took part.

A Reuters reporter saw the bulldozer level the Sha'ab mosque as police surrounded the site and prevented people from approaching and did not stop the demolition.

Inside the mosque, empty graves lay gaping in the rubble.

"A large number of armed militias carrying medium and heavy weapons arrived at the al-Sha'ab mosque with the intention to destroy the mosque because of their belief graves are anti-Islamic," said a government official who declined to be named.

He said authorities tried to stop them but, after a small clash, decided to seal off the area while the demolition took place to prevent any violence spreading.

"The SSC [Libya's Supreme Security Council] joins the ... condemnation," said council spokesman Abdel Moneim al-Hurr.

A man who appeared to be overseeing the demolition said the Interior Ministry had authorised the operation after discovering people had been worshipping the graves and practising "black magic". REUTERS ■

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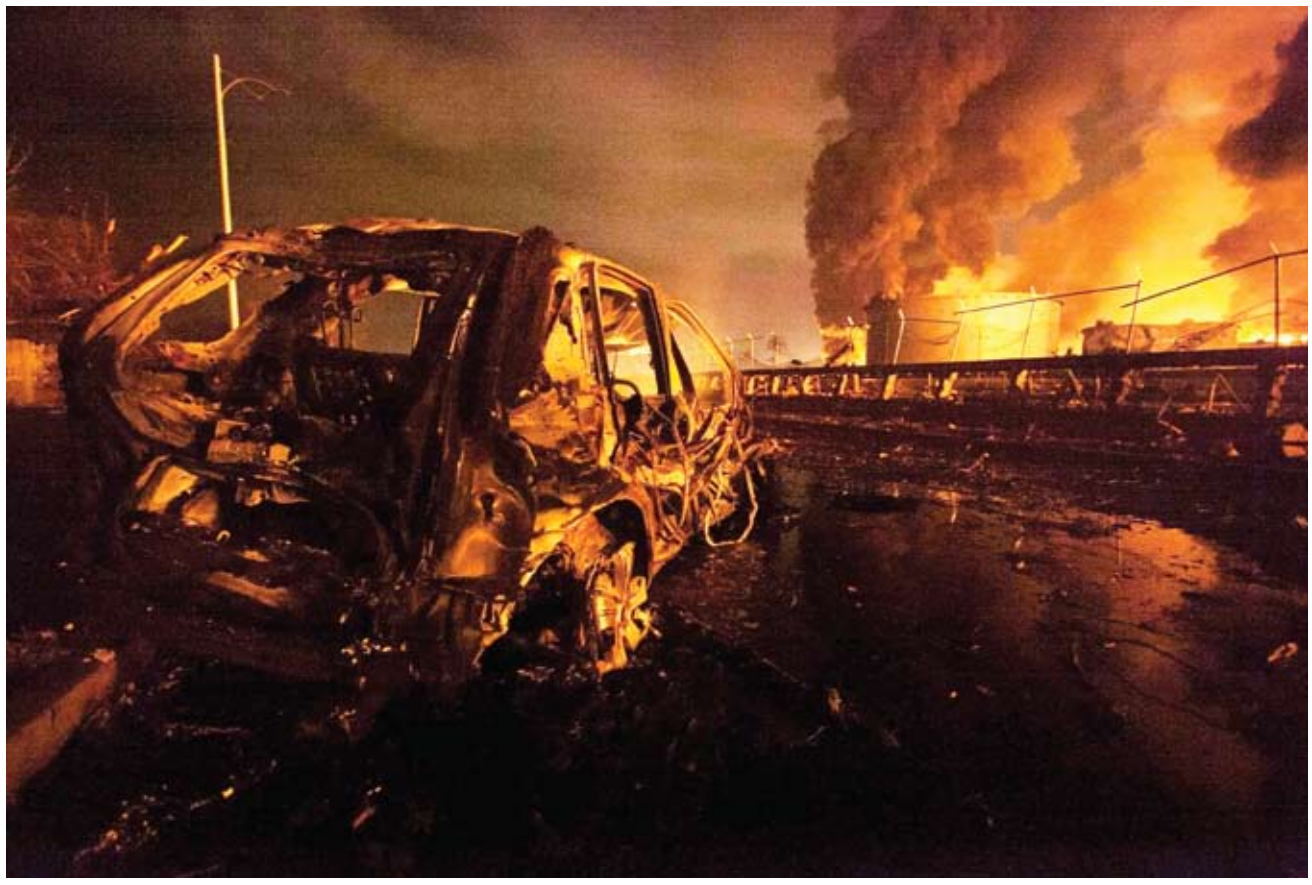
World

Blast kills 39 at Venezuela oil refinery



The charred remains of a car after an explosion at the Amuay oil refinery in Punto Fijo, Venezuela, on Saturday. REUTERS

Sailu Urribarri and Marianna Parragar

AN EXPLOSION tore through Venezuela's biggest oil refinery on Saturday, killing 39 people, injuring dozens more and halting operations at the facility in the worst accident to hit the OPEC nation's petroleum industry.

Energy Minister Rafael Ramirez said no production units at the Amuay refinery had been affected and there were no plans to halt exports — a sign that the incident will likely have little impact on fuel prices.

Photographs taken just after the pre-dawn blast showed wrecked vehicles, flattened fences and giant storage tanks buckling and crumpling as flames lit the night sky.

A nearby National Guard building was shattered, and officials said a 10-year-old child was among the dead.

A gas leak had caused the explosion, and many of those killed were National Guard troops providing security for the 645,000 barrels-a-day facility, Ramirez said.

Officials said 18 of the soldiers were confirmed dead, along with 15 civilians. Six bodies were still unidentified.

"There was a National Guard barracks near the explosion . . . The installation was too close to the operations," Ramirez said, adding that production could resume at Amuay within two days.

"We need to boost production at other refineries and look for floating storage near the complex," he said.

The explosion follows repeated accidents and outages during the past decade across installations run by the state oil company PDVSA that have limited oil output and crimped expansion plans.

Operations at Amuay have partly shut down at least twice this year after a small fire and the failure of a cooling unit.

Those problems have spurred accusations of inept management by the government of President Hugo Chavez, who is running for re-election on October 7.

Acrimony over the explosion could spill into an already bitter campaign, but is unlikely to overtake larger political concerns such as crime and the economy.

"I want to convey the deepest pain that I've felt in my heart and soul since I started to get information about this tragedy," Chavez told state television. He declared three days of mourning.

Venezuela has traditionally been a big supplier of fuel to the United States and the Caribbean, but refinery shutdowns have become so common that they rarely affect market prices.

Traders said the docks at the refinery were shut, and tankers were anchored offshore waiting. They said this would cause delays to some of the country's exports.

The explosion broke windows at homes in the area, a peninsula in the Caribbean sea in western Venezuela, as well as at Amuay's main administrative building.

The blast was also felt out at sea in Paraguana Bay, where crew members of moored tankers were knocked off their feet by the shock wave, a shipping source said.

Ramirez said the fire that began after the explosion had affected only nine storage tanks holding mostly crude oil and some processed fuels including naphtha.

Officials said two tanks were still burning off residual fuel, and a witness at the scene said large, black clouds of smoke hung above the area.

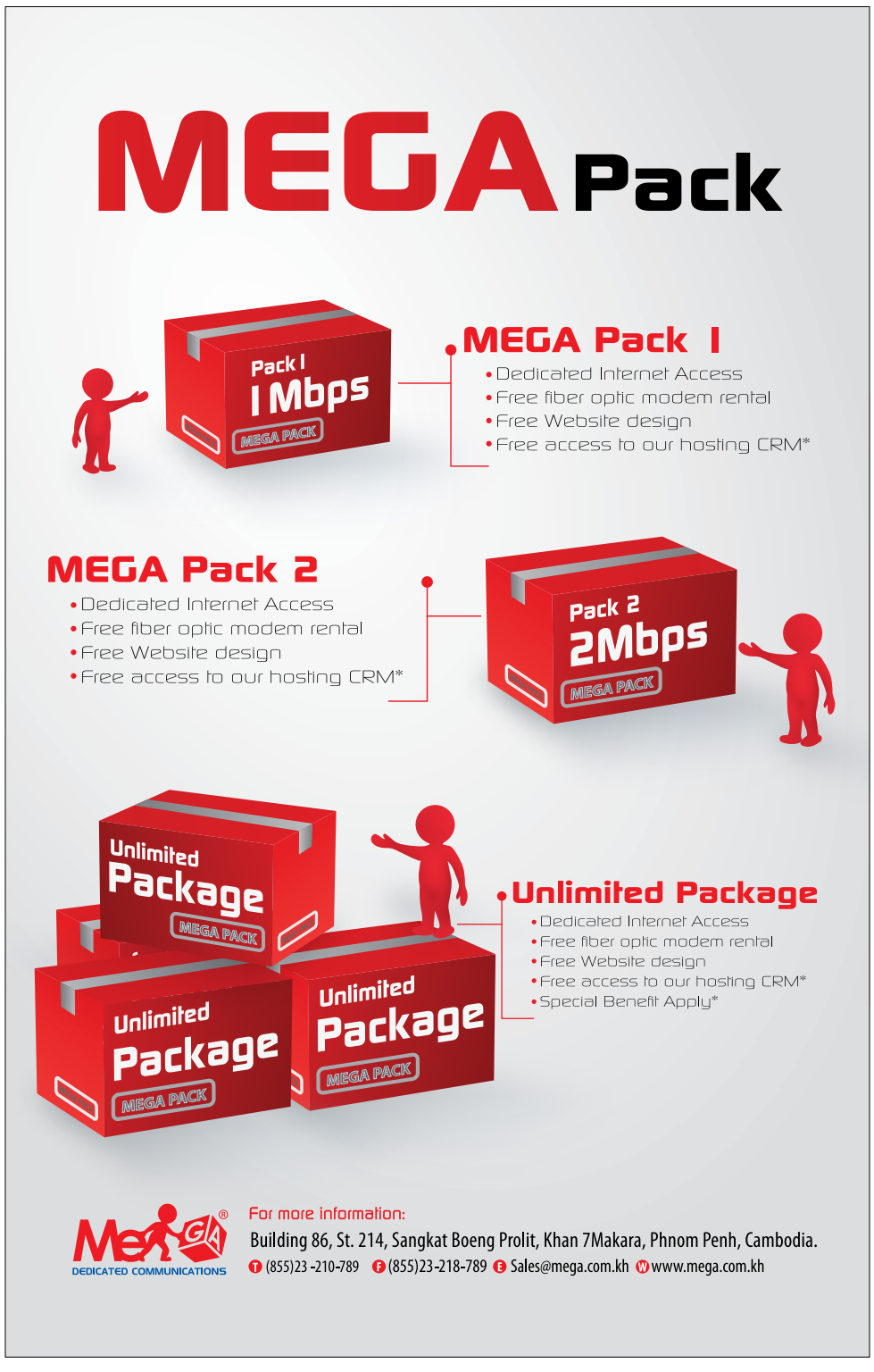
Ramirez said fuel stocks around the country were sufficient to guarantee 10 days of exports and local sales.

PDVSA had no plans to invoke force majeure, which lets companies stop shipments because of accidents or extreme weather, he said.

Amuay, together with a neighbouring facility, forms part of the Paraguana Refining Centre, the second-biggest refinery complex in the world, with an overall capacity of 955,000 barrels a day.

In 2010, there was a huge fire at a PDVSA fuel terminal on the Caribbean island of Bonaire, then a blaze at a dock at the Paraguana complex that halted shipping for four days.

Also in 2010, a natural gas exploration rig, the *Aban Pearl*, sank in the Caribbean. All its 95 workers were rescued safely. REUTERS ■



US claims insurgent dead but comrade begs to differ

Michael Georgy

A US drone in Pakistan may have killed a senior commander of Haqqani insurgents behind some of the biggest attacks on Western and government targets in Afghanistan, sources say, but this has been denied by a senior Haqqani leader.

Pakistani intelligence officials and militant sources said Badruddin Haqqani, the network's head of operations, who is also believed to handle its vital business interests and smuggling operations, may have been killed during the strike last week in Pakistan's North Waziristan province.

A senior Pakistani intelligence official said Badruddin had fled a compound he and other militants were in after it was hit by a missile, but was killed by a second drone strike on a car he was in.

But Maulvi Ahmed Jan, a senior Haqqani network commander, denied Badruddin had been killed. He said a distant relative, 13-year-old Osama, was killed in the strike and his funeral had been mistaken by locals for Badruddin's.

The insurgents would soon provide proof that Badruddin was alive, Jan said.

"We have proudly announced before when our people died in action or in drone strikes. Jihad against the occupying forces in Afghanistan is our mission, and death is certain in fighting them. Why would we keep it secret?" he said.

Afghanistan's Taliban movement, allies of the Haqqani network, also said Badruddin was alive.

There was no official word on Badruddin's fate from the network. Other intelligence officials were cautious.

"Our informers have told us he was killed in the drone attack on the 21st, but we cannot confirm it," one of the Pakistani intelligence officials said.

If Badruddin's death is confirmed, it could deal a major blow to the Haqqanis, one of the US's most feared enemies in Afghanistan.

The Haqqanis are the most experienced fighters in Afghanistan, and the loss of one of the group's most important leaders could ease pressure on NATO as it prepares to withdraw most of its combat troops at the end of 2014.

"We are 90 per cent sure he was in the house that was attacked with a drone on Tuesday," another Pakistani intelligence official said.

Sources close to the Haqqani network also said Badruddin was believed to be in the house hit by a drone strike as militants were planting explosives in a vehicle meant to be used for an attack on NATO forces in Afghanistan.

"The drone fired two missiles on the house last Tuesday and killed 25 people, most of them members of the Haqqani family," one of the sources said.

Pakistani Taliban and tribal sources said they believed Badruddin had been killed in the drone attack. REUTERS ■

Giant of space exploration dies

Cass Jones

NEIL Armstrong, the first man to walk on the moon, has died aged 82. The former US astronaut, who will go down in history as the most famous pioneer of space exploration, passed away as the result of heart complications following surgery.

As commander of the Apollo 11 mission, he became the first person to set foot on the moon, on July 20, 1969, fulfilling the longheld dream of the United States to get there before the Soviet Union. His first words as he stepped on to the surface – "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind" – instantly became one of the most recognisable phrases ever uttered.

Armstrong underwent heart bypass surgery earlier this month, just two days after his birthday on August 5, to relieve blocked arteries.

His family released a statement on Saturday describing him as a "reluctant American hero who always believed he was just doing his job".

It read: "We are heartbroken to share the news that Neil Armstrong has passed away following complications resulting from cardiovascular procedures. Neil was our loving husband, father, grandfather, brother and friend. Neil Armstrong was also a reluctant American hero who always believed he was just doing his job. He served his nation proudly as a Navy fighter pilot, test pilot and astronaut.

"While we mourn the loss of a very good man we also celebrate his remarkable life and hope that it serves as an example to young people around the world to work hard to make their dreams come true, to be willing to explore and push the limits, and to selflessly serve a cause greater than themselves."

Other tributes have come flooding in for the astronaut as news of his death spread across the world. US president Barack Obama hailed Armstrong as one of America's greatest heroes. In a statement issued by the White House, he said the crew of Apollo 11 carried with them the aspirations of an entire nation when they set out for the moon in 1969. He later tweeted: "Neil Armstrong was a hero not just of his time, but of all time. Thank you, Neil, for showing us the power of one small step."

Former astronaut Tom Jones, who completed four space shuttle flights between 1990 and 2001, said: "Mr Armstrong was one of the astronauts that was my hero when I was growing up and I watched his initial landing on the moon in 1969 with incredible interest. He really was an inspiration to an entire generation of people." The US space agency tweeted: "Nasa offers its condolences on today's passing of Neil Armstrong, former test pilot, astronaut & the 1st man on the moon. Neil was 82."

Armstrong grew up in Ohio with a keen interest in flight and earned his pilot's certificate when he was just 15. After flying combat missions during the Korean war, he became a test pilot and joined Nasa's astronaut program in 1962.

Armstrong was joined on his moon landing by Buzz Aldrin and the pair spent nearly three hours walking on the lunar surface, collecting samples, conducting experiments and taking photographs. Last night Aldrin called Armstrong "a true American hero and the best pilot I ever knew". The Apollo 11 mission turned out to be Armstrong's last space flight. The following year he was appointed to a desk job at NASA, later becoming a lecturer in engineering at Cincinnati University.

In 1961 President Kennedy had declared before the United States Congress that the US would have a man on the moon before the turn of the decade and the moon walk marked America's victory in the cold war space race. An estimated 600 million people – a fifth of the world's population – watched and listened to the moon landing, the largest audience for any single event in history. THE OBSERVER ■

A portrait of Astronaut Neil A Armstrong, commander of the Apollo 11 Lunar Landing mission, in a NASA studio file image. REUTERS

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World

Past, future haunt Greek isle

Vanessa Thorpe

A coachman drives alongside the coast on the Greek island of Spetses, a playground for the wealthy. REUTERS

ON a jetty alongside the town beach a loud phone call disturbs the peace of a handful of Spetses residents lying in the sun before taking their daily swim – one free pleasure that is still available to all. A rich weekender from Athens booms ostentatiously into his mobile, directing a man behind the wheel of a sizeable speedboat.

"Just ignore the line of buoys," he says, "and steer straight over to me so we can talk." The instruction provokes a furious reaction from locals, who yell out angrily that boats are never allowed to come so close to the swimmers. A nasty row flares up – a sign of growing social tensions on an island where poor locals live cheek-by-jowl with the holidaymaking rich.

Antonis Samaras, the Greek prime minister, spent last week pleading with European leaders for more time to implement the severe austerity program that is, ultimately, the condition for Greece remaining in the euro. Back home, and on islands such as Spetses, those well-off Greeks who remain financially cushioned from the effects of the deepening crisis, and from the fresh austerity measures due to be imposed next month, are the targets of growing fury.

The Saronic isle, with its horse buggies and flowery villas, has been chosen as the location for a new Greek tourism advert, designed to reassure international visitors that the beaches and the bobbing fishing boats are still waiting for them, despite the economic meltdown.

Yet the place is also a microcosm of the country's troubles: 78 square kilometers that encompass unimaginably big gaps in income.

While Athenians can enjoy browsing in the expensive deli that has replaced the souvlaki outlet in the square, the majority of Spetsiots can no longer afford to eat in local restaurants. The price of food in supermarkets and shops has soared.

"It is a theatre now," says Kostas, who is stockpiling food against a coming national emergency and has hunting guns positioned around his home. But as the son of an old Spetses family, he knows that appearances must be kept up to attract wealthy guests, no matter how difficult life becomes for residents. Leisure and pleasure are Spetses' only lifeline in the crisis, but might also put islanders in peril. Kostas is aware that communities on the mainland are envious of the apparently lavish lifestyle on the isle. There are fears that if the Greek economy really does melt down, Spetses could be targeted as a symbol of the feckless rich even as most of its year-round inhabitants struggle to get by.

The glitzy reputation is not new. By custom elderly women, wrapped in black scarves and long dresses, would gather in the afternoon to share slices of watermelon as they sat in the shade. A scene from old Greece, sure enough, but this was never really a rustic island – not the kind with donkeys and quiet tavernas with broken chairs. Proximity to Athens ensured that it became a tycoons' playground as soon as international shipping began to make billionaires in the 1950s.

And so it has continued. In 1962 Stavros Niarchos, second only to Aristotle Onassis in the magnate stakes, bought the tiny neighbouring private island of Spetsopoula where Charles and Diana later spent part of their honeymoon; and in the early 1980s when Duran Duran's Simon Le Bon wanted to celebrate a birthday, he did so under the flashing lights of a disco in Spetses' glamorous Old Harbour.

Even as Greece staggers towards a possible exit from the euro, the glamorous façade is intact. Far from looking down-at-heel, or being daubed with angry graffiti, Spetses has never looked more affluent. The failed economy is the fearful topic of conversation everywhere, but the place is gleaming. Smart decking has replaced crumbling concrete around the cobbled maritime mosaics of the Dapia, the island's neat port, and alongside a new crop of sophisticated bars and clothes shops, two sparkling rival frozen yoghurt parlours vie for trade with an equally clinical-looking ice cream café.

The majority of Spetsiots can no longer afford to eat in local restaurants. The price of food in supermarkets has soared

The imposing Edwardian Poseidonian Grand Hotel – so disliked by John Fowles when he set his 1966 novel *The Magus* here – is more stately than ever. But its linen-covered terrace tables are reserved for the owners of a succession of vast, state-of-the-art yachts moored at the marina on the promenade.

Perhaps most tellingly of all, no restaurant here, no matter how traditional, seems to serve retsina, the national wine. "Tastes have changed," say the waiters. Moneyed Athenians have largely switched to the European-style Greek wines that have started winning admirers.

This opulence, tailored for the few, explains why little Spetses has come to be known as the Monaco of Greece. It is somewhere, along with a few other smart islands such as the neighbouring Hydra, where those Greeks who still have lots of money can spend it in splendid seclusion.

There are no private cars on the island and so the locals travel on mopeds or quadbikes. Visitors, on the other hand, take horse buggies, traditional wooden fishing boats, or water taxis that charge €18 (US22.52) to cross the bay to the Old Harbour, while those who are really flush can be heard landing on the island's private helipads.

Middle-class European tourists tend to come to the wider Saronic Gulf for its safe sailing. Although the sea can be affected by the unpredictable meltemi wind, it is a haven for amateurs in search of day trips and weekend excursions. Trade is just about surviving, says Melody McKay Burton, who runs the Aegean Sailing School from nearby Aegina. People are booking much later, but still booking. Her work, she adds, brings her in touch with all nationalities and so has emphasised Greece's key position at the meeting point of the Middle East and Europe. "We have had Palestinians and Israelis, Greeks and Turks, all on the same skippered boat before, and they all seem to get on and to be interested in each other." Russians also now regularly hire out her yachts for lavish weekend parties.

Back in the 1980s and 1990s the island of Spetses flirted with cheap package tours, but British firms pulled out in the recession, leaving in their wake an adventurous group of British women who had fallen in love with the island, and with some of its men, and stayed to raise families. Fortunes have ebbed and flowed since then, as mass tourism beat a slow retreat from Spetses' beaches. But behind the picture-postcard façade, the times have never been worse than now.

The island, once described by Fowles as "a place so beautiful, quiet and empty that it verged on the terrifying" is full of worried people. Memories of the atrocities inflicted on Greeks by Greeks at the end of the second world war, and recounted in *The Magus*, are still vivid for many. They may have been distorted in the retelling, but they remain powerful enough to create fear and suspicion. After all, people were lynched on the Dapia and shot outside the Poseidonian.

An old sense of vulnerability is returning to Spetses, behind the beach parasols and designer sunglasses.

The words on the island's flag, which dates back nearly 200 years to the Greek war of independence, are: "Freedom or Death". They no longer seem such a quaint remnant from a swashbuckling past. THE OBSERVER ■

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Deadly shark attacks spark debate

Alison Rourke

THE deaths of five swimmers killed by sharks in the waters off Western Australia during the past 12 months have led local officials to consider ending the ban on the killing of great whites.

"There's no documented account of fatal attacks attributed to white sharks in such a short time and geographic location, anywhere in the world, like we have experienced in Western Australia, and action is necessary to deal with it," state fisheries minister Norman Moore said in the wake of the most recent fatal attack last month.

"I think we need to have another look to see whether there's been a significant increase in great white numbers since they became protected.

"And if that's the case, should they still be on a protected list?"

Moore asked for urgent clarification from Canberra on the shark's status as a protected species. Since 1999, the animals have been listed as "rare or likely to become extinct", and fishing or culling them has been banned.

Many conservationists believe the sharks should remain protected. "Australia has an immense moral and legal responsibility to protect great white sharks in our waters," Alexia Wellbelove, of the Humane Society, said.

The latest fatality was Ben Linden, 24, who was surfing 200 metres offshore when a great white bit him in half, according to witnesses.

A would-be rescuer on a jet ski was driven away by the shark.

Theories to explain the number of attacks range from increasing populations of seals, sea lions and whales that the sharks feed on, to there being more people in the water as Western Australia's population grows.

What is clear to scientists is that the sharks are now bigger. Professor Shaun Collin, from Western Australia University's Oceans Institute, said: "There's no doubt the bans have allowed the sharks to grow to greater maturity."

Collin believes removing great whites from the protected list would be a mistake.

"Sharks may be apex predators, but they are also a very important part of the ecosystem. If you remove them, there can be hugely detrimental effects on whole species, as new predators step up to where the sharks were.

"The big question is why there have been so many attacks in the past year.

"There's been something about Western Australia in that time that has brought them closer, and that's what we need to find out."

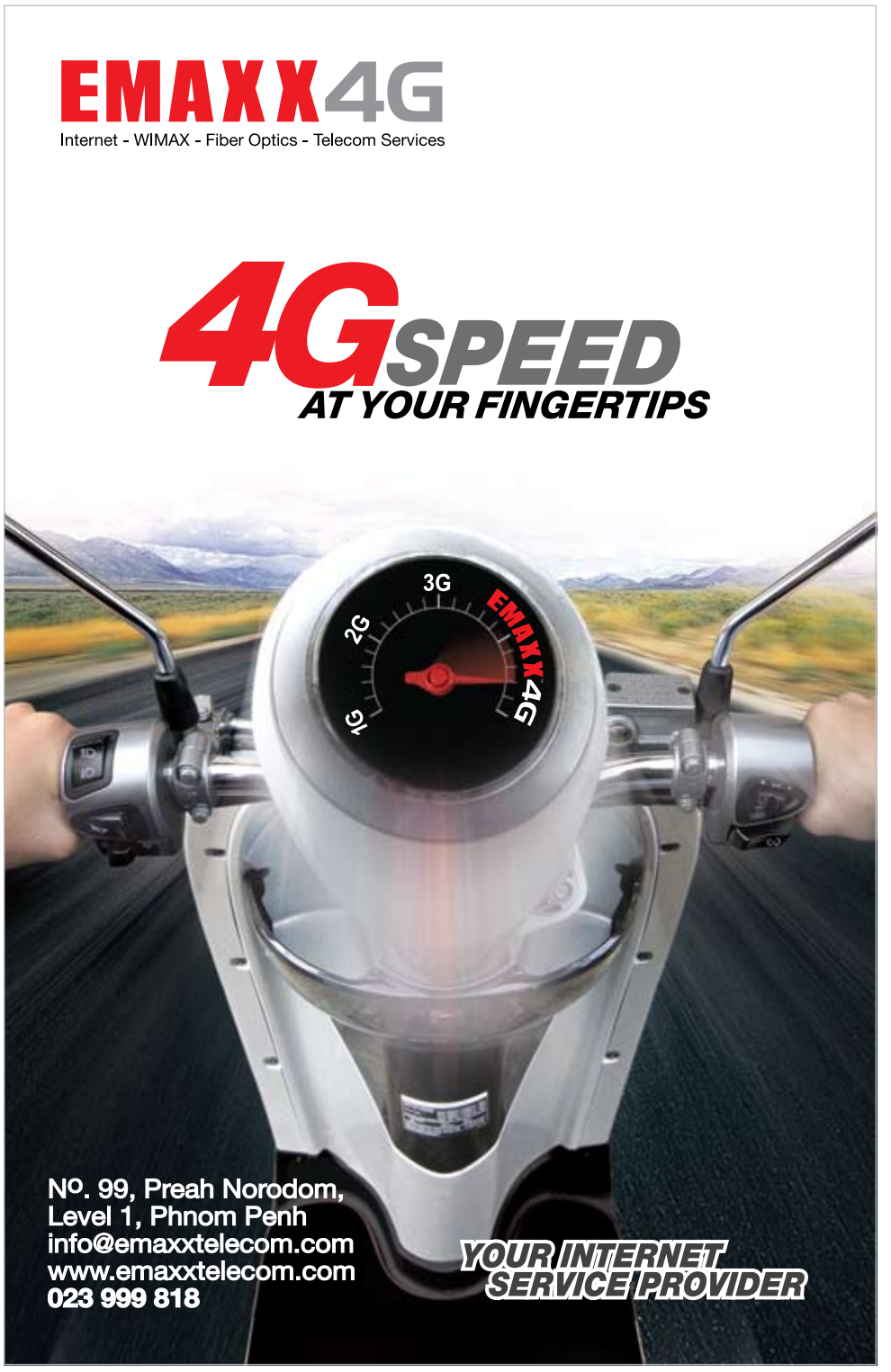
The federal government says it is reviewing its great white protection plan, but getting accurate information is not easy. Only about 100 great white sharks have ever been tagged or sampled in Australian waters.

"Trying to find them is like looking for a needle in a haystack, because they roam across such large distances and don't necessarily hang out in groups," said Professor John Pandolfi of Queensland University, whose recent study on great whites established that there are two genetic populations in Australia: one on the east coast and another that travels between South and Western Australia.

Last week, at Perth's Cottesloe beach, where Bryn Martin, 64, was killed by a shark last October, swimmers from the surf club were enjoying the water. About a dozen women aged from 60 to 90 swim up and down the beach for 20 minutes each day. They stick closer to shore now than they used to. "We err on the side of caution and only swim about 20 metres off the shore, in water that's waist-deep," said Jean Burling, 67, who swims at Cottesloe every day.

Surf clubs have been given fresh instructions on shark sightings and encouraged to put up posters about shark safety. At Cottesloe, there are beach patrols and a helicopter monitors the coastline. THE OBSERVER ■

Constable Jeromy Jones holds a surfboard involved in a fatal shark attack at Gracetown, Western Australia, in August, 2010. REUTERS



Opinion

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Cheating blights our schools

Comment

You Sokunpanha

Grade 12 students in Phnom Penh are blessed by Buddhist monks during a ceremony before their final exams last month. HONG MENEA

HIGH-SCHOOL seniors in Cambodia are anxiously awaiting the results of the school-leaving examination they sat just over two weeks ago.

For many, the exam was the culmination of years of hard work and gruelling preparation.

How they performed in it is crucial, because it will determine their chance of a place in university, which will, in turn, help or harm their future employment prospects.

Sadly, there was evidence of widespread bribery and cheating during the exam.

Stories have circulated of proctors who set a "quota" – the amount of money raised by those sitting the exam in each room – that had to be paid in return for a blind eye towards blatant acts of plagiarism including copying from "cheat sheets" that were allowed into test centres.

For extra money, some proctors reportedly even offered to write papers on test-takers' behalf.

That such practices occur at all is unfortunate, though not surprising.

Even the most stringent, well-thought-out proctoring system cannot eliminate cheating. But the most worrying aspect is that the practice of bribery, in exchange for cheating, is now so pervasive that it is accepted as a fact of life and ceases to "feel wrong" or to shock the consciences of those involved.

On one hand, some proctors treat exams as an opportunity to "earn" extra income. On the other, some students simply opt to pay to pass exams instead of studying and preparing for them.

In addition, parents are willing to give their children money to bribe proctors, and a small industry has sprung up to supply test-takers with cheat sheets, often with the claim that questions covered in these cheat sheets will also be on the real exams.

Not all engage in this corrupt practice, but the consequences of tolerating it can be grave.

Students are ill-served by a system that allows an easy pass. Presented with the option of paying for their degree, students have fewer incentives to apply themselves to their studies.

They may fail to gain through schooling the skills and knowledge needed to lead a fulfilling life and become productive, responsible citizens able to contribute to their country's development.

Furthermore, in a more globalised society, they will find it difficult to compete with the knowledge workers of other countries in the region and the wider world.

I also cannot help but wonder how this experience shapes the moral character of 18-year-old examination candidates.

In addition to being a yardstick for university admission, a high-school degree is a symbol of intellectual accomplishment that is worthy of recognition and praise.

That it can be bought and sold so readily may send the wrong signal to young Cambodians that money reigns supreme over honour and respect, and is an acceptable alternative to hard work and real effort.

Surely this is not a lesson we want to leave our children with.

Addressing this issue is not easy, but it is possible. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport can begin by introducing a zero-tolerance policy towards cheating and bribery during exams.

Proctors who solicit, or accept, bribes should be barred from supervising future exams and be denied promotion.

Depending on the seriousness of their actions, students caught cheating should be required to sit for the examination again, have their grades reduced or given an automatic fail.

At the same time, the education system needs to be reformed to focus more on critical thinking and analytical skills and less on rote learning and exams.

Instead of using examination results as the sole admission criterion, for example, universities should introduce other requirements such as admission essays that challenge students to carefully think about, and articulate, their reasons for wanting a tertiary education.

And these measures should be complemented with longer-term policies aimed at recruiting, training and retaining capable teachers through both an appeal to their sense of public service and reasonable remuneration.

Most important, fixing the problem requires a concerted effort by all of society – students, parents, educators, policymakers – to refuse to take part in a fraudulent practice.

A good sign will be when bribery and cheating, instead of being widely accepted and unquestioned, once again becomes a taboo. ■

You Sokunpanha is a Master of Public Policy candidate at the University of Michigan in the US.

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Lifestyle

A mellower Colin Farrell finds solace in family life

Actor Colin Farrell poses on the red carpet before the premiere of his latest movie, *Total Recall.* REUTERS

Colin Farrell is giving someone a right ticking-off, gesticulating with one hand and prodding him in the chest with the index finger of the other. The fellow, a reporter, seems embarrassed but doesn't object; several pokes later he retreats into another room. Farrell follows him, maintaining a frown and daggering the man with suspicious glances. We're both here, in a Mexican hotel, to interview the actor, who is promoting his new film. Farrell has been chipper all day. I wonder what's got his goat.

A while later, when I sit down with him, he looks at me aghast. "Can you f---in' believe what he said?" he asks with eyebrows arched. I presume he's referring to the poking scene and confess I don't know what was said. What is it, Colin? "Well, I couldn't believe it," he continues. "He said that I had a patchwork family. The cheek of it. That's no way to talk about another man's family."

One can see why Farrell objects to the term, although upon investigation I discover that the offender was German, and that the phrase "patchwork family" carries no negative connotations in his native tongue. It's simply a rather neat expression for a family in which the children are born to different parents. The German media regularly employs it as an idiom for Brad and Angelina's brood, for example, and that family is revered. Farrell, however, was not to know.

"My first-born was three years of age before I made anything that I would even pretend was a mature decision," he says. "So I can't say that fatherhood immediately changed me. But I'm different to what I was yesterday, and life is quieter now for me than it was a few years ago. I'm cool with that. I love my kids. I'm crazy about them."

He leans in when he talks, and whispers conspiratorially. It makes you wonder if you're privy to secret information, or whether he simply doesn't want anyone else to hear what he's saying – because there is another presence in the room. A small, smartly dressed lady is sitting quietly in the corner. She is not clicking away on a BlackBerry, so she can't be a publicist. She entered with Farrell and, if I'm honest, looks like she might be his mum.

"So, anyway," Farrell whispers, breaking my reverie, "things have changed. I am happier, more settled now." Farrell is here to talk about the big-budget remake of the 1990 sci-fi hit *Total Recall,* in which he takes on the role of Quaid, famously delivered with a string of one-liners by Arnold Schwarzenegger in the original film.

"There is a lot of energy and it's brilliant to be part of it because I know that back in the day I would have dragged myself through this and been as loud as hell, smoking two cigarettes at once and being really obnoxious. But that's not part of my life now and I'm glad."

Farrell's journeys through obnoxiousness – fuelled at various stages by heroin, cocaine and alcohol – have been well documented, and the actor himself has proved a good sport when talking about his troubles.

"It's helped to stay away from cocaine and whisky," he says, smiling, when we touch on past misdemeanours. "Life moves in cycles. I'm not going to say there was a particular day or time [when things changed], or even that I'm a different man. I enjoy the work more, I enjoy being a dad more, I enjoy doing things that I never thought I'd enjoy." Like what? "Like yoga," he says.

Yoga, parenting or enjoying his work, the moves are paying off – *Total Recall* is the actor's first big-budget Hollywood picture since 2006's *Miami Vice*. It was after that film wrapped that Farrell checked into rehab, back in December 2005. "Everything is by design, even if you think it's not," he says. "I can't say that I sat down and said, 'Right, I am going to reinvest.' I know from talking to some friends and different people that it looks as though I've tried to redesign my career but it's not really like that."

His last blockbusters were both commercial misfires. Oliver Stone's 2004 swords-and-sandals epic, *Alexander,* in which Farrell tackled the lead role, earned less than $35 million at the US box office (against a production budget of around $150 million), while Michael Mann's *Miami Vice* fell short of the $65 million mark in the States (it cost $135 million to make). More recent outings – the likes of *London Boulevard* and *Fright Night* – have gone largely unnoticed.

"I had signed up to do quite a few of those films before I went away to rehab after *Miami Vice*," he says of his independent output "but I had also done a certain amount of big budget films that didn't perform that well. Consequently, there weren't that many big films that were coming knocking for me.

"I was probably due an arse kicking," he continues. "I really was. I was having too much fun and being too loud about it. I'm not saying that my hand was totally forced but, of the work that then presented itself, I did the most interesting jobs. They were not all particularly good films, and not of all them worked."

Farrell earlier referred, now begins to emerge. The actor, as we've seen, cannot identify an epiphany moment, a day where his life turned around, but by shooting smaller films he edged out of the spotlight and, as a consequence, sidled away from many of the pleasures and temptations that follow in its shadow. Whether he sought it or not, the actor has finally found time to work out what he really wants.

He doesn't mind recalling the dark days of inebriation and sexual industriousness, because he "can talk about it objectively. I feel so far away from that, experientially, now. And the rise that I had from the point of Tigerland through all these films, and the money I had thrown at me, and the beds I ended up in, it was crazy." It's many blokes' dream, I note, being romantically linked to the likes of Britney Spears, Demi Moore or any one of the more glamorous yet lesser-known models. "I know, and the fact that I got to experience that was amazing. But I am glad it is done."

The small, smartly dressed lady who's been sitting in the corner suddenly appears at the actor's elbow. "This is my mum," says Farrell, confirming my earlier suspicion. "She's here to make sure you don't write anything mean," he half-jokes. His mum, Rita, then fixes me with a steely look and offers an inscrutable smile. I say my goodbyes and hope that she likes the piece. THE GUARDIAN ■

In brief

Foreign funny men sweep British awards

PERFORMERS from the United States, Norway and New Zealand swept Britain's top comedy awards at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival on Saturday, the first time all three prizes have gone to non-British comedians. American Phil Burgers from Los Angeles took the top prize, the Foster's Best Comedy Show award, while the Best Newcomer award went to Norway's Daniel Simonsen. REUTERS

Scorcese lawsuit 'absurd', say reps

REPRESENTATIVES for Martin Scorsese on Friday said it was "shocking" that Cecchi Gori Pictures had sued the famed director for failing to make a promised movie for the Italian production company, and labelled the claims in the legal action "absurd". The Oscar-winning filmmaker of *The Departed* was sued by Cecchi Gori Pictures earlier this week for choosing to make *The Wolf of Wall Street*, which started filming on Thursday, instead of its movie, *Silence*. The suit, filed in Los Angeles alleging breach of contract, also claims the director and his company owe Cecchi Gori $1.5 million plus 20 per cent of other fees Scorsese received from making movies that were put ahead of *Silence*. REUTERS

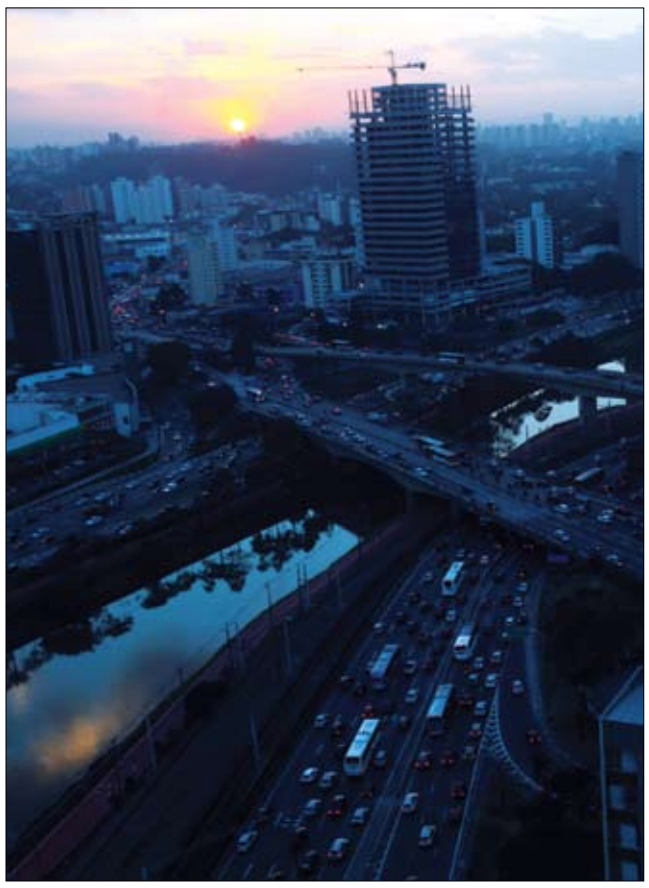
Tom Cruise gets off cheaply from divorce

THE quick-fire divorce settlement between Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes left the actress with much less child support than she would have received if the case had gone to trial, according to the TMZ website. It reports Holmes will receive $400,000 a year in child support, which Cruise must pay until their daughter, Suri Cruise, is 18. He also is covering all related health, insurance and other educational costs and has agreed that she will not attend a primary school. THE WASHINGTON POST

Actor Tom Cruise. REUTERS

Travel

Now hiring: Brazil wants more foreign professionals



Buildings in the city skyline as seen from the Pinheiros neighbourhood in Sao Paulo, Brazil. REUTERS

Esteban Israel

Brazil's government is exploring ways to ease immigration rules in order to attract up to 10 times more foreign professionals and help spur economic growth, a senior official told Reuters.

A lack of skilled workers is one of many bottlenecks that have lately brought the world's sixth largest economy to a near standstill. From construction sites to oil rigs and technology operations, companies are struggling to find qualified workers to ramp up their operations in Brazil. Internet giant Google for instance, currently has 39 open positions in Brazil.

"This country has become very isolated from the rest of the world in terms of its labour markets and that is affecting our competitiveness," said Ricardo Paes de Barros, who heads a team on strategic initiatives at the president's office.

"We want to turn that around so Brazil will be better connected with the rest of the world in terms of transfer of knowledge," he said in a telephone interview.

A former Portuguese colony, Brazil has a long history of welcoming immigrants from all over the world, similar to the United States. In the last few centuries, the country has received waves of immigration from Africa, Europe, Japan and most recently from poorer neighbours such as Bolivia.

But economic woes in the second half of the last century reduced the arrivals to a trickle. Today foreigners represent just 0.3 per cent of Brazil's workforce, down from 7 per cent at the beginning of the 20th century. In Australia, a similarly sized country that has long attracted immigrants, foreigners account for about 20 per cent of the workforce.

The debate over a more flexible immigration framework reflects Brazil's new status as an emerging economic power. Near full employment has boosted the popularity of President Dilma Rousseff, herself the daughter of a Bulgarian immigrant.

"We need to reach a level of 2 to 3 per cent of our workforce made up of foreigners. That means multiplying the current levels by 10," said Paes de Barros, a Yale-educated economist. "If we do that we should be fine."

Brazil granted 70,524 work permits to foreign professionals in 2011, 25.9 per cent more than in 2010, according to the Labour Ministry. That's almost three times more than the 25,400 permits issued in 2006.

And yet by some estimates the country still needs an additional 20,000 engineers a year to keep up with ambitious plans to modernise its obsolete infrastructure and tap massive offshore oil reserves. REUTERS ■

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHT SCHEDULE

FROM PHNOM PENH

Flighs	Days	Dep	Arrival
PHNOM PENH - YANGON			
8M 402	3.6	18:40	20:05
PHNOM PENH - BANGKOK			
PG 938	Daily	06:40	08:15
PG 932	Daily	09:55	11:10
TG 581	Daily	10:05	11:10
PG 934	Daily	15:30	16:40
FD 3617	Daily	17:05	18:15
PG 936	Daily	19:30	20:40
TG 585	Daily	20:40	21:45
PHNOM PENH - BEIJING			
CZ 324	Daily	08:00	16:05
PHNOM PENH - GUANGZHOU			
CZ 324	Daily	08:00	11:40
CZ 6060	2.4.7	14:45	18:10
PHNOM PENH - HANOI			
VN 840	Daily	17:30	20:35
PHNOM PENH - HONG KONG			
KA 207	1. 2. 6	11:25	15:05
KA 207	Daily	18:50	22:30
PHNOM PENH - KUALA LUMPUR			
MH 755	Daily	11:10	14:00
MH 763	Daily	16:40	19:10
AK 1475	Daily	16:45	19:35
AK 1473	Daily	08:35	11:20
PHNOM PENH - HO CHI MINH CITY			
VN 841	Daily	14:00	14:45
VN 3856	Daily	19:20	20:05
PHNOM PENH - SHANGHAI			
FM 833	2.3.4.5.7	19:50	23:05
PHNOM PENH - INCHEON			
KE 690	Daily	23:40	06:50
OZ 740	Daily	23:50	06:50
PHNOM PENH - SINGAPORE			
MI 601	1.3.5.6.7	09:30	12:30
MI 622	2.4	12:20	15:20
3K 594	1.3.6	12:50	15:40
3K 599	2.4.7	18:15	21:05
MI 607	Daily	18:10	21:10
PHNOM PENH -TAIPEI			
BR 266	Daily	12:45	17:05
PHNOM PENH - VIENTIANE			
VN 840	Daily	17:30	18:50
QV 920	Daily	17:50	19:10
PHNOM PENH- PARIS			
AF 273	2	20:05	06:05

TO PHNOM PENH

Flighs	Days	Dep	Arrival
YANGON - PHNOM PENH			
8M 401	3.6	15:15	17:40
BANGKOK - PHNOM PENH			
PG 931	Daily	07:55	09:05
TG 580	Daily	07:55	09:05
PG 933	Daily	13:30	14:40
FD 3616	Daily	15:15	16:20
PG 935	Daily	17:30	18:40
TG 584	Daily	18:25	19:40
PG 937	Daily	20:15	21:50
BEIJING - PHNOM PENH			
CZ 323	Daily	14:30	20:50
GUANGZHOU - PHNOM PENH			
CZ 6059	2.4.7	12:00	13:45
CZ 323	Daily	19:05	20:50
HANOI - PHNOM PENH			
VN 841	Daily	09:40	13:00
HONG KONG - PHNOM PENH			
KA 206	1. 2.4. 6	08:55	10:30
KA 206	Daily	18:00	18:45
KUALA LUMPUR - PHNOM PENH			
AK 1474	Daily	15:15	16:00
MH 754	Daily	09:30	10:20
AK 1472	Daily	07:05	07:50
MH 762	Daily	15:20	16:10
HO CHI MINH CITY - PHNOM PENH			
VN 920	Daily	15:50	16:30
VN 3857	Daily	18:00	18:45
SHANGHAI - PHNOM PENH			
FM 833	2.3.4.5.7	19:30	22:40
INCHEON - PHNOM PENH			
KE 689	Daily	18:80	22:20
OZ 739	Daily	19:10	22:50
SINGAPORE - PHNOM PENH			
MI 602	1.3.5.6.7	07:40	08:30
MI 622	2.4	08:40	11:25
3K 593	1.3.6	11:05	11:25
3K 591	2.4.7	14:50	17:30
MI 608	Daily	16:20	17:15
TAIPEI - PHNOM PENH			
BR 265	Daily	09:10	11:35
VIENTIANE - PHNOM PENH			
VN 841	Daily	11:30	13:00
QV 921	Daily	11:45	13:15
PHNOM PENH - PARIS			
AF 273	2	20:05	06:05

FROM SIEM REAP

Flighs	Days	Dep	Arrival
SIEM REAP - BANGKOK			
PG 924	Daily	09:45	11:10
PG 906	Daily	13:15	14:40
PG 914	Daily	15:20	16:45
PG 908	Daily	18:50	20:15
PG 910	Daily	20:30	21:55
SIEM REAP -HANOI			
VN 868	1.2.3.5.6	12:40	15:35
VN 842	Daily	18:05	19:45
VN 844	Daily	19:45	21:25
VN 800	Daily	21:00	22:40
SIEM REAP - HO CHI MINH CITY			
VN 3818	Daily	11:10	12:30
K6 3818	Daily	11:10	12:30
VN 826	Daily	13:30	14:40
VN 3820	Daily	17:45	18:45
K6 3820	Daily	17:45	18:45
VN 828	Daily	18:20	19:20
VN 3822	Daily	21:35	22:35
K6 3822	Daily	21:35	22:35
SIEM REAP - INCHEON			
KE 688	1.3.4.7	23:25	06:35
OZ 738	Daily	23:40	07:10
SIEM REAP - KUALA LUMPUR			
AK 281	Daily	08:35	11:35
MH 765	1. 6	13:00	16:10
SIEM REAP - SINGAPORE			
MI 622	2.4	10:40	15:20
MI 630	5	12:25	15:40
MI 615	7	12:45	16:05
MI 636	3	06:25	21:35
MI 617	5	18:35	21:55
SIEM REAP - VIENTIANE			
QV 522	2.4.5.7	10:05	13:00
SIEM REAP - GUANGZHOU			
CZ 3054	2.4.6	11:25	15:35
CZ 3054	1.3.5.7	19:25	23:20

TO SIEM REAP

Flighs	Days	Dep	Arrival
BANGKOK - SIEM REAP			
PG 903	Daily	08:00	09:00
PG 905	Daily	11:35	12:45
PG 913	Daily	13:35	14:35
PG 907	Daily	17:00	18:10
PG 909	Daily	18:45	19:55
HANOI - SIEM REAP			
VN 843	Daily	15:25	17:10
VN 845	Daily	17:05	18:50
VN 845	Daily	17:45	19:30
VN 801	Daily	18:20	20:00
HO CHI MINH CITY - SIEM REAP			
VN 3809	Daily	09:15	10:35
K6 3809	Daily	09:15	10:35
VN 827	Daily	11:35	12:35
VN 3821	Daily	15:55	16:55
K6 3821	Daily	15:55	16:55
VN 829	Daily	16:20	17:40
VN 3823	Daily	19:45	20:45
K6 3823	Daily	19:45	20:45
INCHEON - SIEM REAP			
KE 687	1.3.4.7	19:00	22:25
OZ 737	Daily	19:20	22:40
KUALA LUMPUR - SIEM REAP			
AK 280	Daily	06:50	07:50
MH 764	2.4.6	11:00	12:05
SINGAPORE - SIEM REAP			
MI 622	2.4	08:40	09:50
MI 616	7	10:40	11:50
MI 636	3	13:55	17:35
MI 630	5	07:55	16:35
MI 618	5	16:35	17:45
VIENTIANE - SIEM REAP			
QV 512	2.4.5.7	06:30	09:25
GUANGZHOU - SIEM REAP			
CZ 3053	2.4.6	08:45	10:30
CZ 3053	1.3.5.7	16:35	18:30

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DOMESTIC FLIGHT SCHEDULE

TO SIEM REAP

Flighs	Days	Dep	Arrival
PHNOM PENH - SIEM REAP			
K6 101	Daily	07:15	08:00
K6 103	Daily	10:00	10:45
K6 109	Daily	16:00	16:45
PREAH SIHANOUK - SIEM REAP			
K6 130	1-3-5	12:55	13:55

FROM SIEM REAP

Flighs	Days	Dep	Arrival
SIEM REAP - PHNOM PENH			
K6 100	Daily	08:40	09:25
K6 102	Daily	11:15	12:00
K6 108	Daily	17:20	16:45
SIEM REAP - PREAH SIHANOUK			
K6 131	1-3-5	11:20	12:20

AIRLINES CODE		COLOUR CODE
MH - Malaysia Airlines	**CI** - China Airlines	**1** Monday
OZ - Asiana Airlines	**CZ** - China Southern	**2** Tuesday
PG - Bangkok Airways	**FD** - Thai Air Asia	**3** Wednesday
QV - Lao Airlines	**FM** - Shanghai Air	**4** Thursday
TG - Thai Airways	**KA** - Dragon Air	**5** Friday
VN - Vietnam Airlines	**MI** - SilkAir	**6** Saturday
AK - Air Asia	**SQ** - Singapore Airlines	**7** Sunday
BR - EVA Airways	**3K** - Jetstar, **K6** Cambodia Angkor Air	

This flight schedule information is updated about once a month. Further information, please contact direct to airline or a travel agent for flight schedule information.

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#148E0, St.169, Phnom Penh. Tel/Fax: 023 884574 / 884787
Email: worldexpress@online.com.kh|wwww.worldexpresstour.com

AIRLINES BASED IN CAMBODIA

Air Asia (AK)
Room T6, Phnom Penh International Airport
Tel: 023 6666 555
Fax: 023 890 071
www.airasia.com

Air France – (AF)
#445, Monivong Blvd, 11 floor, Phnom Penh Tower, PP
Tel: 023 965500
www.airfrance.com.kh

Asiana Airlines (OZ)
A16 Domestic Arrival Terminal, Phnom penh International Airport
Tel: 023 890 441
Fax: 023 890 443
http://us.flyasiana.com

Bangkok Airways (PG)
#61A, St. 214, PP
Tel: 023 966 556-8
Fax: 023 966 554
www.bangkokair.com

China Airlines (CI)
#32, Norodom, PP
Tel: 023 222 056
www.china-airlines.com

Cambodia Angkor Air (K6)
#206A, Preah Norodom, PP
Tel: 023 6666 787
www.cambodiaangkorair.com

Dragon Air (KA)
#168, Monireth, PP
Tel: 023 424 300
Fax: 023 424 304
www.dragonair.com

Eva Air (BR)
Suite 11-14B, St. 205, Phnom Penh
Tel: 023 219 911
www.evaair.com

JetStar Asia (3K)
#333B, Monivong, PP
Tel: 023 220 909
Fax: 023 218 040
www.jetstarasia.com

Lao Airlines (QV)
#111, Sihanouk Street, No 274.
Tel: 023 222 956
E:pnhqv@laoairline.com
www.laoairlines.com

Malaysia Airlines (MH)
#35-37, Samdech Pan St. 214
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www.malaysialines.com

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No. 479-481Eo, Kampuchea Krom (St. 128), 12155, Phnom Penh
Tel 023 881 178
Fax 023 886 677
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Korean Air (KE)
#254, Intelligent Office Center, 3rd Floor-R03, Monivong
Tel: 023 224 047
Fax: 023 224 050
www.koreanair.com

Singapore Airlines (SQ)
Regency C,Unit 2-4,Tumnorb Teuk, Chamkarmorn PP.
Tel:023 988 629
www.singaporeair.com

Vietnam Airline
No. 41, Samdech Pan (St. 214), angkat Boeung Raing, 12211, PP. Tel: 023 215 998
www.vietnamairlines.com

SilkAir (MI)
Regency C,Unit 2-4,Tumnorb Teuk, Chamkarmorn PP
Tel:023 988 629
www.silkair.com

Shanghai Airlines (FM)
No. 53, Preah Monivong (St. 93), Room K6, Ground Floor, Phnom Penh Hotel, 12201, PP
Tel 023 723 999
www.shanghai-air.com

Thai Airways (TG)
#294, Mao Tse Tung, PP
Tel: 023 214 359
Fax: 023 221 469
www.thaiair.com

PHNOM PENH SORYA BUS TRANSPORT SCHEDULE

INTERNATIONAL ROUTES	
PP-HO CHI MINH DEPATURE	**HO CHI MINH-PP**
6:45, 8:30, 11:45	6:45, 8:00,11:30
PP-BANGKOK	**BANGKOK-PP**
6:30	6:30
PP-PAKSE,VIENTIANE	**PAKSE,VIENTIANE-PP**
6:45	7:30
DOMESTIC ROUTES	
PP-SIEM REAP	**SIEM REAP-PP**
6:15, 7:00- 12:00, 13:00, 14:00	5:30, 6:30, 7:00, 9:30, 10:30,12:30, 13:30
PP -SIHANOUK	**SIHANOUK-PP**
7:00 To 12:00, 13:00, 14:30, 16:30	7:10, 8:00, 10:30,12:15, 14:00,15:30,17:30
PP-BATTAMBANG	**BATTAMBANG-PP**
7:00, 8:00, 9:00, 10:00, 11:00, 12:00	5:30, 6:45, 7:45, 8:30, 9:30,10:30
PP-POIPET	**POIPET-PP**
6:30, 8:00 10:00, 12:00, 19:30	6:30, 8:00 10:00, 12:00, 19:30
PP-PREAH VIHEAR	**PREAH VIHEAR-PP**
8:15	7:30
PP-MONDULKIRI	**MONDULKIRI-PP**
8:30	8:30
PP-KOH KONG	**KOH KONG-PP**
7:30, 9:30, 12:30	7:30, 9:30, 12:30
PP -BT.MEANCHEY	**BT.MEANCHEY-PP**
6:30, 8:00, 9:00, 10:00, 12:00, 2:00	6:00, 7:00, 7:30, 9:00,10:30, 11:30
SR-SOUNG,KAMPONG CHAM	**PURSAT, BATTAMBANG-SIEM REAP**
7:30, 8:30, 10:30	7:30
PP-KRATIE	**KRATIE-PP**
6:45, 7:15, 7:30, 8:00,10:30	7:00, 8:30, 9:30, 11:30, 2:30

Further information, please contact: Tel: 023 210 359, email:168@ppsoryatransport.com

REGULAR SHIPPING LINES SCHEDULES CALLING PORT ROTATION

LINE	CALLING SCHEDULES	FREEQUENCY	ROTATION PORTS
RCL (12calls/moth)	1 Wed, 08:00 - Thu 16:00	1 Call/week	SIN-SHV-SGZ-SIN
	2 Thu, 14:00 - Fri 22:00	1 Call/week	HKG-SHV-SGZ-HKG (HPH-TXGKEL)
	3 Fri, 20:00 - Sat 23:59	1 Call/week	SIN-SHV-SGZ-SIN
MEARSK (MCC) (4 calls/moth)	1 Th, 08:00 - 20:00	1 Call/week	SGN-SHV-LZP-SGN - HKG-OSA-TYO-KOB - BUS-SGH-YAT-SGN - SIN-SHV-TPP-SIN
	2 Fri, 22:00- Sun 00:01	1 Call/week	
SITC (BEN LINE (4 calls/onth)	Sun 09:00-23:00	1 Call/week	HCM-SHV-LZP-HCM-NBO-SGH-OSA-KOB-BUS-SGH-HGK-CHM
ITL (ACL) (4 calls/month)	Sat 06:00 - Sun 08:00	1 Call/week	SGZ-SHV-SIN-SGZ
APL (4 calls/month)	Fri, 08:00 - Sun, 06:00	1 call/week	SIN-SHV-SIN
COTS (2 calls/month)	Irregula	2 calls/month	BBK-SHV-BKK-(LZP)

34 call/month

BUS= Busan, Korea
HKG= HongKong
kao=Kaoshiung, Taiwan ROC
Kob= Kebe, Japan
KUN= Kuantan, Malaysia
LZP= Leam Chabang, Thailand
NBO= Ningbo, China
OSA= Osaka, Japan
SGN= Saigon, Vietnam
SGZ= Songkhla, Thailand
SHV= Sihanoukville Port Cambodia
SIN= Singapore
TPP= TanjungPelapas, Malaysia
TYO= Tokyo, Japan
TXG= Taichung, Taiwan
YAT= Yantian, China
YOK= Yokohama, Japan

NOW SHOWING

LEGEND CINEMA

PARANORMAN (3D)
In this animated adventure horror film, a misunderstood boy who can speak with the dead takes on ghosts, zombies and grown-ups to save his town from a centuries-old curse.
11:45am, 2:30pm, 5:40pm

THE BOURNE LEGACY
An expansion of the universe from Robert Ludlum's novels, this centres on a new hero whose stakes have been triggered by the events of the previous three films.
9:40am, 2:35pm, 9:15pm

PLATINUM CINEPLEX

TOTAL RECALL
A factory worker, Douglas Quaid, begins to suspect that he is a spy after a visit to a company that provides its clients with implanted fake memories goes wrong and he finds himself on the run.
11:50am, 4:35pm

DARK KNIGHT RISES
Eight years on, a new terrorist leader, Bane, overwhelms Gotham's finest, and the Dark Knight resurfaces to protect a city that has branded him an enemy.
7:20pm

THE FLICKS 1 & 2

WOODY ALLEN
Iconic writer, director, actor, comedian, and musician Woody Allen has allowed his life and creative process to be documented on-camera for the first time.
6:00pm

FOOTNOTE
Eliezer and Uriel Shkolnik are father and son as well as rival professors in Talmudic Studies. When both men learn that Eliezer will be lauded for his work, their complicated relationship reaches a new peak.
8pm

The Flicks Community Movie House on Street 95 (between Str 310 and 360)

Sailboats fill the harbour in Chicago, Illinois. Gang violence in the city is the subject of a new documentary to be shown at Meta House tonight at 7pm. REUTERS

TV PICKS

Larry David in a scene from *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, on Max today at 2pm. BLOOMBERG

2:00 PM - CURB YOUR ENTHUSIASM: Seinfeld co-creator Larry David stars as himself in this hilarious, off-kilter comedy series that presents an unflinching, self-depreciating depiction of his life. MAX

3:25PM – THE FIRST WIVES CLUB: Reunited by the death of a college friend, three divorced women seek revenge on the husbands who left them for younger women. HBO

5:35PM – GROWN UPS: After their high school basketball coach passes away, five good friends and former teammates reunite for a Fourth of July holiday weekend. HBO

7:20PM – HALF PAST DEAD: the story of a man who goes undercover in a high-tech prison to find out information to help prosecute those who killed his wife. MAX

The Interrupters @ Meta

New doco from director Steve James is an unusually intimate journey into the stubborn persistence of violence in American cities. It tells the story of ex-convicts who go daily into the streets of Chicago to try to talk gang members out of shooting each other.

US $2. Free for Khmer students.

Meta House, #38 Sothearos Blvd. 7pm

Margarita mayhem

Shake your blues away with margaritas in every flavour. Buy one get one free all night. Enjoy mash-up remixes and tunes with DJ Narata.

Riverhouse Lounge, Cnr Sisowath Quay and St 110. 8.30pm

GTS @ Sofitel

A selection of standard and original tunes to recreate a typical jazz club feel.

Sofitel Phnom Penh Phokeethra, 25 Old Auguste Site, Sothearos Blvd. 7.30pm

Yoga @ The Flicks

The highly experienced Oskar Nery is your yoga teacher for one hour, every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 8.00am and Saturday at 10am.

The Flicks Community Movie House on Street 95 (between St 310 and 360)

Thinking caps

Sudoku Pacific

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

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

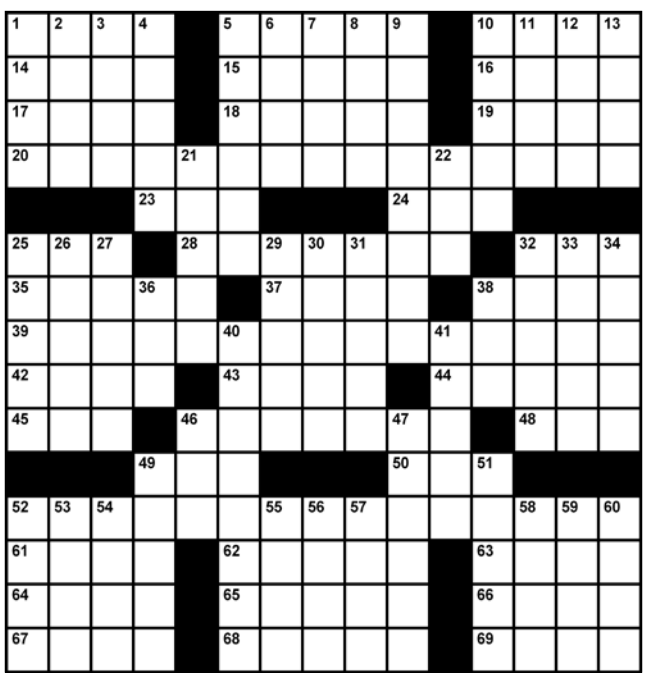
8/27 DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

7D SEVENDAYS EVERY FRIDAY!

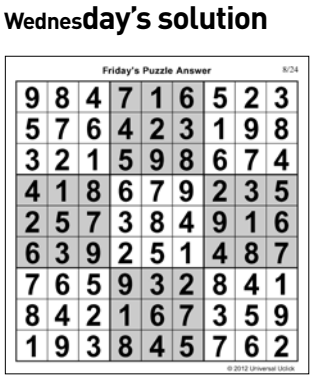
"GRAB A SHOVEL"

ACROSS
1 French cleric
5 Modem units
10 Extremely dry champagne
14 Fictional plantation of Georgia
15 "Captain Blood" star Flynn
16 Fury
17 Big name in Norwegian royalty
18 Diameter halves
19 Wight is one
20 Three holes to fill
23 ___ Lanka
24 Squeeze from mom
25 ___ de mer (seasickness)
28 Hero worshiper?
32 ___ in the hole
35 Dispatch boat
37 Litigious type
38 Hang a right
39 Four holes to fill
42 Thigh-covering skirt
43 Hang a sharp right
44 Prefix for "act" or "play"
45 ___ mode (served with ice cream)
46 Most concise
48 Feeding trough site
49 Title for Sean Connery
50 Possessive pronoun
52 Three holes to fill
61 Length X width
62 Temptress
63 Highly rated
64 Breathe like a dog
65 Creme de la creme
66 Job for a plumber
67 Blackthorn fruit
68 Relinquish office
69 They can be made to meet

DOWN
1 Sitting on
2 Island in the Java Sea
3 Indulge in self-praise
4 Roof projections
5 Late comedian Mac
6 Middle East denizen
7 Descendant of Sanskrit
8 "That oughta ___!"
9 Like snakes and eels
10 Tote with you
11 Abrade with a tool
12 Fruit that doesn't sound pretty
13 Person 'twixt 12 and 20
21 DuPont fiber
22 Your and my
25 "___ mia!"
26 To no ___
27 Yorba ___, Calif.
29 Daisy look-alike
30 Heats up in a microwave
31 Name on many tractors
32 Parent's sisters
33 Oil-bearing vessel
34 Contest submission
36 Glide down peaks
38 Cargo measure, perhaps
40 Hackneyed
41 "What she said"
46 Little spasm
47 Official seal
49 Mode of being
51 Tool for this puzzle's title
52 Soft foods
53 Presentation type
54 Nevada city near the California border
55 Fluid from the liver
56 Hat part
57 Hairy Himalayan, reportedly
58 Rhinoceros protuberance
59 English novelist Bagnold
60 Iron-pumper's count



Wednesday's solution



Friday's Puzzle Answer 8/24

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

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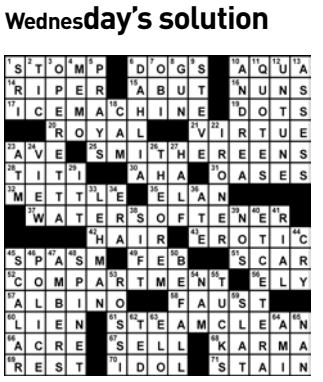
Wednesday's solution



TOUN CHANREAKSMEY & CHHIM SREYNEANG

Grand Opening Asian Square Restaurant

H. E Chhor Bonavy and H. E Sour Yara cut ribbons at the grand opening

The opening of Siem Reap's Asian Square Restaurant and Lounge was marked with a grand party on August 25. A mix of international and national guests from hotels and travel agencies, including His Excellencies Lok Chum Chhor Bonavy and Sour Yara. They were treated to Western and Khmer food and enjoyed Khmer traditional music played with classical instruments.

Than Rina, owner of Your Beauty Spa and student Than Dina

Srey Sophon, from the Victoria Hotel, and Phlong Bora, from the Vinagolf Angkor Hotel

Keo Soklinna; Cheung Sokha, general manager at the Angkor Holiday Hotel; and Vat Is Pirath, assistant sales and marketing manager at the Victoria Hotel

Ouch Sophy, general manager of the Asian Square Restaurant and Lounge

Khun Thanet, from the Tara Hotel, and Chea Malen, sales manager at the Sokha Hotel

Students Mut Davy and Mut Dalin

Thon Molyka, senior sales executive, and Van Chan Rith, NGO Marom Restaurant

Run Sitha, from Green Era Travel, and Run Vichna, from About Asia

Cheas Penh, managing director of CIC Cambodia, and Chun Sok Panha, resident director of finance at the Park Hyatt hotel

Ito Yumiko, operator, and Hoshino Hiromi, general manager, of Happy Smile Tours, with Ly Kheang, from the Asian Square Restaurant and Lounge

Thy Chhay, from Korean Air, Tuon Lida, business development officer at Cambodia Airports, and Oum KongKea

Lean Boramy from the City River Hotel; Ty Sokheng and Hong Heng, from the National Museum; and Veng Chantha, from Tringle Ma

Emma Lese from the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies

Jo Crisp, from Peak Adventure Travel, Alex Kong and Srey Kloeng

Seafood company owner Eong Sichhay

Lun Reaksa, operations executive at Indochina Partner Travel

Thy Chanra, restuarant assistant at the Pacific Hotel; Sang Sivuthy, general manager at the Pacific Hotel; Mut Vanda, assistant director of sales at the Ree Hotel; and Lek Komsan

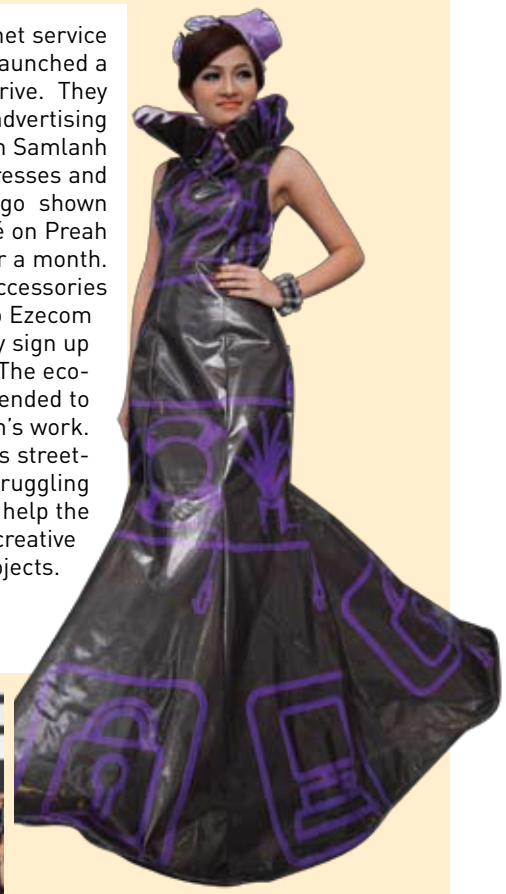
Chheong Leakhena, who works at the Ree Hotel; Lam Vichet, sales executive at the Ree Hotel; Yin Anita; and Un Sophy, from the Sokhalay Hotel

Om Lalin, sales co-ordinator at the Asian Square Restaurant & Lounge, Om Vannsy and Om Kimseun, owner of the Ratanak Sambath diamond shop

A violin band from Siem Reap serenaded the party all night

Charity exhibit parades eco-friendly fashion drive

On 23 August internet service provider Ezecom launched a special eco-fashion drive. They donated their old advertising banners to the NGO Mith Samlanh who made it into dresses and accessories. They will go shown at the Ezecom e-café on Preah Sihanouk Boulevard for a month. The dresses and accessories will be given out to Ezecom customers when they sign up with the company. The eco-friendly exhibition is intended to highlight Mith Samlah's work. The organisation supports street-children and people struggling to find work. They also help the community to develop creative projects.



Oeun Leaklita, Model

Tabu, Presenter at MyTV

Inge Olde Rikkert, Marketing Manager at Ezecom

James Sutherland, International Communications Coordinator at Friends International

Srun Sreypov, a student at Friends International, model Oeun Leaklita and Kong Sreylen, also a student at Friends International

Semi-final in race to find face of Hiruscar at Legend cinema

Soth Simarch, general manager at Magic Gecko; Virath Chau, from the Heritage International School; Princess Soma Norodom; and Sopheary Cheng, from Fruit Nirvava

Ryan Drewe Taylor and Kanary Sros

Singers Nop Bayarith Chhit Sovanpanha and Tito In from Hong Meas Production

Nana Lee, Roxy Leak and Roxy Leap

Local and international stars enjoyed a night at the Legend Cinema on August 25 for the semi-final of the competition to find the new face of Hiruscar skin care. Judges picked the 10 best to go through to the final in the race to win the US $1000 top prize. The top 10 will also model clothes at Cambodia Fashion Week.

Singers Nop Bayarith and Chhit Sovanpanha, from Hong Meas Production

Khemera Ngy, director at NOVA

Artist Em Riem and Kim Hong

Kuy Danich, a Sapor model, and Leang Syna, from the Sapor Modelling Agency

Mirjam Vigier, managing director of Siren Media

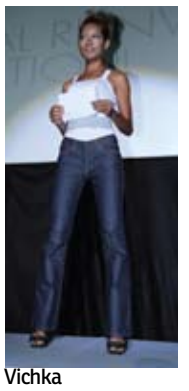
Dah Lee, co-founder and partner at the Edge Management Group

Srey Pich

Tat Sukin

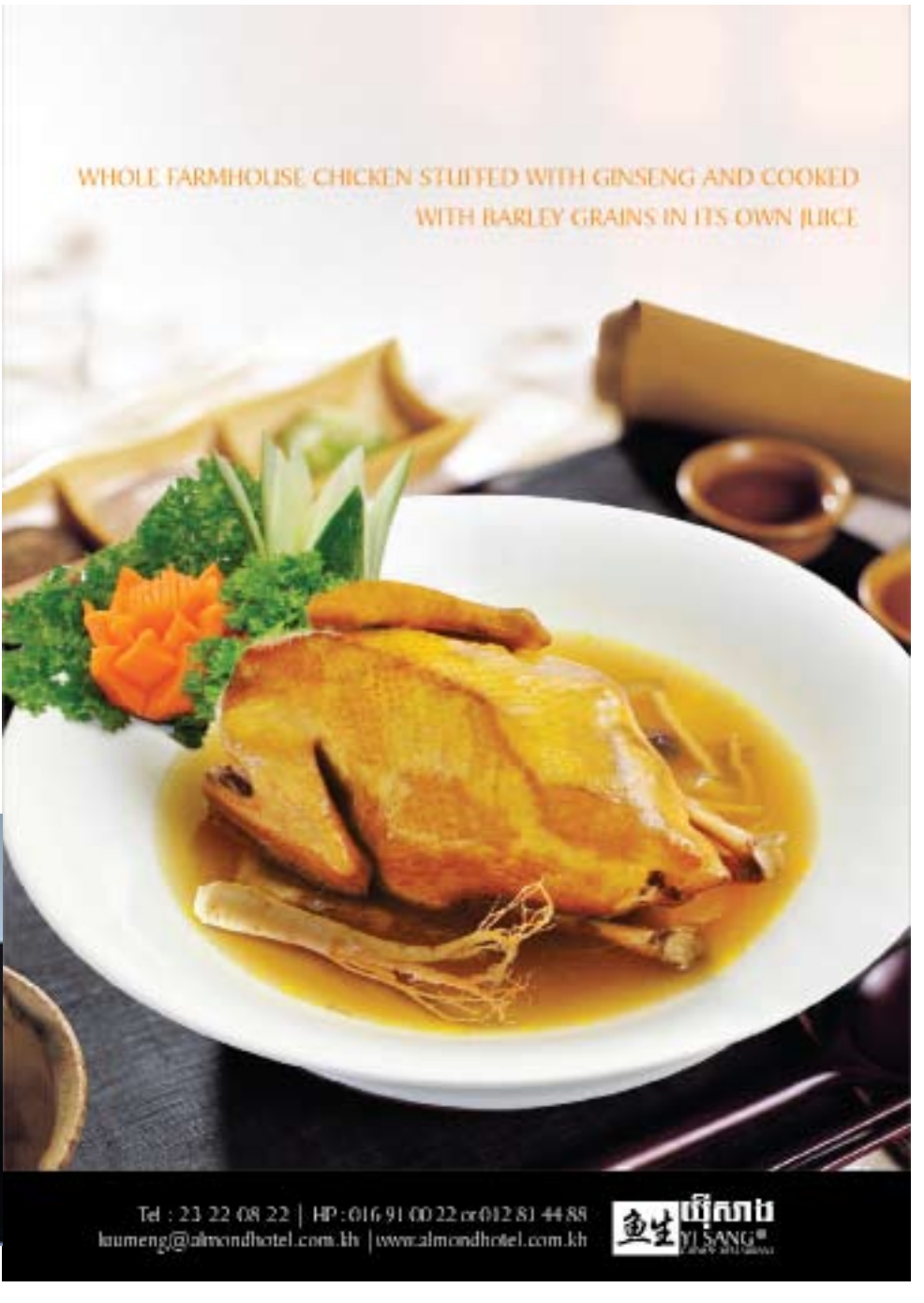
Chally Dung

Vuthina



Vichka

Hiruscar competition models



Sport

Thin Seng Hong to fly the flag at Paralympic Games

Yeun Ponlok and Dan Riley

THIN Seng Hong, Cambodia's sole representative at the 2012 Paralympic Games, set off for London on Friday ahead of her participation in the women's 100-metre and 200-metre T44 competitions. The T44 group of ambulant athletes with a disability are classified by the International Paralympic Committee as those with a unilateral below knee amputation or equivalent. Preliminary heats for the women's 100-metre T44 are this Saturday, with the final on Sunday. Women's 200-metre T44 heats are on September 5 with the final the following day.

The Kampong Cham native, 26, lost her right leg when she was 10 years old after stepping on an anti-personal mine. Running with a carbon-fibre blade in place of her missing limb, Seng Hong has become one of the Kingdom's most prolific athletes with a disability, capturing gold in the 400-metre and silvers over 100-metre and 200-metre at the 6th ASEAN ParaGames in Solo, Indonesia, last December.

She said she was determined to break her personal bests in her events in London, being inspired by the chance to race against the world's top athletes.

"The real problem for me is the [cold] weather in London. Also, my [prosthetic racing] limb is not a new model. Other athletes will have better models," Seng Hong told the *Post* before her departure.

Seng Hong set her record times in Indonesia last year, running the 100 metres in 17.13 seconds and 200 metres in 36.07 seconds. American sprinter April Holmes currently holds both of the women's T44 world records over the same distances – 12.98 in the 100 metres and 27.10 in the 200 metres set in 2006 and 2008 respectively. The 39-year-old is competing in both races in London, where she will look to retain her 100-metres gold medal from Beijing.

Should Seng Hong succeed in achieving qualification for the finals of either of her events, she would set a new precedent for Cambodian Paralympians. The Kingdom's representatives have failed to progress from the opening rounds in all previous editions.

At the 2000 Sydney Games, the men's standing volleyball team won just two sets during five group match losses against the likes of gold medallists Germany, bronze medalists Slovakia, USA, Israel and Poland. However, they bowed out on a high note, beating Australia 3-2.

At the 2004 Athens Games, men's T44 sprinter Nhork Kimhor did not advance past the first round with times of 12.93 and 26.55 over 100 metres and 200 metres respectively. Four years later in Beijing, Kim Vanna set slower times in identical events to also miss out on the final.

Yi Veasna, executive director of the National Centre of Disabled Persons and general secretary of the National Paralympic Committee of Cambodia and who requires a wheelchair having had both legs amputated after contracting polio as a child, is heading the Cambodian delegation bound for London. He is being accompanied by his wife as his personal assistant, while Thin Seng Hong's assistant coach Mao Sochea will also travel after getting the nod ahead of national team coach Phay Sok. TRANSLATIONS BY UNG CHAMROEUN ■

Thin Seng Hong displays her gold medal won at the 2011 ASEAN ParaGames in Indonesia. The sprinter will represent the Kingdom at the London Paralympics, which start on Wednesday. YEUN PONLOK

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Pressure builds on Deans

Greg Stutchbury

AUSTRALIA'S failure to regain the Bledisloe Cup from New Zealand has upped the pressure on under-fire coach Robbie Deans and raised questions as to whether he will see out his contract.

The Wallabies were humbled 22-0 by the world champions at Eden Park in Auckland on Saturday, continuing their run of losses at the ground stretching back to 1986.

It was also the first time in 50 years Australia had failed to score against the All Blacks, whose defence swamped an attacking Wallabies backline capable of destroying most other teams when the mood takes them.

The All Blacks' victory ensured they retained the Bledisloe Cup for a 10th successive season and made the third match in Brisbane, which is not part of the Rugby Championship, a dead rubber before both sides embark on northern hemisphere tours.

Deans' contract runs until after the British and Irish Lions tour of Australia next year, but after a 14th loss in 17 internationals against their trans-Tasman rivals with the New Zealander at the helm, the drums will be beating louder for a change.

New Zealand's Cory Jane gets away from Michael Hooper of Australia in their Bledisloe Cup match. REUTERS

But he told reporters in Auckland on Saturday that his side had met a team showing the confidence of their World Cup triumph last year, and few would have matched them.

"Let's give credit to the All Blacks. That was an outstanding performance," Deans was quoted as saying by New Zealand's *Herald on Sunday* newspaper.

"They're a side playing with the confidence of being world champions, and I don't think there's any side in the world that could have footed it with them tonight — including ourselves, obviously."

Meanwhile, Argentina stood on the brink of a remarkable first victory over South Africa in their second Rugby Championship match, before the Springboks rallied to snatch a 16-16 draw.

The match had looked like ending in a perfect home debut for the Pumas, famously tough opponents on Argentine soil long before their entry into their first annual major tournament. REUTERS ■

Don't cry for me, says Armstrong

LANCE Armstrong was back on his bike on Saturday, urging his supporters not to cry for him a day after the United States Anti-Doping Agency's (USADA) decision to strip his seven Tour de France titles and ban him for life.

In his first public appearance since announcing he would no longer fight doping charges brought by USADA, Armstrong finished second in a 36-mile mountain bike race in Aspen, Colorado, five minutes behind a 16-year-old rider, Keegan Swirbul.

Wearing sunglasses and black and gold riding gear adorned with sponsors' logos, Armstrong appeared unfussed by the media throng that had travelled to the mountain resort amid concerns his legacy has been irrevocably tarnished.

"Nobody needs to cry for me. I'm going to be great," Armstrong told reporters.

"I have five great kids and a wonderful lady in my life. My foundation is unaffected by all the noise out there.

"I think people understand that we've got a lot of stuff to do going forward. That's what I'm focused on, and I think people are supportive of that. It's great to be out here," he said.

Despite giving up the fight against the charges, Armstrong has maintained his innocence and railed against what he says is an unfair witch hunt.

The Texas-born cyclist, who famously beat cancer and whose foundation, Livestrong, has raised hundreds of millions of dollars in the fight against the disease, has retained major sponsors and enjoyed the backing of many key cycling figures.

Others, including WADA chief John Fahey, say his failure to contest his charges can only mean he is a drug cheat who has defrauded the cycling tour, his rivals and millions of sports fans for more a decade.

The Armstrong case has yet to rest, with cycling's global governing body, the International Cycling Union, demanding USADA hand over its evidence. The Court of Arbitration for Sport could ultimately have a final say on his guilt or innocence. REUTERS ■

KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS AND TRANSPORT
INVITATION FOR BIDS

Date: 27 August 2012
ADB Loan No. 2373-CAM (SF) and Government of Australia Grant 0096-CAM – GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION - SOUTHERN COASTAL CORRIDOR PROJECT (SCCP)
SCCP – CW5 – Road Safety Billboards on National Roads
Deadline for Bids submission: 10 October 2012

1. The Kingdom of Cambodia has received a loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and a grant from the Government of Australia towards the cost of the GMS SOUTHERN COASTAL CORRIDOR PROJECT. Part of the grant will be used for payments under the contract above. Bidding is open to bidders from eligible source countries of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The eligibility rules and procedures of ADB will govern the bidding process.

2. The Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT) ("the Employer") of the Kingdom of Cambodia invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF ROAD SAFETY BILLBOARDS ON NATIONAL ROADS. The Road Safety Billboards comprising the Works are sited at 79 no strategic locations along national roads and 5 no locations within Phnom Penh. The Civil Works comprise construction of 84 no reinforced concrete footings and fabrication and erection of 84 no steel mono-pole columns and steel support frames for dual faced signs approximately 7.50 m high. The Signage Works consist of the fabrication and installation of 168 no metal backing panels and vinyl sheet facing of 6.0m x 4.0 m sign panels including safety messages and artwork/ graphics. The work also includes compliance with the Project's Environmental Management Plan (EMP), which is included in the Specifications.

3. Only eligible bidders that meet the following requirements should participate in this bidding:

   – all pending litigation shall be treated as resolved against the Bidder and so shall in total not represent more than seventy five (75) percent of the Bidder's net worth;
   – minimum average annual construction turnover of US$ 1 million calculated as total certified payments received for contracts in progress or completed, within the last three (3) years.;
   – financial resources, in terms of at least his latest year's working capital and lines of credit, will be adequate to cover his Bid Price and current work;
   – experience under construction contracts in the role of contractor, subcontractor, or management contractor for at least the last five (5) years prior to the applications submission deadline;
   – participation as contractor, management contractor, or subcontractor, in at least two (2) contracts within the last six (6) years, each with a value of at least US$ 0.24 million that have been successfully or are substantially completed and that are similar to the proposed works; and
   – experience in both design and construction of civil works, i.e reinforced concrete and fabricated steel structures, and in the design, supply, installation and finishing of large roadside billboards and signs, including sign graphics and artwork, as well as implementation of an Environmental Management Plan or an equivalent strategy to mitigate environmental impacts of the works (Lead Firm only).

4. The Procurement will be done through National Competitive Bidding (NCB) in accordance with ADB's Single-Stage :One – Envelope Bidding Procedure.

5. To obtain further information and inspect the bidding documents in English, bidders should contact:

   Project Management Unit 3
   Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT)
   4th Floor, Northern Building, Corner Norodom Blvd. & St. 106
   Phnom Penh, Cambodia
   Tel. 855 23 724 565 Facsimile: 855 23 724 595
   e-mail: psovicheano@online.com.kh

6. A complete set of bidding documents may be purchased by interested eligible bidders on submission of a written application to the address above from 27 August 2012 from 7:30 to 12:00 and from 14:00 to 17:30 local time and upon confirmation of payment of a non-refundable fee of US$200 in the bank mentioned below. In case bidders are from within Cambodia, the bidding documents can be obtained from the above address while for those outside the country the bidding documents will be couriered if requested, upon confirmation of payment including courier fees of US$ 100.

   Bank: National Bank of Cambodia
   Acct Name: MEF Current Account
   Acct No: 000000001333

7. Bids shall be delivered:

   - to the address above
   - on or before the deadline: 10 October 2012, on or before 15:00 hours local time
   - together with a bid security of US$ 10,000.00, or an equivalent amount in a freely convertible currency.

   The bid security shall be, at the bidder's option, in any of the following forms:

   (a) an unconditional bank guarantee;

   (b) an irrevocable letter of credit; or

   (c) a cashier's or certified check;

   all from a reputable source from an eligible country.

   Bids will be opened at 15:30 hours local time on the same day thereafter in the presence of bidder's representatives who choose to attend.

8. When comparing bids, ADB's Domestic Preference Scheme will not be applied in accordance with the provisions stipulated in the bidding documents

9. MPWT will not be responsible for any costs or expenses incurred by the Bidders in connection with the preparation of Bid.

Coaches attend FIFA MA Coaching Course

THIRTY football coaches and assistant coaches from Cambodian league clubs and national teams concluded their FIFA MA Coaching Course on Friday. The four-day course, organised by the Football Federation of Cambodia in collaboration with the sport's world governing body, was led by Australian coaching expert Kelly Cross, with Naga Corp coach Prak Sovannara as his assistant. Cross aimed to strengthen the coaches' capacity to build football teams through technical knowledge and lessons in refereeing, administration and medical matters. Nine newly certified A-Licence coaches, including men's national team head coach Hok Sochetra, also attended the course. UNG CHAMROEUN

Juve win, Fiorentina grab victory late on

CHAMPIONS Juventus enjoyed a 2-0 victory over Parma with banned coach Antonio Conte watching in the stands, and Fiorentina came from behind to grab a last-minute win in the first matches of the Serie A season on Saturday. Second-half goals from Stephan Lichtsteiner and Andrea Pirlo were enough for Juve in a match that could have been postponed due to a downpour in the lead up, as fans made their feelings about the punishment of their coach for his involvement in match-fixing clear with a series of chants. REUTERS

SATURDAY'S RESULTS

English Premier League
- Swansea 3 West Ham 0
- Aston Villa 1 Everton 3
- Man United 3 Fulham 2
- Norwich 1 QPR 1
- Southampton 0 Wigan 2
- Sunderland v Reading
  Postponed due to waterlogged pitch
- Tottenham 1 West Brom 1
- Chelsea 2 Newcastle 0

Spanish La Liga
- R. Sociedad 2 Celta de Vigo 1
- Espanyol 1 Real Zaragoza 2
- Real Betis 1Rayo Vallecano 2
- Malaga 1 Mallorca 1

Italian Serie A
- Fiorentina 2 Udinese 1
- Juventus 2 Parma 0

German Bundesliga
- Augsburg 0 Fort. Dusseldorf 2
- B. M'gladbach 2 Hoffenheim 1
- Gr. Furth 0 Bayern Munich 3
- Hamburg 0 Nuremberg 1
- Freiburg 1 Mainz 1
- E. Frankfurt 2 B. Leverkusen 1
- Stuttgart 0 Wolfsburg 1

On Friday
- B. Dortmund 2 W. Bremen 1

French Ligue 1
- Nice 2 Lille 2
- Nancy 0 Toulouse 1
- Reims 1 Sochaux 0
- Rennes 3 Bastia 2
- Troyes 2 Lorient 2
- Valenciennes 3 AC Ajaccio 0

On Friday
- Evian T.G. 1 Lyon 1

TONIGHT'S FIXTURES

Spanish La Liga
- Valladolid v Levante – 1am
- Atletico Madrid v Athletic Bilbao – 3am

Raid-Alaxan reeled in by Team Sharky in overtime

H S Manjunath

TEAM Sharky lived up to their name in thrashing back against the mighty Raid-Alaxan FR in a fierce battle that was grudgingly settled in extra time on Saturday.

The heightened excitement of Team Sharky's 61-54 victory ended Raid-Alaxan's two-week unbeaten run in the Cambodia Basketball Challenge presented by Banzai and Sabay at the Beeline Arena.

Curran Hendry, just back after a trip to Scotland, produced one stunning basket for Sharky with barely 25 seconds left in the fourth quarter that would turn the contest on its head.

Raid-Alaxan, who had jumped into an early lead, managed to cling on to it for all of 39 minutes before Team Sharky began their counter-attack. Hendry's basket tied the game at 50-50, forcing extra time, which Team Sharky quickly turned into their advantage as Colin Meyn hit back-to-back three-pointers.

Meyn top scored for Team Sharky with 24 points with team-mate Jeff Kane adding 14.

Raid-Alaxan could hardly raise their own game, and the side's leading scorer Aimar Sabayo, who accounted for every one of his side's 18 points in the second half, went scoreless in extra time. Overall, Sabayo was easily the most productive, tallying 26 points, his third straight over-20-points game.

Well before this dramatic finish unfolded, Sabay Salty Crabs rolled into their third victory, this time shutting off CCPL Heat 51-44. The Crabs led early and kept going, and at one stage had a 20-point lead early in the third quarter.

The Heat tried to make a desperate run in the fourth quarter, but it was far too late to make any impact.

Team Sharky's Curran Hendry (centre) drives to the hoop during their Cambodia Basketball Challenge game against Raid-Alaxan FR on Saturday at Beeline Arena. Team Sharky won 61-54 in overtime. SRENG MENG SRUN

Served well by Im Pronita's triple of three-pointers, the Crabs, who remain the only unbeaten side, owed their victory to Sokhun Vireak (9 points) and Kim Veng Ngoun (8). For CCPL Heat, Sok Tour and Sovan Panha scored 13 points apiece.

In a game dominated by fast breaks and a horde of three-pointers, the all-Cambodian team Sela Meas posted the highest score and the biggest winning margin of the competition so far when beating HTPS Mike's Burger Knights 85-59.

Sok Pagna drilled five three-pointers, four of them in the third quarter, as Sela Meas took a firm hold and picked scores of over 20 in all the four quarters. Pheng Dara came into his own with some slick shooting for a personal tally of 18 points.

For the Knights, who found the pace too hot to handle, Mark Ruel (18) did well in the company of Jaypee Garcia and Jurizze Santiago, who each contributed 15 points.

Successive defeats had only made Phnom Penh Dragons more determined than ever to break the ice, and the team achieved that goal without much ado, beating Mobitel XG Warriors 79-71.

The Dragons jumped into an early 8-0 lead, thanks to successive three-pointers by Jerry Roxas, who by the end of the game added three more to emerge as the side's top scorer with 17. Admirable support came from Kelvin Chan (14).

For the Warriors, Josua Schmitz (21) and Jerry Manus (18) fought bravely.

Sabay Salty Crabs lead the Week 3 standings with nine points, ahead of Team Sharky, Raid-Alaxan FR and Sela Meas, all on seven points. ■

Rooney faces four weeks out after gashed leg

WAYNE Rooney faces at least four weeks on the sidelines after picking up a badly gashed knee at the end of Saturday's game against Fulham. The striker will miss England's World Cup qualifiers against Moldova and Ukraine next month as a result of being caught by Hugo Rodallega's studs as the pair challenged for the same ball following a free kick.

"It's a very bad one, he's gone straight to hospital," Sir Alex Ferguson said.

Several players near the incident on the pitch recoiled in horror at the sight of the gaping wound, but the injury is thought to be just a deep cut with no added complications.

"I don't know quite what happened. I think the player followed through and caught him but Wayne is going to be missing for maybe four weeks," the United manager said. "It was just an accident."

If Manchester United are going to have to manage without Rooney during September they made a start on Saturday. The England man began the game on the bench, with Robin van Persie up front and Shinji Kagawa just behind him, and each managed their first goals for the club in a 3-2 win.

Van Persie's equaliser was probably the pick of United's goals, an unanswerable left-foot half-volley that gave the Fulham goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer little chance after Patrice Evra had sent over a cross from the left.

"It was a fantastic goal from Robin to get off the mark," Ferguson said. "It was his first full game for us and he will develop a better understanding with the other players as time goes on.

"That goal lifted the team, from that moment on we played very, very well, but instead of winning by four or five goals, as we should have done, we gave away a goal in the second half through bad defending and suddenly it became a match again when it should never have been a match.

"Once again, it was all a bit too nervy as the end, when we should have been in easy street."

Fulham manager Martin Jol actually agreed with Ferguson about United being up to half a dozen goals better. "We had a good win last week, put playing here is a little bit different to playing at home against Norwich," Jol said.

"Even though we scored an early goal, we were still not full of confidence, and United played so well in the first half I thought it might be a really bad day for us. We just couldn't keep up with Tom Cleverley and Anderson, but we managed to win the second half 1-0, so it was a game of two totally different halves." THE GUARDIAN ■

Man United's Wayne Rooney receives treatment on an injured knee before being stretchered off the pitch during the match against Fulham. REUTERS

Clijsters praised as role model before last slam

Will Swanton

MARIA Sharapova and Andy Murray led a torrent of praise for Kim Clijsters on Saturday as the three-time US Open champion prepared for the final tournament of her storied career.

Clijsters is chasing a fairytale ending at Flushing Meadows before retiring at the age of 29. She first retired in 2007 but returned two years later to become the first wildcard to win the US Open and the first mother to win a major championship since Australian Evonne Goolagong Cawley in 1980.

"What's there to say about Kim?" Sharapova said. "There's so many great things besides the fact she's been an incredible tennis player and champion. She's someone that went away from the sport to commit herself to being a mother and a good wife and then coming back and being a professional and winning a few more grand slams.

"She was always so focused and determined. One of the best athletes the game saw in women's tennis," Sharapova said.

"And just a really great person, very humble. At the end of the day, just a down-to-Earth person that reflected on life in a very good way."

Clijsters praised Murray's ability to handle pressure at Wimbledon this year and the Scot returned the favour in New York.

"As a person, which is much more important than the tennis, she's a lovely person," Murray said.

He also admired the competitive side of Clijsters, Murray said.

"Early in her career she obviously had a lot of tough losses. She was competing with Justine Henin and a lot of pressure came with that. She lost a lot of tough matches to Henin. She managed to turn that around after taking a break. To come back to win a slam, or a couple more slams, is pretty incredible.

"I'm sure she will be remembered as one of the best players of the last 15, 20 years, and also one of the best people."

Venus Williams said Clijsters' successful return to the tour in 2009 fuelled hope that her own recovery from an autoimmune disease was possible.

"Kim has had a resurgence like no other, coming back to win two majors," Williams said.

"I think she's inspiration for everyone who has said if you put your mind to it, if you have a dream, you can do whatever you want."

Top seed Victoria Azarenka described Clijsters as the ideal role model. "For the kids she's one of the people who you always like to be around," she said. "Obviously a lot of people love here. She's definitely one everybody is going to miss." REUTERS ■

Belgium's Kim Clijsters will play in her last grand slam tournament, the 2012 US Open which starts today, before retiring from the game. REUTERS

Australia win but Afghanistan impress in ODI

AUSTRALIA won the match but Afghanistan won plenty of admirers before going down by 66 runs in their one-day international in Sharjah.

Playing only their second ODI against an established side, Afghanistan restricted Michael Clarke's team to 272-8 before responding with 206 all out from 43.5 overs.

"It was a big occasion and we learnt a lot from the experience of playing Australia," Afghanistan captain Nawroz Mangal told reporters through an interpreter.

"I'm satisfied with the performance of my team. We couldn't put runs on the board in the top order but Australia are a major team and they know how to win."

The match actually spanned two days, starting at 6pm local time (9pm Cambodian time) on Saturday and finishing at 1:30am the following day in an effort to combat the extreme heat of the United Arab Emirates summer.

There was no direct sunlight for the players to contend with but extremely high humidity allied to a temperature that never dipped below 30 degrees Celsius made it as much a case of the survival of the fittest as a cricket match.

Afghanistan, who lost by seven wickets to Pakistan in February in their previous ODI encounter with a leading side, now head to Trinidad to continue preparations for the ICC World Twenty20 tournament in Sri Lanka next month, which they have qualified for along with Ireland. REUTERS ■

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