

MARINE SAFETY NEWS

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

Unity can only be manifested by the Binary. Unity itself and the idea of Unity are already two. - Buddha

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China, Russia Eye Expanded Ties

BEIJING - China and Russia discussed expansion of economic cooperation on Monday, paving way for Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's upcoming visit to China.

In a nearly two-hour discussion Monday morning, Vice-Premier Wang Qishan and his Russian counterpart Alexander Zhukov expressed willingness to explore new directions for bilateral economic and trade co-operation.

"In the next phase, China and Russia will make efforts to maintain the rapid growth of bilateral trade and improve trade structure," Wang said at the 15th meeting of the Joint Commission for the Regular Meetings of Heads of Government of China and Russia.

Wang said the two countries will discuss building a special economic zone in Russia, expanding local currency settlement in trade, pushing forward key co-operative projects in space cooperation, and promoting infrastructure construction.

China has become Russia's top trading partner, and trade volume this year is expected to exceed USD70 billion, he said.

"The two countries should give full play to their respective advantages to expand

co-operation in scope and depth," Wang said.

"We totally have the ability and confidence to maintain the sound momentum of Sino-Russian economic co-operation, create new directions in energy resources, high technology, infrastructure, finance and tourism, and realise the goal of making trade reach USD100 billion by 2015 and then to USD200 billion by 2020," Wang said.

China will also enhance communication and co-ordination with Russia within the framework of the Group of 20 (G20), BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), and the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO), Wang said.

Zhukov said the two sides conducted candid and detailed discussions in economy and trade fields during the meeting, including bolstering customs co-operation, issues concerning Russia's entry into the World Trade Organisation, and co-operation in long-range wide-body aircraft.

Zhukov expressed appreciation for China's consistent support for Russia's entry into the WTO. (Xinhua)

Ministry Wants Standards For Edible Bird Nests

BEIJING - The government is preparing to establish a national standard for chemicals in edible bird nests after excessive amounts of nitrite were found in bird nests imported from Malaysia in August.

The Ministry of Health is collecting data and doing research to set up a standard for chemical nitrite, Zhang Xudong, an official with the ministry's food safety and health standards department, said in an interview on Monday.

On August 15, the industry and commerce administration of Zhejiang province said that excessive amounts of sodium nitrate were found in edible bird nests imported from Malaysia. Sodium nitrate is used to produce food preservatives and fertilisers.

Although it is widely used to cure meat, nitrite can cause health problems, including cancer, if ingested in large amounts. Spot checks on rare "blood-red" bird nests from 491 dealers in Zhejiang found an average 4,400 mg of sodium nitrite per kg, far above the allowed cap of 70 mg per kg. (Xinhua)

Thai Govt: 13 Chinese Sailors Confirmed Dead

BANGKOK - Thai authorities on Monday confirmed that all the 13 Chinese crewmen on two ships which were hijacked yesterday while sailing on the Mekong River were killed. The Thai government identified the attackers as members of a drug ring based in northern Thailand.

Investigators suspected that a faction from the Shan, or Tai Yai ethnic group, led by Nor Kham was responsible for the incident, Seramsak Seesan, chief of Chiang Rai's Chiang Saen District, where the incident occurred, told Xinhua.

Seramsak's words corroborated the investigation of the Army. Maj Gen Prakarn Chonlayuth, commander of the Pa Muang Task Force, Thailand's border force, said the Nor Kham drugs gang killed all the crew members of any vessel which refused to pay protection money to the gang. He believed that that is what happened in this case.

Nor Kham, 40, wanted in both Thailand and Myanmar with arrest warrants for drugs trafficking, had reportedly expanded his criminal activities to include the collection of protection money from Chinese-flagged cargo ships, Prakarn said.

The gang have been hijacked ships plying the river and demanded protection money from them.

If they refused to pay, they kill the crew and take over the ships to deliver drugs from Burma to Thailand, he added. About 400 armed men are thought to belong to the Nor Kham drugs gang, said Permpong Chavalit, deputy secretary-general of the Office of the Narcotics Control Board. (Xinhua)

Heavy Fog Shuts Roads, Flights In North

SHIJIAZHUANG - Heavy fog in north, central and east China snarled traffic, closed highways and stranded flyers on Monday. The National Meteorological Centre (NMC) on Monday renewed its code blue alert for heavy fog in the provinces of Hebei, Shandong, Jiangsu, Anhui and Yunnan, as well as Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

Visibility will drop to less than one kilometre in some of the affected regions, while other places will suffer slight air pollution as the fog persists into Tuesday, according to the NMC.

In north China's Hebei Province, low visibility has led to the closure of eight highways, prompting warnings for dangerous road conditions and extended gridlock.

The fog also caused 48 flights at the province's Shijiazhuang Airport to be cancelled until Monday afternoon. The Hebei Provincial Meteorological Station said the fog will last until Thursdays, when a cold front will replace the fog with rain. (Xinhua)

Reward Eyed For Ticket Buyers As Lottery Pot Rises

BEIJING - Lottery ticket buyers in China may receive as much as CNY15 million by spending just two yuan for a welfare lottery ticket.

Starting from October 20, any player who wins the ShuangSeQiu ("Double Coloured Ball"), China's biggest welfare lottery, will receive a bonus of CNY5 million, the country's Welfare Lottery Distribution and Management Centre said on Tuesday. The maximum prize amount is currently capped at CNY10 million.

The move is aimed at rewarding the public for their contribution to the welfare lottery programme, as annual sales of lottery tickets have reached nearly CNY100 billion, according to the centre.

The total bonus amounts to CNY200 million, which will be given out over the course of 40 lottery drawing days at a rate of CNY5 million per day, the centre said. The bonus prize marks the sixth large-scale reward initiative to be launched since the Double Coloured Ball lottery was kicked off in 2003. (Xinhua)

MARINE NEWS SUMMARY

CONTAINER VESSELS: NEXT-GENERATION WILL BE LARGEST EVER

If the need is for greater efficiency for road and rail freight during an economic slowdown, standard operating procedures might be to downgrade to smaller and lighter means of overland transport. Shipping lines, however, have a different approach: they build bigger ships. The reason, they say, is better economies of scale, costing them less to send a string of three or four huge new ships across the oceans instead of a larger fleet of smaller vessels. These bigger and newer ships will also have more efficient engines and lower emissions, which also means lower fuel costs, as the company hopes an everlasting impression on its customers. One shipping giant is reportedly spending USD 1.9 billion on 10 new ships, each of which will carry 18,000 TEUs. The new Ultra Large Container Ships (ULCS) will be more than 1,312 feet long and more than 193 feet wide, and will outdo cargo capacity of the world's largest container vessel currently afloat, by 16%. The company's chief executive said that building ULCSs was not only a top priority for the firm but also for its customers, who are heavily dependent upon this in their supply chain. Five years ago, the world's largest container ship had a TEU capacity of 9,500. According to a Paris-based maritime research firm, the container carriers' answer to challenges of sustainable shipping and reduction of emissions is to build ever-larger ships, whose sizes have doubled over a decade.

Art and culture groups at the prefecture and county levels will receive subsidies ranging from CNY200,000 to CNY250,000 per year according to their size, said Abliz Abdurehim, director of Xinjiang's Department of Culture.

In 2011, all art and culture groups will receive fixed subsidies. But starting in 2012, they will be required to stage a minimum number of public performances to receive the subsidies, according to Abliz Abdurehim. Several art and culture groups, especially those at the grassroots level, have been experiencing difficulties due to a lack of funding. (Xinhua)

WWF Recruits Panda Watchers

SICHUAN - International conservation group World Wildlife Fund is recruiting four panda watchers for a five-day research and patrol programme in the wilderness of Sichuan Province.

The ideal candidates should be avid bloggers who are eager to share text, photos and video of their experiences with other Internet users, WWF said on its microblog at Weibo (www.weibo.com).

Other qualifications include advanced photography skills, a love of animals, a desire to help protect critically-endangered wild pandas and good physical health - as the panda watchers will need to hike eight hours a day in the wild mountains, it said. Applications are open online from October 8 to 14.

The programme, scheduled to run from October 23 to 27, will be held at the Heizhugou Nature Reserve in Ebian County in the suburbs of Leshan.

The panda watchers will take two routes into the reserve, where they will use GPS and ultrared cameras to identify and record traces of wild pandas, and share their findings with WWF's panda researchers and local villagers. (Xinhua)

REGIONAL NEWS

Northwest China in Focus

News from around Northwest China over the past seven days. (In tomorrow's issue: North China)

Xinjiang Province To Subsidise Cultural Performances

URUMQI - The government of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region will earmark CNY100 million to subsidise local art and culture groups and encourage more non-profit performances, local officials said Monday.

Wang Fuqiang, deputy director of Xinjiang's Department of Finance, said the money will be provided to help art groups cover salaries, costume fees, rent and maintenance charges for their equipment over the next five years.

Heavy Fog To Continue In Central, Eastern China

SHAANXI - Meteorological authorities on Sunday issued a blue-coded alert for heavy fog across the country's central and eastern regions, predicting low visibility in the regions from Sunday night to Monday morning.

Mist will envelop Shaanxi Province in the northwest, most parts of northern China, regions in the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River, the Huaihe River and the Yangtze River, as well as the northern part of the southern China region and the eastern part of southwest China, the National Meteorological Center (NMC) said.

Visibility will drop to less than 1 km, or even below 500 meters, in the southern and eastern part of Hebei Province, the western part of Shandong Province, the southern part of Anhui Province, and the southwestern part of Hunan Province, according to the NMC's forecast. (Xinhua)

Jilin Province Launches 1st Train Tour To DPRK

JILIN - Northeast China's Jilin province on Saturday launched a group tour that will allow tourists to travel around the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) by train, local authorities said Sunday.

A group of 103 Chinese tourists have already arrived at the DPRK's city of Namyang, which is separated from east Jilin's city of Tumen by a river, according to the Tumen city government.

The tour group will travel by train to visit Mount Chilbo and the city of Chongjin in Hamgyong, visit hot spring spas in Kyongsong County, taste local delicacies and check out performances over the course of three days and four nights.

The train tour, the first of its kind offered by Jilin, is part of the province's efforts to promote cultural exchanges with the DPRK.

The province launched a one-day walking tour of Namyang in May 2008. China decided to grant approved outbound destination status to the DPRK in September 2008. The first Chinese group tour to the DPRK took place on April 12, 2010. (Xinhua)

Xinjiang Economic Zones Get Cabinet Support

XINJIANG - The State Council on Saturday unveiled guidelines giving more support to the construction of two economic development zones in the western Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

According to guidelines released on the central government's website, the State Council will adopt measures such as fiscal subsidies and tax preferences to facilitate the construction of the Kashgar and Korgas economic development zones located in western and southern Xinjiang.

The central government will work to develop the two zones into new sources of economic growth in Xinjiang and grow the cities of Kashgar and Yining as regional hubs for China's opening up to central, southern and western Asian countries as well as eastern Europe.

According to the guidelines, the central government will offer a certain amount of financial subsidies every year to the development of the two economic zones from 2011 to 2015, exempt qualified enterprises from business income taxes for five years, subsidise fixed-asset investment and offer government loans to qualified companies at discounted rates. (Xinhua)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Angela Merkel Leaves Crisis-Hit Eurozone For Asia

HANOI - German Chancellor Angela Merkel arrived in Vietnam on Tuesday, leaving behind the debt crisis raging in the eurozone to push a free trade deal and press the communist nation on human rights.

The trip, which will also take her to Mongolia, comes shortly after Merkel vowed with French President Nicolas Sarkozy a response within weeks to the economic storm which has raised fears for Europe's banking sector.

Ahead of the four-day visit, Merkel, who is accompanied by top business leaders eyeing investment opportunities, stressed the need to boost ties between the two fast-growing Asian nations and Europe's top economy.

"Vietnam is an emerging country in Asia, has enjoyed fast-paced economic growth in recent years and is increasingly becoming a competitor for large nations like China," Merkel said in her regular weekend podcast.

A senior government source in Berlin said Merkel would push a free-trade accord between the European Union and Vietnam, adding that Germany "is a very strong supporter" of such a deal.

Her trip comes after she and Sarkozy provided welcome relief to global markets by insisting they were united on plans to shore up eurozone lenders in the face of a debt crisis which has pushed Greece to the brink of bankruptcy. (AFP)

Libya Forces Drive To Centre Of Gaddafi Hometown

SIRTE - Libya's new regime forces were battling block by block towards the centre of Sirte, eyeing the symbolic prize of finally capturing Muammar Gaddafi's hometown after a month-long siege.

On the diplomatic front, Libya's ruling National Transitional Council said it recognises the Syrian National Council grouping opponents of President Bashar al-Assad, becoming the first government, albeit an interim one, to do so. But Gaddafi diehards were putting up fierce resistance and in their other remaining bastion, Bani Walid, they mounted a fightback, killing 17 NTC fighters.

The interim ruling NTC has been waiting for Sirte's full capture to declare the liberation of the whole of Libya, clearing the way to draw up a timetable for elections.

A column of NTC troops thrust towards central Sirte from positions east along the Mediterranean coast, coming under heavy rocket and small arms fire as they inched forward house by house. They advanced about a kilometre into the city centre from the south and east by the afternoon, backed by heavy shelling and tanks. (AFP)

Egypt Probes Deadly Sectarian Clashes

CAIRO - Egypt's military rulers ordered a speedy probe into clashes which killed 25 people, mostly Coptic Christians, as the cabinet held crisis talks and thousands attended the funerals of 17 victims.

FINANCIAL NEWS

FOREIGN EXCHANGE

USD 1 = CNY6.3483

Xinhua News Agency

The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) "tasked the government with quickly forming a fact finding committee to determine what happened," in a statement read on state television Monday as world leaders urged restraint.

It called for "all measures against all those proven to have been involved, either directly or by incitement".

Both the ruling military council and the cabinet held crisis talks, a day after the clashes in Cairo left 25 dead, most of them Copts, and more than 300 people injured, according to health ministry figures.

The SCAF, which took power when president Hosni Mubarak was ousted in February, stressed it "continues to bear national responsibility to protect the people" until it hands over to an elected civilian authority. Thousands of people attended a service at the Copt cathedral for the funerals of 17 demonstrators. (AFP)

Fresh Oil Spills In New Zealand

TAURANGA - New Zealand on Tuesday declared its worst maritime pollution disaster, as oil gushed into a pristine bay from a stranded container ship which was being pounded in heavy seas.

The crippled container vessel Rena, which hit a reef off the North Island coast last Wednesday, leaked up to 350 tonnes of heavy fuel after being further damaged in the storm, dwarfing an initial spill, maritime authorities said.

"I'd like to acknowledge this event has come to a stage where it is New Zealand's most significant maritime environmental disaster," Environment Minister Nick Smith told reporters at Tauranga.

Smith said there was little authorities could have done to prevent the disaster in the environmentally sensitive Bay of Plenty, where beaches have already been fouled with oil and some wildlife found dead or contaminated.

"It is my view that the tragic events we are seeing unfolding were absolutely inevitable from the point that the Rena ran onto the reef in the early hours of Wednesday morning," he said. The latest spill was much larger than an initial leak of 20 tonnes after the Liberian-flagged vessel ploughed into the reef, 22 kilometres offshore. (AFP)

Saudis Struggle To Find Affordable Housing

JEDDAH - Saudis, citizens of one of the world's wealthiest nations, are struggling to afford housing in a crisis spurred by urbanisation and a lack of competition in real estate.

 WEATHER

Beijing: 13c-22c Cloudy
 Guangzhou: 24c-29c Thunderstorms
 Shanghai: 19c-24c Sunny
 Hong Kong: 26c-28c Thunderstorms
 Macau: 26c-27c Thunderstorms

Less than 40% of Saudis are homeowners, and demand continues to outstrip supply in the property market, driving up prices and leaving low- and middle-income families with few options to buy or even rent.

A recent study by the construction and real estate conglomerate Binladin Group said the oil-rich Gulf kingdom needs one million new housing units over the next five years.

In March, King Abdullah ordered 500,000 housing units to be built within five years and set aside USD66 billion for the project, but the International Monetary Fund said last month that more needs to be done.

"To address the affordability of housing, mitigate the land prices, and increase the supply of land...the government must unlock the static supply of land," the IMF said in a report. At the core of the problem, analysts say, are the ultra-wealthy who own massive swathes of land in major cities and on their outskirts but do nothing with it. (AFP)

 SPORTS NEWS

Asian Women U19 - China, DPR Korea, Japan Take Lead

HANOI - After three days of the round-robin tournament, China, DPR Korea, and Japan are in the leading positions in Vietnam southern Ho Chi Minh City. According to Vietnam Football Federation (VFF) on Monday, each of the six teams, namely Australia, China, Japan, South Korea, DPR Korea, and Vietnam, already played three games.

The temporary top three were DPR Korea with nine points, Japan with seven and China with five.

China drew with South Korea 1-1, Japan edged Australia 1-0 and DPR Korea whitewashed Vietnam 5-0 on Monday.

After six more games on Oct 13 and 16, the official top three teams will qualify for the World U-20 Football Tournament in 2012. Vietnam lost all three games, scoring four goals with three of those in the game with Australia and the other one against China. Meanwhile, South Korea has one point and Australia with three. (Xinhua)

China, Iraq Face 'Critical' Clash

SINGAPORE - China and Iraq face a "critical" World Cup qualifying clash on Tuesday as Asia's big powers look set to step closer to the 2014 tournament in Brazil. Australia host Oman, Japan entertain Tajikistan and South Korea are at home to UAE in games the 'Big Three' should win easily as they march towards the fourth round. But China's match-up with Iraq is shaping up as a tense affair after Zico, coach of the 2007 Asian champions, called it a must-win.

The teams are level on points in Group A behind leaders Jordan with four rounds to play.

"The situation of Iraq in the qualifiers is critical, we have no choice other than victory against China," the Brazilian legend warned.

"China is good and well prepared team and will be playing at home. We have to be cautious but the players' confidence is sky-high." China coach Jose Antonio Camacho blasted his team as "lazy" and threatened to banish some players from his squad after last week's friendly against UAE, when they were forced to hang on for a 2-1 win. (AFP)

Former National Coach Eyes Asian Champions Berth

JINAN - Gao Hongbo, who took over as Chinese Super League club Shaanxi two weeks ago, said on Monday that he still thinks his team can win a berth in the Asian Champions League.

Gao, who quit as the Chinese national team last August after two years in the post, failed to give Shaanxi a win in his first match, seeing his team lose to the visiting Guangzhou Hengda 4-1 last weekend and drop to 10th.

"Frankly speaking, it's difficult to get a berth in Asia," Gao said. But that's still our top goal.

That is to say, we must get to top three at the end of the season. That's our first step.

The second is to win the Super League champion.

"The 45-year-old Gao stepped down after China edged Jamaica 1-0 in an international friendly at Hefei, East China's Anhui Province. "I had planned to go study abroad after leaving the national team.

The Chinese Football Association contacted several foreign clubs for me, but nothing was decided. And then Shaanxi offered me this job, which I could not refuse." (Xinhua)

11th Wushu Worlds - Li Wins Women's Taijiquan Gold

ANKARA - China's Li Xinyu won the first place in the women's Taijiquan competition in the championships held in Turkish capital Ankara, the WWC organising committee announced on Monday.

Li recorded the highest mark of 9.85 points among 16 competitors, while Indonesian athlete Guo Lijuan got the second place with 9.75 points and the Japanese competitor Ai Mayaoka shared the third place with Malaysian competitor Chai Fongying with 9.71 points. The full mark for Taijiquan competition is 10.

"I prepared a lot for this competition and experienced tough practices before I came here. And that is why I am rather confident in the competition," Li told Xinhua after the competition.

"To play Taijiquan well is quite difficult," said Liu Baoyu, a coach from Chinese Wushu team. "However, Li performed quite excellent thanks to her confidence during the performance." Li, the girl in her 20's, said that she started to practice Taijiquan when she was ten years old. (Xinhua)

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Beijing Hosts Top Amateur Golf

BEIJING - Fangshan-Changyang Chinese Amateur Golf Champions Tournament will tee off on Wednesday in California Country Golf Club in Fangshan on the outskirts of urban Beijing. The inaugural event attracts 85 golfers from six countries and regions, including 32 winners of various Chinese amateur events.

Among the Chinese participants are five national team members, including Zhang Weiwei and Wang Xinying, and six youth team members, including Chen Zihao, Dou Zecheng and Wu Haochuan.

Zhang Weiwei, who has made impressive progress since joining the Chinese team, is a star to watch in the three-day tournament, while Chen Zihao is also a force to reckon with as he has swept junior titles in the Asian Cup China Open, the 17th Chinese National Youth Championships and HSBC Junior Golf in Jiangxi in 2011.

Zhang Huilin, the men's champion in the 2011 Hope finals, and Guang Tianlang and Yang Jiabin, who triumphed in the men's and women's amateur tour finals in 2011, have also set their sights on the top prize.

Chinese Taipei sends nine players to the event and Bahrain fields its 2010 Asian Games squad to Beijing, while Ozaki Shuhei spearheads a four-player Japanese team. (Xinhua)

Liang Tees Off Golf's Week-Long March

SHANGHAI - One hundred years to the day since Dr Sun Yat-sen founded modern China, Chinese number one Liang Wen-chong teed off the seven-day, seven-city Shui On Land China Golf Challenge, the sport's most innovative competition in the world's most populous nation.

Englishman Ian Poulter led the 18-hole tournament at 1-under after the first day's two holes, putting him one ahead of Liang.

World number two Lee Westwood was one-over, while world number three Rory McIlroy was four-over after finding water on both holes.