

MARINE SAFETY NEWS

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

There is always a well-known solution to every human problem - neat, plausible, and wrong. - HL Mencken

INFOTAINMENT DVD 46

- Learn about the latest 'Save Our Seafarers' campaign launched to tackle the menace of piracy. Interviews of leading maritime personalities are also available in DVD 46 as they speak at great length about the subject.
- Take a sneak peek into the 2011-2012 NBA Season in the Sports section of DVD 46. Also read about ways to cure sports injuries and learn about world's best ice-skating destinations.
- Don't be the odd one out. Learn new languages now available on DVD 46. Also go through the Language Tips Section to brush up on your English grammar. Our sample papers give you the opportunity to test your English-language skills.

Urgent Steps Needed To Lower Climate Risks In Pacific: UNISDR

UNITED NATIONS - Amid growing concerns about drought crises in some small island States of the Pacific, the United Nations today called for comprehensive risk reduction steps to be put in place to protect vulnerable populations living in delicate ecosystems.

"It really is time to assist Tuvalu and Tokelau to increase storage capacities and manage their resources sustainably, including more effective warnings for drier spells," UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) policy head John Harding said.

"With climate change predictions pointing to more acute La Niñas in the futures, plans must also include assistance for communities that will be displaced if existing freshwater is not sufficient," he added, referring to the weather pattern characterized by unusually cool ocean temperatures in the central and eastern tropical Pacific that can bring abnormal conditions to widely separate areas of the world, from floods to droughts to below- or above-normal

temperatures.

On the positive side, Harding noted that the strong correlation between drought and La Niña could be a blessing in disguise, since the phenomenon is increasingly predictable and climate experts can inform decision-makers weeks and even months in advance, allowing for increased storage or stockpiling of emergency supplies in advance of a crisis.

The UN Office of the Coordinator of Humanitarian Assistance has identified solar powered desalination units and improved rain catchment and water storage as longer-term mitigation measures against future droughts.

Tuvalu, a collection of far-flung atolls with a population of some 12,000, today began a three-week needs assessment of water, agriculture and health facilities. The most affected areas are the capital city of Funafuti, as well as Nukulaelae and Nanumaga. Australia is covering the fuel costs for the assessment of eight outer islands. (UN)

PM O'Neill In 1st Official Trip To Australia

PORT MORESBY - Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Peter O'Neill is expected to discuss the reopening of the Manus Island detention center when he meets his Australian counterpart, Julia Gillard, for the ministerial forum that starts tomorrow.

High commissioner to Australia Charles Lepani on Monday said that Port Moresby is "ready and willing to co-operate with Australia on any solutions through Manus processing centre, however mechanism(s) could be established and agreed to between our two governments."

O'Neill expressed support for the reopening of the facility when replaced Michael Somare on August 2. Although Australia's high court ruled out processing outside the country, Canberra is reportedly set to pass draft laws before the lower house this week to revise the Migration Act.

The leaders are also likely to talk about a new economic treaty between the two governments that will reduce Papua New Guinea's financial dependence on Australia.

Financial aid to the island currently stands at 11.7% of Australia's national budget. Also expected in the agenda is the creation of sovereign wealth funds from earnings in Papua New Guinea's new gas-related projects.

Cancelled Air Pacific Flight Imperils Kiribati Polls

TARAWA - Elections in Kiribati's Line Islands are at risk of being cancelled after Air Pacific cancelled a flight to Christmas Island. A total of 138 candidates will vie for 44 seats in the October 21 polls.

"Still we're negotiating with Air Pacific if they can give us some more options. If they can take the matter and consider it. I am seeking the electoral commission view, the electoral commission will be meeting to consider the matter. Still, we're still planning and negotiating with Air Pacific," chief electoral officer Rine Ueara said, adding that the commission may opt to request that the papers be shipped to Kiribati instead.

Voters will come from 23 electoral districts. Ueara said that election officers have been educating residents in the past weeks so they will know how to fill out the ballots so as to reduce the number of invalid votes. Some 60,000 people aged 18 and above are expected to go to the polling stations on election day.

Pape'ete Port Partially Blockaded By Protesters

PAPE'ETE - Fishermen in French Polynesia have begun protest actions against the rising cost of fuel, partially blocking the entry to the port of Pape'ete and staging a demonstration outside the Outer Islands Development Fund (OIDF) office.

Protesters calling on the government to lower oil prices will reportedly meet government officials later today.

They have threatened to seal the whole port if officials do not give in to their demands, which include ensuring job security for OIDF's 82 employees. The agency will reportedly be dissolved and merged with another government body by the end of the year.

Kauri Use In Art Gallery Angers Conservationists

AUCKLAND - Environmentalists have criticized Auckland Art Gallery administrators for using native timber kauri for the facility's interior. A total of 250 cubic meters of kauri boards were reportedly used to produce a "floating canopy effect," the "New Zealand Herald" said in its web site.

Waipoua Forest Trust's Stephen King said that the gallery should have opted for macrocarpa instead of the rare kauri.

"It would have made a statement: This is a sustainable crop. We have moved away from raiding nature to get what we want. I think there is something a bit sad about having to prop up the art by pulling apart the greatest art we have in the country - which is the forests and the iconic kauri tree," King said.

Northland Bushland Trust chairman Kevin Matthews held the same sentiments, adding that "A prominent public building like this should be advertising clear grain radiata pine, a renewable resource."

Gallery director Chris Saines, however, said that the wood type was used "because it strongly reflects New Zealand's cultural and built heritage, in particular its significance to Maori." He also said that no live trees were felled for the project.

REGIONAL NEWS

Australia Condemns Iranian Actress Lashing Sentence

SYDNEY, Australia - The Australian government urged Iran to respect the human rights of its citizens on Tuesday after an Iranian actress was sentenced to 90 lashes for appearing in an Australian film with her head uncovered and shaven.

Australian Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd expressed "deep concern" at reports that Marzieh Vafamehr had been sentenced to a year in prison and the lashes for her role in the film "My Tehran for Sale."

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.

"The Australian government condemns the use of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and is deeply concerned by reports that Marzieh Vafamehr has been sentenced to one year in jail and 90 lashes for her role in an Australian-produced film," a spokesman for Rudd told AFP.

"The Australian government urges Iran to protect the rights of all Iranians and foreign citizens."

A report of Vafamehr's sentence appeared on the Iranian opposition web site Kalameh.com on Sunday, also saying that her lawyer was lodging an appeal.

Iran's "Fars" news agency said the film had not been approved for distribution in the country and was being distributed there illegally. Shot entirely in Tehran and directed by Iranian-Australian Granaz Moussavi, the 2008 film tells the story of a young actress in Iran's capital whose work is banned by the authorities. (AFP)

Aussie Teen Unlikely To Face Indonesian Prison

JAKARTA, Indonesia - A 14-year-old Australian boy arrested on Indonesia's resort island of Bali for alleged possession of marijuana, likely will avoid a prison sentence because of his age, the police said on Monday.

The boy, who cannot be identified under Indonesian law, has been detained in a police cell since October 4 when he allegedly bought seven grams of marijuana while on vacation with his parents and a 13-year-old friend.

The local drug squad chief, Col Mulyadi, said the boy will have to stand trial.

"But he'll probably be charged with a count that does not carry a prison term since he is still a minor and appears to have been purchasing the drug for personal use, not distribution," Mulyadi added.

The case has triggered intense media interest in Australia, which has seen several of its citizens thrown in jail or placed on death row for smuggling or possessing drugs in Indonesia.

Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard took the unusual step of speaking to him and his father by telephone on Sunday, assuring them her "government was doing everything it could."

The child's lawyer, Muhammad Rifan, said his client was eager to get home as soon as possible. The boy is being held at police headquarters since Bali does not have a detention house for minors, he said. (AP)

Australia's White House Declared A Fire Hazard

CANBERRA, Australia - Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard is looking for a new home after her official residence was declared a potential fire hazard with a leaking roof that needs replacing.

Special Minister of State Gary Gray said on Tuesday that the prime minister is looking for "suitable, secure accommodation" in the national capital of Canberra while her official home, known as The Lodge, is renovated over 18 months.

The 84-year-old building near Parliament House has hosted world dignitaries including President George W Bush, who attended a barbecue there during a 2003 Australian visit.

Gray said its original copper electrical wiring is enclosed in cloth insulation, which may become a fire hazard. He added that the slate tiled roof is dangerous and no longer weatherproofs the building. (AP)

Shark Suspected Of Killing Australian

PERTH, Australia - A man who vanished while swimming at a popular Australian beach was likely the victim of a great white shark, the police said on Tuesday. Bryn Martin was last seen early Monday morning in calm water on his regular daily swim off Cottesloe Beach in Perth.

Police divers found his swimming trunks on the sea floor later in the day, and said the damage to them was consistent with a shark attack.

Local police official Neil Blair said the missing man's wife confirmed they were the type of trunks her husband had worn.

"Fisheries experts have viewed the bathers and were of the opinion the damage is consistent with what a white pointer shark could cause," he told reporters. If confirmed, it would be the second fatal shark attack off Cottesloe in 11 years after a man was attacked in shallow water and died in 2000. (AFP)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Under-Pressure Europe Postpones Key Debt Summit

BRUSSELS - Europe's leaders postponed on Monday a key summit on the debt crisis, buying more time as they decide what to do about Greece now that their banks also need a financial leg-up.

Greece completed an audit which will be key to determining whether it gets further bailout funding, but its finance minister said Athens now expects a deeper write-down of its debt in a second rescue that Slovakia threatens to block on Tuesday.

As the debt crisis claimed its first bank, with France and Belgium bailing out Dexia, European Union president Herman Van Rompuy announced that a two-day meeting of leaders scheduled for October 17 and October 18 has been put back to Sunday, October 23.

In between times, there will be an extra gathering of finance ministers from the 27 EU states, and more talks among the 17 from the eurozone.

The finance ministers were not due to meet again until November 7 and November 8 Van Rompuy's goal, following talks on Sunday between German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Nicolas Sarkozy on recapitalising banks, is to come up with a "comprehensive" solution to the nearly two-year-old emergency. (AFP)

China Currency Bill Set To Clear US Senate

WASHINGTON - Defying Chinese anger and White House warnings, the United States Senate was set on Tuesday to approve legislation to punish China for alleged currency manipulation widely blamed here for costing American jobs.

The proposal, powered by a tide of US voter frustration at a sour economy and high unemployment ahead of November 2012 elections, envisions retaliatory duties on Chinese exports if the yuan's value is unfairly "misaligned."

The Democratic-held Senate was due to approve the measure after 2130 GMT, shifting the spotlight to the Republican-led House of Representatives, where Speaker John Boehner has condemned the "dangerous" bill.

"You could start a trade war. And a trade war, given the economic uncertainty here and all around the world - it's just very dangerous, and we should not be engaged in this," he said recently.

US President Barack Obama last week stopped well short of backing the legislation and worried it could violate World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules even as he mounted an unsparing attack on China's trade policies.

"China has been very aggressive in gaming the trading system to its advantage and to the disadvantage of other countries, particularly the United States," he declared at a White House press conference. (AFP)

Myanmar Political Prisoner Amnesty Soon: Officials

YANGON - Myanmar is on the verge of freeing political prisoners, officials said on Monday, as the United States hailed "dramatic developments" in the country after decades of military rule.

The release of the country's estimated 2,000 political detainees, who include pro-democracy campaigners, journalists and lawyers, has long been a top demand of Western nations which imposed sanctions on Myanmar.

"Political prisoners will be released. But we still do not know whether all of them will be freed," said a government official who did not want to be named, adding that the pardon was expected "within days."

A second official said the release would come before President Thein Sein leaves on Wednesday for an official visit to India.

An amnesty would be the latest sign of political change under a new nominally civilian government that has reached out to critics including opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, freed in November after seven straight years of detention.

Her National League for Democracy said it was "expecting" all political detainees, including student activists, to be released. (AFP)

Blue Nile Terror As Sudan Air Strikes Cause Havoc

KURMUK - Satdam Anima's eyes flicker and weep as the doctor sews up the stump of his left arm, before he rolls back on the hospital bed, one of the latest victims in Sudan's relentless bombing campaign in Blue Nile state.

Dr Evan Atar says he has done seven amputations since war broke out between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and fighters loyal to the SPLM-North in Blue Nile state last month.

FINANCIAL NEWS

FOREIGN EXCHANGE

USD 1 = AUD 0.9838

Reserve Bank of Australia

USD 1 = NZD 1.2792

Reserve Bank of New Zealand

He has treated more than 600 others for shrapnel wounds. We are really now running out of supplies. We have been running here and there and crying... But now where to get it from is really an issue," he said.

President Omar al-Bashir has blocked foreign aid agencies from entering Blue Nile and nearby South Kordofan state, where a separate conflict between the army and SPLM-North rebels has raged since June.

Kurmuk's is the only hospital between neighbouring Ethiopia and Damazin, the state capital of Blue Nile, which remains under SAF control, and Dr Atar is the only doctor. He says the hospital will run out of vital supplies such as saline solution, cotton and gauze this week if no aid arrives, after using up six months' supplies in one. (AFP)

Mexico On High Alert For Hurricane Jova

MEXICO CITY - The Mexican authorities have placed four southern coastal states on high alert ahead of Tuesday's expected arrival of Jova, a major hurricane barrelling in from the Pacific.

The Miami-based United States National Hurricane Centre said in a 0300 GMT bulletin that Jova was packing maximum sustained winds of 195 kilometres per hour and was 255 kilometres southwest of the busy port city of Manzanillo, in Colima state.

It was moving north-northeast at 11 km/h. Jova has strengthened to a category three storm on the five-level Saffir-Simpson scale and was forecast to become a category four before weakening as it makes landfall on Tuesday. (AFP)

SPORTS NEWS

Old Rivalries Spark Rugby World Cup Semis

AUCKLAND - The 2011 Rugby World Cup has distilled down to two compelling semi-finals next weekend: tournament revelations Wales against the great enigmas France and another instalment in the prickly All Blacks-Wallabies rivalry.

The quarterfinals were absorbing battles of wills with France bouncing back from their Tongan humiliation to oust their World Cup nemesis England, and Wales winning the Celtic showdown with Ireland.

 WEATHER

Rarotonga: 22-28c Partly Cloudy
 Suva: 22-28c Showers
 Tarawa: 26-30c Scattered Thunderstorms
 Aneityum: 20-28c Mostly Clear
 Funafuti: 27-32c Clear
 Noumea: 18-27c Partly Cloudy
 Nuku'alofa: 21-28c Showers
 Yaren: 27-29c Scattered Thunderstorms

The backs-to-the-wall Wallabies somehow conjured a fighting 11-9 win to knock out defending champions South Africa, while New Zealand took an hour before subduing Argentina's resilient Pumas.

So, after a month of eventful rugby, it is down to the last four at Auckland's Eden Park.

Wales have been the tournament surprise, losing their opener to the Springboks, 17-16, but finishing pool runners-up with three wins before mastering the Irish, 22-10, in Wellington last Saturday.

Ireland went in uplifted by a 15-6 ambush of the Wallabies in their pool but they were no match for the youthful Welsh, who continue to impress with their confidence and fearlessness. It is Wales' first World Cup semi-final appearance in 24 years and optimism is bubbling in the Valleys. (AFP)

All Blacks Lose Duo

AUCKLAND - New Zealand's bid to win the Rugby World Cup suffered a double blow on Monday as Mils Muliaina and stand-in fly-half Colin Slade became the latest All Blacks to be ruled out of the tournament through injury.

With star No 10 Dan Carter already out of action with a groin injury, Slade succumbed to a similar problem to ensure the stand-off's 24th birthday yesterday was not one he would remember with any great fondness.

"Have we got the depth?," said New Zealand coach Graham Henry, posing the question on the minds of All Black fans across the rugby-mad nation as they contemplated a semi-final against old rivals Australia on Sunday.

"We'll find out in the next two weeks, I guess," Henry added.

Hosea Gear and Stephen Donald will replace 100 cap full-back Muliaina, who has a fractured shoulder, and Slade respectively in the squad after the duo suffered their setbacks during a 33-10 quarterfinal win over Argentina last weekend.

The sidelining of Slade brought Aaron Cruden into play eight days after he was rushed into the team following Carter's injury. (AFP)

Golfer Westwood Hopes To Regain No 1 Spot

SHANGHAI - Lee Westwood, the world's No 2 parbuster, said on Monday that wins in Asia have boosted his confidence and raised his hopes of regaining the top spot.

The 38-year-old Englishman earlier this year won the Indonesia Masters and the Ballantine's Championship in South Korea, adding to a long career which includes playing in seven Ryder Cups and winning 22 European Tour titles.

"I've always enjoyed playing in Asia, played well here. It makes a lot of sense to keep coming back," he told AFP in an interview in Shanghai, where he is playing in the Shui On Land China Golf Challenge.

"If you come somewhere and you play well, then obviously it builds confidence," he added.

Westwood spent several weeks as world No 1 last year, but said his recent play, though consistent, had failed to push him a notch higher.

"Obviously, I would like to get back to number one in the world," he said. "I just haven't really quite played well enough." Westwood will return to China in November for the World Golf Championships-HSBC Champions in Shanghai. (AFP)

Ponting Happy To Drop Down Test Batting Order

PERTH - Former Australian cricket captain Ricky Ponting is happy to drop down the Test batting order to accommodate Shaun Marsh at No 3. The 36-year-old, who has scored 12,487 runs in 154 Tests, has long come in to bat at first drop but slotted in as No 4 during the second Test against Sri Lanka last month in which Marsh scored 141 at No 3 on his debut.

Marsh followed it up with scores of 81 and 18 in the third Test when again batting at No 3.

Test skipper Michael Clarke sees Marsh as a long-term fixture in the role and Ponting said he had no complaints.

"It was a long-term plan of Michael's to have Shaun move to No 3 and me move to No 4 and Michael (Clarke) move to five and (Mike) Hussey to six," Ponting told reporters.

"So that wasn't just ... a one-off for that game (in Sri Lanka)." Ponting is playing for Tasmania in their Sheffield Shield clash with Western Australia at the WACA Ground in Perth starting Tuesday, ahead of Australia's Test tour of South Africa next month. (AFP)

NFL - Surging Lions Beat Bears, Extend Run

Detroit Lions 24 - Chicago Bears 13: Detroit fans counted down the final seconds - as if it was New Year's Eve - when the franchise finished its first Monday night game in a decade. The Motor City is hoping this party does not stop any time soon.

Matthew Stafford's second touchdown pass put Detroit ahead in the third quarter and Jahvid Best's 88-yard run later in the period gave the Lions a double-digit lead in a superb win over Chicago.

"It was electric," Stafford said. Our fans came out and did an unbelievable job." The Lions did a pretty good job, too.

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Detroit (5-0) are undefeated through five games for the first time since 1956 - the year before its last National Football League (NFL) title.

Lions coach Jim Schwartz, though, refused to be celebrate, pointing to the team's next game on Sunday at home against the San Francisco 49ers.

"We'll start on San Fran in about an hour and a half," Schwartz said shortly after midnight. The defending NFC North champion Bears (2-3) are off to their worst start since 2007. They are three games behind Detroit and defending Super Bowl champion Green Bay (5-0) in the division. (AP)

London 2012 Safe From Cyber Attacks: Officials

LONDON - Olympic organisers say the technology systems for next year's Games have tested well and can withstand the danger of cyber attacks.

The Technology Operations centre, which will monitor security, power, telecommunications and the results systems that will send Olympic data to fans and the world's media, opened Monday in the Canary Wharf section of London.

"Security is a big concern of the games and cyber security is a major part of that. We are obviously very attentive of the risks involved," said Paul Deighton, chief executive officer of the London organising committee LOCOG.

"The key steps we've taken to protect these systems are really to make sure we have an independent Olympic-dedicated network which gives us an insulation from the rest of the world that makes it much harder to penetrate."

A quarter of LOCOG's overall budget of USD3.1 billion has been spent on technology, with organisers expecting to process 30% more results than at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. (AP)