

MARINE SAFETY NEWS

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

People deal too much with the negative, with what is wrong. Why not try and see positive things, to just touch those things and make them bloom? - Nhat Hanh

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.
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Merkel Arrives, To Discuss Free Trade Pact

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.

Vietnam, Thailand Work To Ensure Food Security

HA NOI - The legislative bodies of Vietnam and Thailand had reached a high degree of consensus on how to develop their cooperation through specific activities, including the exchange of delegations and experience and joint supervision of governmental agreements and programs.

The consensus was reached at talks held on Monday between National Assembly Chairman Nguyen Sinh Hung and Thai National Assembly president and Thai House of Representatives speaker, Somsak Kiatsuranont.

Hung expressed his sympathy over heavy the losses that the Thai people suffered in recent floods.

He congratulated Thailand on its recent achievements and said he believed that with political stability, the neighboring country would see further development.

Somsak Kiatsuranont proposed that Vietnam and Thailand, the world's leading rice exporters, work closely in the field in the interests of each side and to ensure the world's food security. The two sides agreed to boost cooperation in rice production, processing and export. (PNA)

A senior government source in Berlin said that 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.

The European Union announced in March last year that it would start negotiating a free trade pact with Vietnam.

Germany is the Asian nation's largest trade partner in Europe, buying Vietnamese exports worth USD1.8 billion in the first seven months of this year, against imports of USD1.1 billion, the Vietnam News Agency reported.

Merkel insisted she would not shy away from tackling what Berlin sees as a "deficit" in Vietnam's human rights record. Economic cooperation "is of course tied to complying with human rights. And I will of course raise such questions when I am there," Merkel said. (AFP)

Coffee Prices Dip On Crisis, Oversupply

HO CHI MINH CITY - The economic crisis and a bumper Robusta coffee crop have dragged down coffee prices on both the international and domestic markets. The price on the London International Financial Futures and Options Exchange (Liffe) came down below the psychological level of USD2,000 per tonne last Monday.

Local exporters have been reluctant to sell at the low level due to the uncertainty with the weather, the start of the coffee crop harvest, and banks' refusal to provide credit.

The continuous rains in the Central Highlands in the past week have had a certain influence on Liffe Robusta prices.

Three weeks ago, experts believed that the new harvest would bring coffee beans to the market by mid-October.

The late arrival of the new harvest last week helped slow down the price fall in the local market.

Robusta coffee grade two with five percent black and broken beans for delivery in December fetched VND35,000-VND36,000 per kilogram, VND3,000 higher than ten days before.

The 2011-2012 coffee crop began on October 1 and will be harvested in September 2012. But Nguyen Nam Hai, director of HCM City-based coffee surveyor Cafecontrol, pointed out that Vicofa chairman Luong Van Tu had made a wrong prediction about this year's exports, estimating it at 18 million bags, or 3.5 million bags less than it actually turned out to be. (PNA)

Small Banks Worried Profit Targets Won't Be Met

HO CHI MINH - Many small banks may not reach their profit targets this year, while major banks' profits are expected to be modest. In the first eight months of the year, the Orient Joint-Stock Commercial Bank's (OCB) pre-tax profit was VND225 billion, much lower than compared to its yearly target of VND500 billion.

OCB general director Trinh Van Tuan said that the bank would try to find more earnings from all of its activities to reach its goal by year-end.

The Gia Dinh Joint Stock Commercial Bank's profit goal this year was VND380 billion, a representative of the bank said. But in order to meet the goal, the bank would have to obtain credit growth to VND10.6 trillion, nearly tripling last year's figure of VND3.6 trillion. Meanwhile, the central bank has capped all banks' credit growth at 20%, and has asked them to keep loans for the non-production sector at under 16% until the year-end. (PNA)

Flood Of Smuggling Hits Mekong Delta

CHAU DOC - Cuu Long (Mekong) Delta flood season sees a peak in the smuggling in of goods from Cambodia, with thousands of boats plying day and night to sneak in all kinds of goods. The most popular are mobile phones, tablet computers, electronic goods, tobacco, wine and clothes.

A large volume of goods had recently flooded into the country from Ta Mau market in Cambodia's border province of Ta Keo, "Saigon Giai Phong" newspaper reported.

Most houses along a five-kilometer road in Chau Doc District in An Giang province to the border Vinh Nguon Commune have a board saying "giu xe, dua do" (Parking/ferry available).

What they offer is transport to Ta Mau market and back during the flood season when the area is under water. A round trip only costs VND15,000 per person.

Thousands of people, most of them smugglers, use the service every day, storing the goods they bring at warehouses in Chau Doc before transporting them to other provinces. Major smugglers reportedly transport their goods at night.

The owner of a mobile-phone shop in Ta Mau market said she bought her goods, mostly made in Thailand and China, from the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh.

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.

A fake Thai-made iPhone 4 costing a mere VND3 million - compared to around VND14 million in Vietnam - looks exactly like the original. An iPhone3 costs VND1.1 million, a Nokia N8 costs VND1.3 million, a Vertu costs VND1.5 million, and an iPad costs VND2.3 million. (PNA)

REGIONAL NEWS

Japan Funds Quang Binh Bridge Construction

DONG HOI - Japan has donated over VND2.2 billion for the construction of a bridge in a commune in the north central coast region. Japanese officials, led by ambassador Yasuaki Tanizaki, have pledged to fund the building of a suspension bridge crossing the Son River in central Quang Binh Province's Son Trach Commune.

The grant agreement was signed recently by Tanizaki and the commune's People's Committee chairman, Nguyen Cong Tru. The bridge is expected to ease travel woes, especially for students who have to ride the boat the rainy season to reach their schools. (PNA)

Conference Seeks To Attract Infrastructure Investment

VINH - An investment promotion conference that aims to bring investments to the north-central provinces will be held in the city of Vinh, Nghe An Province next week. The event co-organized by the Ministry of Planning and Investment and the provincial People's Committee is scheduled on October 17.

The meeting will also assess the infrastructure needs of the region.

In other news, the Forestry Protection Department has launched an investigation on corruption among forest rangers in the province, Ha Tinh and Thanh Hoa.

The move follows reports of forest rangers and leaders of relevant agencies being involved in corruption cases. Last week, four officers of the Ha Tinh Forestry Protection sub-department were suspended for their involvement in corrupt activities. In Nghe An, forestry officials have ordered investigation reports on suspected officers.

Train Derails In Quynh Hoa

VINH - Local authorities in Nghe An province are investigating the derailment of a North-South train in Quynh Hoa commune recently. According to a report, seven carriages overturned after they went off track in a 200-meter section of the railway on Saturday. No casualties were reported.

The railway management company in Ha Tinh province, which borders Nghe An, confirmed that no one was hurt but said that passengers were forced to take buses instead. Over 100 workers and local officials are taking part in the repair and maintenance work after the incident. Reports added that railway operations may be suspended for over a week.

Star Cruises To Boost Thua Thien Hue Tourism

HUE - The Chan May Port is expecting about 30,000 tourists aboard Malaysia-based Star Cruises to arrive in Thua Thien-Hue until April next year. A company representative said the cruise passengers, composed of Chinese and other Asian nationalities, will be go on tour from Hainan Island to Hue.

Provincial People's Committee vice-chairman, Ngo Hoa, said that local officials have plans of organizing welcoming activities for the tourists.

Meanwhile, candidates of the Miss Vietnam 2012 recently carried out social work in Thua Thien-Hue.

During their six-day visit to Hue starting on Wednesday, the beauties spent time with children at the Thuy Xuan orphanage.

They also had a photo shoot with photographer Dao Duc Hieu for his new book, which will feature local women and former royal capital's cultural heritage. Proceeds of a planned auction for the book will go to Agent Orange victims.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

UN's OCHA Chief To Hold Food Talks In North Korea

UNITED NATIONS - United Nations humanitarian chief Valerie Amos was headed for China ahead of a visit to North Korea, stricken by a new food crisis, as the UN presses Pyongyang to give aid agencies more freedom.

Amos, who heads the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), will have talks with government officials in China this week, before meeting ministers in the isolated North next Monday.

The UN estimates that a third of children aged under five in the communist state are malnourished.

North Korea puts severe restrictions on the movement of foreigners, however, and the UN became so frustrated that it would only send aid to areas where it could get access.

"Those living in counties which remain off limits to humanitarian agencies, therefore, do not receive assistance," UN leader Ban Ki-moon said in a report last month on human rights in the North.

Ban again pressed for more cooperation when he met North Korea's vice-foreign minister, Pak Gil-yon, in New York last month. Many governments have raised concerns that food aid could be diverted to the North's 1.1 million strong army. (AFP)

Libya Forces Drive On Center Of Gaddafi Hometown

SIRTE - Libya's new regime forces were battling block by block towards the center of Sirte on Monday, eyeing the symbolic prize of finally capturing Muammar Gaddafi's hometown after a month-long siege. But Gaddafi diehards were putting up fierce resistance and in their other remaining bastion, Bani Walid, they mounted a fightback, killing 17 National Transitional Council (NTC) fighters.

A column of NTC troops backed by tanks thrust towards the centre of Sirte from positions east along the Mediterranean coast, coming under heavy rocket and small arms fire as they moved forwards house by house.

"We are less than a kilometre and a half from the central square," said NTC commander Tareq Drisa.

Burned out vehicles littered the streets as NTC tanks and artillery pounded Gaddafi positions in open ground in the Dollar area of the city from a ridge some four kilometers inland, which they seized in a major advance on Sunday.

On the third day of what commanders have touted as a final assault, NTC troops captured Sirte's showpiece conference center, university campus and hospital on Sunday, AFP correspondents said. (AFP)

China Currency Bill Set To Clear US Senate

WASHINGTON - Defying Chinese anger and White House warnings, the United States Senate became 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 5:30 pm (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," Boehner said recently.

US President Barack Obama last week stopped well short of backing the legislation and worried it could violate World Trade Organization 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)

Australian PM Speaks To Boy Arrested In Indonesia

SYDNEY - Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard has spoken to the 14-year-old boy arrested in Bali last week for allegedly carrying marijuana, telling him she was doing everything possible to help him.

The teenager, detained last Tuesday on the resort island, has been the focus of intense negotiations involving Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd and other Australian officials who hope he will be released and sent home.

A spokesman for Gillard said the prime minister was following the case with concern and was briefed daily by Australia's ambassador to Indonesia, Greg Moriarty, who has flown to Bali from Jakarta to handle the case.

FINANCIAL NEWS

STOCK INDEX

HOSE 417.73 (-1.93), HSX 70.93 (+0.47), Gold Price: USD 1675.08

FOREIGN EXCHANGE

USD 1 = VND 20875

Vietcombank

"During a phone call with the ambassador yesterday while he was at Denpasar police station she had the opportunity to talk to the father and the son," the spokesman said Monday.

"The prime minister reassured them the government was doing everything it could." Australia has asked that the Indonesian legal process take into account the young age of the boy, a high school student from a coastal region north of Sydney who was holidaying with his parents when arrested. (AFP)

Cambodian Flood Toll Climbs To 207: Govt

PHNOM PENH - More than 200 people have died in Cambodia's worst floods in over a decade, a disaster official said Monday, as the country scrambled to provide aid for tens of thousands of families.

Over 80 children were among those killed in two months of flooding caused by heavy rainfall that has seen the Mekong River burst its banks, according to the National Committee for Disaster Management.

More than 270,000 families have seen their homes or livelihoods waterlogged by the floods, which have inundated 350,000 hectares of rice paddies across the country, said the committee spokesman Keo Vy.

The flooding, which has killed 207 people, including 83 children, is the deadliest since 2000 and represents a huge challenge to the impoverished nation.

Despite the scale of the disaster Keo Vy insisted the situation was under control. "We are not yet appealing for international assistance," he said, adding that the waters have begun to subside. (AFP)

SPORTS NEWS

Injured Klose Leaves German Camp, Returns To Rome

BERLIN - Veteran striker Miroslav Klose left the Germany camp on Monday on the eve of their final Euro 2012 qualifier against Belgium and returned to his club Lazio for treatment on a knee injury.

 WEATHER

Cao Bang: 23-30c Thunderstorms
 Ha Noi: 24-39c Thunderstorms
 Vinh: 24-32c Thunderstorms
 Da Nang: 24-29c Thunderstorms
 Ho Chi Minh: 24-29c Thunderstorms
 Ca Mau: 25-37c Thunderstorms

Klose played no part in Germany's 3-1 win away to Turkey on Friday and was not expected to feature against Belgium in Dusseldorf, with coach Joachim Loew set to stick with Mario Gomez in attack.

Klose is the second player to be sent home from the Germany squad in recent days after Borussia Dortmund's Mario Gotze was allowed to rejoin his club to prepare for their Bundesliga clash away to Werder Bremen.

However, Real Madrid's Mesut Ozil is likely to return to the side after missing the Turkey win with a painful achilles tendon.

Bastian Schweinsteiger (thigh) and Jerome Boateng (muscle problems) will remain doubts until the last minute, but Loew has admitted that their Bayern Munich teammate Toni Kroos could start. Germany are already through to the European Championship finals, but are looking to end their qualifying campaign with a perfect ten wins from ten. (AFP)

Beckenbauer Tips Platini For Top FIFA Job

BERLIN - German football legend Franz Beckenbauer on Monday tipped UEFA chief Michel Platini to succeed Sepp Blatter as the next president of world football governing body FIFA.

In an interview with sporting magazine Kicker, Beckenbauer hailed "the super work" being carried out by Platini as UEFA president where the Frenchman "makes a great effort and gets his ideas across".

"I think he'll (Platini) be the next FIFA president. Sepp Blatter will finish by no longer being a candidate because of his age," said Beckenbauer.

Blatter, 75, was reelected for a fourth four-year term in June.

Beckenbauer added that he was very concerned by the Financial Fair-Play project adopted by UEFA last May, designed to crack down on debt-laden clubs. The initiative aims to prevent clubs from spending more than they generate to play in European competition and will progressively come into force with the first sanctions from 2014-2015. (AFP)

F1 Driver Hamilton Will Bounce Back, Warns Team Boss

SUZUKA - McLaren team chief Martin Whitmarsh has backed Lewis Hamilton to bounce back from his recent string of disappointments to win again and be a title contender next season.

Whitmarsh said he believed the 26-year-old Englishman's difficulties this year have sapped his confidence, but he is just one win away from rediscovering his form as the world's fastest and most exciting racing driver.

Speaking after Sunday's Japanese Grand Prix won by Hamilton's team-mate and fellow-Briton Jenson Button, Whitmarsh said: "He's a great racing driver. His heart is in it and he is very open about his emotions. He doesn't like not winning, but it will come good. "I hope that this time next week we are celebrating one of Lewis's greatest ever victories - and that is entirely possible.

We all know he's got it, we know we've got a car that can win and he has got the capability to do it.

"We just have to make sure he has the focus and ensure that we do that." Whitmarsh spoke out as Hamilton avoided being dragged into a new controversy after a brush with Brazilian Felipe Massa of Ferrari in Sunday's race in which Hamilton finished fifth. (AFP)

Tour De France Organizers In Route Slip-Up

PARIS - Tour de France organizers inadvertently published next year's route on their official website according to several specialist cycling websites on Monday. Amaury Sport Organisation (ASO) refused to comment when contacted by AFP about the embarrassing slip-up over the race which gets underway in the Belgian town of Liege on June 30.

The page is no longer accessible but Dutch journalist Stephan van der Zwan has some images he took of it on www.Wielerland.nl, the website that revealed the error.

The 2012 Tour will feature nine flat stages, five mountain stages including two finishing at altitude, two individual time-trials and a prologue.

There will also be two rest days. The race will comprise a total of 25 climbs of 2nd, 1st or Hors categorie: one in the Vosges, three in the Jura, four in the Swiss Jura, six in the Alps and 11 in the Pyrenees. The official unveiling of the route is due to take place in Paris on October 18. (AFP)

Golfer Westwood Hopes To Regain Number One Spot

SHANGHAI - Lee Westwood, the world's No 2 golfer, 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.

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

Westwood spent several weeks as world number one 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." (AFP)

Action Needed After No-Shows: Roddick

SHANGHAI - Andy Roddick said on Monday that Shanghai Masters no-shows from Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer were stark evidence of the toll put on players by their punishing schedules.

The shine has been taken off the tournament due to the absence of injured world number one Djokovic and 16-time Grand Slam champion Federer, leaving only Rafael Nadal and Andy Murray of the current "Big Four."

Murray told the BBC last month he had held several talks with other players at the US Open and they would be discussing the issue in Shanghai.

Roddick, speaking after a first-round win in Shanghai over Taiwan's Lu Yen-hsun, said it had to be addressed.

"People have to understand, people act like we pull out and we get something out of it. We don't get anything. They're out of the bonus pool now. They don't get their money this week. "Obviously, if they were feeling well and they weren't worn down, then they would (play).

We're not getting away with anything by pulling out of tournaments. I feel like that's the way it's presented sometimes. That's just not the case," he added. (AFP)

!?! THAT'S ODD

No Turkeys Fall On Arkansas Festival This Year

YELLEVILLE - Turns out turkeys don't fly. The "Baxter Bulletin" reports that attendees at the Turkey Trot festival in Yellville were disappointed when no turkeys dropped from planes on Friday or Saturday. The turkey drop is a mainstay of the event in northern Arkansas, though organisers don't sanction it. Supporters say the turkeys can fly just enough to descend safely, but animal-rights advocates call it cruel.