



China pushes to digitize mines to try to make them safer

SHENMU, China (AP) — China is using “smart” technology to try to improve its safety record in coal mines, as part of a push by the National Energy Administration to bolster output and stem frequent accidents and collapses. Smart-mine sensors monitor aspects such as gas buildup and flooding or ventilation levels, and set off an alert if any reach a dangerous level. The sensors, located inside the mine and on carts and tools, transfer the data via 5G, allowing for real-time monitoring by a central command. Huawei Technologies Ltd., better known for telecommunications equipment, teamed up with state-owned Shaanxi Coal Industry Co. to pilot its intelligent coal mine technology in Hongliulin and Xiaobaodang. Huawei has pivoted to other industries, including self-driving cars, factories, and mines amid U.S. sanctions that led it to report a 70% decline in profits from last year in March. The system has allowed Shaanxi to reduce the number of people working underground by 42% at the Xiaobaodang mine, while increasing production levels. Miners now work with the help of robots, which also monitor equipment including centrally-controlled shearers, the sharp blades used to collect coal.

Reports: Tesla plans Shanghai factory for power storage

BEIJING (AP) — Electric car maker Tesla Inc. plans to build a factory in Shanghai to produce power-storage devices for sale worldwide, according to state media reports. Plans call for annual production of 10,000 Megapack units, according to the Xinhua News Agency and state television. They said the company made the announcement at a signing ceremony in April in Shanghai, where Tesla operates an auto factory. The factory is due to break ground in the third quarter of this year and start production in the second quarter of 2024, the reports said.

Apple Inc. bets big on India with first flagship store

NEW DELHI (AP) — Apple Inc. opened its first flagship store in India in a much-anticipated launch that highlighted the company’s growing aspirations to expand in the country it also hopes to turn into a potential manufacturing hub. Dozens lined up outside for the grand opening. Located in India’s financial capital, Mumbai, the store’s design is inspired by the iconic black-and-yellow cabs unique to the city. A second store then opened in the national capital, New Delhi. The tech giant has been operating in India for more than 25 years, selling its product through authorized retailers and the website it launched a few years ago. Regulatory hurdles and the pandemic delayed its plans to open a flagship store. The new stores are a clear signal of the company’s commitment to invest in India, the second-largest smartphone market in the world, where iPhone sales have been ticking up steadily, said Jayanth Kolla, analyst at Convergence Catalyst, a tech consultancy. The stores show “how much India matters to the present and the future of the company,” he added. About 600 million of India’s 1.4 billion people have smartphones.

India’s heat is underestimated, harming progress, per study

BENGALURU, India (AP) — The full extent of the damage from India’s sizzling heat that’s causing more deaths, illnesses, school shutdowns, and crop failures is underestimated by lawmakers and officials in the country and slowing the nation’s development, according to a study. Extreme heat is placing 80% of India’s 1.4 billion population in danger, but assessments of how vulnerable the country is to climate change don’t take into account how much the searing temperatures in recent decades are hampering goals like reducing poverty and improving health outcomes across India’s population, researchers at Cambridge University in England found in a peer-reviewed study. “It is high time that climate experts and policymakers reevaluate the metrics for assessing the country’s climate vulnerability,” said Ramit Debnath, the lead author of the study. India has seen an uptick in sweltering temperatures caused by climate change from the burning of coal, oil, and gas, with an early heat wave in March and April last year breaking heat records in India and neighboring Pakistan. Scientists were able to attribute last year’s exceptional heat to human-made climate change and warned of worse to come as global average temperatures continue to creep upwards. Debnath and a team of researchers analyzed the methods currently used to work out India’s vulnerability to heat and climate change alongside measurements of the country’s progress toward goals like eliminating poverty and hunger and promoting equity, health, education, and curbing climate change — known as the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals. Those goals will only be harder to reach the hotter it is, with the pace that India is progressing toward sustainable development aims already having slowed in the past 20 years because of more severe weather extremes, the study said.

Rare big tornado near Myanmar capital kills 8

BANGKOK (AP) — A tornado that tore through two villages in central Myanmar near the capital of Naypyitaw killed eight people and destroyed more than 200 houses, according to a rescue worker. The tornado hit Aung Myin Kone and Tadau villages on Naypyitaw’s southern outskirts in April, Thet Paing Soe, a leading member of the Doh Lewe charity organization, told The Associated Press. He said local charity organizations had transported 128 people to hospitals, and 232 houses in the two villages were destroyed. “The tornado blew for approximately 40 minutes. Almost all the houses in the villages are quite badly damaged. The restoration will take months,” Thet Paing Soe said. Major tornadoes are rare in Myanmar.



TREES IN TROUBLE. A crane is visible in the marsh through the roots of mangroves belonging to the Mangalavanam bird sanctuary, a protected area in the heart of the city in Kochi, Kerala state, India, on March 29, 2023. Government buildings, private offices, and homes have sprung up at pace, cutting deep into the forest known as the “green lung of Kochi.” Environmentalists have expressed concern over the loss and declining health of mangrove cover. (AP Photo/R S Iyer)

In India, mangrove trees make way for booming city of Kochi

By **K Praveen Kumar**
Press Trust of India

KOCHI, India — Burrowed between mangroves and a bustling skyline, 70-year-old Rajan, who only uses one name, reminisces about his old home.

For nearly sixty years, Rajan has lived comfortably among the trees in Mangalavanam forest in India’s southern Kerala state. In the last two decades, the surrounding city of Kochi has boomed as the state’s financial capital and swallowed up once-protected green areas, including Rajan’s former home.

He was forced to sell his land to a local private realtor when the area was bought up for construction about 15 years ago. He moved into a makeshift dwelling on the edge of a protected bird sanctuary.

“Now there are buildings all around and no wind,” said Rajan, adding that the towering concrete has made the city and forest stifling hot.

Government buildings, private offices, and homes have sprung up at pace, cutting deep into the forest known as the “green lung of Kochi.” The trees are now squeezed on all sides by buildings, construction, and smog.

Environmentalists are concerned over the loss and declining health of mangrove cover, which is particularly effective at sucking planet-warming carbon dioxide out of the air, can fend off scorching heat for nearby residents, and sustains populations of local wildlife.

Officials and developers alike defend the need to house the state’s dense population and harness economic growth in the world’s soon-

to-be most populous nation, but experts say this cannot come at the cost of green spaces.

Kerala has lost nearly 98% of its mangrove forests, shrinking from 270 square miles to just 6.5 square miles since 1975, according to figures from the Kerala Forest Research Institute. Mangrove cover across the country crept up slightly between 2017 to 2019 at a rate of 0.5% per year thanks to concerted efforts by the government with restoration and maintenance projects springing up in Kerala and beyond.

“I had literally fought with the government to come out with plans to protect the mangrove forests,” said Kathiresan Kandasamy, who studies India’s mangrove forests and is a former member of the National Mangrove Committee, a body set up by the government to advise on conservation.

In 2022, the Indian government, following Kandasamy and the committee’s advice, identified 44 critical mangrove ecosystems in the country, including two in Kerala. It launched a management action plan to protect and maintain the areas. State governments also started sanctioning funds for conservation projects.

The shrunken Mangalavanam is now listed as a protected area, but there are concerns about the impact of nearby development.

“I found out that some city drainage is passing through this mangrove ecosystem,” said Rani Varghese, a research scholar at the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies. Varghese said the runoff “is changing its whole ecosystem.”

While the trees themselves are still sucking

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Hong Kong Dollar	7.8498
Indian Rupee	81.77
Indonesian Rupiah	14657
Iranian Rial	42356
Japanese Yen	136.18
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Papua N.G. Kina	3.521
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Singapore Dollar	1.3334
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Sri Lankan Rupee	319.8
Taiwan Dollar	30.734
Thai Baht	34.11
Vietnam Dong	23397