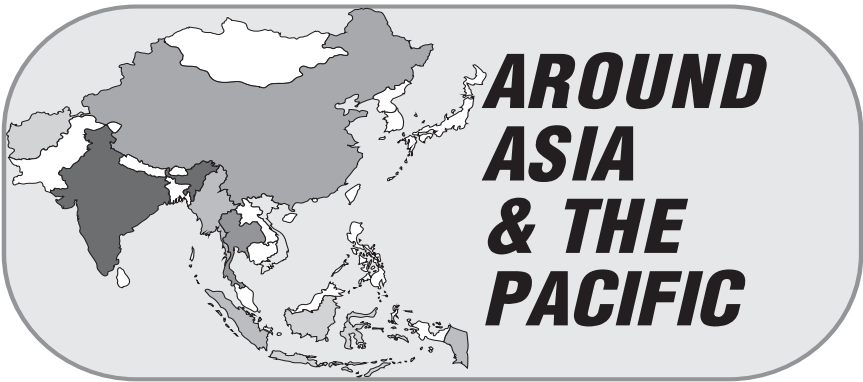




Tiny island nation of Niue has novel plan for protection

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — The tiny Pacific island nation of Niue has come up with a novel plan to protect its vast and pristine territorial waters — it will get sponsors to pay. Under the plan, which was launched last month by Niue’s Prime Minister Dalton Tagelagi in New York, individuals or companies can pay \$148 to protect 1 square kilometer (about 250 acres) of ocean from threats such as illegal fishing and plastic waste for a period of 20 years. Niue hopes to raise more than \$18 million from the scheme by selling 127,000 square-kilometer units, representing the 40% of its waters that form a no-take marine protected area. In an interview with The Associated Press before the launch, Tagelagi said his people have always had a close connection with the sea. “Niue is just one island in the middle of the big blue ocean,” Tagelagi said. “We are surrounded by the ocean, and we live off the ocean. That’s our livelihood.” He said Niueans inherited and learned about the ocean from their forefathers and they want to be able to pass it on to the next generation in sustainable health. Most fishing in Niue is to sustain local people, although there are some small-scale commercial operations and occasional offshore industrial-scale fishing, according to the U.N.’s Food and Agriculture Organization. “Because of all the illegal fishing and all the other activities at the moment, we thought that we should be taking the lead, to teach others that we’ve got to protect the ocean,” Tagelagi said. Unregulated fishing can deplete fish stocks, which then cannot replenish, while plastics can be ingested by or entangle marine wildlife. Human-caused climate change has also led to warmer and more acidic oceans, altering ecosystems for underwater species. Niue is also especially vulnerable to rising sea levels threatening its land and freshwater, and the island is at risk of more intense tropical storms charged by warmer air and waters. With a population of just 1,700 people, Niue acknowledges it needs outside help. It’s one of the smallest countries in the world, dwarfed by an ocean territory 1,200 times larger than its land mass.

Thai police say bust nets biggest ever seizures of illicit drugs

BANGKOK (AP) — Police in Thailand say they made one of the country’s biggest ever seizures of illicit drugs, a haul including methamphetamine, crystal meth, and heroin, with a total estimated street value of about 300 million baht (\$8.2 million). The police say the drugs were seized during a night raid on a house in Nakhon Pathom, west of Bangkok, in which four men were arrested for possession of illegal drugs. They allegedly confessed to renting the house to stash the drugs before distributing them to dealers in the greater Bangkok area. The seized drugs included 15 million methamphetamine tablets, 443 wrapped packages of heroin, 420 kilograms (926 pounds) of crystal meth, and a quantity of drugs often used for partying, including “happy water” — a powder comprising several psychoactive substances to be made into a drink — and “five-five,” a strong sedative with the pharmaceutical name Nimetazepam, police said. The drugs were displayed to the media at a news conference. The bust was the result of a two-year investigation initiated after another member of the trafficking gang was arrested, according to police. They did not say where the drugs originated, but U.N. and other experts have said that neighboring Myanmar is the source of most of the region’s methamphetamine and heroin. Myanmar has historically been the region’s main drug production area in part because of lax security measures in border areas where minority ethnic groups have long been fighting for greater autonomy. Some of the powerful ethnic armed groups there have been heavily involved in narcotics production for decades. A 2021 military takeover in Myanmar that unseated the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi triggered armed resistance nationwide, further destabilizing the country. The U.N. drug agency’s June 2023 report on synthetic drugs in East and Southeast Asia warned that the huge trade in methamphetamine and other illegal drugs shows no signs of slowing down. Another U.N. report in January noted that opium production has flourished in Myanmar since the military seized power, after many years of decline.

Japan, Vietnam mark 50 years of diplomatic relations

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — Japanese Crown Prince Akishino, the younger brother of Emperor Naruhito, travelled to Vietnam last month for a five-day visit marking the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries, as Tokyo pushes to deepen ties with Southeast Asia and other developing and emerging nations to tackle regional and global challenges. Akishino, at a news conference, stressed the importance of deepening relations between Japan and Vietnam, noting their long history of cultural and economic exchanges dating back to the 16th century. “Japan and Vietnam have a very close relationship,” Akishino said. “I hope we can contribute as part of an effort to promote friendly relations between the two countries.” He said it is particularly important for younger people to develop mutual understanding and respect for each other’s cultures through exchanges. Akishino especially looked forward to his first visit to Hoi An, an old port city that was home to a “Japantown” for Japanese traders in the first half of the 1600s. He also looked forward to seeing the nearby My Son Sanctuary, an archeological site with spiritual origins in Indian Hinduism. The trip is Akishino’s third to Vietnam after earlier visits in 1999 and 2012. Akishino, who specializes in the study of chickens, noted there are wild breeds of chickens in various stages of domestication in Southeast Asia, including Vietnam, and their presence, along with giant catfish that live in the Mekong River, are part of the reason he is attracted to the region.



SCANDALOUS SHORTCUT. Two people used an excavator to widen an existing gap in the Great Wall in China, according to police, as seen in this photo taken from an August 31, 2023 online posting by the Youyu Police. The two workers apparently wanted to create a shortcut through the ancient structure for their construction equipment. (Youyu Police via AP)

Workers smash shortcut through Great Wall with excavator

SHANXI PROVINCE, China (AP) — China’s Great Wall was pierced by Genghis Khan, the Manchus, and now, allegedly, a couple of construction workers named Zheng and Wang who wanted a shortcut.

Authorities in China arrested two people for smashing a path through a section of the ancient wall, a cultural icon and United Nations protected heritage site.

The area of the breach was a broken-down section far from the restored segments most Chinese and foreign tourists are familiar with.

The government of Youyu County, hundreds of miles west of Beijing, showed a dirt road cut through a section of the wall against a rural landscape, along with the two suspects, identified as a 38-year-old man surnamed Zheng and a 55-year-old woman surnamed Wang. The pair wanted a shorter route for some construction work they were doing in nearby towns, the government report said.

The section lies in Shanxi province at the western extreme of the wall, parts of which was constructed 2,000 years ago. It’s relatively well preserved and holds “important preservation and research value,” the local government said.

China places immense pride in the system of towers and connecting walls wide enough for carriages to pass that stretch approximately 5,500 miles, built mainly during the Ming dynasty that lasted until 1644.

In that year, Manchu tribespeople from the north overcame China’s defenses and took over the empire as the Qing dynasty.

The wall was subsequently abandoned and plundered for bricks and stones by local villagers, only to be revived by the Communist government as a symbol of patriotism, mass

mobilization, and resistance to outside pressure.

The Youyu County government said the arrests were made after a report of the breach was received on August 24. It said the two suspects were in custody with further legal action pending.

In its citation of the Great Wall, UNESCO described it as reflecting the “collision and exchanges between agricultural civilizations and nomadic civilizations in ancient China.”

“It provides significant physical evidence of the far-sighted political strategic thinking and mighty military and national defense forces of central empires in ancient China, and is an outstanding example of the superb military architecture, technology, and art of ancient China,” the citation says.

Japanese teen Taichi Fukui among 3 debutants for Bayern in 4-0 win at Múnster in German Cup

MÜNSTER, Germany (AP) — Four goals, three debuts.

Bayern Munich eased to a 4-0 win at third-division team Preussen Múnster to start its German Cup campaign last month, with Israeli goalkeeper Daniel Peretz, Portugal wing back Raphaël Guerreiro, and Japanese teenager Taichi Fukui all making their debuts for the Bavarian powerhouse.

First-half goals from Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting, Konrad Laimer, and Frans Krätzig set Bayern up for a comfortable game, allowing coach Thomas Tuchel to send on Guerreiro and Fukui in the second half. Fukui usually plays for Bayern’s under-19s, while Guerreiro had

Continued on page 4



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Asian Currency Exchange Rates	
Units per U.S. dollar as of 9/29	
Bangladesh Taka	110.0
Cambodian Riel	4116.4
China Renminbi	7.301
Fijian Dollar	2.2507
Hong Kong Dollar	7.8309
Indian Rupee	83.061
Indonesian Rupiah	15472
Iranian Rial	42002
Japanese Yen	149.33
Laos New Kip	20362
Malaysian Ringgit	4.6935
Nepal Rupee	132.92
Pakistani Rupee	288.3
Papua N.G. Kina	3.653
Philippine Peso	56.62
Russian Ruble	96.75
Saudi Riyal	3.7503
Singapore Dollar	1.3651
South Korean Won	1346.1
Sri Lankan Rupee	324.6
Taiwan Dollar	32.157
Thai Baht	36.53
Vietnam Dong	24283