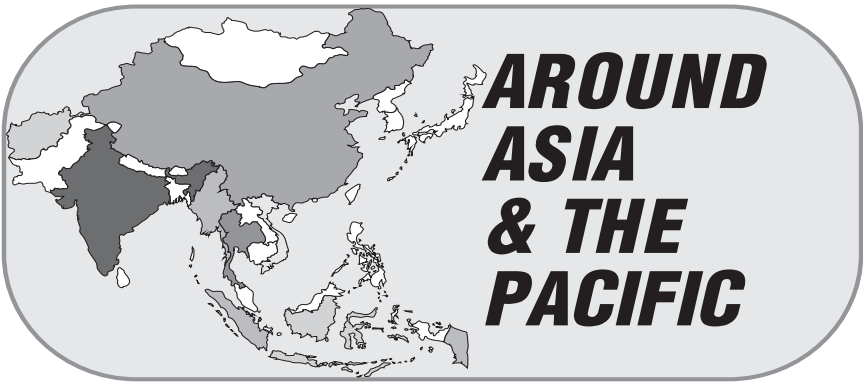




Man airlifted from Mount Fuji rescued a second time

TOKYO — A climber airlifted with altitude sickness from near the peak of Japan’s Mount Fuji in late April returned to the slope and was rescued for a second time just four days later, according to authorities. Officials urged people to be aware of the harsh conditions at the country’s tallest peak during its off-season. The climber was identified only as a 27-year-old Chinese student living in Japan. He made an emergency call on April 22 and was airlifted off the mountain after developing symptoms of altitude sickness, police said, adding that his climbing irons also were damaged. He returned days later to the mountain’s Fujinomiya trail about 10,000 feet above sea level to look for his cellphone and other belongings left behind, Shizuoka prefectural police said. Another climber found him there unable to move after he apparently developed altitude sickness for a second time, police said. The mountain’s hiking trails are officially open only from July to early September, but there is no penalty for hiking off-season. There also is no charge or penalty when a climber needs to be rescued, but the Chinese student’s case prompted an uproar on social media and generated calls for him to be charged, at least for his second rescue. The Shizuoka police urged all climbers to use caution, noting that the mountain has low temperatures and is covered in snow even in spring. The 12,388-foot-high mountain was designated a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site in 2013. A symbol of Japan, the mountain called “Fujisan” used to be a place of pilgrimage and is increasingly popular among hikers today. To control overcrowding and risks from rushed overnight climbing through rocky slopes to see the sunrise, local authorities last year introduced an entry fee and cap on the number of entrants on the most popular trail and will introduce similar rules on other main trails this year.

Asian scam operations are spreading across the world

BANGKOK (AP) — Transnational organized crime groups in East and Southeast Asia are spreading their lucrative scam operations across the globe in response to increased crackdowns by authorities, according to a recent U.N. report. For several years, scam compounds have proliferated in Southeast Asia, especially in border areas of Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar, as well as in the Philippines, shifting operations from site to site to stay a step ahead of the police. More recently, scam centers that have bilked victims out of billions of dollars through false romantic ploys, bogus investment pitches, and illegal gambling schemes are now being reported operating as far afield as Africa and Latin America. Asian crime syndicates have been expanding operations deeper into remote areas with lax law enforcement that are vulnerable to the influx, according to the report issued by the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime, or UNODC. The report is titled “Inflection Point: Global Implications of Scam Centers, Underground Banking, and Illicit Online Marketplaces in Southeast Asia.” UNODC estimates that hundreds of industrial-scale scam centers generate just under \$40 billion in annual profits. New online markets, money laundering networks, stolen data products, malware, artificial intelligence, and deepfake technologies are laying the ground for the rise of crime as a service, the report says.

World’s largest deforestation project fells more forests

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Indonesia plans to clear forests about the size of Belgium to produce sugarcane-derived bioethanol, rice, and other food crops, potentially displacing Indigenous groups who rely on the land to survive. Local communities say they’re already experiencing harm from the government-backed project, which environmental watchdogs say is the largest current planned deforestation operation in the world. A vast tropical archipelago stretching across the equator, Indonesia is home to the world’s third-largest rainforest, home to many endangered species of wildlife and plants, including orangutans, elephants, and giant forest flowers. Some live nowhere else. Indonesia has been building food estates, massive plantations designed to improve the country’s food security for decades, with varying level of success. The concept was revived by former President Joko Widodo during his 2014-2024 administration. The current president, Prabowo Subianto, has expanded such projects to include crops to produce bioethanol, a renewable fuel made from plants like sugar cane or corn, in pursuit of Indonesia’s ambition to improve its energy mix and develop more renewable sources.

Pakistan begins second anti-polio vaccination campaign

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistan has started a second nationwide vaccination campaign aimed at protecting 45 million children from polio, officials said. According to the World Health Organization, Pakistan and neighboring Afghanistan remain the only two countries where the potentially fatal, paralyzing virus hasn’t been stopped. Since January, Pakistan has reported only six polio cases. Last year, the South Asian country witnessed a surge in polio cases, which jumped to 74, though it reported only one polio case in 2021. Pakistan’s health minister, Mustafa Kamal, has urged parents to cooperate with the medical staff, who visit door-to-door to vaccinate children. Health workers are often attacked by militants who falsely claim that vaccination efforts are part of a western plot to sterilize Muslim children. It was reported that police killed a militant when he opened fire on officers assigned to protect health workers on the polio drive in Azam Warsak, a district in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, according to local police chief Alamgir Mahsud. He said all the officers were unharmed. Since the 1990s, more than 200 polio workers and the police assigned to protect them have been killed in attacks.



FUTURISTIC FACTORY. Lego characters in Vietnamese traditional costumes are displayed at a Lego factory in Binh Duong, Vietnam. Lego has opened a \$1 billion factory in Vietnam that it says will make toys without adding planet-warming gas to the atmosphere by relying entirely on clean energy. (AP Photo/Hau Dinh)

Lego opens a toy factory in Vietnam designed to run entirely on clean energy

By Aniruddha Ghosal
The Associated Press

BINH DUONG, Vietnam — Lego opened a \$1 billion factory in Vietnam in April that it says will make toys without adding planet-warming gas to the atmosphere by relying entirely on clean energy.

The factory in the industrial area of Binh Duong, close to Ho Chi Minh City, is the first in Vietnam that aims to run entirely on clean energy. Lego says it will do that by early 2026.

It’s the Danish company’s sixth worldwide and its second in Asia. It will use high-tech equipment to produce colorful Lego bricks for Southeast Asia’s growing markets.

“We just want to make sure that the planet that the children inherit when they grow up needs to be a planet that is still there. That is functional,” Lego CEO Niels Christiansen told The Associated Press.

The factory is an important factor in Lego’s quest to stop adding greenhouse gasses by 2050. It has a shorter-term target of reducing emissions by 37% by 2032. The privately held group makes its bricks out of oil-based plastic and says it has invested more than \$1.2 billion in a search for more sustainable alternatives. But those efforts have not always been successful.

Fast-industrializing Vietnam also aims to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, so it needs more of its factories to use clean energy. The country hopes the plant’s 12,400 solar panels and energy storage system will help set a precedent for more sustainable manufacturing.

Locating the Lego factories in regions they

supply has also helped insulate them from the tariffs ordered by U.S. President Donald Trump, Christiansen said. “Right now, I am probably more observant of what does this mean to growth in the world? Do we see consumer sentiment changing in parts of the world or not, and what would that potentially mean?” he said.

The blocks are made from differently colored plastic grains that are melted at high temperatures and then fed into metal molds. The highly automated factory uses robots for making the bricks to a tenth of a hair’s width precision and then packaging them. It eventually will employ thousands of mostly skilled workers to operate these machines. Some of them have already begun work after being trained at Lego’s factory in eastern China.

Manufacturing makes up a fifth of Vietnam’s GDP and consumes half the energy it uses. There are plans to phase out its coal power plants by 2040.

The Lego factory, which spans 62 soccer fields, sets the “blueprint” for making large, power-guzzling factories sustainable while remaining profitable, said Mimi Vu, a founder of the consultancy Raise Partners in Ho Chi Minh City. “Sometimes it takes a big company, like Lego, to take those risks. To show that we can do it ... And we can be profitable,” she said.

The factory will benefit from a new 2024 rule known as a direct power purchase agreement or DPPA, which allows big foreign companies to buy clean energy directly from solar and wind power producers and to meet their clean energy requirements.

The factory will be linked to an adjacent

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News page advertising deadlines for our next two issues are:

June 2, 2025 edition:

Space reservations due: Wednesday, May 28 at 1:00pm

Artwork due: Thursday, May 29 at 1:00pm

July 7, 2025 edition:

Space reservations due: Wednesday, July 2 at 1:00pm

Artwork due: Thursday, July 3 at 1:00pm

Asian Currency Exchange Rates	
Units per U.S. dollar as of 5/02	
Bangladesh Taka	121.68
Cambodian Riel	4013.5
China Renminbi	7.2716
Fijian Dollar	2.252
Hong Kong Dollar	7.7502
Indian Rupee	84.668
Indonesian Rupiah	16467
Iranian Rial	42107
Japanese Yen	144.97
Laos New Kip	21661
Malaysian Ringgit	4.2615
Nepal Rupee	135.1
Pakistani Rupee	281.13
Papua N.G. Kina	4.082
Philippine Peso	55.638
Russian Ruble	82.79
Saudi Riyal	3.7503
Singapore Dollar	1.2997
South Korean Won	1399.9
Sri Lankan Rupee	299.51
Taiwan Dollar	30.72
Thai Baht	33.1
Vietnam Dong	26005