

China's maritime authority has banned the discharge of 'wash water' used in ships to strip hazardous Sulphur emissions from engine exhaust gases from Jan. 1, in an effort to curb pollution of its coastal seas, Reuters said.

Spies felt 'mysterious' force from Egypt's Great Pyramid

KGB spies claimed to have come across a bizarre 'magnetic force' which investigating Egypt's Great Pyramid, according to a documentary.

Kremlin chiefs reportedly sent Russian agents to the ancient site after scientists wrote in a 1960s report that the discovery was 'unexplainable', dailystar.co.uk wrote.

The secret report even added that a 'partial decoded message on tomb wall indicates a prophecy of the return of ancient winged gods'.

Spies also claimed to have found 'ancient relics' including 'one particularly mummified body, one stone sarcophagus, and eight hieroglyphic samples'.

Speaking on Amazon Prime documentary 'The Secret KGB Files', a former diplomatic courier for the Soviet Union described how he moved documents from Cairo to Moscow.

He who claimed the key document said: "My agents have secured the notes of one of the scientists working on the tomb of the visitor finding."

"During inspection of the wall segment we noted an odd sensation, a magnetic repulsive force seemed to be emanating from the rock."

"We were unable to find any scientific explanation."

This document and others reveal that Kremlin chiefs were seriously investigating the myth of the pyramid.

In the following decades, conspiracy theorists have also claimed the structures held strange secrets.

There have even been claims that aliens helped Egyptians build the pyramids, or that the ancient civilization simply came across them.

Historian Matt Sibson said there is evidence that proves the pyramids were built more than 5,000 years earlier than existing records.

He added the Egyptians may have simply discovered them, rather than built them.

East coast seas warmer than January 2018

New Zealand is on the cusp of a second consecutive marine heatwave, with temperatures along parts of the east coast now about 3°C warmer than summer averages.

Hot patches of water were already lying off the Hawke's Bay, Kaitiaki and Canterbury coasts during the first week of this year, according to National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA) maps of sea-surface temperatures, stuff.co.nz reported.

Much of the surface of the Tasman Sea is also between 1°C and 2°C warmer than normal, and there are more hot spots close to the shore of Australia.

Another map shows the sea surface from East Cape down to Otago during the first week of this year was at least 2°C warmer than it was in the first week of 2018.

The marine heatwave this time last year was a major contributing factor to the country's hottest summer on record.

However, NIWA meteorologist Ben Noll said Kiwis should not get too excited thinking the warming sea meant a heatwave was also inevitable on land this summer.

"It doesn't necessarily imply that this January-February-March will have the extreme warm temperature anomalies that the same period last year did. But, since we are an island nation, as the seas go we also tend to go."

"Warmer than average temperatures, particularly during January, are favored."

Scientists will leave it another couple of weeks before determining if the current sea-surface warming definitely counted as a marine heatwave.

Two marine heatwave summers in a row would be very unusual, Noll said.

NIWA principal climate scientist Dr. Brett Mullan said there were different thresholds for defining what constituted a marine heatwave.

But if summer sea-surface temperature anomalies were used, the last New Zealand marine heatwave was in the 2001-02 summer.

"Curiously, though, this peak does not occur in the NZ seven-station land temperature record: The summer minimum temperature was high but not the maximum, so maybe it was cloudy and humid or wet."

It was more than 80 years since a marine heatwave that "reached anything like the same level of severity" as that of the 2017-18 summer, he said.

Noll said what happened last summer might still be having an impact on current sea-surface temperatures. Generally, higher air pressures east of the country and settled weather were also allowing the sea to warm.

"Overall, if you look under the skin of the sea, you'll find there has been a more than usual persistence of warmth at depth over 2018. That may have added to this."

"Also, we haven't had a lot of southerlies lately. That is a player."

In January last year, RNZ reported NIWA's Dr. Dennis Gordon as saying the warmer water brought different marine species, including jellyfish and pseudo-jellyfish, close to New Zealand beaches.

Noll said a recent paper in the journal Nature discussed how marine heatwaves would increase with climate change.

There had been a doubling in the number of marine heatwave days between 1982 and 2016.

"This number is projected to further increase on average by a factor of 16 for global warming of 1.5°C relative to pre-industrial levels and by a factor of 23 for global warming of 2.0°C," the paper said.



REUTERS

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50b tons of sand used globally

Experts have said there is need to manage sand extraction to avoid huge environmental impact. It said that about 50 billion tons of sand and gravel are used around the world every year.

The experts at the first round-table focusing on sand, organized by the United Nations Environment, Global Resources Information Database (GRID) — Geneva and the University of Geneva in 2018 said sand extraction from places with fragile ecosystems, if not managed correctly, can have huge environmental impact, dailystar.co.uk reported.

"The experts at the round-table agreed that extraction on a beach, for instance, not only leads to the destruction of local biodiversity but can also reduce the scope for tourism."

In a report on the website of UN Environment titled, "The Search for Sustainable Sand Extraction is Beginning", said the huge demand for sand may also lead to illegal sand extraction which is becoming an issue in many places.

"Fifty billion tons of sand and gravel are used around the world every year. This is the equivalent to a 35-meter-high by 35-meter-wide wall around the equator."

"Most sand goes into the production of cement for



DINUKA LIYANAWATTE/REUTERS

concrete (which is made of cement, water, sand and gravel). Cement, a key input into concrete, the most widely used construction material in the world, is a major source of greenhouse gases, and accounts for about eight percent of carbon dioxide emissions, according to a recent Chatham House report," the report said.

Various stakeholders from the industrial, environmental and academic sector came

together in Geneva to discuss the emerging issue of sand extraction and solutions to address potential environmental impact.

"It is extraordinary that so little attention has been given to this problem," said Bart Geenen, head of the freshwater program at the World Wildlife Fund — Netherlands.

The experts said innovative solutions are being tested to replace sand in the construc-

tion of roads and buildings adding that recycled plastic, earth, bamboo, wood, straw and other materials can be used as alternative building materials.

While there is no magic bullet, the Geneva meeting agreed that it is important to raise awareness of the fact that sand is not a limitless resource and that there are possible negative effects of sand extraction. Good practices must

be shared and the communication gap between policymakers and consumers overcome.

The Geneva meeting concluded that the way forward is to collect more data, and to work on implementing policies and standards to protect delicate ecosystems from illegal and environmentally harmful sand extraction. The search for sustainable solutions should start now, the meeting concluded.

Thailand welcomes EU decision to lift warning on illegal fishing

Thailand on Wednesday welcomed a decision by the European Commission to drop the Southeast Asian nation from a list of countries it had warned over illegal and unregulated fishing.

In 2015, the world's third largest exporter of seafood received a so-called "yellow card" or warning from the European Union over unsustainable fishing practices, carrying the threat of a European ban on the exports, Reuters reported.

That move prompted a major crackdown by Thailand's military government on illegal fishing and an overhaul of the industry.

"There have been sacrifices and adjustment to the way fishing was conducted," the deputy spokesman of the military government, Lieutenant General Werachon Sukhondhapatipak, told said.

Thailand's fishing industry at all levels has a responsibility to the environment and the world through more sustainable fishing practices in line with international standards."

The measures Thailand adopted ranged from new rules to vessel monitoring systems, as well as a satellite-based system of tracking the movements of fishing



ERIK DE CASTRO/REUTERS

boats, enforced by the Royal Thai Navy. It also toughened labor regulations to combat human trafficking and ill-treatment of migrant

workers, improving the situation of more than 300,000 citizens of neighboring countries employed in the Thai fishing industry.

"Since the

yellow card was issued, the Commission and Thailand have engaged in a constructive process of cooperation and dialogue," the European

Commission, the executive arm of the EU, said in a statement on Tuesday announcing its decision.

"This has resulted in a major upgrade of the Thai fisheries governance, in accordance with the international commitments of the country."

The European Commission now sees Thailand as 'a new committed partner' in the fight against fishing practices that deplete global fish stocks and harm people who make their living from the sea, it added.

Thailand's private sector also welcomed the EU decision, saying the reforms would benefit the fishing industry.

"This will boost investment and confidence in Thai seafood exports in the international market," Poj Aramwattanont, the vice chairman of the Board of Trade of Thailand, said in a statement.

their 2014 level after a drop in 2015 to \$1.8 billion following the European Union warning.

About 9.9 percent of Thai seafood exports went to the European Union last year, versus 10.3 percent in 2014, ministry data show.

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California to spend millions more on disaster response

California Governor Gavin Newsom proposed spending \$305 million to improve California's planning and response to wildfires, mudslides and earthquakes, focusing the state's efforts on evacuating elderly and disabled residents who became trapped in recent disasters.

Newsom's plan would also involve efforts to speed up California's ability to buy firefighting equipment and other emergency response tools, Reuters reported.

Newsom's announcement on his first full day on the job continues a broader effort to hit the ground running to deal with problems facing the most populous US state of 40 million people.

"We are stepping up our game," Newsom told officials and reporters in the northern California community of Colfax, one of many places in the Sierra Nevada foothills at high risk for wildfire.

"The last two years have been devastating. We've lost 167 lives in fires and floods."

Democrat Newsom was sworn in as California's 40th governor on Monday, and immediately girded for battle with President Donald Trump, a Republican, while flying the banner of the Democratic Party's progressive wing.



REUTERS

Hours into his new job on Monday, Newsom signed an executive order that will dramatically reshape the way California buys prescription drugs.

On Tuesday, he signed two more executive orders, one directing emergency planners to consider the location of at-risk residents along with the possible places that fires, floods and other disasters could take place. The other set up a process to speed up the state's pro-

urement ability.

California's wildfire season, always dangerous and frequently deadly, has extended nearly year-round amid warming temperatures and extended dry spells.

Last year, the deadliest wildfire in state history ravaged the town of Paradise north of Sacramento, destroying nearly all of the housing stock and killing more than 80 people.

Californians have increasingly built homes and communities in fire-prone areas, in part for the scenic beauty and in part because the state has a dire need for new housing.

Newsom is expected to release additional details of his proposed budget for the state this week.

Newsom also joined the governors of Oregon and Washington to send a letter to Trump asking the administration to increase funding for fire prevention efforts in forests managed by the federal government.

He declined to address question of whether the state should step in to help the investor-owned utility PG&E Corp avoid bankruptcy if it is determined that the company's equipment caused the Camp Fire last November, which destroyed Paradise.