**TODAY** IN **HISTORY** 

Chinese fleet commander Zheng He sets sail to the Spice Islands on his first major expedition, leading 208 vessels, including 62 treasure ships with 27,800 sailors

**Pope Clement** VII excommunicates England's King Henry VIII



**English poet John Keats** writes "In the Cottage Where Burns is Born," "Lines Written in the Highlands," and "Gadfly"

Franklin Roosevelt announces that he will run for a fourth term as President of the United States



Meeting of the Coalition of the Willing. Today's format was expanded - for the first time, representatives of the United States took part in our meeting, including General Kellogg, Senators Graham and Blumenthal.

@ZelenskyyUa

02



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@elonmusk





interacted with MPs Ifrom Namibia after my address to their Parliament. Their positivity towards India is clearly visible!

@narendramodi



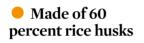
We stand firmly with Ukraine amid the devastating Russian attacks. With SAFE, Europe is mobilising urgently needed military support. And with the Coalition of the Willing we keep up the pressure, to bring Russia to the negotiating table.

@vonderleyen

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stance)

# Houses made from rice

Kyrgyzstan's eco-friendly revolution



31.4 million tons of rice husks fill landfills

Nursultan Taabaldyev is one of the pioneers of the technology in Central

AFP | Kyzyl-Kiya, Kyrgyzstan

t may look like an ordinary building site but Akmatbek .Uraimov's new house in Kyrgyzstan is being built with blocks of rice.

The eco-friendly alternative to conventional construction materials is booming in the Central Asian country, which is vulnerable to global warming and grapples with water shortages.

Before selecting the unorthodox material, Uraimov had researched other options, but concluded that the relatively cheap blocks made from rice husks were his best option.

"In terms of insulation, cost, as well as for builders, it turned out to be convenient," said Uraimov, who lives in the village of Kyzyl-Kiya in southern Kyrgyzstan.

"People didn't know about it. Now they see it, they are interested, they call," he told AFP.

Nursultan Taabaldyev is one of the pioneers of the technology in Central Asia hailed as alternative to water-intensive

In a workshop in his home region of Batken, rice dust was billowing into the air from the husks, the rough outer shell of rice which is normally thrown away or burned.

Workers with protective masks over their faces were compressing the bricks before rushing to dry them, and helping clients load the finished blocks onto trucks.

They are "made of 60 percent rice husks. The rest is clay, cement and a chemical-free glue," Taabaldyev told AFP.

When dry, they are as strong as cement thanks to silica naturally present inside the husks.

This idea came to me as a child, while doing carpentry

The 27-year-old has already tion. built "300 houses" in five years -- first with sawdust, then with

## 'No particular danger'

When he started, there was little robust research into the technology.



A view of the production facility of rice construction blocks, made mostly of rice husks - a byproduct of rice processing, in the Batken region in southern Kyrgyzstan



an environmentally friendly Farmer Abdimamat Saparov is pictured at the processing facility of his rice



That is starting to change. various countries have high- qualities. lighted the potential economic

Crucially, they require less approximately eight percent of she said. global carbon dioxide emissions, according to 2023 figures from the World Economic Forum.

In her village in a mountain- gyzstan's rice crop. ous and arid region, Ykhval Bo-

riyeva has also opted for rice Several initial studies from blocks, praising their insulating

Her house remains "warm and environmental benefits of in winter and cool in spring" with my father," said Taabaldyev. using rice blocks in construct hanks to its low thermal conductivity.

> "We save on coal. The walls cement, which is responsible for retain heat and coolness well,"

The material is also well within reach, with the Batken region producing a third of Kyr-

"Rice waste is thrown into the

fields, slowly burns, harms the environment, and is not used as fertiliser. So we decided to recycle it," Taabaldyev said.

The problem of dealing with rice waste is even more acute in large rice producers like India.

There "31.4 million tons of rice husks fill landfills and cause environmental problems," according to a study late last year published by Springer Nature.

### Next up 'crushed reed'

Farmer Abdimamat Saparov is another who has welcomed Taabaldyev's innovative approach, pointing at the mounds of rice waste.

"After harvesting and drying the rice, about 40 percent of waste remains, which we have no way of processing," said Saparov. Such abundance makes the blocks cheaper than ordinary building bricks -- another crucial factor in southern Kyrgyzstan, where the average monthly salary is around \$230.



Cement is more expensive in Kyrgyzstan than anywhere else in Central Asia and the government is mulling adding it to a list of socially sensitive products, alongside bread and oil, that would allow it to dampen surging prices.

# Ten rescued after deadly Huthi ship sinking off Yemen **Dubai, United Arab Emir-**

Ten people have been rescued after Yemen's Huthis sank a cargo ship, an EU naval force said yesterday, with three killed and 12 missing in one of the rebel group's deadliest Red Sea attacks.

Three Filipino crew and a Greek member of the Eternity C ship's onboard security team were plucked from the sea overnight, "bringing the total number of those rescued to 10", the European Union's Operation Aspides naval task force posted

On Wednesday, the Iranbacked Huthis said they had "rescued" an unspecified number of the Eternity C's crew and taken them to a safe location. The US embassy for Yemen accused the rebels of kidnapping the survivors.

The deadly attack was the rebels' second assault on a commercial vessel in the Red Sea in recent days and threatened a May truce with the United States that ended weeks of air strikes on Huthi targets.

Rebel leader Abdel Malek al-Huthi said both ships belonged to companies serving Israeli ports.

He said the attacks would continue "as long as the (Israeli) aggression and siege of Gaza persist".



## EU chief von der **Leven comfortably** survives confidence vote

AFP | Strasbourg, France

E<sup>U</sup> chief Ursula von der Leyen yesterday comfortably saw off a no-confidence vote in the European Parliament -- but the rare challenge has exposed frictions between her backers and complaints about her leadership style.

Lawmakers in Strasbourg rejected the censure motion -- launched by the far-right over the European Commission president's handling of Covid vaccine contracts -- by 360 to 175 in a widely expected result.

"In a moment of global volatility and unpredictability, the EU needs strength, vision, and the capacity to act," von der Leven, who wasn't at the parliament for the vote, wrote on X afterwards.