

29 March 2024

UK FRAUD AWARENESS REPORT 2024

IDNow has produced this report investigating the British public's awareness of fraud based on age and gender. Containing suggestions about where consumer education needs to focus in the future, the results reveal a shocking disparity in awareness of the different types of fraud, as well as some worrying behavioural trends.

<https://www.idnow.io/portfolio/2024-uk-fraud-awareness-report/>

POLAND - SANCTIONS INVESTIGATION INTO BELARUS TIMBER IMPORTS

On 27 March, Duane Morris reported on an investigation into the alleged importation of timber from Belarus. This involved the alleged use of forged documentation purporting to show a Kazakhstan origin for the timber.

<https://blogs.duanemorris.com/europeansanctionsenforcement/2024/03/27/poland-sanctions-investigation-into-belarus-timber-imports/#page=1>

CZECH REPUBLIC DESIGNATES PRO-RUSSIA NEWS WEBSITE & ASSOCIATED INDIVIDUALS

On 29 March, the Global Sanctions blog reported that Czechia had designated the Voice of Europe and 2 individuals involved with it for pro-Russian/anti-Ukraine disinformation.

<https://globalsanctions.co.uk/2024/03/czech-republic-designates-pro-russia-news-website-associated-individuals/>

FROM INDIA TO AUSTRALIA, MYANMAR IS FLOODING ASIA WITH CHEAP METH

On 29 March, a report from Nikkei Asia says that the highly addictive stimulant is flooding into countries across Asia, reaching as far as Australia and Saudi Arabia, and concerns are mounting that the situation is only getting worse. This comes as conflict has made vast swaths of Myanmar virtually lawless, creating an ideal environment for narcotics trafficking, particularly methamphetamine.

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Special-Reports/From-India-to-Australia-Myanmar-is-flooding-Asia-with-cheap-meth>

US EXPORT WATCHDOG WARNS ABOUT COUNTERPARTIES SENDING DRONE, MISSILE COMPONENTS TO RUSSIA

On 28 March, the Wall Street Journal reported that the Commerce Department has contacted to more than 20 companies with a list of foreign parties that appear to be still selling restricted technology to Russia, amid warnings about violating rules against the export of sensitive technologies to foreign adversaries. The Department has supplied a list of more than 600 foreign parties that appear to have continued to sell restricted parts to Russia.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/export-watchdog-warns-about-counterparties-sending-drone-missile-components-to-russia-d3df4f02>

<https://www.firstpost.com/world/us-takes-another-step-to-stem-the-flow-of-technology-to-russia-for-weapons-13753936.html>

LUXURY GOODS STILL AVAILABLE IN NORTH KOREA DESPITE SANCTIONS

On 29 March, NK Pro reported, with exclusive photos, that foreign cosmetics and luxury goods remain for sale at Pyongyang airport and east coast ski resort for Russian tourists this year. In the new photos, expensive beauty products by American brand Estée Lauder, Japanese brand Shiseido and French brands Christian Dior, Yves Saint Laurent and Lancôme are visible on store shelves.

<https://www.nknews.org/pro/north-korea-hawks-marked-up-luxury-goods-to-russian-tourists-despite-sanctions>

BANGLADESH: HARSHER PENALTIES FOR EXPORT-IMPORT MALPRACTICES

On 29 March, an article in the Financial Express warns of the harsher penalties in a new customs Act, which may be brought into force shortly. The Act was passed in October.

<https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/first-page/harsher-penalties-lurking-for-export-import-malpractices-1711649788>

ECUADOR'S WAR ON DRUG GANGS: A MIXED PICTURE SO FAR

On 21 March, an article in Americas Quarterly says that President Noboa has deployed more than 30,000 soldiers and policemen to contain the chaos; but while homicides have fallen, kidnappings and extortion remain high.

<https://americasquarterly.org/article/ecuadors-war-on-drug-gangs-a-mixed-picture-so-far/>

THE UKRAINIAN GOVERNMENT HAS CONFIRMED IT WILL SELL THE SEIZED ROYAL ROMANCE SUPERYACHT VIA AUCTION

On 26 March, Superyacht News reported that the yacht allegedly belonged to sanctioned Ukrainian Viktor Medvedchuk, a lawyer dubbed as a Russian “collaborator” by government authorities.

<https://www.superyachtnews.com/business/ukraine-will-auction-royal-romance>

FINANCIAL VULNERABILITY FUELS PREDATORY CRIME IN PERU

On 28 March, Insight Crime reported that widespread financial vulnerability is driving criminal competition in Peru, leading to skyrocketing cases of loan sharking and extortion. Cases of extortion in Peru shot up 370% between 2021 and 2023, from 4,761 to 22,396, while overall crime reports rose 20% over the same period.

<https://insightcrime.org/news/financial-vulnerability-fuels-predatory-crime-peru/>

ARMENIAN BANKS TO DITCH RUSSIAN CARDS OVER US SANCTIONS

On 29 March, Rferl reported that Armenian banks have said they would stop processing transactions made by Russian Mir payment cards due to Western sanctions imposed on Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine.

<https://www.rferl.org/a/armenian-banks-to-ditch-russian-cards-over-u-s-sanctions/32882489.html>

CHOCOLATE PRICE HIKES: A BITTERSWEET REASON TO CARE ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

On 28 March, the UN Conference on Trade & Development said that higher price tags for chocolate-loving consumers worldwide are in part linked to a changing climate pushing up cocoa costs.

<https://unctad.org/news/chocolate-price-hikes-bittersweet-reason-care-about-climate-change>

NIGER TERMINATION OF US MILITARY TIES FOLLOWED ACCUSATION OF IRAN URANIUM DEAL

On 17 March, Iran Watch reported that Niger ended its counterterrorism alliance with the US after US officials expressed concerns that Niger was in secret talks to provide Iran with access to its uranium reserves. US officials also raised concerns about the arrival of Russian military equipment and trainers to Niger. The country's ruling junta denied the allegations.

<https://www.iranwatch.org/news-brief/niger-termination-us-military-ties-followed-accusation-iran-uranium-deal>

TAXATION OF THE DIGITALIZED ECONOMY

On 22 March, KPMG published the latest edition of this newsletter covering direct and indirect tax developments.

<https://kpmg.com/kpmg-us/content/dam/kpmg/pdf/2023/digitalized-economy-taxation-developments-summary.pdf>

A MIXED PICTURE: HOW MALI VIEWS THE WAGNER GROUP

On 27 March, a Commentary from RUSI said that, despite the death of its leader Yevgeny Prigozhin, the Wagner Group's operations in Mali continue. But how do locals feel about the mercenaries' presence?

<https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/mixed-picture-how-mali-views-wagner-group>

SOUTH AFRICA: MAPISA-NQAKULA BRIBERY ALLEGATIONS OVER DEFENCE FORCE EQUIPMENT

On 25 March, Defence Web carried an article about the allegations that a former minister received bribes to grant contracts for the return of equipment from Sudan and the DRC.

<https://www.defenceweb.co.za/governance/governance-governance/mapisa-nqakula-bribery-allegations-further-evidence-of-sandf-destruction-groenewald/>

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