

S&V Weekly Newsletter Vol.10 No.23, June 03 2024

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'Shein products contain high levels of toxic chemicals,' says South Korea

According to a report from Agence France-Presse (AFP), the South Korean Government has accused online retailer Shein of selling products, including leather handbags, belts and children's shoes, containing toxic chemicals. The report reads:

Children's products sold by the Chinese-founded online shopping giant Shein contained toxic substances in amounts hundreds of times above acceptable levels, the government of South Korea's capital Seoul said Tuesday.

Shein, headquartered in Singapore, has skyrocketed in popularity around the world in recent years, offering a vast selection of trendy clothes and accessories at stunningly low prices.

This explosive growth has also led to increased scrutiny of its business practices and safety standards, including in the European Union and South Korea - where Seoul authorities have been conducting weekly inspections of items sold by platforms including Shein, Temu and AliExpress.

In the latest round, they selected eight products sold by Shein, including children's shoes, leather bags and a belt and found several to contain high amounts of phthalates - chemicals used to soften plastics.

One pair of shoes contained 428 times the permitted levels of phthalates - the highest observed so far during the Seoul inspections - and three bags had amounts as high as 153 times the limit, the city government said.

Phthalates are widely used to soften plastic and are found in thousands of products including containers, beauty products and toys. However, they have been known for decades to cause hormone disruptions and have been linked to obesity, heart disease, some cancers and fertility problems.

Seoul city official Park Sang-jin told AFP that they have requested a removal of these products from sale, and said that since the city began inspections in April, most platforms have complied with such requests.

AFP has reached out to Shein for comment. So far, Seoul authorities said they have inspected 93 products and found that almost half of them contained toxic substances. These items include children's waders and colouring pencils.

Last month, the European Union added Shein to its list of digital firms that are big enough to come under stricter safety rules - including measures to protect customers from unsafe products, especially those that could be harmful to minors.

Shein and Temu have followed Chinese e-commerce titan Alibaba in challenging Amazon, especially by making inroads in the US market.

From this we can conclude that product coming into South Africa is no different and for that matter from other equivalent online suppliers such as TEMU. This is very disturbing to read," said Jirka Vymetal of SAFLIA. "I will be taking this up with Government."

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And more pressure from SAFLIA on SA Government to control Temu, Shein

Umhlanga, KZN, SA - Online retailers Temu and Shein are undercutting local retailers in part because they're not paying all the tax on products they should be. SAFLIA executive director Jirka Vymetal said on Friday.

Investigating their products, we discovered that SARS has a standard import duty on small parcels of 20%," he said. "The minimum duty on footwear is 30%.

"On top of that, there's no VAT. So the government is losing 25% in tax, and local retailers are being undercut by the same amount. Urgent intervention is needed."

Trading conditions - in short, not good

Greg Bing, A.P. Jones Cape Town, W. Cape, SA - Business is terrible. We have had a very warm and dry May, and a shop full of jerseys and other warm winter ware, and that has had a major impact on our trade. Only in the last 48 hours has it started getting cold and wet.

There has been a lot of scepticism about the elections, and combined with the weather, people have gone into their shells.

Kamlesh Chagan, American Clothing/The Vault Cape Town, W. Cape, SA

- Trade is shocking, and I don't know quite what to put it down to - the elections? - people spending more on groceries? What hasn't helped is the very good weather until a couple of days ago.

- Also, too much product in the marketplace, and the chains murdering the independents. They're already on winter clearance sales, which doesn't help us.

- Online sales by Temu, Shein - offerings and prices affected the retailers. Suppliers are only interested in businesses doing the numbers.

- There's no obvious silver lining, but hopefully the cooler weather will help sales of knitwear, jackets and so on.

- However, we carry on. My father started this business in 1964/65, and I've been in it for 38 years.

Deepak Nathoo, Empiro Durban, KZN, SA

- Business is steady under tough conditions. The brands out of Europe that we have been stocking are now entering the market themselves, and we have to find alternative sources and brands.

- The entire business model for independents has to change to stay relevant. There has been a rise in mono-brand stores globally - here, London, anywhere else you go, you see the same brands on the high streets, and the independents have been pushed to the outskirts. Yes, they're surviving, but we have to change.

Leaving the industry

Cape Town, W. Cape, SA - Froggie Western Cape agent **Desmond Swartz** is leaving the footwear industry at the end of this month to go full time into the ministry. He is doing it with Froggie's blessing.

[In case you missed it!](#)

The latest issue of S&V Protect Magazine

S&V PROTECT MAGAZINE VOL18 NO2 SECOND QUARTER 2024

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 - Online from China: Noncompliant footwear, respiratory protection products still in undetected.

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 - The long overdue overhaul of South African construction health and safety, by **Professor John Smallwood**, Professor of Construction Management, Department of Construction Management, Nelson Mandela University.

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Advertisers in this Issue
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They Said It

"Wow! A week to prepare - how much do you want to bet that I'll still be doing it last minute????? LOL. I'll get something to you." Deborah Taylor, MD of the Sustainable Leather Foundation, and a monthly contributor to S&V African Leather. I'd like to think there WASN'T a hint of sarcasm in her reply, although Heaven knows it would be deserved.

Got anything you'd like to share?

Do you have any suggestions, comments or experiences about the industry that you'd like to share with the industry? - Tony@svmag.co.za

New subscribers last week

Paul, Director, Pienaar Brothers, Mpumalanga, South Africa
Nelson Nemananza, Safety Consultant, SHERQ Symposium, South Africa
Stanford Gwanzara, Director, Prestige Leathers, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe
Kyomuhangi Joan, Joanjilly mobile solutions, Namangoma, Uganda

Birthdays this week

03/06/1957: **Ada 'Ymie' Vymetal**, retired, formerly Rhodesian Bata Shoe Co., Eddels and SA Bureau of Standards, Pretoria, Gauteng, SA.

04/06/1958: **Tom Bailey**, Bolton Footwear, Great Brak River, W. Cape, SA.

03/06/1946: **Hamish Whyte**, Welbourn Shoes, Robertson, W. Cape, SA.

04/06/1956: **Romualdo Varela**, retired, formerly KKI, Mossel Bay, W. Cape, SA.

05/06/1960: **Tom Bassano**, CC Leather, Pieteritzburg, KZN, SA.

06/06/1951: **Yusuf Mayet**, Come Duze Store, Johannesburg, Gauteng, SA.

06/06/1963: **José Leite**, SA Polymers & Compounds, Gillits, KZN, SA.

06/06/1966: **Owen Mathers**, Max-Cowell, Port Elizabeth, E. Cape, SA.

07/06/1959: **Anton Klopper**, Kloppers, Bloemfontein, Free State, SA.

07/06/1984: **Clenton Gounder**, Prisaan Footwear (closed), Pinetown, KZN, SA.

08/06/1955: **Erad Lemkus**, retired, formerly Hi-Tec, Cape Town, W. Cape, SA.

09/06/1958: **Sandra Young**, left the industry, formerly Archilles Engineering (closed), Benoni.

09/06/1957: **Willem Fourie**, Images, Bloemfontein, Free State, SA.

09/06/1989: **Noushard Mahomed Hoosen**, Paris Belts, Johannesburg, Gauteng, SA.

In memoriam this week

03/06/2016: **Joop de Voest** (b. 21/01/1954), Marketing & Planning Consulting Services, De Rust, W. Cape, SA.

04/06/2002: **Rex Phillipson** (b. 13/4/1917), Picaninni Shoes (closed), Durban, KZN, SA.

06/06/2001: **Willem Elbers** (b. 09/04/1941), East Cape Tanning (closed)/BASF, Uitenhage, E. Cape, SA.

06/06/2002: **Willie Compion** (b. 21/10/1929), G&D Shoes (closed), Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

06/06/2013: **Willem Lubbe** (b.25/01/1925), AP Lubbe & Son (closed), Stellenbosch, W. Cape, SA.

09/06/2002: **Howard 'Snowy' Vaubell**, Crown Footwear, Pinetown, KZN, SA.

09/06/2003: **Dr Stanley Shuttleworth** (b. 1911), LIRI (closed) founder, Grahamstown, E. Cape, SA.

Have you let us know about your birthday, or the birthdays of your colleagues? Our readers love this section, so please become part of it. This also applies to the In Memoriam section. Help us remember former colleagues.

Directory entries updated this week

Empiro [Hollywood 2000 cc], Umhlanga, KZN, SA.
 Surf Action/The Blue Coat Surfshop [Wave Action cc], Margate/Ramsgate, KZN, SA.

S&V THE MONTHLY AT A GLANCE
Trade Fairs Seminars Conferences Range Launches
 Do you have an event you want listed in the calendar?
 Email tony@svmag.co.za
 No charge for associations, R199 + Vat for all others

JUN 2024						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Expo Riv...	Expo Riv...	Expo Riv...				
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

S&V THE ABRIDGED OPEN-TO-VIEW ONLINE DIRECTORY
 Over 4500 entries, divided into:
 • Leather • Components & Services
 • Footwear & Leather Goods
 • Commission Agents, Retailers
 • Associations & Support Organisations
 • and much, much more
 The abridged Directory lists business names and their principal phone numbers.
 The comprehensive Directory, which lists the names of personnel, cell numbers, emails, descriptions of products & services, and much more, is also available by subscription only.
 Email tony@svmag.co.za

Exchange rates

Note: For previous rates, see [HERE](#)
 1. SA Rand (ZAR)/Lesotho Loti (LSL)/Namibian Dollar (NAD)/Swazi Liliangeni (SZL)
 Source: <http://www.x-rates.com/calculator/>

	Euro €	GBP £	US \$	CNY ¥
02/01/2024	R20.30	R23.42	R18.54	R2.60
06/01/2024	R20.45	R23.77	R18.68	R2.61
13/01/2024	R20.44	R23.79	R18.65	R2.62
20/01/2024	R20.71	R24.14	R19.01	R2.67
27/01/2024	R20.39	R23.85	R18.78	R2.64
05/02/2024	R20.41	R23.89	R18.98	R2.64
10/02/2024	R20.52	R24.03	R19.03	R2.64
17/02/2024	R20.35	R23.80	R18.89	R2.62
24/02/2024	R20.91	R24.40	R19.30	R2.68
02/03/2024	R20.11	R24.17	R19.11	R2.65
09/03/2024	R20.48	R24.07	R18.72	R2.60
16/03/2024	R20.43	R23.89	R18.75	R2.60
23/03/2024	R20.59	R23.93	R18.99	R2.62
01/04/2024	R20.37	R23.83	R18.96	R2.62
06/04/2024	R20.24	R23.60	R18.67	R2.58
13/04/2024	R20.08	R23.48	R18.85	R2.60
20/04/2024	R20.35	R23.67	R19.12	R2.64
27/04/2024	R20.13	R23.51	R18.82	R2.59
04/05/2024	R19.92	R23.21	R18.50	R2.55
11/05/2024	R19.88	R23.10	R18.45	R2.55
18/05/2024	R19.79	R23.06	R18.16	R2.51
25/05/2024	R19.99	R23.46	R18.43	R2.54
01/06/2024	R20.41	R23.96	R18.81	R2.59

2. Botswana Pula

Source: <https://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/>

	Euro €	GBP £	US \$	CNY ¥
02/01/2024	14.66	16.91	13.39	1.88
06/01/2024	14.78	17.19	13.51	1.89
13/01/2024	14.81	17.24	13.52	1.89
20/01/2024	14.86	17.33	13.64	1.91
27/01/2024	14.77	17.28	13.61	1.91
05/02/2024	14.73	17.24	13.70	1.90
10/02/2024	14.77	17.29	13.71	1.90
17/02/2024	14.77	17.28	13.71	1.90
24/02/2024	14.92	17.41	13.77	1.91
02/03/2024	14.90	17.39	13.74	1.91
09/03/2024	14.61	17.64	13.72	1.90
16/03/2024	15.00	17.30	13.58	1.88
23/03/2024	14.79	17.19	13.64	1.88
01/04/2024	14.77	17.28	13.75	1.90
06/04/2024	14.86	17.34	13.71	1.89
13/04/2024	14.55	17.01	13.66	1.88
20/04/2024	14.67	17.07	13.78	1.90
27/04/2024	14.75	17.23	13.79	1.90
04/05/2024	14.84	17.30	13.79	1.90
11/05/2024	14.67	17.05	13.62	1.88
18/05/2024	14.74	17.22	13.56	1.87
25/05/2024	14.65	17.19	13.50	1.86
01/06/2024	14.74	17.31	13.59	1.87

3. Malawian Kwacha (MWK) (buying)

Source: <https://www.rbm.gov/>

	Euro €	GBP £	US \$	ZAR
10/02/2024	1849.26	2165.66	1666.73	90.57
17/02/2024	1847.37	2160.68	1666.73	90.73
24/02/2024	1858.36	2173.21	1666.73	91.40
02/03/2024	1855.79	2167.03	1666.73	91.32
09/03/2024	1878.96	2198.79	1666.73	91.92
16/03/2024	NA	NA	NA	NA
23/03/2024	1916.05	2234.16	1716.73	93.54
01/04/2024	1913.05	2232.75	1716.73	93.36
06/04/2024	1914.11	2232.22	1716.73	94.21
13/04/2024	1889.00	2213.30	1716.73	94.51
20/04/2024	1880.34	2214.91	1716.73	92.06
27/04/2024	1896.43	2219.17	1716.73	93.03
04/05/2024	NA	NA	NA	NA
11/05/2024	1906.15	2217.01	1716.73	95.80
18/05/2024	1921.00	2238.58	1716.73	97.24
25/05/2024	1911.46	2243.88	1716.73	95.87
01/06/2024	1912.34	2247.95	1716.73	94.10

4. Zambian Kwacha (ZMW) (buying)

Source: <https://www.boz.zm/>

	Euro €	GBP £	US \$	ZAR
10/02/2024	29.04	33.99	26.96	1.41
17/02/2024	27.36	31.96	25.40	1.34
24/02/2024	24.91	29.19	22.99	1.19
02/03/2024	25.48	29.77	23.56	1.22
09/03/2024	26.25	30.78	24.14	1.28
16/03/2024	27.33	32.00	25.09	1.34
23/03/2024	28.52	33.25	26.36	1.38
01/04/2024	26.90	31.45	24.88	1.31
06/04/2024	26.66	31.06	24.69	1.32