

## France to punish 'eco-cide' with prison up to 10 yrs

AFP, Paris

France will make serious intentional damage to the environment punishable by up to 10 years in prison as part of planned "eco-cide" law, government ministers said in remarks published yesterday.

The law was one recommendation from a Citizens' Convention for the Climate, a group created by the government a year ago, bringing together 150 people from the French population to discuss the environment.

An "eco-cide" offence would be sanctioned by up to 4.5 million euros (\$5.3 million) in fines or up to 10 years in prison in cases of "intentional violation" of environmental laws, Justice Minister Eric Dupont-Moretti and Ecological Transition Minister Barbara Pompili told the JDD weekly.

"We are going to create a general pollution offence," Dupont-Moretti said. "Punishment will be staggered according to a perpetrator's intentions."

The aim was to fine violators of environmental laws "up to 10 times the profit they would have generated by throwing waste into the river", he said.

The French constitution did not allow the qualification of such actions as "crimes", just offences, Dupont-Moretti said.

France will also add an offence called "endangering the environment" to its statute books, Pompili said, under which potential offenders could be punished even before committing acts of illegal pollution.

Environmental expertise within the French judiciary will be beefed up to allow courts to improve their handling of pollution cases and civil claims, including by creating special environmental jurisdictions, Dupont-Moretti said.

The citizens' convention has submitted 149 proposals to cut greenhouse gas emissions to President Emmanuel Macron, who said he would convert 146 of them into government policy.



**Demonstrators confront riot police during a protest demanding the resignation of Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei, in Guatemala City on Saturday. Thousands of people flocked to Guatemala City's main plaza in the biggest protest yet against Giammattei's government - over cuts in the 2021 budget - with some setting fire to the Congress building (inset).**

PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Saudi Arabia confident Biden will pursue regional stability

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud said on Saturday he was confident that Democrat Joe Biden's incoming US administration would pursue policies that help regional stability and that any discussions with it would lead to strong cooperation. Riyadh is bracing itself for a new US president who pledged on the election campaign trail to reassess ties with Saudi Arabia, a state he described as a "pariah" in 2019. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman enjoyed close personal ties with President Trump and their relationship provided a buffer against criticism over Riyadh's rights record, Riyadh's role in Yemen's war and the detention of women's rights activists. Those areas may now become points of friction between Biden and Saudi Arabia, a major oil exporter and buyer of US arms.

#### 14 pro-Iran fighters in Syria killed in 'Israeli airstrikes'

At least 14 pro-Iran militia fighters from Iraq and Afghanistan were killed in air strikes in war-torn eastern Syria, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said yesterday. The strikes on Saturday night in Deir Ezzor province, on the border with Iraq, were likely carried out by Israeli war planes, the Observatory said. The Israeli army said it doesn't comment on foreign reports. More than 10 strikes hit positions of Iran-backed militias outside the border town of Albu Kamal, according to the war monitor. The attack killed eight Iraqis and six Afghan fighters, it said. It also destroyed two bases as well as several military vehicles, the Observatory added. Israel has carried out hundreds of air and missile strikes on Syria since the civil war broke out in 2011, targeting Iranian and Lebanese Hezbollah forces as well as government troops.

#### Pope Francis presses for just global economic model



Pope Francis urged young entrepreneurs Saturday to develop a new, more just economic model that could save a mistreated planet while helping the poor and the excluded. Francis spoke via a video message beamed to a virtual meeting of young business leaders and urged them to make major changes to global economic relationships. "You recognize the urgent need for a different economic narrative," the pontiff said in comments translated into English. "The present world system is certainly unsustainable from a number of points of view and is harming our sister earth, so gravely maltreated and despoiled, together with the poor and the excluded in our midst," the pope remarked. He pointed out that the coronavirus epidemic had caused people to think about the situation the world found itself in. "Once the present health crisis has passed, the worst reaction would be to fall even more deeply into feverish consumerism," Francis added.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

## 'Save yourselves'

Ethiopia tells Tigrayans in push on rebel capital

REUTERS, Addis Ababa/Nairobi

Advancing Ethiopian troops plan to surround the Tigray region's rebel-held capital with tanks and may shell the city to force surrender, a military spokesman said yesterday, urging civilians to save themselves.

The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which is refusing to surrender its rule of the northern region, said its forces were digging trenches and standing firm.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's federal troops have taken a string of towns during aerial bombardments and ground fighting, and are now aiming for Mekelle, a highland city of about 500,000 people where the rebels are based.

The war has killed hundreds, possibly thousands, sent more than 30,000 refugees into neighbouring Sudan, and seen rockets fired by rebels into neighbouring Amhara region and across the border into Eritrea.

Foreign nations have urged talks, but Abiy has pressed on with the

offensive since Nov 4.

Claims by all sides are hard to verify because phone and internet communication has been down.

"The next phases are the decisive part of the operation, which is to encircle Mekelle using tanks," military



spokesman Colonel Dejene Tsegay told state-run Ethiopia Broadcasting Corporation.

"We want to send a message to the public in Mekelle to save yourselves from any artillery attacks and free yourselves from the junta... After that, there will be no mercy."

TPLF leader Debretsion Gebremichael told Reuters by text

message that his forces were resisting a push from the south while also fighting near the northern town of Adigrat after it fell to federal troops.

Abiy accuses the Tigrayan leaders of revolting against central authority and starting the conflict by attacking federal troops in the town of Dansha. The rebels say his government has marginalised Tigrayans since taking office two years ago, removing them from senior roles in government and the military and detaining many on rights abuse and corruption charges.

Tigrayan leaders ruled Ethiopia for years before took office.

The prime minister drew plaudits for opening up Ethiopia's closed economy and repressive political system after taking office. However, rights groups say his government has carried out mass arrests after outbreaks of violence and detained journalists this year.

Abiy won a Nobel Peace Prize last year for ending a two-decade standoff with Eritrea.

## Trump defends withdrawal from Paris climate accord

AFP, Riyadh

US President Trump yesterday defended his decision to pull out of the Paris climate accord, calling it "unfair and one-sided" even as President-elect Joe Biden has pledged to rejoin the landmark agreement.

The United States formally left the 2015 Paris accord earlier this month, becoming the first country to ever withdraw from an international climate change pact.

"I withdrew the United States from the unfair and one-sided Paris Climate accord, a very unfair act for the United States," Trump said on the sidelines of a virtual G20 summit hosted by Saudi Arabia.

"The Paris accord was not designed to save the environment. It was designed to kill the American economy."

"I refuse to surrender millions of American jobs and send trillions of American dollars to the world's worst polluters and environmental offenders, and that's what would have happened."

His comment came after Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga yesterday said that his country will lead international efforts to combat climate change, in comments on the sidelines of the G20 summit.

Suga has already said that Japan will aim for net-zero emissions by 2050, making a green society one of his key policy priorities.

Trump has aggressively championed the fossil fuel industry, questioned the science of climate change and weakened other environmental protections.

Biden has vowed that the US would rejoin the Paris climate accord on his first day in the White House in January. The US president-elect has proposed a \$1.7 trillion plan to take the United States, the world's second biggest carbon emitter, to net zero by 2050.

## Turkey sees itself a part of Europe

Says Erdogan

REUTERS, Istanbul

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan yesterday said that his country, an official candidate for European Union membership, sees itself as an inseparable part of Europe but will not give in to attacks and double standards.

"We see ourselves as an inseparable part of Europe... However this does not mean that we will bow down to overt attacks to our country and nation, veiled injustices and double standards," Erdogan said in a speech to the members of its AK Party.

Turkey's drilling activities in a disputed part of the eastern Mediterranean have raised tensions with the EU as Turkey locked in a dispute with and Greece and Cyprus over the extent of their continental shelves and hydrocarbon resources.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said this month that Turkey's rhetoric on Cyprus was aggravating tensions with the EU and Ankara had to understand that its behaviour was "widening its separation" from the bloc. The EU will discuss Turkey's pursuit of natural gas exploration in contested waters in the eastern Mediterranean at their next summit in December.

"We do not believe that we have any problems with countries or institutions that cannot be solved through politics, dialogue and negotiations," Erdogan said.

Erdogan said that the EU should keep its promises regarding the migrants issue and making Turkey a full member of the bloc. He was referring to a 2016 deal under which Ankara curbed migrant entries into Europe in exchange for financial help and visa-free travel in the Schengen region.



**Opposition supporters parade through the streets during a rally to protest against police violence and Belarus presidential election results in Minsk, yesterday. For more than three months Belarus has been gripped by historic protests after a disputed presidential vote that saw strongman leader Alexander Lukashenko re-elected for a sixth term.**

PHOTO: AFP

## China seeks to bring first lunar rocks since 1970s

REUTERS

China plans to launch an unmanned spacecraft to the moon this week to bring back lunar rocks in the first attempt by any nation to retrieve samples from Earth's natural satellite since the 1970s.

The Chang'e-5 probe, named after the ancient Chinese goddess of the moon, will seek to collect material that can help scientists understand more about the moon's origins and formation. The mission will test China's ability to remotely acquire samples from space, ahead of more complex missions.

If successful, the mission will make China only the third country to have retrieved lunar samples, following the United States and the Soviet Union decades ago.

Since the Soviet Union crash-landed the Luna 2 on the moon in 1959, the first human-made object to reach another celestial body, a handful of other countries including Japan and India have launched moon missions.

In the Apollo programme, which first put men on the moon, the United States landed 12 astronauts over six flights from 1969 to 1972, bringing back 382 kg of rocks and soil.

The Soviet Union deployed three successful robotic sample return missions



in the 1970s. The last, the Luna 24, retrieved 170.1 grams (6 ounces) of samples in 1976 from Mare Crisium, or "Sea of Crises".

China's probe, scheduled to launch in coming days, will attempt to collect 2 kg of samples in a previously unvisited area in a massive lava plain known as Oceanus Procellarum, or "Ocean of Storms".

The Chang'e-5 mission may help answer questions such as how long the moon remained volcanically active in its interior and when its magnetic field - key to protecting any form of life from the sun's radiation - dissipated.

China made its first lunar landing in 2013. In January 2019, the Chang'e-4 probe touched down on the far side of the moon, the first by any nation's space probe.

Within the next decade, China plans to establish a robotic base station to conduct unmanned exploration in the south polar region.

## Imran-govt must go by January

Declares Pak opposition coalition in rally amid coronavirus worries

Dawn/ANN

Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairperson Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari yesterday declared that the incumbent government will "have to go home by January" and called upon the masses to hold the rulers as well as their "selectors" accountable.

While addressing a rally in Peshawar arranged by the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), a coalition of opposition parties, Bilawal addressed criticism over PDM's decision to hold the rally despite increasing Covid-19 cases, saying that the government "only remembers Covid when they want to stop our rallies and your protest".

"They don't remember Covid when it comes to regularising medical staff or increasing salaries," he said.

The PPP chief also criticised the accountability process, saying that the



National Accountability Bureau went after members of the opposition for "political revenge" but "does not have the courage" to pursue corruption cases against government figures. He declared the PTI government as the "most corrupt government in Pakistan's history".

Bilawal said that the country cannot have a strong accountability system until "there is one law for all citizens. Until there are same courts

and laws for politicians, army generals and judges."

Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (Fazl) Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman, during his address, alleged that the 2018 general elections had been rigged.

He then went on to say: "We respect the army if it is our defence institution. But if it tries to become a political institution, it will have to tolerate criticism. Then it should not say, 'don't take our name'."

Terming PM Imran Khan as the "Pakistani Trump", Rehman said that the premier will be "rejected" just like the Americans had rejected US President Donald Trump in recent elections.

Meanwhile, Imran Khan lashed out at the PDM for "deliberately endangering lives [and] livelihoods" by going ahead with their rallies despite a rise in the number of coronavirus cases.

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