

# 'Penalised' for others mistakes

## At-risk nations plead for 'justice' at UN climate summit, urge help from rich nations

GREENHOUSE GAS PLEDGE

### India on track to achieve 2030 goal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India is firmly on track to meet its target on power generation from non-fossil sources and reduce greenhouse gases well ahead of the deadline, Environment Minister Harsh Vardhan said on Monday at a climate summit in Poland.

"In terms of commitment, we are already on track. We will achieve our target ahead of the 2030 deadline", Harsh Vardhan said.

He said India is committed to win the battle against global warming and the country has made "great strides" in its journey towards meeting climate change adaptation and mitigation targets.

India has set an ambitious target on three fronts. It has pledged to produce 40 percent of its power from non-fossil fuels by 2030. It has also committed to cut down the emissions of greenhouse gases by 33-35 percent from the 2005-levels and create an additional carbon sink of 2.5-3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide through planting trees.

Vardhan said India is working hard for achieving its target to get 175 GW power from renewable energy by 2022. India stands fourth in wind power, fifth in renewable power, he added.

He also said that just in the last two years India has achieved a one percent increase in its forest cover whereas in many countries across the globe it is depleting.

India has also pledged to get rid of single-use plastic by 2022 across the country.

BITS OF HISTORY (DECEMBER 04)

1943: General Tito named as head of provisional Communist government in Yugoslavia.

1997: A historic treaty to ban anti-personnel landmines worldwide became reality when 121 nations signed it in Ottawa; the United States was among the abstainers.

1998: The last Khmer Rouge fighters surrendered, ending a 20-year war against the Cambodian government.

## 'Govts must protect people'

AFP, Katowice

Governments must protect citizens from the killer effects of climate change, movie tough guy-turned-statesman Arnold Schwarzenegger told AFP, insisting the United States was committed to a greener future despite Donald Trump reneging on the Paris agreement.



nations must agree on a rulebook to limit global temperature rises and the devastating economic and health impacts global warming will bring.

"I think governments' responsibility is to protect people. That's why we have armies to avoid an attack. Well here is the biggest attack," he told AFP.

"Seven million people die every year because of (air) pollution, 25,000 of them die alone in America. If we don't want to fight that then there is something wrong with us."

In his two terms as California governor between 2003-2011, Schwarzenegger helped shape America's richest state into a green powerhouse.

But developing nations have complained that richer states -- responsible for the vast majority of historic fossil fuel use -- aren't doing enough to help them adapt to our warming planet.

"We feel as if we have been penalised for

the mistakes we never made," said Bhandari. "It is incumbent on the international community to ensure that justice is done."

Trust in the Paris process has been hit by US President Donald Trump's decision to renege on his country's commitment, and there are fears the political will to act is

## Trump wants talks with Putin, Xi

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump on Monday proposed talks with the leaders of China and Russia aimed at halting what he described as an "uncontrollable" arms race.

Trump's comment follows an October announcement in which he said he would withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), a Cold War deal with Russia to cut missile numbers.

## Israel to destroy Hezbollah tunnels

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel's army yesterday said it had detected Hezbollah tunnels infiltrating its territory from Lebanon and launched an operation to destroy them, a move likely to raise tensions with the Iran-backed group. Israel declined to say how many were detected or how they would be destroyed.

## More than 150 raped in South Sudan: UN

AFP, United Nations

More than 150 women and girls have come forward in the past 12 days to seek help in South Sudan after they were raped or suffered other forms of sexual violence, the heads of three UN agencies said Monday. Armed men, many in uniform, carried out the attacks near Bentiu, a joint statement said.

## India president to visit Myanmar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Indian President Ram Nath Kovind will visit Myanmar from December 10 to 14 during which several agreements are expected to be signed between the two countries, a statement said yesterday. Kovind will hold talks with his counterpart U Win Myint and Aung San Suu Kyi, it added.



US President Donald Trump salutes as he and First Lady Melania Trump pay their respects at the flag draped casket of former US president George HW Bush as it lies in state inside the US Capitol Rotunda on Capitol Hill in Washington, US, on Monday. Inset, US Vice President Mike Pence (L), former President George W Bush (C), former first lady Laura Bush and Jeb Bush pay respect to the 41st US president.

PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

## Macron bows to pressure

### France halts fuel tax hikes in bid to calm fiery protests

REUTERS, Paris

France's prime minister yesterday suspended planned increases to fuel taxes for at least six months in response to weeks of sometimes violent protests, the first major U-turn by President Emmanuel Macron's administration after 18 months in office.

In announcing the decision, Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said anyone would have "to be deaf or blind" not to see or hear the roiling anger on the streets over a policy that Macron has defended as critical to combating climate change.

"The French who have donned yellow vests want taxes to drop, and work to pay. That's also what we want. If I didn't manage to explain it, if the ruling majority didn't manage to convince the French, then something must change," said Philippe.

"No tax is worth jeopardising the unity of the nation."

Along with the delay to the tax increases that were set for January, Philippe said the time would be used to discuss other measures to help the working poor and squeezed middle-class who rely on vehicles to get to work and go shopping.



Earlier officials had hinted at a possible increase to the minimum wage, but Philippe made no such commitment.

He warned citizens, however, that they could not expect better public services and lower taxes.

The so-called "yellow vest" movement, which started on November 17 as a social-media protest group named for the high-visibility jackets all motorists in France carry in their cars, began with the aim of highlighting the squeeze on household spending brought about by Macron's taxes on fuel.

However, over the past three weeks the movement has evolved into a wider anti-Macron uprising, with many criticising the president for pursuing policies they say favour the rich and do nothing to help the poor.

## KHASHOGGI MURDER

### Zero doubt Saudi crown prince directed the killing

#### Top US senators say after CIA briefing

AFP, Washington

Two key US Republican senators said yesterday after a briefing by the CIA's director they have "zero" doubt Saudi Arabia's crown prince directed the murder of the journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

The explosive new declarations by members of President Donald Trump's party run counter to the White House narrative downplaying possible links between Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and the October killing of journalist and palace critic Khashoggi at the kingdom's Istanbul consulate.

"I have zero question in my mind that the crown prince directed the murder and was kept apprised of the situation all the way

through it," Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman Bob Corker told reporters after CIA director Gina Haspel briefed a small group of senators.

"If MBS were in front of a jury he'd be convicted in less than 30 minutes."

Fellow Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, who has urged Trump to take a far tougher stance against Riyadh over the killing, also attended the hour-long briefing.

He minced no words afterwards, saying he believes Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is "a wrecking ball" who is "complicit in the murder of Khashoggi to the highest level possible."

"There's not a smoking gun but a smoking saw," Graham added.



## New Delhi's govt fined over smog

AFP, New Delhi

India's environmental watchdog has slapped New Delhi's government with a \$3.5 million fine for failing to enforce rules to reduce smog in the world's most polluted major city, officials said yesterday.

The National Green Tribunal penalised the capital administration for its lack of oversight after it emerged some polluting industries were still burning harmful waste in the open.

The tribunal had been hearing a plea from Delhi residents complaining about factories flouting laws on trash fires.

Each winter, Delhi chokes through haze so extreme that levels of airborne pollutants routinely eclipse safe limits by more than 30 times.

## UK can unilaterally cancel Brexit

### Says EU court adviser; British MPs starts debate on May's plan

REUTERS, London

A senior European Union legal adviser yesterday said Britain had the right to withdraw its Brexit notice, opening a new front in a battle over Prime Minister Theresa May's plans to leave the bloc, which could be rejected in parliament next week.

The advice from a European Court of Justice advocate general emboldened supporters of EU membership in Britain's parliament on the first of five days of debate on May's plans to keep close economic ties after leaving in March.

But May has no intention of revoking the notice, her spokesman said, despite facing a daunting struggle to secure approval in the key vote on Dec 11 after her plan was criticised by Brexit supporters and opponents alike.

"The British people want us to get on with a deal that honours the referendum and allows us to come together again as a country, whichever way we voted," she will tell lawmakers on



Tuesday, according to excerpts of her speech.

"This is the deal that delivers for the British people."

May says if lawmakers do not back her deal, they could open the door to Britain falling out of the EU without measures to soften the transition, or that Brexit might not happen.

That is something that many lawmakers want to prevent, and a group of mainly pro-EU lawmakers from May's Conservative Party attempted yesterday to make sure parliament gets more power to dictate the government's next steps takes if the deal fails. If their amendment is accepted for debate, it will be put to a vote and stand a good

## 4,122 criminal cases pending against MPs

### India's SC to form special courts to complete trials within a year

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

A total of 4,122 criminal cases are pending against the present and former members of parliament and state legislatures across India, the Supreme Court was informed yesterday.

The information was given by the amicus curiae (friend of the court) in an affidavit to the apex court which is considering setting up of special fast track courts to complete the trials of politicians within one year.

Acting on a public interest litigation which seeks expeditious trial of criminal cases against elected representatives, the top court had sought detailed data on the criminal cases against present and former lawmakers and legislators in various courts in order to facilitate the setting up of adequate number of special courts for expediting trials in these cases.

The SC has asked each high court to designate as many sessions and magistrate courts in the concerned states to try pending criminal cases against sitting and former MPs and MLAs.

The data given in the affidavit said trials are pending for nearly three decades and charges have not been framed.

The northern state of Uttar Pradesh tops the list of the number of pending cases (992) against former and present legislators followed by Nagaland (331), Tamil Nadu (321), Kerala (312) and Bihar (304) among others.



## Don't act like Hitler

### Ousted Lanka PM tells president

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's toppled premier yesterday likened the president to Hitler as he demanded to be reinstated, almost six weeks into a paralysing political crisis in the Indian Ocean nation.

Ranil Wickremesinghe made the comments -- his strongest yet directed at the head of state -- at the prime minister's official residence, which he has refused to vacate since his dismissal in October.

"The president has to appoint me prime minister as I command a majority in parliament," he said.

"I am telling the president not to act like Hitler who bypassed the constitution... We are not going to allow him to do that."

President Maithripala Sirisena sacked Wickremesinghe and replaced him with Mahinda Rajapaksa, the larger-than-life former president credited with ending Sri Lanka's bloody civil war with Tamil separatists in 2009.

However, with Wickremesinghe's supporters still controlling a majority in parliament -- which has witnessed brawls between MPs in recent weeks -- Rajapaksa has lost two votes of confidence.

On Monday, the Court of Appeal denied Rajapaksa the authority to act as prime minister and stripped his cabinet of their powers, giving Rajapaksa until December 12 to prove his legitimacy and that of his government.