

# UN: Climate battle will ‘succeed or fail’ in Asia

**AFP, Tokyo**

The battle to combat climate change will “succeed or fail” based on what happens in Asia, where growing energy needs are increasing demand for fossil fuels, UN officials said yesterday.

The United Nations will host a key climate summit next month that has been billed as a last chance to prevent irreversible climate change, three years after the Paris agreement went into force.

Commitments from countries in Asia to move towards carbon-neutral economies would be crucial, said Rachel Kyte, a UN special representative for the UN Secretary-General.

“It is really in this region that we will succeed or fail in the energy transition in order to be able to meet our climate change goals,” Kyte told reporters.

The summit hopes to secure commitments to zero net carbon by 2050, but growing demand for electricity in Asia is likely to be one of the key obstacles.

“Southeast Asia is one of the fastest growing economic regions in the world. This is where population and urbanisation mean that electricity demand is expected to triple between 2015 and 2040,” warned Kyte.

“In order to meet this, Southeast Asia



is currently turning to fossil fuels, many countries are.”

New coal plant projects continue throughout the region, particularly in Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines, and countries including Japan are funding their construction despite criticism from climate groups.

But Kyte said the sector should be seen as on its way out.

“There is really no future for coal,” she insisted.

In recent months, some private sector firms in Japan and elsewhere have moved away from funding coal, seeing it as a poor long-term investment, a trend that Kyte said was encouraging, along with growing energy efficiency in China and India.

Luis Alfonso de Alba, UN Special Envoy for the Climate Action Summit, also

# How to feed 10b without ruining Earth

**AFP, Paris**

Experts yesterday began negotiating the most comprehensive scientific assessment ever of the role the land we live off plays in climate change, expected to highlight the stark choices humanity faces to feed 10 billion people while preserving Nature.

The Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) special report on land use is expected to warn how industrialised food chains, rampant resource exploitation, and even efforts to stave off the worst effects of global warming, are jeopardising our future.

But it will also deliver a withering verdict on global inequality, depicting a planet where billions of overfed people throw away vast amounts of calories at the end of each day as hundreds of millions go to bed hungry.

As delegates from around the world began poring over the report’s draft text in Geneva yesterday, experts said the importance of using land efficiently had long been overlooked.

“When you look at both the effects of the changing climate as well as contributions to climate change, the land sector is incredibly

important,” Lynn Scarlett, vice president for public policy at The Nature Conservancy campaign group, told AFP.

Land use including agriculture and deforestation account for around a quarter of planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions. Industrial farming uses one third of all land on Earth and up to 74 percent of fresh water.

Stephen Cornelius, WWF’s chief advisor on climate change,



said the world needed “an urgent transformation in how we use land in the future.

“This includes the type of farming we do, our food system and diets, and the conservation of areas such as forests and other natural ecosystems.”

With the global population set to hit 10 billion by mid-century, there are fears existing food systems will be stretched to breaking point.

Meat is a major problem, as is food waste. It’s estimated as much as 30 percent of all food produced ends up in landfills -- with a carbon footprint to match.

“Although land provides more than enough food to feed everyone, there are still 820 million who go to bed hungry every night,” said Stephan Singer, senior adviser on global energy policies with Climate Action Network, a global grouping of NGOs.

The land use report is expected to detail increasing desertification and habitat degradation from agriculture, with an area of tropical forest the size of Sri Lanka lost each year.

It will also throw up a number of trade offs.

One is striking the right balance between land used for food and land used to mitigate global warming, such as forests and bioenergy projects.

“We need to move away from harmful industrial agriculture that relies on chemicals, drives deforestation and releases emissions,” Teresa Anderson, climate policy co-ordinator at global campaign group ActionAid, told AFP.

“The writing is on the wall for big agriculture corporations.”

**FOOD WASTE IN NUMBERS**

**One third of all food:** An IPCC draft summary says between 25-30 percent of food produced for human consumption every year -- approximately 1.3 billion tonnes -- gets lost or wasted. According to the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), food loss and waste costs the global economy close to \$1 trillion each year. It also generates as much as eight percent of all manmade greenhouse gas emissions.

**Inequality in wasting too:** The FAO says that consumers in rich nations bin almost as much food annually (222 million tonnes) as the entire net food production of sub-Saharan Africa (230 million tonnes). People in Europe and North America each throw away an average of 95-115 kilograms (209-254 pounds) of food each year; people in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia throw away just 6-11 kg.

**Food ‘loss’ vs ‘waste’:** Whereas in developing countries 40 percent of losses occur post-harvest, in industrialised nations 40 percent of losses happen at retail and consumer levels.

**1 billion obese vs 820 million hungry:** Around two billion people across the world are overnourished or obese, while 820 million people go to bed hungry each night.



A woman uses a phone as she leaves an office building in Jakarta, following a 6.9 magnitude earthquake struck off the southern coast of Indonesia’s heavily populated Java island, yesterday. Indonesia’s disaster agency yesterday initially warned that the quake could generate a tsunami of up to three metres (10 feet), but later lifted the warning. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

PHOTO: REUTERS

# ‘One giant leap for Saudi women’

*They now can travel without male guardian’s permission*

**AFP, Riyadh**

Saudi Arabia will allow women to travel abroad without approval from a male “guardian”, the government said Thursday, ending a restriction that drew international censure and prompted extreme attempts to flee the kingdom.

The landmark reform erodes the longstanding guardianship system that renders adult women as legal minors and allows their “guardians” -- husband, father and other male relatives -- to exercise arbitrary authority over them.

The decision, following years of campaigning by activists, comes after high-profile attempts by women to escape their guardians despite a string of reforms including a historic decree last year that overturned the world’s only ban on female motorists.

“A passport will be granted to any Saudi national who submits an application,” said a government ruling published in the official gazette Umm al-Qura.

The regulation effectively allows women over the age of 21 to obtain passports and leave the country without their guardian’s permission, the pro-government Okaz newspaper and other local media reported, citing senior authorities.



Women in the kingdom have long required permission from their male “guardians” to marry, renew their passports or exit the country.

The reform grants women greater autonomy and mobility, the pro-government Saudi Gazette newspaper said, hailing the decision as “one giant leap for Saudi women”.

The changes announced Thursday also grant Saudi women what has long been a male entitlement -- the right to officially register childbirth, marriage or divorce and to be recognised as a guardian to children who are minors.

The decision was hailed in the kingdom yesterday as a historic leap for gender equality, but it also drew anger from religious conservatives.

It triggered a wave of jubilation on social media, with the hashtag “No guardianship over women travel” and “This is our time” gaining traction. Many also posted humorous memes of women dashing to airports lugging suitcases and being trailed by male relatives.

The reform also drew backlash from arch-conservatives, many of whom shared old video sermons on social media by Saudi clerics advocating guardianship laws.

Some also denounced the change as “unIslamic” in a society that traditionally sees men as protectors of women.

# Trust in US values

*Pompeo urges Asean nations as US-China rift widens*

**AFP, Bangkok**

America’s top diplomat Mike Pompeo yesterday implored Southeast Asian nations to trust in US values, delivering a withering takedown of Chinese-style development, comments Beijing later swatted away as “meaningless”.

The secretary of state said decades of US alliances and investment had helped Asia walk from poverty to prosperity, as he aired the Trump administration’s “Indo-Pacific” strategy in Bangkok.

From supporting state-led enterprises to disputes over contested territories, Pompeo took aim at China’s actions and motivations in Southeast Asia, rowing back on comments on Thursday in which he told regional diplomats they were not expected to “choose” sides between the superpowers.

“Our investments don’t serve a government.... (they) don’t serve a political party,” he said of the Chinese Communist Party.

Beijing considers Southeast Asia as its “neighbourhood” where its economic, political and military might has given it primacy, with massive infrastructure and investment schemes straining the region.

But smaller powers also accuse China of loading on debt as well as aggression in the disputed South China Sea where a military build-up threatens the claims of several nations to strategically crucial waters.

The US wants the South China Sea, one of the world’s most important shipping lanes, to remain open.

Serving up a sharp rebuke on China’s drive into Southeast Asia, Pompeo said: “We’re not building roads to pave over your national sovereignty... We don’t fund bridges to close gaps of loyalty.”

His speech came hours after President Donald Trump promised to slap 10 percent tariffs on a further \$300 billion of Chinese goods in a sharp escalation of the trade war

between the two superpowers.

Pompeo is in Bangkok to attend the Association of Southeast Asian nations (Asean) foreign ministers’ meeting.

Earlier in the week China’s top diplomat, who is also in Bangkok, warned the US against trying to “sow distrust” between the regional superpower and Southeast Asian nations.

Replying to Pompeo’s comments in Beijing foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said “positive momentum” had in fact been made in relations between China and its neighbours in Bangkok. That included on a long-delayed code of conduct for the South China Sea, she said.

But Hua added that “high-ranking officials in the United States attempt to provoke discord”.

“It’s really meaningless to play such games every year,” Hua said, calling on the US to come up with a “responsible attitude as the world’s top power.”

# 5 win Asia’s ‘Nobel prize’

**AFP, Manila**

A campaigner who tackles youth suicide in South Korea, two journalists, and a human rights activist were named Friday among the winners of Asia’s equivalent of the Nobel Prize, the Ramon Magsaysay Award.

Kim Jong-ki, whose 16-year-old son took his life after being bullied in school, received the 2019 award for helping South Korea face one of the developed world’s highest suicide rates. Over 24 years, Kim’s Foundation for Preventing Youth Violence has carried out wide-ranging anti-bullying campaigns.

Journalists Ravish Kumar of India and Ko Swe Win of Myanmar were also winners of this year’s award, along with Thai human rights campaigner Angkhana Neelapaijit, and Filipino composer Ramundo Cayabyab.

Neelapaijit, 63, is the widow of a prominent human rights lawyer who was abducted and later murdered after publicly accusing the military of torturing detainees in the troubled Muslim region of southern Thailand. The former housewife took up her late husband’s cause and established the Justice for Peace Foundation to document the situation in the area, provide legal aid to victims, and put pressure on the government to act on human rights cases.

Ko Swe Win, 41, is the editor of the Myanmar Now, an independent online news service known for its well-researched, in-depth articles on the country’s under-reported human rights and social justice issues, the award foundation said.

India’s Ravish Kumar, 47, is the host of NDTV India’s “Prime Time” programme that sheds light on Indian society’s under-reported problems and who has endured harassment and threats for calling the country’s highest officials to account.

The annual award, widely considered Asia’s version of the Nobel Prize, is named for the Filipino president who died in a 1957 plane crash. This year’s winners will receive a cash prize and a medallion at a Manila ceremony on September 9.



# Crocodiles hunt in flooded Indian city

Crocodiles hunted dogs in the flooded streets of the Indian city of Vadodara in Gujarat after it was battered by nearly 50 centimetres (20 inches) of rain in 24 hours leaving five people dead, police said yesterday. About 5,000 people were evacuated from their homes as water from the overflowing crocodile-infested Vishwamitri River spread through the city of 1.2 million people. A video of one crocodile emerging from the flood to attack a dog went viral on social media. The reptile was caught by animal rights activists. Police said other two other incidents involving crocodiles in populated areas were reported. More than 250 people have died in monsoon floods across India in the past few weeks, with Assam and Bihar states in the north the worst hit.

# Rare Assam tea bags world record at auction

A rare Assam tea has sold for a world record price at auction in India, highlighting a boom for speciality teas while the industry as a whole is in crisis. A two kilogram (4.4 pound) lot of Majian Orthodox Golden tea sold for 141,002 rupees (\$2,035) on Wednesday. An unidentified Belgian trader bought the tea through a local agent, an auction official said. Guwahati Tea Auction Centre secretary Dinesh Bihani said it was a record price at auction, shattering the 50,000 rupees a kilo paid for some Manohari Golden tea the day before. Majian Orthodox comes from 100-year-old bushes on plantations owned by Assam Company India Limited, one of the world’s oldest tea enterprises.

# Paramilitaries arrested in Sudan for pupils’ killing

Sudan’s ruling generals yesterday announced that nine paramilitaries had been arrested for the killing of four teenage demonstrators earlier this week after four people were killed protesting their deaths. The move against the feared paramilitaries of the Rapid Support Forces came as talks between protest leaders and the ruling generals on a promised transition to civilian rule were due to enter a second day. The fatal shooting of the four schoolchildren and two other demonstrators during a rally against fuel and bread shortages in the city of Al-Obeid on Monday has sparked angry protests in cities across Sudan.

SOURCE: AFP

# Al-Qaeda attack kills 19 soldiers in Yemen

**AFP, Aden**

Al-Qaeda gunmen killed 19 soldiers in an attack on an army base in southern Yemen yesterday, security officials said, a day after deadly assaults by rebels and a jihadist bomber.

The gunmen stormed Al-Mahfad base in Abyan province and remained inside for several hours before military reinforcements came, three security officials told AFP, adding that the soldiers were killed in clashes with the jihadists.

Security analyst Aleksandar Mitreski said the attacks “seem opportunistic”.

The Yemen-based al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the Islamic State group and other jihadists have flourished in the chaos of the civil war between the government and the Shia Huthi rebels.

The United States considers AQAP the global jihadist network’s most dangerous branch and has waged a long-running drone war against its leaders.

On Thursday, separate attacks by the Huthis and jihadists hit security forces in Yemen’s second city Aden, killing at least 49 people, many of them newly trained police cadets, officials said.

The first attack was a suicide car bombing carried out by jihadists on a police station that killed 13 police officers and wounded several others, a security source said.

The second attack was carried out by the Huthis, who said they launched a drone and a ballistic missile at a training camp west of Aden, that killed 39 people.



A picture taken in Dar Salah yesterday, shows an Israeli border police confronting a journalist following clashes with Palestinians after the Friday prayers at the site of demolished buildings in the West Bank, adjacent to the area of Sur Baher in East Jerusalem.

PHOTO: REUTERS