



'Climatism' a bid to restrict sovereignty Says Brazil FM

AFP, Washington

Brazil's foreign minister charged Wednesday that international efforts to fight climate change amounted to a plot to destroy national sovereignty as this country faces intense criticism over Amazon fires.

Ahead of a major UN summit later this month aimed at stemming global warming, Foreign Minister Ernesto Araujo attacked what he called an ideology of "climatism" during a visit to Washington.

"From the debate that's going on, it would seem that the world is ending, and that's the whole point of climatism," he said at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank.

"The conveyers of that ideology want to create a moral equivalent of war in order to impose policies and restrictions that run counter to fundamental liberties," he said.

"How can someone in a time of peace dream of breaking the sovereignty of a country like Brazil over its own territory, saying 'the Amazon is on fire, again?' Because of ideology, because of the primeval cry of climate crisis, 'Let's save the planet,'" he said.

Araujo however accepted that climate change was happening. But he cast doubt on the overwhelming consensus of scientists that human activity is causing warming temperatures and downplayed the impact of Brazil's fires, which he said were in line with annual damage.

A global commission led by former UN chief Ban Ki-moon warned Tuesday that more than 100 million people in developing countries could be pushed below the poverty line without action on climate change by 2030.

Rainforest wildfires surge in Indonesia

AFP, Pekanbaru

The number of blazes in Indonesia's rainforests has jumped sharply, satellite data showed yesterday, spreading smog across Southeast Asia and adding to concerns about the impact of increasing wildfire outbreaks worldwide on global warming.

Illegal blazes to clear land for agricultural plantations have been raging on Sumatra and Borneo islands, with Indonesia deploying water-bombing helicopters and thousands of security forces to tackle them.

It is just the latest such outbreak globally -- huge blazes have torn through the Amazon in South America while bushfires are sweeping across eastern Australia in an unusually ferocious and early start to the wildfire season.

Indonesia's forest fires are an annual problem but have been worsened this year by particularly dry weather, and in recent days sent toxic smog

More than 930,000 hectares have been burned, hundreds of residents evacuated

Smog spreads across Southeast Asia as number of 'hotspots' jump

Experts say wildfire outbreaks worldwide to worsen global warming



floating over Malaysia and triggered a diplomatic row.

The number of "hotspots" -- areas of intense heat detected by satellite which indicate a high chance of fire -- jumped sharply in Indonesia on Wednesday, according to the Singapore-based ASEAN Specialised Meteorological Centre.

There were 1,619 hotspots detected on the Indonesian part of Borneo and Sumatra up from 861 a day earlier, according to a tally from the centre, which monitors forest fires and smog outbreaks.

More than 930,000 hectares of have been burned, hundreds of residents evacuated, and more than 9,000 personnel have been deployed to fight the fires.

In hard-hit Riau province on Sumatra, firefighters were battling

round the clock through charred forests as they sought to extinguish blazes belching thick white smog, AFP reporters said.

Provincial capital Pekanbaru was blanketed in dense smoke, leaving the sky dark even at midday. Residents sought to go about their daily lives as usual, with many wearing only rudimentary face masks.

Kiki Taufik, a forests campaigner with Greenpeace in Indonesia, told AFP there has been little rain in the past fortnight, particularly on Indonesian Borneo which saw the sharpest increase in hotspots.

Borneo is shared between Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei.

Taufik saw similarities between the blazes in Indonesia and those in the Amazon, where farmers also start fires

to clear land for agriculture.

"This should remind people we are facing a climate crisis," he said of the recent fires around the world. "Industries are looking to expand plantations using fires."

And he warned Indonesia's blazes would add to the sprawling archipelago's climate-damaging emissions, already among the highest in the world.

In 2015 Indonesia suffered its worst forest fires for about two decades, which dramatically increased its greenhouse gas emissions.

Diplomatic tensions were also rising as Malaysian Environment Minister Yeo Bee Yin accused her Indonesian counterpart of being "in denial", after Jakarta insisted fires in Malaysia had caused the smog there.

Indonesian Environment Minister Siti Nurbaya Bakar hit back Wednesday, telling AFP that "hotspots are not only found in Indonesia, but also in Sarawak (on Malaysian Borneo) and peninsular Malaysia".

"We are not standing idly by," she added.

Indonesian personnel have been struggling to tame the blazes as many burn underground in carbon-rich peat, which has been cleared across vast areas of the country for plantations.

After being cleared and drained of water, peat is highly combustible and hard to extinguish once ablaze.

Netanyahu gets Facebook 'hate speech' suspension

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party was found yesterday to have violated Facebook's hate-speech policy after a post from his account saying Arabs "want to destroy us all". Israeli media reported that the post which said Israeli Arabs "want to destroy us all -- women, children and men" appeared on Netanyahu's official Facebook page and was subsequently removed by Likud. A Facebook statement said the account has been suspended for 24 hours. Netanyahu, who is fighting an election battle for his political survival, said the message had nothing to do with him. "It wasn't me. It was one of the workers at our election headquarters," he told Israeli public radio. "Think logically: Do you think I would really write such a thing?"

NZ delays Christchurch mosque shooting trial

New Zealand's High Court yesterday altered next year's trial dates for the man accused of murdering 51 Muslim worshippers in Christchurch mosques to avoid the hearing clashing with the holy month of Ramadan. Australian Brenton Tarrant's trial was due to begin on May 4, 2020, which next year will coincide with Ramadan in the Islamic calendar. Christchurch was the scene of the worst mass shooting in modern New Zealand history on March 15, when Tarrant allegedly opened fire at two mosques while livestreaming his actions on social media. Tarrant, a self-avowed white supremacist, has been charged with 51 counts of murder, 40 of attempted murder and engaging in a terrorist act.

Mugabe to be buried in his village: family



Zimbabwean ex-president Robert Mugabe will be buried next week in his village, his family said on Thursday, delivering an apparent snub to government plans to bury him at a national monument. Mugabe died in Singapore last week aged 95, leaving Zimbabweans divided over the legacy of a leader once lauded as a liberation hero but whose autocratic 37-year rule ended in a coup in 2017. Some family members are still bitter over Mugabe's ouster and the role his former ally President Emmerson Mnangagwa played. Mnangagwa had declared Mugabe a national hero after his death, indicating he should be buried at a national monument for liberation heroes for his role as a founding father. But the family said traditional chiefs in his homestead in the Zimba region should decide.

SOURCE: AFP

US SC allows Trump to deny asylum to most C Americans

REUTERS, Washington

The US Supreme Court on Wednesday granted a request by President Donald Trump's administration to fully enforce a new rule that would curtail asylum applications by immigrants at the US-Mexico border, a key element of his headline immigration policies.

The court said the rule, which requires most immigrants who want asylum to first seek safe haven in a third country through which they traveled on their way to the United States, could go into effect as litigation challenging its legality continues.

Among the nine judges on the court, liberal Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg dissented.

The court's ruling handed a victory to Trump at a time when much of his immigration agenda had been struck down by lower courts. "BIG United States Supreme Court WIN for the Border on Asylum!" Trump said on Twitter.

The rule would bar almost all immigrants from applying for asylum at the southern

border. It represents the latest effort by Trump's administration to crack down on immigration.

The American Civil Liberties Union and others who challenged the administration's policy in federal court said it violates US immigration law and accused the administration of failing to follow the correct legal process in issuing the rule, which was unveiled on July 15.

US Supreme Court said it will allow the asylum restriction to remain in place until the underlying legality of the rule is determined at trial.



"This is just a temporary step, and we're hopeful we'll prevail at the end of the day," ACLU attorney Lee Gelernt said. "The lives of thousands of families are at stake."

The Republican president's administration issued the rule in an attempt to reduce the surging number of asylum claims primarily by Central American migrants who have crossed the US-Mexico border in large numbers during his presidency. The rule would keep asylum protections for Mexican citizens.

CRACKDOWN ON OPPOSITION

Russia cops carry out mass raids

AFP, Moscow

Russian investigators yesterday raided dozens of regional offices of top protest leader Alexei Navalny as well as the homes of his supporters after mass opposition rallies this summer.

Navalny said the raids were the result of Kremlin "hysteria" after allies of President Vladimir Putin suffered major losses in local elections in Moscow on Sunday.

Navalny, who had instructed supporters to vote strategically to push out pro-Kremlin candidates, said on YouTube: "Putin got upset and is stomping his feet."

"That's what we're seeing in 41 cities across the whole country," he added, looking tired and drawn in the video hastily shot on his mobile phone.

He said the raids were being carried out at more than 200 addresses in "the biggest police operation in Russia's modern history".

Police, investigators, national guard and security services were all involved and seized equipment such as phones and computers, he said.

Navalny has credited his strategic voting campaign for the ruling party losing almost a third of its seats in elections for Moscow city parliament, writing in a blog entry: "Why such hysteria? Two words: smart voting."

Law enforcement agencies have not yet made any official comment on the raids.

TRAIN DERAILMENT IN DR CONGO

At least 50 killed

AFP, Lubumbashi

At least 50 stowaways were killed when a freight train derailed in southeastern Democratic Republic of Congo early yesterday, the latest rail tragedy to strike the vast central African nation.

"Another disaster! Derailing at 3am (0100 GMT) in Tanganyika (province) near Mayibari. Provisional toll: 50 dead and several injured," the minister for humanitarian action, Steve Mbikayi, said in a tweet.

Witnesses at the scene and local media feared more than a hundred people could have been killed.

Victor Umba, the union head of the national rail company SNCC, said the freight train was travelling from the town of Nyunzu to the town of Niamba when two carriages fell on their sides.

"Those who died in this derailment were stowaways. It is impossible for the SNCC to provide any kind of toll," Umba told AFP.

He added that the SNCC's chief was in the provincial capital of Kalemie trying to find a way to raise the carriages.

"It seems that many stowaways are trapped under the derailed carriages".

Railways in the DRC have a poor record for safety, hampered by derelict tracks and decrepit locomotives, many of them dating from the 1960s.

In March, at least 24 people were killed and 31 were injured when a freight train carrying illegal passengers crashed in the central region of Kasai.

In November last year, 10 stowaways were killed and 24 injured near the eastern town of Samba when the brakes failed on a freight train.



Destroyed boats are pushed up against the pier in the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian in Treasure Cay on Abaco island, Bahamas, on Wednesday. About 2,500 people are still unaccounted for in the Bahamas following the hurricane, the archipelago's National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) said Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

Saudi princess gets suspended jail in France

AFP, Paris

A French court yesterday handed a 10-month suspended sentence to a sister of the Saudi crown prince over the beating of a workman at a luxury residence in Paris in 2016.

Hassa bint Salman, a daughter of King Salman and sister of the powerful Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, had been charged with instructing her bodyguard to beat up a plumber.

Tried in absentia and the target of an arrest warrant since December 2017, she was also ordered by the Paris court to pay a 10,000-euro (\$11,000) fine.

The princess, 42, had never shown up at the trial, which got underway in July.

The punishment was heavier than demanded by prosecutors, who had sought a six-month suspended sentence and a fine of 5,000 euros (\$5,480).

The princess, whose brother is known by his initials MBS and is seen as the kingdom's de facto ruler, was accused of instructing her bodyguard Rani Saidi to beat up Ashraf Eid after he was seen taking pictures inside her home in September 2016.

She had been charged with complicity in an act of intentional violence, complicity in illegal confinement and complicity in theft.

Saidi was handed an eight-month suspended sentence and a 5,000-euro fine, in line with the recommendations of prosecutors.

According to Eid, he was called in to repair a damaged wash basin of the princess. Eid claims that the princess flew into a rage after he caught her reflection in a mirror on camera. She called in her bodyguard, who allegedly beat him. Eid claimed he was also tied up and ordered to kiss the feet of the princess.

SOURCE: AFP

Bolton fired after disagreeing with Trump on Iran: report

AGENCIES

The sacking of John Bolton, US President Donald Trump's former national security adviser, is tied to a fundamental disagreement over the issue of easing of Iran sanctions, a Bloomberg report said.

Trump fired Bolton via Twitter, saying he had "strongly disagreed" with many of Bolton's hawkish positions, including on relations with Iran and North Korea.

While it is no secret the two men had not seen eye to eye on a number of key foreign policy issues, the timing of Bolton's exit is more specifically linked to his pushback against Trump signalling his willingness to ease sanctions on Iran as a way to secure a meeting with President Hassan Rouhani, Bloomberg said.

Citing three anonymous people familiar with the matter, Bloomberg reported that Bolton had argued forcefully against the idea when it was brought up in the Oval Office on Monday.

After Steven Mnuchin, the treasury secretary, expressed his support for Trump's idea, "Trump decided to oust

Bolton a 'disaster' on North Korea, 'out of line' on Venezuela: Trump



Bolton" later in the day.

Bolton was a strong advocate of the US' "maximum pressure" campaign on Iran, where he had spearheaded the US abandonment of the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran and the reimposition of sanctions. He has also long called for pre-emptive attacks on Tehran to destroy its nuclear programme.

According to the individuals cited by Bloomberg, the White House has begun preparations for Trump to meet Rouhani on the sidelines of the annual United Nations General Assembly during the week of September 23 in New York.

The fractious relationship between Bolton and Trump has long been demonstrated in their disagreements over international policy.

On Wednesday, Trump said Bolton had been a "disaster" on North Korea policy, "out of line" on Venezuela, and had not gotten along with important administration officials.

Trump said Bolton had made mistakes, including offending North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un by demanding that he follow a "Libyan model" and hand over all his nuclear weapons.

'REBEL' SAUDI WOMEN SHUN OBLIGATORY ABAYA ROBE

Her high heels clacking on marble tiles, a defiant Saudi woman turned heads and drew gasps as she strutted through a Riyadh mall -- without a body-shrouding abaya.

The billowy over-garment, usually all-black, is customary public wear for women in the ultra-conservative Islamic kingdom, where it is widely seen as a symbol of piety.

Last year, de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman hinted during an interview with CBS that the dress code may be relaxed, saying the robe was not mandatory in Islam. But despite his sweeping liberalisation drive, the practice continued as no formal edict followed.

Some women subsequently mounted a rare social media protest against the restriction, posting pictures of themselves wearing the figure-concealing garment inside out.

Despite the risk of provoking arch-conservatives, many others now leave their cloaks open in the front or wear them in bright colours.

Masha'al al-Jaloud has taken the cultural rebellion a step further -- she stopped wearing the robe. In a stunning sight, the 33-year-old human resources specialist strolled through a mall in central Riyadh last week wearing nothing but a burnt

orange top over baggy trousers. In the crowd, there were audible gasps and arched eyebrows. Women veiled head-to-toe stared askance. Some mistook her for a celebrity. Manahel al-Otaibi, a 25-year-old activist, has also foregone the garment.

"For four months I have been living in Riyadh without an abaya," said Otaibi, walking along Tahlia street, a restaurant-lined thoroughfare, in casual overalls.



The abaya, which has existed for thousands of years but only became obligatory in recent decades, is also mandatory for non-Muslim women in the kingdom. The dress code was once fanatically enforced by the now-neutered religious police, and uncovered women still face random harassment in a conservative nation where attire is often associated with chastity.

SOURCE: AFP