

### Frigid Arctic air, winter storms grip much of US

AFP, Houston

Arctic weather that already killed 10 people and left millions without power in the United States was continuing yesterday, after dumping deep snow and bringing perilous conditions across swathes of the country.

The National Weather Service (NWS) warned of an "unprecedented and expansive area of hazardous winter weather" from coast to coast, with more than 150 million Americans under winter weather advisories.

"Hundreds of daily low maximum and minimum temperatures have been/ will be broken during this prolonged 'polar plunge,' with some February and even all-time low temperature records in jeopardy," it said.

US reported more than 2.7 million people were without power in Texas, where temperatures in the major metropolis of Houston dipped to 16 degrees Fahrenheit (-9 degrees Celsius), well below average February lows of 34.

A separate storm front was due to hit the northeastern Great Lakes region, with New York governor Andrew Cuomo on Monday ordering emergency services to prepare for sleet, ice and freezing rain.

Extreme weather is also set to hit even further south, with the NWS warning "severe thunderstorms, heavy rain, and warm temperatures are expected for southern Georgia and Florida".

President Joe Biden issued an emergency declaration for Texas on Sunday, providing federal assistance to supplement state relief efforts. Weather-related emergencies have also been declared in Alabama, Oklahoma, Kansas, Mississippi and Oregon -- where more than 300,000 people were without power.



Myanmar protesters block the train tracks on the railway line between Yangon and the southern city of Mawlamyine in Mon state yesterday. Inset, Protesters hold up signs during a demonstration against the military coup in front of US embassy in Yangon. Myanmar's deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi was hit with another charge yesterday, after the military imposed a second straight overnight internet shutdown in an attempt to grind down an anti-coup uprising.

PHOTO: AFP



### US CAPITOL ATTACK PROBE Lawmakers to set up commission

REUTERS, Washington

US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said on Monday lawmakers will establish an outside, independent commission to review the "facts and causes" related to the deadly Jan. 6 attack on the US Capitol by supporters of then-President Donald Trump.

Pelosi said in a letter to lawmakers that the commission would be modeled on a similar one convened after the Sept. 11, 2001 attack on New York and the Pentagon. Pelosi said the panel will also look at the "facts and causes relating to the preparedness and response of the United States Capitol Police and other federal, state, and local law enforcement."

She has tasked retired US Army Lieutenant General Russel Honoré with assessing security needs of the Capitol in the aftermath of the attack. Based on his interim findings, she said Congress must allocate additional funds "to provide for the safety of members and the security of the Capitol."

She added: "It is clear from his findings and from the impeachment trial that we must get to the truth of how this happened."

More than a month after the attack that left five dead as pro-Trump supporters stormed the US Capitol and sought to disrupt the certification of Joe Biden's victory as president, the Capitol complex remains guarded by more than 5,000 National Guard troops and ringed with eight-foot fences rimmed with razor wire. The troops are expected to remain through mid-March.

More than 200 people have been charged with federal crimes in the bloody assault on Congress, which led to Trump's impeachment trial on a charge of inciting insurrection. Trump was acquitted on Saturday on a vote of 57-43, as seven Republican senators joined Democrats in favor of conviction, though short of the required majority.

### World needs pandemic treaty to ensure transparency: UK PM

REUTERS, London

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said that world powers should clinch a global treaty on pandemics to ensure proper transparency after the novel coronavirus outbreak which originated in China.

Johnson said he would be keen to agree a global treaty on pandemics where countries agreed to share data, amid British and US concern over access given to a World Health Organization (WHO) mission to China.

Asked by Reuters about any action he wanted to improve transparency, Johnson said: "I think what the world needs to see is a general agreement on how we track data surrounding zoonotic pandemics... and we want a joint agreement on transparency."

"I think one of the attractive ideas that we have seen in the last few months has been a proposal for a global treaty on pandemics, so that signatory countries make sure that they contribute all the data they have and

we are able to get to the bottom of what's happened and stop it happening again," he said at a news conference.

"That is the sensible thing to do." European Council President, Charles Michel, wrote on Twitter that he welcomed "the support of @BorisJohnson to work together on a pandemic treaty in order to improve global preparedness, resilience and recovery."

The Covid-19 outbreak, which was first detected in China in late 2019, has killed 2.4 million people, tipped the global economy into its worst peacetime slump since the Great Depression and upended normal life for billions of people.

Britain's foreign minister Dominic Raab said on Sunday he shared U.S. concerns about the level of access given to a World Health Organization Covid-19 fact-finding mission to China, while Johnson has said he supports US President Joe Biden in the need for more data from the investigation.

REUTERS, Canberra

Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison yesterday apologised to a woman who alleged that she was raped in parliament two years ago for the way her complaint was handled at that time, ordering a probe into the government's workplace culture.

The woman told an online news publication and Channel 10 on Monday that she had been raped in the office of the current Defence Minister Linda Reynolds in March 2019 by unnamed colleague who also worked for Morrison's ruling Liberal party.

She said she spoke with police in early April of that year, but decided against making a formal complaint due to concerns that it would damage her career prospects.

It is unclear whether she has now lodged a formal complaint to police.

The woman said she told senior staff in Reynolds' office of the alleged



attack. She said she was then asked to attend a meeting in the office where she alleges she had been assaulted.

Reynolds on Monday confirmed she had been told of the complaint in 2019, though she denied the woman was pressured against making a police complaint.

Morrison on Tuesday apologised to the woman and promised an investigation.

"That should not have happened, and I do apologise," Morrison told reporters in Canberra. "I want to make

sure any young woman working in this place is as safe as possible."

Reynolds echoed Morrison in apologising a few hours later.

Reynolds was the Defence Industry Minister at the time of the alleged rape, and became Defence Minister two months later.

Morrison said he has appointed Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet official Stephanie Foster to review the process in dealing with workplace complaints, while a backbench lawmaker will investigate workplace culture.

The Liberal party has been dogged by allegations of improper behaviour towards women. In 2019, female backbench lawmakers said they felt bullied to support a move to oust then prime minister Malcolm Turnbull, while a former female Liberal staff member last year made an official complaint of improper behaviour by then immigration minister Alan Tudge.

THE WORLD AWAITS

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