

'THERE IS NO VACCINE FOR THE PLANET'

UN chief slams 'suicidal' failure to combat climate crisis

AFP, United Nations

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has denounced a "suicidal" failure to combat global warming and said recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic could be humanity's chance for a reset to save the planet.

"The state of the planet is broken. Humanity is waging war on nature. This is suicidal," the UN chief said in a speech at Columbia University in New York City Wednesday.

"Next year we have the opportunity to stop plunder and begin healing," he added. "Covid recovery and our planet's repair must be two sides of the same coin."

Guterres called for a reduction in use of fossil fuels, and said a summit planned on December 12 for the fifth anniversary of the Paris climate change agreement should chart a new way forward.

"A new world is taking shape," he said. "Biodiversity is collapsing. One million species are at risk of extinction. Ecosystems are disappearing before our eyes. Deserts are spreading. Wetlands are being lost. Every year, we lose 10 million hectares of forests."

"Oceans are overfished -- and choking with plastic waste. The carbon dioxide they absorb is acidifying the seas. Coral reefs are bleached and dying. Air and water pollution are killing nine million people annually."

As such "making peace with nature" must "be the top, top priority" of the 21st century, he warned, adding: "there is no vaccine for the planet."

Welcoming the first commitments towards carbon neutrality from China, the European Union, Japan and South Korea, he hoped that the movement would become global.



Farmers shout slogans during a protest against the newly passed farm bills at Singhu border near Delhi, yesterday. Indian government ministers began talks with farmers' leaders yesterday to try and break a deadlock over laws passed earlier this year seeking to deregulate the agriculture sector that has ignited the country's biggest farm protests in years. The farmers, who form a powerful political constituency, fear the laws passed in September could pave the way for the government to stop buying grains at guaranteed prices, leaving them at the mercy of private buyers. The farmers have demanded a special session of parliament to repeal the laws, saying this is the "last chance" for the government.

PHOTO: REUTERS

NEWS IN BRIEF

Hong Kong pro-democracy media tycoon denied bail

Hong Kong media tycoon Jimmy Lai was remanded into custody yesterday after being charged with fraud, the latest in a string of prosecutions brought against high-profile Beijing critics and democracy campaigners. Lai, 73, is the owner of Hong Kong's best-selling Apple Daily, a popular tabloid that is unashamedly pro-democracy and fiercely critical of authorities. China's clampdown on Hong Kong has dramatically accelerated since it imposed its sweeping security law in June, with opposition politicians disqualified and dozens of activists charged or investigated. On Wednesday, three prominent young democracy campaigners -- including Joshua Wong -- were jailed for taking part in last year's democracy protests.

Japan set to ban sales of petrol cars in mid-2030s

Japan wants to ban sales of new petrol cars in around 15 years' time as part of efforts to reach carbon neutrality by 2050, reports said yesterday. The new policy could be announced as soon as next week, building on an existing push to promote electric and hybrid vehicles, the Mainichi Shimbun said without citing sources. The country's current target is to increase the share of low-emission cars sold -- both hybrid and electric -- to 50-70 percent by 2030, from around 40 percent in 2019.

Ex-French president Giscard d'Estaing dies of Covid at 94



Former French president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, a leading advocate of European integration who led his country into a new modern era, has died of Covid-19, his family said. He was 94. Giscard died late Wednesday "surrounded by his family" at the family home in the Loire region. He became the 20th century's youngest president at 48 when in 1974 he beat his Socialist rival Francois Mitterrand, to whom he then lost after his seven-year term in 1981 in a failed re-election bid. In France, he is remembered for his radical reform drive, which included the legalisation of abortion, the liberalisation of divorce and the lowering of the voting age to 18. In Europe, he helped drive moves towards a monetary union.

Chinese probe completes moon sampling

A Chinese space probe sent to gather material from a previously unexplored part of the moon has completed its mission and is preparing to send back the world's first lunar samples in four decades, Beijing said yesterday. The Chang'e-5 spacecraft landed on the moon Tuesday and has now completed its gathering of lunar rocks and soil, the China National Space Administration said. Scientists hope the samples will help them learn about the Moon's origins, formation and volcanic activity on its surface. The samples will be returned to Earth in a capsule programmed to land in northern China's Inner Mongolia region in early December, according to Nasa.

SOURCE: AFP, DAWN



Biden to join Iran nuke deal, seeks talks

AFP, Washington

President-elect Joe Biden has signaled he will return the United States to a nuclear accord with Iran before quickly launching talks on other concerns, reviving diplomacy to ease soaring tensions.

In his most substantive remarks on Iran since his victory, Biden told The New York Times that he still backed the 2015 deal negotiated under Barack Obama from which defeated president Donald Trump withdrew.

Biden told the newspaper's columnist Thomas Friedman that "it's going to be hard" but that if Iran returned to compliance, the United States would rejoin the agreement.

The top US priority should be to prevent an Iranian nuclear weapon, Biden said, explaining, "The last goddamn thing we need in that part of the world is a buildup of nuclear capability."

After re-entering the agreement, "in consultation with our allies and partners, we're going to engage in negotiations and follow-on agreements to tighten and lengthen Iran's nuclear constraints, as well as address the missile program."

Biden also seeks to address US concerns about Iran's support to militants in Iraq, Yemen and Lebanon and to the Syrian regime.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif last month said that his country would immediately return to its JCPOA commitments if Biden removes crippling sanctions imposed by Trump.

'I'll see you in four years'

Trump hints at conceding, floats idea of 2024 White House run; reports say he discussed pre-emptive pardons for family

AGENCIES

Still irate and bitter one month after his election defeat to Joe Biden, Donald Trump is openly musing about a second run at the US presidency in 2024.

Refusing to accept defeat, Trump's lawyers and supporters continued Wednesday to file lawsuits and even call for extraordinary intervention, such as martial law, to force a new vote.

And Trump released an extraordinary 46 minute video in which he again claimed that he was robbed of victory in a "rigged" election.

But at a White House Christmas party on Tuesday, the president suggested he might have lost this battle, but would not retire quietly as a one-term president.

"It's been an amazing four years. We are trying to do another four years. Otherwise, I'll see you in four years," he told guests.

The comment was perhaps the closest the 74 year old Trump has come to admitting his quixotic, month-long quest to reverse Biden's win has failed.

All six contested states have now certified their tallies, and the national count gives



Biden nearly seven million more votes than Trump, an insurmountable four percentage-point margin.

On Tuesday Attorney General Bill Barr declared that the Justice Department had found no significant evidence of fraud in the election.

According to media reports Trump is preparing his exit, holding discussions about issuing preemptive pardons for his three adult children -- Don Jr, Eric and Ivanka -- for Ivanka's husband Jared Kushner, and his own personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani.

On Wednesday he released on Twitter a formal address on the election.

"This may be the most important speech I've ever made," he began. He recited a litany of complaints about the election, saying the Democrats used the Covid-19 crisis to force widespread use of mailed ballots, which he said were fraudulently manipulated to support Biden.

"This election was rigged, everybody knows it," he said.

Supporters continued to fight against the results. Giuliani appeared before Michigan's state legislature Wednesday to present his claims of irregularities.

In Georgia, another lawyer tied to the Trump campaign, Sidney Powell, spoke to a rally of supporters claiming their votes were not counted.

And two prominent retired three-star generals, including Trump's former national security advisor Michael Flynn, chillingly called for Trump to declare martial law and have the military supervise a new election.

According to NBC News, Trump has discussed the possibility with his close aides of launching his 2024 campaign on January 20, the day Biden is to be inaugurated as president.

But he has not decided when to concede defeat to Biden.

Rajinikanth enters political fray in India

AFP, Chennai

Indian film superstar Rajinikanth yesterday became the latest in a long line of big-name actors to enter politics.

The action hero, one of Asia's best-paid actors, said on Twitter that with "huge support from people" he would be launching a political party in January that is expected to contest elections scheduled in Tamil Nadu state next year.

The 69-year-old former bus conductor said the public wanted "honest, transparent, corruption-free, caste-less, secular and spiritual politics" in the state.

The actor enjoys a cult-like following across India where he is called "The Superstar" or "Thalaivar" (leader).

Every new film sends Tamil Nadu into a frenzy, with fans getting haircuts like his most recent character or having his face tattooed on their bodies.



A Palestinian demonstrator falls on the ground after being knocked down by Israeli forces during a protest against Jewish settlements in Salfit in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Pandemics, climate change 'intensifying' health threats

AFP, Paris

From small island states to urbanised powerhouses, every country on Earth faces "multiplying and intensifying" threats to human health as climate change renders future pandemics and system collapses ever more likely, a major study concluded yesterday.

A deadly mix of extreme heat, air pollution and intense farming are combining to produce the "worst outlook for public health our generation has seen", according to the Lancet's fifth annual report on the links between health and climate.

The assessment showed that the last two decades have seen a 54 percent increase in heat-related deaths among older people, with extreme heatwaves claiming close to 300,000 lives in 2018 alone.

While climate-linked phenomena such as tropical storms remain for now problems overwhelmingly faced by developing nations, the authors said extreme heat was already inflicting devastating damage to

health in wealthier countries.

"The threats to human health are multiplying and intensifying due to climate change and unless we change course our healthcare systems are at risk of being overwhelmed in the future," said Ian Hamilton, executive director of the Lancet Countdown report.

It said that projected sea level rises caused by fossil fuel, farming and transport emissions could threaten to displace up to 565 million people by 2100, in turn exposing them to a range of health problems.

With more than nine million deaths attributable to poor diet each year, the expert panel behind the report found that mortality linked to excess red meat consumption had risen 70 percent in just three decades.

The authors warned that continued urbanisation, intensive agriculture, air travel and lifestyles powered by fossil fuels would render future pandemics such as Covid-19 far more likely.

CHINA'S CRACKDOWN ON XINJIANG US blocks imports of 'slave labor' cotton

AFP, Washington

The United States will block imports of cotton it says are harvested with "slave labor" in China's Xinjiang region, authorities have announced.

Beijing has come under intense international criticism over its policies in the resource-rich territory, where rights groups say as many as one million Uighurs and other mostly Muslim minorities are being held in internment camps.

The new rule allows Customs and Border Protection officials to detain shipments containing cotton originating from the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps.

Xinjiang is a global hub for cotton, with one study by a labor group estimating that 20 percent of the garments imported into the United States contain at least some yarn from the region.

Meanwhile, Washington issued new entry rules for Chinese Communist Party members traveling to the United States, the New York Times reported yesterday, citing the State Department. The new policy -- which took immediate effect on Wednesday -- caps visas of Communist Party members and their immediate families to one month and a single entry into the country, the report said.

Bangladesh Bank

Sustainable Finance Department
Head Office
Dhaka

Website: www.bb.org.bd

Request for Expression of Interest (EOI) for Hiring Consulting Firm (National)

1. Name of procuring entity : GCF RPSP Project Implementation Unit, Sustainable Finance Department, Bangladesh Bank.
2. Expression of Interest (EOI) : Selection of Consulting Firm.
3. EOI Ref. No. & date : SFD/(GBMS)/1003/6/2/2020-2117 Date: 02/12/2020.
4. Procurement sub-method : Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS).
5. Budget and source of funds : Foreign grant.
6. Project title : Upscaling regulatory landscape of Green Banking for Shariah Based Banks and Financial Institutions in Bangladesh.
7. Assignment title : Hiring Consulting Firm (National) for the capacity building of Banks and Financial Institutions on Sustainable Financing and Financial Inclusion Strategy.
8. EOI closing date and time : 20/12/2020 at 3:00pm.
9. Brief description of the assignment : Bangladesh Bank (BB) has received financing from Green Climate Fund (GCF) to implement a policy framework or a white paper on Shariah based green financing. To carry out the project successfully, consultancy service is needed for the capacity building of Banks and Financial Institutions on Sustainable Financing and Financial Inclusion Strategy.
10. Qualifications and experience : Consultant firm should be locally enlisted. The firm should have established and credible credentials, expertise, and track record in undertaking and conducting comprehensive training programs on Sustainable Financing, Financial Inclusion for financial sector. The experts employed by the firm for the project should demonstrate experience and knowledge of environmental friendly projects management and Financial Inclusion landscape.
11. Other details : Expected term of the assignment is 16 (sixteen) months. The prospective consulting firm shall submit all supporting documents in BB website (<http://etender.bb.org.bd>) or through e-mail stated below. Interested candidates may obtain "Terms of Reference (ToR)" from the website of Bangladesh Bank (<http://www.bb.org.bd/aboutus/tenders/tenders.php>). Application/proposal will not be accepted after EOI closing time.

PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS

12. Name of the official inviting EOI : Khondkar Morshed Millat.
13. Designation of the official inviting EOI : General Manager (Project Director).
14. Address of the official inviting EOI : GCF RPSP Project Implementation Unit, Sustainable Finance Department, 19th Floor, 2nd Annex Building, Bangladesh Bank, Head Office, Dhaka-1000.
15. Contact details of the official inviting EOI : Phone: 9530320, Fax: 9530327.

This Request for Expression of Interest (EOI) is in compliance with relevant government rules and regulations e.g. Public Procurement Rules 2008. By responding to this EOI, consultant firms are conforming to those rules and regulations. The procuring entity reserves all right to accept or reject any or all EOIs without assigning any reason whatsoever.
The details EOI and ToR are available at BB website: (<http://www.bb.org.bd/aboutus/tenders/tenders.php>).

DGP: 48/2020-3584
Date: 03/12/2020

ব্যক্তিগত ও আর্থিক সেবা পেতে হয়রানির শিকার হলে কিংবা কোনো অভিযোগ থাকলে ১৬২৩৬ নম্বরে ফোন করুন।

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GD-1931