



CLIMATE ACTION Oil giants 'greenwashed' dirty image

AFP, Washington

Oil giants have "greenwashed" their public image while locking in fossil fuel production for years to come, potentially foiling moves to prevent climate change, said a US House committee memo released Friday.

The document follows an investigation on allegations that the fossil fuel industry has been misleading Americans about its role in the climate crisis, and hampering actions on climate change.

"Today's documents reveal that the industry has no real plans to clean up its act and is barreling ahead with plans to pump more dirty fuels for decades to come," said Carolyn Maloney, who chairs the Committee on Oversight and Reform.

Companies know their climate pledges are "inadequate," but are prioritizing profits over the costs of climate change, she added.

It cited an excerpt of a presentation to Chevron's board of directors which said that while competitors retreated from oil and gas, the company's strategy is to continue investing in fossil fuels to take advantage of consolidation in the industry.

Meanwhile, an internal email from lobbying group the American Petroleum Institute was said to show its 2021 climate action framework was organized around the aim of "continued promotion" of natural gas.

Executives have also admitted privately that they have adopted a strategy to "resist and block" climate regulations and only cut emissions if it made commercial sense, the memo said.

XI JINPING'S SAUDI ARABIA VISIT Riyadh seeks to break 'historical trends'

AFP, Riyadh

Chinese President Xi Jinping's trip to Saudi Arabia this week made clear just how quickly ties are intensifying during a period of geopolitical realignment, despite warnings from the White House.

The agenda included talks with Saudi royals and summits with the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council and broader Arab League, yielding agreements on everything from infrastructure to space.

Yet the lack of public bilateral breakthroughs on sensitive portfolios like defence and telecommunications will make it easier for Saudi Arabia to continue balancing the demands of Beijing and longtime security guarantor Washington -- at least for now.

Weeks before Xi touched down in Riyadh, a top US official warned Gulf countries about the risks of growing too close to China.

"There are certain partnerships with China that would create a ceiling to what we can do," Brett McGurk, the National Security Council's Middle East Coordinator, told a security conference in Bahrain in November.

The White House reiterated that warning on Wednesday, saying China's attempt to amass influence in the Middle East and beyond is "not conducive" to international order.

The same statement, however, stressed that the US is not asking countries to choose between Washington and Beijing, and Saudi foreign minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan made clear on Friday that the Saudis have no plans to.

China has long been a close energy partner of Saudi Arabia, consuming roughly a quarter of its crude exports last year.

As ties expand, Riyadh is "moving very cautiously" in areas that are more concerning to Washington, notably defence, telecommunications and nuclear energy, said Naser al-Tamimi, an expert on Gulf China ties at the Italian Institute for International Political Studies.

That approach was visible this week. In his remarks to the China-GCC summit on Friday, Xi vowed to "jointly establish" a forum on nuclear technology, while stressing that training

opportunities for Gulf nations would focus on its "peaceful use".

Xi also said China would make full use of a Shanghai-based platform to process oil and gas transactions in Chinese yuan, a potential threat to the global dominance of the US dollar.

Yet when asked if Riyadh would participate in such a scheme, Prince Faisal said on Friday that "I don't know anything about it".

This caution aside, Saudi Arabia "will not stop cooperation with China" because it believes the success of Vision 2030, a reform and economic diversification agenda championed by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, depends on it, Tamimi said.



Prince Mohammed said on Friday they would usher in "a new phase for the advancement of relations between our countries".

But in many ways the substance of the talks represented a continuation

of Saudi foreign policy under Prince Mohammed, who was appointed first in line to the throne by his father King Salman in 2017.

His approach "is mainly driven by mutual interests and is no longer held hostage by historical trends," said Umar Karim, an expert on Saudi politics at the University of Birmingham.

One difference now, though, is that Prince Mohammed has more fraught relations with US President Joe Biden than he did with Biden's predecessor, Donald Trump.

"Although Saudi policy towards China wasn't much different during President Trump's time, (Prince Mohammed's) cordial and personal relationship with the Trump family did moderate some Saudi actions," Karim said.

Looking ahead, both Saudi Arabia and its Gulf neighbours are likely to remain focused on their own needs rather than old allegiances, said Kristian Ulrichsen, a research fellow at the Baker Institute at Rice University.

"The main takeaway is that the Gulf States do not view relations with the US and China as a zero-sum game and are asserting their own interests in ways that do not necessarily align with Washington," Ulrichsen said.

Lift curbs on Israeli businesses US presses UN

AFP, Washington

The United States said Friday it was pressing the United Nations not to update a blacklist of companies doing business in Israeli settlements, despite Washington's calls on its ally to stop expansion in occupied Palestinian territory.

The State Department confirmed that it had approached the UN human rights office with concerns about the list, whose first publication in 2020 infuriated Israel.

The United States "continues to oppose any work to update it" and has raised concerns "directly with the Office of the High Commissioner" for rights, State Department spokesman Vedant Patel told reporters.

Axios, quoting Israeli sources, said that the new UN rights chief, Volker Turk, faced an upcoming choice on whether to update the list and may do quietly without announcing it.

The UN report comes in response to a 2016 UN Human Rights Council resolution calling for a "database for all businesses engaged in specific activities related to Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory."

In Norway, the list led the sovereign wealth fund to dump companies involved in settlements, citing concern over human rights violations.

Cyclone Mandous kills 4 in India

REUTERS, Mumbai



A cyclonic storm killed at least four people in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu yesterday, the top state official said, as heavy rain and strong winds buffeted several districts damaging property and causing power outages. Cyclone Mandous, which made landfall late Friday night, damaged 185 houses and huts. Mandous had weakened from an earlier severe category as it swept past Sri Lanka. It was expected to gradually weaken into a low-pressure area, India's meteorological department tweeted yesterday.

67 journos killed in 2022: IFJ

AGENCIES

Russia's war in Ukraine, chaos in Haiti and rising violence by criminal groups in Mexico have contributed to a rise in the number of journalists killed doing their work in 2022, according to a new report by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ).

The IFJ said on Friday that 67 journalists and media workers have been killed around the world so far this year, up from 47 in 2021.

More media workers were killed covering the war in Ukraine -- 12 in total -- than in any other country this year, according to the IFJ. Most of them were Ukrainian journalists but several foreign reporters also died, with many deaths occurring in the first chaotic weeks of the war.

The IFJ report also called out the fatal shooting of Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh who was killed by Israeli forces on May 11 in the northern occupied West Bank.

The report, released on the eve of the United Nations Human Rights Day, also shows that "political repression has reared its ugly head" in 2022. IFJ recorded at least 375 media professionals -- 10 more than last year -- currently in prison for doing their job. Most of those jailed are in China, Myanmar, Turkey, Iran and Belarus.



Many suffer at police

FROM PAGE 12

Facebook, Messenger and WhatsApp.

After checking, police allowed some to go to their destinations. They had to walk for miles due to the absence of any vehicles, said a number of people who had the experience.

Abdullah Al Kafi, additional superintendent of police in Dhaka, said they detained some people for questioning as their behaviour was suspicious.

Action will be taken against them if anything unlawful is found during interrogation, otherwise they will be released, he added.

Asked about checking phones of people, he said that there was a time when they did body searches, but now the type of crimes have become different, and many crimes are planned on virtual platforms. That is why police check phones.

In the morning, hundreds of people were seen entering Dhaka on foot by crossing the Aminbazar bridge.

"I spent Tk 290 to buy a bus ticket to reach Motijheel, but I was forced to get off midway," said Robiul Islam.

Another man, Riad, alleged that police stopped him at Aminbazar checkpoint around 10:30am when he was going to a friend's home in Khilgaon.

Riad, who was coming from Savar, was questioned for around 15 minutes about where he had come from, where he was going and whether he had any political affiliation.

"At one point, when I got nervous, two policemen even asked me to admit that I am a BNP activist and assured me that they would let me go if I did," said Riad. He said police eventually let him go but not towards Dhaka.

While talking to this newspaper, Mijanur Rahman, one of the detainees, asked, "What did I do wrong by supporting a political party?"

"I vote as a citizen ... I pay tax, so, why do they detain me like that," he said as police officials took him away in a police van.

Another detainee, Rajib Hossain, who was picked up from Abdullahpur, said he introduced himself as the joint secretary of Noakhali district unit Chhatra Dal.

"I came to join the BNP rally in Dhaka. But they stopped me at the checkpoint, asked where I came from, where I was going, and forcibly took my phone from my pocket and went through the device.

"At one point, when I said that I came to Dhaka to join the rally, they detained me," he added.

A year only lasts 17.5 hours

FROM PAGE 12

the sizzling world completes one orbit in less than one Earth day. One year for this planet lasts about 17.5 hours on Earth.

The incredibly tight orbit is why Janssen has such intensely hot temperatures -- so close that astronomers doubted a planet could exist while practically hugging a host star.

Astronomers wondered if the planet had always been so close to its star.

A team of researchers used a new tool known as EXPRES, or the EXtreme PREcision Spectrometer, to determine the precise nature of the planet's orbit. The findings can help astronomers gain new insight into planet formation and how these celestial bodies evolve an orbit.

The instrument was developed at Yale University by a team led by astronomer Debra Fischer and

installed on the Lowell Discovery Telescope at Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, Arizona. The spectrometer was able to measure tiny shifts in starlight from Copernicus as Janssen moved between our planet and the star -- like when the moon blocks the sun during a solar eclipse.

The researchers determined that Janssen orbits along the star's equator. But the hell planet is not the only planet orbiting Copernicus. Four other planets on different orbital paths populate the star system.

The astronomers believe Janssen's oddball orbit suggests the planet initially began in a cooler and more distant orbit before drifting closer to Copernicus. Then, the gravitational pull from the star's equator changed Janssen's orbit.

The journal Nature Astronomy published a study detailing the findings on Thursday.

Investigate reports

FROM PAGE 12

government to ensure that no party or candidate threatens, incites or conducts violence against any other party," he said.

Kirby said Washington was also urging government authorities in Bangladesh to "fully investigate reports of violence in a thorough, transparent and impartial manner."

The protest comes ahead of national elections planned in Bangladesh next year.

Kishan scripts

FROM PAGE 12

290-run second-wicket partnership was also the biggest partnership against Bangladesh.

Kohli also had a field day, smashing his 44th ODI ton and surpassing passed Ricky Ponting's 71 hundreds in all formats of international cricket. With 72 centuries, he is now only behind Sachin Tendulkar's 100 centuries.

Kishan was eventually dismissed by Taskin Ahmed after scoring 210 off 131 deliveries, smashing 24 fours and 10 sixes. Kohli, who struck his first ODI hundred after over three years, was dismissed after scoring 113 off 91 balls with the help of 11 fours and two sixes.

The tough outing for the home side's bowlers made for grim reading. Taskin conceded 89 runs from nine overs and picked up two wickets while Ebadot Hossain gave away 80 from nine overs, also bagging a couple.

In chase, Bangladesh struggled from the start. Shakib Al Hasan top scored with 43 runs while Shardul Thakur picked up three wickets and while Axar Patel and Umran Malik took two each for India.

Law minister

FROM PAGE 12

any statement on any issue [regarding Bangladesh]," he said.

In reference to a lower court sending some BNP leaders to jail, including the party's Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, Anisul said, "I can firmly tell you that the law will take its own course. The government does not and will not intervene in this matter."

He also stated that the current government has been working tirelessly to establish, protect, and advance human rights in Bangladesh.

"The government is taking action against all forms of human rights violations. Its stance on human rights violators is very clear. Those who violate human rights must be brought to justice."



PHOTO: REUTERS

Natalia Pinchuk, representing her husband, the activist Ales Bialiatski from Belarus, Jan Rachinsky, representing the Russian organisation Memorial and Oleksandra Matvichuk, representing the Ukrainian organisation Center for Civil Liberties (CCL) receive the Nobel Peace Prize for 2022 in Oslo City Hall, in Oslo, Norway, yesterday.

German hostage held in Sahel since 2018 freed: NGO

AFP, Berlin

A German humanitarian worker held hostage in the Sahel for more than four-and-a-half years has been freed, his organisation said yesterday.

Jorg Lange, 63, "can return to his family", said Bianca Kaltschmitt, director general of the NGO Help, thanking Germany's foreign ministry, criminal police and the authorities in Mali, Niger and other neighbouring countries for contributing to his release.

Lange was kidnapped by armed men riding motorcycles on April 11, 2018 near Ayorou in western Niger, in a region near the Malian border frequently hit by jihadist attacks.

His Nigerien driver was freed shortly afterwards, but according to German media, Lange was sold to the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara group.

German weekly Der Spiegel quoted security sources saying Lange was "in good health, given the circumstances".

According to the magazine the

Moroccan secret services' contacts with jihadist groups in the Sahel facilitated Lange's liberation.

Der Spiegel said the humanitarian worker was repatriated on a German army plane.

German media has reported that the kidnappers sought a seven-figure ransom sum and urged Berlin not to try to drag out negotiations.

The government considered deploying KSK special forces to free Lange, but decided the operation would be too risky, Der Spiegel said.

The German government declined to respond to an AFP request for comment on Lange's release.

At least four Western hostages from France, the United States, Australia and Romania are still detained in the Sahel, according to a tally only covering cases made public by their entourage or governments.

Another German, Catholic priest Hans-Joachim Lohre, has been missing since late November and is widely thought to have been kidnapped, although no one has claimed responsibility.

Ukraine's Odesa without power

FROM PAGE 2

Yashin had discussed in a YouTube video evidence uncovered by Western journalists of Russian war crimes in Ukraine. Moscow denies committing war crimes. In a post on his Telegram channel, Yashin urged supporters to continue opposing the war.

On the ground in Ukraine, the entire front line in the east of the country was being shelled, said the governor of the Donetsk region, which is partly occupied by Russia. Five civilians were killed and two wounded in Ukrainian-controlled areas, the governor said.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said Ukrainian forces were standing their ground in the Donbas, made up of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, despite huge difficulties, but that Russian forces had reduced the town of Bakhmut to ruins.

"The situation on the front line remains very tough," he said in an evening address on Friday. "I thank all our heroes, all soldiers and commanders who are... repelling assaults and inflicting significant losses on the enemy."