Fight over climate science intensifies at COP31

AFP, *Antalya*

The European Union yesterday vowed to "fight" for science at the UN climate summit after accusing some countries of seeking to undermine the world's leading authority on global warming.

A long-running disagreement over when to publish the next major reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is spilling into the COP31 talks in Turkey, threatening to complicate negotiations toward a final deal.

The EU and dozens of other nations want the next set of IPCC reports available before a crucial stocktake of global efforts to cut planet-heating emissions at the 2028 edition of the annual climate summit.

Saudi Arabia, China and India are among those pushing for the IPCC's "seventh assessment report" to be delayed until 2029.

The IPCC is deadlocked over the timetable, but some countries want the matter put on the table in Turkey, where negotiations are approaching the midway point.

"We will fight for this outcome to be there," senior EU climate official Diana Acconcia told reporters, cautioning it would "not be so easy" to bridge the gulf on the issue.

"There are some parties that are trying to undermine what science is telling us because they don't want to do what it takes to address climate change," Acconcia said.

"It is as simple as that," she added, lamenting the "polarised" nature of the debate.

The IPCC publishes a series of reports every seven years that provide the definitive scientific assessment of climate change and inform global policy responses to the crisis.

Pierre Friedlingstein, a climate scientist from the University of Exeter and author of previous IPCC assessments, said it was "always best for policy decisions to be based on the most up-to-date science".



Investigators work at the site of a car explosion that wounded Sergei Zavorotniy, former spokesman for ex-Ukrainian prime minister Mykola Azarov (2010-2014), in Moscow, Russia, yesterday.
PHOTO: **REUTERS**

Yemen govt forces fortify Aden defences

Iran-backed Houthi foes seize hilltops overlooking the area, say military officials

AFP, *Abu Dhabi*

Yemen's internationally recognised government is fortifying positions on the outskirts of Aden province, home to their de facto capital, as their Iran-backed Houthi foes seize hilltops overlooking the area, three military officials told AFP.

Fighting has flared since a 2022 truce fell apart over the summer, with violence intensifying after Yemen's Saudi-backed government lost control of the Red Sea coastline along the strategic Bab al-Mandab strait in September.

Houthi fighters are now advancing east, consolidating their gains near the Red Sea while also moving closer to the Gulf of Aden. They have been taking hold of strategic hilltops in the Al-Madaribah wal Ara district overlooking Aden province, the sources said.

"We received high-level directives to establish military fortifications west and north of Aden Governorate, as the threat to the government's interim capital draws nearer," one of the military officials said.

The fortifications include stacking up sandbags and digging tunnels. All the sources requested anonymity to discuss sensitive matters.

Government forces have repeatedly tried to regain control of the Red Sea coast to no avail, with battles killing dozens on both sides in the past couple of days, according to government and Houthi sources.

Another of the military officials described the fortification outside Aden as a long-overdue precautionary measure.

The third military source, a field officer on the ground, said the Houthis were advancing east of the strait towards the Gulf of Aden coast after taking large parts of Al-Madaribah wal Ara district adjacent to Aden province.

Nearby also lies the mountainous region of Al-Maqatirah , home to a road serving as the main gateway to the city of Taiz, which has been besieged by the Houthis for weeks.

The source said Al-Maqatirah had been captured by the Houthis, complicating government efforts to retake Taiz and opening the door to further advances in Al-Madaribah.

Aden has come under regular Houthi attack since hostilities resumed, with the group targeting the presidential palace complex and a base at the airport.



Yemen has been embroiled in war since 2014, when the Houthis seized the capital Sanaa, forcing the government to relocate to Aden and declare the city its temporary capital.

The conflict fell dormant between 2022 and July this year, when a fragile truce collapsed amid the US-Iran war.

The Houthis allowed an Iranian plane to land in Sanaa in defiance of Saudi control over Yemeni airspace, setting off a spate of attacks.

Later, the Houthis declared a maritime blockade of Saudi Arabia and began hitting its airports, ships and oil facilities, before seizing Yemen's entire Red Sea coast.

IN BRIEF



Hollen announces bid for US Senate majority leader

Challenges Schumer for the post

REUTERS, *Washington*

Democratic US Senator Chris Van Hollen said on Thursday he would run for Senate majority leader, challenging Chuck Schumer, who has led the Democrats in the Senate since 2017, after the Democratic Party won a majority in the chamber in the midterm elections.

Schumer, who is expected to retain his party's leadership in the chamber but previously predicted not having a challenger, released his own statement on Thursday saying he had the votes to continue as the Democratic leader in the Senate.

The closed-door secret-ballot vote will take place next month.

Van Hollen, a Maryland Democrat, said that in the midterm elections, in which Democrats also secured a majority in the House of Representatives, voters called for "a change from the status quo that isn't working for working people."

North Korean hackers stole $400m using fake calls: FBI

AFP, *Washington*

North Korea's state-backed hackers stole more than $400 million using a "highly effective social engineering scheme" involving identity theft and AI-powered fake video calls, the FBI said on Thursday.

The FBI this month accused hackers affiliated with North Korea of the theft of $6 billion from cryptocurrency platform Binance, a charge Pyongyang denies.

The FBI this month accused hackers affiliated with North Korea of the theft of $6bn from cryptocurrency platform Binance

"The North Korean regime relies on proceeds from large-scale cryptocurrency theft to fund its illicit weapons program, stealing billions of dollars in recent years," said FBI Cyber Branch Operations Director Brett Leatherman.

The FBI said that, separate from the Binance hack, North Koreans have "aggressively (targeted) individuals in the cryptocurrency and Web3 sectors through deceptive social engineering tactics."

The scheme has led to the theft of more than $400 million in the last 18 months.



Truck, bus collision in Assam kills 23

AFP, *New Delhi*

A head-on collision between a container truck and a passenger bus killed at least 23 people, including three children, in eastern India yesterday, a police official told AFP.

The crash took place on a highway bordering Kaziranga National Park in the northeastern state of Assam. The road is a designated animal corridor, where strict speed limits are in place. "The total number of casualties is 23," said Swapneel Deka, the local district police chief.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said he was "deeply distressed by the tragic accident".

"The scale of this loss has shaken all of us, and my heart goes out to every family that has lost a loved one," Sarma said on X.

India, with a population of 1.4 billion, recorded more than 183,000 road traffic deaths in 2025, or over 500 a day, according to the roads ministry.

Many accidents are linked to inadequate road infrastructure, poorly maintained vehicles and exhausted drivers, according to official data.



People attend a funeral ceremony for the remains of 110 soldiers recently recovered from the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war, in Tehran, Iran, yesterday.
PHOTO: REUTERS

Netanyahu uses fear of Iran to stay in power

AGENCIES

As the right-wing coalition government that oversaw the genocide in Gaza, launched attacks across the region, and eroded civil liberties at home appears to lose its grip on power by the day, caretaker Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's increasingly frantic efforts to derail the political transition suggest a growing desperation to stay in office.

Among those efforts appears to be an attempt to reignite the war with Iran. Netanyahu has reportedly ordered the Israeli military to prepare for war ahead of a potential attack on Iran, in defiance of the opposition's calls for restraint.

The reports follow revelations that Netanyahu had been phoning US President Donald Trump almost daily to press for renewed strikes on Iran. Israeli media have also reported repeated confrontations between Netanyahu and military chief Eyal Zamir, who has resisted proposals for military action against Iran, warning that they could trigger a wider conflict.

Opposition leader Gadi Eisenkot has been tasked with forming a viable government, but that is not a foregone conclusion. Netanyahu has been pushing for a national unity government that would include himself and his Likud party, or waiting for Eisenkot to fail, leading to another election, reports Al Jazeera.



Analysts say Israeli politicians would back Netanyahu despite knowing the war serves his political survival

"Netanyahu is desperate," Ahron Bregman, an Israeli political analyst at King's College London, said. "He knows – and you can see it from his behaviour – that it is likely that he is politically done, and only a national unity government could save him."

"A little war could compel Eisenkot & Co," he said, referring to the opposition bloc and its leader, Gadi Eisenkot, "to form such a government in a time of crisis."