

World News Roundup



This file photo taken on Sept 08, 2013 shows swans taking off from the Ohrid lake 3 near the city of Struga. A fishing boat glides across the shimmering surface of Europe's oldest lake, a haven of biodiversity and a UNESCO World Heritage Site — one that conservationists warn faces multiple development threats. (AFP)

Environment

Clean-water rule targeted

Environmentalists set to battle Trump, GOP

CHICAGO, Jan 29, (AP): The night before **Donald Trump's** inauguration, five environmental lawyers filed a federal court brief defending an Obama administration clean-water rule that the new president and his Republican allies have targeted for elimination, considering it burdensome to landowners.

The move served as a warning that environmentalists, facing a hostile administration and a Republican-dominated Congress, are prepared to battle in court against what they fear will be a wave of unfavorable policies concerning climate change, wildlife protection, federal lands and pollution.

Advocacy groups nationwide are hiring more staff lawyers. They're coordinating with private attorneys and firms that have volunteered to help. They're reviewing statutes, setting priorities and seeking donations.

"It's going to be all-out war," said Vermont Law School Professor Patrick Parenteau. "If you're an environmentalist or conservationist, this is indeed a scary time."

Heightened
Trump's first week in office only heightened their anxieties. He moved to resume construction of the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines that the Obama administration had halted, while signaling intentions to abandon his predecessor's fight against global warming, vastly expand oil and gas drilling on public lands and slash the Environmental Protection Agency's budget.

Environmentalists increasingly regard the courts as their best option, even though success there is far from certain. The Department of Justice, which represents the federal government in environmental lawsuits, declined to comment, while the White House did not respond to emails seeking comment. Doug Erickson, communications director for Trump's transition team at EPA, said of the environmentalists that he's "not sure what they think they're preparing for" but suspects they are stoking fear of Trump as a fundraising tool.

"They're more concerned about raising money than protecting the environment," Erickson said.

Landowners

Jim Burling, litigation director for the Pacific Legal Foundation, a nonprofit property rights group that sues regulators on behalf of businesses and landowners, also contended environmental groups were exaggerating the Trump administration's threat for political and financial gain.

The government bureaucracy is entrenched, Burling said, and, "who happens to occupy the White House hasn't made that much difference."

Environmentalists say their fears are justified by the new administration's antagonism toward government's role in keeping air and water clean and the planet from overheating.

Donations began increasing after Trump's election, "even before the fundraising letters were sent" asking for support to fight the administration's actions, said David Goldston, government affairs director at the Natural Resources Defense Council.



Trump



A handout photo released on Jan 28, by the CNES shows the launch of a Soyuz rocket on January 27 from the European Spaceport in Kourou, in French Guiana, to put into orbit a telecommunications satellite for Spanish operator Hispasat. (AFP)



Qi



Jining

Discovery

Embryo photographer dies: Swedish photographer Lennart Nilsson, who shot to fame in the 1960s with photographs of human fetuses and embryos, died on Saturday at the age of 94, his family told TT news agency.

A war photographer, documentary-maker and portraitist, Nilsson used an ultra-fine tube called an endoscope, to take pictures of cells and blood vessels, and went on to take images of human fetuses and embryos.

His 1965 book, "A Child is Born," was one of the most successful photography albums ever, selling in the millions and becoming an iconic work for the anti-abortion movement.

Only later did it become widely known that many of the embryos used in the photo-essay were not alive, as many readers had thought, but had been aborted.

At Sweden's Karolinska Institutet, Nilsson went on to explore scientific photography. (AFP)

Tiger kills man at China zoo: A tiger killed a visitor to a wildlife park in eastern China on Sunday after the man apparently entered its enclosure, the second such attack in just six months, media reports said.

The incident occurred at the Youngor Wildlife Park in the city of Ningbo, about 200 kms (125 miles) south of Shanghai, according to media reports which added that one tiger in the enclosure was shot dead as a result.

Video emerged online showing a tiger mauling a man in black clothing as visitors screamed in horror and two other tigers stood close by watching.

Biodiversity

Macedonians send out SOS over infrastructure plans

Europe's oldest lake in 'danger'

OHRID, Macedonia, Jan 29, (AFP): A fishing boat glides across the shimmering surface of Europe's oldest lake, a haven of biodiversity and a UNESCO World Heritage Site — one that conservationists warn faces multiple development threats.

Lake Ohrid, which straddles the mountainous border of Macedonia and Albania, has been in existence for up to three million years and is home to more than 200 species of flora and fauna found nowhere else in the world.

But huge infrastructure plans on the Macedonian side have alarmed environmentalists and the United Nation's cultural agency UNESCO, which has called on the country's authorities for an urgent assessment of the potential cumulative damage.

The proposals include a large ski complex and an expressway through the lakeside Galicica National Park, itself a protected area home to thousands of plant and animal species.

Local activists are also incensed by proposed "touristic development zones" and other urbanisation plans on Ohrid's shores, including a marina and apartment buildings.

They fear the destruction of a 50-hectare (120-acre) wetland serving as a crucial natural filter to the lake, pointing to a draft impact assessment, commissioned by the local government, that warns of unavoidable damage.

Officials insist they will protect Ohrid's heritage, but campaigners accuse them of manipulation and violating laws to allow such developments to go ahead.

The "tsunami" of planned infrastruc-

ture projects, if implemented, "means that you can just say goodbye to the UNESCO World Heritage Site," said Aleksandra Bujaroska, an environmental lawyer in the Balkan country.

Bujaroska is part of the citizens' association Front 21/42, which is campaigning for a moratorium on all of the "destructive" plans.

"The big issue with all of these procedures ... is the constant breach of public participation," said the 30-year-old lawyer, who grew up in Ohrid and is based in the capital Skopje.

Assigned

UNESCO has assigned World Heritage status to more than 1,000 sites in the world, but fewer than three dozen are listed as both "natural" and "cultural" sites. The Ohrid region is one of them.

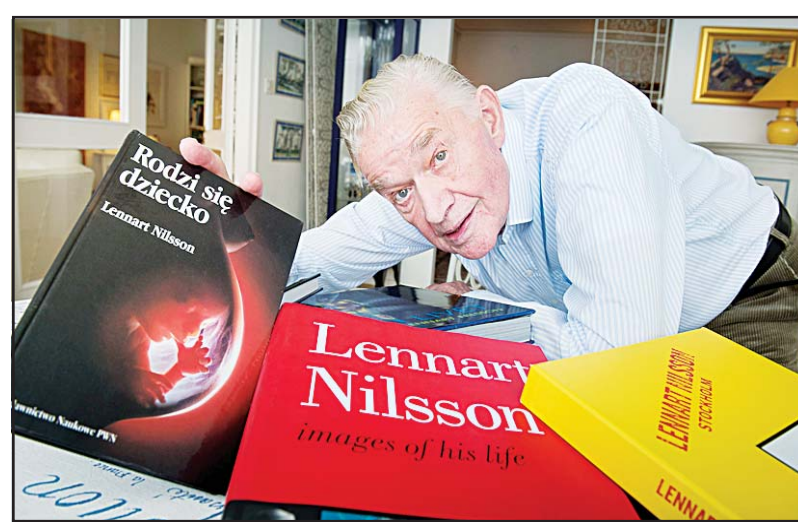
On the lake's Macedonian shores, the city of Ohrid is one of Europe's oldest human settlements with a wealth of Byzantine-style icons, frescoes and churches, which together with the lake's natural beauty drew more than 200,000 tourists last year.

"It's amazing. The beautiful thing is it's so close to nature," said visiting Polish student Aleksandra Walerych by the 13th-century Church of St John at Kaneo, which overlooks the lake and is thought to be the most photographed spot in the country.

The lake covers an area of 358 sq kms (143 square miles), two-thirds of which lie in Macedonia and are covered by the World Heritage status and work is under way to try to extend this to the third lying in Albanian territory too.

The tigers were eventually driven away by park staff using with firecrackers and water cannon, said a report in the Beijing Youth Daily, which added that the man was rushed to hospital but later died.

The reports said it was not clear how or why the man, whose wife and child had come to the park with him, had gotten into the tiger enclosure. (AFP)



A 2012 photo from files of Swedish photographer Lennart Nilsson posing with some of his books. Lennart Nilsson, whose pictures of fetuses developing in the womb illustrated a 1965 book that was translated into several languages, has died. He was 94. (AP)

But at its annual meeting in Istanbul in July last year, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee said it "notes with concern that a number of large-scale infrastructure projects have been proposed" on the Macedonian side.

It warned that Ohrid could find itself on the "List of World Heritage in Danger" if threats to the site were confirmed, suggesting alternative routes and locations should be identified for major projects. Sites can lose their heritage status if they are deemed to be improperly protected.

Alexandra Fiebig, project officer for Europe and North America at UNESCO's World Heritage Centre, told AFP there had been "a lot of close contact with the (Macedonian) authorities" and a UNESCO "reactive monitoring mission" was due to start work in Ohrid soon.

Of the raft of controversial proposals, expected to involve both private and public investment, some fall under the remit of central government ministries while others are part of municipal plans.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, a potential investor in the expressway, says it is "assessing the feasibility" of the project.

Macedonia's conservative VMRO-DPMNE party, in power nationally since 2006, has been accused by critics of authoritarianism and corruption but narrowly won a general election in December.

Ohrid's mayor Nikola Bakraceski, from VMRO-DPMNE, insists environmental regulations have been followed and the public sufficiently consulted in city planning.

Hazardous Beijing pollution: Residents of China's capital awoke on Saturday to dense, choking smog after many set off a barrage of fireworks overnight to ring in the Lunar New Year, despite limits and public admonitions against such displays in the congested city.

The Beijing Municipal Environmental Protection Bureau said harmful particulate matter in the air had hit the second-highest level in five years by Saturday morning, the state-owned China News Service reported.

Beijing whose Mayor **Cai Qi** launched a "war against pollution" in 2014 as part of a central government promise to reverse damage done by decades of breakneck growth and strengthen powers to shut down and punish polluters. Efforts to clean up the skies in the industrial heartland around Beijing are being thwarted by coal-burning industry and indoor heating, which increases during China's winter months.

Beijing's level of PM2.5, a measure of small particulate matter particularly damaging to health, peaked at 647 micrograms per cubic metre early on Saturday, the national Ministry of Environmental Protection under its minister **Chen Jining** said in a statement on its website.

That was well beyond the upper limit of 500 on China's air quality index and double the threshold considered hazardous. (RTS)