

World News Roundup



Indians, some holding national flags and placards, participate in a protest against a new citizenship law that opponents say threatens India's secular identity in Bangalore, India on Feb 3. Demonstrators across the country have been demanding the revocation of the citizenship law approved last month. The law provides a fast-track to naturalization for persecuted religious minorities from some neighboring Islamic countries, but excludes Muslims. (AP)

Australia

Deputy PM survives internal revolt

Lawmakers commemorate victims and heroes of fires

CANBERRA, Feb 4, (AP): Lawmakers commemorated wildfire victims and praised the heroism of firefighters when Australia's Parliament sat on Tuesday as hundreds of protesters rallied outside demanding more policy action on climate change.

The usual business of Parliament was postponed on the first sitting day of the year with the focus instead on the wildfires that have killed at least 33 people and destroyed more than 3,000 homes since September.

Prime Minister **Scott Morrison** paid tribute to those who lost their lives, including three US airmen who died when their Hercules C-130 tanker crashed while fighting a blaze in southern New South Wales state last month. Relatives of some of the nine firefighters who have died in this fire season were in a public gallery to hear lawmakers give their condolences. The US ambassador represented the airmen's families.

Morrison, close to tears, vowed that despite the scale of the disaster and tragedies, "Australia is not and will never be overwhelmed." "As we face the challenges that remain active, as we confront and face the devastating drought compounded in so many places by these fires, as we confront and contain the challenge of the virus indeed that threatens the world, Australians will not be overwhelmed," Morrison told Parliament.

Outside Parliament House, Morrison was lampooned by protesters for his conservative government's policies on carbon emissions, efforts that have been widely criticised as inadequate.

Morrison was also attacked for secretly taking a family vacation to Hawaii in December at the height of the crisis while his hometown of Sydney was choking on wildfire smoke. One environmental protester among the many gathered under a sky hazy with wildfire smoke wore a Morrison mask and carried a sign reading: "My Bushfire Plan? Hawaii!"

The demonstrators also condemned Australia's heavy economic reliance on fossil fuels as the world's largest exporter of coal and liquid natural gas. Jane Baker, 65, and her friend Judith Thompson, 67, drove five hours from their hometown of



Morrison

Wangaratta in rural Victoria state to take part in the Canberra protest.

"We're both frustrated at sitting on the couch and yelling at the politicians on the television, so we've come out to yell at them in person today - to have our voices heard," Baker said.

Several rural homes were reportedly destroyed overnight in Australia's southeast but the wildfire threat had diminished by Sunday across New South Wales state and around the national capital Canberra, officials said.

The New South Wales Rural Fire Service said in a statement on Sunday it had yet to confirm media reports of homes lost near the village of Bumbalong, 92 kilometers (57 miles) south of Canberra.

The most dangerous fire threatened southern Canberra and the nearby village of Tharwa. The fire had burnt 55,000 hectares (136,000 acres) of forest and farmland by Sunday, with a perimeter 148 kilometers (92 miles) long, the Australian Capital Territory Emergency Services Agency said.

Residents close to the fire front were warned on Sunday to remain vigilant.

"This morning the fire is still active. There are still days and possibly weeks of firefighting ahead of us," Australian Capital Territory Chief Minister Andrew Barr told reporters.

He said a state of emergency for Canberra and its surrounds would remain in place until at least Monday.

It is the first such emergency declaration in the Australian Capital Territory since 2003, when wildfires killed four people and destroyed almost 500 homes in a single day.

There were no fires burning at emergency level - the most dangerous on a three-tier scale - across the Australian Capital Territory or surrounding New South Wales on Sunday.

Also:

CANBERRA: Australia's deputy prime minister on Tuesday stood a challenge to his leadership mounted by the man he replaced two years ago. The Nationals party has not revealed the size of the margin that returned Deputy Prime Minister **Michael McCormack**. The leadership was confirmed in a ballot of 21 Nationals lawmakers.

He had been challenged by **Barnaby Joyce**, who quit as Nationals leader in 2018 over a controversy surrounding a child he had with a former staffer and allegations that he had sexually harassed another woman.

Subcontinent

Militant shell kills 7: At least seven members of the same Pakistani family were killed Sunday when their home was hit by a mortar round fired from across the border in Afghanistan by suspected militants, Pakistani police said.

Four children, two women and a man were killed in Bajur district, once a Taleban stronghold inside Pakistan's northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, according to local police official, Shahab-ud-Din. He said other civilians were also wounded.

Police and local officials provided no further details on the shelling. Police gave the name of the owner of the home that was struck, but did not say if he was among the casualties or if he was present at the time of the attack. Authorities said an investigation was underway.

Pakistan's militant groups are often interlinked with those across the border in Afghanistan, and Bajur district was once a haven for Taliban insurgents. Pakistan says the army has cleared the area in recent years, although violence persists. Militants who were not killed have mostly fled across the rugged mountains into neighboring Afghanistan.

Terror attacks in Pakistan plummeted by more than 85% over the last decade, from nearly 2,000 in 2009 to fewer than 250 in 2019, according to a tally put together by Pakistani think tanks.

The steady decline underscores the long-haul nature of fighting terror. Pakistan's success in tackling terror is essential amid American attempts to wind down the war in Afghanistan and withdraw U.S. troops. (AP)

Tamil anthem scrapped: Sri Lanka's new government declined to sing the national anthem in Tamil, the country's second national language, during the island's Independence Day celebrations Tuesday, a departure from the previous government which sang the anthem in the country's two primary languages to promote ethnic harmony in the aftermath of a decades-long civil war.

President **Gotabaya Rajapaksa** was elected last year largely with votes of majority Buddhist Sinhalese. Minority Tamils overwhelmingly voted against him.

Rajapaksa was a top defense official in the civil war and played a major role in defeating the rebel Tamil Tigers. Many ethnic Tamil civilians were killed or went missing in the war.

The country's 72nd anniversary of independence from Britain was celebrated in Colombo with military parades and air shows.

Rajapaksa said in his speech that he is the president of all communities, reiterating a sentiment he made in his elections speech.

"I have the vision that I must serve as the leader of the country looking after all citizens rather than serve as a political leader concerned only about a particular community," he said. "As the President today, I represent the entire Sri Lankan nation irrespective of ethnicity, religion, party affiliation or other differences," Rajapaksa said. (AP)



Gotabaya

Opponents of the law say it is discriminatory

India still weighing citizenship registry

NEW DELHI, Feb 4, (AP): India's ruling Hindu nationalist-led government said Tuesday it was still weighing whether to roll out a nationwide citizenship registry, an exercise it says would weed out illegal foreign nationals, amid ongoing protests against a citizenship law that fast-tracks naturalization for some religious minorities from three neighboring countries but not Muslims.

The official statement, made by lawmaker Nityanand Rai in a written reply to a question in Parliament, is a departure from comments made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's senior party leaders, including the home minister, Amit Shah.

The BJP's manifesto for the 2019 national elections, which the party won in a landslide victory, also promised the citizenship registry in India.

Modi, however, recently backed away from the exercise after public pressure mounted with the passage of the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act. Millions of people have demonstrated in India's major cities since the law was passed in December.

Opponents of the law say it is discriminatory because it excludes Muslims and unconstitutional because it links faith to citizenship in a secular country.

Critics fear the registry coupled with the new law could leave millions stateless, a fear that government officials have dismissed.

Nearly 2 million people, about half Hindu and half Muslim, were excluded from a similar registry Modi's party implemented in the northeastern state of Assam last year. They have been asked to prove their citizenship in quasi-legal

tribunals or else risk being declared foreign and stripped of rights including to cast a vote.

India is building a detention center for foreigners in Assam.

Modi has publicly denied that there are any detention centres in the country and has downplayed the protests, saying they are orchestrated by his opponents.

Meanwhile, Indian police last week detained a man who allegedly fired a pistol near a university in New Delhi where students were protesting a new citizenship law that excludes Muslims.

The man challenged protesters as they started marching from the university to the mausoleum of India's independence leader Mohandas Gandhi on his death anniversary, said Ahmed Azeem, a Jamia Millia Islamia University spokesman.

Enertech 100 mw Maiden Solar Project in Balochistan delivers lowest tariff in the Country



Enertech Holding Company Kuwait has received a record low tariff of US\$ Cent 3.76 per KWh for its first 100 MW solar project from NEPRA in Balochistan. This is by far the lowest tariff determined for Independent Power Projects (IPPs) in the history of Pakistan. These projects will be setup near Quetta and are the first phase of the 500 MW solar PV solar projects signed by Enertech with Government of Balochistan.

This is the first renewable project in Balochistan and will change the perception of the province as an investor friendly province with immense renewable energy potential. The lowest tariff is the culmination of excellent renewable energy resource, superior engineering and the commitment from EnerTech Holding Company to drive the prices of renewable energy down to international averages.

Balochistan has immense renewable potential with the best solar and wind resources in the region. Cheap energy will allow Balochistan to unlock the mineral potential in the province and support the critical agriculture sector. Currently, the agriculture sector is the largest employer in the province. These projects by EnerTech has greatly changed the perception of Balochistan and increased local and foreign investor interest in the province.

Enertech Holding is wholly owned by National Technology Enterprises Company (NTEC) which is a fully owned subsidiary of Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) - the sovereign wealth fund of the State of Kuwait. KIA is one of the oldest and largest sovereign wealth funds in the world.

Mr. Abdulla A Mutairi, CEO Enertech Holding Kuwait, congratulated NEPRA, Energy Ministry and the Balochistan Government on this landmark

achievement. He reaffirmed his commitment to bring significant investment in the renewable and water sector in Pakistan. He especially thanked the Chief Minister Mr. Jam Kamal for his support and believes that under his visionary leadership Balochistan will be able to unlock its true potential. He also announced that Enertech's next round will include development of solar power projects near Lasbela and Kharan.

Enertech Pakistan's CEO Mr. Yasser Malik commented that Enertech's initiative to set up solar power projects in Balochistan will open doors for sophisticated investors. Enertech is committed to harnessing the renewable potential of Balochistan with the goal to develop it into the Renewable Energy Hub of Pakistan. The first step towards achieving this goal is to deliver a record low tariff for the first renewable project in Balochistan. Mr. Malik said that Enertech is committed to the project and will be working with all stakeholders to successfully complete the project in record time as well. He also underlined Enertech has been focusing on infrastructure assets including waste to energy and water supply in Sindh.

His Excellency Syed Sajjad Haider Pakistan Ambassador to Kuwait while visiting Enertech's headquarters appreciated Enertech's effort in developing the renewable sector in Balochistan and in the process delivering the lowest IPP tariff in the history of Pakistan. He further commented that sophisticated investors like Enertech will pave way for other investors to invest in Balochistan. He encouraged Enertech to facilitate technology transfer, bring innovation in high-tech and help in building capacity.