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President His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan meets with Dr Ahmad Al Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al Azhar and Chairman of the Muslim Council of Elders, in Baku, Azerbaijan, ahead of the 2024 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29).

2015-24 heating up to become warmest decade ever recorded

Paris agreement climate goals 'in great peril', warns UN as COP29 kicks off

BAKU

The Paris climate agreement's goals "are in great peril" and 2024 is on track to break new temperature records, the United Nations warned yesterday as COP29 talks opened in Baku.

The period from 2015 to 2024 will also be the warmest decade ever recorded, the UN's World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said in a new report based on six international data sets. WMO chief Celeste Saulo said she was sounding the "red alert". "It's another SOS for the planet," she told reporters in Baku.

The warming trend is accelerating the shrinking of glaciers and sea-level rise, and unleashing extreme weather that has wrought havoc on communities and economies around the world.

High-stakes climate talks

"The ambitions of the Paris Agreement are in great peril," the WMO climate and weather agency said as global leaders gathered for high-stakes climate talks in Azerbaijan.

The warming trend is accelerating the shrinking of glaciers and sea-level rise, and unleashing extreme weather that has wrought havoc around the world.

Under the Paris agreement, nearly every nation on Earth committed to work to limit warming to "well below" two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, and preferably to below 1.5C. The EU climate monitor Copernicus has already said that 2024 will exceed 1.5C. The WMO, which relies on a broader data set, also said 2024 would likely breach the 1.5C limit, and break the record set just last year.

"Climate catastrophe is hammering health, widening inequalities, harming sustainable development, and rocking the foundations of peace. The vulnerable are hardest hit," UN chief Antonio Guterres said in a statement.

"We need to act as soon as possible," Saulo said, insisting that the world must "not give up on the 1.5 (ambition)".

—AFP

Riyadh calls Israel's war on Gaza genocide

SAUDI CROWN PRINCE APPEALS FOR IMMEDIATE TRUCE IN CONFLICT AREAS

DUBAI

BY STEPHEN N. R.

Senior Associate Editor

Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince yesterday condemned Israel's campaign in Gaza as "genocide" and called for immediate ceasefires in the besieged territory and Lebanon.

Opening a joint Arab League and Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC) summit in Riyadh, Prince Mohammad said the international community must "immediately halt the Israeli actions against our brothers in Palestine and Lebanon".

"(Saudi Arabia) affirms its support for the brothers in Palestine and Lebanon to overcome the disastrous humanitarian consequences of the ongoing Israeli aggression," he said.

Palestinian state

"We emphasise the necessity of establishing a Palestinian state and preserving Lebanese sovereignty," Prince Mohammad said.

"We condemn the Israeli military operations that targeted Lebanese territories, and we reject threatening Lebanon's

security and stability." He also called on Israel to respect Iran's sovereignty and refrain from attacking Iranian soil.

A draft resolution for the summit stresses "firm support" for "national rights" for the Palestinian people, "foremost among which is their right to freedom and to an independent, sovereign state".

The summit comes one year after a similar gathering in Riyadh of the Cairo-based Arab League and the Jeddah-based Organisation of Islamic Co-operation during which leaders condemned Israeli forces' actions in Gaza as "barbaric".

The OIC has 57 members and the Arab League 22, who include countries which recognise Israel and those firmly opposed to its regional integration.

Secretary General of the Arab League Ahmad Aboul Gheit said: "What is needed is an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon," Aboul Gheit said.

"Maybe the new elected US president, who promised to end the war, can fulfil this promise," he said, referring to Donald Trump who won the US presidential race last week.

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Viral craze: Dumpling-hunting cyclists in China spark road chaos

Police, first amused by revelry, forced to crack down on joy riders

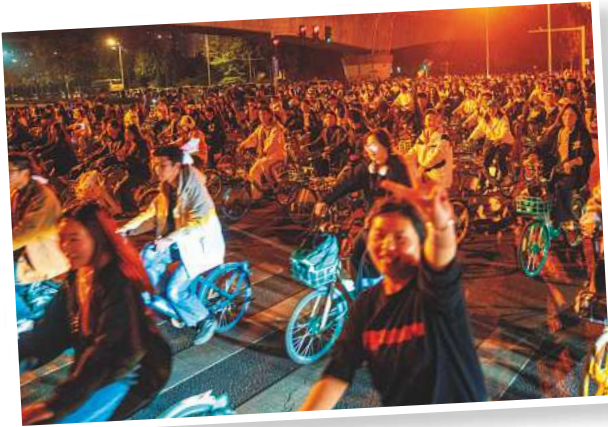
BEIJING

Chinese police have cracked down on an internet craze that saw thousands of cyclists throng a highway under cover of night to gorge on dumplings in a nearby city.

University students sparked the trend weeks ago when they posted on social media about an evening ride from the central city of Zhengzhou to Kaifeng, around 80km away, to enjoy some famous local soup dumplings.

The activity went viral, with images of more recent rides showing a multi-lane motorway linking the two cities crammed with thousands of cyclists, some straddling brightly coloured shared bikes - dubbed the 'Night Riding Great Army'.

Authorities initially welcomed the revelry, but later imposed traffic restrictions after the sheer number of participants prompted traffic



chaos. The provincial police on Saturday said the road would be "closed to non-motorised vehicles" from 4pm to midday on Sunday.

Three shared bike companies also imposed new local geographic restrictions - the vehicles would lock automatically if riders travelled in prohibited areas.

—AFP


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