



Govt mulls center to deal with emergencies



Dow Chemical, DuPont merge in \$130bn deal



Sports tribunal upholds Platini suspension



150 Fils

GLOBAL CLIMATE TALKS STUMBLE TOWARDS END

DEAL 'SURE', BUT PITFALLS AHEAD



Min 05°

Max 21°



PARIS: Activists hold a banner in front of a giant polar bear puppet called Aurora during a demonstration organized by environmental organization Greenpeace at the venue of the COP21 United Nations climate change conference in Le Bourget on the outskirts of the French capital yesterday. — AP

LE BOURGET, France: Sleep-starved envoys tasked with staving off catastrophic climate change are on track to seal a historic accord, the French hosts of UN talks said yesterday although the biggest pitfalls were yet to be cleared. The 195-nation conference in Paris had been scheduled to wrap up yesterday, but was extended another day after ministers failed to bridge deep divides during a second consecutive all-night round of negotiations.

Still, Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, who is presiding over the talks, voiced confidence the event would culminate with a much-awaited pact. "We are almost at the end of the road and I am optimistic," said Fabius, whose hopes were echoed by many negotiators and observers despite potential deal-breakers still up in the air. Fabius said he would submit the deal at 9 am (0800 GMT) and was "sure" it would be approved. "It will be a big step forward for humanity as a whole," he said.

World leaders have billed the Paris talks as the last chance to avert disastrous climate change: increasingly severe drought, floods and storms, as well as rising seas that would engulf islands and populated coasts. The outcome of a laborious two-decade-long process, the post-2020 accord would commit all nations to curb greenhouse gases that trap solar heat, warming Earth's surface and disrupting its delicate climate system.

Highlighting the urgency of the moment, US President Barack Obama and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, spoke by phone yesterday about the Paris negotiations, according to China's foreign ministry. Xi said the world powers "must strengthen coordination with all parties" and "make joint efforts to ensure the Paris climate summit reaches an accord", according to a statement on the ministry's website. The planned accord would seek to revolutionize the world's energy system by cutting back or potentially eliminating the burning of coal, oil and gas, whose carbon dioxide is the big warming culprit.

UN efforts from the 1990s have been hamstrung by rows between developed and developing nations over sharing the emissions-curbing burden, aiding climate-vulnerable poor countries and funding the shift to cleaner renewables. Developing nations have insisted established economic powerhouses must shoulder the lion's share of responsibility as they have emitted most of the greenhouse gases since the Industrial Revolution.

But the United States and other rich nations say emerging giants must also do more. They point out that developing countries now account for most of today's emissions and thus will be largely responsible for future warming. The financing issues remained the biggest potential deal-breakers in Paris, highlighted in a draft text presented by Fabius on Thursday that was debated through the night.

Rich countries promised six years ago in Copenhagen to muster \$100 billion a year from 2020 to help developing nations make the energy shift and cope with the impact of global warming. But how the pledged funds will be raised remains unclear - and developing countries are determined to secure a commitment for increasing amounts of money after 2020. The latest text refers to the \$100 billion as a floor, potentially triggering a last-minute backlash from the United States and other developed nations fearful of being forced to sign a blank cheque.

Another remaining flashpoint issue is how to compensate developing nations that will be worst hit by climate change but are least to blame for it. The developing nations are demanding "loss and damage" provisions, which Washington is particularly wary of as it fears they could make US companies vulnerable to legal challenges for compensation. — AFP

SHEIKH AHMAD TO FIGHT JAIL SENTENCE

KUWAIT: Sheikh Ahmad Fahd Al-Sabah, an influential figure in football and the Olympics, vowed yesterday to fight a six-month jail term imposed in Kuwait for insulting the judiciary. Sheikh Ahmad, a member of the FIFA executive committee and the International Olympic Committee, was sentenced to jail by a lower court on Thursday, local media said. The sheikh, also president of the Olympic Council of Asia, was convicted of casting doubt on the integrity of the judiciary, insulting the public prosecution and threatening public order in a television interview three years ago, Al-Qabas newspaper reported.

Prosecutors had placed a gag order on the case, but Sheikh Ahmad spoke out about it on Kuwaiti television anyway. Authorities later dismissed the sheikh's complaint and he appeared on state television in March to issue an apology, saying he was "misinformed" about the plot, without elaborating.

The case erupted in the weeks after FIFA and the IOC suspended Kuwait for government interference in sport. Sheikh Ahmad said he is appealing against the jail term and a KD 1,000 (\$3,300) fine and denied any wrongdoing. "This is a personal attack and unfortunately is symptomatic of the current relationship between Kuwait and the sports movement," he said in a statement released by the OCA. "Under Kuwait's democratic constitution, it is my right to express my opinion freely, and that is all that I have done," he added.

"I have fought against all forms of corruption and promoted freedom of speech all my life - when I was in the military, when I was in the government and now within the sports movement. I will continue to protect the value of democracy, freedom of right of speech and the autonomy of the sports." The OCA statement said the 55-year-old royal had been "personally targeted for criticisms

he made on the general situation in Kuwait during a television interview three years ago."

It added that new sports laws "which threatened the autonomy of sport in Kuwait were introduced in response to the outcome of the last International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) elections in December 2014 and have led the IOC to suspend the Kuwait Olympic Committee on October 27, 2015." Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah, Kuwait's information minister and former head of the Asian Shooting Confederation, lost the 2014 election to lead the world shooting federation. "Certain individuals who introduced these sports laws have further sought to seek retribution on the OCA for the suspension," the statement added. "These individuals are also threatening to ban Kuwaiti athletes from being able to compete at international events - including the Rio 2016 Olympic Games." — Agencies