

GREEN CLIMATE FUND NEEDS NEW IDEAS WITH LOW-CARBON

BARCELONA: The Green Climate Fund, which aims to channel billions of dollars to help poorer nations tackle global warming, is not yet backing the right kind of projects to bring about a sea change in low-carbon development, said its recently departed executive director. Hela Cheikhrouhou, who was appointed as Tunisia's minister for energy, mining and renewables in its new government on Friday, urged the \$10.3-billion fund to provide clearer guidelines on what it is seeking to finance in areas such as water, urban development, energy and transport.

"Now our rules are very broad... the net that exists is very wide, so anything goes," Cheikhrouhou told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in an interview from Tunis. "We can't continue like that; we need to invest the money wisely to meet the mandate of the fund." The Green Climate Fund has a specific objective to promote a "paradigm shift towards low-emission and climate-resilient development pathways", and aims to use its money to achieve "transformational impact".

Since November 2015, the South Korea-based fund has approved investments of around \$424 million in 17 projects and has an "aspirational

goal" to commit \$2.5 billion this year - a goal observers say will be tough to reach. In the rush to get the first projects approved before the Paris climate talks in December last year, and to hit the 2016 goal, some proposals given the green light have been criticised as "business as usual".

They include a plan to develop solar energy in Chile and another to support World Bank climate action in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Cheikhrouhou, who left the fund after one three-year term, said the agencies eligible to request its cash "need to help us to respect our mandate, and should make a bigger effort to bring us things that are not just ready and have been lying around for a while". The fund, for its part, is working to produce technical notes to help its partners understand what kind of things it defines as "paradigm-shifting", she added.

For example, where a growing city is struggling to supply enough water to residents, simply piping in extra water could make things worse by attracting more people. Instead urban planning could be changed to spur development in regions with better water resources. Or, in a country that wants to boost the share of renewables in its energy mix, the Green Climate Fund could back efforts to change regulations or build institutions that

would attract investment into its chosen forms of clean energy on a large scale, Cheikhrouhou said.

Merely constructing a bigger wind farm or getting business involved in ongoing government efforts to reduce carbon emissions might not make the grade, she explained. "If (the fund) became all things to all people, we would have very limited impact in the greater scheme of things. So we need to find ways to signal clearly what is a project that would change the game," she said.

Paris building block

Despite this challenge, Cheikhrouhou said the fund had achieved a great deal in its first three years, and had been an important building block for the new global climate change deal sealed in Paris last year, giving developing countries "extra confidence" to sign up to that agreement. "It was one of those fast sprints where you have to jump over hurdles," she said. The main hurdles were hammering out the fund's business model, raising \$10 billion from governments, and approving the first projects in time for Paris, she added.

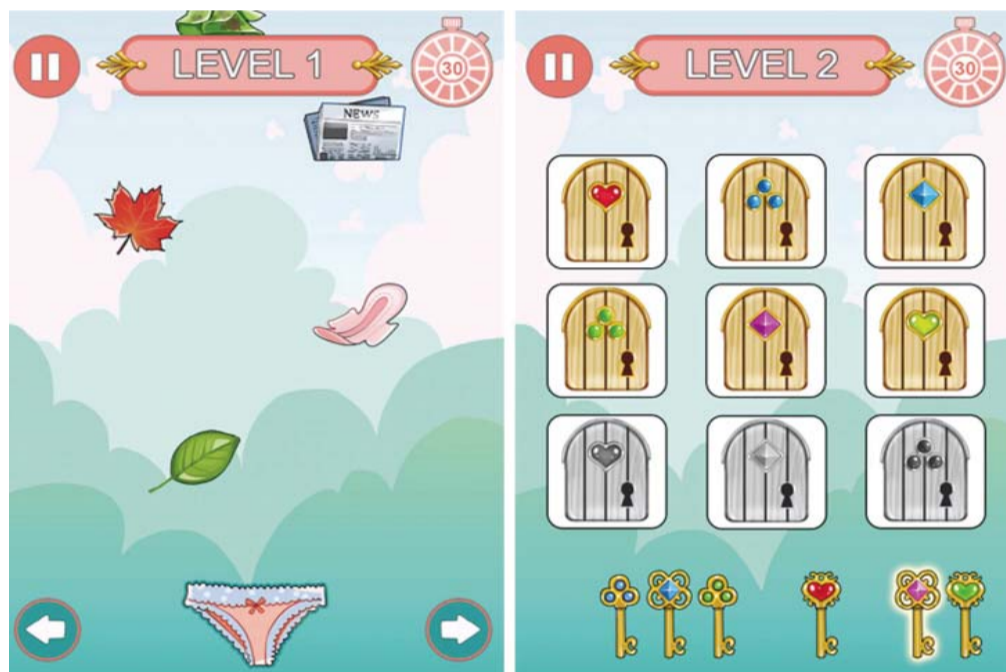
This year, she focused on boosting staff numbers at the fund's secretariat to cope with its

growing work load, and putting in place the right procedures and systems to enable the fund to run smoothly. Those efforts still need to be accelerated so that the fund has a firm foundation to expand its activities. "There has to be a lot of hard work," she said. The board plans to appoint a new executive director after interviewing candidates at its next meeting in October. Javier Manzanares, the fund's chief financial officer, is acting as interim head until the new leader takes over, which the board hopes will be by early next year.

Cheikhrouhou, in her new role as Tunisia's energy minister, said she would seek to promote investment in the north African country's energy sector, with the aim of achieving "a cleaner and more efficient energy mix" over time. Renewable energy now accounts for only around 3 to 4 percent of electric power generation, she noted, even though Tunisia has significant wind and solar resources. "That is not where we want to be 10, 20 years from now," she said, adding that the country's democratic transition meant the time was ripe to start shifting that situation. Tunisia has set targets for raising the share of renewable energy in its electricity production to 14 percent in 2020 and 30 percent in 2030. — Reuters

PAKISTANI TEAM CREATES MENSTRUAL GAME APP TO BREAK GENDER TABOOS

BELIEF THAT PERIODS ARE 'EVIL' STILL PERSIST



This combo screenshot handout received from the social enterprise GRID on August 31, 2016, shows the game "MoHim" levels on their website, in Islamabad. — AFP



ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani entrepreneur has developed a mobile game app intended to break taboos surrounding menstruation in the developing world, including beliefs that periods are "evil" or make women impure. "MoHim", an acronym for Menstrual Health Management which also means "effort" in Urdu, arms players with a pair of panties which they use to catch sanitary pads while avoiding items unsuited to absorbing period flow such as leaves and newspapers.

As players complete levels they are awarded keys which unlock "myth-buster" doors that dispel deep-seated prejudices against menstruation in much of the developing world - such as the idea that women should not cook or bathe while having their periods. The app is the brainchild of Mariam Adil, a World Bank analyst in Washington, DC. She also heads a small Pakistan-based startup called GRID that aims to use games to promote social change.

'Shame'

Adil told AFP yesterday of the stigma she encountered around menstruation in Pakistan, such as "when girls skip school for a week every month out of 'shame' till they drop out from secondary school, and when women suffer from serious infections because they were told they can't bathe during their period". "Video games can target these social constructs and prompt individuals to challenge them in a fun way," she added.

Menstruation remains a taboo subject in Pakistan, with studies showing a widespread lack of education for women on menstrual hygiene. Marginalized girls in Pakistan also end up missing roughly two to four school days a month due to menstruation, according to UN-Habitat. A prototype version of MoHim was launched for iOS earlier this month, and GRID will be partnering with NGO Femme International to implement use of the app in slum communities in the Kenyan capital Nairobi. If successful, the team hopes to release it on the Android store, including in Pakistan - though Adil conceded they have faced resistance from policymakers. — AFP



In this May 27, 2016 photo made available by SpaceX, their Falcon rocket booster lands on a platform in the Atlantic Ocean after launching a satellite into orbit. The company says it can save considerable time and money by reusing the big, expensive parts. — AP

SPACEX GETS TAKER FOR 1ST FLIGHT OF RECYCLED ROCKET

CAPE CANAVERAL: SpaceX has a taker for the first flight of one of its recycled rockets. The Luxembourg-based company SES - a longtime SpaceX launch customer - said Tuesday it will send its next communications satellite up on a previously flown Falcon rocket. It will be the first true reuse of a rocket previously used for an orbital mission. The launch will take place sometime this fall from Cape Canaveral. "Thanks for the longstanding faith in SpaceX," SpaceX chief Elon Musk said via Twitter. "We very much look forward to doing this milestone flight with you."

The chief technology officer at SES, Martin Halliwell, said SpaceX's testing for the upcoming mission gives his company "full confidence." SES was the first commercial satellite operator to launch with SpaceX, back in 2013, he noted, and the satellite operator is excited to team up with SpaceX for another first. "We believe reusable rockets will open up a new era of spaceflight," Halliwell said in a news release. SpaceX said it can save considerable time and money by reusing the big, expensive

parts normally left to sink at sea. The first-stage, 15-story rocket - equipped with nine engines - is what launches everything to space. It separates 2 1/2 minutes after liftoff, and the second stage takes over to get the payload into the proper orbit. This second stage, for now anyway, is still discarded. Since December, SpaceX has recovered six boosters following liftoff, landing them upright on an ocean barge or back at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station. It hopes to expand its Florida inventory this weekend, as it attempts to launch an Israeli communications satellite. SpaceX's single attempt to land a leftover booster launched from California, back in January, failed.

The first recovered booster now stands outside the company's Southern California headquarters. The one used in a space station supply run for NASA in April will be used in the fall SES flight. Another private space company, Blue Origin, has been re-flying a recovered rocket from Texas for months but these have been suborbital test flights. — AP

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