

Climate deal pushed by world's poorest nations

World's poorest countries ask that talks on a new climate deal covering all nations begin immediately

At the UN Climate Summit, the Least Developed Countries bloc and small island states tabled papers saying the deal should be finalised within a year. Many of them are vulnerable to climate impacts such as drought or inundation. The move puts the blocs on a collision course not only with many rich nations, but also with developing world partners such as China, India and Brazil. These three developing world giants believe talks on a new mandate should not begin now because developed nations have yet to fulfil existing commitments. But their smaller peers believe there is no time to lose.

"We put forward our mandate for a new legal agreement today to get things moving quickly in an effort to respond to the urgency of our challenge," said Selwin Hart, lead negotiator for Barbados, speaking for



Locals take part in a march, against climate change ahead of South Africa hosting global climate talks

the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). "We can no longer afford to wait. We need to conclude the new deal in the next 12 months."

The 48-country Least Developed Countries bloc (LDCs) includes drought-prone states such as Ethiopia and Mali, those with long flat coastal zones such as Bangladesh and Tanzania, and Himalayan mountain

states including Bhutan and Nepal for whom melting glaciers pose serious dangers. The 39-strong AOSIS includes a plethora of Pacific and Caribbean islands, some of which are very low-lying and vulnerable to sea level rise. The draft mandate that the LDCs launched into the UN Summit in Durban, South Africa, says that talks 'shall begin immediately af-

ter January 1st, 2012 and shall conclude... by COP18 (next year's summit)".

Brazil and India have argued that no new process should begin before 2015; and China is also known to be resistant. Along with Canada, the US, Japan and Russia, they have also argued that the current pledges on curbing emissions, which most countries tabled

around the time of the Copenhagen Summit two years ago and which run until 2020, should not be adjusted before that date.

But the UNFCCC is obliged to review those pledges in 2015; and the LDCs believe the 1.5C target will be very difficult if not impossible to achieve without strengthening the existing pledges.

Striking UK workers challenge coalition

Hundreds of thousands of public sector workers go on strike in Britain to protest over pension reform, in a walkout billed by unions as the biggest in a generation but derided by Prime Minister David Cameron as a 'damp squib'

nificantly less'.

The Government, trying to turn around a debt-laden economy teetering on the brink of recession, says reform is needed as people are living longer and public service pensions are unaffordable. "Government rhetoric today is as predictable as it has been shallow," said Brendan Barber, the General Secretary of the Trades Union Congress. "The biggest strike in a generation cannot be dismissed as a damp squib. The claims that all low paid workers will be protected and that the average workers will get better pensions collapse under the slightest scrutiny," he added.

Union anger has been fuelled by new curbs on public sector pay and hundreds of thousands of additional job cuts outlined when the Conservative-led coalition Government cut economic growth forecasts and said its tough austerity programme would last until 2017.



Unions and the Government were each quick to claim victory, with labour leaders saying up to 2m teachers, nurses, border guards and other workers took part. The Government disputed the turnout and played down the strike's impact, saying the unions' turnout claim was 'wrong' and the true figure was 'sig-

British Museum acquires set of Picasso etchings

Businessman's gift of £1m allows British Museum to buy a complete set of 100 Picasso etchings never before seen in public

The museum said the etchings, produced during a 'critical period in Picasso's career', would be the only complete set held by a public museum in the UK.

The works were acquired following the donation from City fund manager Hamish Parker on behalf on his late father. The complete *Vollard Suite* will go on show at the British Museum next summer. It is believed to be the first time the suite — created between 1930 and 1937 — has been shown in Britain in the past 50 years.

Picasso himself described his etchings as a 'visual diary' and a way of keeping track of ideas he was developing. The suite includes the artist's 17 year old muse, Marie-Therese



Museum assistant poses for a photo with Picasso's work

Walter, while others show the studio where Picasso was creating new sculptures. It takes its name from Paris art dealer and print publisher Ambroise Vollard, who commissioned the etchings and gave Picasso a Renoir and a Cezanne painting in exchange for the work. Some 313 sets

were printed but Vollard died before they could be distributed.

The British Museum's set has been acquired from the heirs of French dealer Henri Petiet — who purchased most of the prints from the Vollard estate — following the donation by the Hamish Parker Charitable Trust.

Antique Stradivarius violin 'replicated' by radiologist

Stradivarius violin 'recreated' using an X-ray scanner normally used to detect cancers and injuries

The US-based group used a computerised axial tomography scanner on the 307 year old instrument to reveal its secrets. They then used the data recovered to build 'nearly exact copies'. The team said the technique could be used to give musicians access to rare musical equipment.

The two men scanned many hundreds of instruments, including guitars, mandolins and other violins. Scans of the older instruments revealed worm holes, small cracks and other damage that helped create their distinctive sounds. Eventually the two men borrowed a Stradivarius known as 'Betts' from the US Library of Congress which still had an original label placed by its Italian creator, Antonio Stradivari, inside its body. Teaming up with another violin maker, Steve Rossov, they proceeded to create three replicas.

China's industrial activity falls to a 32-month low

China's manufacturing activity falls to a 32-month low in November, hurt by a slowdown in the global economy

China's official Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) fell to 49.0 in November, the lowest level since March 2009. The industry survey data comes amid concerns that a slowdown in the global economy may dent demand for Chinese goods and hurt its economy. PMI is a key indicator of manufacturing activity and a reading below 50 shows contraction.

The success of its manufacturing sector has been key to China's economic growth in the past few years. However, recent economic problems in two of its biggest export markets — the US and Europe — have raised concerns about whether the sector can maintain its growth pace.

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