

## WORLD IN BRIEF

Associated Press

## Pence has long pushed for Trump policies on Israel

WASHINGTON — Vice President Mike Pence is making his fifth visit to Israel, returning to a region he's visited "a million times" in his heart.

An evangelical Christian with strong ties to the Holy Land, Pence this time comes packing two key policy decisions in his bags that have long been top priorities for him: designating Jerusalem as Israel's capital and curtailing aid for Palestinians.

Since his days in Congress a decade ago, Pence has played a role in pushing both for the shift in U.S. policy related to the capital and for placing limits on funding for Palestinian causes long criticized by Israel.

Traveling to Israel just as Palestinians have condemned recent decisions by President Donald Trump's administration, Pence will arrive in the region as a longtime stalwart supporter of Israel who has questioned the notion of the U.S. serving as an "honest broker" in the stalled peace process.

"The United States certainly wants to be honest but we don't want to be a broker," Pence once told the Christian Broadcasting Network in 2010. "A broker doesn't take sides. A broker negotiates between parties of equals."

## Trump steps to forefront of anti-abortion movement

WASHINGTON — He once called himself "pro-choice." But a year into his presidency, Donald Trump is stepping to the forefront of his administration's efforts to roll back abortion rights.

And though his record is mixed and a mid-term election looms, abortion opponents say they have not felt so optimistic in at least a decade.

"I don't think anybody thinks that the White House is a perfectly regimented and orderly family ... but that doesn't change their commitment to the issue," said Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the Susan B. Anthony List, which is expanding its door-knocking operation across states with Senate incumbents who have voted for abortion rights.

With a Republican-controlled Congress at his back on this issue, Trump is cementing his turnaround on abortion with a video address today to the annual March to Life. That's a symbolic change from last year, when Vice President Mike Pence — in practical terms, the leader of the anti-abortion movement in the United States



AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd  
A group of indigenous men waits today for the arrival of Pope Francis in Puerto Maldonado, Madre de Dios province, Peru.

## Pope shocks Chile by accusing sex abuse victims of slander

SANTIAGO, Chile — Pope Francis accused victims of Chile's most notorious pedophile of slander Thursday, an astonishing end to a visit meant to help heal the wounds of a sex abuse scandal that has cost the Catholic Church its credibility in the country.

Francis said that until he sees proof that Bishop Juan Barros was complicit in covering up the sex crimes of the Rev. Fernando Karadima, such accusations against Barros are "all calumny."

The pope's remarks drew shock from Chileans and immediate rebuke from victims and their advocates. They noted the accusers were deemed credible enough by the Vatican that it sentenced Karadima to a lifetime of "penance and prayer" for his crimes in 2011. A Chilean judge also found the victims to be credible, saying that while she had to drop criminal charges against Karadima because too much time had passed, proof of his crimes wasn't lacking.

Today, the pope traveled deep into the Amazon rainforest, demanding an end to the relentless exploitation of its timber, gas and gold and recognition of its indigenous peoples as the primary custodians to determine the future of "our common home."

Speaking to a coliseum filled with indigenous men, women and children, many of whom were bare-chested and wearing brightly-colored headdresses, Francis declared the Amazon the "heart of the church" and called for a three-fold defense of its life, land and cultures.

— addressed the group in Trump's absence.

"In one short year, President Donald Trump has made a difference for life," Pence told march leaders Thursday night.

## New Trump office would protect conscience rights of doctors

WASHINGTON — Reinforcing its strong connection with social conservatives, the

Trump administration announced Thursday a new federal office to protect medical providers refusing to participate in abortion, assisted suicide or other procedures on moral or religious grounds.

Leading Democrats and LGBT groups immediately denounced the move, saying "conscience protections" could become a license to discriminate, particularly against gay and transgender people.

The announcement by the Department of Health and Human Services came a day ahead of the annual march on Washington by abortion

opponents. HHS put on a formal event in the department's Great Hall, with Republican lawmakers and activists for conscience protections as invited speakers.

The religious and conscience division will be part of the HHS Office for Civil Rights, which enforces federal anti-discrimination and privacy laws. Officials said it will focus on upholding protections already part of federal law. Violations can result in a service provider losing government funding.

No new efforts to expand such protections were announced, but activists on both sides expect the administration will try to broaden them in the future.

Although the HHS civil rights office has traditionally received few complaints alleging conscience violations, HHS Acting Secretary Eric Hargan, painted a picture of clinicians under government coercion to violate the dictates of conscience.

"For too long, too many health care practitioners have been bullied and discriminated against because of their religious beliefs and moral convictions, leading many of them to wonder what future they have in our medical system," Hargan told the audience.

## Anti-smoking plan may kill cigarettes — and save Big Tobacco

WASHINGTON — Imagine if cigarettes were no longer addictive and smoking itself became almost obsolete; only a tiny segment of Americans still lit up. That's the goal of an unprecedented anti-smoking plan being carefully fashioned by U.S. health officials.

But the proposal from the Food and Drug Administration could have another unexpected effect: opening the door for companies to sell a new generation of alternative tobacco products, allowing the industry to survive — even thrive — for generations to come.

The plan puts the FDA at the center of a long-standing debate over so-called "reduced-risk" products, such as e-cigarettes, and whether they should have a role in anti-smoking efforts, which have long focused exclusively on getting smokers to quit.

"This is the single most controversial — and frankly, divisive — issue I've seen in my 40 years studying tobacco control policy," said Kenneth Warner, professor emeritus at University of Michigan's school of public health.

The FDA plan is two-fold: drastically cut nicotine levels in cigarettes so that they are essentially non-addictive. For those who can't or won't quit, allow lower-risk products that deliver nicotine without the deadly effects of traditional cigarettes.

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