

History will be 'severe judge'

Warns Aussie PM on 'vaccinationalism'; Modi pledges to use India's vaccine-production capacity to help all

AGENCIES

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison on Friday insisted that any nation that develops a Covid-19 vaccine share it universally, warning that history will be a "severe judge" if not.

Morrison made the strongly worded appeal at the United Nations as the United States, a historic ally of Australia, resists global efforts to collaborate on a vaccine.

"When it comes to a vaccine, Australia's view is very clear -- whoever finds the vaccine must share it," Morrison said in a message to the virtual UN General Assembly recorded in front of the iconic Sydney Opera House.

"This is a global responsibility and it's a moral responsibility for a vaccine to be shared far and wide," he said.

"Some might see short-term advantage or even profit, but I assure you, to anyone who may think along those lines -- humanity will have a very long memory and be a very, very severe judge."

Morrison vowed that Australia will share a vaccine if it discovers it and promised support for Covax, the UN initiative that aims to have two billion doses of a vaccine ready for universal distribution by late 2021.

Meanwhile, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday pledged at the United Nations that his country's vaccine production capacity would be made available globally to fight the Covid-19 crisis.

"As the largest vaccine-producing country of the world, I want to give one more assurance to the global community today," Modi said in a pre-recorded speech to the UN General Assembly. "India's vaccine production and delivery capacity will be used to help all humanity in fighting this crisis."

The United States, China and Russia -- which, to wide skepticism, has already unveiled its own vaccine -- have shunned Covax.

President Donald Trump's administration

has given notice that the United States will pull out of the World Health Organization, calling it biased toward China, and has refused to promise to share Covid research, fearing theft of intellectual property from US pharmaceutical companies.



Aussie PM promises support for WHO-led Covax UK pledges over \$400 million for WHO, urges end to 'ugly rifts'

Thai PM says vaccine should be considered as 'global public goods'

"Such 'vaccinationalism' is not only unfair, it is self-defeating. None of us is safe until all of us are safe. Everybody knows that," he told the General Assembly

Meanwhile, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson yesterday pledged a 30% increase in funding for the World Health Organization while urging reforms to the global health body and calling for a revival of cross-border cooperation to end "ugly rifts".

He was scheduled to present a five-point plan to improve the international response to future pandemics. His plan includes a global network of research hubs, more vaccine manufacturing capacity, and an agreement to reduce export tariffs imposed at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

He will commit an initial 71 million pounds to Covax to secure purchase rights on 27 million doses, and 500 million to a separate Covax initiative to help poorer countries access a vaccine.



Joe Biden and his wife pay their respects to the late justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg as her casket lies in state in the Statuary Hall of the US Capitol, in Washington, DC; and people react seeing Donald Trump during a campaign rally in Florida. Photos were taken on Friday.



PHOTO: REUTERS

Can't lose to a guy who didn't campaign!

Trump mocks Biden for 'staying in again', lures Black, Hispanic voters with lofty promises

AFP, Atlanta

With just 39 days until the US election, President Donald Trump ramped up his campaigning with back-to-back events Friday in battleground states -- a frenetic pace in contrast with the more sedate approach of Democratic rival Joe Biden.

The 74-year-old president's grueling schedule includes hosting events in three states plus the capital Washington in a 12-hour slog that culminates with a nighttime rally in Virginia.

Trump -- who trails Biden in national polling and is narrowly behind in several swing states seen as crucial to his path to re-election -- is under pressure to make the most of the remaining weeks before the November 3 election.

During his whirlwind day the president mocked his rival for a lower-energy campaign, saying Biden was "staying in again today."

This guy never goes out! It's terrible, huh?" Trump asked, reviving his "low-energy" critiques of Biden at a black economic empowerment event in Atlanta.

"You better make sure I win. I'm gonna be very embarrassed, I lost to a guy that didn't campaign!" he told a laughing audience.

Biden traveled from his home in Delaware to Washington on Friday to attend a ceremony at the US Capitol as late Supreme Court justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg lay in state there.

But there was no in-person campaigning on the former vice president's schedule.

Trump began the day in Florida with a roundtable with Latino voters, a crucial constituency in the swing state.

Biden has "been very bad to Hispanics," the president said at the event which took place at his golf club in Doral, near Miami. "I'm a wall between the American dream and chaos."

Trump next flew to neighboring Georgia, which has voted Republican in the last six elections but is now rated a toss-up, where he insisted that as president he did "even more than I promised" for African Americans.

US PRESIDENTIAL RACE 2020

"I did more for the black community in 47 months... than Joe Biden did in 47 years," he said, repeatedly swiping at Biden's legislative record in co-sponsoring 1990s tough-on-crime legislation that many experts say resulted in high incarceration rates for black Americans.

Trump said he was unveiling a "platinum plan" that aims to increase capital to African Americans, create three million new jobs for the black community and implement "the highest standards of policing."

He also wooed them with the promise of making Juneteenth, which commemorates the

end of U.S. slavery, as a federal holiday.

Trump then returns to Washington to gather with supporters before flying to a Make America Great Again nighttime rally at an airport in Newport News, Virginia.

Biden's campaign has been cautious ever since the pandemic forced several US states into extended lockdown, with the US death toll now topping 200,000.

Biden, 77, spent months mostly hunkered down in his Delaware home. While he has increased campaigning in swing states like Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Michigan, his events are tightly scripted with only occasional interaction with voters.

The Democratic candidate visited Florida last week to kick off Hispanic Heritage Month, but the event featured no large audience.

His recent go-to strategy to counter Trump appears to be releasing statements that address the president's various campaign stops.

"Since President Trump's last visit to Florida just two weeks ago, over 40,000 more Floridians have tested positive for coronavirus and the state marked 13,000 Covid-related deaths," Biden said Thursday as Trump flew to a Jacksonville rally. "President Trump does not have a plan, but I do -- to beat Covid-19, build our economy back better, and protect and build upon the Affordable Care Act."



A Belarusian law enforcement officer detains an activist during an opposition rally to reject the presidential election results and to protest against the inauguration of President Alexander Lukashenko in Minsk, Belarus, yesterday. At least 10 protesters were detained yesterday, a Reuters reporter witnessed.

PHOTO: REUTERS

STALEMATE IN FORMING NEW LEBANON CABINET

PM designate resigns

REUTERS, Beirut

Lebanon's prime minister-designate quit yesterday after trying for almost a month to line up a non-partisan cabinet, dealing a blow to a French bid aimed at rallying sectarian leaders to tackle the worst crisis since the nation's 1975-1990 civil war.

Mustapha Adib, former ambassador to Berlin, was picked on Aug. 31 to form a cabinet after President Emmanuel Macron's intervention secured a consensus on naming him in a country where power is shared out between Muslims and Christians.

A source close to Macron said the situation that led to Adib's resignation amounted to "collective betrayal" by political parties but said France, the former colonial power, would not abandon Lebanon.

Under the French roadmap, the new government would take swift steps to tackle corruption and implement reforms needed to trigger billions of dollars of international aid to fix an economy that has been crushed by a mountain of debt.

Lebanon faced a further knock when a huge explosion on Aug. 4 at Beirut port

ruined a swathe of the capital.

Adib, a Sunni Muslim under the sectarian power-sharing system, announced he was stepping down but said Lebanon must not abandon the French plan or squander Macron's goodwill.

"I stress that this initiative must continue," he said after meeting President Michel Aoun, a Christian. He wished his successor well in the "hard task" of forming a government.

Politicians, whose loyalties tend to run along confessional lines, had promised Paris they would have a government in place by mid-September.

But Adib's efforts stumbled in a dispute over appointments, particularly the post of finance minister, who will have a key role in drawing up an economic rescue plan.

The cabinet formation hit a roadblock over a demand by Lebanon's two main Shia groups, Amal and the heavily armed Iran-backed Hezbollah, that they name several ministers, including finance, a position previously held by a Shia.

Adib held several meetings with Shi'ite politicians but failed to reach agreement on how the minister would be chosen.



MILITARY PLANE CRASH

Death toll climbs to 23 in Ukraine

AFP, Kiev

The death toll from the crash of a Ukrainian air force plane carrying mostly cadets in the east of the country climbed to 23 yesterday, emergency services said.

The Antonov-26 transport plane was carrying 20 cadets and seven crew when it crashed late Friday two kilometres from the Chuguiv military air base near the city of Kharkiv.

One more body was found under the charred remains of the plane early Saturday, the emergency services said, bringing the number of victims to 23. Two people were also injured.

"The search for two more people continues," the services said in a statement. The cause of the crash is being investigated.

AMY CONEY BARRETT

A judge on a mission to build 'Kingdom of God'

AGENCIES

Judge Amy Coney Barrett, whom US President Trump possibly picked to replace Ruth Bader Ginsburg's US Supreme Court seat, is a darling of conservatives for her religious views, but detractors warn her appointment would shift the nation's top court firmly to the right.

In 2018, she was on the shortlist presented by President Donald Trump for a seat freed up by the retirement of Justice Anthony Kennedy, a position ultimately filled by Brett Kavanaugh after a ferocious confirmation battle.

At just 48, her lifetime appointment to the bench would ensure a strong conservative presence on the panel for decades, but her background -- the antithesis of "RBG," the champion of women's rights who died last week -- is a new flashpoint in an already polarised country.

Climate, minority and LGBT groups yesterday raised alarm over her selection.

A practicing Catholic and the mother of seven children, including two adopted from Haiti and a young son with Downs Syndrome, Barrett is personally opposed to abortion, one of the key issues dominating the cultural divide in the United States.

After a childhood in New Orleans in the conservative south, she became a top student at Notre Dame law school in Indiana where she later went on to teach for 15 years.

At the beginning of her legal career, she clerked for the renowned conservative Supreme Court justice Antonin Scalia and took up his "originalist" philosophy of understanding the Constitution as it was meant to be read at the time it was written, as



opposed to more progressive interpretation.

Praised for her finely honed legal arguments, the university professor nevertheless has limited experience of actually presiding over a courtroom, having only taken to the bench in 2017, after being appointed by Trump as a federal appeals court judge.

Her critics often cite the numerous articles she wrote on judicial matters while she was at Notre Dame, and point to her recent rulings as a judge which they say betray her ideological leanings.

At the federal appeals court in Chicago, she adopted positions backing gun rights and opposing migrants and women seeking abortions, as well as going against the Affordable Care Act, or "Obamacare", the healthcare reform pushed through by the former president which Republicans have been trying to dismantle for years.

One of her lectures in particular, delivered to students at Notre Dame, is frequently used to reprimand Barrett.

Presenting herself as a "different kind of lawyer," she said that a "legal career is but a means to an end... and that end is building the Kingdom of God."

"Amy Coney Barrett meets Trump's two litmus tests for federal judges," said Daniel Goldberg, director of the progressive lobby group Alliance for Justice.

"A willingness to overturn the Affordable Care Act and to overturn Roe v. Wade," the landmark legislation that legalised abortion in the US.

On the other side, conservatives hail a woman they consider "brilliant" and "impressive."

BID FOR UNSC PERMANENT SEAT

Modi calls for India's inclusion

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday made a strong case for India's inclusion as a permanent member of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and asked how long will his country be "kept out of the decision-making structures" of the global body.

Addressing the virtual 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), he said every Indian aspires for India's expanded role in a reformed and expanded UN.

"Today, the people of India are concerned whether this reform process will ever reach its logical conclusion. For how long will India be kept out of the decision-making structures of the United Nations?" Modi said.

"How long would a country have to wait particularly when the transformational changes happening in that country affect a large part of the world?" he said in his nearly 22-minute speech.

He said "reform in the responses, processes and in the very character of the UN is the need of the hour."

Modi pointed out that India is a country "which has hundreds of languages, hundreds of dialects, many sects and many ideologies. This is a country, which was a leading global economy for centuries and also one which has endured hundreds of years of foreign rule."

The PM recalled India's contributions to about 50 UN peace missions over the decades and said the country has accorded priority to the welfare of the entire world.

"India has always given priority to the welfare of the whole world. India is the country, which sent its brave soldiers to about 50 peacekeeping missions the world over to keep the peace. India is that country which, in the course of maintaining peace, has lost the maximum number of its brave soldiers," he said.

Modi said the UN need to change its reactions, arrangements and appearance to stay relevant.

"Today we are in a different era all together... There is a big question in front of the whole world community that whether the institution that was formed under the circumstances of that time is still relevant today," Modi said in his speech.



India, Pakistan spar at UN

AGENCIES

India slammed Pakistan at the 75th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) yesterday saying that the rules and legislation brought in the Jammu and Kashmir are internal affairs of the country after Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan called India's Hindu-nationalist government a sponsor of hatred and prejudice against Islam.

India's response comes a day after

Khan had raised the issue of Kashmir at the UN Assembly saying, "Pakistan has always called for a peaceful solution. To this end, India must rescind the measures it has instituted since August 5 in 2019."

The Indian side was represented by delegate Mijito Vinito, who had earlier walked out of the hall when Imran Khan's pre-recorded statement was played.

"The only dispute left in Kashmir relates to the part of Kashmir that is still under illegal occupation of Pakistan. We call upon Pakistan to vacate all those areas that it is in illegal occupation of," India said.

"This is the same country that provides pensions for dreaded and listed terrorists out of State funds. This is the same leader who called Osama Bin Laden a martyr. This is the same country which systematically cleanses the minorities including Hindus, Christians, Sikhs and others through its abusive blasphemy laws and forced religious

conversion," he said.

"What should rather be on the agenda of the UN is Pakistan's deep state and its unrelenting political and financial support to terrorist organisations and mercenaries which are a threat to global peace and security. The only crowning glory that this country has to show to the world for the last 70 years is terrorism, ethnic cleansing, majoritarian fundamentalism, and clandestine nuclear trade," India said.

India's response came as a part of its Right of Reply after all the country speeches in the high-level debate of the 75th session of UNGA concluded yesterday.

Addressing the UNGA on Friday, Khan said Islamophobia prevails in the world and threatens the nearly 200 million Muslims who live there.

"The one country in the world today where, I am sad to say, the state sponsors Islamophobia, is India. The reason behind this is RSS ideology that unfortunately rules India today," Khan said in a recorded speech to the UNGA, which is being held virtually amid the coronavirus pandemic.

"They believe that India is exclusive to Hindus and others are not equal citizens."

"There will be no durable peace and stability in South Asia until the Jammu and Kashmir dispute is resolved on the basis of international legitimacy," Khan said.