



US President Donald Trump disembarks from the Marine One helicopter followed by White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows as he arrives at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center after the White House announced that he "will be working from the presidential offices at Walter Reed for the next few days" after testing positive for the coronavirus disease, in Bethesda, Maryland, US, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## 'Anyone can get it'

Shocked Trump supporters remain loyal after US president's Covid-19 diagnosis

REUTERS

As Americans digested the news on Friday that President Donald Trump had tested positive for the novel coronavirus, some of his backers expressed surprise that he hadn't been safe from infection and said their support for him was not diminished.

"It was shocking," said Maranda Joseph, 43, of Warren, Ohio, who has 12 Trump flags in her front yard festooned with skeletons and other Halloween decorations. "To see he has it wakes you up a bit. Anyone can get it, even the president."

Trump has played down the risks of the virus and Covid-19 disease that has killed more than 207,000 Americans, drawing criticism for his erratic messaging and recent resumption of campaign rallies where his supporters often are crowded together and don't wear masks.

Joseph, a homemaker, said she thinks more people should wear masks at future Trump rallies, though she added that she would attend one herself once Trump recovers.

Some in Warren expressed skepticism that Trump even has the virus, citing Ohio Governor Mike DeWine's positive test earlier this year before he tested negative later the same day.

"There's so many false positives out there. Has Trump had a second test yet?" asked Sharon Tice, 70, who sells Trump T-shirts and other memorabilia. "But if he does have it, it could influence the way he



sees things."

The White House said Trump was being moved into a special suite at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, for the next few days as a precautionary measure.

Some Republicans said the diagnosis could actually help the president.

"Trump will prove to the American people that you can survive Covid," said Cathy Lukasko, auxiliary chair of the Trumbull County, Ohio, Republican Party.

In Bangor, Pennsylvania, Trump supporter Jack Cooper, a 70-year-old retired electrician, said the president was paying the price for underestimating the virus's dangers.

"He's getting a taste of his own medicine," said Cooper, who lives in a crucial swing district. "He was fooling around without a mask in big crowds. It's like bringing a pit bull into a big crowd — something is gonna happen."

Even so, Cooper said it would not stop him from voting for Trump again.

## Modi opens tunnel route to tense China border

AFP, New Delhi

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday opened a Himalayan tunnel that will drastically reduce the time needed to rush troops to the country's remote Chinese border as tensions grow between the Asian neighbours.

The tunnel traverses India's northern Himachal Pradesh state and lies on one of two main routes for troops headed to border areas in Ladakh.

Twenty Indian and an unspecified number of Chinese troops were killed in June during a deadly clash in Ladakh, which shares a disputed boundary with China's restive Xinjiang and Tibet regions.

The two nuclear-armed countries have since rushed tens of thousands of additional troops and weapons to the area, and have been locked in a tense stand-off for months.

The \$400-million, nine-kilometre (six miles) tunnel will cut the journey by about 50 kilometres (30 miles) and four hours, enabling travellers to bypass a tricky route across a landslide-prone Himalayan pass.

The tunnel, at an altitude of more than 3,000 metres (10,000 feet), has been hailed as a feat of engineering.

The project is part of New Delhi's push to catch up with Chinese infrastructure development on the other side of the border. In the last six years, Modi's government has expedited several frontier projects including roads, bridges and high-altitude airstrips.

"We have put our entire energy in developing our border infrastructure. The country hasn't seen roads, bridges and tunnels built at this scale," the prime minister said after inaugurating the tunnel. "Besides locals, this (infrastructure) will also hugely benefit the men and women in our army," Modi added.

New Delhi hopes such projects will promote tourism and spur economic activity.

India's Border Roads Organisation, which implements most of these strategic projects, says it has built more in the last four years than in the previous decade.

## It's not about being a 'tough guy'

Says Biden on masks as he hits campaign trail after testing negative for coronavirus

REUTERS, Grand Rapids

Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden said on Friday that President Donald Trump's coronavirus diagnosis shows the importance of taking the pandemic seriously, telling Americans that wearing masks is more important than being a "tough guy."

Biden's remarks as he campaigned in the battleground state of Michigan hours after testing negative twice for the virus, served as an implicit criticism of the Republican president. Trump has played down the deadline of the virus for months, frequently eschews masks and has held campaign rallies of thousands with little social distancing.

Trump's illness put even greater attention on the novel coronavirus pandemic a little more than four weeks before the Nov. 3 election. The president was experiencing mild symptoms and will be off the trail indefinitely.

At a union hall in Grand Rapids, Biden said he and his wife, Jill Biden, were praying that Trump and the first lady, Melania Trump, had a swift and full recovery. He delivered the entire speech while wearing a blue medical mask, a departure from prior events where he typically took off his mask before speaking.



"This is not a matter of politics," Biden said. "It's a bracing reminder to all of us that we have to take this virus seriously. It's not going away automatically."

Biden urged all Americans to follow scientific guidelines, including wearing masks, washing hands frequently and staying 6 feet (1.83 m) apart. Health officials, including the head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Robert Redfield, have said masks are a crucial tool for slowing the spread of the virus.

"Be patriotic," Biden said. "It's not about being a tough guy. It's about doing your part."

During Tuesday's chaotic presidential debate, Trump mocked Biden for wearing a mask at his

events, even when he is far away from other people.

Trump's diagnosis is likely to reinforce Biden's message about the president's failed response to the disease, which has killed more than 207,000 people in the United States, and undermine Trump's argument that the end of the pandemic is in sight. Opinion polls show voters trust Biden more than Trump to handle the pandemic.

"It's hard to say 'it's under control' when you fall victim to it," said Democratic strategist Chris Kofinis. "If we are talking about the pandemic for the next four weeks, Donald Trump loses."

As Biden's motorcade traveled through Grand Rapids, dozens of supporters stood along the road waving placards. One woman held a small American flag and a cardboard sign that read, "Masks work."

The Biden campaign is temporarily taking down ads criticizing Trump for his handling of the coronavirus after his diagnosis, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Biden leads Trump in national opinion polls, although surveys in the battleground states that will decide the contest show a closer race. A Reuters/Ipsos poll last month showed Biden leading Trump by 5 percentage points among likely voters in Michigan.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### California wildfires threaten towns, wineries

California fire crews deploying water-dropping helicopters made a defensive stand on Friday against flames raging in the foothills of the Napa Valley wine region as forecasts called for a return of dangerous high winds and hot weather this weekend. More than 2,500 firefighters were battling the Glass Fire, which broke out last Sunday near the resort community of Calistoga, some 75 miles (120 km) north of San Francisco, and has already destroyed 248 homes or other structures. Roughly 52,000 residents were under evacuation orders at least through the weekend, with the fire at only 5% containment, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or Cal Fire. The National Weather Service issued red flag warnings for high winds over the next two days.

#### Russian journalist dies after setting herself on fire

A Russian journalist died on Friday after setting herself on fire in front of the local branch of the interior ministry in the city of Nizhny Novgorod, a day after her apartment was searched by police, her news outlet said. Prior to her self-immolation, Irina Slavina wrote on her Facebook page: "I ask you to blame the Russian Federation for my death." She said they seized notebooks, her laptop and other electronics, as well as her daughter's laptop and her husband's mobile phone. She worked as editor-in-chief at Koza Press, a small local news outlet that advertised itself as having "no censorship, no orders from above". Russia's Investigative Committee said it was opening a preliminary inquiry after a woman self-immolated in Nizhny Novgorod, a city of 1.3 million around 400 km (250 miles) east of Moscow. It did not name Slavina in its statement.

#### 15 killed in east Afghanistan car bomb attack

At least 15 people were killed and more than 30 others wounded in a car bomb attack that targeted a government building in eastern Afghanistan yesterday, officials said. The explosion occurred at an administrative building that also housed some military facilities in the Ghani Khel district of Nangarhar province, the governor's spokesman Attaullah Khogyani told AFP. "The car bomb detonated at the entrance of the district headquarters building. Several armed attackers tried to enter the building after the attack but were killed by security forces," he said. Provincial police spokesman Farid Khan confirmed the details. He said most of the victims were Afghan security force members but several civilians were also among the dead. No one had so far claimed responsibility for the attack but Khan blamed the Taliban.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

### OUTRAGE OVER GANGRAPE IN INDIA

## Rahul, Priyanka meet victim's family in UP

AGENCIES

Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra yesterday met the family of the 20-year-old Dalit woman whose gang rape and murder last month in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras has sparked outrage across India and triggered days of protests.

The visit, involving a dramatic standoff with cops at the Delhi-UP border, was the Congress leaders' second attempt - the first, on Thursday, ended in a tussle with cops who refused to let Gandhi pass, citing orders banning large gatherings amid coronavirus concerns, and shoved him to the ground in the chaos that followed.

A similarly dramatic face-off seemed in store yesterday as Gandhi set off from Delhi at around 2.30pm in a silver Toyota Innova that Gandhi Vadra was driving. Their convoy consisted of around 30 Congress MPs, including Shashi Tharoor. Hathras is around 200 km from Delhi.

"No power in the world can stop me from meeting and sharing the pain of the victim's family of Hathras," he said before leaving, while she told news agency ANI: "If not this time, then we will try again."

After skirmishes with police at the Noida-Delhi border, the UP government allowed Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and two others - KC Venugopal and Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury - to cross.

Furious protests against the police and the government have been staged across the country, including one in national capital Delhi on Friday, where CM Arvind Kejriwal made an appearance and demanded that the four accused be executed. The Allahabad High Court has taken notice of the case and has summoned top officials of the government and police to appear before it on October 12. Five senior police officers have been suspended over their handling of the investigation.

## Heavy fighting rages over Karabakh

Peace push appears to be failing amid fears of wider conflict

AFP, Stepanakert

Armenian and Azerbaijani forces were engaged in fierce clashes yesterday as fighting over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region intensified after its main city came under heavy shelling.

The leader of the breakaway province said he was heading to the front and that the "final battle" for the region had begun, seven days after new fighting erupted in the decades-old dispute.

Armenia's defence ministry said Karabakh's separatist forces had repelled a "massive attack" by Azerbaijan in one area of the frontline and had launched a counter-offensive. "Heavy fighting is ongoing on other flanks," defence ministry spokeswoman Shushan Stepanyan said.

Azerbaijan's defence ministry said its forces had "captured new footholds" and that the Armenians had "suffered serious losses in manpower and military hardware". Both sides have been accused of



hitting civilian areas, with Azerbaijan saying yesterday that Armenian artillery had shelled 19 of its settlements overnight.

The Armenian side has reported 158 military deaths and said 14 civilians have been killed. Azerbaijan has reported 19 civilian deaths but has not confirmed any fatalities among its troops.

Russia, the United States and France -- whose leaders co-chair a mediation group that has failed to bring about a political resolution to the conflict --



Rahul Gandhi, leader of India's main opposition Congress party, addresses his party workers at Delhi-Noida border during a protest after the death of a rape victim, in Noida, India, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

### SUSHANT SINGH RAJPUT CASE

## AIIMS report rules out murder theories: sources

NDTV ONLINE

Bollywood Actor Sushant Singh Rajput was not murdered and it is a case of suicide, a team of doctors from Delhi's AIIMS has said in its opinion to CBI, sources have told NDTV, dismissing the theories of poisoning and strangling floated by the actor's family and their lawyer.

The 34-year-old movie star was found dead on June 14 in his Mumbai apartment.

Though the Mumbai police, based on the autopsy, called it a suicide, wild speculation and campaigns of justice on social media and allegations from Sushant Singh Rajput's family raised doubts that became a part of an overall CBI investigation.

Sources said the AIIMS Panel has completed the examination and closed the file after giving conclusive medico-legal opinion in this case and the CBI is corroborating the report with their investigation.

The CBI is likely to continue its probe into "abatement to suicide", the charge that was originally listed by the Bihar Police, sources said. They also said the AIIMS panel has concurred with the opinion of the Mumbai hospital that carried out the autopsy. The Mumbai hospital's autopsy had found "asphyxia due to hanging" as the cause of death.

The CBI investigation began after the family filed a case accusing the actor's girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty of mentally harassing him, medicating him, exploiting him for money and playing a role in his death.