



Republicans risk election ‘bloodbath’ Warns Senator Cruz

AFP, Washington

US Republican Senator Ted Cruz warned Friday that his party could face a “bloodbath of Watergate proportions” in next month’s election if voters are pessimistic about President Donald Trump’s handling of the economy and the pandemic.

“I am worried.... It’s highly volatile,” Cruz, a staunch Trump ally, told CNBC television, although he noted that Trump could win re-election if voters feel the country is recovering from the pandemic-driven economic crisis.

“If people are going back to work, if they’re optimistic, if they’re positive about the future, we could see a fantastic election,” Cruz said.

But he also spoke of the possibility of landslide losses similar to those in 1974, when Democrats expanded their majorities in the House and Senate in the first election following the Watergate scandal. Jimmy Carter won the White House in 1976 in the first post-Watergate presidential election.

“If on election day people are angry and they’ve given up hope and they’re depressed... I think it could be a terrible election,” Cruz added.

“I think we could lose the White House and both houses of Congress, that it could be a bloodbath of Watergate proportions.” Democrats are widely expected to keep the House in the November 3 election.

Republicans hold a 53-47 advantage in the Senate, but that majority is under threat with Republican senators in several battleground states trailing in polls behind Democratic challengers.



White House hosted Covid ‘superspreader event’

Says Fauci, warns Trump’s talk of ‘cure’ misleading

AGENCIES

Top US virus expert Dr Anthony Fauci has criticised the White House for hosting a gathering last month that has been linked to an outbreak of Covid-19.

The event at the White House on Saturday 26 September, for the president’s nomination of Amy Coney Barrett as a Supreme Court justice, is thought to be the root of the localised outbreak.

Dr Fauci, a member of the White House coronavirus task force, said the gathering was a “superspreader event”.

More than 30 people are thought to have been infected at the White House ceremony including the president himself.

Trump has been talking up an experimental Covid-19 treatment he received as “a cure,” but Fauci, who gave an interview to CBS News on Friday, said referring to it as such may cause “confusion.”

Asked about Trump’s effusive praise for Regeneron’s antibody treatment, Fauci said that talking about a “cure” could be misleading because it hasn’t yet been proven, and the drugs that are currently

available have only been shown to have modest to moderate results.

“We don’t have any indication -- I think you really have to depend on what you mean by a cure, because that’s the word that leads to a lot of confusion,” he said.

He warned everyone against coming to a conclusion without scientific evidence.

Fauci was also asked about the low level of mask use at the White House until recently, and what lessons could be learned.

“I think the — the data speaks for themselves,” the scientist said of mask-wearing. “We had a super-spreader event in the White House and it was in a situation where people were crowded together and were not wearing masks. So the data speak for themselves.”

Fauci said he had faith that the president’s medical team wouldn’t allow him to o out campaigning while he is still contagious.

“I can tell you, they are going to be testing him to determine the trajectory and whether he gets to the point where he’s not infected,” he said. “I can guarantee you that they will be testing him before they let him go out.”

FIGHTING OVER NAGORNO-KARABAKH REGION

Rivals trade accusations of breaching ceasefire deal

AFP, Stepanakert

Armenia and Azerbaijan traded accusations of new attacks yesterday in breach of a ceasefire deal to end nearly two weeks of heavy fighting over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region.

The two sides agreed to implement the ceasefire from noon (0800 GMT) yesterday, after 11 hours of talks in Moscow, but it took only minutes after the deadline for their forces to claim new attacks.

An ethnic Armenian enclave of Azerbaijan, Karabakh broke from the country’s control in a war in the 1990s that killed some 30,000 people. Its separatist government is strongly backed by Armenia, which like Azerbaijan gained independence with the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, and Baku accuses Yerevan of occupying the region.

Karabakh’s declaration of independence has not been recognised by any country -- even Armenia -- and the international community regards it as part of Azerbaijan.

The heaviest clashes since the war erupted on

September 27, with more than 450 people reported dead, thousands forced to flee their homes and fears the fighting could escalate into a devastating all-out conflict.

Armenian defence ministry spokeswoman Shushan Stepanyan said that “in disregard of the previously declared humanitarian ceasefire” Azerbaijani forces had launched an attack on the frontline at 12:05 pm.

Azerbaijan’s defence ministry said Armenian forces had also carried out attacks on the frontline and were shelling two populated areas.

An AFP journalist in Stepanakert reported hearing blasts in the city before the ceasefire took effect, but it was calmer after noon, with isolated explosions in the distance.

The ceasefire deal had been announced after talks between the two countries’ top diplomats mediated by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. He said the truce had been agreed “on humanitarian grounds” and would allow for exchanges of prisoners and bodies.



New Zealand’s Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern takes pictures with supporters during a campaign outing at Mangere town centre and market in Auckland, New Zealand, yesterday. New Zealanders head to the polls on Oct. 17 with popular 40-year-old Ardern seen as a frontrunner to secure a second term in office.

PHOTO: AFP



A ballerina wearing a gas mask performs as demonstrators take part in a protest against Chile’s government, in Santiago, on Friday. Analysts fear that the anniversary of the 2019 protests, triggered last October by a rise in the price of transport, will unleash a new wave of unrest that came to a halt in March due to the arrival of the coronavirus pandemic in the country.

PHOTO: REUTERS

N Korea displays huge new ICBM

AFP, Seoul

North Korea showed off a gigantic new intercontinental ballistic missile yesterday that analysts described as the largest of its kind in the world, as the nuclear-armed country defied the coronavirus threat with thousands of maskless troops taking part in a military parade.

The ICBM, carried on a transporter-erector-launcher with no fewer than 11 axles, rolled through Kim Il Sung square as leader Kim Jong Un watched from a rostrum, footage from state broadcaster KCTV showed.

It was the “largest road-mobile liquid-fueled missile anywhere” tweeted Ankit Panda of the Federation of American Scientists.

Nuclear negotiations between Pyongyang and Washington have been deadlocked since the collapse of the Hanoi summit early last year and the North is widely believed to have continued to develop its arsenal throughout the diplomatic process.

The missile could see its first test around the time of the inauguration of the next US presidential term, as a signal to either Donald Trump or Joe Biden.

Kim -- wearing a grey suit -- told the crowd Pyongyang “will continue to strengthen our military for self-defence and deterrence”.

“If you don’t have the strength, you’ll have to wipe away the tears and blood that flow with your two clenched fists,” he added.

Kim said the North had not seen a single infection, and he repeatedly thanked his citizens for their efforts. He also wished all the coronavirus infected people a sound recovery.

India needs US as ally to counter China threat

Says Pompeo ahead of US-India talks

AFP, Washington

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Friday urged closer ties with India as he warned of China’s growing might on its doorstep, amid a flurry of diplomacy between the world’s two largest democracies.

“They absolutely need the United States to be their ally and partner in this fight,” Pompeo said of his four-way meetings earlier this week in Tokyo with his counterparts from India, Japan and Australia.

“The Chinese have now begun to amass huge forces against India in the north,” Pompeo told radio host Larry O’Connor.

“The world has awakened. The tide’s begun to turn. And the United States under President Trump’s leadership has now built out a coalition that will push back against the threat,” he said.

Following the Tokyo meeting, Pompeo will travel shortly to New Delhi with Defense Secretary Mark Esper for annual talks with their Indian counterparts.

Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun will also travel to India next week to prepare the meeting, the State Department said.

Tensions have soared between India and China since violent hand-to-hand fighting in the Himalayan region of Ladakh in June that left 20 Indian troops dead.

China has acknowledged suffering casualties but has not revealed any figures.

Citing national security grounds, New Delhi has since banned dozens of Chinese apps including TikTok, the blockbuster video-sharing platform which had counted on India as its largest overseas market.

Despite wide concerns about China, India has historically shied away from formal alliances with outside powers under its doctrine of “strategic autonomy.”

Germany says Thai king cannot rule from there

REUTERS, Berlin

Germany’s foreign minister has said that Thailand’s King Maha Vajiralongkorn should not be conducting politics from the European country, where he spends much of his time.

Foreign Minister Heiko Maas responded to a question by a Greens member of parliament in the Bundestag on Wednesday at a time that King Vajiralongkorn’s monarchy faces unprecedented calls for reform from protesters in Thailand.

“We have made it clear that politics concerning Thailand should not be conducted from German soil,” Maas told parliament. “If there are guests in our country that conduct their state business from our soil we would always want to act to counteract that.”

Thousands of protesters have been holding demonstrations in Bangkok over recent months calling for reform of the

monarchy to curb the king’s powers and for the removal of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, a former junta leader, and a new constitution and elections.

King Vajiralongkorn, 68, has been on Thailand’s throne since 2016, but spends much of his time in Bavaria, where his 15-year-old son is at school.

Thai protesters have complained about the cost of the king’s stays in Europe as well as his absence from the kingdom. The protesters seek to reduce the king’s powers under the constitution, which specifically allows him to exercise powers when he is outside Thailand without appointing a regent.

Protesters also want to remove his direct control of a royal fortune valued in tens of billions of dollars and some units of the army. Protesters in Thailand on Thursday said they would rally again next Wednesday and expected a big turnout to pressure the government to meet their demands.



Thunberg urges US voters to pick Biden

AFP, Stockholm

Swedish environmental campaigner Greta Thunberg yesterday asked US voters to choose Joe Biden, saying the outcome of the US presidential election was crucial for fighting climate change.

The 17-year-old founder of the “Fridays for Future” climate protests said on Twitter: “I never engage in party politics. But the upcoming US elections is above and beyond all that.”

“From a climate perspective it’s very far from enough and many of you of course supported other candidates,” Thunberg acknowledged.

“But, I mean...you know...damn! Just get organized and get everyone to vote #Biden,” she added.

Biden is challenging US President Donald Trump, who dismisses climate change warnings and who has been dismissive of Thunberg.

Biden has reached out to Thunberg and hailed her commitment to the fight against climate change.

Last month, the respected magazine Scientific American also urged readers to vote for Biden on November 3, the first time in almost 200 years that it has taken a political stance. “Think about voting to protect science instead of destroying it,” editors said in comments relayed by Thunberg along with her endorsement.

Teen one step from becoming world’s first millennial saint

AFP, Vatican City

A British-born Italian teenager who dedicated his short life to spreading the faith online and helping the poor was scheduled to be beatified by the Catholic Church yesterday.

That leaves him just one miracle away from becoming the world’s first millennial saint.

Internet and computer-mad youngster Carlo Acutis, who died of leukaemia in 2006 aged 15, was placed on the path to sainthood after the Vatican ruled he had miraculously saved another boy’s life.

The Vatican claims he interceded from heaven in 2013 to cure a Brazilian boy suffering from a rare pancreatic disease.

He will be beatified in Assisi, the home of his idol Saint Francis, who dedicated his life to the poor. Some 3,000 people are expected to follow the ceremony on giant screens set up in five squares in the central Italian city.



Acutis, dubbed “the cyberapostle of the Eucharist”, was born in London to Italian parents, and moved to Milan with them as a young boy.

“He was considered a computer genius... But what did he do? He didn’t use these media to chat, have fun,” his mother Antonia Salzano said in an interview with Vatican News. Instead, “his zeal for the Lord” drove him to make a website on miracles, she said.

The millennial, whose body lies in state in Assisi, dressed in a tracksuit and trainers, also warned his contemporaries that the internet could be a curse as well as a blessing.

Acutis was religious from a young age, despite his mother saying his family had rarely attended church.

When he wasn’t writing computer programmes or playing football, Acutis was known in his neighbourhood for his kindness to those living on society’s margins.

SOURCE: STAR REPORT