



Supporters of US President Donald Trump participate in a “Stop the Steal” protest after the 2020 US presidential election was called for Democratic candidate Joe Biden, in Washington, DC, yesterday; a Trump supporter is being kicked by anti-Trump demonstrators; and rival supporters face off. Tens of thousands of Trump’s supporters marched through downtown Washington on Saturday, echoing his unsubstantiated claims of election fraud and cheering as his motorcade drove past.

PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

‘Four more years’

Defiant Trump loyalists mount last stand in Washington

AFP, Washington

Thousands of die-hard Donald Trump supporters rallied for a last stand Saturday in Washington, chanting “four more years” and blaming fraud for an election defeat that will force the president to vacate the White House after just one term.

Trump himself made a drive-past in his armored motorcade, on his way to play golf, smiling through his limousine window to wild cheers and signs saying “Best prez ever” and “Trump 2020: Keep America Great.”

“We wanted to show our support, we’re feeling they are trying to steal the election,” said Pam Ross, who drove eight hours from Ohio to join the rally, referring to the president’s political opponents.

The Republican incumbent is sticking to discredited claims of mass fraud and claiming he defeated President-elect Joe Biden in the November 3 vote, marking another unprecedented challenge to US democratic norms as his time in office runs down.

Later Saturday, he took to Twitter with a series of tweets and retweets that included



claims of voting machines potentially being hacked and complaints about news networks’ coverage of the rally. Twitter slapped labels on at least eight of the posts as containing “disputed” information.

At least 10,000 people -- few wearing masks -- massed on the city’s Freedom Plaza before marching to the Supreme Court in a raucous atmosphere reminiscent of a Trump campaign rally.

“President Trump deserves to see who’s behind him, he deserves to feel the love,” Kris Napolitana, from Baltimore, told AFP. “I believe that he’s going to win when all the fraud and cheating is found out.”

With right-wing militia group the

Proud Boys among those attending, a large security presence was deployed to prevent clashes with anti-Trump events outside the Supreme Court.

As night fell, police formed lines on either side of a street leading to the White House, separating hundreds of rival protesters. After dark, groups of Trump supporters and counter-protesters clashed on the streets, scuffling and throwing punches, video posted by the Washington Post showed.

At least 20 people were arrested during the day, reports said, including four for firearm violations and one for assault on a police officer.

Margarita Urtubey, 49, a horse breeder from Miami, said the election was “so corrupt,” adding, “Trump won by a landslide. We are here to march for the ‘stop the steal’ of this election, to make our voice heard.”

Darion Schaublin, who drove from Columbus, Ohio, said “the whole system’s rigged... in the way that the information is getting to the people.”

“The truth never actually gets out,” he added.



ARMENIA’S WITHDRAWAL FROM KARABAKH

Azerbaijan extends deadline to Nov 25

AFP, Kalbajar

Azerbaijan yesterday said it had agreed to extend a deadline for Armenia to withdraw from a disputed district as part of a peace accord that ended six weeks of fierce fighting over the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Residents of the Kalbajar district in Azerbaijan, which has been controlled by Armenian separatists since a 1990s post-Soviet war, began a mass exodus in the days leading up to the initial withdrawal deadline on Sunday.

But a foreign policy adviser to Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev said his country had extended the deadline over humanitarian considerations. Hikmet Hajiyev said the withdrawal of “Armenian armed forces and of illegal Armenian settlers” was delayed until November 25 following an appeal from Armenia and mediation with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Kalbajar was almost exclusively populated by ethnic Azerbaijanis before they were expelled by Armenians in the 1990s war between the two countries over Nagorno-Karabakh, and a majority of the homes being abandoned previously belonged to Azerbaijanis.

Thick plumes of smoke rose over the valley near the village of Charektar after residents set their homes on fire, preferring to leave devastation in their wake and homes that would be uninhabitable by Azerbaijanis.



Demonstrators clash with police during a protest against the decision of Congress to remove former President Martin Vizcarra, in Lima, Peru, on Saturday. Peru’s Congress yesterday opened a crisis session amid growing pressure on the country’s interim president, Manuel Merino, to resign after a violent crackdown on protests against his government left three people dead.

PHOTO: REUTERS

NEW SETTLER HOMES IN JERUSALEM

Israel eyes more as Trump era nears end

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel has pushed on with plans to build a new Jewish settler neighbourhood in east Jerusalem, a watchdog group said yesterday, warning such efforts were being stepped up before US President Donald Trump leaves office.

The Trump administration has broken with decades of bipartisan US practice by not opposing Jewish settlement activity in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank.

President-elect Joe Biden has said his administration will restore US opposition to the settlements which are considered illegal under international law and that many governments view as an obstacle to peace.

The latest move saw the Israel Land Authority issue construction tenders in Givat Hamatos, a currently uninhabited area of east Jerusalem next to the mainly Palestinian neighbourhood of Beit Safafa.

In February, Israel’s right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced the approval of 3,000 homes in the area.

He said 2,000 would be allocated for Jews, and 1,000 for Arab residents of Beit Safafa.

Last week, the Land Authority issued tenders for the construction of more than 1,200 mostly residential units in Givat Hamatos.

AFP, Washington

After Donald Trump in his first week as president spoke to Australia’s prime minister, leaks of the call left many dumbfounded, with the new US leader haranguing and hanging up on the close ally.

When Joe Biden spoke by phone Thursday with Prime Minister Scott Morrison, the president-elect’s office said Biden hoped to work with him on “many common challenges” and the Australian leader said he would forward a study on how his country fought Covid-19 through contact tracing.

Following four years of presidential pique and chronic chaos in dealing with foreign leaders, Biden has already signaled a reversal -- he is making US diplomacy predictable, even dull, again.

His transition office -- which is not receiving customary assistance from the State Department as Trump refuses to concede the election -- is putting out the sort of soporific readouts that until the 2016 election were the primary means of US presidential communication.

With Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, whom Trump derided over Twitter following a summit as “very dishonest & weak,” a Biden statement after a congratulatory phone call said the pair “reaffirmed the close bonds between the United States and Canada” and pledged cooperation against Covid-19 and future biological

threats.

After his conversation with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, whom Trump had openly criticized for her welcome to migrants, Biden “noted his interest in working closely” to address the pandemic, climate change and other issues and “praised her leadership.”



The lack of drama in Biden’s approach is, well, no surprise.

Biden, with nearly 50 years of experience in Washington, ran on promises to return to normalcy, bringing back the time-honored decision-making process involving expert consultations rather than impulsive tweets.

In a campaign speech on foreign policy, Biden

‘I’m going out’

Hundreds detained as Belarusians chant dead protester’s last words

REUTERS, Moscow

Belarusian police detained hundreds of people who took to the streets in mass demonstrations yesterday chanting “I’m going out”, the last known written words of an anti-government protester who died last week.

A witness in the capital Minsk said police had used tear gas, rubber bullets and stun grenades to disperse the crowds demonstrating against President Alexander Lukashenko.

Belarus has been mired in political crisis for months. Tens of thousands of people have taken to the streets every week since an election in August that they say was rigged, something Lukashenko denies. They want the veteran leader, in power for 26 years, to resign.

The street rallies were re-ignited following the death of Roman Bondarenko, a 31-year old anti-government protester. He died in hospital in Minsk on Thursday following what demonstrators said was a severe beating by security forces.

The interior ministry has denied responsibility for Bondarenko’s death, saying he was killed in a scuffle with civilians.

Security forces in riot gear and shields on Sunday flooded the square where

Bondarenko was detained, pulling down opposition flags, kicking over memorial lamps and dragging people from the crowds and frog-marching them to vans, a witness said.

Video footage by local media also showed security forces entering apartments in the area in search of protesters. A video clip posted on social media showed three men in riot gear attending to a man who appeared to be unconscious.

The Viasna (Spring) human rights group said 504 people had been detained so far by police so far during Sunday’s protests around the country.

Hundreds of protesters, wearing the red-and-white colours that have come to represent the protest movement, had gathered on Sunday for a vigil near Bondarenko’s house in Minsk.

Witnesses said Bondarenko was detained after scuffling with people in plain clothes who had come to a playground to remove red-and-white ribbons.

Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Lukashenko’s main opponent said on social media she supported Sunday’s rallies in memory of Bondarenko. The EU has called Bondarenko’s death “an outrageous and shameful result of the actions by the Belarusian authorities... (who have) directly and violently carried out repression of their own population.”

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel strikes Hamas positions after rockets fired from Gaza

Israel’s military said it struck Hamas positions yesterday morning following a rocket attack from the Gaza Strip overnight. Two rockets were fired into southern Israel from Gaza late Saturday, the Israeli army said, although there were no immediate reports of any casualties or damage. The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) tweeted they had “struck Hamas underground infrastructure & military posts in Gaza”. An army source told AFP in a WhatsApp message that fighter jets, helicopters and tanks were deployed. Security sources in Gaza said there were a number of strikes overnight, including in Khan Younes, Rafah and Beit Hanoun, without reporting any casualties. Israeli media said the rockets from Gaza came down in uninhabited areas.

Huge India oil well fire extinguished after 5 months

A massive oil well fire that has raged for more than five months in northeast India has finally been extinguished, officials said yesterday. Oil India engineers had battled the blaze in Assam state since an explosion in June, weeks after the well blew out and began discharging huge quantities of natural gas. Two employees of the state-owned company died in the blast, which sent a wall of flame and massive plumes of smoke into the sky. A third worker died in September after an accident at the site. Experts from Singapore, the United States and Canada joined efforts to contain the inferno, and Oil India spokesman Tridiv Hazarika yesterday said the fire had now been “doused completely”. The disaster cost Oil India more than \$800,000 according to the firm’s estimates, managing director Sushil Chandra Mishra told local media in late September.

Nearly 25,000 Ethiopians flee to Sudan: state media



Around 25,000 Ethiopians fleeing conflict in the Tigray region have crossed into neighbouring Sudan, state news agency SUNA reported, as the UN said it was working to find them shelter. “The number of Ethiopian refugees who have arrived in Gadaref and Kassala states since Saturday has reached 24,944,” the agency said. Sudan’s commissioner for refugees Abdullah Suleiman toured the border region on Saturday with UN refugee agency assistant representative in Sudan Jan Hansmann to discuss the influx. Sudan has already said it would shelter thousands of Ethiopians fleeing the conflict at the Um Raquaba camp, which in the 1980s hosted thousands of Ethiopian fleeing famine.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

Vamco hits Vietnam

Philippines death toll rises to 67

AFP, Hanoi

Storm Vamco barrelled into Vietnam yesterday, damaging buildings and injuring at least five people, as the death toll in the Philippines climbed to 67.

The storm made landfall in the morning with reported winds of up to 90 kilometres per hour (56 mph), uprooting trees and blowing the roofs off houses and schools.

Vamco is the latest in a series of storms that have pummelled Vietnam over the past six weeks, causing flooding and landslides that have killed at least 159 people and left 70 others missing.

Vamco has weakened since hitting the Philippines as a typhoon with winds of up to 155 kph, but state media said it had still caused significant damage.

Pictures showed seafloor restaurants in the tourist hotspot of Hoi An -- a UNESCO world heritage site -- ripped apart by the storm, and huge trees uprooted in the old imperial city of Hue.

Authorities evacuated nearly 650,000 people from seven coastal provinces to higher and safer ground before the storm hit, but on Sunday warned of the danger of landslides triggered by the heavy rains.

Vamco was the deadliest storm to hit the Philippines this year, killing at least 67 people across the main island of Luzon in recent days and affecting some 1.7 million around the country.

The storm triggered some of the worst flooding in years, swamping villages, destroying crops and leaving hundreds of thousands without power.

Rescue teams and emergency supplies including food were dispatched to the northeast Philippines on Saturday where swathes of the region were inundated. The situation was made worse by the release of water from a dam.