



A family wades through floodwaters outside a residence in the Gampong Meunasah area in North Aceh, Indonesia, yesterday. About 24,000 people have been evacuated and two children killed in floods on Indonesia's Sumatra island, officials said, with environmental campaigners blaming deforestation for worsening the disaster.

PHOTO: AFP

## CAPITOL RIOT ANNIVERSARY Biden, Trump to address divided US

AFP, Washington

A divided nation will experience an ominous split-screen moment Thursday when President Joe Biden uses the anniversary of the January 6 attack on Congress to warn of threats to US democracy and Donald Trump goes live with his conspiracy theories.

One year after a mob of Trump supporters marched on Congress to try and prevent lawmakers from certifying Biden's victory in the presidential election, political wounds remain far from healed.

Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris will reportedly speak from inside the Capitol, the setting during the unrest of almost unbelievable scenes as Trump supporters fought past police to invade the heart of US democracy.

As a veteran politician who came out of retirement to take on what he saw as Trump's authoritarian presidency, Biden has often warned during his first year in the White House of an "existential" threat to political freedoms that until now most Americans took for granted.

His speech -- part of a series of events on what Biden's key ally, Democratic Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, says will be a "difficult day" -- is set to take that warning to a new level.

But while Congress is holding a prayer vigil for what Biden has called "a dark moment," Trump will be giving a press conference from his luxury property in Mar-a-Lago, Florida.

His message is likewise easy to predict. Despite losing by more than seven million votes to Biden, and despite losing multiple court challenges around the country, Trump continues to tout wild claims that the 2020 election was stolen.

However ludicrous the election conspiracy theory may be -- one federal judge in Pennsylvania ruled Trump's case "strained" and "speculative" -- it is seen as truth by millions of Americans.

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A new Washington Post-University of Maryland poll puts this number at 58 percent. However, that same poll found that 40 percent of Republicans, compared to 23 percent of Democrats, believe violence against the government is justified sometimes.

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## NY subpoenas Trump, children in fraud probe

AFP, New York

New York's top justice official has subpoenaed ex-president Donald Trump, his son Don Jr. and daughter Ivanka in her investigation into the family's business dealings, a court filing showed Monday.

State Attorney General Letitia James, a Democrat, issued the subpoenas seeking their testimony in her years-long civil probe last month, according to the document.

The filing came to light after the Washington Post reported in December that James had asked Trump to testify in person at her office on January 7. Monday's legal filing was the first time investigators have said that they also want to quiz Trump's two eldest children under oath.

Following the Post's report, Trump sued James, arguing that she was violating his constitutional rights with a politically motivated investigation.

The Trumps urged a court to "quash" the subpoenas, a legal filing showed. "Her (James's) actions are a threat to our democracy and I plan to hold her accountable to the fullest extent," said



Trump lawyer Alina Habba.

James launched her investigation in March 2019 and suspects that the Trump Organization fraudulently overstated the value of certain properties when seeking bank loans, and later reported much smaller values when declaring assets so it could pay less tax.

The former president is facing pressure from several legal probes. In Washington he is trying to prevent a congressional probe into the January 6 attack by his supporters on the US Capitol from accessing White House records related to that day.

The Trump Organization is under investigation by the Manhattan district attorney for possible financial crimes and insurance fraud.

## Spoils of war

### Taliban put victory over US on display



AFP, Ghazni

In the governor's compound of Afghanistan's Ghazni province, a new historical exhibit is unveiled before a rapt audience of Taliban fighters -- sections of blast walls from a former US military base.

One concrete slab is inscribed with the names and regiments of US troops who served in the province during America's longest war.

Like soldiers throughout history, US troops regularly daubed their names on the walls of bases and fixed positions they occupied.

But now the towering block is on public display -- being used to bolster the Taliban's narrative of toppling US-led forces after 20 years of fighting.

"We have to show this so that Afghans, the world, and future generations know that we beat the Americans," Taliban provincial culture chief Mullah Habibullah Mujahid told AFP.

"Even if they called themselves the greatest power in the world."

Taliban forces took the city of Ghazni -- 150 kilometres (95 miles) south of Kabul -- three days before the capital fell on August 15.

The region has 3,500 years of rich recorded history, and the Taliban are now busy writing the latest chapter with proof of their military triumph.

The propaganda push comes as Afghanistan's

new rulers struggle to evolve from an insurgency to a governing power in a country on the brink of economic collapse, with the UN estimating more than half the population is facing acute hunger.

On roads outside the city, another informal exhibition to the Taliban victory has been erected.

Rusting hulks of destroyed American armoured vehicles are on display, their weapons removed, their tyres flat and frayed.

Children clamber around and over the wreckage, which also features skeletons of abandoned Soviet tanks from the decade-long occupation of Afghanistan. That invasion ended in humiliation for the Soviets, and -- alongside the defeat of British troops in the 19th century -- Afghans are quick to remind visitors that the country has now triumphed over three foreign empires.

Reminders and relics of two decades of the US-led occupation of Afghanistan are scattered across the nation -- some of them usable. Much military hardware gifted to Afghan police and armed forces fell into the hands of the Taliban in the last chaotic days of the US-backed government.

The windfall of weapons, vehicles and uniforms has given the new rulers of Kabul tangible spoils of victory. But curating those trophies into a credible homage to the Taliban's return to power remains a challenge.



## China landslide kills at least 14

AFP, Beijing

A landslide at a construction site in southwest China's Guizhou province has killed at least 14 people, state media reported yesterday.

Workers were reinforcing a hillside when the landslide happened on Monday evening, the official Xinhua news agency said.

Rescuers have found 14 bodies, as well as three injured people, with the cause of the accident "still under investigation", Xinhua reported.

Rescue work is "completed", with the three injured currently in stable condition, Xinhua added.

Photos published by state media showed rescue crews working overnight under floodlights, with masses of debris and crushed machinery visible.

Construction and industrial accidents are not uncommon in China, often due to lax safety standards.

In December, two workers were killed and twenty others rescued from a flooded coal mine in Shanxi province.

In July, 14 workers died in south China's Guangdong province after a tunnel they were building flooded.

## Haiti PM survives assassination attempt

REUTERS, Port-Au-Prince

Gunmen unsuccessfully attempted to assassinate Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry during an event on Saturday commemorating the Caribbean country's independence, his office said in a statement.

Henry's office said on Monday that "bandits and terrorists" had tried to shoot the prime minister at a church in the northern city of Gonaives where the ceremony marking the 218th anniversary of independence was taking place.

Video footage broadcast on social media



showed Henry and his entourage scrambling toward their vehicles as an armed group began shooting outside the cathedral in Gonaives.

Haitian media pointed to possible gang involvement in the shooting, which they said killed one person and injured two more.

Gangs' hold on parts of Haiti has strengthened since the assassination of President Jovenel Moise in July. Police, who called Saturday's attack the work of "armed groups," were unable to immediately confirm casualties. Prior to the incident, a local gang boss had made threats against Henry in local media. The prime minister's office said arrest warrants had been issued for the suspects who fired on Henry's convoy.



Tourists visit the Taj Mahal amidst heavy fog in Agra, India, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP