

# Rich need to pay ‘fair share’ of taxes

## Says Biden at campaign rally ahead of 2024 re-election bid

AFP, Philadelphia

President Joe Biden on Saturday appealed to blue-collar workers to support his re-election quest and help him compel the richest Americans to pay more taxes.

“It’s about time the super wealthy start paying their fair share,” Biden told hundreds of union workers in the industrial state of Pennsylvania.

The campaign rally was sponsored by the AFL-CIO, a union federation that represents 12.5 million American workers and that formally endorsed Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris a day earlier.

Biden launched his 2024 re-election bid on April 25 but had held no major campaign events before Saturday’s rally.

The president made his pitch as a crowded field of Republicans jostle for the party’s nomination, with Donald Trump the runaway frontrunner despite facing federal criminal charges that he mishandled US government secrets, being impeached twice over allegations of misconduct during his White House



tenure, and a swirl of other legal troubles.

Biden made a distinctly populist appeal in Philadelphia, touching on a number of issues aimed at halting a migration of working-class voters away from the Democratic Party.

Biden said pro-union sentiments are not widely shared by fellow elected officials in Washington.

“There are a lot of politicians in this country who can’t say the word ‘union’ and you know I’m not one of them. I’m proud to say the word, I’m proud to be the most pro-union president in American history,” he said.

He described blue-collar workers as the backbone of the economy.

“Wall Street didn’t build America. You did,” Biden said to cheers.

“If the investment bankers in this country went on a strike tomorrow, no one would much notice,” he said. But if union members walked off the job, “the whole country would come to a grinding halt.”

Biden vowed to protect Social Security and other benefit programs to help average Americans.



People lift placards demanding the release of political prisoners during a demonstration called for by the opposition National Salvation Front coalition in Tunis, Tunisia yesterday. Police in Tunisia, birthplace of the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings, have arrested more than 20 government opponents since February, including former cabinet ministers, trade unionists and media figures.

PHOTO: AFP

### MYANMAR CRISIS

## Key Asean members to skip talks amid criticism

REUTERS, Bangkok

Thailand’s caretaker government was preparing to host talks with the foreign minister of Myanmar’s military junta today, a day later than planned, as key Southeast Asian nations signalled they would stay away from the divisive meeting.

Bangkok has been pushing to reengage with Myanmar’s generals - who have been locked in conflict with armed opposition militias since seizing power in a 2021 coup - in the face of opposition from other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), which has barred the junta from senior level meetings.

Thailand, whose prime minister himself first took power in a coup, sent out an invitation just four days ago to Asean foreign ministers, inviting them to what it said would be an informal meeting set to start yesterday.

The invitation, seen by Reuters and verified by two sources, referenced a proposal at an earlier summit “that it was time for Asean to fully re-engage Myanmar at the leaders’ level”.

Myanmar’s junta-appointed Foreign Minister Than Swe was to attend the talks, two sources with knowledge of the meeting told Reuters.

Later yesterday, the Thai foreign ministry released a statement saying the “informal dialogue” would start today. It would not amount to a formal Asean meeting, the ministry said, but would “help support Asean’s efforts” to end the violence in Myanmar.

### SUDAN CONFLICT

# Start of truce period brings lull in fighting

Saudi, US mediators say pause in clashes will allow for delivery of aid; donors conference to be held in Geneva today

REUTERS, Dubai

The start of a 72-hour ceasefire aimed at calming more than two months of conflict between rival Sudanese military factions brought a lull in clashes in Khartoum early yesterday following battles and air strikes overnight, residents said.

Sudan’s army and the rival Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have agreed to refrain from attacks and from seeking military advantage during the ceasefire period, which started at 6:00 am (0400 GMT), as well as allowing for delivery of aid, Saudi and US mediators said. Several previous truces have failed to stop the fighting.

The power struggle between the two sides has turned the capital into a war zone plagued by looting, led to outbursts of fighting in other regions, and triggered a sharp escalation of violence in Darfur in western Sudan.

In the hours before the truce period began witnesses reported clashes and air strikes in several areas of Khartoum and Omdurman, one of two adjoining cities that make up the wider capital at the confluence of the River Nile.

“The situation in Khartoum is calm, especially because last night there were air strikes and it was terrifying,” 49-year-old resident Salaheldin Ahmed told Reuters by phone yesterday morning, expressing hope that the truce could be the “beginning of the end” of the war.

“We are tired,” he said. “Enough of war, death and looting.”

Previous ceasefires brokered by Saudi

Arabia and the United States at talks in Jeddah have allowed for the delivery of some humanitarian aid as fighting has subsided, but both sides have repeatedly violated the agreements.

The conflict, which erupted over disputes about a plan for a transition to elections under a civilian government four years after long-ruling autocrat Omar al-Bashir was overthrown during a popular uprising, has intensified since early June.



Germany, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Nations are hosting a donors conference in Geneva tomorrow that aims to attract pledges of funding for humanitarian relief in Sudan.

On Saturday, warplanes struck residential districts of Khartoum, killing “17 civilians, including five children”, according to a citizens’ support committee.

The RSF accused the army of targeting residential areas and claimed to have shot down a fighter jet.

A video the paramilitary forces posted

online showed destroyed homes and blankets covering what appeared to be dead bodies, reports AFP.

Since battles began, the death toll across Sudan has topped 2,000, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project says.

The UN says more than half the population of 49 million now needs humanitarian assistance within Sudan, requiring some \$3 billion in funding until the end of the year.

It has also appealed for nearly \$500 million for the refugee crisis caused by the conflict. More than 500,000 people have fled into countries neighbouring Sudan, in addition to nearly 1.7 million who have been internally displaced.

Intense fighting has rocked the western region of Darfur, with the United States saying as many as 1,100 people have been killed in the West Darfur state capital of El Geneina alone.

The Doctors Without Borders (MSF) charity issued an urgent call for more beds and staff across the border in Chad, where it said more than 600 patients - most with gunshot wounds - had arrived.

Chadian leader General Mahamat Id-riss Deby Itno visited the border town of Adre to assess the scale of “the influx of refugees and ensure that the borders with Sudan are effectively closed”, his office said.

The International Organization for Migration says at least 149,000 people have fled from Darfur into Chad, among the roughly 2.2 million uprooted by the fighting.

## Peacekeepers ‘unwavering’

### Says Nato as Kosovo tensions flare

AFP, Brussels

Nato yesterday underlined the “unwavering” commitment of its KFOR peacekeeping force to its duties in Kosovo as tensions flare with pressure building on Serbia over the detention of three Kosovo police officers.

“The commitment of Nato KFOR to the implementation of its mandate is unwavering, as demonstrated by the recent additional deployment of 500 troops,” alliance spokeswoman Oana Lungescu said.

“We once again remind all parties of their obligations to KFOR... including respect for the Administrative Boundary Line, procedures for the Kosovo Police and the 2013 Agreement on the deployment of the Kosovo Security Forces to the north,” she tweeted.

Nato’s KFOR has swelled to more than 4,000 troops after a battalion of 500 reinforcements from Turkey was sent to Kosovo two weeks ago, following clashes with ethnic Serb protesters in late May that wounded 30 of the peacekeepers.

## Modi seeks AU’s full membership in G20

REUTERS, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has written to the leaders of the G20 nations proposing the African Union (AU) be given full, permanent membership of the diplomatic group at its upcoming summit in India, an official source said. Modi’s proposal to grant the African Union full membership in the G20 demonstrates India’s commitment to strengthening Africa’s representation and partnership in shaping global affairs, the source said. The G20 or Group of 20 is an intergovernmental forum of the world’s major developed and developing economies. The members represent around 85 percent of global GDP, over 75 percent of global trade, and about two-thirds of the world population.

## GREEK BOAT TRAGEDY

### Pakistan arrests 10 ‘human traffickers’

AFP, Muzaffarabad

Pakistan authorities arrested 10 alleged human traffickers days after dozens of migrants drowned off the coast of Greece, officials said yesterday. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also ordered an immediate crackdown on agents engaged in people smuggling, saying they would be “severely punished”. Every year, thousands of Pakistanis embark on perilous journeys attempting to enter Europe illegally. There were likely dozens of Pakistanis among those aboard the rusty trawler that sank off Greece’s Peloponnese peninsula on Wednesday, killing at least 78 people with hundreds more missing.

## FLOODS, LANDSLIDES

### Two dead, 28 missing in Nepal

AFP, Kathmandu

Two people were killed and 28 are missing in major flooding and landslides caused by monsoon rains in eastern Nepal, authorities said yesterday. A worker at a hydropower project under construction on the Heva River in Sankhuwasabha district was found dead, while 17 other staff were missing on Saturday evening, according to a local official. In neighbouring Taplejung district another person died and three members of the same family were untraceable after houses were swept away in a landslide. “Two bodies have been recovered, but 28 people are missing,” said a spokesperson for Nepali police. Roads and bridges have been damaged, making it difficult for rescuers to access affected areas, said a district officer in Sankhuwasabha.

## Swiss get behind net-zero climate law

AFP, Geneva

The Swiss, feeling the impact of global warming on their rapidly melting glaciers, yesterday backed a new climate bill aimed at steering their country towards carbon neutrality by 2050. Near-final results showed almost 59 percent of voters supporting the new law, which will require Switzerland to slash its dependence on imported oil and gas, scaling up the development and use of greener and more homegrown alternatives. Voters also overwhelmingly backed adopting a global minimum tax rate of 15 percent for multinational corporations in a second referendum, with nearly 79 percent in favour, with full results in from all but one of Switzerland’s 26 cantons.



Members of the Hyderabad Manipur Society (HYMS) hold placards during a protest amid ongoing ethnic violence in India’s northeastern Manipur state, at Dharna Chowk in Hyderabad yesterday. Indian authorities said yesterday they had started to relax a curfew imposed in Manipur, seeking to reduce anger spilling onto the streets and restore normalcy.

PHOTO: AFP