



Criminal 'clans' challenge Sweden's law enforcement

Malaysia oppn leader claims 'formidable' majority to form new govt

Page 6

Page 7



NEW YORK: This UN handout photo shows US President Donald Trump (on screen), as he addresses the general debate of the seventy-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly at the UN in New York. US President Donald Trump angrily cast blame on China over the coronavirus pandemic in an address on Tuesday before the United Nations, whose chief warned against a new "Cold War" between the two powers. —AFP

Trump lashes China over coronavirus pandemic as UN warns against 'Cold War'

'United States is spreading a political virus here in the General Assembly'

NEW YORK: US President Donald Trump cast blame on China over the coronavirus pandemic in an address on Tuesday before the United Nations, whose chief warned against a new "Cold War" between the two powers.

At a General Assembly held almost entirely virtually due to Covid-19, Trump delivered a speech in election campaign mode, while Chinese President Xi Jinping instead unveiled ambitious new targets to fight climate change.

As the US death toll from Covid-19 reached the grim milestone of 200,000, the highest in the world, Trump attacked Beijing and the United Nations for not stopping the disease and even used the loaded term "China virus."

"We must hold accountable the nation which unleashed this plague onto the world — China," Trump said in a recorded address to the General Assembly, where each nation was represented by a single, masked delegate.

"The Chinese government and the World Health Organization - which is virtually controlled by China - falsely declared that there was no evidence of human-to-human transmission," Trump said, referring to initial statements by the UN health body after Beijing covered up early cases of the respiratory disease.

Trump has given notice that the United States is pulling out of the World Health Organization, to which it has been the largest contributor. Critics say Trump is trying to shift blame for his handling of Covid-19. His rival for the November 3 elections, Democrat Joe Biden, has vowed to keep the US in the WHO, which also fights against malaria, polio and other public health scourges.

Speaking before Xi's announcement of China's new climate pledge, Trump — who has pulled the United States out of the Paris accord on climate change — said that his critics ignored "China's rampant pollution." "They only want to punish America. And I will not stand for it," he said.

'Political virus'

Leaders were asked to send videos of their speeches days in advance in a — partly successful — bid to avoid technical glitches, meaning Xi could not respond to Trump's remarks.

But China's ambassador to the United Nations, Zhang Jun, told reporters that Trump's tone was "incompatible with the general atmosphere" of the world body. "When the international community is really fighting hard against the Covid-19, the United States is spreading a political virus here in

the General Assembly," he said.

"If we do have to hold anyone accountable, it should be the United States held accountable for losing so many lives with their irresponsible behavior." Xi, in a mild-mannered speech delivered before a painting of the Great Wall, warned the world not to "politicize" the fight against coronavirus.

In a step hailed by environmentalists, Xi announced that China — the world's largest polluter of greenhouse gases — would peak its emissions in 2030 and go carbon neutral by 2060.

China has been rapidly curbing dirty coal and shifting to renewable energy, but under the Paris accord had said only that it would cap emissions "around" 2030. "We call on all countries to pursue innovative, coordinated, green and open development for all," Xi said.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres voiced alarm over the US-China rift, warning that "we must do everything to avoid a new Cold War." "We are moving in a very dangerous direction. Our world cannot afford a future where the two largest economies split the globe in a Great Fracture — each with its own trade and financial rules and internet and artificial intelligence capacities," Guterres said in a rare in-person address.

French President Emmanuel Macron similarly said that the rest of the world should not be reduced to "rueful spectators." "The world today cannot be reduced to the rivalry between China and the United States, irrespective of the global weight of these great powers," he said.

Covid 'populism'

The UN General Assembly in normal years draws about 10,000 people from around the world, a prospect that is unthinkable at a time when nations have imposed strict entrance requirements to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

Russian President Vladimir Putin in his speech hailed the safety of a Covid vaccine unveiled by Moscow — which has drawn wide skepticism among Western scientists. Putin called for universal access to the vaccine and offered to give it for free to UN staff. "I repeat again that we are absolutely open and disposed for partnership," Putin said. Guterres in his address criticized nationalist approaches to the coronavirus, without naming Trump or other world leaders. "Populism and nationalism have failed. Those approaches to contain the virus have often made things manifestly worse." —AFP

Britain imposes six month curbs against second wave

LONDON: Prime Minister Boris Johnson told the British people on Tuesday to work from home where possible and ordered restaurants and bars to close early to tackle a fast-spreading second wave of COVID-19, with new restrictions lasting probably six months.

After scientific warnings that deaths could soar without urgent action, Johnson stopped short of imposing another full lockdown, as he did in March, but warned that further measures could come if the disease was not suppressed.

"We reserve the right to deploy greater firepower, with significantly greater restrictions," he told parliament following emergency meetings with ministers and leaders of the United Kingdom's devolved governments.

Just weeks after urging people to start returning to workplaces, Johnson advised office workers to stay at home if they could. He ordered all pubs, bars, restaurants and other hospitality sites to close at 10 p.m. from Thursday, with only table service allowed.

In a prime-time televised plea to citizens, Johnson said the winter would be hard but that his strategy would keep the economy moving while containing

COVID-19 contagion.

"We must take action now...This way we can keep people in work, we can keep our shops and our schools open, and we can keep our country moving forward while we work together to suppress the virus," he said.

It was unclear if the measures would be enough to curb Britain's second wave, which government scientists warned could reach 50,000 new cases per day by mid-October.

Masks will be required in more settings, there will be tougher enforcement of rules, and the military could be brought in to help free up the police, Johnson said. Schools and universities are to stay open. A poll by YouGov of 3,436 British adults found that 78% supported the measures, although 45% said Johnson should have gone further while 32% said he had got the restrictions about right.

'Brazen' rule-breakers

Businesses breaking COVID laws face penalties of up to 10,000 pounds (\$13,000) or even closure, while individuals may be fined 200 pounds for not wearing a mask when required.

Johnson said it was frustrating for the law-abiding majority to see a few "brazenly defying the rules". Asked in parliament why Britain's figures were worse than Germany and Italy, Johnson said: "There is an important difference between our country and many other countries around the world and that is our country is a freedom-loving coun-

try...It is very difficult to ask the British population uniformly to obey guidelines in the way that is necessary."

In the televised address, he said that there had been too many rule breaches, and that even those who were willing to take chances with the virus would be endangering others.

"Never in our history has our collective destiny and our collective health depended so completely on our individual behaviour," he said. The United Kingdom already has the highest official COVID-19 death toll in Europe - 41,825 - while it is borrowing record amounts to pump emergency money through the damaged economy.

Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey warned that the "very unfortunate" escalation of COVID-19 cases threatened the economic outlook and said the central bank was looking hard at how it could support the economy further.

Pub operator JD Wetherspoon said it could cut 400-450 jobs at sites at six airports, including London's Heathrow and Gatwick, because of the large drop in passengers. Opposition leader Keir Starmer urged the government not to end a furlough scheme at the end of October, accusing it of losing control of the coronavirus crisis.

Scotland will introduce additional nationwide restrictions on household gatherings that go further than Johnson's new rules for England, its First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said. —Reuters

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Extend our Heartfelt
condolences to

Mrs. Sujitha Reddy

on the sad demise of
her father

Mr. Surendranath Reddy

who passed away in India
on September 23, 2020

May his soul Rest in Peace