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Inside C2

Monday, March 22 2021|

Biden deplores rising anti-Asian violence, asks Americans to stand together



ATLANTA (Reuters) - President Joe Biden deplored a surge in anti-Asian violence in the United States after a deadly shooting rampage in Georgia, and asked all Americans to stand together against hate during a visit to the state on Friday.

U.S. President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris deliver remarks after meeting with Asian-American leaders to discuss "the ongoing attacks and threats against the community," during a stop at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S., March 19, 2021. REUTERS/Carlos Barria

Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris met for more than an hour with leaders and state lawmakers from the Asian-American and Pacific Islander community, which has been rattled by this week's murders of eight people, including six women of Asian descent, after a year of rising anti-Asian violence.

"Hate can have no safe harbor in America. It must stop. And it is on all of us, all of us together, to make it stop," Biden said after the meeting, calling on U.S. lawmakers to pass a COVID-19 hate crimes bill that would expand Justice Department review of hate crimes exacerbated by the pandemic.

Harris, the first Asian-American vice pres-

ident in U.S. history, tied the violence to the long history of racism in the United States and likened it to the targeting of Muslims after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

"Racism is real in America, and it has al-

ways frustrated him to commit violence. But political leaders and civil rights advocates have speculated the killings were motivated at least in part by anti-Asian sentiment.

Advocates say the surge of attacks on Asian Americans is largely the result of the community being targeted over the coronavirus, which was first identified in Wuhan, China, in late 2019.

Asian-American voters constitute one of the fastest growing racial and ethnic groups in the country and turned out in record numbers in presidential battleground states in the 2020 election, according to data from TargetSmart, a Democratic political data firm.

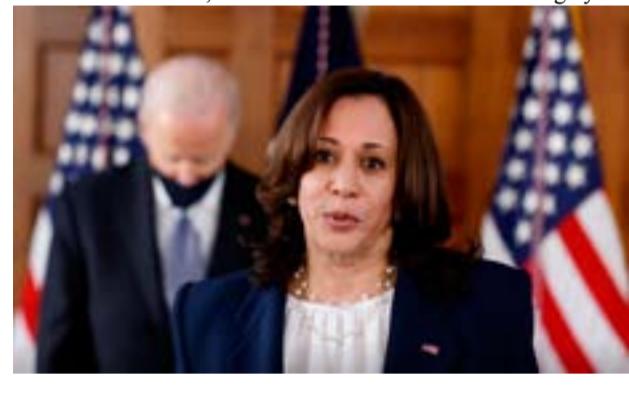
In Georgia, Asian-American and Pacific Islander voters exceeded their total 2016 turnout by 58%, the firm said. These voters were key to carrying Biden to success in states where the race was close such as Georgia, the firm said.

As he headed to Georgia, Biden stumbled as he climbed aboard Air Force One. White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters he was "doing 100 percent fine" and suggested high winds at Joint Base Andrews near Washington may have been a factor.

The Democratic president's trip was initially part of the "Help is Here" campaign, which he kicked off on Monday to promote his promise of "shots in arms and money in pockets," after signing the COVID-19 relief bill into law last week. Biden has traveled to Pennsylvania and Harris has been to Nevada and Colorado to tout the benefits of the package.

Before they met with Asian-American leaders, Biden and Harris received a coronavirus update at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention where they thanked health officials for their effort fighting the pandemic.

"This is a war and you are the frontline troops," Biden said. "We owe you a debt of gratitude for all the lives you've saved."



ways been. Xenophobia is real in America, and always has been. Sexism, too," Harris said. "The president and I will not be silent. We will stand by. We will always speak out against violence, hate crimes and discrimination wherever and whenever it occurs."

A 21-year-old man has been charged with Tuesday's murders at three spas in and around Atlanta. Investigators said the suspect, who is white, suggested that

who repeatedly referred to COVID-19 as the "China virus" and the "kung flu."

Biden ordered the U.S. flag flown at half-staff at the White House to honor the victims of the Atlanta area shootings.

SHIFT IN FOCUS

The meeting with Asian-American community leaders was a shift in focus of a trip originally planned to promote the newly enacted \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package.



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LOCAL NEWS

U.S. backs distance of 3 feet between students, may help get kids back in schools

(Reuters) - The U.S. government on Friday updated its COVID-19 mitigation guidance, halving the acceptable distance between students who are wearing masks to at least three feet (0.91 m) from at least six feet, potentially easing the path for schools that have struggled to reopen under previous guidelines.

The new recommendation from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is a boost to the Biden administration's goal of reopening in-person learning for millions of public school students without sparking coronavirus outbreaks.

"The revised CDC guidance is a great step," said Dr. Amesh Adalja, a senior scholar with the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security. It "reflects the fact that schools ... are not drivers of infections," he added.

Many schools continue to teach students remotely more than a year after the novel coronavirus prompted widespread closures across the United States.

The new guidance was based on data from schools in Utah, Missouri and Florida that suggests transmission of COVID-19 in schools is relatively low when precautions such as mask-wearing are employed, including in cases where students do not maintain six feet of distance.

The guidance applies to students from kindergarten through high school and in areas with low, moderate, and substantial community transmission of COVID-19.

Middle and high school students in communities with high levels of COVID-19 should stay six feet apart unless their schoolday contact can be limited to a single small group of students and staff, CDC said.

"I want to emphasize that these recommendations are specific to students in classrooms with universal mask-wearing," CDC Director Rochelle Walensky said in a news conference.

Students should continue to maintain six feet of distance when interacting with teachers and other school staff and when eating, the agency said. The CDC has been under pressure to relax its guidance to schools to help get students back into classrooms. Walensky said this week the agency was looking at data in part from a recent study in Massachusetts that suggested tighter spacing had not increased virus transmission.

One of the CDC studies released on Friday looked at 20 elementary schools in Utah during a period of high COVID-19 transmission in the broader community. It showed that in-school transmission rates among masked students were low even though they maintained an average distance between seats of only three feet.

Many schools do not have the space in classrooms to maintain six feet between students.

**BILLIONS FOR TESTING**

The guidance urged schools to conduct widespread COVID-19 testing of students, saying regular use of such screening offers added

**Southern
DAILY Make
Today
Different**

Mwajuma Tabyawa applies cream on her son Mmemba Mkangya after his shower, on his first day back to school after coronavirus restrictions were adjusted, in Louisville, Kentucky, March 17, 2021. REUTERS/Amira Karaoud

Editor's Choice

People carry the coffin with the body of Rivaldo Jimenez Ramirez during his funeral in Comitancillo, Guatemala, March 14, 2021. He was among 16 Guatemalan nationals massacred in one of Mexico's northern border states in January, a case that caused renewed consternation about the dangers faced by migrants bound for the United States. The bodies, some badly charred and with gunshot wounds, were found along a migrant smuggling route in a remote area of Tamaulipas state. REUTERS/Luis Echeverria



People watch a burning effigy of Lady Maslenitsa during celebrations of Maslenitsa, also known as Pancake Week, which is a pagan holiday marking the end of winter, in the town of Yuryev-Polsky in Vladimir region, Russia March 13, 2021. REUTERS/Evgenia Novozhenina



Ariana Lamcellari, 4, holds a sign at a protest against violence, following the charge of a British police officer in the London kidnapping and murder of Sarah Everard, in Dublin, Ireland March 16, 2021. REUTERS/Clodagh Kilcoyne



Asylum-seeking families and unaccompanied minors from Central America walk towards the border wall after crossing the Rio Grande into the United States from Mexico on rafts, in Penitas, Texas, March 17, 2021. REUTERS/Adrees Latif



A migrant child from Central America plays with his own shadow inside the office of the Center for Integral Attention to Migrants (CAIM) after being deported with his mother from the United States, in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico March 15, 2021. REUTERS/Jose Luis Gonzalez

