

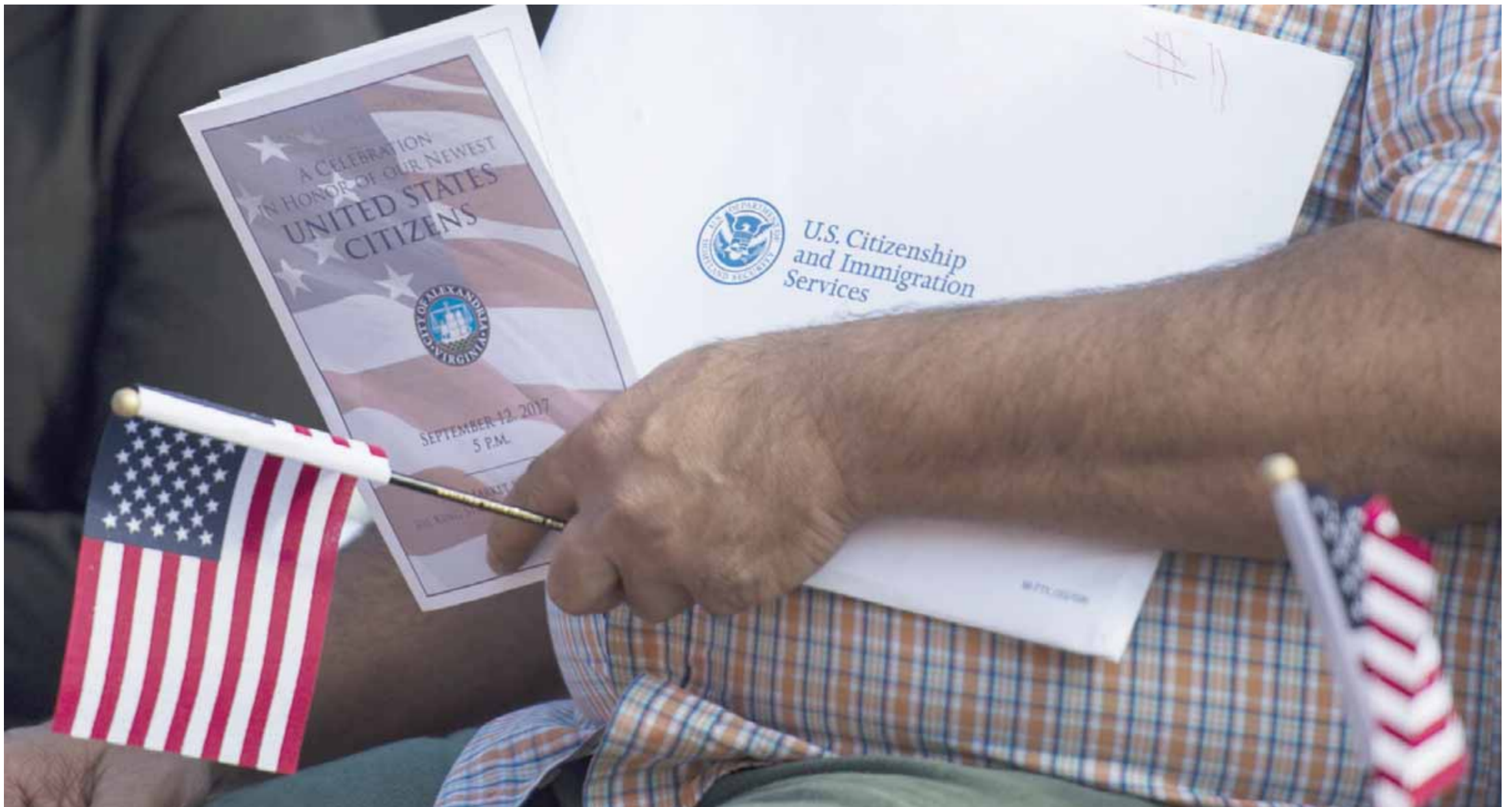


Netanyahu and Gantz reach a 'historic deal'

## US zeroes in on the shadowy Lebanese playmaker in Iraq

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ALEXANDRIA: In this file photo, a new US citizen holds an information packet at a naturalization ceremony at Alexandria City Hall in Alexandria, Virginia. US President Donald Trump said in a Tweet on April 20, 2020 that he will sign an executive order to 'temporarily suspend immigration into the United States', amid the novel coronavirus pandemic. — AFP

# Trump to ban immigration

## Angry Americans demand end to lockdown

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump said he would temporarily ban immigration to the United States because of the "Invisible Enemy" of the coronavirus, as angry Americans took to the streets to demand an end to crippling lockdowns. In just four months, the virus has turned the world upside down, confining half the planet indoors and killing nearly 170,000 on its march through virtually every country. Drastic measures never before seen in peacetime have shredded the global economy, resulting in the extraordinary spectacle of oil prices turning negative as demand evaporates.

World leaders are agonizing over the right moment to loosen restrictions, terrified of a second wave but aware their citizens need to work and live amid growing signs of social tension. US President Trump, who has encouraged anti-lockdown protests roiling parts of the country, said Monday he would halt immigration — a theme long popular with his supporters. "In light of the attack from the Invisible Enemy, as well as the need to protect the jobs of our GREAT American Citizens, I will be signing an Executive Order to temporarily suspend immigration into the United States!" he tweeted.

At least 22 million Americans have lost their jobs

since sweeping lockdowns were implemented to slow the spread of the virus, and exasperation was growing in some parts of the country. Hundreds took part in a "Patriots Rally" in Pennsylvania, one waving a banner proclaiming "Give me liberty or give me death." Rose Bayer, 50, said it was "crazy" to shut down the world over a disease she said has a recovery rate of about 98 percent. "People will starve, they'll commit suicide, they'll lose everything over this. The cure - like Trump said - the cure cannot be worse than the disease," she said.

While such demos have captured much attention, more than four in five Americans would approve of a national stay-at-home order, according to a recent Quinnipiac poll. But isolated protests are also springing up elsewhere with hundreds defying social distancing rules in Vladikavkaz, in Russia's Northern Caucasus, to demonstrate against the lockdown and economic

hardship. Sporadic clashes also broke out in a down-trodden northern Paris suburb with protesters launching fireworks at police they accuse of enforcing the restrictions too harshly.

### 'Like a war situation'

In hard-hit Europe, several countries are cautiously creeping out from confinement measures, buoyed by mounting signs the worst of the virus may be behind them. Chancellor Angela Merkel warned Germany was "still a long way from being out of the woods," as she allowed smaller shops from florists to fashion stores to reopen. There were also encouraging signs in other major European countries such as Italy, France and Britain, although authorities warned citizens against letting their guard down. Ghana became the first African country to lift its coronavirus restrictions, sparking a mixed reaction on streets in Accra teeming with citi-

zens after a three-week lockdown.

"It is a huge reprieve. We have a listening government," hawker Jemima Adwoa Anim told AFP. "It was like a war situation. We had no money and at the same time couldn't step out to work to earn some cash," she added. But others were furious the restrictions had been lifted so early. "This is totally ridiculous. How is it possible?" asked 20-year-old student Francis Collison. "We just recorded over 1,000 positive cases of COVID-19 and suddenly the president decided to lift the partial lockdown."

### 'Nobody wants to buy'

The fallout from the coronavirus has sparked fears of a second Great Depression with millions around the world losing their jobs as economies grind to a halt. A devastating supply glut resulted in oil producers effectively paying others to take crude oil off their hands, as a barrel of US benchmark West Texas Intermediate for May delivery closed at -\$37.63. Futures prices rebounded back above zero in Asian trade Tuesday, but the historic moves sent shockwaves through global markets, sending the Dow Jones Index sharply lower and Asian markets into the red at the opening bell. — AFP



## World leaders terrified of a second wave

## Joy or fear? Mixed feelings as Ghana ends lockdown

ACCRA: While some Ghanaians were relieved to get back to work Monday, others were left fretting after the country became the first in Africa to lift a coronavirus lockdown. The streets of Accra buzzed with life following President Nana Akufo-Addo's announcement of the end to a three-week restriction on movement around the capital and second region Kumasi.

Akufo-Addo told the nation in a televised address that increased testing, aggressive contact tracing and expanded isolation centers allowed him to halt measures that hit the country's poor hard. "This decision to restrict movement has occasioned a number of severe difficulties for all of us across the country, especially for the poor and vulnerable," the president said.

Jemima Adwoa Anim was overjoyed to be back out hawking her wares as pedestrians and cars returned to Accra's Central Business District. "It is a huge reprieve. We have a listening government," she said. "It was like a war situation: we had no money and at the same time couldn't step out to work to earn some cash. God bless our president." But around the capital there was plenty of criticism for the decision to ease restrictions after the West African country saw confirmed infections rise to 1,042.



ACCRA: A woman sells goods in traffic after the partial lockdown in parts of Ghana to halt the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus was lifted in Accra, Ghana on April 20, 2020. — AFP

"This is totally ridiculous. How is it possible?" asked 20-year-old student Francis Collison. "We just recorded over 1,000 positive cases of COVID-19 and suddenly the president decided to lift the partial lockdown." Shopkeeper Rita Baido insisted she was not happy with the decision but had "no option" but to open her store and try to make money in the suburb of Mallam. "It has not been easy indoors, but I think it was the best solution to keep us safe," she said.

### Balancing act

Ghana's decision to lift the lockdown on the two key regions will be watched closely across Africa. Authorities on the continent are grappling with a difficult balancing act: how to curb the spread of the virus while allowing millions living in poverty to earn

money and feed themselves. The Ghanaian government insists that a decision to quarantine arrivals from abroad and bolster testing to more than 68,000 samples gives it a strong hand in controlling the pandemic.

The country's borders remain closed and measures shuttering schools and limiting public gatherings are still in force. But some working in the health sector said Ghana-wide seen as a model of political stability in a volatile region-was risking any progress by lifting the lockdown. "The president has been on top of issues since coronavirus entered Ghana but last night's decision to lift the restriction on movement eroded all the gains we're making," said nurse Abigail Sosu. "I'm scared. We don't have the resources should a second phase of the virus emerge in the country." — AFP

## Algeria targets online media

TUNIS: Algerian authorities have blocked a third online news website that covered the anti-government "Hirak" protest movement, stirring condemnation Monday from media watchdog Reporters Without Borders. RSF also voiced concern that a draft law on "fake news" could be used as another channel to "muzzle the press". The draft legislation aims to "criminalize... fake news" which authorities say could undermine national security.

"Algeria is the country recording the largest numbers of deaths related to the coronavirus in Africa but authorities prefer to hound the free press," said the RSF director for North Africa, Souhaieb

Khayati. Algerian authorities earlier this month shut down online media sites Maghreb Emergent and Radio M. On Sunday, news website Interlignes was also hit by the censor's axe and no longer accessible online, said its founder Bouzid Ichalalene. "The authorities are trying to push serious media to close and allow only the mediocre ones to exist," Ichalalene told AFP.

There was no immediate comment from the authorities. In July last year, Interlignes was targeted by the authorities for its coverage of the Hirak protest movement. For more than a year, Algeria was gripped by weekly protests which started in February 2019 and led to the resignation of veteran president Abdelaziz Bouteflika. Demonstrations continued even after he stepped down in April with protesters demanding a complete overhaul of the political establishment. — AFP



TUNIS: Tunisian seamstresses make designer protective masks at the workshop of the Miss Anais haute couture brand in Tunis which donates 60 masks daily to staff at hospitals caring for COVID-19 patients. — AFP