



Fears for UK homeless as virus hotel scheme draws to a close

## Virus, dire economy, unrest upend US presidential race

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TOKYO: People wearing face masks amid concerns over the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) walk at Futako Tamagawa neighborhood in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

# Global virus deaths approach 400,000

## US largely through crisis; EU to reopen borders

PARIS: The global death toll from the coronavirus neared 400,000 yesterday with fatalities accelerating in Latin America, as oil-producing countries agreed to extend output cuts to offset a collapse in prices caused by the pandemic.

Brazil now has the world's third-highest death toll from the virus, but President Jair Bolsonaro has threatened to leave the World Health Organization (WHO) over "ideological bias", following the example of the United States. He is among those arguing that the economic damage lockdowns are causing is worse than the virus itself—and the oil industry has been hit particularly hard.

OPEC agreed on Saturday to extend an April deal to cut production through July, aiming to foster a recovery in oil prices after they were pummeled by slumps in demand caused by virus restrictions. Governments are also increasingly focused on repairing the economic damage, and even hard-hit European countries are now opening their borders and allowing people to return to work.

But gloomy data from Asia's two largest economies highlighted the long road to recovery.

China reported a plunge in foreign trade on the

back of subdued consumer demand and weakness in key overseas markets. Analysts say a deeper downturn in exports is looming for the world's manufacturing powerhouse, where the virus first emerged late last year.

Factories in India are also struggling to restart because of labor shortages, as the country slowly emerges from a strict nationwide lockdown that sent millions of migrant laborers back to their far-flung home villages.

### US 'largely through'

The worst health crisis in more than a century has infected nearly 6.9 million globally and forced tens of millions out of work just in the United States, the world's hardest-hit nation.

But President Donald Trump said his country was bouncing back. "We had the greatest economy in the history of the world. And that strength let us get

through this horrible pandemic, largely through. I think we're doing really well," he told reporters.

As the country reels from a second weekend of massive protests against racism and police brutality, Trump—facing re-election in November—reiterated his calls to further ease stay-at-home measures.

It followed surprisingly upbeat employment numbers that showed the country gained 2.5 million jobs in May.

### EU to reopen borders

In Europe, badly-hit countries slowly continued on a path toward a post-pandemic normal, also seeking to revive key tourist sectors in time for the summer.

The European Union said it could re-open borders to travellers from outside the region in early July, after some countries within the bloc re-opened to European visitors. In France, the Palace of Versailles re-

opened without the US and Chinese tourists that usually make up a third of its visitors.

The country also marked the anniversary of the 1944 D-Day landings with a fraction of the big crowds seen in previous years, owing to strict social distancing restrictions. Elsewhere, the golf's Asian Tour became the latest international body to announce plans for a restart, after the pandemic threw the world sports calendar into disarray.

Play is expected to resume in September, although organizers said lingering flight restrictions may force competitors to travel without support staff. Signs that life was beginning a return to normal in Europe and Asia were tempered by the bleak numbers streaming in from Latin America. Brazil's death toll passed 35,000 as Bolsonaro echoed criticism of the WHO by Trump, who has said the US will defund the organization because it is too close to China. "The United States left the WHO, and we're studying that, in the future. Either the WHO works without ideological bias, or we leave, too," the far-right leader told journalists. Tolls are also rising sharply in Mexico, Peru and Ecuador, while in Chile, deaths have risen by more than 50 percent in the past week. — AFP



## Fatalities accelerating in LatAm

## 'It's suffocating to be a black man in the US'

WASHINGTON: "I couldn't stay home": Moah Pollas, an African American recent college graduate, explained why he was compelled to spend days demonstrating in the streets of the US capital against systemic racism, despite the fear of being arrested, or worse.

As a victim of racism himself, Pollas simply could not stay home. It started early. When he was just seven or eight years old, walking down a sidewalk one day after a school field trip, he heard someone yell at him from the window of a passing school bus. "Take your black ass back to Africa!" a boy yelled, as others on the bus laughed raucously. "It didn't hurt as much as the reaction I got from my white teacher when I told her," he told AFP. "She basically told me to get over it."

"I'm not sure if she really believed me, to be honest." "That experience," added Pollas, a 21-year-old political science graduate, "has colored every experience with white people or other people of color for the rest of my life." Born in the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince, Pollas was two years old when his family immigrated to the United States. His parents, who were fleeing political persecution, settled in the predominantly white California city of Burbank.

"I grew up knowing that based on my skin color, people were going to perceive me in a more threatening way, perceive me to be more dangerous and perceive me to be more violent. "It causes you as a black person to police your actions on a daily basis, 24/7," he told AFP, sitting in the backyard of a home he shares with other students in northeastern Washington.

Being black in the United States, he said, is "suffocating." It means that if he is walking down the street "and if there are white people walking in the same direction as me, I should probably step out of the way... I



Moah Pollas, a political science graduate, has joined in the continued protests in the US capital over the death of George Floyd in police custody. —AFP

should probably do my best to look at the ground. I probably do my best to stay quiet."

### 'The fear in him'

One day when he was 13 years old he was in a car with his father, who works in the pharmaceutical business, when police pulled them over. "Police officers pull people over just because they're black all the time," he said.

"When my dad was stopped, I could sense the fear in him. A fear that I've never seen in the man who was protecting me and my family my whole life. That fear transferred onto me in that moment. And honestly, has never left me." African Americans are three times as likely to be killed by police as whites or Hispanics, according to data from the specialized website mappingpoliceviolence.org.

In one egregious example, a 32-year-old black man named Philando Castile was shot and killed by police in the state of Minnesota in July 2016 after the officer stopped him because of a faulty brake light on his car.

### 'I saw my own face'

Then on May 25 came the death of a 46-year-old black man named George Floyd, who was suffocated when an arresting offi-

cer in Minneapolis knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes. The death of the father of five, in a horrifying video now seen by millions, sparked protests of historic dimension across the United States as well as in many cities abroad.

"When I saw that video... I didn't just see George Floyd. I saw my father's face. I saw my uncle's face, my brother's, my cousin's, my friends'. "I saw my own face," Pollas said, not hiding his emotions. "I saw how easily I could have been in that situation and the people I cared about could have been in that situation."

A recent graduate of Howard University in Washington, a prestigious predominantly black school, Pollas had long dreamed of a career in politics. But lately he is thinking instead of a job in education. His change of heart likely came when worked in the city as a substitute teacher.

"I've seen first-hand the effects of underfunding that really affects predominantly black schools in DC," said Pollas. Having studied Russian, he is planning to travel to Ukraine to teach English. But when he returns to the United States he hopes to work to help change the system. —AFP

## Emirates, Etihad extend salary cuts to Sept

DUBAI: Gulf carriers Emirates and Etihad Airways are extending the period of reduced pay for their staff until September as they try to preserve cash during the global coronavirus pandemic.

The aviation industry has been among the worst hit by the outbreak, which has dented travel demand and forced major airlines to lay off staff and seek government bailouts. State airlines Emirates and Etihad have operated limited, mostly outbound services from the United Arab Emirates since grounding passenger flights in March.

They are due to restart some connecting flights this month after the UAE last week lifted a suspension on services where passengers stop off in the country to change planes, or for refuelling.

Dubai's Emirates told employees yesterday it would extend a three month wage cut due to end this month until September 30, according to an internal email seen by Reuters. In some

cases, pay cuts will also be deepened, with some basic salaries reduced by 50%, the email to Emirates Group employees said. The decision was made after reviewing all possible options to preserve its cash position, it said.

State-owned Emirates Group, which employed 105,000 as of March and includes the airline among its assets, did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment. Emirates had previously reduced basic wages reduced by 25 percent to 50 percent for three months from April, with junior employees exempted.

Abu Dhabi's Etihad Airways has extended its salary cuts of between 25 percent to 50 percent to September, a spokeswoman said, as it considers all options to protect jobs and preserve cash. The airline originally reduced salaries for the month of April.

Etihad last week laid off some cabin crew and its not planning any further crew redundancies, according to emails seen by Reuters. The spokeswoman said there have been redundancies across several areas of the airline, and last month sources told Reuters Etihad was planning to lay off 1,200 employees. Like other airlines, Emirates and Etihad have laid off staff due to the impact of its business. Fellow Gulf carrier Qatar Airways has said it could lay off up to 20 percent of its employees. — Reuters



DUBAI: An Emirates Airlines flight takes off from Dubai International Airport in this file photo. Gulf carriers Emirates and Etihad Airways are extending the period of reduced pay for their staff until September, it is reported.