



People gather on the street as they establish what they call an autonomous zone while continuing to demonstrate against racial inequality and call for defunding of Seattle police, in Seattle, Washington, US, Thursday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Go back to your bunker

Says Seattle mayor after Trump threatens to send military to clear protesters from 'autonomous zone'

AGENCIES

Seattle's mayor has told US President Donald Trump to "go back to your bunker", escalating a spat after the president threatened to intervene over a police-free autonomous zone protesters have set up in the western United States city.

The reference to a "bunker" was a nod to reports Trump was rushed by Secret Service agents to a secure area in the White House as demonstrations against racism and police brutality sparked by the death of George Floyd reached the president's residence.

Trump sparked the spat when he threatened to intervene in the neighbourhood in Seattle dubbed "Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone", or CHAZ, which was agreed upon by demonstrators and the city's police department.

"Take back your city NOW. If you don't do it, I will," Trump warned mayor Jenny Durkan and Washington state governor Jay Inslee - both Democrats - in a tweet late on Wednesday, calling the protesters "domestic terrorists" who have taken over Seattle.

"This is not a game. These ugly Anarchists must be stooped (sic) IMMEDIATELY. MOVE FAST," he said in another tweet.

Mayor Jenny Durkan replied on Thursday, urging Trump to "make us all safe. Go back to your bunker", with Inslee joining in the Twitter mockery of Trump. "A man who is totally incapable of

governing should stay out of Washington state's business. 'Stoop' tweeting," he wrote.

In some cases, the peaceful Anti-racism demonstrations have turned into violent scenes of rioting and looting. In Seattle, where the CHAZ is now located, protesters were routinely clashing with police officers by nightfall until they were ordered out of the area "in an effort to proactively de-escalate interactions between protestors and law enforcement", the mayor said in a statement earlier.

Meanwhile, Trump on Thursday rebooted his flagging reelection campaign with a speech starkly rejecting nationwide protesters' claims of police racism, saying only a "few bad apples" are to blame.

Back in Washington, there were new tensions between the White House and the military when the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, General Mark Milley, apologized for appearing alongside Trump during a controversial walk to a church on June 1, minutes after police violently dispersed protesters.

"I should not have been there," Milley said in his unexpected comments.

Milley and Secretary of Defense Mark Esper were both strongly criticized for participating in what was widely seen as a political show by Trump, who walked with officials from the White House to pose in front of St. John's Episcopal Church, holding up a Bible.

World confronts colonial past

AGENCIES

Prime Minister Boris Johnson yesterday said a wave of anti-racism protests across Britain had been "hijacked by extremists", as protesters in different parts of the globe continued to vandalise statues of colonialist and racist figures.

Statues and place names honouring figures such as slavers and colonial military figures are being reassessed worldwide in response to anti-racism protests sparked by the police killing of African American man George Floyd.

In London, authorities boarded up several statues, including of World War II leader Winston Churchill, after previous damage and with further demonstrations planned.

Statues and monuments to figures involved in Britain's colonial past and the international slave trade have become increasing targets for activists over the last week. Their targeting has prompted calls for a re-examination of the country's historical legacy.

On Sunday, crowds in southwest England toppled a statue to a local slave trader and philanthropist,

Churchill's statue was vandalised last weekend by campaigners who say his policies led to the deaths of millions of people during famine in the Indian state of Bengal in 1943.

Johnson, who has written a biography of the wartime leader, said it was "absurd and shameful" his memorial would be targeted, as he fought against fascism and tyranny.

"Yes, he sometimes expressed opinions that were and are unacceptable to us today, but he was a hero, and he fully deserves his memorial," the premier wrote.

Activists linked to the Stop Trump Coalition have compiled a crowd-sourced list of statues and monuments across Britain that they say "celebrate slavery and racism". The list includes figures such as the 16th century explorer Francis Drake, and Robert Clive, once described as an "unstable sociopath" who managed the East India Company in British-ruled India.

In New Zealand, the city of Hamilton yesterday tore down a statue of the colonial military commander after whom it was named, joining a

Historians say that millions of Africans from areas in what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo were killed, mutilated or died of disease as they worked on Leopold II's rubber



A statue of former Belgian King Baudouin is seen covered in red paint in Brussels.

PHOTO: REUTERS

plantations.

Several statues of the king, who ruled between 1865 and 1909, have been daubed with paint or torn down by protesters in recent weeks, and a petition has been launched for their removal. And some institutions have removed busts or statues from public view to defuse public anger.

Meanwhile, overnight, protesters daubed blood red paint on a bust of another king of the Belgians, Laurent and Philippe's uncle Baudouin who ruled until 1993, by the cathedral in Brussels.

In US, statues of Christopher Columbus from Boston to Miami have been beheaded and vandalized as calls to remove sculptures commemorating colonizers and slavers sweep America on the back of anti-racism protests.

Italian explorer Columbus, long hailed by school textbooks as the so-called discoverer of "The New World," is considered by many to have spurred years of genocide against indigenous groups.

Meanwhile, defying trump, The Republican-led US Senate Armed Services Committee voted to require the Department of Defense to rename military bases named after Confederate generals, setting up a clash with President Donald Trump, who opposes that change and promised a veto.

As demonstrations have swept the country, cities have removed Confederate statues and institutions have barred displays of the Confederate flag, saying they do not want to honor those who fought to continue enslaving black Americans.



Edward Colston, and threw it into the harbour, prompting calls for others to be removed.

But while recognising the "legitimate desire to protest against discrimination", Johnson said in statement issued on Twitter: "We cannot now try to edit or censor our past. We cannot pretend to have a different history. The statues in our cities and towns were put up by previous generations. They had different perspectives, different understandings of right and wrong. But those statues teach us about our past, with all its faults. To tear them down would be to lie about our history, and impoverish the education of generations to come."

Johnson acknowledged the anger of black and minority ethnic communities and said there had been "huge" strides in tackling discrimination in Britain.

With tensions running high, the Black Lives Matter group called off a demonstration planned for Saturday in London's Hyde Park after far-right groups said they would also protest.

UK PM defends history in statue row, says 'you can't edit history'
New Zealand removes statue of colonist
More Belgian statues targeted in anti-racist protests
Defying Trump, Republican-led Senate panel backs stripping Confederate names from military bases

growing list of places worldwide that are reckoning with their past.

A crane hoisted the bronze sculpture of Captain John Fane Charles Hamilton from the town square after requests from local Maori and threats from anti-racism protesters to topple it. Hamilton was a naval commander who fought indigenous Maori defending their land against British colonial expansion in the 19th century.

The wave of protest against symbols of Belgium's colonial past intensified yesterday with at least two more royal statues targeted by anti-racism activists days before the anniversary of Congo's independence.

The brutal exploitation of Belgium's former central African colonies has long been a sensitive topic, and the recent wave of protests against police killings in the United States has reinvigorated campaigners.

On Friday, Belgium's modern royal family was dragged into the fray when a prince defended the record of his ancestor Leopold II, who once owned the then Congo Free State as a personal estate.

India now 4th worst-hit country

Record rise in cases raises fear of return of curbs; UN warns coronavirus may push millions of children into underage labor

REUTERS, New Delhi

India reported a record daily increase of novel coronavirus cases yesterday and became the world's fourth worst-hit country, raising the prospect of the return of a lockdown just days after it was lifted.

Anxious to revive the economy after a nearly 70-day lockdown, the government this week opened most public transport, offices and malls, even though health officials said the country was weeks away from flattening the curve of infections.

Yesterday, the health ministry said the number of cases had increased by 10,956 from the previous day, with new infections rife in the cities of Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai.

Dr VK Paul, head of a government task force tackling the outbreak, said there was no quick end in sight. "Our population is still susceptible, this virus is present, we have contained it, but this fight will go on for months," Paul told a news conference.

The new cases took India's total number of infections to 297,535, and it replaced Britain as the fourth worst-affected country, according to Reuters tallies.

India's death toll reached 8,498, which



officials said was small in relation to its 1.3 billion population. Britain has had more than 41,000 deaths.

Meanwhile, the United Nations yesterday warned that the coronavirus pandemic has put millions of children at risk of being pushed into underage labor, reversing two decades of work to combat the practice and potentially marking the first rise in child labor since 2000.

As the pandemic pummels the global economy, pushing millions of people into poverty, families may be under

pressure to put their children to work for survival, the UN said, marking the World Day Against Child Labor.

"As the pandemic wreaks havoc on family incomes, without support, many could resort to child labour," said Guy Ryder, director-general of the International Labour Organization (ILO), a U.N. agency, in a statement.

"Social protection is vital in times of crisis, as it provides assistance to those who are most vulnerable."

Due to global shutdowns, the world economy is forecast to shrink 3.2% this year, according to a Reuters poll of more than 250 economists. Forecasts for global economic growth had tended to range from 2.3% to 3.6% before the pandemic struck.

The number of child laborers worldwide has dropped significantly to 152 million children from 246 million in 2000, according to the ILO.

To prevent a rise in exploitation, the U.N. called upon governments to integrate child labor concerns into broader pieces of legislation, including policy on education, labor markets and human rights protections.

Indian lake turns pink overnight

AFP, Mumbai

A crater lake in India's western Maharashtra state has turned pink overnight, delighting nature enthusiasts and surprising experts who attributed it to changing salinity levels and the presence of algae in the water.

Lonar lake, formed some 50,000 years after an meteorite crashed into Earth, is located 500 kilometres (310 miles) from India's financial capital Mumbai and is a popular hotspot for tourists and environmentalists.

As photos of the lake's new flamingo-hued waters began to circulate on social media, experts said that although Lonar had changed colour in the past, the transformation had never been so sharp before.

"Salinity in the lake has increased as water level has gone down drastically this year and it has become warmer too resulting in overgrowth of algae," geologist Gajanan Kharat said in a video posted by the state-run Maharashtra Tourism

Development Corporation on Twitter.

"This algae turns reddish in warmer temperatures and hence the lake turned pink overnight," Kharat explained.

Officials from the state's forest department have collected water samples to determine the exact cause behind the shift, experts said.

With factories and offices shuttered for months due to the lockdown, which only began to ease this week, blue skies have returned to India's polluted cities, sparking speculation that the restrictions may have also had an impact on the lake.

"There wasn't much human activity due to lockdown which could have accelerated the change," said Madan Suryavashi, head of the geography department at Maharashtra's Babasaheb Ambedkar University.

"But we will only know the exact causes once our scientific analysis is complete in a few days," he told AFP.



52 killed in migrant shipwreck off Tunisia

More than 50 people, mostly from sub-Saharan Africa, died when a boat carrying migrants bound for Italy sank off Tunisia, a health official said Thursday in an updated toll. Another 17 bodies were recovered, raising the total to 52 since the authorities were alerted by fishermen near the port city of Sfax on Tuesday. At least 24 women were among the victims. Witnesses had told authorities the victims were believed to be passengers on a boat that set off for Italy a week ago with 53 people on board. An investigation has been launched to identify the organisers of the journey.

New Nepal-India border incident leaves one dead

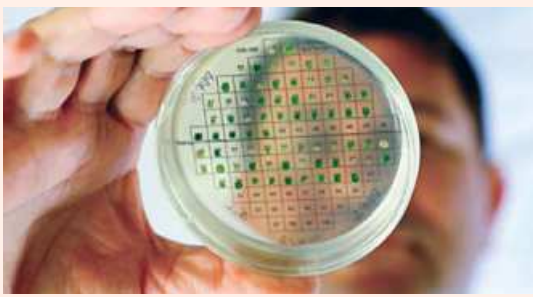
Nepali border guards opened fire yesterday after a group of Indians crossed the frontier, killing one man and wounding two, police said. It was the latest in a series of incidents along the border which Nepal has tightened since imposing a nationwide pandemic lockdown in March. About 30 Indians crossed about 100 metres (yards) into Nepal's territory in the southern district of Sarlahi and clashed with police when stopped, district police chief Ganga Ram Shrestha told AFP. Shrestha said the guards at first fired into the air when scores of people gathered and hurled stones and bricks at police and also snatched a gun. "The police were forced to fire five rounds to recover the gun, injuring three people," Shrestha said. Three Nepali border police were also injured, he added. Indian media said one man was also detained and that officials from the two sides had held talks.

Little reason to maintain Kim-Trump ties: N Korea



North Korea sees little use maintaining a personal relationship between leader Kim Jong Un and U.S. President Donald Trump if Washington sticks to hostile policies, state media reported yesterday - the two-year anniversary of the leaders' first summit. US policies prove Washington remains a long-term threat to the North Korean state and its people and North Korea will develop more reliable military forces to counter that threat, Foreign Minister Ri Son Gwon said in a statement carried by state news agency KCNA. Ri said in retrospect the Trump administration appears to have been focusing on only scoring political points while seeking to isolate and suffocate North Korea, and threatening regime change. "Never again will we provide the U.S. chief executive with another package to be used for achievements without receiving any returns," he said. "Nothing is more hypocritical than an empty promise."

SOURCE: AFP, STAR REPORT



Scientists produce energy from plants

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli scientists say they have produced hydrogen from plants in a development that they hope could eventually lead to using vegetation to produce electricity.

The discovery was made by using microscopic algae, an aquatic plant, in research carried out at a Tel Aviv University laboratory.

"To link a device to electricity, you just have to connect to a power point. In the case of a plant, we didn't know where to connect," said Iftach Yacoby, who heads the university's renewable energy laboratory.

Researchers planted an enzyme into samples of the algae and observed it producing hydrogen, a source of energy already used to fuel vehicles.

"We didn't know if this would work but we believed that it had potential," said Yacoby during a laboratory visit.

Findings of the study, a collaborative project with Kevin Redding at the University of Arizona, were published in April in the Energy & Environmental Science journal.



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