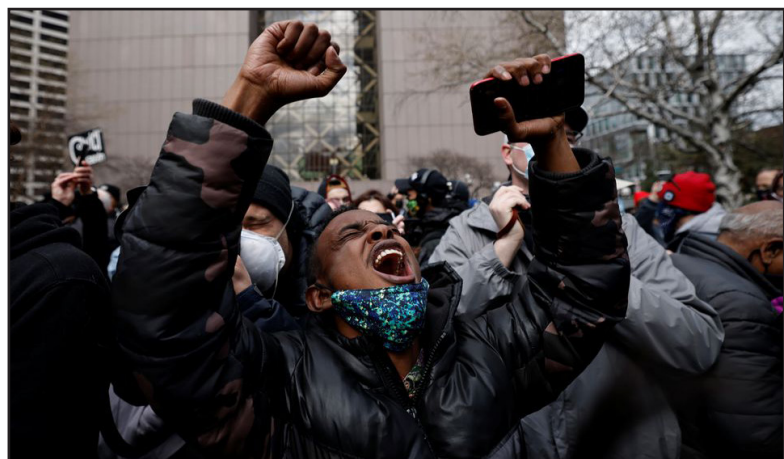


# Top Health Official Reveals 'Undeniable Racism' in U.S.



A person reacts after the verdict in the trial of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, in the death of George Floyd, in front of Hennepin County Government Center, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S., April 20, 2021.

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- White House health advisor Dr. Anthony Fauci says Covid-19 has revealed the "undeniable racism" in the U.S., as minorities were affected by the virus at greater rates because of "social determinants."

The now world-famous U.S. infectious disease expert made his comments during a virtual commencement address for graduates of Emory University.

"Covid-19 has shone a bright light on our own society's failings," Fauci said, noting the health disparities that have affected minorities during the pandemic, especially African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans.

Many people belonging to these minority groups work frontline jobs that exposed them, even during shutdowns, and they can be more likely to be infected because of health conditions such as hypertension, chronic lung disease, diabetes, and obesity, conditions Fauci says can mostly be attributed to social factors like "access to healthcare" and "availability of an adequate diet."

"Now, very few of these comorbidities have racial determinants," he said.

"Almost all relate to the social determinants of health dating back to disadvantaged conditions that some people of color find themselves in from birth regarding

the availability of an adequate diet, access to healthcare and the undeniable effects of racism in our society."

The battle to end these "social determinants" will take a "decades-long commitment."

"Let us promise ourselves our memory of this tragic reality - that an infectious disease disparately kills people of color - does not fade," he said. "Righting this wrong will take a decades-long commitment. I urge you to be part of that commitment."

Black and Hispanic Americans have been dying at higher rates than other races from Covid-19 in the US, according to analysis released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) last fall.

While Fauci remains a leader in the White House and to news outlets on the pandemic, he has earned his fair share of critics, especially among conservatives, who have accused him of flip-flopping his position on things such as mask mandates, as well as being too supportive of long-term lockdown measures.

Rep. Warren Davidson (R-Ohio) even introduced legislation, which was cosponsored by Reps. Andy Biggs (R-Arizona), Chip Roy (R-Texas), and Ralph Norman (R-South Carolina), this week proposing the firing of Fauci as the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

The Fauci Incompetence Requires Early Dismissal (FIRED) Act would create a 12 year term limit for the position Fauci has held since 1984.

## Kurz Says Not to Resign If Indicted for False Testimony



Austria's Chancellor Sebastian Kurz attends a news conference, as the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) continues, in Vienna, Austria May 10, 2021.

VIENNA (Reuters) -- Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz expects to be charged but eventually cleared in an investigation into whether he gave false testimony to a parliamentary commission, he told newspapers, ruling out the idea of resigning if indicted.

The investigation by anti-corruption prosecutors, made public, last week poses a stiff political challenge for the conservative Kurz, 34, who governs in coalition with the Greens.

Kurz has painted himself as the victim of opposition parties trying to trap him into saying something that could be construed as perjury before the commission, which is looking into

possible corruption under his previous coalition with the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) which collapsed in 2019.

"After every word of mine on 58 pages (of testimony) is put on the scale, I certainly expect a criminal complaint, that's right," he told the Krone newspaper in an interview, adding he had not yet been questioned by prosecutors.

But he said he was confident he would be exonerated in the case, which centers on whether he answered truthfully when asked about appointments to state holding company OBAG.

"I have spoken to numerous lawyers and several university professors. The

tenor was always the same: no one can imagine that there will be a conviction here," he told the paper.

In a separate interview with the Oesterreich paper, he rejected the idea of stepping down if indicted.

"I definitely rule that out. Like many people, I have made many mistakes, both privately and professionally. But what I definitely know is that I went into the commission with the intention of answering the questions truthfully," he said.

An opinion poll published by Oesterreich showed Kurz's conservatives winning 35% support should parliamentary elections be held now, down 1 point from a week earlier and 2.5 points from its showing in 2019 elections.

Its Greens partners were on 12%, in fourth place behind the Social Democrats on 22% and the FPÖ at 17%.

The commission has looked into the appointment in 2019 of a conservative loyalist as chief executive of OBAG, which manages Austria's stakes in companies including oil firm OMV. Text messages examined by the commission showed Kurz telling the candidate before then he would get "everything you want".

The investigation is looking at whether Kurz discussed the appointment with the candidate beforehand and whether the chancellor was involved in selecting members of OBAG's supervisory board, both of which Kurz denied at the commission.

## Ireland Worried by Likely UK Plan to Rewrite Brexit



Flags of the Union Jack and European Union are seen ahead of the meeting of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, in Brussels, Belgium December 9, 2020.

DUBLIN (Reuters) -- Ireland is increasingly concerned that British Prime Minister Boris Johnson wants to completely rewrite the Northern Ireland section of the Brexit deal, RTE reported on Monday after London said the agreement was not sustainable.

After the United Kingdom left the European Union's orbit at the start of this year, checks and tariffs were introduced on some goods moving from mainland Britain to Northern Ireland as the province now borders the bloc via EU member Ireland.

Johnson had promised there would be no hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland as result of Brexit, and unfettered trade between the province and the rest of the United Kingdom would continue.

So Britain in March unilaterally

extended a grace period on certain checks to minimize supply disruption, a move Brussels said breached the Brexit divorce deal.

"Dublin is now concerned that London is pushing for a complete re-writing of the Protocol, beyond simply bringing flexibilities to bear through the ongoing technical discussions with the European Commission," RTE reported.

British negotiator David Frost said last week that the Northern Ireland Protocol would not be sustainable in the long term.

Britain is proposing to phase in new Irish Sea border checks on food products in four stages from October, the BBC reported, citing a document London has shared with the European Union on implementing the Brexit deal.

## India's Virus Cases Lower But WHO Expert Downbeat



People wearing protective face masks wait to receive their second dose of COVISHIELD, a coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccine manufactured by Serum Institute of India, outside a vaccination center in Kolkata, India, May 12, 2021.

NEW DELHI (Reuters) -- India reported a further decline in new coronavirus cases on Monday, but daily deaths remained above 4,000 and experts said the count was unreliable due to a lack of testing in rural areas where the virus is spreading fast.

For months now, nowhere in the world has been hit harder than India by the pandemic, as a new strain of the virus fuelled a surge in infections that has risen to more than 400,000 daily.

Even with a downturn over the past few days, experts said there was no certainty that infections had peaked, with alarm growing both at home and abroad over the highly contagious B.1.617 variant first found in India.

"There are still many parts of the country which have not yet experienced the peak, they are still going up," World Health Organization Chief Scientist Soumya Swaminathan was quoted as saying in the Hindu newspaper.

Swaminathan pointed to the "very high" national positivity rate, at about 20% of tests conducted, as a sign that there could be more to come.

Having begun to decline last week, new infections over the past 24 hours were put at 281,386 by the health ministry on Monday, dropping below 300,000 for the first time since April 21. The daily death count stood at 4,106.

At the current rate India's total caseload since the epidemic struck a year ago should pass the 25 million mark in the next couple of days. Total deaths were put at 274,390.

Hospitals have had to turn patients away while mortuaries and crematoriums have been unable to cope with bodies pil-

ing up. Photographs and television images of funeral pyres burning in parking lots and corpses washing up on the banks of the Ganges river have fuelled impatience with the government's handling of the crisis.

It is widely accepted that the official figures grossly underestimate the real impact of the epidemic, with some experts saying actual infections and deaths could be five to 10 times higher.

Whereas the first wave of the epidemic in India, which peaked in September, was largely concentrated in urban areas, where testing was introduced faster, the second wave that erupted in February is rampaging through rural towns and villages, where about two-thirds of the country's 1.35 billion people live, and testing in those places is very patchy.

"This drop in confirmed COVID cases in India is an illusion," S. Vincent Rajkumar, a professor of medicine at the Mayo Clinic in the United States, said on Twitter.

"First, due to limited testing, the total number of cases is a huge underestimate. Second, confirmed cases can only occur where you can confirm: the urban areas. Rural areas are not getting counted."

A cyclone on course to hit the coast of Gujarat on Monday was expected to disrupt both testing and vaccination efforts in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state, where infections have risen 30% since May 2.

While lockdowns have helped limit cases in parts of the country hit during an initial surge of infections in February and April, such as Maharashtra and Delhi, rural areas and some states are dealing with fresh surges.

## News in Brief

MOSCOW (Reuters) -- Three people were killed in a knife attack on Monday near a train station in the Russian city of Yekaterinburg, the TASS news agency cited law enforcement as saying. Police detained a man who had attacked people with a knife, the report said. The stabbings happened amid an argument over alcohol, a law enforcement agency was cited as saying.

SIBLEY (Reuters) -- A Union Pacific train hauling hazardous materials derailed and then caught fire in the city of Sibley, Iowa, authorities said, leading to the evacuation of dozens of people although there were no reports of injuries or fatalities. The derailment, involving 47 rail cars, took place in the afternoon in Sibley, Union Pacific said, adding the cause of the incident was under investigation. Within an hour, local officials texted an evacuation order to people nearby. An area comprising about a 5-mile radius around the scene of the derailment was evacuated as a precaution, according to ABC News.

"There were no injuries to the crew," Union Pacific said in an emailed statement, adding that Union Pacific was working with first responders at the scene. "Approximately 80 people were evacuated," the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management said in an email. Ken Huls, the fire chief in Sibley, said the train was carrying fertilizer and ammonium, the radio station KIWA reported.

STOCKHOLM (Dispatches) -- Nearly 3,000 barrels of "life-threatening" nuclear waste have reportedly been misplaced in Sweden, raising concerns about potential environmental impacts and prompting calls for an urgent re-inspection of the radioactive material. A stock control inspection has recently found that 2,800 barrels containing historical radioactive waste from the 1970s and 1980s were stored incorrectly in a warehouse in Forsmark, Uppland County. The Forsmark nuclear plant and repository, located some 100 kilometers north of Stockholm, contains over 30,000 cubic meters of radioactive waste. While the material is believed not to pose a threat to humans or nature today, it could very well do so in the future if placed and handled incorrectly.

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) -- A wildfire in Los Angeles, California, gained momentum and about 1,000 residents were put under evacuation orders and two suspects were detained as arson investigators and police looked into the cause of the blaze. "We did have one individual who was detained and released. However, we now have a second individual that is being questioned," a representative of the Los Angeles Fire Department said late on Sunday. The department's arson investigators and the Los Angeles Police Department were investigating the blaze, which has been called the Palisades Fire. Mandatory evacuations were ordered for an area near Topanga Canyon with other residents on standby to leave. Topanga Canyon is a remote, wooded community with some ranch homes about 20 miles west of downtown Los Angeles, on the border with Malibu. The fire began late on Friday and had grown to 1,325 acres with 0% containment by Sunday afternoon, the Los Angeles Times reported. There were no reported deaths or casualties.

MOSCOW (Dispatches) -- Moscow's prosecutor on Monday submitted a huge amount of new material to a court hearing a request to outlaw Western-backed Alexei Navalny's political movement, Navalny's lawyers said. The court is considering the prosecutor's request to declare Navalny's anti-corruption foundation and regional campaign groups as "extremist". Navalny and his allies deny the allegations, which they have cast as an attempt to try to blunt their political opposition to the ruling United Russia party ahead of parliamentary elections in September. Navalny's lawyers posted photographs on social media of the prosecutor's new material -- six gigantic wads of A4 paper. The next court hearing will take place on June 9, the lawyers said.

WASHINGTON (Reuters) -- A former Florida official central to the federal probe into whether U.S. Representative Matt Gaetz trafficked a minor for sex was to plead guilty on Monday and agree to cooperate with prosecutors, which may spell trouble for the Republican congressman. Joel Greenberg, a former tax collector in Florida's Seminole County, would plead guilty to charges including sex-trafficking of a minor at a court hearing at 10 a.m. EST (1400 GMT) in federal court in Orlando, Florida, according to an agreement submitted in court on Friday. Greenberg said he would cooperate with federal prosecutors and admitted to introducing the minor he trafficked to other adult men who engaged in sex acts with the minor in Greenberg's presence, court papers showed. The papers did not identify the other adult men. The plea deal marks a turning point in the sprawling federal investigation that has roiled Florida politics and ensnared Gaetz, 39, one of former President Donald Trump's staunchest defenders in Congress. Investigators are seeking to determine whether Gaetz had sex with the same 17-year-old Greenberg was accused of trafficking, according to news reports and a law enforcement source who spoke with Reuters. Greenberg's lawyer, Fritz Scheller, suggested to reporters last month that Greenberg cooperating with federal investigators could have implications for Gaetz.

## Chile's Ruling Coalition in Shock After Loss

SANTIAGO (Reuters) -- Chile's center-right ruling coalition suffered a shock loss on Sunday night after failing to secure a critical one-third of seats in the body that will draft the country's new constitution.

With 90% of the votes counted, candidates backed by President Sebastian Pinera's center-right Chile Vamos coalition had won only a fifth while independents picked up the most votes. New proposals will require two-thirds approval and without a third of the delegates, the government will struggle to block radical changes to the constitution unless it can forge new alliances.

The result and defeats for Chile Vamos candidates in mayoral, gubernatorial and municipal elections held at the same time bode ill for the ruling coalition ahead of general and presidential elections in November.

The vote to pick 155 citizens to rewrite the constitution was borne from fierce protests that erupted over inequality and elitism in October 2019. The current constitution drafted during the 1973-1990 dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet is widely perceived to favor big business over the rights of ordinary citizens.

Until recently, Chile Vamos had been confident its candidates would win at least a third of the vote.

Pinera said his government and other traditional political parties should heed the "loud and clear" message that they had

not adequately responded to the needs of citizens.

It was "a great opportunity" for Chileans to build a more "fair, inclusive, prosperous and sustainable country," he added. CNN's local channel in Chile projected independents would win 45 seats, Chile Vamos would gain 39, the center-left 25, the far-left 28 and a small coalition would take one seat. Seventeen seats have been reserved for members of Chile's indigenous communities who are not mentioned in the present charter.

Pinera cautioned, however, against extreme changes which some fear could threaten Chile's status as one of the wealthiest, most stable democracies in Latin America.

Some of the more controversial ideas being advanced for the new constitution include potential changes to private land and water rights as well as to employment legislation that could threaten the interests of traditional investors.

Gabriel Boric, a leading member of Chile's far-left Broad Front coalition, said the result paved the way for major changes in Chile, the world's largest copper producer.

More than 1,200 people put themselves forward to draft the new charter, including actors, writers, civil society activists, politicians, TV hosts and fashion models.

Francisca Linconao, a "Machi" spiritual leader of the Mapuche indigenous people who was jailed for alleged terrorist links before later being absolved of charges and released, was among those winning a seat.