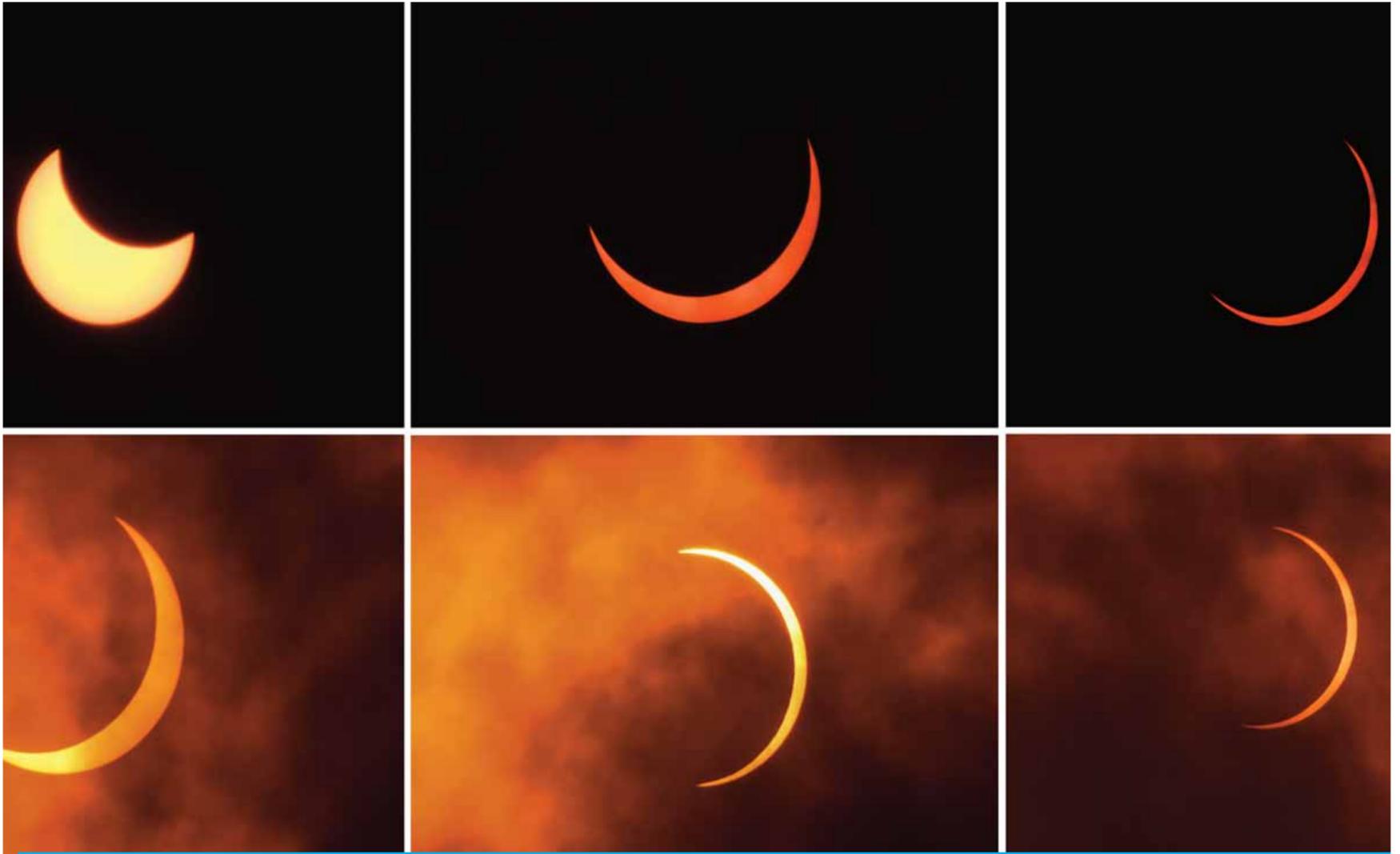


News



This combination of pictures created yesterday shows the Moon moving in front of the Sun during an annular solar eclipse as seen from New Delhi yesterday. — AFP

'Ring of fire' solar eclipse...

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The exact alignment of the Earth, Moon and Sun was visible for only 38 seconds.

In Nairobi, east Africa, observers saw only a partial eclipse as clouds blocked the sky for several seconds at the exact moment the Moon should have almost hidden the Sun. Despite some disappointment Susan Murbana told AFP: "It was very exciting because I think I'm so obsessed with eclipses. "Today has been very kind to us in terms of the clouds. And we've been able to see most of it," said Murbana who set up the Travelling Telescope educational programme with her husband Chu.

Without the coronavirus pandemic, they would have organized a trip to Lake Magadi in southern Kenya where the skies are generally clearer than over the capital. "With the pandemic situation, we're not able to have crowds... and get kids to look

through or do stuff," she said but still managed to share the event on social media. "We had around 50 people joining us via Zoom and then we have so many people via our Facebook live."

The annular eclipse is visible from only about two percent of Earth's surface, Florent Delefe, an astronomer at the Paris Observatory, told AFP. "It's a bit like switching from a 500-watt to a 30-watt light bulb," he added. "It's a cold light and you don't see as well."

Animals can get spooked — birds will sometimes go back to sleep, and cows will return to the barn. The full eclipse was visible at successive locations over a period of nearly four hours, and one of the last places to see the partially hidden Sun was Taiwan. People hundreds of kilometers on either side of the centerline across 14 countries could also see light drain from the day but not the "ring of fire".

Weather conditions are critical for viewing. A solar eclipse always occurs about two weeks before or after a lunar eclipse, when the Moon moves into Earth's shadow. Lunar eclipses are visible from about half of the Earth's surface. There will be a second solar eclipse in 2020 on Dec 14 over South America. Because the Moon will be a bit closer to Earth, it will block out the Sun's light entirely. — AFP

dalize our history, desecrate our beautiful monuments, tear down our statues, and punish, cancel and persecute anyone who does not conform to their demands for absolute and total control," he said. The stakes Saturday could not have been higher — both for the health of thousands spending hours at the arena and for Trump's political fortunes, five months before an election in which he trails in the polls.

"Today we're here to show we support President Trump and that we, the people, we'll win the 2020 election, no matter what the fake news media and other liberal, leftist, mind-controlling big firms are saying," said attendee Brad, who declined to provide his last name. The rally has been controversial in part because it originally was scheduled for Friday — the Juneteenth commemoration of the end of slavery in the US — in a city known for one of the deadliest-ever massacres of African Americans.

Racial tensions have roiled the nation following the police killing of a black man, George Floyd, in Minneapolis, and Trump has fanned the flames with provocative rhetoric. Dozens of Black Lives Matter protesters did gather at rally checkpoints and confronted attendees, but no violence was reported. After the rally, officers were seen using pepper spray to disperse protesters who temporarily blocked a police convoy.

This was the first of Trump's signature rallies since March 2, when the country went into pandemic lockdown. The virus dramatically disrupted a once-booming economy, which had been Trump's strongest re-election selling point. With polls showing him trailing Biden, Trump is eager to change the narrative, and rallies have long been his favorite political tool.

But while Trump rolls the political dice, the crowd gambled with their health. Oklahoma virus cases have spiked recently, and the state's total as of Saturday surpassed 10,000. Rally organizers provided everyone with hand sanitizer, temperature checks and optional masks. Attendees were required to sign a waiver protecting organizers from any liability in the event COVID-19 spreads at the venue. — AFP

tions if the criminal investigation into suspected wrongdoing in the Eurofighter aircraft deal is shelved without pressing charges. He said he will inquire about the reasons for shelving the investigation and to make sure that the defense ministry has provided the public prosecution with all related documents. The ministry of defense referred the \$9 billion deal to the public prosecution after allegations of corruption were raised.

Trump holds fiery rally but...

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The president has downplayed the risk that the evening rally — with thousands of shouting, cheering attendees — might trigger a fresh outbreak, ignoring danger warnings by Tulsa health and municipal officials.

And he suggested that the "double-edged sword" of comprehensive coronavirus testing had led to the United States having the world's highest number of cases. "Here is the bad part: When you do testing to that extent, you are going to find more people, you will find more cases," Trump argued. "So I said to my people, 'slow the testing down'," he boomed. A White House official later told AFP that Trump was joking.

The narrative of a trouble-free campaign event was punctured, however, when the campaign announced just hours before the rally that six members of its Tulsa advance team tested positive for coronavirus. Trump nevertheless reverted to full-on campaign mode, reviving themes that dominated his 2016 campaign: smearing immigrants, building a wall on the southern border, demanding flag burners be sentenced to jail and highlighting a rising stock market. "If you see it happening on November 3," he said of America's potential rebound, "you don't have the guts to vote against Trump."

He notably steered clear until well into his one-hour, 45-minute speech of the racial tensions that have swept the country in the weeks since a handcuffed African American, George Floyd, was killed by police in Minneapolis. Instead he warned that Democrats were seeking to erase American heritage, a reference to the tearing down of several statues of Confederate slave owners and other figures.

"The unhinged left-wing mob is trying to van-

MoH launches random virus...

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Meanwhile, MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei said yesterday that he will send parliamentary ques-

US Asians soul searching over...

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One of the worst examples was during the 1992 protests in Los Angeles over the police killing of Rodney King, a black man. Massive rioting broke out during the demonstrations, most of which occurred in the Koreatown neighborhood. Ethnic Korean store owners, feeling abandoned by the Los Angeles police, shot at black protesters from the rooftops to protect their businesses. "We, Asian Americans, have remained complicit in perpetuating anti-blackness and benefiting from white supremacy," Kevin Quach, who works on policy at the Asian American advocacy group OCA National, told AFP.

Quach noted the internalization of the model minority myth — the stereotype that Asians are the "best" minority, thus implying that other minority groups are somehow lesser — and colorism, or prejudice against darker skin tones, within the Asian community, among other examples. Even using slogans like "Yellow Peril Supports Black Power" or "Asian Americans for Black Lives Matter," Quach said, "ignores and minimizes the harm that the AAPI community has inflicted on the black community within the last 50 years," even if unintentionally.

For instance, the "yellow peril" slogan was first used in 1969 by Japanese-American activist Richard Aoki at a protest in support of Black Panther Party co-founder Huey Newton. Aoki was revealed in 2012 to have been an FBI informant on the Black Panthers. Asian Americans have been used "as a wedge community between black community demands and our system," said Bo Thao-Urabe, a co-founder of the Minnesota-based Coalition of Asian American Leaders (CAAL). It's important to ensure "our communities are not used

against each other," she added.

Groups like CAAL and OCA National, which were already working with black and Latino communities, have made specific pushes to support the current protests. CAAL has provided support for Asian Americans in Minnesota who joined the demonstrations, and OCA has launched several programs explicitly about Asian-black relations, including a workshop on the model minority myth and a virtual summit on Afro-Asian solidarity.

Asians 4 Black Lives has supported protests in the San Francisco Bay Area while Equality Labs, a South Asian rights group, has forums and other resources promoting South Asian-black solidarity. Many younger Asian Americans have taken the conversation online, sharing articles on social media about combating anti-blackness. Others have posted lists of key phrases and talking points, translated into languages such as Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese, for "talking to Asian parents about institutional and internalized racism."

"Anti-blackness is not just something that you can name and it disappears," said Jenny Tam, a 21-year-old student at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities who is of Chinese-Vietnamese heritage. "It's a fear, and fear needs to be deconstructed." After Floyd's death, Tam created a Facebook group called "Asian America for Black Power" to connect Asian Minnesotans who wanted to go to protests together. The group quickly morphed into a platform, now with nearly 3,000 members, for sharing resources on where to donate, what to read, where to protest and how to talk with their families about racism.

Tam also noted that the coronavirus pandemic had served as a kind of wake-up call for Asian Americans, as it sparked an outpouring of anti-Asian racism, with many blaming China for the virus. Racism "may oppress us differently, but there's a common enemy. We're fighting the same thing," said Tam, whose parents came to Minnesota after the Vietnam War. "We are not white, and so we cannot protect a system that supports white and is harming our black community." — AFP

Sisi warns of direct Libya...

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on the Libyan people, interference in Libyan affairs and a dangerous threat to national security," said Mohammed Amari Zayed, a member of the GNA's presidential council.

"There can be no 'red line' within our borders. We reject any bid aimed at dividing the Libyan people or their territory... (and) we categorically reject any bid to impose guardianship on Libya," he added. Turkey also vowed to continue supporting the GNA's push for Sirte and demanded the evacuation of Haftar's forces from the city for a "sustainable ceasefire."

Libya has been torn by violence, drawing in tribal militias, jihadists and mercenaries since the 2011 toppling and killing of longtime dictator Muammar Gaddafi in a Western-backed uprising. The oil-rich country is split between rival administrations in the east and west, with the conflict recently attracting increasing foreign involvement. Besides Egypt, Russia and the United Arab Emirates back Haftar, while the GNA is supported by Turkey and Qatar.

"Any direct intervention by Egypt now has international legitimacy, whether under the UN charter on self defense or at the discretion of the only legitimate elected authority in Libya: the Libyan parliament," Sisi said. Like Haftar, the head of the Libyan parliament is based in the east of the country, where they are both supported by Egypt.

The GNA has vowed to take Sirte, Gaddafi's hometown and a strategic access point to Libya's key oil fields. It is also the last major settlement before the traditional boundary between western

Libya and Haftar's stronghold in the east. "Some think they can trespass on the Sirte or Al-Jufra frontline. This for us is a red line," Sisi said.

Turkish presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin told AFP in an interview that a ceasefire in Libya would be possible if Haftar's forces withdrew from Sirte and Al-Jufra. "It should be a sustainable ceasefire, meaning that the other side, the LNA (Libyan National Army), should not be in a position to launch another attack on the legitimate Libyan government any time it wants," Kalin told AFP in an interview in Istanbul.

Later, Saudi Arabia and the UAE voiced their backing for Sisi. "The kingdom stands by Egypt on its right to defend its borders people from extremism, terrorist militias and their supporters in the region," said a foreign ministry statement carried by state-run Saudi Press Agency. Similarly, the UAE's foreign ministry said it "is siding with Egypt on all the measures it takes to protect security and stability from the repercussions of the concerning developments in Libya," according to the country's official WAM news agency.

Cairo proposed its own ceasefire in Libya earlier this month but it was dismissed by the GNA. That proposal also called for withdrawal of foreign mercenaries, and disbanding of Libyan militias. The Egyptian president blamed "external forces" supporting "extremist militias and mercenaries" in Libya for blocking the initiative. He further urged Egyptian troops to "be prepared to carry out any mission, inside our borders, or if necessary, outside our borders."

On Friday, the Arab League announced plans to hold an urgent virtual foreign ministers meeting on Libya this week at Egypt's request. But the GNA said it would boycott the meeting as it would "merely deepen the rift" between Arab governments on the conflict. — AFP