

News in brief

◆ Nicolas Sarkozy

yesterday was freed from prison, a 20-day experience the former president called a “nightmare”, as a judge ordered his release pending an appeal decision over Libyan funding. Sarkozy was freed from La Sante prison in Paris shortly before 3 pm (1400 GMT) on Monday, a source familiar with the case told AFP. The 70-year-old former president, who maintains his innocence, departed in a car with tinted windows, escorted by police motorcyclists. A lower court in September found the right-wing politician -- who was head of state from 2007 to 2012 -- guilty of seeking to acquire funding from Moamer Kadhafi’s Libya for the campaign that saw him elected, and sentenced him to five years behind bars.



Sarkozy released from jail ‘nightmare’ pending appeal trial

◆ **Blue Origin**, the space company owned by billionaire Jeff Bezos, was forced Sunday to postpone the anticipated launch of its New Glenn rocket due to unfavorable weather conditions. Rain and a ground system issue caused delays

Bezos’s Blue Origin postpones rocket launch over weather

that were followed by cumulus cloud cover as the 88-minute launch window closed, leaving managers with the only option of pushing back the rocket’s planned second mission. The launch had been due to proceed amid intensifying competition between Blue Origin and Elon Musk’s SpaceX. To relieve airspace congestion during the US federal government shutdown, the Federal Aviation Administration is limiting commercial rocket lift-offs starting Monday. But after scrubbing the launch Blue Origin said late Sunday that, in coordination with the FAA, it was aiming for another attempt as soon as Wednesday within the window of 2:50pm to 4:17pm (1950-2117 GMT).

◆ **She lived** a life of luxury that earned her the nickname “goddess of wealth”, but Chinese businesswoman Zhimin Qian now faces a long jail sentence after police made the UK’s largest-ever cryptocurrency seizure of Bitcoin worth over \$6 billion. The 47-year-old, who used the alias Yadi Zhang, defrauded more than 128,000 victims through a scheme in China from 2014-17 and stored the illegally obtained funds in Bitcoin assets. Qian played a leading role in the scam. After fleeing China in 2018 using false documents, she came to the UK where she attempted to launder the proceeds, according to police and prosecutors. She faces up to 14 years in prison. The Chinese national, who pleaded guilty to acquiring and possessing criminal property on September 29, will be sentenced after a two-day hearing on Monday and Tuesday at London’s Southwark Crown Court. A Malaysian accomplice, Seng Hok Ling, also 47, admitted to money laundering at the same court earlier and is also due to be sentenced.

Chinese businesswoman faces jail after huge UK crypto seizure



SPOTLIGHT

Rare Patek Philippe watch sells for \$17.6 million



Geneva, Switzerland

A Patek Philippe timepiece that in 2016 became the most expensive wristwatch ever sold at auction fetched an even higher price this weekend, auctioneers Phillips said Sunday.

The watch sold for 14,190,000 Swiss francs (\$17.6 million), surpassing the 11 million francs it fetched nine years ago, or \$11 million at the time.

The Patek Philippe Perpetual Calendar Chronograph Reference 1518, made in 1943, is one of only four known to have been made in stainless steel -- its rarity making it more sought-after than those produced in gold.

Its 2016 world record price for a wristwatch was overtaken in 2017 by Hollywood star Paul Newman’s Rolex Daytona which fetched \$17.8 million.

That was then surpassed in 2019 by a Patek Philippe Grandmaster Chime, which sold for \$31 million.

But the stainless steel 1518’s sale this weekend reaffirmed its status “as one of the most historically significant wristwatches ever made”, the auctioneers said.

Phillips said the sale took just under nine and a half minutes, attracting five bidders, with the watch ultimately selling to a telephone bidder.

Several well-known collectors, dealers and watchmakers were in the room to witness the sale at the Hotel President in Geneva. Launched in 1941, it was the world’s first serially produced perpetual calendar chronograph.

Patek Philippe produced around 280 Ref. 1518 watches, most of them encased in yellow gold, and around a fifth in pink gold.

Trump threatens BBC with **\$1 billion** lawsuit over speech edit

Trump’s lawyers gave the British broadcaster a deadline of Friday

● The director general of the BBC announced his resignation Sunday

● BBC also issued a public apology for the editing

AFP | Washington, United States

U S President Donald Trump has threatened the BBC with a \$1 billion lawsuit over the “defamatory, malicious” editing of a speech he gave just before the 2021 US Capitol riots, according to a letter obtained by AFP.

Trump’s lawyers gave the British broadcaster a deadline of Friday to fully retract the documentary containing the edit, apologize and “appropriately compensate” the president “for the harm caused.”

If the BBC fails to comply “President Trump will be left with no alternative but to enforce his legal and equitable rights... including by filing legal action for no less than \$1,000,000,000



Deborah Turness resigned as BBC News CEO

(One Billion Dollars) in damages,” it said.

“The BBC is on notice. PLEASE GOVERN YOURSELF ACCORDINGLY.”

The director general of the BBC announced his resignation Sunday over the row, after accusations that a documentary by its flagship Panorama program last year had edited a speech by Trump in a misleading way.

The BBC said earlier Monday that it would “review” the letter

from Trump’s legal team. It also issued a public apology for the editing.

Trump’s supporters rioted at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021 in a bid to overturn the certification of his 2020 US presidential election defeat by Democrat Joe Biden.

But the letter from his legal team said that the BBC edit gave a “false, defamatory, malicious, disparaging, and inflammatory” impression of what he said in his

speech outside the White House.

“Due to their salacious nature, the fabricated statements that were aired by the BBC have been widely disseminated throughout various digital mediums, which have reached tens of millions of people worldwide,” the letter said.

“Consequently, the BBC has caused President Trump to suffer overwhelming financial and reputational harm.”

A spokesman for Trump’s legal team confirmed that a letter had been sent to the BBC but did not give further details.

“The BBC defamed President Trump by intentionally and deceitfully editing its documentary in order to try and interfere in the presidential election,” the spokesman said in a statement to AFP.

“President Trump will continue to hold accountable those who traffic in lies, deception, and fake news.”

Trump has been accused of launching a number of previous lawsuits to stifle US media, including against broadcaster ABC and CBS, and the New York Times.

UAE ‘probably’ won’t join Gaza stabilisation force

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates is not planning to join the international stabilisation force for Gaza because it lacks a clear framework, a senior official said yesterday.

“The UAE does not yet see a clear framework for the stability force, and under such circumstances will probably not participate in such a force,” Emirati presidential advisor Anwar Gargash told the Abu Dhabi Strategic Debate forum.

The US-coordinated international force has been seen as likely to include troops from Egypt, Qatar and Turkey, as well as the UAE.

Last week, US President Donald Trump said he expected the force to be in Gaza “very soon”, as a fragile ceasefire holds.



Displaced Palestinians chase after trucks travelling along Salah al-Din road in the central Gaza Strip, near Deir al-Balah, as they attempt to obtain humanitarian aid

Russia seizes more villages, says Ukraine cannot win war

Moscow, Russia

Russia said on Monday it was delusional to think Ukraine could win the war, while Moscow’s army said it had captured three more villages on the sprawling front line.

Moscow is trying to press its advantage in manpower and

equipment but territorial gains have been slow and costly.

Both sides are heavily entrenched, almost four years after Russia launched its all-out invasion of Ukraine.

“The Europeans believe that Ukraine can win the war and secure its interests through military means,” Kremlin spokesman

Dmitry Peskov said.

“This is the deepest delusion indulged in by the Kyiv regime. The situation on the front indicates the opposite,” he said in a briefing call with reporters.

The Russian defence ministry said on Monday it had seized the villages of Slodkie and Nove in the Zaporizhzhia region of

Ukraine and Gnativka in the Donetsk region.

Peskov said the war would only end “when Russia achieves the objectives it set at the beginning”. Moscow has said it is fighting to protect Russian speakers in the east of Ukraine, to prevent the NATO military bloc moving eastwards.