

Biden, Harris focus campaign on virus crisis

Democratic tandem delivers one-two punch on the performance of President Trump amid pandemic and economic downturn

● Kamala Harris sought to tap into the nationwide upheaval over police violence and racial disparities as she and Joe Biden launched their joint White House campaign

AFP | Washington



Kamala Harris listens to Joe Biden speak during their first press conference together in Wilmington, Delaware

Democratic presidential hopeful Joe Biden and his running mate Kamala Harris will put the coronavirus pandemic front and center in their campaign, targeting Donald Trump's response to the health and economic crises ahead of November's election.

Fresh off Wednesday's campaign rollout that featured the pair together for the first time showcasing their vision for the nation, they will meet with public health experts in Delaware.

Biden and Harris are to deliver remarks afterwards, accord-

ing to the campaign -- a signal to voters that curbing the spread of the virus is a top priority and major election issue.

They will likely unleash a second straight day of vigorous criticism of Trump, whom Democrats widely accuse of mishandling the US response to a pandemic that has claimed more than 166,000 lives, the world's highest death toll.

Harris warned Wednesday

that Trump's "mismanagement" of the pandemic has plunged the nation into the deepest health crisis in a century and the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression.

"There's a reason (the coronavirus) has hit America worse than any other advanced nation. It's because of Trump's failure to take it seriously from the start," she said.

Harris lamented "his refusal

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KAMALA HARRIS

to get testing up and running. His flip-flopping on social distancing and wearing masks. His delusional belief that he knows better than the experts."

Trump meanwhile said the economy was experiencing a "v-shaped recovery," despite millions of American families suffering and analysts warning that the country remains in an unemployment crisis.

"As we continue to confront the China virus, we're rebuilding America's economy like nobody thought possible, actually," Trump said Wednesday at the White House.

"We're doing incredibly well."

News in brief

Huge fire north of Los Angeles prompts evacuations

◆ Iranian forces boarded a tanker in international waters in the Gulf of Oman, using a



helicopter and two ships to take over the vessel for several hours. They also posted grainy black-and-white footage of the helicopter hovering low over the vessel and special forces personnel fast-roping onto the deck. A US defence official said the Iranians released the vessel, a Liberian-flagged oil and chemicals tanker, after holding it for four to five hours.

◆ **The FBI will join investigators probing the cause of the huge port blast that destroyed swathes of Beirut, the top career diplomat at the US State Department said.** "The FBI will soon join Lebanese and international investigators, at the invitation of the Lebanese, in order to help answer questions that I know everyone has about the circumstances that led up to this explosion," David Hale told reporters during a tour of a heavily damaged neighbourhood near the port.

FBI to join Beirut blast probe: US envoy



◆ **Belarusian Nobel Prize-winning writer Svetlana Alexievich condemned police violence against protesters in her country and urged strongman Alexander Lukashenko to go peacefully in an interview.** The 72-year-old author won the 2015 Nobel Literature Prize for her work chronicling the horrors of war and life under the repressive Soviet regime including the 1986 Chernobyl disaster.

Pompeo calls for joint US-EU effort on Belarus crisis

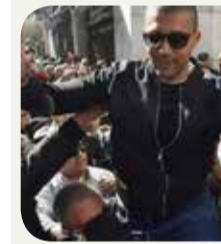
◆ **US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that Washington hoped to work with the EU to resolve the crisis**



in Belarus where veteran leader Alexander Lukashenko's controversial re-election has sparked unprecedented protests. Thousands have been arrested following mass peaceful protests that have been brutally quashed by police following Sunday's vote, which opponents say was rigged.

◆ **A Florida sheriff ordered his officers to not wear face masks -- and banned the safety gear from his office -- even as the southern US state has hit record daily coronavirus death tolls.** Sheriff Billy Woods, of central Florida's Marion County, emailed deputies to tell them of the new mask prohibition, according to local paper the Ocala Star Banner, citing the message. The sheriff allowed for certain exceptions, including for officers who work in prisons, schools, hospitals or with people suspected of being infected with the virus.

Florida sheriff bans face masks among officers



◆ **Supporters of jailed Algerian journalist Khaled Drareni launched an appeal on Wednesday for international pressure to secure the release of someone who has become a symbol of press freedom in the North African nation.** Drareni, 40, editor of the Casbah Tribune news site and correspondent for French-language channel TV5 Monde, was sentenced on Monday to three years in jail for "inciting an unarmed gathering" and "endangering national unity" after covering demonstrations by the Hirak protest movement.

Chinese cities find virus in Brazilian chicken wings, Ecuadorian shrimp packaging

Reuters | Beijing

Two cities in China have found traces of the new coronavirus in imported frozen food and on food packaging, local authorities said yesterday, raising fears that contaminated food shipments might cause

new outbreaks.

A sample taken from the surface of frozen chicken wings imported into the southern city of Shenzhen from Brazil, as well as samples of outer packaging of frozen Ecuadorian shrimp sold in the northwestern Xian city, have tested positive for the

virus, local authorities said yesterday.

The discoveries came a day after traces of the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 were found on the packaging of frozen shrimp from Ecuador in a city in eastern Anhui province. China has been stepping up screenings at ports

amid the concerns over food imports.

Shenzhen's health authorities traced and tested everyone who might have come into contact with potentially contaminated food products, and all results were negative, the city's notice said.

China to expand railway network

Reuters | Beijing

China plans to expand its railway network, the second largest in the world, by one-third in the next decade and a half, as part of a long-term plan to rev up urbanisation and stimulate local economies.

China aims to have about 200,000 kilometres (124,274 miles) of railway tracks by the end of 2035, including about 70,000 km of high-speed railway, according to a plan issued by state-owned China State Railway Group.

The targets compare with a total length of 141,400 km of existing rail lines as of end-July, among which 36,000 km are high-speed routes, the most in the world, company data showed.

200,000 kilometres of railway tracks is what China is aiming to build by the end of 2035

Lebanon assembly ratifies state of emergency after deadly blast



A Lebanese protester uses a tennis racket to throw projectiles during clashes with security forces in downtown Beirut

AFP | Beirut

Lebanon's parliament approved a two-week state of emergency in Beirut declared after last week's gigantic and deadly explosion that gives the army greater powers to suppress resurgent protests.

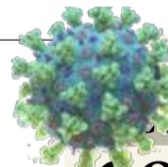
The colossal blast that killed 171 people and wounded 6,500 has reignited street protests demanding the ouster of the entire political elite, dominated by former warlords from the 1975-1990 civil war.

Dozens of demonstrators shouted as lawmakers arrived at parliament to ratify the emergency measure, but protesters were outnumbered by security forces and failed to block the MPs' cars.

Lebanese are furious at a politi-

YOU KNOW WHAT
The state of emergency allows the army to close down assembly points and prohibit gatherings deemed threats to national security

cal leadership that allowed a large shipment of hazardous ammonium nitrate fertiliser to languish for years in a port warehouse despite repeated safety warnings.



Global

COVID-19 Cases: **20,931,914**

Deaths

749,611

Recovered:

13,797,395

New cases

+134,360

New deaths

+3,205

Middle East

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases	Serious, Critical	Tot cases/1m pop
Egypt	95,963		5,085		55,901	34,977	41	936
Saudi Arabia	294,519	+1,482	3,303	+34	260,393	30,823	1,805	8,445
UAE	63,489	+277	358		57,372	5,759		6,410
Kuwait	74,486	+701	489		66,099	7,898	118	17,413
Oman	82,531	+232	551	+12	77,278	4,702	155	16,118
Qatar	113,938		190		110,627	3,121	75	40,579

Figures as of closing

Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	New deaths	Total Deaths
USA	5,377,008	+302	169,433
Brazil	3,180,758	+265	104,528
India	2,456,785	+979	48,117
Russia	907,758	+124	15,384
South Africa	568,919		11,010
Peru	498,555		21,713
Mexico	498,380	+737	54,666
Colombia	422,519		13,837
Chile	378,168		10,205
Spain	376,864		28,579
Iran	336,324	+174	19,162
UK	313,798		41,329
Saudi Arabia	294,519	+34	3,303
Pakistan	286,674	+10	6,139