

# Another fire in Beirut unnerves shattered residents

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● Fire trucks quickly doused the flames that charred a corner of the futuristic building

● France is pressing Lebanon to form a new government to tackle endemic corruption

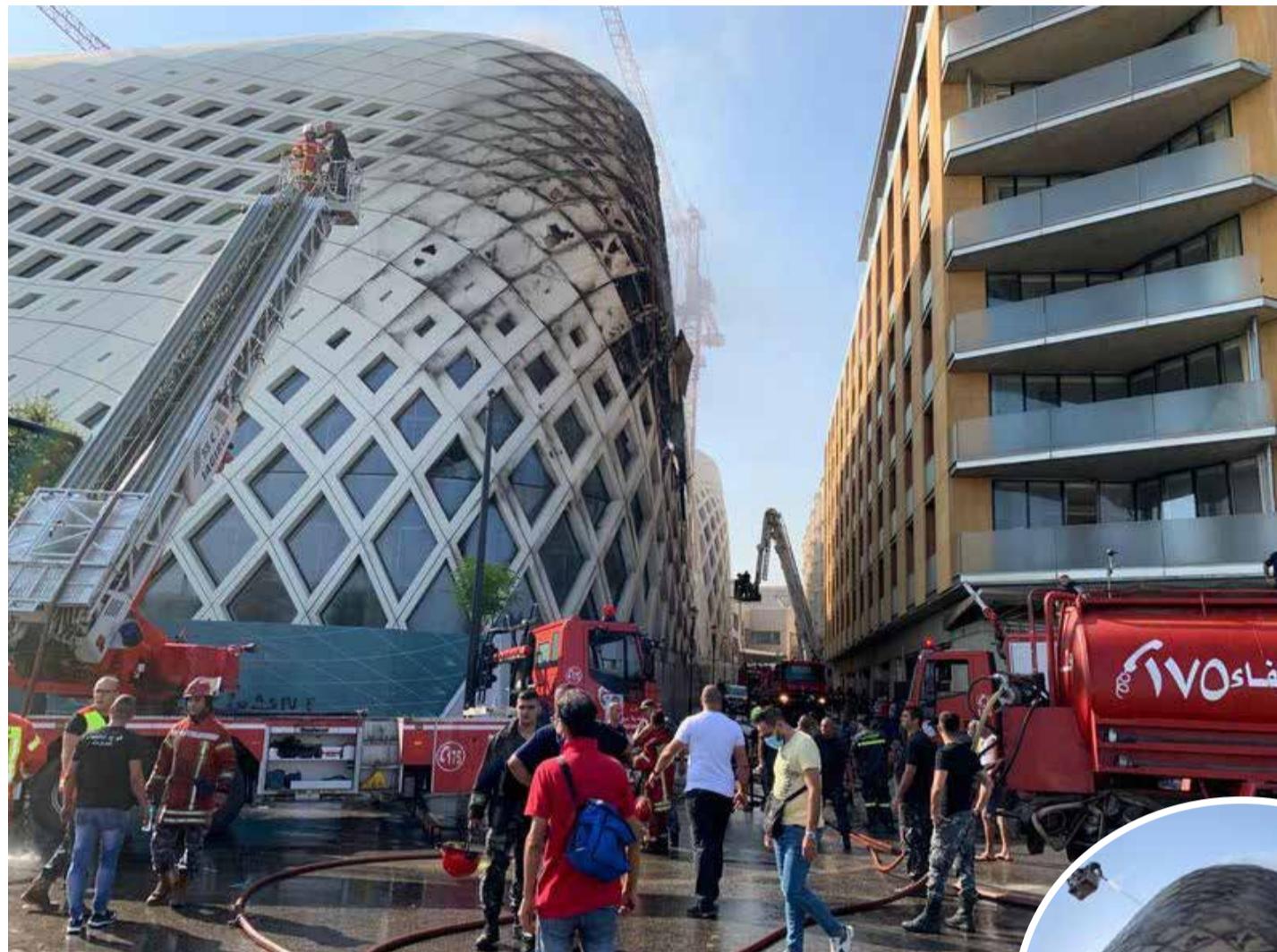
Reuters | Beirut

**A** fire erupted in a landmark building in Beirut's commercial district on Tuesday, the second blaze this month to send shudders through a capital still in shock after a massive port blast in August ripped through the Mediterranean city.

There were no immediate reports of casualties and the blaze was quickly extinguished, but it left residents exasperated in a nation that has been hammered by a deep economic crisis and which is waiting for its politicians to form a new government.

"It's terrible. It's unbelievable," said Joe Sayegh, 48, who had been on a jog through the city before coming to the scene. "Every day we have a problem."

Fire trucks quickly doused the flames that charred a corner of the futuristic building designed by the practice set up by the late



Firefighters and people gather near the site of a fire that broke out in a building in Central Beirut

The building near the seafront which has been under construction for years and its curved lines have become a prominent feature of the central commercial area rebuilt from the 1975-1990 civil war

A man uses a water hose to put out the fire

Zaha Hadid, the renowned British-Iraqi architect.

The building near the seafront which has been under construction for years and its curved lines have become a prominent feature of the central commercial area rebuilt from the 1975-1990 civil war.

During the reconstruction, skyscrapers designed by international architects have gone up and historical Ottoman-era buildings have been renovated.

But protests during an economic crisis that was caused by a mountain of debt had already driven many businesses out of the city centre and left many buildings scarred, before the Aug. 4 port blast ruined another swathe of the capital.

The government resigned after the port blast, which was blamed on highly explosive ammonium nitrate kept in poor storage conditions for years. This month, a big port fire flared up among the ruined warehouses, adding to the devastation.

France is pressing Lebanon to form a new government to tackle endemic corruption and implement reforms to unlock aid. But many Lebanese remain sceptical that Lebanon's political elite can chart a new course.

"With these people, if they are the same people, nothing will change," Sayegh said.

## Welcome to the jungle

### Plants overrun Chinese apartment blocks



With hardly any residents to care for them, the plants at Chengdu's Qiyi City Forest Garden have overrun the towers

AFP News

An experimental green housing project in a Chinese megacity promised prospective residents life in a "vertical forest", with manicured gardens on every balcony.

All 826 apartments were sold out by April this year, according to the project's estate agent, but instead of a modern eco-paradise, the towers look like the set of a desolate, post-apocalyptic film.

The problem? The mosquitoes love the plants too.

Only a handful of families have moved into Chengdu's Qiyi City Forest Garden because of an infestation, state media have reported. The project in the



The project was meant to provide residents life in a 'vertical forest'



southwestern city was built in 2018, with every private balcony designed to provide space for plants to grow, according to local media reports.

Without any tenants to care for them, the eight towers have been overrun by their own plants -- and invaded by mosquitoes.

Plants have almost entirely swallowed up some neglected

balconies, with branches hanging over railings all over the towers, footage shot this month showed.

Paper was seen taped over some of the windows that were still visible behind the overgrown plants.

Only about 10 families have moved in, according to the state-run Global Times newspaper.