

News in brief

◆ **The leader of Lebanon's biggest Christian political party said yesterday he still wanted Prime Minister-designate Saad al-Hariri to form a new government, and blamed political opponents for months of political paralysis.** Lebanon's politicians have argued over the structure of a new government since the last one quit in the aftermath of the devastating August 2020 Beirut port explosion, leaving the country adrift as it sinks deeper into economic crisis. Veteran Sunni Muslim politician Hariri was named premier for a fourth time in October, promising to form a cabinet of specialists to enact reforms needed to unlock foreign aid, but the process has stalled over nominations of ministers.



Lebanon's Christian leader says he still wants Hariri as PM

◆ **China vaccine doses pass one billion mark**



The number of Covid-19 jabs administered in China has passed the one billion mark, health officials said Sunday, more than a third of the doses given worldwide. The announcement by the National Health Commission comes after the number of shots administered globally surpassed 2.5 billion on Friday, according to an AFP count from official sources. It is unclear what percentage of China's population has now been inoculated but its vaccination drive got off to a slow start after a successful fight against the virus left little sense of urgency to get jabbed.

◆ **Taiwan said seven employees of its trade office in Hong Kong left the financial hub on Sunday after authorities there demanded they sign a pledge recognising China's sovereignty over the self-ruled island.** The move comes after both Hong Kong and Macau closed their trade offices in Taipei and as Beijing seeks to pile diplomatic and economic pressure on Taiwan. Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) said Hong Kong's government had demanded its trade office staff sign a "one China pledge", which supports Beijing's view that the island is part of its territory.

Taiwan pulls trade office staff over Hong Kong ultimatum



◆ **Forces loyal to Libya's eastern-based commander Khalifa Haftar have closed the border with Algeria, they said on Sunday, after major deployments of his forces to the south underscored his continued role despite efforts to unify the country.** Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) last week sent troops into the southern city of Sebha, which was already allied to eastern forces, and then on Saturday to a southern border crossing with Algeria. The nearly 1,000-kilometre (620 miles) border between Algeria and Libya cuts through mostly uninhabited desert and has few crossings.

Libya's Haftar closes border with Algeria



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UAE to suspend entry from three countries, Dubai updates protocols

Reuters | Cairo

The United Arab Emirates will suspend travellers from Liberia, Sierra Leone and Namibia from entering the country on national and foreign flights, effective today. The General Civil Aviation Authority said the restrictions would also include transit passengers, with the exception of transit flights travelling to the UAE and bound for those countries. Cargo flights between those countries and the UAE will continue, as usual, the statement added. It said the restrictions were

being introduced to limit the spread of COVID-19. The GCAA added that exemptions to its decision include: UAE nationals, their first-degree relatives, diplomatic missions, official delegations, business jets - after getting prior approvals - and golden and silver residency permit holders, in addition to those who work essential jobs. Those who are exempted will still have to take a PCR test at the airport and enter a mandatory 10-day quarantine. Separately, Dubai's Supreme Committee of Crisis and Disaster Management said on Saturday it would allow travellers from South Africa, who have received two doses of a UAE-approved vaccine, to enter Dubai starting from June 23, WAM said.

Travellers from India, who have valid residence visas and have received two doses of a UAE-approved vaccine, will also be allowed in the emirate. Meanwhile, travellers from Nigeria must only present a negative PCR test taken 48 hours prior to departure and will also undergo another PCR test on arrival in Dubai.

Brazil hits 500,000 'critical' situation

BBC

The number of deaths related to Covid-19 has passed 500,000 in Brazil, the second-highest in the world, as experts say the outbreak could worsen amid slow vaccination and the start of winter. The virus continues to spread as President Jair Bolsonaro refuses to back measures like social distancing. The health institute Fiocruz says the situation is "critical". Only 15% of adults are fully vaccinated. Congress is investigating the government's handling of the pandemic. President Bolsonaro has been heavily criticised for not implementing a co-ordinated national

Biden to host Israeli President Rivlin

Reuters | Washington

US President Joe Biden plans to host Israel's new president, Reuven Rivlin, at the White House on June 28, the White House said on Saturday. "President Rivlin's visit will highlight the enduring partnership between the United States and Israel and the deep ties between our governments and our people," White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki said in a statement. Rivlin will visit shortly before he is due to end his seven-year term in July.



Biden arrives on Marine One for a weekend trip to his home in Wilmington at Delaware Air National Guard Base

Isaac Herzog was elected the country's new president this month in elections that marked the end of the era of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel. The role of president is largely ceremonial but also meant to promote unity among ethnic and religious groups. The government changed after last month's fighting between Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza also touched off rare mob violence among the Jewish majority and Arab minority within Israeli cities. "President Rivlin approaches the end of his term, this visit will honor the dedication he has shown to strengthening the friendship between the two countries over the course of many years," Psaki said.

Israel's Bennett talks with Iran's Raisi

● Joe Biden wants a US return to the deal

● Bennett described Raisi's ascent as enabled by Khamenei rather than by a free and popular vote.

Reuters | Jerusalem

Israel condemned yesterday the election of hardline judge Ebrahim Raisi as Iranian president, saying his would be a "regime of brutal hangmen" with which world powers should not negotiate a new nuclear deal. Raisi, who is under US sanctions for human rights abuses, secured victory as expected on Saturday in Iran's presidential election after a contest marked by voter apathy over economic hardships and political restrictions. Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, convening his first televised cabinet session since taking office last week, described Raisi's ascent as enabled by Khamenei rather than by a free and popular vote.



Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett chairs new government in Jerusalem

COVID-19 Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths
1 USA	34,401,798	617,091
2 India	29,911,240	387,161
3 Brazil	17,883,750	500,868
4 France	5,755,496	110,724
5 Turkey	5,365,208	49,122
6 Russia	5,316,826	129,361
7 UK	4,620,968	127,970
8 Argentina	4,258,394	88,742
9 Italy	4,252,095	127,253
10 Colombia	3,917,348	99,335
11 Spain	3,757,442	80,652
12 Germany	3,729,753	90,954
13 Iran	3,095,135	82,965
14 Poland	2,878,767	74,828

Global tally

179,075,030

Deaths

3,877,769

Recovered:

163,607,989

New cases

+124,931

New deaths

+2,420

Figures as of closing

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	276,756		15,829		205,157	55,770
Saudi Arabia	474,191	+1,079	7,677	+14	455,618	10,896
UAE	612,029	+1,850	1,757	+5	591,061	19,211
Kuwait	337,371		1,862		318,419	17,090
Oman	248,043	+1,637	2,710	+27	218,841	26,492
Qatar	220,800	+107	583	+1	218,244	1,973

Israel says COVID-19 vaccines rejected by Palestinians were safe

Reuters | Jerusalem

The COVID-19 vaccines delivered by Israel and then rejected by the Palestinian Authority over their expiration date were fine, the Israeli health ministry said on Saturday. Israel and the PA on Friday announced a vaccine swap deal that would have seen Israel send up to 1.4 million doses of the vaccine made jointly by Pfizer and BioNTech to the PA in exchange for receiving a reciprocal number of doses later this year. But soon after the announcement, the PA cancelled the deal and said it had sent an initial shipment of around 90,000 doses back to Israel. The PA's Health Minister Mai Alkaila said the delivery showed a June expiration date, sooner than the July-August date that had been agreed. The "vaccine delivery transferred to the Palestinian Authority yesterday was perfectly



A Palestinian labourer who works within Israel or its settlements in the occupied West Bank, is vaccinated at an Israeli facility at Shaar Efraim crossing from Israel to the West Bank

in order," the Israeli health ministry said in a statement. The dates were known and agreed to by both parties, it said. "The vaccines delivered to the Palestinians are identical in every way to the vaccines currently being administered to Israel's citizens."

Champ Biden, Beloved 1

Huffpost

Champ, one of President Joe Biden's two dogs in the White House, has died.

The senior German shepherd "passed away peacefully at home," Biden and first lady Jill Biden said in a statement on Saturday morning.

"We love our sweet, good boy and will miss him always," the statement said.

The couple eulogized Champ's good nature and love for his family.

"Even as Champ's strength waned in his last months, when we came into a room, he would immediately pull himself up, his tail always wagging, and nuzzle us for an ear scratch or a belly rub," said the statement, which did not give a spe-



During Biden's time as vice president, Champ lived with the family at US Naval Observatory.