

News in brief

◆ **Russia on Tuesday set another record for coronavirus-related deaths over a 24-hour period**, despite efforts from authorities to slow a rampant third wave of infections. A government tally reported 780 pandemic fatalities and 24,702 new cases. Russia, the fifth worst-hit country in the world in terms of cases, has seen a wave of new infections driven by the Delta variant over recent weeks, a surge exacerbated by a slow vaccine rollout. Authorities have faced a vaccine-sceptic population, with an independent poll last week showing that 54 percent of Russians do not plan on getting a Covid-19 jab.



**Russia sets another pandemic high for virus deaths**

◆ **The Taliban do not want to battle government forces inside Afghanistan's cities**, a senior insurgent leader said Tuesday, as the militants also warned Turkey against extending its troop presence. The insurgents have swept through much of northern Afghanistan in recent weeks, and the government now holds little more than a constellation of provincial capitals that must largely be reinforced and resupplied by air. On Tuesday, the head of a Taliban commission that oversees government forces who surrender to the insurgents urged the residents of cities to reach out to them.

**Taliban say do not want to fight inside Afghanistan's cities**



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◆ **Thailand yesterday defended mixing two different Covid-19 vaccines to battle a surge in infections**, after the WHO's top scientist not backed by evidence. The kingdom is struggling to contain its latest outbreak fuelled by the highly contagious Delta variant, with cases and deaths skyrocketing and the healthcare system stretched thin. Authorities said they will mix a first dose of the Chinese-made Sinovac jab with a second dose of AstraZeneca to try and achieve a "booster" effect in six weeks instead of 12. Thailand's chief virologist Yong Poovorawan said this would be possible by combining an inactivated virus vaccine -- Sinovac -- with a viral vector vaccine such as AstraZeneca.

**Thailand defends Covid vaccine 'mix-and-match' after WHO warning**



warned it was a "dangerous trend"

◆ **Saudi Arabia will send a medical aid package to Tunisia that includes one million doses of vaccine** to help the North Africa country control the rapid spread of the COVID pandemic. Saudi Arabia joins other Arab countries in helping Tunisia, which is facing the collapse of its health care system, including Egypt, Algeria, UAE, Kuwait, Turkey and Qatar. The Saudi Press Agency said on Monday the aid also includes 190 respirators and other equipment. "We are in a catastrophic situation ... the health system has collapsed, we can only find a bed in hospitals with great difficulty," said health ministry spokesperson Nisaf Ben Alaya.

**Saudi Arabia to send one million doses of vaccine to Tunisia**

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**Greece to require vaccination or negative test at indoor restaurants**



Athens

Greece will require customers at indoor restaurants, bars and cafes to prove they have been vaccinated against COVID-19 or have tested negative within the last three days, the government announced yesterday to combat an infection surge.

Under the new regulations, which will remain in force until August, all customers at indoor bars and restaurants will have to be seated. Those dining outdoors will not require proof of vaccination or a test.

"It is crucial not to give the impression that we are losing control of the pandemic so that our tourism industry can go on and operate normally," Development Minister Adonis Georgiadis told a news conference.

"The course of Greece's economy will hinge on how well we comply with the measures and control the pandemic."

**Violence spreads**

● **Jailing of ex-president Zuma triggered initial protests**

● **Violence has broadened into protest over social injustice**

● **More than 40 killed so far in unrest**

● **Troops move in to flashpoints to help outnumbered police**

● **Shops, government buildings shut amid widespread looting**

Reuters | Johannesburg



Members of the military patrol past looted shops as the country deploys army to quell President Jacob Zuma, in Soweto, South Africa

**UNFULFILLED PROMISE**

At least 45 people have so far been killed during the unrest, 19 in Gauteng and 26 in KwaZulu-Natal, according to state and provincial authorities. Police Minister Cele put the official death toll at 10.

On the streets, protesters hurled stones and police who responded with rubber bullets, Reuters journalists said.

In Soweto, police and military



**French firm to turn grain from Lebanon port blast into compost**



Damaged grain silos at the port of the Lebanese capital Beirut, almost a year after the August 4 massive explosion that killed more than 200 people

AFP | Beirut

A French firm aims to turn tonnes of rotting grain at Beirut's devastated port into compost, the company said yesterday, nearly a year after Lebanon's worst peacetime disaster ravaged its silos.

The detonation of a huge stockpile of fertiliser at the port last August 4 killed more than 200 people and wrecked huge swathes of the capital.

Inside the port, the shockwaves pummelled through the port's silos, sending waves of imported grain spilling out.

Today, large mounds of rot-

ting grain emit an overwhelming stench, not far from the wrecks of two boats sunk in the explosion.

France's Recygroup, in partnership with Lebanese firm Mondis, is to funnel 1.3 million euros (\$1.5 million) into converting the wheat to a new use, for agriculture.

"We imagine we'll find 20,000 to 30,000 tonnes of grain. We think we can treat them within three to four months," Recygroup co-founder Christophe Deboffe said. Mondis head Marwan Rizkallah said work would start within a week.

Deboffe said they estimated half of the grain is mixed with

bits of concrete or iron, and it needs to be separated from the blast rubble using an industrial sieve.

Before the blast, the silos could hold up to 100,000 tonnes of grain in towers 48 metres (160 foot) high.

Lebanon's cash-strapped authorities have yet to start any reconstruction at the port, where only five cranes still operate from an original 16.

The international community has conditioned any cash bailout on Lebanese politicians forming a new government and enacting reforms, but a deeply divided ruling class has yet to agree on a new cabinet line-up.

**Bangladesh**

AFP | Dhaka

Bangladesh will lift its nationwide coronavirus lockdown for the country's second-biggest religious festival, the government said Tuesday, even as new infections soared to record levels.

The cabinet said all restrictions would be eased in the Muslim-majority country of 169 million people from Thursday ahead of the Eid al-Adha festival which will be celebrated from July 20 to 22 this year.

The removal of the curbs would "normalise economic activities" ahead of the celebrations, it added.

Tens of millions of people usu-

**Philippine police w**

AFP | Manila

Philippine police have won a battle for the bulge after the force dropped a requirement for officers seeking promotion to meet body fat targets, an official document showed yesterday.

Expanding waistlines have been a hefty problem among police in the Southeast Asian country for years. A 2019 study showed almost 35 percent of personnel were overweight and nearly 10 percent obese.

Rules introduced at the start of the pandemic by former police chief Debold Sinas -- who publicly acknowledged his own efforts to shed kilos through diet and exercise -- made it compulsory

**COVID-19 Countries worst affected**

Country	Total cases	Total deaths	Global tally
1 USA	34,766,952	623,044	188,253,683
2 India	30,941,863	409,503	
3 Brazil	19,106,971	534,311	Deaths
4 Russia	5,833,175	144,492	4,058,456
5 France	5,813,899	111,353	Recovered:
6 Turkey	5,486,959	50,278	172,122,839
7 UK	5,191,459	128,481	New cases
8 Argentina	4,662,937	99,255	+195,753
9 Colombia	4,530,610	113,335	New deaths
10 Italy	4,273,693	127,808	+2,812
11 Spain	3,971,124	81,020	
12 Germany	3,744,422	91,775	
13 Iran	3,417,029	86,207	
14 Poland	2,880,959	75,173	

**Middle East**

Figures as of closing

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	283,212		16,403		219,291	47,518
Saudi Arabia	503,734	+1,295	8,006	+14	484,883	10,845
UAE	653,284	+1,522	1,876	+6	631,294	20,114
Kuwait	377,364		2,136		357,256	17,972
Oman	287,054	+982	3,472	+37	260,826	22,756
Qatar	223,646	+142	599		221,549	1,498