

Daily briefing

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The world in brief

Seventy percent of **American** adults have received at least one dose of a **covid-19 vaccine**, hitting President Joe Biden's target one month later than hoped. The milestone is good news nonetheless, as the highly-transmissible Delta variant wreaks havoc among the unvaccinated. Case rates have surged in states and communities with low vaccination rates, prompting some local officials to mull mask and vaccine mandates.

Qantas furloughed 2,500 pilots, cabin crew and ground staff working on domestic routes in response to the lockdown and travel restrictions being imposed in Sydney. The Australian carrier has already idled around 6,000 staff employed on its international routes, which have been grounded since June 2020. Qantas expects the furlough to last for at least two months.

Vitaly Shishov, a **Belarusian dissident** living in exile in Ukraine, was reported missing. Mr Shishov runs an NGO that helps Belarusians fleeing President Alexander Lukashenko's regime to settle abroad. His friends say he had recently been followed. Separately Krystsina Tsimanouskaya, a Belarusian sprinter who refused to return home from the Tokyo Olympic games, was given a humanitarian visa by Poland.

Four Palestinian families threatened with eviction from the **Sheikh Jarrah** neighbourhood in East Jerusalem rejected an offer brokered by Israel's High Court to remain in their homes as "protected tenants". The deal would mean them giving up their claims to houses they have lived in for generations. Dozens face eviction after Israeli settler groups purchased land rights from Jewish families who lived there before Israel's independence in 1948.

Goldman Sachs is set to boost the pay of its junior bankers. First-year analysts will earn a starting wage of \$110,000, an increase of nearly 30%. A flurry of dealmaking activity has turbocharged fees at the investment bank—and burnout among its peons. In an internal survey, younger workers reported toiling 95 hours a week, with five hours' sleep a night.

Business surveys suggested that **Asia's economic recovery** is slowing. The Caixin/Markit manufacturing **purchasing-managers' index** for China fell from 51.3 in June to 50.3 in July; 50 is the level that separates expansion from contraction. Japan's PMI rose over the same period. But those for Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam fell, partly because of rising covid-19 case numbers.

Germany joined Israel and France in approving booster shots for elderly people and those with underlying health conditions, starting next month. Experts remain unsure if third jabs are needed, though vaccine-makers are keen to get them approved. Data from Pfizer showed

protection from symptomatic covid-19 dropped to 84%, from a peak of 96%, four to six months after its second shot.

Fact of the day: 80, the number of times that the Thames barrier has been closed since 2010 to protect London from surging tides. In the first decade after it was completed, in 1981, it was closed just ten times. [Read the full article.](#)

Today's agenda

Take to the skies: restarting international travel

From today England will allow fully vaccinated visitors from the European Union and America into the country without having to quarantine. Some Brits might not welcome throngs of tourists around Big Ben and Oxford Street during a pandemic. But restarting air travel will help the economy's recovery. And research has shown there is a way to do it safely. One study by the Mayo Clinic, an American health-care group, suggests there is a one in 10,000 chance of a passenger infected with covid-19 boarding a plane from Britain to America and a one in a million chance of transmission on board with proper testing, mask-wearing and other protections in place.

Now there is more pressure on America to reciprocate. Governments are lobbying for a reopening. Still, once people are packed up, masked up and through check-in, they might find that the long haul to a boardroom in New York is less fun than they remembered.

A region in crisis: covid-19 in South-East Asia

Senior officials from ASEAN, the ten-member club of South-East Asian states, are meeting today to discuss pressing issues facing the region. Foreign ministers are expected to select the long-awaited special envoy to [Myanmar](#), who will have the job of brokering a diplomatic resolution to the crisis engulfing the country since the coup in February.

But they will be most preoccupied by [the pandemic](#). Low vaccination rates and the rapid march through the region of more transmissible variants of covid-19 mean that almost every country is experiencing its worst wave yet. This month [Indonesia](#) surpassed India as Asia's hotspot. With oxygen supplies dwindling and hospitals overcrowded, some health-care systems are near collapse. Death rates are soaring: Indonesia, Malaysia and Myanmar were among the 20 countries with the most deaths per million people in the week to July 29th. Myanmar in particular is hoping that it will be able to tap into ASEAN's covid-19 fund. Just 3% of its population is vaccinated.

Whose house is it anyway: a verdict for Sheikh Jarrah

Today Israel's Supreme Court will rule on the possible eviction of Palestinians from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah, a neighbourhood in East Jerusalem. The families have lived there for seven decades. Unease about the court's verdict was one factor behind the violence that broke out between Israelis and Palestinians in May.

The nub of the case is land ownership. Israeli settler groups purchased the rights to the land from Jewish families who lived there before Israel's independence in 1948. Under Israeli law, Jews who can prove a title from before 1948 can claim back their properties, but no equivalent right exists for Palestinians, such as the residents of Sheikh Jarrah. Israelis and Palestinians alike are primed for further tension. If the court finds in favour of the Jewish settlers, the government may postpone any evictions, in the hope of preventing even more violence.

Rising from the ashes: Lebanon's treasures

The Archaeological Museum at the American University of Beirut, founded in 1868, is a venerable institution. Its collection contains items from across the Middle East, some dating from the early Stone Age. Its treasures survived the second world war and Lebanon's civil war between 1975 and 1990.

But on August 4th 2020, when 2,750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate exploded in a warehouse less than five kilometres away, there was nothing to be done: the force of the blast sent display cases tumbling. One vitrine contained delicate glass objects, including vessels from the Roman, Byzantine and Islamic periods.

On July 27th the British Museum in London announced that it would help to restore eight of those objects (many were unsalvageable). The work will be painstaking—the shards not only have to be positioned correctly, but require tension to return to their original shape—but will at least recuperate some of the country's cultural losses.

Summer quiz: week three

Up for another battle with our baristas in a summer quiz? For week three, we'll again serve up a daily question. On **Thursday**, your challenge will be to **give all four answers and tell us the connecting theme**. Email your responses (and include mention of your home city and country) by 1700 BST on Thursday to . We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown one winner per continent on Friday.

Monday: What is the name of the first-ever female commissioner of the Metropolitan Police?

A man, as a general rule, owes very little to what he is born with—a man is what he makes of himself.

Alexander Graham Bell