



## SpaceX capsule and NASA crew make 1st splashdown in 45 years

By **MARCIA DUNN**  
**CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP)**

— Two NASA astronauts returned to Earth on Sunday in a dramatic, retro-style splashdown, their capsule parachuting into the Gulf of Mexico to close out an unprecedented test flight by Elon Musk's SpaceX company.

It was the first splashdown by U.S. astronauts in 45 years, with the first commercially built and operated spacecraft to carry people to and from orbit. The return clears the way for another SpaceX crew launch as early as next month and possible tourist flights next year.

Test pilots Doug Hurley and Bob Behnken rode the SpaceX Dragon capsule back to Earth less than a day after departing the International Space Station and two months after blasting off from Florida. The capsule parachuted into the calm gulf waters about 40 miles off the coast of Pensacola, hundreds of miles from Tropical Storm Isaias pounding Florida's Atlantic coast.

"Welcome back to planet Earth and thanks for flying SpaceX," said Mission Control from SpaceX headquarters.

"It was truly our honor and privilege," replied Hurley.

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In this frame grab from NASA TV, the SpaceX capsule is lifted onto a ship, Sunday, Aug. 2, 2020 in the Gulf of Mexico.

Associated Press

**Continued from Front**

More than an hour after splashdown, the astronauts emerged from their capsule on the deck of a recovery ship, both signaling a thumbs-up as they headed for medical exams.

Their ride home in the capsule dubbed Endeavour was fast, bumpy and hot, at least on the outside.

The spacecraft went from a screaming orbital speed of 17,500 mph (28,000 kph) to 350 mph (560 kph) during atmospheric reentry, and finally to 15 mph (24 kph) at splashdown. Peak heating during descent was 3,500 degrees Fahrenheit (1,900 degrees Celsius). The anticipated top G forces felt by the crew: four to five times the force of Earth's gravity.

Within a half-hour of splashdown, the scorched and blistered 15-foot capsule was on board a SpaceX recovery ship with a staff of more than 40, including doctors and nurses. To keep the returning astronauts safe in the pandemic, the recovery crew quarantined for two weeks and were tested for the coronavirus.

The opening of the hatch was held up briefly by extra checks for toxic rocket fumes outside the capsule. After medical exams, the astronauts were expected to fly home to Houston for a reunion with their wives and sons. Musk was also headed to Texas to meet with them from SpaceX's Mission Control in California.

Hurley offered final thanks just before he exited the capsule. "Anybody who's touched Endeavour, you should take a moment to

just cherish the day, especially given all the things that have happened this year."

There was one unexpected problem: Once the capsule was in the water, private boaters "just made a beeline for it," and got too close, said NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine, promising to do better next time at keeping sightseers far away.

The last time NASA astronauts returned from space to water was on July 24, 1975, in the Pacific, the scene of most splashdowns, to end a joint U.S.-Soviet mission known as Apollo-Soyuz. The Mercury and Gemini crews in the early to mid-1960s parachuted into the Atlantic, while most of the later Apollo capsules hit the Pacific. The lone Russian "splashdown" was in 1976 on a partially frozen lake amid a blizzard following an aborted mission; the harrowing recovery took hours.

Gemini and Apollo astronaut Thomas Stafford — the commander of the last crew to splash down — watched the reentry on TV from his Florida home. While pleased with the crew's safe return, he wasn't overly impressed. "It's what we did over 50 years ago," he said. SpaceX made history with this mission, which launched May 30 from NASA's Kennedy Space Center. It was the first time a private company launched people into orbit and also the first launch of NASA astronauts from home turf in nearly a decade. Hurley came full circle, serving as pilot of NASA's last space shuttle



**Astronauts Doug Hurley and Bob Behnken prepare to return to earth on a SpaceX capsule, Sunday Aug. 2, 2020.**

**Associated Press**

flight in 2011 and the commander of this SpaceX flight.

President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence, who both watched the launch in Florida, sent congratulations..

"Great to have NASA Astronauts return to Earth after very successful two month mission. Thank you to all!" Trump tweeted.

NASA turned to SpaceX and also Boeing to build capsules and ferry astronauts to and from the space station, following the retirement of the shuttles. Until Hurley and Behnken rocketed into orbit, NASA astronauts relied on Russian rockets. SpaceX already had experience hauling cargo to the space station, bringing those capsules back to a Pacific splashdown.

"This is the next era in human

spaceflight where NASA gets to be the customer," Bridenstine said from Johnson Space Center in Houston shortly before the astronauts' splashdown.

At a press briefing later, Gwynne Shotwell, president of SpaceX called the mission a springboard to "doing even harder things," like collaborating on astronaut flights to the moon and then Mars.

"It was an enormous relief after months of anxiety making sure we could bring Bob and Doug back home safely," Shotwell said.

SpaceX needs six weeks to inspect the capsule before launching the next crew around the end of September. This next mission of four astronauts will spend a full six months aboard the space station. Hurley and Behnken's capsule will be refurbished for another

flight next spring. A Houston company run by a former NASA official, meanwhile, has partnered with SpaceX to send three customers to the space station in fall 2021.

Boeing doesn't expect to launch its first crew until next year. The company encountered significant software problems in the debut of its Starliner capsule, with no one aboard, last year. Its capsules will touch down in the U.S. Southwest desert.

By beating Boeing, SpaceX laid claim to a small U.S. flag left at the space station by Hurley and the rest of the last shuttle crew. Musk tweeted his congratulations and a flag emoji followed by "returned."

Also on board: a toy dinosaur named Tremor, sent into space by the astronauts' young sons. □

## U.S. Marshals put Fyre Festival merchandise up for auction



**In this March 6, 2018 file photo, Billy McFarland, the promoter of the failed Fyre Festival in the Bahamas, leaves federal court after pleading guilty to wire fraud charges in New York.**

**Associated Press**

**NEW YORK (AP)** — More than three years after the highly publicized Fyre Festival famously fizzled out in the Bahamas, merchandise and other "minor assets" are up for sale — courtesy of the U.S. Marshals Service.

In a release Thursday, the U.S. Marshals announced that 126 items from the festival will be auctioned off, with proceeds going toward the victims of Billy McFarland.

McFarland acknowledged defrauding investors of \$26

million in the 2017 Fyre Festival and over \$100,000 in a fraudulent ticket-selling scheme after his arrest in the scam. He was sentenced to six years in prison in October 2018. Now 28, he's serving his sentence at a low-security prison in Ohio, according to the Bureau of Prisons. "This Fyre Festival-branded clothing and other items that were seized from Billy McFarland were originally intended to be sold at the Fyre Festival itself but were kept by Mc-

Farland, with the intent to sell the items and use the funds to commit further criminal acts while he was on pre-trial release," U.S. Marshal Ralph Sozio of the Southern District of New York said in the release.

Among the mementos of that festival are sweatpants, shirts and tokens emblazoned with "a conspiracy to change the entertainment world." The auction, run by Texas-based Gaston & Sheehan, ends Aug. 13. □

# Pompeo says Trump to take broad action on Chinese software

By **CATHY BUSSEWITZ**  
AP Business Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — President Donald Trump plans to take action on a what he sees as a broad array of national security risks presented by software connected to the Chinese Communist Party, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Sunday. Pompeo's remarks followed reports that Microsoft is in advanced talks to buy the U.S. operations of TikTok, which has been a source of national security and censorship concerns for the Trump administration.

"These Chinese software companies doing business in the United States, whether it's TikTok or WeChat — there are countless more ... are feeding data directly to the Chinese Communist Party, their national security apparatus," Pompeo said on Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures." "Could be their facial recognition patterns. It could be information about their residence, their phone numbers, their friends, who they're connected to. Those — those are the issues that President Trump has made clear we're going to take care of," he said. TikTok's U.S. user data is stored in the U.S., with strict



A man wearing a shirt promoting TikTok is seen at an Apple store in Beijing on Friday, July 17, 2020. Associated Press

controls on employee access, and its biggest investors come from the U.S., the company said Sunday. "We are committed to protecting our users' privacy and safety as we continue working to bring joy to families and meaningful careers to those who create on our platform," a TikTok spokesperson said.

Trump had said on Friday that he would soon ban TikTok in the United States. A federal committee is reviewing whether that's

possible, and its members agree that TikTok cannot remain in the U.S. in its current form, because it "risks sending back information on 100 million Americans," said Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin.

"We all agree there has to be a change ... everybody agrees it can't exist as it does," Mnuchin said Sunday on ABC's "This Week."

As speculation grew over a ban or sale of the social media's U.S. business, TikTok posted a video on Saturday

saying: "We're not planning on going anywhere."

TikTok's catchy videos and ease of use has made it popular, and it says it has tens of millions of users in the U.S. and hundreds of millions globally. Its parent company, ByteDance Ltd., launched TikTok in 2017. It bought Musical.ly, a video service popular with teens in the U.S. and Europe, and combined the two. It has a similar service, Douyin, for users in China.

But TikTok's Chinese own-

ership has raised concern about the potential for sharing user data with Chinese officials as well as censorship of videos critical of the Chinese government. TikTok says it does not censor videos and it would not give the Chinese government access to U.S. user data.

"The President, when he makes his decision, will make sure that everything we have done drives us as close to zero risk for the American people," Pompeo said. "That's the mission set that he laid out for all of us when we get — we began to evaluate this now several months back. We're closing in on a solution. And I think you will see the president's announcement shortly."

The debate over TikTok parallels a broader U.S. security crackdown on Chinese companies, including telecom providers Huawei and ZTE. The Trump administration has ordered that the U.S. stop buying equipment from those providers to be used in U.S. networks. Trump has also tried to steer allies away from Huawei over concerns that the Chinese government has access to its data, which Huawei denies. □

# RNC: Decision on private Trump renomination vote not final



President Donald Trump steps off Air Force One at Andrews Air Force Base, Md., Friday, July 31, 2020.

Associated Press

By **KEVIN FREKING**  
Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The vote to renominate President Donald Trump is set

to be conducted in private later this month, without members of the press present, a spokeswoman for the Republican National

Convention said on Saturday, citing the coronavirus. However, a Republican National Committee official contradicted that assessment Sunday, emphasizing that no final decisions have been made and that logistics and press coverage options were still being evaluated. The official was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

While Trump called off the public components of the convention in Florida last month, citing spiking cases of the virus across the country, 336 delegates are scheduled to gather in Charlotte, North Carolina, on Aug. 24 to formally vote to make Trump the GOP standard-bearer once

more. Nominating conventions are traditionally meant to be media bonanzas, as political parties seek to leverage the attention the events draw to spread their message to as many voters as possible.

If the GOP decision stands, it will be the first party nominating convention in modern history to be closed to reporters.

"Given the health restrictions and limitations in place within the state of North Carolina, we are planning for the Charlotte activities to be closed press Friday, August 21 — Monday, August 24," a convention spokeswoman said. "We are happy to let you know if this changes, but we are working within the

parameters set before us by state and local guidelines regarding the number of people who can attend events."

The decision was first reported by the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.

Privately some GOP delegations have raised logistical issues with traveling to either city, citing the increasing number of jurisdictions imposing mandatory quarantine orders on travelers returning from states experiencing surges in the virus.

The subset of delegates in Charlotte will be casting proxy votes on behalf of the more than 2,500 official delegates to the convention. Alternate delegates and guests have already been prohibited. □

# Israel's Netanyahu rails at media over protests against him

By TIA GOLDENBERG

**TEL AVIV, Israel (AP)** — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday railed at swelling protests against his rule, saying they were egged on by a biased media that distorts facts and cheers on the demonstrators.

Netanyahu has faced a wave of protests in recent weeks, with demonstrators calling for the resignation of the long-serving leader, who is on trial for corruption charges. They've also panned his handling of the coronavirus crisis. Netanyahu has painted the protests as dens of "anarchists" and "leftists" out to topple "a strong right-wing leader." The protests have largely been peaceful. In some cases they have ended with clashes between demonstrators and police. In others, small gangs of Netanyahu supporters and individuals affiliated with far-right groups have assaulted demonstrators.

In a six-minute rant at a meeting of his Cabinet, Netanyahu slammed the media for "inflaming" the protests and for misrepresenting incidents of violence against the protesters.

"There has never been such a distorted mobilization — I wanted to say Soviet but it has already reached North Korean terms — of the media in favor of the protests,"



Protesters block a main road during a protest against Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu outside his residence in Jerusalem, early Sunday, Aug 2, 2020.

Associated Press

he said.

Netanyahu said the media ignored "wild and unfettered incitement, including daily calls — including the day before yesterday — to murder the prime minister and his family."

He said the protests were breeding grounds for the virus that were being allowed to take place with no limits, shutting down streets and neighborhoods. He said right-wing protests have not been given such free rein.

He condemned violence "from all sides" at the start

of his remarks before tearing into the media he has long viewed as hostile toward him.

Also at the Cabinet meeting, Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz, who is the country's "alternate" prime minister under a power-sharing deal, said the protests must be allowed to take place with demonstrators shielded from violence.

"The right to protest is the lifeblood of democracy and violence is the erosion of the foundation of democracy," he said.

Netanyahu's tirade came as a Jerusalem court ruled that his son Yair Netanyahu must remove a tweet that published the names, addresses and phone numbers of prominent protesters and called for his followers to demonstrate outside their homes "day and night." Protesters said they received threatening calls after the tweet. The court also decided he must "refrain from harassing" the protesters for six months. "Turns out that in our 'democracy' you aren't allowed to protest outside the

homes of anarchists who have called to for the prime minister's murder," tweeted Yair Netanyahu after the ruling. The 28-year-old has emerged as a driving force in a counterattack against his father's critics.

Throughout the summer, thousands of Israelis have taken to the streets, calling for Netanyahu to resign, protesting his handling of the country's coronavirus crisis and saying he should not remain in office while on trial. Though Netanyahu has tried to play down the protests, the twice-a-week gatherings show no signs of slowing, and Saturday night's Jerusalem gathering drew more than 10,000 people.

The rallies against Netanyahu are the largest Israel has seen since 2011 protests over the country's high cost of living.

After moving quickly to contain the virus last spring, many believe Israel reopened its economy too quickly, leading to a surge in cases. The country is now coping with record levels of coronavirus, while unemployment has surged to over 20%.

Netanyahu faces charges of fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in a series of scandals involving wealthy associates and media moguls. He denies wrongdoing. □

# France starts testing travelers from 16 nations for virus

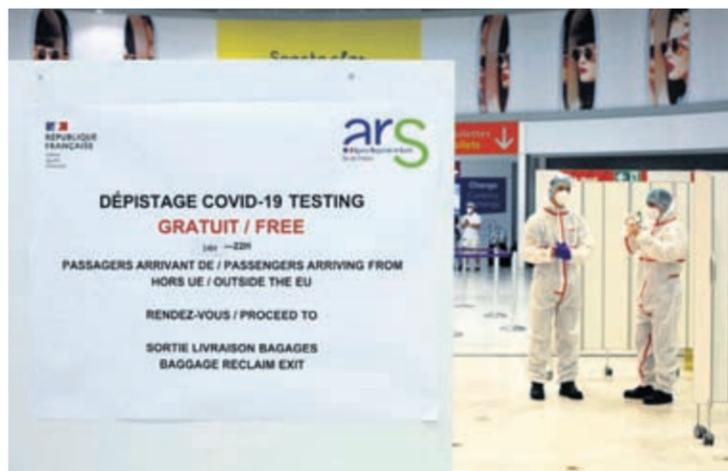
**PARIS (AP)** — Travelers entering France from 16 countries where the coronavirus is circulating widely now must undergo virus tests upon arrival at French airports and ports.

French Prime Minister Jean Castex announced last month that the tests would be required starting Aug. 1 for passengers France is allowing in from a list of approved countries unless they present proof of a negative test done within 72 hours of their departure. Those who test positive in France as of Saturday must quarantine for 14 days. France is not permitting general travel to and from

the 16 countries, which include the United States and Brazil. The testing requirement therefore only applies to people entering under limited circumstances: French citizens who live in these countries or citizens of these countries with an established residence in France.

Daniel Court was tested at Paris-Charles de Gaulle Airport after coming in from the French Riviera city of Nice. He acknowledged not loving the experience. "It's very fast, but I have to say that it's not very pleasant," he said. "But we have to do it."

Another passenger who



Health workers wait to test passengers with the COVID-19 test, at the Roissy Charles de Gaulle airport, outside Paris, Saturday, Aug. 1, 2020.

Associated Press

got tested after landing at Paris' main airport, Nadia Vusik of Belarus, said she

thought the new policy made sense. "It is definitely necessary, and I am happy

that in France it is possible to do right here. It's very convenient," she said.

French health authorities say the number of daily confirmed COVID-19 cases has jumped on the French mainland in recent weeks. The government has already made mask-wearing mandatory in all indoor public spaces.

France has had over 225,000 confirmed infections and over 30,200 virus-related deaths, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University, but experts say all numbers in the pandemic are too low for various reasons, including limited testing and missed cases. □

# Islamic State gunmen, suicide bomber attack Afghan prison

By **RAHIM FAIEZ**

**KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)** —

The Islamic State group on Sunday claimed responsibility for a complex attack by a suicide car bomber and multiple gunmen against a prison in eastern Afghanistan, which Afghan officials said killed at least three people and injured 24 others.

The hourslong gunbattle between Afghan security forces and insurgents in Jalalabad, the capital of Nangarhar province, was still ongoing Sunday evening, and casualties were likely to rise, according to Attaullah Khogyani, spokesman for the provincial governor.

Tariq Arian, spokesman for the Interior Ministry, said at least three people were killed, while Zahir Adil, the spokesman for the provincial Health Ministry, provided the figure of 24 wounded.

The Islamic State affiliate in Afghanistan, known as IS in Khorasan province, claimed responsibility for the attack. The IS affiliate is headquartered in Nangarhar province.

Sunday's attack comes a day after the Afghan intelligence agency said a senior IS commander was



**A wounded man receives treatment at a hospital after a suicide car bomb and multiple gunmen attack in the city of Jalalabad, east of Kabul, Afghanistan, Sunday, Aug. 2, 2020.**

**Associated Press**

killed by Afghan special forces near Jalalabad.

The Taliban's political spokesman Suhail Shaheen told The Associated Press, "We have a cease-fire and are not involved in any of these attacks anywhere in the country," but said he was not aware of the details of the Jalalabad attack.

The Taliban declared a three-day cease-fire starting Friday for the major Muslim holiday of Eid al-

Adha.

The Taliban had also denied involvement in a suicide bombing in the eastern Logar province late Thursday, which killed at least nine people and wounded at least 40, authorities said.

Afghanistan has seen a recent spike in violence, with most attacks claimed by the local IS affiliate.

A United Nations report last month estimated there are around 2,200 IS members

in Afghanistan, and that while the group is in "territorial retreat" and its leadership has been depleted, it "remains capable of carrying out high-profile attacks in various parts of the country, including Kabul."

Efforts to get peace talks underway between the Taliban and the Kabul government have stalled after the Taliban and the U.S. signed a deal in February, seen as a blueprint to ending Afghanistan's decades

of war.

That deal was struck to allow the U.S. to end its 19-year involvement in Afghanistan, and calls on the Taliban to guarantee its territory will not be used by terrorist groups. The deal is also expected to guarantee the Taliban's all-out participation in the fight against IS.

Still, a United Nations report last week said Afghanistan saw a 13% drop in the number of civilians killed and wounded in violence across the country in the first six months of the year, compared to the same period last year.

The report credited the drop in casualties in part to the reduction of operations by international forces — which now only act when called upon and in support of the Afghan forces — and also to a decrease in the number of attacks by IS.

The report said the U.N. had recorded 17 attacks by IS that caused civilian casualties during the first six months of 2020, down from 97 attacks in the same period last year. Overall, the U.N. said 1,282 people were killed in violence in the first six months of 2020 in Afghanistan and 2,176 were wounded. □

# Ethiopians celebrate progress in building dam on Nile River



**Ethiopians celebrate the progress made on the Nile dam, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Sunday Aug. 2, 2020.**

**Associated Press**

**ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (AP)**

— Ethiopians in the capital are celebrating progress in the construction of the country's dam on the Nile River, which has caused regional controversy over its

filling.

In joyful demonstrations urged by posts on social media and apparently endorsed by the government, tens of thousands of residents flooded the streets

of the capital Addis Ababa on Sunday afternoon, waving Ethiopia's flag and holding up posters. People in cars honked their horns, others whistled, played loud music, and danced in public spaces to mark the occasion. Similar events were held in other cities in Ethiopia. Ethiopia's Deputy Prime Minister, Demeke Mekonnen, called on the public to rally behind the dam and support the completion of its construction.

"Today is a date in which we celebrate the beginning of the final chapter in our dam's construction," Demeke told scores of people who gathered at a hall in the capital. "We want the construction to complete soon and began solving our problems once

and for all." Hashtags like #ItsMyDam, #EthiopiaNileRights and #GERD are also trending among Ethiopian social media users. Ethiopians around the world contributed to the festivities on social media. Sunday's celebration, called "One voice for our dam," came after Ethiopian officials announced on July 22 that the first stage of filling the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam's reservoir was achieved due to heavy rains. Officials in the East African nation say they hope the \$4.6 billion dam, fully financed by Ethiopia itself, will reach full power generating capacity in 2023.

With 74% of the construction completed, the dam has been contentious for years and raised tensions

with neighboring countries. Ethiopia says the dam will provide electricity to millions of its nearly 110 million citizens and help them out of poverty. The dam should also make Ethiopia a major power exporter. Downstream Egypt, which depends on the Nile River to supply its farmers and booming population of 100 million with fresh water, asserts that the dam poses it an existential threat. Sudan, between the two countries, is also concerned about its access to the Nile waters. Negotiators have said key questions remain about how much water Ethiopia will release downstream if a multi-year drought occurs and how the countries will resolve any future disputes. □

# Scientists study coronavirus outbreaks among minks in Europe

By ARITZ PARRA and MIKE CORDER

**MADRID (AP)** — Coronavirus outbreaks at mink farms in Spain and the Netherlands have scientists digging into how the animals got infected and if they can spread it to people.

In the meantime, authorities have killed more than 1 million minks at breeding farms in both countries as a precaution.

The virus that first infected people in China late last year came from an animal source, probably bats, and later spread from person to person, as other coronaviruses had done in the past. Some animals, including cats, tigers and dogs, have picked up the new coronavirus from people, but there hasn't been a documented case of animals spreading it back to humans.

The outbreaks among the minks on farms in the Netherlands and Spain likely started with infected workers, although officials aren't certain. But it also is "plausible" that some workers later caught the virus back from the minks, the Dutch government and a researcher said, and scientists are exploring whether that was the case and how much of a threat such a spread might be.

The outbreak at the Spanish mink farm near La Puebla de Valverde, a village of 500 people, was discovered after seven of the 14 employees, including the owner, tested positive in late May, said Joaquín Oloña, regional chief of agriculture and environment. Two other employees got infected even after the operation was shut down.

More than 92,000 minks were ordered killed at the farm in the Aragon region of northeastern Spain, with nine out of 10 animals estimated to have contracted the virus.

After the Dutch outbreaks began in April, professor Wim van der Poel, a veterinarian who studies viruses at Wageningen University and Research, determined that the virus strain in the animals was similar to the one circulating among hu-



In this Dec. 6, 2012, file photo, minks look out of a cage at a fur farm in the village of Litusovo, northeast of Minsk, Belarus.

Associated Press

mans.

"We assumed it was possible that it would be transmitted back to people again," the virus expert said, and that's what appeared to have happened with at least two of the infected workers.

Richard Ostfeld, a researcher at the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies in Millbrook, New York, said that if confirmed, these would be the first known instances of animal-to-human transmission.

"With the evidence for farmed mink-to-human transmission, we definitely need to be concerned with the potential for domesticated animals that are infected to pass on their infection to us," Ostfeld said by email.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says some coronaviruses

that infect animals can be spread to humans and then spread between people, but it adds that this is rare.

Both the World Health Organization and the Paris-based World Organisation for Animal Health are studying the transmission of the virus between animals and people. Several universities and research institutes also are examining the issue.

The WHO has noted that the transmission on the mink breeding farms could have happened both ways. But WHO's Dr. Maria Van Kerkhove said at a news conference last month that such transmission was "very limited."

"This gives us some clues about which animals may be susceptible to infection and this will help us as we learn more about the potential animal reservoir of

(the virus)," she said, referring to cases in the Netherlands and Denmark, another major producer of mink fur.

While scientists think the virus originated in bats, it may have passed through another animal before infecting people. A WHO team is currently in China, planning to study the issue. More than 1.1 million minks have been killed on 26 Dutch farms that recorded outbreaks, according to the Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority. The government announced Thursday that minks at a 27th farm also were infected and would be killed.

The Netherlands, which has some 160 mink farms, is the world's fourth-biggest producer of the prized fur after Denmark, China and Poland, according to Wim

Verhagen, director of the Dutch federation of fur farmers. Spain has 38 active mink breeding operations, most of them in northwestern Galicia.

Both Spain and the Netherlands have tightened hygiene protocols at mink farms and banned transportation of the animals and visits to the buildings where they are kept.

China, which produces about a third of the mink fur market, and the United States have not reported any virus outbreaks in minks or in animals at other farms. □

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# Champagne losing its fizz as global pandemic clobbers sales

By **THOMAS ADAMSON**  
**REIMS, France (AP)** —

Champagne is losing its fizz. For months, lockdown put the cork on weddings, dining out, parties and international travel — all key sales components for the French luxury wine marketed for decades as a sparkling must at any celebration.

Producers in France's eastern Champagne region, headquarters of the global industry, say they've lost an estimated 1.7 billion euros (\$2 billion) in sales for this year, as turnover fell by a third — a hammering unmatched in living memory, and worse than the Great Depression.

They expect about 100 million bottles to be languishing unsold in their cellars by the end of the year.

"We are experiencing a crisis that we evaluate to be even worse than the Great Depression" of 1929, said Thibaut Le Mailloux of the Champagne Committee, known by its French acronym CIVC, that represents some 16,000 winemakers.

Recognizing the urgency of the problem, the CIVC is launching unprecedented damage-limitation measures. Like oil-producing countries, the committee regulates the size of the harvest each year to avoid the kind of excess production that would cause bottle prices to plummet. At a meeting scheduled for Aug. 18, it's expected to impose a cap so tight that record quantities of grapes will be destroyed or sold to distilleries at discounted prices.

The prospect alarms smaller producers, who are more vulnerable than the big houses.

Anselme Selosse, of Jacques Selosse Champagnes, called it "an in-



Champagne bottles for tasters are displayed in the cave of Champagne producer Anselme Selosse in Avize, in the Champagne region, east of Paris, Tuesday, July 28, 2020.

Associated Press

sult to nature" that champagne's famous grapes might even be destined to produce alcohol for hand sanitizer, as is happening in other wine-producing regions such as Alsace after demand spiked during the pandemic.

"We are to destroy (the grapes) and we pay for them to be destroyed," Selosse said, referring to the industry as a whole. "It's nothing but a catastrophe."

"Champagne has never lived through anything like this before, even in the World Wars," Selosse added. "We have never experienced ... a sudden one-third fall in sales. Over one hundred million bottles unsold."

Major producers such as

Vranken-Pommery predict that the crisis could last for years.

"It should not be forgotten that (champagne) has lived through every single war," said Paul-Francois Vranken, founder of Vranken-Pommery Monopole. "But with the other crises, there was a way out. For

now, there is no way out — unless we find a vaccine."

Vranken said the very essence of champagne marketing — as a drink quaffed at parties and weddings — needs to be re-evaluated to reflect the new normal: Fewer festivities and a lack of celebratory group events. The new branding

strategy for his, and other champagne companies, will seek to highlight the wine's status as a naturally, and often organically, produced quality drink from a historic French region.

"Even if the bars and the nightclubs are closed for five years, we don't plan on missing out on customers ... There will be a very big change to our marketing that highlights the grandeur of our wines," Vranken said.

Selosse, who produces many "natural" champagnes with no added sugar, also hopes the pandemic will encourage thought about future champagne marketing and how the multi-billion dollar industry is restructured. He would like to see a more cooperative side to production, such as "communal wine presses" to help pool the costs for smaller producers.

Selosse said adaptability has served champagne well in the past, helping it evolve from a dessert wine in the 19th century to the modern day dry version named "brut."

He even thinks — but this is a minority view among producers — the industry could move away from effervescence and be able to produce all sorts of wine, as it did in the past: red, white or still.

In fact, literally no fizz. □



View of the Champagne vineyards in Avize, in the Champagne region, east of Paris, Tuesday, July 28, 2020.

Associated Press

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## Azure Beach Residences opens second tower

**EAGLE BEACH — Azure Beach Residences speaks for itself the moment you set foot on the place. The luxurious real estate has all ingredients to offer you a 5-star-de-luxe plate. Located right on the beach, offering a blend between your own condominium with advantages and experience of a hotel and all amenities that belong to a spot in heaven.**

Aruba Today was present during the opening of the second tower of the residence last week. We were delighted to talk to a wonderful couple from New York, Esteban Marquez and his wife. "We love the condo we have purchased at Azure. We are planning on retirement five years from now, we are from New York. This is excellent, we are very happy with our choice and we love the island." Happy owners on a

happy island, it sounds like music to his ears says Alberto Perret-Gentil, Vice-president of operations at Azure Beach Residences. "Today we are having the grand opening of Tower II of Azure Beach Residences. We see that there is a new trend of people wanting to work from their second home, their vacation condo. Our island is blessed with the perfect beaches and climate, it is very safe and –many do not know this- it has the best internet in the Caribbean." During the COVID-19 crisis Pering Group, also the developer of Harbour House Aruba, stayed connected to their market and was able to capture all those people staying home at that time. "And now we are here to meet our brokers, showing our new projects and new financial ideas. We are very optimistic. This is going to be the best semester in sales in our 20 years on Aruba," Perret-Gentil states.



Tower 1 of Azure Beach Residences has 45 units on the northern and southern corner and is practically sold out. The residence offers two units at the upper level of the Clubhouse which has on the ground level the restaurant and the lobby and on the upper level the gym, area for grill and a pool table. Tower 2 offers 60 units with studios, 1-bedroom, 2-bedroom, 3-bedroom units and 3- bedroom penthouses at the 8th floor. For more information you can visit the website [www.azure-aruba.com](http://www.azure-aruba.com).



**Alberto Perret-Gentil, Vice-president of operations**

Harbour House Aruba is another project of this group offering 94 condominiums in Oranjestad, just in front of the Renaissance Mall. More information can be found at: [www.harbour-housearuba.com](http://www.harbour-housearuba.com). □

## Aruba to me is ....



**ORANJESTAD — Aruba Today welcomes readers to participate in our newspaper. Now that we are open to visitors again after the three months of lockdown we are all ears to hear about you. How do you feel to be back or maybe this is your first time in Aruba? Let us know! Send us a picture and tell us about your experience because we love to share this with our readers.**

### What do you do?

It's easy. Mail us your vacation picture(s) together with completing the sentence: Aruba to me is ..... (Email: [news@arubatoday.com](mailto:news@arubatoday.com)) and we will publish this in our newspaper. This for sure is a great vacation memory to take home with you.

For today's newspaper we received some great pictures from **Carol and Jamie Robinson**.

They say:

"Aruba to me is our heaven on Earth! We have been coming to Aruba for 20 years. It is the one vacation our family will not miss. It is our family tradition. From 1999 to 2020 we have enjoyed gorgeous weather and beaches, fabulous food and entertainment, and quality family time. We have increased from a one week vacation to a month. It's never long enough!

Counting the days until we see you again." □

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**Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA):**

**World Breastfeeding Week 2020: Support Breastfeeding for a Healthier Planet**

**PORT-OF-SPAIN, TRINIDAD & TOBAGO — In the Caribbean, breastfeeding initiation within the first hour of birth is fairly high, however, continued exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months is low at approximately 39%. The benefits of breastfeeding are tremendous for both mother and baby. Breast milk, which is specially designed to meet the health needs of a growing baby, provides protection against infections and illness, including ear infections, diarrhea, and pneumonia.**

This nutrient-rich product is the first line of a baby's defense against infections. Packed with many properties, breast milk is ultimately the best source of nutrition for a new baby. Antibodies protect against allergy and infection, and Vitamin A prevents eye disease. As the baby's first immunity it also helps prevent jaundice and contains fats that are necessary for brain development. Breastfeeding can also help to prevent childhood obesity and maternal obesity, which are important risk factors for Type 2 diabetes. If we are to reduce the prevalence of childhood obesity and other non-communicable diseases (NCDs) later in life, mothers should try to feed their babies exclusively on breast milk for the first six months of life. Ending breastfeeding too early and introducing other foods into baby's diet at the wrong time, remain one of the greatest threats to a child's health. Breastfeeding provides a healthy, non-polluting, sustainable and natural source of nutrition, and also provides a great way for mothers to bond with their babies. Costing far less than an artificial product, very little is wasted as baby stops feeding when satisfied, once correctly positioned and attached. Breastfeeding also has health benefits for the mother. Mothers who breastfeed have lower rates of breast cancer, ovarian cancer, Type 2 diabetes, and high blood pressure. This year's theme for World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) 'Support Breastfeeding for a Healthier Planet' is aligned with United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 3 – Good Health and Well-being. This theme focuses on the impact of infant feeding on the environment in this era of climate change and the importance of promoting, protecting and supporting breastfeeding to ensure and maintain good health. This is in keeping with the Caribbean Public Health Agency's life course approach for the prevention of NCDs of which breastfeeding is a key factor. In recognition of WBW, CARPHA encourages mothers to see breastfeeding as the optimal feeding method for infants from the first hour of their birth, to at least six months after, with continued breastfeeding up to age two or beyond along with complementary food. During this COVID-19 pandemic, it is only natural for new mothers or expectant mothers to have concerns about their breast milk, breastfeeding and transmitting the virus to their babies. There is no evidence to date of COVID-19 presence in breast milk or transmission via breast milk. Because of the benefits of breast milk and breastfeeding, and the negative effects of stopping it, it is recommended that mothers continue to breastfeed. Breastfeeding continues to protect baby against death and morbidity throughout infancy and beyond due to the anti-infective properties of breast milk, including colostrum, and the long-lasting transfer of immunological competence and memory. Standard feeding guidelines should continue

with appropriate precautions for infection, prevention and control. Protocols and guidelines for standard infant feeding should be adhered to for mothers with suspected, probable or confirmed COVID-19 infection. As with all confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases, symptomatic mothers who are breastfeeding or practicing skin to skin contact should practice respiratory hygiene during feeding (e.g. wearing a mask), perform hand hygiene before and after contact with the child, and routinely clean and disinfect surfaces which the mother has been in contact. Trained health professionals should also provide appropriate support to mothers in maternity facilities to initiate breastfeeding and to assist with common breastfeeding difficulties. In situations when severe illness in a mother due to COVID-19 or other complications prevent her from caring for her infant or prevent her from continuing direct breastfeeding, mothers should be encouraged and supported to express milk, and safely provide breast milk to the infant, while applying appropriate infection prevention and control measures. It is advised that maternity facilities continue to adhere to the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding and Baby Friendly status. Mothers and infants should be enabled to remain together and practice skin-to-skin contact, and to remain together and to practice rooming-in throughout the day and night, especially immediately after birth during establishment of breastfeeding, whether they or their infants have suspected, probable or confirmed COVID-19 virus infection. The World Health Organization (WHO) Global Strategy on Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices aims to renew efforts to promote, protect and support appropriate infant and young child feeding. Based on this strategy, governments are asked to develop and implement comprehensive policies on infant and young child feeding of which the implementation of the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) is important. CARPHA supports breastfeeding which can be seen as a long-term strategy for a more productive and healthier Region. CARPHA has supported its Member States in numerous activities related to breastfeeding. These include technical support for the development of National Infant and Young Child Feeding Policies; Hospital Breastfeeding Policies; and National Food and Nutrition Security Policies. Additionally, the Agency has provided technical support to the development of Child Clinic and Take-Home Records and assessed the growth and development of children in CARPHA Member States: this involved observations at Health Centres and the review of the Clinic Records. CARPHA led training in the WHO/UNICEF 40 Hour Breastfeeding Counselling Course; and training of Health Professionals in the 20-Hour Course for BFHI implementation and certification. The Agency is also part of the Assessment Team for Baby Friendly Status of the Region's Hospitals. The agency has developed interim guidelines for anyone involved in the care and management of newborns and pregnant or nursing women suspected or confirmed cases with coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The Interim Guidance for Management of Pregnant Women and Newborns with Coronavirus Disease which is based on currently available scientific evidence and expert opinion, can be found on CARPHA's dedicated COVID-19 website <https://www.carpha.org/What-We-Do/Public-Health/Novel-Coronavirus>. □