

News in brief

France halts joint army operations with Malian forces over coup

◆ France said it was suspending



its joint military operations with local troops in Mali as part of efforts to pressure the military junta there to restore a civilian-led government. Mali's military arrested interim President Bah Ndaw and Prime Minister Moctar Ouane last week and pressured them to resign, derailing a transition to democratic elections after another military coup last August.

◆ The Canadian government said it would direct more resources to

Canada vows action on violence against indigenous women

First Nations police and address systemic racism in the justice system and law enforcement to tackle violence against indigenous women, but gave no time frame for achieving its "transformative changes." The government vowed to give indigenous communities more control over some social services and improve access to health care. Its plan comes two years after a report into the deaths of more than 1,000 aboriginal women and girls in recent decades called it a national genocide.



Brazilian army exonerates general criticized for appearance with Bolsonaro

◆ Eduardo Pazuella, a Brazilian



army general who ranked feathers among many officials and fellow military officials for appearing at a campaign rally with President Jair Bolsonaro, will not be disciplined, the army said in a statement. Pazuella appeared at a political rally for Bolsonaro in May, where he spoke

with the right-wing leader's arm draped over his shoulder. The incident alarmed many given Bolsonaro's open nostalgia for the nation's 1964 to 1985 military dictatorship and his cozy relationship with some elements of the armed forces, many members of which hold key positions in his government.

◆ A four-storey building collapsed in western Rio de Janeiro

Toddler and man die as building collapses in Rio de Janeiro

before, killing at least one infant and one adult and damaging nearby residences, the city's fire department said. Four people were rescued from the debris. The irregular construction consisted of four small homes built atop one another. A spokesperson for the fire department said. City officials confirmed to The Associated Press in an email that the structure had no licence.



◆ A Guatemalan judge accused of ties to an influence peddling scheme was sworn in to the country's top court, just days before a visit by the US vice president that is expected to focus on regional anti-corruption efforts. Judge Nestor Vasquez took the oath to serve on the Constitutional Court in front of lawmakers in Congress who ratified his controversial appointment earlier this week.

COVID-19: Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths	Global tally
1 USA	34,178,104	611,710	173,143,547
2 India	28,685,804	343,954	
3 Brazil	16,803,472	469,784	Deaths
4 France	5,694,076	109,857	
5 Turkey	5,276,468	47,976	3,723,139
6 Russia	5,108,129	123,037	
7 UK	4,506,016	127,823	Recovered:
8 Italy	4,227,719	126,415	
9 Argentina	3,884,447	79,320	155,925,296
10 Germany	3,702,866	89,637	
11 Spain	3,697,987	80,196	New cases
12 Colombia	3,488,046	90,353	
13 Iran	2,954,309	80,813	+249,112
14 Poland	2,874,411	74,101	
			New deaths

Figures as of closing

Middle East

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	265,489		15,222		194,291	55,976
Saudi Arabia	455,418	+1,201	7,424	+16	438,206	9,788
UAE	579,009	+2,062	1,691	+2	558,584	18,734
Kuwait	314,569	+1,280	1,787	+4	298,485	14,297
Oman	220,702		2,385		202,021	16,296
Qatar	218,263	+183	565	+2	214,625	3,073

Egypt sends building equipment to begin Gaza reconstruction

● The Egyptian equipment and crews will remove debris and rubble from buildings destroyed by last month's devastating Israeli air strikes on Gaza

Reuters | Cairo



Egypt has sent a convoy of engineers and building equipment to Gaza to begin reconstruction in the Palestinian enclave after the recent Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Egyptian state television reported yesterday.

Building equipment, sent by Egypt for Palestinians, arrive in southern Gaza Strip areas in Gaza.

Dozens of bulldozers, cranes and trucks flying Egyptian flags lined up along the border to begin crossing into the Gaza Strip, television pictures showed.

Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem yesterday reiterated the group's appreciation of Egyptian contributions to the rebuilding efforts.

Palestinians lined the street on the Gaza side of the Rafah crossing to welcome the convoy as it rumbled into the small coastal enclave. A Palestinian border official said 50 vehicles had crossed.

Gaza's housing ministry said 1,500 housing units were destroyed during the fighting, another 1,500 housing units had been damaged beyond repair and 17,000 suffered partial damage. A ministry official put the cost of rebuilding at \$150 million.

"We rushed with all our money, equipment, and what we

Eleven days of conflict between Israel and Hamas, the Palestinian Islamist rulers of Gaza, erupted on May 10. More than 250 Palestinians were killed in hundreds of Israeli air strikes in Gaza. Rockets fired by Gaza militants killed 13 people in Israel.



A woman walks past building equipment, sent by Egypt for Palestinians

Egypt played a major role in brokering a ceasefire between both sides and has said it would allocate \$500 million to fund the rebuilding of devastated

Egypt in February opened the Rafah crossing until further notice after Palestinian factions moved towards reconciliation following talks in Cairo.

It had previously been opening the crossing for only a few days at a time to allow stranded travellers to pass.

EGYPTIAN TRUCK DRIVER MAHMOUD ISMAIL

"We rushed with all our money, equipment, and what we owned to join the Palestinians in the rebuilding. Every Muslim and every Egyptian wishes to take part in [the reconstruction]"

Sri Lank disast

Foreign experts depl

● Singapore-registered ship has been slowly sinking into the Indian Ocean since Wednesday

Reuters | Washington

Environmentalists yesterday sued the Sri Lankan government and operators of a container ship loaded with chemicals and plastic that burned offshore for almost two weeks, as international experts prepared to deal with a possible oil spill.

The private Centre for Environmental Justice (CEJ) petitioned the Supreme Court alleging that local authorities should have been able to prevent what they called the "worst marine disaster" in Sri Lanka's history.

The Singapore-registered MV X-Press Pearl has been slowly sinking into the Indian Ocean since Wednesday after a fire that raged for 13 days within sight of the coast.

Tonnes of microplastic granules from the ship have swamped an 80-kilometre (50-mile) stretch of beach which has been declared off limits for residents. Fishing in the area was also banned.

The CEJ said government inaction was "against the concepts and principles of environmental law". A hearing is yet to be fixed.

It said the crew knew of an acid leak on May 11, long before entering Sri Lankan waters, and local authorities should not have allowed the vessel in.

Lebanon urges UN to find funds to keep Hariri trial alive

AFP | Beirut



A billboard bearing a portrait of late Lebanese premier Rafiq Hariri is displayed with the Arabic slogan "The Era of Justice" on a main road in the Lebanese capital Beirut (file photo)

Lebanon yesterday urged the United Nations to urgently consider "alternative means" to fund a UN-backed court on its ex-premier Rafiq Hariri's murder that may close over a cash crunch.

"Taking into account the ongoing acute crises that Lebanon suffers from... (we) would be grateful to Your Excellency for urgently exploring different and alternative means of financing" the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, caretaker prime minister Hassan Diab wrote in a letter to UN chief Antonio Guterres.

STL's work lie in the reflection of a fragmented and incomplete justice," he said.

The STL, set up to try suspects in the 2005 killing of Hariri, said this week it risks closure by the end of July without a cash injection.

'Killed twice'

The court based in the Netherlands on Thursday cancelled the opening of a new trial of a convicted suspect that had been set for June 16 "due to lack of funds".

Sunni billionaire Hariri, who had stepped down as Lebanon's prime minister in October 2004, was killed in a February 2005 suicide blast targeting his armoured convoy.

The STL is estimated to have cost between \$600 million and \$1 billion since it opened in 2009.

The attack in Beirut also killed 21 other people and injured 226.

Born from a United Nations Security Council resolution, the

The World Bank said this week that Lebanon's financial downturn is likely to rank among the world's worst since the mid-19th century.

In his appeal, Diab called on UN member states to keep the court alive.

"The most painful consequences of the cessation of the

STL last year sentenced Hezbollah suspect Salim Ayyash in absentia to life imprisonment over the 2005 truck bombing.

The tribunal was meant to begin next week another trial for Ayyash, who remains on the run, in a separate case over three attacks targeting Lebanese politicians between 2004 and 2005.

Responding to news of the trial's cancellation, the families of victims who died in the attacks warned against impunity from justice.

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Special Tribunal for Lebanon, set up to try suspects in the 2005 killing of Hariri, is estimated to have cost between \$600 million and \$1 billion since it opened in 2009