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Mauritius and its 1.3 million inhabitants depend crucially on the sea for food and ecotourism, having fostered a reputation as a conservation success story and a world-class destination for nature lovers.

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Mauritius races to clean up oil

● The bulk carrier MV Wakashio ran aground on July 25 with 4,000 tonnes of fuel aboard

AFP New

Salvage crews raced against time Monday to prevent a second disastrous oil spill off the picture-perfect coastline of Mauritius, with a damaged tanker carrying thousands of tonnes of fuel at risk of splitting apart.

The bulk carrier MV Wakashio ran aground on July 25 with 4,000 tonnes of fuel aboard and began seeping oil last week, staining coral reefs, mangrove forests and tranquil lagoons in an unprecedented environmental catastrophe for the archipelago nation. More than 1,000

tonnes has already oozed from the ship, its Japanese operator says, causing untold ecological damage to protected marine parks and fishing grounds that form the backbone of Mauritius' economy.

Fuel was being airlifted Monday by helicopter to the shore, but efforts to pump more from the hold were being thwarted by rough seas and strong winds.

The weather, which is also fanning the oil slick further up the coast, is not forecast to improve until evening.

Some fuel has been removed but 2,500 tonnes still remains aboard, said Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth, who warned cracks in the hull were worsening, and there was a very real chance the boat could split.

"We are in an advanced fracturing process. The bulk carrier does not have much time ahead of it," said one scientist working



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on the emergency effort, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Divers have reported fresh cracks in the hull, while creaking sounds from the vessel could be heard from the southeast shore, where a major clean-up operation is underway to remove treacherous sludge coating miles of Mauritius' unspoiled coastline. Japan on Monday dispatched a six-member team, including members of its coast guard, to assist. A French naval vessel with technical advisers aboard arrived Sunday from nearby Reunion, a French Indian Ocean island.

The bulker struck a reef at Pointe d'Esny, an ecological jewel fringed by idyllic beaches, colourful reefs, sanctuaries for

rare and endemic wildlife, and protected wetlands.

Aerial images show the enormity of the disaster, with huge stretches of crystal-clear seas around the marooned cargo ship stained a deep inky black.

Thousands of volunteers, many smeared head-to-toe in black sludge, have marshalled along the coastline since Friday, stringing together miles of improvised floating barriers made of straw in a desperate attempt to hold back the oily tide.

Police are expected to take statements from the captain and crew of the Wakashio after launching an investigation. Detectives boarded the ship on Sunday and seized the log book and black box.

News in brief

◆ Six weeks after China imposed sweeping national security laws on Hong Kong, police moved in on media tycoon Jimmy Lai, one of the most outspoken critics of Beijing in the city. Lai, 71, was whisked away from his home early on Monday morning by national security police, part of a citywide operation that also saw eight other men arrested, including several of his senior executives.



More migrants cross Channel to Britain



◆ British border agents brought ashore migrants in the port of Dover on Monday after

picking them up from an inflatable boat as they crossed the Channel, the latest in a surge of crossings that is causing political tensions with France. Taking advantage of hot weather and calm sea conditions, more than 500 migrants have reached England since Thursday, many in overloaded rubber dinghies. The Home Office, or interior ministry, has said it would return as many migrants as possible to France. Immigration minister Chris Philp is due to meet his French counterpart in Paris this week.

Indonesia volcano spews huge ash cloud



◆ An Indonesian volcano spewed a giant ash cloud 5 km (3.1 miles) into the sky on Monday in its second eruption in three days, emitting

a thunderous noise and turning the sky dark, authorities and witnesses said. The eruption of Mount Sinabung on the island of Sumatra comes after more than a year of inactivity and was the second since Saturday, as authorities warned residents and tourists about possible lava flows. Dramatic footage of the morning eruption captured by residents showed a giant cloud of thick ash rising

from the peak of the 2,460-metre (8,071-ft) mountain in Karo, North Sumatra.

◆ China yesterday sanctioned 11 Americans, including senators Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz, in retaliation for similar US moves prompted by Beijing's crackdown in Hong Kong. Washington last week accused 11 officials of suppressing "freedom and democratic processes" in Hong Kong, including city leader Carrie Lam, and announced plans to freeze their US assets.

China sanctions 11 Americans in retaliation for US move

"China has decided to impose sanctions on some people that behaved badly on Hong Kong-related issues," foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said Monday, with Human Rights Watch director Kenneth Roth and National Endowment for Democracy president Carl Gershman also on the list.

Huge shortfall in funds to fight coronavirus, WHO says

◆ There is a huge gap between funds needed to fight the coronavirus and funds committed worldwide, World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said yesterday. But he said he saw "green shoots of hope". "It is never too late to turn the pandemic around," Tedros told a news briefing. The message is to "suppress, suppress, suppress".

Cows on a wet tin roof: S Korea floods leave animals stranded



Cows are stranded on a rooftop after seeking refuge there during heavy flooding in South Korea. Inset, a cow is hoisted off by rescue services

AFP News

Dozens of cows were stranded on rooftops by floods in South Korea, leaving rescue crews facing a problem the size of several bovines.

The cattle floated upwards as floodwaters mounted at the weekend in Gurye, a farming town in the country's south, and scrambled to safety on the roofs of several houses and other buildings. When the deluge

receded, the animals found themselves stranded high and somewhat damp, and on the horns of a dilemma with no way to get down.

Pictures showed as many as nine of them standing on one battered rooftop, looking mildly non-plussed.

"The cows were swimming as the water level surged and made their way up onto the roof and stayed there even after the floodwaters subsided," one resident told television channel

JTBC. Rescuers brought in a crane and lowered the cattle one by one from the rooftops, hoisting them onto a sling.

But while the cows eventually did come home, many were showing symptoms of pneumonia, according to a veterinarian volunteering with the relief efforts.

South Korea has been inundated by weeks of heavy rain that have caused widespread flooding, recording 31 deaths since the start of the month.



Global

Covid-19 Cases: **20,119,644**

Deaths: **735,667**

Recovered: **12,969,630**

New cases: **+102,627**

New deaths: **+2,048**

Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	New deaths	Total Deaths
1 USA	5,212,509	+149	165,766
2 Brazil	3,035,582		101,136
3 India	2,257,572	+732	45,198
4 Russia	892,654	+70	15,001
5 South Africa	559,859		10,408
6 Mexico	480,278	+292	52,298
7 Peru	478,024		21,072
8 Colombia	387,481		12,842
9 Chile	375,044	+62	10,139
10 Spain	361,442		28,503
11 Iran	328,844	+189	18,616
12 UK	311,641		46,574
13 Saudi Arabia	289,947	+32	3,199
14 Pakistan	284,660	+15	6,097

Middle East

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases	Serious, Critical	Tot cases/1m pop
Egypt	95,492		5,009		52,678	37,805	41	931
Saudi Arabia	289,947	+1,257	3,199	+32	253,478	33,270	1,824	8,315
UAE	62,525		357		56,568	5,600		6,314
Kuwait	72,400	+687	482	+4	64,028	7,890	117	16,927
Oman	81,787	+207	521	+8	76,124	5,142	172	15,976
Qatar	113,262	+315	188	+4	109,993	3,081	75	40,338

Figures as of closing