

News in brief

◆ **Britain's first scheduled flight** taking asylum seekers to Rwanda was set to depart on Tuesday, with the government warning that anyone who avoided it through last-minute legal challenges would be put on a later plane despite an outcry from critics. With just hours to go before the flight was due to depart from London, lawyers for human rights groups and campaigners took their case to the Supreme Court, only for the judge to reject it. However, several individuals have successfully argued that they should not be deported to Rwanda on health or human rights grounds, meaning the numbers due to depart have dwindled from an original 37 to just 7. Other legal challenges were ongoing. Britain has struck a 120-million-pound (\$148 million) deal with Rwanda to send some migrants, who had arrived illegally by crossing the Channel in small boats from Europe, to live in the landlocked African country. According to government figures, more than 28,500 people were detected arriving in Britain on small boats last year.



UK presses ahead with plan for first migrant deportation flight to Rwanda

◆ **Children killed, tortured in Myanmar junta's crackdown, UN expert says**



◆ **Scores of children** have been killed in Myanmar since last year's coup, not just in the crossfire of conflict

but as deliberate targets of a military willing to inflict immense suffering, a United Nations expert said yesterday. Minors had been beaten and stabbed and had fingernails or teeth removed during interrogation, while some were made to endure mock executions, according to a report from UN special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, Tom Andrews. Based on contributions from UN agencies, humanitarian and human rights groups and civil society organisations, the report said 250,000 children were displaced by fighting, and at the least 382 killed or maimed, including by air strikes or heavy artillery.

◆ **Iranian tanker ship seized by Greece has been released, Mehr news agency reports**

◆ **Iran's Ports and Maritime Organisation (PMO)** said yesterday the Iranian-flagged Lana tanker ship seized in April by Greece is no longer impounded and its oil cargo will be returned to its owner, according to Iran's semi-official Mehr news agency. "With the swift and authoritative action of Iran, the Greek government finally issued an order and we are now witnessing the lifting of the ship's seizure and the return of its cargo to its owner," the PMO told Mehr. The ship, previously called Pegas and renamed Lana in March, had reported an engine problem in April. It was headed to the southern Peloponnese peninsula to offload its cargo on to another tanker but rough seas forced it to moor just off Karystos where it was seized, according to the Athens News Agency. A Greek court overturned an earlier ruling last week that allowed the confiscation by the United States of part of the Iranian-flagged tanker's Iranian oil cargo off the Greek coast, three sources familiar with the matter said

◆ **NATO chief says Sweden has taken "important steps" to meet Turkey's demands**

◆ **Sweden has taken important steps** to meet Turkey's demands for approving Stockholm's NATO membership application, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said on Monday during a visit to Sweden.

COVID-19 Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths	Global tally
1 USA	87,424,846	1,036,084	541,246,623
2 India	43,236,695	524,777	
3 Brazil	31,497,038	668,230	Deaths
4 France	29,858,393	148,841	
5 Germany	26,969,546	140,292	Recovered:
6 UK	22,422,611	179,363	
7 Russia	18,382,380	380,137	516,495,383
8 S. Korea	18,239,056	24,390	
9 Italy	17,664,043	167,432	New cases
10 Turkey	15,072,747	98,965	
11 Spain	12,478,994	107,108	+276,992
12 Vietnam	10,733,285	43,083	
13 Argentina	9,313,453	128,994	New deaths
14 Japan	9,061,936	30,910	

Figures as of closing

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	515,645		24,613		442,182	48,850
Saudi Arabia	780,135	+1,152	9,176	+1	761,354	9,605
UAE	920,171	+1,356	2,305		901,424	16,442
Kuwait	636,240		2,555		631,350	2,335
Oman	389,758		4,260		384,669	829
Qatar	373,178	+474	677		369,686	2,815

Biden to meet Bahrain, Saudi, Oman, UAE, Kuwait leaders

- **Biden's visit to Saudi Arabia confirmed from July 15 to 16**
- **To attend a summit with leaders of the Gulf Arab states**
- **He will also hold a virtual summit with the leaders of Israel, India, and the United Arab Emirates**
- **Biden's tour starts with a stop in Israel and the West Bank**



US President Joe Biden arrives at Philadelphia International Airport, in Philadelphia, US

Reuters | Dubai

US President Joe Biden will visit Saudi Arabia from July 15-16 where he will meet Saudi King Salman, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and leaders of Gulf Cooperation Council nations including Bahrain.

The report was confirmed by Saudi state media reported yesterday.

Biden is scheduled to attend a summit with leaders of Gulf Arab states as well as Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, Iraq's Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi and Jordan's King Abdullah, state news agency SPA reported.

While in Saudi Arabia, Biden will meet leaders from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Iraq, Jordan and Egypt.

Biden's tour starts with a stop in Israel and the West Bank before landing in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where he is expected

to meet with nearly a dozen regional leaders, including the crown prince, as part of a summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council and others, a senior official said.

The official did not provide specific details on the meeting with bin Salman.

The official added that if Biden "determines it's in his interest to engage with any particular leader, and if such an engagement can deliver results, then he will do so."

The official pointed to the crown prince's role in helping broker an extension of an UN-brokered truce between Yemen's warring parties as an example of the need to engage with Saudi Arabia as way to help bring peace and security to the region.

The visit to Saudi Arabia

comes as Biden is trying to find ways to lower gasoline prices in the United States. The group of oil-producing nations called OPEC+, led by Saudi Arabia, recently agreed to boost oil production to help bring down prices.

During the stop in Israel, Biden will emphasise the US commitment to the country, which includes billions in military support.

He will also hold a virtual summit with the leaders of Israel, India, and the United Arab Emirates as a way to demon-

strate that regional partnerships extend beyond the Middle East, the official said.

While in the West Bank, Biden plans to meet with Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas and other leaders to reaffirm his commitment to a two-state solution between Israel and Palestine, the official said.

He will end the trip in Saudi Arabia where he will meet close to a dozen leaders from Kuwait, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, plus Iraq, Jordan and Egypt.



Biden will also hold a virtual summit with the leaders of Israel, India, and the United Arab Emirates as a way to demonstrate that regional partnerships extend beyond the Middle East

Saudi, Houthis resume direct talks, sources say

- **Talks resumed in May ahead of truce renewal**
- **Focus on borders' security, future relations**
- **UN presses for a deal in Taiz city**

Reuters | Riyadh

Warring parties Saudi Arabia and the Yemen's Houthis have resumed direct talks to discuss security along the kingdom's border and future relations under any peace deal with Yemen, two sources familiar with the matter said yesterday. The so far sporadic negotiations between the two sides resumed



People sit under posters of Houthi leaders in Sanaa, Yemen

last month before the scheduled renewal of a UN-brokered truce which was extended by another two months on June 2. The virtual talks between senior Saudi and Houthi officials were facilitated by Oman, both

sources said, with one adding that there were also plans for a face-to-face meeting in Muscat if there is enough progress.

Meanwhile the UN envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg has been trying to persuade Houthi

leaders to withdraw their forces from at least one main road in the disputed southwestern city of Taiz, according to one of the sources and a third person familiar with the talks.

The re-opening of the Habwan road was one of the conditions set by the Saudi-backed government as a condition for renewing the truce.

But the Houthis have so far resisted, arguing that the Habwan road is a frontline and that the redeployment of troops was not part of the truce agreement, according to the sources.

The Houthis ousted the internationally recognised government from Sanaa in late 2014, prompting the coalition to intervene months later. The group says it is fighting a corrupt system and foreign aggression.