

## India's former defence minister Parrikar dies

New Delhi, India

India's former defence minister Manohar Parrikar, a close aide of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, passed away yesterday at the age of 63.

Parrikar had undergone months of treatment for pancreatic cancer before his death, Indian officials said.

Modi described him a "true patriot and exceptional administrator".

"His impeccable service to the nation will be remembered by generations," Modi wrote on Twitter. The government announced a day of mourning on Monday and called for the national flag to be flown at half-mast.

Parrikar was India's defence minister in September 2016 when New Delhi said it sent special commandoes across



Manohar Parrikar

the Kashmir border into Pakistan to destroy militant facilities, in response to an attack on one of its army bases that killed 19 soldiers. Parrikar stepped down as defence minister in 2017 to lead his home state of Goa. It was his fourth term as chief minister of the western coastal state.

## Eurostar service hit by French customs strike

Paris, France

Eurostar trains from Paris to London were hit by cancellations and "severe delays" yesterday as French customs officers staged work-to-rule industrial action.

The customs officers are demanding higher pay and better working conditions while seeking to demonstrate what might happen if full border controls are put in place once Britain leaves the European Union.

Paris-to-London trains were experiencing "severe delays and lengthy queues for our services," Eurostar said on its website. "We strongly recommend that you do not travel today."

Four trains had been cancelled by lunchtime on Sunday, with another three on Monday and one on Tuesday.

Sunday's work-to-rule was



Representative picture

just the latest in a string of strike actions by the French customs officers.

Work-to-rule strikes began in early March, in the Channel ports of Dunkirk and Calais, northern France, leading to long delays for trucks waiting to cross to Britain.

The customs workers want better pay but also more staff to cope with British travellers who will no longer have European passports once the UK leaves the European Union.

## Rungis market serves up a world record for its 50th birthday

Paris, France

France's Rungis market near Paris celebrated its 50th anniversary by throwing a giant banquet of record-breaking proportions, reserving its spot in the Guinness Book of Records. Organisers said lunch was served to nearly 2,000 people along just over 401 metres' length of table, between the market's fruit-and-vegetable stands.

Officials from the Guinness Book of Records approved the bid, which beat the previous record of 322 metres set in 2017 on the French Indian Ocean island of Reunion.

Rungis, seven kilometres (four miles) south of Paris, replaced the old market in the heart of Paris, Les Halles, when it was closed in 1969.

It is the world's biggest fresh produce market, covering 234 hectares (580 acres) and employing 12,000 wholesalers, producers, porters, restaurateurs and other workers in 1,200 separate businesses.

Many of the people who work at the market took part in the record bid.



People take part in an attempt to break the Guinness World Records of the longest table to celebrate the international food market of Rungis' 50th anniversary

# Black boxes show clear 'similarities'



A boy look as forensic investigators comb the ground for DNA evidence near a pile of twisted airplane debris at the crash site of an Ethiopian Airways Boeing 737 MAX aircraft on March 16, 2019 at Hama Quntushele village near Bishoftu in Oromia region

● The disaster caused the worldwide grounding of the Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft

● Regulators noticed similarities with the October crash of an Indonesian Lion Air 737 MAX 8

● Both planes reportedly experienced erratic steep climbs and descents

● The disaster in Ethiopia left families in 35 nations bereaved.

AFP | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Black box data recovered from an Ethiopian Airlines plane that crashed last week shows "clear similarities" with a recent crash in Indonesia of the same type of aircraft, Ethiopia's transport minister said yesterday.

While declining to give details, Dagmawit Moges told journalists the parallels would be the "subject of further study during the investigation," with a preliminary report issued in "30 days".

The announcement came a week after Ethiopian Airlines flight 302 plummeted into a field southeast of Addis Ababa minutes into its flight to Nairobi, killing all 157 people on-board.

The disaster caused the worldwide grounding of the Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft involved after aviation regulators noticed similarities with the October crash of an Indonesian Lion Air 737 MAX 8 that killed all 189 passengers and crew.

Both planes reportedly experienced erratic steep climbs and descents as well as fluctuating airspeeds before crashing shortly after takeoff.

Questions have honed in



One of the two black box recorders of the Ethiopian Airlines 737 MAX which crashed minutes after taking off from Addis Ababa airport on March 10



Portraits of victims of the crashed accident of Ethiopian Airlines are held beside funeral cars during the mass funeral at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Addis Ababa

on an automated anti-stalling system introduced on the 737 MAX 8, designed to automatically point the nose of the plane downward if it is in danger of stalling.

The pilots of Lion Air Flight 610 struggled to control the aircraft as the automated MCAS system repeatedly pushed the plane's nose down following takeoff, according to the flight data recorder.

In the case of the Ethiopian flight, the black boxes have

been handed to France's BEA air safety agency, which is working with American and Ethiopian investigators to determine what went wrong.

**Nothing to bury**

The disaster in Ethiopia left families in 35 nations bereaved.

On Sunday, Ethiopians gathered at Holy Trinity Cathedral in the capital Addis Ababa to bury 17 of their citizens killed in the crash, including the eight-person flight crew.

Relatives of the deceased sobbed and held portraits of their loved ones as an Ethiopian Orthodox priest said the last rites.

Wearing a t-shirt bearing a photo of Amma Tesfamariam in her flight attendant uniform, Meselech Petros said her 28-year-old sister was not supposed to work last Sunday, but came in to cover for a friend.

"What I can't forget is that she left an eight-month-old child and didn't come back," Meselch said.

"We are broken and hurting very much. It's very difficult," added Amma's brother Selamsew Mathias, 26.

The funeral ceremony began when caskets draped in the Ethiopian flag were brought to the cathedral in a convoy of black hearses accompanied by hundreds of mourners.

It was unclear what the coffins contained.

Witnesses said the plane had nose-dived into the field, with the force of the impact leaving few bodies intact.

On Thursday, as grieving families and friends visited the area where the plane went down, a correspondent saw them being handed plastic water bottles filled with earth from the site.

Ethiopia's government has said it may take up to six months to identify the remains.

"What makes us very sad is we didn't find any of her remains," said Teshome Legesse, whose 24-year-old niece Ayantu Girma was a flight attendant on the plane.

**'Grief belongs to everyone'**

Ethiopian Airlines is Africa's largest carrier and in many ways the international face of the nation.

The deaths have shocked Africa's second-most populous country, and the funeral attracted a wide range of mourners.

"We all are children of Adam and Eve, even though our skin colours are different," said Seyoum Kidanu, a retired police officer wearing full dress uniform and a sash in the colours of the Ethiopian flag.