

News in brief

◆ **Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte is close to resigning, but then hopes to form a new government that can count on a broader majority, national dailies reported yesterday.** "My aim is to find an agreement that gives a clear political perspective to govern until the end of the legislation," Conte said, according to La Repubblica newspaper. The report added that Conte could hand in his resignation to the head of state as early as Tuesday and then put together a fresh coalition that would draw on centrist and so-called "responsible" members of parliament.



Italy's prime minister looking to resign, then form new govt

◆ **Mexican President Lopez Obrador said Sunday that he has COVID-19. He said in a tweet that his symptoms were light so far, that he's already getting treatment and that, 'as always, I am optimistic.'** The President says he's enjoyed good health though he suffered a serious heart attack in 2013. Lopez Obrador has resisted the lockdowns seen elsewhere and has resisted wearing a mask. His diagnosis comes as Mexico approaches a grim milestone, 150,000 deaths from COVID-19. That's the world's fourth highest death toll, according to a Reuters tally.

Mexico's President tests positive for COVID-19



President says he's enjoyed good health though he suffered a serious heart attack in 2013. Lopez Obrador has resisted the lockdowns seen elsewhere and has resisted wearing a mask. His diagnosis comes as Mexico approaches a grim milestone, 150,000 deaths from COVID-19. That's the world's fourth highest death toll, according to a Reuters tally.

◆ **President Joe Biden on Monday signed an executive order that overturned a controversial ban by his predecessor on transgender individuals serving in the US military, a move that fulfills a campaign promise and will be cheered by LGBTQ advocates.** Flanked by Vice President Kamala Harris, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley, Biden signed the executive order in the Oval Office.

Biden overturns Trump ban on transgender people serving in US military

◆ **Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Monday that an opulent Black Sea palace jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny has accused him of owning did not belong to him or his family.** Navalny's team released a video last week in which he levelled his allegations about the palace, which has since been viewed more than 86 million times on YouTube.



Putin says palace Navalny alleges he owns is not his or his family's

◆ **Rioters looted stores, set fires and clashed with police in several Dutch cities on Sunday, resulting in more than 240 arrests, police and Dutch media reported.** The unrest came on the second day of new, tougher coronavirus restrictions, including a night curfew, which had prompted demonstrations. Police used water cannon, dogs and mounted officers to disperse a protest in central Amsterdam on Sunday afternoon, witnesses said. Nearly 200 people, some of them throwing stones and fireworks, were detained in the city, police said.

Dutch police detain 240 nationwide as anti-lockdown protests turn violent

COVID-19 Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths	Global tally
1 USA	25,729,984	429,736	99,975,275
2 India	10,676,963	153,608	
3 Brazil	8,850,135	217,133	Deaths
4 Russia	3,738,690	69,918	
5 UK	3,669,658	98,531	2,143,849
6 France	3,057,857	73,494	
7 Spain	2,603,472	55,441	Recovered:
8 Italy	2,475,372	85,881	
9 Turkey	2,435,247	25,210	72,004,787
10 Germany	2,152,002	53,070	
11 Colombia	2,015,485	51,374	New cases
12 Argentina	1,867,223	46,827	
13 Mexico	1,763,219	149,614	+218,608
14 Poland	1,478,119	35,401	
			New deaths
			+5,329

Middle East

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	161,817		8,959		126,497	26,361
Saudi Arabia	366,584	+213	6,355	+3	358,137	2,092
UAE	281,546	+3,591	798	+6	255,304	25,444
Kuwait	161,777	+492	954	+2	154,766	6,057
Oman	133,253	+209	1,522	+1	126,334	5,397
Qatar	149,296	+277	248		144,981	4,067

Figures as of closing

Indonesia captures Iran, Panama tankers



Iranian-flagged MT Horse, left, and Panamanian-flagged MT Freya tankers are seen anchored together in Pontianak

● 61 crew members from both vessels have been detained

● Both the supertankers are capable of carrying 2 million barrels of oil

● Very Large Crude Carrier (VLCC) MT Horse, owned by the National Iranian Tanker Company (NITC), was almost fully loaded with oil while VLCC MT Freya, managed by Shanghai Future Ship Management Co, was empty



manian-flagged MT Freya vessels over suspected illegal oil transfer in the country's waters yesterday.

Coast guard spokesman Wisnu Pramandita said the tankers, seized in waters off Kalimantan province, will be escorted to Batam island in Riau Island Province for further investigation.

"The tankers, first detected at 5:30 a.m. local time (2130 GMT on Jan. 23) concealed their identity by not showing their national flags, turning off automatic identification systems and did not respond to a radio call," Wisnu said in a statement on Sunday.

Wisnu said yesterday that the

ships were "caught red-handed" transferring oil from MT Horse to MT Freya when they were discovered by the authorities and there was an oil spill around the receiving tanker. He added that 61 crew members from both vessels have been detained.

The International Maritime Organisation requires vessels to use transponders for safety and transparency. Crews can turn off the devices if there is a danger of piracy or similar hazards. But transponders are often shut down to conceal a ship's location during illicit activities.

Both the supertankers, each capable of carrying 2 million barrels of oil, were last spotted

earlier this month off Singapore, shipping data on Refinitiv Eikon showed.

Very Large Crude Carrier (VLCC) MT Horse, owned by the National Iranian Tanker Company (NITC), was almost fully loaded with oil while VLCC MT Freya, managed by Shanghai Future Ship Management Co, was empty, the data showed.

NITC was not immediately available for comment.

Iran, which has not commented on the seizure, has been accused of concealing the destination of its oil sales by disabling tracking systems on its tankers, making it difficult to assess how much crude Tehran exports as it seeks to counter US sanctions.

Iran sent the MT Horse vessel to Venezuela last year to deliver 2.1 million barrels of Iranian condensate.

Meanwhile, Iran has asked Indonesia to provide details about the seizure of an Iranian-flagged vessel, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said on Monday, a day after Jakarta said it had seized Iran and Panama-flagged tankers in its waters.

Khatibzadeh said that the seizure was over a "technical issue and it happens in shipping field".

"Our Ports Organisation and the ship owner company are looking to find the cause of the issue and resolve it," Khatibzadeh told a televised weekly news conference.

Reuters | Jakarta

Indonesia said its coast guard seized the Iranian-flagged MT Horse and the Pana-



The sanctions bring difficulties to Iran's \$483 billion, oil-dominated economy. [44] Data published by the Iranian Central Bank show a declining trend in the share of Iranian exports from oil-products (2006/2007: 84.9%, 2007/2008: 86.5%, 2008/2009: 85.5%, 2009/2010: 79.8%, 2010/2011 (first three quarters): 78.9%).

Iran has a total of 102 oil fields and 43 gas fields and there are 205 oil reservoirs and 92 natural gas reservoirs. According to Iran Energy Balance Sheet (2009, in Persian), 78 of these fields are currently active, with 62 onshore and 16 offshore, leaving 67 fields inactive at present.

Pirates kidnap 15 sailors in attack on Turkish container ship

Reuters | Istanbul

Pirates off Nigeria's coast kidnapped 15 sailors from a Turkish container ship in the Gulf of Guinea on Saturday in a brazen and violent attack that was farther from shore than usual.

One sailor was killed in the raid, an Azerbaijani citizen, while those kidnapped are from Turkey, according to the respective governments and a crew list seen by Reuters.

Accounts from crew, family members and security sources described a sophisticated and well-orchestrated attack on Saturday in which armed pirates boarded the ship and breached



Turkish ambassador to Libreville, Nilufer Erdem Kaygisiz (C), meets Turkish sailors on board the attacked container ship MV Mozart in Port-Gentil, Gabon

its protective citadel, possibly with explosives.

Three sailors remain on the Mozart, which by Sunday evening was receiving assis-

tance in Gabonese waters off central Africa.

"The ship is in our waters and our sailors are assisting a few nautical miles from Port Gentil," said Gabon's presidency spokesman Jessye Ella Ekogha.

The Liberian-flagged vessel was headed to Cape Town from Lagos when it was attacked 160 kilometres (100 miles) off Sao Tome island on Saturday.

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan spoke twice by phone with the ship's fourth captain, Furkan Yaren, who remained aboard after the attack, his office said.

State-run Anadolu agency cited Yaren as saying he had

been "cruising blindly" toward Gabon with damage to the ship's controls and only the radar working. The pirates beat crew members, and left him with an injured leg while another still aboard the ship had shrapnel wounds, he said.

Turkish media cited Istanbul-based ship owner Boden company as saying the owners and operators of the vessel were abducted at gunpoint. Boden was not immediately available.

Ambrey, a security company, said four armed men boarded the Mozart and entered the citadel - where crew are advised to hide in any attack - from a deck atop the cabin.