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UAE's Amal rockets toward Mars



In this photo released by MHI, an H-IIA rocket with United Arab Emirates' Mars orbiter Hope lifts off from Tanegashima Space Center in Kagoshima, southern Japan on July 20. A United Arab Emirates spacecraft rocketed away Monday on a seven-month journey to Mars, kicking off the Arab world's first interplanetary mission. (Inset top): Emirati men clap as they watch the launch of the 'Amal' or 'Hope' space probe at the

Mohammed bin Rashid Space Center in Dubai, United Arab Emirates on Monday. (Inset above): In this photo released by MHI, Naohiko Abe (right), of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Ltd, and Sarah Al Ameer of United Arab Emirates Ministry of Advanced Technology, celebrate after the launch of a United Arab Emirates spacecraft. (AP)

NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Sunday a phone call from President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, of Turkey, who inquired about His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's health.

President Erdogan wished His Highness the Amir everlasting good health and wellbeing.

His Highness the Crown Prince thanked the Turkish leader for his sincere sentiments, expressing best wishes for him and the friendly Republic of Turkey. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Sunday a phone call from Bahrain's Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa who inquired about the health of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The Bahraini Crown Prince, also Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister wished His Highness the Amir everlasting good health and wellbeing.

His Highness the Crown Prince of Kuwait thanked his Bahraini counterpart for his sincere sentiments and expressed best wishes for him and the sisterly Kingdom of Bahrain. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Sunday received a telephone call from Iraq's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Al-Halbousi, inquiring about health of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and wishing him everlasting wellbeing.

His Highness the Crown prince expressed deep gratitude to the Iraqi Parliament Speaker on the gracious and sincere gesture. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: The Kuwaiti Ministry of Health said Monday that no coronavirus deaths were reported over the past 24 hours, but confirmed 559 new infections.

Thus, the death toll remained unchanged at 408, while the total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases rose to 59,763, the Health Ministry's Spokesperson Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said in a statement to KUNA.

The fresh cases included 337 Kuwaitis (60.29 percent) and 222 non-Kuwaitis (39.71 percent), he elaborated. (KUNA)

KUWAIT CITY: The concerned court and the Public Prosecution looked into the cases of money laundering, human trafficking, corruption, and real estate fraud, while the Attorney General, Counselor Dhirar Al-Asousi, ordered the detention of the Deputy Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior for Education and Training Affairs, Major-General Mazen Al-Jarrah, who is a suspect in the case of the Bangladeshi resident for another 21 days in Central Prison, reports Al-Seyassah daily quoting reliable judicial sources.

The Detention Renewal Judge also ordered the continued detention of the Bangladeshi resident, who is also known as 'Pablo' and is a Member of Parliament in Bangladesh and allegedly owns a cleaning company in partnership with a Kuwaiti, in addition to the detention for 14 days of senior employee working for the Public Authority for Manpower who is former contestant of the parliamentary elections, pending investigations into the case.

KUWAIT CITY: Before the ink on the report issued by 'Standard & Poor's' agency dried up, in which Kuwait's sovereign rating was fixed at "AA" with a "negative" outlook, the Central Bank of Kuwait Governor, Dr Muhammad Al-Hashel stressed that the growing deficit, the ability to borrow and the absence of reforms and economic and financial issues constitute general obstacles to the public finances of the state, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

A government document revealed that Kuwait plans to borrow between four and five billion dinars approximately 13 to 16 billion dollars during the current fiscal year ending on March 31, 2021, subject to approval of the public debt law by the National Assembly.

TEHRAN, Iran: Iran executed a man convicted of providing information to the United States and Israel about a prominent Revolutionary Guard general later killed by a US drone strike, state TV reported on Monday.

The report said the death sentence was carried out against Mahmoud Mousavi Majd, without elaborating.

The country's judiciary had said in June that Majd was "linked to the CIA and the Mossad," the Israeli intelligence agency, and alleged that Majd shared security information on the Guard and its expeditionary unit, called the Quds, or Jerusalem Force, which Qassem Soleimani commanded. (AP)

Saudi King in hospital

RIYADH, July 20, (AP): Saudi Arabia's King Salman has been admitted to a hospital in the capital, Riyadh, for medical tests due to inflammation of the gallbladder, the Kingdom's Royal Court said Monday in a statement carried by the official Saudi Press Agency.

The statement said the 84-year-old monarch is being tested at the King Faisal Specialist Hospital. The brief statement did not provide further details. The hospital frequently treats royal family members, including recently those who've contracted the coronavirus. The facility is specialized in transplant surgeries, research and training programs.

King Salman has been in power since January 2015. He is considered the last Saudi monarch of his generation of brothers who have held power since the death of their father and founder of Saudi Arabia, King Abdulaziz.

His health is closely watched by observers because of the absolute powers he holds presiding over one of the world's top producers of oil and one of its biggest economies.

King Salman has empowered his 34-year-old son, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, as his successor. The crown prince's assertive and bold style of leadership, as well as his consolidation of power and sidelining of potential rivals, has been controversial.

With the support of his father, Prince Mohammed has transformed the Kingdom in recent years, opening it up to tourists and eroding decades of ultra-conservative restrictions on entertainment and women's rights as he tries to diversify the Saudi economy away from reliance on oil exports. The prince has also detained dozens of activists and critics, overseen a devastating war in Yemen and rounded up top members of the royal family in his quest for power.

The Saudi king has not been seen in public in recent months due to social distancing guidelines and concerns over the spread of the coronavirus inside the Kingdom, which has one of the largest outbreaks in the Middle East.

Decision due on 3rd stage

KUWAIT CITY, July 20, (Agencies): The Council of Ministers was expected to issue decisions as part of the third stage of the gradual return to normal life plan on Monday or Thursday, reports Al-Anba daily quoting informed sources.

Sources enumerated these decisions as follows:

■ Assessing the conditions of Farwaniya to lift or continue isolation.

■ Cancel or maintain the partial curfew or reduce the number of curfew hours.

■ Start of the third stage of the gradual return to normal life plan which includes opening hotels, resorts and hotel apartments (hostels); as well as resumption of taxi operations but it should be limited to one passenger and allowing visits to care homes, while the number of employees reporting for work in government agencies and private sector should be less than 50 percent of the total workforce.

■ Merging and opening certain establishments like health clubs, barber shops, salons and tailor shops.

Kuwait's Information Minister Mohammad Al-Jabri decided to postpone this year's cultural and artistic festivals and activities of the National Council of Culture, Art and Letters (NCCAL) to 2021.

Al-Jabri, acting upon a recommendation of NCCAL's Committee of Trustees, also postponed Kuwait 45th International Book Fair, originally scheduled for November, due to the coronavirus pandemic, NCCAL Secretary General said Monday.

Kamel Al-Abduljalil, in a statement, attributed postponement decision to the massive disruption and damage caused by Covid-19 on services and development sectors including culture, art, antiquities and museums.

Al-Abduljalil described the decision as "painful but necessary."

Amir congratulates

TOKYO, July 20, (Agencies): A United Arab Emirates spacecraft rocketed into blue skies from a Japanese launch center Monday at the start of a seven-month journey to Mars on the Arab world's first interplanetary mission.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, has meanwhile, sent cables of congratulations to UAE President Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan and to Vice-President, Premier and Dubai Ruler Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum.

In the cables, His Highness expressed sincere pride, as well as wished utmost prosperity for the UAE after the historic and successful launch of the 'Hope Probe', the first Arab interplanetary space mission to Mars, which blasted off from Japan's Tanegashima Space Centre.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent cables of similar sentiment.

The liftoff of the Mars orbiter named Amal, or Hope, starts a rush to fly to Earth's neighbor that is scheduled to be followed in the next few days by China and the United States.

At the space center in Dubai, people watching were transfixed by the liftoff, then cheered and clapped, with one woman with offering a celebratory cry common for weddings.

Amal blasted off from the Tanegashima Space Center aboard a Mitsubishi Heavy Industries' H-IIA rocket on time at 6:58 am (2158 GMT Sunday) after being delayed five days by bad weather.

Mitsubishi later said the probe successfully separated from the rocket and was now on its solo journey to Mars.

The probe was sending signals that would be analyzed later but everything appeared good for now, Omran Sharaf, the UAE Mars mission director told journalists in Dubai about an hour and a half after liftoff.

Amal is set to reach Mars in February 2021, the year the UAE celebrates 50 years since the country's formation. In September that year, Amal will start transmitting Martian atmospheric data, which will be made available to the international scientific community, Sharaf said.

"The UAE is now a member of the club and we will learn more and we will engage more and we'll continue developing our space exploration program," UAE Space Agency chief Mohammed Al-Ah-

babi told a joint online news conference from Tanegashima.

At Mohammed bin Rashid Space Center in Dubai, Emirati men in their traditional white kandora robes and women in their black abayas watched the liftoff. As its stages separated, a cheer went out from men seated on the floor. They began clapping, one using his face mask, worn due to the coronavirus pandemic, to wipe away a tear.

"It was great to see everything going according to schedule today. It looks like things are all on track. It's a huge step in terms of space exploration to have a nation like the UAE taking that giant leap to send a spacecraft to Mars," said Fred Watson, Australia's astronomer-at-large. "Being on route to a planet like Mars is an exceptional achievement."

A newcomer in space development, the UAE has successfully put three Earth observation satellites into orbit. Two were developed by South Korea and launched by Russia, and a third - its own - was launched by Japan.

A successful mission to Mars would be a major step for the oil-dependent economy seeking a future in space, coming less than a year after the launch of the first UAE astronaut, Hazzaa Ali Almansoori. He spent over a week at the International Space Station last fall.

The UAE has set a goal to build a human colony on Mars by 2117.

"It sends a very strong message to the Arab youth that if the UAE is able to reach Mars in less than 50 years, they could do much more," Sharaf told The Associated Press on Sunday as his colleagues prepared for the launch.

The Emiratis also acknowledged it represented a step forward for the Arab world, the home of mathematicians and scientists for centuries before the wars and chaos that have gripped wide swathes of it in recent times.

"So the region has been going through tough times in the past decades, if not centuries," Sharaf said. "Now we have the case of the UAE, a country that's moving forward with its plans, looking at the future and the future of region also."

For its first Mars mission, the UAE chose partners instead of doing it all on its own.

"Developing a spacecraft is not easy even if there is ample funding," said Junya Terazono, an astronomer at Aizu University.

Emirati scientists worked with researchers at the University of Colorado Boulder, University of California, Berkeley, and Arizona State University. The spacecraft was assembled at Boulder and transported to Japan as the two countries looked to expand their ties with the rich and politically stable Middle Eastern nation.