



# UK Starts Sending Asylum-Seekers to Rwanda



Migrants picked up at sea while attempting to cross the English Channel look on from a bus to a processing centre from the Dover port, on the southeast coast of England, on May 3, 2022.

LONDON (AFP) -- The UK government on Tuesday defended its controversial policy to send asylum seekers to Rwanda, even as the entire senior leadership of the Church of England branded it shameful and immoral.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss insisted the first flight to Kigali would take off no matter how many people were on board, after 23 of the 31 migrants had their tickets cancelled.

"We're expecting to send the flight later today," she told Sky News, as fresh protests were held at a detention centre near London Gatwick airport.

Truss said she was unable to confirm

how many people would be on the charter flight to Kigali, which was due to leave from an undisclosed airport on Tuesday night.

But she said the policy, which the UN refugee agency has also criticized as "all wrong," was vital to smashing the business model of human-trafficking gangs exploiting vulnerable migrants.

Record numbers of migrants have made the perilous Channel crossing from northern France, heaping pressure on the government in London to act after it promised to tighten borders after Brexit.

Campaigners supporting migrants and a union representing Border Force workers who will have to carry out the

policy failed in a legal challenge to stop the deportations.

After the latest attempt was thrown out on Monday, the two senior-most clerics in the Church of England and 23 bishops called the policy "immoral" and said it "shames Britain".

"They (migrants) are the vulnerable that the Old Testament calls us to value," Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell wrote in a letter to The Times.

"We cannot offer asylum to everyone, but we must not outsource our ethical responsibilities, or discard international law -- which protects the right to claim asylum."

At the weekend, it was reported that Queen Elizabeth II's heir, Prince Charles, had privately described the government's plan as "appalling".

Truss, though, hit back. "The people who are immoral in this case are the people traffickers trading on human misery," she said.

"Our policy is completely legal. It's completely moral," she added, accusing critics of having no alternative plan.

Truss said she could not put a figure on the cost of the charter flight, which has been estimated at some £250,000 (\$303,000).

But she insisted it was "value for money" to reduce the long-term social cost of irregular migration.

"There will be people on the flights and if they're not on this flight, they will be on the next flight," she added.

# South Korean Strike Snarls Global Supply Chains



Members of the Cargo Truckers Solidarity union take part in a protest in front of a Samsung Electronics' factory in Gwangju, South Korea, June 14, 2022.

INCHEON, South Korea (AFP) -- South Korean truck drivers staged an eighth day of protests Tuesday over wages and rising fuel costs, further snarling global supply chains with a strike that officials say has caused more than \$1 billion in losses.

The industrial action has disrupted shipments and production for the crucial steel, petrochemical and automobile sectors, in an early test for new President Yoon Suk-yeol who has vowed to deal with labor disputes "strictly".

South Korea is the world's largest memory chip exporter and home to global chip powerhouse Samsung Electronics, as well as large car companies including Kia and Hyundai Motors.

But the truckers say they are desperate due to sharp rises in fuel prices -- with inflation at its highest level in over a decade.

They are also protesting against the ending of a minimum wage guarantee.

The strike in Asia's fourth-largest economy is the latest blow to international supply chains that are already strained by Covid-19 lockdowns in China and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

South Korea's trade ministry said Tuesday that the action had resulted in losses for businesses of about 1.6 tril-

lion won (\$1.2 billion).

Loud music blared from a van parked near a port on Tuesday in Incheon, a city bordering Seoul, AFP reporters saw, as dozens of trucks lined the road flying flags hoisted on bamboo canes.

Similar protests were happening across the country, with more than 7,000 people having taken part at 14 locations as of Monday, according to the land ministry.

At a cabinet meeting on Tuesday, Prime Minister Han Duck-soo called for an end to the strikes, saying they could deliver "a very difficult blow" to the country's export-driven economy.

"It's causing a major setback to the logistics network," he said.

But the protesters say the rallies will not stop until their voices are heard.

Negotiations are ongoing, but the government has come under fire for a "hostile" policy towards workers, which critics say is fuelling tensions.

On the campaign trail, Yoon -- a political novice -- had vowed to be strict on labor disputes and indicated he was more pro-business on issues such as minimum working hours.

At least 23 members of the Cargo Truckers Solidarity Union have been arrested for "illegal activities" at the protests that include "interfering" with normal vehicle operations, according to the transport ministry.

# Mass Shootings Across U.S. Kill 11, Leave Dozens Injured



Philadelphia police at the scene Sunday of a fatal overnight shooting.

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- Eleven people were killed and dozens were wounded in mass shootings that took place across the U.S. over the weekend, according to the latest numbers collected by the Gun Violence Archive. The grim statistics emerge as communities and policymakers grapple with an upswing in gun violence that continues to shake the country.

On the heels of two prominent massacres last month -- one, at an upstate New York supermarket, and another, at a south Texas elementary school -- 12 mass shootings

were recorded between Friday and Sunday, according to the Gun Violence Archive.

The archive, an online database that has operated for nearly a decade, tracks incidents of gun violence in the U.S. as they happen and shares reports that tally resulting deaths as well as injuries. The database also collects and publishes specific summaries of mass shootings, which it classifies as instances where at least four people are either killed or wounded, excluding any shooter.

Mass shootings were reported in numerous states this past weekend, including California, Georgia, Illi-

nois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan and Texas. One of the largest took place in Atlanta's College Park neighborhood on Saturday night, when seven people were shot by an unnamed perpetrator during a house party, CBS affiliate WGCL reported. All seven victims were transported to a nearby hospital, with one suffering critical injuries, police said.

As the Gun Violence Archive noted on Twitter earlier Monday, this past weekend's numbers pushed the nation's combined total of gun-related deaths and injuries past 25,000 since the beginning of 2022. The archive has recorded 266 mass shootings just this year.

Last month's mass shootings at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde and Tops Supermarket Buffalo revived national conversations about gun control and sparked renewed calls for leaders at both the state and federal levels to implement legislative reform.

On Sunday, a bipartisan group of 20 senators announced the outline of an agreement to reform national gun laws after weeks of negotiations on Capitol Hill. If passed, the plan includes some of the most significant changes to gun control legislation the U.S. has seen in almost 30 years.

# India Overhauls Military Recruitment for Younger Troops



Indian army soldiers are seen atop a vehicle on a highway leading to Ladakh, at Gagangeer in Kashmir's Ganderbal district September 2, 2020.

NEW DELHI (Reuters) -- India's military is overhauling its recruitment process for personnel below officer rank, aiming to deploy fitter, younger troops on its front lines, many of them on shorter contracts of up to four years, defense officials said on Tuesday.

India, which shares a heavily militarized border with Pakistan and is involved in a high-altitude Himalayan stand-off with China, has one of the world's largest armed forces with some 1.38 million personnel.

Soldiers have been recruited by the army, navy and the air force separately and typically enter service for a period of up to 17 years for the lowest ranks.

Under the new system, men and women between the ages of 17 and a half and 21 will be brought into the armed forces, many of them for a maximum four-year tenure.

India spent \$76.6 billion on its military in 2021, the highest in the world after the United States and China, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

Analysts said the move by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government would bring down the armed force's pension costs, which along with sala-

ries, form the largest chunk of the defense budget.

"In the long run, it will certainly start bringing down the revenue expenditure," said Colonel Vivek Chadha, a veteran who is now a research fellow at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses in New Delhi.

A total of 46,000 soldiers will be recruited this year on four-year contracts with a quarter expected to be kept on at the end of that term, the government said.

"This scheme will strengthen the country's security and provide our youth an opportunity for military service," Defense Minister Rajnath Singh told reporters in New Delhi, where he was joined by the three service chiefs. Military officials said the new system, called Agnipath, meaning "path of fire" in Hindi, would help bring down the average age of the armed forces.

In the Indian army, the largest of its three services, the average age would drop to 26 from 32, its chief, General Manoj Pande, said.

"A more youthful profile will help train troops more easily in newer technologies, and their health and fitness levels will be much better," Singh said.

# Researchers: Air Pollution Shortens Lives Worldwide

PARIS (AFP) -- Microscopic air pollution caused mostly by burning fossil fuels shortens lives worldwide by more than two years, researchers reported Tuesday.

Across South Asia, the average person would live five years longer if levels of fine particulate matter met World Health Organization standards, according to a report from the University of Chicago's Energy Policy Institute.

In the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, home to 300 million, crippling lung and heart disease caused by so-called PM2.5 pollution reduces life expectancy by eight years, and in the capital city of New Delhi by a decade.

PM2.5 pollution -- 2.5 microns across or less, roughly the diameter of a human hair -- penetrates deep into the lungs and enters the bloodstream.

In 2013, the United Nations classified it as a cancer-causing agent.

The WHO says PM2.5 density in the air should not top 15 micrograms per cubic meter in any 24-hour period, or 5 mcg/m3 averaged across an entire year.

Faced with mounting evidence of damaging health impacts, the WHO tightened these standards last year, the first change since establishing air quality guidance in 2005.

"Clean air pays back in additional years of life for people across the world," lead research Crista Hasenkopf and colleagues said in the Air Quality Life Index report.

"Permanently reducing global air pollution to meet the

WHO's guidelines would add 2.2 years onto average life expectancy."

Almost all populated regions in the world exceed WHO guidelines, but nowhere more so than in Asia: by 15-fold in Bangladesh, 10-fold in India, and nine-fold in Nepal and Pakistan.

Central and West Africa, along with much of Southeast Asia and parts of central America, also face pollution levels -- and shortened lives -- well above the global average.

Surprisingly, PM2.5 pollution in 2020, the most recent data available, was virtually unchanged from the year before despite a sharp slow-down in the global economy and a corresponding drop in CO2 emissions due to Covid lockdowns.

"In South Asia, pollution actually rose during the first year of the pandemic," the authors noted.

One country that has seen major improvements is China. PM2.5 pollution fell in the nation of 1.4 billion people by almost 40 percent between 2013 and 2020, adding two years to life expectancy.

But even with this progress, lives in China are on average cut short today by 2.6 years.

The worst-hit provinces include Henan and Hebei, in north-central China, and the coastal province of Shandong.

Compared to other causes of premature death, the impact of PM2.5 pollution is comparable to smoking tobacco, more than three times that of alcohol use, and six times that of HIV/AIDS, the report said.

MOSCOW (Reuters) -- The Russian rouble hit three-week highs against the euro and U.S. dollar in volatile trading on Tuesday, continuing to climb despite recent interest rate cuts and a looming economic crisis. At 1415 GMT, the rouble was up 1.8% against the euro at 59.03, fading slightly from an early gain of 3.6%, its strongest level since May 25. Against the dollar, the rouble added 0.4% to trade at 56.54, having dipped from multi-year peaks with a session low of 55.6 from the Moscow Exchange earlier on Tuesday. The Russian currency has been supported by capital controls that Russia imposed in late February after sending tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine, though the recent strength has triggered policymakers to rethink their economic response to Western sanctions. After the rouble became the world's best-performing currency, authorities eased capital controls and scrapped a requirement for export-focused companies to convert their foreign-currency revenues.

SYDNEY (AFP) -- Australians were warned to expect blackouts across the densely populated east coast on Tuesday, as an energy crisis grips one of the world's biggest coal and gas producers. Australia's energy market regulator warned there could be a power shortfall in the states of Queensland and New South Wales, which are home to more than 13 million people. Newly elected Prime Minister Anthony Albanese blamed the energy crisis on the previous government, which was in power for nearly a decade. Australia is one of the world's top three producers of gas and coal, but about a quarter of the east coast's coal-fired power stations are currently offline because of outages and maintenance. Russia's operation in Ukraine has also seen export demand for Australian gas spike, mopping up any potential surplus that could ease the domestic shortfall.

MEXICO CITY (AFP) -- Heavily armed attackers stole 20 freight containers, some carrying gold and silver, from a port in western Mexico in a heist of "unprecedented" proportions, authorities said. The burglary, described by local media as "the theft of the century," took place on June 5 in a private compound of a commercial port in the city of Manzanillo on Mexico's Pacific coast. After incapacitating the port's security teams, the assailants used cranes and trucks to move the containers, said state security spokesman Gustavo Adrian Joya. National customs head Horacio Duarte Olivares said the area where the burglary occurred was not under the jurisdiction of the Navy, which is in charge of port surveillance.

OUAGADOUGOU (AFP) -- Burkina Faso on Tuesday began three days of national mourning after suspected takfiris killed at least 50 civilians in one of the worst attacks since the military seized power in January. Strongman, Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba, issued a decree late Monday ordering the entire country to observe the period of mourning until midnight on Thursday. The landlocked Sahel state is in the grip of a seven-year-old takfiri insurgency that has claimed more than 2,000 lives and forced some 1.9 million people to leave their homes. The attack targeted the village of Seytenga in the Sahel region overnight Saturday. On Monday, the government said the army had found 50 bodies and warned that the toll may rise. The EU warned that the attack may have left "more than 100 civilian victims" and condemned the incident, calling for "light to be shed on the circumstances of this killing".

DUSHANBE (Reuters) -- One Tajik border guard was killed and three were wounded in a clash with Kyrgyz border guards on Tuesday, four Tajik security sources told Reuters, a new bout of violence between Russia's Central Asian allies. Clashes along the poorly demarcated and often debated frontier between the two former Soviet republics which both host Russian military bases are common, but occasionally escalate to full-scale hostilities involving heavy weaponry. According to Tajik sources and a statement by the Kyrgyz border guards, the firefight broke out in the Kekk area close to the Tajik city of Isfara where a similar incident took place on June 3.

LONDON (Dispatches) -- Britain on Tuesday marked 40 years since Argentine forces surrendered after 74 days of conflict on the Falkland Islands which Argentinians call Malvinas, with many veterans still paying the physical and mental price of the grueling South Atlantic war. In Britain and the Malvinas, the anniversary of the start of the conflict on April 2 was muted. Islanders in particular see the war as nothing to celebrate. Carol Betheridge, of veterans' charity Help for Heroes, recalled that "for many of those who fought so far from home, the physical and mental wounds they received during the conflict affect them every day -- not just on anniversaries." "The lack of proper support for mental health means that many Falklands veterans buried their issues and 'soldiered on' as they were expected to," said Betheridge, the charity's head of clinical and medical services. "This is why, 40 years on, we still have Falklands veterans coming to us for help for psychological wounds that they have struggled with for so long."