

**MUSTREAD**

**SL deaths rise, births drop since 2020**

**Colombo:** Ever since 2020, there has been a significant drop in the annual birth rate in Sri Lanka while annual deaths have increased, a senior official from the Registrar General's Department told journalists. Appearing on local TV, Senior Deputy Registrar General, Attorney-at-Law Lakshika Ganepola said annual births were around 325,000 before 2020, but they have now decreased to around 280,000 in 2023. Ganepola added that annual deaths have increased to around 180,000, while the number was around 140,000 before 2020. The official said this trend will adversely affect Sri Lanka's population growth.

**Turkish security forces detain 147 PKK suspects**

**Ankara:** Turkish police and gendarmerie teams detained 147 suspected members of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the country's Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said Sunday. The operations, dubbed "Bozdogan 30," were carried out in 29 provinces, Yerlikaya said on social media platform X, without specifying the timing of the operations. The suspects allegedly carried out propaganda for the PKK, he said, adding that they were also accused of "aiding and abetting" the group. The raids also targeted PKK suspects who had allegedly assisted group members attempting to infiltrate Türkiye in 2022, according to the minister.

**EU restricts visa provisions for Ethiopian nationals**

**Brussels:** The European Union has decided to restrict its visa provisions for Ethiopian nationals due to a lack of co-operation from Ethiopia's government over repatriating those who stay illegally, the EU Council said on Monday. The move comes as European governments try to tackle the problem of refugees leaving war-torn countries in Africa and aiming to enter Europe via perilous crossings over the Mediterranean Sea, often organised by criminal gangs. "This decision follows an assessment by the Commission, which concludes that cooperation by Ethiopia in the field of readmission of its nationals illegally staying in the EU is insufficient," said the EU Council.

**4 killed in Brazil bus accident**

**Sao Paulo:** At least four people were killed and another 32 injured after a tourist bus overturned in southeast Brazil, the local fire department reported Sunday. The tragedy occurred on Saturday night on the BR-116 highway in a stretch known as "the curve of death" near the Jequitinhonha Valley region. The tourist bus had left Caruaru, Pernambuco state, and was heading South towards the city of Sao Paulo. A spokesperson for the local fire department informed the local press that the four fatal victims were three women and one man.

**2 terrorists killed in NW Pakistan**

**Islamabad:** Two terrorists were killed in an operation by security forces in Pakistan's northwest Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Sunday, the military said in a statement. The incident occurred in the Dera Ismail Khan district where the troops conducted the offensive by acting on an intelligence tip-off, the military's media wing, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in the statement. Weapons, ammunition and explosives were recovered from the killed terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against the security forces as well as civilians, said the ISPR.

**14 killed in bus crash in central Mexico**

**Mexico City:** At least 14 people were killed and 31 others injured when a bus overturned in Malinalco, the central Mexico state, local Mexican security secretariat said on Sunday. The accident occurred on Sunday morning on the Capulin-Chalma highway and state police have attended to it, the security secretariat said in a statement. "According to the report, the bus was traveling with passengers from San Luis de la Paz, state of Guanajuato," the statement said.

**Israel kills at least 20 Palestinians**

Agencies, Cairo

Israeli airstrikes on three houses in the southern Gaza city of Rafah killed at least 20 Palestinians and wounded many others, medics said on Monday, as Egyptian and Qatari mediators were expected to hold a new round of ceasefire talks with Hamas leaders in Cairo.

In Gaza City, in the north of the Gaza Strip, Israeli warplanes struck two houses, killing at least four people and wounding several people, health officials said.

The strikes on Rafah, where more than one million people are seeking refuge from months of Israeli bombardment, took place hours before Egypt was expected to host leaders of the Islamist group Hamas to discuss prospects for a ceasefire agreement with Israel. The Israeli military said it was checking the report.

Israel has vowed to eradicate Hamas, which controls Gaza, in a military operation that has killed more than 34,000 Palestinians, 66 of them in the past 24 hours, according to Gaza's health authorities. The war has displaced most of the 2.3 million

**New Gaza ceasefire talks expected in Cairo**



population and laid much of the enclave to waste.

The conflict was triggered by an attack by Hamas militants on Israel on Oct. 7 in which they killed 1,200

people and took 253 hostage, according to Israeli tallies.

An assault on Rafah, which Israel says is the last Hamas stronghold in the Gaza Strip, has been anticipated

for weeks but foreign governments and the United Nations have expressed concern that such action could result in a humanitarian disaster given the number of displaced people crammed into the area.

On Sunday, Hamas officials said a delegation led by Khalil Al-Hayya, the group's deputy Gaza chief, would discuss a ceasefire proposal handed by Hamas to mediators from Qatar and Egypt, as well as Israel's response. Mediators, backed by the United States, have stepped up their efforts to conclude a deal.

Two Hamas officials who spoke to Reuters did not disclose details of the latest proposals, but a source briefed on the talks told Reuters that Hamas is expected to respond to Israel's latest truce proposal delivered on Saturday. The source said this included an agreement to accept the release of fewer than 40 hostages in exchange for releasing Palestinians held in Israeli jails, and to a second phase of a truce that includes a "period of sustained calm" — Israel's compromise response to a Hamas demand for a permanent ceasefire.

**Russian strikes kill 14 foreign fighters**

Donetsk (UNI)

Strikes launched by Russia on Sunday at hotels in Mykolaiv (Nikolaev), known for housing foreign fighters hired by Ukraine, left 14 mercenaries dead and another eight injured, a source on the ground told Sputnik.

"The eight injured were hospitalized ... They are being accommodated separately from others. Two are in a serious condition and six have been stabilized. Resistance saw at least 14 dead people being transported to the morgue," Sergei Lebedev, the coordinator of resistance forces, said.

The Riviera and Helen hotels, where English-speaking foreigners live, are being guarded by the Ukrainian armed forces, Lebedev added. Resistance forces have also been reporting American and Canadian



citizens arriving in the Black Sea coast city.

The city is most known for the shipbuilding industry. Lebedev said foreign instructors had been training Ukrainian marines at a local shipyard to conduct naval sabotage operations. About a hundred Ukrainian paramilitary fighters from the Azov

battalion (banned in Russia for terrorism) have recently arrived at the shipyard, which is also used to assemble underwater drones.

Meanwhile, a Ukrainian defense official says Russian troops are engaged in a massive redeployment in the south of the country, including an area where Ukraine has launched a counteroffensive.

Security Council Secretary Oleksiy Danilov made the comments on Ukrainian television on July 27, saying the redeployments were taking place in the direction of the Kherson, Melitopol, and Zaporizhzhya regions, and the Russians were bringing in additional forces.

Danilov also said that Ukraine is now receiving from Western partners the weapons it needed back in March and April.

**Telegram unblocks chatbots used by Ukraine's security services**

Agencies, Kyiv

Ukraine said on Monday the Telegram messaging app had restored access to a number of chatbots used by Ukraine's security agencies to collect information about Russia's war effort after the services were briefly suspended.

The Dubai-based Telegram app founded by Russian-born Pavel Durov blocked a number of bots used by Ukraine to fight back against Russia's full-scale invasion, Kyiv's military spy agency GUR said in a statement shortly after midnight.

A Telegram bot is an automated feature that allows the app's users to submit or ask for information. Some of the bots run by Ukraine's government allow people to report the



whereabouts of Russian military hardware and personnel inside Ukraine.

The GUR had said that "management of the Telegram platform unreasonably blocked a number of official bots that have opposed Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, including the (GUR) bot".

**US military shoots down 5 drones over Red Sea**

**Washington:** US Central Command (CENTCOM) said on Monday that the US military destroyed five drones over the Red Sea as they posed a threat to US and allied vessels in the region.

"Between 1:48 and 2:27 a.m. (Sanaa time) [22:48 - 23:27 GMT], April 28, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) successfully engaged five airborne unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) over the Red Sea. It was determined the UAVs presented an imminent threat to U.S., coalition, and merchant vessels in the region," the command said on X.

Yemen's rebel Ansar Allah movement, also known as the Houthis, has been launching attacks on commercial and military vessels in the region for months, in response to Israeli military operation in the Gaza Strip.

**Taliban's treatment of women under scrutiny at UN rights meeting**

Agencies, Geneva

Afghanistan's Taliban face criticism over their human rights record at a U.N. meeting on Monday, with Washington accusing them of systematically depriving women and girls of their human rights.

However, in an awkward first for the U.N. Human Rights Council, the concerned country's current rulers will not be present because they are not recognised by the global body.

Afghanistan will instead be represented by an ambassador appointed by the previous U.S.-backed government, which the Taliban ousted in 2021.

In a series of questions compiled in a U.N. document ahead of the review, the United States asked how



authorities would hold perpetrators to account for abuses against civilians, "particularly women and girls who are being systematically deprived of their human rights"?

It also called for the promotion of the rights of LGBTQ persons, noting an "escalation of threats and abuse"

**4 killed after tornadoes hit Oklahoma**

**Houston:** At least four people have been killed since Saturday night when multiple large tornadoes began to hit southern central U.S. state Oklahoma, Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt said Sunday at a news conference.

In the hardest-hit town of Sulphur in Murray County in south Oklahoma, a person was killed and some 30 others injured in the wake of at least two large tornadoes, which flattened a number of homes and buildings, said Stitt.

A flood warning was also issued for the city, according to the National Weather Service.

"It seems like every business downtown has been destroyed now here in Sulphur," Stitt said.

"It's definitely the most damage since I've been governor that I've seen."

**N-Korea installs mines in DMZ inter-Korean road**



Seoul (UNI)

South Korean media on Monday reported that North Korea has installed land mines barely 100km from here on an inter-Korean road within the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) separating the two Koreas to shutdown all contacts.

The report by Yonhap news agency quoted a South Korean military official as the Kim Jong-un regime in its latest move plans to shut down cross-border roads. Kim has called for scrapping a decades long policy of seeking unification with South Korea and defined their relations as those between "two states hostile to each other".

In January, Kim gave instructions for "strict" measures to block all the channels of inter-Korean communication along the border, such as cutting off the Gyeongui land route to an "irretrievable level."

The military detected the North laying mines on the unpaved road inside the DMZ late last year near Arrowhead Hill in Cheorwon, 85 kilometers northeast of Seoul, according to the official.

**At Khalsa day celebrations, pro-Khalistan slogans raised in presence of PM Trudeau**

Agencies, Toronto

At the Khalsa Day Celebrations that took place in Toronto, loud chants of pro-Khalistan slogans were seen being raised in the presence of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, as well as opposition leader Pierre Poilievre. This comes amid a sharp rise in anti-India sentiment in Canada in recent times.

As PM Trudeau was about to take the stage for his address to mark Khalsa Day, the chants were heard getting louder till he arrives and commences his speech in the video released by Canada-based CPAC TV.

Slogans of "Khalistan Zindabad" were heard at the event in which, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh and Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow were also present.

A similar instance also occurred



when the leader of the official opposition of Canada, Pierre Poilievre walked up to the stage to begin his address to the people gathered at the event. Thousands of people flocked to downtown Toronto on Sunday for one of the biggest yearly gatherings in the city.

According to the Ontario Sikhs

and Gurdwaras Council (OSGC), Vaisakhi, also called Khalsa Day, commemorates the founding of the Sikh community in 1699 as well as the Sikh New Year.

The group has been organising an annual parade down Lake Shore Boulevard for many years; the council claims that it is the third-largest parade in the nation and that it regularly draws thousands of spectators, according to CBC News.

Even as Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau walked up to address the Sikh Community in Toronto loud pro-Khalistan slogans were raised from the crowd. Trudeau in a staunch assurance to the Sikh Community in the country has said that the government is always there to protect their rights and freedoms at all costs.

**At least 40 killed as dam bursts in Kenya amid heavy downpour**

Nakuru, Kenya (UNI)

At least 40 people have been confirmed dead, with several others still missing, after a dam burst in a town north of the Kenyan capital Nairobi, following heavy rains across the country, local police said Monday.

Naivasha Police Commander Stephen Kirui said that the police recovered 40 bodies from the debris on Monday, with a major search and rescue operation ongoing in the Mai Mahiu area, about 60 kilometers north of Nairobi, after a nearby river overflowed due to flash floods.

"We have 40 bodies collected so far, and many more are covered by the mud. Many cars are also submerged," Kirui said from the site.

The Kenya Red Cross Society, a charity organization, said that the floodwaters originated from a near-



by river that burst its banks on Sunday night. "Several people have been taken to a health facility in Mai Mahiu due to flash floods affecting

Kamuchiri Village," it added. Local officials said casualties could rise as the search and rescue operation continues, noting that

many people remain missing.

Kirui said that more than 100 people were rushed to the hospital following the tragedy. Rescue missions were hampered by the challenging terrain where the water raged through.

The Kenya National Highways Authority reported that the incident had cut off the major road from Nairobi to Mai Mahiu after heaps of rocks, mud and logs were deposited there. Kenyan authorities issued a warning on Sunday about more deaths and property damage following heavy rains and devastating floods across the nation. According to the police, more than 90 people have lost their lives since March, with concerns that the actual number could be higher as many bodies remain missing.

**Sri Lanka expresses hope to join BRICS+**

**Colombo:** Sri Lanka hopes to join BRICS+ in the near future, Sri Lanka's Ambassador to Russia Janitha Abeywickrema Liyanage said recently while addressing the media.

He made the remarks following Sri Lanka's participation in a recent international meeting of high representatives responsible for security issues in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Liyanage said Sri Lanka could gain many benefits in transport and food security by joining BRICS+.

BRICS is the acronym for an emerging-market cooperative mechanism that initially includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. On Jan. 1, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Iran and Ethiopia joined BRICS, doubling its members from five to 10.