UK resolves Rwanda asylum cases after govt drops policy

AFP- Three asylum seekers who brought court action to block the UK's attempt to send them to Rwanda had their cases resolved on Tuesday, after the incoming Labour government ditched the policy.
Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced on Saturday that the migrant deportation plan forged by the ousted Conservative government was "dead and buried".

There had already been a spate of legal challenges to the scheme, with the UK Supreme Court in November last year ruling that it was illegal under international law as Rwanda could not be considered a safe country for asylum seekers.

Government lawyer James Eadie told the High Court in London on Tuesday: "In relation to the three named claimants, these claimants' cases will be fully disposed of and withdrawn subject to the (interior ministry) paying their costs."

The Labour Party said before last Thursday's general election that it would ditch the scheme, which the Tories said would deter huge numbers of migrants trying to get across the Channel to the UK on small boats from northern France.

Sixty-five people were brought ashore Monday – the first under the new government – taking the total number of arrivals so far this year to 13,639, according to an AFP tally of official figures.

Rwanda, home to 13 million people in Africa's Great Lakes region, claims to be one of the most stable countries on the continent and has drawn praise for its modern infrastructure.

But rights groups accuse veteran President Paul Kagame of ruling in a climate of fear, stifling dissent and free speech.

A spokesman for his government said Monday that “Rwanda takes note of the intention of the UK government to terminate the Migration and Economic Development Partnership Agreement”.

As part of the deal, the UK has already paid some £240 million ($307 million) to Rwanda, with a further £50 million scheduled to be sent at a later date.

In January, Kagame said the money was “only going to be used if those people will come. If they don’t come, we can return the money”.

However, he later specified there was “no obligation” to do so.

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