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Shettima urges EU-Africa collaboration for transformative development

By Friday Omosola

Vice President Kashim Shettima on Thursday called on the European Union (EU) and African nations to maximise their shared potential in pursuit of transformative development across the continent.

Shettima spoke at a meeting with an EU delegation led by Ambassador to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Gautier Mignot, at the Presidential Villa in Abuja.

He described the EU as a natural ally of Nigeria, noting that EU investments had significantly supported President Bola Tinubu's ongoing reform efforts.

"Our expectations as Nigerians and as Africans are clear," Shettima said.

"We want this partnership to graduate from well-meaning commitments to transformative outcomes. We want more joint ventures, deeper trade facilitation under the AfCFTA, and sustained investments in energy, education, and digital inclusion."

He pledged Nigeria's readiness to engage fully with the EU's Global Gateway initiative, aimed at developing smart, clean, and secure infrastructure across the globe.

Shettima identified projects such as high-speed rail links, upgraded ports and airports, renewable power plants, and vocational training centres as key areas for collaboration.

He also urged the EU to move from a donor-recipient model to a partnership model rooted in co-creation of prosperity and mutual values such as democracy, freedom of worship, gender empowerment, and climate adaptability.

"We hope to see the EU move from being a donor to being a co-creator of African prosperity," he said.



"We really want to be partners with the EU, not as recipients of aid but as co-creators of prosperity and wealth."

Shettima commended the African Union Commission for repositioning Africa as an active player in shaping global narratives and added, "They are poised to reposition Africa not just as a subject of global discussion but as a co-author of the world's next chapter."

However, Ambassador Mignot reaffirmed the EU's longstanding relationship with Africa, which this year marks its 25th anniversary.

He noted that the EU is Africa's largest trading partner, investor, and donor, with foreign direct investment reaching €309 billion in 2022—outpacing both the United States and China.

"The EU's commitment to Africa remains strong, and we want to enhance this presence," Mignot said, highlighting the ongoing review of the Joint Vision for 2030, a shared strategic framework aligned with Africa's Agenda 2063 and the AfCFTA.

In a separate engagement, Shettima reaffirmed Nigeria's commitment to its historic relationship with Zambia,

describing it as a bond of "fraternal brotherhood."

He made the remarks while receiving Zambia's Special Envoy, Samuel Miambo, who delivered a message from President Hakainde Hichilema to Tinubu.

Shettima praised Zambia's democratic stability and contributions to civil liberties during the anti-apartheid struggle.

He assured the envoy of Nigeria's support for development-oriented policies aimed at improving citizens' livelihoods in both countries.

Miambo, in his address, sought Nigeria's support for his candidacy for the presidency of the African Development Bank (AfDB), citing a vision centred on energy security, infrastructure, and the creation of a pan-African Centre of Excellence for Energy based in Nigeria.

The envoy was accompanied by Zambia's High Commissioner to Nigeria, George Imbuwa, and two presidential advisers.

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10X4	206,890.50
10X3	179,608.00
9X6	254,977.00
9X5	225,738.00
9X4	193,500.00
9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
5X3	66,875.00
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4X4	60,166.50
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9X4	177,500.00
9X3	150,000.00
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8X5	143,500.00
8X4	93,500.00
8X3	82,434.50
7X4	111,173.50
6X4	82,434.50
6X3	59,250.00
6X2	40,000.00
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8X3	N/A
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6X3	41,124.50
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Tinubu approves establishment of national forest guard system

By Friday Omosola



President Bola Tinubu has approved the establishment of a national forest guard system and directed the recruitment of more than 130,000 armed operatives to secure Nigeria's 1,129 forest reserves.

The initiative is aimed at strengthening internal security and protecting forested areas from criminal elements,

Each state will recruit between 2,000 and 5,000 heavily armed and professionally trained forest

guards, depending on available financial resources.

The recruitment and training processes will be overseen by the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Environment.

Security agencies, traditional rulers, and community leaders are also expected to play active roles in the implementation.

Although at least 11 states already have operational forest

guards—also known as forest rangers or forest security personnel—the new directive is set to arm and expand the corps to support broader national security objectives.

The move comes amid growing concerns over the use of forested regions as hideouts by kidnappers, bandits, and other criminal groups.

The national guard system is expected to serve as a strategic layer of defence across Nigeria's vulnerable forest zones.

UTME Glitches: Reps advocate nationwide rollout of CBT centres

By Friday Omosola



Hours after the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) admitted technical glitch in the just concluded Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), the House of Representatives has provided possible solutions in forthcoming exercise.

The House urged the federal government to establish at least one computer-based testing (CBT) centre in each of Nigeria's 774 local government areas, to enhance the administration of the UTME.

The recommendation came during Thursday's plenary session, where the lawmakers said the initiative would help prevent similar issues in future examinations and ensure wider access for candidates across the country.

They also appealed for calm amid mounting concerns over the integrity of

the 2025 exercise, after JAMB admitted to multiple lapses.

The Senate had earlier deliberated on a comparable proposal, suggesting that funds be allocated in the 2026 national budget to establish CBT centres in every local government area.

Senator Mohammed Dandutse, who chairs the Senate Committee on Tertiary Institutions and TETFUND, highlighted the pressing need for more CBT infrastructure after overseeing the conduct of the 2025 UTME in parts of the country.

He noted that his own constituency in Katsina South had only two centres serving 11 local government areas.

He stressed that equitable access to university entrance exams required proper digital infrastructure, adding that the Senate and House would

collaborate to secure funding for the initiative in the upcoming budget cycle.

Meanwhile, JAMB announced that nearly 380,000 candidates would be required to retake the 2025 UTME after it identified significant errors that undermined the integrity of the examination.

At a press conference in Abuja, the JAMB Registrar, Professor Ishaq Oloyede, admitted that technical malfunctions compromised performance in some centres, with 157 out of 887 affected.

The development has drawn sharp criticism from stakeholders, including students and parents, many of whom cited unusually low scores and inconsistencies in questions and grading.

Nigeria approves four satellites to aid Earth observation, fight insecurity

By **Damilola Olufemi**

The Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology, Chief Uche Nnaji, on Wednesday said the Federal Executive Council has approved the launch of four satellites to aid Earth observation and the fight against insecurity in the country.

Nnaji said this at Abuja's 22nd National Council on Innovation, Science and Technology.

The meeting, which was held from May 12 to May 14, had as its theme "Research, Develop, Innovate and Commercialise: A Cycle for National Prosperity."

The minister said the satellites consisted of three Earth Observation satellites and one Radar Aperture satellite.

"The Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Tinubu is awake to the problems of Nigeria, and they are being addressed.

"Just last week, the Federal Executive Council approved that Nigeria launch four satellites, satellites that are worth millions of dollars, three Earth Observation satellites and one search satellite.

"The search satellite is the one that will pick images both day, night, during rain, every time of the day, and that is technology in play.

"The military can use it effectively, unlike now that when we want to go and view Sambisa forest and some of these dungeons on gorilla warfare, we have to buy images and data," he said.

On the National Science, Technology and Innovation Policy, the minister said that there was an inter-ministerial committee on Research and Innovation that was reviewing it and strategising on the institution of the National Research and



Innovation Fund.

Nnaji said the cycle of Research, Development, Innovation and Commercialisation had built renowned economies and technological giants, adding that Nigeria should also tap into its potential.

"As a country, we can no longer afford to ignore the widening gap between research and real-world impact.

"We must rise to this challenge, acknowledging that for decades, valuable research conducted in our universities and institutions has remained underutilised, disconnected from industries and policy.

"Our talented young innovators, full of bold ideas and boundless creativity, have often lacked the structured support, financing, and mentorship required to move their innovations from concept to the market.

"Let this 22nd edition of NCIST mark the beginning of a new chapter, one where every research has a roadmap to industry," he said.

According to him, the meeting should begin an era where every student sees innovation as a viable career, and where every invention finds its way to the market.

He added, "Scientists and researchers must continue to push the frontiers of knowledge, private sector must strengthen collaboration with academia through investments in Research and Development (R&D).

"Similarly, the government must build, enforce regulatory frameworks that protect, support and incentivise innovation at every level."

Nnaji said that the resolutions of the council would be presented to the FEC for adoption.

The minister explained that the 22nd edition of the council, which was scheduled to be held in 2024, was postponed to 2025 due to some contingencies.

He, however, promised that plans were underway for the 23rd edition for the restoration of the regular schedule.

Nigeria's inflation rate drops to 23.71% in April

By Damilola Olufemi



The inflation rate of Nigeria eased to 23.71% in April 2025 against 24.23% recorded in March, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) on Thursday.

The new figure indicated a slight decline of 0.52 percentage points, showing a touch of hope amid continued economic and rising cost-of-living challenges in the country.

New Daily Prime reported earlier that Nigeria's headline inflation rate edged up to 24.23 per cent in March 2025, while stating the increase in its consumer price index (CPI) for March.

The rate indicated an increased move from the 23.18 per cent reported in February.

It also signals a return to levels (24.48

per cent) recorded at the beginning of the year following the CPI rebasing.

"In March 2025, the rate rose to 24.23% relative to the February 2025 rate of 23.18%," the bureau said.

"Looking at the movement, the March 2025 headline inflation rate showed an increase of 1.05% compared to the February 2025 Headline inflation rate," the NBS said.

World Bank advise on inflation

Recall that the World Bank Group had advised the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to sustain efforts to tackle inflation, as Nigeria's price increase rose to 34.8 per cent in December, up from 33.6 per cent in November.

Senior economist for Nigeria at the World Bank Group, Sameer Matta, said this at the launch of the 2025 macroeconomic outlook of the Nigerian

Economic Summit Group (NESG).

The economist said, "I think what is critical in terms of the upsurge is to stay the course. I think that the central bank needs to continue to be focused on making sure that inflation is under control.

"Part of it is related to the supply side. What can be done to improve the yield on the agriculture side? What can be done to improve the link between rural and urban areas?

"There is the question of what can be done on the trade policy side. One would be to increase production locally, but that would take time.

"One of the things that can be done on the trade policy side is to think through which sectors could be targeted to allow some tariffs to be adjusted."

Bagudu: Economic reforms fuel growth, restore investor confidence

By Friday Omosola

The Minister of Budget and Economic Planning, Abubakar Bagudu, has said Nigeria's economy is on a recovery path, bolstered by bold policy reforms, renewed fiscal discipline, and improved investor sentiment.

The minister spoke while featuring in an interview for an upcoming TV documentary marking President Bola Tinubu's second year in office, Bagudu said the administration's "Renewed Hope Agenda" is delivering measurable results and winning the trust of both local and international investors.

"This is two years well spent. President Tinubu confronted Nigeria's economic challenges with courage, making tough but necessary decisions that are now beginning to yield positive outcomes," the Minister said.

Bagudu cited four consecutive quarters of GDP growth, increased stability in the foreign exchange market, and a resurgence of private sector confidence as evidence of progress.

"We're seeing stability in the naira, improved revenue, and renewed faith in our economy from both Nigerians and the international community. Even global rating agencies are recognising our progress," he said.

According to the Minister, the government's policy direction—especially in agriculture, energy, and infrastructure—has attracted significant interest from foreign investors, including those from Brazil, Belarus, and Saudi Arabia.

"These investors are responding to our credibility and transparency. They want policies that are clear and markets that function fairly. We're providing that," he noted.

Bagudu also pointed to major structural reforms under Tinubu's leadership,



including the removal of fuel subsidies and the unification of the foreign exchange market, as game-changing decisions that restored macroeconomic stability.

"We were losing 5% of GDP to a fuel subsidy that benefited a few. The President made the bold move to end it. Similarly, by adopting a willing-buyer, willing-seller exchange rate model, we removed uncertainty and favouritism from the forex market," he said.

Highlighting budgetary discipline, Bagudu explained that the 2024 and 2025 national budgets reflect a deliberate balance between fiscal responsibility and investment in critical sectors such as health, education, infrastructure, security, and technology.

"The 2024 budget significantly reduced the deficit and sent a strong signal to the markets that we're serious about reform," he added.

On debt and monetary policy, Bagudu said Tinubu has shown respect for institutional integrity, particularly in handling inherited liabilities and Central Bank financing.

"Despite inheriting ₦22.7 trillion in Ways and Means financing, the President has insisted on upholding the independence of the Central Bank. That discipline is

gaining Nigeria credibility on the global stage," he stated.

Bagudu credited the Presidential Economic Coordination Council and the Economic Management Team—chaired by President Tinubu and led by the Coordinating Minister for the Economy, Wale Edun—for ensuring alignment between policy formulation and execution.

"This is coordinated governance. The President is not only the chief economic strategist but also the one ensuring everyone delivers results. The private sector is part of this process, not an afterthought," he said.

While acknowledging that the reforms have posed short-term challenges for citizens, the Minister described the process as a necessary path to long-term prosperity.

"Our economy is like a body in training—it may feel painful now, but the muscles of progress are forming," he said.

"President Tinubu is taking the tough path now so future generations can enjoy a more secure and prosperous Nigeria. This is not just economic reform—it is a moral responsibility."

Lagos govt reaffirms 10% cap on tenancy agreement fees

By **Friday Omosola**

The Lagos State Government has reiterated its commitment to enforcing the 10% cap on tenancy agreement fees, cautioning landlords and agents against imposing illegal charges on tenants.

The Special Adviser to the Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu on Housing, Barakat Odunuga-Bakare disclosed this during the 2025 Ministerial Press Briefing held at the Bagauda Kaltho Press Centre in Alausa, Ikeja.



She emphasised that the Lagos State Tenancy Law clearly stipulates that legal or agreement fees must not exceed 10% of the annual rent.

Odunuga-Bakare declared that any landlord or agent who demands more is in direct violation of the law.

“We have been overwhelmed by reports of unscrupulous elements making life hard for Lagosians with agreements and commissions that feel like asking for an arm and a leg,” she said.

“We are calling on members of the public not to keep silent but to report such agents and landlords, as the government cannot be everywhere at all times.”

She acknowledged the mounting pressure on the housing sector due to rapid population growth and rural-urban migration, noting that some individuals have exploited this situation to take advantage of vulnerable residents.

Nonetheless, she reaffirmed the state government’s resolve to sanitise the sector and protect the rights of tenants.

Odunuga-Bakare also revealed that the government has been working closely with recognised real estate associations to address the issue.

“We have met with associations of real estate agents, and they have assured us that those engaging in

these practices are not registered members,” she said, attributing many of the illegal acts to unregistered individuals operating outside professional oversight.

According to her, the state government is urging residents to report any demand for tenancy agreement fees exceeding the legal limit via the Lagos State Real Estate Regulatory Authority (LASRERA) on Facebook and Instagram at lasrera1, and on X.

This public appeal, officials say, is intended to empower residents and support the enforcement of tenancy regulations, ultimately ensuring a fairer and more transparent housing market in the state.

Oyebanji urges more police presence in Ekiti, seeks tighter border wecurity

By Friday Omosola



Governor Biodun Oyebanji of Ekiti State has appealed to the Nigeria Police Force to deploy additional personnel to the state, particularly to its border communities, to bolster security and combat rising criminal activity.

Oyebanji made the request on Thursday while receiving the newly posted Assistant Inspector General of Police (AIG) for Zone 17, Ajani Omolabi, in his office in Ado-Ekiti.

Omolabi will oversee Zone 17 which covers both Ondo and Ekiti States.

While describing Ekiti as one of Nigeria's safest states, the governor raised concerns over inadequate security coverage in rural areas, warning that these gaps leave residents vulnerable and undermine

public safety.

"We are underserved. A lot of communities have no police formations. I have discussed this with the Inspector General of Police, and he explained the challenges, but even if you cannot add to our numbers, do not deplete us," Oyebanji said.

He also urged the police to intensify security efforts ahead of the state's upcoming election season.

The governor commended the state police command for its professionalism and credited its efforts for the noticeable reduction in kidnapping, banditry, and other criminal activities across the state.

He reaffirmed his administration's commitment to supporting the police

through continued investment in security infrastructure, partnerships, and resource mobilisation.

"You said you are here to work, we are also ready to work with you," he told the AIG.

"The cooperation we enjoy with the police has helped us create a safer environment for residents and investors alike."

However, Omolabi appreciated the governor's unwavering support and pledged to sustain the peace and security in Ekiti.

"I am committed to working tirelessly to ensure the safety of residents and to maintain public order across the state," he assured.

APC news: Kebbi senators dump PDP after meeting with Tinubu

By **Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi**

Three PDP senators from Kebbi State have defected to the APC from PDP after a closed-door meeting with President Tinubu.

In a remarkable turn of political events that underscores the complexities of Nigerian democracy, Kebbi State has emerged as a case study in split-ticket politics. While the state is governed by Dr. Nasir Idris of the All Progressives Congress (APC), all three senators representing Kebbi were initially elected on the platform of the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2023 general elections. That paradox, however, has now shifted dramatically.

Last Tuesday, the three Kebbi senators—Adamu Aliero (Kebbi Central), Yahaya Abdullahi (Kebbi North), and Garba Maidoki (Kebbi South)—announced their defection from the PDP to the APC, marking a significant consolidation of APC power in the Senate and reshaping Kebbi's political landscape.

Their defections, formally announced in letters read during Senate plenary by Deputy Senate President Barau Jibrin, followed a closed-door meeting with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu at the Presidential Villa in Abuja. The trio was accompanied by APC National Chairman Abdullahi Ganduje, Governor Nasir Idris of Kebbi State, Sokoto State Governor Ahmad Aliyu, and Minister of Budget and Economic Planning Atiku Bagudu.

Though the purpose of the meeting



was initially undisclosed, it later emerged that discussions centered on finalizing the senators' move to the ruling party.

The Unfolding Drama

The defections were more than routine political maneuvering. They revealed deep fissures within the PDP, driven by leadership crises, unresolved litigations, and ideological disarray. All three senators cited internal instability in the PDP as their main reason for jumping ship.

Senator Aliero, a political heavyweight and former governor of Kebbi State (1999-2007), was forthright in his reasons. "This decision was not made lightly," he wrote in his letter to the Senate. "Over the past months, it has become increasingly and manifestly clear to me that the PDP has become disconnected from the aspirations of the very Nigerians it seeks to lead."

Aliero praised the APC's renewed

focus on national development and security under Tinubu's leadership, describing the party as a more viable platform for delivering effective governance.

Senator Yahaya Abdullahi, who had left the APC in 2022 over internal disputes, described his return as a "homecoming," noting that his earlier grievances had been resolved by Governor Idris. He emphasized that his decision followed extensive consultations with stakeholders in his district.

The newest senator, Garba Maidoki, elected in 2023, has gained attention for his vocal criticism of federal policies. Despite being a first-time legislator, Maidoki has made waves in Senate debates. However, his tone is expected to soften now that he has crossed over to the ruling party.

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on next page**

Cont from page 11

Maidoki cited progress in security as a key factor. “When I was sworn in... more than 100 villages in my senatorial district were occupied by bandits,” he said. “To the glory of God, the deployment of troops has brought stability. My people have almost all returned and are farming peacefully.”

APC Consolidates Power

With these defections, the APC now controls 68 of the 109 Senate seats. The PDP’s strength has been reduced to 30, while the Labour Party holds five seats. The SDP has two, and both the NNPP and APGA hold one seat each. Notably, the Senate currently has 107 members, due to the death of Senator Ifeanyi Ubah and the election of Monday Okpebholo as Edo State Governor.

This is the second wave of defections to the APC since the Senate resumed from its Easter and Eid-el-Fitr recess. Just a week earlier, Kano South Senator Kawu Sumaila dumped the NNPP for the APC, citing similar internal wrangling.

Political Calculations

Observers see the defections as both a blow to the PDP and a strategic coup for the APC ahead of midterm evaluations and the 2027

general elections. The presence of top APC officials at the Senate plenary—including Ganduje, Governor Idris, and Minister Tanko Yusuf—underscored the importance the party places on consolidating legislative support.

Following the announcement, the three senators were led to their new seats in the majority section of the chamber and joined in a photo session with party dignitaries, symbolizing their formal induction into the APC fold.

PDP’s reaction

Despite these setbacks, the PDP is not retreating. The party has launched a high-level reconciliation initiative. On Monday, the PDP Governors Forum named former Senate President Bukola Saraki to head a seven-member committee tasked with resolving internal conflicts.

Saraki has pledged to heal divisions and restore party unity ahead of a crucial National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting scheduled for May 27. In addition, the PDP Senate Caucus announced in October 2024 plans to form a panel of senior party leaders, including former governors, to mediate disputes.

However, it remains unclear whether these panels have been effective. With defections mounting and internal cohesion waning, the PDP faces a critical juncture.

Kebbi’s Political Paradox

Kebbi’s political setting—an APC governor and (formerly) PDP senators—is emblematic of the electoral contradictions in Nigeria’s democracy. Split-ticket voting is not unusual in the country, as voters often make decisions based on personality, regional affiliations, and immediate benefits rather than strict party loyalty.

However, the recent alignment of all federal and state representation under APC in Kebbi may lead to more synchronized governance. Governor Idris, a former president of the Nigeria Union of Teachers and Deputy President of the Nigeria Labour Congress, has emphasized unity and development since taking office.

His influence appears to have played a role in reconciling with erstwhile political adversaries like Senator Abdullahi, indicating his growing stature within the APC.

Defections rock NNPP, PDP as Lawmakers cite leadership crisis, join APC

By New Daily Prime

Barely 72 hours after three senators from Kebbi State—Adamu Aliero (Kebbi Central), Yahaya Abdullahi (Kebbi North), and Garba Maidoki (Kebbi South)—announced their defection from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to the All Progressives Congress (APC), the ruling party has recorded yet another wave of defections.

On Thursday, two members of the House of Representatives, Kabiru Usman and Abdullahi Sani—both elected under the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP)—formally joined the APC. The lawmakers represent Rano/Bunkure/Kibiya and Karaye/Rogo Federal Constituencies, respectively, both located in Kano State.

The notices of defection were read on the floor of the House by Speaker Tajudeen Abbas during Thursday's plenary session. According to the lawmakers, their decision to leave the NNPP was driven by what they described as "the internal crisis rocking the party."

In a related development, another federal lawmaker, Oluwole Oke, representing Oriade/Obokun Federal Constituency in Osun State, also announced his defection to the APC. Oke, who had previously served under the PDP banner, did not publicly state his reason for leaving but was warmly welcomed into the APC fold.

Thursday's plenary had all the markings of a coordinated political



shift. The presence of APC National Chairman, Dr. Abdullahi Ganduje, underscored the party's growing momentum and its strategic approach to expanding legislative dominance across Nigeria.

Observers noted that the rapid succession of defections—spanning both chambers of the National Assembly and involving lawmakers from different regions and political backgrounds—suggests a broad realignment in national politics ahead of the 2027 general elections.

The APC now appears to be tightening its grip not only on the Senate, where it currently holds 68 out of 109 seats, but also in the House of Representatives, further solidifying its position as the dominant political force in Nigeria.

Analysts believe the defections are part of a larger trend fueled by internal strife within opposition parties, the

APC's strategic political overtures, and the perceived stability of President Bola Tinubu's administration.

As of now, the APC leadership has not ruled out more defections in the coming weeks. Sources within the party suggest ongoing discussions with additional lawmakers dissatisfied with their current party leadership or disillusioned with their party's direction.

The political equation in Nigeria's National Assembly is clearly shifting, and with each new defection, the ruling party's legislative muscle grows stronger. Whether this will translate to more unified governance or increased political tension remains to be seen.

Stay with New Daily Prime for exclusive updates on Nigeria's evolving political landscape.

Lagos establishes SWIFT project to empower women through health, financial access

By Helen Okechukwu

To improve women's health and economic inclusion, the Lagos State Ministry of Health in partnership with the Society for Family Health (SFH) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation on Tuesday launched the SWIFT Project — a transformative, multi-sectoral initiative.

Launched at the Radisson Hotel, Ikeja, the SWIFT Project—Strengthening Women's Initiatives for Family Planning and Technology, aims to bridge gaps in reproductive health access while empowering women economically through entrepreneurship, digital tools, and improved service delivery via pharmacies and Patent and Proprietary Medicine Vendors (PPMVs).

Speaking on behalf of the Special Adviser to the Governor on Health, Dr. Kemi Ogunyemi, Dr. Folashade Oludara, Director of Family Health and Nutrition, described SWIFT as a timely solution addressing barriers like cost, stigma, and distance in accessing contraceptives.

“By engaging pharmacies and Patent and Proprietary Medicine Vendors (PPMVs), this project brings care closer to the people and reaffirms the right of every woman to informed reproductive choices,” she said.

Read Also: FG launches Empower Academy to boost local drug, medical device production

Dr. Olusegun Ogboye, Permanent



Secretary, Lagos State Ministry of Health, called family planning a “development accelerator,” highlighting that the project builds on the success of the previous IntegratE program, which trained over 1,200 providers and supported nearly 188,000 women.

Pharm. Kene Eruchalu, SFH Deputy Director, commended the Gates Foundation, noting Lagos as the final rollout location after Kaduna and Kano.

“We’re not only training health workers, but specifically empowering women providers because peer trust improves uptake and outcomes. This project is as much about trust as it is about access,” he said.

Project Manager Ummi Rahama-Shehu outlined SWIFT’s three-year vision, emphasising its five strategic pillars: need-based support, investment readiness, market presence, tech-driven access, and stakeholder ecosystem

alignment.

“The project aims to strengthen the capacity and sustainability of pharmacies and Patent and Proprietary Medicine Vendors (PPMVs) using a social enterprise model focused on a triple bottom line: economic viability, social impact, and gender empowerment,” she stated.

Mr. Olukunle Daramola, Gates Foundation Consultant, praised Lagos for its commitment to health equity, noting that SWIFT will extend voluntary family planning services to hard-to-reach communities using trained, regulated providers.

Also speaking, Dr. Cecelia Mabogunje, Permanent Secretary, Health District VI, and Dr. Taiwo Filusi of the Pharmacy Council of Nigeria, emphasised SWIFT’s role in strengthening community health structures and promoting women-led healthcare access.

Emergency care failings linked to 320 preventable deaths weekly

By Helen Okechukwu



The Head of the UK's emergency medicine body has accused the government of failing the most vulnerable patients, as new data suggests more than 16,000 people may have died last year due to excessive delays in A&E departments.

Dr Adrian Boyle, president of the Royal College of Emergency Medicine (RCEM), said older and severely ill patients are being overlooked in favour of quicker wins, such as treating minor injuries, to meet relaxed performance targets.

RCEM analysis indicates that in 2024, up to 320 people each week died due to prolonged waits for hospital beds. These figures were derived using a major 2021 study, which linked long emergency department stays with higher mortality rates.

The analysis found that the risk of death

begins to climb after five hours in A&E, with significant increases for patients waiting between eight and twelve hours. In 2024, over 1.7 million patients experienced waits of 12 hours or longer.

Dr Boyle criticised the current government benchmark of treating 78% of patients within four hours, down from the previous 95% goal, arguing that it deprioritises those most in need of inpatient care.

Public trust in emergency services deteriorating

He warned that public trust in emergency services is deteriorating, with some patients choosing to stay away from A&E for fear of prolonged suffering in corridors and waiting areas.

The crisis will be addressed at the launch of a new cross-party parliamentary group on emergency care, led by Labour MP and

A&E doctor Dr Rosena Allin-Khan. The group plans to examine the impact of long delays and so-called "corridor care."

Dr Allin-Khan described the figures as alarming, stressing that front-line staff are stretched thin and urgent systemic reform is needed to ensure patients receive timely, dignified treatment.

In response, the Department of Health said it is working to fix deep-rooted issues in the NHS, pointing to a £26 billion investment plan aimed at relieving pressure on hospitals through community-based care and increased GP recruitment.

Despite these commitments, emergency medicine leaders say the government must act faster to improve bed availability and staffing levels to prevent further avoidable loss of life.

Health firm, Oyo launch first harm reduction IEC materials for drug users

By Helen Okechukwu



In a historic move to combat Hepatitis C and other bloodborne diseases among People Who Inject Drugs (PWID), the Society for Family Health (SFH), in partnership with the Oyo State Ministry of Health, has created the first set of harm reduction Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials in the state.

These new materials were developed under the HEPC3P project through a community-centered workshop that included public and private harm reduction partners, communication experts, and members of the PWID community.

Together, they reviewed old materials, found messaging gaps, and created eleven new tools designed to educate

and protect drug users.

The statement shared on X on Thursday read partly, “This innovative measure was achieved through a community-centred material development workshop, bringing together harm reduction partners (from both the public and private sectors), communication experts, and members of the target community.”

“With a human-centred approach, participants reviewed existing tools, identified messaging gaps, developed the corresponding Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) themed creative briefs, and eleven new community-focused materials evolved.

Read Also: FG unveils ‘Medipool’ scheme to cut drug costs

The initiative underscores SFH’s commitment to Universal Health Coverage and reinforces the principle of leaving no one behind, especially those traditionally underserved in the healthcare system.

By rooting the campaign in the lived realities of PWID, the project takes a bold step toward dismantling stigma and improving health outcomes through inclusive, effective communication.

As Nigeria continues its journey toward better public health outcomes, this community-led approach stands as a model for other states and organizations looking to bridge the gap between policy and people.

Social services neglect left 11 months-old baby drown in bath

By **Helen Okechukwu**



An 11-month-old baby named Theo Taylor-Maloney drowned in a bath in Manchester after being left alone for 12 minutes.

An investigation found that social services failed to respond to many warnings about neglect in the family.

Theo died in October 2020, just two days before his first birthday. His parents, Jessica Taylor and Michael Maloney, were in another room using their phones while Theo was in the bath, says BBC report.

Both parents were later convicted of neglect and given suspended prison

sentences in July 2023.

The family lived in Wythenshawe and was already known to Manchester Children's Services.

A serious case review revealed that between 2017 and 2020, there were 17 separate warnings made to authorities about the children's safety.

Eleven of those reports were about neglect, including poor supervision that had caused injuries in the past.

Most of the concerns were raised by friends and neighbours, but some also came from professionals like a police officer, a GP, and a children's centre worker.

The review said that social services did not properly act on the repeated reports of neglect.

It also said that Theo's mother was often left to care for the children alone and was struggling without enough support.

Manchester City Council said it was very sorry about what happened and is working on improving how social workers respond to serious cases.

A spokesperson said all agencies involved must learn from this tragic event to better protect children in the future.

If I wasn't a musician, I would have been a journalist, Davido reveals

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian music icon David Adeleke, widely known as Davido, has revealed a surprising side of himself.

In a recent interview with Atlanta's 96.1 The Beat, the award-winning singer said that if he weren't making music, he would probably be working as a journalist.

Davido made this statement while discussing his passion for media promotion. He also talked about why he spends more time engaging with the press than many of his fellow musicians.

A natural love for talking and promotion

"I like promo. I like conversations," Davido said with a smile. "A lot of people don't know that I studied marketing as well as business management. I enjoy promoting myself. I love to talk."

He joked that if he had his podcast, he could talk for three to four days straight. "It's just part of who I am," he added. "Some big artists don't like doing press, but I do. I enjoy it. I can talk."

For Davido, talking to people is more than just part of the job, it's something he genuinely enjoys. He said he likes meeting people, having conversations, and learning new things.

Curiosity drives him

Even outside the studio, Davido said he's always seeking information. "Even at home, I'm always researching," he shared. "If I wasn't doing music, I would definitely be in journalism."

His natural curiosity and interest in the world around him make him more than just a performer. They show he's also a communicator at heart.



Not afraid of the work

The singer also touched on why he believes he has one of the largest fan followings among Nigerian artists.

"A lot of people in my position would just sit back and let everything work for them," Davido said. "But I'm always working. People ask why I have the most followers. It's because I'm active. I put in the work."

He explained that staying on top takes real effort, even when you've already made it big. "I know how hard Beyoncé works, and she already has all the money in the world," he said.

The power of staying visible

Davido's media presence is no accident. His love for talking, promoting his work, and staying visible in the public eye has made him one of the most recognisable names in Afrobeats.

While many artists shy away from interviews and publicity, Davido embraces them. "For me, it's not just about the music. It's about sharing the story, connecting with people, and being

present," he said.

More than just a musician

Davido's comments reveal a deeper layer to his career. He's not just focused on creating hits. He's also focused on building his brand, telling his story, and staying engaged with fans and the media.

"I like information. I like knowing what's going on," he said. "That's why I'd be great in journalism. It's something I would have done if music didn't work out."

Conclusion

Davido's honesty and openness during the interview show just how passionate he is, not only about music but also about communication, storytelling, and hard work.

While he has already made his mark in the music industry, it's clear he could have easily found success in media or journalism. Whether he's on stage or in front of a microphone, one thing is clear, Davido was born to connect with people.

Chris Brown arrested over 2023 London nightclub attack

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

American rapper Chris Brown was arrested early Thursday morning at a luxury hotel in Manchester.

Officers from the Metropolitan Police detained the 36-year-old musician just after 2 a.m. at The Lowry Hotel. The arrest is connected to a nightclub assault that reportedly took place more than a year ago in central London.

Incident linked to mayfair nightclub attack
Police say the arrest relates to an incident that occurred on February 19, 2023, at Tape nightclub in Hanover Square, Mayfair. Brown is accused of launching a violent, unprovoked attack on music producer Abe Diaw. The alleged assault happened around 3 a.m. at the exclusive venue, which is popular among celebrities and nightlife elites.

According to Diaw, Brown struck him with a bottle during the attack. The producer claimed the incident left him injured and shocked, describing the act as sudden and without any warning.

Brown flew into the UK on private jet
Chris Brown had arrived in the United Kingdom on Wednesday, May 14, flying into Manchester Airport on a private jet. His arrival drew attention after The Sun reported that the artist was in the country. This report alerted detectives from the Metropolitan Police, who then made the decision to act.

In response, officers traveled from London to Manchester to carry out the arrest. Just hours later, in the early hours of May 15, they located Brown at The Lowry Hotel and took him into custody.

Police confirm details of arrest
A spokesperson for the Metropolitan Police issued a statement confirming the arrest:

“A 36-year-old man was arrested at a hotel



in Manchester shortly after 02:00hrs on Thursday, 15 May on suspicion of grievous bodily harm. He remains in custody. The arrest relates to an incident at a venue in Hanover Square on 19 February 2023.”

The rapper was reportedly transported to a nearby police station for questioning. As of now, he remains in police custody while officers continue their investigation.

Assault claim adds to Chris Brown’s legal history

This is not the first time Chris Brown has faced legal trouble. The artist, best known for hits like Forever and Run It!, has a long history of run-ins with the law. Most notably, he was convicted in 2009 for assaulting fellow pop star Rihanna, who was his partner at the time. Since then, he has faced various other accusations, ranging from violent outbursts to altercations with fans and other musicians.

The latest accusation once again places Brown under public and legal scrutiny. If charged and convicted, he could face serious penalties under UK law for causing grievous bodily harm.

What happens next?

As of Thursday morning, Brown’s legal team had not issued a public statement regarding the arrest or the allegations. It is

still unclear whether the rapper will be charged, released on bail, or face court proceedings in the coming days.

The investigation remains ongoing. Police are expected to examine evidence from the night of the incident, including security footage, eyewitness accounts, and medical reports.

No public response yet from Brown

Chris Brown has remained silent on the matter. The rapper, who is currently in the UK for a reported series of private appearances, has not posted anything on his social media accounts about the arrest or the incident.

His management team and public relations representatives have also declined to comment as of Thursday afternoon.

Ongoing media attention

The arrest has attracted widespread media coverage both in the UK and the United States. Fans and critics alike have taken to social media to react, with some defending the singer and others calling for accountability.

More details are expected to emerge in the coming days as police continue their investigation and determine the next steps in the case.

I need help to quit 21 years of smoking, Yung6ix cries out

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian rapper Yung6ix has made a heartfelt appeal to the public, asking for help to stop smoking marijuana.

The rapper, who has been in the music industry for years, said he has smoked weed for 21 years, to be exact. He says his body is sending strong signals that it's time to quit.

The rapper shared his struggles on social media, using his official X (formerly Twitter) handle to reach fans and followers.

"I need help," Yung6ix says

In his post, Yung6ix didn't hold back. He admitted that while he has tried to reduce his weed intake, quitting completely has proven difficult. He also revealed that he currently spends about \$600 a month on the drug. Though this is a reduction from what he used to spend, he says it's still too much.

"Coming out today to tell everyone I need help," he wrote. "I've been smoking for 21 years now, and my body is telling me to stop. I'm trying, but it's not easy. I've reduced how much I spend buying weed to \$600 a month, and I need help to turn that to \$0. Any help?"

His message was direct and emotional, reflecting the weight of his battle.

Read Also: I lost my sight after smoking with Snoop Dogg, Ed Sheeran

My kidney failure not from alcohol or smoking, DJ Jimmy Jatt

Smoking reduces lifespan by 20 minutes per cigarette



Colleague offers support to Yung6ix

Shortly after Yung6ix made his post, fellow rapper Phenom responded. Phenom shared his own experience with quitting smoking and offered practical support.

"10 years since I quit smoking," Phenom wrote in reply. "I can link you up with the doctor who helped me."

Yung6ix replied with surprise, saying, "Wow, no way ,bro. So you no dey now kana all this while when we dey yarn?"

This exchange drew attention from fans, many of whom praised Phenom for offering help and commended Yung6ix for speaking out.

Fans react with concern and encouragement

The post quickly gained traction on social media. Fans responded with concern, encouragement, and advice. Many applauded Yung6ix for being honest about his struggle and taking the first step by speaking up. Others shared tips, personal stories, or contacts for professionals who could help.

Mental health advocates also chimed in, pointing out that addiction is a health issue and should be treated with care, not judgment.

One fan wrote, "It's brave of you to speak up. Many are going through the same thing in silence." Another added, "You're not alone. There are people and tools out there that can help."

Addiction and the music industry

Yung6ix's story adds to the growing conversation about drug use in the music industry. Many artists face pressure, stress, and long hours. Some turn to substances to cope. While some can manage their use, others find themselves stuck in habits that are hard to break.

Experts say it's important for artists and their teams to create support systems and safe spaces to talk about issues like addiction. Open conversations, they say, are the first step toward healing.

The road ahead

For Yung6ix, the journey to quitting weed will likely be a tough one. But he's taken a bold first step by reaching out for help. With the support of his fans, friends, and professionals, there is hope he can overcome the addiction.

Quitting a habit built over two decades is no small task. But by speaking out, Yung6ix may not only help himself, but he may also inspire others who are silently facing the same struggle.

His post ends with a clear message: "Any help?" It's a call for support, one that many hopes will be answered in full.

‘Money is everything’, Omah Lay tells fans

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular Nigerian singer Stanley Omah Didia, better known by his stage name Omah Lay, has once again spoken openly about his mental health struggles.

This time, the 26-year-old artist offered a new perspective on his journey through depression, one that includes a bold statement: “Money is everything.”

A deep struggle behind the music Omah Lay first gained wide attention not just for his music but also for the emotional depth he brings to his lyrics. His debut album, *Boy Alone*, released on July 15, 2022, touched heavily on themes of loneliness, anxiety, and emotional pain. Through heartfelt melodies and raw lyrics, he revealed that he had been battling chronic depression, an experience that nearly took his life.

Fans were surprised by the vulnerability in his music. But for Omah Lay, it wasn’t just art. It was real life.

“I was going through the worst time of my life,” the singer shared in a previous post. “I was broken and confused.”

Social media post sparks conversation
On May 13, 2025, the Soso crooner took to X (formerly Twitter) with a short but powerful message. He wrote: “Clarity of mind money is everything.”

Though the post was brief, it drew strong reactions online. Many of his followers praised his honesty and courage, while others began discussing the complex relationship between mental health and financial stability.

The phrase “Clarity Of Mind” turned out to be more than a passing thought. Omah Lay later revealed that it is the title of his upcoming second album. This new project, he hinted, will reflect his journey from the depths of depression to a more stable and hopeful place.

New album inspired by healing



Clarity Of Mind is set to be a continuation of the emotional storytelling fans came to appreciate in *Boy Alone*. But this time, the tone appears more positive.

In his own words, the new album represents healing, growth, and maturity. Unlike the sorrowful undertones of his first album, this one, he suggests, will focus on self-discovery, acceptance, and a fresh outlook on life.

While no official release date has been announced yet, fans are eagerly waiting to hear what lessons the artist has turned into lyrics this time.

The role of money in recovery
Omah Lay’s statement that “money is everything” has sparked debate. Some say it reflects the reality many young Nigerians face today, where financial stability can offer a sense of safety and peace. Others argue that while money can help, it’s not a cure for deeper emotional wounds.

For the singer, however, the message seems personal. After facing intense mental health challenges, he appears to credit part of his healing to the comfort and security that money brings. The success of *Boy Alone* and a growing international fanbase have no doubt improved his financial standing.

Still, Omah Lay’s earlier revelations show that emotional healing is not easy, no matter how much money one has.

A controversial past confession
Shortly after releasing *Boy Alone*, Omah Lay shocked fans with a deeply personal confession. On July 18, 2022, just days after the album dropped, he disclosed on social media that his mental health took a turn for the worse after he had a sexual relationship with his therapist.

The revelation drew mixed reactions. Some commended him for being transparent. Others questioned the ethics of such a relationship, especially during a period of emotional vulnerability.

It was a reminder of just how complex and messy the path to healing can be.

A new chapter
With a new album on the way and a new outlook on life, Omah Lay seems ready to move forward. Though the scars of the past may remain, his recent posts show signs of hope, growth, and clarity.

For his fans, *Clarity Of Mind* is more than just an album title, it’s a promise. A promise that Omah Lay, despite his struggles, is still standing, still singing, and still finding meaning in his journey.

Tragedy strikes as Mexican influencer shot dead on TikTok live

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Valeria Marquez, a 23-year-old social media influencer from Mexico, was killed while broadcasting live on TikTok from her beauty salon.

The shooting happened in the Zapopan suburb of Guadalajara, Jalisco State, according to officials.

The video showed Marquez sitting calmly at a table, holding a stuffed toy and smiling for the camera. In the middle of her stream, a man entered the salon and opened fire. The stream ended suddenly when another person, believed to be a customer or staff member, picked up the phone and stopped the video.

Authorities say the shooter escaped after the attack. Marquez was declared dead at the scene around 6:30 p.m. local time.

Read Also: Journalist shot dead in Mexico, 3rd such murder this year

Late Nollywood actor, Ernest Asuzu's brother shot dead

Treated as a femicide

The Jalisco state prosecutor's office confirmed that they are treating the case as a femicide, a gender-based killing. In Mexico, femicide is considered one of the most serious forms of violence against women.

Although the motive remains unclear, officials say that Marquez may have been targeted. Police have not named any suspects, and the investigation is still ongoing. Forensic teams are examining the crime scene and reviewing security footage from the area.

Local news outlets reported that the attacker may have entered the salon by pretending to deliver a gift. This has not yet been confirmed by police.

Mexico's femicide crisis

Violence against women continues to be a major issue in Mexico. According to the United Nations, around 10 women or girls are murdered every day in the country,



often by partners or family members.

Human rights groups and activists have repeatedly called on Mexican authorities to do more to protect women and to hold offenders accountable.

The killing of Valeria Marquez has once again brought national attention to the crisis of femicide in Mexico.

Rising star on social media

Marquez was a well-known figure in Mexico's beauty and fashion world. She had built a large following on social media, with nearly 200,000 followers on TikTok and Instagram combined. She often shared videos about makeup, hair styling, and daily life at her beauty salon.

Her fans flooded social media with messages of grief and disbelief after the news of her death broke. Many described her as kind, cheerful, and passionate about her work.

"She was always full of life and positivity," one follower wrote. "I can't believe she's gone."

No prior police report

Zapopan Mayor Juan José Frangie spoke to the press after the incident. He said that Marquez had not asked for police protection before the attack, even though

she had reportedly received threats.

"She never filed a report," Frangie stated. "A femicide is the worst thing that can happen. It shows that we, as a society, must do more to protect women."

The mayor also urged the public to speak up if they receive threats or feel unsafe. He said that the city would increase efforts to improve security, especially in areas where violence against women is rising.

Ongoing investigation of Valeria Marquez's death

Police are urging anyone with information about the shooting to come forward. Authorities hope that witness statements, security footage, and forensic evidence will help them identify and arrest the suspect.

Meanwhile, tributes continue to pour in from fans, friends, and fellow influencers. Many are using the hashtag #JusticiaParaValeria ("Justice for Valeria") to demand action and awareness about the dangers faced by women in Mexico.

As investigators search for answers, Marquez's death stands as a chilling reminder of the risks women face, online and offline, in a country battling a wave of gender-based violence.

Tinubu to attend inauguration of Pope Leo XIV in Rome

By Friday Omosola



President Bola Tinubu will depart Abuja for Rome on Saturday, 17 May, to attend the inauguration of Pope Leo XIV, following a formal invitation from the Vatican.

Bayo Onanuga, Tinubu's Special Adviser on Information and Strategy disclosed this in a statement on Thursday.

The solemn mass, which marks the beginning of the pontificate of the new leader of the Roman Catholic Church, will take place on Sunday, 18 May, at St. Peter's Square in the Vatican.

Pope Leo XIV, formerly Cardinal

Robert Francis Prevost, was elected by the Conclave of Cardinals on 28 April, 27 days after the death of Pope Francis on 21 April.

In a personal message conveyed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin.

Pope Leo XIV emphasised the significance of Tinubu's presence at the ceremony.

He described it as 'a moment of particular importance for the Catholic Church and the world afflicted by many tensions and conflicts.'

The Pope added that Nigeria holds a special place in his heart, recalling

his time serving at the Apostolic Nunciature in Lagos during the 1980s.

President Tinubu will be accompanied by a high-level delegation including Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu; President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria and Archbishop of Owerri, Lucius Ugorji; Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama of Abuja; Archbishop Alfred Martins of Lagos; and the Bishop of Sokoto Diocese, Matthew Hassan Kukah.

Tinubu is expected to return to Abuja on Tuesday, 20 May.

US, Iran near nuclear deal – Trump

By Fatimah Idera

US President Donald Trump announced that the United States is nearing a nuclear deal with Iran, stating that Tehran has sort of agreed to the terms. Trump made these remarks during a business event in Qatar, part of his ongoing Middle East tour. He emphasised the potential for long-term peace through serious negotiations.

The proposed deal would reportedly limit Iran's uranium enrichment in exchange for relief from crippling US sanctions. Trump mentioned two possible paths forward, which are a diplomatic solution and a violent step, that he prefers to avoid. Oil prices dropped around \$2 on expectations of a potential US-Iran nuclear deal that could ease sanctions.

Read also: US, Iran resume nuclear talks amid tensions

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi suggested that significant gaps remain between the two sides. In a statement, Araghchi expressed hope for a more realistic approach from the US in future negotiations.



An Iranian official, however, indicated a willingness to make concessions on the nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief. Ali Shamkhani, an adviser to the nation's Supreme Leader, stated that the country would commit to not developing nuclear weapons, limit uranium enrichment and allow international inspection.

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian responded critically to Trump's comments, accusing him of trying to create instability within the country.

Pezeshkian denied allegations that Tehran is the "most destructive force" in the Middle East, attributing regional instability to US actions.

The two countries have held several rounds of talks, mediated by Oman, with further negotiations planned. While both sides prefer diplomacy, key differences persist, particularly regarding Iran's uranium enrichment activities and the scope of sanctions relief. The potential deal's success hinges on navigating these complex diplomatic challenges.

South Carolina parents charged after rats bite infant twins

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A South Carolina couple has been arrested after authorities discovered their 6-month-old twins covered in bite wounds allegedly caused by large rats inside their home.

Akayla and Justin Bearden, both 24, are facing two counts each of unlawful conduct toward a child after sheriff's deputies found their infant daughter bloodied and mauled in a bassinet on May 9. According to the Anderson County Sheriff's Office, the child had suffered multiple bite marks to her arms, head, ears, and face.

Her twin brother was also found with severe bite wounds, primarily on his feet. The couple reportedly told authorities that field rats had



been a persistent problem in their home for several months.

The injured girl was rushed to Greenville Memorial Hospital, where she remained under care for several days. Authorities have

since placed the twins and the couple's third child in the custody of the Department of Social Services (DSS).

Investigators said Akayla Bearden contacted authorities on the day of the incident, seeking help after one of the rats attacked her daughter in the bassinet.

Both parents have been barred from any contact with their children unless specifically permitted by DSS, according to Fox Carolina.

The shocking case has raised concerns over the living conditions of vulnerable children and the responsibility of parents to ensure a safe environment. The investigation remains ongoing.

Britain's productivity growth weakens in first quarter

By **Fatimah Idera**



Productivity growth in Britain's economy weakened in the first quarter of this year compared to the final three months of 2024 and was down compared with a year previously, official data showed on Thursday.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported that output per hour worked increased by 0.2% in the January-to-March period, weaker than the 0.7% growth in the fourth quarter of last year. Compared with a year earlier, output per hour was down 0.2%.

Despite this slowdown, Britain outpaced the US, where the economy contracted, and the eurozone, which grew 0.4% over the period. On an annualised basis, GDP grew by 2.9%,

the fastest rate since the beginning of last year, fueled by growth in the services sector.

Read also: UK property prices surge to new record high

However, the ONS noted that the latest annual change in productivity figures should be interpreted with caution due to low response rates in the Labour Force Survey.

Britain's economy faces difficulties
The British economy faces several challenges like, An increase in taxes on employers that came into effect at the start of the second quarter, A rise in the minimum wage, which has damaged business confidence, Gradually rising unemployment, according to ONS

figures and Uncertainty about future taxes, with the government likely to raise rates and cut spending to meet self-imposed budget rules.

The National Institute of Economic and Social Research warned that these budget rules have become a source of uncertainty that weakens investment and growth.

The UK's long period of low productivity growth reflects low levels of investment since the global financial crisis and Brexit. A shrinking workforce, strained by an ageing population and the NHS's struggle with long-term illnesses, may be further impacted by the government's immigration policies.

U.S Supreme Court to consider Trump's executive order on birthright citizenship

By Fatimah Idera

The U.S. Supreme Court wrestled on Thursday over Donald Trump's attempt to broadly enforce his executive order to limit birthright citizenship, a move that would affect thousands of babies born each year as the Republican president seeks a major shift in how the U.S. Constitution has long been understood.

The justices are considering the administration's emergency request to scale back injunctions issued by federal judges in Maryland, Washington, and Massachusetts blocking Trump's directive nationwide.

The judges found Trump's order, a key part of his hardline approach toward immigration, likely violates citizenship language in the U.S. Constitution's 14th Amendment.

U.S. Solicitor General D. John Sauer argued that Trump's order was protecting the meaning and value of American citizenship. The case is unusual in that the administration has used it to argue that federal judges lack the authority to issue nationwide, or universal, injunctions, and have asked the justices to rule that way and enforce Trump's directive even without weighing its legal merits.

Trump signed his order on January 20, his first day back in office. It directed federal agencies to refuse to recognize the citizenship of U.S.-born children who do not have at least one parent who is an American citizen or lawful permanent resident. The plaintiffs argued that Trump's directive violated the 14th Amendment, which long has been understood to confer citizenship on almost anyone born on U.S. soil.

The 14th Amendment's citizenship



clause states that all "persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside." The 14th Amendment overrode an infamous 1857 Supreme Court decision called Dred Scott v. Sandford that had denied citizenship to Black people and helped fuel the Civil War.

Sauer told the justices that Trump's directive "reflects the original meaning of the 14th Amendment, which guaranteed citizenship to the children of former slaves, not illegal aliens or temporary visitors." The court has a 6-3 conservative majority, including three justices appointed by Trump during his first term as president.

The justices asked a wide range of questions, some focusing on the validity of universal injunctions, while others probed the legality of Trump's order and how courts can stop a presidential action that is illegal without universal injunctions. Liberal Justice Sonia Sotomayor said she

believes Trump's order violates multiple Supreme Court precedents concerning citizenship.

Sotomayor said that if Trump's order goes into effect, thousands of children would be born in the United States without citizenship, rendering some of them stateless because of policies in the home countries of the parents and left ineligible for government services in the United States. More than 150,000 newborn children would be denied citizenship annually if Trump's order is allowed to stand, according to the plaintiffs.

Trump's order was challenged by Democratic attorneys general from 22 states as well as individual pregnant immigrants and immigrant rights advocates. The administration contends that the citizenship clause does not extend to immigrants in the country illegally or immigrants whose presence is lawful but temporary, such as university students or those on work visas.

440 year old body of Saint Teresa of Jesus unveiled in Spain

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



In an awe inspiring moment of faith and history, the remarkably well preserved corpse of 16th century Catholic saint, Saint Teresa of Jesus, was unveiled to the public for the first time in over a century.

The display took place on Sunday, May 11, at the Basilica Annunciation of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Spain's Salamanca province, drawing hundreds of emotional pilgrims, clergy, and researchers. The unveiling marked only the third public veneration ceremony of the saint's body since her death in 1582, with the previous events occurring in 1760 and 1914.

Saint Teresa, a Discalced Carmelite nun and a towering figure in Catholic mysticism, was placed inside a glass coffin for viewing. While the skeletal nature of the body was evident, observers

noted that parts of her corpse, especially the face and foot, remained strikingly intact despite the passage of 440 years.

"There is no colour, there is no skin colour, because the skin is mummified," explained Father Marco Chiesa, "but it is seen, especially in the middle of the face. The uncovered parts are the same as those they were in 1914."

The coffin was opened by members of the Discalced Carmelite order, including nuns, monks, and priests, who also retrieved relics of her heart, hand, and arm for study and religious purposes. Comparisons with archival photographs from 1914 confirmed the body's preservation, leaving researchers stunned.

The rare display evoked strong emotions among the faithful. Many were seen praying, crying, and kneeling before the

glass coffin, overwhelmed by the tangible connection to the revered saint.

Saint Teresa of Jesus, also known as Saint Teresa of Ávila, was canonised in 1622 and declared a Doctor of the Church in 1970, one of the few women to receive such recognition. Her life, marked by spiritual reform and mystical writings, continues to inspire millions worldwide.

This once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to witness the saint's remains is expected to deepen devotion and revive interest in her life and teachings, as well as prompt renewed discussions among scientists and religious historians on the phenomenon of incorruptibility.

The public viewing is part of an ongoing initiative by the Carmelite order to honor their most iconic member while allowing both spiritual reflection and academic examination.

Two killed, 1,000 rendered homeless as major wildfire ravages Canada

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



A rapidly spreading wildfire in central Canada has claimed the lives of two people and forced the evacuation of over 1,000 residents in the small community of Lac du Bonnet, Manitoba, as the country braces for what experts warn could be another brutal fire season.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) confirmed the fatalities on Wednesday, reporting that emergency responders were unable to reach the victims until the following morning due to severe fire conditions.

“We were aware that these individuals had been trapped in the fire,” said Chris Hastie of the RCMP. “Due to extreme conditions yesterday afternoon, emergency personnel were not able to reach the location until this morning.”

Manitoba’s Premier, Wab Kinew, expressed his sorrow in a statement: “I am deeply saddened to learn of the tragic

loss of two Manitobans due to the wildfires. My heart goes out to their loved ones.”

The town of Lac du Bonnet, located approximately 100 kilometres north of Winnipeg, has been severely affected. Local officials report a mass evacuation of around 1,000 residents, and multiple fire alerts remain in place.

“This is a truly tragic event. We are a very close-knit community here,” said Loren Schinkel, the town’s leader.

Across Canada, 92 active wildfires are currently burning in provinces including British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario. In Manitoba alone, authorities are battling 24 active blazes, five of which are considered out of control.

Kristin Hayward of the Manitoba Wildfire Service described the current weather as “very challenging,” noting that hot, dry, and windy conditions have

worsened the situation. “We have had some very windy days, and we expect that to continue,” she said.

Officials have warned that 2025’s fire season may surpass the devastation of last year, when Canada experienced its worst wildfire season on record. Despite the widespread destruction in 2023, there were no recorded civilian deaths, making this week’s tragedy a sobering start to the new season.

Climate scientists continue to link these increasingly intense wildfires to the global climate crisis, with rising temperatures and prolonged droughts creating the perfect conditions for more frequent and more destructive fires.

Authorities continue to monitor the situation closely and urge residents in at-risk areas to follow evacuation orders and stay informed through official channels.

Detained Russian scientist charged with smuggling frog embryos into US

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A Russian scientist and Harvard University research associate, Kseniia Petrova, has been charged with smuggling frog embryos into the United States, following months in immigration detention. The 33 year old now faces possible deportation despite claims that her case is politically motivated and scientifically significant.

Petrova was initially detained by U.S. immigration authorities in February after arriving at Boston Logan International Airport. On Wednesday, May 14, the U.S. District Attorney's Office for Massachusetts announced the smuggling charge, which carries a potential sentence of up to 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

According to federal prosecutors, Petrova knowingly failed to declare the biological material, frog embryos, while entering the country. They cited text messages allegedly showing she was aware of the requirement to report such items.

Her attorney, Gregory Romanovsky, denounced the charge as "meritless" and suggested the timing was suspicious. "The charge, filed three months after the alleged customs violation, is clearly intended to make Kseniia look like a criminal to justify their efforts to



deport her," he said. Romanovsky also criticized her transfer to criminal custody, which came shortly before a bail hearing scheduled for May 28.

Petrova, who has been held in a Louisiana immigration facility for three months, recently penned an op-ed in The New York Times detailing her experience. She described fleeing Russia after being arrested for protesting the war in Ukraine and arriving at Harvard Medical School in 2023, where she found "a paradise for science."

Her research, which focuses on ageing and the molecular makeup of cells, has the potential to aid in the fight against Alzheimer's and cancer. According to Petrova, her absence has stalled her lab's progress. Her supervisor at Harvard, Dr. Leon Peshkin, called

her "spectacular, the best I've ever seen in 20 years at Harvard."

Petrova's case also highlights the broader crackdown on international academics under U.S. immigration enforcement. She has not been accused of involvement in recent political protests but has openly criticized Russian President Vladimir Putin and fears political persecution if returned to Russia.

Her op-ed concluded with a plea to continue her work: "I hope that the judge rules on Wednesday that I can be released, so I can return to my lab. There is a data set that I'm halfway finished analyzing. I want to go home and finish it."

Petrova remains in custody as her legal team prepares for the upcoming bail hearing.

US air base in Qatar to get \$10 billion investment – Trump

By Fatimah Idera



US President Donald Trump announced that Qatar will invest \$10 billion in the Al Udeid Air Base, the largest U.S. air base in the Middle East, over the coming years.

Trump made this announcement during a speech to US troops at the base in Doha, Qatar's capital. The investment is part of a broader deal that includes \$42 billion in Qatari defence purchases signed on Wednesday.

The deal is significant for the US military's presence in the region. Trump emphasised the importance of the partnership between the US and Qatar during his speech. This development comes as part of Trump's four-day swing through the Gulf region, where he has been engaging in diplomatic efforts and

securing business deals.

Trump's trip has also focused on diplomacy, including a surprise announcement to remove long-standing sanctions on Syria. He met with Syrian interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa and encouraged him to establish ties with Israel. This move marks a significant shift in US policy towards Syria.

In the United Arab Emirates, Trump will meet with UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan to discuss artificial intelligence. The US has a preliminary agreement with the UAE to export 500,000 Nvidia AI chips annually, starting this year. This deal would boost the UAE's construction of data centres vital for developing AI models. However, national security concerns have been raised, and the terms of the agreement

might change.

The potential chip deal has sparked debate due to concerns that the semiconductors could be diverted to China, enhancing Beijing's military strength. Former President Joe Biden's administration had imposed strict oversight on US AI chip exports to the Middle East. If the proposed chip deals come to fruition, the Gulf region could become a significant player in global AI competition, alongside the US and China.

Trump will meet with UAE leaders to discuss AI and other key issues. His administration has prioritised improving ties with Gulf countries. The president had considered a side trip to Turkey for Russia-Ukraine talks, but ultimately decided against it.

Cabbie docked for stealing from UK's foreign secretary, David Lammy, wife

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



A French taxi driver has been formally charged with theft after allegedly stealing luggage and cash belonging to UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy and his wife, Nicola Green, during a cross-border journey from Italy to France.

The incident, which occurred last month, involved a lengthy taxi ride spanning over 600 kilometers from Forlì, Italy, to the French Alpine resort of Flaine in Haute-Savoie. The couple had reportedly pre-paid €1,550 (£1,315) through a booking service for the trip.

Dispute arose when the driver allegedly demanded €700 (£590) in cash upon arrival, claiming he was owed additional payment. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) strongly denied the claim, stating that the full fare had already been

covered. Whitehall sources confirmed that no sensitive material was among the couple's missing belongings.

According to French authorities, the situation escalated into a criminal matter when the driver departed with the Lammy couple's luggage, prompting an investigation. Bonneville prosecutor Boris Duffau confirmed that the driver has now been charged with theft of both cash and personal items. He is expected to appear in court on November 3, 2025.

"The foreign secretary and his wife are named as victims in this matter," the FCDO said in a statement. "The fare was paid in full. The driver has been charged with theft."

Nicola Green provided a statement to French police claiming she felt threatened during the incident and

alleged that the driver showed her a knife stored in the glove compartment of the vehicle. David Lammy was inside the residence at the time.

After the driver left the scene, a member of Lammy's office reportedly contacted him to retrieve the stolen belongings. While the luggage was eventually returned to a local police station, a significant sum of money was reported missing from Green's bag.

The driver, who has also filed a complaint and claimed Lammy became "aggressive" during the disagreement, maintains that he was still owed a portion of the fare.

With legal proceedings underway, UK officials have declined to comment further.

Taiwo Awoniyi wakes from induced coma after life-threatening injury

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

Nigerian international and Nottingham Forest striker, Taiwo Awoniyi, has emerged from an induced coma after undergoing emergency surgery to treat a ruptured intestine sustained during a dramatic 2-2 Premier League draw against Leicester City on Sunday.

The 26-year-old forward collided with the goalpost in a desperate attempt to connect with a cross from teammate Anthony Elanga late in the match, a move later ruled offside in the build-up. The injury, described by medical professionals as “potentially life-threatening,” sparked immediate concern both on and off the pitch.

Forest confirmed that Awoniyi underwent the first phase of surgery on Monday, followed by an induced coma on Tuesday to stabilise his condition. The second stage of the operation, focused on closing the internal wound, was completed on Wednesday. Awoniyi regained consciousness later that evening.

Speaking to BBC Sport, Professor Gillian Tierney, a consultant colorectal surgeon, warned of the gravity of such injuries: “The injury is really serious. It is potentially life-threatening. It is very easy to miss at the point of contact, and it can take hours to diagnose. Fluid leaking from the intestine would not be easy to identify straight away. The mortality stat is 9%. But if an athlete is fit, they stand a good chance of recovery.”

Echoing the concern, Mr. Harpaul Flora, consultant vascular and general surgeon



at The London Clinic, added: “If not treated promptly, such an injury can lead to infection and potentially deadly sepsis.”

Forest speaks on Taiwo Awoniyi

Forest released a statement Tuesday confirming the surgery and expressing strong dissatisfaction with how the situation was handled during the match. Despite visible discomfort and treatment on the pitch, Awoniyi continued playing, as all substitutions had been used by head coach Nuno Espírito Santo.

“There is a shared frustration between all of us that the medical team should never have allowed the player to continue,” the club’s statement read.

Post-match, Forest owner Evangelos Marinakis was seen entering the pitch to speak with the coaching staff, highlighting growing concern over the incident. The club has since launched an internal review to determine why

Awoniyi remained on the field and whether proper protocols were followed.

The incident has reignited long-standing debates surrounding VAR and the delayed offside flag rule, which many argue increases the risk of injury. Former Premier League referee Keith Hackett criticised the policy, saying: “This practice does expose the risk to players of injury.”

Former England international Fara Williams was more scathing: “This has been a time bomb waiting to go off. Awoniyi got that horrific injury because of it. I am totally against it. When an offside is so clear, the assistant referee must stop play.”

With Awoniyi now awake and under observation, the football community remains hopeful for his full recovery, but the fallout from Sunday’s match may leave lasting changes in its wake.