



**'Now is time to invest in Nigeria'- Shettima to Citibank** **Pg 2**

**P&ID Victory: FG retrieves \$210m, AGF applauds lawyers** **Pg 4**



# The New Daily Prime

f @new\_daily\_prime x @prime\_daili149 @ @new\_daily\_prime

...your prime source for excellence in journalism

## Nigerians among top migrants as UK cuts immigration by 50% **Pg 16**



**Luka Modric to leave Real Madrid after Club World Cup** **Pg 22**



**'African giant Burna Boy is dead', Singer** **Pg 13**

**Tinubu proposes N1.48 trn budget for Rivers State** **Pg 6**



**Diaspora: Cybersecurity expert warns immigrants over online financial fraud** **Pg 17 & 18**

# ‘Now is time to invest in Nigeria’ – Shettima to Citibank

By Friday Omosola

Vice President Kashim Shettima has urged global investors to seize the moment and invest in Nigeria.

He declared that recent economic reforms have stabilised the financial landscape and created a more attractive environment for international capital.

He made this call while hosting a high-level delegation from Citibank, led by the Global Head of Citibank International, Ernesto Torres Cantú, at the Presidential Villa in Abuja.

“This is the right time to come to Nigeria and the right time to invest in Nigeria,” Shettima said, highlighting the unification of exchange rates as a key milestone that guarantees currency stability for incoming investors.

He assured both domestic and foreign stakeholders of the Tinubu administration’s determination to safeguard investments, implement transparent policies, and drive economic recovery.

Shettima praised Citibank’s enduring relationship with Nigeria, noting its instrumental role in raising \$2.1 billion in December 2024 and accounting for more than 30 percent of inward capital over the years.



“You have been with us through thick and thin. This is a partnership that has stood the test of time,” Shettima said.

Recounting the administration’s bold economic steps since assuming office in May 2023, Shettima pointed to the removal of the fuel subsidy and the collapse of the dual exchange rate system as politically difficult yet necessary decisions that have strengthened Nigeria’s economic foundation.

He also referenced sweeping fiscal reforms, including new tax legislation that adjusts VAT allocations—reducing the federal share from 15% to 10% while increasing states’ allocation to 55% and keeping local governments at 35%.

“When we came into office, our debt service-to-revenue ratio was a

staggering 111%. Today, we’ve brought it down to manageable levels through disciplined fiscal management,” he added.

Responding, Cantú praised Nigeria’s reform efforts, calling them bold and timely.

He reaffirmed Citibank’s long-term commitment to the country.

“We believe Nigeria is at an inflection point — one that signals a better future for all Nigerians and companies. We congratulate the government for making these difficult decisions,” Cantú said.

He added that Citibank would continue to connect Nigerian businesses to global markets and bring international investors into the country, as it has done over the past 41 years.



# THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

## PUBLIC NOTICE COLOUR

## PRODUCT COLOUR

## EFFECTIVE FROM DECEMBER 1, 2024

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	372,500.00
HALF PAGE	213,000.00
QUARTER PAGE	106,500.00
14X2	118,000.00
10X6	261,585.50
10X5	255,238.00
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
5X2	42,916.50
4X4	60,166.50
4X3	36,499.50
4X2	29,333.50
3X3	28,000.00
3X2	17,400.00
2X2	13,000.00
2X1	8,600.00
1X1	4,400.00

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	329,868.50
HALF PAGE	192,500.00
QUARTER PAGE	100,000.00
14X2	109,500.00
10X6	242,500.00
10X5	237,500.00
10X4	192,500.00
10X3	171,000.00
9X6	232,500.00
9X5	206,000.00
9X4	177,500.00
9X3	150,000.00
8X6	216,000.00
8X3	98,500.00
7X4	164,002.00
6X4	94,010.50
6X3	78,500.00
6X2	47,500.00
5X5	100,000.00
5X4	61,500.00
5X3	57,819.00
5X2	40,379.50
4X4	55,000.00
4X3	31,000.00
4X2	22,003.50
3X2	17,260.00
2X2	12,945.00
2X1	8,630.00
1X1	4,315.00

## POLITICAL COLOUR

SIZE	RATE
CENTRESPREAD	1,200,000.00
DOUBLE SPREAD	885,000.00
FULL PAGE	420,000.00
HALF PAGE	213,250.00
QUARTER PAGE	115,012.50

## POLITICAL BLACK & WHITE

SIZE	RATE
CENTRESPREAD	1,050,000.00
DOUBLE SPREAD	745,000.00
FULL PAGE	315,777.50
HALF PAGE	184,700.00
QUARTER PAGE	95,222.50

## CORPORATE BLACK & WHITE

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	254,533.50
HALF PAGE	142,787.50
QUARTER PAGE	80,706.50
14X2	78,222.50
10X6	217,830.00
10X5	192,305.50
10X4	142,787.50
10X3	121,355.50
9X6	192,305.50
9X3	107,757.50
8X6	170,725.00
8X3	70,390.00
7X4	58,666.50
6X4	67,048.00
6X3	53,361.50
6X2	37,694.00
5X6	83,850.00
5X4	55,900.00
5X3	43,705.00
5X2	27,938.00
4X4	44,493.00
4X3	33,524.00
4X2	22,350.00
3X2	16,763.00
2X2	10,877.00
2X1	5,588.50
1X1	2,795.50

## SPECIAL POSITIONS

2X6 FRONT PAGE	700,000.00
2X6 BACK PAGE	300,000.00
2X6 INSIDE PAGE	155,000.00
3X6 FRONT PAGE	1,200,000.00
4X6 FRONT PAGE	2,250,000.00
5X6 FRONT PAGE	3,350,000.00
10X6 FRONT PAGE	8,250,000.00
EARPIECE FRONT PAGE(1.5X2)	246,500.00
EARPIECE INSIDE PAGE(1.5X2)	117,875.00
EARPIECE BACK PAGE	236,796.50
CENTRE SPREAD COLOUR (PUBLIC NOTICE)	1,027,000.00
CENTRE SPREAD COLOUR (PRODUCT)	929,000.00
CENTRESPREAD B&W	800,000.00
CENTRE SPREAD HALF COLOUR	575,000.00
CENTRESPREAD STRIP COLOUR	191,668.50
DOUBLE SPREAD COLOUR	721,500.00
DOUBLE SPREAD HALF COLOUR	432,881.00
DOUBLE SPREAD STRIP COLOUR	144,294.00
CENTRE SPREAD B&W	835,000.00
CENTRE SPREAD HALF PAGE B & W	550,000.00
DOUBLE SPREAD B & W	725,000.00
DOUBLE SPREAD HALF B & W	425,000.00
FULL WRAP AROUND	15,000,000.00
HALF WRAP AROUND	8,500,000.00
HALF PAGE FRONT	5,500,000.00

## PUBLIC NOTICE BLACK & WHITE

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	280,690.00
HALF PAGE	164,178.00
QUARTER PAGE	84,641.50
10X6	228,000.00
10X5	201,600.00
10X4	149,440.00
10X3	127,108.00
9X6	201,600.00
9X5	169,050.00
9X4	137,875.00
9X3	112,875.00
8X6	179,368.00
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
5X6	98,749.50
5X4	65,833.00
5X3	49,375.00
5X2	32,916.50
4X4	52,666.50
4X3	39,499.50
4X2	26,333.50
3X2	19,750.00
2X2	13,000.00
2X1	6,500.00
1X1	3,292.00

## PRODUCT BLACK & WHITE

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	210,795.50
HALF PAGE	124,236.00
QUARTER PAGE	70,950.00
14X2	76,128.35
10X6	194,961.00
10X5	162,222.445
10X4	103,963.00
10X3	N/A
9X6	162,222.445
9X5	168,191.50
9X4	N/A
8X6	N/A
8X3	N/A
7X4	72,676.00
6X4	65,000.00
6X3	41,124.50
6X2	29,858.00
5X6	71,378.00
5X4	42,825.00
5X3	29,858.00
5X2	22,841.00
4x4	N/A
4X3	N/A
4X2	17,737.50
3x3	23,458.00
3X2	14,923.00
2X2	10,200.00
2X1	5,439.50
1X1	2,700.00

## ALLURE RATE

SIZE	RATE	TOTAL
CENTRESPREAD		967,500.00
DOUBLE SPREAD		806,250.00
ALLURE COVER		750,000.00
(IBC) Inside Back Cover		376,250.00
(IFC) Inside Front Cover		430,000.00
(BC) Back Cover		483,750.00
Full Page		430,000.00
10X5		295,625.00
Half Page		225,000.00
EVENT		250,000.00

## PICTURE & CAPTION

SIZE	RATE	7.5% VAT	TOTAL
PHOTO NEWS PAGE 2	50,000.00	3,750.00	53,750.00
PHOTO NEWS (3X3)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
PHOTO NEWS (4X4)	53,333.30	4,250.00	57,583.30
PRESS RELEASE (4X4)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
EVENT COVERAGE	100,000.00	7,500.00	107,500.00
FEATURES	200,000.00	15,000.00	215,000.00

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**SERIES DISCOUNT**  
5 PAGES 2.5%  
10 PAGES 5%  
15 PAGES & ABOVE 7.5%

**SURCHARGE**  
PAGE 3 (100%)  
PAGE 4, 5, 7 AND 8 (50%)  
PAGE 2 (75%)

**LOOSE INSERT**  
LEAFLET, POSTERS 1,000 COPIES  
SPECIAL INSERTS (8 PAGES) COPIES  
SPECIAL INSERTS (4 PAGES) 1,000 COPIES  
HANDLING CHARGES FOR LESS THAN 35,000 COPIES  
HANDLING CHARGES MORE THAN 35,000 COPIES

**CLASSIFIED ADVERT RATES**  
CHANGE OF NAME  
GUIDE BLACK & WHITE  
GUIDE COLOUR

25,000.00  
45,000.00  
30,000.00  
75,000.00  
100,000.00

2,000.00  
3,750.00  
4,250.00

## CONTACT US

**Correspondent Address:**  
Real Group Plaza, No.1 Junaid Dosumu  
Street, CBD, Alausa, Ikeja, Lagos  
**Call the Editor on: 07025014298, 09014323792**

**E-mail Address:**  
**info@newdailyprime.news**  
Terms and Conditions apply

**ALL RATES ARE VAT INCLUSIVE**

# P&ID Victory: FG retrieves \$210m, AGF applauds lawyers

By Alade Adisa



**T**he Federal Government of Nigeria has successfully recovered \$200 million and an additional \$10 million award that were previously deposited with a United Kingdom court in relation to the long-standing legal dispute with Process and Industrial Development (P&ID) Ltd.

The funds, held as part of Nigeria's legal defense in the case concerning a failed gas processing contract, were officially confirmed recovered by the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Prince Lateef Fagbemi, SAN, during a reception in Abuja on Thursday night in honor of Nigeria's legal team.

Speaking during the event, Fagbemi expressed appreciation for the dedication and expertise of the team

that represented Nigeria in the high-stakes case. He particularly lauded the efforts of Shaistah Akhtar, head of the delegation, and Kofo Salam-Alada, former Director of Legal Services at the Ministry of Justice.

"The whole country has celebrated our success in the P&ID case and applauded my resilience and determination not to negotiate or settle with the fraudsters. But many do not know that my strength came from the dedication and uprightness of the FGN-P&ID coordinating team, led by Kofo Salam-Alada, who gave me the necessary support," the minister stated.

Fagbemi also paid tribute to Salam-Alada's contribution to public service, adding:

"It is personally disheartening for me to bid Kofo farewell from public service, but I take solace in the fact that a golden fish has no hiding place. It is therefore certain that the country will continue to call upon him for the benefit of all Nigerians."

In her remarks, Akhtar explained that \$10 million had already been paid to Nigeria from the \$20 million awarded in its favor following the legal victory. The outstanding \$10 million, she added, is currently the subject of a separate legal challenge by P&ID.

The P&ID case, which once posed a potential \$11 billion liability for Nigeria, has been widely regarded as a landmark victory in the nation's efforts to fight corruption and uphold contract integrity in international arbitration.



# FG sues suspended Senator Natasha for defamation, lists Akpabio, Bello as witnesses

By Damilola Olufemi



**T**he Federal Government has filed a legal case against suspended Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, who represents Kogi Central, over comments deemed defamatory that she made during a televised interview.

According to court documents, Senate President Godswill Akpabio and former Kogi State governor Yahaya Bello are expected to appear as witnesses during the proceedings.

The charge stems from statements Akpoti-Uduaghan allegedly made on April 3, 2025, during a live broadcast of Politics Today on Channels Television.

Other individuals listed as witnesses include Senator Asuquo Ekpenyong, Sandra Duru, and police investigators Maya Iliya and Abdulhafiz Garba. Akpabio and Bello are identified as the nominal complainants in the matter.

Akpoti-Uduaghan was suspended from the Senate on March 6 over what was described as “gross misconduct” after a confrontation involving her seating position in relation to Akpabio. She, however, has strongly criticized the Senate’s decision, calling it “illegal, unjust and a way of silencing her.” She also dismissed the claim that her suspension was unrelated to her sexual harassment allegations.

In the weeks following her suspension, the Kogi lawmaker submitted multiple petitions targeting Akpabio and made several public accusations against him.

In response, Akpabio petitioned the Inspector-General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun, in April, requesting action over what he described as “criminal defamation, incitement, false accusation, and conduct likely to cause a breach of peace.”

Bello also petitioned the police, claiming that Akpoti-Uduaghan had falsely accused him of masterminding and funding efforts to recall her from office. She had further alleged that Bello, acting under Akpabio’s instruction, plotted her assassination to make it appear like a mob attack outside Abuja.

The case, marked CR/297/25, was filed on May 16, 2025, at the Federal Capital Territory High Court, with Akpoti-Uduaghan named as the sole defendant.

The government alleges she made defamatory imputations “knowing or having reason to believe that such imputation will harm the reputation of a person,” citing Section 391 of the Penal Code (Cap 89, Laws of the Federation, 1990). The charge is punishable under Section 392 of the same code.

# Tinubu proposes N1.48 trn budget for Rivers State

By Alade Adisa

President Bola Tinubu on Thursday wrote the National Assembly proposing a budget of N1.48 trillion to be approved for Rivers State.

In the letter read at plenary by the President of the Senate, Senator Godswill Akpabio, Tinubu explained that when approved, the money would be used by the Emergency Rule Government of Rivers State to provide for education, agriculture, provision of free drugs, among others.

Akpabio explained that N324billion is earmarked for Infrastructure development in the fiscal year, N166billion for health, N75.6billion for education, N31.4billion for agriculture and N5 billion for free drug distribution to all categories of people in



the state.

The Senate accordingly referred the budgetary proposal to its Committee on Emergency Rule in Rivers State for consideration and to report back.

Recall that the issue of the budget presentation was among the knotty issues between suspended Governor Similayi Fubara and the also suspended Rivers House of Assembly.

## Obi backs Zulum, demands probe into alleged 'terrorist infiltration of politics, armed forces'

By Friday Omosola

Peter Obi, the 2023 presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP) has described Governor Babagana Zulum's recent revelation about the presence of Boko Haram collaborators within the political class and armed forces as 'a damning indictment' of the Nigerian state.

Obi reacted to the Borno governor's comments in a statement on his X page on Thursday.

He said the claim, if true, confirms long-standing fears that Nigeria is not only under attack from external terrorist forces but also bleeding from betrayal at the highest levels of leadership.

"It is not just shocking, it is devastating," Obi said.

"Anyone who aids, abets, protects, or collaborates with terrorists, no matter their rank, title, or political office, is a traitor to



the Federal Republic of Nigeria."

Obi called for the immediate identification, exposure, and prosecution of all individuals implicated in such acts, insisting that they have no place in Nigeria's institutions.

"We cannot win the war against terrorism while traitors sit in the corridors of power, feeding off the blood of innocent

Nigerians.

"We cannot continue to bury our citizens while those responsible hide behind the veil of politics and impunity. This is not just a security failure—it is a moral collapse," he said.

The former Anambra governor urged the federal government to treat Zulum's revelation with 'utmost urgency', warning that continued silence and inaction would only embolden the enemies within.

He praised Zulum for his courage, saying, "Governor Zulum has done what few in power dare to do: he has spoken the truth. That truth must not die in the news cycle. It must be pursued, investigated, and confronted with courage and justice."

Obi said, "Let us rise to it with courage, with clarity, and with a commitment to reclaim our country from the shadows."



# IGP condemns murder of school boy in Oyo, mob attack in Edo, orders investigation

By Helen Okechukwu



**T**he Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Kayode Egbetokun, has condemned the incident that led to the tragic loss of a 14-year-old boy, Kehinde Alade, who was hit by a stray bullet while heading to write the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) in Oyo State.

According to the police spokesperson, Olumuyiwa Adejobi, in a statement on Wednesday, Egbetokun has directed a full investigation into the matter, as the officer involved in the incident has been taken into custody.

“In a separate development, the Inspector-General of Police has ordered a comprehensive investigation into a tragic incident in Oyo State involving personnel of the Oyo State Police Command and the Oyo State Traffic Management Authority (OYTMA), which led to the

unfortunate demise of a 14-year-old boy, Kehinde Alade,” Adejobi noted.

While sympathizing with the family of the late 14-year-old boy, Egbetokun assured the public that the investigation process will be transparent and that their findings will be made public. He also reaffirmed that justice will be served.

Similarly, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) condemned a mob attack on its officers, which occurred on Monday at Okhuimwun Community, Ovia North-East LGA of Edo State.

Officers from the Force Intelligence Department – Intelligence Response Team (FID-IRT) were said to be en route from Lagos as they passed through the state when a mob blocked the road near the University of Benin (UNIBEN) and violently attacked

them with stones and sticks.

Despite the assault, the police exercised restraint and did not retaliate.

The two officers who sustained serious injuries are receiving medical care and are in stable condition.

Meanwhile, the police warned against attacks on law enforcement personnel and said investigations are underway, with legal action promised against the perpetrators.

“The Nigeria Police Force reiterates its commitment to the protection of lives and property and urges citizens to remain law-abiding and to channel grievances through lawful and peaceful means,” the spokesperson added.

# Otedola backs FG, CBN reforms as First HoldCo investment tops N320bn

By Friday Omosola

**F**emi Otedola, Chairman of FBN Holdings Plc (First HoldCo), has attributed his growing confidence in Nigeria's financial sector and his over ₦320 billion investment in the group to the economic reforms introduced by the Federal Government and policy shifts by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN).

Speaking during the 13th Annual General Meeting of First HoldCo Plc on Thursday, Otedola highlighted the transformative impact of recent government initiatives, noting they laid the groundwork for long-term investor confidence.

He praised President Bola Tinubu's administration for taking bold, necessary steps to stabilise the economy.

According to him, the President's leadership has provided direction for structural economic changes which align with First HoldCo's growth trajectory.

"President Tinubu has demonstrated the political will to push through difficult but essential reforms. This resonates with the path we've taken at First HoldCo," Otedola stated.

He further commended CBN Governor Olayemi Cardoso for implementing what he described as "sound and courageous" monetary policies, crediting these efforts with helping to restore investor confidence and stability within the financial sector.

"These policies are reshaping Nigeria's financial landscape. They've created the environment needed for serious investors to commit significant long-term capital without hesitation," he added.

Otedola's remarks follow the successful completion of First HoldCo's initial ₦150 billion rights issue earlier in March, which closed with ₦187.6 billion in



subscriptions—over 25 percent more than its target.

The company has also announced a second capital raising phase via private placement, targeting an additional ₦350 billion, though a date for this phase has yet to be confirmed.

Reflecting on his personal journey with the bank, Otedola said the decision to acquire a major stake in 2021 came after exiting the downstream oil sector.

He had earlier sold Forte Oil Plc in 2019 following a strategic repositioning.

"My decision to invest in First Bank was deliberate and long-term. I saw the potential to rebuild the institution into one governed by transparency, professionalism, and profitability," he explained.

"This wasn't speculative. I had a vision—and we're just getting started. With the next capital raise, my investment will exceed ₦320 billion, all funded personally and without taking on any debt," he added.

Otedola also acknowledged the leadership and commitment of the bank's board and executive management, stating that their alignment with his vision has been key to the company's renewed focus.

He paid tribute to the bank's loyal customer base of over 40 million, attributing First Bank's enduring legacy—spanning over 130 years—to their unwavering support.

"As a shareholder deeply invested in the organisation's future, I'm committed to financial discipline, safeguarding depositors' interests, and ensuring sustainable returns to stakeholders. That includes eliminating unnecessary luxuries such as private jets or extravagant executive perks," he said.

Looking ahead, Otedola expressed confidence in the institution's ability to meet the CBN's recapitalisation deadline, saying: "I'm optimistic we will surpass the capital requirements ahead of schedule—that, I can guarantee."



# Sanwo-Olu seeks auditors' collaboration for accountability

By Friday Omosola

**L**agos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, has called for greater collaboration between federal and state auditors-general to strengthen Nigeria's accountability ecosystem.

The governor made the call at the 54th bi-annual conference of the Body of Federal and State Auditors-General, held at the Grand Ballroom of the Marriott Hotel, GRA, Ikeja, Lagos.

Represented by his deputy, Obafemi Hamzat, Sanwo-Olu spoke on the theme, "Nigerian Accountability Ecosystem: Leveraging on Performance Audit for Effective Governance and Transparency."

He stated that sharing best practices, harmonising audit standards, and investing in capacity building would enhance the nation's collective ability to identify inefficiencies and promote transparency.

"To build a robust accountability ecosystem in Nigeria, collaboration between federal and state auditors-general is essential. Sharing best practices, harmonising audit standards, and investing in capacity building will enhance our collective ability to detect inefficiencies and promote transparency.

"Without accountability, governance becomes opaque, and corruption thrives. As custodians of public funds, auditors-general play a pivotal role in safeguarding the integrity of our public institutions," he said.

Sanwo-Olu stated that accountability remains the cornerstone of democracy, adding that auditors-general play a crucial role in ensuring that public officials and institutions are held answerable for their actions and decisions.

He emphasised that leveraging technology—such as data analytics, real-time monitoring, and blockchain—can



revolutionise the audit process by enhancing efficiency and reducing susceptibility to manipulation.

Consequently, the governor urged auditors-general to embrace innovation in audit methodologies and to foster both inter-agency and inter-governmental cooperation.

He also advocated for stronger legal frameworks that empower auditors, and, most importantly, encouraged them to remain steadfast in their commitment to integrity and impartiality.

Sanwo-Olu noted that Lagos State has adopted performance auditing as a key mechanism for evaluating policies and projects.

He highlighted that, through rigorous performance audits, the government had identified bottlenecks in public transportation, healthcare delivery, and education, enabling the state to implement targeted reforms that have yielded tangible results.

He further stated that the state has consistently prioritised transparency and accountability across all spheres of governance.

The governor assured that the state government's commitment to these principles is evident in initiatives such as the Lagos State Public Procurement Law, the Open Budget Portal, and the digitisation of government services—efforts that, he stressed, have enhanced public trust and improved service delivery.

Also speaking, the Lagos State Head of Service, Olabode Agoro—represented by the Permanent Secretary, Office of the Head of Service, Olasunkanmi Oyegbola—implored auditors at both state and federal levels not to see themselves as "policemen" of the system.

He said but rather as partners in progress with all Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) they work with.

He added that auditors must ensure that the values of quality, integrity, and accountability are consistently promoted in the public service.

In his address, the Auditor-General for the Federation, Shaakaa Chira, stressed that auditors must build stronger institutional frameworks, invest in training and technology, and foster inter-agency collaboration.

# Govt puts N5m bounty on fleeing inmates of Ilesha Prison

By Alade Adisa

**A**nybody with useful information that can lead to the recapture of five fleeing inmates of the Ilesha Prisons, Osun State will receive a cash reward of N5 million, the federal government said on Wednesday.

The Public Relations Officer of the Nigerian Correctional Service NCoS, DCC Abubakar Umar disclosed this in a statement issued on Wednesday in Abuja.

“In order to encourage public

participation, the Nigerian Correctional Service wishes to inform the general public that a reward of N5 million is being offered to anyone who provides useful information that leads to the recapture of the fleeing inmates from the Medium Custodial Centre, Ilesha, Osun State.

“The Service urges members of the public to report any information they may have regarding the whereabouts of the inmates at large to the nearest security agencies. All information will be treated with



utmost confidentiality and anonymity.

# Police in Enugu arrest suspected armed robber, chase after fleeing suspects

By Helen Okechukwu

**A** 27-year-old male suspect, Somadina Ugwueke, has been apprehended by operatives of the Enugu State Command through the support of the Nsukka Urban Division along with members of the local community.

Daniel Ndukwe, the command spokesperson, said on Thursday that Ugwueke, who was involved in armed robbery activities and motorcycle snatching, was arrested on 19 May following relayed information gathered.

Ndukwe recounted that the apprehended suspect, along with his accomplice, boarded a commercial motorcycle along Edim Road.



Upon getting to Saint Cyprian Road in Nsukka, they both snatched the motorcycle while pointing a firearm at the motorcyclist.

On hearing of the attack on the motorcyclist, the police, strategizing

with members of the community, apprehended the suspect, while efforts are ongoing to arrest his fleeing accomplice.

Items recovered include one locally made revolver pistol, one expended cartridge, two live cartridges, the snatched Q-Link motorcycle, and other exhibits not mentioned.

Ndukwe added, “The Commissioner of Police, CP Mamman Bitrus Giwa, psc, has directed that the operatives ensure the arrest of the fleeing suspect and every other member of the criminal gang, to bring them to justice.”



# Lagos DSVA, Ford Foundation engaged 10,000 Ibeju-Lekki LGA residents against SGBV

By Helen Okechukwu

Over 10,000 residents of Ibeju-Lekki Local Government Area (LGA) have been educated on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) following the awareness campaign conducted by the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (DSVA) and the Ford Foundation.

Both partners conducted this engagement through a door-to-door sensitization campaign to aid in halting the high rate of domestic and gender violence recorded, urging residents to report promptly.

The campaign exercise cut across key areas within the community of Ibeju-Lekki LGA, including religious institutions, schools, healthcare facilities, and judicial centers.

One of the sensitization exercises, which addressed cultural and religious dimensions of SGBV, was held with congregants and faith leaders at Magbon-Segun Central Mosque.

Other places visited include schools, Ibeju-Lekki General Hospital, Akodo, and Magbon-Segun Magistrates' Court.



Various participants, including students, medical professional and patients, were taught how to identify, respond to, and report SGBV cases, while also reinforcing the legal implications in obtaining justice.

According to a DSVA post on Wednesday, the initiative aimed to strengthen grassroots awareness and foster a community-wide culture of zero tolerance.

“Community Development Associations (CDAs) across Imagbon Segun, Oke Segun, Oke Yanta, Idotun, Itesiwaju and other localities were actively involved in the sensitization efforts,” the notice indicated.

“Leaders received Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials and committed to disseminating the content within their communities.”

During the campaign, the participants pledged to report cases and promote DSVA’s activities using the provided contact: 08000333333.

Highlighting the commitment of DSVA in protecting lives and promoting justice, the notice added, “Through sustained partnerships and community-centered strategies, DSVA continues to build safer, more informed neighborhoods across Lagos State.”

# I was told to renounce Jesus to succeed in Nollywood, Ekene Umenwa opens up

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**P**opular Nigerian actress Ekene Umenwa has revealed that she once faced pressure from insiders in Nollywood to abandon her Christian faith in exchange for success in the film industry.

In an emotional Instagram post shared on Wednesday, Umenwa recounted how a group of unnamed individuals advised her to “drop Jesus and Mary” if she truly wanted to make it big in Nollywood.

A test of faith in the spotlight  
Umenwa described the moment as a serious test of her beliefs. She said the suggestion shocked her deeply and made her question the industry she had just entered. However, she made it clear that she never considered giving up her relationship with Jesus.

“When I came to Nollywood many years ago with my Jesus,” she wrote in the post, “I was told by some folks to drop Jesus and Mary, to go with the flow, so I could succeed. They said, ‘Ekene, this game no be Jesus Jesus oo.’”

According to her, the comment came from a small but powerful group within the industry. She did not name them but referred to them as a “cabal” trying to influence her choices.

Holding firm to her beliefs  
Rather than follow their advice, Umenwa said she turned to her faith for strength. She recalled running back to what she described as her spiritual foundation.

“I was like, ‘Chimo, is that so? Never,’” she wrote. “I ran to my Father. And Jesus told me to move ahead, ahead.”

The actress posted a video of herself dancing to the well-known gospel song No Turning Back, a symbolic nod to her decision to remain committed to her Christian values. The video has since drawn support from many of her fans and fellow believers.



A growing christian voice in nollywood  
Umenwa expressed gratitude that her decision to stand by her faith has inspired others in the industry. She said she’s proud that more people in Nollywood are now openly declaring their faith in Jesus.

“I thank God today that many people have joined me to proclaim Jesus in Nollywood,” she wrote.

Her post has sparked fresh conversations on social media about the pressures that entertainers face and how faith can serve as both a shield and a guide in difficult times.

A rising star with strong roots  
Ekene Umenwa rose to fame after her breakout role in the 2013 film Black Choir, a performance that earned her widespread recognition. Since then, she has featured in over 100 movies and has built a strong fan base.

Known for playing emotional and faith-based roles, Umenwa has carved a niche for herself in Nollywood. Her open embrace of Christianity has made her a role model for young actors who wish to succeed without compromising their values.

Reactions pour in

Her post drew praise from fans and colleagues who admire her boldness. Many called her a woman of strong convictions. Others said her story was a reminder that staying true to one’s beliefs can still lead to success, even in a competitive industry like Nollywood.

Several users flooded the comments section with words of encouragement and thanks for being a light in the entertainment world. One follower wrote, “You are a true inspiration. Thank you for choosing the narrow path.”

Faith over fame  
Umenwa’s story reflects a growing trend among Nigerian celebrities who are choosing to be vocal about their faith. In an industry known for glamour and intense competition, her decision to place God at the centre of her career stands out.

Despite the pressures she faced early in her journey, Umenwa has shown that it is possible to succeed on one’s terms. Her story is not just about faith, but about courage, integrity, and staying grounded in what matters most.

As her career continues to grow, she remains a beacon for those navigating fame while holding on to personal convictions.



# 'African giant Burna Boy is dead', Singer

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Grammy-winning Nigerian music star, Damini Ogulu, known to fans around the world as Burna Boy, has revealed that a new version of him has emerged, and the old one is gone for good.

In a deeply personal message shared on the Instagram page of his upcoming album *No Sign of Weakness*, Burna Boy said that the version of himself many fans once knew is no longer alive. He blamed Nigerians for what he described as the "death" of his former self.

**A message from the heart**

In the post, Burna Boy shared a raw and emotional message that shed light on his inner struggles. He spoke of a battle between his past and present selves. The post suggested that behind his fame, there's a man dealing with pain, betrayal, and a desire to protect what's left of him.

"The 'African Giant' Burna Boy died. His own people killed him," he wrote. "Then 'Big 7' was born to protect what was left of Burna Boy."

His words have sparked conversations across social media, with fans and critics alike trying to understand the meaning behind the powerful message.

**Who is big 7?**

According to Burna Boy, "Big 7" is not just a nickname. It's a symbol of who he has become, a more guarded, tougher version of himself. He said this new persona was created to shield the last remaining pieces of his broken heart.

He continued, "Burna Boy and Big 7 fight each other a lot because while Big 7 is only protecting the final and only existing piece of Burna Boy's broken heart, the 'African Giant' still haunts Burna Boy."

This statement reveals an emotional conflict. While "Big 7" serves as a form of protection, the memory of his past self, the "African Giant", still lingers, making peace difficult.

**A history of reinvention**

Burna Boy has never been a stranger to change. Over the years, he has evolved, from his early days as a rising star in



Nigeria to becoming a global music icon. His albums, style, and public image have all seen major transformations.

However, this may be his most personal shift yet.

The "African Giant" era, which peaked with his 2019 album of the same name, brought him international recognition and his first Grammy nomination. That image, confident, bold, and rooted in African pride, became a part of his identity.

But now, Burna Boy seems to be letting go of that chapter. Not out of pride, but from hurt.

**"His own people killed him"**

The most striking part of Burna Boy's post is his claim that Nigerians "killed" the old him. While he didn't name specific individuals, this part of the message has sparked reactions online. Some fans expressed sympathy, saying they understood his pain. Others were more critical, questioning why he would blame his own people.

Still, the message seems to reflect a larger feeling of being misunderstood or unappreciated at home, a theme he has touched on in previous interviews and songs.

Burna Boy has often spoken about how he feels more recognized abroad than in Nigeria, despite being one of the country's biggest musical exports.

**A glimpse into his upcoming album**

The post was shared on the official Instagram page of Burna Boy's next album, *No Sign of Weakness*. That alone gives fans a clue: this album may carry deeper emotions and personal reflections than his past work.

Based on his statement, *No Sign of Weakness* could explore themes of heartbreak, self-protection, inner conflict, and growth. It may be Burna Boy's most introspective project yet.

**Fans react online**

Following the post, social media buzzed with reactions. Some fans praised him for his honesty and vulnerability. They applauded him for speaking his truth, even if it was painful.

Others, however, urged him to be careful with his words. Some said they felt hurt by his claim that Nigerians had turned on him. Still, many agreed that his message highlighted the emotional cost of fame.

**Looking ahead**

As Burna Boy prepares to release *No Sign of Weakness*, his fans will be watching closely. This new version of him, "Big 7" may be different, but the voice behind the music remains the same.

What's clear is that Burna Boy is no longer trying to please everyone. He's choosing to protect his heart, even if it means letting go of who he used to be.

# Junior Pope's father is dead

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

The family of late Nollywood actor Junior Pope has been hit with another devastating loss.

His father, Ozor Luke Odonwodo, has passed away, just one year after the actor's tragic death.

Jennifer Awele, the widow of Junior Pope, shared the news on her Instagram page. In a heartfelt post, she revealed that her father-in-law died in his 80s. She described him as a kind-hearted, devoted father who lived a full life surrounded by love and dedication to family.

## A life of love and sacrifice

In her tribute, Jennifer recalled her final moments with the elder Odonwodo, just weeks before his passing. She spoke warmly about his deep affection for her and his role in the family, especially during a period of grief following her husband's untimely death.

"Barely one month ago, I was with you in Enugu," she wrote. "Some days later, my mother-in-law, Reme, called to ask how I and the boys were doing. Then she said her husband had gone to join my husband."

Jennifer said the news hit her like a wave. "I screamed," she continued. "But I had to quickly hold myself together because she started crying after hearing my reaction."

She described Ozor Luke as "one man that genuinely loved me," and said she was grateful for the time they had together, even though it turned out to be his last days.

## A father who lived well

Jennifer praised her father-in-law as a man who "lived a good life, paid his dues, sacrificed a lot for his family and loved ones, and happily reaped the fruits of his labour."

She reflected on the strength he showed



throughout his life and the deep bond they shared as a family. In her message, she prayed for strength for her mother-in-law and other family members left behind.

"Reme, Nwanyioma, this is a lot to deal with in one year," she wrote. "But I pray that God gives you and all of us the strength to keep pushing, no matter how hard it gets."

She ended her tribute with a note of faith and farewell. "Adieu father and son. You are sorely missed, but we hold onto the resurrection promises in John 5:28-29 and Acts 24:15. May your gentle souls rest in perfect peace till we meet to part no more."

## Remembering Junior Pope

Junior Pope, whose full name was Pope Obumneme Odonwodo, died on April 10, 2024. He drowned in a tragic boat accident on the River Niger in Asaba, Delta State.

He was on his way to a movie set when the boat capsized. Four other members of the film crew also lost their lives in the accident. The event shocked the Nollywood community and fans across Nigeria, prompting tributes from fellow actors and film industry leaders.

Known for his charisma, talent, and energetic performances, Junior Pope

left a mark in Nollywood with his many roles in both comedy and drama films. His death at a young age was a huge blow to fans and colleagues alike.

## Family and fans in mourning

With the passing of Ozor Luke Odonwodo, the family has now endured the loss of two beloved figures in just over a year. Friends, fans, and members of the Nollywood community have begun to send their condolences once again.

Many expressed their sadness over the double tragedy, especially for Jennifer and her children who are now mourning both a husband and a grandfather.

Though the family is in pain, Jennifer's tribute reflects a strong spirit — one that finds comfort in faith and the memories of the lives that were lived with love, honor, and dignity.

## A legacy remembered

As the Odonwodo family grieves, they also celebrate the life of a man who stood tall as a father and a grandfather. Ozor Luke's legacy lives on through the values he instilled and the memories he created.

In life, he loved deeply. In death, he is remembered dearly.



# American Cheers actor, George Wendt passes away

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Famed actor George Wendt, best known for his role as Norm Peterson on the classic sitcom Cheers, has died at the age of 76.

The actor passed away peacefully in his sleep on Tuesday, May 20, 2025, according to a statement released by his longtime publicist, Melissa Nathan. News of his death was shared with the public later that day.

## A quiet farewell

In the official statement, Nathan described Wendt as a “beloved actor and comedian” whose work brought laughter and joy to millions.

“George Wendt, known and loved for his unforgettable role in NBC’s Cheers, has passed away peacefully,” the statement read. “He will be missed forever.”

The family, through the publicist, asked for privacy as they grieved the loss.

## Fame through cheers

George Wendt became a household name through his portrayal of Norm Peterson, the friendly, beer-loving bar regular on Cheers. The show aired from 1982 to 1993 and became one of the most popular sitcoms in American television history.

Norm’s signature entrance, greeted by the bar patrons shouting “Norm!” became a beloved staple of the series. Wendt’s character captured the heart of the nation with his dry wit, warm smile, and everyman charm.

His performance earned him six consecutive Primetime Emmy nominations for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Comedy Series from 1984 to 1989.

## A career beyond one role

While Cheers brought Wendt lasting fame, his career extended far beyond that single role. He appeared in numerous television



shows and movies, including Fletch, Forever Young, Man of the House, and The Little Rascals.

Wendt also made guest appearances on popular TV series like Frasier, The Simpsons, Becker, and Modern Family. In each role, he brought a relatable warmth and comic timing that endeared him to audiences.

He even made a splash on stage, performing on Broadway in Hairspray and Art, and London’s West End as Edna Turnblad.

## A life in laughter

Born on October 17, 1948, in Chicago, Illinois, George Wendt grew up in a large Irish-American family. He studied at the University of Notre Dame before transferring to Rockhurst College, where he earned a degree in economics.

After college, he turned toward acting and joined the famed Second City comedy troupe in Chicago. This decision marked the beginning of a lifelong commitment to comedy and performance.

Wendt often credited his time with Second City as the foundation of his career. The improv group honed his comedic instincts and helped launch him into television and film.

## Remembered with love

Friends, co-stars, and fans flooded social media with tributes following news of his passing. Many praised his talent, kindness, and the warmth he brought to every set.

Ted Danson, who played bartender Sam Malone on Cheers, shared a heartfelt message: “George was the soul of Cheers. He made everyone laugh, on and off camera. I’ll miss him deeply.”

Other tributes poured in from across the entertainment world, describing Wendt as a genuine professional, a devoted family man, and a legend in the world of television comedy.

## A lasting legacy

Although George Wendt is gone, his work lives on. Cheers remains a cherished part of TV history, continuing to find new fans through reruns and streaming platforms.

His portrayal of Norm Peterson has become an icon of American pop culture, representing comfort, humour, and a sense of belonging.

In the words of many fans, “The bar won’t be the same without Norm.”

As his family, friends, and admirers mourn his passing, George Wendt leaves behind a powerful legacy of laughter, love, and unforgettable performances.

# Nigerians among top migrants as UK cuts immigration by 50%

By Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

**N**et migration to the United Kingdom fell sharply in 2024, dropping by nearly 50% to 431,000, according to new figures released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The steep decline, down from record levels in 2023, reflects the cumulative impact of stricter immigration rules, especially around work and student visa categories, introduced by the previous Conservative government.

The data, published on Wednesday, reveals that 948,000 people moved to the UK in 2024, while 517,000 left, leading to a net migration figure of 431,000 — a significant decrease from the 2023 high of over 700,000. The ONS attributes the fall to a drop in work and study-related migration, particularly the curbs on student dependants.

Despite the overall decline, Nigerians ranked among the top three nationalities arriving in the UK. According to the ONS breakdown:

- Nigeria:
  - 27,000 arrived on work-related visas
  - 22,000 arrived for study-related reasons
  - 3,000 arrived for other reasons

Other leading countries of origin include:

- India (the highest contributor):
  - 68,000 work-related
  - 82,000 study-related
  - 7,000 other

- Pakistan:
  - 31,000 work-related
  - 30,000 study-related
  - 15,000 other

The majority of arrivals — 81% — came from outside the EU, amounting to 766,000 individuals, while 122,000 came from the EU or EFTA countries. Interestingly, 60,000 British nationals also returned to the UK in the same period.



## Political Backdrop and Policy Shifts

The data come amid continued public debate over immigration policy. Before the general election last year, the Labour Party campaigned on a pledge to reduce net migration, citing pressures on housing and public services. Since assuming office, the Labour government has implemented stricter visa rules, including a rise in salary thresholds for work visas and tighter criteria for dependent family members.

Labour officials argue that the recent figures show that their policies — and those of the outgoing Conservative government — are beginning to take effect. However, critics warn of unintended consequences, such as labour shortages in key sectors like healthcare and social care.

## Asylum Seekers and Hotel Accommodation

Separate Home Office data reveal a mixed picture on asylum. As of March 2025, there were 32,345 asylum seekers living in taxpayer-funded hotels, down from 38,079 in December 2024 — a notable decrease. However, the figure still exceeds the 29,585 recorded in June 2024, when Labour assumed power, indicating a 9% increase during its tenure. The all-time high under the previous administration

was 58,636 in June 2023.

## A Generational Policy Question

Experts say that while the short-term drop in migration may ease political pressure, the UK still faces long-term questions about its economic needs and demographic sustainability.

“The reduced net migration number is headline-grabbing,” said a senior migration analyst in London, “but the real story is whether the UK can align immigration controls with skills shortages, ageing demographics, and global economic shifts.”

## Glossary of Key Terms

- Immigration: People entering the UK
- Emigration: People leaving the UK
- Net Migration: Immigration minus emigration
- Long-term Migration: Migration lasting at least 12 months

As the UK redefines its post-Brexit immigration identity, today's numbers show that it remains an attractive destination for professionals and students — especially from countries like India, Nigeria, and Pakistan — even as policymakers continue to tighten the gates



# Diaspora: Cybersecurity expert warns immigrants over online financial fraud

By Adeniyi Yusuf

A UK-based cybersecurity expert, Oluwananumi Dawodu has cautioned people living overseas to remain vigilant against fraudulent activities on financial platforms.

According to him, without proper caution, individuals risk being swindled by cybercriminals.

Dawodu made this known in a statement made available to New Daily Prime.

He said living in the UK as a Nigerian brings many opportunities, including better education, career growth, access to healthcare, and stronger digital services.

The expert, however, stated that these advantages come with risks, especially online.

He said, “Whether you’re sending money home, keeping in touch with family, or using the internet for work and school, there are growing threats that specifically target Nigerians abroad. Cybercriminals are getting smarter, and many are creating scams that prey on people’s trust, habits, and needs in the diaspora.

“One of the most common threats is phishing. This happens when someone sends a fake email or message pretending to be from a trusted source, like your bank, immigration services, or even a Nigerian embassy. These messages often look real, but they aim to trick you into sharing personal details—like your bank information, passwords, or passport scans. For example, you might get a message saying your visa has a problem or that your bank account needs urgent action. Many people panic and respond quickly without checking if it’s real.

“Another major issue is SIM swap fraud. This is when scammers convince your mobile network to transfer your phone number to a new SIM card they control. Once they do this, they can receive your calls and text messages, including the banks’ codes to confirm your identity. With that access, they can break into your accounts, transfer money, and even lock you out of your phone or email. This often



happens when people use old Nigerian SIM cards or connect their UK accounts to those numbers.

“Sending money home is another activity that has opened doors to fraud. Many Nigerians use mobile apps, agents, or forex platforms to send money to loved ones. Unfortunately, scammers create fake websites or pose as trusted individuals to offer “better exchange rates” or “quick returns on investment.” These often turn out to be scams, and people lose both their money and their trust. Some are even tricked into joining fake business groups on WhatsApp or Telegram that turn out to be Ponzi schemes.

“WhatsApp account hacking is becoming more common, too. Criminals send messages pretending to be someone you know, asking you to verify a code or send money. Once they access your WhatsApp, they message your contacts pretending to be you. Many victims don’t realize what’s happening until a friend tells them. Fake profiles on Facebook or Instagram are also used to scam people by pretending to be someone they know or trust.

“Some scams focus on those looking for jobs or scholarships. Fake recruiters or universities might contact online, offering jobs, internships, or study opportunities. They often ask for a fee or your documents. These scams take advantage of people’s hopes and eagerness, and many victims only realize the truth after they’ve sent money or shared sensitive information.

“For some, the danger becomes more personal. A growing issue, especially for young women, is sextortion—when someone tricks or pressures you into sending private pictures or videos, and then threatens to share them unless you pay or give them more content. These situations are deeply painful and hard to discuss, especially within close-knit communities. Many victims suffer in silence out of shame or fear.”

Dawodu further stated that another reason Nigerians in the UK are at risk is the use of old or shared phones and computers.

**Continue reading  
on next page**

## Cont from page 17

He added that some use second-hand devices that may not have the latest security updates or antivirus protection. Others might use free Wi-Fi in public places or student housing, which can be easily hacked.

The expert noted that using the same weak password for different accounts or saving sensitive information on your phone without any protection makes it even easier for attackers to steal your data.

“Fake immigration agents and consular service scams are also common. Many Nigerians rely on agents to help with visa issues,

passport renewals, or legal advice. Scammers take advantage of this trust, setting up fake websites that look like real embassies or posing as immigration lawyers online. Victims sometimes pay hundreds of pounds for fake services—or worse, submit documents to criminals who later use them to commit other crimes.

“So, how can Nigerians in the UK protect themselves? Start by being cautious with any message that asks for personal information, especially if it comes with urgency or a threat. Don’t click on suspicious links. If you get a message from your bank, embassy,

or any official body, call them directly using the number from their official website. Avoid using SMS codes to secure your accounts; try using apps like Google Authenticator or bank apps that use fingerprint login instead.

“Use strong passwords, and don’t reuse the same one across different accounts. Update your devices regularly and install antivirus software, even on your phone. Avoid using free Wi-Fi for anything sensitive, like banking or emails. Only send money through trusted remittance services and check if they are registered with the UK’s financial authorities.”

## Plane crashes in San Diego’s military house, affects 15 houses

By **Fatimah Idera**

A plane crashed into a San Diego military housing neighbourhood on Thursday morning, officials confirmed.

The incident occurred on Salmon Street, where the plane headed to Montgomery-Gibbs Executive Airport.

Addressing reporters at the site of the crash, San Diego Fire-Rescue Department Assistant, Chief Dan Eddy, said that the plane struck about 15 homes, causing multiple homes and cars to catch fire.

“I just walked it myself, and down the street itself, it looks



like something from a movie,” Eddy said Thursday morning.

Eddy said officials were still looking for the pilot and other

“souls on board.” The plane appeared to be a Cessna private jet, he said.



# Budget strain worsen in UK ahead of key spending review

By **Fatimah Idera**



**B**ritain's government kicked off the 2025/26 financial year in April by borrowing more than expected, suggesting no let-up in the pressure on the public finances ahead of a major review of spending.

Public sector net borrowing was 20.155 billion pounds (\$27 billion) in April, according to official data. Economists have routinely underestimated the extent of Britain's budget deficit each month over the past year.

Finance minister Rachel Reeves is due to deliver her first multi-year spending review on June 11 to set the budgets for public services. She outlined her first annual tax and spending plans last October when she raised social security contributions paid by employers but held off from broader tax increases.

"The decision to hold off on tax rises in the Spring Budget increasingly

looks like a temporary reprieve," said Lindsay James, investor strategist at wealth management firm Quilter. "As borrowing continues to outstrip forecasts and debt interest costs remain elevated, pressure is building on the Chancellor to make tougher choices."

With Reeves' budget plans hinging on a tiny buffer against the government's self-imposed fiscal rules – equivalent to less than 1% of annual spending – investors are watching public sector finance data closely. The British government bond market has become increasingly volatile in recent years, reflecting unease among investors over Britain's mix of slow economic growth, high debt interest costs and persistent inflation.

Thursday's figures from the Office for National Statistics were the first to estimate the impact of the large hike in employer social security payments, known in Britain as National

Insurance contributions (NICs), which came into effect in April. A major source of funding for the Labour government's spending plans, the ONS said compulsory social security contributions increased by 12.8% compared with a year ago, on an accrued basis that relies heavily on projections.

Separate HMRC tax data, which records what the government actually received, showed a 7.7% annual increase in employer NICs contributions – the weakest such increase for the month of April since 2020. But as NICs contributions are paid a month in arrears, it will not be until next month that more concrete evidence of the NICs increase appears in the data.

The ONS revised down its estimate of borrowing for the last financial year that ended in March to 148.3 billion pounds from 151.9 billion pounds previously, o

# UK court clears way for chagos island deal

By **Fatimah Idera**



**B**ritain had conclude a deal with Mauritius on the future of the Chagos Islands on Thursday after a judge at London's High Court overturned an eleventh-hour injunction which had blocked the agreement being signed earlier.

Lawyers representing a British national born in the Chagos Islands were granted an interim injunction in the early hours of Thursday morning, postponing the formal signing of the treaty which aims to secure the future of the strategically-important U.S.-UK Diego Garcia air base.

But Judge Martin Chamberlain lifted the injunction following a hearing later on Thursday, clearing the way for Britain to sign the multi-billion dollar deal to cede sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius.

The deal, the details of which were first announced in October, would allow Britain to retain control of the strategically important base on Diego Garcia, the largest island of the archipelago in the Indian Ocean, under a 99-year lease. Following the court's decision to overturn the injunction, the agreement is due to be signed off later.

James Eadie, the government's lawyer, said they needed a decision in order for the deal to be agreed on Thursday and everyone is standing by. He said the delay was damaging to British interests and "there is jeopardy to our international relations ... (including with) our most important security and intelligence partner, the U.S."

The earlier injunction had been granted following action by Bertrice

Pompe, a British national who was born in Diego Garcia and has criticisms the deal for excluding Chagossians. It was the latest legal action in the last two decades brought by members of the wider Chagossian diaspora, many of whom ended up in Britain after being forcibly removed from the Indian Ocean archipelago more than 50 years ago.

They have said they cannot endorse an agreement they were not consulted on, while critics have also said the deal plays into the hands of China, which has close trade ties with Mauritius. In 1965 Britain detached the Chagos Islands from Mauritius – a former colony that became independent three years later – to create the British Indian Ocean Territory.



# Police arrest gunman for killing 'lovers' outside DC Jewish museum

By Fatimah Idera



A suspect is in custody after shooting dead two Israeli embassy staff outside a Jewish museum in Washington.

The gunman, named by police as Elias Rodriguez, 30, of Chicago, approached a group of four people leaving an event at the Capital Jewish Museum and opened fire, killing Yaron Lischinsky and Sarah Milgrim, who officials said were in a relationship.

Metropolitan police chief Pamela Smith said the shooter had been pacing outside the museum, steps away from the FBI's field office, before the shooting. After killing the pair, he walked inside, where event security detained him.

The suspect yelled, "Free, free Palestine," after he was arrested, police said. He wasn't on any security watchlists, and there were no heightened security threats before the shooting.

The event was the annual Young Diplomats reception, organized by the American Jewish Committee (AJC), focusing on bridge building among US state department and embassy staff from various Middle Eastern and North African countries.

The Israeli ambassador to the US, Yechiel Leiter, said Lischinsky had purchased a ring to propose to Milgrim in Jerusalem the following week.

Lischinsky, 28, a German-Israeli, worked in the Israeli embassy's political department, while Milgrim, a Jewish American, organized visits and missions to Israel. The embassy described them as friends and colleagues in a social media post, expressing heartbreak and devastation over their murder.

The US president, Donald Trump, condemned the killings, attributing them to antisemitism. The Israeli

foreign minister, Gideon Sa'ar, blamed European governments for incitement against Israel, linking it to the murder. However, France dismissed Sa'ar's claims as completely outrageous and unjustified.

The DC mayor, Muriel Bowser, vowed to stand against antisemitism, stating, "We will not tolerate this violence or hate." Rights advocates noted a rise in antisemitism and anti-Arab hate in the US since the conflict began, citing various incidents.

The FBI director, Kash Patel, expressed condolences for the victims and their families. The Israeli president, Isaac Herzog, condemned the "despicable act of hatred" and offered support to the embassy staff. The UK's prime minister, Keir Starmer, opposed the expansion of military force in Gaza but emphasized that it doesn't excuse antisemitism.

# Luka Modric to leave Real Madrid after Club World Cup

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

**R**eal Madrid captain and midfield maestro Luka Modric has confirmed he will leave the Spanish giants after their FIFA Club World Cup campaign this summer, closing the curtain on a glittering 13-year spell at the Bernabeu.

The 39-year-old Croatian, who joined Real Madrid from Tottenham Hotspur in 2012, announced his decision via Instagram, saying, “The moment has arrived. The moment I never wanted to come, but that’s football, and in life everything has a beginning and an end.”

Modric, who won the Ballon d’Or in 2018, leaves behind a remarkable legacy as Real Madrid’s most decorated player. His farewell appearance at the Santiago Bernabeu will come this Saturday against Real Sociedad in the final La Liga match of the season.

Since arriving in the Spanish capital, Modric has collected a staggering 28 trophies, including six UEFA Champions League titles, four La Liga championships, and six FIFA Club World Cups. With 590 appearances, 43 goals, and 95 assists for the club, he has become synonymous with Real’s modern golden era.

“I arrived in 2012 with the hope of wearing the jersey of the best team in the world and the ambition to do great things, but I couldn’t have imagined what came next,” Modric reflected. “Playing for Real Madrid changed my life as a footballer and as a person.”

Despite limited game time this season—often appearing from the bench—Modric has remained a vital presence in the dressing room. He notched two goals and six assists in 34 La Liga matches, helping Real remain competitive in both domestic and European fronts. However, Barcelona edged them out to claim the league title, while Real Madrid fell to Arsenal in the Champions League quarter-finals.

His departure marks not just the end of his era but coincides with a broader shift within the club. Manager Carlo Ancelotti, under whom Modric flourished, is also set



to leave after Saturday’s match, with Bayer Leverkusen boss Xabi Alonso reportedly lined up as his successor.

Club president Florentino Perez paid tribute to the veteran midfielder, saying, “Modric will forever remain in the hearts of all Madridistas as a unique and exemplary footballer who has always embodied the values of Real Madrid. His football has captured the imagination of Madridismo and fans all over the world.”

No other player has won more titles in a Real Madrid shirt. Among his accolades are five Spanish Super Cups, two Copa del Rey trophies, and five UEFA Super Cups. His 2018 Champions League triumph, followed by guiding Croatia to their first-ever World Cup final, earned him the Ballon d’Or—breaking a decade-long duopoly held by Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi.

Modric also became the oldest goalscorer in La Liga for Real Madrid earlier this season, netting against Valencia at 39 years and 116 days, surpassing Ferenc Puskas’ longstanding record.

Guillem Balague, BBC Sport columnist,

said Modric’s departure feels like “the end of an era” at the Bernabeu. “Although Modric has been playing less, he was still a magnet for the team. But football is changing—it’s faster and more physical. Modric understood his role this season better, but ultimately, this is a club decision. A new culture must emerge.”

As Real Madrid prepares to open their Club World Cup campaign on June 18 against Saudi Arabia’s Al-Hilal, followed by matches against Mexico’s Pachuca and Austria’s RB Salzburg, Modric’s final contribution to the team could add yet another trophy to his illustrious collection.

Beyond football, Modric recently became a minority investor and co-owner of English Championship side Swansea City, hinting at a post-playing career in football business.

Whether lifting one last trophy or bidding farewell with quiet dignity, Luka Modric’s departure signals the end of one of Real Madrid’s greatest chapters—and the beginning of its next.



# Barca eye Rashford, Diaz, Deco hints at summer moves

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Barcelona sporting director Deco has confirmed the Catalan giants are monitoring both Manchester United's Marcus Rashford and Liverpool's Luis Díaz as potential summer targets, though he stressed that internal squad renewals remain the club's top priority.

Speaking in an interview with Catalan radio station RAC1, Deco admitted Barcelona's admiration for the two Premier League stars, amid growing speculation that the La Liga champions could look to bolster their attacking options ahead of the 2025/26 campaign.

"We like Luis [Díaz], we like [Marcus] Rashford, and we like other players," Deco stated. "When we go to the market, there are names that we know and that could improve the team."

Both players have recently been the subject of transfer rumours linking them with moves to Spain. Rashford, 26, was reportedly holding out for a switch to Barcelona during the January window before completing a surprise loan move to Aston Villa. United are said to be open to selling the England forward this summer, with an asking price of around £40 million.

Díaz, meanwhile, has enjoyed a strong season at Liverpool, and while there is no indication the Merseyside club are actively seeking to offload the Colombian winger—who has two years left on his contract—his dynamic style and versatility have made him a long-time admirer among Barcelona scouts.

Yet, despite the high-profile links, Deco was quick to shift focus toward what he described as the "real signings" of the summer: contract renewals for the club's emerging core of talent.

"Our big priority is to strengthen what we have at home with the renewals of Pedri, Gavi, [Ronald] Araujo, Raphinha, [Jules] Kounde," Deco said. "I understand that when people talk about signings, they always think about players coming from abroad, but for me, renewals are also signings."



One of those key renewals includes teenage sensation Lamine Yamal, whose explosive breakthrough season has been widely celebrated. Deco called Yamal's potential extension "the best signing in history," underlining just how important the 17-year-old is to Barcelona's long-term vision.

Under newly re-signed manager Hansi Flick, who extended his deal last week after securing the La Liga title, Barcelona are expected to make surgical additions rather than wholesale changes. Deco confirmed that squad balance would be critical in the club's recruitment strategy this summer.

"Then, if the team can be improved. From what we've seen this season, we need a player with a different profile to what we have to help the strikers," Deco explained. "Fermin [Lopez] has played as a winger and has done well. The composition of the squad also depends on the market."

Barcelona's interest in Rashford and Díaz, both of whom offer pace, width, and directness—qualities that could complement Robert Lewandowski and João Félix—reflects Flick's desire to add variety to his forward line.



However, financial constraints remain a factor. Barcelona's tight wage structure and long-standing issues with La Liga's salary limits mean that any potential big-money signings will be carefully weighed against internal needs and outgoings.

Meanwhile, Rashford has found his form again at Villa Park and recently stated that he's been "playing better football" since joining the Midlands club on loan. Whether United are ready to part with a homegrown star and whether Rashford himself still dreams of the Camp Nou remains to be seen.

As for Díaz, Liverpool would likely command a significant fee for a player still considered central to their post-Klopp rebuild under new manager Arne Slot. Barcelona would likely need to sell players or negotiate structured deals to fund such a move.

With the summer transfer window fast approaching, Deco's comments have added fuel to speculation—but have also reinforced that, for Barcelona, stability at home may be the first order of business before turning to marquee signings.

# Postecoglou delivers glory, but Spurs future still unclear

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

**A**nge Postecoglou promised silverware in his second season—and he delivered. Tottenham Hotspur are the 2025 UEFA Europa League champions after a dramatic 2-0 win over Manchester United in Bilbao, ending a 17-year trophy drought. Yet even in triumph, the future of their charismatic Australian manager remains clouded with uncertainty.

“This is what I do—I win,” Postecoglou declared after the final whistle, echoing his bold September prediction. He’s silenced critics, at least temporarily, by delivering a long-overdue trophy and securing Champions League qualification. But behind the celebrations lies a club still wrestling with internal discord, injury crises, and underwhelming league form.

## From Bold Words to European Glory

Postecoglou’s early-season statement—“I always win things in my second year”—was mocked when Spurs languished mid-table. But he stood firm. His focus shifted toward Europe by January, a move he later admitted was “at odds” with figures inside the club. The gamble paid off, culminating in a resolute, tactical masterclass in Bilbao.

Despite missing key players like James Maddison and Dejan Kulusevski, and starting Son Heung-min on the bench, Spurs displayed grit, control, and defensive discipline—traits rarely associated with “Ange-ball.” For once, pragmatism trumped philosophy.

## Internal Struggles and Injury Woes

Still, Spurs’ league campaign has been disastrous—21 losses in 37 matches—and the club’s injury record has been nothing short of alarming. Multiple insiders pointed to growing friction between Postecoglou’s coaching team and the medical department, with some blaming the manager’s intensity for repeated muscular issues.

This pattern isn’t new. Similar tensions were reported during his time at Celtic. The debate continues: are players overworked, or is there a deeper structural



issue within the club’s health staff?

## A Divided Dressing Room?

Although Postecoglou has built a sense of camaraderie, particularly evident in the euphoric post-match celebrations, whispers from inside the camp suggest not all players remain loyal. At least two are said to have bypassed Postecoglou in favour of other staff for footballing concerns, hinting at a disconnect that grew over a tough second half of the season.

Some insiders also believe Postecoglou’s refusal to adjust tactics earlier in the campaign cost the team dearly in the league. Only in the latter stages of the Europa League did he begin to show flexibility, moving away from his rigid attacking setup.

## What’s Next?

Postecoglou’s fate isn’t solely tied to his European success. The board must weigh up his historic achievement against the backdrop of league failure. Incoming CEO Vinai Venkatesham and existing figures like technical director Johan Lange will play pivotal roles.

Lange is reportedly an admirer of

Brentford’s Thomas Frank. Others in contention include Fulham’s Marco Silva, Palace’s Oliver Glasner, and Bournemouth’s Andoni Iraola. Mauricio Pochettino’s name lingers in fan conversations, though extracting him from his MLS contract could cost Spurs £20m—an unlikely splurge.

Then there’s the possibility of Fabio Paratici returning to the fold, a move that could dramatically shift the club’s direction.

## The Fans, the Boss, and the Verdict

Fan sentiment is split. The controversial ear-cupping incident after Spurs’ loss to Chelsea soured Postecoglou’s relationship with some supporters, though many rallied behind him after the Europa League run. The board knows full well how fickle supporter opinion can be.

As the dust settles, Daniel Levy faces a massive call: stick with a manager who just proved he can win, or pursue a fresh face amid domestic decline. Postecoglou himself offered no guarantees, signing off his post-match conference with a knowing grin and the words: “Que sera, sera.”



# Tuchel won't yield to Clubs ahead of England squad reveal

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

England manager Thomas Tuchel is expected to name a full-strength squad on Friday ahead of the Three Lions' World Cup qualifier against Andorra and a friendly versus Senegal in early June—despite mounting pressure from Premier League clubs concerned about player fatigue.

The six-day England training camp, which runs from 4-10 June, lands squarely in a jam-packed post-season calendar. With the FIFA Club World Cup kicking off on 15 June and several English clubs—Manchester City, Chelsea, and newly crowned Bundesliga champions Bayern Munich—set to feature, tensions are rising over the availability of key players.

However, BBC Sport understands Tuchel is unlikely to offer any concessions to clubs over player workload. The former Chelsea and Bayern Munich boss has made it clear from day one: every session counts.

"I have just 60 days and 24 sessions before the 2026 World Cup. That's not enough, so we need to use every opportunity to build," Tuchel said in March.

His hardline stance has already raised eyebrows. Big-name surprise selections such as Jordan Henderson, Marcus Rashford, and Dan Burn in his first squad demonstrated that Tuchel is unafraid to ruffle feathers in pursuit of squad cohesion and readiness. Club concerns, while noted, are unlikely to sway the German tactician, whose sole remit is to win the World Cup.

The Club World Cup, set to be held in the United States from 15 June to 13 July, complicates matters. With Manchester City, Chelsea, Real Madrid, Bayern Munich, and Atletico Madrid among the participants, the clubs are lobbying national teams—not just England—to rest key players in the June international window. The FA itself has acknowledged the calendar clash, calling it a "significant challenge" in balancing player welfare and the financial interests of clubs and governing bodies.



One of Tuchel's biggest calls will involve Real Madrid's Jude Bellingham. The midfielder, who is due to undergo shoulder surgery after the Club World Cup, is expected to play in the U.S.—raising questions about his availability for the England camp. If he's fit enough for Madrid, Tuchel may expect him to report for national duty too.

Other high-profile players with fitness concerns include Phil Foden, who has struggled with form and an ankle injury since the Manchester derby in April. The Manchester City star has admitted to battling off-field mental challenges and said he could use a break. However, his inclusion in the squad remains likely.

Bayern Munich's Harry Kane, fresh off lifting his first career trophy, is expected to be involved despite facing another quick turnaround for the Club World Cup. Chelsea's Cole Palmer, who missed Tuchel's first squad due to injury, is available again. His teammates Reece James, Levi Colwill, and Noni Madueke, fresh from the Conference League final on 28 May, are also under consideration.

Tuchel remains resolute. "We're in

contact with the clubs and monitoring players closely. But we take care of our team—we won't make unprofessional risks. That said, we're not here to make compromises," he said. "I never interfered as a club manager, and I expect the same in return."

Beyond the regulars, Tuchel could hand opportunities to rising stars. Crystal Palace's Eberechi Eze, fresh from a superb season finish and his first England goal against Latvia in March, is a strong contender. Teammate Adam Wharton, now fully fit, could also make the step up from the U21s.

Manchester United defender Harry Maguire may re-enter the frame after returning from a post-season club tour of Asia, while Nottingham Forest's Morgan Gibbs-White and Ipswich forward Liam Delap are also under consideration.

With so many moving parts, Tuchel's squad announcement on Friday will not just shape England's short-term plans—it could set the tone for his World Cup campaign. And if his early decisions are anything to go by, expect bold moves and little compromise.

# Trossard close to new Arsenal deal as talks advance

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Arsenal forward Leandro Trossard is on the verge of signing a new contract with the club, sources reveal, with all parties confident of reaching an agreement soon. The Belgian winger's current deal at the Emirates Stadium runs until 2027, but talks for an extension have been underway since January and have gained momentum in recent weeks.

Trossard, 30, has been a crucial figure for Arsenal since his transfer from Brighton & Hove Albion in 2023. In that time, he has made 123 appearances across all competitions, contributing 28 goals. His Premier League tally this season stands at eight goals and six assists, underscoring his importance in Mikel Arteta's attacking setup.

Despite growing interest from clubs in Saudi Arabia, the winger appears set to stay in north London. Sporting director Andrea Berta, who joined Arsenal last month, has been leading the negotiations. Sources close to the club say Trossard has made it clear that staying at Arsenal is his priority.

## A Key Player for Arteta's Arsenal

Trossard's impact on the pitch has been significant since his arrival. Known for his versatility, pace, and technical ability, he has fitted seamlessly into Arteta's tactical plans. His creativity and goal-scoring knack have helped Arsenal maintain their push for top positions in the Premier League and compete on multiple fronts.

Arsenal supporters have quickly taken to Trossard, appreciating his work ethic and clutch performances. His ability to link play, create chances for teammates, and deliver in crucial moments has made him a fan favorite and an essential part of Arsenal's forward line.

## Contract Talks Gain Momentum

Negotiations between Trossard and Arsenal began earlier in the year but have accelerated in recent weeks, with optimism growing that the deal will be finalised soon. This push to secure the winger's future at the club has been



bolstered by the arrival of Andrea Berta, who has quickly taken a hands-on role in squad planning and contract renewals.

The club is keen to secure Trossard's services for the long term as part of their broader strategy to build a squad capable of challenging for titles domestically and in Europe. The importance of maintaining a strong core of players familiar with Arteta's system has been a key consideration in these discussions.

## Interest from Abroad

While Arsenal has pushed forward with contract talks, Trossard has also attracted attention from clubs outside England, particularly from the Saudi Pro League. The league has been active in recruiting Premier League talent in recent transfer windows, offering lucrative contracts that have tempted many players.

However, Trossard appears focused on continuing his career at Arsenal, valuing the club's ambitions and the competitive environment of the Premier League. His commitment to staying reflects both his professional goals and the positive environment at the Emirates.

## What a New Deal Means for Arsenal

Securing Trossard's future would be a significant boost for Arsenal as they look to build on their recent progress. The club has invested heavily in new players in

recent years but maintaining continuity with key performers remains crucial.

Trossard's new contract would send a strong signal to the squad and fans that Arsenal is committed to retaining its top talents. It also provides Arteta with a reliable attacking option as the team prepares for upcoming challenges, including domestic competitions and potential European campaigns.

## Looking Ahead

As contract talks continue, Arsenal fans and football observers will be watching closely. A successful renewal would mark another positive step in the club's ongoing project under Mikel Arteta and new sporting director Andrea Berta.

The discussions underscore Arsenal's ambition to keep hold of key players who can help them compete at the highest levels. For Trossard, the prospect of continuing his journey at the Emirates offers the chance to cement his legacy at a club with rising aspirations.

With confidence growing on all sides, it seems likely that the Belgian winger's future will remain bright at Arsenal, where he has already made a significant impact and looks set to play a vital role in the seasons ahead.