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Akpabio's contempt claims against Natasha holds Tuesday

By Friday Omosola

The Federal High Court in Abuja has postponed until Tuesday, May 13, the hearing of a contempt application filed by Senate President Godswill Akpabio against suspended Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, Senator representing Kogi Central.

Justice Binta Nyako fixed the new date after hearing from counsel to the second and third defendants, who said they had filed a fresh application highlighting alleged contemptuous behaviour by the plaintiff.

The conflict stems from a February 20 Senate plenary session where a disagreement over seating arrangements escalated. Shortly afterwards, Akpoti-Uduaghan appeared on a television programme, accusing Akpabio of sexual harassment, a claim that added fuel to the ongoing dispute.

In response, Akpoti-Uduaghan sought a court injunction to stop the Senate Committee on Ethics, Privileges, and Public Petitions from investigating her. She filed an *ex parte* motion (FHC/ABJ/CS/384/2025), naming the Clerk of the National Assembly, the Senate, Akpabio, and Senator Nedamwen Imasuen as defendants.

Despite a court order on March 4 restraining the Senate from taking disciplinary steps, Akpoti-Uduaghan was suspended just two days later, based on committee findings of alleged gross misconduct.



Court refrain Akpabio, Natasha from making public statements

On April 4, Justice Nyako ordered all parties to refrain from making public statements, including interviews or social media posts, while the case remained in court. However, during the resumed session on Monday, counsel to the second defendant, Paul Daudu, claimed that Akpoti-Uduaghan violated this order by posting a satirical apology on Facebook. He described the post as contemptuous and asked the court to take action.

Akpabio's lawyer, Ekoh Ejembi (SAN), backed the claim, referencing a report from Punch newspaper that highlighted the Facebook post. He argued that the plaintiff's actions undermined the court's authority.

In defence, Akpoti-Uduaghan's counsel, Jibrin Okutekpa (SAN), insisted the post was unrelated to the ongoing litigation and focused solely

on the sexual harassment allegation. He urged the court to dismiss the claims and proceed with the substantive case, emphasising that his client had already been absent from the Senate for 68 days.

Justice Nyako, however, made it clear that contempt matters must be resolved first. "If there is contempt, I have to hear and determine it before proceeding," she stated.

Interestingly, Okutekpa also raised a counter-contempt claim against all the defendants, prompting the judge to issue a stern warning to both sides: continued disobedience of the court's directives could lead to sanctions, including summoning all parties to appear personally.

"If counsel or litigants disobey the court, the court has no business hearing them," Justice Nyako declared. She invited any party with contempt applications to bring them forward, saying the court would address them before moving on.

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

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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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9X5	206,000.00
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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
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Tinubu urges African youth to lead continent's progress

By Friday Omosola

President Bola Tinubu has encouraged Africa's emerging generation to take bold steps towards building a united, innovative, and thriving continent by making impactful contributions across key sectors.

The sectors include science, education, governance, entrepreneurship, and the creative arts.

Tinubu spoke through the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu at the 25th anniversary celebration of the Millennium Excellence Prize, held at the Manhyia Palace in Kumasi, Ghana.

Tinubu addressed dignitaries as the special guest of honour at the event.

He emphasised the need for collective action among African nations in shaping a common future.

He also reaffirmed Nigeria's commitment to regional unity through his Renewed Hope Agenda—a policy framework aimed at promoting inclusive development, improving livelihoods, and positioning Nigeria as a cornerstone of continental leadership.

Calling on attendees to remain champions of excellence and mentorship, Tinubu urged continued investment in youth empowerment and stronger cross-border partnerships.

He also extended his appreciation to the Life Patron of the Millennium Excellence Foundation, His Majesty Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, Asantehene, for hosting the prestigious gathering and for recognising outstanding achievements across the continent.



Reflecting on the history of the awards, which began in 1988, he said the initiative has served as a powerful platform for acknowledging individuals who have made meaningful contributions to Africa's development.

He commended the Foundation for upholding values such as integrity, service, and leadership.

"I commend those whose vision brought this institution to life and sustained it over the past 25 years," he said.

"The principles it stands for mirror the hopes and ambitions of Nigeria and indeed all of Africa."

He further praised the Foundation for honouring inspirational figures, citing past laureates like Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Wole Soyinka, President Cyril Ramaphosa, and Dr Mo Ibrahim as icons whose legacies have

left lasting impressions on the continent.

Tinubu extended congratulations to the organisers, the Life Patron, and both previous and newly named award recipients.

Ambassador Odumegwu-Ojukwu accepted the Lifetime Africa Achievement Prize on his behalf.

Among other Nigerians recognised at the event were Benedict Oramah, President of the African Export-Import Bank (AFREXIM), who received the Global Intra-Africa Trade Excellence Award; Governor Umo Eno of Akwa Ibom State, who was honoured for Governance and Public Service; BUA Group Chairman, Abdul Samad Rabi, who earned recognition for Business Excellence; and Chief Dumo Lulu-Briggs, who was celebrated for his role in Traditional Leadership and Business.

Shettima: Nigeria building digital bridges to connect MSMEs across Africa

By Friday Omosola

Vice President Kashim Shettima has said that the administration of President Bola Tinubu is taking bold steps to construct digital infrastructure that will enable Nigerian Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to compete and thrive across African borders.

Shettima spoke in Abuja on Monday while inaugurating the committee for Nigeria's hosting of the 4th African Union (AU) MSME Forum, scheduled to take place from 23rd to 27th June.

He noted that the digital economy presents an unprecedented opportunity for African MSMEs to integrate into global value chains.

"With over 83% of employment in Africa rooted in the informal economy, the continent is not short on ideas or digital innovation," he said.

"This forum provides the blueprint, the platform, and the partnerships that will empower African MSMEs to become the heartbeat of our economic renewal."

Shettima highlighted key programmes under the Tinubu administration, including Nigeria's leadership role in the AfCFTA Negotiating Forum and the alignment of national policies on investment, digital trade, and competition with AfCFTA goals.

He also cited the establishment of a Technology Export and Digital Trade Desk and initiatives like the i-DICE Programme—a \$617.7 million investment in digital and creative enterprises—and the 3 Million Tech Talent Programme focused on youth training in coding, data science, and digital fluency.

Reiterating Tinubu's commitment, the Vice President assured that Nigeria is harmonising its laws to make cross-border digital trade seamless, secure and scalable.

"We have reformed, we have invested, and



we are resolved to see this transformation through. But none of us can achieve this in isolation," he added.

The Deputy Chief of Staff to the President (Office of the Vice President), Ibrahim Hadejia, who chairs the organising committee, said the upcoming forum would foster collaboration and knowledge exchange among African nations.

He added that the summit's theme—"Building Resilient MSMEs Through Digital Innovation, Market Access and Affordable Financing for Africa", reflects the Tinubu administration's ongoing support for MSME growth.

Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, said Nigeria's selection to host the forum signalled rising confidence in the country within the international community.

Minister of State for Industry, John Enoh, also praised the President and Vice President for prioritising MSME development, given the sector's contribution to GDP and economic transformation.

Special Adviser to the President on Job Creation and MSMEs, Temitola Adekunle-Johnson, who serves as committee secretary, assured that the forum would be a world-class event showcasing Nigeria's efforts in job creation and enterprise

support.

Lagos State Commissioner for Commerce, Cooperatives, Trade and Investment, Folashade Ambrose-Medebem, noted that Lagos, home to nearly 70% of Nigeria's MSMEs, has launched a N10 billion MSME Access to Finance Scheme in partnership with the Bank of Industry (LASMECO) to boost access to funds.

States including Benue, Imo, Enugu, Katsina and Ekiti are also playing key roles through sub-committees.

Committee members include the Managing Director of the Bank of Industry, Olasupo Olusi; Executive Chairman of the Federal Inland Revenue Service, Zacch Adedeji; and the Director-General of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), Charles Odii, who all pledged support for the forum, emphasising its potential to boost Nigeria's economic landscape.

Other committee members are Jumoke Oduwole (Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment); Bosun Tijani (Minister of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy); Hannatu Musawa (Minister of Arts, Culture, Tourism and Creative Economy); Nonny Ayeni (Executive Director, NEPC); Aisha Rimi (Executive Secretary, NIPC); Abba Bello (CEO, NEXIM Bank); and Dele Oye (President, NACCIMA).

Alake: Nigeria earns N7bn from mining licences in Q1 2025

By Friday Omosola

The Minister of Solid Minerals Development, Dele Alake, has revealed that the country's mining sector recorded impressive growth in the first quarter of 2025.

He said the sector generated close to N7 billion from mining licence fees.

Speaking at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Forum in Paris, Alake revealed that the country's solid minerals sector is rapidly gaining momentum.

He said the sector is positioning Nigeria as a key player in Africa's mineral-driven transformation.

In a statement shared on his official X handle, the minister attributed the progress to bold reforms aimed at formalising mining activities and improving regulatory efficiency.

"Nigeria is already showing what's possible. In Q1 2025, we generated nearly N7 billion in mining license fees, formalised 1,200+ artisanal cooperatives, and approved hundreds of licenses, all while pushing for sustainability, value addition, and investor confidence," he said.

Alake pointed out that over 1,200 artisanal mining cooperatives were formally recognised during the quarter, in line with the government's strategy to harness the full potential of small-scale miners while promoting environmental and social standards.

Highlighting the continent's growing relevance in the energy transition, the minister said Africa must rise to the occasion by asserting control over its vast mineral wealth.



"As Chair of the Africa Mineral Strategy Group, I'm proud to work with leaders across the continent to unlock inclusive, long-term growth from our rich mineral resources. It's time for Africa to move from exporting raw materials to owning the future of clean energy," he stated.

He further stressed that the continent holds a strategic advantage, given its increasing contribution to the global supply of essential minerals like lithium, copper, cobalt, and tantalum.

Calling for a major policy shift, Alake urged African nations to abandon the traditional export model and embrace industrialisation through value-added mineral processing.

"As Chair of the Africa Mineral Strategy Group (AMSG), I work closely with my counterparts across the continent to advance a shared agenda of value addition, resource mobilisation, and responsible development," he said.

"Our focus is clear—unlocking inclusive growth from Africa's vast mineral wealth," he added.

Alake also emphasised the importance of collaboration between governments, the private sector, civil society, and local communities to build a transparent and ethical mineral value chain.

"Nigeria is ready to work with global partners to promote responsible sourcing, encourage beneficiation, and deliver long-term economic value," he noted.

Reflecting on the broader implications of the global transition to clean energy, the minister underscored the urgency of effective leadership at this critical moment in history.

"The future of electricity, transportation, telecommunications, and indeed global prosperity depends on the work we do here. Let us embrace this opportunity, not just to discuss change, but to drive it," Alake declared.

He reaffirmed Nigeria's commitment to forging international partnerships that support the growth of a resilient and sustainable mining industry.

55 days after suspension, Fubara says 'he no longer wants to govern Rivers'

By Friday Omosola

Fifty-five days after President Bola Tinubu suspended Rivers State Governor Siminalayi Fubara, he has declared his disinterest in returning to the helm of state affairs.

Fubara, who was suspended alongside his cabinet and lawmakers in the state said he has emotionally checked out of the role.

He made this revelation yesterday during a service of songs in honour of the late Niger Delta elder statesman and PANDEF leader, Edwin Clark, held in Port Harcourt.

"Have you asked yourself, do you think I'm interested in going back there?" Fubara said during his remarks.

"If I had my way, I would say this is it. This is the will of God. I don't wish to go back there. My spirit has left that place."

Fubara's comment came as members of the Rivers Elders Forum paid tribute, referring to him as the sitting governor and voicing opposition to his removal from office.

However, Fubara was quick to dismiss their words as personal opinions, urging those present to avoid injecting politics into a moment of mourning.

"Those are personal views," he said, noting that such remarks were



unlikely to promote reconciliation or stability in the state.

He also criticised some supporters, suggesting their actions had worsened the political crisis rather than alleviated it.

The deepening unrest in the state traces back to a prolonged feud between Fubara and his predecessor, now Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike.

Despite Tinubu's intervention and a peace agreement announced in December 2024, hostilities continued.

Tensions escalated further when the presidency declared a state of emergency in Rivers on March 18, suspending Fubara, his deputy Ngozi Odu, and members of the state legislature.

Retired naval officer Ibok-Ete Ibas

was appointed to oversee the state's administration in an interim capacity.

The federal action triggered widespread backlash.

Eleven opposition PDP governors took the matter to the Supreme Court, alleging constitutional violations.

However, their suit was dismissed by the National Assembly as lacking merit, with lawmakers urging the court to levy a N1 billion penalty against the plaintiffs.

In April, Fubara reportedly held a private meeting with President Tinubu in London, raising hopes of a possible resolution.

But with his latest public statement, Fubara has thrown fresh doubt over his political future and the path forward for the state.

‘Ponzi schemes destroy lives, shun them,’ EFCC warns Nigerians

By Friday Omosola

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has urged Nigerians to steer clear of Ponzi schemes, warning that they destroy lives, erode public trust, and undermine national development.

Acting Zonal Director of the EFCC’s Enugu Zonal Directorate, Assistant Commander of the EFCC (ACE I), Aisha Abubakar, issued the warning during the 2025 Annual Management Retreat of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), held at Jubilee Hall, Holy Ghost Cathedral, Ogbete, Enugu State.

Abubakar, who spoke on the topic “Get-Rich-Quick Syndrome and Youth Vulnerability: A Case Study of Ponzi Schemes – The Role of Law Enforcement in Prevention and Disruption”, described the get-rich-quick mentality as a major economic and security threat in Nigeria, particularly among young people.

She explained that the get-rich-quick syndrome reflects a mindset driven by the desire to attain wealth without legitimate, sustained effort—a mindset increasingly fuelled by social media portrayals of instant success and societal pressure.

“In Nigeria today, the obsession with wealth has intensified among the youth, making them susceptible to financial frauds such as Ponzi schemes. Many are lured by promises of double returns within short timeframes, despite the absence of any credible business model,” she stated.

Abubakar noted that desperation to escape poverty or fund small projects often drives many young Nigerians into high-risk, unregulated investment ventures.

She identified several root causes of the syndrome, including greed, financial illiteracy, peer pressure, digital exposure, substance abuse, the erosion of societal values, depression, frustration with



traditional systems, and psychological instability.

“Notable examples in Nigeria include MMM Nigeria, MBA Forex, Chinmark Group, and CBEX. In April 2025, the country witnessed one of its most devastating financial scams with the collapse of CBEX, a digital asset trading platform.

“It operated as a Ponzi scheme, promising investors a 100% return within 30 days by exploiting the hype around cryptocurrency trading and artificial intelligence,” she said.

Abubakar highlighted several common get-rich-quick frauds, including advance fee scams, fake job and scholarship offers, online loan and grant fraud, and bogus forex and cryptocurrency platforms.

She also pointed to cybercrime as a significant outgrowth of the get-rich-quick mentality, lamenting its damaging effects on Nigeria’s international reputation and economic growth.

“Cybercrime has tarnished Nigeria’s image globally, discouraged foreign

investment, and affected our economy as a whole. The stigma also affects individual Nigerians, who face suspicion both at home and abroad,” she said.

“Fraudsters now dominate market systems, outcompeting legitimate businesses. Billions are lost to internet scams, some of which finance organised crime and terrorism. This not only fuels further insecurity but also undermines national defence,” she added.

Abubakar went on to outline the EFCC’s efforts to disrupt such fraudulent activities.

“Through roadshows, social media campaigns, and collaborations with youth-focused institutions, the EFCC has raised awareness about fraudulent investment schemes.

“We also work closely with the Central Bank of Nigeria, the Securities and Exchange Commission, commercial banks, and international bodies such as INTERPOL to trace illicit funds, monitor financial flows, and dismantle scam networks,” she said.

Hajj 2025: 560 pilgrims depart Kwara for Saudi Arabia

By Friday Omosola

The Kwara State Government has commenced the 2025 Hajj operations with the successful airlift of the first batch of 560 intending pilgrims, alongside two officials from the National Hajj Commission of Nigeria (NAHCON), to Saudi Arabia.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported that the state government announced that allocation four flights for this year's Hajj will convey 550 pilgrims, making a total of 2,174 intending pilgrims from the state.

The scheduled flights will take off on 12, 14, 16, and 17 May respectively.

The pilgrims departed the Babatunde Idi-Agbon International Airport, Ilorin, aboard a Max Air flight which took off at exactly 12:40 p.m. on Saturday.

Addressing the pilgrims prior to their departure, Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq, represented by his Special Adviser and Councillor, Saadu Salaudeen, urged them to uphold



discipline, integrity, and the values of peace throughout their pilgrimage.

He appealed to the 2,174 intending pilgrims from the state to be exemplary in character and conduct, while also offering prayers for the peace and progress of Kwara State and Nigeria as a whole.

He also cautioned the pilgrims against any behaviour that could bring disrepute to the state or country, urging them to remain law-abiding and cooperative during their stay in the holy land.

Also speaking at the departure

ceremony, the Chairman of the Kwara State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, Mashood Jimba, and the Amirul-Hajj for this year, the Olupo of Ajase-Ipo, Oba Ismail Yahaya Alebiosu, admonished all pilgrims to exhibit good behaviour, patience, and devotion throughout the spiritual exercise.

In his farewell address, the Executive Secretary of the board, Abdulkadir Abdulsalam, disclosed that all 2,174 pilgrims from Kwara will be transported to Saudi Arabia in four batches as part of the 2025 Hajj operations.

ASUU gets new president

By Friday Omosola

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has appointed Professor Chris Piwuna, a consultant psychiatrist and Dean of Student Affairs at the University of Jos, as its new national president.

He succeeds Professor Emmanuel Osodeke, a soil scientist from Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, who held the position until the recent transition.



The announcement came during the union's 23rd National Delegates Congress, held in Benin City, Edo State on Sunday.

According to sources, Piwuna emerged victorious in a tightly contested election against Professor Adamu Babayo of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi.

Piwuna steps into leadership at a time of growing tension in the academic sector, as unresolved issues surrounding the distribution of Earned Academic Allowances and the increasing exodus of academic professionals continue to stir concerns.

IPOB declares 12hrs lockdown May 30

By Damilola Olufemi

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has declared a 12-hour lockdown from 6 am to 6 pm in South East and South South states of the country on May 30, 2025.

However, only essential workers such as doctors, nurses, journalists, ambulance drivers, police, firefighters, and fuel workers are allowed to go out during the lockdown.

The sit-out-home, according to IPOB spokesperson Emma Powerful, is aimed at honouring Biafran men and women who died during the Biafran War.

The war was fought between Nigeria and the breakaway Republic of Biafra from July 1967 to January 1970. The war resulted from the attempted secession of the Igbo-dominated southeastern region of Nigeria, driven by political, economic, and ethnic tensions.

IPOB, in its statement, announced governors of the concerned states are notified and aware of the yearly remembrance.

“IPOB has contacted the West African Examination Council, WAEC, to inform them of the lockdown directive on the 30th of May, so they can modify the May/June SSCE exams schedule to serve all students. Messages have also been dispatched to the Governors in the South East and South-South Regions to notify them that we will remember and pay tribute to our heroes and heroines who sacrificed everything for us with a lockdown mandate on May 30, 2025.”

“The peak of the yearly memorial and remembrance event will occur on May 30th, 2025, known as the Biafra Heroes Memorial Day. It is a day designated by IPOB for Biafrans to commemorate and pay tribute to our heroes, heroines, and those who sacrificed their lives in the struggle for Biafra’s liberation and independence. The IPOB leadership has



announced that May 30, 2025, will be a free day, marking a total lockdown for Biafrans residing in Biafran Land.

“Biafrans residing in Biafra land should observe a lockdown to pay tribute to those who battled and perished in the Nigerian genocidal war against Biafra, while Biafrans fought for our independence. We need to commemorate them by spending one day indoors. We urge all Biafrans and every advocate of freedom in Biafra Land to comply with this one-day lockdown directive on May 30, 2025.

“All IPOB family members in their various countries must organise and obtain permits to demonstrate against the unlawful imprisonment of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu and the illegal detention of Nnamdi Kanu in Nigeria.”

According to the group, “there will be no school, no community meetings, no religious services, no opening of markets and stores, and no public assemblies of any kind. Simply stay inside and enjoy television and videos with your family while contemplating the memories and the genocide inflicted upon Biafrans from 1967 to the present day.

IPOB described May 30 as a day “for families to recount their experiences of the Biafran genocidal war from 1967 to

1970 and the ongoing victimisation, destruction, and marginalisation of the Ndigbo within Nigeria.”y

The group said there will be no protests in Biafra land or any part of Nigeria to avoid violence from security forces.

However, no protests will take place in Biafra or anywhere in Nigeria to prevent being harmed by the lethal Nigerian Security Forces.

“Biafrans abroad will gather in the streets of their host countries or organise town hall meetings to express their support in honouring our fallen heroes and advocating for the restoration of Biafra.

“IPOB and Ndigbo across the globe will pay tribute to all our fallen heroes and heroines, including our everlasting leader, the late Dim Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, Gen Phillip Efiog, Chief Dr Frank Opigo, Commander Ikonso, and numerous others who significantly contributed and fought to avert the genocide and destruction of Biafrans by the Nigerian and British governments along with their allied forces.

“Every year on May 30th is a significant day for all Biafrans. It is a public holiday for every citizen and non-citizen of Biafra living in the Biafra territory.

NAFDAC boss urges varsities, pharma firms to develop local medicines, vaccines

By Helen Okechukwu

The Director General of National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Prof. Mojisola Adeyeye, has called on Nigerian universities and pharmaceutical companies to work together to create new medicines and vaccines.

Speaking at the 38th Prof. Victor Olufemi Marquis Memorial Lecture at Obafemi Awolowo University, she said President Bola Tinubu's ban on importing easily available products would help grow local drug production.

Adeyeye stressed that strong ties between universities and industry are key to solving Nigeria's health needs and cutting reliance on imported drugs.

She said universities can help transfer knowledge, build skills, and support manufacturing through research.

NAFDAC, she added, already works with many universities and helps students



gain real-world experience.

Prof. Adeyeye also highlighted the progress in Nigeria's pharmaceutical industry, partly due to the "Five Plus Five" Regulatory Directive, which encourages local drug production by limiting certain imports. She said 30% of new drug factories owe their growth to this policy.

She urged more focus on local vaccine production, clinical trials, and drug studies. Collaboration, she said, will create jobs, improve healthcare, and reduce the disease burden.

"Our products are now of better quality than what they used to be because of the regulatory system strengthening," she said. "The time to build a robust R&D system for a healthier Nigeria is now."

Global nursing workforce grows, but inequality persists — WHO report warns

By Helen Okechukwu

A new report from the World Health Organization (WHO) shows that the global nursing workforce has grown to 29.8 million in 2023, up from 27.9 million in 2018.

However, the report shared on Monday warns that serious gaps remain between countries and regions, putting global health goals at risk.

While the global shortage of nurses has reduced from 6.2 million in 2020 to 5.8 million in 2023, most nurses (78%) are concentrated in countries that represent just 49% of the world's population.

Low- and middle-income countries face challenges in training, employing, and keeping nurses, while richer countries rely heavily on foreign-trained staff, with 1 in 4 nurses in high-income countries born abroad.



The report shows slow but steady improvements, including a 33% increase in countries reporting workforce data since 2020.

It also highlights rising numbers of advanced practice nurses and more national nursing leadership roles, though

support for mental health and leadership development is still lacking in many low-income countries.

Women make up 85% of the nursing workforce, but gender equity and working conditions remain major concerns.

Retirement trends are also worrying, especially in high-income countries where more nurses are leaving than entering the workforce.

WHO is calling on governments to expand nursing jobs, improve working conditions, and strengthen local training.

Countries are also urged to invest in leadership, mental health support, and prepare nurses for climate and digital health challenges.

117-year secret: How 3 yogurts a day, peaceful life helped Maria Morera live longer

By Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

What does it take to live to 117? For Maria Branyas Morera, the answer may lie in a diet rich in yogurt, daily walks, and an intentional life free of alcohol, cigarettes—and toxic people.

Until her peaceful passing in August 2024, Morera held the title of the world's oldest living person. Born in San Francisco in 1907 to Catalan parents and a resident of Spain since childhood, her remarkable longevity has intrigued scientists, nutritionists, and medical experts globally. Now, new research may have unlocked some of her secrets.

A recent study—currently awaiting peer review—revealed that Morera's biological cells were functioning as though they belonged to someone 17 years younger. More impressively, her gut microbiome closely resembled that of an infant: rich in bifidobacterium and anti-inflammatory agents that promote immunity and stave off disease.

"She had the microbial diversity of a young person," says Dr. Megan Rossi, a dietitian and research fellow at King's College London. "Her gut health was truly exceptional."

The Power of Three (Yogurts)

Central to Morera's daily routine was consuming three yogurts a day—a habit that caught the attention of researchers. But as Dr. Rossi cautions, it's not about the yogurt alone. "Fermented foods like kefir, kimchi, and sauerkraut all contribute to gut diversity," she explains. "They help reduce inflammation, which is linked to conditions like cancer, heart disease, and diabetes."

Fermentation breaks down milk sugars and proteins, producing bioactive compounds believed to benefit heart and gut health. However, not all yogurts are created equal. Experts recommend plain, unsweetened yogurts with high concentrations of live cultures—steering clear of sugary or artificially enhanced varieties.



The Mediterranean Lifestyle

Morera's overall diet mirrored the Mediterranean model, which emphasizes fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, herbs, seeds, and nuts. This diverse, plant-rich intake is what Dr. Rossi refers to as the "Super Six" of gut nutrition.

"Eating a variety from these six categories daily provides your gut bacteria with the fuel they need to thrive," she says. "It's not about short-term diets—it's a long-term lifestyle."

Movement Matters

In addition to her dietary habits, Morera walked daily. Moderate, consistent exercise has been linked to improved gut function, enhanced blood flow to the intestines, and increased microbial diversity. "Your gut is a muscle," Rossi notes. "Movement helps digestion and keeps your microbes nourished."

Alcohol-Free, Stress-Free

Morera abstained from alcohol and smoking, both known to damage the gut lining. Excessive drinking can lead to a more permeable, or "leaky," gut, allowing harmful substances into the bloodstream and triggering systemic inflammation.

She also avoided unnecessary stress—including from unpleasant

company. Scientists now understand that mental stress and gut health are closely connected through the gut-brain axis. Chronic stress can elevate cortisol, disrupting digestion and microbial balance.

"In her own words, she avoided 'toxic people,'" Rossi says. "And science now suggests that stress—and the people we surround ourselves with—can directly affect the microbiome. We even share microbes with those we live or work with."

Lessons for Longevity

While Morera credited her longevity to "luck and good genetics," researchers believe her lifestyle choices played a major role. She lived simply, ate with intention, moved daily, and protected her mental space—principles that modern science is increasingly validating.

"There's no magic food or single habit," Dr. Rossi concludes. "But a combination of fermented foods, plant diversity, regular activity, and emotional wellbeing creates the right conditions for a long, healthy life." If you're aiming for a longer, healthier life, think beyond superfoods and supplements. Instead, think like Morera: eat your yogurt, take a walk, call a friend, and avoid the things—and people—that stress you out.

Kaduna Health Commissioner urges BHCPF officials to collaborate, ensure proper fund management

By **Helen Okechukwu**

To improve healthcare access and provide quality service delivery for citizens, the Kaduna State Commissioner of Health, Umma Kaltum-Ahmed, has charged newly elected members of the Expanded State Oversight Committee of the Basic Health Care Provision Fund (BHCPF) to partner and ensure funds are well managed.

According to News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), the newly elected members of the committee were inaugurated on Monday by Kaltum-Ahmed in Kaduna.

Kaltum-Ahmed described the inauguration as a clear step forward in Kaduna State's efforts to improve the health of its people.



She stressed the key role of the BHCPF oversight committee, created under the 2014 National Health Act, in boosting access to quality healthcare, especially for the most at-risk groups.

According to her, the committee's recent expansion shows the Governor's strong focus on openness, responsibility, and inclusive leadership in managing the health sector.

The elected members were selected from government institutions, development partners, civil society, religious groups, and traditional leaders.

The Ministry of Health also expressed full support for the committee and its goal of improving healthcare services and ensuring better health outcomes for everyone in the state.

UK care sector faces crisis as govt ends overseas recruitment

By **Helen Okechukwu**

The United Kingdom (UK) government has announced it will no longer allow care workers to be recruited from overseas, in a move aimed at reducing low-skilled migration.

Care providers have warned that the decision could worsen the country's social care crisis.

Recent figures show a sharp drop in the number of overseas care workers, from 143,900 in 2023 to just 26,100 this year, following earlier visa restrictions that banned workers from bringing dependents.

Experts say the new policy could lead to around 7,000 fewer care workers, with many providers now facing staff shortages. This, they warn, could force more home care services to shut, leaving older and disabled people



without support.

Dr. Jane Townson, head of the Homecare Association, called the decision a clear sign that social care is not a government priority. She said rising costs and lack of funding were already straining the sector.

Nadra Ahmed from the National Care

Association said the policy could lead to closures similar to what was seen after Brexit.

She questioned if the government had any real plan to replace migrant workers.

The Health Foundation's Lucinda Allen added that the care sector is already fragile due to limited funding and rising costs, warning that the visa changes could leave many people without care.

One provider, Stella Shaw, said overseas staff were key to her home care business. Without them, she fears she won't be able to meet demand.

Unison's general secretary, Christina McAnea, also criticised the move, saying the care system depends on overseas workers and risks collapse without them.

Davido could someday become Governor of Osun, Ben Murray-Bruce says

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Former Bayelsa East Senator Ben Murray-Bruce believes Afrobeats superstar David Adeleke, widely known as Davido, has what it takes to become the Governor of Osun State in the future.

Murray-Bruce made this bold prediction during a recent episode of his Commonsense series, where he shared his thoughts on Nigerian politics, leadership, and the growing influence of entertainers in public affairs.

Davido is more than a musician. Speaking with confidence, Murray-Bruce described Davido not just as a global music icon, but also as someone with a strong interest in politics. According to him, Davido is already showing signs of a future in public leadership.

“David Adeleke, the global phenomenon better known as Davido, is undeniably an international artist and a true Nigerian superstar,” Murray-Bruce said. “He stands as one of Nigeria’s most valuable cultural exports.”

But beyond the music and fame, the former senator pointed out that Davido has a side many may not know, a deep passion for politics and a strong political identity.

Politics runs in Davido’s family
Murray-Bruce said Davido’s interest in politics should not surprise anyone. The Adeleke family has a long history in Osun State politics. His uncle, Senator Ademola Adeleke, is the current Governor of Osun State. Another uncle, the late Isiaka Adeleke, was also a governor of the state during the military era under General Ibrahim Babangida.

“The Adeleke name carries political weight in Osun State,” Murray-Bruce noted. “Davido grew up around politics. He understands it. He is not new to the game.”

This strong political background, combined with his popularity, gives Davido a unique advantage, the senator said.



A new face in Nigerian politics?
Murray-Bruce believes that if Davido decides to run for governor, he has a real chance of winning.

“Considering all of these, the thought that Davido himself could one day aspire to become the Governor of Osun State seems more like a potential path,” he said. “Especially if his political interests are nurtured and properly guided.”

He added that more entertainers should consider public office, saying their ability to connect with people from different backgrounds makes them strong candidates.

“In Nigeria today, there is a growing feeling that entertainers can bring fresh energy into politics,” he said. “Their strong connection with young people and their ability to reach large audiences gives them an edge. Davido, if you run, I predict you will win.”

Davido has shown political interest
Though Davido has not officially declared any political ambition, he has been active in political conversations. He openly supported his uncle, Ademola Adeleke, during the 2018 and 2022 Osun State gubernatorial elections. He was seen campaigning on the streets, using his music and star power to rally young voters.



On social media, Davido has also shared his political opinions. He has called for accountability, fairness, and youth participation in government. Many of his fans see him as someone who speaks truth to power.

A youth movement on the rise
The idea of Davido becoming a governor speaks to a larger trend in Nigeria. Many young Nigerians are looking for leaders who understand their struggles and can speak their language. Celebrities like Davido are already role models for millions of youths. Some believe they can also lead in government.

Ben Murray-Bruce, who is known for promoting youth involvement in politics, sees Davido as a strong example of what the future could look like.

“Young people need to take charge of their future,” he said. “And Davido could be one of the leaders that make that happen.”

Final thoughts
While Davido has not made any official political move yet, Ben Murray-Bruce’s comments have stirred conversations across social media and political circles. For now, the Afrobeats star remains focused on music. But if he ever chooses to enter politics, many will be watching, and possibly cheering him on.

'I don't believe in marriage', Lil Kesh claims

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular Nigerian singer and rapper, Lil Kesh, has shared his thoughts on love, relationships, and why he is not ready to walk down the aisle.

In a recent interview, the 'Shoki' crooner revealed that he no longer believes in marriage and has no plans to settle down anytime soon.

Speaking on The Esther Show, the 31-year-old music star explained his reasons for staying single and why he feels marriage may not be for him. He said his current lifestyle and focus on personal growth make it hard to commit to a romantic relationship.

"I'm happier on my own", Lil Kesh

Lil Kesh, born Keshinro Ololade, revealed that he has been single for a long time and is not actively looking to change that.

"I'm currently single. I've been single for a long time," he said during the interview. "I broke up with my last girlfriend because I realised I could do better on my own. At that point in my life, my career and personal goals were more important. Since then, I've not found myself in the right space to manage both love and work."

He admitted that it would be nice to meet someone who could change his mind, but right now, he's not searching. "It would be nice to find someone who could make me compromise," he said. "But for now, I'm not intentional about dating. If I'm dating someone, I have to make time for them. And I just don't have that time."

No pressure from family

Lil Kesh also expressed his gratitude for the support he gets from his family. Despite being in his early 30s, his parents have not pressured him to settle down.



"I'm 31 now, and thankfully, my parents are not on my neck about marriage," he said. "They understand that I'm different and they've accepted that."

The rapper explained that he is not avoiding marriage just to stay free or live a playboy lifestyle. Instead, he believes that many marriages today are unhappy and often end in divorce. That, he says, has made him cautious.

"I don't believe in marriage"

The singer was clear about his views on the institution of marriage. He said it's not something he sees himself embracing shortly.

"Marriage? Maybe later. But right now, I'm not thinking about it," he said firmly. "I'm also not going to intentionally make someone my baby mama, and I'm not going to 'wife' anyone anytime soon either."

He added, "It's not that I want to be free or live recklessly. I just don't believe in marriage. They don't work. Look at the number of divorces. I've seen too many people in unhappy marriages. That doesn't mean happy marriages don't exist, but they are rare."

Choosing happiness over pressure

Lil Kesh explained that he values peace and happiness over social expectations. He wants to build a happy home one day, but only when he feels truly ready. For now, he believes that forcing himself into a relationship or marriage would not be fair to him or anyone else.

"I want a happy home," he said. "And right now, I don't think I can give that. I'm not going to risk someone else's happiness just to follow society's timeline."

He wrapped up the conversation by saying he prefers to focus on personal growth and his music career for the time being.

A personal choice, not a trend

While many celebrities often face pressure to get married or settle down, Lil Kesh has made it clear that he is charting his path. His decision, he says, is about self-awareness and being honest with what he can and cannot offer in a relationship.

Whether his views will change in the future remains to be seen. But for now, Lil Kesh is choosing to stay single, focus on his music, and live life on his terms.

Laide Bakare named face of 2025 Osun Osogbo festival

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Renowned Nollywood actress and cultural ambassador, Laide Bakare, has been officially unveiled as the face of the 2025 Osun Osogbo Festival.

The announcement came with the launch of a bold new campaign titled “I’m Laide. I’m Culture”, rolled out today across all official platforms.

The Osun Osogbo Festival is one of Africa’s oldest and most respected spiritual gatherings. Held every August in Osogbo, Osun State, the festival honours Osun, the Yoruba goddess of fertility and water. Recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage event, it draws tens of thousands of pilgrims, tourists, and culture lovers from around the world.

This year’s edition, set for August 2025, promises to be the most exciting yet. Organisers are introducing new features to blend tradition with modern experiences. The goal is to engage a younger audience while preserving the sacred roots of the event.

“This is not just a celebration”

In a vibrant reveal video, Laide Bakare speaks with passion about her new role. She describes the festival not just as a celebration, but as a call for collaboration.

“This isn’t just a celebration, it’s a collaboration,” she says in the video. “We’re opening the doors to fashion, tech, beauty, media, creators, and brands. We want to turn Africa’s biggest spiritual festival into a global movement.”

Bakare, known for her roles in Yoruba-language films and her advocacy for African culture, brings star power and cultural pride to the festival’s global campaign.

A new look for a sacred tradition

The spiritual heart of the festival remains unchanged. Pilgrims will still walk the sacred path to the Osun Sacred Grove, a forest believed to be home to the goddess herself. However, the 2025 edition is



adding new events designed to expand the festival’s reach.

Highlights of the new lineup include:

The cultural glow pageant: A celebration of African beauty, pride, and tradition.

Tech fusion experience: A showcase of innovations by African tech creators.

Entrepreneurial fair: A space for local businesses, startups, and artisans to shine.

Celebrity walk of elegance: A glamorous red carpet moment blending culture and entertainment.

Pan-African roundtable: A summit of cultural thinkers, influencers, and investors.

Organisers say these additions aim to turn the festival into more than a spiritual event. They see it as a platform for creativity, business, and diplomacy.

Big stage for brands

With more than 100,000 in-person attendees and millions more following online, Osun Osogbo 2025 offers unmatched exposure. Organisers are actively inviting brands to partner with the festival, calling it a rare chance to align with culture, youth, and purpose.

Sponsorship benefits include:

Access to Nigeria’s booming youth market and the global African diaspora.

Branding opportunities across digital media, red carpet events, and festival

venues.

Endorsement from Osogbo’s royal palace and inclusion in official programming.

Organisers stress that this is not just a sponsorship, it’s a partnership with cultural impact.

Backed by royalty, open to the world

The campaign also comes with strong support from the royal leadership of Osogbo. Speaking on behalf of the Ataoja of Osogbo, His Royal Majesty Oba Jimoh Olanipekun Oyetunji Laroye II, organisers have extended an open invitation to the world.

They are calling on brands, creatives, influencers, and investors to join in the 2025 celebration and make history together.

“If you’re ready to go big, make history, and leave your mark on the world, then join me,” Bakare adds. “Because this year, we’re not just celebrating Osun, we’re elevating it.”

Festival details

Date: August 2025

Location: Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria

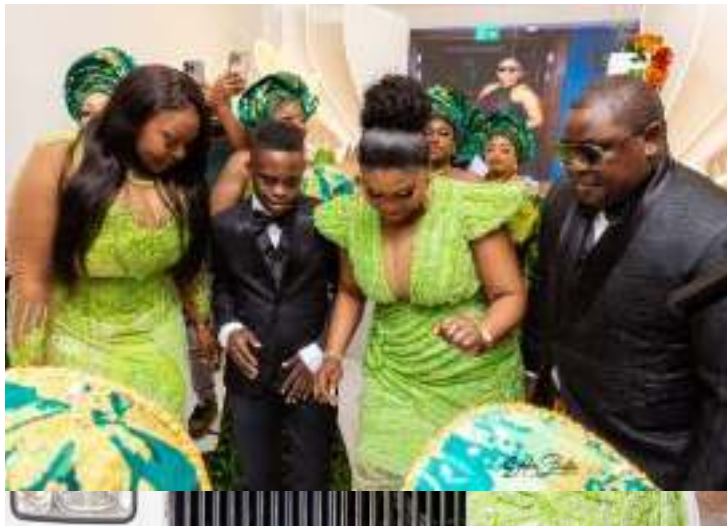
Osun Osogbo 2025 promises to be a powerful blend of heritage and innovation. With Laide Bakare leading the charge, the festival is stepping confidently into a new era, proudly rooted in tradition and boldly looking ahead.

Rolls royce, radiant style: Funmi's unforgettable 45th birthday

By Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

In the city of Manchester, United Kingdom, on May 4, 2025, s2fum a vision of grace and style, celebrated her 45th birthday in breathtaking fashion and vibrant sophistication. Pictured beside a stunning white Rolls Royce, Funmi radiated joy and confidence, a true embodiment of celebratory glamour.

Her gown, a mesmerizing shade of lime green, flowed with an ethereal quality, its intricate detailing catching the light with every movement. The delicate embellishments shimmered, adding a touch of magic to her already luminous presence. Dazzling gold earrings complemented the striking gown. The backdrop of a classic luxury vehicle further underscored the celebratory and sophisticated nature of the occasion.



I regret breaking up with some of my ex-girlfriends, Ice Prince opens up

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular Nigerian rapper, Panshak Zamani, widely known as Ice Prince, has opened up about some of the regrets he carries from his past.

In a recent interview, the artist spoke honestly about choices he wishes he could undo, especially when it comes to his relationships with women.

Ice Prince appeared as a guest on a new episode of the Konnected Minds podcast. The conversation took a reflective turn when the host asked a direct question:

“What is one thing you’ve done in your career that you wish you could change?” The rapper didn’t hold back. “I broke a few hearts I regret”

In response, Ice Prince revealed that many of his regrets involve his personal life, not his music career.

“Maybe decisions with women,” he said. “I have broken a few hearts that I regret. I have messed up in some relationships that I wish I could turn back the hands of time.”

He admitted that some of his actions in the past hurt people he truly cared about. Looking back, he sees them as missed chances for something better.

“I have lost some very amazing angels due to some stupid stuff,” he added.

“Stuff I could probably have avoided, girls I shouldn’t have said ‘hi’ to or followed back on social media.”

The artist described these as small but costly mistakes, moments that may have seemed harmless at the time but later led to pain and regret.

“I try to learn from every mistake”

Despite the emotional weight of these



regrets, Ice Prince shared that he’s trying to grow from his past. He believes that every setback can be a lesson, even if the learning process is difficult.

“Everything happens for a reason,” he said.

“Sometimes, in life, you just have to learn from your mistakes and not repeat them.”

The rapper emphasised that he tries to take responsibility for his choices. Rather than hiding from his errors, he aims to reflect on them and use those lessons to become a better person.

“As for me, I have tried to learn from every mistake I have made,” he said.

“I have made a lot of mistakes, especially regarding women. But as you grow older, you just learn to live with the regrets.”

A different kind of fame

Known for his chart-topping hits and smooth delivery, Ice Prince has long been one of the most recognisable faces in the Nigerian music scene. However, his recent comments show a more personal side to the rapper, one that fans may not often see in public.

The artist, who once dominated radio waves with tracks like Oleku and Aboki, is now also using his platform to speak about personal growth, maturity, and the consequences of youthful decisions.

His honesty struck a chord with listeners and sparked conversation online. Many fans praised him for being vulnerable, calling his words a refreshing change from the usual celebrity image.

Learning to let go

Ice Prince’s reflection offers a reminder that success doesn’t make someone immune to regret. Even in the spotlight, mistakes happen. And sometimes, the ones that stay with us the longest aren’t about business deals or missed shows, they’re about people.

In his case, it’s the women he hurt along the way. The connections that could have lasted. The love that might have grown but didn’t.

Still, the rapper isn’t dwelling on the past. He seems to be facing it head-on, accepting the pain, and trying to grow from it.

“You just learn to live with the regrets,” he said again, closing the chapter with a quiet sense of acceptance.

Diddy's sex trafficking trial begins as Cassie set to testify

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Opening statements are set to begin Monday in the explosive federal sex trafficking trial of hip-hop mogul Sean "Diddy" Combs, who stands accused of operating a criminal enterprise under the guise of his Bad Boy Records label and coercing women into drug-fueled, days-long sex acts.

A jury of 12 New Yorkers, along with six alternates, is expected to be finalised and sworn in Monday morning, after which prosecutors and defence attorneys will deliver their first pitches in a case that has rocked the entertainment industry.

At the centre of the trial is Cassandra "Cassie" Ventura, the R&B singer, model, and Combs' ex-girlfriend, whose harrowing allegations helped spark the federal investigation. Ventura, 38, is expected to take the stand as the prosecution's star witness, detailing a decade-long relationship allegedly marked by manipulation, forced sex with male escorts, and brutal violence.

Ventura's testimony is expected to include video footage from a 2016 incident at a Los Angeles hotel, where Combs, wearing only a towel, was seen punching and kicking her. Prosecutors say she will remain on the stand for several days as jurors are shown graphic evidence of the alleged abuse.

Diddy accused of drug intake

In a 2023 lawsuit, which was swiftly settled, Ventura accused Combs of forcing her to take drugs before participating in sexual



encounters he orchestrated and filmed. She also alleged that Combs destroyed a car belonging to rapper Kid Cudi out of jealousy over her alleged romantic involvement with him.

The trial, which has drawn intense public scrutiny, marks a stunning fall for the 55-year-old music tycoon. Combs faces a slew of federal charges, including racketeering conspiracy, sex trafficking, and transportation to engage in prostitution. He has pleaded not guilty and remains in custody at a Brooklyn detention facility following his September 2024 arrest.

According to federal prosecutors, Combs used his record label and inner circle to facilitate, conceal, and normalise criminal activity, a pattern they claim was part of a larger, ongoing enterprise.

Before Ventura takes the stand, jurors are expected to hear from an escort and another minor witness

who will provide early testimony supporting the prosecution's broader claims of exploitation and abuse within Combs' circle.

Meanwhile, Combs' legal team plans to argue that the encounters were part of a consensual, albeit unconventional, sex life. Defence attorney Marc Agnifilo acknowledged in court last week that Combs physically abused Ventura but claimed the violence was mutual.

"We are going to take the position that there was mutual violence in their relationship," Agnifilo said. "There was hitting on both sides."

If convicted on all charges, Combs could face life in prison.

The trial is expected to last several weeks, with public interest intensifying as the details of one of the entertainment industry's most high-profile legal battles unfold in federal court.

Zelenskyy proposes face-to-face meeting with Putin on peace talks

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



In a new diplomatic push to end the grinding war, Ukraine and top officials from the United States, France, Britain, and Germany have discussed ways to pressure Russia into accepting a 30-day ceasefire. The talks, held online, focused on a U.S.-backed proposal that Ukraine has signaled willingness to implement immediately.

Andriy Yermak, chief of staff to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, revealed details of the conversation on Thursday, saying the parties agreed that “a complete and unconditional ceasefire should be the first step towards a just and sustainable peace.”

Senior officials involved included U.S. special envoys Steve Witkoff and Keith Kellogg, France’s diplomatic adviser Emmanuel Bonne, Britain’s national security adviser Jonathan Powell, and Guenter Sautter, a top

adviser to German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

Ukraine has accused Russia of sidestepping the proposal, offering instead a mere three-day truce, from Thursday to Saturday, which Yermak dismissed as a strategic ploy.

“The Kremlin’s proposal for a three-day truce is not about peace, but about safely holding the parade in Moscow. This is political manipulation,” Yermak said via Telegram, referring to Russia’s planned Victory Day celebrations marking the 80th anniversary of Nazi Germany’s defeat.

Despite Moscow’s limited offer, reports indicate that Ukrainian skies remained quiet across major cities on Thursday after the short-term ceasefire took effect. However, clashes reportedly continued in eastern Ukraine, underscoring the

fragility of the lull.

Yermak added that during the talks, the group also discussed possible “instruments of pressure” to be used if Russia either rejects the ceasefire proposal or violates any agreements made.

Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and has since faced mounting international isolation. Friday’s military parade in Moscow is expected to be a symbolic display of strength by Russian President Vladimir Putin, even as the war grinds on with no clear end in sight.

As Ukraine signals openness to a longer-term truce and the West scrambles for diplomatic leverage, the possibility of a broader peace deal remains uncertain but not out of reach.

Duterte likely to secure election victory from Hague prison cell

By Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi



Despite his imprisonment in The Hague on charges of crimes against humanity, former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte appears set to win an election, showcasing his enduring popularity in his stronghold of Davao. Duterte, known as “The Punisher” for his hardline stance, was arrested in March in connection with his controversial “war on drugs,” which human rights groups allege resulted in the extrajudicial killings of up to 30,000 people.

Despite denying any wrongdoing, Duterte’s arrest has seemingly galvanized his support, particularly in Davao, where he served as mayor for 22 years. “His ICC arrest doesn’t really shake the core of who Duterte is but rather, paradoxically, it only reinforces what Duterte stands for,” stated Cleve Arguelles, a political scientist and head of polling company WR Numero, to CNN.

Ahead of Monday’s midterm elections, supporters flooded Davao, wearing T-shirts demanding his release and posing with cardboard cut-

outs of the former president. Thousands also rallied in green, the color of Duterte’s political party, to celebrate his 80th birthday in March. “I’ve seen what he accomplished as both mayor and president,” said Jennifer Maumbas, a Davao café worker, reflecting the sentiment of many in the city.

Duterte’s family, a powerful political dynasty in the region, has several members also running for office, further solidifying their influence. However, these elections are not just a show of Duterte’s popularity, they also serve as a crucial battleground in a burgeoning feud with the Marcos family.

The once-strong alliance between Duterte’s daughter, Vice-President Sara Duterte, and President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. has fractured. The 2025 midterm elections, in which 18,000 national and local seats are contested, are seen as pivotal in determining the future political landscape and which family will dominate the 2028 presidential elections.

A key focus of the elections is the Senate race, where half of the 24 seats are up for grabs. Sara Duterte faces a potential impeachment trial, accused of misusing funds and amassing unexplained wealth. If impeached, she would be removed from office and barred from future political positions, potentially derailing her presidential ambitions.

In a recent rally, Sara Duterte claimed her family’s name has been “dragged through the mud” and blamed the current administration for the country’s woes. “Who will really benefit if the Duterte family is gone from this world? Not the Filipinos, not the victims of crime, the unemployed, the poor or even the hungry,” she asserted.

Meanwhile, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has announced that a hearing for Rodrigo Duterte’s initial appearance will be scheduled “in due course.” The results of the election will determine the political strength of the Duterte family, and their ongoing battle with the Marcos dynasty.

Mexican mayoral candidate, supporters gunned down in Veracruz

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Political violence in Mexico took a deadly turn again on Sunday when Yesenia Lara, a mayoral candidate from President Claudia Sheinbaum's ruling Morena party, was shot and killed alongside three of her supporters during a campaign event in the eastern state of Veracruz.

The ambush occurred during a daylight procession, where motorcycles and supporters bearing Morena flags marched in support of Lara's candidacy for mayor of Texistepec. The event, meant to be a public show of unity and hope, devolved into terror when gunfire erupted. A Facebook Live broadcast captured the chaos, screams, people fleeing in panic, and the chilling crackle of automatic gunfire.

Lara, a prominent local figure who had spent the day rallying with residents, was among four people killed in the attack. Three others were wounded. Shocking images shared online shortly after the shooting appeared to show the victims' bodies lying motionless on the street, a gruesome reminder of the escalating political violence plaguing the country.

"We will find those responsible for the cowardly murder of the Morena candidate and supporters in Texistepec," Veracruz Governor Rocio Nahle declared via social media. "No position or office is worth a person's life."

Mexico's Attorney General's Office has launched an investigation, though no arrests have been announced. Authorities have yet to publicly confirm whether organized crime was behind the attack, but the region has long been beset by cartel activity and turf wars.

Just hours before her death, Lara posted campaign photos to Facebook, writing: "The strength of our youth is the vitality that motivates me to keep walking day by day." Her message now reads like a haunting farewell.



A Pattern of Political Assassinations

Lara's killing is far from an isolated case. It follows a disturbing pattern of violence against politicians, especially at the local level, as Mexico grapples with the deadly entanglement of politics, cartels, and corruption.

Only two days earlier, Cecilia Ruvalcaba, a councilmember from Jalisco, was gunned down in a hospital. In April, senior government official José Luis Pereira was executed while dining at a restaurant. In December 2024, a congressman from the ruling coalition was also shot dead, again, in Veracruz.

Even more horrifying, in October 2024, a sitting mayor in Guerrero was murdered and decapitated. The following month, a former prosecutor and a local police official were arrested in connection with the brutal crime. And in June 2024, violence surged across southern Mexico, where a mayor and several other local politicians were assassinated in quick succession.

In March, a mayor dining with his teenage son was shot dead in Morelia, the capital of Michoacan state. His son survived, but the trauma lingers.

These killings form a grim timeline of

error that has haunted Mexico's political landscape for years, a relentless campaign of intimidation, silencing, and slaughter.

Since 2006, an estimated 480,000 people have been murdered in Mexico amid a wave of criminal violence driven by the multibillion-dollar drug trade. Politicians, especially at the municipal level, are frequently targeted by cartels looking to control local governments, police departments, and public contracts.

As tributes pour in for Yesenia Lara, her death has sent shockwaves through the political community and ignited new demands for government accountability. Her supporters remember her as a passionate advocate for her town, committed to improving education and youth development, a dream now cut short by gunfire.

"Violence is not the future we want for our children," wrote one supporter on social media. "We cannot continue to let bullets choose our leaders."

As the investigation unfolds, one thing remains clear: Mexico's war on corruption and organized crime has claimed another victim, not just a candidate, but the hope she symbolized.

Trump defends planned gift of luxury plane from Qatar, says 'It's a very transparent deal'

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

President Donald Trump is under intense fire after confirming his administration is poised to accept a luxury Boeing 747-8 aircraft from the Qatari royal family, sparking a political storm over alleged bribery, foreign influence, and legal grey zones.

The aircraft, dubbed a "flying palace" and worth an estimated \$400 million, is reportedly being offered as a temporary replacement for the aging Air Force One. ABC News first broke the story Sunday morning, citing multiple sources that confirmed the Trump administration is preparing to accept the jet, pending final approval.

While a Sunday statement from Qatar downplayed the situation, claiming no final decision had been made and denying that the plane was a "gift," Trump appeared to confirm the deal on his Truth Social platform.

"So the fact that the Defense Department is getting a GIFT, FREE OF CHARGE, of a 747 aircraft... so bothers the Crooked Democrats that they insist we pay, TOP DOLLAR, for the plane," he wrote.

The plan, according to ABC, is for the aircraft to be transferred first to the U.S. Air Force, which would refit it for presidential use. Trump would utilize the jet throughout the remainder of his term, and upon leaving office, it would be transferred to his presidential library foundation by January 1, 2029.

The luxury jet is expected to be officially unveiled during Trump's upcoming Middle East tour, which includes stops in Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Trump reportedly toured the plane privately in February while it was parked at Palm Beach International Airport.

Legal Loophole or Constitutional Crisis? The Trump legal team, including Attorney General Pam Bondi and White House Counsel David Warrington, claims the gift is permissible. They argue the plane is being donated to the U.S. Air



Force, not to Trump directly, and later to his library foundation, which they say skirts federal anti-bribery laws and the Constitution's Emoluments Clause.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth reportedly received legal memos affirming this interpretation. The lawyers involved insist the gift is not contingent on any political favor and thus doesn't qualify as bribery under U.S. law. Still, critics aren't buying it.

"Nothing says 'America First' like Air Force One, brought to you by Qatar," mocked Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer. "It's not just bribery, it's premium foreign influence with extra legroom."

Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-MD) slammed the move as unconstitutional, writing on X, "Trump must seek Congress' consent to take this \$300m from Qatar... a gift you use for four years and then deposit in your library is still a gift (and a gift)."

Democratic pollster Matt McDermott pointed to recent Trump Organization dealings in Qatar, including a newly announced \$5.5 billion golf resort, as a possible motive. "Today: Qatar 'gifts' Trump a luxury jet. Surely just a coincidence," he said.

Security Concerns and Public Outcry Beyond accusations of corruption, experts are raising red flags about national security and intelligence vulnerabilities.

Harvard security professor Juliette Kayyem warned of potential surveillance concerns, noting that any aircraft provided by Qatar could be tailored to meet their own security objectives as well. "The surveillance and security aspects are also as disturbing as the gift," she said.

CNN's Jonathan Reiner echoed this, writing, "Air Force One is a (checks notes) Air Force plane. A military aircraft. It's not intended to be a palace because the US doesn't have a king."

Veteran journalist Maggie Haberman of The New York Times noted that this may be "the most expensive gift from a foreign government in U.S. history," adding that it is likely to draw "serious legal questions."

The controversy comes as Trump seeks to reshape his global image and legacy, with the presidential library now positioned to receive one of the most opulent symbols of power ever gifted to a U.S. leader.

Hamas to release final American hostages held in Gaza today

By **Fatimah Idera**

Hamas announced on Sunday its intention to release Edan Alexander, the last living American hostage held in Gaza.

Recall that Alexander, an Israeli-American soldier, was captured on October 7, 2023.

Donald Trump confirmed the news in a social media post, writing that Alexander, 21, "is coming home to his family. This was a step taken in good faith towards the United States and the efforts of the mediators, which are Qatar and Egypt, to put an end to this very brutal war and return all living hostages and remains to their loved ones."

The captive's release is set to take place on Tuesday, according to reports.

Trump begins a trip to the Middle East the same day, although there is no stop in Israel on his schedule as of yet. The president is set to visit Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

Trump's Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff, told the Israeli newspaper Haaretz he would travel to Israel on Monday.

"Right now, the intention is to return Edan Alexander home to his family," Witkoff said.

Adam Boehler, the US special envoy for hostage affairs, is travelling to Israel with Alexander's parents, a US official told Axios.

The office of the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, said in a statement: "The US has informed Israel of Hamas's intention to release soldier Edan Alexander as a gesture to the Americans, without conditions or anything in exchange. The US has conveyed to Israel that this is expected to lead to negotiations for the release of hostages, according to the original Witkoff framework, which Israel has already accepted. Israel is preparing for the possibility that this effort will be



implemented."

In a later statement, his office added: "Israel has not committed to a ceasefire of any kind or the release of terrorists but only to a safe corridor that will allow for the release of Edan."

Negotiations would "continue under fire, during preparations for an intensification of the fighting", it added.

Israel will not be asked to release Palestinian prisoners in exchange for the release of Alexander, but will have to agree to a temporary ceasefire and a halt to drone flights over Gaza to allow Alexander to safely leave the enclave.

Alexander's family said in a statement released by the Israeli Hostages and Missing Families Forum: "The family confirms that it has been informed of Hamas's announcement and that it is in constant contact with the American government regarding the possibility of Edan's expected release in the coming days."

Boehler, the hostage envoy, said the planned release of Alexander was "a positive step forward" and asked for Hamas to also release the bodies of four other Americans who have died in captivity in Gaza.

According to Haaretz, the four dead Americans include two who were serving in the Israeli military, Omer Neutra, 21, and Itay Hen, 19, and two older Israeli-

Americans, Judih Weinstein-Haggai, 70, and her husband Gad Haggai, 73, were living in the Israeli kibbutz Nir Oz on the Gaza border when it was raided by Hamas-led militants on 7 October.

Khalil al-Hayya, a Hamas leader in Gaza, said in a statement that the group was ready to immediately start intensive negotiations to reach a final deal that will end Israel's deadly war on Gaza.

Over the last year and a half, Israeli forces have killed at least 52,800 Palestinians while forcibly displacing 2 million survivors, including babies, across the narrow strip amid widespread food and aid shortages due to Israeli restrictions.

Meanwhile, 59 hostages remain in Gaza. According to Trump, just 21 remain alive.

The governments of Qatar and Egypt, which have been brokering talks aimed at ending the war in Gaza, said in a joint statement that Hamas's decision to release Alexander was "a gesture of goodwill and a positive step toward resuming negotiations aimed at reaching a ceasefire".

Alexander, who was born in Israel but raised in the US by Israeli parents, moved to Israel in 2022 after graduating from high school and enlisted in the Israeli military.

His parents and two younger siblings still live in Tenafly, New Jersey.

Trump to reduce drug prices by 80%

By Damilola Olufemi



United States President Donald Trump said he would sign an executive order to lower the prices of prescription drugs and pharmaceutical products.

“Prescription Drug and Pharmaceutical prices will be reduced, almost immediately, by 30 per cent to 80 per cent,” Trump said in a social media post.

They will rise throughout the World to equalise and, for the first time in many years, bring fairness to America

The US president said he would sign the executive order, which he said would be one of the most consequential in U.S. history, at 9 am (1300 GMT) on Monday.

Earlier in the week, Trump had promised an “earth-shattering” announcement.

US media at the time reported the announcement would relate to drug

prices.

In the US, there is currently no central government price regulation for drugs that applies to all medicines.

The pharmaceutical industry plays the most important role in determining how much a drug costs, and government influence is limited.

This leads to sometimes enormously high prices for certain drugs. Many drugs in the U.S. are particularly expensive compared to other countries.

It was not initially clear how Trump’s order would work, with a pushback expected from pharmaceutical companies.

Trump initial attempt
Trump had attempted to lower drug prices during his first term in office. The plan at the time was to provide drugs, including insulin and EpiPens, at discounts to people with low

incomes, and use lower international prices to pay for some drugs provided under the Medicare state insurance programme for older adults.

The proposal was never implemented due to legal and political opposition. Trump’s Sunday post said this time he would try to bring down prices by “instituting a most favoured nation’s policy whereby the U.S. will pay the same price as the Nation that pays the lowest price in the World.

The Republican suggested that the Democrats fought against bringing down prices.

Drug regulation was one of the central issues of Trump’s predecessor, Democrat Joe Biden.

In 2022, Biden signed a major legislative package that also authorised Medicare to negotiate certain drug prices. Biden’s measure was considered a milestone.

US to reduce tariffs on Chinese imports to 30% for 90 days

By Damilola Olufemi



The United States and China have agreed to a temporary 30 per cent reduction in tariffs on each other's goods, marking a 90-day reprieve as both sides seek a more lasting resolution.

The agreement, reached after two days of high-level negotiations in Geneva, Switzerland, represents the most meaningful progress in trade relations between the two powers since the intensification of hostilities under former President Donald Trump's administration.

As part of the deal, the U.S. will scale back tariffs on Chinese imports from 145 per cent to 30 per cent by May 14, including levies previously tied to the fentanyl trade. In return, China will reduce its tariffs on U.S. goods from 125% to 10%, signalling a mutual intent to stabilise economic relations and avoid further escalation.

Markets React and Officials Comment
The announcement triggered a strong reaction across global financial

markets. Asian and European indices posted gains, U.S. stock futures climbed, and the offshore yuan strengthened by 0.5% against the dollar. Oil prices and Treasury yields also rose as investors welcomed signs of reduced trade friction.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, who led the American negotiating team, described the talks as "productive" and "forward-looking." According to Bessent, "Both parties agree that economic decoupling is not the goal." He added that negotiations also touched on fentanyl-related exports and potential purchasing arrangements by Beijing.

Trade War Background

The trade conflict, which had led to historic tariff hikes under Trump's "Liberation Day" policy, severely disrupted global supply chains and affected an estimated \$660 billion in annual trade. Both nations experienced increased costs and market uncertainty,

leading to mounting pressure for a negotiated solution.

Greer emphasised that the U.S. remains committed to more balanced trade relationships, noting, "China came prepared to negotiate this time," indicating a possible shift in tone from previous encounters.

While the temporary tariff relief has calmed markets and opened a window for deeper dialogue, observers caution that past efforts at de-escalation, such as the failed 2018 talks and the limited success of the "Phase One" deal in 2020, offer a note of caution.

Despite signs of goodwill, scepticism remains over whether this 90-day period will yield a durable trade agreement or merely postpone further conflict. Analysts are particularly focused on whether Beijing will offer concessions on key exports, including those related to fentanyl production, and whether Washington will maintain a flexible stance beyond the initial timeline.

Starmer vows to slash immigration numbers amid farage pressure

By **Fatimah Idera**

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer pledged to significantly reduce net migration over the next four years, citing the need for greater control to preserve social cohesion and prioritise investment in the domestic workforce.

Controlling immigration was a key factor in Britain's 2016 vote to leave the European Union, yet net arrivals have quadrupled since it left the bloc, helping boost the popularity of Nigel Farage's right-wing, anti-immigration Reform UK party.

Starmer said nations depend on rules that set out rights, responsibilities and obligations, and that without them Britain risked becoming an island of strangers.

He said his new plan meant migration would fall sharply by the end of this parliament in 2029, though he gave no numerical targets.

"That's a promise, but I want to be very clear on this, if we do need to take further steps, if we do need to do more to release pressure on housing and our public services, then mark my words, we will," he told a press conference at his Downing Street office.

Among the measures announced on Monday was a move to restrict skilled worker visas to graduate-level applicants, to prevent care sector firms from recruiting abroad and to require businesses to increase training for local workers.

Automatic settlement and citizenship



for people who move to Britain will apply after 10 years, up from five years now, although highly skilled workers, such as nurses, doctors, engineers and AI experts, would be fast-tracked.

The government also said it planned to raise English language requirements to include all adult dependents who will have to show a basic understanding of English. It said the change would help integration and reduce the risks of exploitation.

Migration has long been a hot political issue in Britain, with critics arguing that social cohesion can be damaged if the government does not build enough houses or public services to accommodate a larger population.

But many business sectors, including the adult care sector, argue they cannot hire enough staff locally, and employers in science, technology and other areas warn that tough restrictions will damage their potential and hit overall economic growth.

The number of European Union migrants to Britain fell sharply after Brexit, but new visa rules, higher net numbers of foreign students, and a rise in people arriving from Ukraine and Hong Kong led to an overall surge in recent years.

Net migration – the number of people coming to Britain minus the number leaving – hit a record 906,000 in the year to June 2023, up from 184,000 who arrived in the same period during 2019, when Britain was still in the EU.

Neil Carberry, chief executive of the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC), said Starmer's "major intervention" would spark alarm among bosses.

Asked about concerns of business, Starmer said Britain had endured largely stagnant growth when immigration was high.

Foreign students may be required to leave the UK if they fail to secure a graduate-level job

By **Fatimah Idera**

Foreign students face deportation if they fail to secure graduate-level roles, and migrants to the United Kingdom may soon face a 10-year wait before becoming eligible for citizenship—unless they can demonstrate a “real and lasting contribution” to British society and the economy—under sweeping immigration reforms to be unveiled by Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer. In a long-anticipated white paper on immigration, the Labour government is set to overhaul a decades-old framework that previously allowed migrants to apply for indefinite leave to remain—and ultimately, citizenship—after five years of residency. The new proposal seeks to extend this timeline to 10 years, unless applicants can clearly prove their societal or economic value.

Contribution-Based Path to Residency

The government will prioritize applicants with verified contributions, such as sustained tax payments, service in the National Health Service (NHS) or other public sectors, or documented outstanding voluntary service. Those who qualify will still be allowed to apply before the 10-year threshold. Indefinite leave to remain grants access to a wide range of civic rights—from voting and passport eligibility to welfare benefits and full access to public healthcare. Officials say the tougher policy mirrors systems seen in Denmark and aims to promote integration and good citizenship.

The reforms are part of Labour’s broader plan to “substantially” reduce net migration, which reached 728,000 in the year to June 2024. The move comes amid political pressure from the right-wing Reform UK party, which dealt Labour a blow in recent local elections with its strong anti-immigration stance. The Conservative opposition has



criticized Labour for failing to impose a migration cap and plans to table a vote on such a cap in Parliament.

The reforms also propose stricter English language requirements for skilled visa applicants, raising the bar to the equivalent of A-level fluency—a B2 level—for work, study, and permanent residency applications. Dependents of visa holders will now need to pass A1-level English tests, with further progress required for visa renewals.

Foreign students and graduates will face heightened scrutiny. Those who cannot secure graduate-level employment post-study may be required to leave the UK, a move designed to close what critics say is a backdoor to permanent residency.

Crackdown on Overseas Care Workers

Home Secretary Yvette Cooper announced that foreign recruitment in the social care sector will be restricted. From later this year, care homes will no longer be allowed to sponsor visas for overseas staff. Instead, they will be expected to hire from within the UK—including from the pool of 40,000 current foreign care workers whose sponsorships were recently cancelled.

“This is about prioritizing local workers and addressing longstanding issues in the care sector with fair wages and proper investment,” Cooper said. However, industry groups, such as Care England, warned that the sudden halt to international hiring could further cripple a fragile sector already suffering from chronic vacancies and underfunding.

In a significant tightening of enforcement, any offence committed by a foreign national—not just those leading to imprisonment—will now be reported to the Home Office. This change could lead to deportation proceedings for lower-level offences, reflecting an aggressive new approach to immigration violations. Foreign nationals with unreported criminal histories abroad, or who commit crimes while in the UK, may also face removal under the new regulations.

Skilled Worker Requirements and Exceptions

While the minimum qualification threshold for skilled migrants is being restored to degree level, exemptions will remain in place for industries deemed critical to the UK economy—such as IT, construction, and engineering.

Trump seeks Blair's Middle East expertise amid Gaza frustration

By Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

As US President Donald Trump grapples with the complexities of Middle East policy, he has sought counsel from former UK Prime Minister Sir Tony Blair, a figure with extensive experience in the region's intricate political landscape, source revealed. This move comes amidst Trump's growing frustration in his efforts to broker an end to the ongoing conflict in Gaza.

Sources close to the administration reveal that Trump, currently preparing for a crucial visit to Saudi Arabia to secure US economic investment, is leaning on Blair's "natural mediator" skills and established contacts within the region. "Mr. Blair is an obvious choice," stated a Western diplomatic source, highlighting Blair's ability to engage with diverse factions.

This development coincides with Trump's envoy, Mr. Witkoff, facing increasing scrutiny over his diplomatic capabilities. While tasked with resolving the Ukraine conflict and engaging in discussions regarding Iran's nuclear program in Oman, Witkoff's lack of traditional diplomatic experience has raised concerns among Trump's allies. Notably, his handling of meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin, where he reportedly relied on Russian interpreters, drew criticism for breaching protocol.



Trump's decision to consult Blair signals a shift towards leveraging experienced voices to navigate the region's complexities. Blair, who served as Middle East envoy for the US, UN, and EU from 2007 to 2015, possesses a deep understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, despite his efforts yielding limited progress. His involvement in the 2003 Iraq War, however, remains a point of contention, with the official inquiry citing "wholly inadequate" post-conflict planning.

Recently, Blair proposed a potential solution for Gaza, suggesting a governance model that excludes both Israel and Hamas to facilitate reconstruction. This aligns with Witkoff's initiative, which involves establishing a Geneva-based foundation to address Gaza's humanitarian crisis, potentially replacing the UN's role. Both

Witkoff and Blair are reportedly keen on appointing David Beasley, former executive director of the World Food Programme, to a key position within this foundation.

The Tony Blair Global Institute for Change declined to comment on Blair's involvement with Witkoff. However, Washington insiders view this collaboration as a strategic move, acknowledging Witkoff's perceived naivety in diplomatic negotiations.

The president's approach comes as his visit to Saudi Arabia aims to secure substantial investment into the American economy. His Middle eastern strategy is under immense scrutiny, and the aid of Sir Tony Blair is seen as a way to navigate a complex and volatile region.

US-China trade talks boost oil prices

By Fatimah Idera

Oil prices increased on Monday following positive remarks from both the US and China during weekend trade talks. The progress in negotiations had boosted market sentiment, suggesting a potential resolution to the trade dispute between the world's two largest crude consumers.

Brent crude futures climbed 43 cents, or 0.67%, to \$64.34 a barrel by 0500 GMT. U.S. West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were trading at \$61.50 a barrel, up 48 cents, or 0.79%, from Friday's close.

Both benchmarks rose more than \$1 on Friday and gained over 4% last week for their first weekly gains since mid-April, after a U.S. trade deal with Britain swelled investors' optimism that economic disruptions from U.S. tariffs on trading partners may be avoided.

The United States and China ended trade talks on a positive note on Sunday, with U.S. officials touting a deal to reduce the U.S. trade deficit, while Chinese officials said both had reached an important consensus.

However, neither side released any details of the talks with Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng, saying a



joint statement would be issued on Monday.

Positive talks between the world's two largest economies could help boost crude demand as trade, currently disrupted by massive tariffs levied by both countries, is restored between them.

"Optimism over constructive U.S.-China talks supported sentiment, but limited details and OPEC's plan to raise output capped gains," said Toshitaka Tazawa, an analyst at Fujitomi Securities.

Tazawa was referring to plans by the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies, known collectively as OPEC+, to accelerate output hikes in May and June that will add more crude to the market.

Reuters survey found that OPEC oil output edged lower in April. Additionally, talks between Iranian and U.S. negotiators to resolve disputes over Tehran's nuclear programme ended in Oman on Sunday with further negotiations planned, officials said, as Tehran publicly insisted on continuing its uranium enrichment.

A U.S.-Iran nuclear deal could alleviate concerns about a lower global oil supply and pressure oil prices.

Energy services firm Baker Hughes said that last week, U.S. energy firms cut the number of oil and natural gas rigs operating to their lowest level since January.

California varsities students launch hunger strike to protest Gaza starvation

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

In a bold act of political resistance, around two dozen students from California State University campuses began a hunger strike on May 5 to protest the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza and demand divestment from weapons manufacturers. The protest, organized by Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), spans San Jose State, Sacramento State, San Francisco State, and CSU Long Beach.

"We, the students of San Francisco, Sacramento, Long Beach, and San Jose State Universities, are beginning a united hunger strike in solidarity with the two million Palestinians at risk of starvation in Gaza," SJP announced in a press release.

The hunger strike is in response to Israel's ongoing blockade of humanitarian aid to Gaza, which has stretched past the two-month mark and drawn fierce international criticism. The situation has worsened following Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich's controversial statement that "Gaza will be destroyed."

Student striker Max Flynt of San Francisco State University described the aid blockade as the central motivation behind the action. Under a "Hunger Strike for Gaza" canopy on campus, organizers hold daily educational workshops, and strikers regularly monitor their vitals though they do not stay overnight. "Many of the protests used last year, especially encampments, are now essentially illegal in the U.S.," said Flynt. "If we were to put up a tent today, the police would be called almost immediately."

Jaime Jackson, a professor at Sacramento State and member of Faculty for Justice in Palestine, underscored the hunger strike's symbolic weight. "The bombing, the killing, the massive violations of human rights have been an ongoing issue throughout," Jackson said. "But the recent, really big thing has been the blocking of humanitarian aid and the ongoing starvation of people in Gaza."



The student movement has also been met with mounting crackdowns, particularly under the Trump administration, which has continued the Biden-era policy of increased restrictions on campus protests. International students have faced additional risks, with vocal support for Palestinians putting their visas and academic standing in jeopardy.

"They're scared of the student movement," Flynt said. "They're scared of what they saw last year, and they're scared that it will come back again."

Protesters are calling for several actions from the CSU system, including adopting San Francisco State University's Human Rights Investment Policy Screening, cutting ties with Israeli universities, and divesting from companies involved in military, weapons, and surveillance technology. "We don't want to be used to fund war efforts or genocide through these companies," said Amal Dawud, an undergraduate organizer at Sacramento State.

Some progress has already been made. San Francisco State University confirmed divestment from Lockheed Martin, Palantir, and Leonardo. Sacramento State also reportedly began divestment processes last

year, although questions remain about how thoroughly the changes have been implemented.

Marcus Bode, a hunger striker from CSU Long Beach, criticized his university's partnership with Boeing, a key supplier to the Israel Defense Forces. Bode, like other strikers, is limited to water, electrolytes, and sports drinks during the fast. He reported early signs of physical decline, aching joints, muscle cramps, and dizziness. Still, he remains resolute. "We don't see tuition hikes reinvested into students," Bode said. "It's being used to fund war and genocide abroad."

Despite student pressure, the CSU system has not budged. "We will continue to uphold the values of free inquiry, peaceful protest and academic freedom," said Amy Bentley-Smith, CSU's director of media relations. "However, the system and its campuses will not alter investment policies."

As the hunger strike enters its second week, student organizers say they are prepared to continue their protest for as long as it takes. For them, it's not just about dollars and divestment, it's about taking a stand for lives on the line thousands of miles away.

Real Madrid targets Xabi Alonso for Club World Cup

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Real Madrid are working swiftly to appoint Xabi Alonso as their new manager ahead of the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup, with plans for him to take charge as early as June 1. Sources close to the Spanish giants reveal that Alonso, 43, is expected to be in Madrid by the start of next month to prepare the team for their first match of the tournament against Saudi Arabian side Al-Hilal on June 18 in Miami.



The move follows Alonso's announcement on Friday that he would leave his current position at Bayer Leverkusen at the end of the 2024-25 Bundesliga season. Alonso had been with the German club since 2019, and during his time there, he led them to the Bundesliga title last season, although they are set to finish second this campaign behind Bayern Munich. His decision to leave was a result of Real Madrid's approach, which began months ago when it became clear that Carlo Ancelotti would be stepping down from his position at the end of the season to take over as coach of the Brazilian national team.

Real Madrid's decision to bypass an interim manager and appoint Alonso directly reflects the club's desire for continuity and stability. Alonso, a former player at both Real Madrid and Liverpool, was always considered the frontrunner to succeed Ancelotti. Although initially, Alonso had no intention of joining his former club until after the summer, recent discussions have moved up his timeline. The Spanish club views the Club World Cup as a crucial competition, and they want Alonso in place to start preparations as soon as possible.

Ancelotti's departure is imminent, and the Italian will take charge of Brazil's national team after the end of this season. His final game in charge of Real Madrid will be their last home fixture of the campaign against Real Sociedad on May 25, marking the end of his second stint at

the Santiago Bernabeu. Ancelotti's tenure at Madrid was highlighted by significant successes, including winning the UEFA Champions League three times. However, this season, Real Madrid failed to reach the semi-finals of the Champions League and were dealt a decisive blow in their La Liga title defense with a 4-3 loss to Barcelona, leaving them seven points adrift with only three matches remaining.

Alonso's arrival is seen as a fresh start for the club after Ancelotti's departure, and Real Madrid is already preparing for a new chapter with the former midfield maestro at the helm. Alonso played for Los Blancos from 2009 to 2014, enjoying a successful spell that included winning the Copa del Rey and the Spanish Super Cup. His managerial career has been equally impressive, with Alonso leading Bayer Leverkusen to the Bundesliga title and the German Cup in his first full season in charge.

Alonso's close ties to Real Madrid, having spent five years at the club, as well as his experience at Liverpool and Bayern Munich, give him a unique blend of knowledge and expertise that Real Madrid believe will benefit them in the coming seasons. Although Alonso has expressed interest in eventually managing Liverpool, the opportunity to take charge of one of the biggest clubs in the world has proven irresistible.

In addition to Alonso's appointment, Real Madrid are also looking to strengthen

their squad for the upcoming season. The club is reportedly keen on completing the signing of Liverpool full-back Trent Alexander-Arnold before the start of the Club World Cup. The acquisition of Alexander-Arnold would add to their already star-studded squad, which includes several high-profile players, including Eden Hazard, Luka Modric, and Karim Benzema.

Real Madrid's pursuit of Alonso marks a new chapter for the club, with the Spaniard now tasked with guiding the team back to the top of European football. While Alonso's managerial career is still in its early stages, his success in Germany and his deep understanding of the club's culture make him a fitting candidate to take on the challenge. As Real Madrid prepares for the Club World Cup, all eyes will be on Alonso to see if he can replicate his success as a manager, much like he did during his playing career at the Bernabeu.

The Club World Cup presents an opportunity for Alonso to stamp his authority on the team right away, and Real Madrid's hopes for a successful campaign will rest on his ability to integrate the squad quickly and effectively. If Alonso can lead them to glory in the tournament and improve their league form next season, he could very well become the next great manager in Real Madrid's storied history.

Can Ancelotti fix Brazil and End the World Cup hoodoo?

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

In a move that has stunned the footballing world, Carlo Ancelotti has been confirmed as the next head coach of Brazil's national team. The appointment of the Italian master tactician marks a radical shift for a footballing nation long defined by its home-grown flair and cultural pride.

Ancelotti, 65, will take charge officially on 26 May following the conclusion of his duties at Real Madrid. And with Brazil desperate to end a 24-year wait for World Cup glory, the stakes could hardly be higher.

Desperate Times, Decisive Measures

Since lifting their fifth World Cup title in 2002, Brazil's fortunes on the grandest stage have taken a nosedive. From the haunting 7-1 thrashing at the hands of Germany in 2014 to the more recent heartbreak against Croatia in 2022, every knockout-stage meeting with a European side has ended in disappointment.

The latest chapter in their decline has unfolded in the current World Cup qualifying campaign. A shocking 4-1 home defeat to Argentina spelled the end for coach Dorival Junior and sent alarm bells ringing in the corridors of the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF).

Enter Project Ancelotti — a bold, unprecedented initiative to bring in a serial winner with five Champions League titles and domestic success in every major European league.

Breaking Tradition

Brazil has historically resisted foreign influence at the national team level. In



over 100 years, only three non-Brazilians have managed the side, and none since 1965. But the tide began to shift in 2019 when Portuguese coach Jorge Jesus led Flamengo to an extraordinary season, proving that European pragmatism could thrive on Brazilian soil.

Now, Ancelotti steps into a role that has never been held by a figure of his stature from abroad. South American football expert Tim Vickery explains: "This is an important wall coming down. Brazil knows it must evolve if it wants to compete with Europe's best."

A Coach Built for the Moment

Calm under pressure and universally respected, Ancelotti is known not for reinventing the wheel, but for mastering it. His ability to unify squads, instill discipline, and provide tactical clarity makes him an ideal figure to tame the chaos that has plagued Brazil in recent years.

His rapport with Brazilian stars like Vinicius Jr, Rodrygo, and Casemiro — forged at Real Madrid — gives him a head start. Vinicius, often inconsistent for the national team, has flourished under Ancelotti's tutelage in Spain. If anyone can unlock his potential in the yellow shirt, it's the Italian maestro.

Balancing Samba with Structure

The eternal tension in Brazilian football lies in balancing expressive brilliance with the discipline required to win modern tournaments. Ancelotti's career is a case study in that harmony. His AC Milan sides combined elegance with efficiency. His Real Madrid tenure proved he could both manage egos and conjure miracles.

Now he'll be expected to deliver similar results in a nation where football is not merely a sport, but a religion.

A New Era Dawns

This isn't just about results. It's about changing the very DNA of a team struggling to reconcile its history with the demands of the present. If Ancelotti succeeds, he won't just win Brazil a sixth World Cup — he'll have redefined what it means to play Brazilian football in the modern age.

For a country that once danced its way to dominance, the next step could be a measured march — led, of all people, by an Italian in a suit, raising an eyebrow on the touchline.

Amorim's United sink amid historic league collapse

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Ruben Amorim's tenure at Manchester United has veered dangerously off course. Appointed in November 2024 to steady a faltering ship, the Portuguese manager finds himself under intense scrutiny after a dismal run of form that has plunged the Red Devils into 16th place in the Premier League—just two points above the relegation zone.

The recent 2-0 home defeat to West Ham extended United's winless streak to seven matches, equalling their worst such run in Premier League history. In Amorim's own words, it's "embarrassing."

When Amorim replaced Erik ten Hag mid-season, expectations were cautiously optimistic. United were underperforming but sat in 14th, with a belief that a new voice could galvanize the squad. Instead, the downward spiral accelerated. In 25 league matches under Amorim, United have secured just 24 points, with a paltry 24% win rate—the worst of any United manager since the Sir Alex Ferguson era.

Statistically, the story is grim. United have only beaten relegated sides Ipswich and Leicester since late January. If results against the bottom three teams were excluded, they would sit dead last. With two games remaining, even victories against Chelsea and Aston Villa wouldn't lift them above 13th, which would mark their lowest-ever Premier League finish—five places worse than last season's eighth.

Their home form has been catastrophic. Nine league defeats at Old Trafford equals the club's record for most home losses in a season—matching failures from as far back as 1930-31 and 1962-63. Falling behind in 19 of 25 games, including 12 times at home, United have struggled to



recover, registering only three comeback wins.

Their attacking woes mirror their defensive fragility. United have failed to score in 10 of Amorim's 25 league games, with just 30 goals from 344 shots. Only Leicester and Southampton have a worse conversion rate. Meanwhile, the defence has leaked 41 goals, with just four clean sheets to show for it.

Amorim's side has also underperformed relative to expected goals (xG), with only Crystal Palace faring worse in that metric. Despite having attacking talents like Marcus Rashford, Rasmus Højlund, and Bruno Fernandes, United look blunt in front of goal and vulnerable at the back.

Even more damning is the comparative table since Amorim's first match on 23 November: United rank 16th, behind teams like Nottingham Forest, Crystal Palace, and Brentford. Once-mighty United now find themselves among clubs desperately battling for Premier League survival.

The only bright spot for Amorim has been Europe. United remain unbeaten in the Europa League and have reached the final, where they'll face Tottenham on 21 May. Victory would not only deliver a

rare piece of silverware but also offer a backdoor entry into next season's Champions League.

But even Amorim admits there's a dilemma. "I don't know what is best, if it's playing in the Champions League or not," he said, hinting at fears over whether his struggling squad could cope with elite continental competition.

Critics have argued that United's domestic collapse stems from putting all their eggs in the Europa League basket. In their past seven league matches, they've picked up just two points—a tally that would leave them in the relegation zone if the season had started then.

With his future in doubt, Amorim conceded he might walk if results don't improve. "I may have to leave," he recently admitted, a sentiment echoed by fans and pundits who have grown frustrated with the team's lack of identity and fight.

A Europa League trophy might buy him time. But unless there's a dramatic turnaround, Ruben Amorim's stint at Manchester United may be remembered more for setting unwanted records than restoring the club's stature.