



Tinubu returns from Rome after attending Pope Leo XIV's installation **Pg 4**

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N6.93trn worth of dubious projects inserted into 2025 Budget – BudgIT



Pg 6 & 7



Spain plagued by nationwide phone, Internet outage
Pg 24



Putin signals readiness to end Ukraine war after call with Trump **Pg 25**

Strategic ties at risk as Gaza conflict redraws Israel's global map **Pg 27 & 28**



Woman sentenced for impersonating applicants in citizenship tests **Pg 30**

Senate advances bill to reform asset recovery framework

By Friday Omosola



The Senate has passed the second reading of the Proceeds of Crime (Recovery and Management) Amendment Bill 2025, aimed at overhauling how assets seized from illegal activities are managed in Nigeria.

Sponsored by Senator Idiat Adebule of Lagos West, the proposed legislation seeks to amend the Proceeds of Crime Act 2022 by introducing a centralised body to oversee the administration and disposal of recovered assets—a role currently distributed across no fewer than 18 different government agencies.

In her lead argument, Adebule criticised the existing decentralised system as inefficient and vulnerable

to corruption, citing a lack of uniform procedures and inter-agency coordination.

She emphasised that a dedicated agency would close loopholes and promote accountability in the handling of recovered assets.

“The fragmented structure in place has resulted in confusion and untraceable asset management,” she noted.

The proposal triggered a range of reactions from senators.

While Senator Sani Musa expressed cautious support, calling for robust checks and balances, he warned against the unnecessary expansion of government agencies.

Senator Emmanuel Udende, however, opposed the bill outright, insisting that agencies like the EFCC already have the statutory mandate to manage recovered assets effectively.

On the other hand, Senator Isah Jibrin backed the initiative, arguing that existing mechanisms are riddled with financial leakages that a specialised body could address.

Despite the divided opinions, the Senate approved the bill’s progression to the committee stage.

The legislation has now been referred to the Senate Committee on Human Rights and Legal Matters, which is expected to present its report within four weeks.

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

PUBLIC NOTICE COLOUR

PRODUCT COLOUR

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SIZE	TOTAL RATE
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10X5	255,238.00
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10X3	179,608.00
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8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
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5X5	110,000.00
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POLITICAL COLOUR

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POLITICAL BLACK & WHITE

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9X3	112,875.00
8X6	179,368.00
8X5	143,500.00
8X4	93,500.00
8X3	82,434.50
7X4	111,173.50
6X4	82,434.50
6X3	59,250.00
6X2	40,000.00
5X6	98,749.50
5X4	65,833.00
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PRODUCT BLACK & WHITE

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8X3	N/A
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ALLURE RATE

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10X5		295,625.00
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PHOTO NEWS (4X4)	53,333.30	4,250.00	57,583.30
PRESS RELEASE (4X4)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
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Tinubu returns from Rome after attending Pope Leo XIV's installation

By Friday Omosola



President Bola Tinubu has returned to Abuja after attending the formal installation of Pope Leo XIV at the Vatican.

Tinubu touched down at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport on Tuesday evening.

The President was received by a high-ranking delegation including Minister of the Federal Capital Territory Nyesom Wike, Secretary to the Government of the Federation George Akume, and APC National Chairman Abdullahi Ganduje.

Tinubu had departed for Italy on Saturday, arriving at the Mario De

Bernardo Military Airport before proceeding to Vatican City for Sunday's ceremony, where Cardinal Robert Prevost was installed as Pope Leo XIV — the 267th head of the Roman Catholic Church.

A video posted to Tinubu's official X account showed the President exchanging pleasantries with the newly installed pontiff after the inaugural mass at St. Peter's Square.

The event drew several global dignitaries, including US Vice President J.D. Vance and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who also greeted the Pope.

During his brief stay in Rome, Tinubu met with notable Nigerians, including Labour Party's 2023 presidential candidate, Peter Obi, and former Ekiti State Governor, Kayode Fayemi.

Pope Leo XIV, who was elected on 8 May, used his inaugural address to advocate for a more equitable world, calling on global leaders to combat environmental degradation and economic inequality.

Tinubu also urged Nigerians to embrace the nation's diversity as a catalyst for unity and progress, encouraging inclusive governance and mutual respect across political and ethnic divides.

FG to sell Emefiele's 753 forfeited duplexes as EFCC hands over

By Damilola Olufemi



The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has handed over 753 duplexes located in the Cadastral Zone of Abuja linked to the former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Godwin Emefiele, to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development.

The duplexes and apartments were seized by the EFCC as part of an ongoing investigation into Emefiele.

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Ahmed Dangiwa, on Tuesday, disclosed that the decision followed a directive by President Bola Tinubu that the recovered estate be completed and made available to the Nigerian public through a “transparent and accountable” process.

He stated that the federal government is ready to sell the duplexes.

“Today, I had the honour of hosting the hardworking Chairman of the EFCC,

Mr. Olanipekun Olukoyede, as he officially handed over 753 duplexes and other apartments—located in the Cadastral Zone of the Federal Capital Territory—seized from the former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, to the Federal Ministry of Housing and Urban Development,” Dangiwa said.

Dangiwa noted that the duplexes forfeited by the former CBN governor will be accessed by Nigerians through a competitive and transparent sale process.

He added that “a standardised housing design framework will be developed to ensure architectural uniformity and provide guidance to prospective allottees.

The minister revealed that the duplexes will be sold through the Renewed Hope Portal.

“The housing units will be offered for

sale through a transparent and competitive process, which will be widely advertised and managed via the Renewed Hope Portal.

“Together with the EFCC, we will work to show that the fight against corruption can deliver real benefits—turning looted assets into livable homes for Nigerians.”

Speaking while handing over the properties to the federal government, the anti-agency Chairman, Olanipekun Olukoyede, said, “This handover is a demonstration of the impact of the fight against financial crimes and corruption.

Court orders forfeiture of Emefiele's duplexes

Recall that a Federal Capital Territory High Court in Abuja had trashed Emefiele's application to reclaim the estate after granting both interim and final forfeiture orders in December 2024.

N6.93trn worth of dubious projects inserted into 2025 Budget – BudgIT

By Friday Omosola

BudgIT, a leading civic-tech organisation advocating transparency in Nigeria's public finance, has uncovered 11,122 questionable projects worth N6.93 trillion inserted by the National Assembly into the 2025 budget.

The New Daily Prime reported that President Bola Tinubu, in December 2024, presented a budget of N49.7 trillion for the 2025 fiscal year to the National Assembly.

The budget was tagged “Budget of Restoration: Securing Peace, Rebuilding Prosperity.”

BudgIT, in a detailed analysis released on Tuesday and signed by Nancy Odimegwu, the organisation's Senior Communications Associate, revealed a disturbing trend in which budget insertions—once isolated irregularities—have now evolved into an entrenched culture of abuse.

The organisation accused top-ranking lawmakers of turning the national budget into a vehicle for self-serving political interests.

The report identified 238 projects, each valued above N5 billion and collectively worth N2.29 trillion, inserted with little to no justification.

Additionally, 984 projects amounting to N1.71 trillion and 1,119 projects within the N500 million to N1 billion range, totalling N641.38 billion, were indiscriminately included, raising



serious concerns about their relevance and alignment with Nigeria's development priorities.

“Rather than promote development, these insertions appear tailored to satisfy narrow political ambitions and personal enrichment,” BudgIT stated.

A breakdown of the insertions showed 3,573 projects worth N653.19 billion assigned to federal constituencies and 1,972 projects valued at N444.04 billion earmarked for senatorial districts.

Specific anomalies included 1,477 streetlight projects worth N393.29 billion; 538 boreholes totalling N114.53 billion; 2,122 ICT-related projects valued at N505.75 billion; and a puzzling N6.74 billion allocated to the ‘empowerment of traditional rulers.’

Shockingly, 39% of all insertions,

4,371 projects worth N1.72 trillion, were forced into the Ministry of Agriculture's budget, inflating its capital allocation from N242.5 billion to N1.95 trillion.

The Ministries of Science and Technology and Budget and Economic Planning were also affected, with N994.98 billion and N1.1 trillion, respectively, added through similar insertions.

BudgIT raised alarms over the misuse of smaller agencies such as the Nigerian Building and Road Research Institute (Lagos) and the Federal Cooperative College, Oji River.

These agencies, the report said, lack the technical capacity to handle large-scale capital projects.

**Continue reading
on next page**

Cont from page 6

For example, the Oji River College—designed as a training institution, was allocated N3 billion for utility vehicles, N1.5 billion for rural electrification in Rivers State, and N1 billion for solar streetlights in Enugu State, all outside its statutory mandate.

Despite these revelations, the Presidency has remained silent.

BudgIT recalled that in 2024, it launched a campaign titled “The Budget is a Mess” and formally submitted its findings to the Presidency, Budget Office, and National Assembly.

While the letters were acknowledged, no institution has responded or taken responsibility.

Commenting on the findings, BudgIT’s Country Director, Gabriel Okeowo, warned that unchecked insertions are

eroding public trust and undermining national planning.

“The insertion of over 11,000 projects worth N6.93 trillion into the 2025 budget is not just alarming—it is an assault on fiscal responsibility,” Okeowo said.

“This trend, now dangerously normalised, distorts development priorities and redirects scarce resources into the hands of political elites. Nigeria cannot afford to run a government of projects without purpose.”

BudgIT called on Tinubu to provide stronger executive leadership and reform the budgeting process to align with the Medium-Term National Development Plan (2021–2025).

It also urged the Attorney General of the Federation, Lateef Fagbemi to seek constitutional clarification from the

Supreme Court on the extent of the National Assembly’s powers in introducing capital projects without executive input.

Furthermore, the organisation appealed to anti-corruption agencies—the EFCC and ICPC, to investigate and track these projects to ensure value for public funds.

BudgIT called on citizens, civil society organisations, the media, and the international development community to speak out.

“This is not merely about financial mismanagement,” the statement added.

“It is a matter of justice, equity, and the future of accountable governance in Nigeria. The 2025 budget must serve the interests of the Nigerian people—not a privileged few.”

Nigerian banks are stable - CBN

By Alade Adisa

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) on Monday night dispelled rumours that there is instability in the Nigerian banking sector.

The apex bank, in a statement described insinuations that some banks are experiencing difficulties as far from the truth.

The bank’s Acting Director of Corporate Communications, Mrs. Hakama Sidi Ali, in a statement, said that certain publications and online reports to the contrary, were false and should be disregarded.

“The attention of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has been drawn to certain publications and social media reports containing misleading information regarding the operations of a regulated financial institution.



“The CBN wishes to categorically reassure the public, depositors, and stakeholders that the Nigerian banking sector remains resilient, safe, and sound.

” Like all other regulated institutions, the institution referenced in these reports is held to stringent regulatory requirements, and there is no cause for concern regarding the safety of depositors’ funds.

“The Bank affirms that it continues to monitor all financial institutions under its regulatory purview and maintains robust frameworks for early warning signals and risk-based supervision.

“These mechanisms ensure that any emerging issues are promptly addressed to protect the integrity of the financial system.

“We urge the public to disregard sensational or unverified claims and rely solely on official channels for information about the financial system.

“The CBN remains dedicated to fostering a secure banking environment where depositors can be fully confident in the safety of their funds. It will continue to monitor and adapt strategies to safeguard the financial interests of all Nigerians and stakeholders in our financial system.”

El-Rufai decries alleged judicial bias, says justice now privileged access

By Friday Omosola

Former Kaduna State Governor Nasir El-Rufai has raised alarm over what he described as the deteriorating state of Nigeria's judiciary.

He claimed the system has become compromised and increasingly serves the interests of the elite.

Speaking yesterday at the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) Bwari Branch Law Week in Abuja, the former governor, who is also a trained lawyer, expressed concern over what he termed "a growing disconnect between justice and the law."

El-Rufai warned that public confidence in the judiciary is fast eroding due to what he called "a culture of delay, manipulation, and perceived favouritism."

"Our judiciary, once seen as a beacon of justice and the last refuge for the common man, is now under the microscope," he said.

"Delays in delivering verdicts, lack of consistency, and suspected influence from powerful interests have led many Nigerians to view the courts with scepticism."

He noted that judicial processes often appear to favour wealthy individuals and political elites, leaving the average Nigerian disillusioned.

"There is an increasing belief that justice in this country is something money and connections can buy," he added.

"What we are witnessing is not always the administration of justice, but rather the mechanical application of law that sometimes bends to political convenience."

El-Rufai also criticised the use of ex parte orders in politically sensitive cases and the alleged practice of "forum



shopping"—where litigants seek favourable courts to secure biased outcomes.

According to him, "There is a clear gap between what the law is and what justice ought to be. In too many cases, judicial decisions appear aligned with executive interests rather than constitutional integrity."

He called on legal practitioners to engage in deep introspection and question whether the legal profession is still upholding the principles it claims to defend.

"To all of you who serve in the temple of justice, the moment has come to examine whether the scales still weigh fairly and whether blindfolded Lady Justice still exists in our courtrooms," he urged.

El-Rufai did not spare the National Judicial Council (NJC), accusing the body of lacking the will to discipline erring judges and failing to uphold transparency in judicial appointments.

He highlighted what he termed a pattern of weak disciplinary actions, irregular judgments in electoral disputes, and

opaque selection processes as contributors to the perception of widespread corruption in the judiciary.

"If we are being truthful, we must accept that judicial corruption is no longer whispered—it has entered the mainstream of public discourse," he said.

"The NJC, in its current form, is struggling to restore trust and urgently needs internal reforms."

Reflecting on the changing public attitude toward judges, El-Rufai recalled a time when members of the judiciary commanded deep respect in society.

"There was a time when Nigerians held judges in high esteem, even walking past their homes with quiet reverence.

"Today, that respect is eroding rapidly. Judges are now openly criticised, insulted, and in some cases, physically targeted," he lamented.

"It is a painful sign of how far the institution has fallen."

Why CBN retains monetary policy rate at 27.5%

By **Damilola Olufemi**



The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has once again retained the Monetary Policy Rate (MPR) at 27.50 per cent.

The MPR is a benchmark for interest rates in the country.

The CBN governor, Olayemi Cardoso, declared the committee's stand on Tuesday after the panel's 300th meeting in Abuja.

The CBN boss expressed that the committee members in unionism agreed to retain the policy to better understand near-term developments.

The committee maintained the cash reserve ratio (CRR) at 50 per cent and the liquidity ratio at 30 per cent.

"MPC noted the relative improvements in some key macroeconomic indicators expected to support the overall moderation in crisis in the near to medium term.

"These include the progressive narrowing of the gap between the Nigerian foreign exchange market, bureau de change (BDC) windows, the positive balance of payments position and the easy price of PMS.

"The members also noted with satisfaction the progressive moderation in food inflation and, therefore, commended the government for implementing measures to increase food supply, as well as stepping up the fight against insecurity, especially in farming communities.

"The committee thus encouraged security agencies to sustain the momentum while the government provides necessary inputs to farmers to further boost food production," the CBN governor said on the monetary policy rate.

He added that the MPC noted new policies introduced by the federal government to boost local production,

reduce foreign currency demand pressures, and thus lessen the pass-through to domestic crisis," he said.

"Given the relative stability observed in the foreign exchange market, members urged the bank to sustain the implementation of the ongoing reforms to further boost market confidence," he said.

Monetary policy rate increased in 2024
New Daily Prime earlier reported that the CBN increased the MPR to 27.25 per cent in September 2024.

According to a statement, the decision was made during the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting chaired by CBN Governor, Yemi Cardoso.

In July 2024, the CBN raised its MPR by 800 basis points to 26.75 percent, up from 13 percent in May 2022.

Stressing that the move will help improve confidence, and enable economic agents to plan in the medium to long term, the CBN governor said,

Tijani: Nigeria's digital economy nets \$191m in Q1, \$2bn fibre rollout set for Q4 By Friday Omosola

The Minister of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy, Bosun Tijani, has said the digital economy witnessed growth under the administration of President Bola Tinubu.

He said this was with foreign direct investment (FDI) in the sector soaring to \$191 million in the first quarter of 2024—up from \$22 million in the same period last year.

Tijani made this disclosure in an interview for an upcoming State House documentary marking Tinubu's second year in office.

Tijani revealed that the country is set to roll out a \$2 billion fibre optic infrastructure project—known as Project Bridge—in the fourth quarter of 2025.

The initiative aims to deploy 90,000 kilometres of fibre optic cable across Nigeria to expand access to high-speed, affordable internet.

“These foundational reforms, coupled with advancements in artificial intelligence and the startup ecosystem, have positioned Nigeria as a global leader in the digital economy,” Tijani stated.

He noted a continued upward trend in investment, citing Q2 2024 FDI figures of \$114 million—up from \$25 million in Q2 2023.

Tijani highlighted the achievements of the 3 Million Technical Talent (3MTT) programme, launched in October 2023, which has already trained over 117,000 Nigerians in digital skills—far exceeding its initial target of 30,000.

An additional 35,000 trainees are currently enrolled, pushing the programme close to achieving 10% of its 3 million target.



On connectivity, Tijani said: “We are preparing a \$2 billion investment to ensure every Nigerian can access affordable, high-quality connectivity regardless of location. Increasing connectivity hubs by just 10% could yield a 2.5% growth in GDP.”

He also celebrated Nigeria's inclusion in the world's top 60 countries for AI readiness and noted progress in developing a homegrown large language model (LLM).

The AI Collective platform, supported by global tech giants such as Google, Microsoft, and Pierre Omidyar's network, was launched to drive AI innovation and collaboration.

For the first time, the ministry has provided funding for 55 academic researchers to explore tech solutions in agriculture, healthcare, and education.

In addition, ₦300 million was invested in 10 startups using AI and blockchain to boost agricultural productivity.

Speaking at the Nigeria Startup House in

San Francisco, Tijani said the project aims to attract \$5 billion in investment into Nigerian startups.

Backed by the Startup Pact and Trade Desk initiatives, the goal is to connect local tech companies to global opportunities and procurement channels.

The Minister also revealed that over 500 government technologists have been trained in AI and Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), while the landmark Digital Economy Bill has passed its first reading in the National Assembly.

To close the rural connectivity gap, Tijani announced that 7,000 telecom towers would be deployed nationwide, targeting 98% coverage.

He added that the Federal Executive Council (FEC) has approved the project.

**Continue reading
on next page**

Cont from page 10

He described progress on Right-of-Way reforms as a 'game-changer', with 12 states adopting zero-cost Right-of-Way policies to support infrastructure development.

According to the Minister, these initiatives will help achieve the National Broadband Plan's goal of 90% penetration by 2025, up from the current 48%.

Tijani projected that the sector's contribution to GDP would rise from 16% to 22%.

He noted: "If a sector can increase its contribution by three to four per cent to GDP, we're about to witness economic growth like never before. Technology allows us to bridge the gap between governments and the

people."

He stressed that the government is focused on long-term transformation.

"We are not chasing quick wins. The results we want to provide for Nigeria are long-lasting reforms that will transform our economy for generations to come."

Police open fire on fleeing vehicle, bullet reportedly kill Ibadan student

By Helen Okechukwu

A little lad's dream was cut short after a stray bullet allegedly shot by a police officer in Ibadan, Oyo State, reportedly struck him, leaving him dead.

According to Oyo Affairs, the accident, which occurred on 20 May, claimed the life of a yet-to-be-identified student who was on his way with his twin to write the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WAEC).

The publication further stressed that the police officers opened fire on a fleeing vehicle around the Gbagi Market Road in Ibadan, and the bullet pierced the father's vehicle, resulting in the death of the teenager.

Upon arrival at the Welfare Hospital in Ibadan, the student was declared dead.

The report noted, "Eyewitnesses report that a policeman, while trying



to shoot at a vehicle they were chasing along Gbagi market road in Ibadan, hit an innocent school student with a stray bullet while he was in his father's car.

"The student was rushed to Welfare Hospital but was declared dead on arrival (DOA).

"It was reported that the student, along with his twin, was on his way to write

his WAEC exams this morning when the incident occurred.

"Protesters took the corpse to the Oyo State Secretariat to inform Governor Seyi Makinde," Oyo Affairs added.

As of this press time, all efforts to reach the Oyo State Police Public Relations Officer, Adewale Osifeso, proved abortive.

Oyo Govt: Father of slain WASSCE student drove against traffic

By Helen Okechukwu



A tragic incident unfolded in Ibadan on Tuesday as a secondary school student en route to sit for the ongoing West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) was fatally struck by a stray bullet.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported that a student who was heading to sit for the ongoing WASSCE was killed after a stray bullet pierced through his father and struck him.

The Oyo State Government has confirmed that the heartbreaking event occurred during a traffic enforcement operation involving officers of the Oyo State Road Traffic Management Authority (OYRTMA) and police personnel.

According to a statement by the Special Adviser on Media to Governor Seyi Makinde, Sulaimon Olanrewaju, the student's father was driving against traffic along Alakia Old Road at approximately 7:30 a.m.

in a tinted black Honda Accord (registration number FST 639 JU) when the incident occurred.

Government sources revealed that law enforcement officers were deployed to the area following repeated complaints by residents about reckless driving and frequent one-way violations, which had led to several fatal accidents.

"It was during an attempt to apprehend the traffic offender that a policeman, who is already being investigated by the state police command, allegedly aimed a shot at one of the tyres of the car, which missed the target," the statement noted.

Describing the incident as "sad, shocking, and painful," the government emphasized that the tragedy could have been avoided if traffic rules had been followed.

It also acknowledged the heightened

need for police backup during the operation due to recent violent attacks on OYRTMA officials, including the murder of one officer in Ibadan.

The state government has urged the public to remain calm as investigations continue and vowed to ensure that justice is served.

Additionally, it reassured citizens of its commitment to preventing such incidents in the future through stricter enforcement of traffic regulations and improved inter-agency coordination.

The state government urged road users to obey traffic laws to avoid further needless tragedies.

The identity of the slain student has not been officially released, but the incident has sparked widespread grief and calls for accountability across the state.

Seven inmates escape from Ilesha prison; manhunt underway

By Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi



Seven inmates at the Ilesha Correctional Facility escaped in the early hours of Tuesday, the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS) confirmed late Tuesday night.

Following the security breach, the federal government has launched a nationwide manhunt to track down and re-arrest the fleeing inmates.

In an official statement issued on Tuesday night, the NCoS spokesperson, Deputy Controller of Corrections (DCC) Abubakar Umar, stated:

“The force majeure, which occurred

at approximately 02:00 hours on Tuesday, May 20, 2025, led to the escape of seven inmates.

He added that the Controller General of Corrections (CGC), Sylvester Ndidi Nwakuche, has ordered an immediate and comprehensive investigation into the circumstances surrounding the incident.

“The Service is working closely with sister security agencies and local community leaders to recapture the escapees and return them to custody,” Umar said.

The NCoS also appealed to members of the public for assistance, urging

anyone with useful information to come forward.

“The Service solicits the cooperation and support of the public in providing any information that may lead to the recapture of the fleeing inmates.

Anyone with information is encouraged to contact the nearest security agency or call the NCoS Response Desk on any of the following numbers:

0708 708 6005, 0906 000 4598, 0807 505 0006,” the statement concluded

Ex-APC aspirant sues party over N10m refund nomination fee

By Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

The Federal Capital Territory High Court in Maitama has directed that a hearing notice be formally served on the All Progressives Congress (APC) in an ongoing lawsuit seeking the refund of ₦10 million paid for a nomination form by a former aspirant.

The order was issued by Justice Yusuf Halilu during a session on Monday, after the APC failed to appear in court or provide legal representation in the case brought by Mr. Sunny Moniedafe, a former contender for the position of APC Deputy National Chairman (North).

Moniedafe, in suit number FCT/HC/CV/2434/2024, is demanding the refund of the ₦10 million he paid in 2022 to obtain the party's nomination form ahead of its national convention held on March 26 of that year.

According to the plaintiff, party leadership, under the administration of then-President Muhammadu Buhari, reached a consensus that the Deputy National Chairman (North) slot would go to a candidate from Borno State. As part of that arrangement, aspirants were instructed to step down, with a promise that those who complied would be refunded their nomination fees.

Despite his withdrawal in line with the party's directive, Moniedafe



alleges the APC failed to honour its commitment. "The leadership of the defendant reneged on its promise and blatantly refused, failed, and neglected to refund the ₦10 million despite repeated demands," he stated.

Both Moniedafe and his counsel, Mr. Okoi Obono-Obla, were present at Monday's hearing. However, the APC was neither represented in court nor had any legal counsel on record during the session.

Justice Halilu noted the absence and observed that there was no evidence the party had been served the hearing notice. "I can see no proof of service here," he remarked, before directing the court registrar to ensure the notice is served promptly by contacting the defendant's legal team.

In response, Moniedafe's lawyer assured the court of their readiness to engage in the proceedings once proper service is effected. "My lord, we are very diligent. If we are served, we will respond immediately," Obono-Obla said.

The court also acknowledged an application by the APC requesting an extension of time to file necessary documents. Justice Halilu granted the request, allowing the party additional time to respond.

The matter has been adjourned to July 15, 2025, for further hearing, with a focus on verifying whether the APC has been properly served with the court notice.

APC sets N20m fee for FCT chairmanship forms

By Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

The All Progressives Congress (APC) has officially pegged the cost of nomination and expression of interest forms for aspirants seeking to contest chairmanship positions in the 2026 Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Area Council elections at a total of N20 million.

The announcement was made public on Tuesday via a statement shared on the party's verified X (formerly Twitter) account and signed by its National Organising Secretary, Sulaiman Argungu. The statement also outlined the party's schedule of activities and timetable for the highly anticipated local elections.

According to the breakdown provided, the Expression of Interest (EoI) form for chairmanship aspirants will cost N5 million, while the Nomination form is priced at N15 million, bringing the total to N20 million.

For aspirants contesting councillorship seats, the APC fixed the cost at N2.5 million, comprising N500,000 for the EoI form and N2 million for the Nomination form.

Concessions for Women, Youths, and Persons with Disabilities

In an apparent effort to promote inclusion and broaden



participation, the party introduced waivers and discounts for specific categories of aspirants. Female aspirants and persons living with disabilities (PWDs) will only be required to pay for the Expression of Interest forms, while their Nomination forms will be issued free of charge. In addition, young aspirants aged between 25 and 40 years will be eligible for a 50% discount on the cost of the Nomination form. Key Dates Ahead of the 2026 FCT Polls.

The APC announced that the sale of forms will commence on Thursday, May 22, 2025, and will close on Wednesday, May 28, 2025. Screening of aspirants is scheduled for Monday, June 16, 2025, while party primaries are slated for Wednesday, June 25, 2025.

INEC Confirms Election Date

The party's preparations come in

response to the timetable released earlier this year by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), which fixed the next FCT Area Council elections for February 21, 2026.

INEC Chairman, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, had made the announcement during a consultative meeting with political parties, reiterating that the tenure of the current chairmen and councillors will end in February 2026—exactly four years after the last Area Council elections held on February 21, 2022.

As political activity intensifies ahead of the polls, analysts expect the APC's pricing structure to spark debate over the affordability of political participation and the inclusivity of grassroots governance.

‘Support Tinubu like Southeast govts’, Umahi urges Obi

By Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

Minister of Works, Dave Umahi, has urged Peter Obi, the 2023 Labour Party presidential candidate, to join the ranks of Southeast governors in backing President Bola Tinubu.

Umahi made this appeal during a feature interview for an upcoming State House documentary commemorating Tinubu’s second anniversary in office.

The Minister emphasised that all governors in the Southeast are aligned in their support for Tinubu.

He also revealed that a section of the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway is nearing completion, with tolls set to be introduced in December.

Umahi stated that, despite differing political affiliations, the governors remain supportive of President Tinubu’s administration.

He further noted that the region is experiencing renewed federal attention and significant infrastructure development under Tinubu’s leadership.

He said, “The Igbo man is enterprising and blessed with God-given wisdom. What Ndi Igbo seek is fairness, Nigeria that treats every zone equally. That is what President Bola Tinubu is doing.

“Before, when I was governor and deputy governor, one of our major concerns in Ebonyi State was the lack of federal presence. But today, nobody remembers that issue anymore. Under President Tinubu, at least four federal projects are



ongoing in Ebonyi State.”

East.

He observed that whereas cries of marginalisation once dominated discussions in the South East, the current administration has made substantial strides in addressing longstanding concerns over infrastructure and appointments.

“Today, the South East has a Minister of Works for the first time, and we are witnessing tangible projects—Port Harcourt to Enugu, Enugu to Abakaliki, Enugu to Onitsha, Onitsha to Owerri, and the Second Niger Bridge. The President has already paid 30 per cent of the cost of that bridge.

“All the governors in the South East, irrespective of party affiliation, are collaborating with the President. We are even organising a summit to bring together all South-East leaders to formally endorse the President for the 2027 elections. We want our projects completed, the country’s unity strengthened, and the proper integration of Ndi Igbo ensured.”

Umahi urged prominent regional opposition figures to align with the President for the greater good of the South

“Leadership is not about oneself—it is about the people. If someone else is already delivering what you would have done for your people, support them. I call on my brother, His Excellency Peter Obi, to join us and work with Mr President.

“He must take part in this summit where we will collectively endorse President Tinubu for the 2027 election. I say it plainly: the South East is pleased with the President,” he declared.

Providing updates on four major national projects—the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway, the Sokoto-Badagry Superhighway, the Trans-Saharan Trade Route, and the soon-to-be-procured Ogun-Ondo-Niger Corridor, Umahi described them as transformative investments designed to unlock Nigeria’s economic potential and deepen regional integration.

Regarding the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway, the Minister revealed that over 80 per cent of Section 1, spanning 47.47 kilometres from Ahmadu Bello Way to the Lekki Deep Sea Port, terminating at Eleko Junction—had been completed.

WHO hails Austria, Norway, Oman, Singapore for eliminating trans fats

By Helen Okechukwu

The World Health Organization (WHO) has praised four countries – Austria, Norway, Oman, and Singapore – for successfully removing industrially produced trans fats from their food supplies.

These countries were awarded validation certificates for their strong policies, effective monitoring, and enforcement systems during the 78th World Health Assembly.

WHO made this announcement on 19 May.

WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus said that removing trans fats is one of the cheapest and most effective ways to reduce heart-related illnesses.

He noted that these countries are setting a great example for others to follow in protecting public health.

Trans fats are dangerous fats that clog the arteries and increase the risk of heart attacks and heart disease. They are responsible for over 278,000 deaths each year globally.

These fats are commonly found in baked goods, fried foods, margarine, and other processed



products.

Austria's Minister of Health, Korinna Schumann, said the country was proud to be among the first in the EU to introduce strict measures against trans fats. She emphasized that bold policies based on evidence can lead to real health improvements.

Oman's Health Minister, Dr. Hilal Alsabti, said the country is honoured to be among the few leading this global effort.

He noted that WHO's recognition reflects their serious commitment to keeping their citizens healthy.

Norway's Health Minister, Jan Christian Vestre, said their

monitoring data proves that it is possible to not only reduce but almost fully remove trans fats from diets.

He stressed that these results are due to strong laws and enforcement.

Singapore's Health Minister, Ong Ye Kung, added that their efforts began over ten years ago and show how consistent policies and cooperation with food industries can lead to major public health gains.

WHO encourages more countries to apply for validation by August 2025 and continues to support nations in their efforts to eliminate trans fats.

NHIA adds five hospitals in Lagos to boost emergency maternal care

By Helen Okechukwu



The National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA) has included five new hospitals in Lagos State in preparation for the full rollout of its Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric Care (CEmOC) programme.

This development was made known through their X page on Tuesday.

This move follows a service level agreement signed between NHIA Director General, Dr. Kelechi Ohiri, and the Lagos State Commissioner for Health, Dr. Akin Abayomi, to ensure smooth implementation of the initiative.

The newly added facilities are Lagos Island Maternal Hospital, General Hospital Gbagada, Surulere General Hospital, General Hospital Apapa, and General Hospital Ikorodu.

Read Also: Again, Chega leader André Ventura hospitalised days before Portugal election

Launched in September 2024, the CEmOC programme aims to lower maternal deaths and complications by improving access to emergency obstetric services for poor and vulnerable women.

Target beneficiaries include women facing serious pregnancy-related conditions

such as pre-eclampsia, excessive bleeding, prolonged or obstructed labour, infections, complications from abortion, and those needing caesarean sections.

In addition to emergency care, the programme offers a full range of postpartum services under the Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (RMNCH) package.

It also supports access to family planning and helps women enrol in health insurance, ensuring continued access to critical maternal and child health services.

Veteran actress Jumoke George reunites with daughter after four-year ordeal

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

After four long years of uncertainty and heartbreak, veteran Nigerian actress Jumoke George has finally reunited with her daughter, Adeola, who was trafficked to Mali under mysterious circumstances.

The emotional story, which first came to light through a heartfelt interview on the YouTube podcast Talk to B, hosted by actress Biola Adebayo, sparked national concern and action.

Jumoke George revealed during the interview that she had not seen or heard from Adeola in years. Her daughter's sudden disappearance had left a painful void in her life.

Jumoke George cries out
According to Jumoke George, Adeola had been staying with her grandmother in Ibadan before her sudden departure. Details surrounding how she ended up in Mali remain unclear. George said she had no idea her daughter had left the country until much later. She believed her daughter had simply vanished without a trace.

The veteran actress broke down in tears as she described the pain of not knowing whether Adeola was alive or dead. She also expressed her frustration at not getting enough help or attention from the authorities when she first reported the case.

Public outcry sparks action

After the interview aired, it quickly went viral. Many Nigerians sympathised with George's pain and demanded action. Actress Biola Adebayo, moved by the story, took it upon herself to help. She reached out to government officials and shared the details with the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM).

The Commission, led by its Chairman, Abike Dabiri-Erewa, took swift action. Working behind the scenes with relevant agencies, Dabiri-Erewa launched efforts to locate Adeola and bring her home.

Successful rescue and safe return



On Monday, May 20, 2025, Abike Dabiri-Erewa confirmed on social media that Adeola had returned safely to Nigeria. She posted the news on X (formerly Twitter), writing:

“Breaking! Adeola, daughter of popular actress Jumoke George, who cried out that she had not heard from her daughter in four years, is back home from Mali, where she was trafficked to. Just received her, with Biola Adebayo, who broke the story and Niyi Johnson. Details later.”

The post quickly gained attention online, with many expressing relief and joy over Adeola's safe return.

Warm welcome at the airport

Adeola arrived in Nigeria to a warm reception. Biola Adebayo, actor Adeniyi Johnson, and Abike Dabiri-Erewa were at the airport to receive her. Photos and videos showed a visibly emotional reunion.

Read Also: Homeless, sick for six years, actress Jumoke George seeks financial aid

Jumoke George reveals 14-year Nollywood absence reasons

Adebayo, who played a key role in raising awareness about the case, expressed gratitude to everyone who supported the

rescue efforts. She thanked NIDCOM and other agencies involved in bringing Adeola home safely.

Ongoing investigations and next steps

While Adeola is now safe, questions remain. How was she trafficked to Mali? Who was responsible? And what happened during her time there?

Authorities have not released full details yet. However, NIDCOM has promised a thorough investigation. Dabiri-Erewa stated that the commission is working closely with law enforcement agencies to ensure justice is served and to prevent similar cases in the future.

She also emphasised the importance of public awareness about human trafficking. “Many young girls are being deceived and taken out of the country with false promises,” she said. “We must all work together to stop this.”

A mother's relief

For Jumoke George, Adeola's return brings a sense of peace she has long hoped for. In a brief statement, she thanked everyone who helped reunite her with her daughter. Though still shaken by the experience, she said she is now focused on helping Adeola heal and rebuild her life.

‘We lost lives, properties’, Timaya recounts Odi massacre ordeal

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian music star Timaya has spoken about the 1999 Odi massacre, a tragic event that deeply affected his hometown in Bayelsa State.

In a recent interview, the singer reflected on how the attack by the Nigerian Army destroyed lives, properties, and history in the small town of Odi.

He also shared how the event inspired his 2007 breakthrough hit, *Dem Mama*, and shaped his identity as a voice for the people.

A community torn apart

Odi, a quiet and largely Ijaw town in Bayelsa, became the centre of national attention in November 1999. Following the killing of 12 policemen by suspected militants near the area, the federal government ordered a military operation in the town. The Nigerian Army responded with a heavy force.

The singer, born Inetimi Alfred Timaya Odon, described the destruction that followed as deeply personal. His mother owned a bakery in Odi, and the town had once been a vibrant place of business and community life.

“It was part of me, too,” he said. “My mum had a bakery in the village. She was supplying bread to all the nearby villages. That was the same village that got attacked.”

Read Also: Herdsmen destroying farmlands in Bayelsa – Singer cries out

‘Rema is leader of new generation of Nigerian musicians’

‘They burnt the town down’

The military invasion of Odi resulted in widespread destruction. Homes, businesses, and public buildings were burned down. Eyewitness reports and human rights groups later stated that hundreds of civilians may have been killed, though the exact number has never been confirmed officially.

Timaya recalled how painful it was to witness the loss. “It’s very touching,” he



said. “We lost lives. We lost a lot of things. We lost our history.”

He criticised the government’s approach at the time, saying, “You know when the government just says, ‘Go and shoot these people down.’”

Timaya turns pain into music

In 2007, Timaya turned the tragedy into art. He released *Dem Mama*, a song that told the story of the Odi massacre. The track was raw, emotional, and honest. It became a hit and helped launch his music career.

“I sang about it,” he explained. “That was the most I could do. I told the story—how they sent the military to burn down the village. I narrated my story.”

Through the song, Timaya gave a voice to those who had none. The song connected with many Nigerians who remembered the tragedy or had faced similar losses.

Honoured as the voice of the people

Because of *Dem Mama* and his outspoken stance on the massacre, Timaya was later given a traditional title. He became the “Egberi Papa 1 of Bayelsa.” In the Ijaw language, this means “the mouthpiece of the people.”

“I became the voice,” he said. “That’s why they gave me the title. Egberi Papa 1 of Bayelsa State. That means I speak for the

people.”

The title became part of Timaya’s public identity, and he proudly carries it in his music and message. For him, it is more than just a name. It is a responsibility.

A memory that lives on

The Odi massacre remains a dark chapter in Nigeria’s recent history. Many Nigerians still seek justice for what happened. For Timaya, it is a memory that continues to shape his life and music.

By speaking out and turning his pain into art, he has helped keep the memory alive. He believes telling the story was his way of contributing to history and standing up for his people.

“It helped me to make an impact,” he said. “I became a voice.”

A call for peace and justice

Timaya’s story is a reminder of the human cost of violence. His words highlight the need for peace, justice, and better handling of conflicts in Nigeria. While the scars of Odi remain, voices like his ensure that the victims are not forgotten.

As he continues to make music, Timaya carries the weight of his past and the hopes of a people still healing.

I'm Igbo by blood, Davido declares

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian music superstar, David Adeleke, widely known as Davido, has publicly declared that he has Igbo roots.

The Afrobeats icon made this revelation in response to a social media user who criticised his close ties with people from the Igbo ethnic group.

Davido, a Yoruba man by paternal lineage, has long been known for promoting unity among Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups. However, his recent social media exchange has sparked renewed conversation about ethnicity, identity, and national unity.

Troll warns Davido about Igbos

The drama unfolded on X (formerly Twitter) after a user identified as @Yakbel took to the platform to express disapproval of Davido's association with Igbos. In a strongly worded post, the user warned Davido that his relationship with people of Igbo descent might end in betrayal.

The post read:

"Davido just dey carry Ibo full body, until when dem betray am before e rest. Yoruba boy dey frolick with Ibos in 2025, they want your head and everything you have to belong to them. You can never satisfy Ibos. Ibos are not people you surround yourself with as a Yoruba man."

The statement, laced with ethnic bias and generalisations, quickly gained attention online. Many users called it offensive and divisive, while others were eager to see how Davido would respond.

Davido fires back with a simple reply

In his usual calm and confident manner, Davido replied directly to the user's post. His response was short but powerful.

"Lol. I am Igbo by blood."

With just six words, Davido silenced the criticism and sparked fresh interest in his heritage. Fans praised his response for its maturity and for shutting down hate without causing further tension.

Social media erupts in support



Following Davido's reply, thousands of fans and followers flooded the platform with messages of support. Many applauded him for embracing his background and promoting unity in a country often divided along ethnic lines.

One user wrote:

"That's how to respond. Classy, respectful, and straight to the point."

Another fan added:

"Davido understands what Nigeria needs, togetherness. We're one people regardless of tribe."

The singer's post was reposted widely and quickly went viral. It became a trending topic on X, sparking debates about identity, tribalism, and the role of celebrities in fostering peace.

A History of Promoting Unity

Davido has always shown love and support for different cultures across Nigeria. He has worked closely with artists from various ethnic backgrounds, including Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba musicians. His music, known for its diverse sounds and collaborations, reflects his deep appreciation for Nigeria's rich cultural blend.

In interviews, Davido has spoken about growing up in a multi-ethnic environment and how it influenced his music and

worldview. He often describes himself as a Nigerian first, rather than just a Yoruba man.

Mixed heritage?

Although Davido is widely known as a Yoruba artist, his recent statement has raised questions about his family background. It is unclear which side of his family has Igbo roots, but many believe it could be from his maternal lineage. Regardless, the singer's pride in claiming both identities has earned him even more admiration.

For many fans, Davido's statement goes beyond just defending himself. It is a strong message against ethnic profiling, tribalism, and discrimination. In a country where ethnic tensions often rise, his words serve as a reminder of the need for unity and mutual respect.

Final thoughts

Davido's simple but powerful response has once again shown why he remains one of Nigeria's most influential voices, on and off the stage. By proudly embracing his mixed heritage, he sends a message that transcends music.

At a time when Nigeria faces challenges of division and intolerance, Davido's stance is clear: identity is not a limit, and love for one's people should never mean hate for others.

His message? Nigeria is stronger when united.

Dunsin Oyekan reflects on six-year journey of grief, faith after wife's passing

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular Nigerian gospel singer, Dunsin Oyekan, has shared a heartfelt reflection on his journey through grief six years after the tragic death of his wife, Adedoyin Oyekan.

Adedoyin passed away on May 18, 2019, leaving behind her husband and their two young children. The couple had married in February 2013, just six years before her untimely passing. To this day, the circumstances surrounding her death have remained private, with the family choosing not to speak publicly about the details.

Dunsin Oyekan finds strength in faith

Now, on the sixth anniversary of her death, Dunsin, 40, opened up in an emotional Instagram post about how the loss of his wife changed his life and deepened his faith.

In his message, the gospel artist didn't shy away from discussing the pain he experienced. Instead, he revealed how he chose to face it head-on, not by ignoring or hiding his emotions, but by turning to God in worship.

"Most people wondered how I survived," he wrote. "I didn't numb the pain, I channelled it!"

Healing through worship

He went on to describe how he found peace, comfort, and healing by drawing closer to God. Through worship, he said, he was able to process his grief and understand it through a spiritual lens.

"I found closure in the Presence of God," he said. "I understood from God's perspective, accepted His sovereignty, and found joy in His presence."

Despite the heartbreak, Oyekan expressed gratitude for the strength and clarity he gained through his faith. He ended the post with a simple but powerful message:



"Six years after, with tears of joy, all I still have to say is GOD IS GOOD!"

Support and reactions

The post quickly drew attention online, with fans and fellow gospel artists showing their support and admiration for Oyekan's openness and strength. Many praised him for using his platform to speak about grief, healing, and the role of faith in difficult times.

A ministry shaped by experience

Over the past six years, Dunsin Oyekan has continued to release soul-stirring gospel music that speaks to themes of worship, faith, and surrender. His songs often reflect his personal experiences, which have clearly played a role in shaping his ministry and message.

His decision to share this personal part of his life was seen by many as an act of courage. In a world where many public figures choose to keep their pain private, Oyekan's openness offered a message of hope to others who may be grieving.

Gospel singer, Dare Melody loses wife

A message of hope

By channelling his sorrow into his music, Oyekan has not only found healing for himself but also inspired others to lean into their faith during hard times. His story is a reminder that grief does not have to end in despair; it can also lead to growth, strength, and deeper spiritual understanding.

As fans reflect on his words, many have taken to social media to share their own stories of loss and how Oyekan's music has helped them through. Messages of love and encouragement have poured in, reminding him that he is not alone in his journey.

Looking forward with faith

Dunsin's tribute to his late wife is more than just a post, it's a message of resilience, faith, and hope. It shows that even in the face of deep sorrow, it is possible to find light and keep moving forward.

In sharing his story, Oyekan has once again shown why he is not just a gospel singer but a vessel of encouragement to thousands. His journey through grief and faith continues to inspire those walking through their valleys, proving that even after loss, there is still life and there is still God.

UK, France, Canada threaten action against Israel, Netanyahu hits back

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



The leaders of the UK, France and Canada on Monday condemned Israel's "egregious actions" in Gaza and warned of joint action if Israel did not stop its military offensive.

But Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, hit back at British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron and Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, saying their joint statement was a "huge prize" for Hamas in the war.

Starmer, Macron and Carney criticised Israel's blocking of aid and comments by ministers in Netanyahu's government who have threatened the mass displacement of Palestinians.

"We will not stand by while the Netanyahu government pursues these egregious actions," the leaders said. "If Israel does not cease the renewed military offensive and lift its restrictions on humanitarian aid, we will take further concrete actions in response."

Netanyahu gave a furious response in a statement released by his office.

"By asking Israel to end a defensive war for our survival before Hamas terrorists on our border are destroyed and by demanding a Palestinian state, the leaders in London, Ottawa and Paris are offering a huge prize for the genocidal attack on Israel on October 7 while inviting more such

atrocities," he said, referring to the Hamas attacks in 2023 that set off the war.

Netanyahu said "all European leaders" should follow US President Donald Trump's example in supporting Israel.

"The war can end tomorrow if the remaining hostages are released, Hamas lays down its arms, its murderous leaders are exiled, and Gaza is demilitarised. No nation can be expected to accept anything less, and Israel certainly won't," Netanyahu declared.

"This is a war of civilisation over barbarism. Israel will continue to defend itself by just means until total victory is achieved."

Spain plagued by nationwide phone, internet outage

By Fatimah Idera

Spain experienced widespread phone and internet blackouts on Tuesday, just weeks after a massive power failure plunged the country into darkness. The outage, which began around 2 am, affected landline and mobile services across the country, with fixed-line internet services being the most impacted.

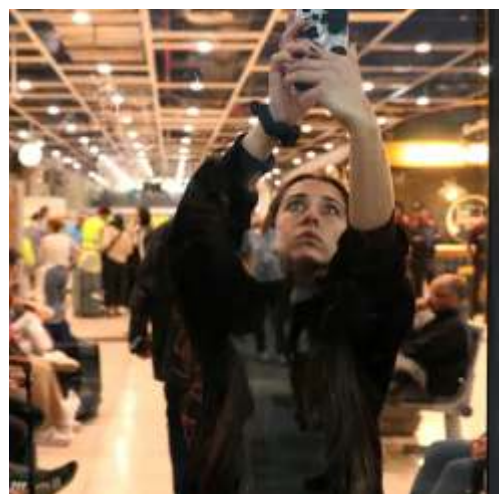
According to DOWNDetector, 18 per cent of users reported no signal, while 10 per cent experienced a total outage.

The regions affected by the blackouts include the Basque Country, Andalusia, Aragon, and Extremadura, with major cities like Madrid, Barcelona, Seville, and Valencia also impacted. Emergency call operators faced significant disruptions, with some callers being cut off while trying to reach hospital staff. In response, some emergency service providers set up alternative numbers to ensure households could still get in touch.

Telefonica, the Spanish telecoms giant, attributed the outage to a botched system upgrade. A company spokesperson stated, "This morning we had an incident that affected the fixed communications services of some companies and public services. We have been working from the outset to restore these services, which have now been fully recovered." The spokesperson added that the incident management committee was activated, and field staff were deployed to resolve specific cases.

The outage affected all major mobile network providers, including Movistar, Orange, Vodafone, Digimobil, and O2. By lunchtime on Tuesday,

Telefonica announced that the issue had been resolved, with services fully restored. This incident comes just weeks after Spain, Portugal, and parts of southern France experienced mass blackouts, affecting around 50 million people and disrupting public transport,



critical infrastructure, ATM machines, and phone services.

The recent power outage in late April was attributed to an issue in Europe's grid, with the Spanish Prime Minister investigating the cause. The grid operator Red Electrica worked with energy companies to restore power, which took several hours. The mass blackouts had significant impacts on daily life, including halting metro trains, managing traffic, and affecting payment systems.

House Republicans push forward with tax legislation as deadline approaches

By Fatimah Idera

U.S. President Donald Trump is set to join the congressional debate over his sweeping tax bill, as House Republicans struggle to maintain their fragile majority ahead of a crucial vote.

Trump will attend a Tuesday morning meeting with the 220-member House Republican caucus, including hardline conservatives who previously stalled the "One Big Beautiful Bill" and Republicans from New York seeking help with raising the deduction cap for state and local taxes.

House Speaker Mike Johnson anticipates extensive discussions within the conference over the next 48 hours, hoping Trump's influence will help bridge



divisions over spending, green tax credits, and social safety net programs.

Despite Trump's call for unity, four hardliners initially blocked the bill's progress in the House Budget Committee, which later approved it on Sunday night.

Trump celebrated the development on Truth Social, saying, "CONGRATULATIONS REPUBLICANS!!! MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!!!".

The push to advance the legislation follows Moody's downgrade of the U.S. federal government's top-tier credit rating, citing the nation's growing \$36.2 trillion debt pile.

Trump's bill would add \$3 trillion to \$5 trillion to the debt, according to nonpartisan analysts. Johnson believes the downgrade underscores the need for the legislation, aiming to pass it in the House before the May 26 Memorial Day holiday.

Putin signals readiness to end Ukraine war after call with Trump

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

In a major diplomatic development, Russian President Vladimir Putin has expressed readiness to end the war in Ukraine following a lengthy phone conversation with U.S. President Donald Trump. The two leaders reportedly spoke for over two hours, with both sides describing the exchange as constructive and forward-looking.

According to Russian state media, President Putin conveyed Moscow's willingness to work with Kyiv on drafting a formal ceasefire memorandum. This announcement marks one of the strongest signals yet of Russia's openness to ending the conflict, which has stretched on for years with devastating humanitarian consequences.

Trump, who played a central role in the discussion, described the tone of the call as "excellent," while Putin called it "informative" and "frank." The conversation appears to be part of a growing international push to bring an end to the war through diplomacy.

Momentum for renewed peace talks is reportedly building across the West. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni confirmed on Monday that Pope Leo XIV has offered the Vatican as a neutral venue for negotiations



between Russia and Ukraine, a gesture that has received support from key European and American leaders.

Following the Putin-Trump call, a number of European heads of state, including Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, French President Emmanuel Macron, and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, held individual discussions with Trump to assess the potential for peace talks.

In a related development, the U.S. Vice President met privately with Pope Leo XIV and Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, the Vatican's top diplomat. While details of the conversation with the Pope remain undisclosed, the White House

released a statement highlighting shared concerns over religious freedom and the persecution of Christians in conflict zones.

"The Vice President and Archbishop Gallagher discussed religious freedom, the persecution of Christians around the world, and the shared commitment of President Trump and Pope Leo XIV to stop the killing in Ukraine and the Middle East," the statement read.

While cautious optimism surrounds the prospect of peace, officials warn that a lasting resolution will require robust diplomatic coordination, mutual concessions, and genuine political will from both Moscow and Kyiv.

Half of young people prefer living without Internet – Report

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Nearly half of young people would prefer to live in a world without the internet, according to a new survey that paints a stark picture of digital life's toll on youth mental health and well-being.

The survey, conducted by the British Standards Institution, according to The Guardian, found that 46 per cent of 16 to 21-year-olds would rather grow up in a world without the internet. The findings come amid growing concerns over the psychological impact of social media and the lack of online safety for young users.

A striking 68 per cent of respondents said spending time online negatively affected their mental health, while 70% reported feeling worse about themselves after using social media. Despite this, a quarter of respondents said they spend four or more hours on social media each day.

In a sign of how deep the issue runs, 42 per cent of those surveyed admitted to lying to their parents about what they do online. Nearly half had lied about their age, while 40 per cent said they had a secret or "burner" account, and more than a quarter (27 per cent) had pretended to be someone else altogether.

The study also found troubling online behaviours, with 27 per cent of young people saying they had shared their location with strangers. Three-quarters said their screen time increased after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Amid these revelations, 50 per cent of



young people surveyed expressed support for a "digital curfew" that would restrict access to certain apps, such as TikTok and Instagram, after 10 pm. The UK government has signalled it is considering mandatory cut-off times for certain platforms.

However, experts caution that curfews alone won't solve the problem. Rani Govender, policy manager for child safety online at the NSPCC, said: "A digital curfew alone is not going to protect children from the risks they face online. They will be able to see all these risks at other points of the day, and they will still have the same impact."

Govender emphasised the need for safer, less addictive online spaces. "The focus should be on ensuring young people are using much safer and less addictive sites," she said.

Andy Burrows, chief executive of the suicide prevention charity the Molly Rose Foundation, echoed the call for urgent reform. "It's clear that young people are aware of the risks online and, what's more, they want action from tech companies to protect them," he said.

Burrows warned about the dangers of harmful content pushed by algorithms. "Young people can quickly spiral down rabbit holes of distressing material through no fault of their own," he added. "New laws are urgently required to embed a 'safe by design' approach that puts children and society ahead of big tech profits."

As debate over digital safety grows louder, the message from young people is clear: the internet as it stands may be more burden than a blessing.

Strategic ties at risk as Gaza conflict redraws Israel's global map

By Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi



The United Kingdom and the State of Israel share a deeply entangled history—one that is rooted in colonial legacies, wartime diplomacy, and a shared commitment to democratic values. Over the decades, the UK-Israel relationship has evolved through phases of tension, pragmatism, and strategic alignment. But recent events in Gaza have tested this long-standing alliance like never before, with Britain joining a growing list of countries reassessing their support amid mounting civilian casualties and humanitarian concerns.

From Security Cooperation to Sanctions

Security and defense cooperation have long been a cornerstone of the UK-Israel alliance. Both nations have shared intelligence on counterterrorism, cybersecurity, and regional threats, particularly from Iran

and extremist non-state actors. Israeli defense firms have collaborated with British contractors, and post-Brexit trade ties were strengthened through a 2021 UK-Israel Trade and Partnership Agreement.

However, those strategic ties are now under strain. In a dramatic policy shift, the British government announced a suspension of free trade negotiations with Israel and imposed sanctions targeting violent Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank. Foreign Secretary David Lammy stated the government could not continue discussions with a partner pursuing “egregious policies” in Gaza and the West Bank.

“The Israeli government has a responsibility to intervene and halt these aggressive actions,” Lammy said. “Their consistent failure to act is

putting Palestinian communities and the two-state solution in peril.”

Israel regards the EU as too pro-Palestinian
Pro-Palestinian

A Turning Point in Diplomatic Alignment

The Conservative Party has historically championed strong ties with Israel, but the Labour-led government under Prime Minister Keir Starmer has adopted a more critical posture. Starmer described the level of suffering among children in Gaza as “utterly intolerable” and reiterated his call for an immediate ceasefire.

**Continue reading
on next page**

Cont from page 27

On Monday, the UK joined France and others in issuing a rare joint condemnation of Israel's military actions. The statement marked one of the strongest criticisms by close allies since the war began, threatening "concrete actions" unless Israel halts its offensive and allows greater humanitarian access.

Even the United States, Israel's most stalwart ally, has voiced concern. While the initial international response to Hamas' October 7 attack was overwhelmingly supportive of Israel's right to self-defense, global patience is wearing thin as the civilian death toll in Gaza surpasses 53,000—many of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

Read More: UK, France, Canada threaten action against Israel, Netanyahu hits back

Public Opinion and Political Reckoning

British public opinion, already divided on Israel-Palestine issues, is increasingly critical of Israel's handling of the war. Protests have erupted across major UK cities demanding an end to arms sales and stronger diplomatic pressure. NGOs and civil society organizations have ramped up their campaigns, urging the government to hold Israel

accountable for what they describe as disproportionate military action.

Though the UK continues to oppose antisemitism and reaffirms Israel's right to security, the Gaza war has reframed the debate from one of counterterrorism to humanitarian urgency. Starmer's government has emphasized that criticism of Israeli policy must not be conflated with hostility toward Jewish communities.

European Allies Reconsider Support

The UK is not alone in its strategic recalibration. French President Emmanuel Macron has intensified calls for a ceasefire and greater humanitarian access. Macron has also floated the possibility of recognizing a Palestinian state as early as June and has warned that France could revisit its cooperation agreements with Israel.

Tensions with France escalated further after Macron urged a halt to arms deliveries destined for Gaza, a move that provoked sharp rebukes from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. France has even barred Israeli defense companies from participating in a key naval defense exhibition.

The humanitarian toll in Gaza has become a focal point of international

concern. A near-total blockade lasting months has pushed the region toward famine. Although Israel has recently allowed aid trucks carrying baby formula and medicine to enter, UN officials describe the volume as a "drop in the ocean."

UN humanitarian warned that the starvation and displacement in Gaza could spark long-term regional instability and fuel radicalization. "This is no longer just a conflict," he said. "It's a crisis of human dignity."

Britain's once-solid relationship with Israel is now undergoing a profound transformation. What was previously a dependable alliance built on shared values and strategic interests is now being tested by the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and Israel's controversial policies in the West Bank.

As more traditional allies begin to distance themselves, Israel finds itself increasingly isolated. Whether this diplomatic fallout will lead to meaningful policy change or further entrenchment remains to be seen. What is clear is that the Gaza conflict has redrawn Israel's global map—turning former allies into vocal critics and forcing a fundamental rethink of long-standing relationships.

Taiwan calls for peace, urges China to resume dialogue amid rising tensions

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Marking his first year in office, Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te delivered a tempered yet resolute message on Tuesday, calling for peace and dialogue with China amid heightened cross-Strait tensions and growing political friction at home.

In a press conference following his formal address, President Lai reaffirmed Taiwan's commitment to peace while cautioning against naïveté in the face of Chinese aggression. "Peace is priceless, and in war there are no winners," Lai said. "It is the aggressor who undermines peace. Taiwan is a peace-loving nation, and our society values goodwill. However, whilst our pursuit of peace is sincere, it must not be naive."

Lai urged Beijing to resume dialogue on equal footing, calling for communication to replace confrontation. "Using exchanges to replace hemming in, dialogue to replace confrontation," he stated, in a direct appeal to China's leadership.

The remarks come as Taiwan faces near-daily incursions into its air defense identification zone by Chinese military aircraft and naval vessels. According to Taiwan's defense ministry, an average of 20 Chinese warplanes and 11 naval and coastguard ships have been detected around the island daily in recent weeks.

In anticipation of Lai's speech, Taiwanese officials had warned that China could respond with military drills or psychological operations aimed at undermining public morale. As of Monday, Taiwan's coast guard cautioned that Beijing could escalate "political warfare" in reaction to the anniversary.

In its response, China's state-run Xinhua news agency accused Lai of "deliberately escalating" tensions and pursuing



"Taiwan independence" for personal and partisan gain. "The Lai Ching-te administration has brazenly pursued 'Taiwan independence,' charging headlong down a path of division and confrontation," Xinhua stated.

Notably, Lai's formal speech refrained from directly mentioning China or its ambitions to annex Taiwan. Instead, he focused on domestic issues, including climate initiatives, plans to navigate U.S. trade pressures under a potential Trump administration, and strategies to address Taiwan's internal political gridlock.

Political analyst Amanda Hsiao of the Eurasia Group suggested this omission may reflect concerns that Taiwan's status could become a bargaining chip in future U.S.-China negotiations. "This uncertainty may be a factor for why Lai chose not to reiterate his views on the China threat in a high-profile speech," Hsiao said.

Domestically, Lai faces mounting resistance from a legislature dominated by the opposition Kuomintang (KMT) and the Taiwan People's Party (TPP),

both of which have been critical of his administration's China policy and accused the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) of suppressing dissent.

In an effort to ease partisan tensions, Lai announced plans to provide national security briefings to opposition leaders, a move the KMT welcomed cautiously. "He's finally taken a small step," the KMT stated, "but he has much more to do."

Lai's government has also come under fire for its increasing scrutiny of Chinese-born residents and censorship of pro-Beijing rhetoric, measures his administration defends as necessary for national security.

As Taiwan continues to navigate a volatile geopolitical landscape and fraught domestic politics, Lai's call for dialogue serves as both a diplomatic olive branch and a strategic warning: peace is the goal, but preparation is essential.

Woman sentenced for impersonating applicants in citizenship tests

By Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

A former London bus driver who impersonated multiple test candidates—using wigs and forged documents to take UK citizenship exams on their behalf—has been jailed for four years and six months.

Josephine Maurice, 41, of Enfield, North London, admitted to a sweeping scheme that saw her sit for at least 13 fraudulent Life in the UK Tests between June 2022 and August 2023. Her impersonations, which involved disguising herself as both men and women, spanned test centres across the country, from London to Oxford and Milton Keynes.

Maurice pleaded guilty to 13 counts of fraud, one count of conspiracy to commit fraud, and two counts of possessing another person's identity documents. She was sentenced at Snaresbrook Crown Court on Tuesday.

“A Wholesale Assault on the Immigration System”

Judge Anthony Callaway, presiding over the case, described Maurice's conduct as a “wholesale assault” on the UK immigration process, stating: “You attended test centres fraudulently, undertaking Life in the UK Tests on behalf of individuals who were supposed to be there themselves. The fraud was deliberate, sophisticated, and carefully organised—relying on wigs, forged identity documents, and extensive travel.”

The court heard that Maurice travelled to testing sites in Stratford, Luton, Hounslow, Reading, Oxford, Nottingham, and Milton Keynes, repeatedly presenting false identities to help applicants bypass legal residency



requirements.

The Life in the UK Test

The Life in the UK Test is a mandatory assessment for individuals applying for indefinite leave to remain or British citizenship. The exam features 24 questions on British history, culture, and political life. A £50 fee applies for each attempt.

Typical questions include:

- “Who was King of England at the time of the Norman invasion in 1066?”
- “How often does Prime Minister's Questions occur when Parliament is sitting?”

“Well-Organised” Scam with Unclear Profits

After her arrest earlier this year, police found multiple provisional driving licences and forged documents at Maurice's home. While the financial gains from the scam could not be clearly quantified, Prosecutor Nana Owusuh described it as a “well-organised criminal operation.”

Maurice was not believed to be the mastermind of the network, but her role

was pivotal. Investigators say the scheme could pose a “national security risk” by enabling individuals with no legal immigration status to secure permanent residency or citizenship.

“Not the Mastermind, But Responsible”

In her defence, barrister Stephen Akinsanya described Maurice as a single mother of a vulnerable 25-year-old son with schizophrenia. At the time of the offences, she was working as a bus driver for Arriva.

“She foolishly agreed to help someone and this is where it has landed her—in custody and away from her son. That's what keeps her awake at night,” Akinsanya told the court.

Public Response and Legal Commentary

Immigration lawyers and policymakers have expressed concern over growing trends in test fraud linked to residency and naturalisation applications. Speaking anonymously, one senior Home Office official said the case underscores a “wider pattern of abuse” targeting the UK's citizenship verification system.

Maurice will serve her sentence at HMP Bronzefield, where she appeared via videolink for the proceedings.

Anti-doping: Six disqualified from participating in NSF

By Damilola Olufemi



Six athletes have been disqualified from participating in the ongoing 22nd National Sports Festival (NSF), named Gateway Games, by the National Sports Commission (NSC).

The NSC Director General (DG), Bukola Olopade, made this known on Tuesday in Abeokuta, the Ogun state capital.

He disclosed that the athletes were disqualified for anti-doping issues, adding that registered athletes with anti-doping issues cannot compete for scoring medals at the ongoing Gateway Games.

The decision is coming after a strategic joint meeting of the Main Organising Committee (MOC) and the Local Organising Committee (LOC) of the Games.

The athletes affected are Marcus Okon, representing Akwa Ibom state in Para Athletics, Ayabeke Opeyemi, representing Bayelsa state in Gymnastics, Shukurat Kareem, representing Lagos state in kick-boxing and Omole Dolapo Joshua, representing Bayelsa state in kick-boxing.

Others are Ogunsemilore Cynthia, representing Bayelsa state in kick-boxing and Animashaun Sofi, representing Lagos state in Para powerlifting.

The Commission announced that this is in line with global best practices and the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) code.

Olopade charged all the participating states to take note of this and reiterated the Commission's commitment to ensuring that every athlete competes clean.

"The issue of anti-doping is one important mandate of the Commission to ensure that Nigeria is devoid of drug problems at both domestic and international competitions."