



Secure data exchange key to Africa's economic progress - Shettima Pg 2

After 455 days, US releases report on helicopter that killed Wigwe Pg 6



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Black smoke rises as Cardinals fail to elect new Pope

Crowds Wait in Anticipation —and Silence PAGE 15



Plateau Killings: Pastor Adeboye declares end to bloodshed Pg 7



UK, US meet over movie tariffs Pg 23



Xi Jinping arrives in Moscow amid drone strikes Pg 17

WORLD

Pg 16

Trump: Fight between India, Pakistan to end soon



SPORTS

UCL: PSG eliminate Arsenal, to play Inter Milan in final Pg 30



Reps call on FG to fund free cancer screenings nationwide

By Friday Omosola



As part of efforts to curb the rising incidence of the disease, the House of Representatives has called on the Federal Government (FG) to introduce free cancer screening services across the country.

This appeal came during Wednesday's plenary, following a motion sponsored by Adeyemi Oseni, who raised concerns over the escalating cost of cancer care and the alarming spread of the disease in Nigeria.

Oseni, who's representing Ibarapa East/Ido Federal Constituency of Oyo State, noted that cancer remains a major public health challenge.

He cited data from 2020 which showed that over 125,000 Nigerians were diagnosed.

He stressed the urgent need for government intervention to reduce the financial burden on

affected citizens.

The House directed its Committee on Healthcare Services to work closely with the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, as well as other relevant bodies, to develop a framework that would enable the FG to subsidise cancer treatment and essential medications for patients.

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

PUBLIC NOTICE COLOUR

PRODUCT COLOUR

**EFFECTIVE FROM
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SIZE	TOTAL RATE
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QUARTER PAGE	106,500.00
14X2	118,000.00
10X6	261,585.50
10X5	255,238.00
10X4	206,890.50
10X3	179,608.00
9X6	254,977.00
9X5	225,738.00
9X4	193,500.00
9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
5X3	66,875.00
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3X3	28,000.00
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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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Secure data exchange key to Africa's economic progress - Shettima

By Friday Omosola

Vice President Kashim Shettima has underscored the critical role of secure and lawful data sharing in driving Africa's development.

Shettima, who spoke at the official opening of the Network of African Data Protection Authorities (NADPA) conference in Abuja yesterday highlighted the need for robust digital cooperation across the continent.

The Nigerian Virtual Privacy Academy (NVPA) was also launched at the event where Shettima was represented by Deputy Chief of Staff Ibrahim Hadejia.

He stressed that Africa's future prosperity hinges on its ability to manage and share data responsibly.

"Data goes beyond digital statistics; it represents lives, identities, and trust," he noted.

"As Africa embraces the African Continental Free Trade Area, secure data sharing will be central to realising our economic ambitions."

He welcomed the NADPA gathering, describing it as a vital platform for fostering collaboration, enhancing legal frameworks, and building human capacity.

According to him, these engagements are essential for ensuring that digital innovation is rooted in accountability and respect for individual privacy.

Shettima also praised Nigeria's data protection legislation, calling it one of the most forward-thinking on the continent.

He said it aligns with global human rights conventions and reflects the administration's strategic priorities.

However, the Minister of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy, Bosun Tijani, reinforced this position.



He stated that Nigeria remains committed to inclusive and ethical digital advancement.

"As we digitise government services and expand digital trade, securing trust across our systems is paramount," Tijani said.

"Trust is the foundation of any thriving digital economy."

Unveiling the NVPA, Tijani described the initiative as the first of its kind globally—designed to provide virtual training in data privacy and protection for both public and private sector stakeholders.

Representing NADPA President Iro Adamu, Immaculate Kassait of Kenya reaffirmed the continent's collective dedication to creating a secure digital ecosystem.

She described the Abuja event as evidence of Africa's unity in safeguarding individual privacy rights amid technological evolution.

"We are all bound by a shared duty to protect personal data, regardless of nationality or gender," Kassait stated, also

announcing that the next NADPA meeting would take place in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in 2026.

Vincent Olatunji, National Commissioner of the Nigeria Data Protection Commission (NDPC), revealed that the local data protection industry had generated over \$10 million in revenue and created around 23,000 jobs within three years.

He added that government earnings from data compliance activities had surpassed \$1.2 million in under two years.

Olatunji called for stronger ties among African data regulators to boost enforcement, training, and knowledge sharing.

Representing the European Union, Inga Stefanowicz, Head of Green and Digital Economy, reiterated the EU's commitment to partnering with Africa to deepen digital rights and enhance data governance across the continent.

Aiyedatiwa calls for united action on cocoa production challenges in Nigeria

By Friday Omosola

Ondo State Governor, Lucky Aiyedatiwa, has called for collective and innovative efforts to tackle the critical challenges confronting cocoa production in Nigeria.

These include the effects of climate change, inefficiencies in the value chain, and poor succession planning within the sector.

The governor made the appeal while declaring open the two-day 'National Cocoa Stakeholders' Workshop and Excellence Award Ceremony', held on Wednesday at The Dome, Akure.

The event was organised by the Cocoa Association of Nigeria (CAN) in partnership with Lutheran World Relief (LWR).

With the theme "Deforestation-Free Cocoa Production and Improved Trade Practices Through Adoption of Sustainable National Traceability System: Key to Industry Growth and Development," the workshop brought together farmers, processors, exporters and other key players from across the cocoa value chain.

Ondo State Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa

Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa Welcoming participants to the state, Aiyedatiwa described the theme as timely, noting that Ondo remains the leading cocoa-producing state in Nigeria.

He emphasised the sector's potential to drive economic growth, reduce poverty, and support sustainable development.

"As we convene to deliberate on this very apposite theme, we are reminded of Ondo State's significant contributions to Nigeria's cocoa production," he said.



"We must work together to develop innovative solutions, leverage technology, and promote sustainable practices. We cannot afford to be left behind in the global cocoa value chain."

The governor highlighted various initiatives by his administration to support the sector, including the distribution of free improved seedlings and fertilisers, training for farmers, improved access to finance and markets, and promotion of sustainable agricultural practices.

He also identified persistent challenges such as environmental degradation, outdated farm systems, inefficient market structures, and a lack of reliable data.

"I charge all participants to engage meaningfully, share knowledge, and chart a path forward for sustainable cocoa production," he urged.

Earlier, M.O. Abolarinwa, National President of the Cocoa Association of Nigeria, commended Ondo State's leadership in cocoa production.

He described the workshop as a platform to align Nigeria's cocoa industry with global best practices and stressed the importance of a national traceability system to enhance market access amid tightening international regulations on deforestation and sustainability.

Victor Halim Iyama, Chairman of CAN's Board of Trustees, expressed optimism about cocoa's potential to boost Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings, noting that the industry's current trajectory was promising.

Also speaking, Hajara Usman, who represented the Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Jumoke Oduwole, reiterated the Federal Government's commitment to revamping the sector under President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope agenda.

The workshop will continue on Thursday with technical sessions and stakeholder engagements focused on innovation, sustainability, and long-term growth in Nigeria's cocoa industry.

After 455 days, US releases report on helicopter that killed Wigwe

By **Damilola Olufemi**



The United States National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has concluded that pilot error, triggered by spatial disorientation, was the primary cause of the helicopter crash that claimed the lives of former Access Holdings CEO Herbert Wigwe, his wife, son, and three others on February 9, 2024.

The final report, released Wednesday, also criticised the helicopter operator for “inadequate oversight of its safety management processes,” pointing to systemic failures in safety protocols.

According to the NTSB, the pilot continued flying under visual flight rules despite deteriorating weather that required instrument navigation. This decision led to a loss of situational awareness. Investigators

determined that “the probable cause of this accident [was] the pilot’s decision to continue the visual flight rules flight into instrument meteorological conditions, which resulted in the pilot’s spatial disorientation and loss of control.”

The crash took place on February 9, 2024, near the California-Nevada border. All six on board, including Wigwe, his wife Doreen, their son Chizi, and former NGX chairman Abimbola Ogunbanjo, were killed.

The investigation also highlighted pre-existing issues with the aircraft’s radar altimeter. The report revealed that the pilot had previously flagged the instrument’s malfunction via text to a maintenance official. Despite attempted troubleshooting, “the radar altimeter remained non-functional,” and the flight proceeded

anyway.

“A company mechanic performed some troubleshooting on the radar altimeter; however, he was unable to rectify the issue,” the NTSB noted. “The mechanic reported that the pilot and the DOM [director of maintenance] were aware that the radar altimeter was not functioning.”

Further scrutiny revealed that, before the fatal leg of the journey, no conversation took place between the pilot and the company’s flight follower about the altimeter’s status or the prevailing weather. The report concluded: “The pilot likely experienced spatial disorientation while manoeuvring the helicopter in IMC [instrument meteorological conditions], which led to his loss of helicopter control and the resulting collision with terrain.

Plateau Killings: Pastor Adeboye declares end to bloodshed

By Friday Omosola



The General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Pastor Enoch Adeboye, has expressed deep sympathy with the people and government of Plateau State over the recent wave of violent attacks.

Pastor Adeboye, during a courtesy visit to Governor Caleb Mutfwang at the New Government House, Little Rayfield, Jos, declared that the season of bloodshed in the state has come to an end.

He was in the state as part of his visit for the RCCG's annual retreat at the Heipang Camp in Barkin-Ladi Local Government Area.

Describing the killings as senseless and heart-wrenching, Pastor Adeboye reassured the governor that the Church has been fervently interceding for the

state and believes that a new chapter of peace, restoration, and hope is imminent.

“We are here to encourage you and to let you know that even in these difficult times, we have not relented in our prayers for Plateau State,” he said.

“We have dedicated a special hour of prayer for the state, believing that a new story will emerge—one of peace, restoration, and hope. There are times when the flesh may fail, but God never fails.”

He emphasised that it was important to pay a visit to the governor and offer prayers for the healing and restoration of the state, especially in light of the trauma caused by recurring attacks.

Reacting, Mutfwang welcomed the RCCG leader and expressed profound

gratitude for the Church's continued spiritual support and intercessory role.

He noted that the RCCG Camp in Heipang once deserted due to insecurity, has resumed activities—signalling a return of hope and resilience.

“It is only when men of God lift their voices to heaven that God grants them wisdom and answers the cry of His people,” Mutfwang said.

“We thank you, sir, for your love for the land and your unwavering commitment to building the body of Christ.”

He credited the improvement in security to the proactive efforts of security agencies and their strong collaboration with his administration, adding that divine guidance remains essential in leading the state forward.

Politicians pushing sons to contest Lagos LG polls alarming - GAC Chairman

By Alade Adisa

The Chairman of the Governance Advisory Council, GAC, in Lagos State, Prince Tajudeen Olusi, has expressed deep concern over the growing trend of established politicians promoting their children—especially sons—to contest in the upcoming local government elections in Lagos.

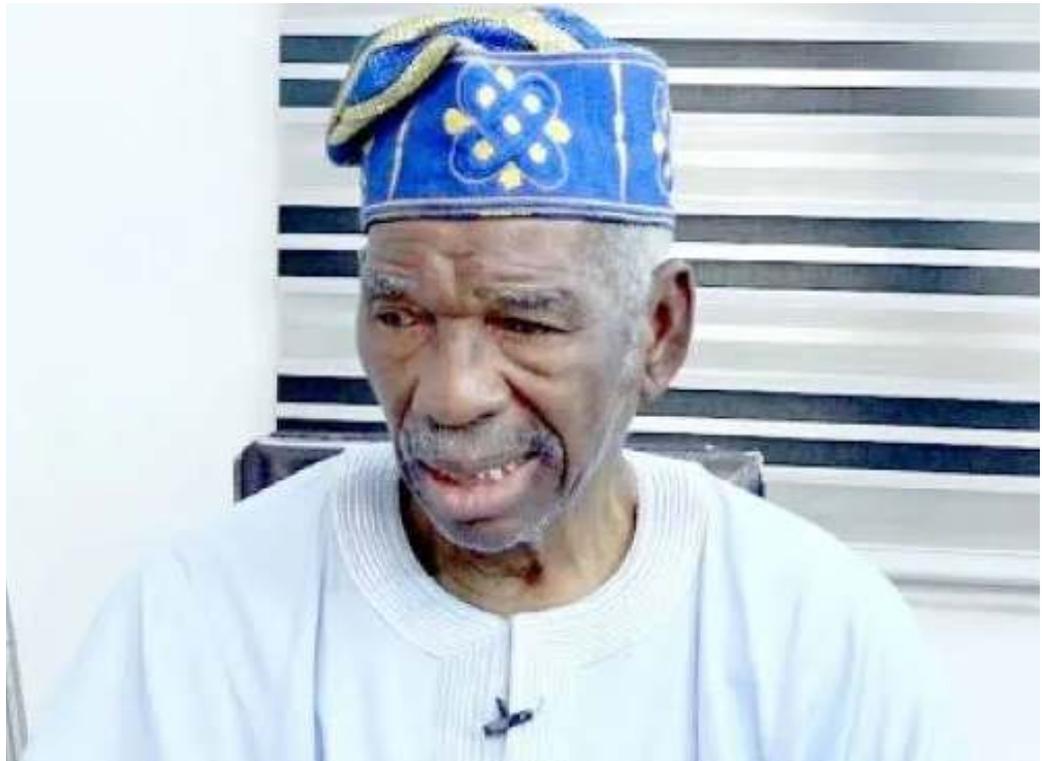
Speaking in an interview monitored by The New Daily Prime, Olusi described the development as “alarming,” warning that it signals a dangerous shift in Nigeria’s political culture, where public office is increasingly treated as an inheritance rather than a calling.

“This is part of what is wrong in this country that all of us are not addressing,” Olusi said.

“My father did not bring me into politics. In our time, your career was determined by your own interests or societal contribution—not because your parents were politicians.”

Olusi revealed that at least three prominent figures in Lagos politics are currently backing their sons for elective positions on Lagos Island.

Among them are former Lagos State Governor, Babatunde



Fashola and former Vice Chairman, Yemisi Coker.

“In the First Republic, this wasn’t so common. We were the ones who asked Awolowo’s son, Oluwole, to serve as a councillor, and even then, his father declined. Now, things have changed drastically,” he remarked.

The GAC chairman linked this trend to the perception that politics is now a pathway to wealth.

“Nowadays, everyone wants their children to become Honourables and Chairmen because they see politics as a money-making venture. That’s where we’ve all gone wrong.”

Olusi blamed this shift on the

legacy of military rule, particularly under General Ibrahim Babangida’s administration, which, he said, handed power to those primarily motivated by financial gain rather than public service.

He further criticised the increasing practice of aspiring politicians offering money for endorsements despite lacking any record of community leadership or civic engagement. “Anyone who wants to serve should have a clear track record—from school to their community,” he said.

“But these days, someone embezzled funds and the next advice they get is to run for office.”

Abure-led LP faction suspends Otti, Nwokocha, others

By Friday Omosola

The leadership crisis within the Labour Party (LP) deepened on Wednesday as the faction led by Julius Abure announced the indefinite suspension of Abia State Governor, Alex Otti, alongside several others, over alleged anti-party activities.

In a statement signed by the faction's National Secretary, Umar Farouk, the suspended members include Senator Ireti Kingibe, Senator Darlington Nwokocha, Victor Afam Ogene, Amobi Ogah, and Seyi Sowunmi.

Farouk explained that the suspension followed a thorough investigation conducted by a five-member disciplinary committee set up by the party's National Executive Committee (NEC).

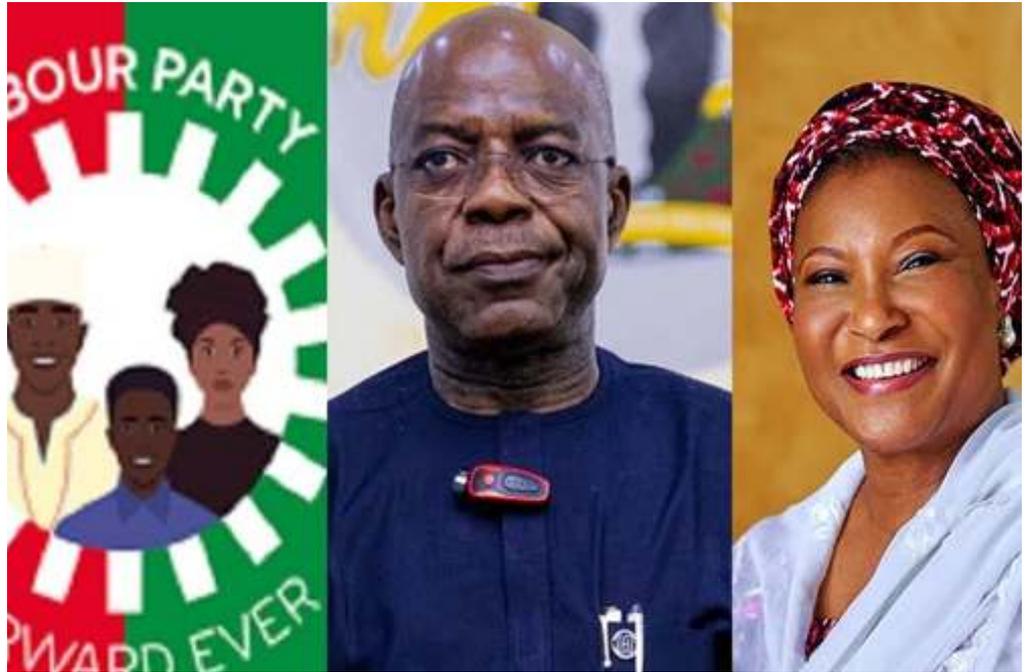
The committee, inaugurated on 2 May, was chaired by Deputy National Chairman Ayo Olorunfemi, with Farouk and three others serving as members.

According to the party, the NEC convened on Wednesday and, after extensive deliberations in accordance with the powers granted to it by the party's constitution, ratified the committee's recommendations, thereby formalising the suspensions.

The statement read, "By this suspension, these former members of the party will no longer act for and on behalf of the party. All concerned institutions, including the Nigeria Governors Forum, the National Assembly, INEC and security agencies, among others, are to take note.

"It will surprise Nigerians and party faithfuls that the name of one Nenadi Usman was conspicuously omitted from the list of the suspended members of the party. First, we have said repeatedly that the said Nenadi Usman was and is not a member of the Labour Party, being not a card-carrying member of the Party.

"We are aware that she is a member of the Obidient Support group that worked and



is still working for the party's 2023 presidential candidate. We will, therefore, not honour her with any sanction for not being a member of the party.

"Again, we are aware that Ms Usman recently, in a well-televised occasion, in cohort with a former Kaduna state governor, joined another political party where she pledged loyalty to the party. We are clearly confused about where Usman Nenadi's loyalty lies.

"The party leadership is also surprised that Nenadi Usman is talking about corruption when, indeed, she is the headmistress of corruption. Nigerians are already aware of all the EFCC cases against her and we expect Ms Usman to come out and explain to Nigerians the story behind her Plea Bargain with EFCC and all the properties she allegedly forfeited.

"She should also tell Nigerians how she acquired her radio station in Kaduna, all her properties all over Nigeria and abroad, her companies in Cameroon, including her plantations. Nenadi Usman lacks the moral capacity to commence any probe or even talk about corruption.

"In any event, the party's financial records

are straight and it will interest the members of the public to know that the party's audited account has been published. INEC, being the regulatory body, sent their external auditors to audit the party's account, and they gave a clean report and also commended the party for its financial transparency. It is on record that among the comity of Political Parties in Nigeria, the Labour Party's financial records were adjudged to be among the best.

"Finally, the party has since taken a position on the issue of coalition and we want to reiterate that the party is not interested in any overtures by any group or persons to go into any coalition or merger. As we have earlier stated, the protagonists of the coalition, those driving the agenda, lack the capacity, character and competence to midwife such a political arrangement.

"These are people who have failed to manage one political party; how can they manage an amalgam of political parties and their varied interests? The Labour Party intends to prosecute the 2027 general election as a stand-alone party, and no further discussion will be entertained on this matter."

Scientists unveil new ai pilot to predict disease, prevent outbreak

By FHelen Okechukwu

A group of scientists has embarked on groundbreaking artificial intelligence (AI) research model that could predict disease and complications before an outbreak.

The groundbreaking model, which uses technology similar to ChatGPT, is undergoing training using NHS data from 57 million people in England.

Marked as a world first, with researchers from University College London (UCL) and King's College London (KCL), officials said the soon-to-be-launched AI, known as Foresight, has the potential to unlock a healthcare revolution.

Foresight, which will be trained using eight collected datasets, will, instead of predicting text like ChatGPT, use patient medical histories to examine potential future health challenges.

Among the routine datasets to be used—which contain personal data—are hospital admissions, A&E attendances, and Covid-19 vaccination rates.

Dr Chris Tomlinson of UCL described the AI model as a “significant event and exciting step” to prevent deterioration, and predict disease and complications before they happen, with the aim of tackling and preventing disease outbreaks.

“And to give a practical example of what that actually looks like, we could use Foresight to look across the whole population and predict the risk of, for example, unscheduled hospitalisation,” Dr Tomlinson said.

Although this study is currently limited to Covid-19-related research, Dr Tomlinson said the research will help inform them about the next pandemic.

“We’re also testing the model’s ability to generalise to other important healthcare outcomes, such as predicting the risk of hospitalisation or death in the next year, as well as the onset of over 1,000 different



conditions,” Dr Tomlinson added.

The group of researchers also aims to increase the depth and capability of Foresight by including richer sources of data—information such as physicians’ notes and the results of investigations like blood tests or scans.

According to NHS England, the pilot will operate using de-personalised patient data, ensuring that all information remains securely under NHS control.

The initiative builds on promising research published in *The Lancet Digital Health* in March 2024, which demonstrated the ability of the AI tool to predict the types of health conditions a patient might develop in the future.

Dr Vin Diwakar, National Director of Transformation at NHS England, highlighted the significance of the Secure Data Environment in driving innovation.

“The NHS Secure Data Environment has been fundamental to this pioneering research, shaping a future where earlier treatments and interventions are targeted to those who will benefit, preventing future ill health,” he said. “This will boost our ability to move quickly towards personalised, preventative care.”

Science and Technology Secretary Peter Kyle also praised the initiative, pointing to its broader implications for healthcare and the economy.

“This ambitious research shows how AI, paired with the NHS’s wealth of secure and anonymised data, is set to unlock a healthcare revolution,” he said. “This technology is transforming what’s possible in tackling a host of debilitating diseases, from diagnosis to treatment to prevention.

“This is work that will be instrumental to this Government’s missions to overhaul healthcare and grow the economy, which sit at the heart of our Plan for Change. And an unrelenting focus on privacy and security means people can rest assured that their data is in safe hands.”

The pilot follows earlier research involving data from two NHS trusts, which confirmed Foresight’s potential to map individual health trajectories.

Prof Richard Dobson, Deputy Director of the NIHR Maudsley Biomedical Research Centre and lead researcher at King’s College London and University College London, expressed enthusiasm for the pilot’s national rollout.

OHID reports significant rise in obesity across England

By Helen Okechukwu



In England, a recent report has revealed a significant increase in obesity rates, with the majority of affected individuals located in Yorkshire, the Midlands, and the North East—regions that dominate the top 10 local areas with the highest obesity prevalence.

Obesity, which contributes to reduced life expectancy and is linked to several risk factors such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and mental health conditions, has evolved into a complex and global health challenge.

Among the 44 local areas assessed, Doncaster, Stockton-on-Tees, and Walsall—each with 33.3% of adults below the national margin in 2018/2019—have continued to show high obesity rates in 2023/2024.

According to a publication by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID), data from the Sport England Active Lives Adult Survey (March 2024) shows that West Lindsey in Lincolnshire recorded the highest percentage of adults living with obesity, at 38%.

Hartlepool and Bolsover in Derbyshire followed closely, each with a rate of 37.9%.

Of the 317 local authorities that participated in the survey, it is estimated that at least 1 in 7 recorded obesity rates affecting a third or more of their adult population in 2023/2024.

Overall, 252 local authorities saw an increase in obesity rates, while only 65 reported a decline.

Among ethnic groups, Black adults had the highest obesity prevalence compared to White British, Mixed, and Asian groups.

Conversely, nine of the 10 local authorities with the lowest obesity rates are in southern England. These include Islington (13%), Hammersmith and Fulham (12.1%), and Camden (11.0%) in London.

Between 2022/2023 and 2023/2024, 176 local authorities recorded a significant rise in obesity, while 140 saw a decrease.

The OHID recommends regular physical activity as a key preventive measure, noting that it can reduce the risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, and certain cancers (colon and breast), while also improving mental health.

Nasty Blaq denies dating rumours with Davido's cousin Nikos

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular Nigerian skit maker Asibi Emmanuel Ezechukwu, better known as Nasty Blaq, has firmly denied rumours linking him romantically with Adenike Adeleke, also known as Nikos Living.

The rumours began to spread after the two were seen spending time together. Photos and videos of Nasty Blaq and Nikos hanging out recently surfaced online, quickly sparking speculation about a possible relationship.

Social media users and gossip blogs began to suggest that the two were dating. The posts gained attention, with fans commenting and asking questions about their connection.

But Nasty Blaq has stepped forward to clear the air.

"We are just friends," says Nasty Blaq

In a post shared on his official X account (formerly Twitter), the comedian addressed the trending topic directly. He wrote:

"The Loml is Esther. I and Nikos are just very good friends. Bloggers please stop the agenda."

The statement quickly drew attention. Fans praised him for being honest and straightforward. Others criticized bloggers for jumping to conclusions without confirmation.

Nasty Blaq made it clear that there is no romantic relationship between him and Nikos. He emphasized that his heart belongs to someone else, a woman named Esther, who he called the "love of my life."

Nikos: No stranger to rumours

This is not the first time Nikos Living has found herself at the center of dating rumors. Just last year, she was linked with Nigerian singer and music producer Young Jonn.

In that case too, speculations started after the two were seen together several times. They were spotted attending events and hanging out in public. At one of Young Jonn's concerts, Nikos even joined him on stage to dance, a moment that went viral online.



However, neither Nikos nor Young Jonn confirmed or denied the rumors. They remained silent on the matter, letting the gossip fade without addressing it publicly.

Nasty Blaq's love life in the spotlight

With a strong social media presence and millions of followers, Nasty Blaq is used to public attention. Over the years, fans have often shown interest in his personal life, especially his relationships.

Though he prefers to keep most of his private life out of the spotlight, this time he felt the need to speak out. The comedian made it clear that Esther, his current partner, plays an important role in his life.

His post was both a show of loyalty to Esther and a warning to media outlets and blogs not to spread false information.

Reactions from fans and followers

Fans reacted swiftly to the news. Many appreciated Nasty Blaq for setting the record straight. Others expressed support for his relationship with Esther, saying they admired his openness.

On social media, users praised him for showing respect to his partner while clearing up misunderstandings. Some, however, criticized the speed at which online platforms spread unconfirmed gossip.

A user on X wrote, "He did the right thing. People should stop assuming every man and woman seen together are dating."

Another added, "Respect to Nasty Blaq for defending his girl. That's how to shut down fake news."

The rise of celebrity rumours in Nigeria
In recent years, dating rumours involving Nigerian celebrities have become increasingly common. From musicians to actors, skit makers to influencers, many public figures have faced speculation about their personal lives.

Often, these rumors are fueled by social media posts, event appearances, or friendly hangouts. While some of them turn out to be true, many are based on little or no evidence.

Celebrities like Nasty Blaq now face the challenge of correcting false stories while maintaining their privacy.

Final word

Nasty Blaq has made it clear: he is not dating Nikos Living. They are just friends. He remains committed to his partner Esther and hopes that the media will respect his relationship.

As gossip continues to spread easily online, this story is a reminder of the importance of truth, and the value of speaking up when the facts are misunderstood.

Actor Okey Bakassi crowned King in Imo State

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular Nigerian actor and comedian, Okey Bakassi, has been crowned the traditional ruler of his hometown, Umuihuocha, in Imo State.

The widely celebrated entertainer, whose real name is Okechukwu Onyegbule, was officially installed as the monarch in a colourful ceremony rich with Igbo culture and tradition.

The event took place in the Umuihuocha Autonomous Community, located in the Mbaise area of the state. A large crowd of well-wishers, family members, and community leaders attended the event to witness the historic moment.

The new title: Okwe II of Umuihuocha
Following his coronation, Okey Bakassi now bears the royal title His Royal Highness, Eze Okechukwu Onyegbule, the Okwe II of Umuihuocha Obohia. The title recognizes his new role as a custodian of the customs, values, and progress of his people.

He shared a video of the occasion on Instagram, offering fans a glimpse into the ceremony. In the post, he wrote: "Special presentation as king (Eze) of Umuihuocha community." The video shows him dressed in traditional royal regalia, surrounded by chiefs, dancers, and villagers paying homage to their new ruler.

A joyous celebration of Igbo tradition
The coronation ceremony featured the full display of Igbo tradition. Men and women in traditional outfits danced to cultural music. There was drumming, chanting, and joyful celebration as the community welcomed their new king.

Speakers at the event praised Bakassi for his contribution to the entertainment industry and his long-standing support for the people of Mbaise. They described his rise to the throne as a "homecoming" for a son of the soil.



Cultural leaders and elders took turns blessing the actor as he sat on the royal stool. With each ritual and performance, the message was clear: the community believes in his leadership and wants him to guide them into a brighter future.

From comedy to royalty
Okey Bakassi is best known across Nigeria and beyond as a talented comedian and actor. With over two decades in the entertainment industry, he has earned respect for his creative work and dedication to promoting Nigerian culture through film and stage performance.

His transition from the entertainment scene to traditional leadership has sparked a wave of admiration online. Many fans and celebrities congratulated him on social media, calling it a well-deserved honor.

Though the move may seem surprising to some, those who know Bakassi say he has always remained close to his roots. In interviews, he often speaks proudly of his heritage and the values he learned growing up in Imo State.

Quick rise to the throne
Interestingly, the coronation happened just two weeks after Bakassi first announced his appointment as traditional

ruler. The news came as a surprise to many fans who did not expect the actor to take up a royal role so soon.

Still, those close to him say he accepted the position with humility and a sense of duty. Community leaders said his calm nature, wisdom, and ability to bring people together made him an ideal choice for the role.

A resident of Umuihuocha described the coronation as a "turning point" for the town. "We believe Eze Okechukwu will bring peace, unity, and progress to our community," he said.

What comes next?

As the new Okwe II of Umuihuocha, Okey Bakassi now carries the responsibility of uniting the people, settling disputes, and helping to lead development efforts in the area.

It is a role that comes with both honor and challenge. However, many believe he is well prepared. His years in public life and his connection with both rural and urban communities may help him bridge the gap between tradition and modernity.

For now, it is a time of celebration in Umuihuocha. The people are hopeful that their new king, who made them laugh for years, will now lead them with wisdom and heart.

EFCC arraigns music promoter Eeze Tee for alleged \$397,000 fraud

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has taken legal action against a well-known Nigerian music promoter, Ezekiel Onyedikachukwu ThankGod, popularly known as Eeze Tee.

He was arraigned alongside his company, Eeze Global Concepts Limited, for alleged foreign exchange violations and money laundering.

The case was heard on Wednesday at the Federal High Court in Ikoyi, Lagos. Justice Chukwujekwu Aneke presided over the session. The EFCC presented a seven-count amended charge against ThankGod.

Accusations of illegal forex transactions

According to the EFCC, the charges stem from illegal financial activities dating back to June 2023. Investigators allege that ThankGod conducted foreign exchange deals without proper authorization. He is said to have negotiated the naira equivalent of \$52,895 with a man identified as Mr. Olatotun Olaobaju Mureke.

The EFCC claims that ThankGod was not licensed to operate as a currency dealer at the time of the transaction. Nigerian law requires individuals or companies to register with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and obtain a license before engaging in foreign exchange trading.

Undeclared transactions raise suspicion

Further allegations emerged from financial activity in 2024. EFCC prosecutors say ThankGod failed to report large transactions to the appropriate authorities. Specifically, he is accused of receiving \$137,383 into a corporate bank account without notifying the Special Control Unit Against Money Laundering (SCUML).

This failure to report is a violation of



Nigeria's anti-money laundering laws. Under the Money Laundering (Prevention and Prohibition) Act of 2022, businesses are required to disclose large cash and electronic transactions to the SCUML to ensure transparency and prevent financial crimes.

In total, the EFCC claims that ThankGod and his company were involved in foreign exchange and money movement activities amounting to \$397,106.

Laws cited in the case

The charges filed against ThankGod fall under two major Nigerian laws:

The Foreign Exchange (Monitoring and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, which governs how forex transactions are handled in the country.

The Money Laundering (Prevention and Prohibition) Act, 2022, which outlines steps financial institutions and individuals must take to prevent and report suspicious financial activities. The EFCC has accused ThankGod of violating both laws.

ThankGod denies all charges

In court, ThankGod pleaded not guilty to all seven charges. His legal team requested bail. However, the EFCC's lead counsel, Bilkisu Buhari-Bala, strongly opposed the application.

She argued that the music executive had previously ignored multiple invitations from the Commission during the investigation. She also claimed that ThankGod had tried to avoid being served with court documents, which raised doubts about his willingness to cooperate with the legal process.

Judge grants temporary release

Despite the EFCC's objections, Justice Aneke decided to grant ThankGod temporary release. The judge ordered that the defendant be handed over to his lawyer, pending the outcome of the formal bail hearing.

The court has scheduled the ruling on the bail application for May 9, 2025.

Background on Eeze Tee

Eeze Tee is known in Nigeria's gospel music scene. He is the founder of Eeze Global Concepts, a music label that has signed several top gospel artists. His company has played a key role in promoting gospel music within Nigeria and abroad.

The charges have sparked reactions across the entertainment industry, with many waiting to see how the case unfolds. Some of his supporters have called for a fair trial and have expressed hope that he will clear his name.

Black smoke rises as Cardinals fail to elect new Pope

By Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi



Just under four hours after 133 cardinals entered the conclave under solemn oath and total secrecy, the first round of voting has ended without a result. The unmistakable symbol—dark smoke—rose slowly into the Roman twilight sky, signaling that no candidate received the required two-thirds majority.

As tradition dictates, the cardinals are now sealed off from all outside communication and will retire overnight before resuming deliberations tomorrow. Inside the Sistine Chapel, beneath Michelangelo's fresco of The Last Judgment, they will continue their sacred task: discerning who among them is called to lead the world's 1.3 billion Catholics as the 267th pope.

Crowds Wait in Anticipation—and Silence

The scene in St. Peter's Square was charged with reverence and suspense. Tens of thousands of pilgrims, clergy, journalists, and onlookers watched the chapel chimney for over three hours following the conclave's start. The delay

in the appearance of smoke—white for a new pope, black for no decision—only deepened the anticipation.

When the black smoke finally emerged, a gentle wave of disappointment passed through the crowd. Still, many remained, praying or waiting quietly in the hope of a quicker resolution tomorrow.

Inside the Conclave: A Sacred Secrecy

Because of the strict confidentiality surrounding the conclave, the reasons for today's impasse remain a mystery. No cardinal is permitted to reveal anything from inside the proceedings, now or ever. "We may never know what caused the delay," said Mathew Schmalz, professor of Catholic studies at the College of the Holy Cross, in an interview with the BBC.

Schmalz added, "I'm kind of nervous that there seems to be some ripples in the process... These are cardinals who are still getting to know one another. Unless they agree on a clear, familiar candidate, deliberations may take some time."

He noted that while most modern conclaves are swift—typically lasting two to three days—the current diversity within the College of Cardinals could extend the process slightly. "I'd expect this one to be just a day longer than usual," he suggested.

What Happens Now?

The cardinals will reconvene tomorrow morning for another round of ballots, with up to four votes possible per day—two in the morning, two in the afternoon. The conclave will continue until white smoke signals a successful election. At that moment, the Vatican bell will ring, and the world will hear the traditional announcement: *Habemus Papam*—"We have a pope."

Until then, the Vatican—and the world—waits in spiritual stillness and expectation.

Stay with New Daily Prime for continuing live coverage from Vatican City as the papal conclave unfolds.

Trump: Fight between India, Pakistan to end soon

By Damilola Olufemi



U.S. President Donald Trump on Tuesday expressed hope that escalating tensions between India and Pakistan would subside quickly, following Indian airstrikes on Pakistani territory.

“They’ve been fighting for many decades,” Trump remarked during an event at the White House. “I just hope it ends very quickly.”

Regarding the current flare-up, the president noted, “People knew something was going to happen based on a little bit of the past.”

India launched the strikes across the border, stating it was targeting militant hideouts allegedly responsible for a deadly attack in April that claimed at least 26 civilian lives in the disputed Kashmir region. In response, Pakistan’s military reported eight fatalities and 33 injuries resulting from the missile strikes.

Indian media also reported that three civilians were killed in areas under India’s control due to retaliatory shelling by Pakistani forces.

Trump’s administration

Secretary of State speaks

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio addressed the situation via social media, stating, “I echo (Trump’s) comments earlier today that this hopefully ends quickly and will continue to engage both Indian and Pakistani leadership towards a peaceful resolution.”

India and Pakistan, both nuclear powers, have fought three full-scale wars since their partition in 1947, most of them centred around the disputed region of Kashmir, which remains divided between them and is also claimed by China.

Xi Jinping arrives in Moscow amid drone strikes

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



Chinese President Xi Jinping has arrived in Moscow for a four-day state visit, coinciding with a wave of Ukrainian drone strikes on the Russian capital. The visit, centred around Russia's Victory Day celebrations commemorating the end of World War II, marks Xi's 11th trip to Russia since taking office, more than to any other country.

Moscow's mayor, Sergei Sobyenin, confirmed that at least 14 Ukrainian drones were intercepted by Russian air defence overnight, temporarily shutting down most of the city's airports. Russia's flagship airline, Aeroflot, announced major schedule changes in response to the disruption.

Xi Jinping's visit comes at a politically charged moment

Xi's visit comes at a politically charged moment, as tensions between China and the West, particularly the United States,

intensify over trade and security. Meanwhile, Ukraine has recently accused China of aiding Russia's war effort, including the presence of Chinese mercenaries in eastern Donetsk.

The Kremlin views Xi's visit as a key event in strengthening the strategic partnership between the two countries. The Chinese leader is expected to meet President Vladimir Putin on Thursday and attend the Victory Day military parade on Friday. For the first time since 2015, China's People's Liberation Army will send an honour guard to Moscow for the event, and for the first time, it will also participate in parallel celebrations in Minsk, Belarus.

Xi and Putin are expected to sign several cooperation agreements, including discussions on the Power of Siberia 2 gas pipeline, which would transport 50 billion cubic meters of gas annually from Russia to China.

Since the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, trade between China and Russia has surged to record levels, reaching \$245 billion in 2024, a 66% increase from 2021, providing Moscow with a crucial economic lifeline amid Western sanctions.

Despite its deepening ties with Russia, Beijing maintains that it is a neutral party in the Ukraine conflict and continues to call for a peaceful resolution. However, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has criticised China for allegedly turning a blind eye to its nationals' participation in the war and for tacitly supporting Russia's military actions.

As Xi's visit unfolds under the shadow of drone strikes and geopolitical strain, the world watches closely for what deeper Sino-Russian cooperation could mean for the global balance of power.

Trump administration faces backlash over reported migrant deportation plans to Libya

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Trump administration is under fire following reports that it is planning to deport an unspecified group of migrants to Libya, a country the U.S. State Department itself has condemned for “life-threatening” prison conditions and widespread human rights abuses.

According to Reuters, three unnamed U.S. officials confirmed the administration’s intent to carry out the deportations as early as this week. Two officials indicated that flights to the North African nation could occur as soon as Wednesday, though plans remain fluid. The New York Times also reported similar confirmations from a U.S. official.

The nationalities of the migrants remain unclear, and Libya’s provisional Government of National Unity has publicly denied any agreement to accept deportees, stating there had been no coordination or consent given.

Libya has long served as a dangerous bottleneck for migrants and refugees attempting to reach Europe, with numerous human rights organizations documenting the brutal realities of life inside Libyan detention centers. These centers, often controlled by militias and smugglers, are plagued by overcrowding, torture, sexual abuse, and forced labor.

In its most recent human rights report, the U.S. State Department criticized Libya for “harsh and life-threatening prison conditions” and “arbitrary arrest or detention,” highlighting that migrants, including children, are often held indefinitely without due process or access to immigration courts.

The Trump administration has yet to publicly comment on the reported deportation plans. Requests for responses from the White House, the State Department, and the Department of



Homeland Security have gone unanswered.

International aid organizations and NGOs operating in the Mediterranean have condemned the reports. Mirka Schäfer of the German NGO SOS Humanity stated, “Libya is not a safe place for migrants and refugees. Survivors aboard our vessel Humanity 1 have visible signs of torture, bullet wounds, and psychological trauma.”

One refugee reportedly told aid workers, “In Libya, they sell people like they would sell bread.”

Luca Casarini, founder of the Italian NGO Mediterranea Saving Humans, offered sharp criticism: “This is not just about policy—it is an endorsement of horror. Trump is dragging our civilization toward the abyss by sending people to a hell on Earth.”

Trump, who made immigration a central tenet of his presidency, has repeatedly pushed for stricter enforcement. Since taking office, his administration has deported over 152,000 people and sought to expand the list of countries willing to

accept U.S. deportees, including El Salvador and Guantánamo Bay detention facilities.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio signaled last week that the administration intends to broaden its deportation destinations. “We are working with other countries to say: We want to send you some of the most despicable human beings,” Rubio said during a White House cabinet meeting. “And the further away from America, the better.”

As of now, the U.S. Supreme Court has temporarily blocked the deportation of a group of Venezuelans accused of gang activity. The Trump administration has asked the court to lift or narrow that order, invoking a rarely used wartime statute to justify its actions.

The legality and morality of deporting migrants to a conflict-ridden country such as Libya remain under intense scrutiny, with critics accusing the administration of knowingly placing vulnerable individuals in grave danger for the sake of political optics.

UK to back de-escalation as India-Pakistan exchange fire

By Agency Reporter

The United Kingdom is ready to help India and Pakistan to de-escalate tensions following an exchange of fire over Kashmir, a Cabinet minister has said.

Officials said at least 19 people have been killed and 38 wounded after India fired missiles across the border into Pakistani-controlled territory in at least six locations overnight.

Pakistani forces were reported to have shelled Indian-controlled Kashmir.

The escalation in the conflict between the two nuclear-armed powers follows last month's massacre of tourists in the Indian-controlled portion of Kashmir.

New Delhi has blamed Pakistan for the attack, which killed 22 people, but Islamabad has denied responsibility.

On Wednesday, Trade Secretary Jonathan Reynolds said his Cabinet colleague David Lammy had reached out to both nations in an effort to avoid further escalation, as U.S. and European figures.

Reynolds told the BBC the situation in Kashmir was "hugely worrying, our message will be that we are a friend, a partner to both countries.

"We stand ready to support both countries. Both have a huge interest in regional stability, in dialogue, in de-escalation and anything we can do to support that, we are here and willing to do."

Meanwhile, the Foreign Office has updated its travel advice for the region, warning against all travel within 10 kilometres of the India-Pakistan border, 10 miles of the Line of Control.



The de facto border divides disputed Kashmir between the two countries and the Balochistan province of Pakistan.

Pakistan had also closed its airspace, with the Foreign Office advising affected Britons to contact their airline for further information.

Scotland's First Minister John Swinney and Labour MP Stella Creasy said they were deeply concerned by the escalation in violence, while former Conservative minister Tariq Ahmad warned the "potential for war tonight is real."

Pakistani officials said the strikes hit at least two sites previously tied to banned militant groups.

One hit the Subhan Mosque in the city of Bahawalpur in Punjab, killing 13 people, including a child, according to Zohaib Ahmed, a doctor at a nearby hospital.

The missiles hit six locations in Pakistan-administered Kashmir and in the country's eastern Punjab province, said Pakistan's military spokesperson, Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif.

The Indian army said seven civilians were killed and 30 wounded in Poonch district when Pakistani troops "resorted to

arbitrary firing," including gunfire and artillery shelling, across the Line of Control and their international border.

"It said it was responding proportionately."

Shortly after India's strikes, aircraft fell in two villages in India-controlled Kashmir.

State-run Pakistan Television, quoting security officials, said the country's air force shot down five Indian jets in retaliation but provided no additional details.

There was no immediate comment from India about Pakistan's claim.

Pakistan's Foreign Affairs Ministry said Indian forces had launched the strikes from inside Indian airspace.

UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said in a statement late on Tuesday that Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for maximum military restraint from both countries.

"The world cannot afford a military confrontation between India and Pakistan," the statement read.

Labour poll shows immigration is lowering living standards

By Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

Labour Party surveys show that voters in the United Kingdom believe rising immigration levels are negatively affecting their standard of living, according to a new poll, adding pressure on party leader Sir Keir Starmer following disappointing local election results.

The poll, conducted by Merlin Strategy on April 22 and 23, surveyed 3,000 British adults. Among respondents who voted for Labour in the last general election, only 24 percent said immigration had a positive impact on their economic situation. Forty percent said it had a negative effect, while 33 percent said it had neither.

The survey results come just days after Labour lost significant ground in local elections to the right-wing Reform UK party, which has campaigned on sharply reducing immigration and promises to freeze non-essential migration.

Growing Concern Inside Labour

Labour's electoral struggles have sparked internal debate, especially among Members of Parliament representing working-class districts in the party's traditional heartlands—the so-called “Red Wall” constituencies in the North and Midlands.

Jonathan Hinder, MP for Pendle and Clitheroe, described immigration as an “existential threat” to the party's future and proposed implementing a “one in, one out” immigration model. Jo White, chair of the Red Wall Caucus of Labour MPs, called on Starmer to abandon what he termed a cautious approach and urgently tighten controls, particularly on illegal Channel crossings.

Their remarks underscore growing frustration within the party over what some view as a lack of clarity or



decisiveness on immigration policy.

Voters Across Parties Express Skepticism
Across all political affiliations, 50 percent of respondents said immigration had a negative impact on their living standards, while just 18 percent believed it had a positive one. Among supporters of Reform UK, 72 percent viewed immigration as harmful, with only 6 percent expressing a favorable view.

Even among Liberal Democrat voters—typically more immigration-friendly—more respondents said immigration had hurt their economic situation (36 percent) than helped it (25 percent). Among Conservatives, that margin rose to 41 percent versus 14 percent.

Scarlett Maguire, founder of Merlin Strategy, said the results reflect a disconnect between elite political narratives and the lived experiences of many voters. “Only one in four Labour voters believe immigration has helped the economy,” she said. “That puts Labour in a difficult position as it weighs electoral strategy heading into the next general election.”

Not all in Labour agree on how to

respond. Louise Haigh, a senior Labour figure and former transport secretary, warned the party against what she called a “simplistic lurch to the right.” Instead, she advocated for increased public investment, funded by higher taxes, to address economic inequality.

Nadia Whittome, MP for Nottingham East, echoed that sentiment, saying that “tough talk on immigration isn't working” and urging the party to focus on wealth disparity and cost-of-living issues instead.

Looking Ahead

The poll was commissioned by Looking for Growth, a new political group advocating for pro-growth policies. As immigration continues to shape political debate in Britain, the results point to a growing challenge for Starmer: how to navigate rising voter frustration while holding together a party split over how best to respond.

Whether Labour shifts its position—or doubles down on its current approach—may prove decisive in the next general election.

Trump planning to rename Persian Gulf – Sources

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

U.S. President Donald Trump is expected to announce during his upcoming visit to Saudi Arabia that the United States will officially begin referring to the Persian Gulf as the “Arabian Gulf” or “Gulf of Arabia,” according to two U.S. officials speaking on condition of anonymity.

The proposed renaming, which is not yet formally confirmed by the White House or National Security Council, has already drawn strong backlash from Iranian officials who view the move as a deliberate political provocation.

“Politically motivated attempts to alter the historically established name of the Persian Gulf are indicative of hostile intent toward Iran and its people, and are firmly condemned,” Iran’s foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, posted on X (formerly Twitter). “It will only bring the wrath of all Iranians from all walks of life and political persuasion.”

Iran insists on the name “Persian Gulf,” which has been in use since at least the 16th century and reflects the country’s historical identity tied to the ancient Persian Empire. Meanwhile, many Arab states in the region, and parts of the U.S. military, have long preferred “Arabian Gulf,” viewing the name as a better reflection of contemporary regional demographics and alliances.

The dispute is far from new. In 2012,



Iran threatened to sue Google after the tech giant left the name of the gulf unlabeled on its maps. Today, Google Maps lists it as “Persian Gulf (Arabian Gulf)” in the U.S., while Apple Maps sticks with “Persian Gulf.”

The naming controversy erupted again in 2017 during Trump’s first term, when he referred to the waterway as the Arabian Gulf. Iran’s then-president Hassan Rouhani responded sharply, advising Trump to “study geography.”

Though Trump’s announcement would only apply to U.S. government terminology, the symbolic shift is likely to stoke further diplomatic friction at a time of strained U.S.–Iran relations. The International Hydrographic Organisation (IHO), a global authority on maritime naming conventions and a body in which the U.S. holds membership, continues to

recognise the name “Persian Gulf” as standard.

Naming disputes over geographic landmarks are not uncommon, countries frequently use different terms domestically for shared natural features. However, in this case, the renaming is widely viewed as a political gesture meant to strengthen U.S. ties with Gulf Arab states while antagonising Tehran.

The move comes months after Trump controversially suggested renaming the Gulf of Mexico the “Gulf of America,” a proposal widely criticised as unserious and nationalistic.

As the Trump team prepares for the announcement in Saudi Arabia, reactions from the international community, and especially from Iran, are expected to intensify.

Measles resurgence hits South Korea amid global uptick in cases

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

South Korea is battling its worst measles outbreak in six years, as health authorities warn that global travel and declining vaccination coverage are fueling a regional resurgence of the highly infectious disease.

The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) confirmed 52 cases so far in 2025, surpassing last year's total of 49. It marks the highest number of cases since 2019, when 194 infections were recorded, despite South Korea being declared "measles free" by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2014.

Officials attribute the spike largely to overseas transmission. Of the 52 recent cases, 34 involved individuals arriving from abroad, most from Vietnam, according to the Yonhap news agency.

"The global increase in measles is likely to result in more imported cases," a KDCA spokesperson stated. "However, the risk of rapid outbreaks remains low due to South Korea's stable vaccination rates and strong monitoring systems."

Despite the reassurance, the surge is part of a broader trend causing alarm across Southeast Asia and the United States. Vietnam has already reported around 40,000 suspected cases and five deaths in 2025 alone, prompting a nationwide push to accelerate vaccinations. In 2024, the country recorded 6,725 confirmed infections and 13 deaths, mostly among



children and elderly people with underlying health conditions.

Thailand, too, has seen a dramatic increase, reporting 7,507 cases in 2024 compared to just 38 the year prior. Meanwhile, the U.S. is experiencing its worst measles outbreak in 25 years, with Texas emerging as a hotspot.

"We're living in a post-herd immunity world," one U.S. immunologist warned, highlighting the consequences of vaccine hesitancy and gaps in global coverage.

The WHO cautioned in March that Vietnam's outbreak remains "very much ongoing," with new clusters emerging even in previously unaffected regions. It warned of "significant immunity gaps" among children who are un or under-

vaccinated.

Measles, often dismissed as a childhood illness, can lead to life-threatening complications such as pneumonia, brain inflammation (encephalitis), and death, particularly in vulnerable populations. According to infectious disease experts, the two-dose measles vaccine offers roughly 99% protection.

As global travel resumes post-pandemic and vaccination rates stagnate in some areas, experts warn that more countries, including Australia, could become fertile ground for measles outbreaks unless immunisation efforts are reinforced.

Health authorities are urging the public to ensure their vaccinations are up to date, particularly before international travel.

UK, US meet over movie tariffs

By **Fatimah Idera**

U.S. President Donald Trump, announced it aims to protect one of its biggest creative industries by having active discussions with top U.S. officials over the 100% tariff on all movies produced outside the country.

“We are already in active discussions with the top of the U.S. administration on this subject. We are working hard to establish what might be proposed, if anything, and to make sure our world-beating creative industries are protected,” creative industries minister Chris Bryant told parliament on Wednesday.

Bryant noted that Trump had not given any details about his proposal, adding that it was not clear how tariffs could be applied to the film industry, with productions often created and developed across different locations and countries.



The entertainment industry was left flummoxed on Monday by Trump’s announcement of tariffs, with executives questioning both the timing of the proposed levy and how it could be enforced.

Britain has a leading film and TV production industry, centred on studios located close to London.

Production spending on films in Britain in 2024 totalled \$5.91 billion, according to ProdPro, compared with \$14.54 billion in the United States.

Biden slams Trump’s Russia stance as “modern-day appeasement”

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

In his first interview since leaving the White House in January, former U.S. President Joe Biden delivered a scathing critique of Donald Trump’s foreign policy, warning that Trump’s approach to Russia could shatter global alliances and undermine America’s credibility on the world stage.

Speaking to the BBC in Delaware during the Allied commemorations of the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II, Biden likened Trump’s recent suggestions that Ukraine should concede territory to Russia to the failed appeasement strategies of the 1930s.

“Anybody who thinks Putin would stop if Kyiv gave in is just foolish,” Biden said. “This is modern-day appeasement. He [Putin] believes Russia has historical rights to Ukraine, and Trump’s proposals echo Chamberlain’s failed gamble with



Hitler.”

Biden voiced deep concern that Trump’s potential return to power would shake the foundations of the transatlantic alliance. “Europe would lose confidence in the certainty of America,” he said. “Our allies would be left wondering, ‘Can I rely on the United States?’ That kind of doubt

would rewrite modern history.”

The former president also criticized Trump’s past Oval Office meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, calling it “beneath America,” and condemned Trump’s outlandish proposals to reclaim the Panama Canal, make Canada the 51st state, and seize Greenland. “What the hell’s going on here?” Biden exclaimed. “We’re about freedom, democracy, opportunity not confiscation.”

Defending his own handling of the Ukraine conflict, Biden pushed back against claims that his administration was slow to arm Kyiv. “We gave them everything they needed to defend their independence,” he said. “And we were prepared to respond more aggressively if Putin escalated.”

UK denies plan to sell out British workers in India Trade deal

By Fatimah Idera



Britain's Trade Minister has defended a contentious tax break for some Indian workers agreed as part of a landmark free trade agreement with India, saying the idea that he had undercut British workers was absolute nonsense.

The trade deal, which includes a range of tariff cuts on British imports to India, also exempts some short-term workers from India from paying into Britain's social security system for three years.

The exemption under the so-called Double Contributions Convention also applies to British workers in India, but while Britain barely made mention of this element of the trade deal, India hailed it as a huge win.

British opposition parties accused the government of signing up to a deal

that would unfairly benefit India.

"This is absolute nonsense... No-one is being undercut," Reynolds told LBC Radio, stressing that Britain had similar agreements with 50 other nations so that workers didn't have to make contributions in two countries at one time.

"If you are a business that needs to temporarily put your staff in the UK or India, if you are a UK business, it's a little bit easier to do that."

Reynolds also told other media that the changes would affect a very small number of people.

Nigel Farage, the leader of Reform UK, which is currently leading in the opinion polls, said the government had sold out British workers.

He said, without elaborating, that

Indian workers and firms would pay 20% less tax than their British counterparts.

India said during negotiations that its workers and companies should not pay social security contributions on staff if they lived in Britain for fewer than three years because they would have to make social security payments in both countries.

British officials could not initially say how many Indian workers would benefit or how much it would cost the British government in lost revenue.

Official data shows Britain granted more than 81,000 work visas to Indians last year, more than any other nationality, although many represent health and care or other non-temporary workers who would still be expected to pay social security in Britain.

5 Venezuelan opposition figures rescued from Caracas Embassy, now in U.S.

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

In a dramatic turn of events, five members of Venezuela's political opposition who had taken refuge in the Argentinian ambassador's residence in Caracas have safely arrived in the United States, following what U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio described as a "rescue operation."

The five individuals had been sheltering at the diplomatic residence since March 2024 to avoid arrest by President Nicolás Maduro's regime, which accused them of inciting violence and attempting to destabilize the country. Among the group were the campaign manager and communications director for opposition leader María Corina Machado.

Rubio confirmed their arrival on U.S. soil in a post on X, formerly Twitter. "The US welcomes the successful rescue of all hostages held by the Maduro regime at the Argentinian embassy in Caracas. Following a precise operation, all hostages are now safely on US soil," he wrote, without disclosing details of how the group was transported out of Venezuela.

Argentina's President Javier Milei had initially granted the five asylum within the ambassador's residence in a controversial diplomatic standoff that has since escalated tensions between Caracas and Buenos Aires. In response to the operation, Milei called it "an important step in defending freedom in the region."

Machado praised the effort as an "impeccable and epic operation for the freedom of five heroes of Venezuela," also taking to social media to express



gratitude for the support behind the mission.

While the Maduro government has not issued an official statement, the episode marks another flashpoint in Venezuela's deepening political crisis. The compound had reportedly been under constant surveillance by state intelligence and police forces, with power and water cut off, claims the government previously denied.

A sixth man, former cabinet minister Fernando Martinez, had also sought shelter with the group but left the compound in December. Authorities claimed he voluntarily appeared before prosecutors. He died two months later under unclear circumstances.

The escape comes in the wake of a highly contested presidential election in Venezuela, during which the Maduro-aligned national electoral council declared Maduro the victor despite widespread allegations of

fraud. The announcement sparked nationwide protests, resulting in more than 20 deaths and triggering diplomatic ruptures with several nations, including Argentina.

In August, Argentina requested Brazil to safeguard its diplomatic premises in Caracas following the expulsion of Argentinian diplomats. However, Venezuela revoked Brazil's authorization in September, accusing the compound of harboring terrorists and conspirators, an allegation denied by both Argentina and Brazil.

The rescue operation is expected to strain already fragile regional relations while drawing renewed attention to the Maduro regime's crackdown on dissent and the dangerous conditions faced by opposition members.

As of Tuesday, the five rescued individuals have not spoken publicly, and details about their route to the United States remain under wraps.

UK admits no evidence 'nature laws' hinder development

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The United Kingdom government's central justification for sweeping changes to environmental protections in its controversial new planning and infrastructure bill has been dealt a major blow by its own impact assessment.

According to the analysis conducted by Whitehall officials, there is very little evidence to support the claim that environmental protections delay development.

The bill, which is currently under scrutiny, aims to fast-track housing and infrastructure projects by allowing developers to sidestep vital environmental obligations. In exchange, developers would pay into a Nature Recovery Fund (NRF), a move critics have slammed as a "licence to kill nature."

Officials admitted that they were unable to provide robust data or research showing that rules protecting habitats and endangered species, such as barn owls, bats, otters, and newts, actually obstruct construction. "There is very limited data on how environmental obligations affect development," the assessment reads, undermining the government's longstanding argument that nature laws are a development bottleneck.

While the impact of one rule, nutrient neutrality, was examined, officials conceded that even this analysis lacked sufficient data. Other obligations, like protecting Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), threatened species,



and maintaining water neutrality, were not studied at all due to a "lack of data."

Nature at risk, but for what?

The most controversial part of the bill, Part Three, would let developers offset damage to nature by funding environmental improvements elsewhere, possibly in different counties. Ecologists and economists warn this will fragment habitats and reduce local communities' access to green space, all while offering no proven economic benefit.

"This bill puts vulnerable species at risk on the false premise that nature blocks development," said Robert Oates, CEO of ecological consultancy Arbtech. "The government has no idea how this bill will affect wildlife like barn owls and otters, and they've admitted as much."

Oates also highlighted a striking contradiction: the government claims the bill creates new solutions, yet the impact assessment states these solutions are already possible under existing legislation.

Mounting criticism over nature laws from experts, watchdogs

The Office for Environmental Protection, the UK's environmental watchdog, has warned that the bill would strip away essential safeguards, placing protected sites in jeopardy. Meanwhile, the Wildlife Trusts have demanded urgent amendments.

"Ministers have repeatedly ignored evidence that current protections don't delay building," said Becky Pullinger, head of land use planning at the Wildlife Trusts. "Now their assessment confirms it. We can build homes and protect nature, but this bill won't let us do either."

There are also concerns about the NRF's implementation. Officials have flagged risks around Natural England's capacity to manage the fund effectively. If nature recovery projects aren't delivered in time, developers could bypass crucial protections without any meaningful offset, creating a new bottleneck, this time inside the system meant to streamline it.

Amazon unveils touch-sensitive robot 'Vulcan'

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Amazon has unveiled a groundbreaking advancement in warehouse automation with the launch of "Vulcan," a new touch-sensitive robot designed to revolutionize how items are handled in its massive global distribution centers.

Debuting at the tech giant's "Delivering the Future" event in Dortmund, Vulcan represents what Amazon describes as a "fundamental leap forward in robotics." The robot can feel and identify items by touch, an ability long considered a hurdle in robotics, allowing it to safely pick up and sort about 75% of the diverse products in Amazon's inventory.

Aaron Parness, Amazon's director of robotics, hailed the innovation as transformative: "It's not just seeing the world, it's feeling it, enabling capabilities that were impossible for Amazon robots until now."

Designed to Work Alongside Humans

Unlike its predecessors, which relied on suction cups and basic computer vision to move products, Vulcan uses artificial intelligence and tactile feedback to assess and grasp items of varying shapes and textures. It can store items in hard to reach places, such as the top and bottom tiers of mobile shelving units known as pods, reducing the need for workers to use ladders or bend repeatedly.

Vulcan is part of a growing suite of automation tools used by Amazon, which currently operates more than 750,000 robots across its warehouses. These machines, often working in tandem with humans, already transport shelving units to picking stations, where staff retrieve or stow goods.

Job Security Concerns Resurface

The rapid rise of warehouse robotics



continues to spark concern over potential job losses. With many retailers, including Amazon, ramping up automation to offset rising global labor costs, industry watchers worry about long-term impacts on employment. Strikes over pay and working conditions have plagued Amazon facilities in the UK and other countries.

In 2023, Goldman Sachs economists projected that up to 300 million jobs could be lost worldwide by 2030 due to advances in generative AI and automation. Similarly, a report from the Tony Blair Institute warned that 60,000 to 275,000 UK jobs could be displaced annually at the peak of this disruption.

Yet, Amazon maintains that robots like Vulcan are meant to support not replace its human workforce.

"People Will Always Be Part of the Equation"

Tye Brady, Amazon's chief technologist of robotics and a self-proclaimed "Star Wars geek," likened Vulcan to a collaborative droid in a sci-fi saga.

"There's no such thing as completely automated," he said. "People will always be part of the equation. Robots are here to take on the menial, the mundane, and the

repetitive tasks that wear people down."

Brady added that human oversight remains critical in detecting system failures, cyber threats, and everyday mishaps such as damaged goods. "Machines may be able to flag anomalies, but people have the common sense and intuition to truly understand what's happening."

AI-Powered Packaging and Sustainability Push

Amazon is also rolling out machine-learning-powered packaging systems that customize boxes to reduce waste. More than 70 of these systems will be installed across the UK, Germany, France, Italy, and Spain by year-end, with more to follow through 2027.

The push for robotics comes alongside Amazon's launch of a new low-cost shopping platform, Amazon Haul, in the UK, an aggressive move to take on ultra-budget e-commerce competitors like Shein and Temu. The site offers thousands of products for £20 or less.

As Brady put it, "It's really exciting to bring both the mind and the body together. It's finally here, and it's just beginning."

Miliband proposes converting UK car parks into solar farms

By **Fatimah Idera**

Ed Miliband has called for a massive expansion of solar power through the untapped potential of Britain's car parks.

The Energy Secretary while seeking views on how to spur the construction of solar panel canopies above parking spaces at supermarkets, offices and shopping villages.

The idea is viewed as a win-win because it would make better use of sprawling car parks while also generating more green electricity, potentially lowering bills for businesses.

Motorists would also benefit from more shaded parking spots and potentially a larger number of electric car charging stations, which could be powered directly by the panels, the Government said.

It is understood that the consultation will seek to understand why such solar canopies are more common in Europe than in the UK and what can be done to encourage more to be built here.

Ministers are thought to be considering whether measures used in Europe, which require outdoor car parks to have solar canopies, could be introduced.

Mr Miliband said: "Right now, the sun is shining on hundreds of thousands of car parking spaces across the country which could be used to power our homes and businesses.

"We want to work with businesses and car park operators to turn our car parks into solar carports to save families and



businesses money with clean, home-grown British energy through our Plan for Change."

It comes as Mr Miliband is seeking to ramp up the deployment of wind and solar farms across the UK to deliver the Government's promise of a 95pc clean power system by 2030.

That will require the installed amount of solar capacity to jump from about 17GW (gigawatts) today to between 45GW and 47GW within just five years, according to the clean power action plan.

Mr Miliband has approved nearly 3GW of new capacity since he was appointed Energy Secretary in July, enough to power about 1m homes.

So-called solar carports and canopies are seen as yet another way for solar deployment to be boosted.

According to the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero, one 80-space car park could save about £28,000 a year in electricity bills by installing solar carports and using all electricity generated.

One of the biggest existing schemes is at the Metrocentre shopping centre in Gateshead, which has more than 5,300 rooftop and carport solar panels. These provide 40pc of the site's annual electricity needs.

Chris Hewett, chief executive of the trade association Solar Energy UK, welcomed the consultation but warned that grid connection issues across Britain were the real blocker to having more carports.

"Encouraging or mandating the creation of solar-roofed car parks would be another win-win for the industry, creating greater access to charging points, cutting bills for businesses, driving down emissions and creating jobs," he said.

"What has held this back from happening already is largely a lack of capacity in local electricity networks to accept the power generated.

"Resolving that challenge is of critical importance, not just for solar car parks but to decarbonise warehouses, supermarkets, factories and hospitals, too."

Real Madrid target Alexander-Arnold for club world cup push

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Real Madrid are pushing to secure the early arrival of Trent Alexander-Arnold in time for the Club World Cup this summer, with the Spanish giants hoping to complete a deal before his Liverpool contract officially expires.

The 26-year-old England international recently confirmed he will leave Liverpool at the end of the 2024–25 season after 18 years at the club. His current contract runs until 30 June, but the Club World Cup — organised by FIFA and set to be staged in the United States — begins on 14 June, leaving a two-week gap in eligibility.

BBC Sport understands Real Madrid have initiated talks with Liverpool to explore the possibility of releasing Alexander-Arnold before the expiry of his deal, to integrate him into their squad ahead of the revamped Club World Cup, which is expected to draw global attention and serve as a showcase for top clubs.

Sources close to the negotiation describe the discussions as “amicable,” with no suggestion of tension between the clubs. Real are reportedly preparing an offer in the region of £850,000 as compensation to Liverpool in exchange for Alexander-Arnold’s early release. The Spanish side are also said to be considering covering the defender’s wages for the final two weeks of June, as part of the overall agreement.

Though Alexander-Arnold will be available on a free transfer from 1 July, Real’s interest in securing his services for the Club World Cup adds financial and sporting value to an otherwise straightforward Bosman transfer. From



Liverpool’s perspective, the proposal presents an opportunity to recoup at least a symbolic fee for a player who has been central to the club’s success in the last decade.

A Legacy at Anfield

Trent Alexander-Arnold, a product of Liverpool’s academy, has been instrumental in the club’s modern era under Jürgen Klopp. Since his breakthrough in 2016, he has helped Liverpool win two Premier League titles, the UEFA Champions League, the FA Cup, the League Cup, the UEFA Super Cup, and the FIFA Club World Cup.

Known for redefining the full-back role with his passing range, vision, and set-piece ability, Alexander-Arnold has become one of the most influential defenders of his generation. His departure marks the end of an era for Liverpool and is expected to spark significant reshaping in their backline.

Although he remains a fan favourite, the decision not to renew his contract had reportedly been under discussion for some time, with the player keen on a new challenge abroad. Real Madrid, long admirers of the right-back, view him as a natural long-term replacement for Dani Carvajal, and a key figure in their

evolving squad.

FIFA Confirms Early Transfer Window

FIFA has confirmed that a short transfer window will open from 1 to 10 June, specifically for clubs involved in the Club World Cup to register new players. This window allows participating clubs — including Real Madrid — to make squad adjustments in time for the tournament’s start on 14 June.

The timing of this window gives Real Madrid a narrow but viable opportunity to register Alexander-Arnold, provided an agreement with Liverpool can be finalised swiftly. Failure to do so would mean the defender misses the tournament entirely and only joins up with the squad in July, potentially missing pre-season integration.

A Deal in the Making

As things stand, all parties appear open to a pragmatic solution. Liverpool would receive a parting fee and shed wages, Alexander-Arnold would avoid a month on the sidelines before his official unveiling, and Real would bolster their squad for the Club World Cup — a tournament they are eager to win as part of their global brand strategy.

UCL: PSG eliminate Arsenal, to play Inter Milan in final

By Oluwatosin Ologun

Paris Saint-Germain have eliminated Arsenal in the second-leg of the semi final clash on Wednesday night.

Paris St-Germain's pursuit of European glory has been a long one.

But with the club in a "special moment" following their 2-1 semi-final victory over Arsenal on Wednesday - 3-1 on aggregate - their dreams could finally become reality in Munich against Italian champions Inter Milan on 31 May.

The Champions League is the one trophy that has eluded the 13-time French champions, who reached the 2019-20 final but were beaten by Bayern Munich.

But under Luis Enrique, PSG have struck a balance between star quality, togetherness and hard work.

"PSG, out of all the Champions League teams I've seen this season, they're in a special moment at this club," said former England defender Matthew Upson on BBC Radio 5 Live.

"There's a real feeling from me that this is going to be their time. A team that works incredibly hard for each other, they've got a speed and energy about them that is so hard to handle.

"Luis Enrique has struck the perfect balance in the PSG team. It has got an imprint of him. His work rate, the intensity, the togetherness, the way they are fighting for each other. All the



hallmarks of a team that is going to be really successful."

PSG might have lost five games on their way to the Champions League final, but they have found a way to win when it matters.

"They have gone to young, French players, the fans identify with these players. They are a proper team and deserve to be in the final," said Owen Hargreaves on TNT Sports.

"Luis Enrique understands you cannot carry any players in the Champions League. Now they have captured the hearts of Paris fans and for the neutrals they are great to watch."

Their semi-final victory is in no small part thanks to their dynamic full-backs - Achraf Hakimi, who was named man of the match in both legs and scored a stunning goal to make sure of PSG's victory, and Nuno Mendes.

Their energy up and down the flanks always gave PSG options out wide in attack while their workrate to get back into defensive shape was equally impressive.

"They have come up against some of the best wingers in Europe and they have really stood tall, and they are not scared of having those duels, time and time again, or being isolated against them," said former Manchester City defender Nedum Onuoha.

"In terms of a full-back display in Europe this season, the stuff that they have been doing is as good as any pair in the competition."

Gianluigi Donnarumma has also been a key figure with Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta suggesting the Italian goalkeeper is the reason PSG have reached the final.

"Over the two legs, the best player on the pitch was their goalkeeper - he's made a difference in the tie," said the Gunners boss.

Onuoha said Donnarumma had been the "key man" for PSG, adding: "There are so many big moments he stepped up. Some of his saves were massive saves in really big moments on the biggest stage."

Trump: 2026 World Cup could push Russia to end war

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

At the inaugural meeting of the 2026 World Cup taskforce, US President Donald Trump suggested that the opportunity for Russia to participate in the tournament could act as a diplomatic lever to end the war in Ukraine.

The Russian national team has been banned from international football since 2022 following its invasion of Ukraine. The ban, imposed by both FIFA and UEFA, excludes Russia from all major competitions, including the 2026 World Cup, which will be co-hosted by the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

Trump, who is running for a second presidential term in the November 2024 election, has repeatedly vowed to end the war in Ukraine on “day one” if re-elected. Speaking in Washington alongside FIFA President Gianni Infantino, Trump appeared surprised to learn that Russia was still barred from participating in international tournaments.

“I didn’t know that. Is that right?” Trump asked, turning to Infantino.

“That is right,” Infantino responded. “They are banned for the time being from playing, but we hope that something happens and peace will happen so that

can be readmitted.”

Trump seized on the point as a potential motivator. “That’s possible. Hey, that could be a good incentive, right?” he said. “We want to get them to stop. We want them to stop. Five thousand young people a week are being killed — it’s not even believable.”

While suggesting that the prospect of



World Cup participation could help prompt peace talks, Trump was quick to distance himself from any formal role in FIFA’s decision-making process, saying, “He [Infantino] is the boss. I have nothing to do with it.”

The comments come at a politically sensitive time, as the United States prepares to welcome fans from all over the world to the 2026 World Cup. The tournament, expected to be the biggest in history with 104 matches, will feature 78 games in the US alone, including the final.

Immigration, security take centre stage
Also present at the meeting was US Vice President JD Vance, who struck a harder tone regarding immigration. While emphasising that the US looks forward to welcoming international fans, Vance made it clear that visitors must return home after the event.

“We want them to come. We want them to celebrate. We want them to watch the game,” said Vance. “But when the time is up, they’ll have to go home.”

This sentiment was echoed by Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, who revealed that visa processing for international fans is already underway.

“That is going to be a precursor to what we can do next year for the World Cup as well. It is all being facilitated,” Noem said.

The World Tourism Forum Institute recently warned that strict immigration policies and rising global tensions could disrupt the expected influx of nearly two million overseas visitors.

Despite the political backdrop, FIFA has not indicated any imminent decision regarding Russia’s potential reinstatement. The organisation has so far remained firm in its stance, insisting that participation in its competitions must align with its principles of peace and fair play.

BBC Sport has contacted FIFA for further comment on whether Russia’s ban could be lifted ahead of the 2026 tournament.

For now, the intersection of geopolitics and global sport remains delicate. Whether football can serve as a tool for peace, as Trump suggests, or whether it remains another arena marked by division, is a question that may shape both the tournament and the global stage in the years to come.

Wenger proposes 'daylight' offside rule to revive attacking football

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Arsene Wenger, FIFA's Head of Global Football Development, has reignited the debate around one of the sport's most contentious rules — offside. The former Arsenal manager has proposed a fundamental shift in how offside is judged, aiming to give attackers more freedom and revive the excitement of attacking football.

Currently, a player is deemed offside if any part of their body, excluding the hands and arms, is ahead of the last outfield defender when the ball is played. But Wenger's new proposal, dubbed the 'daylight rule', suggests that a player should be considered onside if any part of their body is in line with the last defender.

Speaking to Bein Sports, Wenger likened the proposed change to the rule amendment made after the 1990 World Cup in Italy. At that time, players were judged offside even when level with the last defender — a restriction widely blamed for the tournament's historically low goal average of just 2.21 goals per game.

"It was in 1990 after the World Cup in Italy when there were no goals scored," Wenger recalled. "We decided that there is no offside any more when you are on the same line as the defender. In case of doubt, the doubt benefits the striker."

The post-1990 changes, including awarding three points for a win and modifying the back-pass rule, aimed to encourage attacking play. The results were evident at the 1994 World Cup in the United States, where the goal average jumped to 2.71 per game — a marked improvement that signalled a more entertaining brand of football.

However, the advent of Video Assistant Referee (VAR) technology in recent years has created new frustrations. Highly



precise offside decisions — sometimes disallowing goals for a toe or a shoulder being marginally offside — have sparked widespread debate about fairness and the spirit of the game.

Semi-automated offside technology, already in use in competitions like the Premier League and Champions League, further intensified scrutiny. In last week's Champions League semi-final first leg, Inter Milan's Henrikh Mkhitaryan was ruled offside by a toe — a ruling that encapsulates the frustration felt by fans and players alike.

"With VAR, this advantage disappeared and for many people it's frustrating," Wenger said. His suggested rule change would aim to shift the balance back in favour of attackers, giving the benefit of the doubt to the offensive player in tight situations.

Trials of the proposed daylight rule have already taken place in Italian youth leagues, and further experiments are planned ahead of a potential global rollout. The ultimate decision rests with the International Football Association Board (IFAB), football's law-making body, which approved the continued testing during its annual general meeting in March.

According to IFAB, the objective is clear: "To foster attacking football and encourage goalscoring opportunities while maintaining the game's attractiveness."

Before any rule change is implemented, IFAB will consult a range of stakeholders, including football's technical and football advisory panels. These panels feature respected voices from the game — including former players, coaches, and referees — who will provide insights into the feasibility and potential impact of the change.

Wenger, who spent over two decades promoting dynamic football as Arsenal's manager, has long championed innovation in the sport. His push for offside reform is just one of several initiatives under his leadership at FIFA, where he has also advocated for changes in youth development, fixture congestion, and tournament formats.

Whether the daylight rule becomes part of football's future remains to be seen, but it is clear that momentum is building for a more attacking interpretation of the offside law. For fans and players yearning for fewer VAR interruptions and more goals, Wenger's proposal might just be the change the beautiful game needs.