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Over 8,000 terrorists killed in 2024, says Defence minister Pg 5



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Poor JAMB results: Obi calls for aggressive investment in education

By Friday Omosola

The 2023 presidential candidate of the Labour Party, LP, Peter Obi, has raised alarm over the declining state of Nigeria's education and the worsening poverty levels across the country.

Obi, in a statement, called for urgent and strategic investment in critical sectors.

He described the recently released results from the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) as 'shocking' and a clear indicator of systemic failure in the country's educational sector.

The New Daily Prime reported that JAMB disclosed that over 1.5 million out of the 1,955,069 candidates who sat for the 2025 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination scored below 200 in the just-concluded exam.

"I just came across the official results from JAMB showing the recent exam figures. According to the data shared, a total of 1,955,069 candidates sat for the exam. Shockingly, only about 420,000 candidates scored above 200, while over 1.5 million scored below 200," Obi said.

"This means that over 78% of the total candidates failed to meet the 200-mark threshold — a reflection of the deep-rooted challenges in our educational system," he added.

Obi attributed the poor performance to decades of underinvestment in education, stressing that the sector should be central to Nigeria's development strategy.

Comparing Nigeria's university enrolment to that of other countries, he lamented the dismal figures.

"Nigeria's total university enrolment currently stands at approximately 2 million students. By contrast, the National University of Bangladesh — a single university — has over 3.4 million students enrolled, despite the country having only about 75% of



Nigeria's population," he noted.

"Turkey, with a population of about 87.7 million, has over 7 million university students, more than three times Nigeria's total university enrolment."

Obi reiterated his long-standing position that education must be treated not merely as a social service, but as a strategic investment capable of driving national development and lifting citizens out of poverty.

"Education is the most critical driver of national development and the most powerful tool for lifting people out of poverty. We must now invest aggressively in education — at all levels — if we are serious about building a prosperous, secure, and equitable Nigeria," he said.

The former Anambra State governor also decried the rising poverty levels, citing a recent World Bank report which revealed that, as of April 2025, over 75% of rural Nigerians now live in poverty, while 41.3% of the urban population is also below the poverty line.

"Back in 2018/2019, about 30.9% of Nigerians lived below the international extreme poverty line. As

of 2025, that figure has more than doubled instead of improving," Obi stated.

He blamed the worsening situation on years of misplaced priorities by successive governments, criticising the continued investment in non-essential infrastructure over critical human capital sectors.

"Rather than investing in critical sectors, we have continued to prioritise wasteful spending on non-developmental projects such as conference centres, government houses and lodges, guest houses, and fleets of official vehicles—instead of investing in education, healthcare, and MSMEs," Obi said.

Calling for a shift in national priorities, Obi urged governments at all levels to reassess their focus and urgently redirect investments towards health, education, and poverty alleviation.

"We must urgently redirect our national focus and address the root causes of poverty. Nigeria must expand access to quality education and healthcare, and support job creation by investing in and empowering Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)," he said.

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

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SIZE	TOTAL RATE
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HALF PAGE	213,000.00
QUARTER PAGE	106,500.00
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10X5	255,238.00
10X4	206,890.50
10X3	179,608.00
9X6	254,977.00
9X5	225,738.00
9X4	193,500.00
9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
5X3	66,875.00
5X2	42,916.50
4X4	60,166.50
4X3	36,499.50
4X2	29,333.50
3X3	28,000.00
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2X2	13,000.00
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POLITICAL COLOUR

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POLITICAL BLACK & WHITE

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5X6 FRONT PAGE	3,350,000.00
10X6 FRONT PAGE	8,250,000.00
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EARPIECE INSIDE PAGE(1.5X2)	117,875.00
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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
EVENT COVERAGE	100,000.00	7,500.00	107,500.00
FEATURES	200,000.00	15,000.00	215,000.00

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CONTACT US

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

E-mail Address:
info@newdailyprime.news
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Senate sets up oversight committee to monitor Rivers administrator

By **Damilola Olufemi**

The Nigerian Senate has inaugurated an 18-member committee to oversee the activities of the Rivers State Sole Administrator, Vice Admiral Ibok-Ete Ibas (retd.), in a move aimed at enhancing transparency and accountability in the state's governance.

Senate President Godswill Akpabio announced the formation of the committee during plenary on Tuesday, naming Senate Leader Opeyemi Bamidele as chairman.

Akpabio emphasised that the committee's work would play a crucial role in deepening legislative oversight and ensuring that democratic norms are upheld in Rivers State. "This committee is expected to provide effective scrutiny and ensure the right processes are being followed," he said.

He noted that the committee's structure could be revised after further consultations, hinting at possible



adjustments in its membership.

The Senate President also urged the committee to begin its work without delay, citing the urgency and importance of the assignment.

Committee members by inaugurated by Senate

The committee includes Senators

Adamu Aliero, Osita Izunaso, Osita Ngwu, Kaka Shehu, Aminu Abass, Tokunbo Abiru, Adeniyi Adebire, Sani Musa, Simon Lalong, Asuquo Ekpeyong, Adams Oshiomhole, Irete Kingibe, Onyekachi, Idiat Adebule, Ide Dafinone, and Mohammed (APC, Jigawa), with the Clerk of the Senate also participating.

Delta Speaker, 21 PDP lawmakers, defect to APC

By **Friday Omosola**

TWENTY-TWO members of the Delta State House of Assembly, including the Speaker, Rt. Hon. Emomotimi Guwor, have formally defected from the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, to the All Progressives Congress, APC.

They defected during Tuesday's plenary.

Guwor, who announced the



defection, disclosed that he had received 22 letters, including his notification of change of membership from the PDP to APC by members of the PDP in the House.

The Speaker said the defection was hinged on the instability of the national leadership of the PDP and factionalisation of the South-South zonal executive of the party.

Over 8,000 terrorists killed in 2024, says Defence minister

By **Damilola Olufemi**

Minister of State for Defence, Bello Matawalle, has revealed that security forces neutralised more than 8,000 terrorists and armed criminals across Nigeria in 2024, attributing the achievement to the renewed military strategies under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's leadership.

During a review of the administration's progress, Matawalle praised the improved coordination and direction in Nigeria's security architecture, which he said has significantly strengthened efforts against insurgency, banditry, and other criminal threats nationwide.

According to a statement released Monday by Patience Ituke on behalf of the Ministry of Defence's Director of Information and Public Relations, the minister also disclosed that over 11,600 suspects were apprehended during security operations, and more than 10,000 illegal weapons were recovered.

Matawalle expressed strong confidence in President Tinubu's performance, stating that the administration's visible successes, especially in security and defence, could pave the way for his re-election in 2027.

The statement read in part: "Minister Matawalle commended President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for his bold and transformative initiatives, particularly



in the security sector, where thousands of criminals have been neutralised or arrested, and thousands of weapons have been confiscated from criminal elements."

He also highlighted the establishment of the Multi-Agency Anti-Kidnap Fusion Cell, which he said has significantly improved inter-agency coordination in combating kidnapping and related crimes.

Beyond the gains in national security, Matawalle applauded the government's broader development agenda, pointing to the creation of the Ministry of Livestock Development as a major step toward reviving agriculture in northern Nigeria. He credited the ministry with helping to stabilise grain prices and enhance food production.

"The economic benefits of the new

Ministry of Livestock Development are already being felt," the statement noted. "By supporting agricultural growth in the North, the government is creating jobs and improving livelihoods for millions of Nigerians."

Matawalle also referenced major infrastructure projects currently underway, including road and transport upgrades, as further evidence of the administration's commitment to inclusive economic development.

He concluded by expressing optimism about the future, asserting that President Tinubu's policies are not only addressing immediate challenges but also laying the foundation for long-term prosperity. He maintained that if the current momentum is sustained, it could secure public support for Tinubu's second term in office.

FG establishes phytomedicine committee to boost healthcare products, economic growth

By Helen Okechukwu



To improve the health sector and strengthen Nigeria's economy, the Federal Government (FG) through the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare has established a Ministerial Committee for the Development of the Phytomedicine Value Chain.

The committee is charged with the responsibility of integrating traditional and modern medicine, including building a foundation to support herbal remedies and rural livelihoods, which aligns with the World Health Organization (WHO).

Dr. Izaq Salako, Honourable Minister of State for Health & Social Welfare, during the inauguration of the committee, described the initiative as a testament which aims to achieve universal health coverage (UHC), economic diversification, employment opportunities, and wealth creation.

"This is not just a health policy," Salako said, "it is also a socio-economic policy."

The minister added that it will position Nigeria into the growing global market for herbal medicinal products and significantly improve the country's national economy.

Dr. Obi, Chairman of the Committee and Director-General of NIPRD, while speaking, expressed optimism about the inaugurated committee and reaffirmed the commitment of the committee to championing the phytomedicines value chain for a transformative economy.

"We will create high-value employment, build robust capacity, secure revenue streams and, above all, improve health outcomes for Nigerians," Dr. Adigwe disclosed.

The committee is made up of government officials, the private sector, international partners, a WHO representative, and Traditional & Natural Medicine Practitioners.

The committee is tasked with responsibilities to develop a comprehensive framework, identify key phytomedicinal products, propose policy reforms and regulatory mechanisms, and engage with key stakeholders, including traditional healers, to create capacity building.

Other responsibilities involve recommending sustainable financing and investment models and ensuring that the national health strategies and global health practices align with WHO guidelines on traditional medicine.

Nigeria loses over N2bn yearly to poor electricity supply – UNDP

By **Damilola Olufemi**

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has revealed that Nigeria suffers economic losses exceeding N2 billion each year due to its unstable and insufficient electricity supply.

Speaking at the maiden edition of the National Legislative Conference and Expo on Renewable Energy in Lagos, UNDP Resident Representative, Elsie Attafuah, said the unreliable power situation continues to stifle productivity across sectors, particularly in agriculture.

The conference was a joint effort between the House of Representatives Committee on Renewable Energy and the UNDP, under its Parliamentary Development Programme.

Attafuah stressed that large quantities of agricultural produce, including yams, fruits, and vegetables, go to waste due to inadequate refrigeration and storage caused by inconsistent electricity. She also noted that the country's power challenges contribute to rising unemployment.

Highlighting some progress, Attafuah pointed out that UNDP's provision of alternative power sources to farmers in parts of northern Nigeria has begun to show encouraging results, including improved earnings and increased participation in farming activities.

Also addressing participants, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Tajudeen Abbas, emphasised that Nigeria must transition to renewable energy to safeguard its economy and secure a sustainable future.

He noted, "This conference reflects our commitment to responding to global energy challenges. Nigeria must embrace sustainable energy solutions not only for



growth and energy security but also for long-term environmental resilience."

Abbas referenced international energy trends, stating that in 2024 alone, 585 gigawatts of renewable capacity were added globally, representing 92% of new electricity generation. In 2023, \$1.7 trillion of the \$2.8 trillion invested globally in the energy sector went into clean energy technologies.

He acknowledged that while Nigeria, a country heavily reliant on fossil fuel exports, faces challenges in adapting to these shifts, it also has opportunities to diversify its economy and attract green investment.

To support this transition, Abbas revealed that new tax reforms had been passed, removing value-added tax (VAT) on renewable energy products and compressed natural gas (CNG). He said the House is also working to strengthen the legal framework for the federal government's Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Policy introduced in 2015.

"We also recognise the urgency of

expanding access to clean cooking energy, which is critical for public health and environmental sustainability," he added.

Chairman of the House Committee on Renewable Energy, Victor Ogene, reiterated the goal of the conference: to help reduce Nigeria's reliance on fossil fuels and foster clean energy-driven industrial growth. Representing Ogbaru Federal Constituency, Ogene said renewable energy is essential to job creation and long-term development.

Delegates from Abia, Enugu, and Osun states also echoed the need for a more reliable and sustainable power system. They advocated for expanded energy access and better infrastructure as keys to national progress.

Notable contributors at the event included Ghana's First Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Prof. Benard Afiator (on behalf of Speaker Alban Bagbin), Executive Director of the INCLUDE Knowledge Platform, Anika Altaf, and top energy officials from the participating Nigerian states.

Sanwo-Olu urges ECOWAS to champion inclusive justice

By Damilola Olufemi

Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, has called on legal professionals and civil society groups across West Africa to intensify efforts toward building a more inclusive justice system that guarantees equal access for all, regardless of background or status.

Delivering the keynote address at the opening of a two-day sensitisation mission organised by the ECOWAS Court of Justice in Lagos, Sanwo-Olu challenged the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to lead by example in the administration of justice and the protection of human rights across the sub-region.

The event, which opened at Eko Hotels and Suites, Victoria Island, brought together ECOWAS judges, legal experts, and civil rights organisations from member states to deliberate on strengthening regional legal systems.

Sanwo-Olu stressed that unity among officers of the law was vital for ECOWAS to realise a just, peaceful, and prosperous community.

He urged stakeholders to contribute meaningfully to discussions, enhance regional ties, and harness the sub-region's vast potential through collaboration and innovation.

"Today's gathering reflects a shared determination to fortify our legal institutions and make justice more accessible," the governor said.

"Whether tackling security challenges, economic hurdles or rights violations, our response must be rooted in equity, transparency and a collective commitment to the rule of law."

He added that the presence of the ECOWAS Court in Lagos underscored the city's strategic importance and symbolised a wider effort to demystify



justice and bring it closer to the people.

Through public engagement and external court sessions, he said, the regional court could strengthen its connection with citizens and national institutions.

The governor also described Lagos as a symbol of ECOWAS unity and progress, citing the state's status as a hub for trade, investment and cultural integration.

He said the decision to host the event in Lagos reflected a shared goal of deepening regional integration and reinforcing the rule of law.

In his address, President of the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice, Ricardo Gonçalves argued that justice must no longer be viewed as distant or exclusive.

He said the era of inaccessible and elitist justice systems should end.

"Justice is the birthright of every citizen, whether in bustling cities or remote villages," he said.

"When access is denied to a farmer due to distance, or a child grows up believing justice is unreachable, we have failed in our duty as custodians of justice."

He called on all stakeholders to work together to make justice real and

effective at the grassroots level, saying the court's mission must centre on restoring hope, building trust, and serving the marginalised.

Also speaking, Chief Justice of Nigeria, Kudirat Kekere-Ekun, described the sensitisation mission as an opportunity for legal practitioners to recommit to the principles of the rule of law and regional integration.

She underscored the importance of judicial cooperation in addressing cross-border crimes and protecting human rights across West Africa.

"Within a region where the ideals of free movement, economic development and political stability are paramount, no national judiciary can function in isolation," she said.

"Strong collaboration between domestic courts and the ECOWAS Court is vital to ensure justice is fair, predictable, and widely accessible."

Justice Kekere-Ekun noted that greater cooperation would enhance the interpretation of ECOWAS legal instruments and enable the fight against corruption, terrorism, and trafficking, while also supporting businesses and individuals in resolving regional disputes.

Ogun targets 6,500 jobs with \$400m steel factory

By Friday Omosola



No fewer than 6,500 direct and indirect jobs are set to be created in Ewekoro Local Government Area of Ogun State as a \$400 million hot rolled coiled steel factory is slated for establishment.

The President of Inner Galaxy Group, Mr Li Shuang, disclosed this on Tuesday during a visit to the Governor Dapo Abiodun's Office at Oke-Mosan, Abeokuta, where he led a delegation of key officials from the company.

Mr Li stated that the factory is expected to commence operations in April 2026.

He noted that Inner Galaxy Group, a multinational conglomerate with significant investments across Asia—including the Philippines and Malaysia—as well as in African countries such as Ghana and Angola, entered the Nigerian market in 2005 and currently produces iron rods for the construction sector.

However, Abiodun expressed delight at the scale of the investment,

attributing it to his administration's deliberate efforts to position Ogun State as the foremost industrial hub in Nigeria and the wider West African sub-region.

"This is a \$400 million investment; this aligns with the President's vision to ensure that we grow this economy to a trillion dollars, and I think that you will be contributing your quota in achieving that. We are excited that you will also be employing people.

"I will be commissioning a multimillion-dollar diagnostic equipment facility during the week. This administration has managed to attract quite a lot of industries in the last six years," Abiodun said.

The governor stated that the state is endowed with abundant human and natural resources.

He noted that significant deposits of alluvial gold have been discovered, alongside what is believed to be the highest quality lithium in the country.

"I believe it may interest you to know that we also have lithium in Ogun State, and reports indicate that it is of the highest quality in Nigeria. This could be an area worth exploring further.

"We rank first in non-oil revenue generation in Nigeria, as two-thirds of the state sits atop vast limestone deposits. We are home to a substantial amount of limestone, making us the leading producer of cement in Sub-Saharan Africa and the third largest across the entire continent," the governor said.

Governor Abiodun further explained that his administration has developed an integrated infrastructure ecosystem to support investment inflows into the state.

He emphasised that critical infrastructure—including roads, rail, air transport, affordable housing, healthcare facilities, and schools—has been strategically provided to attract and sustain economic growth.

Lagos made over N3bn from Mushin food hub since Dec 2023 – Commissioner

By Friday Omosola

The Lagos State Government has revealed that food transactions worth over N3 billion have been recorded at the Mid-Level Agro Produce Hub in Idi-Oro, Mushin, since its launch in December 2023.

Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Systems, Abisola Olusanya, disclosed this on Tuesday during the ongoing 2025 Ministerial Press Briefing held at the Bagauda Kaltho Press Centre, Alausa, to mark Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu's sixth year in office.

Olusanya said the hub, commissioned on 17 December 2023, commenced operations with the sale of farm-fresh agro-produce every Wednesday and Saturday.

She described it as a key component of the state's food system transformation agenda.

"The total value of transactions at the hub since inception stands at over N3 billion," she said.

"This hub represents the second tier of our food system transformation efforts. Additional hubs are currently under construction in Agege, Abijo, and Opebi."

The Commissioner also highlighted the administration's broader agricultural initiatives, including the establishment of the Lagos Cattle Transit Station, ranches, and the Central Food Security Systems and Logistics Hub in Epe.

According to her, these projects reflect the government's unwavering commitment to boosting the agricultural sector.

"Governor Sanwo-Olu has initiated a revolution in the agro space," she said, "ensuring Lagosians have access to wholesome food at affordable prices, processed in hygienic conditions and sold in dignified markets."

Olusanya warned that Lagos's population is projected to hit 24 million by 2030,



stressing the need to significantly scale up food production.

She noted that the state's annual food demand would rise to N7.96 trillion by then, requiring imports of up to N3.38 trillion if local production is not increased.

"To meet 40% of this demand locally, Lagos must grow its food production by at least 20% annually," she added.

Highlighting the Ministry's achievements, Olusanya said several initiatives had boosted food production, agro enterprises, and employment across the value chain.

These include the Produce for Lagos Programme, which has redefined food marketing, transportation, and processing, as well as forged upcountry partnerships to ensure steady supply.

The Commissioner also cited the introduction of Food Discount Markets and the 'Ounje Eko' Farmers' Subsidy Programme, which aims to reduce the impact of high animal feed costs and provide affordable food to communities.

On the Lagos Rice Mill in Imota, Olusanya disclosed that it had produced over 240,000 bags of 50kg rice, created 430 direct jobs, and over 10,000 indirect employment opportunities.

She added that the state had partnered with multiple organisations for paddy production and technical support to sustain the mill.

Other milestones include distribution of subsidised food items to 800,000 households through the 'Ounje Eko' project, support for 3,726 poultry and fish farmers with subsidised feed and training of 300 youths in beekeeping (apiculture).

Others are empowerment of 70,200 beneficiaries across various agricultural value chains with inputs and production assets and construction of 13km of farm access roads, six jetties, and 15 cottage processing centres under the APPEALS and Lagos CARES programmes, in collaboration with the World Bank.

Additional programmes mentioned include the Lagos Agric Scholars Programme (LASP), the Agrinnovation Club/Agrithon Fund, Eko Flavours competition, Lagos Food Festival, Urban Farming Initiative, Eko Agro Mechanisation Project, LACE Aquaculture Centre, and the Lagos Agripreneurship Programme.

The Commissioner reaffirmed the government's commitment to ensuring food security and sustainable agricultural growth in Africa's most populous city.

Edo Speaker, others dump PDP for APC

By Friday Omosola

The Speaker of the Edo State House of Assembly (EDHA), Blessing Agbebaku, has defected from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to the All Progressives Congress (APC), leading 17 local government chairmen, numerous councillors, and several notable PDP members in the move.

Governor Monday Okpebholo's Chief Press Secretary, Fred Itua, confirmed the development in an official statement on Tuesday.

Agbebaku said the decision aimed to align with Okpebholo's vision to accelerate development across the state.

Receiving the defectors on behalf of APC National Chairman, Abdullahi Ganduje, the party's National Secretary, Ajibola Bashiru, welcomed them and assured of equal opportunities within the APC.

He described the defection as a significant milestone in the party's efforts to consolidate power in Edo State.

Among those who decamped with the Speaker were Sunny Ifada, Yekini Idiaye, former Deputy Speaker Hon. Roland Asoro, former House Majority Leader Nosa Nosayaba, and former PDP State Secretary Gabriel Oloruntoba.

Governor Okpebholo received the defectors into the APC, asserting that Edo was on the path to rapid growth under President Bola Tinubu's leadership.

"Edo is witnessing unprecedented development because we have a president who believes in our people. From roads to flyovers, education, youth employment, and agriculture, we are investing massively to ensure food security and economic stability," the governor stated.

He further pledged that Edo would lead the South-South in delivering President Tinubu's re-election in 2027.



"We have the structure and the momentum, and we will launch this mission from Edo State," he affirmed.

Bashiru, representing Ganduje, commended Okpebholo's leadership, particularly for consistent salary payments and ongoing infrastructure upgrades such as road projects in Ekpoma.

He noted that the wave of defections reflected growing confidence in the APC-led administration.

Former Governor of Edo State and current Senator representing Edo North, Adams Oshiomhole, hailed Agbebaku's return to the APC as a homecoming.

He described the Speaker as one of the original architects of the party in the state.

"This defection is a testament to the governor's remarkable performance. Of the 24 Assembly members, the APC now holds 18 seats, providing the legislative backing needed to move the state forward," Oshiomhole said.

He expressed confidence that Governor Okpebholo's achievements would secure him a second term in 2028, while Edo State would also deliver for Tinubu in 2027.

Edo APC Chairman, Jarrett Tenebe, attributed the influx of defectors to the visible development strides recorded under Okpebholo's administration.

In his remarks, Speaker Agbebaku lauded the governor's inclusive leadership, citing the construction of Uhonmora Secondary School and three major roads in Owan West LGA as clear indicators of progress.

"We are here to support the governor and the president to move Edo forward," he declared.

The mass defection came just hours after 24 members of the Delta State House of Assembly, including the Speaker, Rt. Hon. Emomotimi Guwor, also dumped the PDP for the APC.

Guwor, who announced the defection during Tuesday's plenary, said he had received 22 letters—among them, his own—indicating a switch from the PDP to the APC.

He cited the instability in the PDP's national leadership and the fractionalisation of the party's South-South zonal executive as the key reasons behind the mass exit.

Woman kills husband nine days after wedding

By Alade Adisa

A newlywed woman, Saudat Jibrin Adam, has been arrested for allegedly killing her husband, Salisu Idris Ibrahim, just nine days after their wedding in the Farawa community of Kumbotso Local Government Area, Kano State.

The tragic incident, which occurred late Monday night, has shocked residents of the area.

According to eyewitnesses, Saudat allegedly asked her husband to close his eyes for a “surprise” before fatally slitting his throat with a knife.

A neighbour, Dini Mada, who was one of the first to arrive at the scene, disclosed that Salisu named his wife as the attacker before succumbing to his injuries at the hospital.

“I asked him who did this to you, and he said, ‘Dini, it’s my wife. She stabbed me in the neck in the parlour.

“She told him to close my eyes for a surprise, not knowing she had hidden a knife,” Dini recalled.

He added that Salisu’s mother, whose home is attached to the couple’s residence, alerted him moments after hearing a disturbance.

“She thought it was an external



attack, but we found Salisu bleeding with his throat slit.”

The suspect reportedly locked herself in a bedroom after the attack and was discovered by police during a search of the premises.

“She was on the phone when police entered and arrested her.

“We didn’t even know she was still in the house,” Dini added.

Sources close to the deceased claimed that the couple had unresolved marital issues.

Despite displaying affection during their courtship, the suspect allegedly refused to consummate the marriage and frequently declined to cook for her husband.

“That night, Salisu bought gurasa and meat for dinner because she



again refused to cook,” one friend said.

Neighbours described the suspect as appearing “normal” and often accompanying her husband to visit family nearby, which made the attack even more shocking.

Family members confirmed that Salisu was rushed to the hospital but later died from his injuries.

His brother, Tanimu Idris, said he has been buried according to Islamic rites.

As of the time of this report, the Kano State Police Command has yet to issue an official statement.

Spokesperson SP Abdullahi Kiyawa said the command is investigating the matter.

'Poor children 13 times more likely to die before age five'

By **Helen Okechukwu**

Poor children face a stark survival disadvantage, as recent data from the World Health Organisation (WHO) reveals that they are 13 times more likely to die before their fifth birthday compared to those in wealthier nations.

Despite the lack of a comprehensive 2025 data report, about 1.8 million child deaths could be prevented if the gap is bridged by enhancing equity between the poorest and wealthiest sectors within low- and middle-income countries.

The WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health's first report, published in 2008, aimed to reduce the gap between and within countries in life expectancy, childhood, and maternal mortality by 2040.

The 2025 data suggests that the 2040 targets are likely to be missed. Although data between 2000 and 2023 showed a 40 per cent decline in maternal mortality globally, 94% of maternal deaths still occur in low- and lower-middle-income countries.

The health organisation said that women, being part of vulnerable groups, are more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes. In several high-income countries, racial and ethnic inequities in maternal death rates persist.

"For example, in some areas, Indigenous women were up to three times more likely to die during childbirth. There are also strong associations between higher levels of gender inequality, including child marriage, and higher maternal mortality rates."

The global report indicates that the underlying causes of ill health are often unrelated to health issues themselves, such as lack of quality housing, education, and job opportunities.

Another example describes that people who reside in countries with the lowest life expectancy may, on average, live 33



years less than those born in countries with the highest life expectancy.

WHO highlighted that those with access to quality education and healthy food are more likely to enjoy better health outcomes than those relying solely on inherited genes or medical care.

WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus declared, "Our world is an unequal one."

Ghebreyesus expressed optimism that change is possible, saying, "This world report illustrates the importance of addressing the interlinked social determinants and provides evidence-based strategies and policy recommendations to help countries improve health outcomes for all."

The report emphasises that health disparities are strongly tied to social and economic disadvantage, with well-being declining as poverty, low education, and poor living conditions increase.

Moreover, discrimination and marginalisation further deepen these gaps, evident in the fact that Indigenous communities often experience shorter life expectancies than non-Indigenous groups, regardless of a country's wealth.

Call to Action by WHO

WHO stresses that tackling income inequality, systemic discrimination, conflict, and climate change is essential to reducing persistent health inequities.

Climate change alone could push up to 68–135 million more people into extreme poverty within five years, says the WHO.

Currently, about 3.8 billion people lack basic social protections, like paid sick or parental leave, undermining their health.

Meanwhile, rising debt burdens limit government investments, with interest payments from the world's 75 poorest countries quadrupling in the last decade.

WHO urges coordinated efforts from governments, health systems, academia, civil society, and the private sector to reduce economic inequality, strengthen public services, and address discrimination, conflict, and forced migration.

Others include aligning climate and digital strategies with health equity goals and supporting inclusive governance that shifts resources and decision-making to the local level and empowers communities.

Drug Crisis: NDLEA reports 62,595 arrests since 2021, seized 10.3 million kg drugs

By Helen Okechukwu

To curb the rising tide of substance abuse in Nigeria, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has disclosed that 62,595 drug suspects have been arrested between January 2021 and March 2025.

Of these, 11,628 have been successfully prosecuted and convicted, while over 10.3 million kilograms of illicit drugs were seized during the same period.

The revelation was made during a high-level training workshop organized by the NDLEA for members of the Nigeria Governors' Spouses Forum (NGSF), held on Tuesday, in Abuja.

The event aimed to build capacity among state first ladies to champion grassroots drug control initiatives.

Delivering a keynote address through Hajiya Laila Barau, wife of the Deputy Senate President, First Lady Senator Oluremi Tinubu commended the NDLEA's sustained efforts.

She stressed that the fight against drug abuse must begin within communities, families, and schools.

"This training cannot be coming at any better time than now when statistics and daily life experiences reveal that drugs have infiltrated every nook and cranny of our communities," Senator Tinubu said.

"I urge us to continue to provide the right direction through prevention initiatives, advocating for those whose voices have been silenced by addiction, providing community interventions to support recovery and reintegrate people into communities after treatment."

NDLEA Chairman Brig. Gen. Mohamed Marwa (Retd) emphasized the urgency of



a nationwide, community-based response to the drug menace.

"Nigeria is not immune to this scourge, which steadily infiltrates every stratum of our society," he stated.

"The magnitude and impact of the drug crisis render the attainment of our national aspiration—improving the health and security of all who dwell within our borders, as enshrined in the National Drug Control Master Plan 2021–2025—a daunting yet inevitable task for any government and people worthy of the name."

Marwa detailed the NDLEA's recent achievements, which include identifying and destroying 1,330 hectares of cannabis farms, counselling 24,375 drug users, and conducting over 10,500 sensitization programmes nationwide under the War Against Drug Abuse (WADA) campaign.

"Since it is at the community level that the burden of the drug menace is most acutely felt. This gathering must strive for common ground, developing indigenous and pragmatic solutions that go beyond mere statistics and harrowing headlines, addressing instead the real and harrowing

human toll of drug abuse," he added.

He also urged states to activate or revitalize State Drug Control Committees (SDCCs) as a collaborative platform for drug demand reduction.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Country Representative, Cheikh Toure, echoed this sentiment, asserting that real progress hinges on local government and state-level ownership.

"When you speak, communities listen. When you act, local governments follow," he told the First Ladies, urging them to channel their influence into creating community counselling centers, mobilizing resources, and adopting culturally relevant strategies.

Also speaking at the event, Dr. Daniel Amankwaah of the ECOWAS Drug Prevention and Control Division emphasized the economic and social toll of drug abuse on West African societies.

He called for sustained investment in prevention and recovery infrastructure.

WHO reports 33-year life expectancy difference between rich, poor

By **Damilola Olufemi**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has sounded the alarm on global health disparities, revealing that people born in the world's wealthiest countries can expect to live over three decades longer than those in the poorest nations.

This striking revelation comes from WHO's World Report on Social Determinants of Health Equity, launched Tuesday by Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. The report underlines how deeply social and economic conditions affect health outcomes globally.

Read also: WHO says poor children 13 times more likely to die before age five

"Our world is an unequal one. Where we are born, grow, live, work, and age significantly influences our health and well-being," said Dr. Tedros during the report's release.

The analysis found that the average life expectancy gap between the highest- and lowest-ranked countries stands at 33 years. This vast difference is largely shaped by unequal access to safe housing, quality education, decent employment, and other critical social infrastructure.

According to the report, even within countries, people living in disadvantaged communities tend to experience poorer health outcomes. "Health follows a social gradient



whereby the more deprived the area in which people live, the lower their incomes are," WHO noted.

The impact is even more severe for marginalised groups, such as Indigenous Peoples, who often face lower life expectancy compared to the general population, regardless of whether they live in low- or high-income nations.

The 2024 report is the first of its kind since 2008, when the WHO last issued a major study on the social roots of health inequity. It warns that global targets set for 2040—such as reducing childhood and maternal mortality and narrowing life expectancy gaps—are likely to be missed if urgent action is not taken.

For instance, children in poorer nations are 13 times more likely to die before their fifth birthday than those in wealthier countries. The

report also estimates that up to two million young lives could be saved annually by closing equity gaps in low- and middle-income countries.

While maternal mortality has declined by 40% since 2000, 94% of maternal deaths still occur in low-income and lower-middle-income countries.

To address these deep-rooted disparities, WHO is urging governments and global partners to invest in universal public services, confront structural discrimination, and tackle the broader impacts of conflict, displacement, and poverty.

The report makes it clear: meaningful progress in global health cannot happen without addressing the social conditions that determine who gets to live longer—and who doesn't.

Report revealed how Nigerian women demand better workplace health coverage

By Helen Okechukwu



A recent national survey in Nigeria has revealed that more than two in five working women, constituting 43.4% across regions and industries, are seeking enhanced health coverage, including breast cancer care and menopause support, among other major health issues affecting women.

The publication, titled “State of Women’s Health in Nigeria Report,” by Healthtracka’s Foundation for Advocacy, Innovation and Research (FAIR), aims to understand health-related issues affecting women at work with a solution-driven approach.

The study highlights the gap in current health insurance coverage, and provides actionable recommendations for policymakers and employers.

It also discloses that many Nigerian women feel unsupported and exposed under current health insurance plans.

Respondents highlighted gaps in coverage for essential needs like fertility, maternity, and menopause, calling for insurance that reflects women’s real-life health realities.

The report emphasizes that women’s health at work is a growing concern.

It urges employers to embed women’s health into core policies—offering paid leave for menstrual and menopause-related symptoms and expanding coverage to include fertility and reproductive care.

It also recommends training managers to support women without stigma.

The three-part study includes a state-by-state breakdown of women’s health in Nigeria, insights from Nigerian researchers, and a review of workplace health policies.

Key policy recommendations include a minimum 15% allocation

of state budgets to health, with full fund utilization; using gender-disaggregated data for accountability; and tying future funding to measurable improvements in women’s health services.

More recommendations include integrating home-care models, self-sampling tools, and digital support into care plans; and promoting partnerships with private providers, nonprofits, and researchers.

The report insists women must shape policies and programs to ensure services reflect their lived realities.

Ifeoluwa Dare-Johnson, Executive Director of Healthtracka’s FAIR, called the report “a call to action,” saying:

“Women’s health is not a side issue; it is a foundation for economic growth, social progress, and generational prosperity.”

I got pregnant at 20, Eniola Ajao recalls

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular Nollywood actress Eniola Ajao has opened up about the personal struggles she faced when she became pregnant at the young age of 20.

In a recent episode of the Talk To B podcast, the 44-year-old actress shared emotional details about the fear, isolation, and societal pressures she battled during her early journey into motherhood.

Her story sheds light on the silent struggles many young women face in Nigeria and across the world when they become mothers before they feel ready.

Hiding her pregnancy

Eniola revealed that when she discovered she was pregnant, her first instinct was to hide it.

“You know, things weren’t what they are today,” she explained. “Getting pregnant at 20 was dramatic. You feel like the world is turning against you.”

She said that at the time, societal expectations made her feel ashamed, even though she personally did not see the pregnancy as shameful.

“You want to hide it from your parents, from the public, because people see it as a shameful thing,” she shared. “Not that I saw it that way, but it was considered ‘too early.’”

Fears of stigma and judgement

Eniola Ajao spoke openly about the emotional weight she carried during that period.

“There were times you just wanted to die,” she said. “You feel like you’ll never get married again because of the stigma.”

She pointed out that, despite knowing of others who had married young, like Nollywood star Omotola Jalade-Ekeinde, who married at 18, the community she came from expected a woman to finish school, graduate, and achieve certain



goals before having children.

“I was already in Yabatech (Yaba College of Technology) when I got pregnant,” she said. “I was hiding it. Only close friends and some family members knew. You start worrying, thinking maybe you’ll never get married, and people will just label you a ‘baby mama.’ You don’t want to be stigmatised.”

Facing society’s expectations

Eniola’s story reflects the strong societal pressures placed on young Nigerian women. For many, the idea of becoming a mother outside of marriage can lead to shame, judgement, or exclusion.

She explained that even though times have changed in some ways, back then it was much harder for young women to face such challenges openly.

“Where I come from, they want you to graduate first, do a couple of things, then think about marriage and children,” she said. “But life doesn’t always follow that order.”

Motherhood at 20

Despite the fear and isolation, Eniola Ajao eventually welcomed her son in May 2002. She was just 20 years old at the time.

Looking back, the actress now speaks with strength and reflection about that

period of her life. She has since built a successful career in Nollywood as both an actress and filmmaker.

Her experiences as a young mother have shaped who she is today, giving her a deep understanding of resilience, determination, and growth.

A message to young women

By sharing her story publicly, Eniola hopes to encourage other young women who may be facing similar struggles.

Her message is clear: no one’s life path is perfect, and mistakes or unexpected events do not define one’s entire future.

“You are stronger than you think,” she seemed to say between her words. “Even when it feels like the world is against you, you can rise, build your life, and chase your dreams.”

The road ahead

Eniola Ajao’s openness about her teenage pregnancy adds another layer to her public image, showing her not just as a star on screen but as a woman who has faced and overcome real-life challenges.

Her story also highlights the need for society to become more supportive of young women facing difficult situations, offering understanding rather than judgement.

Finally, EFCC breaks silence on the arrest of VDM

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has confirmed it is holding Martins Vincent Otse (VDM) in custody.

The anti-graft agency stated that Otse was arrested after he failed to respond to several invitations. These invitations were tied to multiple petitions accusing him of financial crimes.

In a press statement, the EFCC explained that the arrest has nothing to do with Otse's public criticism of the agency. "While such attacks are condemnable, his arrest was not informed by them," the Commission clarified. It emphasised that other law enforcement bodies will handle any issues related to those public criticisms.

Serious allegations spark VDM's arrest
According to the EFCC, the arrest came after serious allegations of financial misconduct were raised against Otse. These complaints led the agency to investigate his activities. When Otse failed to show up after repeated invitations, the EFCC moved to arrest him.

Read Also: VDM's detention: Amnesty Int'l accuses EFCC of intimidation, harassment

The Commission assured the public that the arrest followed legal procedures. It stressed that it obtained a court order allowing it to hold Otse during its ongoing investigation. "We have the appropriate remand order to keep him in custody while we investigate the claims," the EFCC stated.

Administrative bail offered

In a move to calm public concerns, the EFCC announced that Otse has been offered administrative bail. This means he can be released once all the required bail conditions are met.

"We are following due process," the agency said. "Once the bail conditions are fulfilled, Otse will be released."

The Commission did not disclose the specific terms of the bail but made it clear



that the process is underway. It also promised that Otse's legal rights are being respected throughout the investigation.

Public reactions and EFCC's appeal
The arrest has drawn wide public attention, with many Nigerians expressing strong opinions on social media and other platforms. The EFCC acknowledged this public interest in its work and thanked Nigerians for staying engaged.

However, the Commission urged the public not to jump to conclusions or misread its intentions. "The EFCC should be allowed to do its job without fear or favour," the agency said in its statement. It called on citizens to avoid spreading misinformation or assuming political motives behind its actions.

Formal charges to follow

As investigations continue, the EFCC assured that formal charges will be filed if enough evidence is gathered. The Commission stressed that it will only move forward based on facts, not public pressure or media noise.

"Once investigations are complete, we will take the proper legal steps," the EFCC promised. The agency emphasised that it remains committed to fighting financial crimes and upholding the law.

Agency defends its integrity

The EFCC's statement also defended the agency's integrity and independence. It

reminded the public that its mandate is to tackle financial crimes, no matter who is involved.

"We are here to serve Nigerians by holding people accountable," the Commission declared. "We will not be distracted by attacks or false claims."

The agency reassured the public that its work is guided by the law and that all suspects are treated fairly. It underlined that no one is above the law and that due process will always be followed.

Looking ahead

As the case develops, all eyes will remain on the EFCC and its handling of the matter. The public will be watching to see how the investigation unfolds and whether Otse will face formal charges.

For now, the Commission says its focus is on completing a thorough investigation. It has called for patience and support as it continues its work.

The arrest of Martins Vincent Otse has sparked national debate, but the EFCC maintains that its actions are guided by law and not by personal or political motives. With administrative bail already offered, Otse's release appears possible once bail conditions are met. Meanwhile, the agency continues its investigation, promising transparency and fairness as it seeks to address the financial crime allegations.

Palestinian poet Mosab Abu Toha wins Pulitzer for powerful essays on Gaza

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

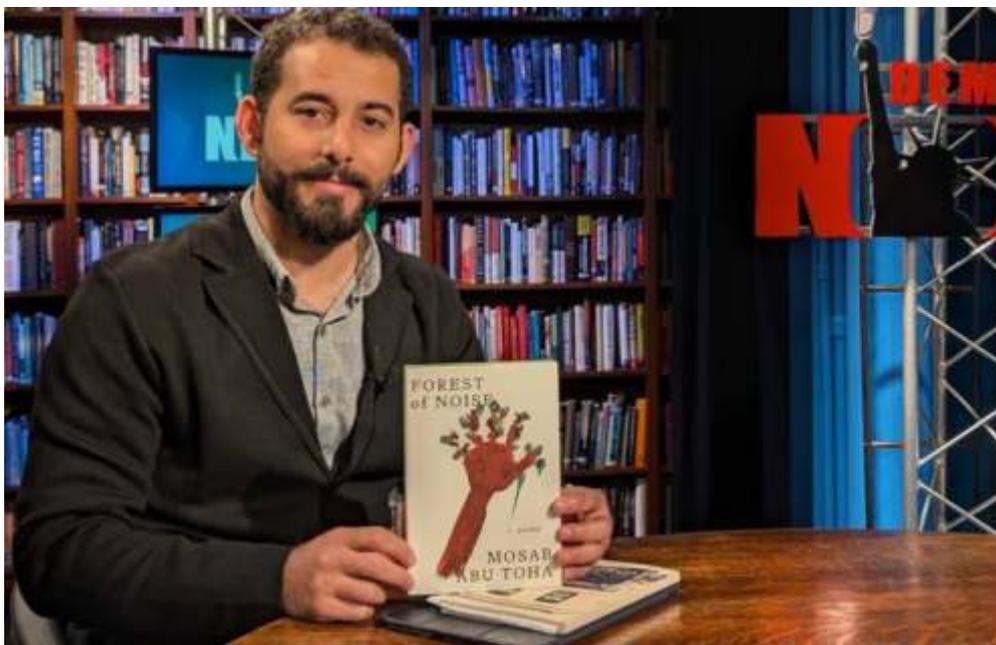
Palestinian poet and author Mosab Abu Toha has been awarded the 2024 Pulitzer Prize for Commentary for his poignant and deeply personal essays in *The New Yorker*, documenting life and loss in Gaza. His win marks a historic moment not only for Palestinian literature but for global journalism that centers voices from within conflict zones.

Abu Toha, 32, has spent nearly his entire life in Gaza. His Pulitzer-winning work combines intimate memoir with meticulous reporting, capturing the raw physical and emotional toll of the war between Israel and Hamas that has ravaged the territory for over a year and a half.

“I have just won a Pulitzer Prize for Commentary,” Abu Toha announced on X, formerly Twitter. “Let it bring hope / Let it be a tale.”

The Pulitzer board praised the essays for their profound insight, noting that they “portray the physical and emotional carnage in Gaza that combine deep reporting with the intimacy of memoir to convey the Palestinian experience.”

One of Abu Toha’s most harrowing essays recounts his own arrest in 2023 by Israeli forces. He was detained at a checkpoint while attempting to flee northern Gaza’s Beit Lahia with his wife, Maram, and their three children. “They separated me from my family, beat me, and interrogated me,” he wrote. His release and eventual escape to the United States came only after a wave of international pressure from friends and advocates.



In another essay, Abu Toha describes his family’s desperate search for food amid the siege, contrasting it with memories of simple, joyful meals shared before the war. “I yearn to return to Gaza, sit at the kitchen table with my mother and father, and make tea for my sisters,” he wrote. “I do not need to eat. I only want to look at them again.”

Mosab Abu Toha’s reflection

He also reflected on the devastation of Jabalia refugee camp, once home to his grandparents and the school he attended. “I looked at the photos again and again, and an image of a graveyard that grows and grows formed in my mind,” he wrote.

Outside of Gaza, Abu Toha’s experience with suspicion and discrimination continued. During a layover in Boston, he recounted an unsettling interaction with a TSA agent who swabbed his hands for explosives. “I was kidnapped by the Israeli army in November... Today, you

come and separate me from my wife and kids, just like the army did a few months ago.”

Abu Toha’s Pulitzer was one of several awarded to *The New Yorker* this year. The magazine also won for an investigative podcast exposing the U.S. military’s killing of Iraqi civilians, and for Moises Saman’s feature photography capturing the collapse of Bashar al-Assad’s dictatorship in Syria.

The Pulitzer Prizes in the arts also recognized novelist Percival Everett for *James*, a reimagining of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* from the perspective of Jim, the enslaved character. Playwright Branden Jacobs-Jenkins received the drama award for *Purpose*, a searing depiction of a Black family consumed by internal conflict.

In a year defined by war, displacement, and reckoning, Mosab Abu Toha’s writing stands as a testament to the power of literature to bear witness and bring truth to the forefront.

Trump: Lower oil prices could spur Ukraine peace talks

By **Fatimah Idera**

President Donald Trump said Moscow and Kyiv want to settle the war in Ukraine and that Russian President Vladimir Putin was more inclined towards peace after the recent fall in the price of oil.

“I think Russia, with the price of oil right now, oil has gone down, we are in a good position to settle, they want to settle. Ukraine wants to settle,” Trump said on Monday.

The price of oil, which drives the Russian economy, has fallen around \$15 a barrel since the start of the year. OPEC+ will accelerate oil output hikes.

“We’ve come a long way, and it could be something will happen, but hopefully it will,” Trump said.

Putin ordered thousands of Russian troops into Ukraine in February 2022, triggering Europe’s biggest ground conflict since World War Two and the largest confrontation between Moscow and the West since the depths of the Cold War.

Hundreds of thousands of soldiers have been killed or injured, and Trump has repeatedly said he wants to end the “bloodbath” that his administration casts as a proxy war between the United States and Russia.

Trump noted that Putin had proposed a three-day ceasefire to mark the 80th



anniversary of the victory of the Soviet Union and its allies over Nazi Germany in World War Two.

“As you know, President Putin just announced a three-day ceasefire, which doesn’t sound like much, but it is a lot if you knew where we started from,” Trump said. “This is a war that should never have happened”.

Trump speaks on the number of those killed in war

Trump said that the number of those killed in the war was far higher than reported by most media organisations. Neither side in the war publishes up-to-date casualty figures.

The Kremlin, asked on Monday about a possible meeting between Trump and Putin in Saudi Arabia, said that a meeting was necessary but that Putin had no trips to the Middle East planned for mid-May. Trump has said he plans to visit Saudi Arabia as early as May.

Trump was asked by a reporter about whether or not he would order an investigation into the attack on the Nord Stream gas pipelines in 2022.

A sharp pressure drop on the pipelines under the Baltic Sea was registered on Sept. 26, 2022, and seismologists detected explosions, triggering a wave of speculation about who sabotaged the multibillion-dollar project that carried Russian gas to Germany.

“They said Russia blew it up-yeah,” Trump said in comments which indicated he doubted that Moscow was behind the attack. “I think a lot of people know who blew it up.”

Reports had it that Ukraine, which has repeatedly denied involvement, was behind the attack

Russia has accused Western powers, including the United States and Britain, of being involved in the attack, but has published no evidence to support its theory.

Why UK may ban visa applications from Nigeria, others

By Damilola Olufemi



The United Kingdom (UK) may soon introduce tougher visa requirements for citizens of Nigeria, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, citing concerns over high rates of overstaying and subsequent asylum claims.

According to a report by The Times, the UK Home Office is taking steps to curb what it sees as growing abuse of work and study visas. Citizens from these countries are reportedly more likely to remain in the UK beyond their visa limits and later seek asylum.

“To tackle abuse by foreign

nationals who arrive on work and study visas and go on to claim asylum, we are building intelligence on the profile of these individuals to identify them earlier and faster,” a Home Office spokesperson stated.

The upcoming Immigration White Paper, expected later this May, will outline a new framework aimed at “restoring order to our broken immigration system,” the spokesperson added.

These proposed changes come as Nigerian applicants, in particular, face rising rejection rates for UK visas—a shift from

the previous surge in Nigerian migration to the UK for education and employment.

Aside UK, USA threatens visa ban

Although not the first time Nigerian travellers have been met with stricter immigration policies, the move signals renewed efforts by UK authorities to tighten borders and reduce asylum pressures.

Earlier policies under former U.S. President Donald Trump also reflected similar sentiments, as he threatened deportation for migrants holding valid visas.

Merz loses Germany's CDU seat in first parliament vote

By Fatimah Idera



In his bid to become the country's 10th chancellor, Friedrich Merz, leader of Germany's conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU), has failed by falling short by six votes in the first round of voting in parliament.

Merz, who had been widely expected to win the parliamentary vote, needed 316 votes in the secret ballot held on Tuesday, but he received only 310.

The failure to win the required majority means that the political parties will now regroup to discuss the next steps.

It is an embarrassment for Merz as no candidate for German chancellor had ever failed to secure an absolute majority in the

first round of voting.

The Bundestag, Germany's lower house of parliament, has 14 days to elect a chancellor, either Merz or another candidate, who will need an outright majority.

CDU, CSU led by Merz

The conservative alliance of CDU and Christian Social Union (CSU), led by Merz, had topped the polls in the national elections in February with 28.5 per cent of the vote, but it still required at least one coalition partner to form a majority government.

On Monday, the CDU/CSU reached an agreement with the centre-left Social Democratic Party (SPD), which secured 16.4 per cent in the elections after the

collapse of Olaf Scholz's government last year.

If the vote were to pass, the CDU/CSU-SPD coalition would have a slim majority, with just 328 seats in the Bundestag out of a total of 630.

Also, within the CDU/CSU and SPD blocs, 10 members failed to attend the vote, three abstained, and several voted against Merz "despite the official steer" of their parties.

It comes as the newly formed coalition had set ambitious goals, including stimulating economic growth, boosting defence spending, and tightening immigration policies in response to the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), which came second in the vote.

Ukrainian drones strike Moscow, force airport closures

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A second consecutive night of Ukrainian drone strikes on Moscow has heightened tensions ahead of Russia's 9 May Victory Day parade, prompting temporary closures of airports and intensified security across the capital.

Russian officials confirmed that at least 19 drones targeted the city from multiple directions late Monday night, disrupting air travel and striking near residential areas.

Moscow Mayor speaks

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin said emergency services were responding to several sites where drone debris had fallen, including along major highways. Though no casualties were reported, social media channels linked to Russian security sources indicated that at least one drone hit an apartment building, shattering windows.

Russia's aviation authority, Rosaviatsia, temporarily suspended flights at all four of Moscow's main airports, while regional airports were also briefly shut down in response to the escalating threat.

In the Voronezh region, bordering Ukraine in south-western Russia, officials reported a separate wave of at least 18 drones. Meanwhile, Moscow's internet services faced widespread disruptions, and the state-run Tass news agency confirmed that critical infrastructure had been placed under heightened protection. Air defence systems were reportedly repositioned to shield the capital in anticipation of further attacks.

The drone assaults come just days before Russia's annual Victory Day commemoration, which this year marks the 80th anniversary of the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany. The highly symbolic event is expected to



draw about two dozen foreign dignitaries, including Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Ukrainian officials have not publicly claimed responsibility for the strikes. However, the campaign appears to be aimed at undermining the Kremlin's image of control ahead of the celebratory parade.

Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed a three-day ceasefire from 8 to 10 May, ostensibly to ensure peace during the commemorations. But Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy dismissed the offer as "unserious" and "self-serving," arguing that any meaningful truce must last at least 30 days, in line with a U.S.-backed proposal.

In a warning issued earlier this week, Zelenskyy said Ukraine "cannot bear responsibility for what happens" to foreign leaders attending the parade, further fueling security concerns. In response, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova accused Zelenskyy of issuing direct threats, while former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev ominously declared that "10 May may not come for Kyiv" if

provocations occurred.

Meanwhile, fighting has flared on Russia's western front. Ukraine's military reported active combat in the Kursk region over the past 24 hours, directly contradicting Moscow's claims of repelling a Ukrainian incursion. In a Telegram update, Ukrainian forces said they had resisted Russian attacks and endured heavy shelling and airstrikes.

Local Russian officials also appeared to confirm Ukraine's presence. Vasily Khudyakov, the head of Glushkovo in Kursk, announced on Monday that all residents were being evacuated due to the deteriorating security situation.

"Due to the worsening situation in the village, residents currently there must temporarily evacuate," Khudyakov wrote online.

While international leaders weigh Moscow's limited ceasefire proposal, the battlefield tells a different story, one of continued violence, mounting uncertainty, and a growing sense that this year's Victory Day may be overshadowed by the war still raging at Russia's borders

Drone strikes Port Sudan for third consecutive day

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Port Sudan, once a sanctuary for thousands fleeing the brutal two-year conflict tearing Sudan apart, has come under heavy drone fire for the third day in a row, officials confirmed on Tuesday. Strikes have targeted key infrastructure, including the city's airport and a central army base, igniting fears over the safety of displaced civilians and the continuity of humanitarian aid.

Sudanese officials report that one drone hit the civilian section of Port Sudan Airport early Tuesday morning, grounding all flights at the country's main international point of entry. Fires broke out in multiple buildings following the blast, according to eyewitnesses. This comes just two days after the military section of the airport was attacked in similar strikes, which the army attributes to the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

Simultaneously, another drone reportedly struck the army's primary base in the city center. A hotel located nearby was also hit, according to local witnesses. Both the base and the hotel lie in close proximity to the residence of Sudan's army chief, Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who has been embroiled in a bitter power struggle with his former deputy, RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, since April 2023.

A third drone attack ignited a fuel depot near the city's southern port, sparking a massive blaze visible for miles. The depot sits near densely populated neighborhoods now housing hundreds of thousands of people displaced from the capital, Khartoum. Witnesses in the city's north reported anti-aircraft fire responding from a military base.

Loud explosions and thick plumes of smoke were observed across the coastal city on Tuesday morning, with one column of smoke rising from the port



and another from the fuel depot. The escalation follows Monday's strike on Sudan's main fuel depot, which further crippled the nation's already fragile infrastructure.

The RSF, which has lost significant territory including almost all of Khartoum as of March, has increasingly relied on drone warfare to penetrate army-held zones. Military analysts say the shift in strategy has significantly disrupted the army's logistics and supply chains. Some of the drones used have been described as "highly advanced," with the Sudanese army accusing the United Arab Emirates of supplying the RSF, a charge that has added new geopolitical tension to the conflict.

On Monday, the International Court of Justice dismissed a Sudanese case against the UAE accusing it of complicity in genocide through its support for the RSF. The ruling cited the ICJ's lack of jurisdiction due to the UAE's 2005 reservation to the UN Genocide Convention. Sudan's foreign ministry stated it "respected" the court's

decision.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres expressed grave concern on Monday, calling the paramilitary attacks a "worrying development threatening the protection of civilians and humanitarian operations." Port Sudan currently serves as the primary hub for humanitarian aid entering the country, where famine has already been declared and nearly 25 million people face extreme food insecurity.

Since the war began, tens of thousands have died and over 13 million people have been displaced, making it the world's largest hunger and displacement crisis. The country remains effectively divided, with the army controlling the center, north, and east, while the RSF dominates Darfur and parts of the south with support from local allies.

As Port Sudan reels from yet another wave of violence, the prospects for peace, and survival for millions, grow increasingly bleak.

Trump tariffs force Hong Kong watchmaker to pivot toward European market

By **Fatimah Idera**

The introduction of steep U.S. tariffs on low-value shipments from China and Hong Kong has pushed a Hong Kong-based watch company to shift its business strategy, turning its focus from America to Europe.

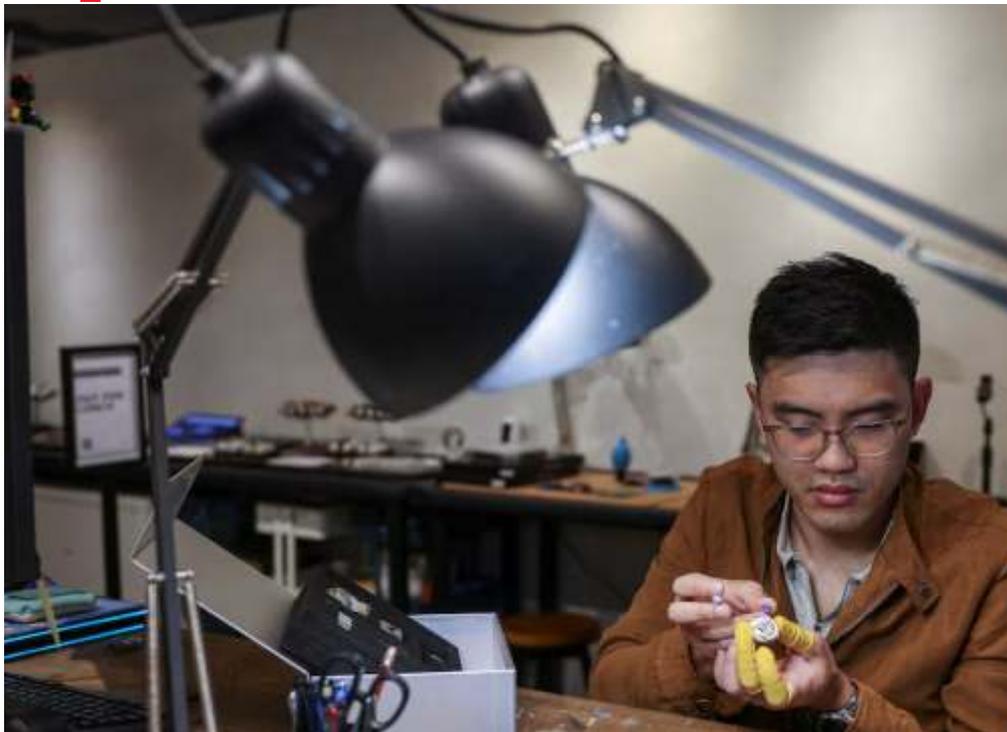
Quinn Lai, founder of the DIY Watch Club, which specialises in do-it-yourself timepiece assembly kits, saw the writing on the wall when the U.S. announced it would end duty exemptions for small packages from China and Hong Kong. Beginning May 2, these items are now subject to a hefty 90% tariff or a \$75 flat fee under escalating trade tensions between Washington and Beijing.

With over 80% of the brand's sales previously going to the U.S., Lai said the policy change dealt a major blow to his operations. He estimated that the move could wipe out between 20% and 30% of his U.S. revenue.

"If nothing changed, we were facing the possibility of cutting down operations, or worse, shutting down altogether," Lai explained.

Read also: China grants some exemptions from US tariffs to limit trade war pain

As the tariffs took effect in April, Lai quickly pivoted, doubling down on his



marketing efforts across Europe. He ramped up social media campaigns and sent product kits to influencers in the region for promotional unboxings.

Lai said he chose Europe over Southeast Asia due to stronger e-commerce performance in the region. "We spent hours testing different countries in Europe to see which markets responded best," he said.

Thanks to this shift, the company grew its European market share from a mere 6% to roughly 30%. While the U.S. remains its largest single market, now contributing about 50% of revenue, Lai says the business is less reliant on it than before.

Looking ahead, he plans to further strengthen the company's European

presence and explore new markets like Japan to diversify even more.

Kennedy Wong, honorary president of the Hong Kong Chinese Importers' and Exporters' Association, acknowledged the broader impact, saying the tariffs have severely disrupted cross-border e-commerce. Products typically shipped in small packages have been particularly affected, and according to Wong, "No single market can truly replace the United States."

In response to the new U.S. import rules, Hong Kong Post has halted mail services for goods bound for the U.S., while couriers still handling such shipments now require prepayment of American tariffs, Wong added.

UK lagging behind in global fight against microplastics, scientists warn

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The United Kingdom is falling behind international efforts to tackle the growing crisis of microplastic pollution, scientists have warned, as research continues to reveal the extent of contamination in ecosystems, food, and even human bodies.

Microplastics, tiny fragments created by the breakdown of larger plastic waste, have infiltrated every corner of the planet, from the peak of Mount Everest to the ocean's deepest trenches. They have been discovered in human testicles, lungs, and brains, and in plants where they hinder photosynthesis. While the full impact on human health remains uncertain, emerging studies have linked microplastic exposure to strokes and heart attacks.

Despite the alarming evidence, experts say the UK is falling behind the European Union and the United States, where enforceable limits on microplastic levels in water and air are already being introduced.

"Microplastic pollution represents a complex, transboundary policy challenge with implications for environmental health, public well-being, and long-term economic resilience," said Dr. Antaya March, director of the Global Plastics Policy Centre at the University of Portsmouth. "The fact that the evidence is still emerging should not be a reason to delay action."

Scientists are urging the UK government to implement a comprehensive national roadmap,



complete with measurable targets and timelines. They recommend prioritising interventions at the source of pollution and funding research to identify safe exposure levels and effective strategies, particularly in overlooked areas such as air quality and soil contamination.

Currently, the UK enforces a ban on microbeads in cosmetic products, but experts argue that this is not enough. They are calling for broader action, including design standards for clothing and textiles to reduce fibre shedding, and urgent regulation of high-emission sectors like agriculture.

One major concern is the widespread use of sewage sludge, rich in microplastics, as fertiliser on farmland, as well as plastic-based mulch materials contaminating soil.

"Microplastic pollution is an escalating threat with potentially irreversible consequences," warned

Professor Fay Couceiro, from the University of Portsmouth's microplastics research group. "Without decisive action, the UK's environment and global leadership will be compromised, with potential impacts to public health."

In response, a spokesperson from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said: "For too long, plastic has littered our rivers and oceans and threatened our wildlife. This must change. We are taking action to clean up our waterways to make sure it works for people and the environment."

However, scientists say general statements are no longer sufficient. With the mounting evidence and global momentum, they insist the time for half-measures has passed. The UK must act decisively or risk being left behind in the race to protect both public health and the planet.

World's most secretive vote: 130 Cardinals enter Sistine Chapel today to elect new Pope

By **Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi**

One of the most important and mysterious events in the modern world is now unfolding behind closed doors in the Vatican. Today, 130 cardinals from across the globe will enter the Sistine Chapel to begin the sacred task of selecting a new pope, a spiritual leader who will shape the future of more than 1.3 billion Catholics around the world.

This sacred process, known as the conclave, follows the death of Pope Francis, whose decade-long papacy was marked by his humble leadership style, outreach to marginalized communities, and strong calls for Church reform. His passing has left a profound impact not only on Catholics but on world leaders, interfaith communities, and millions who looked to him as a moral voice.

The cardinals, dressed in their traditional scarlet robes, walked into the Sistine Chapel in silence, surrounded by Michelangelo's Last Judgment and centuries of tradition. As the doors closed and the words "Extra omnes!" — everyone out! — echoed in the room, all non-electors left, sealing off the chapel from the outside world. From this point on, no phones, no internet, and no communication is allowed. The cardinals will remain completely cut off until a new pope is elected.

To maintain the integrity of the election, all electronic devices have been removed from Casa Santa Marta, where the cardinals are staying. Radios, televisions, Wi-Fi, and even



landlines have been blocked. Everyone involved in supporting the conclave, from cooks and cleaners to medics and drivers, has taken an oath of secrecy.

The Vatican's Casa Santa Marta, a guesthouse built in 1996, now houses the electors. Although it was designed for smaller groups, it is currently hosting 133 voting-age cardinals and support staff. Every morning, the cardinals quietly walk the 500-meter path to the chapel to begin the day's voting.

Their identical red robes serve as more than ceremonial dress. The colour represents both the blood of Christ and the willingness of each cardinal to lay down his life for the Church. These images of unity and sacrifice stand in contrast to the often divided world outside.

Inside the Sistine Chapel, the voting process unfolds beneath Michelangelo's iconic ceiling. Up to

four rounds of voting can happen each day. If no candidate secures a two-thirds majority, the ballots are burned and black smoke rises from the chapel chimney. When a pope is finally chosen, the smoke turns white, signaling to the world that the decision has been made.

The newly elected pope is then taken to the "Room of Tears," a small chamber where he will don white papal robes and take a few moments to pray. Many new popes are said to have wept in this moment of deep responsibility.

Then, he steps out onto the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica to greet the world with the words: Habemus Papam — We have a pope.

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One of the UK's most senior Catholic leaders, Cardinal Vincent Nichols, spoke openly before entering the conclave. "I feel quite intimidated knowing that people all over the world, from all faiths and beliefs, are watching and waiting," he said. Nichols ruled himself out of being selected but urged the Church to pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. "The next pope must be someone who can speak across cultures, inspire hope, and guide with compassion."

Though much attention focuses on who the next pope will be, the deeper questions are about what kind of leadership the Church needs right now. The new pope will inherit a Church facing deep internal tensions between conservative and progressive factions, declining attendance in Western countries, and rising influence in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Several names have quietly surfaced among Vatican watchers. Some cardinals are known for their diplomatic skill, others for their strong defense of traditional doctrine. There is growing interest in leaders from the Global South — particularly Africa and Latin America — where the Church is growing rapidly. While no official favorites have been confirmed, observers note a shift toward voices that can bridge divisions and renew faith.

The new pontiff will also be expected to address long-standing scandals involving abuse, issues of financial transparency, and increasing calls for reform. Beyond the Church, he must respond to a rapidly changing world shaped by war, climate change, inequality, and increasing alienation from institutions. His moral leadership will be closely watched not only by Catholics, but also by governments, human rights groups, and people of other faiths.

Geographically, the conclave reflects the Church's international scope.

According to Vatican data, Europe has the largest bloc with 53 cardinal electors — though that number is expected to be 52 due to one Spanish cardinal's absence. Italy leads individually with 17 electors, followed by the United States with 10. Brazil contributes 7, while France and Spain each have 5. Argentina, Canada, India, Poland, and Portugal each count 4 cardinal electors. This diversity underscores the global nature of the decision now underway.

Timeline: What happens after Pope Francis funeral — how the Conclave to select his successor will work | The Independent

Rome itself has become a gathering place for the faithful and curious. Pilgrims fill St. Peter's Square, some holding banners, others

quietly praying or staring up at the small chimney above the chapel. "I want to be here when the white smoke rises," said Maria Estevez, a nurse from Argentina. "This is history. It touches more than just Catholics."

Vatican historian Father Paolo Ruggieri noted, "This conclave may shape the global Catholic agenda for the next 20 or 30 years. It is not just about tradition, but about how faith speaks to the modern world."

Most conclaves in recent history have lasted between two and five days. Vatican sources suggest voting will continue with up to four rounds per day. If consensus is reached, white smoke could rise as early as the weekend, though no official timeline exists.

While the identity of the next pope remains unknown, what is clear is the significance of the decision now taking place in silence beneath one of the most beautiful ceilings in the world. As millions wait for a glimpse of white smoke, the world is reminded that some of the most important decisions are still made not with noise, but with prayer.

When the new pope finally appears on the balcony, it will be more than a name. It will be a symbol of unity, continuity, and a chance to guide a troubled world back toward spiritual grounding.

UCL: Inter Milan reach final after 13-goal thriller with Barcelona

By Oluwatosin Ologun



For the second time in six days, Inter Milan and Barcelona served up a European classic. On Tuesday night, the Italian champions won 4-3 to edge Barca 7-6 on aggregate.

After 210 gripping minutes and 13 goals, Internazionale have reached their second UEFA Champions League final in three years, surviving three astonishing Barcelona comebacks to eliminate the LaLiga side 7-6 on aggregate.

Davide Frattesi scored the winning goal in extra time to seal a 4-3 win. San Siro erupted as the rain began to pour, but that doesn't come close to telling the full story of one of the most remarkable European semifinals ever.

Barça, who came from 2-0 and 3-2

down in the first leg to draw 3-3 last week, had earlier produced yet another stirring turnaround to move to the brink of their first Champions League final since 2015. When Raphinha struck in the 87th minute, they led for the first time in the tie after second-half goals from Eric García and Dani Olmo had cancelled out a first-half strike from Lautaro Martínez and a Hakan Çalhanoglu penalty.

But their advantage lasted only six minutes. They were unable to get over the line, with veteran defender Francesco Acerbi turning home from close range in the 93rd minute. There was still time for the brilliant Yann Sommer to deny Lamine Yamal, who had also hit the post before Acerbi's late goal, but the teams could not be separated after 180 minutes.

Frattesi pulled Inter clear again in the 99th minute, and then it was over to Sommer to seal his team's passage to the final in Munich against either Paris Saint-Germain or Arsenal on May 31. The Swiss goalkeeper saved superbly on two occasions from Yamal as Barça threw everything at the Inter Milan side, but they held on to win and the three-time winners will now have the chance to banish memories of defeat to Manchester City in the final in 2023.

Inter Milan, Barça produce a game for the ages

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There are two words for this sort of game, and they both have four letters. But I can only print one of them here, so I'm just going to say "EPIC." That's not what many neutrals, worn out by 120 minutes — more than 130 if you count injury time — of enthralling, twisting-in-the-tale football, probably uttered at the final whistle.

So much has been made about rotations, squad management and the physical toll that this game takes on its protagonists. Barça boss Hansi Flick rested nine starters over the weekend, his counterpart Simone Inzaghi — who has an older squad and has been rotating all season — 10 starters. But Tuesday night at San Siro, we moved into something else. Whatever reserves these two teams had as we headed toward the 90th minute were long exhausted.

Inter's well had run dry before Barça's, enabling their comeback from two goals down to lead 3-2 as the clock ticked down. As much as their legs were heavy, it was compounded by the fact that their minds had become clouded, their decisions poor, their judgment ill-timed. They had fallen under the spell of Yamal — the Blonde Beelzebub, the 17-year-old with otherworldly skills, veteran brains and always in perpetual motion.

Eagle-eyed VAR gets it right

More simply put, without VAR, referee Szymon Marciniak does not award the penalty for Pau Cubarsí's last-ditch tackle on Lautaro. There is simply no way he could have seen Cubarsí fail to make contact with the ball.

This was not a case of "do nothing and let VAR sort it out." It simply didn't

look like a penalty. And it didn't look like a penalty in the first three replays that were shown. All of them suggest Cubarsí gets the ball first. And then comes the fourth, which leaves zero doubt: Cubarsí's contact is with Lautaro. That's what the referee was shown, and that's why the penalty was awarded.

You might like or dislike VAR, but there is little question that its effectiveness depends on what replays are available. And how the absence of evidence in the first few replays doesn't mean there will be evidence of absence (of a foul) in the fourth.

Inter Milan will play either Arsenal or Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) in the final of the UEFA Champions League Allianz Arena in Munich, Germany, on 31 May 2025.

