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Vice President Kashim Shettima



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**Religious hate has no place in France, says Macron after Muslim killed in mosque** Pg 16

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# FG to reopen Enugu International Airport on Monday

By Oluwatosin Ologun



**T**he federal government says Akanu Ibiam International Airport in Enugu state will reopen on Monday, following the completion of emergency repairs on the runway.

The Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo, who announced on Sunday, said the work was finished ahead of the scheduled May 6 date.

“Dear compatriots, we worked extra hard to meet the deadline we gave on the repair of the runway of Akanu Ibiam International Airport in Enugu and finished way ahead of the scheduled date. It will now be open

for use as from tomorrow (the 28th of April, 2025),” Keyamo wrote on his X handle.

On April 18, the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) announced the temporary closure of the airport after a sudden and major rupture appeared in the asphalt surface at a critical part of the runway.

Obiageli Orah, FAAN director of public affairs and consumer protection, said the repairs were initially planned to be completed later, but the work was swiftly done.

“The work was scheduled to begin

on April 22nd and conclude before reopening on May 6th, 2025,” Orah said.

“However, rehabilitation works on the runway have been completed, and the runway is cleared for landings and takeoffs by the engineers working with FAAN.

“FAAN appreciates all airport users and stakeholders for their understanding and cooperation during this time.”

Orah said the authority apologised for the inconvenience but assured the public that all actions were taken for safety.



# THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

## PUBLIC NOTICE COLOUR

## PRODUCT COLOUR

## EFFECTIVE FROM DECEMBER 1, 2024

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	372,500.00
HALF PAGE	213,000.00
QUARTER PAGE	106,500.00
14X2	118,000.00
10X6	261,585.50
10X5	255,238.00
10X4	206,890.50
10X3	179,608.00
9X6	254,977.00
9X5	225,738.00
9X4	193,500.00
9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
5X3	66,875.00
5X2	42,916.50
4X4	60,166.50
4X3	36,499.50
4X2	29,333.50
3X3	28,000.00
3X2	17,400.00
2X2	13,000.00
2X1	8,600.00
1X1	4,400.00

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

## POLITICAL COLOUR

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

## POLITICAL BLACK & WHITE

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

## CORPORATE BLACK & WHITE

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

## SPECIAL POSITIONS

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

## PUBLIC NOTICE BLACK & WHITE

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	280,690.00
HALF PAGE	164,178.00
QUARTER PAGE	84,641.50
10X6	228,000.00
10X5	201,600.00
10X4	149,440.00
10X3	127,108.00
9X6	201,600.00
9X5	169,050.00
9X4	137,875.00
9X3	112,875.00
8X6	179,368.00
8X5	143,500.00
8X4	93,500.00
8X3	82,434.50
7X4	111,173.50
6X4	82,434.50
6X3	59,250.00
6X2	40,000.00
5X6	98,749.50
5X4	65,833.00
5X3	49,375.00
5X2	32,916.50
4X4	52,666.50
4X3	39,499.50
4X2	26,333.50
3X2	19,750.00
2X2	13,000.00
2X1	6,500.00
1X1	3,292.00

## PRODUCT BLACK & WHITE

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

## ALLURE RATE

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

## PICTURE & CAPTION

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

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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:**  
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# Defectors are joining APC, supporting Tinubu out of free will – Presidency

By Oluwatosin Ologun

**T**he Presidency has stated that the recent defections of politicians in the opposition parties to the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) and the increasing support of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu are out of free will.

In a statement signed by the Special Adviser to President Bola Tinubu on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, on Sunday, the Presidency insisted that democracy is not under threat or undermined “simply because politicians exercise their rights of association.”

“Nigerians migrating to the APC and expressing support for Tinubu are doing so out of their free will, based on the belief that the reforms being executed are in the interest of Nigerians and the unborn generation,” Onanuga said.

This is coming after last Wednesday’s defection of Governor Sheriff Oborevwori of Delta State, his predecessor, Ifeanyi Okowa, Deputy Governor, Monday Onyeme, commissioners, local government chairmen, among others.

The defection of Okowa, who was



PDP’s presidential running mate in the last election, and others further depletes the main opposition party.

The other opposition parties, the Labour Party and the New Nigerian Peoples Party (NNPP), are also grappling with internal crises, leaving observers to wonder if they could challenge the ruling party in 2027.

Some have alleged that the crisis within the opposition parties is being orchestrated by the ruling party, a claim that the Presidency has denied.

“The opposition cannot blame President Tinubu and the governing APC for their poor organisation, indiscipline, and gross

incompetence in managing their affairs. It is certainly not part of President Tinubu’s job to organise or strengthen opposition parties.

“We find it curious that those who celebrated the defection of the former Governor of Kaduna State, Mallam Nasir El-Rufai, to the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the formation of a regional grand coalition with the sole aim of defeating President Tinubu in the 2027 election are the same people shedding crocodile tears over Nigeria’s so-called drift to a one-party state and authoritarianism.

Continue reading  
on next page

## Cont from page 4

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shedding crocodile tears over Nigeria’s so-called drift to a one-party state and authoritarianism.

“While the latter-day defenders of democracy raised no anxious voice against the disgruntled politicians cobbling an anti-Tinubu, anti-APC coalition along dangerous regional lines, even before INEC blows the whistle for party politicking, they are quick to ascribe the political shifts in some states to “bribery, blackmail, and coercion” without any shred of evidence.

“Without any equivocation, freedom of association, freedom of speech and freedom of choice are part of the cherished ideals of democracy. When politicians and citizens cannot freely join any association or political party of their choice or cannot openly express their views, democracy is imperilled.

“Those opposed to the Tinubu administration should understand that they can issue diatribes, without fear, against the government because we practice a thriving democracy.

“It is hypocrisy writ large when opposition politicians and their



# Shettima rallies global partners to boost Nigeria's HCD

By Friday Omosola

**V**ice President Kashim Shettima has called for enhanced international collaboration to advance Nigeria's Human Capital Development 2.0 (HCD 2.0) strategy.

Speaking virtually at a high-level roundtable on the sidelines of the 2025 World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) Spring Meetings, Shettima reaffirmed President Bola Tinubu's commitment to placing human potential at the centre of national progress.

He stressed that the success of the HCD 2.0 agenda would depend on evidence-based interventions, data-driven policies, and sustained political will.

"This meeting, for us, is not just another item on our global agenda. It is a continuation of a journey whose beginnings I had the privilege of witnessing about seven years ago. True national wealth is found not in natural resources, but in human potential," he said.

HCD 2.0 is designed to improve Nigeria's Human Capital Index (HCI) and equip the country to meet emerging national and global challenges, including climate change and the digital economy.

Shettima assured stakeholders that the Nigerian government would provide full political backing to the initiative, highlighting that President Tinubu remained firmly committed to the programme's success.

"Government is a continuum. Nowhere is this truer than in programmes that demand patience, vision, and long-term commitment—programmes such as our Human Capital Development programme," he stated.

Under HCD 2.0, six priority indicators from the health, education, and labour sectors have been identified as 'quick wins' to drive policy actions and track measurable progress.



Shettima disclosed that a dedicated HCD Dashboard had been developed to guide decisions and assess outcomes.

"We will continue to hold ourselves accountable and press forward toward our bold goal to elevate Nigeria among the top 80 countries in Human Capital Index rankings," he added.

He further appealed to the World Bank and other development partners to support efforts to generate disaggregated, state-level HCI data, enabling more targeted and effective interventions across the country.

Emphasising the need for equity and inclusiveness, the Vice President pledged that no Nigeria subnational would be left behind.

"Some of the states have already set a template for the others, having localised the HCD strategies to align with the peculiarities of their people while, of course, aligning them with the national strategy," he said.

The session featured several key figures from the World Bank, including Executive Director, Zainab Shamsuna Ahmed;

Regional Director for Human Development in Western and Central Africa, Trina Haque; Senior Social Protection Specialist and Regional Task Team Leader, Tina George; and Chief Economist for Human Development, Norbert Shady.

Members of the Nigerian delegation included Deputy Chief of Staff to the President and Chair of the HCD Core Working Group, Senator Ibrahim Hassan Hadejia, and Special Adviser to the President on National Economic Council and Climate Change/National Coordinator of the HCD Programme, Rukaiya El-Rufai.

World Bank officials at the session reaffirmed the institution's commitment to strengthening its partnership with Nigeria and proposed senior-level engagement to identify key areas where technical support could be most impactful.

Speeches were also delivered by representatives from several Nigerian states, including Lagos and Akwa Ibom, alongside local and international development organisations.

# NANS condemns early morning UTME schedule, demands urgent review

By Alade Adisa



**T**he National Association of Nigerian Students, NANS, has strongly condemned the scheduling of the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination, UTME, by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board, JAMB, which has placed students in precarious situations by assigning examination times as early as 6.30 a.m.

Given the prevailing security challenges in the country, the student body said the decision is both inconsiderate and dangerous.

The body spoke through the National President, Comrade Olushola Oladoja and the National Public Relations Officer, Comrade Samson Ajasa Adeyemi in a statement they endorsed on Sunday.

“It is deeply troubling that students are expected to commute to examination centres in the early hours of the morning, often navigating unsafe routes and facing transportation difficulties.

“Reports indicate that some candidates have had to travel long distances, exposing them to unnecessary risks.

“The current security climate in Nigeria demands that authorities prioritise the safety and well-being of students rather than subjecting them to undue hardship.

“NANS calls on JAMB to immediately review and adjust the examination schedule to ensure that no student is required to sit for an exam before 9 a.m.

“We urge the Honourable Minister of

Education, Tunji Alausa, to intervene and ensure that students are not placed in harm’s way due to poor planning.

“We hereby issue a 72-hour ultimatum to JAMB to revise the UTME schedule and adopt a more student-friendly approach. Failure to comply will leave NANS with no choice but to mobilise students nationwide for peaceful protests to demand immediate action.

“The welfare and security of Nigerian students must never be compromised.

“NANS remains committed to advocating for policies that protect students and ensure their academic pursuits are not hindered by avoidable challenges.”



# Ghana creative agency strengthens cultural ties with Lagos tourism ministry

By Friday Omosola

In a bid to deepen regional collaboration and boost the creative and tourism sectors across West Africa, the Lagos State Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture hosted a high-level delegation from the Ghana Creative Arts Agency at its headquarters in Alausa, Ikeja.

Speaking during the visit, the Lagos State Commissioner for Tourism, Arts and Culture, Toke Benson-Awoyinka, described the engagement as a strategic opportunity for knowledge exchange, institutional partnerships, and sustainable growth within the creative sector.

“Lagos does not compete, we create and collaborate,” she said.

“It is a pleasure to host our brothers and sisters from Ghana. This engagement is about synergy, shared learning, and laying a foundation for cross-border support systems that benefit creatives throughout the region.”

Highlighting Lagos’ leadership in Africa’s cultural and creative industries, Benson-Awoyinka reaffirmed the Ministry’s commitment to delivering a comprehensive, year-round calendar of tourism and cultural events, aimed at solidifying the state’s position as a premier destination for arts, culture, and tourism.

She further emphasised the economic potential of the creative sector, describing it as a formal industry with the capacity to drive significant economic growth when fully developed.

“Creativity is a vast industry, and



everyone has a role to play in its advancement,” she added.

The Commissioner also pledged the Ministry’s support for the forthcoming Speed Boat Racing and Creative Summit, scheduled for October 2025.

This she described as an innovative platform to showcase Lagos’ waterfront culture and diverse creative talents.

She stressed the need for sustainable public-private funding models, strong institutional support, and youth empowerment across all creative disciplines.

Also speaking during the visit, Bisi Omojare, Director of Creative Arts at the Ministry, explained the operational framework designed to encourage creatives—from architecture to comedy—to register with the Ministry.

She noted that registration facilitates access to endorsements and government support for participation

in both local and international events.

Leading the Ghanaian delegation, Acting Executive Secretary of the Ghana Creative Arts Agency, Gideon Aryeequaye, expressed admiration for Lagos’ structured approach to cultural development and reaffirmed Ghana’s commitment to building similar systems.

“We have always admired Lagos from afar, and this visit has confirmed why you are regarded as a big sister in the creative space,” Aryeequaye said.

“Our purpose here is to learn, collaborate, and grow together.”

Reflecting on the transformation of Ghana’s Creative Arts Agency following national reforms in 2020, Aryeequaye proposed future initiatives including immersive exchanges, joint talent showcases, and collaborative media projects designed to promote Afrocentric ownership of creative assets and resist cultural dilution.



# UNICEF seeks collaboration from stakeholders for effective vaccination delivery in Nigeria North Central

By Helen Okechukwu

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has called for stronger collaboration among stakeholders to ensure effective vaccination delivery, especially among displaced persons in Nigeria's North Central region.

Speaking during a Zoom meeting at the Media Dialogue on the 2025 World Immunisation Week, Dr. Ifeyinwa Anyanyo, a Health Specialist at UNICEF's Enugu Field Office, assured that UNICEF has contingency plans in place to reach those persons who are recently displaced in Benue State with life-saving vaccines.

The media dialogue, which was organised by UNICEF Enugu Field Office in partnership with the Broadcasting Corporation of Abia State (BCA), highlighted the theme of this year's World Immunisation Week: "Immunisation for all is humanly possible."

Dr. Anyanyo explained that although insecurity and the large geographical spread of internally displaced persons (IDPs) pose significant challenges, UNICEF is committed to reaching the vulnerable populations.

She revealed that the organisation already has a presence in 11 IDP camps across Benue State but stressed that the scale of the need is overwhelming.

"The geographical space of the displaced is quite much, but we have contingency plans to reach the newly displaced and ensure impactful interventions.

She noted that although the needs are many, and the demand is huge but it



cannot be left to partners alone, urged government to play its roles in the various areas.

She also pointed out that funding gaps, misinformation, insecurity, and the vastness of affected areas continue to hinder vaccination efforts. She appealed for more collaboration from all sectors, emphasizing that no single organisation could tackle the challenges alone.

Adding to the conversation, Dr. Olusoji Akinyele, another Health Specialist with the Enugu Field Office, described vaccines as "one of humanity's greatest achievements."

He noted that vaccination has contributed to a 40 percent reduction in infant mortality rates globally, allowing more children to live beyond their first birthdays than at any other time in history."

"Vaccines have helped check disease outbreaks. It has helped save the lives of people of all ages. The vaccination of one individual helps to keep others safe. That is how important vaccination is to humans," Dr. Akinyele said.

Also speaking, Dr. Ijeoma Onuoha-Ogwe, UNICEF's Communication Officer in Enugu, stressed the critical role of media practitioners in driving awareness and ensuring the success of immunisation efforts.

She urged journalists to actively support public health campaigns by educating communities and countering misinformation.

Earlier in her opening remarks, Mrs. Juliet Chilwe, Chief of UNICEF's Enugu Field Office, emphasized the significance of World Immunisation Week and the need to achieve targeted vaccination coverage to protect every child.

The Director General of BCA, Francis Nwubani, also lauded recent scientific advances in vaccine development, highlighting the positive impact of newer vaccines against diseases such as malaria, HPV, cholera, meningitis, RSV, Ebola, and mpox.

"More lives are now being saved among people of all ages," Nwubani said.

# NDLEA raids Lagos hotel, seizes N1.04bn drugs, busts trafficking rings

By Helen Okechukwu

In a major breakthrough against drug trafficking, operatives of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) have raided an 80-room hotel in Victoria Island, Lagos, seizing illicit drugs valued at over ₦1.04 billion.

The operation, which took place between Friday, April 25th and Saturday, April 26th, 2025, led to the discovery of 589 bags of “Canadian Loud,” a potent strain of cannabis, weighing a total of 417.3 kilograms.

Femi Babafemi, the Director of Media & Advocacy on Sunday said the contraband was hidden across the five-storey building known as “The Hook Hotel,” also operating as Caesar Hotel and Caesar Lounge at 16 Waziri Ibrahim Street, off Elsie Femi Pearse Street.

Three suspects — Eze Ayitu, Ofuokwu Samuel, and Emmanuel Ameh — were arrested during the raid, while two others, identified as Noble Philip and Kenneth, remain on the run.

Items suspected to be proceeds of the illicit drug trade, including luxury vehicles, dozens of televisions, and refrigerators, were also recovered.

In a related development, NDLEA officers in Jigawa and Kano states intercepted a major opioid shipment destined for Niger Republic and Yobe State.

Acting on intelligence, operatives stopped a Toyota Sienna vehicle along the Kano-Ringim road in Gumel town, recovering 200,000 tramadol pills and 217,500 pregabalin capsules.



However, two suspects, Abba Ibrahim and Shuaibu Umar, were arrested.

A follow-up operation led to the arrest of the supplier, Jamilu Muhammad, and the seizure of an additional 1.58 million tramadol pills in Kano — bringing the total haul to over two million pills.

Meanwhile, at a courier company in Lagos, NDLEA's Directorate of Operations and General Investigation intercepted 46 wraps of cocaine, cleverly concealed in body cream and destined for Saudi Arabia.

Another shipment containing 1.8kg of pentazocine injections and 60 grams of bromazepam tablets bound for Canada was also seized.

The Agency also made key arrests at the Seme border, where three Ghanaian women — Haziza Zubairu, 42; Samirat Mustapha, 43; and Jamila Salifu, 26 — were caught trying to smuggle nearly 5kg of high-grade cannabis (“Ghana Loud”) into Nigeria.

In similar operations, a 60-year-old woman, Safiya Shamsu, was apprehended in Kano with 5.6kg of cannabis.

In the same state, 35-year-old Muntari Labaran was arrested for possessing 100 litres of codeine syrup.

In Edo State, NDLEA officers destroyed 3,814.9kg of cannabis on two farms in Ugboodu community, arresting three suspects during the raid.

Alongside these enforcement efforts, NDLEA continued its War Against Drug Abuse (WADA) sensitization programs, reaching students and community groups across Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Anambra states.

Commending the officers for their relentless efforts, NDLEA Chairman/CEO, Brig. Gen. Mohamed Buba Marwa (Rtd), praised the balance the Agency has maintained between reducing both the supply and demand for drugs across the country.



# Funding: Universities will have heartache if they rely solely on government – Sunmonu

*Dr 'Niyi Sunmonu is an Associate Professor of Atmospheric Physics in the Department of Physics & Engineering Physics of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria and he is the National President of the Congress of University Academics, CONUA. In this exclusive interview with The New Daily Prime, he speaks on several issues, including how the congress was registered as an academic staff union in the Nigerian university system.*

**By Alade Adisa**

Can you tell us about the registration of CONUA?

Sunmonu: It was a very tortuous task. CONUA started the registration process in May 2018 after more than 700 academics were expelled from ASUU in OAU. This process was completed on 17th January 2023, having been previously given a provisional letter of registration on 4th October 2022. So, the registration process took a period of about five years to materialize. Before and up to the point of registration, the journey was both rough and tough. The first test of our mettle as a union occurred when the application was rejected. The refusal of our application for the registration of CONUA as a Trade Union was communicated to us in a letter dated 23rd January 2019, with the caveat that “you also have the right to appeal the refusal of the application to be registered as a trade union to the Honourable Minister within 30 days of the receipt of this letter in line with section 5(b) of the Trade Union Act CAP.T.14 of 2004”. The leadership immediately identified 23 grounds of appeal and prepared six annexures, and the appeal, dated 28th January 2019 and addressed to the Honourable Minister of Labour and Employment, was promptly filed by our counsel. About a year later, the Ministerial Committee set up immediately the appeal filed and invited the leadership of CONUA to a formal meeting scheduled for 22nd January 2020. The meeting was held in the



Conference Room of the Honourable Minister of Labour and Employment. Subsequently, the Honourable Minister of Labour and Employment invited the CONUA leadership to a public meeting held on 19th November 2020, where the justification for the registration of CONUA as an academic Trade Union was further elucidated upon.

The Honourable Minister, in his response, gave the Ministerial Committee on the appeal for the registration of CONUA four weeks to turn in its report for his consideration. Our leadership and followership were literally forged by fire through physical, psychological and emotional strain as weeks turned into years! During the period, we also had to cope with constant ridicule, taunting and propaganda from ASUU leadership in a bid to suffocate CONUA.

By 26th October 2022, ASUU (claimant) had already instituted a case at the National Industrial Court of Nigeria (NICN) against the registration of CONUA through Mr Femi Falana (SAN). Part of the eight reliefs sought included “an order mandating the Federal Government to withdraw the certificate of registration of CONUA”; “an order restraining the FG from recognizing and dealing with CONUA as trade unions in any manner whatsoever and howsoever”; and “an order restraining CONUA from parading itself as a trade union capable of unionizing academic staff in the universities in Nigeria in any manner whatsoever and howsoever”. The intention to asphyxiate CONUA was laid to bare from these reliefs!

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**B**ut, thankfully, on 25th July 2023, the NICN ruled that all “the reliefs prayed for by the claimant are not grantable. They must fail.” The NICN also expatiated on the paragraph 67, section 25 of the Trade Union Act (TUA). It held that “in talking of ‘all registered trade unions in the employment of an employer’ intuitively that there can be more than one trade union in employment; and for purposes of collective bargaining, these registered trade unions in employment shall constitute an electoral college to elect members who will represent them in negotiation with the employer.

Section 25 accordingly does not intuit trade union monopoly.” It intuitively trade union plurality. May I, therefore, use this opportunity to appeal to Nigerians, particularly members of the fourth estate of the realm, including the elites, to seek the truth about these issues. It is then incumbent on us all to uphold the truth after it is discovered.

After the registration, we are still battling discrimination and exclusions from the programmes of some government agencies that would ordinarily interface with registered academic unions. For example, CONUA is still facing discrimination from TETFUND, which excluded it on 14th May 2024 from the “Reconstitution of TETFUND National Research Fund Screening And Monitoring Committee (NRFS&MC)”.

Another instance is that of the exclusion from the NEEDS Assessment Committee, constituted by the immediate past Honourable Minister of Education, Prof Tahir Mamman (SAN) on 28th August 2024. CONUA’s leadership is following up with the current Minister of Education, Dr. Olatunji Alausa, to seek redress on the oversight.

We have had to cope with propaganda from the Comrade Ayuba-Wabba-led

NLC, even though CONUA did not approach it for affiliation. Thankfully, CONUA got affiliated with the Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC) on 15th October 2023, after fulfilling all the requirements. Little by little, we are surmounting the “teething” challenges and we are very optimistic about a very bright future.

Can you tell us about the spread of CONUA since it was registered?

Sunmonu: CONUA started in OAU, grew to five universities by October 2019, and then to about 30 Chapters, as we speak. We are in universities, which include but are not limited to, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike; University of Benin; Federal University, Lokoja; Federal University, Oye-Ekiti; Kwara State University, Malete; Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma; Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; University of Nigeria, Nsukka; University of Jos; Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Federal University, Wukari, National Mathematical Centre, Abuja, University of Abuja, University of Maiduguri, Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Ikwo, etc. In short, CONUA has Chapters across all the six geopolitical zones in the country, and it is still growing.

When did you form CONUA?

Sunmonu: For “daring” to raise questions about over 700 OAU academics who were expelled/suspended from ASUU on 4th February 2018. As a result, Congress met on 12th February 2018 and presided over by the Caretaker Committee, the ill-advised expulsion or suspension was deliberated upon exhaustively, and the need to provide a refuge for the academics who had been arrogantly driven out of ASUU was a key issue.

At the end of the discussions, Congress decided “to constitute itself into a new

Union that is totally independent of ASUU, adopt an appropriate name and open a new bank account for the check-off dues of its members”, among other key decisions. The Congress adopted the name, Congress of University Academics (CONUA). We were quite conscious of the fact that standing up to ASUU would be a humongous and fearsome undertaking with a difficult-to-predict outcome.

All the same, with courage buoyed by our desire to protect our dignity, we forged ahead. On 6th March 2018, the formal inauguration of CONUA was held, with representatives of the University of Ilorin and Kwara State University, Malete, in attendance. In the meantime, academics under the yoke of ASUU in other universities heard about the principled and definitive resistance to the excesses of ASUU in OAU and the resultant formation of CONUA.

From 4th to 6th October 2019, the first National Stakeholders Meeting of the Union held at OAU, with the following five branches were represented: Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife; Kwara State University, Malete; Federal University, Lokoja; Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma; and Federal University, Oye-Ekiti.

Were CONUA’s formation and subsequent registration really to split ASUU?

Sunmonu: There is no iota of truth in this and I make bold to say that it is a complete fabrication! This notion was propagated in the immediate aftermath of the letter of approval of registration handed over to the union on 4th October 2022. I’d like to mention three instances, out of many more, in this regard, to prove that this assertion is false.

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The event that led to the formation of CONUA is the story of ripples generated in 2018 by events set in motion in 2016 by inanities engaged by ASUU in 2013.

In 2013, elections were duly conducted into various offices of the Executive Committee of the Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile-Ife, Branch of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), to which virtually all the academic members of staff belonged at the time. Regrettably, the National Executive Committee (NEC) of ASUU annulled the already declared results of the duly elected contestants, because the leadership of the union did not like those who emerged victorious.

Out of the electoral destruction of trust and widespread demoralization wreaked by the despicable unconstitutional annulment, an ASUU-NEC-favored Dr. Caleb Aborisade-led Executive Committee emerged to run the affairs of a by-then-divided ASUU-OAU. The Hassan Sunmonu-led committee of trustees, which was eventually set up to look at the crises, wrote, on page 8 of its report, that “the Trustees committee could not uncover any justification for the wholesale annulment of the entire election; and therefore, considers NEC’s action was wrong.”

The second point is the unethical collaboration of the ASUU-OAU executive committee in the selection process of a vice chancellor at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, in 2016. Complaints against the Executive included the mischievous alteration of Congress resolution and the misrepresentation of Congress’s position to the press on the serious matter of the appointment of the 11th substantive VC of the University.

In one specific instance, despite the obvious flaws in the process, the Chairperson of the Branch at the time, Dr Caleb Aborisade, sent to the press a statement claiming that the VC selection “followed due process” and “was free, fair and transparent”; and he failed to comply with the Congress directive to him to withdraw the misleading statement.

The third and last point for this

engagement is that of walking out on a duly called Congress on 20th October 2016 by the Dr. Caleb Aborisade-led executive. After discussing the substantive matter, Congress demanded to know how the report of Professor Osodeke Visitation Committee got to the press and whether that report reflected the views of ASUU-NEC.

Rather than address the matter, the presiding officers impetuously walked out on Congress. The aggregate contempt of this new debasement of Congress by the de facto Executive of ASUU-OAU and the earlier indignity suffered in the ASUU-NEC’s annulment of the victory of duly and popularly elected candidates in the Branch got members thinking about how to shake off the leech. Members reasoned that heedlessly abandoning the Congress midstream by the Executive amounted to disdain for Congress and that repulsive action was taken as the abdication, by the Executive, of their responsibility to continue to provide leadership to the Branch of the union. As a consequence, Congress resolved that rather than disperse in a rudderless and disoriented manner, the meeting should continue and end properly.

Congress further resolved that since there was no constitutional provision to deal with the abdication of leadership by the Executive in the middle of a meeting, a three-person Caretaker Committee should, as dictated by the exigency of the moment, be nominated at that instant to steer the affairs of the union in the interim. Congress thereafter nominated my humble self (Chairperson), Dr Henri Oripeloye (now a Professor and secretary) and Dr Monica Orisadare (now a Professor and Financial Officer) of a Caretaker Committee.

This is how I became an “accidental” Chairperson, albeit, of a Caretaker Committee. The trustees committee has this to say on the Caretaker Committee, on page 7 of its report, that “this was the peak of illegality. There is no provision in the ASUU constitution for a Caretaker Committee. It is not recognized by NEC.” The dubious antecedents of ASUU-NEC regarding fidelity to its constitution have made it lose any moral authority to sanction members on

account of the creation of the Caretaker Committee.

ASUU-NEC showed its lawlessness by annulling the victory of members who had been duly nominated and elected for various posts. It engaged in this gross violation of rights because it did not like those who won the elections. In addition, ASUU-NEC also subsequently hypocritically condoned the victory of a candidate who did not meet the eligibility requirement into the office of Financial Secretary. Of course, there are other issues of violation of the mandate with the banks, violations of the constitution concerning contests in elections, etc.

By Sunday, 4th February 2018, at the ASUU-NEC held at Gombe State University, Gombe, expulsion and suspension were pronounced on the “709 members” who “have withdrawn their check-off” in a report by the Professor Suleiman Muhammed-led committee of Ethics, Grievances and Crises/Conflict Management Committee. Even though the financial infractions that led to the stoppage of check-off dues were reported to the ASUU’s highest hierarchy, which included violation of mandate with the union’s bankers.

By this pronouncement, ASUU washed off its hands from the protection of the interests of those expelled! An example of this point was the case of the Earned Academic Allowance (EAA) released to the universities in late 2021. Its leadership swung into action immediately, and there was nothing on earth they did not do to deny our members their earned allowance.

There were all manners of financial infractions as if the EAA was a largesse to be distributed among union leadership! Eventually, reasoning prevailed, and our members were paid, along with other colleagues, their dues to the EAA when the payment was made by the university management sometime in February/March 2022. There were antecedents to this, albeit in another guise.

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What can you say about the current state of the Nigerian University System?

Sunmonu: It is crystal clear to all and sundry that the fortune of the Nigerian University System (NUS) has nosedived. The major culprit can be traced to poor and/or inadequate funding, which started plummeting around 1976 and coincided with reduced budgetary allocation. Before the year, excess unspent funds were usually remitted back to the government coffers. Then, there was the unplanned proliferation of universities; even though the growing population of the country requires that more universities are needed, funding and other important requirements such as personnel, teaching and research facilities, etc., need to be adequately prepared and provided for!

Then, there is the pattern of management of Nigerian universities that has remained largely unchanged for more than four decades despite major changes in the environment, which has been amplified by corruption in the system. Then, there are the incessant strike actions, over the years. All these factors and many more have negatively impacted the NUS, as evidently manifested in the poor global ranking. For example, the premier university of Ibadan was the top-ranked university in Nigeria, placing 1,163rd globally, in 2023; 1083rd in 2024.

Why do you think crises accompany the selection of VCs in the universities?

Sunmonu: Sadly, colleagues cannot manage the autonomy granted to the universities concerning the selection of vice-chancellors due to unbridled ambitions and lack of respect for laid down procedures. Unfortunately, the “emotion” introduced into the process includes issues of ethnic dominance, political interference and corruption.

There can be only one vice chancellor at a time, even though there may be many aspirants. Strict adherence, devoid of any sentiment, to the promotion of merit and integrity will avert, to a large extent, acrimony arising from the selection of VC.

Do you think the FG is doing well with the composition of varsity governing councils?

Sunmonu: This is a prerogative of the government, and this is largely political in nature. The union will continue to monitor the performance of these Councils. We, however, hope that the Federal Government will not violate the Autonomy Act again with a wholesale dissolution of the Governing Councils before the end of their tenure, which could give the unintended impression that the government is unappreciative of the invaluable services of the distinguished Nigerians some of whom were literally begged to put their wealth of experience at the service of the nation’s educational system.

The Federal Government should also prioritize the nomination of individuals with exceptional credibility, a spotless track record, and unwavering integrity to the Governing Councils.

What do you have to say about the composition of varsity accreditation teams?

Sunmonu: In terms of composition, the majority of the members of accreditation teams are academics. They are brought on board because of expertise in related areas to the courses to be accredited. So, they are supposed to be qualified individuals, largely. CONUA would, however, like to put on record that accreditation should not be window-dressed; it should be conducted most professionally to help create and not

create contradictions within it.

Has the FG settled your Earned Academic Allowance (EAA)?

Sunmonu: No. The FG agreed to pay the Earned Academic Allowance (EAA) for excess work done by academics in Federal Universities since they are battling with a shortage of manpower. This EAA payment was supposed to cover academic sessions from 2008/2009 (rain semester) onwards. The Federal Government has released four tranches, 2013, 2017, 2021 and 2022, so far. These releases did not cover up to four sessions completely, not to mention the entire fourteen and a half sessions, for which payment is required. The outstanding EAA owed by the FG is, therefore, for upward of ten sessions!

How can Nigerian varsities overcome the funding problem?

Sunmonu: CONUA has always advocated for a multipronged approach to funding the universities, as relying on the government alone will always cause heartache and will not bring the much-needed progress we yearn for. The multifaceted approach should include, but not limited to, increased budgetary allocation by the FG, public-private partnership, contributions by alumni and endowment, international collaborations, efficient management of resources and compliance with budgetary provisions, policy reforms, town & gown engagement, diversification of revenue sources, etc.

The suggested proposals require collaboration between the government, private sector, universities, and the community, with an adequate policy framework to create a sustainable funding model for Nigerian universities.



# 'Godfather' director Coppola bags lifetime achievement award

By Oluwatosin Ologun

**M**ultiple Oscar-winner and director of the Godfather trilogy Francis Ford Coppola picked up a lifetime achievement award on Saturday at a star-studded ceremony which praised his "fearless" attitude to filmmaking.

The 86-year-old director of classics including "The Godfather" and "Apocalypse Now" received a trophy from fellow filmmaking legends Steven Spielberg and George Lucas, who lauded him for fighting the system and redefining American cinema.

"Star Wars" creator Lucas recalled Coppola telling him "don't be afraid of jumping off cliffs," while Spielberg hailed the "fearless" director and said that "The Godfather" was "the greatest American film ever made."

"You have taken what came before and redefined the canon of American film, and in so doing, you've inspired a generation of storytellers," Spielberg said.

The award was given by the prestigious American Film Institute, which produces annual lists of the best films ever made and is seen as one of the industry's most respected bodies.

Taking the podium at Hollywood's Dolby Theatre in front of film veterans including Robert De Niro and Dustin Hoffman, Coppola said that winning the award felt like



coming home.

"Now I understand here, this place that created me, my home, isn't really a place at all, but you, friends, colleagues, teachers, playmates, family, neighbors, all the beautiful faces are welcoming me back," Coppola said.

The six-time Academy Award winner was praised by the AFI as a "dreamer", a "pioneer" and also a "maverick."

Coppola, who famously threw five of his Oscars out a window in an outburst while making "Apocalypse Now," heard emotional tributes from peers including De Niro, Al Pacino, Diane Lane, Harrison Ford and Ralph Macchio, who thanked the filmmaker for taking a chance on them.

"When the studio wanted stars, you fought for actors," said "Rain Man"

star Hoffman.

He joked that Coppola launched so many young actors' careers, but only cast him in last year's sci-fi drama "Megalopolis" when Hoffman was 86.

The independent AFI has honored the likes of Alfred Hitchcock, Martin Scorsese, Jack Nicholson and Al Pacino in previous years.

Pacino joined De Niro to pay tribute to Coppola, who directed them in the second installment of "The Godfather" trilogy.

Coppola, who battled studio executives to make the film according to his own vision, told AFP that there is no art without adventure.

"I think making art without risk is like making babies without sex. It's possible, but it's not the best way to do it," he said.

# Religious hate has no place in France, says Macron after Muslim killed in mosque

By Oluwatosin Ologun

There can never be a place for racism and hate in France, President Emmanuel Macron said on Sunday after the brutal stabbing to death of a Muslim in a mosque in the south of the country.

“Racism and hatred based on religion can have no place in France. Freedom of worship cannot be violated,” Macron wrote on X in his first comments on Friday’s killing, extending his support to “our fellow Muslim citizens”.

The attacker, who is on the run, stabbed Aboubakar Cisse, a young Malian in his early 20s dozens of times and then filmed him with a mobile phone while shouting insults at Islam in Friday’s attack in the village of La Grand-Combe in the Gard region.

French Prime Minister Francois Bayrou had already denounced what he described as an “Islamophobic atrocity” although the prosecutor in the case has emphasised that Islamophobia is just one of the motives being considered.

Around 1,000 people on Sunday marched through La Grand Combe, which has just 5,000 inhabitants, to remember the victim.

The alleged perpetrator sent the video he had filmed with his phone — showing the victim writhing in agony — to another person, who then shared it on a social media platform before deleting it.

A source close to the case, who asked not to be named, said the suspected perpetrator, while not apprehended, had been identified as a French citizen of Bosnian origin who is not a Muslim.



The victim, a young Malian man in his 20s, and the attacker were alone inside the mosque at the time of the incident.

After initially praying alongside the man, the attacker then stabbed the victim up to 50 times before fleeing the scene.

The body of the victim was only discovered later in the morning when other worshippers arrived at the mosque for Friday prayers.

A protest “against Islamophobia” was due to take place Sunday evening in Paris in response to the killing.

‘Not neglected’

The French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM) said it was “horrified” by the “anti-Muslim terrorist attack” and urged Muslims in France to be “extremely vigilant”.

“The murder of a worshipper in a mosque is a despicable crime that must revolt the hearts of all French people,” added the Representative Council of Jewish Institutions of France (CRIF).

The attacker has been named only as Olivier A., born in France in 2004 and unemployed without a criminal record. He is “potentially extremely dangerous” and it is “essential” to arrest him before he claims more victims, said regional prosecutor Abdelkrim Grini.

But while the motive of Islamophobia is the lead that the 70 investigators are “working on as a priority... it is not the only one”, Grini said.

There are “certain elements (which) could suggest that this motive was perhaps not the primary motive... or the only motive,” he added, without elaborating.

Grini was speaking in the regional centre of Ales alongside Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau, a hardline right-winger who takes a tough line on immigration and Islamism.

Retailleau emphasised that “the possibility of an anti-Muslim act has not been neglected at all, quite the contrary.”



# At least nine killed in Vancouver after vehicle plows into Filipino festival

By **Fatimah Idera**

**A**t least nine people were killed when a man drove through a crowd at a Filipino community festival in the western Canadian city of Vancouver on Saturday evening, police said in an X post.

Police said they had arrested a 30-year-old Vancouver man at the scene, who was “known” to them. The suspect was initially chased down and held by people at the scene. A number of people were also injured.

One witness told CTV News he saw a black vehicle driving erratically in the area of the festival just before the crowd was struck. “At this time, we are confident that this incident was not an act of terrorism,” Vancouver police said in an X post.

The incident happened shortly after 8 p.m. (0300 GMT) near East 41st Avenue and Fraser Street, where the Lapu-Lapu Day Block Party, celebrating a Philippine national hero, was taking place.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said on X: “I am devastated to hear about the horrific events at the Lapu-Lapu festival in Vancouver earlier this evening.”

Canada’s federal election takes place on Monday. Officials from Carney’s Liberal Party said the prime minister’s campaign events would be paused on Sunday morning after the tragedy.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr said he was “shattered to hear about the terrible incident” and extended his “deepest sympathies to the families of the victims and to the strong and thriving Filipino community in Canada.”



The government of British Columbia officially recognised April 27 as Lapu-Lapu Day in 2023, acknowledging the cultural contributions of the Filipino-Canadian community, one of the largest immigrant groups in the province.

Jagmeet Singh, leader of Canada’s New Democratic Party, was among the attendees at the event, but left minutes before the vehicle arrived, CTV News said.

“This is so horrific, I don’t even know what to say,” CTV quoted Singh as saying. “I was just there, and I just imagined the faces of the kids that I saw smiling and dancing.”

Witnesses revealed about 15 people lying on the ground after the dark SUV plunged into the crowd. The witness said the driver had tried to run but was chased down by festival-goers and held against a fence for about 10 minutes until police arrived.

The festival, celebrated especially in the central Philippines, honors Datu Lapu-Lapu, a Filipino chieftain who defeated Spanish forces led by Ferdinand Magellan in the Battle of Mactan in 1521.

The centerpiece of the festivities in Vancouver is a multi-block street party in the Sunset neighborhood featuring Filipino food and traditions, live performances and cultural displays.

“I didn’t get to see the driver, all I heard was an engine rev,” Yoseb Vardeh, co-owner of food truck Bao Buns, said in an interview with Postmedia.

“I got outside my food truck, I looked down the road and there’s just bodies everywhere,” said Vardeh, his voice breaking with emotion. “He went through the whole block, he went straight down the middle.”

The Vancouver Sun said thousands of people had been in the area.

Vancouver city councillor Peter Fry told CTV News he had also been at the event earlier in the day.

“This was a great day. A wonderful event. Huge community event. And to have it end in tragedy like this, it won’t break us or the community but it’s horrible,” he said.

# IMF-World Bank meetings end with little tariff clarity, but economic foreboding

By **Fatimah Idera**

**G**lobal finance leaders came to Washington this past week seeking clarity on what it would take to get some relief from President Donald Trump's multi-layered tariff assault and on just how much pain it will bring to the world economy.

Most headed home with more questions than answers.

Many participants in the International Monetary Fund and World Bank Spring Meetings had a sense that Trump's administration was still conflicted in its demands from trading partners hit with his sweeping tariffs.

During the whirlwind week, many finance and trade ministers sought to meet with U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and other key Trump administration officials, to no avail. Those that did were often told to be patient – even as the clock steadily ticks down on the 90-day pause Trump had granted on the steepest levies. Indeed, not a single deal was finalized over the course of the week despite the Trump administration touting the receipt of 18 written proposals and a full slate of negotiations.

“We are not negotiating. We are just presenting, discussing the economy,” said Polish Finance Minister Andrzej Domanski. He added that he stressed “how this uncertainty is bad for Europe, for the U.S. I mean, it's actually bad for everyone.”

Warnings that the tariffs – 25% on all U.S. imports of vehicles, steel and aluminum and currently 10% for most everything else – would cause painful damage to the U.S. and other major economies went largely unheeded by U.S. officials.

“We know that they think – that it won't be that bad,” Domanski said. “They think it's a short-term pain, long-term gain.”



And I'm afraid that we'll have short-term pain, long-term pain.”

The Trump administration's most substantial trade negotiations during the week were with Japan and South Korea, but the results were inconclusive as Bessent cited “productive” talks with both countries. Specific currency targets for the Japanese yen were not discussed, but both countries' currency policies are expected to be part of future talks as the U.S. sees currency weakness against the dollar as a nontariff barrier to American exports.

The IMF took a slightly more optimistic view of the economic fallout from the highest U.S. tariffs in more than a century, slashing growth forecasts for most countries in its World Economic Outlook but stopping far short of predicting recessions – even for the U.S. and export-dependent China, which now faces U.S. tariffs of 145% on many goods.

IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva acknowledged that member countries were anxious about the uncertainty shock to a global economy buffeted by pandemic, inflation and wars

but held out hope that trade negotiations would ease the tariff strains.

“We recognize that there is work under way to resolve trade disputes and reduce uncertainty,” Georgieva told reporters. “Uncertainty is really bad for business, so the sooner there is this cloud that is hanging over our heads is lifted, the better for profit, for growth, for the world economy.”

Several finance officials told Reuters that odds of recession were higher than the IMF's 37% chance, citing private sector forecasts.

## DEBT RISKS RISE

Eric LeCompte, executive director of Jubilee USA Network, a faith-based nonprofit group advocating debt relief, said that the IMF's forecasts were clearly aimed at preventing market panic, even as officials in private meetings expressed concerns about new debt crises emerging.

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"It was a do-nothing kind of week," LeCompte said, adding that debt discussions were inconclusive and overshadowed by tariff talks.

Reza Baqir, a former Pakistan central bank governor who now heads sovereign debt advisory at Alvarez & Marsal, said: "For many developing countries, especially in the Global South, there is a real sense of despair that the agenda on Financing for Development is really not center-stage. And who is going to be there to champion that debate?"

World Bank chief economist Indermit Gill also sounded an alarm on rising debt levels for emerging markets, noting that tariffs had prompted a sharp slowdown in trade and foreign direct investment that are crucial to developing country growth.

He and other World Bank and IMF officials told countries to cut their own tariffs to boost growth prospects.

NO U.S. WITHDRAWAL

Policymakers did breathe a sigh of relief when Bessent expressed U.S. support for the IMF and the World Bank, declaring that they have "enduring value" but criticizing their "mission creep" into climate, gender and equality issues.

Rather than withdrawing from the institutions as prescribed by the Project 2025 Republican policy manifesto, Bessent said he wanted to refocus them on their core missions of economic stability and development, with expanded World Bank energy financing options and an end to China loans.

Participants at the meetings, along with financial markets, were encouraged by Bessent's comments early in the week that triple-digit U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods and vice versa were unsustainable, suggesting that a deal to ease them could be reached soon.

But China denied Trump's assertions that tariff negotiations were underway with

Beijing, adding to the week's confusion over his tariffs and offering little reassurance to country delegations.

"I think most people left here bracing for things to get worse from an economic perspective," said Josh Lipsky, a former IMF adviser who is now senior director of the Atlantic Council's GeoEconomics Center. "The broad picture, when you step back, is very concerning."

But a big challenge for developed countries at the moment was the recent selloff in U.S. Treasury debt and other dollar-based assets, which indicated an erosion of trust in U.S. economic policies, Lipsky said.

Trust in U.S. economic leadership was the fundamental reason that the dollar had achieved reserve currency status, he said. While the U.S. economy is too big to ignore the dollar for now, trading partners will try to seek alternatives unless that trust is repaired, he added.

## British Airways flight diverts to Boston after bird strike

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A British Airways flight traveling from Washington, D.C., to London diverted to Boston on Saturday evening after the crew reported a possible bird strike and smoke in the cabin, officials said.

British Airways Flight 216, operated by a Boeing 777 aircraft, had departed Dulles International Airport shortly after 5:30 p.m. and was bound for Heathrow Airport. The plane landed safely at Boston Logan International Airport around 7:30 p.m. Eastern Time, according to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

A spokesperson for British Airways said the flight was diverted "as a precaution following a suspected bird strike," adding that engineers are



inspecting the aircraft. A Massachusetts Port Authority spokesperson confirmed that a bird was struck and noted that the aircraft "landed without incident." No injuries were reported, and the number of passengers aboard the flight was not immediately disclosed.

The FAA stated it will investigate the incident.

Bird strikes have been steadily rising across the United States, according to FAA data. In 2023, approximately 19,400 bird strikes were reported at 713 U.S. airports. Officials attribute the increase to a combination of factors, including larger wildlife populations, a rise in aviation traffic, and the development of quieter aircraft engines.



# Carney pauses final day campaign events after Vancouver tragedy

By Fatimah Idera

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney paused election campaigning on Sunday after at least nine people were killed when a man drove through a crowd at a Filipino community festival in Vancouver, Carney's campaign said.

Sunday is the final day for Carney and Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre to make their pitches to voters ahead of an election on Monday that has centered largely on U.S. President Donald Trump's tariffs and threats to annex Canada.

It was too early to tell if the mass casualty event in Vancouver would have any impact on the election. Police said they had arrested a 30-year-old Vancouver man who was known to them. A number of people were injured in the incident.

In posts on social media, Carney offered condolences and Poilievre said his thoughts were with Vancouver's Filipino community after the "horrific" news coming out of the festival.

The Conservative Party did not immediately respond to a request for comment about a rally Poilievre has scheduled in Oakville, Ontario, at 11 am eastern time (1500 GMT).

Carney had spent Saturday in the most populous province of Ontario, arguing he is best placed to steer Canada through a crisis triggered by Trump's tariffs, while Poilievre has emphasized the need for change after nearly a decade of Liberal rule under former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Carney, a two-time central banker and former college hockey goalie who took over this year after Trudeau resigned, referred to the country's most popular sport as he campaigned ahead of Monday's election.



"We are in the equivalent of Game 7 of the Stanley Cup in the last two minutes," Carney, 60, said in a speech north of Toronto, referring to the National Hockey League championship.

Pollsters revealed that Carney's Liberal Party holds a narrow lead in popular support ahead of final voting, after Trump slapped tariffs on Canada and repeatedly referred to the once close ally as the 51st U.S. state. Trump's comments enraged Canadians and reversed a lead of some 20 points for Poilievre, whom the Liberals have compared to Trump.

A Nanos poll on Saturday said the gap between the two front-running parties had narrowed nationally to approximately three percentage points, from closer to four a day earlier, with the Conservatives making up ground especially in Ontario.

The poll put national Liberal support at 41.9% versus 38.6% for the Conservatives.

That result in national voting would usually translate into a Liberal win, because the party's support is more concentrated than the Conservatives' in

urban areas rich with electoral districts, or seats. It is unclear if it would result in the Liberals winning a majority of seats to govern without a smaller party's help.

Nanos surveyed 1,291 adult Canadians between April 23 and 25 and is accurate to 2.7 percentage points.

According to another Saturday poll by Angus Reid, voter intention favors the Liberals by four percentage points over Poilievre's Conservatives.

Poilievre's promises of change and his pledges to curb living costs have resonated with young men, among others, leading to large crowds at rallies.

"We can't afford four more years of the Liberals," Poilievre told supporters in British Columbia on Saturday as they cheered "bring it home" and waved placards reading "change".

Carney, who has distanced himself from Trudeau's policies since taking over in March and has attracted mainly older voters to rallies, had been expected to hold a frenetic four-province canvassing sprint on Sunday.

# EPL: Liverpool win 2024/2025 title after thrashing Tottenham

By Helen Okechukwu

**L**iverpool thrashed Tottenham Hotspur 5-1 to clinch the Premier League title at Anfield on Sunday, sealing a record-equalling 20th English top-flight crown.

Arne Slot's men stormed back after conceding a surprise early goal to dominate the first half as the decibel level soared among 60,000-plus fans.

Liverpool, who can no longer be caught by second-placed Arsenal, are now level with bitter rivals Manchester United as the joint-most successful club in English top-flight history.

Slot's men started on the front foot at an expectant Anfield after a stirring rendition of club anthem "You'll Never Walk Alone" in the warm spring sunshine.

Mohamed Salah had an early sighter and Cody Gakpo went close with a spectacular overhead kick but Tottenham briefly threatened to become party poopers when Dominic Solanke powered home a header from a James Maddison corner in the 12th minute.

But Liverpool were level just four minutes later when Luis Diaz converted Dominik Szoboszlai's cross from close range. The offside flag went up but VAR awarded the goal.

The momentum was now all with Liverpool and the home side took the



lead in the 24th minute when Alexis Mac Allister thundered the ball home from the 18-yard line past the flying Guglielmo Vicario.

Now the party was well and truly started and Gakpo made it 3-1, slamming a shot into the bottom corner after Spurs failed to clear.

Tottenham manager Ange Postecoglou had made eight changes from the team that lost to Nottingham Forest last week as he prioritises the semifinals of the Europa League and they now had a mountain to climb.

The Liverpool fans – deprived of

celebrating the 2020 Premier League trophy due to Covid restrictions, ran through their full repertoire of songs as their team pushed for a fourth goal in the second half.

## SALAH SELFIE

Top-scorer Salah scored the goal the crowd craved, collecting Szoboszlai's pass before cutting in and blasting his shot into the bottom corner.

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He celebrated by grabbing a fan's phone before taking a selfie in front of the Kop.

Deafening cheers of "We're going to win the league" and "We shall not be moved" rang out.

Liverpool had a fifth when Spurs defender Destiny Udogie poked the ball past his own goalkeeper from close range with about 20 minutes to go as the game turned into a procession.

As the game went into added time the club's anthem rang out again as scarves were held aloft and the final whistle elicited a thunderous roar.

The win leaves Liverpool on 82 points, 15 clear of nearest challengers Arsenal with just four games remaining.

Tottenham are a miserable 16th in the Premier League table after their 19th defeat of the season, putting Postecoglou under enormous pressure.

Tens of thousands of fans swarmed around Anfield in the build-up to kick-off in anticipation of Liverpool's coronation, setting off flares as the home team bus arrived.

Flags and scarves saying "Liverpool 20-time Champions" were on sale from stalls outside the ground.

At the start of the campaign, Pep Guardiola's Manchester City were favourites to extend their dynastic Premier League reign and make it five titles in a row but their form collapsed.

Arsenal emerged as their closest

challengers but they drew too many games, failing to take advantage of the rare Liverpool slip-ups.

It was feared Liverpool's players would need time to adapt to the methods of Slot, who replaced Jurgen Klopp last June following the German's departure after nine trophy-filled years at Anfield.

But the former Feyenoord boss has sailed serenely through the season despite relentless speculation over the futures of three of his biggest stars – Salah, captain Virgil van Dijk and Trent Alexander-Arnold.

Both Salah and Van Dijk have now signed two-year extensions, though England defender Alexander-Arnold is believed likely to be on the verge of a move to Real Madrid.

