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Judge recuses self from Natasha's case over Akpabio's petition

By Dave Oludare Oso

A judge of the Federal High Court in Abuja who was assigned to hear a suit filed by the suspended Senator for Kogi Central, Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, on Tuesday, recused himself from the case.

Justice Obiora Egwuatu based his decision on a petition the Senate President, Godswill Akpabio, wrote to challenge his (Egwuatu's) objectivity in the matter.

Though the suit was originally fixed for hearing, however, when the matter was called up by the court's clerk, Justice Egwuatu announced his decision in a short ruling he delivered.

The trial judge said the case-file would be returned to the Chief Judge for a reassignment to another judge.

Recall that Justice Egwuatu had on March 4, issued an interim order that stopped the Senate Committee on Ethics, Privileges and Public Petitions from going ahead with the disciplinary proceeding that was initiated against Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan over an allegation that she flouted rules of the legislative house.

He held that the disciplinary process should be placed on hold, pending the determination of the suit that was brought before him by the embattled female lawmaker.



More so, Justice Egwuatu gave defendants in the matter, 72 hours to show cause why it should not issue an order of interlocutory injunction to stop them from probing the plaintiff for alleged misconduct, without affording her the privileges stipulated in the 1999 Constitution, as amended, the Senate Standing Order 2023, and the Legislative Houses (Powers and Privileges) Act.

He granted permission for the plaintiff to serve the Originating Summons and all the accompanying processes on all the defendants, through substituted means.

It held that they should be served by handing the processes to the Clerk of the National Assembly or by pasting them on the premises of the National Assembly and publishing same in two national dailies.

The interim orders followed an ex-parte application and an affidavit of urgency that was brought before the court by the lawmaker.

However, despite the orders of the court, the Senate Committee held its sitting and slammed the plaintiff with a six months suspension.

Following an application by the defendants, Justice Egwuatu subsequently amended the interim order he issued in favour of the plaintiff, by vacating the aspect that barred the Senate from undertaking any activity within the pendency of the suit.

The Senate President had through his team of lawyers led by Mr. Kehinde Ogunwumiju, SAN, queried the powers of the court to meddle in the affairs of the Senate.

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

PUBLIC NOTICE COLOUR

PRODUCT COLOUR

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9X5	225,738.00
9X4	193,500.00
9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
5X3	66,875.00
5X2	42,916.50
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3X3	28,000.00
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8X3	98,500.00
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9X3	112,875.00
8X6	179,368.00
8X5	143,500.00
8X4	93,500.00
8X3	82,434.50
7X4	111,173.50
6X4	82,434.50
6X3	59,250.00
6X2	40,000.00
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Tinubu congratulates Jonathan on winning 2025 Sunhak Peace Prize

By Friday Omosola



President Bola Tinubu has congratulated former President Goodluck Jonathan on being awarded the 2025 Sunhak Peace Founders' Award.

Tinubu, in a statement by Bayo Onanuga, his Special Adviser on Information & Strategy, said the recognition showed the contributions of the former president to peacebuilding and democracy.

The former Lagos State governor commended Jonathan for his

unwavering advocacy for peace, unity, and democratic values, noting that his efforts have earned him global recognition.

The President described Jonathan's selection for the prestigious award as a testament to his bold initiatives in conflict resolution and governance reforms, particularly in Africa.

He also recalled Jonathan's historic concession in the 2015 presidential election, which led to the first peaceful transition of power to an opposition party in Nigeria's history—an action that

solidified the country's democratic reputation.

He joined in celebrating this international honour with the former president and expressed gratitude to the Sunhak Peace Prize Committee for recognizing individuals committed to making the world a better place.

The Sunhak Peace Prize is an international award that honours individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to peace, human development, and global harmony.

Nigeria launches special operations force training to enhance military efficiency

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Minister of Defence, Mohammad Badaru Abubakar, has reaffirmed President Bola Tinubu's commitment to modernising the Nigerian military, with a particular focus on equipping forces with cutting-edge technology, improving personnel welfare, and enhancing training for greater operational efficiency.

Speaking at the Opening Ceremony of the First Batch of Special Operations Force Training and Equipping for the Armed Forces of Nigeria, held at Camp Kabala in Jaji, Kaduna State, Minister Abubakar underscored the strategic importance of the initiative.

He said, "This milestone marks a new chapter in our commitment to strengthening Nigeria's defence capabilities, enhancing our response to evolving security threats, and ensuring that our forces remain among the best-trained and most resilient in the world."

Abubakar outlined the necessity of developing an elite force that would not only be well-equipped but also proficient in advanced combat tactics, unconventional warfare, intelligence-driven operations, and rapid-response missions.

He stressed, "Our vision is to build a highly skilled, agile, and mission-ready force capable of executing specialised operations in diverse and complex environments."

The Special Operations Force Training is a critical initiative aimed at bolstering the nation's ability to combat terrorism, insurgency, transnational crime, and other asymmetric threats.

It is designed to provide a robust response to national security challenges and will play an essential role in protecting Nigeria's sovereignty, citizens, and maintaining peace both within and outside the country's borders.



Abubakar also highlighted the diverse areas of training that the recruits will undergo, including special combat tactics, counterterrorism operations, intelligence gathering, and hostage rescue missions.

"Trainees will be prepared for high-risk operations in urban and hostile environments, ensuring that they remain adaptable to the ever-changing landscape of security threats," he explained.

The programme will also foster inter-agency collaboration, with personnel from the Nigerian Army, Navy, Air Force, and other security agencies working together to address modern security challenges.

Recognising that Special Operations require not only technical expertise but also mental resilience, the Defence Minister noted that the training programme will rigorously test the physical and psychological endurance of all participants.

"Emphasis will be placed on leadership under pressure, fostering duty, discipline, and camaraderie among participants," he added.

Upon completion of the training, Minister Abubakar anticipates that the Special Operations Force will be capable of conducting high-impact operations with

precision and speed.

This enhanced force will be deployed to critical areas across the country, reinforcing Nigeria's national security architecture.

The inaugural batch consists of 800 trainees, with a total of 2,400 expected to be trained as part of this comprehensive long-term strategy.

The training programme will be expanded over time to include personnel from all branches of the Armed Forces of Nigeria.

Abubakar reiterated that this is just the beginning, with continued skill development and adaptability being a key focus for the forces moving forward.

The Minister also confirmed that, as part of President Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, the government is committed to providing the Special Operations Force with the latest modern weapons, surveillance systems, and intelligence tools to further improve their operational effectiveness.

This initiative is set to reinforce Nigeria's commitment to developing a world-class military, capable of meeting the challenges of a rapidly changing global security environment.

Nigeria, Canada sign bilateral Air Services Agreement to boost aviation cooperation

By Friday Omosola

In a landmark move to enhance air connectivity between Nigeria and Canada, the Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo, has signed a Bilateral Air Services Agreement (BASA) with Canadian authorities.

The agreement was finalised today at the Ministry's headquarters in Abuja, marking a significant milestone in Nigeria's aviation sector.

Keyamo clarified that the agreement is a code-share arrangement, rather than a full bilateral agreement.

Under this arrangement, multiple airlines can market and sell seats on flights operated by another airline, allowing passengers to book flights under different airline codes.

He also stated that Nigeria will designate airline operators to implement and benefit from the agreement.

Expressing gratitude to the Canadian authorities, Keyamo noted that his counterpart in Canada had already signed the agreement.

To minimize costs, he signed the document in Nigeria.



He emphasised that the agreement will further strengthen diplomatic and economic ties between the two nations.

The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Ibrahim Abubakar Kana, mni, commended Keyamo for his proactive approach and dedication to advancing Nigeria's aviation industry.

Welcoming the Canadian High Commissioner to Nigeria, Pasquale Salvaggio, Kana highlighted Nigeria's position as Canada's largest economic partner in Africa.

He expressed confidence that the BASA agreement would benefit both nations by enhancing air travel and economic cooperation.

In his remarks, Salvaggio thanked the Nigerian government for facilitating the agreement and expressed Canada's commitment to strengthening bilateral relations.

He reiterated the Canadian government's readiness to collaborate with Nigeria in advancing aviation partnerships.

Code-sharing agreements, such as the one signed today, allow airlines to expand their networks, improve connectivity, and streamline passenger travel without adding new flights.

This agreement is expected to enhance travel options between Nigeria and Canada, promoting economic and cultural exchange.

African democr-acy not working because it enables corruption, injustice – Obasanjo

By Dave Oludare Oso

A former president of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo has stated that democracy in Africa has failed because it does not align with the continent's values, culture, and way of life.

Obasanjo spoke said at the 60th birthday colloquium of Emeka Ihedioha, former governor of Imo State on Monday.

The former president questioned whether Africa was practising true democracy or merely adopting Western liberal democracy.

Obasanjo argued that before colonial rule, Africa had governance systems that served the people effectively, which, in his view, qualified as democracy. He referenced Abraham Lincoln's definition of democracy as "government of the people, by the people, for the people," stating that the system should work for all citizens, not just a privileged few.

The former General said democracy has evolved into a system where a small group of people govern over a large majority who are deprived of their rights and necessities.

He criticised this model, describing it as a system that enables corruption and injustice, where those in power accumulate wealth illegally and leave



the masses without recourse.

According to Obasanjo, "Democracy has now become representative democracy. Today we have democracy, which is government of the people, of a small number of people, by a small number of people, over a large number of people who are deprived of what they need to have in life. Now that is not democracy that will endure. So if you are talking of democracy failing in Africa, democracy in Africa has failed.

"And why has it failed? Because it didn't have any, in content and in content is not Africa. It does not have any aspect of our culture, our way of life, what we stand for, what we believe. What sort of democracy brings you and you grab everything illegally, corruptly, and you say go to

court? Even in the court, you cannot get justice."

The former military Head of State warned that democracy in Africa is not just failing but is at risk of dying entirely unless it is redefined to reflect African values and serve the needs of its people.

He called for an approach that integrates Africa's cultural and historical context to create a system of governance that truly delivers for all.

Obasanjo said, "We have to look at democracy in the context and in the content of Africa. I hope that we will get to that stage so that democracy which will deliver will be the democracy that we will have in Africa."

INEC raises concerns, faults vague state, incompleteness of petitioners to recall Natasha

By New Daily Prime

The Independent National Electoral Commission has faulted the recall petition of the suspended Senator representing Kogi Central, Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan.

The National Commissioner and Chairman, Information and Voter Education Committee of the electoral umpire, Sam Olumekun, admitted receiving the petition submitted yesterday by some individuals led by Charity Ijese and received by INEC's Secretary, Rose Oriaran-Anthony.

According to INEC, the petition which includes six bags of documents from than half of the 474,554 registered voters in the district covers 902 polling units across 57 registration areas and represents voters from five local government areas — Adavi, Ajaokuta, Ogori/Magongo, Okehi, and Okene.

In a statement signed by Olumekun, on behalf of INEC, stated that the petitioners could not make available necessary contact information, such as their addresses, phone numbers and email addresses, as required under the Commission's Regulations and Guidelines for Recall 2024. The commission noted that only phone number of lead petitioner was made available.

It also slammed the petitioners for providing a wrong address such as listing "Okene, Kogi State"

The INEC statement read in part, "The commission held its regular weekly meeting today, Tuesday, 25th March 2025. Among other issues, the meeting discussed the petition for the recall of the Senator representing



Kogi Central Senatorial District.

"The process of recall is enshrined in the 1999 Constitution, the Electoral Act 2022 as well as the commission's detailed Regulations and Guidelines for Recall 2024, available on our website. All petitions will be treated in strict compliance with the legal framework.

"The petition from Kogi Central Senatorial District was accompanied by six bags of documents said to be signatures collected from over half of the 474,554 registered voters spread across 902 Polling Units in 57 Registration Areas (Wards) in the five Local Government Areas of Adavi, Ajaokuta, Ogori/Magongo, Okehi and Okene.

"The commission's immediate observation is that the representatives of the petitioners did not provide their contact address, telephone number(s) and e-mail address(es) in the covering letter forwarding the petition through which they can be contacted as provided in Clause 1(f) of our Regulations and Guidelines.

"The address given is 'Okene, Kogi

State', which is not a definite location for contacting the petitioners. Only the telephone number of 'the lead petitioner' is provided as against the numbers of all the other representatives of the petitioners."

INEC, however, reiterates that the recall of a legislator is the prerogative of registered voters in a constituency who sign a petition indicating loss of confidence in the legislator representing them.

"Once the petition meets the requirements of submission, as contained in our regulations, the commission shall commence the verification of the signatures in each Polling Unit in an open process restricted to registered voters who signed the petition only.

"The petitioners and the member whose recall is sought shall be at liberty to nominate agents to observe the verification, while interested observers and the media will also be accredited. At each Polling Unit, signatories to the petition shall be verified using the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System," the body said.

Appointing local administrators unconstitutional, says legal expert

By Friday Omosola

Amid escalating tensions in Rivers State, the appointment of a Sole Administrator, Vice Admiral Ibok-Ete Ekwe Ibas (rtd), by President Bola Tinubu has sparked legal and constitutional debates. Recent reports claim that Ibas may be planning to appoint administrators across the 23 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the state — a move that legal experts argue contradicts Nigeria's constitutional provisions.

A legal practitioner, Barrister Yusuf Temilola, has expressed strong opposition to these alleged plans, asserting that under the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, only democratically elected officials have the right to head local governments.

"No individual or state government can lawfully oversee local government functions without an electoral mandate," Temilola told New Daily Prime.

He referenced Section 7 of the Constitution, which guarantees the autonomy of local governments and mandates their administration through elected councils.

Temilola further cited recent decisions of the Supreme Court of Nigeria, including the case AG Fed v.



AG Abia & Ors, which reaffirmed that the removal or appointment of local government chairmen without due process violates constitutional law.

"Any administrator appointed without following due process — especially in the absence of democratic elections — is acting in breach of the Constitution," he emphasized.

His position echoes that of the Attorney General of the Federation (AGF) and Minister of Justice, Prince Lateef Fagbemi, SAN, who recently reaffirmed that no governor or appointee has the right to remove elected local government officials.

"Such removal lies solely with the legislative arm of the local council," the AGF said in a public statement.

Legal Expert Denies Ibas' Authority to Appoint LG Officials

Barrister Temilola reiterated that Vice Admiral Ibas, despite being appointed as a Sole Administrator, lacks any constitutional authority to appoint local government chairmen or administrators.

"It is not envisaged by law, nor is there any constitutional provision that permits such appointments by a state administrator. It contradicts both the letter and spirit of the Constitution," he concluded.

As the situation in Rivers State continues to unfold, legal experts and civil society alike are watching closely. The debate has reignited broader conversations around local government autonomy in Nigeria, democratic governance, and adherence to constitutional frameworks in resolving political crises.

Natasha wants Senator Imasuen disbarred, petitions lawyers' body

By Dave Oludare Oso

Suspended Kogi Central Senator, Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, has formally filed a petition before the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Committee, seeking the disbarment of Senator Nedamwen Bernards Imasuen from the Nigerian Bar.

According to reports, the petition, grounded on allegations of professional misconduct, claims that Senator Imasuen was previously disbarred from the New York Bar for fraud, misappropriation of client funds, and failure to respond to disciplinary authorities.

The petition noted that Senator Imasuen was permanently disbarred by the New York Supreme Court, Appellate Division, Second Department on May 10, 2010, following a complaint by Daphne Slyfield, a client who accused him of misappropriating legal fees.

The court found him guilty of multiple breaches of professional conduct, leading to the revocation of his legal licence in the United States.

Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan alleged that, despite his disbarment, Senator Imasuen relocated to Nigeria and continued presenting himself as a legal practitioner while venturing into politics.

He was eventually elected as the Senator representing Edo South Senatorial District and appointed Chairman of the Senate Committee on Ethics, Privileges, and Public Petitions, a role requiring unimpeachable integrity.

The petition further stated that Senator Imasuen failed to disclose his disbarment in his FORM EC-9 – Particulars of Personal Information submitted to the Independent National Electoral



Commission (INEC) before contesting for public office.

The legal action comes in the wake of Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan's six-month suspension from the Senate, which she claims was orchestrated by Senator Imasuen in defiance of a court order.

On March 4, 2025, the Federal High Court in Abuja, presided over by Justice Obiora Atuegwu Egwatu, issued an interim order restraining the Senate Committee on Ethics, Privileges, and Public Petitions from proceeding with an investigation against her regarding alleged misconduct during a Senate plenary session on February 20, 2025.

Despite being served the court order on March 5, 2025, Senator Imasuen and his committee proceeded with the investigation, leading to her suspension on March 6, 2025.

In her petition, Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan described Senator Imasuen's actions as contempt of court, citing Rule 31 of the Rules of Professional Conduct for Legal Practitioners (2023), which mandates that lawyers must always treat the court with respect, dignity, and honour.

She further accused him of procedural bias, stating that he dismissed her petition alleging sexual harassment against Senate President Godswill Akpabio on procedural grounds, while actively pursuing disciplinary action against her.

Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan argued that Senator Imasuen's defiance of a subsisting court order and his unethical conduct violate Rule 1 of the Rules of Professional Conduct (2023), which mandates lawyers to uphold the rule of law and maintain high professional standards.

She contended that under Rule 74(1) of the RPC, 2023, Senator Imasuen's actions constitute professional misconduct, warranting his removal from the Roll of Barristers and Solicitors of the Supreme Court of Nigeria.

As the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Committee commences its review of the petition, the case is expected to spark significant legal and political debate, particularly regarding the ethical obligations of public officials who are also members of the legal profession.

Seven fleeing Kogi inmates recaptured after prison break

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Seven of 12 inmates who escaped from the Medium Security Custodial Centre in Koton Karfe, Kogi State, following a prison break in the early hours of Monday have been recaptured.

The Nigeria Correctional Service (NCoS) has confirmed the recapture in a statement issued on Monday by its spokesperson, Abubakar Umar, who said the feat was achieved because the Service swiftly launched a manhunt for the fleeing inmates.

The Kogi State Commissioner for Information, Kingsley Fanwo had earlier disclosed that 12 inmates escaped during the incident.

Thereafter, the acting Controller-General of NCoS, Sylvester Nwakuche, reacting to the development, swiftly mobilised security personnel in collaboration with sister security agencies and top



government officials, including the Senior Special Adviser to the Kogi State governor.

The statement read, "Security forces were deployed to restore order, reinforce security at the facility, and track down the escapees.

"As of this moment, five of the fleeing inmates have been recaptured, while

efforts are ongoing to apprehend the remaining inmates and bring them to justice."

The Acting Controller General, Nigeria Correctional Service, Sly Nwakuche, disclosed late Monday, that additionally two escapees have been re-arrested, bringing the number of those returned to seven.

He spoke during a press briefing at the Koton Karfe Correctional Service in Kogi State.

He vowed that the remaining escapees would be apprehended as he called on the public to provide security agencies with all the needed information that would lead to the arrest of all the escaped inmates.

Meanwhile, the Kogi State Government has vowed to work with security agencies to uncover the circumstances surrounding the jailbreak.

Shock as 250,000 sign petition to recall Senator Natasha in 5 days

By Alade Adisa

Tongues have started wagging over the claim that 250,000 voters have signed a petition to recall Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan from the Senate.

The main question raised is how 250,000 people managed to endorse the petition within just five days.

Commenting on the development, political analyst Dr. Nnaemeka Onyeka Obiaraeri expressed doubt over the figure, questioning its feasibility.

"This would translate to 50,000 people signing per day, which further breaks down to about 35 people signing per minute—assuming signatures were collected continuously over 24 hours with no breaks," he said.



He added that even the election that brought her into office recorded fewer than 120,000 total votes.

"She scored about 57,000 votes; her main rival got around 51,000, and a third candidate had barely 4,000," Obiaraeri noted.

He warned against what he described as inordinate ambition aimed at silencing

opposition and manipulating democratic processes to favor specific interests.

The petition was submitted to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on Monday.

Speculation is mounting that former Kogi State Governor Yahaya Bello may be eyeing the senatorial seat, despite currently facing fraud charges running into billions of naira. Bello reportedly went into hiding for several months after the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) initiated investigations shortly after he left office.

Meanwhile, Justice Ekwuatu of the Federal High Court, Abuja, has recused himself from the suit filed by Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan against the Senate and the Senate President, which

Five UNIOSUN students die in auto crash, gov mourns

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Following the death of five students of the Osun State University (UNIOSUN) in a horrific motor accident, the management has announced the closure of the school.

The accident occurred when a luxurious bus travelling from Ibadan and an 18-passenger bus from Osogbo had a head-on collision resulting in multiple fatalities, including the five UNIOSUN students.

New Daily Prime gathered that five other persons were killed in the unfortunate incident which occurred at Balogun Area of Ikire on Sunday, March 23, 2025.

The institution's public relations officer, Ademola Adesoji, announced this in a statement in Osogbo, saying it is deeply saddened by the tragic road accident.

The statement read, "Our University Management, upon receiving this distressing news, swiftly dispatched a team to the scene to identify and support any of our students involved in the accident.

"Regrettably, we confirm the loss of Olagbemide Dotun, a 200-level student of Software Engineering, Suleiman Adedayo, a 400-level student of Law, Ogundare Pelumi, a 300-level student of Public Health, Ogundare Elijah, a 100-level student of Mechanical Engineering and Olawuyi Mary, a 200-level student of Nursing."

More saddening, two of the deceased, Ogundare Pelumi and Ogundare Elijah, are said to be from the same parents.

The institution's spokesperson added, "One of our students, Olagbemide Damilola, a 200-level student of Medicine and Surgery, survived the accident and is currently receiving medical attention."

According to him, "This ghastly road accident involving a luxurious bus travelling from Ibadan and an 18-passenger bus from Osogbo resulted in



multiple fatalities, including five UNIOSUN students.

He stressed that, from the reports from the Nigerian Police and the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), the accident was caused by the head-on collision of the two buses, leading to a severe impact that claimed the lives of several passengers.

"The Nigerian Police have confirmed a total of ten fatalities from this unfortunate incident.

"We are also providing necessary moral and logistical support to the bereaved families, including funeral arrangements for the deceased students."

"This tragic loss has deeply shaken our university community. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and loved ones of the deceased. We urge our students, staff, and the entire university community to remain calm and supportive during this difficult time.

"Osun State University will continue to monitor the situation and provide updates as necessary. We extend our heartfelt condolences to the grieving families and pray that they find strength and solace in this moment of grief," he concluded.

Meanwhile, the Vice-Chancellor and Management of UNIOSUN has announced the closure of the University

on Tuesday, March 25, 2025, to mourn five of the students of the institution who tragically lost their lives in a ghastly motor accident while returning to their homes after the Harmattan Semester examinations.

This development was contained in a release issued by the School's Registrar, Atiuke Oguntunde. According to the release, the Vice-Chancellor has directed that all academic and administrative activities be put on hold until Wednesday, March 26, 2025.

Also reacting, the governor of Osun state, Ademola Adeleke has expressed deep sadness over the tragic demise of the students.

Adeleke, in a statement issued by his spokesperson, Olawale Rasheed, conveys the heartfelt sympathy of the government and the people of Osun state to the families of the deceased, describing their losses as heart-wrenching considering the great potentials that they hold for the present and future of Osun State.

The governor prays for the quick recovery of passengers who survived the accident and receiving treatment at the hospital, charging motorists to adhere strictly to laid down safety guidelines in order to make traveling on our roads safer.

Emergency rule in Rivers: Lawyer wants administrator sacked

By Alade Adisa

An Abuja based lawyer, Mr Johnmary Jideobi, has asked a Federal High Court in Abuja to sack the Administrator of Rivers State, Vice Admiral Ibokette Obas (Rtd).

Jideobi, in a suit filed before the Court, also cited President Bola Tinubu, the Minister of Justice and others as defendants.

The suit is marked: FHC/ABJ/CS/572/2025, and was lodged before the court on Tuesday. Jideobi is equally praying the court to set-aside as void, "all actions and decisions [howsoever described or made] of the 3rd Defendant [Vice Admiral Ibokette Ibas (Rtd)] in the name of Sole Administrator of Rivers State, same being unconstitutional, null and of no constitutional force throughout the Federal Republic of Nigeria for all purposes."

The plaintiff further prayed the court to issue a perpetual order of injunction, restraining the 1st defendant (Tinubu, either by himself, his officers, agents, privies, servants or any other person acting under his command howsoever named, "from either removing, suspending or otherwise tampering with the tenure of the Governor and Deputy-Governor of Rivers State [and indeed any other State in Nigeria]."

As well as an order of perpetual injunction, barring President Tinubu, "either by himself, his officers, agents, privies, servants or any other person acting under his command howsoever named, from appointing any Sole Administrator into any State Government House in the thirty (36) of the Federation for any purpose whatsoever."

In the Originating Summons he filed through a consortium of lawyers led by Mr. Chimezie Euka, the plaintiff prayed the court to determine: "Whether in view of the combined provisions of the entirety of Sections 1, 5(2), 180, 188, 189, 305 and 306 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended and their conflated interpretation, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria [1st Defendant herein] has any constitutional authority [whatsoever] to either remove, suspend or otherwise tamper with the tenure of the duly elected Governor and Deputy Governor of Rivers State [and indeed of any other State in Nigeria] and appoint a sole Administrator [or any other substitute howsoever called or described] such as the 3rd Defendant for that State?"



Upon the determination of the question, he prayed the court to declare that upon an intimate reading and complete understanding of the entirety of section 305 of the 1999 Constitution, as amended, there is NO other circumstance contemplated by the Constitution for the removal OR interruption of the tenure of an elected Governor and Deputy Governor of a State EXCEPT the circumstances contemplated under Sections 180, 188, 189 and 306 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended.

"A declaration of this Honorable Court that in view of the entirety of Sections 1, 5(2), 180, 188, 189, 305 and 306 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has NO constitutional authority to either remove, suspend or otherwise tamper with the tenure of a duly elected Governor and Deputy Governor of a State and appoint a sole Administrator [or any other substitute howsoever called or described] such as the 3rd Defendant herein for that State.

"A declaration of this Honourable Court that the purported suspension of the Governor and the Deputy-Governor of Rivers State of Nigeria by the 1st Defendant on Tuesday the 18th day of March, 2025 is unconstitutional, null and void and of no legal effect whatsoever.

"A declaration of this Honourable Court that the purported nomination/appointment and swearing in of Vice Admiral Ibokette Ibas (Rtd) by the 1st Defendant as the Sole Administrator of Rivers State of Nigeria is unconstitutional, null and void and of no legal effect whatsoever.

"An order of this Honourable Court setting aside the suspension of the Governor and the Deputy-Governor of Rivers State of Nigeria by the 1st Defendant on Tuesday the 18th day of March, 2025 for being unconstitutional, null and void and of no legal effect whatsoever.

"An order of this Honourable Court setting aside the nomination/appointment and swearing in of Vice Admiral Ibokette Ibas (Rtd) as the Sole Administrator of Rivers State of Nigeria by the 1st Defendant."

Likewise, "An order of this Honourable Court directing Vice Admiral Ibokette Ibas (Rtd) [the 3rd defendant herein] to vacate, forthwith, the Government House of Rivers State of Nigeria."

In a 32 paragraphed affidavit he deposed in support of the suit, the plaintiff maintained that though President Tinubu has the constitutional power to declare a state of emergency in deserving circumstances in any part of the federation, he does not have the power to suspend elected officials like a governor who is not his appointee.

"As a Nigerian Lawyer and all through my years of practice, I have never seen the word 'Sole Administrator' in the amended 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

"I know that neither the 1st Defendant nor the 2nd Defendant appointed the Governor and Deputy-Governor of Rivers State of Nigeria and that no Governor or Deputy Governor in Nigeria is an appointee of the 1st and 2nd Defendants.

"I know that Nigeria practices Federalism hinged on separation of power.

"I have instituted this suit in the public interest, in the defence of the Rule of Law and accentuation of the supremacy of the Constitution and to preserve the integrity of the Nigerian Constitution which is the most sacred document that holds the Nigerian State in balance and in being.

"I am genuinely worried that, in the absence of the intervention of this Court, removal of duly elected Governors and Deputy-Governors, may become the pastime of the President thereby opening the floodgate of anarchy capable of consuming this nation.

Rivers police intensifies security operations, arrest suspected kidnappers

By Helen Okechukwu

The Rivers State Police Command has reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining law and order, as Commissioner of Police (CP) Olugbenga Adepoju commended the joint security forces for their efforts in ensuring peace across the state.

Speaking at a press briefing on Tuesday, CP Adepoju emphasized that ongoing security operations are crucial to preventing a breakdown of law and order.

He noted that the joint patrols by the police, armed forces, and other security agencies have been effective in deterring criminal activities.

He assured residents that these security measures are temporary and will lead to a more peaceful environment.

However, it was revealed that over the past week, security agencies have successfully foiled several criminal operations.

On 16 March, suspected pipeline vandals attempting to detonate an oil pipeline at Aluu-Rumuekpe in Ikwerre Local Government Area (LGA) were neutralized.

On 21 March, a raid along Omoku Road in Ahoada East LGA led to the arrest of eight suspected kidnappers and the rescue of six victims.

Weapons, motorcycles, and communication equipment were recovered during the operation.

Read Also: Police confirm release of JOSTUM students



In another development, two suspects were arrested on 19 March in Ogbia/Egbema/Ndoni LGA (ONELGA) with explosives, including dynamites and detonating devices.

Additionally, security operatives dismantled 30 illegal refining sites, destroyed crude oil reservoirs, and seized thousands of liters of stolen crude oil and illegally refined fuel.

CP Adepoju urged the public to provide credible intelligence on criminal activities, emphasizing the importance of protecting national infrastructure and maintaining an environment conducive to economic growth.

He also announced increased security deployments to track down criminal elements, particularly those using unregistered vehicles. A new State Operations Room has been established for real-time surveillance and rapid response.

To enhance enforcement, a crackdown on unregistered and improperly marked vehicles will begin in seven days, with vehicle owners advised to comply with registration regulations before the deadline.

The Rivers State Police Command reaffirmed its zero-tolerance stance against crime, warning that all offenders will be identified and prosecuted.

CP Adepoju also called on parents and guardians to discourage their wards from engaging in criminal activities.

Residents are encouraged to report suspicious activities through the following emergency contact lines, Control Room: 08032003514, 08098880134, Public Relations Officer (PPRO): 09014273818 and Crime Response Unit (CRU): 08120822987, 09035774814.

NOA urges shift from fear-based messaging to combat HIV/AIDS stigma in Nigeria By Helen Okechukwu

The National Orientation Agency (NOA) has called for a strategic shift in HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns, moving away from fear-based messaging to a more inclusive and stigma-free approach.

The agency's Director-General, Mallam Lanre Issa-Onilu of National Orientation Agency (NOA), emphasized the need to reframe HIV/AIDS as a manageable health condition, akin to hypertension and diabetes, rather than a death sentence.

Speaking during a visit at the agency's headquarters by the Director-General of the National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA), Dr. Temitope Ilori, Issa-Onilu reaffirmed NOA's commitment to leveraging its extensive grassroots network to amplify HIV prevention, treatment, and anti-discrimination



campaigns.

To tackle the rising case of HIV/AIDS, the NOA boss pledged the agency unwavering support as the fight continues.

He also urged NACA to adopt innovative local strategies to sustain awareness efforts amid dwindling international

funding, especially from U.S. government.

Dr. Ilori acknowledged NOA's impact and called for stronger collaboration on HIV/AIDS awareness.

She noted that many, especially the youth, underestimate the disease due to treatment success.

Despite over two million Nigerians living with HIV, infections are rising, particularly among young people and children.

She stressed the need for better public awareness and behavioral change to combat misinformation and enhance prevention.

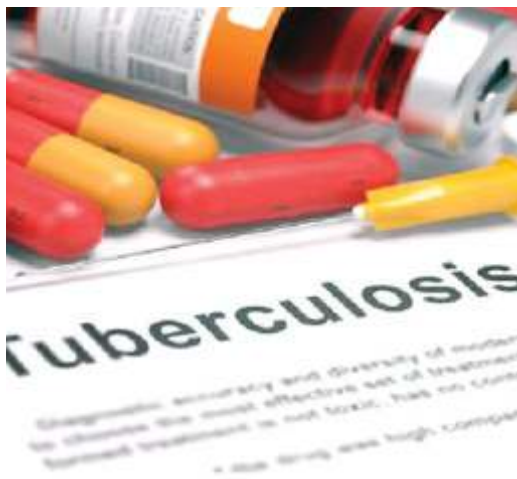
NGO raises TB awareness in Kaduna, targets communities By Helen Okechukwu

A Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) launched a public awareness campaign in Kaduna State to educate residents on the health risks of tuberculosis (TB), urging early detection, treatment, and preventive measures to curb its spread.

Kadashi Initiatives on Equity, Health, Empowerment, and Education (KIEHEE) emphasized that healthy living—practicing abstinence from smoking and alcohol, along with proper dieting—helps prevent the spread.

In marking this year's World Tuberculosis Day, the Executive Director of KIEHEE, Amos Kadashi-Isuwa, on Monday educated residents on the disease's risks, symptoms, and prevention, particularly among smokers.

The targeted communities are Kanti Agah,



Sabon Tasha, Angwan Durunwa, Tsauni, and Kurah in Chikun LGA.

The initiative used one-on-one discussions, flyers, and local languages to engage residents, traders, and commuters.

He emphasized the link between smoking and TB, warning that delayed treatment could lead to drug resistance.

"Tuberculosis is curable with proper treatment," he said.

He encouraged residents to utilize free TB testing at government health centers and recognize symptoms such as persistent cough, weight loss, night sweats, and fever.

Kadashi-Isuwa also urged collaboration with local health centers and the involvement of influencers and religious leaders in awareness efforts.

Community elder Mr. Bala Musa welcomed the initiative, pledging to spread awareness, particularly among children.

The campaign also debunked myths, including the belief that TB is a spiritual attack.

Femi Lazarus acknowledges Timi Dakolo's advocacy for gospel musicians amid financial debate

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Pastor Femi Lazarus has responded to the ongoing debate over the financial expectations in gospel music by praising singer Timi Dakolo for his advocacy on behalf of gospel musicians.

The debate, which was sparked by Lazarus' recent sermon, focused on the financial demands made by gospel artists for their performances.

Dakolo, a well-known advocate for fair compensation in the music industry, had strongly challenged Lazarus' stance, calling for better treatment and remuneration for gospel musicians.

In an Instagram post on Monday, March 24, Pastor Lazarus shared a picture of himself with Dakolo and Pastor Emmanuel Iren.

He referred to Dakolo as a "music legend" and urged people to acknowledge his contributions, writing, "My brother #timidakolo is a music legend. Give him his flowers. What a man! He genuinely carries the burdens of musicians. His concerns are real. I love you."

Lazarus acknowledged the validity of Dakolo's concerns and highlighted the need for improvement in the gospel music space.

He assured both gospel event hosts and performers that they would work together to make necessary



changes.

"Pain is real. From pulpit to the pew, the pain is real, but we will be fine. This generation will not have a carryover of pain. Better structures will be built. Hosts will do better. Guests will do better. We will have a better nation together," he wrote.

The ongoing conversation stems from a recent sermon by Lazarus, where he questioned the financial demands of gospel artists for their performances.

Dakolo had responded strongly, particularly challenging Lazarus on his personal practice of charging fees for his school of ministry, especially after the pastor criticised an unnamed gospel artist's performance fee.

In response to Dakolo's comments, Lazarus clarified his position by making a distinction between "music ministers" and

"music artists."

He emphasised that genuine gospel ministers should not commercialise their calling for personal gain.

"Ministers charging for performances are in the business of music, not ministry," he explained.

Lazarus suggested that such individuals should seek alternative sources of income unless they feel a divine calling to full-time ministry.

The pastor also expressed concern over the struggles of many gospel music ministers, admitting that churches often fail to offer sufficient support.

"We must do better. Pastors need to support their music ministers, many of whom are struggling due to a lack of resources and proper backing," Lazarus concluded.

My wealth isn't investment-based - Davido boast

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian Afrobeats superstar David Adeleke, better known as Davido, has boldly stated that his level of wealth cannot be achieved through investments.

Instead, he believes it is a gift from God.

The singer, son of Nigerian billionaire businessman Deji Adeleke, made this declaration in a video shared on Instagram by his associate, Cubana Chief Priest.

In the footage, Davido and Cubana Chief Priest are seen relaxing inside what is rumoured to be the singer's newly acquired luxury jet.

During their conversation, he confidently said, "My type of wealth can't be obtained through investment." Cubana Chief Priest quickly agreed, responding, "Yeah, no!" Davido then added with a laugh, "It can only be obtained through God's blessings."

A life of wealth and fame

Davido's statement has sparked discussions online, with many debating whether hard work or divine favor plays a bigger role in achieving success. As one of Africa's most successful musicians, he has built a massive fortune through his music, endorsements, and business ventures. However, critics argue that his privileged background gave him a head start in life.

Born into the wealthy Adeleke family, he had access to opportunities that most aspiring musicians can only dream of.

His father, Deji Adeleke, is a well-known businessman and philanthropist with investments in education, real estate, and banking. Despite this, Davido insists that his wealth is not just a product of investments but something



beyond financial planning.

Mixed reactions from fans

The singer's comments have divided opinions among fans and industry watchers. Some agree with him, believing that success often involves luck and divine intervention. Others argue that hard work, talent, and smart financial decisions are what truly build wealth.

On social media, reactions poured in. One fan wrote, "Davido was born into money, but he also worked hard to become one of the biggest artists in Africa." Another commented, "Not everyone has a billionaire father. Investments and wise decisions are how most people grow wealth."

Despite the debates, Davido's success remains undeniable. With hit songs, sold-out concerts, and international recognition, he continues to dominate the Afrobeats scene. His endorsement deals with major brands and ownership of a record label further prove his business acumen.

Luxury lifestyle

The video with Cubana Chief Priest

also highlighted Davido's extravagant lifestyle. Reports suggest that the private jet they were seen in is his latest multimillion-dollar acquisition. If true, it adds to his growing collection of luxury assets, including expensive cars, designer jewelry, and high-end properties.

The singer has never shied away from flaunting his wealth. From throwing lavish parties to gifting friends expensive items, he enjoys living large. This has made him a role model for some and a target for criticism from others who believe in a more modest approach to wealth.

Conclusion

Whether Davido's riches come from divine blessings, family wealth, or a combination of factors, there is no doubt about his impact in the music industry. His journey from a privileged background to global superstardom continues to inspire many.

As the debate continues, one thing remains certain—Davido's success is a mix of talent, opportunity, and an undeniable stroke of good fortune.

Rita Dominic refutes claims of blocking Ghanaian reporters

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian actress Rita Dominic has firmly denied reports that she prevented journalists from covering a birthday event in Ghana.

The viral claim, which spread across social media, alleged that the award-winning actress obstructed reporters from doing their jobs.

Rita breaks silence on Instagram

On Monday night, Rita took to her Instagram story to address the accusation. She dismissed the report as false and urged her fans to ignore the misleading claims. She also called on the public to stop spreading baseless stories about her.

Public figures and press freedom

In her response, the actress emphasized that she respects the role of the media. She stated that as a public figure, she understands the importance of press freedom and would never interfere with journalists doing their work.

“A person in my profession, out in a public space, would never prevent the press from doing their job,” Rita wrote. “That’s ridiculous. Stop creating stories that make no sense.”

Social media reactions

The allegation first surfaced on social media, sparking reactions from fans and critics alike. Some online users questioned the credibility of the claim, while others criticized the actress before she had a chance to respond. However, Rita’s statement has put the matter to rest.

The spread of false news



This is not the first time a celebrity has been the subject of false reports. In the age of social media, misinformation spreads quickly, often damaging reputations before the truth emerges. Many public figures have spoken out against fake news, urging people to verify information before sharing it.

Celebrities and misinformation challenges

Rita’s swift response highlights the growing challenge celebrities face in handling false narratives. With her clarification, she hopes to prevent further misinformation from circulating.

Fans show support

Fans of the actress have expressed their support, praising her for addressing the issue directly. Some have also called on media outlets to fact-check stories before publishing them.

Rita Dominic’s legacy in Nollywood
As one of Nigeria’s most respected

actresses, Rita has built a career based on talent and professionalism. She continues to inspire many with her work in the entertainment industry. Despite occasional controversies, she remains a strong voice in Nollywood.

A reminder about responsible reporting

The incident serves as a reminder of the responsibility that comes with sharing news, especially on social media. Spreading unverified claims can harm reputations and mislead the public. Rita’s response reinforces the importance of truth and responsible reporting.

Looking ahead

In the future, the actress hopes to focus on her craft without unnecessary distractions. Meanwhile, she encourages her fans to seek accurate information and avoid engaging with misleading content.

You charge 150 dollars – Timi Dakolo slams Apostle Femi Lazarus of selling gospel

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian singer Timi Dakolo replies to Apostle Femi Lazarus of Light Nation Church, Abuja, over criticism of gospel musicians charging for church shows.

Apostle Lazarus, in a viral video, expressed disappointment over the high fees some gospel artists demand. He revealed that a gospel singer requested \$10,000 to perform at a church event. The Apostle also shared an invoice, allegedly from the artist, which included requests for a 40-person escort, first-class flight tickets, and an executive suite. He condemned such demands, calling them excessive and inappropriate for gospel ministry.

Timi Dakolo fires back

Dakolo, however, did not take the claims lightly. He challenged the Apostle to name the singer instead of making generalized accusations. He also dismissed the claim that any artist travels with a 40-member team.

In a series of Instagram posts, Dakolo addressed the issue directly. He pointed out that Apostle Lazarus himself charges fees for his School of Ministry. He argued that if charging for music ministry makes gospel artists mere performers, then charging for teaching and preaching makes pastors motivational speakers and merchants of hope.

Questioning double standards

“Sir, you charge as low as \$150 per person for your School of Ministry,”



Dakolo wrote. “If you have 1,000 students, that’s a significant amount. You even have different pricing tiers for God’s house?”

The singer, who describes himself as a Christian raised in church, questioned the fairness of the pastor’s stance. He insisted that if gospel musicians should not charge for their performances, then preachers should not charge for their teachings.

Dakolo emphasized that his statements were made “with love and respect,” but urged the pastor to stop shifting the argument. He asked whether the pastor was also guilty of selling the gospel, as he accused musicians of doing.

Mixed reactions from the public

The debate has sparked discussions among Nigerians, with many weighing in on the issue of charging fees for ministry. Some agree with Pastor Lazarus, arguing that gospel music should be purely for worship, while others side with Dakolo,



stating that gospel artists, like preachers, deserve to be compensated for their work.

Many social media users pointed out that professional musicians, including gospel artists, invest in their craft, hire teams, and incur expenses while ministering. Others countered that true worship should not have a price tag.

The bigger debate: Money in religious spaces

This conversation highlights the ongoing debate about money in religious spaces. Should gospel artists and preachers charge for their services? Does financial compensation undermine the spiritual essence of ministry? These questions remain at the center of a broader discussion on faith, commerce, and fairness in the church.

As the debate continues, one thing is clear: the relationship between money and ministry will always be a topic of controversy.

US intel chiefs face Senate grilling over Yemen chat breach

By Oluwatosin Ologun

Top US intelligence officials faced heated questions by Democratic senators on Tuesday over the spectacular security breach which saw a journalist included in a chat group discussion about airstrikes in Yemen.

The Senate Intelligence Committee hearing was nominally about an annual report on national security threats, but Democrats used the opportunity to hammer officials — two of whom were reported to be in the group chat — over the mounting row.

The New Daily Prime reported that there was an outrage after the White House accidentally texted a journalist about Yemen strike plans.

Pressed by Democratic Vice Chair Mark Warner over how military plans could be posted in Signal, a publicly-available instant messaging app known for its encryption, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard repeatedly denied that classified material had been shared.

But she refused to go into further detail or confirm her presence in the group.

Warner criticized her reticence and urged her to share the content of the chat, if indeed no classified information had been divulged.

The breach was revealed Monday in an article by Jeffrey Goldberg, editor-in-chief of The Atlantic



magazine, who said he had given detailed plans on rebel Huthi targets in Yemen just hours before they were launched.

Others in the chat appeared to include Vice President JD Vance and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, as well as National Security Advisor Mike Waltz.

Goldberg was initially skeptical but said he realized the chat was real when reports of strikes in Yemen emerged on the timeline that had been shared in the group, and at that point left.

He chose not to reveal the contents of all the messages for fear of compromising security and potentially endangering American forces in the Middle East.

But the existence of a group in which top Trump officials were discussing military planning in an unofficial chat app has raised widespread concerns about managing sensitive intelligence.

The White House confirmed the

authenticity of the group chat, but also asserted that no classified information had been revealed.

Unlike Gabbard, CIA chief John Ratcliffe confirmed his presence in the chat to senators Tuesday, but defended the decision to use Signal for the discussion.

Warner appeared unconvinced.

“If this was the case of a military officer or an intelligence officer and they had this kind of behavior, they would be fired,” he said, branding the incident “one more example of the kind of sloppy, careless, incompetent behavior, particularly towards classified information.”

Democratic Senator Ron Wyden called for the resignations of Waltz and Hegseth.

The former is said to have been behind the inadvertent addition of Goldberg into the group, while the latter is said to have shared the plans for the strikes on the Huthis.

Thousands of new homes to be built across England with £2bn pounds investment

By **Fatimah Idera**

Britain's government on Tuesday pledged 2 billion pounds (\$2.58 billion) to build up to 18,000 social and affordable homes in England as part of its efforts to deliver 1.5 million properties by the end of parliament and boost economic growth and social and affordable house building.

Construction is set to start in March 2027, with an aim to finish building by 2029, by fixing house crises, the government said.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer's Labour Party has made housebuilding the centrepiece of its growth strategy and announced planning reform to speed up construction and fix Britain's chronic housing shortage that has pushed up house prices and priced many out the market.

"This investment will help us to build thousands more affordable homes to buy and rent and get working people and families into secure homes and onto the housing ladder," housing minister Angela Rayner said during a visit to an affordable housing site in Stoke-on-Trent, central England.

Official figures, showed the average median house price cost 7.7 times the average full-time income in 2024. Temporary tax



incentives for first-time buyers as well as for buyers of less expensive homes are due to expire at the end of this month

However, Tuesday's funding is in addition to 600 million pounds, announced by finance minister Rachel Reeves earlier to tackle severe skills shortages in the construction sector and train up to 60,000 bricklayers, electricians, engineers, and carpenters by 2029.

Reeves, who has vowed to stick to her fiscal rules, is set to deliver her spring statement on

Wednesday alongside new economic and public finance forecasts from Britain's fiscal regulator

The government said it will announce further long-term investment into housing in England when it concludes its spending review in June.

By the final year of this parliament, ministers would need to go beyond this and deliver 110,000 new social homes to ensure 1.5million homes are built, amounting to a total of 365,000 social ret homes over the next five years to hit the target.

Retail sales sink in March amid weak consumer confidence, CBI says

By **Fatimah Idera**

UK retail sales had slumped in March amid weak consumer confidence, according to the confederation of British industry latest distributive trades' survey.

This marked the sixth consecutive month of decline, with retailers expecting sales to fall again in April, but at a slower rate.

The CBI's retail sales balance fell to -41 in March from -23 in February.

A balance is the weighted difference between the percentage of firms reporting an increase and those reporting a decrease.

Sales for the time of year were deemed to be below seasonal norms in March, to a similar extent to February, with a balance of -36% in March versus -34% the month before.

Martin Sartorius, principal economist at the CBI, said: "Annual retail sales volumes fell markedly in March and are expected to continue declining next month. Firms across the retail and wholesale sectors reported that global trade tensions and the Autumn Budget are weighing on consumer and business confidence, which is leading to reduced demand.

"Tomorrow's Spring Statement is likely to focus on the persistent challenges facing the UK economy, reinforcing the need for policies that boost businesses' confidence to invest.

"Reforming business rates, supporting the British Business Bank's Growth Guarantee Scheme, and properly resourcing the Growth and Skills Levy could support businesses' investment plans and drive the government's growth



ambitions."

Retailers and other businesses have complained about a 25 billion-pound (\$32 billion) rise in employers' social security contributions in the Labour government's first budget last October as well as other cost increases due to come into force next month.

King Charles, Queen Camilla postpone Pope Francis visit – Palace

By Oluwatosin Ologun



Buckingham Palace on Tuesday said that King Charles III and Queen Camilla have postponed a planned state visit to the Vatican in early April following medical advice from Pope Francis' doctors.

“Medical advice has now suggested that Pope Francis would benefit from an extended period of rest and recuperation. Their Majesties send the pope their best wishes for his convalescence and look forward to visiting him in The Holy See, once he has recovered,” a statement said.

The UK's head of state wrote to Francis when the 88-year-old pontiff was struck down with pneumonia in both lungs in February, amid fears he might not survive.

Francis was discharged on Sunday following almost 40 days in Rome's Gemelli hospital.

Since then, he has concelebrated mass within the Santa Marta guesthouse where he lives, as well as undergoing breathing and speech therapy to help his recovery, according to the Vatican.

But he has received no visitors “apart from his closest associates”, it said, and no date has been set for his next appearance in public.

Charles, who is the head of the Church of England, had been scheduled to meet his Catholic counterpart on April 8.

But by “mutual agreement” with the Holy See the visit which would have been Charles's first to the Vatican as monarch has now been postponed.

Charles last visited the Holy See as heir to the British throne in 2019.

The Italian part of Charles and Camilla's visit is still due to go ahead in early April with meetings

planned with Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and President Sergio Mattarella.

Charles is set to become the first British monarch to address a sitting of the Italian parliament, according to Buckingham Palace.

After revealing in February 2024 that he was being treated for cancer, the 76-year-old sovereign has since October resumed his trips abroad.

The Church of England split from the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th century, after Pope Clement VII refused King Henry VIII's request to annul his first marriage to Catherine of Aragon.

In response Henry launched the English Reformation, making himself supreme leader of the country's Church and steering it towards Protestantism.

20 Cameroonian soldiers killed in Boko Haram attack

By Oluwatosin Ologun

At least 20 Cameroonian soldiers were killed today in an attack by Boko Haram jihadists disguised as herders in northeastern Nigeria, near the border town of Wulgo, sources close to the army said.

Cameroonian troops are commonly stationed across the border in Nigeria as part of anti-jihadist operations around Wulgo, which is near the volatile Lake Chad — itself home to both Islamic State and Boko Haram fighters.

Cameroonian forces regularly operate in the region, as do forces from Nigeria, Niger and Chad, as part of anti-jihadist operations around Lake Chad, a volatile area that is home to both Boko Haram and Islamic State in West Africa fighters.

The militants had disguised themselves as herders and traders in a nearby city and then infiltrated Wulgo to attack its surrounding military positions, said two intelligence sources.

The sources were assisting troops in the long-running fight against the militants and requested anonymity to speak freely on the matter.

“The insurgents attacked the bases around 1:00 am and fighting continued for two hours before they subdued the troops and burnt the bases, after taking away heavy weapons,” one of the sources said.

“Twenty Cameroonian troops were killed in the fighting and their bodies were transported across the border into Cameroon this morning,” the source added.



Soviet-made Shilka guns — lightly armoured, radar-guided anti-aircraft weapons — were among the cache seized by the Boko Haram fighters, said the second source, who offered the same death toll.

On Monday, the fighters had blended among herders at the weekly market in the town of Gamboru, a commercial hub 15 kilometres (nine miles) away, the sources said.

They then moved into Wulgo under the cover of night to launch a “surprise attack”, said the second security source.

Boko Haram: Military bases raided
Sounds of heavy guns and explosions were heard by people in Gamboru who had been awake to observe Ramadan vigils, local resident Muhammad Sani Umar told AFP.

“I saw three Cameroonian military trucks conveying 13 bodies across the border into Cameroon this morning,” said Umar, who visited Wulgo on Tuesday.

The attacked military bases were a mess, with the building torched and vehicles burnt, Umar said.

Since losing its Sambisa stronghold in 2021 to the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), a rival offshoot, Boko Haram has shifted its presence to areas around Lake Chad as well as Wulgo, Waza, Gwoza, Pulka the Mandara mountains on the border with Cameroon.

Wulgo and Waza have been repeatedly targeted by Boko Haram fighters, who have kidnapped and killed loggers, herders and scrap metal scavengers they accuse of spying on them on behalf of the military or local militias.

In March 2021, two Cameroonian soldiers were killed in a Boko Haram attack in Wulgo, with three other Cameroonian troops and a Nigerian soldier injured.

Since 2009, jihadist violence in northeast Nigeria has killed 40,000 people and displaced two million.

The conflict has spread into neighbouring Niger, Cameroon and Chad, prompting the creation of a regional military coalition to fight the militants.

Rules change propose by FCA to boost consumer information

By **Fatimah Idera**

Britain's Financial Conduct Authority is weighing changes to disclosure rules on mortgages, lending and savings products to give clearer information to consumers, as it prepares to unveil a new five-year plan to deepen trust and promote growth in UK financial services.

The watchdog said on Tuesday it wanted to retire hundreds of pages of outdated guidance and supervisory publications as part of a broader plan to streamline demands on financial firms, which it said would give product providers more flexibility to tailor communications to customers' needs and preferences. French woman takes pet pigs to work to challenge meat-eater mindset

It also said it would review parts of its credit advertising rules, such as lengthy terms and conditions.

The latest proposals come as the FCA prepares to publish its next five-year strategy focusing on four priorities: helping consumers, fighting crime, supporting growth and being a "smarter" regulator.

The UK government is betting on faster growth in financial services to help kickstart



Britain's lacklustre economy, where growth is expected to roughly halve in 2025 to about 1%.

The FCA and sister regulator the Prudential Regulation Authority have secondary objectives to promote the domestic and international competitiveness of the UK financial industry.

With Chancellor Rachel Reeves pushing to

keep fragile fiscal plans intact, the regulators face increasing pressure to loosen red tape on financial firms, without endangering market stability or exposing consumers to excess risk.

"Now the Consumer Duty is in full force we're making changes quickly where stakeholders want us to, to cut unnecessary costs, support growth, and ultimately help consumers get better outcomes," Sarah Pritchard, Executive Director of Competition, Consumers and International at the watchdog said.

"These proposals are part of our long-term efforts to future-proof our rules, reduce burdens for financial firms and will help the ambitious government targets to cut the cost of regulation."

The FCA said the industry had given feedback that now was not the time for widespread changes to its rules. The regulator has pledged to avoid a widespread overhaul and said it would engage with the industry to strike an appropriate balance.

Britain gives go-ahead to new \$13 billion Thames tunnel

By **Fatimah Idera**

Britain gave the green light on Tuesday to a new 10-billion-pound (\$13 billion) road tunnel for the River Thames in southeast England, in its latest backing for an infrastructure project to help revive a sluggish economy.

The Labour government has put speeding up the planning process to deliver new energy and transport projects at the heart of its growth agenda since it was elected last year, backing expansion at London's Heathrow and Gatwick airports.

When I said I would back the builders, not the blockers, I meant it," Prime Minister Keir Starmer said on X.

"Giving the Lower Thames Crossing the green light will drive growth and make journeys quicker, safer, and more reliable."

The Lower Thames Crossing, consisting of a tunnel and roads 23 kilometers (14.5 miles) in length, was granted development consent by



Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander, the Planning Inspectorate said.

The tunnel will connect Kent, south of the river, to Essex, on the north side, improving connectivity and providing more road capacity for goods to travel between ports and central and northern England.

The idea for an additional crossing in this part of the river east of London was first mooted as far back as 1989.

Formally proposed by the then-Labour

government in 2009, the crossing has been held up as an example of the difficulties faced in trying to get infrastructure projects off the ground in Britain

Planning can take years, involving multiple consultations with the need to satisfy what critics say can be overly stringent environmental concerns, and is often stalled by local community objections.

Finance minister Rachel Reeves said in January that the government was committed to the Lower Thames Crossing, adding that it was exploring options to privately finance the project.

Reeves is expected to announce a sharp downgrade to the UK's economic growth forecasts this year when she provides a fiscal update on Wednesday. That, along with higher borrowing costs, is likely to force her to cut plans for spending spikes in coming years, potentially endangering government-funded projects.

US says Russia, Ukraine agree to end Black Sea military action

By Oluwatosin Ologun

Russia and Ukraine have agreed to halt military strikes on vessels in the Black Sea and pause attacks on energy infrastructure, the United States has announced after talks with both sides in Saudi Arabia.

The White House said on Tuesday that Moscow and Kyiv had separately “agreed to ensure safe navigation, eliminate the use of force and prevent the use of commercial vessels for military purposes in the Black Sea”.

With President Donald Trump pushing for a rapid end to the war that has killed tens of thousands of people, US negotiators shuttled separately over three days in the Saudi capital Riyadh between delegations from Ukraine and Russia.

In parallel statements, the White House said that each country “agreed to ensure safe navigation, eliminate the use of force and prevent the use of commercial vessels for military purposes in the Black Sea.”

The United States said it would also look for ways to enforce a ban on strikes on energy infrastructure in the two countries.

The Kremlin meanwhile said the agreement to halt strikes on the Black Sea could only come into force after the lifting of restrictions on its agriculture sector.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who has turned to diplomacy after heavy pressure from Trump including a brief ban on US aid and intelligence sharing, said it was too early to tell if the agreements will work but that they were “the right steps.”

“No one can accuse Ukraine of not moving towards sustainable peace after this,” Zelensky told a news conference in Kyiv.

Zelensky said that the talks also discussed bringing in third parties to oversee a future truce.

He said that Turkey, which has



maintained ties with both sides, could monitor the situation on the Black Sea and that a Middle Eastern nation could look at the energy agreement.

Russia: Offer on agriculture

Trump after taking office spoke directly to Russian President Vladimir Putin, ending the ostracization of him by the West since he ordered the invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

In the first concrete step by the United States toward Russia in return for the engagement, the White House said it would “help restore access to the world market” for Russian agricultural and fertilizer exports.

The United States never directly put sanctions on Russian agriculture but had restricted access to payment systems used for international transactions.

The issue became a major talking point for Russia, which told countries in the developing world that US policies — not the war itself — were contributing to higher prices.

Moscow said the deal would “come into force” after the “lifting of sanctions restrictions” on the Russian Agricultural Bank and other “financial institutions involved in international trade of food,” and only after they are reconnected to the SWIFT international payment system.

Zelensky, while saying he did not know full details of the US decision, voiced

alarm.

“We believe that this is a weakening of the position and a weakening of sanctions,” he said.

Ukrainian Defense Minister Rustem Umerov, who took part in the talks, said that details on the Black Sea agreement were still being worked out.

He also warned that if Russian warships moved from the eastern part of the Black Sea then “Ukraine will have full right to exercise right to self-defense.”

Ukraine earlier this month agreed to a US-proposed unconditional ceasefire, but Russia turned it down, with Kyiv accusing it of wanting to gain more battlefield advantage first.

‘Napoleon and Hitler’

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov gave no sign that Moscow was closer to agreeing to a wider ceasefire and put a priority on shipping through the Black Sea.

A previous UN-brokered deal that allowed millions of tonnes of grain and other food exports to be shipped safely from Ukraine’s ports, but Russia had complained that it was not beneficial for its trade.

Before the US announcement on agricultural exports, Lavrov accused Western countries of trying to “contain” Russia like “Napoleon and Hitler.”

Osimhen's heroics not enough as Nigeria stumbles in World Cup Qualifiers

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Victor Osimhen's 40th cap for Nigeria was marked with a goal, but his efforts were not enough to secure a crucial win as the Super Eagles conceded a heartbreaking last-minute equalizer in their 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifier against Zimbabwe in Uyo.

Osimhen, ever the talisman for Nigeria, broke the deadlock in the 73rd minute, capitalising on an Ola Aina cross to put the Super Eagles ahead.

His clinical finish seemed to have set the stage for a much-needed victory, but Zimbabwe had other plans.

Despite Nigeria's attacking dominance, including several dangerous runs from Moses Simon, Zimbabwean goalkeeper Washington Arubi kept his side in contention.

The visitors nearly responded



immediately, with Khama Billiat rattling the crossbar just three minutes after Osimhen's goal.

The Super Eagles' defensive frailties were exposed once again in stoppage time when substitute Tawanda Chireda struck, denying Nigeria maximum points and leaving them in a

precarious position in Group C.

With four games left, Osimhen and his teammates face an uphill battle to secure a spot at the World Cup, needing a turnaround in form come September and October.

Nadia Nadim: Soccer Aid Gives Women a Voice

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Afghan-born footballer Nadia Nadim sees her participation in Soccer Aid as an opportunity to represent women who lack access to sports and a voice in society.

Nadim, 37, fled Afghanistan as a child after her father was executed by the Taliban. Growing up in a refugee camp, she discovered football, leading to a successful career with clubs like Manchester City and the Danish national team.

With women's rights severely restricted in Afghanistan since the Taliban's return in 2021—including a ban on competitive sports—Nadim



believes Soccer Aid can highlight these issues to a wider audience.

"It's important to create awareness and show what is possible when given a second chance," she told BBC Sport. "For me, it's about representing women who don't have access and a voice."

Soccer Aid, an annual charity football match supporting UNICEF, raises funds for children worldwide. Nadim hopes her presence will inspire young girls and pressure those in power to expand opportunities for women in sports.

Red Bull considers dropping Liam Lawson after just two races

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Red Bull Racing is reportedly considering dropping Liam Lawson after just two races in the 2025 Formula 1 season, raising questions about the team's management and decision-making.

Lawson, who replaced Sergio Perez at the end of 2024, has struggled to adapt to Red Bull's challenging car. He crashed out in Melbourne and finished last in qualifying and the race in China, failing to match teammate Max Verstappen's pace.

While Lawson's poor performances are a concern, Red Bull's problems extend beyond its newest driver. Verstappen himself has admitted the car is difficult to handle, suffering from mid-corner understeer and instability. The Dutchman, despite his skill, has struggled against McLaren and Mercedes.

Red Bull's quick decision to reconsider Lawson raises eyebrows. If they believed he was the right choice in December, why is he the wrong choice now? Rumors suggest Yuki Tsunoda or rookie Isack Hadjar could replace him, but it's unclear if either would fare any better in the current car.



If Red Bull proceeds with Lawson's removal, it will only add to growing criticism that the team mismanages its second driver role, cycling through talent without stability.

Ferrari's Disqualification Explained

Elsewhere in China, Ferrari's weekend ended in disaster after both Lewis Hamilton and Charles Leclerc were disqualified from the Grand Prix.

Leclerc's car was found to be 1kg underweight, a result of excessive tire

wear due to a one-stop strategy. Hamilton, who had won the sprint race, was disqualified for excessive skid block wear, a consequence of running his car too low to maximize performance.

Both incidents highlight how fine the margins are in Formula 1, where teams push the limits of regulations to gain an edge. However, Ferrari's costly errors resulted in a wasted weekend, handing McLaren an early advantage in the championship.

Racing Bulls Impress Despite Challenges

Meanwhile, Red Bull's sister team, Racing Bulls, has shown strong pace. Yuki Tsunoda and Isack Hadjar have delivered solid qualifying performances, even as their race results have fallen short. Verstappen even suggested that Racing Bulls' car might be more competitive than the struggling Red Bull.

With two races completed, McLaren leads the field, Ferrari has work to do, and Red Bull faces a critical decision about Lawson's future. The Japanese Grand Prix could bring even more drama.

NWSL investigates 'hateful language' directed at Barbra Banda

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

The National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) is investigating an incident in which Orlando Pride striker Barbra Banda was subjected to "hateful language" from a fan during Sunday's 2-0 win over Gotham FC at Sports Illustrated Stadium in New York.

Gotham FC has apologized to Orlando and is working with the NWSL on the investigation. "This behaviour is unacceptable and has no place in our league or stadiums," the NWSL, Orlando Pride, and Gotham FC said in a joint statement.

Stadium security addressed the situation after it was reported, monitoring the fan for the remainder of the match.

Banda, named BBC Women's Footballer of the Year in 2024, was instrumental in



Orlando's championship-winning season, scoring 17 goals. She also became Africa's top Olympic goalscorer, netting 10 goals for Zambia.

The NWSL reaffirmed its commitment to creating a safe and respectful environment for all players, praising Banda as an exceptional athlete and role

model.

Orlando Pride currently leads the league after two victories, including a dominant 6-0 win over Chicago Stars, where Banda scored twice. The club emphasized its continued support for Banda on and off the pitch.

Super Eagles face backlash after frustrating draw against Zimbabwe in World Cup Qualifier

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Nigerian gospel singer Nathaniel Bassey has joined the chorus of critics following the Super Eagles' disappointing 1-1 draw with Zimbabwe in their World Cup qualifier on Tuesday, March 25, at the Godswill Akpabio Stadium in Uyo.

The result has left Nigeria's hopes of securing a spot at the 2026 FIFA World Cup hanging in the balance.

The match saw Victor Osimhen give Nigeria the lead in the 75th minute with a powerful header, but Zimbabwe's Tawanda Chirewa stunned the Super Eagles with a last-minute equaliser in the 90th minute, leaving fans deflated and the team's qualification prospects hanging by a thread.

Bassey was vocal in his criticism of the team's performance, highlighting a recurring issue with complacency.

He posted on social media: "I've always said this, one of our problems is managing small success. You score just one goal, all of a sudden you think you have qualified for the World Cup."

He continued: "The Zimbabweans practically strolled from the midfield into the net unchallenged while we watched. Na wa. Now they'll start calculating maths."

The reaction from fans on social media was swift and scathing, with many expressing frustration over the team's lacklustre performance.

Kachi Onyedika was particularly harsh, saying: "I'm sorry but Nwabali utter dog shte. He can't keep his focus for 90 minutes, gets too cocky and overconfident for no reason! Very heavy going down. He has so many flaws in his game but everyone's overlooking it because of last AFCON."*

Daniel Regha pointed the finger at both



the players and coaching staff, writing: "Super Eagles coach is to blame as much as the players. The team lacks consistency and determination. This performance against Zimbabwe was embarrassing. The team needs to step it up; this is the World Cup for goodness sake."

Influencer @_VALKING summed up the collective anxiety with a succinct query: "Omo, shey Nigeria still fit qualify like this?" (Can Nigeria still qualify like this?)

British-Nigerian doctor and social media personality @OurFavOnlineDoc offered a more measured response, stating: "To be honest, that was a poor game. We should have won. We could have won. We didn't look convincing at all. I genuinely hope we qualify for the World Cup. But we absolutely need to do a whole lot better. I still support Team Super Eagles."

The frustration extended beyond fans as Abiola (@abdulhakeemyun6) lamented: "A big shame, Nigeria supposed to be Spain/Germany to all other African teams but chai."

Analyst Solace Chukwu dissected the tactical choices, stating: "I thought the (Victor) Boniface sub was a blunder on (Eric) Chelle's part. That said, Ekong really should have dealt with that (the Zimbabwe run to the goal); he's a great leader, but at this point he needs to be phased out of the starting XI. AFCON 2023 was, looking back, his one final heave."

@Choji_ES criticised the team's over-reliance on Osimhen, writing: "Zimbabwe had one job. Frustrate us and steal points. They did it effortlessly. The moment Osimhen left, the team collapsed. Over-reliance on one player is a disaster waiting to happen. At this rate, let's just forget the World Cup and focus on AFCON and hope for a miracle."

Others, such as Oladayo Martins, expressed concerns about individual performances, with a particular focus on the defensive lapses. "Ekong was a major flop today... Bassey came to his rescue severally. Based on permutations and calculations, we've still got a chance," Martins added.