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# Nigeria's debt rises to N144.67tn in 2024, soars 48.58%

By Damilola Olufemi



**N**igeria's public debt has surged to N144.67 trillion (\$94.23 billion) as of December 2024, representing a 48.58% increase from December 2023. The Debt Management Office reports that both external and domestic borrowings drove this growth. External debt rose by 83.89% to N70.29 trillion, while domestic debt increased by 25.77% to N74.38 trillion.

The increase in external debt is attributed to new borrowings and naira depreciation. Domestic debt growth reflects the government's reliance on local borrowing for budget deficits and infrastructure projects. The Federal Government's domestic

debt component grew significantly from N53.26 trillion to N70.41 trillion, reflecting a 32.19% increase.

On a quarter-on-quarter basis, Nigeria's total public debt increased by N2.35 trillion, translating to a 1.65% rise from N142.32 trillion as of September 30, 2024. External debt rose by N1.4 trillion, while domestic debt increased slightly by 1.29%. The Federal Government's domestic debt increased from N69.22 trillion to N70.41 trillion within the quarter.

The debt structure shows external debt accounting for 48.59% and domestic debt 51.41% of the total public debt.

The Federal Government holds the majority of both external and domestic debt, with N62.92 trillion (\$40.98 billion) in external debt and N70.41 trillion (\$45.86 billion) in domestic debt.

The rise in public debt has raised concerns among economic analysts regarding Nigeria's fiscal stability. The sharp increase, particularly in external debt, highlights the nation's vulnerability to exchange rate fluctuations and changes in global economic conditions. With the continued depreciation of the naira, the cost of servicing foreign debt could escalate, adding pressure on the country's financial resources.

# THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

## PUBLIC NOTICE COLOUR

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SIZE	TOTAL RATE
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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
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3X2	17,400.00
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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
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10X4	142,787.50
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9X6	192,305.50
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8X3	82,434.50
7X4	111,173.50
6X4	82,434.50
6X3	59,250.00
6X2	40,000.00
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5X4	65,833.00
5X3	49,375.00
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10X4	103,963.00
10X3	N/A
9X6	162,222.445
9X5	168,191.50
9X4	N/A
8X6	N/A
8X3	N/A
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6X4	65,000.00
6X3	41,124.50
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5X6	71,378.00
5X4	42,825.00
5X3	29,858.00
5X2	22,841.00
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4X3	N/A
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PHOTO NEWS (4X4)	53,333.30	4,250.00	57,583.30
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# Education minister advocates extending NYSC to two years

By Oluwatosin Ologun



**T**he Minister of Education, Olatunji Alausa, has pushed for the extension of the national service scheme, NYSC from one to two years.

The minister stated this on Saturday when the Director General of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), Brigadier General Olakunle Nafiu, paid him a courtesy visit in his office in Abuja.

Alausa said the duration of the scheme can be extended with the expansion of NYSC Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development Training programme content for corps members.

The National Youth Service Corps confirmed that the education ministry proposed the extension of the scheme's duration to two years.

The NYSC, in a statement by its public relations director Caroline Embu on Saturday, spoke of its ongoing reform efforts to tackle certificate racketeering.

Olakunle Nafiu, the National Youth Service Corps director-general, visited Tunji Alausa, the minister of education,

in Abuja on Friday.

In 2024, a federal probe revealed that about 22,789 Nigerians were parading fake foreign degree certificates, which were then used to enrol for the NYSC scheme.

Nigeria, in 2024, initiated probes and sweeping reforms to block certificate rackets exploiting the system as a result.

Alausa said efforts are ongoing in the ministry to digitise the verification of foreign-trained graduates of Nigerian origin.

He said the ministry and NYSC would further strengthen their alliance towards the improvement of education for national development.

Alausa commended the National Youth Service Corps for digitising the mobilisation process to curb certificate racketeering.

The minister, per the NYSC, advocated for the extension of national service from one to two years.

This, he reportedly said, would enable the expansion of the National Youth Service Corps Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED) training programme content for corps members.

“You have done so well as an organisation. Let NYSC give people more opportunity to become job creators that will meet the needs of the country,” Alausa told the NYSC DG.

The National Youth Service Corps DG, Olakunle Nafiu, said the scheme is ready to comply with policy guidelines as directed by the federal government.

“We are also trying to reform the scheme to conform with the present national needs”, he added.

Nafiu called for the establishment of a database of Nigerian youths going abroad to study for degree programmes.

He said this would help the government have detailed records of Nigerians studying abroad and also eliminate fake graduates.

# Plateau killings: Tinubu orders security agencies to hunt down attackers

By Oluwatosin Ologun

President Bola Tinubu has directed security agencies to hunt down and apprehend the perpetrators of another violent attack in communities in Plateau State, which led to the deaths of over 50 people.

The president said this in a statement signed by his aide, Bayo Onanuga.

Tinubu promised that the gunmen would be apprehended and made to face severe punishment under the law.

He urged affected community members to cooperate with the authorities and security agencies by volunteering information to catch the perpetrators and secure their communities.

According to a statement issued on Saturday by Presidential Spokesman Bayo Onanuga, the President extended his condolences to the families of the victims in Ruwi, Hurti, and Tadaï communities in Bokkos Local Government, as well as those from Manguna and Dafo villages, where the gunmen launched brutal attacks, resulting in the loss of lives and the destruction of properties.

President Tinubu commiserated with the Government of Plateau State and Governor Caleb Mutfwang, assuring him of his support in ending this



spate of wanton bloodletting on the Plateau.

He directed the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to work with state authorities to provide necessary support to the victims and bring immediate relief to the affected communities and those wounded during the attacks.

The statement said NEMA would work closely with the state to ensure that affected communities rebuild and recover.

The President stated, “The report of another violent attack in communities in Plateau State by mindless gunmen saddens me. The latest attacks on defenceless citizens are unacceptable. I have directed security agencies to hunt down the attackers, and they will face severe punishment when apprehended.

“These intermittent attacks should have no place in our country at a time when we are working so hard to restore peace and order in all parts of our country. This unfortunate incident will never dampen or slow us down in our duty to protect every Nigerian citizen. Instead, we will work harder to exterminate forces of evil wherever they are lurking in our country.

“Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims’ families and all those affected by this senseless violence. No community should have to endure such tragedy. We all must unite to foster peace and stability. I urge all citizens—regardless of ethnic, religious, or political affiliations—to uphold the shared humanity that binds us all, embrace peace, and reject retaliation.”

# Oba Abimbola Owoade crowned 46th Alaafin of Oyo

## • 'Unity, prosperity of Yorubaland top of my priorities' - Alaafin

By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

In a momentous occasion steeped in tradition and royal grandeur, Oba Abimbola Akeem Owoade was officially crowned the 46th Alaafin of Oyo, succeeding the late Oba Lamidi Adeyemi III, who passed away in April 2022 at age of 82. The historic coronation ceremony took place at Oliveth Baptist High School in Oyo on Saturday, drawing dignitaries, traditional rulers, and well-wishers from across the country.

The event followed Oba Owoade's completion of the compulsory 21-day Oro Ipebi traditional rites on March 29, marking the final spiritual preparation before assuming the throne. The Alaafin was earlier presented with the staff and instrument of office on January 13, 2025, by Governor Seyi Makinde at the Governor's Office in Ibadan.

Among the eminent personalities in attendance were the Olubadan of Ibadan, Oba Owolabi Olakulehin; the Ooni of Ife, Oba Adeyeye Ogunwusi; the Soun of Ogbomoso, Oba Ghandi Olaoye; the Oluwo of Iwo, Oba Abdulrasheed Akanbi; and the Aare Ona Kakanfo of Yorubaland, Iba Gani Adams. Their presence underscored the unity and cultural significance of the Alaafin's installation.

Governor Makinde praised the new monarch's pedigree and expressed confidence in his ability to lead Oyo into a new era of progress. "There is no more crisis within the Oyo Mesi," the governor assured, addressing speculations surrounding the selection process. "It is natural for various interests to emerge when a new king is to be chosen, but in the end, one emerges, and the process is concluded in peace."

To ensure a peaceful and secure event, the Oyo State Government deployed heavy security across strategic locations in Oyo and its environs, facilitating a smooth



coronation celebration.

### Oba Abimbola Owoade's Profile

Born on July 17, 1975, Oba Owoade hails from the prestigious Owoade-Agunloye royal lineage, tracing his ancestry to Alaafin Lawani Agogoja of the Agunloye ruling house. He completed his secondary education at Baptist High School, Saki, in 1992 and later pursued Mechanical Engineering at the Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, and The Polytechnic, Ibadan, earning both a National and Higher National Diploma.

His academic journey continued overseas, where he obtained a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Sunderland in 2008 and a Master of Science from Northumbria University in 2012.

Professionally, Oba Owoade brings a wealth of experience from both Nigerian and international institutions. He served with the Nigeria Gas Company during his NYSC, had a brief stint at Oceanic Bank Plc, and held a key role as project coordinator at Manitoba Hydro in Winnipeg, Canada.

As the Alaafin of Oyo, Oba Owoade is stepping into a revered position with centuries of tradition and influence. With his blend of modern education, royal heritage, and professional experience, expectations are high that he will preserve the cultural legacy of the Oyo Empire while steering it toward innovation and development.

### 'Unity, prosperity of Yorubaland top of my priorities' - Alaafin

Oba Abimbola Owoade I, said his top priorities is to ensure peace and harmony throughout Yorubaland.

"Part of my mission for Yorubaland at large is that I will be working to ensure peace, unity and harmony among all the Yoruba. If there is a problem or misunderstanding between two towns, or between two obas for instance.

"I will intervene and mediate to ensure peace and harmony throughout Yorubaland. I will work hard to create a peaceful environment for all," Alaafin said.

# 15 ex-domestic workers of Patience Jonathan held in prison for six years without trial

By Damilola Olufemi



**F**ifteen domestic workers of former First Lady Patience Jonathan have been detained at the Okaka Custodial Centre in Bayelsa State since 2019. They were accused of stealing jewellery and electronics worth N200 million, as well as conspiracy to commit murder and other crimes.

The workers claim they've been unlawfully detained without evidence presented against them. One worker said while speaking with The PUNCH Newspaper, "We have been in prison since 2019... There is no evidence to prove to the court, and the case is not proceeding." Another inmate alleged maltreatment, stating, "These people want to kill us... Anything you can do for us to leave here, please do."

Their families are calling for a speedy

trial, with one sister, Gladys Achese, expressing anguish over her sibling's imprisonment. "This is not a nice experience... The court should do the right thing and give them fair hearing." Steve Ibiene, brother of another detainee, William Alami, added, "We only want them to do what is right. Let the court try them quickly."

The case has faced repeated delays, with over 40 adjournments between 2019 and 2025. A human rights organization, Tech4Justice, accused the Bayelsa State judiciary of succumbing to pressure from influential individuals close to the former first lady.

Funmi Adedoyin, a legal associate of the group, said, "We have filed applications, made representations, and sought bail on many occasions. But, the judiciary appears unwilling to proceed

with the case." She added that the workers were charged with conspiracy to kill the former first lady despite lack of evidence.

The defendants' families are seeking help from the Attorney General of the Federation, the National Human Rights Commission, and the Chief Judge of Bayelsa State to bring an end to their continued incarceration. The prolonged detention has taken a toll on the families, with some relatives expressing exhaustion and frustration.

One father, Offor Cosmos, pleaded for government intervention, saying, "My son is suffering. He has piles, and it's disturbing him seriously. I want the government to help me." The families demand justice and a fair trial for their loved ones.

# Brent crude oil price records lowest price in four years

By **Damilola Olufemi**



**B**rent crude oil records the lowest price for the first time in four years as the price fell to \$65.58 per barrel on Friday.

The worldwide oil benchmark fell by 7 per cent to trade at \$65.58, making it lowest since April 2021.

The United States West Texas Intermediate (WTI) also fell by 7.35 per cent to 62.03 per barrel.

## WHY THE DROP

The price of the crude oil dropped following China's increased tariffs on US goods in a retaliatory move, sharply intensifying a global trade war that has investors worried about a recession.

President Donald Trump, on April 2, announced sweeping global tariffs on all imports into the US, imposing 14 per cent on Nigeria.

The approach described as "Liberation Day," is intended to counteract what Trump's administration sees as unfair trade practices.

Trump on Wednesday announced new blanket tariffs of 10 per cent on most imports to the U.S., with higher penalties based on trade deficits for many countries.

Meanwhile, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the Director-General of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), disclosed the recent tariffs announced by the US will have significant implications for

global trade and economic growth prospects.

The drop in oil prices also follows an increase in oil production by the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies (OPEC+).

## What Oil alliance says

The oil alliance has concluded to increase oil production by 411,000 barrels per day (bpd) in May.

This was as a result of eight member countries' decision to phase out oil output cuts.

The current oil price is lower than Nigeria's 2025 budget target of \$75 per barrel.

# Tension in Kano as Police summon Emir Sanusi over Eid stabbing

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Nigeria Police Force has invited the 16th Emir of Kano, Muhammadu Sanusi II, for questioning following the fatal stabbing of a palace guard during the recent Eid celebrations in Kano State.

According to a police invitation letter signed by Commissioner of Police Olajide Ibitoye, the monarch is expected to appear before the Force Intelligence Department (FID) in Abuja by 10:00 am on Tuesday, April 8, 2025.

The tragic incident, which occurred on March 30 at the Kofar Mata Eid Ground, shocked residents of the ancient city after a vigilante attached to the Emir's security detail was stabbed to death in the aftermath of the Eid prayer. At least one other guard sustained serious injuries and is currently receiving treatment at Murtala Muhammad Hospital, Kano.

Despite a government suspension of the traditional Sallah durbar and its signature horse-riding procession over security concerns, the Emir reportedly attended Eid prayers in a low-key manner without the equestrian display.

Initial reports indicated that Inspector-General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun, had ordered the immediate arrest of the Emir following the violent incident.



However, the Kano State Commissioner of Police reportedly resisted, arguing that Sanusi did not violate any durbar ban or breach known security protocols.

In a move suggesting mistrust in the state command, the IGP allegedly ordered the FID in Abuja to take over the case and directly invite the monarch for interrogation.

"I have the directives of the Inspector General of Police, through the Deputy Inspector General of Police, Force Intelligence Department, to invite you for an investigative meeting regarding an incident that occurred during the Sallah celebration within your domain," the letter to the Emir reads in part.

As of press time, sources close to



the palace said the Emir had not formally acknowledged receipt of the invitation.

Meanwhile, police authorities have confirmed the arrest of a 20-year-old suspect linked to the attack. The unnamed attacker allegedly struck during the Emir's departure from the prayer ground.

Also summoned by the police is a senior palace official, Wada Isyaku, the Shamakin Kano, who is expected to assist in the ongoing investigation.

The fatal incident has sparked widespread reactions, with many calling for a thorough and impartial probe to unravel the circumstances behind the deadly Eid violence.

# Police rescue 14 abducted victims, kill bandits in Otukpo gun duel

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

**B**enue State Police Command has successfully rescued 14 victims who were abducted from a Benue Links bus traveling from Makurdi to Otukpo on April 3. The armed kidnapers attacked the bus in the Otukpo Burnt Bricks area, leaving the driver and one passenger dead.

According to the Command's Public Relations Officer, SP Sewuese Anene, the kidnapers shot the driver and one passenger, before whisking away the remaining 14 passengers to an undisclosed location. The injured were rushed to the hospital but were confirmed dead upon arrival.

In a joint effort with the State Civil Protection Guard, the police quickly



initiated a search for the abductees in nearby forests. On April 4, a breakthrough came when officers encountered the bandits and engaged them in a gunfight.

The superior firepower of the police forced the bandits to retreat, leaving their captives behind.

While the 14 victims were rescued, two had already sustained machete injuries. The survivors were immediately taken to the hospital, where one was later confirmed dead. The remaining victims are currently receiving medical treatment.

Benue State Police Commissioner, Mr. Steve Yabanet, extended his condolences to the families of the deceased and vowed to ensure the perpetrators are brought to justice. He urged Otukpo residents to report any suspects with gunshot wounds, as several of the bandits were likely injured during the exchange of fire.

# 7 dead, 4 injured in Lagos-Ibadan truck crash

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

**S**even people have tragically lost their lives, and four others have sustained injuries following a horrific accident on the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway. An articulated truck, reportedly traveling at excessive speed, lost control and collided with two other vehicles, resulting in multiple fatalities.



The incident, confirmed by Florence Okupe, the Route Commander and Chief Public Education Officer of Ogun State's Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), involved a total of 15 passengers, including 13 male adults and two females. Among the 15, four individuals were injured—three male adults and one female—while seven others perished, including six males and one female.

According to FRSC officials, the Mack truck's excessive speed was the suspected cause of the crash. The truck veered off course, smashing into the two other

vehicles in the process. The injured victims were immediately rushed to Divine Touch Hospital and Glory Center Hospital Ibafo, while the bodies of the deceased were taken to Idera Morgue in Sagamu.

"Efforts were made to clear the wreckage, and the vehicles involved were towed off the road to allow for smooth traffic flow," Okupe stated. "Sector Commander Fasakin Akinwumi visited the scene for further investigation and expressed condolences to the victims' families."

Meanwhile, in a separate incident, a BRT bus caught fire at Maryland, Lagos State, on Saturday morning. Eyewitnesses reported that the fire began on the driver's side of the bus, which was traveling from Ikorodu to CMS. Passengers, initially unaware of the source of the smoke, quickly realized the severity of the situation as the smoke turned into flames.

One of the passengers, who narrowly escaped the fire, shared the panic that ensued: "We thought the smoke was coming from other buses at first, but when it got worse, we all rushed out of the bus before the fire fully ignited."

Reports indicate that both the driver and the conductor fled the scene, abandoning the passengers to their fate. According to the eyewitness, the driver seemed to be aware of the bus's malfunctioning state before it was put on the road. "They knew the bus was faulty and still risked our lives by driving it," the passenger alleged.

# Lagos begins upgrade of 27 PHCs in four months under IMPACT project

By Helen Okechukwu

In a major step toward strengthening grassroots healthcare delivery, the Lagos State Government has launched the upgrade of 27 Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs) across the state under the World Bank-supported IMPACT Project, with completion expected within the next three to four months.

In a post shared on Saturday via Facebook, State Commissioner for Health, Prof. Akin Abayomi while speaking during the official handover ceremony held at Palm Avenue PHC in Mushin, assured residents of the government's commitment to revitalizing the state's healthcare system.

Represented by the Permanent Secretary of the Lagos State Primary Healthcare Board, Dr. Ibrahim Mustafa, Abayomi emphasized that the initiative is designed to ensure timely and efficient execution of the upgrades.

The Immunization Plus and Malaria Progress by Accelerating Coverage and Transforming Services (IMPACT) Project is a collaborative effort between the Lagos State Government, the World Bank, and other stakeholders aimed at improving the quality and utilization of immunization and malaria services.

Read Also: Kaduna to strengthen PHC workforce through task-shifting policy

With a strategic focus on reducing under-five mortality rates, the project underscores the government's drive to enhance service delivery and accessibility at the community level and reduce infant and maternal mortality rate.

Abayomi called on Community Development Associations, local leaders, and residents to actively support the contractors executing the upgrades, stressing that community ownership is key to the sustainability and protection of the infrastructure.

He noted that the upgraded PHCs will significantly enhance the capacity of healthcare professionals to deliver



essential services, particularly in maternal and child health, thereby reducing infant and maternal mortality rates across the state.

"I want to plead with our residents and stakeholders in the communities where these projects will be executed to support and take ownership of them, ensuring they are not impeded," he said.

He further urged residents to make effective use of the centres upon completion and maintain the facilities to serve future generations.

According to the Commissioner, the project marks a significant investment in the state's healthcare infrastructure and reaffirms the government's resolve to deliver quality healthcare that is accessible, affordable, and sustainable.

Also speaking at the event, the Chairman of Mushin Local Government Area, Hon. Emmanuel Bamigboye, described the PHC upgrade as a historic milestone in the collective effort to provide quality healthcare to all Lagosians.

He lauded Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu for his leadership and unwavering commitment to implementing impactful social and infrastructural projects across the state, including in Mushin.

"Healthcare is the backbone of any thriving society," Bamigboye said. "It is not just a necessity but a fundamental

right of every citizen. The upgrading of these 27 Primary Healthcare Centres is a testament to our commitment to ensuring that every resident, irrespective of status or location, has access to quality medical services," Bamigboye stated.

He expressed gratitude to the Lagos State Ministry of Health, the Lagos State Primary Health Care Board, medical personnel, and community leaders for their collaborative efforts in making the project a reality.

Bamigboye also encouraged residents to take responsibility for the facilities by ensuring proper usage and maintenance.

The handover ceremony drew attendance from key stakeholders, including Permanent Secretaries of Health Districts I, II, V, and VI — Dr. Dayo Lajide, Dr. Olufunmilayo Bankole, among others.

Also present were development partners, health officials, council officers, contractors, and community representatives, all of whom reaffirmed their commitment to supporting the Lagos State Government's healthcare transformation agenda.

# 'Filmmakers now push actors into content creation' – Jemima Osunde

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**N**ollywood's Jemima Osunde criticizes the rising pressure on actors to be social media influencers to land roles in Nigeria's film industry.

According to her, filmmakers are increasingly choosing actors not for their talent, but for their ability to create viral online content.

### Pressure to become content creators

In a recent conversation with fellow actor Jammal Ibrahim, Osunde expressed frustration with this emerging trend. She explained that many actors are now being pressured to also become influencers just to secure roles in films.

"Now, it's as though they are forcing every actor to be a social media content creator before casting them," she said. "It's like you have to dance on the internet to get roles. Why?"

### Online following over acting skill

Osunde criticized the growing belief among producers that actors must have a large social media following to be considered. She believes this practice unfairly shifts the focus from acting ability to online popularity.

"It's like if you're not an actor with a strong social media presence, we're not casting you because we need you to sell our film," she said. "That shouldn't be the actor's job."

### A shift in Nollywood values

These comments shed light on a bigger issue in Nollywood. More and more, it seems casting decisions are being based on an actor's ability to market rather than perform. This shift is causing concern among professionals who value the art of acting.

### Jammal Ibrahim echoes the concern



Actor Jammal Ibrahim agreed with Osunde's concerns. He emphasized the importance of staying true to one's personality and using good management to navigate the pressure.

"I told my management that I don't know how to dance. I'm a terrible dancer," he shared. "A good manager should say, 'This is your personality — how can we work with who you are?' Not, 'How can we make you just like everyone else?'"

### Refusing to fake it for promotion

Ibrahim also made it clear that he would not take part in promotional stunts that don't align with his character. "If you're doing a PR stunt for a film and you're going to be dancing, seriously, I'm not going to be part of it unless I feel like the dance is something I can actually do," he said. "I don't want to look stupid on screen. It's just not my personality."

### Losing sight of true talent

Both actors stressed the need for the industry to respect individuality and true skill. They warned that if casting continues to favor social media fame

over acting ability, the overall quality of Nollywood films could suffer.

### Balancing digital reach with artistic integrity

Their concerns mirror a wider issue facing creative industries worldwide. While social media can help promote projects and connect with fans, Osunde and Ibrahim argue it should not come at the cost of authentic storytelling and artistic expression.

### A call for change in Nollywood

As more actors speak out, Nollywood may need to reconsider how it chooses its stars. Osunde and Ibrahim are urging producers to prioritize acting talent and passion over digital popularity. They believe actors should be valued for their work on screen, not for how entertaining they are on Instagram or TikTok.

Their message is clear: casting should be about who can bring characters to life, not who can trend online. It's a call for balance, one that may reshape the way Nollywood defines success in the digital age.

# '2Face needs our prayer' – Comedian Ushbebe

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Comedian Ushbebe urges Nigerians to pray for music icon 2Face Idibia, sparking online buzz over concerns about the singer's relationship choices.

In a recent video, Ushbebe questioned the nature of 2Face's relationship with Natasha Osawaru, an Edo State lawmaker, suggesting that there may be more going on than the public is aware of.

In a strongly worded video shared on his social media page, Ushbebe expressed concern over how closely 2Face seems to be tied to Natasha.

According to him, the veteran singer is no longer acting like the legend many have respected for decades.

Instead, he appears to be following Natasha around in a manner that the comedian described as "schoolboy-like."

"Let's just call for prayers for legend o!" Ushbebe exclaimed. "Dem go hold legend's hand, dey carry am waka like tata wey dem wan go drop for school. Legend supposed be legend o, 2Face free yourself. Emancipate yourself!"

"This one go hard me"

Ushbebe admitted he usually keeps his opinions to himself but felt compelled to speak out in this case. He described the situation as embarrassing, especially given 2Face's status in the Nigerian entertainment industry.

"I like minding my business but on this particular issue, I have to speak up," he said. "Which one be all these rubbish na? Which one be all these see finish na? You dey carry legend waka like say na schoolboy. No, now. We need to talk."

The comedian's remarks have sparked mixed reactions online. While some agree with his call for concern, others believe 2Face's personal life should be left private.

Not the first concern raised

Ushbebe's comments follow an earlier plea from 2Face's mother, Rose Idibia, who also expressed worry about her son's



connection to Natasha Osawaru. In a public appeal, she urged the lawmaker to release her son from what she described as spiritual or emotional control.

According to Rose Idibia, 2Face's recent actions suggest he may not be thinking clearly. She pleaded with Natasha to remove certain spiritual items from her son's body.

"Take off the beads you put on his hand and on his neck," she said. "He's not himself. Let him go."

These statements have only fueled public speculation, with fans and commentators asking questions about how deep this relationship might really be.

More than just love?

Ushbebe didn't mince words. He made it clear that, in his view, what's happening between 2Face and Natasha goes beyond ordinary affection. He hinted at manipulation or some deeper control, urging the singer to break free and reclaim his identity.

"Emancipate yourself o!" Ushbebe said again, with emotion in his voice. "Legend no suppose dey move like say e no get voice. This one go hard me to overlook."

Public figures under scrutiny

As a music icon, 2Face Idibia—real name Innocent Ujah Idibia—has long been seen as a symbol of excellence in

Nigerian music.

His fans hold him in high regard, not just for his talent, but also for his resilience and legacy. That's why many are surprised and confused by his recent public appearances, which some say show him taking a backseat in his own life.

The growing concern from both family and public figures like Ushbebe has ignited a wider conversation about celebrity relationships and influence. When public figures, especially legends like 2Face, show signs of distress or unusual behavior, fans tend to notice—and speak up.

What's next?

For now, neither 2Face nor Natasha Osawaru has officially responded to the growing commentary. However, with voices like Ushbebe and Rose Idibia stepping into the spotlight, the pressure may mount for clarification.

As fans continue to watch closely, one thing is clear: many people care deeply about 2Face and want to see him well—both emotionally and spiritually. Whether the concerns are valid or just misunderstandings, the calls for prayer and clarity are growing louder.

And in the words of Ushbebe himself, "Legend supposed be legend."

# I was raped by my colleague, says Adaku

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian actress and media personality Omotunde Adebowale-David, popularly known as Adaku from *Jenifa's Diary*, has opened up about a deeply painful chapter in her life.

During a recent episode of the *Say My Piece* podcast, which she co-hosts, Lolo revealed that she was raped by a male colleague in the broadcasting industry.

Her voice was steady, but her words carried years of pain. She described the assault as a traumatic experience that has left lasting emotional scars. This is the first time she is publicly speaking about the incident.

A long-buried truth

"I hardly ever say this," she began during the podcast. "I'm not even ready to tell the full story."

Lolo went on to say that the experience continues to affect her deeply. She struggles to be around the man who assaulted her, especially since they still cross paths professionally.

"I was raped once in my life, and it was by a colleague. I still see him around," she said. "Every time I see him, I panic. It's like I freeze inside."

The fear of speaking out

Lolo explained why she has remained silent for so long. According to her, fear of public judgment has kept her from revealing the full story. She worried that if she named the man now—especially as he rose to a prominent TV role—people would question her timing.

"People will say, 'Why are you speaking now after all these years?'" she said. "They'll think I'm trying to ruin his career. But they won't think about the pain I've carried all this time."

Her concerns reflect a reality many women face when trying to speak out about sexual assault. The fear of disbelief, blame, and backlash often silences victims for years, if not forever.

A conversation with her daughter



What finally gave Lolo the courage to share her story was a conversation she had with her daughter.

"When I told her, she held my hand and said, 'Mummy, you've gone through so much,'" Lolo recalled. "And I said, yes, I have."

That moment of empathy and support reminded Lolo of her strength. It also reminded her of the many women who have suffered in silence, just like she did.

The emotional toll

Lolo spoke openly about the psychological weight of the incident. She said she constantly relives the trauma and often blames herself. These feelings, she explained, are all too common among survivors.

"When sexual assault happens, the first thing you feel is denial," she said. "Then comes the self-blame. You start thinking, 'Did I cause this? Did I let it happen?'"

She added that these emotions don't go away easily, especially when the attacker remains present in your daily

life.

Breaking the silence

By sharing her story, Lolo is joining a growing number of women who are breaking their silence and demanding change in the media and entertainment industries. Her words highlight the need for safer work environments and better support systems for survivors.

Although she chose not to name her attacker, her bravery in speaking out sends a clear message: it's time to listen, believe, and support survivors of sexual violence.

Her story is a powerful reminder that trauma doesn't disappear with time. And silence, often born from fear, doesn't mean a lack of truth.

As conversations about sexual assault continue to grow across Nigeria and beyond, voices like Lolo's shine a light on the work still needed. Her courage may just inspire others to speak up—and finally be heard.

# Mr. Macaroni reacts to alleged detention of domestic workers by Patience Jonathan

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**M**r Macaroni condemns Patience Jonathan for detaining 15 domestic workers since 2019, calling it an abuse of power and a violation of their rights.

The workers are allegedly being held because of missing jewellery.

A call for justice

Reacting to the shocking reports, Mr Macaroni condemned the ongoing detention, calling the situation “painful.” He questioned whether Patience Jonathan, the former first lady, was even aware that the domestic workers had been in prison for so long.

In a powerful message, Mr Macaroni urged Nigerians to take a stand against the growing abuse of power by the wealthy and influential who use their positions to trample on the rights of those who cannot defend themselves.

The legal question: Innocence until proven guilty

According to the reports, the domestic workers have been locked away for over five years without any conviction or trial in court.

This has raised serious concerns about the fairness of the system and the treatment of individuals who are accused of crimes but have not been proven guilty.

Mr Macaroni, known for his outspoken views, argued that everyone should be presumed innocent until proven guilty by a court of law, regardless of their social status or wealth.

A personal plea for justice

He took to social media, expressing his frustration: “The injustice in this country is so painful!” he wrote. “According to this report, these men and women have been locked up for over five years without a court conviction!!” He then raised a crucial question: “Does Madam Patience Jonathan even remember that they are still in prison?”

His post continued: “We must stand against this pattern of abusing power that allows rich or influential people to lock up



others because they cannot speak or fight for themselves. By law, they are innocent until proven guilty!”

The broader issue of abuse of power

Mr Macaroni’s message highlights a deepening issue in Nigerian society—where the voices of the powerless are often silenced by the powerful.

The detained workers, according to reports, have not faced a trial or been given an opportunity to defend themselves in a court of law.

Instead, they have been languishing in prison for years, a situation that Mr Macaroni strongly believes reflects a failure of the justice system and a blatant disregard for human rights.

Mr Macaroni’s advocacy for the voiceless

The Nigerian activist has long been an advocate for the rights of ordinary Nigerians, particularly those who have no means of defending themselves against the powerful elite.

He has used his platform to call attention to numerous social injustices, using his fame to amplify the voices of those who would otherwise remain unheard.

His latest comments come at a time when concerns about the abuse of power by the wealthy and influential in Nigeria are

growing louder.

Widespread support and growing debate

Mr Macaroni’s comments have sparked widespread debate on social media, with many Nigerians expressing their support for his stance.

They echoed his calls for justice and fairness, arguing that the rich and powerful should not be allowed to use their wealth to manipulate the legal system and imprison those who cannot afford to defend themselves.

A broader look at human rights in Nigeria

The case has also drawn attention to the broader issue of human rights in Nigeria. For years, there have been reports of individuals being detained without trial, often due to their inability to afford legal representation or navigate the complex legal system.

The detention of the domestic workers in this case is just one example of a much larger problem facing the country.

Wealth and power in Nigerian society

In a society where wealth often dictates power, the situation of these 15 workers raises critical questions about the integrity of the justice system and the rights of individuals to a fair trial.

# 'Funke Akindele paid me N190,000, not N90,000' – Ijoba Lande clarifies

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**N**ollywood actor Ijoba Lande accused actress Funke Akindele of underpaying him for a movie role, sparking controversy across social media.

In a now-viral video, Lande claimed he was paid a mere ₦90,000 for a full month's work—a statement that shocked many and sparked a wave of criticism online.

A new video, a different story

On Friday, Lande released a new video, retracting his earlier claim. He admitted he was actually paid ₦190,000, not ₦90,000 as he initially stated. The actor blamed the confusion on poor video editing and claimed the original clip had been altered in a way that made him appear dishonest.

“Please help me beg Aunty Funke”

Speaking emotionally in Yoruba, Lande appealed to both Akindele and the public for forgiveness.

“Funke Akindele gave me ₦190,000, not ₦90,000,” he said. “Please help me to beg Aunty Funke. The video was a mix-up. It was cut and joined badly. The full part where I corrected myself was not shown.”

He added, “I don't want to go to jail. I didn't mean to defame her. I respect her a lot. I made a mistake, and I want to make it right.”

Backlash and defense

The actor's initial claim had triggered outrage, especially from fans of Akindele. Known for her dedication to helping rising actors and promoting fair work practices, many found the accusation hard to believe. Social media users rushed to her defense, demanding evidence and questioning the timing of Lande's comments.



Lande has shown clear remorse.

A cautionary tale for the industry

This incident serves as a warning for everyone in the entertainment industry. With the power of social media comes the responsibility to speak carefully and truthfully. One video, one quote, or one edited clip can damage reputations and cause unnecessary tension.

Ijoba Lande's story reminds both creators and audiences that while it's easy to jump to conclusions, the full truth often takes a bit longer to come out.

Conclusion: Will apology mend the rift?

Whether or not Funke Akindele chooses to forgive Ijoba Lande publicly, the actor's apology has already shifted public opinion. It has also started a broader conversation about fairness, professionalism, and the power of apology in the age of instant information.

For now, all eyes remain on Akindele's next move—and on how Lande handles his words going forward.

Now, with the retraction out, the tide has shifted. Some are calling for more responsible content creation and urging bloggers to stop spreading unverified claims.

Misinformation and the role of editing

Lande's clarification sheds light on the growing issue of misinformation in digital media. With videos easily edited and shared in fragments, even small mistakes can snowball into major controversies.

“This shows how dangerous half-truths can be,” one online commenter noted. “The internet runs with the first story. Nobody waits for context.”

Funke Akindele yet to respond

As of Saturday morning, Funke Akindele had not made any public comments about the retraction. Known for her calm and collected approach, many fans believe she will handle the situation with grace.

Others are encouraging her to accept the apology and move on, especially since

# American rapper Eminem welcomes grandchild

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**M**arshall Bruce Mathers III, the iconic American rapper known as Eminem, has officially become a grandfather at the age of 52.

This significant milestone in his personal life was revealed on Friday when his daughter, Hailie Jade, shared the exciting news on Instagram.

Hailie posted a heartfelt announcement about the birth of her son, making Eminem a grandfather for the first time.

**A proud mother's announcement**

The proud new grandmother, Hailie, shared a photo of her newborn son with fans on social media.

The image showed the baby, whose name is Elliott Marshall McClintock, with a sign reading "Elliott Marshall McClintock" placed above his crib.

In her post, Hailie wrote, "Happy due date / 3 weeks earthside little E." Her words offered a glimpse into the joy and excitement surrounding the arrival of her little one.

**Congratulations pour in for the new family**

The announcement quickly gathered attention, with numerous well-wishers sending their congratulations to Hailie, her husband, Evan McClintock, and, of course, the newly minted grandfather, Eminem.

Fans, friends, and family flooded the comments section of Hailie's post, sending messages of love and support to the growing family.

**Eminem's new role as a grandfather**

This event marks a new chapter in Eminem's life. Known for his tough persona and gritty lyrics, the rapper is now embracing a softer role as a grandfather.

It's a far cry from the rapper who once rapped about his struggles with fame, family, and life in general.

**Hailie Jade's personal milestone**

Hailie Jade, Eminem's only biological daughter, has often been in the spotlight,



largely due to her father's lyrics.

Over the years, Eminem has mentioned Hailie in several of his songs, speaking about his deep love for her and the challenges he faced as a father.

Their close relationship has been a significant theme in his music. Now, with Hailie becoming a mother herself, a full circle moment has come to fruition for the rapper.

**Eminem's poignant "temporary" music video**

This personal shift in Eminem's life comes shortly after the release of his music video for "Temporary" in October 2024.

The music video, which featured a touching montage of old home videos of his daughter, struck an emotional chord with fans.

Towards the end of the video, Eminem shared a deeply personal moment: a clip where Hailie revealed to her father that she was expecting a child with her husband.

The video highlighted the close-knit bond between father and daughter and underscored the joy that both of them were experiencing in their respective lives.

A rare glimpse into Eminem's family life. Eminem's transition into grandfatherhood has undoubtedly stirred emotions, both among fans and within his

own family.

For years, his songs have chronicled his struggles with fame, family, and addiction. Yet, through all the hardships, his relationship with his daughter has always been a consistent and powerful part of his story.

Now, as he embraces this new role as a grandfather, it's clear that family remains one of the most important aspects of his life.

**Hailie Jade steps into motherhood**

The arrival of Elliott Marshall McClintock also marks a new beginning for Hailie Jade. As a young mother, she is stepping into a new chapter of her own life.

Fans are excited to watch as she embarks on this journey of motherhood. With the support of her husband Evan and the love of her family, including her famous father, it's clear that Hailie will be surrounded by love and guidance as she raises her son.

**Eminem's private family life revealed**

Eminem, for all his fame and success, has always kept his family life relatively private. However, moments like these, shared through social media and music, offer a rare glimpse into the more personal side of the rapper's life.

# Trump's tariffs risk global recession, JP Morgan warns

By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

The Trump administration's aggressive new tariffs are sparking serious concerns of a looming recession both in the United States and across the global economy, according to dire warnings from major financial institutions and investors.

In a dramatic downgrade, JP Morgan—the United States' largest investment bank—has slashed its U.S. growth forecast, now predicting a 0.3% contraction in GDP for 2025. This marks a sharp drop from its previous projection of 1.3% growth. The bank's chief U.S. economist, Michael Feroli, cited the weight of the tariffs as the key reason: "We now expect real GDP to contract under the weight of the tariffs."

This economic alarm comes in the wake of President Donald Trump's sweeping 10% baseline tariff on imports from nearly all nations, with some products facing levies as high as 50%. The policy, which the president has championed as part of his "America First" economic strategy, has already wiped more than \$5 trillion off U.S. stock markets in just two days, fueling global investor panic.

## Global Financial Leaders Ring Alarm Bells

Jerome Powell, Chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve, called the tariffs "significantly larger than expected" and warned that their economic consequences are likely to be equally severe. Meanwhile, International Monetary Fund (IMF) chief Kristalina Georgieva cautioned that the measures pose a "significant risk to the global outlook" at a time when growth is already sluggish.

The trade war has already prompted China to impose retaliatory tariffs of up to 34% on all U.S. imports, escalating tensions between the world's two largest economies. With both sides refusing to back down, fears of a prolonged global economic crisis are growing.



## Britain Faces Double Threat

Across the Atlantic, the UK may also be heading toward financial turbulence. Analysts warn that Britain's £2.8 trillion debt and weak economic growth could mirror the conditions that triggered Greece's debt crisis more than a decade ago.

Neil Robson, head of global equities at Columbia Threadneedle, said, "Britain's situation resembles the lead-up to the eurozone meltdown. If nominal GDP growth stalls below interest costs, the UK could quickly spiral into a debt crisis."

Bruno Schneller, managing partner at Erlen Capital Management, added, "Trump's tariffs risk triggering a global stagflation shock. For the UK, that's a recipe for a gilt crisis—stalling growth, rising inflation, and spiking borrowing costs."

## Investor Confidence Plummets

A new survey by ADS, the trade association for aerospace, defence, and security industries, reveals that business confidence in the UK has plunged by a third in recent months. Half of the companies surveyed are planning to cut investment this year, reflecting the growing unease in the business

community.

Aimie Stone, Chief Economist at ADS, called the results a "warning signal," adding that Trump's trade blitz "threatens the stability of global markets."

## More Tax Hikes Looming in the UK

The UK Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, has already made deep cuts to welfare spending to recover £9.9 billion in fiscal headroom. However, economists warn that if the global economy weakens further, additional tax hikes may be needed to avoid breaching fiscal rules. The Office for Budget Responsibility has said a full-blown trade war could erase any remaining margin for economic error.

Despite mounting pressure, President Trump has remained defiant, insisting that his tariff policy is "going very well" and claiming the economy is "healing."

## Recession Fears Take Hold

JP Morgan has now raised its estimate of a global recession to 60%, up from 40%, as financial markets reel from the fallout of Trump's tariff escalation. Many analysts agree that unless the U.S. administration reverses course, the world could be headed for one of its most disruptive economic downturns in recent history.

# I am fighting for free speech, claims pro-life activist at heart of transatlantic row

By New Daily Prime

**A**nti-abortion campaigner Livia Tossici-Bolt was convicted for protesting outside a Bournemouth clinic, despite support from the White House

A pro-life activist backed by the White House has said she is fighting for free speech.

Livia Tossici-Bolt, 64, was convicted on Friday for protesting outside an abortion clinic by holding a sign that read: "Here to talk if you want to."

The mother of three was handed a two-year conditional discharge and ordered to pay £20,026 in costs after the 2023 protests in Bournemouth, Dorset.

On Saturday, she told BBC Radio 4's Today Programme: "What I'm going to do [now]? There isn't much I can do, isn't it?"

"I've been given this conditional discharge, and I will continue my fight for freedom of speech."

The dual UK-Italian citizen stood diagonally opposite a British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) clinic in Bournemouth, approximately 50 metres away, holding a sign on two consecutive days in March 2023.

She refused requests to leave the area, claiming that she had not been given an adequate reason to do so, and declined to pay two fixed penalty notices issued by the council.

Mrs Tossici-Bolt was convicted at Poole Magistrates Court on Friday of



breaching a ban on protests in a protected buffer zone.

Giving her verdict, District Judge Orla Austin said that Tossici-Bolt was not "lawfully exercising" her rights of freedom of expression under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

Mrs Tossici-Bolt told Today: "It was purely inviting consensual conversation and I think in the public space, everybody can do that. And this, I don't think is detrimental. I think it is very beneficial for everyone."

She added: "I was not there to express my views. That's the point. I was there to have a free conversation, consensual conversation, to anyone who wanted to speak to me, and not all the topics I want to speak. I was there to listen."

The prosecution gained global attention this week after the US State Department announced it was "monitoring" her case, risking a diplomatic row with Britain.

Donald Trump's administration is actively seeking to champion more anti-abortion protesters facing prosecution in the UK in a move that risks a transatlantic rift.

The US State Department is understood to have contacted a pro-life Christian charity asking to speak to campaigners who have suffered from "censorship" of their views.

Jeremiah Igunnubole, Mrs Tossici-Bolt's barrister, said: "This is unprecedented circumstances. Never before have we seen entirely peaceful conduct being criminalised for nothing other than offering a consensual conversation.

"It's the first time in modern British history that this has happened. So we, of course, have to go through the judgment and explore all our legal options."

# Iran's Vice President fired over lavish Antarctica holiday

By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

In a dramatic move that has reignited debate over public accountability in Iran, President Masoud Pezeshkian has dismissed Vice President Shahram Dabiri following a controversial private trip to Antarctica—one he called “indefensible” as the nation battles a prolonged and painful economic crisis.

Dabiri, 64, a physician and political ally of the president, embarked on an extravagant holiday during the Iranian New Year (Nowruz), visiting Argentina before boarding the *Plancius*, a Dutch-flagged cruise ship offering Antarctic expeditions priced at approximately £3,300 per person. Photos shared on Instagram, believed to be posted by his wife, documented the couple's stops in Buenos Aires, Paris, Rome, and Tbilisi. The account was made private shortly after the images drew widespread public backlash.

“In recent days, after reviewing the news, it was confirmed that during Nowruz, you were on a leisure trip to Antarctica,” President Pezeshkian wrote in a formal letter published by the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA). “In a context where economic pressure on the population remains high... expensive leisure trips by officials, even if paid out of their own pocket, are neither defensible nor justifiable. Therefore, we can no longer continue our cooperation with you in the government.”

The dismissal underscores growing pressure on the Iranian government to hold high-ranking officials to account, particularly as ordinary citizens face soaring inflation, rising unemployment, and the rapid devaluation of the rial—which has lost over 50% of its value in the last year.

Dabiri had been appointed as vice president in August 2024, despite controversy surrounding his past arrest and imprisonment on corruption charges while serving as head of the local council in Tabriz, northwestern Iran. His dismissal is the first major public sacking under President Pezeshkian's administration.

No Constitutional Breach, But Political



## Fallout

Under Iran's Constitution, vice presidents are appointed directly by the president and do not require parliamentary approval. While Dabiri's trip did not violate any legal provisions, it was seen as tone-deaf given the country's dire financial situation. President Pezeshkian, who publicly disclosed his monthly salary of around £600 following his election, was elected on promises to combat economic inequality and government excess.

With Iranian vice presidents earning under £7,000 annually, the revelation of Dabiri's lavish travel expenses raised eyebrows. Dabiri has not publicly commented on the source of funding for his trip or his dismissal, though a source close to him insisted the expenses were covered personally and unrelated to his political role.

Critics argue that the regime's advocacy for “simple living” is enforced only for the general population, while government elites live in stark contrast. “It's a double standard,” said one political analyst. “The symbolism of such a trip during Nowruz, when millions of Iranians are tightening their belts, is damaging.”

## Backdrop of Economic Turmoil

The scandal comes as Iran faces what many economists describe as the most severe economic downturn in its modern history. Mismanagement, longstanding corruption, and crippling international sanctions have battered the economy. In early March, Parliament voted to impeach Economy Minister Abdolnaser Hemmati amid public frustration over surging prices and currency

depreciation.

Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index scored Iran just 24 out of 100 in 2023, ranking it 149th out of 180 countries—a reflection of widespread institutional distrust.

President Pezeshkian's administration has pledged to improve living conditions and tackle inequality, but the Dabiri scandal may cast doubt on the government's ability to deliver on its promises.

## Public and Political Backlash

The reaction to Dabiri's trip was swift and widespread, with public figures and members of the president's own circle calling for his removal. “At a time when families are struggling to afford basic necessities, this kind of elite behavior is not just inappropriate—it's insulting,” said a member of Parliament who requested anonymity.

The episode mirrors recent controversies in other nations over officials' travel habits. In Argentina, President Javier Milei recently instructed ministers to avoid luxury vacations, citing public perception. Similarly, former UK Prime Ministers Tony Blair, David Cameron, and Boris Johnson faced scrutiny for holidaying in opulent locations.

Though Dabiri's trip did not breach the law, the political fallout could have lasting implications. For President Pezeshkian, the sacking signals a willingness to draw a line—but also a reminder of the deep-rooted challenges his administration must confront.

# Nationwide anti-Trump protests erupt in all 50 US states

By New Daily Prime

A powerful wave of dissent swept across the United States on Saturday as coordinated anti-Trump protests erupted in all 50 states, marking the largest nationwide demonstration of Donald Trump's second term. The protests were a response to what organizers described as a sweeping attack on Americans' rights, economic stability, and democratic values.

More than 1,200 "Hands Off!" protests took place across cities including Washington D.C., New York, Boston, Chicago, and Los Angeles, with an estimated 600,000 people participating. Demonstrators also gathered in solidarity across international cities like London, Paris, Berlin, and Toronto.

The mass mobilization came just days after President Trump announced hundreds of billions of dollars in sweeping "reciprocal" tariffs on U.S. trading partners—policies that sent global stock markets into a tailspin, erasing more than \$5 trillion in value. The protests also coincided with widespread public outrage over drastic federal workforce cuts led by Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), which eliminated 200,000 civil service jobs.

While thousands gathered beneath the Washington Monument, Trump spent the day at his Jupiter, Florida golf club before retreating to Mar-a-Lago. The stark contrast between presidential leisure and public protest only fueled more anger on the streets.

Many protesters carried signs portraying President Trump with a swastika, denouncing Elon Musk as a "fascist" and accusing both men of waging war on American democracy. Ukrainian flags,



Palestinian keffiyehs, and banners calling for social justice created a visual representation of the movement's global and intersectional nature.

"This is an enormous demonstration that's sending a very clear message to Musk, Trump, and all the MAGA enablers: we will not stand by while they dismantle our democracy," said Ezra Levin, co-founder of Indivisible, one of the event's main organizers.

Democratic lawmakers, including Maryland Congressman Jamie Raskin, joined the protests in D.C. Raskin told the crowd, "Donald Trump has the politics of Mussolini and the economics of Herbert Hoover. We don't need a dictator who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing."

In Los Angeles, one protester dressed as Marie Antoinette held a sign that read: "Musk & Trump say: let them eat cake," a satirical jab at the administration's perceived disregard for working-class Americans.

Despite the heavy criticism, the White House defended Trump's recent economic actions. Assistant Press Secretary Liz Huston said: "President Trump's position is clear: he will always

protect Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid for eligible beneficiaries. Democrats, meanwhile, are proposing benefits for illegal aliens that would bankrupt the system."

The protests recalled the energy of the 2017 Women's March, though this time without the celebrity fanfare. Critics noted that the movement's grassroots tone was a deliberate contrast to recent campaigns that had relied heavily on celebrity endorsements, which many voters found out of touch.

Among the crowd in Washington was Terry Klein, a retired biomedical scientist from Princeton, New Jersey. "I came here because everything is under attack—immigration, education, our institutions, and now our economy," she said. "We can't stay silent anymore."

With the nation reeling from layoffs, economic uncertainty, and mounting political division, Saturday's protests could mark a pivotal moment in America's political narrative. Whether they signal the beginning of broader public resistance or remain symbolic remains to be seen—but one thing is clear: discontent is no longer confined to online spaces or political rhetoric. It's now marching in the streets.

# Migration Chaos as Hotels threaten to evict hundreds of asylum seekers

By Fatimah Idera



**H**otels predominantly in London are threatening to evict hundreds of asylum seekers after failing to receive contracted payments from an accommodation company ditched by the Home Office.

The hotels, largely in the London area, say that they should have received payments from Stay Belvedere Hotels (SBHL) for housing the asylum seekers last month.

They claim that means they have been unable to pay their insurance premiums, leaving them in breach of their contracts and potentially without cover.

“We are saying that if there is no payment, there is no option. We will have to evict the asylum seekers,” the owner of a group of hotels housing hundreds of migrants said.

SBHL, understood to be running more than 50 migrant hotels, was stripped of its contract by the Home Office last month over its alleged behaviour and poor performance.

currently, there are still around 38,000 asylum seekers in hotels at a cost of £5.5 million a day to the Home Office.

SBHL was sub-contracted by Clearsprings Ready Homes, one of three overarching providers that have 10-year contracts with the Home Office to provide accommodation for asylum seekers waiting for claims decisions. Clearsprings tripled its profits in two years to £91 million last year.

The contract to manage SBHL’s hotels is being transferred to Mears, Serco and CTM. Although

most of the hotels are in the capital, there are also properties in Bournemouth, Eastbourne and Folkestone.

Government sources said that all the invoices due for payment by the Home Office had been paid, and it was up to SBHL and Clearsprings to fulfil their contracts and pay the money owed.

“We are progressing with the transition away from SBHL and Clearsprings. They are co-operating but if they breach their terms at any time and stop co-operating, we will act accordingly,” a source said.

Ministers have blamed the previous Conservative administration for badly-drawn contracts that left the taxpayer exposed.

# Wind turbines as tall as the Eiffel Tower to be built in the Channel

By **Fatimah Idera**

**E**d Miliband has approved a £4bn development off the Sussex coast despite hundreds of objections, the plans for a giant wind farm to be built in the English Channel with dozens of turbines as tall as the Eiffel Tower.

The wind farm, called Rampion 2, received the green light from the Energy Secretary despite objections from hundreds of locals who fear it will damage ecosystems and ruin views from the coastline and South Downs National Park.

Once complete, the £4bn development will stretch 50 miles along the coast from east of Brighton to west of Bognor Regis. The plans are part of Mr Miliband's race to hit net zero, which is being powered by renewable energy including solar and wind.

Mr Miliband said: "This project puts us within reach of our clean power offshore wind target. It's time to get off the fossil fuel rollercoaster, roll out clean power, protect our energy security and bring down bills for good.

"The UK has a boundless supply of wind that cannot be turned on and off at the whims of dictators and petrostates."

The scheme had attracted hundreds of objections from people angry at the "industrialisation" of England's seascape, and at the damage from installing onshore cables and substations.

One objection submitted to the Government warned that the wind turbines would be as high as the Eiffel Tower. It added: "There will be no place on the West Sussex coast that the horizon is not dominated by them day and night."

The turbines will stand 1,066ft above sea level, the same height as the Parisian landmark when its aerial is not included.



Brighton and Hove Council has warned they will ruin the view from the seafront.

Meanwhile, this project will require hundreds of miles of cabling which will be cut into the seabed, as well as a power export cable landing at Climping, and more than 22 miles (35km) of buried cable routed through the South Downs National Park.

Under the sea they will be embedded in foundations comprising thousands of tons of cement and protected from currents by thousands more tons of rock armour boulders typically quarried from Norwegian fjords and dumped around the towers.

Also, Fishermen fear the scheme will destroy their livelihoods by making swathes of seabed inaccessible.

RWE, the German company leading the scheme, said the environmental impacts were justified by the green power the turbines would generate.

However, the South Downs National Park Authority said the turbines would ruin the views of the sea from its rolling hills.

It said: "Their proximity to the coastline, size, number and spread would have significant adverse effects on the

character and setting of the national park."

An objection from the Littlehampton East Beach Residents Association said the scheme would "disrupt and permanently degrade ecosystems in the sea, on the land and in the air, both during construction and operation ... It will substantially degrade intrinsic values of the natural seascape and landscape impacting on the wellbeing of many."

Mr Miliband's decision to approve Rampion 2 follows a string of controversial planning grants including the giant Sunnica solar park in Suffolk.

In each case, hundreds of objections from local people, councils and environmental groups were overruled by Mr Miliband on the grounds that generating low carbon power was more important than the landscape and other impacts.

The Rampion project is led by RWE on behalf of joint venture partners, all of which are foreign-owned.

The UK's contract for difference scheme means that, if accepted into it, Rampion will be guaranteed profits – which will mostly flow abroad to the scheme's overseas investors.

# Miliband pours £2.7bn into nuclear power plant after EDF cuts stake

By Fatimah Idera



**E**d Miliband has sunk an extra £2.7bn into Sizewell C after EDF slashed its stake in the nuclear power project. The Energy Secretary said the additional money would boost energy security, jobs and the race for net zero.

But anti-Sizewell campaigners questioned the wisdom of pouring billions into a project that the Government has still not taken a final decision to build.

It means UK taxpayers have so far spent a total of £8bn on the nuclear power station.

The latest cash is thought to be

aimed at building confidence in the project, potentially attracting other investors as EDF steps back.

The French energy giant recently reduced its stake from 24pc to 16pc amid pressure from Emmanuel Macron, the French president, to cut back on risky overseas commitments. EDF was told it should instead focus on making a success of multibillion-euro projects at home, ensuring they were profitable and built on time.

Sizewell C is a proposed 3.2-gigawatt nuclear power station planned for the Suffolk coast, potentially generating power for 6m homes.

Its design would be similar to the Hinkley Point C power station being built by EDF in Somerset, whose start date has been delayed by a decade to the mid-2030s with costs that have doubled to £40bn.

Sizewell C was given the go-ahead by the last government and the £2.7bn is in addition to the £1.2bn made available by Mr Miliband since July last year, as well as the £4bn spent by the previous administration

The money has gone to Sizewell C Ltd, the company set up by the Government and EDF, so far the only other investor in the project

# Mourinho handed three-match ban for nose grab incident

By **Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi**



**F**enerbahçe manager José Mourinho has received a three-match suspension and a fine after an altercation with Galatasaray boss Okan Buruk in the aftermath of a fiery Turkish Cup clash.

The incident occurred at the Sukru Saracoglu Stadium on Wednesday, shortly after Galatasaray's 2-1 victory. Footage shows Mourinho approaching Buruk from behind and appearing to pinch his nose, prompting the Galatasaray coach to dramatically fall to the ground holding his face.

The Professional Football Disciplinary Board (PFDK) described the action as “provoked”

by Buruk's alleged gestures and behavior. While Mourinho was fined 292,500 Turkish Lira (around £5,955), the board confirmed that the ban was reduced due to Buruk's conduct.

Galatasaray described Mourinho's action as a “physical attack”, while Fenerbahçe accused Buruk of theatrics, claiming he “acted as if he had been shot” and made “disrespectful hand gestures” toward Mourinho.

Tensions escalated further when Mourinho's assistant, Salvatore Foti, received a four-match ban for insulting a Galatasaray player. Additionally, Fenerbahçe's Mert Yandas and Galatasaray substitutes Kerem Demirbay and Baris Yilmaz

were all sent off after a bench-clearing melee during stoppage time. Yandas has since been handed a one-match suspension.

This incident is the latest in a series of heated exchanges between the two Istanbul rivals. In February, Galatasaray threatened legal action against Mourinho, accusing him of racist remarks. However, Fenerbahçe stated on Friday that the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office had dismissed those claims.

Mourinho, who took over at Fenerbahçe in June, now faces a crucial run of games from the stands, as his team chases domestic glory amid a storm of controversy.

# Everton 1-1 Arsenal: Controversial penalty dents title hopes

By **Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi**

**A**rsenal's Premier League title hopes took a heavy hit after a controversial penalty decision handed Everton a route back into the game at Goodison Park.

Mikel Arteta's side, who took the lead through Leandro Trossard in the first half, were left frustrated as Iliman Ndiaye converted from the spot early in the second half. The equaliser followed a contentious moment in the box where Myles Lewis-Skelly was adjudged to have fouled Jack Harrison.

Referee Darren England was decisive in pointing to the spot, and a brief VAR check upheld the decision. But Arteta was far from convinced.

"I have seen it 15 times – in my opinion, it is never a penalty," a clearly frustrated Arteta told Match of the Day. "We were in control and looking to build on that. The referee just gave them something out of nothing."

Everton boss David Moyes was far more reserved, claiming he hadn't seen the incident back:

"I've watched it zero times so I couldn't tell you if it was a penalty or not."

The Premier League's Match Centre later clarified on social media that VAR had confirmed



"sufficient contact" and that the incident occurred inside the area.

Former striker and pundit Chris Sutton weighed in, calling the decision "very, very soft", and speculated Moyes himself might agree once he reviewed it.

## Penalty Debate Overshadows Tactical Battle

The game lacked fluidity overall, with both teams struggling to maintain rhythm. Trossard's first-half goal looked set to give the Gunners a valuable three points, but Ndiaye's coolly taken penalty just after the restart changed the complexion of the match.

Arsenal, chasing their first Premier League title in over two decades, are now relying on a significant slip from league leaders Liverpool. With just eight games remaining, Jurgen Klopp's side

need only 11 points to seal the title — starting with their trip to Fulham on Sunday.

"We have no margins – that's so clear," Arteta admitted. "We did enough to win the game, but the margins are very small."

## A Bitter Return for Arteta

Arteta, who played over 200 games for Everton between 2005 and 2011, was hoping for a smoother return to Merseyside. Instead, he departs with just a point — and possibly the final blow to Arsenal's title charge.

As the dust settles on another Premier League weekend, the debate around officiating decisions continues, and Arsenal must now regroup quickly if they're to keep any remaining hopes alive.

# Barcelona held by Betis but extend lead at La Liga summit

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Barcelona extended their lead at the top of La Liga to four points despite being held to a 1-1 draw by Real Betis at the Estadi Olímpic Lluís Companys.

Hansi Flick's side started brightly, with Gavi opening the scoring in the 7th minute after a slick one-touch move involving Ferran Torres. The 20-year-old midfielder tucked away his third goal of the season with a composed finish from a tight angle.

However, Barcelona's lead lasted just 10 minutes. Real Betis responded quickly, as Brazilian defender Natan powered home a header from Giovani Lo Celso's corner to level the score at 1-1.

Despite dominating possession and chances, the hosts couldn't find a breakthrough. Jules Kounde came closest to restoring the lead in the second half, but his close-range shot on his weaker foot was well saved by goalkeeper Adrian.



The result ended Barca's seven-match winning streak across all competitions and also brought Betis' own four-game winning run to a halt. Forwards Cucho Hernandez and Antony, on loan from Manchester United, were kept quiet by a solid Barcelona backline.

Real Madrid's shock 2-1 defeat to Valencia earlier in the day — their first loss to Los Ches since 2008 — gave

Barcelona the opportunity to stretch their lead at the summit. While they couldn't take full advantage, the point still pushes them four clear with just weeks remaining in the title race.

Barcelona will now shift focus to the Champions League, where they host Borussia Dortmund on Wednesday in the first leg of their quarter-final clash.

# Valencia stun Real Madrid with last-gasp winner

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Real Madrid's La Liga title hopes took a major blow as Hugo Duro's stoppage-time header handed Valencia a dramatic 2-1 victory at the Santiago Bernabéu.

With the clock ticking into the 95th minute, Rafa Mir delivered a pinpoint cross that Duro headed past Madrid goalkeeper Fran Gonzalez to secure a memorable win for the visitors.

Valencia had taken the lead in the 15th minute when Mouctar Diakhaby rose above the defence to nod home André Almeida's cross. Madrid, despite dominating possession, struggled to break through until after the break.

Vinícius Júnior atoned for his earlier penalty miss, sending a powerful shot into the top corner in the 50th minute to level the



scores. Madrid had missed a golden opportunity minutes earlier when goalkeeper Giorgi Mamardashvili saved Vinícius's penalty after Kylian Mbappé was fouled in the box.

Despite pushing for a winner, Madrid were caught out in the dying seconds as Duro's header stunned the home crowd. The defeat leaves Los Blancos three points behind leaders Barcelona, who play later on Saturday.

For Madrid, it was another frustrating day, with their penalty woes continuing — they've missed five this season, their most in a single campaign since 2013-14. Meanwhile, 19-year-old Fran Gonzalez became the youngest goalkeeper to make a La Liga debut for Madrid since Iker Casillas in 1999, stepping in due to injuries to Thibaut Courtois and Andriy Lunin.

For Valencia, the win was historic, marking their first victory at the Bernabéu since 2008. They will now look to build on this triumph as they aim to climb further up the table.

Madrid now face a tough challenge ahead with their Champions League quarter-final first leg against Arsenal on Tuesday.