The weekly business newspaper

# FINANCIAL STANDARD

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Think And Grow Rich




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# S/Leone's UK Investments Shrinks 50% to £1m

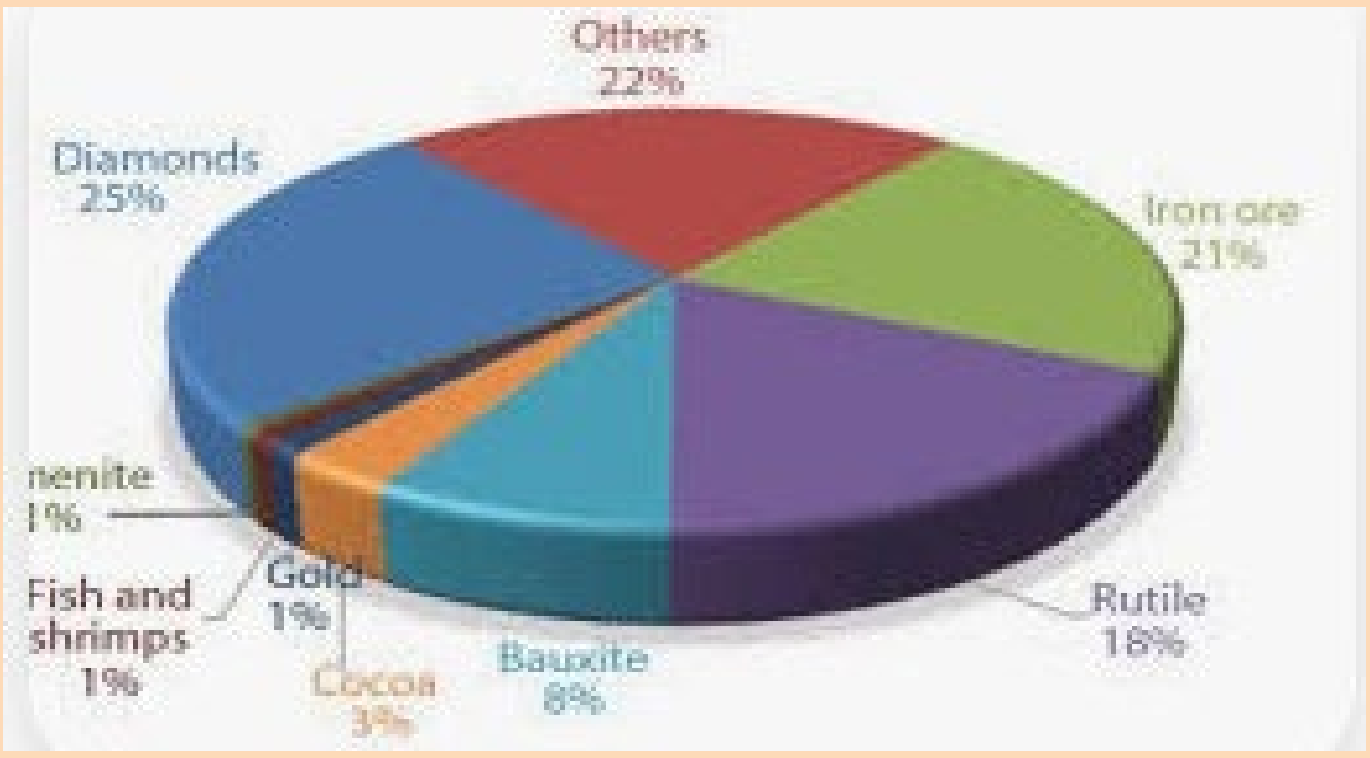
*By Reuben Ademiluyi, London*

Sierra Leone's investment presence in the United Kingdom has weakened significantly, with the country's foreign direct investment (FDI) stock in the UK falling by 50 per cent to just £1 million at the end of 2024, according to the latest Sierra Leone: UK Trade and Investment Factsheet.

The decline underscores the challenge facing Sierra Leonean businesses seeking to establish a stronger foothold in international markets, even as trade relations between Freetown and London continue to show signs of growth. According to the factsheet, Sierra Leone's FDI stock in the UK declined from £2 million in 2023 to £1 million in 2024.

The sharp contraction comes against a backdrop of improving bilateral

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# Expedia, Skyscanner Others For Travel Market




**By Sento Conteh**

Senior figures from Expedia, Skyscanner and Booking.com are among those who will share their expertise on the Future Stage, Trends Stage and Experience Hub at World Travel Market (WTM) which holds this week in London.

"This year's programme reflects where the industry is heading, with data-led insight on the Trends Stage, practical thinking on the Future Stage, and creative problem-solving in the Experience Hub," said Chris Carter-Chapman, Event Director at WTM London. "Whatever their role, attendees will leave with fresh ideas and the tools to put them into action."

These three stages sit alongside the WTM Wanderlust Headliner Stage, which has its own stellar line-up of tourism ministers, industry CEOs and household names, as already announced. WTM's Trends Stage aims to be "the pulse of the industry", bringing travel trends to life through data and inspiring showcases, helping businesses identify new sources of growth.

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# US$12m Digital Upgrade for Upcoming Census

**By Ibrahim Mansaray**

Sierra Leone is intensifying preparations for its December 2026 Population and Housing Census, with more than US$12 million earmarked for digital enumeration devices, including tablets, satellite communication systems, and internet connectivity equipment.

Financial Standard (FS) sources say the initiative will deploy satellite-enabled technology, including Starlink connectivity, to support data collection in remote areas lacking mobile network coverage. The devices will also incorporate geofencing technology to prevent enumerators from recording data outside their designated Enumeration Areas, thereby enhancing data integrity.

The preparations are being undertaken by Statistics Sierra Leone in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and the United States Census Bureau.

An FS source noted that the December 2026 schedule was chosen to allow sufficient time for cartographic mapping and full system readiness ahead of the nationwide exercise.

Meanwhile, Statistics Sierra Leone has warned citizens against travelling to their ancestral villages solely to be counted during the census. The agency stressed that the headcount will be conducted on a de facto basis, meaning individuals will be counted

*Continues on* **PAGE 8**



*Minister of Planning and Economic Development, Hon. Kenyeh Barlay ( right), and MoPED Officials at a recent meeting at the Office of the ECOWAS Resident Representative in Freetown.*



*Members of Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the Parliament at a recently concluded 3-day retreat in Freetown.*

# Contract Dispute Threatens ECOWAS-Funded Market

Construction of the ECOWAS-funded cross-border market in Wai Village has stalled amid disputes over project documentation and concerns about missing critical infrastructure, raising the prospect of further delays to a project intended to boost local trade and economic activity.

A high-level inspection led by the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MoPED) identified significant discrepancies in the project's Bill of Quantities (BoQ), contractual documents, and approved scope of work, issues that have prevented completion and handover of the facility to the community. Mrs. Laygbay Lilian Amadu, Deputy Secretary and ECOWAS Desk Officer at MoPED, expressed concern over the project's prolonged implementation period. The contract, originally scheduled for completion within eight months, has exceeded its deadline, leaving key components unfinished and the market non-operational.

The contractor, S. Brothers, attributed the impasse to the existence of multiple versions of the BoQ, creating uncertainty over approved deliverables and resulting in differences between stakeholder expectations and the works covered under the contract. During the inspection, officials identified several outstanding facilities considered essential for the market's functionality, including market stalls and tables, a water well, wheelchair-accessible ramps, sanitation facilities, drainage systems, parking areas and storage units. The findings have intensified calls for a comprehensive review of project documents to establish a single authoritative BoQ and determine responsibility for the missing infrastructure.

The inspection team also raised concerns about the quality and suitability of some completed facilities, underscoring the need for further technical assessments before the project can be commissioned.

# New Pan-African Drive on Health Outcomes

The Angel Care Foundation has officially launched its Angel Blanket Initiative in Sierra Leone, marking the country's participation in a pan-African maternal and newborn health programme aimed at reaching one million babies across Africa within the next five years.

The launch ceremony, held at the New Brookfields Hotel in Freetown, saw the donation of 500 newborn blankets to major healthcare institutions, including King Harman Road Maternal and Children's Hospital, Ola During Children's Hospital, Princess Christian Maternity Hospital, and the 34 Military Hospital.

Speaking at the event, Dr. Olivia Tchangue, Founder of the Angel Care Foundation, explained that the initiative was inspired by her personal experiences and created to provide practical support to mothers and newborns during the critical early stages of life. She emphasized that the programme extends beyond material assistance and seeks to promote healthier beginnings for vulnerable families.

The initiative, which was first introduced in Ghana, combines the distribution of essential newborn supplies with health education programmes focused on neonatal care, postnatal health, and the identification of danger signs in newborns.

## World Business Briefs

### Global Economy Faces Rising Inflation

The global economy has remained surprisingly resilient in 2026 despite geopolitical tensions, higher energy costs and tighter monetary conditions. According to the International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook, global growth is projected at 3.1% in 2026 before recovering to 3.4% in 2027, supported in part by continued investment in artificial intelligence and business adaptation to economic shocks.

However, the IMF warned that inflationary pressures are re-emerging, with global headline inflation expected to rise to 4.7% in 2026. The institution cautioned that escalating conflicts, renewed trade tensions, fiscal vulnerabilities and a potential slowdown in AI investment could undermine economic

### AI Investment Drives U.S. Economic Expansion

Artificial intelligence spending has emerged as one of the strongest drivers of U.S. economic growth, boosting demand for semiconductors, data centres, networking equipment and digital infrastructure. Analysts note that AI-related investment is contributing significantly to economic activity and helping offset the impact of higher interest rates and global uncertainty.

The trend is reshaping global capital flows, with investors increasingly favouring technology-linked markets. Economists caution, however, that the growth surge is becoming heavily concentrated around AI infrastructure, raising concerns about sustainability should corporate spending in the sector slow.

### Central Banks Tighten Policy as Price Pressures Rise

Major central banks are maintaining a hawkish stance amid renewed inflation risks. Forecasts from S&P Global Market Intelligence indicate that the U.S. Federal Reserve, European Central Bank and Bank of Japan are expected to implement further interest-rate increases before the end of 2026 as commodity prices and inflation remain elevated.

The tightening cycle is already pushing bond yields higher and increasing borrowing costs for businesses and governments alike. Financial analysts warn that persistent fiscal deficits and rising debt-servicing costs could become a significant drag on global economic growth during 2027.





*United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel, Leonardo Santos Simão (left), with a Sierra Leone official (centre of photo) and Mr Alpha Sesay, Attorney General and Minister of Justice at a recent meeting in Freetown.*




*From left of photo taken is Mr Emilio Rossetti, European Union (EU) Chargé d'Affaires in Freetown, Hon Kenyeh Baelay, Minister of Planning and Economic Development (MOPED), a government official and Hon Chernor Bah, Minister of Information and Civic Education at MoPED Conference Room in Freetown.*

# S/Leone Must Not Become a Mere Marketplace

## EDITORIAL

*The latest figures on Sierra Leone's investment relationship with the United Kingdom should concern policymakers, business leaders, and every citizen who cares about the country's long-term economic future.*

*While it is encouraging that trade between Sierra Leone and the UK continues to grow, the sharp decline in Sierra Leone's foreign direct investment stock in Britain, from £2 million in 2023 to just £1 million in 2024, exposes a troubling reality. Sierra Leone remains largely a participant in global commerce rather than an influential player in the global economy.*

*Trade is important. Investment is transformative.*

*A nation that exports goods but does not build ownership stakes beyond its borders risks remaining trapped at the lower end of the value chain. Countries that have successfully developed strong and resilient economies did not merely sell products internationally; they built companies capable of investing overseas, acquiring technology, accessing new markets, and establishing strategic commercial footprints.*

*The contrast revealed in the latest factsheet is therefore striking. Sierra Leonean exports to the UK increased significantly, reflecting growing demand for the country's products. Yet the capacity of Sierra Leonean businesses to invest abroad has moved in the opposite direction. This suggests that the benefits of expanding trade are not yet being translated into stronger corporate growth, capital accumulation, or international competitiveness.*

*At a time when Sierra Leone is actively seeking foreign investment, the country must also ask a critical question: what is being done to support Sierra Leonean enterprises seeking to become investors themselves?*

*A healthy economic relationship should not be defined exclusively by inward investment. It should also empower domestic firms to expand internationally. When indigenous companies establish a presence abroad, they gain access to global networks, financing opportunities, technological knowledge, and market intelligence. These advantages ultimately flow back into the domestic economy through job creation, innovation, and increased productivity.*

*The decline in Sierra Leone's investment stock in the UK signals that many local businesses remain constrained by limited access to long-term finance, insufficient institutional support, and the high costs associated with international expansion. These barriers must be addressed deliberately and urgently.*

*Government agencies responsible for trade promotion, investment, and private-sector development should view these figures as a call to action. The focus must extend beyond attracting foreign investors to creating Sierra Leonean multinational enterprises capable of competing on the global stage. This requires stronger financial markets, improved access to credit, targeted export financing, investment guarantees, and support mechanisms for businesses seeking overseas partnerships and acquisitions.*

*The private sector must also rise to the challenge. Too often, Sierra Leonean enterprises have operated with limited ambition beyond national borders. The current era of regional integration through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and deepening global connectivity presents opportunities that cannot be ignored. Businesses must begin thinking not only as exporters but also as investors, innovators, and owners of international assets.*

*The encouraging news is that Sierra Leone's economic outlook remains positive. Forecast growth rates suggest that the country has an opportunity to build stronger domestic businesses capable of competing globally. But growth alone will not guarantee success. It must be accompanied by deliberate policies that strengthen entrepreneurship, corporate governance, access to capital, and international competitiveness.*

*The latest figures therefore tell two stories. One is positive: trade ties between Sierra Leone and the United Kingdom are expanding. The other is worrying: Sierra Leone's ownership stake in that relationship is shrinking.*

*For a country seeking sustainable economic transformation, that imbalance cannot be ignored.*

*Sierra Leone must aspire to be more than a marketplace for foreign capital and foreign goods. It must become a nation whose businesses invest, compete, and prosper across international borders. Until that happens, the promise of economic empowerment will remain only partially fulfilled.*

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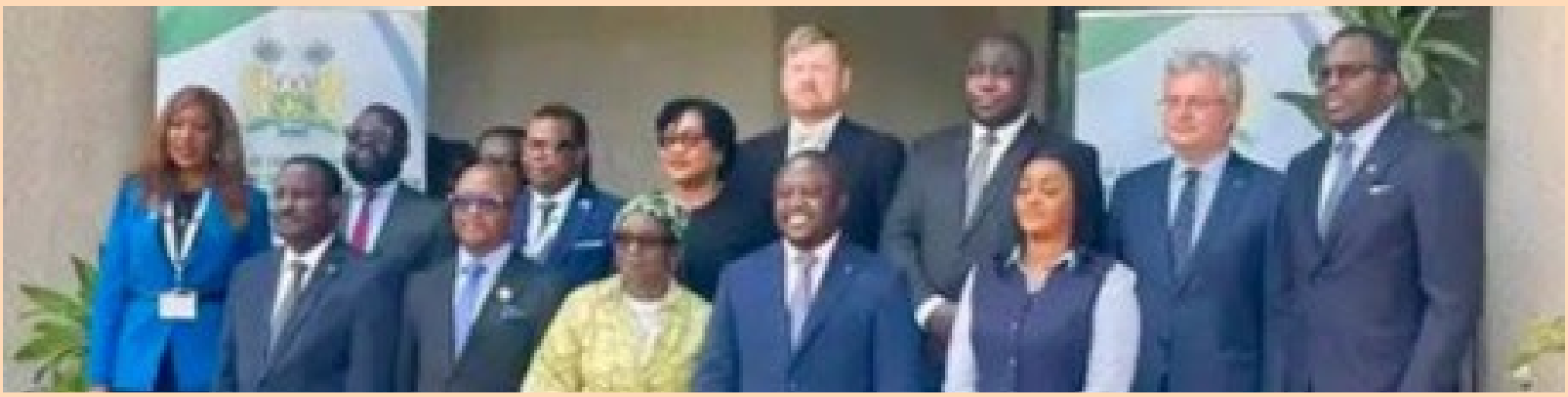
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# NEWS



*After a 2-day seminar on internal law, participants including the European Union (EU) Chargé d'Affaires Ms. Emilio Rossetti, Mr Alpha Sesay, Sierra Leone's Minister of Justice, and officials from the International Criminal Court (ICC) in a group photograph.*

## SLCAA Tightens Travel Rules Amid Ebola Alert

Passengers travelling through Freetown International Airport are now required to complete a Health Declaration Form before arriving at the airport, following a new directive issued by the Sierra Leone Civil Aviation Authority (SLCAA). The authority has warned that passengers who fail to comply with the requirement may be denied boarding.

The directive was announced by Musayeroh Barrie, Director General of the SLCAA, who stated that all arriving and departing passengers must complete and submit the form in advance. The completed document must be available for verification during check-in and other airport processing procedures.

According to the SLCAA, the measure is intended to improve passenger processing, reduce delays, and ensure a smoother travel experience. By requiring travellers to complete the forms ahead of time, airport authorities hope to minimize disruptions caused by incomplete documentation.

The authority has also called on airlines, travel agencies, and other aviation stakeholders to help raise awareness of the new requirement and support passengers in complying with the directive. This collaborative approach is expected to enhance efficiency across airport operations.

The SLCAA said the policy forms part of broader efforts to strengthen public health safeguards, reduce the risk of health-related disruptions to airport operations and commercial flights, and maintain the safety, reliability, and reputation of Sierra Leone's aviation sector.

## National Policy Coming for CBOs

Government has commenced the development of a national policy for Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) aimed at formalizing their registration, regulation, operations, and funding mechanisms to strengthen grassroots development and align community initiatives with national development priorities.

The process was launched by the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MoPED) during an orientation meeting held at the Ministry's Conference Hall in Freetown. The meeting brought together key stakeholders to discuss the proposed policy framework and prepare for consultations across all 16 administrative districts of the country.

Chairing the session, Development Secretary Ambrose James stressed the importance of effective coordination and accountability in community development initiatives.

## Expedia For Travel Market

*Continues from* **PAGE 1**

The opening keynote will feature Stephen Cheng, Expedia Group B2B Vice President with his session 'The Business of Trends – Identifying a Fad or the Future?', which will set the stage for debates over the three days of WTM London. The discussion will be moderated by Dan Christian, Founder of Travel Trends Podcast – the number one B2B travel podcast globally.

The climate crisis will be in the spotlight on day two, with Kirsty Webster, Head of Sustainability for Industry at Skyscanner. In a session called 'Too Hot to Handle? Climate Risk and Future Demand', she will examine how heatwaves, wildfires, flooding and weather volatility are changing the commercial viability of travel – and look at rising demand for cooler destinations, shoulder seasons, slower journeys and smaller carbon footprints.



*Minister of Planning and Economic Development, Hon. Kenyeh Barlay, (2nd from right of photo) with the Cuban Ambassador to Sierra Leone, H.E. Norma Sánchez Águila (2nd left of photo) and officials of both countries during recent courtesy visit to the Minister's Office in Freetown.*



# TRAVELOGUE




*The plane's 75-meter fuselage — the longest in the world for more than a decade*

# The Last Flight of the A346: An Aviation Love Story



*The plane has four engines compared with the two on most modern aircraft, giving it power, but also making it inefficient. Credit...*

Lufthansa's quirky plane, with its extra-long fuselage, four engines and restrooms down a flight of stairs, has a devoted following. Now, the carrier, one of few still flying the model, is taking it out of service.

The Airbus A340-600 is not the world's fastest, newest or sleekest airplane. Its cabin is dated compared with its modern, high-tech counterparts. It guzzles far more fuel than its rivals and relies on four engines to fly routes that other planes do with two.

Still, the A346, as it is known, has developed a devout fan base that is drawn to its abnormally long fuselage, restrooms that can be configured to be down a set of stairs adjacent to the cargo hold and the power of its four engines.

"The A346 has been one of my favorite aircraft since about the age of 7," said Connor Joossens, 31, an aviation maintenance student, who lives in Orlando, Fla.

But the plane's days are coming to an end. On Oct. 18, Lufthansa, one of only three passenger carriers that still use it, will fly the plane for the last time, from Washington's Dulles International Airport to Frankfurt Main Airport. (Of the other two carriers, one is in Iran and the other is in Venezuela, making it unlikely most people will fly on their planes.)

Personal tributes have flooded social media while aviation photographers have traveled thousands of miles to shoot the plane one last time. And some fans have spent thousands of dollars — and shaped entire intercontinental trips — to get on a farewell flight.

Mr. Joossens is one of them. For most of his life, the opportunity to fly on an A346 had eluded him. But in June, when his wife had to go to Finland for work, he saw his opportunity. Instead of flying the most direct route from their home in Orlando, which would have taken about 14 hours, they first traveled to Washington, then flew the A346 to Frankfurt, and then connected to Helsinki, arriving in Finland about 24 hours after they departed.

Mr. Joossens said flying on the plane for the first and last time was an amazing, yet slightly bittersweet experience. "It's really disheartening to see these amazing planes retire," he said.

Charmaine D'Cruz, who runs Lufthansa Group's ground operations at Dulles, said many passengers are drawn to the downstairs restrooms, often taking pictures of the staircase and waiting area. "Passengers always make sure to see it," she said. "It's special."

On Borrowed Time

The jet entered service in 2002, engineered to compete with Boeing's 747 and connect cities that many thought were too far apart for twinjets to safely fly between and that were out of range for the shorter, under-poweredA340-300 (with engines often mockingly compared to hair dryers). For the A346, however, power was not a problem.

But the plane was hardly a success. Fewer than 100 were built, while Boeing's competitor aircraft saw thousands roll out over generations. After Boeing introduced the 777-300ER in 2004, matching the A346's capacity and range with half the engines, many considered the Airbus jet an anachronism.

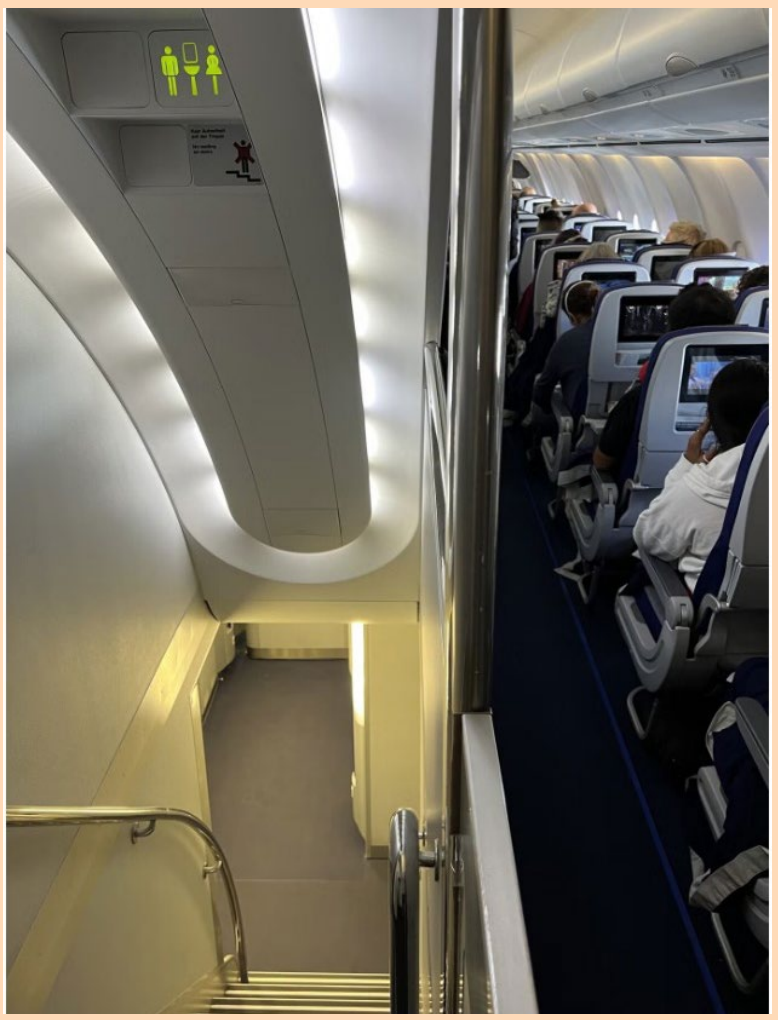
The final four planes Lufthansa has been flying were already living on borrowed time. The carrier originally retired the aircraft after the pandemic flatlined international travel, and had already ordered dozens of modern, fuel-efficient jets. But many of those have been delayed for years, so the airline resurrected the A346 to meet the soaring demand for post-pandemic travel.

"It was a special situation for us," said Francesco Sciortino, a member of Lufthansa's board and the pilot captaining the aircraft's final flight from Dulles. It helped that the airline already had pilots certified to fly it, and that the aircraft was reliable. "But this era should be over already," he said. "It's time."

Does he believe that the A346 will be missed?

Pilots will reminisce about the four engines, Captain Sciortino said, but "from the perspective of a passenger who is not an aircraft enthusiast, to be honest, they will miss nothing."

In a world where most planes are indistinguishable from one another, the A346 does stand out, and not just because of its extra engines. Its 75-meter fuselage — the longest in the world for more than a decade — appears even longer to the naked eye because of its narrowness relative to its length. Passengers sitting in the back have said that, on takeoff, they would see the front of the plane lurch toward the sky long before they felt themselves lift off.



*The plane has four engines compared with the two on most modern aircraft, giving it power, but also making it inefficient. Credit...*

# FINTECH




## *Fintech companies will compete against, and cooperate with, traditional banks; public policy must provide direction*


Inaki Aldasoro


Jon Frost


Vatsala Shreeti

Digital innovation often starts with a radical idea. It can be a new way to store and process information, a new business model, or a new service. But the idea is just the start: Realizing the benefits of innovation requires hard work, sufficient investment, and user adoption.

Disruptive innovation has been the name of the game in the financial sector over the past decade. New financial technology (fintech) firms have emerged, large digital platforms (big techs) are offering payment services and credit, crypto assets and stablecoins are growing in value, and many institutions are adopting artificial intelligence. Each of these is challenging traditional financial intermediaries, like banks, insurers, and asset managers, and the services that they provide (Ben Naceur and others 2023).

Digital innovations can both complement and substitute for services in the traditional financial system. Many services seem to offer a stark alternative to existing intermediaries and services in the short term. But in the medium term, they often complement existing services, leading to even greater competition and a more diverse financial system. Still, innovations don't always lead to the best outcomes on their own: Things can, and frequently do, go wrong. Harnessing the benefits of digital innovation often requires forward-thinking public policy.

Disruption in payments

Payments are the gateway to financial services. For individuals, a transaction account is often a prerequisite for accessing credit, buying an insurance policy, or starting to save and invest. For new entrants to the financial system, like fintechs and big techs, it is common to start by handling payments and then branch out into other areas of finance.

In the past decade, the way we pay has changed dramatically, with so-called fast or instant payment systems taking off in many countries, especially emerging markets (see Chart 1). They allow for real-time (or nearly real-time) transfers between end users (Frost and others 2024). Fast, 24/7 payments are provided by fintechs, big techs, and existing banks. They use smartphone apps and quick response (QR) codes, even operating on lower-tech phones. They have generally allowed disruptors to provide services that directly compete with incumbents.

The most well-known success stories come from public infrastructures, such as systems operated, or overseen, by central banks. In Brazil, for instance, the central bank introduced its fast payment system Pix in November 2020. Now, over 90 percent of Brazilian adults use the service for daily retail payments, such as food or travel, and even for recurring payments like utility bills. In India, the Unified Payments Interface (UPI)—operated by the National Payments Corporation of India and regulated by the central bank—promotes services by incumbent banks, fintechs, and big techs on one platform (see "India's Frictionless Payments" in this issue of F&D). Similar successes include Thailand's PromptPay, which is privately run but with a key role for the central bank, and SINPE Móvil in Costa Rica, operated by the central bank.

These successful public infrastructures stand in contrast to the situation in many economies where there are multiple private sector fast payment systems inaccessible to users of other financial institutions. For example, in the US, someone using only Venmo cannot pay someone who uses only Zelle. Similar "walled gardens" have also arisen in China, with competing wallets by Alipay and WeChat Pay, and in Peru, where the wallets Yape and Plin compete for users (Aurazo and Gasmi 2024). In the case of China and Peru, policy intervention was needed to make payment systems interoperable.

Often, what begins as a substitute (fintech and big tech challengers) can complement existing services operating in the same market. Users get cheaper, faster payments, which can also support financial resilience and higher economic growth. The disruptors—and public policy—help improve the system, serve new clients, offer new services in the same market, and push incumbents to enhance their offerings.

A digital credit metamorphosis

Beyond payments comes the need to borrow. Companies need credit to make productive investments, and people need it to buy a house or a car or to pay for education.

In the early days of the fintech revolution, it looked like new lending platforms could end up replacing many functions of banks. Crowdlending and other new credit platforms grew quickly, often using alternative data for credit scoring and connecting borrowers and lenders in streamlined, digital processes. This was soon overshadowed by new lending by big tech providers, such as merchant lending by Amazon in the US and Alibaba in China. The volume of big tech credit boomed (Cornelli and others 2023).

### Digital payments take off

The volume of fast payment transactions has grown rapidly, especially in emerging markets.

(number of transactions per capita)




SOURCES: Bank for International Settlements, CPMI Redbook statistics; Frost and others 2024; International Monetary Fund; National Payments Corporation of India; World Bank; and individual

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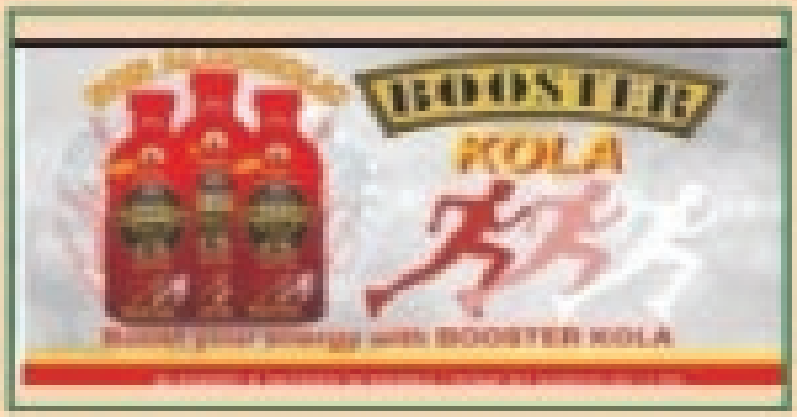



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# Security Forces Bust Suspected Cybercrime Ring

Security agencies have dismantled a suspected international cybercrime syndicate following coordinated operations in Freetown and Kenema that led to the arrest of 18 individuals and the detention of approximately 400 others. The raids, conducted last Tuesday were carried out jointly by the National Telecommunications Authority (NaTCA) and other security agencies, according to a statement issued by Minister of Information and Civic Education, Chernoh Bah.

Authorities said the operation resulted in the seizure of a large cache of electronic equipment and documents believed to be connected to the network's activities. Items recovered included 1,206 mobile phones, more than 500 computers and monitors, laptops, nine CPUs, five servers, 301 passports, and 339 SIM cards, many of them originating from foreign countries.

Minister Bah disclosed that those arrested and detained include both Sierra Leonean nationals and foreign citizens from several African and Asian countries. The composition of the group has strengthened suspicions that investigators are dealing with a well-organized transnational criminal enterprise that had established a significant presence within Sierra Leone. Officials warned that such operations pose serious risks to the country's financial systems, telecommunications infrastructure, and national security.

The Government has launched a comprehensive investigation to determine the exact nature of the syndicate's activities, identify its sources of funding, and trace any international collaborators involved in the operation. Authorities said the inquiry would also seek to establish the full extent of the network's activities and any financial crimes that may have been committed.

Reaffirming the Government's commitment to combating cybercrime, Minister Bah stated that anyone found culpable would face prosecution under Sierra Leonean law. He also urged members of the public to report suspected cybercrime and other suspicious activities to the relevant authorities, assuring citizens that investigations into the seized assets and detained individuals would be conducted thoroughly and transparently.




*Sierra Leone Football Association (SLFA) President Babadi Kamara (centre) with football administrators, National Sports Authority officials and FIFA representatives at the launch of the country's first Women's Football Strategy at the Freetown City Council Hall.*

# Government Targets 0.1m Jobs by 2030

The Government of Sierra Leone has pledged to create at least 500,000 jobs for young people by 2030 as part of its efforts to tackle youth unemployment and drive economic transformation. The commitment was announced by the Minister of Planning and Economic Development, Dr. Kenyeh Barlay, during the 29th Session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts (ICSOE) in Freetown.

The conference, organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in partnership with the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MoPED), brought together delegates from 15 West African countries, regional institutions, and development partners. Discussions focused on the theme: "Unlocking the Potential of Young People in West Africa: Pathways to Employment, Economic Transformation and Resilience."

Delivering a keynote address on behalf of the Vice President, Dr. Barlay highlighted Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan (2024-2030), stating that the Government intends to achieve its employment target through strategic investments in education, vocational skills training, agriculture, and infrastructure development.

She called for stronger regional cooperation and increased investment in human capital, digital technology, and infrastructure to unlock opportunities for young people. Dr. Barlay also urged participants to move beyond policy declarations and adopt action-oriented commitments with clear targets, timelines, and accountability mechanisms.

Speakers at the conference, including UN Resident Coordinator Seraphine Wakana and ECA West Africa Director Ngone Diop, stressed

# S/Leone's UK Investments Shrinks

Continued from **PAGE 1**

trade. Total trade between the United Kingdom and Sierra Leone reached £99 million in the four quarters to the end of the first quarter of 2026, an increase of 2.1 per cent compared with the previous year. While investment flows remain subdued, Sierra Leone's export performance to the UK has shown encouraging momentum. UK imports from Sierra Leone rose by 29.4 per cent to £22 million during the review period, indicating growing demand for Sierra Leonean goods and services in the British market.

Economic analysts say the contrast between rising trade and declining investment highlights a broader structural challenge for Sierra Leone's private sector. Although local businesses are increasingly participating in international trade, relatively few possess the financial scale and institutional capacity required to make and sustain investments abroad.

The latest figures suggest that Sierra Leone has yet to translate commercial engagement with the UK into meaningful cross-border investment. By comparison, the United Kingdom maintained a trade surplus of £55 million with Sierra Leone during the reporting period, reflecting the continuing importance of British exports and services in the bilateral relationship. Data on UK investment stock in Sierra Leone were not disclosed in the factsheet because of statistical confidentiality requirements, making it difficult to assess the full balance of investment relations between the two countries.

The development is likely to fuel renewed debate over the need to strengthen Sierra Leone's investment ecosystem, improve access to long-term finance, and support the international expansion of indigenous enterprises. Business leaders have long argued that outward investment can help domestic firms gain access to new markets, technology, strategic partnerships, and global value chains.

# US$12m for Census

Continued from **PAGE 1**

where they spend Census Night.

Speaking at the Waterloo Civic Day Series, Samuel Ansumana, Director of Communications and Public Relations at Statistics Sierra Leone, cautioned that such "census migration" distorts population figures and can lead to the misallocation of development resources. He emphasized that government investments in schools, healthcare, water supply.



# Car Review: Renault Megane CC




**Introduction**

Renault's glass-roofed MK2 model Megane CC tried to bring a fresh level of elegance to the affordable folding hard-top convertible market during its sales life between 2010 and 2016. It makes an interesting used car buy if you're after a stylish, affordable drop-top.

**Models**

2dr convertible (1.4, 2.0 petrol / 1.5, 1.6, 1.9 diesel [Floride, Dynamique, GT Line Tom Tom])

**History**

You've heard of convertibles with fabric roofs and metal roofs? Well here's one with a glass roof. Renault wanted its second generation Megane Coupe-Cabriolet, launched in 2010, to establish a clear lead over rivals at the relatively affordable end of the drop-top market. With that in mind, they tried with this design to minimise the usual compromises associated with compact open-top cars

*By Jonathan Crouch*

But not an impossible one and Renault, with a history of small, inexpensive cabriolets that stretches back to their pretty Floride model of the Fifties, thought themselves well placed to pull it off. This Megane was targeted at hatch-based rival cabriolets like Volkswagen's Eos and Peugeot's 308CC and aimed to suit style-seekers who, the French brand hoped, would appreciate the car's glassy, airy design in enough numbers to make it a class leader. Unfortunately, sales were relatively slow and the car was finally withdrawn from the UK market in early 2016.

**What You Get**

This is a slightly bigger car than its Megane Cabrio predecessor, 125mm longer with a wider track, large headlights and wrap-over taillights aiming to partly disguise its bulk. Whether it's also more stylish is a subjective call: it certainly looks more premium, thanks in part to the satin chrome surround of the windscreen and the gloss black roof pillars.

But this is a convertible, so we should concentrate on the roof. Some hard-top coupe-cabriolets use their styling to disguise the fact that the roof is removable when the top is in place. This Megane isn't one of those, intentionally looking like an open topped-car whether the hood is up or down. When raised, the two-piece glass roof forms a bubble over the cabin, justifying the 110kg weight of its assembly by bringing extra illumination and an airy feel to the interior. And to allay worries that the glass roof will create a greenhouse of your car's cabin on hot days, Renault have provided a retractable sunblind for when the sun gets too oppressive.

At the touch of a button (which unfortunately only works when the car is stationary), the roof breaks apart and begins its balletic descent into the confines of the boot. 23 seconds later, the Megane CC is an elegantly proportioned convertible. The windscreen structure has been moved slightly forward to maximise cabin space and aid access through the car's two doors, though it's still possible to bang your head on the two thick A-pillars if you're not careful getting in and out. They can slightly get in the way of your visibility at some junctions too.

The windscreen design is also intended to work in conjunction with the fixed glass wind deflector behind the rear headrests, with the aim of reducing the cabin buffeting at speed that will probably determine how often you'll feel the need to enjoy al fresco motoring. If you're travelling two-up and have ticked the box for the additional folding mesh-type net deflector, then your car will be even more serene on the move. Which'll make you more likely to want to take the top down all the year round - and so justify the premium that this car demands over an equivalent ordinary Megane hatch.

Talking of travelling two-up, you probably will be most of the time. An lengthened wheelbase does mean that these two rearmost seats offer more space for adults than you get in some small cabrios, but it would still be stretching things a bit to call this a fully-fledged four-seater. Which means that these two rearmost perches remain probably best left to children, jackets, designer shopping backs or friends particularly desperate for a lift home from the pub. At the wheel, the interior design is basically similar to that of standard Megane hatchback models from this era, with the same classy materials on display.

One of the downsides of a folding hard top roof is usually that when you retract the thing, it munches through all your available bootspace. And sure enough, Renault's designers have been unable to defeat the laws of physics in this regard, providing buyers with a restricted 211-litre boot with the hood lowered.



## AUTO TIPS

# Tyre size guide

If you are looking to buy new tyres, then knowing the required sizes and dimensions is essential.

Tyre size explained

- Width (e.g. 225): The tyre's width in millimetres
- Aspect ratio (e.g. 45): Sidewall height as a percentage of width
- Construction (R): Radial (standard for most cars)
- Wheel diameter (e.g. 17): Size of the wheel in inches
- Load index (e.g. 91): Maximum weight the tyre can carry
- Speed rating (e.g. W): Maximum safe speed for the tyre

**How to check your tyre size**

You can check your tyre size quickly by looking at the markings on the sidewall of your tyre. This is the most common and reliable method.

The size appears as a sequence of numbers and letters, for example: 225/45 R17 91W.

Each part has a meaning. The first number (225) shows the tyre width in millimetres, the second number (45) is the aspect ratio (the tyre sidewall's height as a percentage of its width), 'R' indicates radial construction, and the number after it (17) is the wheel diameter in inches.

The final numbers and letter refer to the tyre's load index and speed rating – how much weight it is designed to carry, and the maximum speed it can be driven to safely.

You can also find tyre size information inside your car. Check for a sticker located in the driver's door frame, inside the fuel flap, or sometimes in the glovebox.

Your vehicle handbook will also list the correct tyre sizes and recommended specifications, including tyre pressures.

In the UK, another easy option is entering your vehicle registration on a tyre retailer's website, which will display the correct tyre size for your car.




Always ensure replacement tyres match the correct size and ratings – and double-check markings to ensure correct fit and safe driving.

**Aspect ratio**

Aspect ratio is the height of a tyre's sidewall and is displayed as a percentage of its width.

It appears as the second number on the tyre size sequence – XXX/XX.

When it comes to the number itself, 35-45 is typically a thinner sidewall, mostly associated with sportier models and tyre types.

CONVERSATION

# Rethinking Multilateralism

**Bruce Edwards: Trading among nations big and small has long helped maintain global stability. But geopolitical tensions of late have changed the rules of the game.**

Danny Quah: And I think there's a bit of a disappointment, that after working hard to rise to a point where we can compete, we suddenly discover that the richer nations, America in particular, have decided that these are no longer the rules of the game they want to play to. My name is Danny Quah. I am Li Ka Shing Professor of Economics at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy in Singapore.

**Bruce Edwards: Danny Quah's research focuses on international economic relations, and he's been tracking global tensions from a rising East for more than a decade. His latest article, published in Finance & Development magazine, is on how multilateralism can survive the loss of consensus. We**lcome to the podcast.

Danny Quah: Thank you for having me.

**Bruce Edwards: So to get us started, maybe give us a bit of a primer on how multilateralism came about. I mean, what was our first big exercise in nations working together for the greater good?**

Danny Quah: A good place to begin is at the end of the first World War, Woodrow Wilson, who was then President of the United States, felt that something was needed that would ensure peace, maintain collective security for the entire international community of nations. He and other world leaders reckoned that something like World War I should never happen again. And their big idea was that they needed to create an international community, something that had a one-world vision of nation-states that got together, they traded, they interacted with each other in a multilateral system of laws, and that is what would create an international community that could be at peace. This was a wonderful idea. It was about the reign of law over all of humanity, but based on, in Woodrow Wilson's words, the consent of the governed, a phrasing that of course comes from the American Declaration of Independence. And this would be sustained by the organized opinion of humanity. As we know, this vision actually went on and won Woodrow Wilson the Nobel Peace Prize. It was, however, much more popular with the international community than it was with his fellow Americans. And the isolationist opposition in the US Congress decided that America would not go along with this idea. And so when the international community did come together to form this multilateral order and called itself the League of Nations, America was not a member.




*DANNY QUAH, Professor of Economics, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, Singapore.*

**Bruce Edwards: So the League of Nations was about addressing a balance of power issue. When did economics come into the picture as an incentive for greater collaboration between countries?**

Danny Quah: Now, that didn't happen until a little bit later because the great institutions of international economics did not come into being after the First World War. It was only after the next World War, the Second World War, that economics entered the picture. But in extrapolation from the Woodrow Wilson vision with three great ideas, first, the rules-based order as you say, and this would include a level playing field so that there would be open trade. There was a commitment, secondly, there was a commitment to peaceful dispute resolution, something that echoes things that we see in the World Trade Organization with its appellate body that's supposed to engage in dispute resolution. And thirdly, and this third idea is both politics and economics, is that collaboration needed to be the default by which nations dealt with each other. So these were three wonderful ideas, and they struggled in that geopolitical climate until after the Second World War when economics firmly entered the frame. And one of the interesting things here is that economics and geopolitics began to work together building out the multilateral rules-based system. And it's really important to emphasize this, and I'm glad that you've already raised the question of economics entering the picture, because far too often in economics, we think of politics or geopolitics as being something that other people do. We don't think of our economic institutions as getting involved in that because, well, there's kind of a fear sometimes that when institutions get involved in things that seem like politics, our institutions are accused of getting involved in politics when we shouldn't. Our funding streams rely on our staying away from politics.

**Bruce Edwards: Which is a bit ironic, in fact, because one plays so much on the other, right?**

Danny Quah: Yeah, absolutely. But the second idea that enters this is that often economists then consider that geopolitics is the dustbin of bad economics. Their thinking is that with economic analysis, we've built a wonderful set of ideas, frameworks, platforms around which engagement across nations can take place. But oh, oh wait, here comes geopolitics with its non-economic, irrational thinking, messing everything up. But the wonderful thing about the history of multilateralism is that it shows the opposite. It shows geopolitics and economics working together. Economic calculations informing geopolitics. It's something that I feel that in economics we don't often play up enough, the way in which economic calculations entered the formation of the geopolitical world. So your question about when economics began to enter this picture of multilateral construction happened after the Second World War and took a long time. It took decades before we realized that these two things could work together. And bizarrely, it was competition with the Soviet Union during the Cold War that transformed the political multilateral system into an economic one, because eight decades ago, America, the architect of the system, even if it was outside the League of Nations, America found great advantage to supporting a multilateral international economic system. And there's a very simple reason why. The Cold War against the Soviet Union had America's great adversary

*Continues on* **PAGE 14**



# ARTS & CULTURE HUB

*Book Review*

## Think And Grow Rich

***Author:*** Napoleon Hill
***Format:*** 320 pages, Paperback
***Published:*** January 1, 2005 by Tarcher
***ISBN:*** 9781585424337 (ISBN10: 1585424331)
***ASIN:*** 1585424331
***Language:*** English

Think and Grow Rich is one of the most influential personal development and success books ever written. First published in 1937, Napoleon Hill developed its ideas after studying successful individuals, including industrialists, entrepreneurs, and leaders of his era. While the title emphasizes wealth, the book is fundamentally about achieving any worthwhile goal through disciplined thinking and purposeful action.

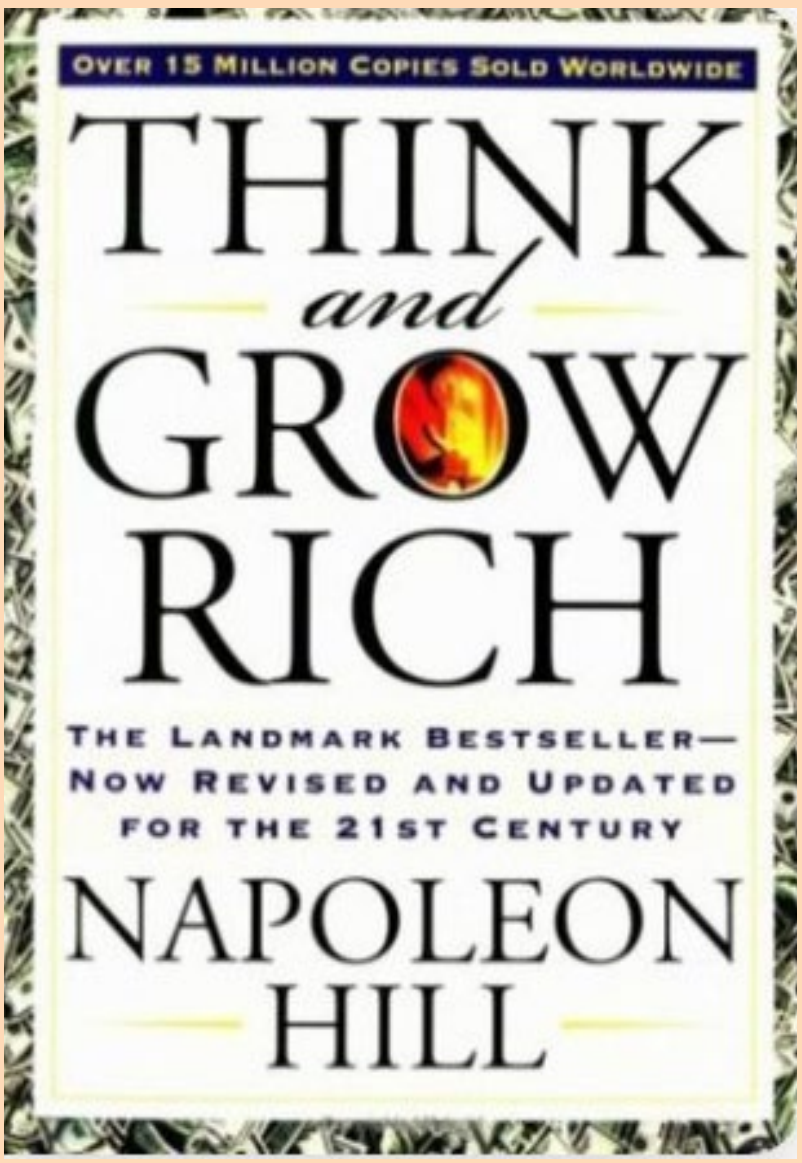
Hill argues that success begins in the mind. According to him, thoughts are powerful forces that shape reality when combined with desire, faith, persistence, and action. The core message is simple: what a person consistently thinks, believes, and works toward can significantly influence outcomes.

The book opens with the principle of desire. Hill contends that every notable achievement starts with an intense, burning desire. He distinguishes mere wishes from genuine desire, emphasizing that successful people possess a definite purpose that drives their efforts.

One of the book's enduring strengths is its emphasis on clarity. Hill repeatedly stresses the importance of knowing exactly what one wants. Vague ambitions often produce vague results, whereas clearly defined objectives provide direction and motivation.

Faith, as described in the book, is confidence in one's ability to achieve goals. Hill explains that repeated affirmations and positive thinking can strengthen belief. Although some readers may find this concept idealistic, it underscores the psychological importance of self-confidence.

Hill introduces autosuggestion as the process of influencing one's subconscious mind through repeated thoughts and statements. This concept resembles modern discussions about mindset, mental conditioning, and self-talk. While not scientifically rigorous, the principle highlights the impact of internal dialogue.




The author argues that general knowledge alone rarely creates success. Instead, specialized expertise applied to practical situations generates value. This insight remains highly relevant in today's competitive economy, where expertise often differentiates successful professionals.

Hill regards imagination as the workshop of the mind. He believes innovation, entrepreneurship, and problem-solving emerge when individuals creatively combine ideas. Many successful inventions and enterprises began as imaginative concepts before becoming realities.

A valuable section of the book focuses on planning. Hill reminds readers that desire without a plan remains ineffective. Success requires structured action, adaptation, and the willingness to revise strategies when circumstances change.

The author observes that successful people tend to make decisions promptly and change them cautiously. Conversely, indecision often leads to missed opportunities. This lesson remains applicable in leadership, business, and personal growth.

Persistence receives significant attention throughout the book. Hill suggests that failure often occurs because people stop trying too soon. He believes perseverance separates those who eventually succeed from those who abandon their goals prematurely.

One of Hill's most influential ideas is the "Master Mind" principle. He argues that cooperation among like-minded individuals creates a collective intelligence greater than the sum of its parts. Modern networking, mentorship, and collaborative leadership reflect similar thinking.

The book identifies fear as a major obstacle to achievement. Hill discusses fears of poverty, criticism, ill health, loss of love, old age, and death. His analysis encourages readers to confront limiting beliefs that undermine progress.

Long before positive psychology became popular, Hill emphasized optimistic thinking. He believed that positive attitudes attract opportunities and improve resilience. While optimism alone does not guarantee success, it can influence behavior and decision-making.

A significant strength of the book is its focus on accountability. Hill encourages readers to take ownership of their circumstances and actions rather than blaming external factors. This perspective promotes proactive problem-solving.

Throughout the text, Hill identifies qualities associated with effective leadership, including courage, self-control, fairness, decisiveness, and service.

## POETRY CORNER



## Distant Ledger

*By Ibrahim Mansaray*

**Clay pots crack, their earthen promise dust,**
**While hollow bellies echo silent plea.**
**The land, a bounty spilled in oil and rust,**
**Is sipped by parched lips, thirsting to be free.**
**Great feasts are set within chambers sealed,**
**Where light's intrusion dares not penetrate.**

**They chart the skies, on prophecies they've wheeled,**
**And court the slumbering spirits of their fate.**
**The senior's tongue, a balm of reasoned lore,**
**Conceals a blade, as smooth as polished wood.**
**The sacred grove, though owned by spirit's door,**
**Sees harvest borne by hands misunderstood.**
**Is this the weave of heavens, or the greed**
**That dons a mantle, sanctified in deed?**

**Across the brine, where white caps churn and sigh,**
**Great freighters bear the fruit of labour's ache.**
**They dock in realms where towers pierce the sky,**
**And frozen light, no winter's thaw can break.**
**Young limbs are clad in rags, by scissors torn,**
**Of hungry haste, and appetites untold.**
**Behind their walls, where chromatic sin is born,**
**A gentle mirth, a knowing, softly told.**

**The drum's deep pulse, a cadence slow and deep,**
**Beats time to waiting, boundless and forlorn.**
**The mountains hear the promises they keep,**
**And send back whispers, fractured and outworn.**
**Why seek the south when hearth is standing strong?**
**The ancient roots were weakened, all along.**

**The silken drape obscures the watching eye,**
**Which wilfully refuses to behold.**
**Affinity binds hands that strike the phantom high,**
**And honour weighs on shoulders, bought and sold.**
**They claim the watch, yet gates swing open wide,**
**For those who carry naught but phantom load.**

**The written word, a noose that slips aside,**
**Around the girth of journeys overgrown.**
**The young bear stones, while giants tread on air,**
**Who guards the scroll where every name resides?**

**Perhaps its leaves were ripped beyond repair,**
**Before the first devout a prayer confides.**
**The knowing crone, her counsel deep within,**
**Holds secrets locked, where shadows start and spin.**

**Development's proud wheel, a mire's embrace,**
**Now halts its turn, as darkness veils the way.**
**The roads extend to meet an empty space,**
**And bridges span to join the dying day.**

**The halls of learning echo with their hush,**
**No youthful laughter dares to fill the air.**
**The healing draughts decay in market's rush,**
**Sold as a poison, purchased with despair.**

**The healer's art, a cure held in reserve,**
**Locked in a case, against the ailing's plight.**
**The dream's own farmer, tilling without nerve,**
**Reaps only thorns beneath the barren light.**
**The season turns, the basket stays unfed,**
**While metal roars, and moves the earth instead.**

# CAREER & WORKPLACE



# Being Strategic at Work

Ever looked at a job description that asks for 'strategic thinking' and wondered what that actually means? Or been told in a performance review that you could improve in the area of 'being strategic'?

Strategic thinking skills are very valuable for developing your career. If you're looking for a new role, then showing evidence of this is one of the factors that will make you more likely to get hired. So how do you develop these skills? Here's how to be strategic at work.

**What is strategic thinking?**

Firstly, you more than likely do already think strategically on a daily basis. If you've ever worked out which tasks you can move around in order to meet a deadline, or how you can build more experience of something to get a new job or promotion, then you will have made a strategic decision. But when people talk about being strategic specifically, what they really mean is applying this logic to the bigger picture and the longer term.

When you first learn how to do a job, what you're learning is the tactics or the 'how' to achieve something, but being strategic is more about the 'what' you need to achieve and 'why'. When you first start out in a role, particularly early in your career, you're usually acting on plans and decisions that someone else has made, but if you're being strategic then you're deciding what you need to achieve, and planning how to do it, yourself.

Think of it like choosing the best destination and drawing a map of how to get there. But not only is it about finding the best route, but also exploring the advantages and disadvantages of all the alternative routes.

**How to be strategic at work**

Clear some space in your diary

Whether you're in an busy operational role and are bogged down with 'doing' all day or you're a manager who finds themselves constantly fire-fighting with little time to actually move things forward, the first thing you'll need to do is make some time.

You'll need some headspace, so you can start thinking beyond the day-to-day and about the bigger picture. This can be tricky to get, especially at a charity, but without this space it's very difficult to get into the mindset of thinking strategically, so it's the most important step.

Delegate as much as you can, try to reduce the number of meetings you go to. Try different time management techniques. Identify the tasks that have the least value and cross them off your list. Book an away day (or just a couple of hours) with yourself. Do whatever you need to do to really get your mind to focus. And don't feel guilty about the time away from your to-do list. It doesn't mean you aren't being productive and this work is potentially even more valuable.

Think about the bigger picture

Start by thinking about how your role fits into the overall vision, mission and objectives of your organisation. If you're not sure then find out more about what it's trying to achieve—read your charity's strategy and ask for more information if you need it. Then think about how you could better align the two.



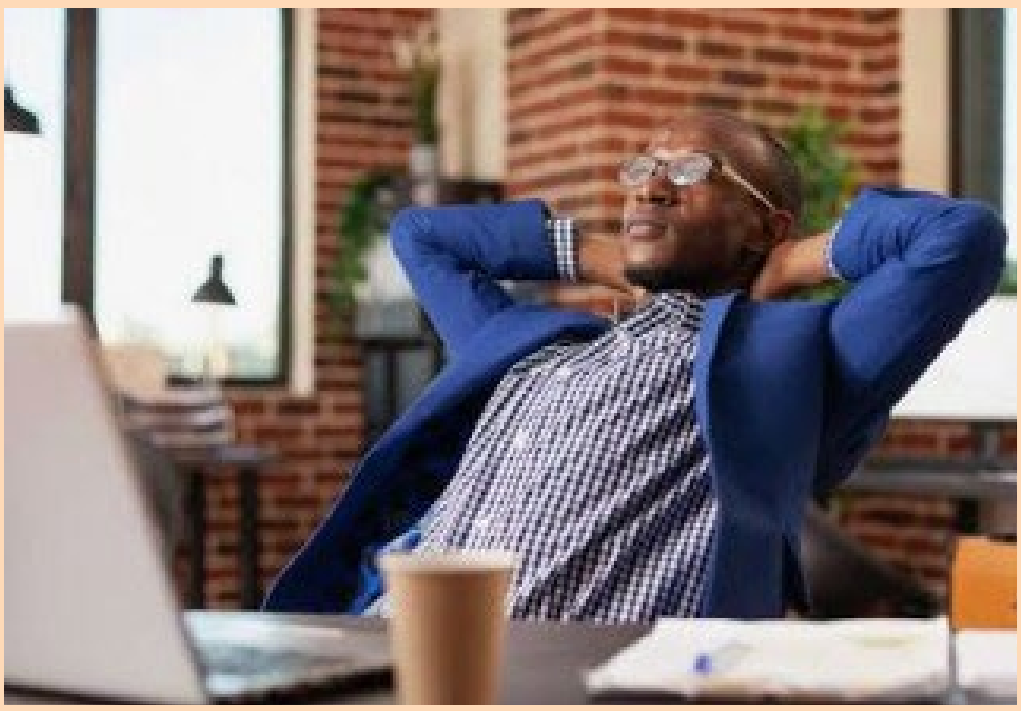
Where are you now? Where does your role, or the things you're responsible for, need to be in a year, or three years' time to move the organisation's mission forwards? How could you get there? Remember that, especially in charities, you're working with limited resources and you can't do everything. So ask yourself what's really valuable for your charity to do and for you personally to spend your time on.

Try to connect your ideas with people and existing plans and to anticipate any problems, challenges or obstacles that may come up.

**Get support and insight from others**

Seek out advice and opinions on your work and ideas from colleagues at all levels. This is really valuable for their insight and feedback and to hear different viewpoints. Your ideas won't always be right, or the best solution, and considering other angles can help your thinking to develop in the right direction.

If there's organisational planning going on at a higher level, then ask your manager if you can be involved in it in some way, even if it's just discussing it with them in your next 1:1. As well as increasing your ability to be strategic, this will also help to boost your profile at work.



**Continue to develop professionally**

To think more strategically, you need to keep learning. So it's important to upskill yourself and learn as much as you can about your particular specialism and how this fits into the bigger picture. Depending on the stage of your career, you could do this through reading books and blogs, listening to podcasts, finding a mentor or joining a professional networking group (try CharityConnect as a good starting point). This will also give you access to even more different points of view to develop your thinking.

Be prepared for trial and error

To really be strategic you need to think differently and experiment with new ideas. This means embracing change and being willing to try something new and take risks—but don't be reckless. Consider all the pros and cons and how you could mitigate what could go wrong before you make a move.

Adopt a solutions-focused approach and don't be afraid to make mistakes or fail. Only then can you really move forwards.

Remember that strategic thinking isn't something you either can or can't do. And, although it does get scaled up the higher you climb the ladder, neither is it something that can only be done at a certain level of your career. Being strategic is about how you think rather than what you think.




# Insurance Scams and Frauds

***Car insurance fraud comes in a variety of shapes and sizes, from deliberately hiding penalty points to 'crash for cash' and 'flash for cash' scams. Here we run through some of the most common types and what you should do if you're unlucky enough to be struck by a scammer***

## Types of car insurance fraud

Drivers may fail to share information with insurers or intentionally mislead them in the following ways:

**Fronting**

Fronting is when a driver tells a car insurance company that he or she is the main driver of a vehicle when in fact, it's somebody else.

This illegal practice is often committed by parents with the aim of getting a cheaper insurance quote for their children, who are either learning to drive or have passed their driving test and face expensive car insurance premiums.

**Change of circumstances**

Insurance premiums are calculated on a number of factors and if any of these change – such as your home address, where the car is regularly parked overnight, your occupation, what you use your vehicle for – you should inform your insurer.

This case of accidental fraud is often committed by students whose address isn't changed to their student accommodation when they go back to university during term time.

If you find that your circumstances change and you're driving less miles – under 6,000 miles – you could think about taking out a different type of insurance policy. Paying as you go could save you money.

**Declaring modifications**

If you make any modifications to your car, however minor, you should inform your insurer.

Fitting a security alarm might bring insurance costs down, but most cosmetic modifications will usually result in an increase, especially if it improves the performance or increases the value of the car.

**Vehicle dumping**

Vehicle dumping is when an owner abandons their car, sets fire to it or does something similar to dispose of it, and then claims it has been stolen to recover money via insurance.

## Car insurance scams

Fraudsters often target other motorists to make false claims and profit from policies. Some of the most common scams include:

ghost brokers

'crash for cash' fraud

'flash for cash' fraud

**What are ghost brokers?**

Ghost brokers are criminals who pose as insurance brokers to sell fake policies to unsuspecting motorists.

Some policies might be genuine and bought from official companies but then modified and falsified, before being passed on to motorists who have no idea that they are buying a policy that could be essentially worthless.

**Crash for cash fraud**

In 'crash for cash' scams, fraudsters deliberately crash into the vehicles of innocent motorists or submit false claims for accidents.

Their aim is to make as much money as possible from an exaggerated claim, with proceeds often used to fund more serious crimes.

As well as putting motorists lives in danger, the scams also cost the UK millions every year.

Crash for cash scenarios

The Insurance Fraud Bureau divides 'crash for cash' scams into three different scenarios:




Staged accidents where fraudsters crash two of their own vehicles together or use tools to imitate the effects of a crash.

Induced accidents where a fraudster will deliberately slam on the brakes of their car to ensure the car behind crashes into them.

Ghost accidents where a fraudster will submit false claims for accidents that didn't even happen.

**Flash for cash**

In a 'flash for cash' scenario criminals flash their headlights to let other drivers pass before crashing into them on purpose.

One of the difficulties with 'flash for cash' is that it is hard to prove in court that the innocent driver was not at fault – it often comes down to one driver's word against another's.

Rule 104 of The Highway Code says you should "watch out for signals given by other road users and proceed only when you are satisfied that it is safe"

**Slam on fraud**

In 'slam on' fraud cases, criminals will slam on their brakes unexpectedly in the hope that an unsuspecting car will crash into the back of their vehicle. The fraudsters will then make a claim aiming to make as much money as possible.

The 'slam on' technique has grown increasingly sophisticated and given rise to the 'hide and crash' technique. Criminals will hide in a motorist's blind spot before waiting for a lapse in their concentration to accelerate in front of them and then 'slam on' the brakes.

## How can I avoid being targeted for crash fraud?

Although there's no guaranteed way of protecting yourself against crash fraud, looking out for the following should help you avoid becoming a victim:

Cars travelling unusually slowly or vehicles that speed up and slow down for no apparent reason

Drivers and passengers paying particular attention to the vehicle behind them – this could be a warning sign that they are looking to cause an accident

Signs of prior accidents particularly damage to the back of cars

Faulty or disabled brake lights are often used by fraudsters to increase the chance of causing an accident

It's also important to stay alert and make sure there is always enough distance to brake and avoid hitting cars in front of you.

If you think you have been involved in a crash scam, you should follow these steps:

Write down the make, model and registration of other vehicles involved.

Note the time, date, location and weather conditions.

Take the full names, addresses and dates of birth of other drivers and any passengers involved.

Make sure you write down any injuries mentioned.

Photograph all cars involved and the damage sustained when safe to do so.

# Freetown, Beijing Partner to Transform Maritime Trade

Sierra Leone Launches National Shipping Venture with Chinese Partner to Boost Trade and Create Jobs

Freetown, Sierra Leone – Sierra Leone has taken a significant step toward strengthening its maritime sector with the launch of the Sierra Leone Ocean Shipping Company (SLOSCo) at the Queen Elizabeth II Quay's NSBT Terminal in Freetown.

SLOSCo is a joint venture between the Sierra Leone National Shipping Agency (SLNSA) and China's Zhejiang Xiehai Group Co. Ltd. Under the partnership agreement, Zhejiang Xiehai Group holds a 70 percent stake in the company, while SLNSA owns the remaining 30 percent.

The new shipping company is expected to handle approximately 40 percent of all cargo imported into and exported from Sierra Leone. Beyond its commercial objectives, the venture includes commitments to train and employ Sierra Leoneans, with a particular focus on creating maritime career opportunities for young people and increasing women's participation in the industry.



*Photo from right shows the Country Rep of the World Health Organization (WHO), Dr. George Ameh, UNICEF Representative in Sierra Leone, Ms. Mariko Kagoshima, and Dr Austin Demby, Minister of Health, and official after a meeting on immunization programme.*

Speaking at the launch ceremony, President Julius Maada Bio described the initiative as a strategic move that will enable Sierra Leone to secure a greater share of the economic benefits generated by international trade.

"The establishment of SLOSCo gives Sierra Leone a more direct stake in global shipping operations and creates opportunities to retain greater value from the country's trade activities," the President said.

Also addressing the gathering, Mr. Wang An, President of Zhejiang Xiehai Group, reaffirmed his company's commitment to investing expertise, technical know-how and commercial networks in Sierra Leone. He said the partnership would contribute to the modernization of the country's shipping industry, generate employment opportunities and further strengthen bilateral relations between Sierra Leone and China.

For decades, Sierra Leone has depended largely on foreign shipping companies to transport its mineral exports, agricultural products and imported goods. The creation of SLOSCo is expected to reduce that dependence while enhancing national participation in maritime trade.

Officials said the company will operate under a framework emphasizing commercial viability, transparency and compliance with both national legislation and international maritime standards. The agreement also includes strict anti-corruption provisions and mechanisms for monitoring performance and outcomes.

# PAC Concludes on Local Council Audit Report

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of Parliament has concluded a three-day retreat at the National Assembly in Freetown aimed at finalizing its report on the Auditor-General's findings relating to local councils for the 2024 financial year.

The retreat brought together Members of Parliament and the PAC Technical Secretariat to examine key audit findings and agree on recommendations intended to strengthen financial management, accountability, and oversight within local government institutions. The finalized report will be submitted for parliamentary adoption and consideration.

Speaking during the retreat, Opposition Whip Hon. Abdul Karim Kamara stressed the importance of implementing the Committee's recommendations, warning that failure to act could allow financial irregularities identified in the audit to persist.



*The Country Representatives of the World Health Organization (WHO), Dr. George Ameh (2nd right) at the presentation of materials to the National Public Health Agency (NPHA) in Freetown. With him is Dr. Foday Sahr (2nd left) and an official at the presentation.*

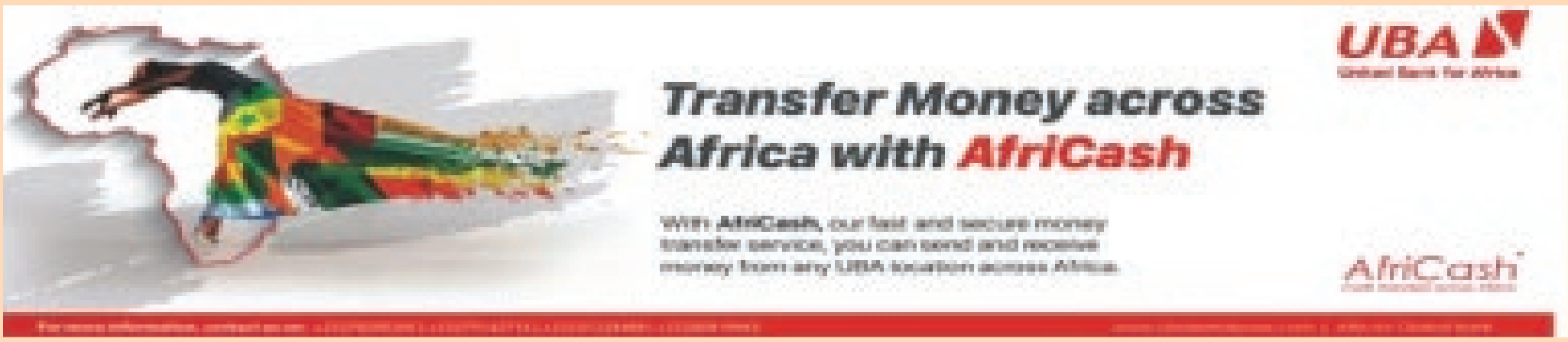
# Rethinking Multilateralism

*Continued from* **PAGE 10**

opposing free markets and open trade. America gained geopolitical mileage from taking the contrary position, adding to the economic benefit that America drew from the multilateral international economic system and in turn helping build that out. So it was right there that economics entered the picture.

**Bruce Edwards: And today when we talk about multilateralism, would you say it's economics or politics that has the upper hand in terms of influencing these agreements?**

Danny Quah: Interestingly, I think that, and mine is not necessarily a very popular view, but I think it's one that has historical empirical evidence backing it. I think that today's world is one where economics and geopolitics have again allied with each other, and peculiarly, both of these are now driving the world apart.



# STATISTICAL SIERRA LEONE

IMF | INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

## Sierra Leone's Economic Outlook

*Growth Slows, Inflation Climbs*

DatalyticLab
INSIGHTS. DATA. IMPACT.

### KEY HIGHLIGHT



**Sierra Leone GDP Growth**
**4.0%**
in 2026

**Inflation Rate**
**13.8%**
in 2026

**Current Account Deficit**
**4.7%**
of GDP in 2026

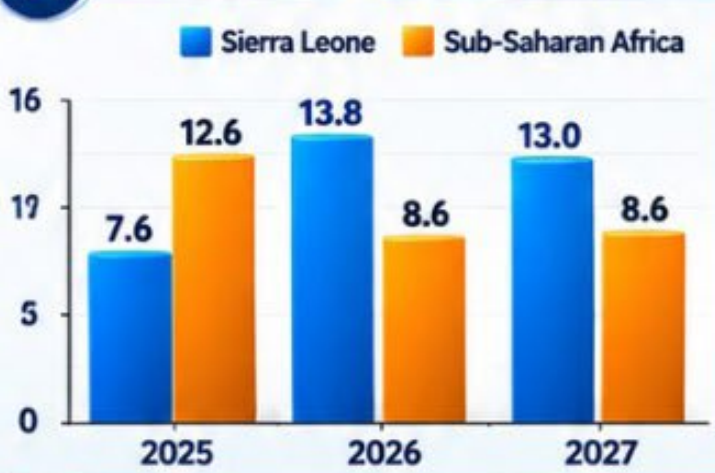
### 1 Growth Outlook: Sierra Leone vs Region




Sierra Leone's growth is projected to slow to 4.0% in 2026, below the regional average of 4.5%.

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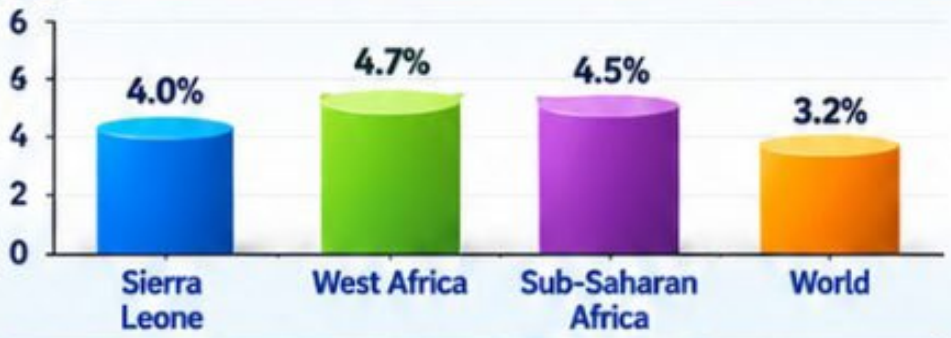
### 2 Inflation: A Key Concern




Inflation in Sierra Leone is forecast to rise to 13.8% in 2026, still well above the regional rate of 8.6%.

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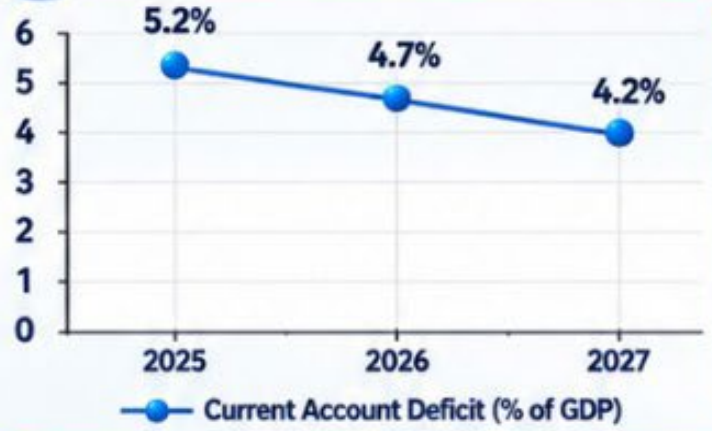
### 3 Regional Comparison (2026)




Sierra Leone's growth in 2026 is below both regional and global averages.

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### 4 External Position: Gradual Improvement

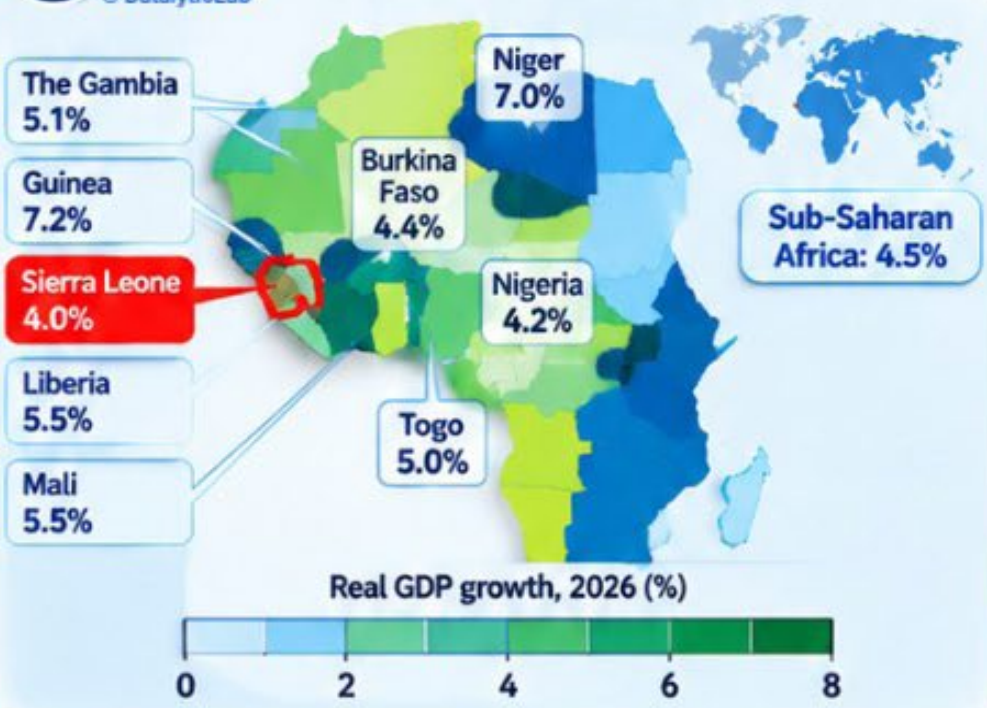



The current account deficit is expected to narrow from 5.2% to 4.7% in 2026, and 4.2% in 2027.

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### 5 AFRICA & GLOBAL GROWTH MAP

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### 6 GROWTH & INFLATION POSITIONING

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