



May Day: Atiku, Obi urge govt to prioritise workers' welfare, job creation **Pg 2**

Tinubu to launch world's largest cotton factory in Ogun **Pg 4**



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Federal judge rebukes Trump administration over Kilmar Abrego's case

• The conduct of foreign policy belongs to the President, not some judge
- Secretary of State Marco Rubio

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I helped create Afrobeats, Akon brags **Pg 11**



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May Day: Atiku, Obi urge govt to prioritise workers' welfare, job creation

By Friday Omosola

Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar and Labour Party presidential candidate Peter Obi have called for the creation of a national environment that fosters growth, generates opportunities, and guarantees fair compensation for Nigerian workers.

The politicians made this call on their X pages as Nigeria joins the global community to mark International Workers' Day.

They praised the resilience of Nigerian workers amid the country's persistent economic challenges, while also urging policymakers to act decisively in improving their welfare.

Obi described Nigerian workers as the 'engine that propels the nation', adding that despite harsh economic and political realities, they have continued to show unwavering commitment to the country's growth.

"The struggles and harsh realities facing our dear workers are obvious. Nigeria currently grapples with unemployment and underemployment rates exceeding 35%, while youth unemployment and underemployment stand at over 45% — one of the highest globally. This situation fuels criminality and various social vices," Obi stated.

He stressed the need for 'aggressive investment in the productive population,' noting that the fastest route to building a resilient workforce is by investing in education, health, and poverty reduction through job creation and support for small businesses.



"As a nation, we must create an environment that fosters growth, provides opportunities, and ensures fair compensation. We must recognise the dignity of labour and promote a culture of respect for all workers," he said.

Atiku, in his message, described the Nigerian worker as the 'indomitable engine' of the country's progress, lamenting that the commitment of workers has not been matched by the actions of those in positions of authority.

"In the face of relentless hardship and meagre compensation, Nigerian workers have continued to bear the burdens of our economic aspirations with silent heroism," he said.

"Yet, those entrusted with policy and governance have failed to reciprocate this steadfast commitment with tangible acts of support and justice."

Atiku called on policymakers to draw inspiration from the theme of this year's Workers' Day and treat the

labour force not as a tool, but as an "equal partner in the journey to national greatness."

Both leaders reiterated their commitment to building a Nigeria that recognises and rewards hard work, productivity, and integrity.

Atiku and Obi's statements came just hours after Nigerian workers gathered at Eagle Square, Abuja, on Thursday to commemorate May Day.

The rally, organised by the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC), brought together workers from various sectors, all clad in vibrant uniforms representing their professions.

As the celebration progressed, both Labour unions were expected to address critical national and workers' issues — from the implementation of the new minimum wage to broader concerns surrounding employee welfare and economic justice.

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

PUBLIC NOTICE COLOUR

PRODUCT COLOUR

EFFECTIVE FROM DECEMBER 1, 2024

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

SIZE	TOTAL RATE
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HALF PAGE	192,500.00
QUARTER PAGE	100,000.00
14X2	109,500.00
10X6	242,500.00
10X5	237,500.00
10X4	192,500.00
10X3	171,000.00
9X6	232,500.00
9X5	206,000.00
9X4	177,500.00
9X3	150,000.00
8X6	216,000.00
8X3	98,500.00
7X4	164,002.00
6X4	94,010.50
6X3	78,500.00
6X2	47,500.00
5X5	100,000.00
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5X3	57,819.00
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4X4	55,000.00
4X3	31,000.00
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1X1	4,315.00

POLITICAL COLOUR

SIZE	RATE
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POLITICAL BLACK & WHITE

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HALF PAGE	184,700.00
QUARTER PAGE	95,222.50

CORPORATE BLACK & WHITE

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10X4	142,787.50
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DOUBLE SPREAD HALF COLOUR	432,881.00
DOUBLE SPREAD STRIP COLOUR	144,294.00
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DOUBLE SPREAD HALF B & W	425,000.00
FULL WRAP AROUND	15,000,000.00
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HALF PAGE FRONT	5,500,000.00

PUBLIC NOTICE BLACK & WHITE

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10X5	201,600.00
10X4	149,440.00
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9X3	112,875.00
8X6	179,368.00
8X5	143,500.00
8X4	93,500.00
8X3	82,434.50
7X4	111,173.50
6X4	82,434.50
6X3	59,250.00
6X2	40,000.00
5X6	98,749.50
5X4	65,833.00
5X3	49,375.00
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3X2	19,750.00
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1X1	3,292.00

PRODUCT BLACK & WHITE

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10X4	103,963.00
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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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5X4	42,825.00
5X3	29,858.00
5X2	22,841.00
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4X3	N/A
4X2	17,737.50
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3X2	14,923.00
2X2	10,200.00
2X1	5,439.50
1X1	2,700.00

ALLURE RATE

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

PICTURE & CAPTION

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

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CONTACT US

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

E-mail Address:
info@newdailyprime.news
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Tinubu to launch world's largest cotton factory in Ogun

By Friday Omosola



Ogun State Governor, Dapo Abiodun, has announced that President Bola Tinubu will perform the groundbreaking ceremony for what is projected to be the world's largest cotton and polyester processing factory.

Governor Abiodun stated that the factory will be sited within the Special Agro-Processing Zone at the Gateway International Airport, in the Iperu/Ilisan axis of the state.

Abiodun stated that the launch will take place in the coming weeks.

The project, part of the Renewed Hope Cotton Resurgent Initiative, will span 400 hectares and is expected to employ approximately 250,000 people daily.

He noted that the location was strategically selected due to its robust infrastructure and proximity to raw materials.

The governor also highlighted ongoing infrastructure developments in the area, including road construction, new schools, and a mother-and-child hospital.

He further disclosed that the Nigerian Air Force plans to establish a base in the vicinity to bolster security.

Governor Abiodun commended the former Accountant General of the Federation, Oluwatoyin Madein, for her dedicated service and contributions to Ogun State's development.

Local leaders have acknowledged the significant transformation of Iperu, describing its evolution into a modern town as remarkable.

Nigeria partners UK in fight against financial crime

By Damilola Olufemi

The United Kingdom and Nigeria have entered into a new strategic partnership aimed at strengthening the fight against fraud and financial crime. This follows the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and a joint Action Plan by both countries during a high-level meeting in Abuja.

Signatories to the agreement included UK Minister for Fraud Lord Hanson, Nigeria's Attorney General and Minister of Justice Lateef Fagbemi, SAN, and the National Security Adviser, Nuhu Ribadu.

As outlined in a statement from the British High Commission in Abuja, the agreement focuses on improving intelligence exchange, launching joint investigations, and coordinating enforcement measures to address the growing threat of international fraud.

The UK has expressed increasing concern about cross-border fraud, with officials estimating that over 70% of fraud cases affecting the country involve perpetrators based overseas.

"This agreement marks a significant step in strengthening our defences against fraud," said Lord Hanson. "By working closely with Nigeria, we aim to detect and prevent financial crimes more effectively and protect the public from harm. My discussions in Abuja have been extremely productive, and I'm pleased to see this partnership take shape."

The collaboration will involve



intelligence cooperation between the UK's National Crime Agency (NCA) and Nigeria's Office of the National Security Adviser. It will also support joint law enforcement efforts and regulatory alignment across sectors such as finance, telecommunications, and digital services.

Part of the initiative includes joint training for Nigerian prosecutors, led by the UK's Serious Fraud Office, along with collaborative research into new fraud techniques, especially those involving emerging technologies like AI.

National Security Adviser Nuhu Ribadu emphasised the importance of sustained collaboration, saying, "We must build on past progress, enhance cooperation at every level, and remain committed to protecting our people by tackling criminal networks and supporting victims."

Fraud remains the most common crime in the UK, with over 4.1 million cases reported in 2024, resulting in an annual financial loss exceeding £6.8 billion. Beyond the financial toll, the emotional effects on victims, particularly in cases involving coercion or exploitation, are significant.

Nick Sharp, Deputy Director of Fraud at the NCA, stressed the importance of global cooperation: "Through shared intelligence and coordinated operations, we can close gaps exploited by criminals and bring offenders to justice, no matter where they are."

This agreement builds upon the UK-Nigeria Fraud Dialogue launched in November 2024 and aligns with the UK's broader Fraud Strategy, which prioritises international partnerships to curb financial crime and protect global communities.

'We keep our promises' – Sanwo-Olu tells workers

By Friday Omosola

To mark International Workers' Day, thousands of workers in Lagos State defied the rain on Thursday and gathered at the Mobolaji Johnson Arena, Onikan, for a celebratory parade.

The event, themed 'Reclaiming the Civic Space in the Midst of Economic Hardship', brought together various labour unions in a show of unity and resilience.

Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu at the event reaffirmed his administration's commitment to prioritising workers' welfare.

He emphasised that Lagos remained the sub-national entity with the highest wage structure in Nigeria.

"Lagos State will continue to lead in public service excellence," the governor said.

"Throughout the negotiations for a new minimum wage, we fulfilled every promise made to our workers. Lagos is currently the highest paying state in the federation."

Sanwo-Olu highlighted consistent and timely salary and pension payments, promotion exercises, and enhanced training as key indicators of his administration's commitment to workforce development.

He urged workers to remain patient with the economic reforms being implemented by the Federal Government, expressing optimism that President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda was beginning to yield positive results, particularly in the agricultural sector.



"Let us celebrate not just with songs and salutes, but with a renewed spirit of solidarity. Let us recommit to building a country where every hand finds purpose and every labour receives its reward," Sanwo-Olu added.

However, Commissioner for Establishments and Training, Afolabi Ayantayo, commended the administration's proactive stance on wage improvements.

He noted that Lagos had implemented a new minimum wage of N85,000—the highest in the country.

Ayantayo stressed the need for worker welfare to extend beyond pay, advocating for safe and empowering work environments.

Meanwhile, Labour leaders welcomed the governor's efforts but called for further adjustments.

Chairperson of the Lagos chapter of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Funmi Sessi, thanked the implementation of the new wage but appealed for an upward

review to N100,000 in light of rising inflation and living costs.

"Our take-home pay is being eroded by soaring prices. A further increase would not only cushion the hardship but also boost productivity and internally generated revenue," she said.

Also, Chairman of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) in Lagos, Gbenga Ekundayo, called for urgent action to reduce electricity tariffs, warning that the new pricing model—classified into Bands A, B, and C—had severely impacted households and small businesses.

"We urge the governor to invest in local electricity generation and distribution. Many workers can no longer afford their bills. This is not the Nigeria we strive for," he said.

Head of Service, Bode Agoro, encouraged workers to remain resolute and relevant amidst economic adversity.

He described Sanwo-Olu as a listening leader committed to providing a secure and enabling environment for public servants.

Ogun govt projects rise in Olumo Rock Tourist visits to 100,000

By Friday Omosola



The number of annual visitors to the Olumo Rock Tourist Centre in Ogun State is projected to rise from 20,000 to over 100,000 in 2025, with renovation works scheduled for completion ahead of the National Sports Festival in May.

In April, the state government announced that the iconic site, located in Abeokuta—the state capital—would be temporarily closed from 14 April to undergo renovation and a major facelift.

According to the Commissioner for Culture and Tourism, Sesan Fagbayi, the renovation aims to boost tourism and preserve the state's cultural heritage.

The projected increase in tourist numbers follows a newly formed partnership between the Ogun State Government and the renowned Nike

Art Gallery, founded by Chief Nike Davies-Okundaye.

Governor Dapo Abiodun, who disclosed the collaboration during a courtesy visit by Davies-Okundaye to his office in Abeokuta, stated that the Olumo Rock complex will be transformed into a dedicated art exhibition space.

He explained that the gallery will feature works curated by Nike Art Gallery, adding that the initiative is part of a broader strategy to revitalise cultural tourism across the state.

To further enhance tourism, the governor also highlighted plans to promote other key attractions such as the Adire Market, the Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library, and the ancestral homes of national icons including MKO Abiola and the Ransome-Kuti family.

The governor further highlighted ongoing state support for the Adire industry, including the provision of solar-powered equipment, the launch of the Adire Ogun Digital Marketplace, and a policy mandating the wearing of Adire fabrics in official settings.

However, Chief Davies-Okundaye affirmed her foundation's readiness to attract international attention to the revamped Olumo Rock site.

She noted that the gallery is likely to draw visits from foreign dignitaries, as has been the case at its Abuja location.

Both parties reaffirmed their commitment to leveraging culture, art, and tourism as instruments for economic development and global engagement.

May Day: Edo gov raises minimum wage to N75,000

By Damilola Olufemi

Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo has raised the minimum wage for Edo workers from N70,000 to N75,000 to further improve their standard of living.

The governor announced this during his May Day speech at the Samuel Ogbemudia Stadium in Benin.

The governor, while appreciating Edo workers' contributions to the state's development, said his administration would always look for ways to improve the welfare of Edo workers.

"Today, I am proud to announce that our administration has approved a new minimum wage of N75,000 per month for all Edo workers.

"It's our way of saying thank you, Edo workers. We believe this makes a real difference, and we count on your dedication to a better Edo.

"Since taking office, my administration has prioritised workers' welfare.

"One early action was converting over 1,000 casual workers, including cleaners, into permanent civil service employees," he said.

Okpebholo disclosed that his administration had also hired 500 teachers, adding that he was reviewing over 3,000 casual teachers for full employment.

"We also approved recruitment of 450 clinical and non-clinical hospital staff and regularised 126 contract workers at Edo State Specialist Hospital for stability and growth," he added.

The governor also disclosed that his administration had cleared outstanding



salary arrears owed to Edo Polytechnic staff.

"In the judiciary, judges whose appointments were delayed have been properly sworn in and are now actively performing their constitutional duties without further administrative hindrances.

"To prove our commitment, we approved health insurance for retirees because we believe support must continue after workers leave active service," the governor said.

Okpebholo reiterated his administration's dedication to prompt salary and pension payments, structured recruitment, workers' welfare and professional development

"As we celebrate today, I join President Tinubu and fellow governors in wishing Nigerian workers a peaceful, fulfilling celebration. Your efforts build our nation daily."

Acting NLC Chairman, Edo chapter, Comrade Bernard Egwekhide, praised Governor Okpebholo for laudable policies that ease the hardship experienced by workers and pensioners

across the state.

He said the theme, "Reclaiming the Civil Space Amid Economic Hardship," was appropriate and highlighted the critical issues faced by Nigerian workers in today's tough economy.

Egwekhide appreciated the governor's seriousness towards workers' welfare, noting that recent interventions had significantly improved the lives and civil rights of Edo workers.

"Within six months in office, you have performed excellently for Edo workers. Your achievements surpass our expectations and show real commitment to the needs of workers

"We also thank President Bola Tinubu for supporting Edo State. The first flyover is under construction, and a second has already been approved for development.

"Additionally, federal roads across the state are now receiving the urgent attention they have long needed, thanks to the partnership with the Federal Government," Egwekhide said.

CSOs urge stronger NOSDRA action on oil spills

By Helen Okechukwu

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have called for a stronger, more independent action from National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) to address the constant oil spillage faced in Niger Delta region.

The call was made during a visit to its zonal office in Port Harcourt on Wednesday.

The delegation, which included representatives from Environmental Rights Action (ERA), Kebetkache Women Development Centre, Media Awareness and Justice Initiative (MAJI), and others, congratulated the newly appointed NOSDRA Zonal Head, Mr. Bello Augustine.

TNN newspaper reported that the led team reaffirmed their commitment to working with NOSDRA to address environmental degradation in the Niger Delta.

Coordinator of Oil Watch International, Mr. Kentebe Ebiaridor, said the visit aimed to strengthen collaboration and push for quicker responses to oil spills and environmental hazards.

He also emphasized the need to review the NOSDRA Act to empower the agency with adequate funding and logistics.

Ebiaridor asserted, “We feel that the Act is okay but not sufficient enough, we feel there are some grey areas that



needs to be strengthened, we feel that NOSDRA should be independent enough to be able to have logistical equipments to engage in oil spills whether on land or on seas.

“We believe that if NOSDRA is a little bit independent by having funds, logistical vehicles, speed boats, helicopters, they will be stronger enough in defending the environment and also not relying on the polluters because when the polluters are the ones taking this stand it gives us a huge indifference as civil society people and as community people to not want to trust the outcomes of such events.”

The CSOs also raised concerns about the lingering Ogoniland clean-up and ongoing threats from gas flaring and oil spills, which continue to harm communities and ecosystems.

Kebetkache Women Centre’s Program Officer, Idongesit Umoh-Smart, speaking on behalf of Dr. Emem Okon, stressed the health impact on women,

saying, “There is need for NOSDRA to work with women to improve women’s health as they are the most affected in this sadly polluted Niger Delta region. We want our environment to be restored to what it used to be.”

In support of technological solutions, MAJI’s Executive Director, Mr. Okoro Onyekachi Emmanuel, presented a low-cost air quality sensor to NOSDRA, encouraging wider deployment for environmental monitoring.

Responding, Zonal Head Bello Augustine appreciated the CSOs’ support and reaffirmed NOSDRA’s commitment to building a safer, healthier environment through active collaboration.

The visit concluded with a renewed call for sustained partnership and reforms to boost NOSDRA’s effectiveness in protecting the Niger Delta’s environment and people

I no longer go to club for fun, says DJ Cuppy

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian disc jockey Florence Ifeoluwa Otedola, better known as DJ Cuppy, has made a striking confession: she no longer enjoys going to clubs for fun.

The 32-year-old music star shared this personal update on her social media, explaining that she now only steps into a nightclub if she's being paid to perform. Otherwise, her nights are reserved for something she values even more, a good night's sleep.

"My bedtime is fully booked"

Taking to her X (formerly Twitter) handle, DJ Cuppy wrote, "Had to remind a friend that I'm 32 years old o... I will absolutely not go clubbing unless I'm getting paid to be there as a DJ. Otherwise, my bedtime is fully booked by 10 p.m."

This honest post sparked conversations among fans and followers, many of whom praised her for setting clear personal boundaries.

A career in the spotlight

For years, DJ Cuppy has been a regular figure in Nigeria's nightlife and entertainment scene. Known for her colorful style, energetic performances, and high-profile social connections, she became one of the country's most recognizable faces in music and fashion. But now, it seems, the popular DJ is choosing rest over the party life.

Faith shaping her priorities

Her shift away from the club scene isn't just about age, it's also linked to her deepening spiritual journey. Recently, DJ Cuppy opened up about how her encounter with Jesus Christ has reshaped her priorities and career plans.

In a statement that caught the attention of many fans, she shared that giving her life to God has caused her to rethink the direction of her life. However, she stressed that the change has been for the better.



A public declaration of faith

DJ Cuppy publicly dedicated her life to God in August 2024 at the Holy Trinity Brompton church in London, England. This spiritual turning point, she says, has brought her peace and clarity, even though it has disrupted some of her previous career goals.

"I may not have everything figured out yet, but I know I'm on the right path," she said in an earlier interview.

Balancing fame and personal growth

For those who have followed DJ Cuppy's career, this is a notable shift. She has long been seen as a party icon, headlining major events, traveling for international gigs, and appearing at glamorous fashion shows and music festivals. Her playlists and mixes have lit up dance floors from Lagos to London.

Yet, behind the scenes, the star has been working through personal changes. By stepping back from clubbing, she is making space for rest, reflection, and faith, things she now finds more fulfilling than late nights out.

Living life on her own terms

The daughter of billionaire businessman Femi Otedola, DJ Cuppy has often spoken about the pressures of living in the public eye. Balancing fame, family expectations,

and personal growth has not always been easy. But today, she seems determined to follow her own path, even if that means turning down social invitations.

Her post on X underlines this new chapter. At 10 p.m., when many others might just be heading out, DJ Cuppy is already winding down for the night. Sleep, she says, has become a non-negotiable part of her routine, unless, of course, she's behind the DJ booth, where she continues to shine.

Fans applaud her honesty

Fans have been quick to show their support. Many applauded her for being honest about her limits and praised her for putting her well-being first. Others shared their own stories of outgrowing the party scene as they entered their thirties.

A new chapter ahead

DJ Cuppy's story is a reminder that even those in the spotlight need to slow down sometimes. It also highlights how personal growth, and spiritual change can reshape not just private life, but public image as well.

As she moves forward, DJ Cuppy seems ready to focus on what truly matters to her, faith, purpose, and peace. And while the dance floors may miss her presence, her fans will no doubt be cheering her on as she enters this new phase of her life.

I helped create Afrobeats, Akon brags

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Senegalese-American singer Akon has opened up about his part in shaping the sound and rise of Afrobeats, the music genre that has now become a global sensation.

In a recent interview on Sherri, Akon confidently stated that his work with Nigerian artists and music leaders in the late 2000s and early 2010s laid the foundation for what the world now knows as Afrobeats.

Akon, who is also the founder of Konvict Muzik, recalled those early years with pride. “2008 was my last official album, which was the Freedom album,” he shared. “Then I produced music for the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa. From there, I went to Nigeria. What we created in Nigeria is what you hear today as Afrobeats.”

Early partnerships with Nigerian stars

He pointed out that his team was one of the first to sign Nigerian star Wizkid. “Wizkid was the first Nigerian artist we signed back in 2008,” Akon said. “We went there to work with him and Banky W. From there, we started developing other artists like P-Square, D’banj, and more.”

Akon’s memories reach back to a time before Afrobeats became the global force it is today. Back then, Nigerian artists were still mainly popular within Africa. But thanks to collaborations with international stars and music executives like Akon, they began gaining attention across the world.

A bigger purpose behind the music

The singer stressed that his role in opening global doors for African music was not just chance. He believes it was part of a bigger purpose. “It’s the role God put me in,” Akon explained. “I just feel like I am a beacon to somebody’s success. I don’t know who it will be, but everything we have touched so far has been really successful. And I’m grateful



for that.”

Akon’s claims highlight a key moment in Afrobeats history. Before the genre hit the mainstream, artists like Wizkid, Banky W, P-Square, and D’banj were already pushing the sound forward in Africa. But it took support from major figures like Akon to break into international markets.

Using his fame to lift others

In the late 2000s, Akon was already a household name. Known for hits like *Lonely* and *Smack That*, he had the star power and connections to help lift African artists onto the world stage. By signing artists like Wizkid, Akon gave them not only exposure but also the tools and backing to reach wider audiences.

Wizkid, for example, has since become one of Africa’s biggest stars. He has worked with global giants like Drake, Beyoncé, and Justin Bieber. Meanwhile, D’banj’s *Oliver Twist* broke into the UK charts, and P-Square’s hits filled dance floors worldwide.

Blending cultures, creating a global sound

Akon’s involvement was not just about business. It was also about cultural exchange. By working closely with African artists, he helped shape a sound

that blended African rhythms with global pop influences. That sound became known as Afrobeats, a term that today covers a wide range of styles but always carries the energy and creativity of West Africa.

Today, Afrobeats is one of the most exciting music movements in the world. From Lagos to London to Los Angeles, Afrobeats artists are topping charts, selling out shows, and gaining millions of streams.

Looking ahead: A lasting legacy

Looking back, Akon feels proud of the part he played. “I’ve always wanted to be part of something bigger,” he said. “It’s not just about me. It’s about building something that lasts, something that helps others shine.”

While Akon is not the only figure to help push Afrobeats forward, his early involvement remains a key piece of the story. By believing in African talent early on, he helped open the way for today’s wave of global African stars.

In the end, Akon’s message is one of teamwork and vision. As he put it, “I just want to be that light, that guide. And as long as we keep creating and working together, I believe African music will keep rising.”

Robert De Niro publicly backs transgender daughter Airyn

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Two-time Oscar winner Robert De Niro has openly and proudly supported his transgender daughter, Airyn, just one day after she came out publicly as a trans woman.

The 81-year-old Hollywood legend made it clear that his love and support for Airyn remain as strong as ever.

In a heartfelt statement to The Hollywood Reporter, De Niro said, "I loved and supported Aaron as my son, and now I love and support Airyn as my daughter. I don't know what the big deal is ... I love all my children."

These simple, powerful words show the softer, more personal side of De Niro, who is best known for his tough, sharp-edged roles in classic films.

Airyn's journey to living her truth

Airyn, who is now 29, began hormone therapy last year as part of her gender transition. She recently opened up about her experience in an in-depth interview with a popular LGBTQ+ magazine.

In that interview, Airyn shared the emotional struggles she faced before coming out. She described how difficult it was to live in hiding and how much courage it took to finally share her true identity.

"I knew I couldn't keep pretending," she said. "I had to be true to myself, no matter how scared I was."

Her honesty and bravery are already inspiring others in the transgender community.

A family history

De Niro shares Airyn and her twin brother, Julian, with actress Toukie Smith, now 72. The two were together from 1988 to 1996. Although their romantic relationship ended long ago, they have continued to co-parent their children with care and respect.

De Niro is the father of seven children in total. Throughout his life, he has largely kept his family life private. This recent public statement is one of the rare times



he has opened up to the media about personal family matters.

Positive reaction from the public

De Niro's public backing of Airyn has sparked a wave of positive reactions. Fans, celebrities, and LGBTQ+ activists have praised him for his open show of love and acceptance.

On social media, supporters have called De Niro a shining example of what it means to be a loving parent. Many people noted that his support comes at a crucial time when transgender rights are under attack in various parts of the world.

One fan wrote on X (formerly Twitter), "Robert De Niro just showed the world what unconditional love looks like. We need more parents like him."

A simple but powerful message

For De Niro, the situation seems clear and uncomplicated. His job as a father, he says, is to love and support his children, no matter what.

"I don't know what the big deal is," he repeated in his statement a sign that, for him, love and acceptance come naturally.

While debates over gender identity continue to rage in politics and media, De Niro's statement cuts through the noise. He reminds the world that, at its core, this is about family and love.

Why family support matters

Experts have long said that family support can greatly improve the mental health and well-being of transgender people.

Studies show that transgender individuals who receive love and acceptance from their families are far less likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, and thoughts of self-harm.

In this light, De Niro's words are not just kind; they are life-affirming. They send a message that can help other families understand the importance of standing by their loved ones.

Airyn's voice matters

In her recent magazine interview, Airyn explained how hard it was to come out, especially as the child of a famous actor. She feared judgment and rejection but knew she could no longer hide.

"I realized that living as someone I'm not was hurting me," she said. "I had to make the choice to live as my true self."

Her openness adds to a growing number of public voices calling for greater understanding and respect for transgender people.

A model for other parents

De Niro's straightforward message has made him a role model for many other parents. He has shown that loving your child, no matter their gender identity, is not complicated.

Federal judge rebukes Trump administration over Kilmar Abrego's case

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A federal judge in Maryland has slammed the Trump administration for its continued refusal to cooperate in the case of Kilmar Abrego Garcia, a Maryland resident wrongfully deported to El Salvador in what the government admits was an "administrative error."

U.S. District Judge Paula Xinis rejected a fresh request from the administration for more time to respond to discovery demands, ordering government officials to fully comply by Monday and setting strict new deadlines. She also cleared the way for depositions of four federal officials, to be completed by May 9.

The case has ignited national debate over due process, executive power, and the limits of judicial authority in immigration matters.

A Legal Tug of War

Abrego Garcia was deported in March despite a 2019 court order explicitly barring his removal to El Salvador due to fears of gang-related persecution. Since then, he has been held in Salvadoran prisons, including the notorious Terrorism Confinement Centre (CECOT), raising concerns about his safety and constitutional rights.

Judge Xinis has accused the administration of acting in "bad faith" repeatedly stonewalling court orders and hiding behind vague claims of privilege. "That ends now," she wrote in a fiery ruling this week, rejecting what she described as a pattern of evasive behaviour.

The Trump administration's most recent request for delay was filed under seal, leaving the public in the dark about its contents. But Xinis clarified her position, blasting the government for



"boilerplate assertions" and a "willful refusal" to cooperate.

In a sharply worded order, she allowed the depositions of Robert Cerna, an ICE field director who initially called the deportation an "oversight," and three other officials: Evan Katz (ICE), Michael Kozak (State Department), and Joseph Mazzara (DHS). She also opened the door to two additional depositions and provided the plaintiff's file by May 7.

Xinis specifically took aim at the administration's claim that it cannot act because Abrego Garcia is now in Salvadoran custody. She said the government had mischaracterised a Supreme Court order that directed it to "facilitate" his return, a directive that upholds her original ruling.

While acknowledging that some of the plaintiff's questions were overly broad, she maintained that the government could not continue dodging accountability.

The case has drawn widespread attention, including from Maryland Senator Chris Van Hollen, who visited

Abrego Garcia in El Salvador earlier this month and took to the Senate floor Wednesday to condemn the administration's actions.

"I'm not vouching for Mr. Abrego Garcia," Van Hollen said, "but I am vouching for his constitutional right to due process. If Donald Trump can ignore court orders and trample one man's rights, he threatens all of ours."

Van Hollen also revealed he had sent a letter to President Trump this week, urging compliance with the court and the return of Abrego Garcia.

Despite the growing criticism, administration officials remain defiant.

In an exclusive interview with CBS News, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem stated bluntly: "He is an El Salvador citizen. He is home there. If he were brought back to the United States, we would deport him again immediately."

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President Trump echoed that sentiment during an ABC News interview this week. "He is not an innocent, wonderful gentleman from Maryland," Trump said, repeating unproven allegations that Abrego Garcia is a member of the violent MS-13 gang, claims his attorneys and family vehemently deny.

Asked whether he would call on El Salvador to release Abrego Garcia, Trump said, "I haven't spoken to

him [the Salvadoran president]. I leave that to the lawyers."

When pressed at a Cabinet meeting Wednesday, Secretary of State Marco Rubio offered a pointed response: "I would never tell you that [whether I spoke to El Salvador], and you know who else I'd never tell? A judge. The conduct of our foreign policy belongs to the President... not some judge."

As deadlines loom and tensions

rise between the judiciary and the executive, the fate of Kilmar Abrego Garcia remains in limbo. With Judge Xinis holding firm and the Trump administration digging in, the case is shaping up to be a defining battle over constitutional rights in the immigration system.

Whether Abrego Garcia will return to the U.S., or remain behind bars in a foreign prison, now depends on what unfolds over the next two weeks.

Brazil creates fewer-than-expected formal jobs in March

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

Brazil's economy created a net 71,576 formal jobs in March, Labor Ministry data showed on Wednesday, below the 200,000 jobs forecast in a Reuters poll of economists.

The figure accounts for 2,234,662 jobs opened and 2,163,086 closed in the period, according to the ministry.

It was the weakest figure for March since 2020, and for any month since last December. It compares with over 245,000 net formal jobs created in the same period of 2024, adjusted data showed.

Earlier in the day, before the data was released, Labor Minister Luiz



Marinho told state media that formal job creation in March had been weaker year-on-year.

He noted that hiring was affected by a lower number of business days, particularly because this year's Carnival holiday fell in March,

while last year it occurred in February.

From January to March, a net 654,503 jobs were created in Brazil, down from 725,973 in the year-earlier period, according to adjusted data.

Netanyahu declares National Emergency as wildfires threaten Jerusalem

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared a “national emergency” on Wednesday as fast-moving wildfires scorched areas west of Jerusalem, prompting mass evacuations, injuring several civilians, and threatening to engulf the capital itself.

Thick plumes of smoke rose above highways as firefighters, soldiers, and emergency personnel rushed to combat the fires, described as the worst Israel has seen in over a decade. Blazes broke out in multiple forested areas near the cities of Modiin, Latrun, and Bet Shemesh, spurred by high temperatures and fierce western winds.

“We are now in a national emergency, not just a local one,” Netanyahu said in a video statement. “The priority right now is defending Jerusalem. The western wind can push the fire easily towards the outskirts, and even into the city itself.”

Israel’s Magen David Adom (MDA) rescue service said 23 people had received medical attention, with 13 hospitalized for smoke inhalation and burns. Among the injured were two pregnant women and two infants. The agency raised its alert level to the highest tier.

Police closed the vital Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway and evacuated at least five communities along the route. Video footage showed residents fleeing their homes and stranded motorists abandoning vehicles as flames advanced. A student witness



told AFP, “The fire had already completely taken over the whole area.”

Fire Chief Eyal Caspi warned that aerial firefighting efforts were temporarily halted due to weather conditions. “Our aircraft can’t do anything right now... Our goal is to save lives,” Caspi said.

The Israel Defense Forces deployed soldiers from its Search and Rescue Brigade, along with 50 firetrucks and engineering vehicles to build firebreaks overnight. “We are apparently facing the largest fire in Israel in a decade,” Caspi added.

Police announced the arrest of an East Jerusalem resident caught allegedly attempting to ignite a field. Though no direct link to the main wildfires has been confirmed, National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir referred to “arson terror”

and vowed aggressive investigations.

France’s President Emmanuel Macron extended solidarity and offered material assistance. The Israeli government has reached out to Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Bulgaria, and Croatia for firefighting support. Italy and Croatia are sending aircraft to join the containment efforts.

As firefighters battle to contain the inferno, Ben Gvir has ordered the cancellation of Independence Day events requiring firefighter presence. “We must redirect all available personnel to the emergency,” he said.

With communities still under threat and emergency services stretched thin, the situation remains critical. “It’s just very sad,” said Yuval Aharoni, a resident watching fires near Modiin. “We knew this weather would come. We weren’t ready.”

Kamala Harris returns to public stage with fierce rebuke of Trump administration

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Former Vice President Kamala Harris made a powerful return to the political spotlight Wednesday night, delivering a keynote speech that doubled as a searing critique of President Donald Trump's administration and policies. Speaking at the 20th anniversary gala for Emerge America, a group dedicated to empowering Democratic women to run for office, Harris addressed a packed room in the city where her political journey began.

It marked her first major address since her 2024 election defeat to Trump.

Without formally announcing a political comeback, Harris didn't hold back as she accused the Trump administration of abandoning American ideals and weaponizing fear.

"Instead of an administration working to advance America's highest ideals," Harris declared, "we are witnessing the wholesale abandonment of those ideals."

The former vice president called out what she described as a calculated use of fear by the administration, stating, "They are counting on the notion that if they can make some people afraid, it will have a chilling effect on others."

On the economy, Harris didn't mince words. She labeled Trump's ongoing trade war as "the greatest man-made economic crisis in modern presidential history," pointing to rising costs for families and layoffs in businesses big and small. "The tariffs, as I predicted, are clearly



inviting a recession," she warned.

Harris also criticized Trump's immigration policies, including the recent deportation of Maryland resident Kilmar Abrego Garcia, a case the Justice Department has admitted was mishandled, and the removal of a two year old U.S. citizen to Honduras with her undocumented mother.

"It is not OK to detain or disappear American citizens without due process," Harris said, striking a tone both urgent and defiant.

In a nod to recent legal battles between state and federal authorities, Harris praised judges "who uphold the rule of law in the face of those who would jail them," referencing the controversial arrest of a Wisconsin judge accused of obstructing immigration agents.

While she stopped short of

announcing a new campaign, speculation about her political future is growing. With California Governor Gavin Newsom unable to seek re-election in 2026, Harris' name has surfaced as a strong contender for the job. Recent polls show her maintaining significant support across the state.

Harris closed her speech on a hopeful note, urging resilience and unity amid political turmoil. "Things are going to get worse before they get better," she said, "but we must stand together. Always remember: This country is ours. It belongs to we the people."

Her appearance in San Francisco, and the speech's political intensity, suggests that Kamala Harris is far from finished with public life. Whether she runs for governor or returns to the national stage, her message was unmistakably clear: the fight, in her eyes, is far from over.

US Senate rejects bill to rein in Trump tariffs as economy contracts

By **Fatimah Idera**

The narrowly divided U.S. Senate rejected the latest bipartisan bid to block President Donald Trump's tariffs on Wednesday, hours after the federal government reported that the nation's economy contracted for the first time in three years amid the chaos of the president's tariff policies.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune then moved quickly to kill the measure for good before supporters could muster a successful vote on a later date, calling Vice President JD Vance to the U.S. Capitol to break a tie and table the resolution.

The measure sought to terminate the national emergency that Trump declared as the basis for 10% global tariffs on U.S. trading partners and higher reciprocal tariffs on 57 trading partners including the European Union.

The resolution failed in a 49-49 vote, with only three Republicans crossing the aisle to join Democrats to support it. Just weeks ago, four Senate Republicans had joined Democrats to pass a similar bill to terminate new tariffs on Canada. Republicans currently hold a 53-47 majority.

But with two would-be supporters absent on Wednesday, it became clear that the measure could succeed at a later date. In a dramatic move, Thune called for a second vote to kill the resolution by tabling its reconsideration, which succeeded 50-49 with Vance casting the tie-breaking vote.

"Leader Thune and Senate Republicans tonight voted to keep the Trump tariff-tax in place. They own the Trump tariffs and higher costs on America's middle-class families,"



Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said in a statement.

The action came hours after the Commerce Department reported that the U.S. economy contracted at an annualized rate of 0.3% during the first three months of 2025, amid a flood of imports as businesses raced to avoid higher costs from tariffs.

It was the first decline since the first quarter of 2022 and the first tangible evidence of the economic effects of the Trump tariffs, following weeks of turmoil in U.S. stock and bonds as economists warned that tariffs would lead to rising consumer prices and a possible recession.

The resolution was introduced by Democratic Senator Ron Wyden and co-sponsored by Republican Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky, an outspoken critic of Trump's tariff policy.

It drew support from Republican Senators Susan Collins and Lisa Murkowski. Senator Mitch McConnell, a fourth Republican who

had voted for the earlier measure, was absent. So was Democratic Senator Sheldon Whitehouse.

"It's not perfect. I think it's too broad. But it sends the message that I want to send – that we really need to be far more discriminatory in imposing these tariffs and not treat allies like Canada the way we treat adversaries like China," Collins, of Maine, told reporters.

The earlier measure, which had multiple Republican sponsors, went nowhere in the Republican-controlled House of Representatives, which last month blocked the ability of Congress to move quickly to challenge Trump's tariffs.

The White House threatened to veto the latest resolution on Monday, saying it would undermine national and economic security

Swedish journalist given suspended sentence in Turkey, remains imprisoned on terror charge

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A Turkish court on Wednesday handed Swedish journalist Joakim Medin an 11 month suspended sentence for allegedly insulting President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan but the reporter remains imprisoned as he awaits trial on a more serious charge of terrorism.

Medin, who reports for Swedish newspaper Dagens ETC, was detained on March 27 upon arrival at Istanbul Airport, where he had flown in to cover the widespread protests sweeping the country. He was subsequently charged with insulting the president and belonging to a terrorist organization. The following day, he was incarcerated at the high-security Silivri prison outside Istanbul.

While the court has now suspended the sentence on the insult charge and formally ordered Medin's release, he will remain in custody due to the ongoing investigation into the terror-related allegation. No trial date has yet been scheduled.

Prosecutors allege that Medin's reporting included photos from a controversial protest in Stockholm in January 2023, where an effigy of Erdoğan was hanged. The same effigy later appeared at Stockholm's Pride parade, this time holding an LGBTQ flag on a Kurdish float. These images, which reportedly accompanied articles authored by Medin, form the basis of the accusation.

Medin, however, denied any connection to the images or the protest itself, telling the court via video link from Silivri prison that he



had been in Germany for work at the time of the rally. He stated that while he had posted links to his published articles on social media, he did not select the photographs used in the reports.

"I was not at this event. I didn't know about its plans. I never posted any photo or video from it. I did not insult the president," Medin said. "I was assigned to report on Sweden's NATO accession photo choices were made by editors. I was just doing my job."

Medin also made a heartfelt plea for release, noting that his wife is seven months pregnant with their first child.

His lawyer, Veysel Ok, urged the court to acquit him entirely. "My client had no intention to insult the president. He simply reported on a critical diplomatic matter, Sweden's NATO accession," Ok said. "He is not responsible for the imagery used. We demand his immediate acquittal."

Press freedom advocates have criticized Turkey's continued use of

"insulting the president" laws as a tool to suppress dissent. Even teenagers, journalists, and celebrities, including a former Miss Turkey, have faced charges under the statute.

The second, more serious charge of belonging to a terrorist organization could carry a sentence of up to nine years in prison if Medin is convicted, an allegation he flatly denies.

Erol Önderoğlu of Reporters Without Borders condemned the court's handling of the case. "It's undemocratic that Medin was convicted at all, and deeply regrettable that this ruling isn't enough to free him today," Önderoğlu said. "We urge Turkish authorities to release the journalist, swiftly set a date for the second trial, and drop all charges."

As the international spotlight turns once again to Turkey's troubled record on press freedom, Medin's fate now rests on a case that has yet to see a courtroom.

Ukraine, US sign minerals deal sought by Trump

By Fatimah Idera

Ukraine and the U.S. on Wednesday signed a deal heavily promoted by U.S. President Donald Trump that will give the United States preferential access to new Ukrainian minerals deals and fund investment in Ukraine's reconstruction.

The two countries signed the accord in Washington after months of sometimes fraught negotiations, with uncertainty persisting until the last moment with word of an eleventh-hour snag.

The accord establishes a joint investment fund for Ukraine's reconstruction as Trump tries to secure a peace settlement in Russia's three-year-old war in Ukraine.

The agreement is central to Kyiv's efforts to mend ties with Trump and the White House, which frayed after he took office in January. Ukrainian officials have hoped that the deal would ensure continued U.S. support for Ukraine's defence against Russia.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Ukrainian First Deputy Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko were shown signing the agreement in a photo posted on X by the Treasury, which said the deal "clearly signals the Trump Administration's commitment to a free, sovereign, prosperous Ukraine."

Svyrydenko wrote on X that the accord provides for Washington to contribute to the fund.

"In addition to direct financial contributions, it may also provide NEW assistance – for example air defense systems for Ukraine," she said. Washington did not directly address that suggestion.

The U.S. has been Ukraine's single largest military donor since Russia's 2022 invasion with aid of more than 64 billion euros (\$72 billion), according to the Kiel



Institute in Germany.

Before the signing, Trump repeated on Wednesday that the U.S. should get something for its aid to Kyiv, thus the effort to secure a deal for Ukraine's plentiful deposits of rare earth minerals.

In announcing the deal, the U.S. Treasury said the partnership recognized "the significant financial and material support that the people of the United States have provided to the defense of Ukraine since Russia's full-scale invasion."

Svyrydenko said the accord allowed Ukraine to "determine what and where to extract" and that its subsoil remains owned by Ukraine.

Ukraine is rich in natural resources including rare earth metals which are used in consumer electronics, electric vehicles and military applications, among others. Global rare-earth mining is currently dominated by China, which is locked in a trade war with the U.S. after Trump's sharp tariff increases.

Ukraine also has large reserves of iron, uranium and natural gas.

Svyrydenko said Ukraine has no debt obligations to the United States under the agreement, a key point in the lengthy negotiations between the two countries.

The deal also, she said, complied with Ukraine's constitution and Ukraine's campaign to join the European Union, key elements in Ukraine's negotiating position.

The minerals deal and U.S. peace efforts have been negotiated separately but reflect Washington's approach to Ukraine and Russia. Trump has upended U.S. policy by softening the U.S. stance toward Russia and sometimes falsely blaming Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy for the war.

U.S. peace proposals have called for recognition of Russia's claim to Crimea, which it seized from Ukraine in 2014, and potentially four other Ukrainian regions. Zelenskiy has said Kyiv would never do so because it would contravene Ukraine's constitution.

"Importantly, the Agreement sends a signal to global partners that long-term cooperation with Ukraine – over decades – is not only possible but reliable," Svyrydenko said on X.

A draft of the U.S.-Ukraine agreement seen by Reuters earlier on Wednesday showed Ukraine secured the removal of any requirement for it to pay back the U.S. for past military assistance, something Kyiv had staunchly opposed.

Snake causes major disruption on Japan's Tokaido Shinkansen line

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

One of Japan's busiest transportation lifelines came to a dramatic halt on Wednesday evening after a metre-long snake slithered onto a power line along the Tokaido Shinkansen route, shorting the system and bringing all train services between Tokyo and Osaka to a standstill.

The unusual reptilian disruption occurred at approximately 5:25 p.m. between Maibara and Gifu-Hashima stations, coinciding with the start of Golden Week, a string of national holidays when millions of Japanese citizens travel across the country to visit family and enjoy vacation time. Passengers were left stranded for nearly two hours as engineers worked to restore power, which was finally re-established just after 7:00 p.m.

Despite the outage, conditions inside the stalled trains remained stable. Passengers reported that lights and air conditioning continued to function throughout the ordeal.

"I use the Shinkansen several times a month, but this is the first time I have experienced suspensions due to a power outage," said Satoshi Tagawa, 46, who was returning to Tokyo when the disruption occurred.

According to Central Japan Railway Co. (JR Tokai), the snake had apparently climbed an electrical pole and made contact with the



high-voltage overhead line, instantly electrocuting itself and knocking out power along the section.

The timing of the incident proved especially inconvenient, as crowds surge toward Osaka not only for the holidays but also for the Osaka Expo 2025, which officially opened in mid-April and is drawing international visitors in droves.

The Tokaido Shinkansen is Japan's most traveled bullet train line, linking Tokyo, Nagoya, and Osaka. With over 370 trains running daily and carrying an average of 430,000 passengers, it is a symbol of Japan's railway punctuality and safety. Since its launch ahead of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, the line has transported more than 7 billion passengers without a single injury or fatal accident.

Wednesday's reptilian interference, however, is not the first of its kind. In April 2024, a 40-centimetre snake caused commotion on a Nagoya-to-Tokyo service after it was spotted inside a carriage. Although it was never found, the entire carriage had to be replaced, resulting in a 17-minute delay. A similar power outage caused by a snake also occurred in 2009, temporarily halting trains between Tokyo and Fukushima.

Despite the inconvenience, JR Tokai remains proud of its near-flawless service record, with average train delays measured in mere seconds. As for the snake? Authorities confirm it did not survive the encounter, proving once again that playing with electricity is a dangerous game, even for nature's slinkiest commuters.

Columbia student Mohsen Mahdawi released after judge blocks deportation

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A Palestinian student at Columbia University who was detained by immigration authorities earlier this month was released on Wednesday following a federal judge's order, amid growing concerns over free speech and political retaliation.

Mohsen Mahdawi, a lawful U.S. permanent resident, was taken into custody on April 16 while attending a U.S. citizenship interview. His case drew national attention after his attorneys argued that the Trump administration sought to deport him in retaliation for his involvement in pro-Palestinian protests at Columbia University during the early stages of the Israel-Hamas war.

Speaking outside the courthouse in Burlington, Vermont, shortly after his release, Mahdawi said, "Yes, you might think I am free, but my freedom is interlinked with the freedom of many other students."

Judge Geoffrey Crawford, who ordered Mahdawi's release, also barred the federal government from removing him from the state or country. In his ruling, Crawford said Mahdawi had "made substantial claims that his detention is the result of retaliation for protected speech." He drew historical parallels to the McCarthy era, when immigration laws were used to suppress political dissent during the Red Scare.

"This is not the first time the U.S. has seen chilling efforts by the government that are intended to shut down debate," Crawford stated in court.

The Justice Department has said it will



appeal the ruling, maintaining that Mahdawi's detention was legally valid. U.S. Attorney Michael Drescher previously argued that deportation proceedings are constitutionally sound and that district courts should not interfere with immigration enforcement.

The government cited a provision of the Immigration and Nationality Act that allows for removal if the Secretary of State determines an individual's presence poses "serious adverse foreign consequences." Secretary of State Marco Rubio has invoked the same provision in other recent cases, including those of Columbia student Mahmoud Khalil and Tufts University student Rümeyşa Öztürk, both currently detained in Louisiana. Rubio has publicly said he has revoked hundreds of visas of students involved in pro-Palestinian demonstrations, calling protestors "lunatics" and boasting, "Every time I find one of these lunatics, I take away their visa."

The State Department has said its actions are aimed at curbing

antisemitism. However, Mahdawi has firmly rejected those allegations. In an interview with CBS News a day before his arrest, he stated, "My compassion extends beyond the Palestinian people. My compassion is also for the Jewish people and for the Israelis as well."

Mahdawi added that he had stepped back from protest organizing well before students began setting up encampments or occupying buildings on Columbia's campus.

His immigration case remains active, with a new hearing scheduled for Thursday. His legal team continues to argue that the government's actions are a violation of his First Amendment rights and a dangerous precedent in targeting political speech through immigration law.

As Mahdawi reunites with his community, his case has become a lightning rod in the broader debate over student activism, free expression, and the limits of government authority.

Google hopes to reach Gemini deal with Apple this year

By **Fatimah Idera**

Google hopes to enter an agreement with Apple by the middle of this year to include its Gemini AI technology on new phones, CEO Sundar Pichai said in testimony at an antitrust trial in Washington.

Pichai testified in the Alphabet unit's defense against proposals by the U.S. Department of Justice which include ending lucrative deals with Apple, Samsung, AT&T and Verizon to be the default search engine on new mobile devices.

During questioning by DOJ attorney Veronica Onyema, Pichai said that while Google does not yet have an agreement with Apple to include its Gemini AI on iPhones, Pichai spoke with Apple CEO Tim Cook about the possibility last year.

A potential deal this year would see Google's Gemini AI included within Apple Intelligence, Apple's own set of AI features, Pichai said.

Google also plans to experiment with including ads in its Gemini app, Pichai said.

Prosecutors have sought to illustrate how Google could extend its dominance in online



search to AI. Google maintained its monopoly in part by paying billions of dollars to wireless carriers and smartphone manufacturers, U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta ruled last year.

The judge is now weighing what actions Google should take to restore competition. The outcome of the case could fundamentally reshape the internet by potentially unseating Google as the go-to portal for information online.

The DOJ and a broad coalition of state attorneys general are pressing for remedies including requiring Google to sell off its Chrome web browser, banning it from paying to be the default search engine and requiring it to share search data with competitors.

The data-sharing provisions would discourage Google from investing in research and development, Pichai testified on Wednesday.

Provisions that would require the company to share its search index and search query data are "extraordinary," and amount to a "de facto divestiture of our IP related to search," Pichai said.

"It would be trivial to reverse engineer and effectively build Google search from the outside," he said.

That would make it "unviable to invest in R&D the way we have for the past two decades," Pichai added.

Google has said it plans to appeal once the judge makes a final ruling.

Tesla board search for new CEO to succeed Elon Musk

By **Fatimah Idera**

About a month ago, the board members of Tesla reached out to several executive search firms to find a successor for CEO Elon Musk.

The current status of the board's push, which, according to the report, was sparked by Musk's heavy involvement with the Trump administration, could not be determined.

Musk last week said he would cut back significantly the time he devotes to the Trump administration and spend more time running his many companies.

That follows widespread investor criticism for his work at the Department



of Government Efficiency (DOGE), where he has led efforts to cut federal jobs, while sales of Tesla's aging EV lineup have been on the decline.

His embrace of far-right politics in Europe has also led to protests against

Musk and the company as well as vandalism at its showrooms and charging stations across the U.S. and Europe

The board members met Musk and asked him to acknowledge publicly that he would spend more time at Tesla, the report said.

But it was unclear if Musk – also a member of the board – was aware of succession planning, or if his pledge to spend more time at Tesla has affected the efforts, the report added.

However, Tesla and Musk did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Visa, Bridge partner to launch stablecoin-linked cards

By **Fatimah Idera**

Visa and stablecoin infrastructure provider startup Bridge are partnering to offer stablecoin-linked Visa cards to customers across multiple countries in Latin America, which the companies say will allow users to make everyday purchases in cryptocurrency tokens.

The move comes as the U.S. Congress appears likely to pass a bill creating stablecoin rules for the first time, which experts say could pave the way for more financial firms to use or issue their own stablecoins.

Stablecoins, a type of cryptocurrency designed to maintain a constant value, usually a 1:1 dollar peg, are commonly used by crypto traders to move funds between tokens. Proponents say that they could be used to send payments instantly, but it remains challenging to use stablecoins for everyday purchases because merchants typically don't accept payments in crypto.

Bridge – which was acquired by Stripe earlier this year – will work on the back-end of transactions that customers make with their linked Visa cards to deduct funds from



a user's stablecoin balance and then will convert the payment into the local currency for merchants.

Although the partnership with Visa, developers building products on Bridge will be able to add stablecoin-linked Visa cards to their slate of offerings.

Users will be able to use the stablecoin-linked cards at any merchants that accept Visa in Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Chile. Bridge and Visa say that the product will become available in Europe, Africa and Asia in the coming months.

The chief product and strategy officer at Visa, Jack Forestell, said "We feel like the moment is now to take some of the things

that we've already been doing in a more experimental, pilot basis and start to expose them to the world as capabilities that we anticipate will really start to become big and meaningful and globally scalable."

For consumers to use stablecoins at a large-scale, they will have to be interoperable with existing tools and services that customers and businesses are accustomed to, said Zach Abrams, CEO of Bridge.

"This enables folks to use and take advantage of the benefits of stablecoins wherever they are in the world, but remain wholly connected with the financial tools that folks use," he said.

Why over £100m rests on Man Utd winning the Europa League

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

As Manchester United prepare for their Europa League semi-final first leg in Bilbao, the weight of expectation extends far beyond silverware and prestige. The true stakes? A financial lifeline worth more than £100 million.

United's underwhelming Premier League season — currently placing them 14th with their lowest points tally in history — has left their only route back into European competition through the Europa League. Failure to win the tournament would see the club miss out on European football for only the second time in 35 years, with wide-ranging consequences.

Sir Jim Ratcliffe, co-owner of United, has publicly estimated the value of Champions League qualification at between £80m and £100m. Football finance expert Kieran Maguire believes the figure could be even higher when all revenue streams are considered — including prize money, broadcasting rights, matchday income, and commercial bonuses.

Champions League: A Financial Game-Changer

Since UEFA revamped its club competitions, the Champions League prize pot has grown significantly. Even if United were to lose all eight of their league-stage games next season, their participation alone could be worth £70m. With modest results — say, three wins, three draws, and a 10th-place finish — United could generate around £13m in prize money. Add qualification bonuses and performance-related rewards, and the total rises steeply.

Clubs also earn payouts based on UEFA's coefficient rankings and the relative size of their domestic TV deals. United's position among UEFA's top 15 clubs could net them another £24m. Progressing to the knockout rounds would open the door to even more revenue — up to £73m from UEFA alone with a quarter-final run.

In contrast, Europa League qualification brings in a maximum of about £40m, and that's only with strong performances. For a

club the size of United, that gap is significant.

Matchday Revenue Losses

United's accounts show an average of £5.2m in matchday revenue per home game during the 2024-25 season. With ticket prices set to increase by 5% next season, the club could make up to £6m per Champions League home fixture. That's £24m to £48m lost if United are absent from Europe — particularly painful when fans are already protesting rising ticket costs and ownership issues.

High-profile European matches, like those involving Bayern Munich or Real Madrid, also offer commercial opportunities and hospitality revenue that far exceed those from lower-tier fixtures or domestic cup matches.

Commercial Clauses & Sponsor Penalties
Missing the Champions League would also trigger penalties in commercial contracts. Adidas, United's kit manufacturer, would reduce payments by £10m, though this is spread across a 10-year deal. While clauses in other sponsorship deals — including Qualcomm (£60m/year), DXC (£20m/year), and Tezos (£20m/year) — have not been disclosed, Maguire says it's "likely" similar incentives apply. This means further hidden financial losses.

Altogether, qualification could bring United close to £130m if they go on a deep run, while failure could leave a gaping hole in their

budget — further shrinking their transfer and wage flexibility.

United's Bigger Financial Picture

The financial pressure isn't limited to European earnings. United's overall debt hovers around £1bn, with £331m still owed in transfer fees. The club reported losses of more than £370m over the past five years. In response, 250 staff have already been made redundant, and another 200 jobs are at risk.

United also spent £14.5m sacking manager Erik ten Hag and others. Meanwhile, they have announced ambitious plans for a £2bn stadium — but haven't explained how they'll fund it.

Ratcliffe admitted the club would have gone "bust" this year without drastic action. He and CEO Omar Berrada have said the club has plans to cope financially without European football — but that would require "efficiency" and further cuts, not investment.

Conclusion

The Europa League final is not just about trophies — it's about survival. Without European football, United face a sobering reality: lower revenues, less attractiveness to top players, and even deeper financial strain. Their fate in Bilbao and beyond could determine not just their European status, but their financial future.



Debate Erupts Over Transgender Ban in Women's Football

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

The English Football Association (FA) has announced a controversial new policy that will bar transgender women from participating in women's football across England from 1 June 2025. The decision, which follows a recent UK Supreme Court ruling that the legal definition of "woman" is based on biological sex, has reignited a polarising debate about fairness, inclusion, and the future of women's sports.

Under the new policy, only individuals assigned female at birth will be eligible to participate in women's football. The ruling applies to all levels of the game, including amateur and grassroots competitions. The FA confirmed that 28 transgender women are currently registered to play in England.

The move comes as part of a broader trend across UK sports bodies. The Scottish FA announced a similar ban shortly after the English FA's declaration, and sources have told BBC Sport that the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) is likely to follow suit.

"A De Facto Ban on Trans Women in Football"

Natalie Washington, a former men's Sunday League player and campaign lead for Football v Transphobia, expressed deep concern over the decision. Washington, one of the 28 affected players, has played in women's amateur football since 2017 and described the new policy as a personal and communal setback.

"It is a shock," she told BBC Sport. "This means for me personally, and for many others, that we are no longer able to do the thing we love and have been doing for decades."

Washington, who began her transition over a decade ago, explained that



returning to men's football is not a viable option for most trans women due to both the physical changes brought on by hormone therapy and safety concerns.

"The effect that hormones have had means when I play five-a-side kickabouts with men, I can't keep up," she said. "It's going to be very mentally challenging and potentially physically dangerous for trans women to go back to men's teams—if they ever played there at all."

She also criticised the disproportionate focus on a "very small number of people who aren't causing a problem," arguing that the new policy effectively excludes trans women from football entirely.

"The reality is there aren't enough of us to create our own leagues," Washington added. "This is a de facto ban from football."

The FA, in a letter sent to affected players, acknowledged the emotional toll the policy may have. It offered "free, fully confidential online talking therapy" and indicated plans to expand mixed-gender football options by the 2026–27 season. The letter also suggested that those barred from playing might consider alternative roles in the sport, such as coaching or officiating.

"Women Are Getting Their Sport Back"
On the other side of the debate, former Olympic swimmer and long-time

campaigner Sharron Davies welcomed the policy as a necessary step to preserve the integrity of women's sport.

"I'm overjoyed that women are getting their sport back at last," Davies said. "Hopefully cricket will follow."

Davies, 62, has argued for years that biological differences between men and women provide unfair advantages to trans women in competitive sport, particularly in physical contact games like football.

"The science is still the same," she said. "Males kick 50% harder than females, they're taller, have bigger hands and feet, and are more dynamic—especially in goal."

Davies also pointed to several distressing examples she's heard from families: young girls suffering serious injuries during games, or receiving bans for reacting negatively when faced with trans women competitors.

"I've spoken to heartbroken parents. I've heard from girls who self-harmed after season-ending injuries. There are autistic girls who've been banned for recognising that there's a male player on the pitch," she added.

For Davies and many of her supporters, the issue is not about transphobia, but about fairness and safety.

Russell demands FIA action on swearing ban

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

As the Formula 1 paddock gathers in Miami, Mercedes driver George Russell has called for “action, not words” from the FIA over its controversial ban on swearing and criticism by drivers. The call comes in response to FIA President Mohammed Ben Sulayem’s recent social media comments that he is “considering making improvements” to the statutes that introduced penalties for verbal conduct.

Russell, one of four directors of the Grand Prix Drivers’ Association (GPDA), expressed frustration over the lack of dialogue between the FIA and the drivers’ body since an open letter was sent in November 2024. That letter requested that the governing body treat drivers with the respect and maturity befitting professional athletes.

“It’s being considered,” Russell said of Ben Sulayem’s statement. “The words don’t mean anything until the change has been made. We need to see action. We wrote an open letter months ago, and there’s been no follow-up, no formal conversation.”

The FIA’s crackdown on driver language and criticism has been a flashpoint since its quiet implementation over the winter. The revised statutes introduced explicit penalties for drivers who swear or express negative opinions about the FIA publicly—rules many drivers say go too far in policing expression.

Russell said the GPDA’s original purpose was to focus on driver safety and racing matters. “We’re now being pulled into issues we didn’t intend to get involved in,” he said. “Fines, punishments, and swearing are not what we came to F1 for. We’re here for the racing—fastest cars, best engineers, top competition. This isn’t the conversation anyone wants to be having.”



The FIA, in turn, has said little about the specifics of potential amendments. According to protocol, any statute change proposals must be disclosed to member organisations by 8 May, ahead of the June General Assembly.

A Pattern of Controversies

Russell’s comments touch on deeper concerns many in the paddock have held since Ben Sulayem assumed office in December 2021. His presidency has been marked by a series of controversies: comments about women, the dismissal of senior officials amid questions about financial transparency, and accusations from whistleblowers—all of which the FIA has either dismissed or declined to address in detail.

Most recently, Deputy President of Sport Robert Reid resigned, followed by a rare public statement from former FIA CEO Natalie Robyn, who left her role in 2024 after just 18 months. The situation escalated further when Susie Wolff, director of F1 Academy, launched a lawsuit against the FIA alleging reputational damage caused by unsubstantiated investigations.

In light of these developments, Russell hinted that the GPDA could consider

evolving its role. “Maybe something should change,” he said. “We’re open to it. But ultimately, we just want what’s best for the sport.”

Hamilton Calls for Greater Driver Influence

Lewis Hamilton also weighed in from the Ferrari camp. “The GPDA is very unified,” he said. “We want to collaborate with the FIA, not oppose them. But we’ve been climbing an uphill battle for years now when it comes to communication. We don’t have a seat of power at the table. That needs to change.”

Hamilton pointed out that other sports have formal unions to represent athletes. “We’re not asking for control,” he clarified. “We just want to be heard. Our input matters because we’re the ones out there, week in and week out.”

With the Miami Grand Prix set to begin, all eyes are on the FIA’s next move. If the governing body fails to follow through on its promise of “consideration,” tensions may escalate—and not just over a ban on foul language.

As Russell put it bluntly: “Until something changes, it’s just talk.”

English sides shine in Euro semi-final first legs

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

England's top clubs took commanding strides toward European finals on Thursday night as Manchester United, Tottenham Hotspur, and Chelsea all secured impressive first-leg victories in their respective UEFA competitions.

Manchester United Cruise in Bilbao

Manchester United delivered a clinical away performance to beat Athletic Bilbao 3-0 in Spain, setting themselves firmly on course for the Europa League final. Goals from Casemiro and a brace from captain Bruno Fernandes secured the win against a Bilbao side reduced to 10 men early in the second half.

United dominated large spells of the match and showed composure under pressure in front of a passionate San Mames crowd. The result leaves Erik ten Hag's side needing only to avoid a collapse in the return leg to book a place in the final, which will also be held in Bilbao — a rare quirk of the tournament setup.

The away end erupted at the final whistle, with United's players making a point of thanking the travelling fans. BBC Radio 5 Live described the scenes as "wonderful" and "deserved for such a confident performance."

Tottenham Take Lead but Bodo/Glimt Land Late Blow

In North London, Tottenham Hotspur earned a 3-1 victory over Norway's Bodo/Glimt in a tie that remains finely balanced. Goals from Brennan Johnson, James Maddison, and Dominic Solanke put Spurs in control, but a late strike from Ulrik Saltnes gave the visitors a glimmer of hope heading into next week's second leg in the Arctic Circle.

While Spurs fans will be pleased with the two-goal advantage, the late goal slightly dampened the celebratory mood. Former



England goalkeeper Rob Green, on BBC Radio 5 Sports Extra, said, "This was a missed opportunity for Spurs to put the tie to bed."

The artificial pitch and icy conditions awaiting Spurs in Norway will add an unpredictable element to the return fixture. However, with their attacking trio firing, Ange Postecoglou's side remain favourites to advance.

Chelsea Dominate Djurgarden

Over in Stockholm, Chelsea ran riot against Swedish side Djurgarden, winning 4-1 and virtually booking their place in the Europa Conference League final. Goals from Jadon Sancho, Noni Madueke, and two from Nicolas Jackson put the Blues in firm control ahead of the return leg at Stamford Bridge.

BBC Sport's Nizaar Kinsella likened Chelsea to a "Death Star" in the Conference League, wreaking havoc with their vastly superior squad depth and quality. The Premier League side, whose squad is valued higher than many entire leagues, proved too powerful for their Swedish hosts.

"This team is only getting more dominant," Kinsella wrote, "and they've put one foot, both arms, and four of five toes into the final in Poland."

Chelsea's success in this competition may be tempered by the level of opposition they've faced, with Real Betis or Fiorentina likely to offer the stiffest challenge should they meet in the final.

Elsewhere in Europe

Real Betis edged Fiorentina 2-1 at home in the other Conference League semi-final. Robin Gosens came close to equalizing for the Italian side late in the match, but his header narrowly missed the target. The tie remains delicately poised.

Back in North London, concern briefly swept the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium as Bodo/Glimt's only shot on target found the net, exposing Spurs' vulnerability late on. One fan summed up the mood with a text to #bbcfootball: "Typical Spurs. Can't kill a game."

Looking Ahead

All three English clubs take strong leads into the second legs next week. While Manchester United and Chelsea appear to have one foot in their respective finals, Tottenham still have work to do in the cold of northern Norway.

Regardless, Thursday night was a celebration of Premier League strength on the European stage, with three dominant performances and the promise of more drama to come.