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Health Commissioner



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Could next Pope be Nigerian?

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Cardinal Peter Okpaleke and Pope Francis



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Colleges of Education to begin concurrent NCE, degree programmes in September

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

In a bid to revive dwindling enrolment and safeguard the future of teacher training institutions, the Federal Government has announced that all 18 Federal Colleges of Education (COEs) will begin the concurrent running of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) and bachelor's degree programmes starting from the 2025/2026 academic session.

Minister of Education, Dr. Tunji Alausa, made this known on Tuesday during a follow-up meeting in Abuja, reviewing outcomes from the last biannual stakeholders' conference.

This major policy shift follows the 2023 enactment of the Federal Colleges of Education Act, which empowers qualifying federal COEs, those at least ten years old, to award both NCE and degree certificates. The Act, signed into law by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu shortly after assuming office, had earlier slated the pilot implementation for the 2024/2025 session. However, the full rollout will now commence in September 2025.

Describing the reform as a "game changer," Alausa emphasized that the dual mandate is critical for the survival of the colleges. "The only thing that can save the colleges from going into extinction is the implementation of the dual mandate," he said. "Any federal college of education that fails to run both NCE and degree programmes concurrently will cease to exist."

The Minister noted that the initiative,



approved by the National Council on Education, aims to improve access to teacher education, address chronically low enrolment figures, and ensure the quality production of professional teachers across the nation.

According to Alausa, the sector is in dire straits. Citing data from the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), he revealed that less than 1,000 candidates applied to study at Federal COEs in 2024, out of the over 2 million students who registered for the examination. "It's a shame," he lamented. "We have institutions lying fallow with less than 1,000 students and almost 800 staff members. That's a failing system. A college of education should not have less than 30,000 students."

To prepare for the transition, the National Universities Commission

(NUC) has developed guidelines for implementation, while JAMB has begun promoting the dual-mode admission process and engaging with relevant stakeholders.

Alausa assured Nigerians of the Tinubu administration's commitment to revitalizing the education sector. "Education is pivotal to national development," he stated. "We are determined to resolve the concerns of staff unions and ensure a smooth, uninterrupted academic calendar in our tertiary institutions."

With this bold step, the Federal Government hopes to reposition its colleges of education as viable and attractive destinations for aspiring teachers, while stemming the tide of institutional decline.

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

PUBLIC NOTICE COLOUR

PRODUCT COLOUR

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SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	372,500.00
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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
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SIZE	TOTAL RATE
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10X6	242,500.00
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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
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6X3	78,500.00
6X2	47,500.00
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9X3	112,875.00
8X6	179,368.00
8X5	143,500.00
8X4	93,500.00
8X3	82,434.50
7X4	111,173.50
6X4	82,434.50
6X3	59,250.00
6X2	40,000.00
5X6	98,749.50
5X4	65,833.00
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10X5	162,222.445
10X4	103,963.00
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9X5	168,191.50
9X4	N/A
8X6	N/A
8X3	N/A
7X4	72,676.00
6X4	65,000.00
6X3	41,124.50
6X2	29,858.00
5X6	71,378.00
5X4	42,825.00
5X3	29,858.00
5X2	22,841.00
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4X3	N/A
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3X2	14,923.00
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Tinubu orders overhaul of security architecture, declares 'enough is enough'

By Friday Omosola

President Bola Tinubu has ordered an immediate overhaul of Nigeria's national security strategy, following a wave of violent attacks in Borno, Benue, Plateau, and Kwara states.

He gave the directive during a high-level security meeting with service chiefs at the State House in Abuja on Tuesday.

Speaking during the over two-hour closed-door session, Tinubu condemned the continued killing of innocent Nigerians, describing the situation as intolerable.

"Enough is enough," he said, stressing that the lives of citizens must be protected at all costs.

Briefing State House correspondents after the meeting, National Security Adviser (NSA) Nuhu Ribadu said the service chiefs presented detailed reports on recent attacks, casualty figures, and the extent of property destruction across the affected states.

According to Ribadu, the President issued new directives and demanded a more effective and localised approach to tackling insecurity.

"Mr President is insisting that we



work harder to restore peace in the country," Ribadu said.

"Even during his recent visits to Paris and London, he stayed in touch, issued directives, and followed developments closely."

Ribadu confirmed that a presidential mandate had earlier sent security chiefs to the flashpoint states, where they met with political authorities and community leaders.

He added that Tinubu has now called for stronger collaboration with local councils and governors to curb the violence.

"The issue of insecurity often originates from the grassroots. We need to work closely with communities, local governments,

and state governors. The President directed us to deepen this collaboration," the NSA stated.

Ribadu also revealed that the assailants had been using improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and exploiting ungoverned areas to carry out attacks.

"He was very worried and concerned," Ribadu said of the President's mood during the meeting.

"The message is clear — the time to end this senseless violence is now."

The meeting was attended by top officials from the armed forces, police, and intelligence community.

Okpebholo leads global investment drive for Edo at World Bank/IMF meetings

By Friday Omosola

Edo State Governor, Monday Okpebholo, has launched a bold international investment drive aimed at repositioning the state as a destination for sustainable economic growth.

The governor is leveraging the ongoing 2025 Spring Meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington, D.C., to attract credible investors and forge long-term development partnerships.

According to a statement by the Chief Press Secretary to the Governor, Fred Itua, the initiative marks a strategic shift from previous development models which relied heavily on debt financing.

Instead, Governor Okpebholo is championing equity-based investments across key sectors, including infrastructure, healthcare, education, agriculture, and manufacturing.

“Unlike past approaches reliant on debt financing,” Itua said, “the governor’s strategy emphasises long-term partnerships and direct capital investment aimed at strengthening the state’s fiscal sustainability.”

Leading the state’s delegation in Washington is a three-man team comprising the Commissioner for Finance, Emmanuel Okoebor; policy economist and head of Policy House International, Taiwo Akerele; and the Special Adviser on Finance, Investment and Revenue Generation, Kizito Okpebholo.

The team is showcasing a diverse portfolio of investment-ready projects spanning mining, oil and gas, agro-processing, housing, and SME development.

A key highlight of the governor’s



trip is Edo’s co-hosting of the inaugural Multi-Sector Global Partnership Summit in partnership with ReadyToLead Africa and Policy House International.

The summit aims to build transparent, actionable investment relationships by spotlighting Edo State’s development milestones and future opportunities.

Edo is also aligning itself with the World Bank’s \$50 billion Africa-focused investment pipeline for 2025–2026.

The state is targeting funding through mechanisms such as Investment Project Financing (IPF), Multilateral Investment Guarantees (MIG), and Technical Assistance (TA).

These instruments are expected to support infrastructure projects, social protection initiatives, academic exchanges with Ambrose Alli University, and affordable housing schemes.

“This is a bold shift in economic diplomacy,” Itua added. “Edo State is now focused on building—not borrowing. The emphasis is on attracting investments that translate to jobs, innovation, and inclusive growth.”

Edo’s engagement with international partners is rooted in its longstanding relationship with global financial institutions.

While previous administrations secured World Bank-backed budget support, Governor Okpebholo’s administration is redefining the playbook—prioritising transparent, equity-led investments over credit-heavy arrangements.

With the global economic landscape evolving, Okpebholo is positioning Edo to harness new opportunities, aiming to anchor development on measurable outcomes and improved quality of life for the people.

Delta gov Oborevori, Okowa join APC

By Friday Omosola



Delta State witnessed a major political shake-up on Wednesday as Governor Sheriff Oborevori and his predecessor, Ifeanyi Okowa, parted ways with the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to align with the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

The development, which followed a high-level meeting at the Government House in Asaba, was confirmed by the Governor's Chief Press Secretary, Festus Ahon.

In a related move, Senator James

Manager announced Okowa's defection, revealing that the decision came after over six hours of deliberation among top political figures in the state.

According to Manager, the entire PDP structure in Delta—including the Speaker, the state chairman, and all local government chairmen—has resolved to cross over to the APC.

"We can't remain in a sinking ship," Manager declared, signalling the group's collective loss of confidence in the PDP.

The switch, sources say, follows weeks of behind-the-scenes consultations and is aimed at repositioning Delta State politically and economically ahead of the 2027 elections.

Governor Oborevori, who rode to power under the PDP banner in 2023, was welcomed into the APC fold by senior party leaders in what observers have described as a bold, strategic move with significant implications for the national political landscape.

Osun state PDP chieftain, Oluwole Oke, resigns from party

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye



The Chairman of the House of Representatives Committee on Public Accounts, Honourable Oluwole Oke, has formally resigned his membership of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

Oke, who represents the Obokun/Oriade Federal Constituency in Osun State, made the announcement in a letter addressed to the Chairman of the PDP in Ward 7, Obokun Local Government Area.

The letter, dated Wednesday, signals the end of his long-standing affiliation with the party.

“I wish to formally notify you that I am resigning my membership of the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, with immediate effect,” Oke stated.

A veteran legislator, Oke is currently serving his sixth term in the House of Representatives.

He noted that his decision to leave the PDP was reached

following extensive consultation with political associates, family members, and close friends.

“It is my wish that you accept my resignation in good faith,” he added.

Copies of the resignation letter were also sent to the National Chairman, the State Chairman, and the Local Government Chairman of the PDP.

LASG warns against intake of unregistered herbal products

By Oluwatosin Ologun

The Lagos State Government has warned residents against the consumption of herbal medicines not certified by the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), citing serious public health risks.

The State Commissioner for Health, Akin Abayomi, gave the warning on Wednesday, during the 2025 Lagos State Ministerial Press Briefing held at Alausa, Ikeja, where he also presented key achievements in the health sector over the past year.

“No one should consume any herbal medication that is not certified by NAFDAC.

“Those who indulge in unapproved herbal concoctions are exposing themselves to dangerous health conditions. The government will not be held responsible for such actions.”

New Hospital Facilities

Turning to healthcare infrastructure, the Commissioner announced that three major health facilities—the Massey Children’s Hospital on Lagos Island, the Mental Health Institute at Ketu-Ejirin in Epe, and the Iba-Ojo General Hospital—will be completed and commissioned in 2026.

The Massey facility, he said, is already 70 per cent complete.

“These projects form part of our strategy to improve access to quality healthcare and reduce the burden on existing facilities,” he stated.

Abayomi revealed that public health challenges in Lagos remain significant, with hypertension prevalence at 20 per cent, of which 70 per cent of affected individuals are unaware of their condition.



The obesity rate in the state stands at 12 per cent, while a total of 135,224 residents are currently living with HIV.

On malaria control, Abayomi announced a shift in clinical protocol. “Henceforth, no patient will be treated for malaria without a confirmed test result,” he said, noting a significant decline in malaria prevalence across the state.

Medical Personnel Shortage

Professor Abayomi further disclosed the state’s strategy to reverse brain drain in the health sector by building world-class infrastructure capable of attracting Nigerian doctors in the diaspora back home.

According to him, Lagos State currently has 7,000 practising doctors but needs an additional 33,000 doctors—and an equal number of nurses—to meet World Health Organisation (WHO) standards.

To address the growing workforce shortage, he announced that the Lagos State Government has increased the annual admission quota of the Lagos State University College of Medicine (LASUCOM) from 200 to 2,500 students.

“This is a bold step aimed at producing the critical medical professionals needed

to serve our fast-growing population,” he said.

On digital healthcare transformation, Abayomi introduced the recently launched Smart Health Information Platform (SHIP), designed to power Lagos’ digital health strategy.

“The SHIP platform will enable a robust Health Information Exchange—aggregating and interpreting data to support patients, practitioners, and policymakers,” he explained. The initiative is a collaboration between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Innovation, Science and Technology.

In her remarks, the Special Adviser to the Governor on Health, Dr Kemi Ogunyemi, addressed the recent diphtheria outbreak, noting that it has been effectively managed through mass vaccination and public awareness campaigns.

She urged residents to maintain good hygiene practices, especially as the rainy season begins. “Clean surroundings are essential to preventing the outbreak and spread of communicable diseases,” Ogunyemi emphasised.

Why NDLEA seeks drug test for Corps members, couples — Marwa

By Oluwatosin Ologun



The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has explained its rationale for the push for drug integrity tests for youth corps members and prospective couples.

NDLEA Chairman/Chief Executive Officer, Brig Gen Mohamed Buba Marwa (Rtd) said the move aimed at discouraging substance abuse and providing early treatment.

Addressing the Director General of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), Brig.-Gen. Olakunle Nafiu, the NDLEA boss, said the measure was not punitive as those who test positive before their condition degenerate can receive treatment for drug dependence and other health challenges.

He congratulated the NYSC boss on his recent appointment, describing the scheme as a national treasure and a

veritable instrument of national unity.

“The drug scourge has continued to devastate our kids, families, and communities everywhere. There’s nowhere you go in the country that you don’t have a drug abuse problem,” he stated.

“One in seven Nigerians between the ages of 15 and 64 uses drugs. You have mentioned our efforts to cut off access and availability of these drugs but beyond that, we have to work with all stakeholders, including NYSC to ensure drastic reduction in the demand for drugs by our youths and one of our strategies to address this is through our drug integrity test, which we’re advocating that NYSC should embrace for corps members.”

According to him, the drug supply reduction will also be accompanied by drug demand reduction through preventive measures, as well as

counselling and rehabilitation.

“These are important areas for further collaboration. You have introduced in the camps the War Against Drug Abuse clubs, which is fantastic. One other important area of collaboration is the question of drug integrity tests for youth corps members.

“It’s a major drug demand reduction effort. In the same way we said, if you are getting married, both the bride and the groom should bring a drug-free certificate.

“This is because it is always better to detect drug use early before it gets to addiction, which eventually could get to psychiatric problems, and it becomes a danger to the user and society,” Marwa stated.

135,000 Lagos residents living with HIV – Health Commissioner

By Oluwatosin Ologun



The Lagos State Commissioner for Health, Professor Akin Abayomi, has revealed that 135,224 residents in the state are currently living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

He disclosed this during the 2025 Lagos State Ministerial Press Briefing held at Alausa, Ikeja, while highlighting the achievements of the health sector in the past year under the administration of Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu.

“The estimated hypertension prevalence in Lagos is 20%, 70 per cent unaware. Obesity prevalence in Lagos State stands at 12 per cent, while 135,224 people living in Lagos State are living with HIV,” he stated.

On malaria treatment, he emphasised that “no patient would be treated for the disease without a confirmed test result, as the state intensifies efforts to reduce misdiagnosis and inappropriate drug use.”

Abayomi said that the state government has engaged over 100 religious leaders as HIV and AIDS ambassadors.

He added that on cancer, the state government has provided free screening for 154,228 patients for cervical cancer and treatment of 8,613 with thermal ablation.

He also said screenings were done for 300 for prostate cancer.

On efforts to curb the rate of diabetes and hypertension in the state, he said the

government has provided 667 BP machines, 770 Glucometers, and 332 stethoscopes for general hospitals and primary health centres.

He also said the state government screened 312,927 persons for hypertension and diabetes.

He disclosed that, in Lagos with a population of 30 million, there is an estimated hypertension prevalence of 20 per cent, and 70 per cent of them are unaware

He also revealed that the obesity prevalence in Lagos is 12 per cent while diabetes prevalence is 6 per cent, with 50 per cent of them being unaware.

Benue govt appoints 2baba as technical adviser on entertainment

By Oluwatosin Ologun



Benue State Governor, Hyacinth Alia has appointed Legendary Nigerian musician, Innocent Idibia, popularly known as 2Baba as the Technical Adviser on Entertainment and Community Outreach.

The appointment was made public during a meeting between the governor and the music icon.

In the clip, Governor Alia lauded 2Baba's unwavering dedication to Benue State—his state of origin—and praised his contributions to Nigeria's entertainment industry.

“Once you say 2Face, people start dancing—even without a song. So we are happy you are here,” Governor Alia remarked during the meeting.

“On behalf of the Benue State

Government and our very good people, we want to give you some more responsibilities, in addition to what you've already been doing, because you can do even more.”

He continued, “You can help us chart the way forward to improve other people's lives and to gain from your wisdom and advice as well. So I am pleased to announce that we will make you a Technical Adviser to the Governor on Entertainment and Community Outreach.”

The governor expressed optimism that 2Baba's experience in the creative industry would inspire young people across the state and support efforts aimed at community development.

The appointment comes in the wake of recent changes in the singer's

personal life, making headlines.

In late January, 2Baba confirmed his separation from his estranged wife, actress Annie Idibia.

Days later, he publicly acknowledged his relationship with Natasha Osawaru, a lawmaker in the Edo State House of Assembly.

By February, he had proposed to Osawaru, asserting that their relationship was independent of his split from Annie.

Despite the headlines surrounding his private life, 2Baba remains a respected figure in Nigerian entertainment, known not just for his music but also for his advocacy and philanthropic work.

Could next Pope be Nigerian?

By Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

More than 72 hours after the death of Pope Francis, the Catholic Church has entered the Novendiales—a traditional nine-day period of mourning. The Pope's body will lie in state at St. Peter's Basilica, giving the faithful an opportunity to pay their final respects and start the process of electing a new pope. The pope Francis funeral, expected between the fourth and sixth day after his passing, will draw dignitaries, religious leaders, and pilgrims from across the globe. Meanwhile, unofficial ceremonies are being planned in his homeland of Argentina.

In a few days, following the funeral rites, the College of Cardinals—those under the age of 80—will gather in the Sistine Chapel for a papal conclave. There, in secrecy, they will elect the 267th pope of the Roman Catholic Church. Up to four votes per day may take place, with black smoke signaling an inconclusive vote and white smoke announcing the selection of a new pope.

Nigeria's Growing Voice in the Catholic World

With over 30 million Catholics, Nigeria stands as one of the powerhouses of the faith in Africa. According to the most recent statistics, approximately 70% of Nigerian Catholics live in the southeastern region. Yet despite this large following, only one of Nigeria's four cardinals is eligible to participate in the upcoming conclave. Of the four, only Peter Ebere Cardinal Okpaleke is under the age of 80, making him the sole Nigerian voice among the global electors.

The oldest of the Nigerian cardinals is Francis Cardinal Arinze, aged 93, who was made a cardinal in 1985 and previously served as Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation for Divine Worship. Anthony Olubunmi Cardinal Okogie, now 89, was elevated in 2003 and is known for his strong advocacy on social justice issues; he served as Archbishop of Lagos. John Olorunfemi Cardinal



Onaiyekan, aged 81, became a cardinal in 2012 and is widely respected for his interfaith dialogue work and tenure as Archbishop of Abuja. The youngest, and currently the only voting member of the Nigerian cardinals, is Peter Ebere Cardinal Okpaleke, aged 62. Elevated to the cardinalate in 2022, he currently serves as Bishop of Ekwulobia.

Peter Ebere Cardinal Okpaleke – A Rising Force

In the heart of Nigeria's southeast, Cardinal Okpaleke has become a symbol of integrity, humility, and pastoral leadership. Initially appointed Bishop of Ahiara in 2012, his tenure was challenged by regional tensions, ultimately leading to his resignation in 2018. Rather than assert authority, Okpaleke chose unity over conflict.

In 2020, Pope Francis appointed him Bishop of the newly formed Diocese of Ekwulobia. Just two years later, he was elevated to the College of Cardinals. At only 62, he is one of the youngest voting cardinals from sub-Saharan Africa.

Why Cardinal Okpaleke Stands Out to be a next pope

Cardinal Okpaleke's theological training in Rome, his multilingual abilities, and his cross-cultural sensitivity give him a truly global perspective. His pastoral approach is deeply rooted in community healing and

inclusivity, qualities much needed in today's fragmented world. His resignation from Ahiara Diocese, rather than impose leadership, displayed a rare moral integrity and a commitment to Church unity that won widespread admiration.

Although Cardinal Okpaleke has not expressed any ambition for the papacy, many within the Church see his rise as significant. His experience and temperament align well with the Church's evolving global mission.

"Cardinal Okpaleke's humility and integrity make him an ideal candidate to help lead the global Church," says Rev. Fr. Emeka Nwachukwu, a lecturer in Ecclesiology.

Could a Nigerian Pope Become Reality?
The prospect of an African—or specifically Nigerian—pope is no longer seen as improbable. In 2005, Cardinal Arinze was once considered a frontrunner. Today, attention is turning to a younger generation.

As the conclave approaches, and the world watches the Sistine Chapel's chimney, many Nigerians are daring to hope that their voice may resonate in the Vatican more loudly than ever before.

Cardinal Okpaleke may not be campaigning, but in the silent deliberations behind locked doors, his name might just rise with the smoke.

I have no plan to fire Jerome Powell – Trump

By **Fatimah Idera**

President Donald Trump on Tuesday backed off from threats to fire Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell after days of intensifying criticisms of the central bank chief for not cutting interest rates.

“I have no intention of firing him,” Trump told reporters in the Oval Office on Tuesday. “I would like to see him be a little more active in terms of his idea to lower interest rates,” he added.

The de-escalation drew an immediate thumbs up from Wall Street, as equity index futures jumped by nearly 2% on the resumption of trading on Tuesday evening. Stocks, bonds and the U.S. dollar had all slumped on Monday after Trump over the Easter holiday weekend repeatedly attacked Powell for not cutting interest rates further since the president resumed office in January.

Read also: Trump Tariff pain, the growing evidence

“Whether this reflects Monday’s brutal foretaste of what would happen in markets if he did try to fire Powell, or was the plan all along, it is a clear positive,” wrote Evercore ISI Vice Chairman Krishna Guha. “It materially reduces the likelihood of worst-case outcomes including stagflation and the morphing of the tariff crisis into a sovereign debt crisis, though these risks



remain.”

Also, during his question-and-answer volley with reporters on Tuesday, Trump expressed optimism that a trade deal with China could “substantially” cut tariffs, which also provided a boost for investors. He said a deal would result in “substantially” lower tariffs on Chinese goods, suggesting that a final deal will not “be anywhere near” current tariff rates. But “it won’t be zero,” he added.

The combination of the rocky rollout of Trump’s tariffs and, more recently, his repeated barbs at Powell and the Fed had rattled investors and intensified selling of U.S. assets including stocks, U.S. Treasuries and the dollar.

Trump’s broadsides were often accompanied by threatening remarks, such as last week’s social media posting that Powell’s termination as Fed chair “cannot come fast enough” and more personal jabs, such as calling

Powell “a major loser.” The threats spooked financial markets that view the Fed’s independence as critical to underpinning its credibility as the world’s most influential central bank and a cornerstone of global financial stability.

But while Trump seems to have set aside those threats for now, his criticisms of Fed rate policy remain just as pointed.

“We think that it’s a perfect time to lower the rate, and we’d like to see our chairman be early or on time, as opposed to late,” Trump said.

Trump’s sour grapes with Powell date back to the Republican’s first term in the White House. Trump elevated Powell from a Fed Board of Governors member to the central bank’s head but was soon irritated by ongoing rate increases under Powell’s watch. Trump openly mused about firing Powell but was ultimately dissuaded by his advisers.

UK employer pay rises hold at 3% – Report

By Fatimah Idera

Pay increases granted by British employers stayed at three per cent in the three months to March, according to figures from human resources data firm Brightmine that are likely to be welcomed by the Bank of England.

It marked the fourth consecutive rolling quarter of pay awards at that level and the joint lowest pace of increase since December 2021.

BoE officials are watching closely to see how employers react to an increase in social security contributions – known in Britain as national insurance – and a higher national minimum wage. Both took effect in April.

“Currently, the data isn’t showing any signs of a knee-jerk reaction to recent national insurance changes,” said Sheila Attwood, Brightmine’s senior content manager.



“However, we do know that employers are taking a watch and wait approach, so we expect to see that reflected in the second half of this year.”

Britain’s minimum wage went up this month by almost seven per cent. Attwood said Brightmine had seen more pay deals awarded at the lower end of its range, but the overall picture was one of stability.

The BoE is watching for signs that inflation pressure in Britain’s jobs market is abating sufficiently for it to carry on cutting interest rates. It is widely expected to do so on May 8.

Brightmine analysed 125 pay settlements effective in the three months to March 31, covering around 192,000 employees.

Florida sues Snapchat owner for allegedly addicting children

By Fatimah Idera

Florida on Tuesday sued photo-sharing app Snapchat for allegedly employing features that addict children and opening accounts for children age 13 and younger.

The complaint said Snapchat features including infinite scrolling, push notifications, auto-play videos, and metrics that provide user feedback violate a 2024 state law signed by Governor Ron DeSantis, and designed to protect children’s mental health from compulsive social media exposure.

Florida called Snap’s conduct “particularly egregious” because the Santa Monica, California-based company markets Snapchat as safe for 13-year-olds, though it can be used to view pornography and buy drugs, among other harmful activities.

By failing to remove 13-year-old users



and require parental consent for 14- and 15-year-old users, “Snap is actively deceiving Florida parents about the risks of allowing their teens to access this platform,” the complaint said.

The complaint was announced by Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier and filed in a Santa Rosa County state court in the state’s panhandle. Uthmeier and

DeSantis are Republicans.

In a statement, Snap said Florida’s law infringes the First Amendment constitutional rights of adults and children.

Snap also said there are “more privacy-conscious solutions” at the operating system, app store, and device level to address online safety and age verification.

Two technology industry trade groups, NetChoice and the Computer & Communications Industry Association, are challenging the Florida law’s constitutionality in the federal court in Tallahassee, the state’s capital.

The case is Florida v Snap Inc, Florida Circuit Court, Santa Rosa County, No. 25000258CAAXMX.

IMF slashes global growth outlook on impact of Trump tariffs

By Fatimah Idera

Britain's economic growth forecast for 2025 received the sharpest downgrade of any major European economy from the International Monetary Fund on Tuesday as the UK braces for the global fallout from the U.S. President Donald Trump's trade tariffs.

The Fund also said British inflation would be higher this year than it had thought in January, and higher than in any other Group of Seven country – showing the economic risks facing finance minister Rachel Reeves and Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey, who will attend IMF spring meetings this week.

Britain remains on course to grow more strongly than France, Italy or Germany in 2025, the IMF said.

But the pace of the increase was revised down to 1.1% from January's projection of 1.6% – more sharply than for any of the others.

As well as the impact of Trump's tariffs and the steep increase in borrowing costs in financial markets in recent weeks, the IMF linked the downgrade to weak momentum in the economy at the end of 2024 and the hit to demand from inflation.

The IMF trimmed its forecast for UK growth in 2026 to 1.4% from a previous 1.5%.

IMF chief economist Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas told reporters that the Fund expected three more interest rate cuts by the BoE this year after a quarter-point cut in February.

The higher U.S. import tariffs were likely to reduce pressure on inflation in Britain, as in most economies, Gourinchas said. BoE rate-setter Megan



Greene had earlier said she expected the diversion of exports away from the U.S. would push down inflation in Britain.

Despite the weaker outlook, the Fund bumped up its forecast for British inflation this year by 0.7 percentage points from its January forecast, to 3.1%.

On average, the IMF's inflation forecast for advanced economies rose 0.4 percentage points, while that for the United States, where Trump's tariffs will hit prices directly, jumped 1.0 points.

The IMF said the increase in its forecast for UK inflation "primarily reflects one-off regulated price changes".

Energy and water bills for households in Britain rose this month, alongside a hike in social security contributions paid by employers and a nearly seven per cent rise in the minimum wage, which could also increase inflation pressure.

The IMF said it expected British inflation to slow to 2.2 per cent in 2026,

close to the BoE's two per cent target.

In her response, Reeves highlighted how the IMF still saw stronger economic growth in the UK in 2025 than in Europe's other big countries.

"The report also clearly shows that the world has changed, which is why I will be in Washington this week defending British interests and making the case for free and fair trade," Reeves said in a statement.

She is due to meet U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent to push Britain's case for a trade agreement with Washington that could lower or eliminate the tariffs imposed by Trump on UK exports.

The IMF's new forecast of 1.1 per cent growth in Britain's economy this year is stronger than the 1.0 per cent expansion seen by the government's budget watchdog and the BoE's forecast of 0.75 per cent.

Sanwo-Olu: Lagos to strengthen tech, cybersecurity ties with Sweden

By Friday Omosola

Lagos State Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, has reaffirmed his administration's commitment to strengthening bilateral relations with Sweden in the areas of information technology, cybersecurity, and infrastructure development for the benefit of Lagos residents.

The governor made this known yesterday during a courtesy visit by Her Royal Highness, Crown Princess Alice Désirée of Sweden and Duchess of Västergötland, to the Lagos House, Marina.

Governor Sanwo-Olu was represented at the event by his deputy, Obafemi Hamzat.

Highlighting Lagos as the heartbeat of Nigeria and a significant player on the African continent, the governor expressed optimism that the Crown Princess's engagement with the Lagos business community would foster mutually beneficial development opportunities.

"We need a lot of technology. We are laying about 6,800 kilometres of fibre optic cables across the state. We've completed the first phase—around 3,500 kilometres—to enhance bandwidth penetration.

"Excitingly, many companies are investing—Google is building a data centre, and three others are under construction in Lagos," he said.

He added that with a population of 22



million—double that of Sweden—Lagos offers vast opportunities for collaboration in IT and infrastructure.

However, Désirée commended the Lagos State Government for its role as Nigeria's economic powerhouse, noting the impressive scale of business activity in the state.

"We are excited to be here and to explore the growth potential of the Swedish-Nigerian partnership. There are vast opportunities for further cooperation, and we're pleased to support Swedish companies already operating in Nigeria," she said.

Additionally, Sweden's Minister of Infrastructure and Housing, Andreas Carlson, noted that the Crown Princess's visit was aimed at strengthening ties in green economy initiatives, digital innovation, and knowledge exchange.

He announced that Lagos would host Sweden's first-ever trade office in Nigeria, officially inaugurated later that day by the Crown Princess.

"Her Royal Highness the Crown Princess Victoria is here to emphasise the importance of deepening the strong relationship between Sweden and Nigeria.

"We see immense potential for collaboration in digital and green transitions. Lagos is clearly the ideal starting point," Carlson said.

Désirée and her delegation arrived in Lagos yesterday morning and were received at the Presidential Wing of the Murtala Mohammed International Airport by the Secretary to the State Government, Abimbola Salu-Hundeyin, Commissioner for Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Mrs Bolaji Dada, and other top officials.

The Crown Princess was warmly welcomed with cultural performances by the Lagos State Cultural Troupe, and joined in the festivities, dancing to the delight of spectators.

Brazil calls for stricter emission goals ahead of climate summit

By Fatimah Idera

Brazil, which hosts the 2025 United Nations Climate Summit has a main goal of persuading Europe, China and other developing economies to commit to cutting greenhouse gas emissions enough to keep global warming well below 2 degrees Celsius, three people with knowledge of the country's plans revealed.

Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres have scheduled a closed online meeting on Wednesday to talk with leaders from the world's 35 biggest economies about stronger commitments.

Brazilian ambassador and COP30 president Andre Correa do Lago, was in Beijing last week, where he discussed national pledges with Chinese officials.

He said that bringing NDCs in line with the Paris Agreement was not a strictly Brazilian goal, because each nation sets its own target, but Brazil was encouraging countries to get there.

"We're not where Paris has recommended," he added. "We hope the numbers will come closer."

Brazil's Foreign Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

This year's global climate summit, COP30, hosted in the Amazonian city of Belem in November, marks the 10th anniversary of the Paris Accord, when signatories agreed to limit warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels.

Until now, though, nations have only committed to limiting warming to around 2.6 degrees Celsius, a catastrophic level that scientists believe could lead to the collapse of several



natural systems that humans depend on.

U.S. President Donald Trump pulled his country, the world's biggest economy, out of the Paris Agreement, so closing the gap will be difficult. Brazilian diplomats hope it will be possible with a more ambitious pledge from China, the world's biggest polluter, as well as other emerging economies and Europe.

Brazilian diplomats are working closely with U.N. officials to encourage countries to file new emissions targets, called Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), by September. Most countries missed a February deadline.

"In principle, Belem will go down in history as the COP with NDCs below 1.5 or 2 degrees," said one of the sources, who requested anonymity to discuss sensitive diplomatic dynamics.

Given China's importance to global climate talks, Brazil is putting added emphasis on the topic as president this year of the BRICS group, which includes

China and other major developing economies.

Lula is set to meet Xi in person at least twice before the September deadline for new pledges, including at a June gathering of BRICS leaders in Brazil.

China has given no sign it plans to boost its target, and its economy has shown signs of flagging due to a punishing trade war with the U.S.

"The economic concerns that are constraining China's NDC are still there, if not exacerbated by Trump's tariffs," said Yao Zhe, global policy advisor with Greenpeace in Beijing.

China's Foreign Ministry did not comment specifically on the country's plans for its emissions target.

"Climate governance is currently facing headwinds. Only by strengthening multilateralism and international cooperation can we effectively address global issues," a spokesperson for the ministry said in a statement.

6.2-Magnitude Earthquake jolts Istanbul, sends residents fleeing buildings

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



A magnitude 6.2 earthquake struck Istanbul early Wednesday, sending tremors through the metropolis of more than 15 million and sparking fear among residents who fled buildings in panic. Turkey's Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) reported that the quake struck at a shallow depth of six miles beneath the Sea of Marmara, approximately 25 miles southwest of the city.

While no casualties or significant damage were immediately reported, the quake prompted mass evacuations from homes, schools, and offices. Footage showed crowds gathering in open spaces, many clutching phones as they sought updates and frantically reached out to loved ones.

"I was in the middle of a meeting when everything started to shake. We ran out immediately," said one Istanbul resident. "People were crying, calling family members—no one knew what was happening."

The United States Geological Survey confirmed the shallow depth of the quake and noted that the seismic event was followed by several aftershocks, the strongest of which registered a magnitude of 5.3. Authorities warned of potential structural risks and advised residents to stay away from damaged or aging buildings until thorough inspections could be conducted.

Read also: 7.7-Magnitude earthquake rocks myanmar, triggers widespread damage across southeast Asia
AFAD continues to monitor the situation and coordinate with local

emergency teams. So far, no power outages or infrastructure damage have been officially reported.

Turkey lies atop two major fault lines, making it one of the most seismically active regions in the world. The memory of the catastrophic earthquakes of February 2023—when a 7.8-magnitude quake and a powerful aftershock devastated 11 provinces, killing over 53,000 people in Turkey and 6,000 in neighboring Syria—remains fresh in national memory.

Officials are expected to give another update later today as assessment efforts continue.

Residents are urged to follow emergency guidelines and remain vigilant in the event of further aftershocks.

Liverpool on brink of title after Arsenal held by Palace

By **Helen Okechukwu**

Arne Slot's side were watching in anticipation of an Arsenal defeat that would have secured Liverpool's record-equalling 20th English title.

They didn't get their wish to start the party just yet, but Liverpool look certain to lift the trophy for the first time since 2020 after Jean-Philippe Mateta's late equaliser for Palace at the Emirates Stadium.

Liverpool are 12 points ahead of second-placed Arsenal, who have just four games left and an inferior goal difference of +34 compared to the leaders' +44.

The Reds, who have five matches remaining, will be assured of matching the 20 titles won by bitter rivals Manchester United if they avoid defeat against Tottenham at Anfield on Sunday.

While the champagne remains on ice for Slot's men, it is only a matter of time before Liverpool finish their relentless march to the title after Arsenal's third draw in their last four league games. Jakub Kiwior put the Gunners ahead early on, but Eberechi Eze equalised for Palace.

Leandro Trossard restored Arsenal's advantage before half-time, only for Mateta to come off the bench and bag a sublime leveller with seven minutes left.

Arsenal had delayed Liverpool's celebrations by routing Ipswich 4-0 on Sunday, when a defeat for the Gunners and a Reds win over Leicester would have ended the title race.

Mikel Arteta's team again kept Liverpool waiting a few days longer, but their real focus was already on Tuesday's Champions League clash with Paris Saint-Germain.



Arsenal will be making their first Champions League last-four appearance since 2009 when they host the French club in the first leg. Arteta had insisted he would not rest his stars against Palace with a view to protecting them for the PSG showdown.

But he opted to leave Bukayo Saka on the bench after the England winger was left limping by a foul from Ipswich's Leif Davis last weekend, with Mikel Merino and Ben White not fit to feature.

Title within touching distance
With Palace facing an FA Cup semi-final clash against Aston Villa on Saturday, Oliver Glasner started without key forwards Mateta and Ismaila Sarr. Arsenal looked set to take advantage of Palace's Wembley distraction when they went in front after just three minutes.

It was another success for Arsenal's set-piece coach Nicolas Jover as they scored from a well-worked dead-ball routine for a Premier League leading 16th time this season.

Martin Odegaard whipped a free-kick into the Palace area, and Kiwior was left completely unmarked to power his header past Dean Henderson from 12 yards.

The Poland defender's first league goal

since February 2024 was almost followed by an immediate Palace equaliser as David Raya saved Daniel Munoz's volley from an acute angle. So switched on when attacking from set-pieces, Arsenal were caught out from one when Palace equalised in the 27th minute.

Adam Wharton picked out the unmarked Eze on the edge of the area, and the England midfielder's agile volley went in off the post after bouncing past an unsighted Raya.

Trossard put Arsenal back ahead in the 42nd minute as the Belgian took Jurrien Timber's pass and deftly evaded two Palace defenders before clipping a deflected finish into the bottom corner from 12 yards.

Arteta took a risk by sending on Saka for the last half an hour, but it was Palace who were on the offensive as Justin Devenny's header was tipped over by Raya. Henderson made a brilliant save to push Saka's volley over, and Palace took advantage of that escape to snatch an 83rd-minute equaliser.

William Saliba carelessly conceded possession, and Mateta pounced to chip a superb finish over the out-of-position Raya from 30 yards to leave Liverpool within touching distance of the title.