



Tinubu applauds Tah's emergence as AfDB President **Pg 4**

Gov poll 2026: INEC sets dates for Ekiti, Osun **Pg 7**



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Appeals Court temporarily reinstates Trump-era tariffs

President will use all tools to advance trade policy that works for all Americans. – White House **Pg 19**



Toxic chemicals found in Nigeria's water, expert raises alarm **Pg 10 & 11**



Russian commander killed in mysterious explosion **Pg 22**

Comedian Russell Brand pleads not guilty to rape, sexual assault charges **Pg 23**



Presidency rebuts Atiku's claims, highlights economic progress under Tinubu

By Friday Omosola

Bayo Onanuga, the Special Adviser to President Bola Tinubu on Information and Strategy has issued a strong rebuttal to recent criticisms made by former Vice President Atiku Abubakar.

Onanuga in a statement posted on his social media platforms described Atiku's remarks as unfair and driven by personal animosity rather than objective analysis.

Reacting to Atiku's condemnation of Tinubu's economic policies and overall performance, Onanuga said the former vice president had failed to acknowledge the substantial reforms and progress achieved under the current administration over the past two years.

"Unless former Vice President Atiku allowed personal grievances to cloud his judgement, he should, in good conscience, acknowledge the significant progress and positive achievements made by this administration," Onanuga said.

He defended the administration's economic reforms, particularly the removal of the fuel subsidy and the unification of the foreign exchange market—initiatives he claimed past administrations, including the Obasanjo-Atiku era, failed to implement despite recognising their necessity.

"During the campaign, Tinubu never promised that the reforms would be painless. But he was clear they were necessary to rescue the country from the brink of fiscal collapse," he stated.

Onanuga highlighted key economic milestones under Tinubu, including a sharp rise in the Nigerian Exchange's All-Share Index, from 50,000 to over 110,000, and a growth in market capitalisation from approximately ₦30 trillion to ₦69.4 trillion.



He also refuted Atiku's assertion that government policies are anti-people, noting that the administration increased investments in social safety nets, introduced targeted interventions for vulnerable groups, and more than doubled the minimum wage, from ₦30,000 to ₦70,000, with some states reportedly paying as high as ₦85,000.

Addressing Atiku's claims about the inaccessibility of education, Onanuga cited the Student Loan Scheme as a landmark intervention, saying it had already benefited over 600,000 students.

"The loans cover school fees and living allowances," he noted, adding that the scheme currently excludes private institutions such as Atiku's own American University in Yola.

Onanuga also accused the former vice president of spreading misinformation about the administration's borrowing practices.

He clarified that the government's 2025 budget was not reliant on new loans, as allegedly suggested by Atiku, and revealed that Nigeria's debt service-to-revenue ratio had dropped from 93% to 60% under Tinubu's leadership.

Furthermore, he disclosed that the Tinubu administration had repaid a \$3.4 billion COVID-19-era IMF loan and ended decades-long reliance on Ways and Means deficit financing.

While admitting that the reforms had brought challenges, Onanuga insisted the government was making concerted efforts to mitigate the impact.

He quoted the president's recent anniversary address, stating that inflation was easing, food production had improved, and investor confidence had returned.

He urged the opposition to embrace constructive criticism rather than political rhetoric.

"When Atiku opposes government policies, he should also offer a solution," Onanuga stated. "Otherwise, his opposition statements will be dismissed as mere partisan rhetoric and cheap talk."

He said Nigerians should judge the Tinubu administration based on its performance, not the opinions of those who, according to Onanuga, "had their opportunities to lead and bungled the chance."

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
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SIZE	TOTAL RATE
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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
5X4	61,500.00
5X3	57,819.00
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POLITICAL COLOUR

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4X2	22,350.00
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HALF PAGE FRONT	5,500,000.00

PUBLIC NOTICE BLACK & WHITE

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9X4	137,875.00
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
5X2	32,916.50
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3X2	19,750.00
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1X1	3,292.00

PRODUCT BLACK & WHITE

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FULL PAGE	210,795.50
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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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5X3	29,858.00
5X2	22,841.00
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2X1	5,439.50
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PHOTO NEWS (4X4)	53,333.30	4,250.00	57,583.30
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Tinubu applauds Tah's emergence as AfDB President

By Friday Omosola



President Bola Tinubu has congratulated President Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani of Mauritania following the election of Sidi Ould Tah as the new President of the African Development Bank (AfDB) Group.

Tah, a former Mauritanian Finance Minister and Director-General of the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA), was elected as the ninth president of the AfDB during the institution's Annual Meetings held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

In a telephone conversation from Lagos yesterday, Tinubu commended the transparent and credible process that produced Tah as the successor to Nigeria's Akinwumi Adesina, who is set to leave office in September after serving two five-year terms.

Tinubu expressed confidence in the new AfDB leader, citing his extensive experience and previous leadership roles.

He reaffirmed Nigeria's commitment to the Bank and pledged to collaborate with Tah to advance key priorities such as infrastructure development, agricultural transformation, energy access, and climate resilience across the continent.

Nigeria, the largest shareholder among the AfDB's 81 member countries, which include 54 African and 27 non-African states, has maintained a strategic partnership with the institution.

In May 2025, the Federal Government approved a \$500 million capital replenishment for the Nigeria Trust Fund (NTF), extending its operations for another 15 years.

Established in 1976, the NTF is a Nigeria-funded special facility under the AfDB designed to support development projects across Africa.

Tinubu noted that the fund's renewal reaffirms Nigeria's dedication to the Bank's mission of promoting inclusive growth and poverty reduction.

The President assured Tah of Nigeria's full support in implementing his vision for the Bank, which includes enhancing regional financial institutions, promoting economic independence across the continent, and investing in climate-resilient infrastructure while harnessing Africa's demographic potential for sustainable development.

Tinubu also thanked the outgoing President, Adesina, for his service and wished him success in his future endeavours.

Nguru Emirate Council secures FG backing for tree planting initiative

By Friday Omosola



The Federal Government (FG) has pledged strong support for the Nguru Emirate Council's environmental sustainability efforts, particularly its ambitious tree planting programme, aimed at combating climate change and land degradation in Yobe State.

The Minister of Environment, Balarabe Lawal, gave the assurance during a courtesy visit by the Emir of Nguru, His Royal Highness Mustafa Ibn Kyari, to the Ministry in Abuja.

Lawal confirmed the FG's readiness to partner with traditional institutions in tackling environmental challenges.

He announced that the Ministry, through its agencies—including the National Agency for the Great Green Wall (NAGGW), the Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes (ACReSAL) project, and the Nigeria Erosion and Watershed Management Project (NEWMAP)—is working to restore degraded land, reduce

greenhouse gas emissions, plant trees, and prevent desert encroachment across Nguru, Yobe State, and other parts of the country.

To support the Emirate Council's target of planting 50,000 trees this year, the Ministry will provide 100,000 tree seedlings, the Minister confirmed.

He also highlighted other priority areas such as the Nguru Watershed, the Hadejia-Jama'are River Basin, and the Lake Chad Basin.

Describing the Emir as a committed environmentalist, Lawal pledged the Ministry's continued support under President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda on environmental protection and climate resilience.

In response, the Emir of Nguru expressed appreciation for the Minister's swift action on ecological issues affecting the Emirate, particularly through initiatives being

implemented by NAGGW, ACReSAL, and NEWMAP.

Accompanying the Emir was Abba Liman, Chairman of the Forest Farmers Cooperative Society Nguru, who briefed the Minister on the Council's involvement in agroforestry, climate-smart agriculture, livestock development, environmental protection, youth and women employment, and access to agricultural finance.

Liman praised the ongoing collaboration between the Ministry and the Emirate Council, while the Director-General of NAGGW, Abubakar Sale, also lauded the Emirate's proactive role in climate action.

It will be recalled that the Presidential Committee on the Nguru Ecological Intervention has already submitted its report to the Minister.

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Courtesy:

Hon. Joshua Audu Gana

Member of the House of Representatives representing
Lavun, Edati, and Mokwa Federal Constituency



Gov poll 2026: INEC sets dates for Ekiti, Osun

By Damilola Olufemi

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has announced that the governorship elections in Ekiti and Osun states will hold on Saturday, June 20, and Saturday, August 8, 2026, respectively.

INEC Chairman, Professor Mahmood Yakubu, disclosed this during the swearing-in ceremony for six newly confirmed Resident Electoral Commissioners (RECs), an event held in Abuja on Friday.

Yakubu stated that preparations are also in progress to conduct by-elections to fill vacant legislative seats at both the national and state levels.

For Ekiti, the electoral calendar shows that party primaries will take place from October 20 to November 10, 2025. Political parties are expected to upload their nomination forms by 6:00 p.m. on December 22, 2025. The final list of candidates will be published on January 18, 2026, and campaigns will officially run from January 21 until 24 hours before the polls.

“In line with the requirements of the law, the commission is under legal obligation to publish the notices for major elections not later than 360 days before the date fixed for the election,” Yakubu explained.

He added, “The last governorship elections in Ekiti and Osun were held in June and July 2022, and the governors’ four-year terms will end next year. Therefore, the commission has approved the timetable and schedule of activities for the 2026 elections.”

As for Osun State, party primaries are scheduled for November 24 to December 15, 2025. The nomination portal will close by 6:00 p.m. on February 9, 2026. The final candidate list will be released on March 9, and campaigns will commence on March 11.

Yakubu stated, “The final list of candidates will be published on 9th March 2026, while campaign in public by



political parties will commence on 11th March 2026 and end 24 hours before election day.”

He confirmed that the full schedule has been uploaded to INEC’s website and social media pages to ensure public access and guide political stakeholders accordingly.

INEC deploys RECs

Meanwhile, some RECs have been redeployed as part of the Commission’s ongoing efforts to improve electoral preparedness. The affected officials include Sa’ad Idris (Gombe), Johnson Sinikem (Cross River), Feyijimi Ibiyemi (Ogun), Mukhtar Gajiram (Taraba), Chukwuemeka Ibeziako (Abia), and Umar Garba (Sokoto).

“These redeployments are necessary to support the Commission’s work ahead of the upcoming elections,” Yakubu noted.

Speaking to the newly sworn-in commissioners, Yakubu reminded them of the weight of their responsibility. “With the swearing-in of six RECs today, all vacancies have been filled in the 36 states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory,” he said.

“The conduct of elections is not only a huge responsibility but also a sacred duty. You are now the Commission’s

representatives in your assigned states. The work is undoubtedly challenging, but your collective experience justifies the trust placed in you.”

He emphasised that the redeployments were administrative and routine, but could be repeated as needed. He further cautioned the RECs to remain accountable, uphold the law, and maintain public trust.

“You must never act independently or think that you can act in violation of the law, regulations and guidelines or defy the commission without consequences. We will hold you accountable for your actions and inactions,” Yakubu warned.

He also addressed concerns surrounding the delay in conducting pending bye-elections and restarting the Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) process nationwide.

“The number of bye-elections has now risen to 17,” he confirmed. “We are aware of the urgency to commence the CVR, particularly given the forthcoming governorship election in Anambra State. We want to assure Nigerians that we are finalising our preparations for both activities, the details of which will soon be made public.”

Rivers Emergency: Fubara hails Tinubu's intervention in restoring order

By Friday Omosola

Suspended Rivers State Governor, Siminalayi Fubara, has applauded President Bola Tinubu for his decisive and timely intervention in the state's political crisis.

He stated that the president's involvement prevented a complete breakdown of governance.

Speaking yesterday in Port Harcourt during a meeting with stakeholders and leaders of the Simplified Movement to mark his second year in office, Fubara disclosed that efforts were already underway to restore normalcy across the executive and legislative branches.

According to him, Tinubu's declaration of emergency rule helped stabilise the situation and ensured that constitutional order was not derailed.

He called on Rivers residents and Nigerians to appreciate the president's role in steering the state away from chaos, assuring that he would resume full duties in his office soon.

"We are making progress in the reconciliation process," the governor said. "Soon, both the executive and legislative institutions will resume functioning fully. We must also recover the harmony we once enjoyed for the benefit of our state."

Governor Fubara urged his supporters to embrace the peace process, stressing that personal interests must give way to the collective good of Rivers State.

He noted that Tinubu's action came at a critical moment and was instrumental in averting what could have been a deeper crisis.

"Let us be thankful to Mr President for stepping in at the right time," he said. "His wisdom and sense of timing played a vital role in preventing further escalation. He deserves our gratitude. I also thank



everyone who encouraged his intervention."

Fubara also appealed to all parties involved to put aside grievances and commit fully to reconciliation efforts.

"We all need to come down from our high horses and give peace a chance. That is what the state needs now. It's not about individual pride but the future of our people," he added.

The governor noted that the current situation had disrupted plans for a more elaborate second-anniversary celebration, which would have showcased key achievements across various sectors of the state.

Nonetheless, he expressed optimism that his administration would emerge stronger and more focused on delivering democratic dividends once stability is fully restored.

He acknowledged the concerns of those who were dissatisfied with how the crisis had been managed, but reiterated that every action taken was intended to safeguard the peace and welfare of Rivers people.

"If anyone felt let down, I seek your understanding," he said. "My intentions have always been to protect the interests of the state above all else."

Addressing his relationship with the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike, Fubara expressed hope that reconciliation was within reach.

He confirmed that a number of peace meetings had taken place since the president's intervention, including private discussions at Wike's residence in Abuja.

"There's no reason why peace shouldn't return between me and my former boss," Fubara said. "Dialogue is ongoing. Reconciliation will come."

He expressed deep appreciation to the people of Rivers State and Nigerians across the country who offered support during the political upheaval, promising to continue governing with humility and respect.

"Respect is fundamental in leadership," the governor remarked. "I want to earn it, not demand it. I remain committed to the people who placed their trust in me."

LASU bans wearing of nose ring, tattoos, others by students

By Alade Adisa



The management of the Lagos State University, LASU, Ojo, has banned the wearing of nose rings, tattoo, transparent dresses among others on campus.

The Vice Chancellor, Prof. Ibiyemi Olatunji-Bello, gave the directive in a memo to deans, Provosts and other top management staff of the institution.

This is just as the management of the university has fixed next Monday for a walk against indecent dressing on campus.

“The Vice Chancellor having noted the continuous disregard for the University’s rules and regulations on indecent dressing by students has directed that:

“Provost, Deans, Heads of Departments and Faculty Officers should ensure decent dressing among students within their various College/Schools/Faculties; all lecturers are to deny any indecently

dressed students from attending lectures.

*In view of the above, and for clarity, the following are modes of dressing which constitute indecent dressing among students of Lagos State University:

“Wearing transparent dresses, mini and skimpy skirts/dresses, and other clothes revealing sensitive parts of the body. Wearing tattered, dirty jeans with holes or obscene subliminal messages.

“Wearing “baggy”, “saggy”, “yansh”, “ass level”, and any other form of indecent trousers. Wearing tight fitting apparels; wearing clothes that reveal sensitive parts of the body. Wearing shirts and tops with obscene, obnoxious or seductive inscriptions.

“Wearing shirts without buttons, improperly buttoned, rolling of sleeves or flying collar.

“Wearing of face caps or complete covering of face (very dark glasses). Piercing of body and tattooing. Wearing of earrings and a necklace by male students. Wearing of nose rings, very big dropping earrings and necklaces by students.

“Wearing of distractive knocking shoes like stiletto heels to lecture rooms and the Library. Plaiting, weaving or bonding of hair by male students. Wearing slippers.

“Wearing of lousy, unkempt, extremely bogus hair or coloured artificial hair, brightly tinted hair/eyelashes/brown, fixing of long eyelashes, artificial dreadlock. Fixing of long nails.

“It is important to note that any student who violates the dress code in the University will be sanctioned accordingly.”

Toxic chemicals found in Nigeria's water, expert raises alarm

By Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

Abeokuta, Nigeria – In a groundbreaking environmental investigation led by Professor O.O. Olujimi, one of Nigeria's foremost environmental toxicologists, researchers have exposed the widespread contamination of groundwater by hazardous chemicals leaching from dumpsites across southwestern Nigeria.

The former Staff of the Department of Environmental Management and Toxicology, Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta and who currently work as Cultural, Natural and Environmental Programme Manager at the United States of America Air Force, United Kingdom a scholar of over 20 years teaching and researching experience reported from his recent study.

The study's primary focus—Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs) and Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)—reveals a disturbing narrative of environmental degradation with serious implications for public health and ecological integrity. Covering six major dumpsites across Lagos, Ogun, and Oyo States, the research uncovers how open dumping practices and poor waste management are allowing these toxic compounds to infiltrate critical water sources, threatening the health of millions of Nigerians.

According to Professor. Olujimi who has been researching on impact of inadequate solid waste management in Lagos, Ogun and Oyo State since 2014 through research grants received from the Lagos State Government during Governor Babatunde Fasola regime and recently from the Tertiary Education Trust Fund, poor waste management result in soil, air, surface and groundwater pollution. PBDEs and phthalate esters have been reported in groundwater around selected dumpsites in Lagos and Ogun States.



A Region Under Threat: The Dumpsites in Focus

The team conducted sampling and analysis around the following six major dumpsites:

Lagos State: Olusosun Dumpsite, Ojota, Solous Dumpsite, Igando (including Solous 1, 2 & 3)

Ogun State: Saje Dumpsite, Abeokuta, Kurata Dumpsite, Sango-Otta

Oyo State: Ajakanga Dumpsite, Oluyole LGA, Awotan Dumpsite, Apete area

These locations represent some of the most densely populated and industrially active areas in Nigeria, which further complicates the waste pollution problem. Many of these dumpsites operate without engineered liners or leachate treatment systems—allowing contaminants to seep directly into the soil and aquifers.

PAHs: A Silent Infiltrator in the Water Table

Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs) are compounds formed from the

incomplete burning of coal, oil, gas, wood, or organic waste. The study found that these hazardous chemicals were present in both dumpsite leachates and nearby groundwater in significant concentrations—many of them exceeding World Health Organization (WHO) safety limits.

For example:

At Saje, the concentration of acenaphthylene in groundwater reached 54.96 µg/L, far above acceptable thresholds.

Benzo[a]pyrene, a potent carcinogen, was detected in concentrations that pose elevated cancer risks for adults and children.

These compounds are known to cause immune suppression, respiratory issues, developmental delays in children, and various cancers.

**Continue reading
on next page**

Cont from page 10

PCBs: A Second Wave of Danger

In addition to PAHs, Professor Olujimi's team also analyzed the presence of Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs)—synthetic organic chemicals once widely used in electrical equipment, paints, and building materials. Despite being banned in many countries, PCBs persist in the environment and are among the top 12 Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) identified by the Stockholm Convention.

The study's results showed alarming PCB levels in both groundwater and leachates across the six sites:

Solous Dumpsite recorded the highest concentration of PCB 3 in groundwater—338.99 µg/L, far exceeding acceptable risk levels.

Ajakanga Dumpsite showed significantly higher levels of PCB4 and PCB6, indicating heavy contamination likely from industrial and electrical waste.

Seasonal variations also impacted PCB concentrations, with dry season samples showing spikes in PCB3 and PCB4, possibly due to concentrated leachate during reduced rainfall.

These PCBs are linked to reproductive disorders, endocrine disruption, neurological damage, and several forms of cancer. Their bioaccumulative nature makes them particularly dangerous over long-term exposure.

What's Leaking and Who's at Risk?

The spatial distribution of both PAHs and PCBs demonstrated a clear pattern: groundwater sources closer to the dumpsites showed exponentially higher contamination levels. In several communities surrounding Olusosun, Solous, Saje, and Ajakanga, residents rely on boreholes for drinking and cooking water—placing them directly in harm's way.

The health risk assessments, conducted using U.S. Environmental Protection

Agency (USEPA) models, confirmed:

Carcinogenic risks (especially for children) were above the acceptable threshold (1×10^{-6} to 1×10^{-4}) in multiple sites.

Non-carcinogenic risks, calculated via Hazard Quotient (HQ) and Hazard Index (HI), exceeded the safety margin ($HI > 1$) in most locations, particularly in Ajakanga and Awotan.

This toxic exposure, over time, could lead to kidney and liver damage, immune system suppression, skin lesions, and increased cancer incidence.

Unmasking the Source: Pyrogenic vs. Petrogenic Origins – Using advanced analytical techniques such as Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and diagnostic ratio modeling, the study traced the origins of these contaminants to two major pathways:

Pyrogenic sources, such as incomplete combustion of organic waste and fossil fuels. – Petrogenic sources, including petroleum leaks from waste trucks and dumping of industrial oils.

In Kurata, for instance, the diagnostic ratio suggested a predominance of petrogenic sources, while Awotan showed indicators of biomass and coal burning—reflecting the mixed-use nature of the waste deposited.

A National Crisis in the Making

What makes this research especially critical is its extrapolative value. While it covers six sites, Nigeria has hundreds of similar unregulated dumpsites. If the findings here are representative, millions across the country may be consuming or irrigating with contaminated water without even realizing it. The lack of institutional response compounds the threat. Although regulatory frameworks exist, enforcement remains weak due to funding shortages, limited manpower, and bureaucratic inertia. There is no

national system for routine monitoring of groundwater near dumpsites.

Solving Nigeria's groundwater pollution crisis goes beyond technology—it requires strong political will and public engagement. Prof. Olujimi recommends a five-step action plan.

Government Action

Build proper waste systems, including lined landfills and leachate treatment plants to prevent toxins from seeping into the ground.

Regular Monitoring

Set up a national program to check groundwater quality near dumpsites and industrial zones.

Public Awareness

Educate communities about the dangers of drinking untreated borehole water near waste sites.

Health Screenings

Provide medical testing and support for people already exposed to toxic chemicals.

Polluter Accountability

Enforce strict laws and penalties for industries that dump hazardous waste into the environment.

Finally the recent findings reveal a dangerous truth lurking beneath our feet—groundwater contaminated with harmful chemicals like PAHs and PCBs. This isn't just an environmental issue; it's a national emergency.

As Nigeria continues to grow and industrialize, how the country handles its waste will shape its future. Clean water, public health, and environmental safety are all on the line. Therefore, groundwater is more than a natural resource—it is our lifeline. Protecting it means protecting our people, our economy, and the legacy we leave behind," stated Prof. Olujimi.

WHO highlights new tools to protect babies from RSV

By Helen Okechukwu

The World Health Organization (WHO) has released its first official guidelines to protect infants from respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), a major cause of serious lung infections in young children worldwide.

RSV causes around 100,000 child deaths and over 3.6 million hospital stays each year, mostly in low- and middle-income countries. Infants under 6 months are the most at risk.

One of the new WHO position paper recommends is the maternal vaccine (RSVpreF)—given to pregnant women from week 28 of pregnancy to protect their babies through antibodies passed before birth.

Another recommendation is the



monoclonal antibody (Nirsevimab)—a single shot is given to newborns at birth or during their first health visit. It protects babies for at least five months, enough to cover the RSV season.

WHO says countries should choose the option that best fits their health systems

and budgets.

Read also: 20 million Nigerians live with mental health problem – WHO Both products were approved for global use in 2024, and the maternal vaccine was officially prequalified by WHO in March 2025.

“RSV is an incredibly infectious virus that infects people of all ages, but is especially harmful to infants, particularly those born premature,” said Dr. Kate O’Brien from WHO. “These new tools can save lives and reduce hospital visits.”

RSV often looks like a cold, but it can cause serious illnesses like pneumonia. WHO hopes these new steps will help countries better protect infants and reduce RSV’s global impact

NNMDA develops 23 new natural medicines, targets diarrhoea, others

By Helen Okechukwu

The Nigeria Natural Medicine Development Agency (NNMDA) has developed 23 new herbal medicines, surpassing its 2024 target of 11.

The announcement was made by the agency’s Director-General, Prof. Martins Emeje, during a public accountability event in Lagos.

Emeje, a professor of Drug Delivery and Nanomedicine, said the new remedies include treatments for diarrhoea, peptic ulcers, hepatitis B, sickle cell, diabetes, and immune boosting.

He described the diarrhoea medicine as a key achievement, developed using nanotechnology and recognised at a national science competition.

“Diarrhoea is a child killer disease,” he said, adding that the National Assembly allocated funds in the 2025 budget to support its development.

The DG noted that while NNMDA was



founded in 1997, its recent transformation has boosted productivity and innovation. The agency now works with natural resources from agriculture, soil, plants, water, and even insects.

One notable product comes from the spine of fish, he revealed.

At the event, the agency also launched a malaria prevention kit containing Amarus herbal tea and mosquito repellent cream.

Dignitaries from the police, military, immigration, and health sectors were in attendance.

According to World Health Organisation (WHO), hepatitis B and C cause 1.3 million deaths and 2.2 million new infections globally each year. In Nigeria, over 20 million people are estimated to live with hepatitis, yet more than 80% are unaware of their status.

Key human shift behind Bedbug boom uncovered, scientists say

By **Helen Okechukwu**



A dramatic rise in bedbug populations over the centuries can be traced back to a pivotal shift in human behaviour, leaving caves to build cities, new scientific research said.

Published in the journal *Biology Letters*, the study reveals that bedbugs have been parasitising humans for more than 50,000 years, but it wasn't until the rise of early urban settlements around 12,000 years ago that their numbers began to soar.

The Independent report noted that researchers found that bedbugs split into two distinct genetic lineages thousands of years ago: one that remained on bats and another that adapted to human hosts.

The bat-associated lineage never recovered after the Ice Age, while the human-targeted bedbugs began to thrive as human civilisations expanded.

“That makes sense because modern

humans moved out of caves about 60,000 years ago,” explained Professor Warren Booth, associate professor of Urban Entomology.

“There were bedbugs living in the caves with these humans, and when they moved out, they took a subset of the population with them, so there's less genetic diversity in that human-associated lineage.”

Read Also: Herpes virus may raise alzheimer's risk, study suggests antivirals could help

Booth noted that as humans built cities like those in Mesopotamia and other early civilisations, the growing population density created a fertile environment for the tiny pests.

Bedbugs have long been considered one of the first urban pests, but their presence diminished drastically in the 20th century with the introduction of powerful

pesticides like DDT (dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane).

“They were thought to have been essentially eradicated,” Booth said, “but within five years they started reappearing and were resisting the pesticide.”

In recent years, the resurgence has been alarming. Between 2022 and 2024, bedbug infestations rose by 35 per cent, while cockroach removal visits also saw a 13 per cent increase.

Experts warn this could be tied to increasing urban density, global travel, and pesticide resistance.

As scientists continue to monitor these trends, researchers suggest that understanding the historical relationship between humans and pests like bedbugs may be key to managing future outbreaks.

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of Isiwo Ijebu

On Saturday 31st May, 2025



Courtesy:

Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

& HIS FAMILY

Jarvis and I are waiting until marriage for sex, Peller opens up

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular TikTok creator Habeeb Hamzat, widely known as Peller, has revealed his commitment to celibacy and clean living.

During a recent livestream with fellow content creator Shank Comics, the 19-year-old influencer opened up about his decision to abstain from sex until marriage. He made it clear that both he and his fiancée, Jarvis, have agreed to wait until after their wedding to become physically intimate.

‘We’re waiting until marriage’

Speaking with confidence during the live broadcast, Peller explained their shared values. “I don’t smoke, I don’t drink, and I’m not touching Jarvis till marriage,” he said.

He added that although he and Jarvis often appear in videos together, their interactions are strictly professional. “She is not always at home. I live alone. All our vacations are mostly for content. I’m planning to marry her,” Peller said.

A relationship based on values

Peller’s relationship with Jarvis has attracted attention not only for its visibility on social media but also for the couple’s strong personal values. Their decision to stay celibate until marriage stands out in a world where such choices are often seen as old-fashioned. Yet, the couple remains firm in their beliefs, showing that they prioritise commitment and mutual respect.

The two young stars got engaged in December 2024. At the time, Peller proposed to Jarvis in a private but emotional moment, which they later shared with their followers online. Jarvis, who is 23 years old, said yes, and their relationship has since continued to grow in the public eye.

Turning down a billion-naira offer

In another surprising revelation, Peller shared a story that stunned many fans. He said that Jarvis once received a huge offer from Netflix, worth N3 billion, to act in a kissing scene. However, he convinced her



to reject the deal.

“I love Jarvis so much, and I can’t watch another man kiss her,” Peller said. He admitted that the idea of someone else getting physically close to her was too painful to bear. While the offer was financially tempting, Peller and Jarvis chose their relationship over the money.

This decision sparked mixed reactions online. Some praised them for their loyalty and values, while others questioned whether turning down such a large sum was wise. Still, Peller stood by his choice. For him, love and respect came before fame or fortune.

No alcohol, no smoking, no drama

Peller also used the livestream to share more about his lifestyle. Unlike many young influencers, he avoids alcohol and cigarettes entirely. “I don’t smoke. I don’t drink,” he said proudly.

This lifestyle choice, combined with his decision to stay celibate, sets him apart in the world of online fame, where wild parties and scandals often dominate the headlines. Peller wants to show a different kind of example, one based on discipline and long-term commitment.

Fans react online

Since the livestream, social media has been buzzing with comments and reactions. Many fans praised Peller for his discipline, calling him a role model.

Some said it was refreshing to see a young man openly speak about making good choices, especially on a platform like TikTok, where trends often promote the opposite.

Others were more sceptical, asking whether the couple would follow through on their promises. Some even joked about the Netflix deal, saying they wouldn’t have passed up that kind of money for anything.

Still, the general response has been supportive. Many fans encouraged the couple to keep doing what feels right for them.

A bold stand in the spotlight

In a digital world full of noise and pressure, Peller and Jarvis are choosing a different path. They are building their relationship on values, not clicks. They are turning down fame and fortune when it clashes with their beliefs. And they are showing millions of fans that it’s okay to wait, to say no, and to put love first.

Whether or not others agree, one thing is certain: Peller isn’t afraid to speak his truth. And that alone is earning him even more respect.

I moved out of my parents' house at age 16, Ayo Maff recounts

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian singer Ayo Maff has revealed that he moved out of his parents' home in the Shomolu area of Lagos when he was just 16 years old.

In a recent interview with Hip TV, the 19-year-old rising star spoke about his humble beginnings and the bold decision that changed his life.

According to him, the choice to leave home wasn't out of rebellion but out of a deep sense of responsibility. As the firstborn in his family, Ayo Maff said he felt the need to step up and find a way to help his loved ones.

"I wanted more for my family"

In the interview, Ayo Maff shared that life in Shomolu was tough but also full of valuable lessons. He said he reached a point where he knew he had to make a move, not just for himself, but for those closest to him.

"I left home because I wanted more for my family," he said. "As the first child, I felt a duty to go out and find something better. It wasn't easy at home. Life in Shomolu is hard, fun, and exciting at the same time. But it taught me a lot."

The singer explained that growing up in Shomolu helped him understand the struggles people face every day. That real-life experience later found its way into his music. "Without living there, I wouldn't have had the stories to sing about. I wouldn't have seen life the way I do now."

Leaving was not easy

Moving out at 16 came with its challenges. Ayo Maff didn't have a detailed plan. He simply knew he had to act. He packed his things and moved in with a friend. For over a year, that friend's home became his new shelter.

"My mum was worried when I said I was leaving," he recalled. "But I told her I'd always check on them. I wasn't running away. I just had to take a step. I needed to find a way to help us all."

His decision might have seemed risky, but in his eyes, it was necessary. He wanted to escape the cycle of struggle and open a new door for his family.

The music journey begins

Ayo Maff's gamble started to pay off in 2023. That year, he released the hit single Dealer featuring Fireboy DML. The track quickly gained attention and introduced him to a wider audience. Many were drawn to his voice, style, and honesty.

Since then, the young artist has continued to build on that early success. Fans now look to him as one of the fast-rising stars in Nigeria's music scene. His story of leaving home young, chasing a dream, and putting family first has inspired many.

Shomolu still shapes his music

Even as he moves forward in the industry, Ayo Maff hasn't forgotten where he came from. He often speaks of how life in Shomolu shaped his view of the world. The challenges he faced growing up have helped him stay grounded, even as fame begins to grow.

"Shomolu made me who I am," he said. "It taught me to hustle. It taught me to see beauty in the struggle. I still carry those lessons with me."

A story of courage and hope

Ayo Maff's journey is far from over, but his early steps show the power of courage, belief, and family. Leaving home at 16 was a bold move. But it was driven by love and a desire to build something better, not just for himself, but for the people he holds dear.

As his music continues to reach new ears, Ayo Maff stands as a reminder that even the toughest beginnings can lead to bright futures.

Nigerian singer Ayo Maff has revealed that he moved out of his parents' home in the Shomolu area of Lagos when he was just 16 years old. In a recent interview with Hip TV, the 19-year-old rising star spoke about his humble beginnings and the bold decision that changed his life.

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I work five times harder than my colleagues as blind musician, Cobhams Asuquo reveals

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Renowned Nigerian music producer and singer, Cobhams Asuquo, has spoken openly about living with blindness and how it has shaped both his personal life and professional journey.

In a recent interview with Hip TV, the multi-talented artist gave a heartfelt message about embracing one's reality, especially for those living with disabilities.

'I work five times harder'

Cobhams, known for hit songs like "One Hit," did not shy away from discussing the challenges he faces daily. He admitted that being blind has made him push himself far beyond the average.

"My awareness of myself as a blind person makes me work five times as hard [as others]," he said. "There's a stereotype around blind people. The assumption is often that you are not capable. So, I work hard to prove that I can do a lot of things."

He explained that people with disabilities are often underestimated. And for him, that has become a source of motivation rather than discouragement.

"It's important to show that being blind doesn't stop you from achieving great things," he added.

Embracing reality without shame

Cobhams urged others living with disabilities not to hide from their reality. Instead, he advised them to face it directly and use it as a source of strength.

"It's okay to be blind," he said. "We live in a world that's become very sensitive, and that's fine. But it's also important to be honest with ourselves. Don't hide behind fancy names. Call it what it is and deal with it."

According to the singer, facing the truth about your situation is not about giving up, but about starting from a place of truth. This, he believes, builds stronger



individuals.

"If you're always avoiding the truth, you live in denial," he said. "That doesn't help. Your strength grows when you accept your situation and rise above it."

"I am not visually impaired. I am blind." Cobhams made it clear that he does not see himself as simply "visually impaired", a term he feels downplays the extent of his condition.

"Sometimes, we say impaired, and I think impaired is fine. It means weakness, not a total absence. But I'm not impaired, I'm completely blind. I can't see anything. And that's alright."

He explained that accepting the full truth of his condition allows him to live freely. He even finds humour in it at times, which helps him stay grounded.

"I'm okay with it. There's some dark humour around it sometimes, and I'm good with that. That is who I am. And I embrace it."

Living a Full Life, Regardless

Despite being blind, Cobhams has built an outstanding career in Nigeria's music industry. He has produced and written music for some of the country's top artists. His work has earned him national

and international respect.

Looking back, he sees his blindness not as a limitation but as something that adds meaning to his story.

"It makes it even more special that I've lived the life I've lived and done the things I've done," he said.

A message of hope

Cobhams's story is a powerful reminder that disability is not inability. His message to others is simple: know yourself, be honest about your challenges, and use them to build your strength.

He did not ask for sympathy. Instead, he called for acceptance, truth, and hard work.

"Not everybody will agree with me, and that's okay," he said. "But I believe in facing the truth and working from there."

Through his words and achievements, Cobhams Asuquo continues to inspire people across Nigeria and beyond. His honesty, courage, and resilience stand as a beacon of hope for many facing similar challenges.

Nasboi begins 36-state kneeling tour to request Davido verse

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular Nigerian comedian and singer Nasboi has launched a bold campaign to catch the attention of Afrobeats superstar Davido.

In a surprising move, Nasboi has begun a 36-day tour across all 36 states of Nigeria, kneeling in each state, as a public plea to secure a music collaboration with the Grammy-nominated singer.

The tour kicked off on Wednesday, with Nasboi sharing his mission in a heartfelt post on Instagram. The move has since gained attention from fans and celebrities across the country.

A plea for a musical collaboration Nasboi, whose real name is Lawal Michael Nasiru Bolaji, is known for his comedic skits and impressive mimicry of Davido. For years, he gained popularity by imitating Davido's voice and mannerisms in his online videos. However, his passion for music has taken centre stage in recent years.

According to Nasboi, his kneeling tour is a last-resort effort after multiple failed attempts to reach out to Davido directly.

"I will be kneeling across the 36 states for 36 days," he wrote in a post. "I pray this dream comes to pass. Please just tag @davido every day when you see my post."

Tour begins in Osun State
Nasboi began the unusual journey in Osun State, which happens to be Davido's home state. In a photo shared on Instagram, he was seen kneeling with a placard in front of the Osun State Government Secretariat in Osogbo. The placard read, "Dear Davido, please bless me with a verse."

His message struck an emotional chord with fans, many of whom flooded the comments with support and tagged Davido repeatedly.

Stops in northern Nigeria



On Thursday, the comedian continued his campaign in Kano State. He was spotted kneeling at the gate of the Kano State Government House, again holding up a sign with his request. The image quickly circulated online, drawing mixed reactions. While some praised his persistence and creativity, others criticised the act as desperate.

Still, Nasboi remains undeterred.

"This is not for clout," he wrote in a follow-up post. "This is my dream, and I am ready to fight for it."

Five years of trying
Nasboi's efforts to get Davido's attention didn't start this week. He revealed that he has spent the last five years imitating the singer's voice on social media—first as a joke, but later as a genuine call for recognition in the music industry.

"I started mimicking Davido because I admired him. Over time, it became more than just comedy. It became a way to say, 'I'm here, and I want to be seen,'" Nasboi explained in an earlier interview.

His musical career has gained traction in recent years, with singles that showcase his unique voice and storytelling style. However, he believes that a collaboration with Davido could be the breakthrough he



needs.

Fans rally behind him
Nasboi's campaign has sparked a wave of support online. Many fans have joined in tagging Davido in the comments of every post. Others have encouraged the comedian to stay strong and continue pushing.

"Don't give up," one user wrote. "You've got our attention, and soon you'll get Davido's too."

Some celebrities have also acknowledged the effort, calling on Davido to consider granting the upcoming artist a verse.

Will Davido respond?
As the days roll on, attention continues to build around the campaign. With 34 states still to go, Nasboi's journey is far from over. Whether Davido responds or not remains to be seen, but Nasboi's determination has already won him praise and recognition across the country.

In an entertainment industry where social media stunts are common, Nasboi's 36-day kneeling tour stands out for its emotional sincerity and relentless passion.

For now, all eyes are on Davido and the next state on Nasboi's tour.

Appeals Court temporarily reinstates Trump-era tariffs

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A Federal Court of Appeal on Thursday temporarily reinstated President Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs, pausing a lower court's decision that struck down the controversial levies as beyond presidential authority.

In a short but significant order, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit granted an administrative stay of the U.S. Court of International Trade's ruling, which had permanently blocked Trump's 10% tariffs imposed on nearly all U.S. trading partners, including Mexico, Canada, and China.

The trade court had ruled Wednesday that the International Emergency Economic Powers Act of 1977 (IEEPA), which Trump cited as the basis for the tariffs, did not grant the president unlimited authority to set tariffs as a means to combat drug trafficking or trade imbalances.

"The Worldwide and Retaliatory Tariff Orders exceed any authority granted to the president by IEEPA," the three-judge panel wrote, delivering a sharp rebuke to a cornerstone of Trump's economic policy.

The trade court had given the administration ten days before its permanent injunction would take effect. But with the appeals court's intervention, the tariffs will remain in place, for now, while the legal fight continues. The appellate panel ordered the plaintiffs, which include five U.S.-based companies and a coalition of 12 states, to respond to the stay request by June 5. The court will consider both lawsuits together.

The Justice Department had quickly asked the Federal Circuit to halt the lower court's decision while it appeals, warning that the ruling would trigger "irreparable national-security and economic harms." The department also



hinted that it would escalate the case to the U.S. Supreme Court if necessary.

White House spokesperson Kush Desai praised Thursday's appellate ruling as a win for American industry.

"This is a positive development for America's industries and workers," Desai said in a statement to CBS News. "The President will continue to use all tools at his disposal to advance trade policy that works for all Americans."

Trump's tariffs, launched on what the White House dubbed "Liberation Day" in April, were introduced under emergency powers and aimed to pressure trading partners, retaliate against trade imbalances, and curb drug trafficking. But critics argue they've rattled global markets and veered dangerously from established trade law.

Multiple legal challenges have emerged since Trump invoked IEEPA to justify the sweeping tariffs, a novel and aggressive use of the 1977 law. Courts have begun pushing back. In a separate ruling, U.S. District Judge Rudolph Contreras sided with two Illinois toy companies and barred the administration from collecting tariffs on their imports,

calling Trump's use of IEEPA unlawful.

"This case is about whether IEEPA enables the president to unilaterally impose, revoke, pause, reinstate, and adjust tariffs to reorder the global economy," Judge Contreras wrote. "The court agrees with plaintiffs that it does not."

The ruling has been paused for 14 days to allow for appeal to the D.C. Circuit, another potential battleground in a mounting legal war over presidential power in trade.

If the appeals courts uphold the lower decisions, it would be a devastating blow to Trump's trade legacy. The former president has long argued that his tariffs are essential for restoring U.S. manufacturing and boosting government revenue; estimates claimed more than \$1 trillion could be raised.

As the legal wrangling intensifies, the future of Trump's trade doctrine hangs in the balance, with courts now asked to define the limits of executive power in an era of increasingly aggressive economic nationalism.

Taiwan turns to US for military supports amid growing China's threat

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

In a major show of military readiness, Taiwan's armed forces conducted their first-ever live-fire test of U.S.-made HIMARS rocket systems this month, underscoring the island's growing efforts to bolster its defences amid rising tensions with China.

The test, held at a secluded military base in southern Pingtung County, involved the launch of 33 rockets into the Pacific Ocean, pointed away from the Chinese mainland but loud enough to send a message. The High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), manufactured by U.S. defence giant Lockheed Martin, can strike targets up to 185 miles away, far enough to hit China's Fujian province across the Taiwan Strait.

Though the country did not disclose the exact test location, military officers confirmed the exercise was successful and marked a historic milestone in the island's modernisation push.

The launch follows increased Chinese military pressure on the self-governing democracy, which Beijing claims as its territory. Over the past year, China has ramped up large-scale drills, including recent amphibious landing exercises, and continues near-daily incursions by aircraft and naval forces.

HIMARS, which has proven pivotal in Ukraine's war against Russia, is now viewed as a central piece of the East Asia country's asymmetric defence strategy. While Ukraine received the rocket systems through



U.S. aid, Taiwan purchased them at a cost of over \$1 billion. Eleven of the 29 launchers have already arrived; the rest are expected next year, ahead of schedule.

"We take this matter very seriously," said Sun Li-fang, spokesperson for Taiwan's National Defence Ministry. "Ensuring Taiwan's security is our responsibility and our top priority."

The East Asia country's military remains vastly outnumbered, China has 2.8 million active-duty personnel compared to 160,000 of the East Asia nation. To narrow that gap, Taipei has extended mandatory military service to one year, increased annual reservist training, and committed to raising defence spending above 3% of GDP.

Taiwan deepening cooperation with US

In addition to HIMARS, Taiwan is deepening cooperation with the U.S.

through arms deals, drone development, and an unprecedented intelligence-sharing arrangement. Sun described this exchange as a "game-changer," giving Taiwan vital insights into Chinese military activity.

"We typically don't go into detail because intelligence and information sharing are sensitive," he said. "But it's extremely helpful in making appropriate defensive deployments."

This cooperation, however, comes against a backdrop of uncertainty. The U.S. maintains a policy of "strategic ambiguity" on whether it would militarily defend Taiwan in a Chinese invasion. Comments from President Donald Trump have also raised eyebrows in Taipei, accusing Taiwan of "stealing" chip business and not paying enough for defence, while pushing new tariffs on Taiwanese exports.

Trump administration bans race, sex statistics in federal hiring

By **Fatimah Idera**



The Trump administration has directed federal agencies to stop using statistics related to race, sex, ethnicity, or national origin in the hiring process. This move is part of a broader effort to scale back diversity, equity, and inclusion programs.

The directive was part of a broader set of guidelines sent to human resources leaders at government agencies fleshing out an executive order signed by President Donald Trump in January aimed at restoring merit to the center of the hiring process.

All hiring and promotion decisions must be based “solely on merit, qualifications and job-related criteria and not race, sex, color, religion, or national origin,” the memo from the Office of Personnel Management on Thursday said.

The memo further ordered human

resources leaders to “cease using statistics on race, sex, ethnicity or national origin, or the broader concept of ‘underrepresentation of certain groups,’ in relation to recruiting or hiring.

The memo also said dissemination of such data was banned. The directive is the latest move by Trump to undermine diversity and inclusion programs, many of which have been in place for decades in an effort to remedy historical injustices for marginalized groups.

Trump and his allies have called such programs anti-merit and discriminatory against white people and men.

Advocates and experts have said racial or gender data collection, which has long been a standard across the federal government and many private sector U.S. companies, is a necessary

tool to identify inequities or potential discrimination within hiring practices.

The OPM memo also said government agencies have been too focused on elite universities and credentials, instead of merit, practical skill, and commitment to American ideals.

In addition to hiring veterans and individuals with backgrounds in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, agencies should recruit more young people from state universities, religious colleges, trade schools, faith organizations and homeschooling groups, the memo says.

“Going forward, agencies shall ensure that early career recruitment focuses on patriotic Americans who will faithfully adhere to the Constitution and the rule of law,” the memo says.

Russian commander killed in mysterious explosion

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



A retired Russian military commander who played a key role in the brutal airstrikes on Ukraine's port city of Mariupol was killed in an explosion early Thursday, Russian authorities confirmed.

Zaur Gurtsiev, 34, died alongside a 29 year old acquaintance in a blast that rocked a residential neighborhood in the Stavropol region, southern Russia. The cause of the explosion remains unknown, though officials have not ruled out the possibility of Ukrainian involvement.

Videos shared on Russian Telegram channels appear to show Gurtsiev and another man standing together shortly before the deadly blast. No group has claimed responsibility.

Gurtsiev had received several medals for his involvement in Moscow's devastating assaults on Mariupol and Avdiivka during the early stages of the war. He was serving as Stavropol's deputy mayor at the time of his death and was part of the Kremlin's "Time of Heroes" initiative, a program

designed to elevate combat veterans into elite civilian leadership roles.

"Zaur Alexandrovich Gurtsiev, our hero and participant in the Time of Heroes program, has died," said Stavropol Governor Vladimir Vladimirov. "All versions are being considered, including a terrorist attack involving Nazis from Ukraine."

The Kremlin continues to justify its invasion of Ukraine by framing it as a mission to eliminate so-called neo-Nazis, a claim widely discredited by international observers.

The incident adds to a string of unexplained killings of high-ranking Russian military figures since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022. In December, Lt. General Igor Kirillov, head of Russia's biological and chemical weapons unit, was killed in a Moscow explosion. In April, another blast in the capital killed General-Lieutenant Yaroslav Moskalik, deputy head of the military's main operational

directorate.

Ukrainian officials have often referred to such strikes as "legitimate targets," though Kyiv rarely confirms operations on Russian soil. After Kirillov's death, Ukrainian security forces reportedly told CBS News that it was a special operation executed by Ukraine's Security Service, a claim unverified but incendiary enough to spark demands for retaliation within Russia.

Gurtsiev commanded Russian air units during the infamous siege of Mariupol in 2022, a 12-week assault that left much of the Black Sea city in ruins. According to Human Rights Watch, at least 8,000 civilians died during the siege, which included the bombing of a theatre sheltering women and children.

The explosion that killed Gurtsiev is under investigation, with Russian security services yet to release further details.

Comedian Russell Brand pleads not guilty to rape, sexual assault charges

By **Fatimah Idera**



British comedian and actor Russell Brand entered not guilty pleas in a London courtroom on Friday in response to rape and sexual assault charges connected to incidents involving four women more than 20 years ago.

Brand, who was once among Britain's most prominent media personalities and was previously married to American pop star Katy Perry, appeared at Southwark Crown Court. He denied all five charges brought against him.

In April, British prosecutors revealed that Brand faced two rape charges, along with one count of indecent assault and two counts of sexual assault. The alleged offences involve four women and span from 1999 to 2005.

Brand, who has previously listed an address in England but also spends time in the United States, is scheduled to face trial in June 2026.

Read also: UK police charge comedian Russell Brand with rape, sexual assaults
He spoke only to confirm his identity and to formally deny each of the five charges before exiting the courtroom with his legal team and others accompanying him.

Following the announcement of the charges, Brand posted a video on social media in which he described himself during his younger years as reckless and addicted to sex, but insisted, "what I never was, was a rapist."

During the 2000s, Brand became a fixture on British television, recognised for his flamboyant persona and striking

looks.

He held roles at the BBC and appeared in films such as *Get Him to the Greek*, later marrying Perry in 2010. Their marriage ended in divorce just over a year later.

By the early 2020s, Brand had largely stepped away from traditional media, shifting his focus to his online platform, where he frequently discusses U.S. politics and issues surrounding free speech.

In September 2023, several media outlets published reports containing allegations of sexual misconduct. Authorities launched an investigation shortly after.

Brand, who stated last year that he had embraced Christianity, has denied all of the allegations made against him.

London stocks rally despite uncertainty over US trade policies

By **Fatimah Idera**

Britain's main stock indexes rose on Friday, poised for weekly and monthly gains, despite uncertainty surrounding US trade policies.

The blue-chip FTSE 100 index climbed 0.8%, set to end the month higher with three consecutive weeks of gains.

Meanwhile, the domestically focused mid-cap FTSE 250 index was up 0.6%, on track for a second month of gains.

The US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit temporarily reinstated President Donald Trump's tariffs, injecting uncertainty into the market.

However, the Trump administration stated that negotiations with top trading partners, including Britain, have continued despite the trade court's block. Britain remains the only country to have signed a deal.



On the economic front, Bank of England policymaker Alan Taylor downplayed inflation concerns, advocating for lower interest rates.

Taylor had voted for a bigger half-point cut in May, while the BoE cut interest rates by a quarter of a percentage point. A survey also showed British public

expectations for inflation fell to 4% from 4.2% over the year ahead.

Investors are eagerly awaiting the US Personal Consumption Expenditure data, the Federal Reserve's preferred inflation indicator, for insights into future interest rate decisions.

Ex-NYPD Commissioner Bernard Kerik dies at 69

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

Bernard Kerik, the hard-charging former NYPD commissioner who rose to national prominence for his leadership during the September 11 attacks, died Thursday at New York-Presbyterian Hospital after a battle with cardiac disease. He was 69 and surrounded by family and close friends at the time of his passing.



Kerik's life was marked by triumphs, tribulations, and unwavering dedication to public service. Appointed by then-Mayor Rudy Giuliani in 2000, Kerik led the NYPD during one of its most pivotal eras, overseeing a dramatic 63% drop in violent crime and guiding the city through the darkest hours of 9/11.

Often dubbed the "beat cop

commissioner" for his hands-on style, Kerik made five arrests during his 16-month tenure, including collaring two ex-convicts in Harlem while on duty. His no-nonsense approach and tireless work ethic earned him the nickname "America's Cop."

"His legacy is not just in the medals or the titles," said longtime friend and FBI Director Kash Patel, "but in the lives he

saved, the city he helped rebuild, and the country he served with honor."

Mayor Eric Adams, a fellow former NYPD officer and friend of nearly three decades, paid tribute Thursday. "He was a great New Yorker and American," Adams said. "It was just this afternoon that I stopped by the hospital to see Bernie before his passing. Rest in peace, my friend."

Born on September 4, 1955, in Newark, New Jersey, Kerik served in the U.S. Army before joining the NYPD in 1986. His rise was meteoric: from beat cop to Correction Commissioner in 1998, and then NYPD Commissioner two years later.

Man charged over crash at Liverpool FC parade

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Paul Doyle, a 53-year-old former Royal Marine, appeared in Liverpool Crown Court on Friday charged with a series of serious offences after allegedly driving his car into a crowd during Liverpool FC's trophy parade on Monday evening.

Doyle, of Burghill Road in West Derby, faces seven charges including wounding with intent, causing grievous bodily harm (GBH) with intent, attempting to cause GBH with intent, and dangerous driving. The incident, which occurred in Liverpool city centre, left 79 people injured, including two children. Six of the victims form the basis of the current charges.

The father-of-three appeared in the dock wearing a black suit, grey tie and white shirt. He was not asked to enter any pleas. Recorder of Liverpool, Judge Andrew Menary KC, scheduled a plea and trial preparation hearing for 12 August. A provisional trial date has also been set for 24 November, with the court expecting the proceedings to last between three and four weeks.

Reporting restrictions, initially applied during Doyle's first appearance in Liverpool Magistrates' Court, remain in place. A separate hearing to review those restrictions is scheduled for Tuesday, which Doyle is not required to attend.

Philip Astbury, prosecuting, told the court that the current charges may yet be altered as the investigation continues.

"This is an ongoing investigation," Astbury said. "There are a great deal of witnesses to be interviewed and footage to be reviewed."

Damian Nolan, representing Doyle, confirmed that there would be no application for bail during this hearing. At his earlier Magistrates' Court appearance, Doyle was visibly emotional and spoke only to confirm his name and date of birth.



He sat in silence for much of the session, appearing solemn as the charges were read out.

The incident occurred during Liverpool FC's victory parade following their second Premier League title win and 20th overall top-flight crown. Hundreds of thousands of fans packed the city centre and lined the 10-mile (16km) route on a day that was meant to be a celebration of sporting achievement.

Instead, scenes of chaos erupted when a car ploughed into a section of the crowd. Eyewitness footage, which has circulated widely on social media, shows the moment of impact and the aftermath. One particularly harrowing clip captured a pram carrying a baby boy being struck by the car and thrown metres down the road. Miraculously, the child was not injured.

Emergency services responded swiftly, with multiple ambulances and police units on the scene. In total, 79 people received treatment, ranging from cuts and bruises to more serious trauma-related injuries. Hospitals in the area confirmed that several victims required overnight care, though none were reported to be in critical condition.

The incident has prompted an outpouring

of support for those affected. A fundraising campaign established shortly after the crash has already raised more than £30,000. Notably, £10,000 of that total came from the Jamie Carragher Foundation, the charitable arm of the former Liverpool defender, who expressed his shock and sadness over the events.

"This was supposed to be a joyous day for the people of Liverpool," Carragher said. "Our hearts go out to everyone impacted by this tragedy. We stand with them."

Doyle's military background and apparent lack of prior criminal record have raised questions about the circumstances leading up to the incident. While motives remain unclear, investigators are continuing to gather evidence, including surveillance footage and eyewitness statements, to piece together a full picture.

As the city comes to terms with the trauma of what should have been a day of celebration, many now await further developments in what is likely to become one of the most high-profile court cases Liverpool has seen in recent years.

Argentine court declares mistrial in legendary footballer, Diego Maradona's death

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The high-profile trial of seven healthcare workers accused of negligence in the death of Argentine football legend Diego Maradona was abruptly derailed Thursday, after a federal court declared a mistrial due to a scandal involving one of the presiding judges.

The decision resets months of proceedings and testimony, throwing the trial's future into uncertainty. The judges ruled that the entire case will be retried at an unspecified later date, citing compromised judicial integrity.

The mistrial follows the resignation of Judge Julieta Makintach, who came under fire earlier this week for her involvement in a documentary series titled Divine Justice, chronicling the aftermath of Maradona's death and the ensuing legal drama. The trailer for the series, which features dramatic shots of Makintach walking courthouse halls juxtaposed with clips of Maradona's football glory, prompted a firestorm of criticism and accusations of judicial misconduct.

The prosecutor submitted the trailer as evidence, arguing Makintach had breached ethics by permitting filming inside closed courtrooms. With the scandal dominating national headlines, the judge stepped down Tuesday, stating she had "no choice."

On Thursday, Judge Maximiliano



Savarino formally declared the mistrial, stating, "Judge Makintach did not act impartially. Her conduct caused harm to both the plaintiffs and the defense. The only person responsible is the recused judge."

Tears flowed in the courtroom as Maradona's daughters, Gianinna and Dalma, reacted to the news. The original trial, which began March 11, was expected to last through July and had already hosted 21 emotional hearings and dozens of witnesses.

The case centers on the alleged medical negligence of Maradona's care team in the days before his death on November 25, 2020. Maradona, 60, died from cardiac arrest while recovering from brain surgery at a private residence. Prosecutors say the soccer icon was abandoned in a poorly monitored home environment, despite clear medical warnings.

The accused, including Maradona's primary physician Leopoldo Luque, his psychologist, psychiatrist, and several nurses, face charges of culpable homicide, akin to involuntary manslaughter. They deny wrongdoing, arguing that Maradona was a notoriously difficult patient who resisted treatment.

Legal experts say a new panel of judges will be selected by lottery "within a reasonable period of time," though no formal timeline has been announced.

Maradona remains a national icon, known as much for his dazzling football career, including leading Argentina to victory in the 1986 World Cup, as for his tumultuous personal life. His controversial "Hand of God" goal and rags-to-riches story have only added to his legend in Argentina and around the world.