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After 22-year wait, FG approves pensions for ex-Nigeria Airways staff

By Friday Omosola



The Federal Government (FG) has given the green light for pension payments to thousands of retired aviation workers, a decision that ends a nearly 22-year struggle for former employees, particularly those from the defunct Nigeria Airways.

The National Orientation Agency (NOA) confirmed on Tuesday via its official X account that the Ministry of Aviation has committed to commencing disbursements transparently and fairly shortly.

This long-awaited approval brings significant relief to individuals who dedicated years to the nation's aviation sector.

The move follows decades of relentless advocacy from various unions pushing for justice for these retirees.

Nigeria Airways, a wholly government-owned airline, operated from 1958 until its collapse in 2003, a downfall attributed to widespread mismanagement, corruption, and

accumulating debt.

Its closure left over 6,000 former staff members without their full pension and gratuity entitlements, sparking almost two decades of persistent demands for their benefits.

Stakeholders across the industry have largely welcomed this development, seeing it as a crucial step towards restoring faith and dignity within the aviation sector.

The issue has been a recurring point of contention.

In 2018, major aviation unions, including the National Union of Air Transport Employees (NUATE), the Air Transport Senior Staff Services Association of Nigeria (ATSSSAN), and the National Association of Aircraft Pilots and Engineers (NAAPE), even threatened to shut down Nigerian airspace.

Their action was a protest against the government's failure to release N45

billion owed to the retirees.

At the time, they condemned the prolonged delays, warning the then-Minister of Aviation, Hadi Sirika, that they would not tolerate further deaths of retirees without their benefits being paid.

Later that same year, former President Muhammadu Buhari approved a partial payment of ₦22 billion.

However, union records indicated that a substantial ₦36 billion still remained outstanding, leaving many former workers in severe financial hardship, with some passing away before receiving their dues.

Most recently, in January 2025, the National Assembly Joint Committee on Aviation exerted pressure by threatening to withhold the Ministry of Aviation's budget unless clear provisions were made for the full payment of these lingering entitlements to the former Nigeria Airways personnel.

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

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SIZE	TOTAL RATE
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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
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PHOTO NEWS (4X4)	53,333.30	4,250.00	57,583.30
PRESS RELEASE (4X4)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
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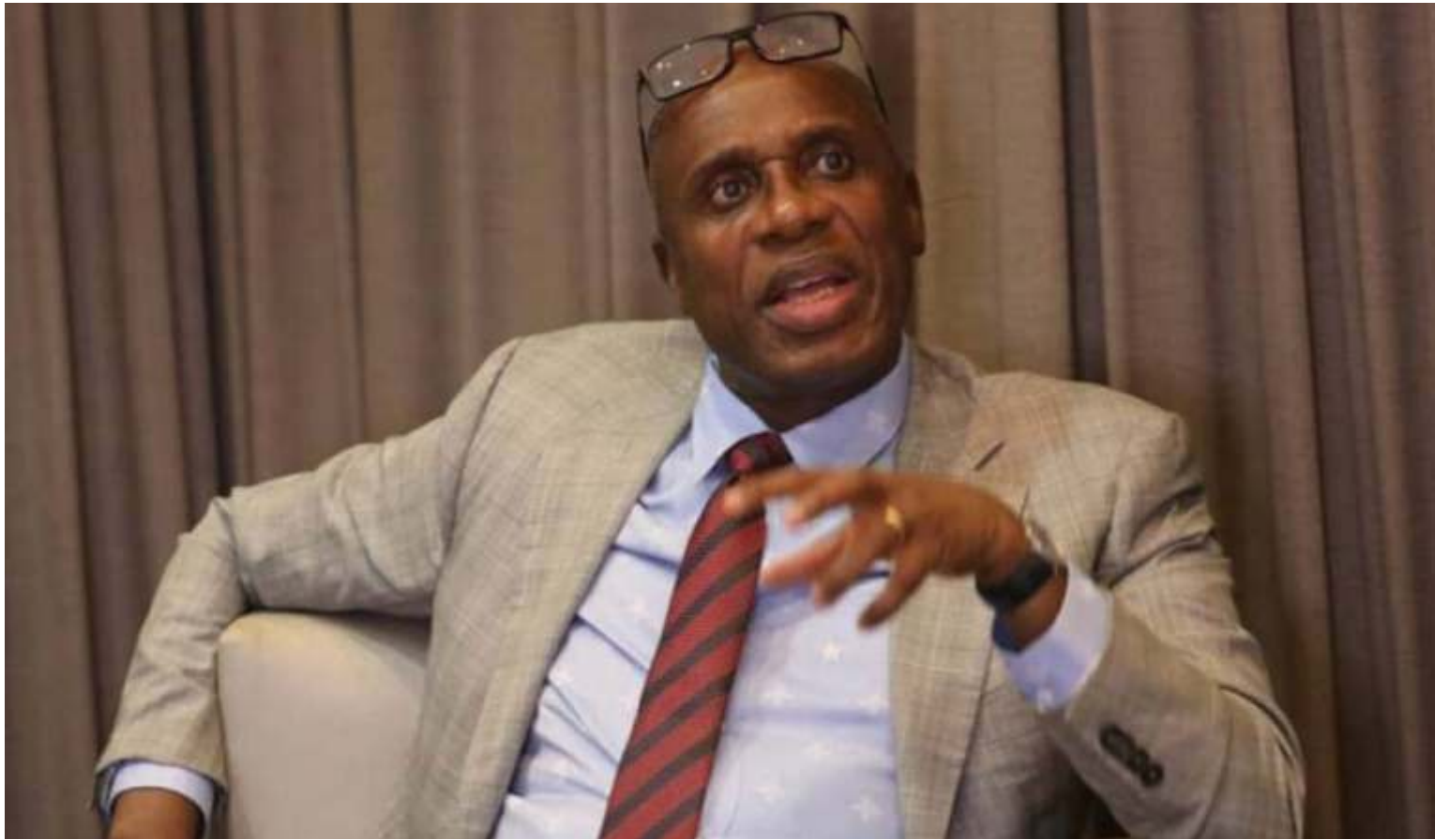
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Amaechi warns Nigerians: “You’ll be dead, buried If Tinubu wins in 2027”

By **Gbenga Olaleye**



Former Minister of Transportation and ex-Governor of Rivers State, Rotimi Amaechi, has issued a stark warning to Nigerians, urging them not to re-elect President Bola Ahmed Tinubu in the 2027 general elections.

Speaking while addressing members of the African Democratic Congress (ADC) coalition in Rivers State, Amaechi claimed that a second term for President Tinubu would be catastrophic for Nigerians.

“Currently, Nigerians are complaining in President Tinubu’s first tenure; imagine what the second tenure will be like. Then, you’ll be dead and buried,” he said.

Amaechi, who recently joined the ADC-led coalition, also criticised the political environment in Rivers State, accusing electoral actors of manipulating results and discouraging public participation.

“Our state is notorious for writing results, and we must stop them,” he told the gathering. “When people hear that results are already written, they don’t come out to vote. That must change.”

He charged ADC members to begin early mobilisation ahead of 2027 and form local committees to assess their political strength across wards and local governments.

“We are new members of the ADC; it’s the adopted party of the coalition. Most importantly, have your eyes on 2027,” Amaechi said. “Go home and start registration.”

He warned that continued rule under the current administration would only worsen the country’s growing economic hardship.

“We should encourage people to come out and vote for the removal of the current government—or we will all die of hunger,” he concluded.

Amaechi’s comments add to growing criticism from opposition voices who accuse the Tinubu administration of failing to address pressing national challenges.

ADC clarifies coalition talks: Not about Atiku, Obi, but Nigeria's future

By Gbenga Olaleye

The African Democratic Congress (ADC) has stated categorically that ongoing coalition negotiations are not centred on any specific presidential aspirant, including former Vice President Atiku Abubakar or former Anambra State Governor Peter Obi. Rather, the talks are focused on forming a robust and inclusive alliance aimed at repositioning Nigeria's political future.

Speaking in an exclusive interview on Tuesday, the ADC's National Publicity Secretary, Bolaji Abdullahi, dismissed widespread speculation that the coalition was a strategic alignment with either Atiku or Obi ahead of the 2027 general elections.

"The coalition has nothing to do with either Peter Obi or Atiku," Abdullahi said. "They are just members like many others. The focus is not on them. And of course, it is within anyone's right to have political ambitions or to run for any position."

He acknowledged that while discussions around potential presidential contenders may be rife on social media, these narratives do not reflect the internal conversations taking place within the coalition.

When asked if the party would eventually have to choose between the two prominent politicians, Abdullahi was firm: "The party cannot align with one person and still call itself a party—that's what happened to most of the other parties in the past. We don't have a preferred candidate. When the time comes, we'll follow a democratic process and allow members to decide."

According to Abdullahi, the ADC is presently focused on strengthening its political structures and increasing its presence across all geopolitical zones



of Nigeria, particularly in the North.

"Nobody is talking about a presidential candidate at the moment. Our focus is on growing the party," he emphasised.

Addressing the party's strategic moves in northern Nigeria, Abdullahi said a growing number of political leaders in the North, disillusioned with the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), are aligning themselves with the ADC-led coalition.

"All the people who were in APC and are not happy with how things are going are in this coalition now," he noted. "The majority of our leaders are from the North. The North knows it doesn't want this APC government to continue because of how they've been treated."

He was critical of the APC's

governance in recent years, asserting that the ADC represents the only viable alternative for Nigerians seeking change.

"If you look back at the last two years and the way the government has made life hard, you'll see that ADC is the only real alternative," Abdullahi declared.

"The ruling party is punishing the people. ADC wants to free Nigerians from that suffering. No one wants to go through this again for another four years."

As the 2027 elections draw nearer, speculation continues to swirl around major political figures and potential alliances. Yet, the ADC's message remains clear: the coalition is about building institutions and a collective vision—not individual ambitions.

2027: 'I might contest for presidency if...' – Datti Baba-Ahmed

By **Gbenga Olaleye**



Yusuf Datti Baba-Ahmed, the former vice-presidential candidate of the Labour Party in the 2023 general elections, has stated that he might consider running for president in 2027—but only under specific circumstances.

Speaking on Arise Television's Prime Time programme on Tuesday, Baba-Ahmed clarified that personal ambition was not his motivation, and that his potential candidacy would only emerge if two prominent figures, including Peter Obi, choose not to run.

"Look at my trajectory," he said. "In 2019, I aspired for the

presidency and I lost, together with 11 others. I religiously supported Peter Obi and I would do so again in 2027, unless certain two people that I have tremendous respect for decide not to take it, and God Almighty in His infinite mercies keeps dropping it for me."

He reiterated his loyalty to Peter Obi, with whom he ran in the 2023 elections under the Labour Party, finishing third according to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

"Except if that happens, I can tell you Peter will contest for sure because he's in the game, he contested before, I'll support him," he said. "If he doesn't, or

another person that I won't call his name from the South, if they don't contest, otherwise I'm not ambitious."

Baba-Ahmed also expressed deep concern for the state of the nation and highlighted the key issues driving his political involvement.

"My key ambition is to stop the killings, stop the stealing, stop the slide," he added.

His comments come amidst rising speculation over who will challenge the ruling party in 2027, and underscore the ongoing internal dynamics of the Labour Party and opposition alliances.

Lamido accuses Tinubu of undermining democracy

By Gbenga Olaleye



Former Governor of Jigawa State, Alhaji Sule Lamido, has alleged that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is systematically dismantling Nigeria's democracy through what he described as "imperial acts" aimed at coercing the opposition into submission.

Speaking to journalists in his Kano office on Tuesday, Lamido claimed that the Federal Government and the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) are weaponising state institutions to intimidate political opponents, forcing them to join the ruling party under duress.

"Today, Tinubu is using state institutions to crush the opposition through intimidation, blackmail, harassment, and government patronage," Lamido stated.

"A clear example is Okowa, who was the PDP vice presidential candidate. He suddenly faced charges of ₦1.3 trillion from the EFCC, and after joining the APC, those charges disappeared."

READ ALSO; Sule Lamido vows to join forces to unseat President Tinubu in 2027
Drawing parallels with past comments by former APC Chairman Adams Oshiomhole, Lamido criticised the notion that joining the APC offers blanket

immunity from prosecution.

"As Oshiomhole once said, no matter your crime, once you join APC, you will be forgiven. That is why people who feel guilty are joining. It's a serious danger to democracy," he warned.

Lamido lamented the deepening divisions in the country and accused the current administration of deliberately fracturing the federation along regional and ethnic lines.

"Nigeria is no longer a united federation. Tinubu is acting like an emperor, politically deciding who survives and who is crushed," he said. "The government is dividing the North Central from the rest of the North, and stoking tensions between the South East and South South, all for political gain."

On the topic of growing opposition unity talks ahead of 2027, Lamido dismissed the current coalition efforts as lacking substance and historical grounding.

"People are now panicking, and in that panic, there is talk of coalitions. But the one we had in 2014 was organic, built around institutions—CPC, ACN, ANPP—not individuals," he explained.

"What we see today is a loose assembly of individuals—Atiku, Obi, El-Rufai—not functioning political bodies."

Lamido stressed that any credible coalition must be based on shared values, not personal ambitions or vendettas.

"A real coalition must define its purpose: democracy, unity, stability, and national prosperity—not revenge or desperation," he asserted.

He reaffirmed his loyalty to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), saying his political identity remains firmly rooted in the party that shaped his career.

"I remain in the PDP. I can't walk out of my skin. PDP made me minister and governor. I was harassed and detained because of my loyalty to the PDP. That legacy matters to me," Lamido said.

While open to any alliance led by or rooted in the PDP, Lamido was unequivocal: "I will support any arrangement that aims to secure Nigeria in 2027, but certainly not one involving Tinubu or the APC."

Baba-Ahmed criticises Tinubu, Buhari, warns against VP pick from Northwest

By Gbenga Olaleye



Former presidential adviser Hakeem Baba-Ahmed has delivered a scathing critique of President Bola Tinubu and his predecessor, Muhammadu Buhari, claiming both men pursued the presidency for personal ambitions rather than national interest.

Speaking on Channels Television's Politics Today on Wednesday, Baba-Ahmed alleged that Buhari had no genuine intention of governing Nigeria, stating: "He just wanted to become a president."

He drew parallels between Buhari and Tinubu, suggesting both men were motivated more by personal fulfilment than a desire to improve the country.

"They have laboured in the political process for so long that it became about them. That is the wrong reason to seek political power. You want power so that you can govern people and improve things – it must never be about you," he said.

Baba-Ahmed, a member of the Northern

Elders Forum and former senior adviser to President Tinubu, also revealed that he left the All Progressives Congress (APC) just six months into Buhari's presidency, citing concerns over leadership direction. He is currently a member of the People's Redemption Party (PRP).

He further addressed his recent resignation from Tinubu's administration, saying his departure came as no surprise to the Northern Elders Forum. "Some members of the Northern Elders Forum knew about my feelings about the job, about the administration, about the direction this country was going," he said.

Baba-Ahmed expressed deep dissatisfaction with the state of the nation, citing widespread hunger, insecurity, and violence. "Nobody would tell you that they are entirely happy with the way the country is going. There is too much hunger, insecurity, and bloodshed."

On the political calculations ahead of the 2027 elections, Baba-Ahmed warned President Tinubu against choosing a new

vice president from the Northwest region, describing it as "risky" following Buhari's eight-year tenure.

"The President cannot go to the Northwest because the late Buhari just finished his eight years; going to the Northwest is a bit risky," he said.

However, he suggested Kano could be a possible option, noting that the electoral gap between the APC and the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) in the state was only about 500,000 votes in 2023.

Speculation has grown that President Tinubu may consider replacing Vice President Kashim Shettima ahead of the next general election.

Former Kano State governor Rabiu Kwankwaso, leader of the NNPP, has been mentioned as a potential replacement. Kwankwaso was recently seen at the Presidential Villa during an event attended by Shettima, though he declined to speak with journalists.

Osun APC rejects Adeleke, labels him 'political liability'

By Gbenga Olaleye



The Osun State chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC) has rejected any attempt by Governor Ademola Adeleke to defect to the party, branding him a political liability whose presence would undermine the integrity of the party.

This was disclosed in a statement issued on Wednesday by the state party's Chairman, Tajudeen Lawal, in reaction to a communiqué released by the state's Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Leadership Caucus.

The communiqué, signed by Governor Adeleke and 27 other PDP leaders, condemned internal and external opposition to his proposed defection.

According to Lawal, the governor's motive for seeking entry into the APC was purely self-serving, driven by fear of an impending defeat in the 2026 governorship election.

"It was the fear of the impending 2026 election defeat that motivated the governor to desperately seek asylum in our party for his political survival," the statement read.

He described the Osun PDP as a crumbling structure overtaken by corruption and factionalism, allegedly controlled by the Adeleke family. Lawal claimed that well-meaning politicians were leaving the PDP in droves, joining the APC instead.

"From 2023, the party began to morally emaciate and became the war loot of the Adeleke dynasty," Lawal alleged. "Bright minds and people with good names to protect... daily troop out from the tattered umbrella into our party."

While acknowledging that political parties are open to new members, Lawal asserted that Adeleke's proposed defection was intended to create internal discord and tarnish the APC's image.

"A political party is a free-exit-free-entry arrangement," he said. "However, when an entry is suspected to tarnish the party's image and create a public perception crisis, the party is within its rights to block such a move."

He went further to accuse Governor Adeleke of mismanaging nearly ₦1

trillion in public funds within 30 months and claimed that the governor was seeking refuge in the APC to escape backlash from Osun voters.

"Those who rejected Adeleke's overtures knew his intention was deceptive and tied solely to a troubled re-election bid," he added.

Lawal also criticised what he described as Adeleke's two-faced political strategy condemning President Bola Tinubu on local media platforms while presenting himself as an ally in Abuja.

"You cannot abuse President Bola Ahmed Tinubu in Osun and pretend to support him in Abuja, just to secure your political future," he said.

"A true supporter of Tinubu would prioritise the people's welfare, not hoard public resources."

The statement concludes by reaffirming the APC's stance: Adeleke's entry into the party is neither welcome nor beneficial.

ADC slams Tinubu administration's rebased GDP celebration as 'economic cosmetics'

By Friday Omosola

The African Democratic Congress (ADC) has condemned the President Bola Tinubu administration's recent celebration of Nigeria's rebased Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The party labelled the celebration as a deceptive public relations exercise that masks underlying economic hardship.

In a statement by Bolaji Abdullahi, the party's National Publicity Secretary, dismissed the fanfare surrounding the new GDP figures as mere 'economic cosmetics.'

Abdullahi stated that these rebased statistics do not translate into an improved quality of life for ordinary Nigerians nor do they address the fundamental crises gripping the economy.

"Economic growth is not about dressed-up numbers that make the government look good. Economic growth means nothing if it leaves the majority of the people behind and is not felt on the dining table, and in the marketplace," Abdullahi stated.

He added, "You can't rebase hunger because Nigerians cannot eat GDP."

According to him, while government officials highlight new GDP figures, millions of Nigerians continue to grapple with record food inflation, pervasive poverty, and crumbling infrastructure.

Abdullahi argued that the GDP rebasing, ordinarily a neutral statistical tool, has instead become a stark indicator of the All Progressives Congress (APC)'s prolonged economic decay and leadership failures.

Abdullahi pointed to a significant decline in Nigeria's economic standing, noting that the nation's GDP has plummeted from \$509 billion in 2014, following a previous rebasing, to a mere \$244 billion today.



This dramatic drop, he claimed, has seen Nigeria fall from its position as Africa's largest economy to fourth place, now trailing behind South Africa, Egypt, and Algeria.

Abdullahi views this not as a mere technical adjustment, but as a 'blunt indictment of a government that has failed to grow what it inherited, let alone transform it.'

Abdullahi further argued that while Nigeria's nominal GDP in Naira terms has increased to ₦373 trillion, this figure is largely 'illusory,' being a direct consequence of a 'steep and poorly managed currency devaluation.'

This devaluation, he maintains, has significantly eroded national wealth and stripped Nigerians of their purchasing power, with GDP per capita crashing from \$3,223 in 2014 to barely \$1,000 currently.

Abdullahi cautioned that while rebasing might cosmetically improve the debt-to-GDP ratio on paper, it should not be misinterpreted as an opportunity for 'reckless borrowing'.

He stressed Nigeria's need for fiscal discipline, which he said the current government has allegedly failed to demonstrate through its 'bloated, ill-prioritised budgets and wasteful

spending.'

He also criticised what he called the 'emptiness' of the APC's long-promised economic diversification, alleging that key sectors crucial for future growth, such as agriculture, manufacturing, infrastructure, and innovation, have either stagnated or regressed.

Abdullahi added that the administration has opted for 'statistical cosmetics' and 'deception' over genuine economic reform, leading to a 'structurally weak economy unable to compete or lift millions out of poverty.'

"There is no real increase in industrial output. No boost in agricultural productivity. No rise in real income. No improvement in electricity, health care or security. Just bloated, hollow numbers," Abdullahi stated.

He said the government is attempting to 'reframe' the economy through 'statistical manipulation' rather than substantive policy changes.

Abdullahi noted that 'Nigerians are not fooled' and that their lives have not improved since Tinubu took office two years ago.

Four senators dump PDP for APC

By Friday Omosola

The Senate has acknowledged the defection of four lawmakers from the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to the dominant All Progressives Congress (APC).

This latest political realignment announced on Wednesday solidifies the APC's numerical strength within the upper legislative chamber.

The senators who switched allegiance are Ekong Samson (representing Akwa Ibom South), Etim Bassey (Akwa Ibom North East), Francis Fadahunsi (Osun East), and Olubiyi Fadeyi (Osun Central).

Their move was marked by the Senate temporarily suspending its usual procedures to accommodate a delegation of prominent APC figures.

Among those present to witness the shift were the party's National Secretary, the APC Chairman for Osun State, various members of the House of Representatives, and former



Minister Chris Ngige.

With these new additions, the APC's representation in the 10th Senate has surged to 72 seats, a notable increase from the 50 seats it held when the current Assembly was inaugurated in June 2023.

Conversely, the PDP's presence in the Senate has now dwindled to 26 members, a reduction attributed to a series of defections not only from its own ranks but also from the Labour Party (LP) and the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP).

Commenting on the development, Senate Leader Opeyemi Bamidele characterised the defections as a healthy manifestation of democratic principles at play.

"For us, it is not just about the numbers," Bamidele said, emphasising the APC's ongoing commitment to ensuring its members and stakeholders uphold the party's core ideals.

He underscored the party's dedication to advancing Nigeria's progress and affirmed that the current momentum would not be taken for granted.

Sanwo-Olu launches N500bn food security initiative, 'Produce for Lagos'

By Friday Omosola



Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State on Wednesday announced the launch of the 'Produce for Lagos' programme, a strategic initiative aimed at bolstering food security and agricultural self-reliance within Lagos State and across Nigeria.

The programme is backed by a substantial ₦500 billion Offtake Guarantee Fund, signalling a significant push to develop a robust, localised food supply chain.

In a statement posted on his X page, Sanwo-Olu highlighted Lagos's pivotal role as Nigeria's largest food market, consuming over half of the food traded in the South-West region.

He noted the state's food economy is valued at more than ₦16 trillion, underscoring both existing demand and vast opportunities for local agricultural growth.

The 'Produce for Lagos' program is designed to create direct links between farmers and producers and the expansive Lagos market.

Key components include guaranteed product offtake, simplified access to financing, and crucial logistical support.

The governor emphasised that the initiative is set to boost food production, generate employment, reduce post-harvest waste, and enhance livelihoods within the agricultural sector.

This ambitious undertaking is a collaborative effort between the state government and the private sector, implemented through the Lagos Food Systems Infrastructure Company, with additional support from Lagos Bulk Trading Company, Ekolog, and the Produce for Lagos Fund.

To ensure efficient distribution, a fleet of

150 cold and dry trucks, described as the largest of its kind in the country, has been deployed to facilitate safe and timely food transport.

The accompanying ₦500 billion fund is specifically structured to attract private investment, mitigate financial risks for participants, and provide essential financing for traders, transporters, and farmers.

Sanwo-Olu stressed that while effective policy is vital, tangible funding and consistent follow-through are critical for achieving real impact.

Sanwo-Olu extended an invitation to partners, other state governments, investors, banks, and development agencies to collaborate on the initiative.

He urged all stakeholders in the agricultural value chain to join forces to 'feed Lagos and build a food system that truly lasts.'

Why Adeleke's defection to APC was stalled

By Alade Adisa

Facts have emerged on why the strident effort by Osun State Governor, Ademola Adeleke to dump the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, for the All Progressives Congress, APC, hit a brick wall – his demand to be given the governorship ticket of the party next year was flatly rejected.

Check by New Daily Prime shows that Adeleke's demand upset some leaders of the APC, especially the former governor, who is now the Minister for Blue Economy, Gboyega Oyetola.

Oyetola, who contested the 2022 poll with Adeleke and lost, is the nephew of President Bola Tinubu and has been told by the President not to seek the ticket of the APC next year but to remain in Abuja and continue to work with him.

Because of that, a leader of the APC from Ife area is being tipped to fly the APC flag next year.

Sources in the APC also revealed that the manner former PDP governors who left to join the APC took over the leadership of the APC in Delta and Akwa Ibom states has taught many a politician lessons.

Senator Ovie Omo-Agege and Festus Keyamo, who were hitherto nurturing governorship ambitions in Delta, have had to perish the thought.

However, the APC, on Wednesday issued a statement saying it rejected Adeleke because of his poor performance and that he would be a liability to the party.

The APC, in a statement issued by its Director of Media and Information, Kola Olabisi, said moving from one political party to another is not a big deal, but the party rejected Adeleke because of his too much baggage, which makes him a liability to the party.

“Governor Ademola Adeleke was rejected because he was quickly identified as a Trojan horse, a big baggage and liability



that would hurt the integrity of the APC.

“We state first of all that the highly informed Osun State public, who are aware that it was the fear of the impending 2026 election defeat that motivated the governor to desperately seek in our party an asylum for his political survival in 2026, are excited about the measured treatment meted to the Osun State governor and his desperate party men.

“It is no longer news that the Osun PDP has become a leprous house deserted by decent politicians to serve the people.

“From 2023 when the party began to morally emaciate and became a war loot of the Adeleke dynasty, bright minds and people with good names to protect, who could not tolerate the deceit, shenanigans and high-levelled corruption and brigandage the Adeleke government represents, daily troop out from the tattered umbrella into our party, thus leaving the PDP with carcasses and political dregs with no structure and hope to retain power in future elections.

“Therefore, the self-adulation of the PDP caucus that it remains the most popular party in Osun State is merely self-consolatory as the claim could not be

substantiated with facts”, he said.

However, the PDP in a statement issued by its Chairman, Sunday Bisi, said though it does not intend to join issues with the opposition, stated that the party is the most popular in the state, adding that the people of the state would determine the next governor of the State.

“Our party is focused on the people and is not seeking to import fake voters and rig the 2026 elections as being plotted by the opposition.

“Our position on the 2026 and 2027 race remains sacrosanct even as it noted that Osun people have the records of performance of all parties and will make their choice.

“We won't join issues with the opposition. We have no plan to rig the 2026 election. We are sure Osun people will vote for PDP and stand by their votes next year. Our records of good performance speak for us.

“Osun PDP remains solid. We affirm that Governor Adeleke will win Osun votes resoundingly in 2026. Through the support of the Osun PDP, President Tinubu will also win the Osun election”, he asserted.

Ondo govt, REA sign MoU to electrify 25 underserved communities

By Friday Omosola

The Ondo State Government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Federal Government's Rural Electrification Agency (REA) to expand access to electricity across 25 underserved communities in the state.

The agreement was formalised yesterday during a roundtable discussion held in Abuja under the theme 'From Access to Impact: Unlocking Ondo's Renewable Energy Potential for Economic Transformation and Socioeconomic Inclusion.'

Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa, who led the state delegation, described the partnership as a pivotal step towards delivering sustainable energy solutions that would transform rural communities and stimulate inclusive growth.

"This MoU marks the beginning of a strategic collaboration between Ondo State and the REA," Aiyedatiwa said.

"Our administration has established a legally backed State Rural Electrification Agency that will work in sync with the Federal REA to accelerate project implementation and address local energy needs with greater relevance and urgency."

The governor noted that the state has become an attractive destination for mini-grid and renewable energy developers due to its clear regulatory framework, streamlined approval processes, and investment-friendly incentives.

"Our Electricity Roadmap targets powering agro-processing hubs, healthcare facilities, schools, digital infrastructure, and small businesses, especially in hard-to-reach areas like Ilaje, Bolorunduro, Idanre, Owo, and Akoko," he said.



"Beyond infrastructure, we are exploring smart metering, energy storage, and data-driven energy management to ensure long-term impact."

Describing the partnership as catalytic rather than symbolic, Aiyedatiwa added that reliable electricity access would serve as a foundation for job creation, innovation, equity, and sustainable development.

Speaking at the event, REA Managing Director, Abba Aliyu, revealed that the agency has a renewable energy funding pipeline nearing \$1.6 billion, sourced through a mix of public-private partnerships, climate financing instruments, and multilateral support.

According to him, the funds will support the deployment of solar mini-grids, standalone systems, and other clean energy technologies, particularly in remote and off-grid communities.

"We've developed a robust programme to power 25 communities across Ondo State," Aliyu said.

"Our implementation model relies on Renewable Energy Service

Companies with proven track records of deploying infrastructure in hard-to-reach areas."

Aliyu also commended Ondo's strong policy readiness, noting that the state scored 4 out of 5 on the REA's subnational preparedness index.

Earlier in his welcome remarks, Ondo State Commissioner for Energy and Mineral Resources, Engr. Alabi Johnson stressed the centrality of energy access to socioeconomic development.

"In Ondo, we see energy not just as power supply, but as a driver of innovation, productivity, and poverty reduction," Johnson said.

"This roundtable provides an opportunity to shape a resilient and inclusive energy future, ensuring no community is left behind."

The partnership is expected to unlock new economic opportunities across the state while reinforcing the government's commitment to equitable and sustainable energy delivery.

Why you should never store tomatoes in the fridge

By Helen Okechukwu



With tomato season in full swing, experts are urging Britons to stop storing their tomatoes in the fridge.

While it might seem like a way to preserve freshness, chilling tomatoes at low temperatures destroys both their texture and flavour.

According to Professor Graham Seymour, emeritus professor of plant biotechnology at the University of Nottingham, storing ripe tomatoes at 5°C – the average fridge temperature – significantly reduces the aromatic compounds that give tomatoes their distinct taste.

“If you have a suitable storage area at a temperature of 12.5C-14C, then ripening will be slowed,” Professor Seymour says. “Flavour could still be altered somewhat, but it’s much better than storing them at 4-5C in the

fridge. I am afraid like most things it’s a compromise,” he said.

Chilled tomatoes also become “mealy” due to damaged cell membranes, resulting in a grainy texture.

Instead, experts recommend keeping tomatoes at room temperature – ideally around 20°C – out of direct sunlight and away from fruits like bananas that emit ethylene gas and speed up ripening.

Read Also: Bowel cancer is rising in Nigeria – Is a lack of fibre hidden cause?

Supermarket tomatoes are often sold in perforated plastic packaging to reduce condensation, and Waitrose advises keeping them sealed in their original wrap until needed.

For underripe tomatoes, placing them

near ethylene-producing fruits or in a sunny spot can encourage ripening. Overripe ones are perfect for soups or sauces.

While tomatoes can be frozen for later use, they’re best reserved for cooking due to their high water content. Cooking methods such as roasting or frying can also bring out the best in underripe or less flavoursome varieties.

To maximise taste and shelf life, experts suggest choosing British-grown tomatoes, which are picked ripe and travel shorter distances. These tend to retain flavour better than long-life varieties imported from abroad.

Bottom line? Keep your tomatoes out of the fridge and let them breathe – your tastebuds will thank you.

€18m EU grant to boost Nigeria's vaccine sovereignty, end dependency — Adigwe

By Helen Okechukwu



The National Institute for Pharmaceutical Research and Development (NIPRD) is set to kick-start the implementation of an €18 million grant from the European Union (EU), aimed at transforming Nigeria's vaccine landscape.

Speaking in Abuja, NIPRD Director-General, Dr Obi Adigwe, described the grant as a “game-changer” for the country's vaccine independence.

According to News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), the funding supports Nigeria's 10-year plan (2024–2034) to build a self-reliant vaccine ecosystem through research, development, and local production.

While recalling the challenges

Nigeria faced during the COVID-19 period, he said, “We also witnessed vaccine nationalism, where countries hoarded vaccines despite preaching equity and justice. That experience underscored the urgent need to build local capacity for vaccine research and production.”

He criticised the vaccine hoarding seen during the pandemic, calling it a wake-up call for the continent to prioritise health sovereignty. The EU grant, he noted, is the largest vaccine-related support received by any African nation to date.

The comprehensive roadmap funded by the grant outlines strategies for vaccine R&D, clinical trials, infrastructure upgrades, technology transfer, and

workforce development.

Key stakeholders—including government ministries, academia, international partners, and the private sector—collaborated on its design.

According to Adigwe, the plan has secured ministerial backing and formal approval from the EU. Implementation has commenced, with teams already deployed to partner agencies like United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

He expressed confidence that within the next decade, Nigeria could be home to multiple vaccine manufacturers, contributing not just to national health security, but also to economic growth and regional resilience.

Davido honours late son Ifeanyi 3 years after tragic loss

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular Afrobeats singer David Adeleke, widely known as Davido, has paid an emotional tribute to his late son, Ifeanyi Adeleke, nearly three years after the toddler's untimely death.

In a heartfelt message shared on his official X (formerly Twitter) account, the award-winning artist wrote, "Ifeanyi David Adedeji Adeleke RIP LEGEND!!" The post quickly drew reactions from fans and fellow celebrities, many of whom offered continued support to the grieving star.

Ifeanyi, Davido's first son with his wife, Chioma Rowland, died on October 31, 2022, in a tragic swimming pool accident at the family's home in Banana Island, Lagos. The devastating news shocked the nation and sparked an outpouring of grief across social media and the entertainment industry.

At the time of the incident, both Davido and Chioma were reportedly away from home. The Lagos State Police Command later confirmed the death and launched an investigation. Authorities disclosed that an autopsy had been carried out, which confirmed that the cause of death was drowning.

Following the incident, eight domestic workers were brought in for questioning. While most were eventually released, two individuals remained under investigation to determine what led to the heartbreaking accident. However, no formal charges were announced publicly.

The tragedy sent shockwaves across Nigeria and beyond. Prominent figures in music, politics, and sports



extended their condolences to Davido and his family. Lagos State Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, American rappers Bia and Meek Mill, and former Super Eagles footballer Victor Moses were among those who expressed their sympathy. Many described the loss of a child as one of the deepest pains a person can experience and commended Davido and Chioma for their strength during such a difficult time.

In the months following Ifeanyi's death, Davido took a break from music and social media, stepping back from the spotlight to grieve in private. His silence was respected by fans, who continued to send messages of love and support.

He made a powerful comeback in 2023 with the release of his highly acclaimed album *Timeless*, which many interpreted as a tribute to resilience and healing. The album was received with widespread praise and commercial success, reinforcing Davido's status as one of Africa's leading music stars.

Later that same year, Davido and Chioma received a joyful blessing.

The couple welcomed a set of twins in the United States, a moment many fans celebrated as a symbol of hope and new beginnings. The birth of the twins brought renewed joy to the family after a period marked by sorrow.

Throughout his career, Davido has remained vocal about the importance of family and has consistently expressed love for his children. His tribute to Ifeanyi not only reflects a father's undying love but also serves as a reminder of the personal trials that even public figures face behind the scenes.

As Davido continues to build his legacy in music and philanthropy, the memory of his late son remains a poignant chapter in his life story. His recent tribute has touched the hearts of many, reigniting conversations around child safety, mental health, and the power of healing.

Despite the pain of loss, Davido's journey since 2022 has been marked by resilience, growth, and a deepened connection with his fans, who have stood by him every step of the way.

'I am no more a Muslim', Peller says

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular Nigerian TikTok personality, Peller, has opened up about his decision to leave Islam and embrace Christianity, citing a traumatic childhood experience as the reason behind his spiritual shift.

The content creator shared his story during a recent live session with fans. The discussion took a personal turn when one of his followers referred to him as a Muslim. Peller quickly clarified that he no longer practices Islam.

"I'm not a Muslim," he said plainly. "I go to church very well."

His statement surprised many of his fans, prompting questions and comments in the live chat. Peller, however, chose to speak candidly, offering more insight into what led to the change in his religious beliefs.

According to him, the root of his transformation began during his early years at a Quranic school. He recalled that the environment was harsh and left him with lasting emotional scars.

"When I was a child, I was enrolled in a Quranic school," he explained. "But I was beaten severely there. That's why I stopped going."

He described the punishments as painful and excessive. Over time, he began to associate religion with fear and pain. This eventually pushed him away from Islam altogether.

"That experience stayed with me for years," he said. "It made me lose interest in the religion."

As he grew older, Peller said he began searching for peace and a deeper connection with his faith. That search, he revealed, led him to Christianity.

"I didn't just wake up one day and decide to change," he said. "It was a journey. I wanted to understand God for myself."



The social media star said he now finds comfort in attending church services and connecting with his Christian faith. For him, this new path brings a sense of peace that he didn't have in the past.

"I now feel more spiritually grounded," he added. "Church gives me a sense of direction and calm."

Peller's revelation has sparked conversations online, especially among his fans who were unaware of his religious background or spiritual journey. While some praised his honesty and courage to speak up, others expressed concern or disagreement.

Despite the reactions, Peller remains firm in his beliefs. He noted that everyone's spiritual path is personal, and he hopes his story encourages others to seek truth and peace in their way.

"Religion is supposed to bring you closer to God, not scare you," he said. "I chose what gives me peace."

Interestingly, this revelation comes shortly after news of Peller's engagement broke on social media.

His girlfriend recently confirmed that they are now officially engaged, sharing photos and heartfelt messages online. The couple's relationship has drawn attention from fans who have followed Peller's journey for years.

Many have congratulated the couple, while others are speculating about how his newfound Christian faith may influence their future together.

Peller has not yet commented on whether his fiancée shares the same beliefs. However, he made it clear during his live session that his spiritual growth is a personal journey he continues to navigate with care and intention.

In the end, Peller's story is not just about changing religions. It's about healing from the past, finding peace, and choosing a path that aligns with his values.

As he put it simply, "I found God in a new way, and I'm grateful for where I am now."

His openness has added a new layer to his public image, reminding fans that behind every viral video is a human being with real struggles, real pain, and a real story.

‘Now I just need to get sexier’, BNXXN declares

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian singer BNXXN, formerly known as Buju, says the next step in his personal branding journey is to look “sexier.”

The Afrobeats star made this statement on Wednesday via his official X (formerly Twitter) account. In the post, he wrote:

“All that’s left for me to do is to get sexier.”

BNXXN’s comment comes amid ongoing conversations about body image in the music industry. Over the years, the artist has faced frequent body-shaming online, with some social media users targeting his physical appearance rather than his musical talent.

Now, the ‘Finesse’ hitmaker says he’s choosing to focus on self-improvement and is no longer letting negative comments define his identity. His tweet appears to be a lighthearted but confident declaration that he is taking charge of his public image on his terms.

BNXXN has never shied away from addressing the issue of body-shaming. In previous interviews, he admitted that the online trolling did affect him at certain points in his career. However, his latest message suggests a shift in mindset, from reacting to criticism to embracing self-love.

His fans were quick to support the tweet, with many praising him for his resilience and positive attitude. Some users even encouraged him to do whatever makes him feel good, while others praised him for not allowing online negativity to break his spirit.

BNXXN’s message also brings to mind a past feud with fellow Nigerian singer Ruger, which at one point involved personal insults and online drama.



Back in 2022, the two artists were locked in a heated exchange on social media that quickly turned ugly. One of the most talked-about moments from that clash was when Ruger body-shamed BNXXN. At the time, many fans and observers criticised Ruger’s remarks, calling them unnecessary and harmful.

But last year, Ruger publicly expressed regret over his actions. During an interview, the ‘Asiwaju’ singer admitted that he felt ashamed of his behaviour during the feud.

“I feel bad that I body-shamed BNXXN. I regret it,” he said.

His apology was widely accepted by the public, and it marked a turning point in their relationship.

In a surprising twist, the former rivals went on to collaborate on a joint music project titled ‘R&B’, which was released months after their reconciliation. The project showcased a new level of maturity from both artists and was well-received by fans and critics alike.

The title ‘R&B’ was a clever play on their initials Ruger and BNXXN, but it also hinted at a softer, more introspective musical direction. The collaboration symbolised not just a professional partnership, but also personal growth.

BNXXN’s latest comment about becoming “sexier” may sound playful, but it touches on broader issues faced by many artists today, especially in the digital age. From fashion to fitness, artists are increasingly expected to present a polished image that aligns with their music brand.

However, for BNXXN, the message seems to be less about conforming and more about evolving on his terms. With consistent hits, a growing fanbase, and a now-public commitment to self-care, the singer appears to be charting his path with confidence and humour.

In an industry where appearance is often scrutinised just as much as talent, BNXXN’s approach sends a strong message: confidence is the ultimate comeback.

Chidinma recalls suicidal struggles, says, 'The devil told me to end my life'

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian gospel singer Chidinma Ekile has shared a powerful and deeply personal account of her recent 40-day spiritual retreat.

The singer, who rose to fame after winning Project Fame West Africa, described the experience as one of the most intense and life-changing periods of her life.

In a recent testimony, Chidinma revealed that she spent 40 days in complete isolation, devoting herself to prayer, fasting, and seeking divine direction. According to her, the journey was marked by emotional and spiritual battles, yet it ultimately led her to a deeper connection with God.

"It felt like I was alone with God, stripped of everything else," she said.

During the retreat, which she spent on a mountain, the singer said she often slept outdoors, choosing to pray and sing throughout the night. She described how the solitude helped her pour out her heart to God and feel His presence in ways she had never experienced before.

"There were nights I stayed outside, singing and praying," she recalled. "It was very personal. I was talking to God with my music and tears. And I could feel Him listening."

Process not easy, says Chidinma

Chidinma admitted that the process was far from easy. She faced several moments of deep internal struggle, including one particularly frightening experience she described as a confrontation with a dark, spiritual force.

She recounted a chilling moment when she stood at the edge of a cliff and heard a voice urging her to jump.



It was a spiritual attack, she said, aimed at cutting her journey short. "The devil came to take me before my time," Chidinma said. "It was night. I was on top of the cliff, and everything was dark. Then I heard a voice, very strong telling me to jump. It was clear. I was supposed to end it there."

But just as she was about to obey, something unexpected happened.

"When I moved closer, I realised I couldn't jump. It was like something was blocking me. There was an invisible wall, a force I couldn't see," she said.

She described the moment as a spiritual intervention that saved her life.

"It was like I was in a theatre, and God was performing surgery on me. He shredded me. He removed everything. I've seen it all. Material things don't move me anymore."

Following the testimony, many fans and followers took to social media to commend Chidinma's courage and openness. They praised her for

sharing such a vulnerable moment and expressed admiration for her spiritual strength.

One follower wrote, "Your story gave me chills. God truly has a purpose for you." Another added, "Thank you for not giving up. This will save someone's life."

Chidinma, who transitioned from secular music to gospel in 2021, has become a vocal advocate for faith and spiritual growth. Her music and message continue to inspire many, especially young people seeking meaning in a fast-paced world.

She ended her testimony with a message of hope:

"If you ever feel alone, please remember that God is closer than you think. The devil tried to end me, but God said no. And I'm still here for a reason."

Chidinma's story is a reminder of the unseen battles many people fight, and the power of faith to bring healing, purpose, and peace.

CDQ opens up on why he left banking for music

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian rapper Sodiq Abubakar Yusuf, popularly known as CDQ, has revealed why he walked away from a stable banking career to chase his dream in music.

In a recent interview with Echo Room, the rapper, born Sodiq Abubakar Yusuf, shared a personal story about how he traded the corporate world for the recording studio.

According to him, his decision to become a banker was driven by the desire to honour his late father's wishes. However, he soon realised that the job didn't bring him joy.

"I became a banker because of my dad," CDQ said. "He wanted me to wear suits and work in an office, and I wanted to make him proud. But deep inside, I wasn't fulfilled. I was working, but my heart wasn't in it."

While still working at the bank, CDQ said he began to notice his growing distraction. Instead of focusing on his tasks, he found himself scribbling lyrics on paper, thinking about beats and rhymes.

"I would sit in the office and start writing songs instead of handling customer files," he said. "That's when I knew I wasn't where I was supposed to be."

At the time, CDQ was staying with his close friend and music producer, Masterkraft, who was also supporting him in more ways than one. He revealed that Masterkraft even lent him suits to wear to work because he couldn't afford his own.

Eventually, CDQ made a life-changing decision.

"I quit my bank job," he said. "I didn't



even tell my mum or any member of my family. I just packed my things and went to stay in the studio with Masterkraft. I told him I didn't want to do banking anymore. That was never my passion."

According to CDQ, it was a bold step, but he was convinced it was the right one. Even though music didn't guarantee immediate financial reward, he was more at peace doing what he loved.

"Music gives me joy," he said. "Even if I don't make money from it, I'm still happy. That's how I knew it was the right path."

CDQ said he had a conversation with Masterkraft where he made a promise that if they both focused fully on their craft, success would come within six months. That confidence soon paid off.

"Before six months, we got a record deal," CDQ recalled. "We moved out of the ghetto and into Lekki. That was the beginning of our breakthrough."

The decision marked a turning point in CDQ's life and career. He began to gain recognition in the music industry, and in

2016, he broke through with the hit single Indomie, featuring Masterkraft and Olamide. The track became an instant street anthem, earning him fans across the country.

The remix, which featured music superstar Davido, pushed the song even further and solidified CDQ's place in the Nigerian music scene.

Looking back, CDQ said leaving the bank was one of the hardest decisions he's ever made, but also the most rewarding. His journey highlights the struggles many young Nigerians face in choosing between job security and personal passion.

"I took a risk," he said. "I didn't know if it would work out, but I knew I couldn't keep living a life that didn't make me happy."

Today, CDQ is one of Nigeria's respected rappers, known for his blend of indigenous Yoruba rap and energetic delivery. But behind the fame is a story of courage, faith, and a leap into the unknown, all in pursuit of purpose.

Trump, Japan strike deal to cut tariffs to 15%

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

President Donald Trump announced on Tuesday that his administration has reached a sweeping trade agreement with Japan, slashing U.S. tariffs on Japanese imports to 15%. The move marks a dramatic shift from the previously threatened rates of 24% and 25%, and follows months of pressure from the Trump administration on global trading partners.

Taking to Truth Social, Trump described the deal as a “tremendous win” for American trade policy. The new 15% tariff is still significantly higher than the pre-Trump effective rate of under 2%, according to World Bank data, but represents a compromise compared to earlier threats.

Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba confirmed the agreement at a press conference in Tokyo on Wednesday, calling it “the lowest rate so far” among countries maintaining a trade surplus with the United States.

“We have exerted all our efforts to protect our national interests,” Ishiba stated. “Among the countries that have a trade surplus with the United States, we have achieved the greatest results.”

The deal arrives just ahead of Trump’s 1 August deadline for countries to reach trade agreements or face increased tariffs. Though previous deadlines have been pushed back, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told Fox Business Network that this one is a “pretty hard deadline.”

Since what the Trump administration dubbed “Liberation Day” on 2 April, when the president began issuing tariff ultimatums, the U.S. has yet to finalise any formal trade deals. Instead, several framework agreements have been signed, including this latest pact with Japan, which could develop into a fully-fledged agreement.

Japan, the fifth-largest exporter to the United States last year, with nearly



\$150 billion worth of goods sold to American buyers, has worked feverishly to avoid Trump’s escalating tariffs. Its lead trade negotiator has reportedly visited Washington eight times in recent months, most recently on Monday, for a two-hour meeting with Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick.

Under the terms of the agreement, Trump claimed that Japan will “invest, at my direction, \$550 Billion Dollars into the United States, which will receive 90% of the Profits.” The specifics of how such an investment would function remain unclear. Japan is already the largest foreign investor in the U.S., with \$754.1 billion in direct investment last year, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Speaking later on Tuesday at an event with congressional Republicans, Trump celebrated the agreement, saying: “The tariffs kicked in better than anybody other than me and a few of the people in the room thought could happen.”

He also announced that Japan and the

U.S. will form a joint venture focused on liquefied natural gas development in Alaska.

The deal comes during a politically precarious period for Prime Minister Ishiba, whose Liberal Democratic Party recently lost both houses of parliament. Despite this, he has vowed to remain in office to address ongoing economic challenges.

In a surprising shift just weeks ago, Trump had appeared pessimistic about the likelihood of a deal. “The Japanese are tough,” he said on 16 June, “but ultimately you have to understand we’re just going to send a letter saying, ‘This is what you’re going to pay, otherwise you don’t have to do business with us.’ But there’s a chance.”

In a separate development, Trump recently approved a delayed takeover of U.S. Steel by Japan’s Nippon Steel. The agreement includes a \$14 billion investment and the creation of at least 70,000 jobs, a figure later revised to 100,000 to include direct, indirect, and induced employment.

UK aid cuts will hit women, girls, Africa hardest, govt admits

By Helen Okechukwu



The United Kingdom (UK) government has acknowledged that its deep foreign aid cuts will likely lead to more global deaths, disproportionately affecting women, girls, and crisis-hit regions in Africa.

In its latest report, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) confirmed a £575 million cut for 2025-26. Overall aid will drop from 0.5% to 0.3% of Gross National Income by 2027—around £6 billion less.

The FCDO's own impact assessment warns that the cuts could increase disease and death, especially among the poorest and most vulnerable, including children and people with disabilities.

Critics say key sectors like education, healthcare, and gender support will suffer most. Labour MP Sarah Champion called the move a blow to “the pillars of healthy and secure societies.”

Gideon Rabinowitz of Bond, a network of UK aid organisations, warned that the world's most marginalised communities will “pay the highest price” and urged the UK to fill the gap left by the US retreat from global gender programmes.

Africa is taking the brunt of regional cuts, despite being home to most of the world's poorest people.

Aid to the Americas, Europe, and Indo-Pacific is rising, while support for countries like South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia is falling sharply.

While the UK is still sending £1.8bn to the World Bank's IDA and backing global vaccine efforts like Gavi, direct country-level support is shrinking. Funding for girls' education is set to be halved, and spending on women's health—including family planning—is also being reduced.

Baroness Jenny Chapman, Minister for Development, defended the shift, saying the UK is moving from being an “aid donor” to a partner, focusing on long-term investment and expertise-sharing.

But campaigners say the strategy change comes at a cost: fewer resources for those most in need, especially women and girls in conflict zones.

Home Office partners Deliveroo to curb illegal migrant labour

By Fatimah Idera

The Home Office has reached an agreement with food delivery giants Deliveroo, Just Eat, and Uber Eats to share the locations of asylum hotels in an effort to prevent asylum seekers from working illegally in the gig economy.

Under the new partnership, the government will provide these companies with data on hotels in high-risk areas. The goal is to help platforms identify and suspend accounts suspected of being used fraudulently, particularly in cases where legal account holders are believed to be sharing their profiles with individuals not authorised to work in the UK.

The move follows an investigation that uncovered how newly arrived asylum seekers, housed in taxpayer-funded hotels, were delivering food for these platforms within days of arriving by small boat.

However, UK law prohibits asylum seekers from working for at least 12 months after they submit their asylum claim unless a decision is made sooner. Officials say this ban is being routinely circumvented through account sharing, which allows unauthorised individuals to earn income under someone else's name.

Home Secretary Yvette Cooper described the new measures as a vital part of a broader campaign to close loopholes and clamp down on illegal work.

"Illegal working undermines honest businesses, exploits vulnerable individuals, and fuels organised immigration crime," Cooper said. "By enhancing our data sharing with delivery companies, we are taking decisive action to close loopholes and increase enforcement."



The initiative comes alongside an ongoing Plan for Change, which includes a 50% rise in workplace raids and arrests, tougher security measures, and new legislation aimed at curbing illegal employment and deterring irregular migration.

Delivery platforms have already begun tightening identity and right-to-work checks. According to the Home Office, these measures have resulted in the removal of thousands of workers from the apps. In addition, the companies have committed to expanding their use of facial recognition and fraud detection tools to ensure only verified account holders are allowed to work.

Anyone caught sharing their account with someone who lacks legal working status will have their access suspended, the companies said.

Director of Enforcement at the Home Office, Eddy Montgomery praised the collaboration as a necessary step in disrupting illegal activity.

"This next step of coordinated working with delivery firms will help us target

those who seek to work illegally in the gig economy and exploit their status in the UK," Montgomery said. "My teams will continue increased enforcement activity across the country."

The new measures form part of a broader government effort to reduce the perceived pull factors attracting migrants to the UK. That includes a promised "nationwide blitz" on illegal working and a recently agreed bilateral deal between Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron to return some migrants crossing the Channel back to France.

So far in 2025, over 23,500 migrants have crossed the English Channel to the UK, a record for this point in the year.

The delivery firms involved said in a joint statement that they are fully committed to supporting the government's enforcement efforts and preventing illegal working on their platforms.

Obama rebukes Trump over 'treason' allegations

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Former U.S. President Barack Obama's office has issued a rare and scathing rebuke of Donald Trump after the current president accused his predecessor of "treason" and claimed he rigged both the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections.

"Out of respect for the office of the presidency, our office does not normally dignify the constant nonsense and misinformation flowing out of this White House with a response," said Obama spokesperson Patrick Rodenbush. "But these claims are outrageous enough to merit one. These bizarre allegations are ridiculous and a weak attempt at distraction."

Trump, speaking to reporters on Tuesday, pivoted from a question about convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein to levelling sweeping accusations against Obama, declaring: "Obama's been caught directly... This was treason. This was every word you can think of. They tried to steal the election."

He added, "After what they did to me, and whether it's right or wrong, it's time to go after people."

Trump cited recent statements made by Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard and CIA Director John Ratcliffe, who alleged that officials in the Obama administration had manipulated intelligence to undermine Trump's 2016 victory. Gabbard, in a post last week, announced she was making a criminal referral to the Justice Department, accusing former officials of deliberate obstruction.

At a separate event with Republican members of Congress, Trump again praised Gabbard and doubled down on his allegations, calling Obama and others "vicious, horrible people."

Rodenbush countered those claims by pointing to longstanding findings that have withstood bipartisan scrutiny. "Nothing in the document issued last week undercuts the widely accepted conclusion that Russia worked to



influence the 2016 presidential election but did not successfully manipulate any votes," he said, referencing a 2020 Senate Intelligence Committee report led by Republican Chairman Marco Rubio.

White House spokesperson Davis Ingle responded by saying the administration "is appreciative of Director Gabbard's commitment to transparency and effort to end the weaponisation of government against American citizens."

Gabbard argued the intelligence community had withheld an assessment from December 2016 that concluded Russia did not impact the election through cyberattacks, a document she claims was abruptly pulled. However, Obama himself, during a press briefing shortly after the 2016 election, clarified that while Russia did interfere, there was no evidence of tampering with vote counts.

Obama maintains influence of Russia's aim

The Obama administration maintained that Russia's aim was to influence the election through hacked document leaks and a sophisticated disinformation campaign, claims later substantiated by Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation and the bipartisan Senate report.

A separate investigation, led by Special Counsel John Durham and championed by Trump's allies, was sharply critical of the FBI's early handling of the Russia

probe but did not uncover any criminal conspiracy within the Obama administration.

"The Committee's bipartisan report found that Russia's goal in its unprecedented hack-and-leak operation... was to assist the Trump Campaign. Candidate Trump and his Campaign responded to that threat by embracing, encouraging, and exploiting the Russian effort," the Senate report concluded.

Democratic lawmakers have slammed the renewed accusations as a political distraction.

"This is just another example of the DNI trying to cook the books, rewrite history, and erode trust in the intelligence agencies she's supposed to be leading," said Senator Mark Warner, Democrat of Virginia.

House Democratic Caucus Chair Pete Aguilar added, "It's all a distraction... they'll release anything if it buys them another day or two not talking about Epstein."

Trump, facing pressure from within his MAGA base over the administration's handling of the Epstein case, has reignited several old grievances on social media. On Truth Social, he accused long-time foe Senator Adam Schiff of criminal behaviour and posted AI-generated mugshots of prominent Democrats.

MeToo Movement leaves some men hesitant to mentor women at work

By **Fatimah Idera**

For many male bosses, the sight of Chancellor Rachel Reeves tearing up behind Sir Keir Starmer in the Commons this month hit a nerve. As Starmer pressed ahead with Prime Minister's questions unaware of the emotional moment happening behind him, some in the business world weren't focused on empathy but anxiety.

According to One City Headhunter, many male managers quietly admit they dread the idea of a woman crying at work. So much so that they often hold back on giving honest, constructive feedback they wouldn't hesitate to offer their male colleagues. The worry isn't always rooted in compassion, but fear: of getting it wrong, being misinterpreted, or just facing the discomfort of visible emotion.

It's a dynamic that's persisted for decades. One female banker recalls a top U.S. executive visiting London in the 1990s. "He admitted he avoided giving women tough feedback because he didn't want to make them cry," she said. "He was honest, but that meant those women were less likely to grow. They didn't get the same feedback as men and were more likely to stumble later."

And the problem hasn't gone away. In fact, it worsened after the rise of the MeToo movement. A 2019 Lean In study found that 60% of male managers said they felt uncomfortable mentoring younger women a sharp increase from just a year earlier. The fear of being misunderstood had grown so widespread that it was visibly altering workplace dynamics.

Sheryl Sandberg, then COO of Facebook, captured the tension at the time: "Ugly behaviour that once



was indulged or ignored is finally being called out and condemned," she said. "Now we must go further. Avoiding and isolating women at work... must be unacceptable too."

She was right. While most people today understand the difference between harassment and a normal professional exchange, the lingering discomfort some men feel, especially around emotionally charged moments, continues to disadvantage women.

Because here's the truth: people cry at work. A YouGov poll last year found that more than half of employees have done so. It's human. But if a manager sees tears as a sign to step back rather than step up, they're failing. A good leader doesn't shy away from uncomfortable moments they navigate them with care and confidence.

What's ironic is how much energy is wasted on superficial training. Entire consultancies are built on online courses, teaching grown adults that sexual harassment is wrong or that unwelcome massaging in the office

is inappropriate. (Yes, even top lawyers are sent these.)

But while companies box-tick their way through performative compliance, they're overlooking the real issue: a culture that encourages managers often male to treat female colleagues with kid gloves. The result? Women miss out on mentorship, tough feedback, and career-defining conversations.

We don't need more e-learning modules. We need better managers. Ones who are trained not just to avoid lawsuits, but to lead teams, including those moments when emotion shows up. If we want the gender pay gap to close (and at the current rate, PwC says it will take over 40 years), we can't afford to let discomfort hold back half the workforce.

So yes, emotion at work can feel awkward. But dodging it isn't leadership it's weakness in disguise. It's time we stopped treating tears like a crisis and started treating them like what they often are: a normal, human response to a high-pressure job.

'Bring home the trophy' – Tinubu urges Super Falcons after semi-final win

By Friday Omosola

President Bola Tinubu has urged the Super Falcons to go all the way and clinch the 2024 Women's Africa Cup of Nations (WAFCON) trophy.

He made this call in a post on his X page following Nigeria's 2-1 victory over South Africa's Banyana Banyana in the semi-final clash.

While congratulating the team, Tinubu described their win as well deserved, commending the players for their resilience and outstanding performance.

"Congratulations to our Super Falcons. Your incredible #WAFCON2024 semi-finals victory over South Africa today was nothing short of superlative. It was a magnificent display of grit, talent, and the indomitable Nigerian spirit.

"You have made the nation proud. Keep soaring. Don't stop until you bring the trophy home. Go for our 10th title. Nigerians worldwide are rooting for you. We are waiting to receive the cup", the president said.

The Super Falcons are set to face host nation Morocco in the final scheduled for Saturday, 26th July.



The TotalEnergies WAFCON 2024 has reached the business end with hosts Morocco booking their spot in a second consecutive final where they will face nine-time record African champions Nigeria on Saturday, July 26 at the Olympic Stadium in Rabat.

This will be the fourth meeting between the two teams at the WAFCON with the Atlas Lionesses emerging victorious in their last meeting: a 5-4 win after a tense penalty shootout following a 1-1 draw

in the semifinals of the WAFCON 2022 in Rabat.

Rookies to serious title contenders

When Morocco embarked on an intentional Women's Football Strategy five years ago, winning major trophies was part of the plan. And ahead of this weekend's final, it is not a surprise to any Moroccan that the team is standing up tall against the best teams in Africa.

Prior to the 2022 edition, Morocco had made two appearances at the continent's biggest showpiece amassing a win and a draw in two editions – in 1998 and 2000 while conceding 22 goals and scoring five. In their third appearance – this time at home in front of their fans, they went to the final but fell to a very well-oiled South African side 1-2.

They are back now – bigger, stronger and ready to fight again and give something to their fans who have filled the Olympic Stadium to the brim every match day in Rabat.



Venus Williams, 45, makes historic comeback win at DC Open

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



In a remarkable display of resilience and timeless talent, Venus Williams became the second-oldest woman in professional tennis history to win a tour-level singles match, defeating Peyton Stearns 6-3, 6-4 at the DC Open on Tuesday night.

At 45, Williams delivered a vintage performance filled with powerful serves and aggressive groundstrokes, triumphing over an opponent 22 years her junior. Her victory marks her first in singles since August 2023 in Cincinnati, and her first competitive singles match since March 2024 in Miami, where she later underwent surgery to remove uterine fibroids.

The only player older than Williams to win a WTA singles match is Martina Navratilova, who accomplished the feat at age 47 in 2004.

Listed as “inactive” by the WTA until this week, Williams returned to the court backed by a passionate Washington

crowd. She reminded everyone of her seven Grand Slam singles titles, 14 women’s doubles titles alongside sister Serena, and two mixed doubles titles.

The crowd roared as Williams stepped onto the 7,000-seat main stadium, more than double the size of the court where she had won her doubles match the previous day. The applause grew louder when she took part in the coin toss, and reached a crescendo when she fired aces above 110 mph, flashes of the dominant form that once made her world No. 1.

While the rust was evident, she was broken at love in the opening game, Williams quickly settled in. In the second game, she cracked a return winner to start a break of serve, then surged to a 4-2 lead before taking the first set. She chased down drop shots, hit fearless returns, and leaned on her experience when the pressure mounted late in the match.

Closing out the win wasn’t straightforward. Williams squandered

multiple match points before finally sealing victory with a 112 mph serve that Stearns could only send into the net. Beaming, Williams jogged to the net, shook hands, and treated fans to her signature post-win pirouette and wave.

She now advances to face fifth seed Magdalena Frech of Poland, aged 27, in the second round.

Elsewhere in the women’s draw, former US Open champion Emma Raducanu saw off seventh seed Marta Kostyuk 7-6 (4), 6-4, extending the Ukrainian’s losing streak to six matches. Raducanu will next face four-time Grand Slam winner Naomi Osaka, who dispatched Yulia Putintseva 6-2, 7-5.

In men’s action, upsets marked the day as Britain’s Cam Norrie defeated second seed Lorenzo Musetti 3-6, 6-2, 6-3, while third seed Holger Rune withdrew due to a back injury. Fourth seed Ben Shelton progressed with a confident 6-3, 6-4 win over Mackie McDonald.