



Atiku: 2027 election will be turning point for Nigeria Pg 2

2027: Those forming coalition against me are political IDPs — Tinubu Pg 4



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Atiku: 2027 election will be turning point for Nigeria

By Gbenga Olaleye



Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar has declared that the 2027 general elections will mark a turning point for Nigeria, vowing that it will not be “business as usual.”

Speaking in Abuja during a meeting with a delegation of Kannywood stakeholders, North West opinion leaders, and digital media influencers, Atiku reaffirmed his commitment to forming a robust opposition coalition aimed at unseating President Bola Tinubu in the next polls.

The delegation was led by Dr Aslam Aliyu, a notable Zamfara politician and head of the PAA 2027 New Media & Digital Communications Forum. The group also included key players from the Kannywood film industry

and various advocacy organisations.

Atiku, the 2023 presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), told the group that the coalition was born out of the pressing demands by Nigerians for meaningful change in governance.

“The envisaged coalition is a deliberate effort to recover and rebuild Nigeria in line with the yearnings and aspirations of the people, I assured the forum that 2027 will not be business as usual,” he said.

He urged members of the delegation to remain engaged and actively participate in public awareness campaigns to help galvanise national support for the opposition’s mission.

Addressing the country’s current challenges, Atiku acknowledged the widespread insecurity and economic hardship being faced by Nigerians, stressing that the proposed coalition has both the individual and collective strength to tackle them effectively.

“We, in the coalition, have the capacity to fix the problems confronting Nigeria today,” he assured.

The statement comes amid growing speculation around potential alliances between Atiku and other key political figures, including Peter Obi and Nasir El-Rufai, as opposition parties begin early preparations for the 2027 election cycle.

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2027: Those forming coalition against me are political IDPs — Tinubu

By New Daily Prime



President Bola Tinubu says opposition leaders planning a coalition to unseat him in 2027 are “politically displaced persons” in search of a new abode.

Speaking on Wednesday in Lafia, the capital of Nasarawa state, Tinubu dismissed the coalition as an early and misguided political move.

He was in the state to inaugurate legacy projects executed by Abdullahi Sule, governor of Nasarawa.

Last week, some opposition leaders seeking to form a coalition against Tinubu submitted a letter of intent to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to register the All Democratic Alliance (ADA) as a political party ahead of the 2027 general election.

The coalition is spearheaded by former Vice-President Atiku Abubakar and

Nasir el-Rufai, ex-governor of Kaduna.

Tinubu also warned that he would not stand idle while some political actors work to undermine his administration.

“Those who have triggered early politics in the perdition of coalition suddenly—don’t pay them any attention; they are the political IDPs. Don’t give them a home; the hope is here,” he said.

“I’m not geared for what they tried to pull on me—an early political campaign—but who is the politician who will keep quiet when the gangsterism are forming a coalition to unseat themselves?”

The president maintained that his government has recorded notable achievements despite current economic challenges.

“We’ve cut the waste. I won’t say much on the economic dynamism that we’re facing, but the hope is here. From this moment on, you’ll have no regret,” Tinubu said.

He praised the governor of Nasarawa’s efforts in delivering development to the people and acknowledged his prudent management of state resources.

“I can see hard work coming from A.A. Sule, who is determined to use the resources available to him for the benefit, stability, and prosperity of Nasarawa State,” the president said.

“Sule is doing well because Bola Tinubu is doing well, too.”

He also applauded the contributions of the first lady of Nasarawa and assured the people of the federal government’s continued support.

Nigeria, Brazil strengthen strategic ties to boost trade, clean energy, agriculture

By Friday Omosola

Vice President Kashim Shettima has said Nigeria is undergoing a quiet but determined transformation under President Bola Tinubu's administration, marked by market expansion, institutional reforms, and focused policy shifts.

Speaking on Wednesday at the Nigeria-Brazil Business Forum in Abuja, as part of the Nigeria-Brazil Strategic Dialogue Mechanism (SDM), Mr Shettima described the country's ongoing reforms as "silent but resolute," aimed at fostering sustainable partnerships and attracting like-minded allies.

"This transformation is driven by a seriousness of purpose that goes beyond reform for reform's sake," Shettima said.

"What we seek are partners who see our direction, who respect our ambition, and who are prepared to walk the path with us."

At the forum, themed "Roots to Revenue: The Nigeria-Brazil Corridor," Nigeria and Brazil agreed to strengthen their strategic alliance, targeting key sectors such as agriculture, food security, infrastructure, clean energy, trade, and industry.

Mr Shettima said Nigeria is following a development path similar to Brazil's, particularly in agriculture, clean energy, and industrial growth.

He highlighted Nigeria's Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zones, adding that local farmers are now poised to operate at scale but need strategic partnerships to maximise their potential.

"Brazil can stand with us in this effort, not as a donor, but as a partner in innovation, training, and investment," he said.

He also praised Brazil's leadership in clean energy, noting that Nigeria is leveraging its gas reserves while advancing renewable energy solutions.

Mr Shettima emphasised that Nigeria is keen to learn from Brazil's experience in building an energy economy that generates jobs and expands rural access.

He further noted the importance of partnerships that promote skills



development and human capital growth.

On Brazil's side, Vice President Geraldo Alckmin reaffirmed his country's commitment to strengthening bilateral relations, describing this as "one of the most promising" moments in Nigeria-Brazil cooperation.

He stressed the need to build sustainable, mutually beneficial partnerships, particularly in agriculture, defence, innovation, and energy.

Alckmin acknowledged that despite strong historic and cultural ties, trade volumes remain far below potential.

"Our trade is growing, but it can increase tremendously. Brazil is ready to work with Nigeria to build a commercially successful South-South corridor," he said.

The Brazilian Vice President also referenced the Green Imperative Initiative (GPI), a \$1.1 billion programme designed to transfer Brazilian agricultural technology to Nigeria, describing it as a model for South-South collaboration.

"Brazil does not just export products but solutions and ideas," Alckmin noted, adding that President Lula's administration is simplifying Brazil's tax regime and exploring a direct flight route to Nigeria to facilitate trade and business travel.

Nigeria's Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Kumoke Oduwole, called for a reset in the bilateral trade relationship, noting that the trade volume had dropped from \$9 billion a decade ago to around \$2 billion today.

"The Nigeria-Brazil corridor is not a nostalgic idea; it is realistic and achievable. Let us walk the talk and ensure our deliberations yield tangible results," she urged.

Ms Oduwole outlined Nigeria's priority investment sectors, including agro-industrial value chains, digital trade, the creative economy, and pharmaceuticals.

She also highlighted the government's new digital platform designed to track live investment projects and streamline investor engagement.

Princess Zarah Mustapha, Director-General of the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC), stressed the importance of state-level reforms in attracting sub-national investments, while Victoria Aigbedion of the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC) reiterated the country's commitment to creating a business-friendly regulatory environment.

Brazilian business leaders at the forum expressed strong interest in Nigeria's investment opportunities and long-term prospects.

Obi decries rising lawlessness after brother's property demolished in Lagos

By Friday Omosola



The Labour Party's presidential candidate in the 2023 general election, Peter Obi, has raised alarm over what he described as the worsening state of lawlessness and disregard for citizens' rights in Nigeria.

In a statement posted on his X page on Wednesday, Mr Obi recounted how his younger brother's company property in Ikeja, Lagos, was invaded and demolished by unidentified individuals without a valid court order or demolition permit.

He disclosed that he received a frantic call from his brother, who just returned from Port Harcourt, only to find the property under demolition and was barred from entering by security personnel who claimed the process had commenced over the weekend.

The former Anambra State governor said he immediately travelled to Lagos from Abuja upon hearing the news.

When he arrived at the scene, he was initially denied access to the premises but was eventually allowed to engage the security operatives overseeing the demolition.

Mr Obi said he demanded to see the court judgment authorising the demolition and was presented with a document purportedly issued against "an unknown

person" and squatters.

He raised concerns about the legality of a judgment against unnamed individuals and insisted that no

demolition permit or formal order was provided.

"How do you sue an unknown person? How does a court issue a judgment in such a case? No one was served, no names were mentioned, yet excavators arrived and began pulling down a structure that had stood for over 15 years," Mr Obi questioned.

According to him, even the demolition workers and the contractor on site could not identify who commissioned the operation.

Despite waiting at the location from 10 am to 2:00 PM and sharing his contact details with the workers, Mr Obi said no one called or stepped forward to claim responsibility.

Two men later suggested visiting a nearby police station, but they also failed to present any authorising documents, further fuelling suspicions that the demolition was carried out in bad faith.

He condemned what he described as a "coordinated act of lawlessness and impunity," lamenting that such incidents erode investor confidence in the country.

He recalled a recent conversation with a businessman who said he had investments in Ghana, Senegal, and Benin Republic but deliberately avoided Nigeria due to its "lawless environment."

"If this can happen to someone with legitimate business registration and known ownership, what hope is there for the ordinary Nigerian?" Mr Obi asked.

The former governor also referenced his personal experience of alleged human rights abuses since contesting the presidential election, saying his ordeal pales in comparison to the daily struggles of small business owners and vulnerable citizens.

The 63-year-old stressed that a nation where lawlessness overtakes the rule of law cannot attract meaningful investment or build a secure and prosperous society.

He reiterated his commitment to building a "new Nigeria" grounded in the protection of life and property, respect for human rights, and care for the less privileged.

FULL LIST: INEC receives 110 requests for new political party registration

By Damilola Olufemi



The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has disclosed that it has received 110 applications for new political party registration.

The electoral body disclosed this on Wednesday via its Facebook page, adding that it is processing the application requests of the parties with due diligence in conformity with the law.

“As of Monday, 23rd June 2025, the Commission has received letters of intent from 110 associations that wish to register as political parties. We are diligently processing the requests in line with the procedure outlined in the law as well as our Regulations and Guidelines.”

INEC disclosed acknowledging all requests received so far, except six requests received recently, which will be done before the end of the week.

“For emphasis, I wish to inform Nigerians, particularly those interested in registering new political parties, that the handbook containing the Regulations and Guidelines for Political Parties 2022 is already available on the Commission’s website,” the INEC chairman, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, said.

The list of the 110 associations seeking registration as political parties showed their proposed names, acronyms, addresses and the names of their Chairmen and Secretaries.

“For transparency and public information, the list will be uploaded to our website and social media platforms shortly, while hard copies are included in your folders for this meeting,” Yakubu added.

See the list of 110 applications below released by INEC

SEE FULL LIST AND ACRONYM

1. Key of Freedom Party (KFP)
2. Absolute Congress (ABC)
3. All Grassroots Party (AGP)
4. Congress Action Party (CAP)
5. United Social Democrats (USDP)
6. National Action Congress Party (NACP)
7. Great Alliance Party (GAP)
8. New Nigeria Congress (NNC)
9. United Peoples Victory Party (UPVP)
10. Allied Conservative Congress (ACC)
11. Peoples Freedom Party (PFP)
12. All Nigerians’ Party (AND)
13. Abundant Social Party (ASP)
14. Citizens Party of Nigeria (CPN)
15. National Freedom Party (NFP)
16. Patriots Party (PP)
17. Movement of the People (MOP)
18. Peoples National Congress (PNC)
19. African Union Congress (AUC)
20. Alliance of Patriots (AOP)

**Continue reading
on next page**

Cont from page 7

21. Socialist Equality Party (SEP)
22. About Nigeria Party (ABNP)
23. African Reformation Party (ARP)
24. Accelerated African Development Association (AADA)
25. Obidient Peoples Party (OPP)
26. Zonal Rescue Movement (ZRM)
27. Zuma Reform (ZR)
28. Party for Socialist Transformation (PST)
29. Liberation People's Party (LPP)
30. Progressive Obedients Party (POP)
31. Great Nigeria Party (GNP)
32. National Youth Alliance (NYA)
33. National Reform Party (NRP)
34. Patriotic Congress Party (PCP)
35. Community Alliance Party (CAP)
36. Grassroot Alliance Party (GAP)
37. Advance Nigeria Congress (ANC)
38. All Nigerians Alliance (ANA)
39. Team New Nigeria (TNN)
40. All Labour's Party (ALP)
41. New Green Generation Coalition Party (NGOCP)
42. New Green Congress (NGC)
43. New Green Coalition Party (NGCP)
44. About All (Nigerian)
45. Nigerian Liberty Movement (NLM)
46. National Democratic Party (NDP)
47. Citizen United Congress (CUC)
48. All Gender Party (AGP)
49. Polling Unit Ambassadors of Nigeria (PUAN)
50. Village Intelligence Party (VIP)
51. Great Transformation Party (GTP)
52. Alliance Social Party (Not Provided)
53. Nigeria Democratic Alliance (NIDA)
54. New National Democratic Party (NNDP)
55. Obedient Peoples Party
56. Nourish Democratic People's Congress (NDPC)
57. All Youth Reclaim Party (AYRP)
58. L A R I B A Multipurpose Cooperative Society
59. Alliance Youth Party of Nigeria (AYPN)
60. The True Democrats (TTD)
61. Democratic Peoples Congress (DPC)
62. National Democratic Movement
63. Economic Liberation Party (ELP)
64. Grassroot Ambassador's Party (GAP)
65. All For All Congress (AFAC)
66. People Democratic Alliance (PDA)
67. United National Youths Party of Nigeria
68. Peoples Liberation Party (PLP)
69. Democratic Union for Progress (DUP)
70. Citizen Democratic Alliance (CDA)
71. African Action Group (AAG)
72. Patriots Alliance Network (PAN)
73. Democratic Leadership Party (DLP)
74. Pink Political Party (PPP)
75. Young Motivation & Awareness for Development Forum
76. Access Party (AP)
77. Youth Progressive Empowerment Initiative (YPEI)
78. Grassroot Ambassadors' Party (GRAP)
79. Republican Party of Nigeria
80. Sceptre Influence Party (SIP)
81. Young Democratic Congress (YDC)
82. Patriotic Nigerians Party (PNP)
83. Far-Right Party
84. Democratic People's Party (DPP)
85. United Citizens Congress (UCC)
86. Reset Nigeria (RN)
87. New Nigeria Democratic Party ()
88. Save Nigeria People Party (SNPP)
89. Above All (AA)
90. Alliance for Youth and Women Party (AYWP)
91. Rebuild Nigeria Group (RNG)
92. Citizen Progressive Party (CPP)
93. Good Guardian Party (CG PARTY)
94. Abiding Greatness Party (AGP)
95. Patriotic Peoples' Party (PPP)
96. Development & Freedom Party (DFP)
97. Peace, Unity & Prosperity Culture (PUP Culture)
98. The Populist Party (Party P)
99. New Nigeria Leadership Party (NNLP)
100. All Allies Alliance
101. National Action Network (NAN)
102. Coalition for Nigerian Democrats (CND)
103. Republican Party of Nigeria (RPN)
104. Abundance Africa Alliance (AAA)
105. Freewill Humanitarian Party (FHP)
106. Peoples Emancipation Party (PEP)
107. Peoples Liberation Congress Party (PLPC)
108. Peoples Democratic Congress (PDC)
109. All Democratic Alliance (ADA)
110. Advanced Democratic Alliance (ADA)

Ndume criticises Tinubu, reflects on El-Rufai rift, threatens to leave APC

By Gbenga Olaleye



Senator Ali Ndume, representing Borno South senatorial district, has voiced his growing dissatisfaction with President Bola Tinubu's administration and the direction of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), warning that he may consider leaving the party if the president fails to address Nigeria's mounting challenges.

Speaking during an interview on Arise Television on Tuesday, Ndume expressed frustration with the current state of governance under Tinubu, stating that the president still has time to correct course but failure to do so may push him to exit the APC.

"I still believe President Tinubu can fix things. Failure to fix those things may cause me to leave the APC," he said.

"If I decide to leave the APC, I will not hide it."

Ndume, who has become an increasingly vocal critic of the administration in recent months, also

cautioned that the influx of politicians defecting to the APC could destabilise the party.

"If Tinubu continues this way, it doesn't matter if he loads more people or governors; you are just endangering APC. When you overload a ship, it might lead to the capsizing of the party."

The senator also took the opportunity to comment on the ongoing rift between President Tinubu and former Kaduna State governor, Nasir El-Rufai. Ndume suggested that El-Rufai's current disillusionment with the administration might be rooted in events leading up to the 2023 presidential primaries.

Recalling his time as Director-General of the Rotimi Amaechi presidential campaign, Ndume said El-Rufai was initially aligned with Amaechi before unexpectedly switching allegiance to Tinubu ahead of the APC primaries.

"El-Rufai was supposed to be on our

side, but somehow, he moved over. And I think these are part of the things that are annoying or frustrating him," Ndume said.

"He really mobilised for Tinubu, did a lot. Tinubu even asked him to join the government, but up till now, I don't understand what happened between them."

Ndume added that while he holds no grudge, he sometimes sees the current fallout between Tinubu and El-Rufai as a form of political karma.

"Sometimes I'll say, 'Okay o, you did that to us, it's payback to yourself.'"

El-Rufai was nominated by Tinubu for a ministerial post following his election victory but was ultimately rejected. He has since left the APC and is now a prominent figure in the opposition, aligning with the Social Democratic Party (SDP).

PDP NWC denies NEC postponement, Anyanwu's reinstatement

By Gbenga Olaleye



The National Working Committee (NWC) of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has firmly denied claims that the party's 100th National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting, scheduled for Monday, 30 June 2025, has been postponed.

In a statement jointly signed by several senior NWC members on Wednesday, the committee also dismissed reports suggesting that Senator Samuel Anyanwu has been reinstated as the party's National Secretary.

The rebuttal follows a press conference held earlier in the day by the Acting National Chairman, Ambassador Umar Damagum, in which he had announced the postponement of the NEC meeting and directed Anyanwu to resume his duties as National Secretary.

However, the NWC has categorically rejected Damagum's pronouncements, stating they run counter to the decisions made at the party's 99th NEC meeting, which had formally scheduled the 100th session for 30 June and referred all matters relating to the office of the National Secretary to that meeting.

"The pronouncements by the Acting National Chairman have no foundation, as no organ of the Party (including the NWC), individual or group has the power to cancel, overrule, veto or vary the resolution of the National Executive Committee (NEC)," the statement read.

Citing Section 31 (3) of the PDP Constitution (as amended in 2017), the NWC reaffirmed that the NEC is the highest decision-making organ of the party after the National Convention and that its resolutions are binding on all members and party

structures.

The committee described Damagum's announcement regarding Senator Anyanwu's return as "misleading" and insisted the issue remains within the remit of the upcoming NEC meeting.

The statement was signed by key members of the NWC including Deputy National Chairman (South), Ambassador Taofeek Arapaja; Acting National Secretary, Setonji Koshedo; National Treasurer, Ahmed Yayari Mohammed; National Auditor, Okechukwu Obiechina Daniel; and National Publicity Secretary, Debo Ologunagba, among others.

This latest development highlights the growing tension within the PDP leadership, as internal factions debate the party's direction ahead of the 2027 general elections.

Gabam denies suspension, blames plot to hijack SDP

By Gbenga Olaleye



The National Chairman of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), Alhaji Shehu Gabam, has refuted reports of his suspension, describing the claims as politically motivated misinformation orchestrated by an external coalition intent on seizing control of the party's structure.

On Tuesday, a faction of the party announced the suspension of Gabam alongside two other members of the National Executive Committee (NEC) over allegations of financial mismanagement. The announcement was made by the party's National Publicity Secretary, Rufus Ayegbeni.

However, addressing journalists at the party's national secretariat in Abuja, Gabam dismissed the announcement as "fake news" and a product of what he described as political mischief.

"I remain the national chairman of the SDP as you can see," he said, flanked by several members of the National Working Committee (NWC).

"This coalition and some people in it believe they can either take over the SDP or create confusion around it. They've now exposed themselves."

RELATED NEWS: SDP Chairman suspended over financial misconduct

allegations

Gabam alleged that no official NWC meeting was convened to discuss or decide on his suspension and questioned the legitimacy of the statement announcing it.

He recalled a previous attempt by the party's National Secretary, Dr Olu Agunloye, to convene a meeting via a private law firm a move he said the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) rejected due to procedural violations.

"INEC letters clearly state that communication must be jointly signed by the national chairman and national secretary. My signature is not just symbolic—it is constitutional," he added.

On allegations of financial misappropriation, Gabam maintained his innocence and challenged his accusers to present proof. He revealed that full financial records, including bank statements, would be submitted to the relevant security agencies for scrutiny.

"All NWC members have received funds. Nothing is hidden. I'm prepared to account for every kobo spent during my tenure. Others should be ready to do the same," he said.

He alleged that the current crisis was part of a broader scheme by a newly formed political coalition that includes some disgruntled SDP officials, aimed at destabilising the party ahead of the 2027 elections.

"This is not just a personal attack. It's an attack on democracy and the political system. They want to use state institutions to break opposition parties. I urge President Bola Tinubu to intervene and prevent misuse of security agencies," Gabam warned.

Meanwhile, Rufus Aiyenigba, in the statement announcing the suspension, said the action was necessary to allow for a proper investigation into the alleged misconduct.

He added that the party's Deputy National Chairman, Dr Sadiq Umar Abubakar, has been asked to assume leadership in the interim.

The unfolding drama within the SDP signals deep internal divisions, with broader implications for the 2027 political landscape, as opposition coalitions continue to form in response to the current administration,

Like APC's 2022, two groups seek INEC registration under 'ADA' party

By Damilola Olufemi



The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has received letters of intent from two different political associations, both seeking to register under the acronym "ADA", raising potential concerns over name duplication and legal compliance.

The two groups are the Advanced Democratic Alliance (ADA), chaired in the interim by Ahmadu Suleiman with Zipporah Pus Miracle as secretary, and the All Democratic Alliance (ADA), reportedly backed by prominent political figures including former Vice President Atiku Abubakar and ex-Kaduna governor Nasir el-Rufai. The latter group listed Akin Ricketts and Abdullahi Musa Elayo as its protem chairman and secretary, respectively.

The electoral body disclosed this on Wednesday via its Facebook page, adding that it is processing the application requests of the parties with due diligence in conformity with the law.

"As of Monday, 23rd June 2025, the Commission has received letters of intent from 110 associations that wish to register

as political parties. We are diligently processing the requests in line with the procedure outlined in the law as well as our Regulations and Guidelines." INEC disclosed acknowledging all requests received so far, except six requests received recently, which will be done before the end of the week.

"For emphasis, I wish to inform Nigerians, particularly those interested in registering new political parties, that the handbook containing the Regulations and Guidelines for Political Parties 2022 is already available on the Commission's website," the INEC chairman, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, said.

The appearance of two separate groups applying under the same acronym "ADA" has sparked comparisons to a notable 2013 case, when INEC rejected the application of the African Peoples Congress (APC) due to its similarity to the All Progressives Congress (APC), which was already a registered party.

In that instance, INEC cited a breach of Section 222(a) of the 1999 Constitution, which mandates that political associations

submit names and addresses of their national officers as part of the registration process. The commission formally rejected the African Peoples Congress in a letter dated March 21, 2013, stating the group's application lacked necessary details.

INEC yet to react

So far, INEC has not indicated whether either of the ADA factions meets constitutional or regulatory requirements for registration. However, officials stress that all applications must comply strictly with the legal framework.

Sam Olumekun, INEC's National Commissioner and Chairman of the Information and Voter Education Committee, clarified that the submissions received so far are "expressions of interest," not formal applications.

INEC has directed all prospective political associations to consult its 2022 handbook on party registration guidelines, available on its official website, for a complete understanding of eligibility and procedural compliance.

Oyebanji pays over N1.45bn compensation to landowners for EKZ project

By Gbenga Olaleye

Governor Biodun Oyebanji of Ekiti State has disbursed over N1.45 billion in compensation to 195 landowners whose properties were acquired for the Ekiti Knowledge Zone (EKZ) project.

The beneficiaries, from Ijan, Awo, and Araromi Ekiti, received cheques yesterday during a brief ceremony held at the Conference Hall of the Governor's Office in Ado Ekiti.

The EKZ is a major economic initiative designed to establish an innovation-driven ecosystem and serve as a business incubation hub for knowledge-based enterprises in the state.

Mr Oyebanji emphasised that the project is expected to generate over 14,000 jobs, particularly targeting young people, as part of efforts to combat unemployment and secure a sustainable future for coming generations.

Highlighting the strategic importance of the EKZ, the governor said, "As a state celebrated for its intellectual capital, we have chosen to leverage this unique strength to drive inclusive economic growth and create a vibrant hub for innovation and service-driven industries."

Mr Oyebanji further noted that the EKZ is supported by key infrastructure projects, including the Ekiti State Agro-Allied International Cargo Airport and the Ekiti Ring Road Project, which are aimed at ensuring the long-term success of the initiative.

He disclosed that the state government engaged Green Engagement Limited as consultants to guarantee a transparent and fair implementation of the Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) for those affected by the project.



The governor also expressed appreciation to the Federal Government (FG), led by President Bola Tinubu, for providing a supportive environment for the EKZ, and to the African Development Bank (AfDB) for both funding and providing technical support for the project's implementation.

Mr Oyebanji clarified public misconceptions regarding the project's financing, stating that although the FG guaranteed an \$80 million loan for the state, the funds are not handled by the state government.

He explained that the African Development Bank, in collaboration with the Ekiti State Development and Investment Promotion Agency (EKDIPA), oversees procurement and pays contractors directly.

Reassuring the landowners, Mr Oyebanji said the initial compensation of N1.12 billion was reviewed to reflect current economic realities, bringing the total compensation package to N1.45 billion.

Howes, the Director General of EKDIPA and EKZ Project Coordinator, Lolade Olutola, reaffirmed the government's

dedication to building the future of the state on the foundation of knowledge, creativity, and resilience.

She stressed that the compensation process was guided by the administration's commitment to fairness, transparency, and inclusion.

Ms Olutola also thanked Mr Oyebanji, the African Development Bank, and the Federal Ministry of Finance for their steadfast support towards the success of the EKZ project.

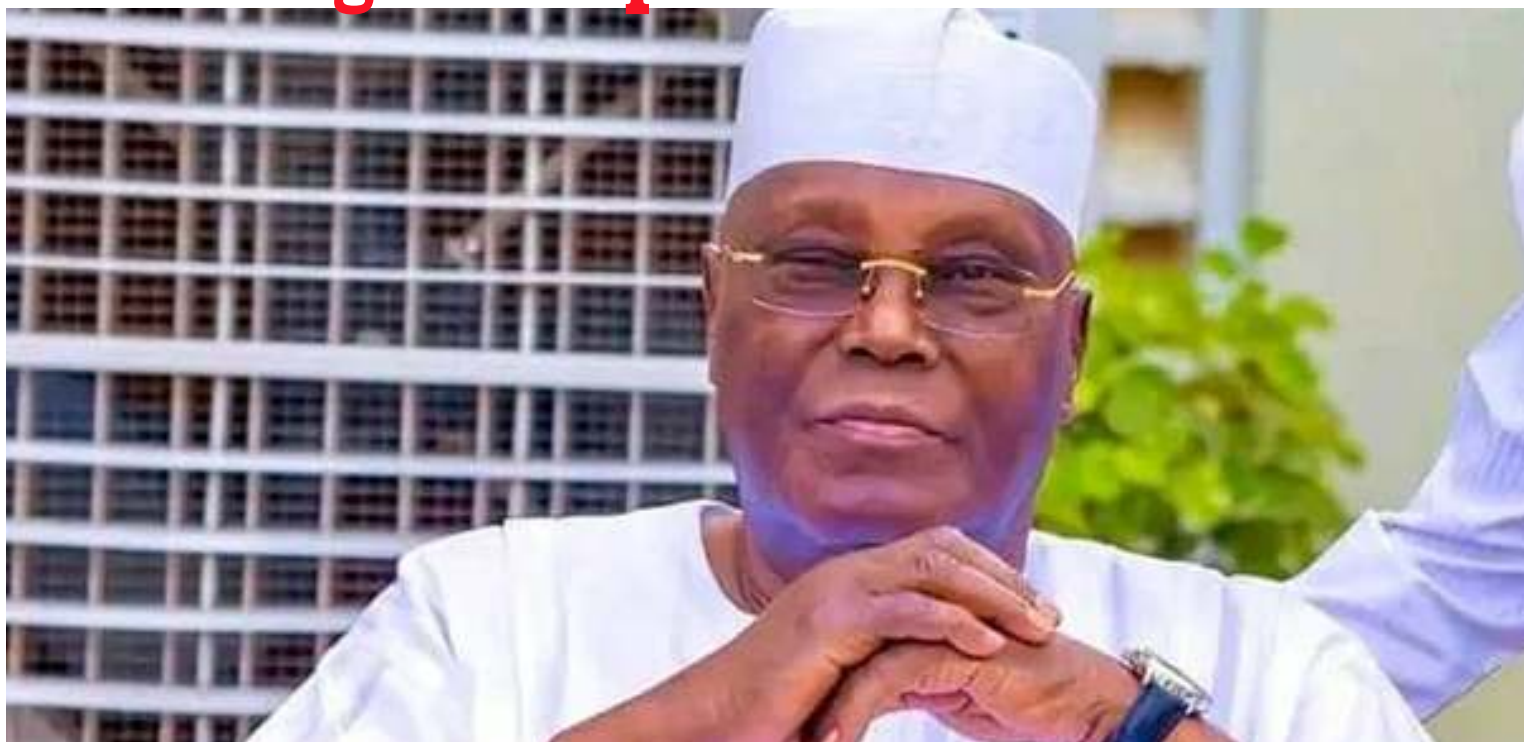
Also, the Onijan of Ijan Ekiti, Oba Aladesuyi Adebangi, expressed deep gratitude to the governor for fulfilling his promises and prioritising the welfare of the people.

He described the EKZ as a holistic solution to the country's developmental challenges.

Furthermore, Bankole Ojo, who spoke on behalf of the beneficiaries, also thanked the governor and pledged their full support for the successful execution of the project.

Atiku loses Waziri Adamawa title under new indigeneship rules

By Gbenga Olaleye



The Adamawa State Government has officially revoked the traditional title of Waziri Adamawa from former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, citing a newly adopted indigeneship policy that reshapes leadership eligibility within emirate councils across the state.

The move was detailed in a circular dated 20 June 2025 and signed by Mrs Adama Felicity Mamman, Permanent Secretary of the Department of Chieftaincy Affairs.

It forms part of a wider restructuring of traditional institutions under Governor Ahmadu Umaru Fintiri's administration, following the recent creation of new chiefdoms.

The title of Waziri Adamawa, historically regarded as the second most senior position in the Adamawa Emirate after the Lamido, is now subject to revised eligibility criteria.

Under the new guidelines, only indigenes from Yola South, Yola North,

Girei, Mayo-Belwa, Song, and Zumo districts are permitted to hold emirate council titles or positions. Atiku, hailing from Jada Local Government Area under the Ganye Chiefdom is thereby rendered ineligible.

The circular further clarified that the policy would apply uniformly to all council members and traditional titleholders within the state's emirate systems, potentially affecting a number of other prominent figures whose origins fall outside the approved districts.

While the government maintains that the policy is administrative in nature and aimed at improving traditional governance, political observers are drawing connections between the decision and the deepening rift between Governor Fintiri and Atiku Abubakar.

The two were leading figures in the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) during the 2023 general elections, but relations have since cooled amid emerging political realignments.

Atiku has in recent months been linked to discussions with major national political figures including Peter Obi, Nasir El-Rufai, and Senator Aishatu Binani. These developments have fuelled speculation around the formation of a new opposition alliance ahead of the 2027 elections.

Adding to the controversy is a bill presently before the Adamawa State House of Assembly that proposes granting the governor the authority to depose traditional rulers deemed unfit and directly appoint their successors.

Critics argue that the bill, if passed, would centralise excessive power in the state executive and undermine the independence of traditional institutions.

The unfolding situation marks a significant shift in the interplay between traditional authority and political power in Adamawa State, and observers are watching closely for further fallout.

Stop pointing fingers at Tinubu, Shehu Sani slams opposition parties

By Friday Omosola



Former Senator Shehu Sani has urged opposition parties, including the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the Labour Party (LP), the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP), and others, to focus on resolving their internal disputes rather than accusing President Bola Tinubu of orchestrating their troubles.

Mr Sani spoke on 'The Morning Brief' programme on Channels Television on Wednesday.

He criticised opposition parties for looking to the president to resolve their challenges.

"It makes no sense for you to face internal turmoil and then start pointing fingers at your rivals instead of tackling the root of your own problems," Mr Sani said.

"If there's a crisis within the PDP, it's their responsibility to handle it. The same goes for the Labour Party, the SDP, the NNPP, and others. I'm not sure whether they now expect the president to cross over and manage their affairs."

Over the past year, the opposition has suffered heavy losses, with several governors, lawmakers, and key members defecting to the ruling All Progressives

Congress (APC).

Many of those who decamped blamed persistent internal rifts in their former parties.

However, opposition figures have consistently accused the APC and Mr Tinubu of engineering the divisions that weakened their ranks.

Mr Sani, however, dismissed these claims, describing them as "irresponsible."

He insisted that opposition parties should look inward instead of holding Tinubu accountable for their collapse.

"If you're in the PDP and you allow internal saboteurs to operate unchecked, refusing to discipline or expel them, then turning to blame the president for your problems is simply an act of irresponsibility," he said.

"The same applies to the SDP or any other party. If you can't put your house in order, and you would rather search for a scapegoat in the president, then you are not serious about leadership."

He further argued that it is not in the

president's political interest to help stabilise the opposition, describing it as a natural strategy for a ruling party to capitalise on the weaknesses of its rivals.

"As a president from the ruling party, it would be illogical to help fix the weapons that might later be used against him. Politically, it benefits the ruling party if the opposition remains disorganised and distracted by their own internal battles," he added.

Mr Tinubu himself made a subtle reference to the situation during his Democracy Day address on June 12, where he mocked the opposition as "sinking ships."

Addressing a joint session of the National Assembly, he said he had no intention of offering assistance to the opposition or encouraging them to resolve their problems.

"Political parties worried about losing their members should focus on examining their internal systems rather than creating imaginary enemies," Mr Tinubu said.

"For me, I won't say, 'Try to get your house in order,' and I won't lift a finger to help you either. Honestly, I take pleasure in watching you remain in disarray."

Gov Mbah appoints Super Eagle's goalie Okoye as Enugu ambassador

By **Gbenga Olaleye**



Super Eagles goalkeeper and Udinese star, Maduka Okoye, has been appointed an ambassador of Enugu State by Governor Peter Mbah in recognition of his achievements in international football and his plans to invest in youth development.

The 25-year-old shot-stopper was hosted by the governor at the Lion Building on Tuesday, where the two discussed strategic ways to harness sports for youth empowerment and to support Enugu's broader economic goals.

"Today, I had the pleasure of receiving the Super Eagles and Udinese star goalkeeper, Maduka Okoye, at the Lion Building," Mbah announced.

"A true son of Enugu, Maduka is not just making us proud on the global stage; he is also poised to give back."

Okoye shared his plans to launch a charitable foundation and establish a football academy in Enugu aimed at inspiring and training young talents. In support, Governor Mbah pledged land for the proposed facility and invited Okoye to participate in the upcoming Enugu International Marathon.

"In recognition of his achievements and commitment, I'm proud to appoint him as an ambassador of Enugu State," Mbah added.

"He will serve as a role model to our children, especially those in our Smart Green Schools."

Okoye, visibly moved by the honour, described the occasion as a "special homecoming."

"I feel delighted to be welcomed home by the governor of Enugu State, His Excellency Dr Peter Mbah. It was indeed a great and memorable

moment we shared together, all in the interest of economic and sporting progress for the state and beyond," he said.

Born in Düsseldorf to a Nigerian father and a German mother, Okoye has earned 16 caps for Nigeria and was recently recalled to the national team for the Unity Cup and a friendly against Russia.

In the 2024/25 Serie A season, he featured in all 25 of his appearances for Udinese, keeping four clean sheets and maintaining strong distribution statistics, including a 76% pass completion rate and over 91% accuracy in his own half.

Governor Mbah noted, "At the heart of our vision is the youth their talent, passion, and future. And with proud sons like Maduka Okoye, Enugu is truly rising."

DStv slashes decoder price by 50% to attract more viewers

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi



MultiChoice Nigeria, the operator of DStv, has announced a significant reduction in the price of its DStv decoders, cutting the cost from ₦20,000 to ₦10,000 as part of a strategic initiative to boost subscriptions and provide greater value to its customers.

The company made the announcement on Tuesday through a statement issued by its Chief Executive Officer, John Ugbe.

According to Ugbe, the move is part of DStv's new "We Got You" campaign, which aims to reward customer loyalty, attract new users, and reinforce the platform's commitment to delivering daily value beyond sports content.

"We want to ensure our customers

feel appreciated and have access to the best entertainment every day," Ugbe said.

"The 'We Got You' campaign is about making premium content more accessible and showing that DStv offers something for everyone, not just football fans."

The new pricing strategy comes amid growing concerns over subscriber retention and increasing competition from streaming platforms. Industry observers have noted a gradual decline in pay-TV subscriptions in recent years, driven largely by rising economic pressures and evolving viewer habits.

By slashing decoder prices, MultiChoice aims to encourage more households to come onboard

and explore the platform's wide range of programming, including movies, drama series, children's content, documentaries, and news.

"This means more channels, more shows, and more reasons to tune in every day," Ugbe added.

The campaign is also designed to reposition DStv as a platform for daily entertainment, offering customers a broader and more affordable way to access diverse content that caters to different interests and age groups.

The decoder price cut is expected to take effect immediately and may serve as a precursor to further promotional offerings as MultiChoice seeks to consolidate its market share in Nigeria's highly competitive media landscape.

Education under attack – Academic warns of anti-learning narrative

By **Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi**

Professor Sesan Fabamise, a distinguished Associate Professor of International Law at Afe Babalola University, has strongly criticised the Tinubu administration's decision to embark on the construction of a new INEC Annex Office and the expansion of the INEC Headquarters, describing it as ill-timed amid Nigeria's escalating insecurity, widespread hunger, and deepening economic hardship.

Speaking exclusively with New Daily Prime, Professor Fabamise described the development as a "symbol of misplaced priorities" during a time when millions of Nigerians are grappling with worsening living conditions.

"It is unfortunate that our politicians are not sincere," he said. "Look at what's recently happening in Benue State. Despite the devastating attacks that have claimed many lives, the state government still encouraged people to come out en masse to welcome the President. That visit should have been a moment of national mourning, not celebration. It shows just how disconnected the government is from the people's reality."

The professor further criticised the administration's neglect of critical infrastructure, especially in rural areas. He pointed to the dilapidated condition of the Aramoko–Eyiyo–Ado road in Ekiti State, which he said has become so impassable that travellers now avoid it entirely.

"Even the roads already contracted remain untouched. People now take longer detours through Ilawe just to reach Igbaraoke. It's a clear sign of the government's insensitivity to the everyday struggles of its citizens," he added.

Politics of Poverty and "Stomach Infrastructure"

Professor Fabamise traced the root of Nigeria's governance issues to what he called the "politics of poverty" and a form of grassroots manipulation commonly referred to in local parlance as "dibo ko sebe"—a Yoruba phrase that roughly translates to "vote and cook your own soup."

"This idea of 'stomach infrastructure' has



overtaken our democratic process," he said. "People are conditioned to expect food or cash during elections. Politicians hand out ₦5,000 or ₦10,000, and people vote not out of conviction, but because they are desperate. Poverty has become a deliberate political tool."

According to Fabamise, this cycle of transactional politics stunts national development and keeps citizens disengaged from demanding long-term solutions.

Education Under Threat

The academic also raised alarms over an emerging trend where education is being discredited, particularly among young Nigerians. He blamed this on political elites who, he claims, deliberately propagate the narrative that "education is a scam."

"They understand that education is power. It opens minds. So, after plunging people into poverty, they now try to delegitimise education to keep them docile and dependent," he warned.

Even in the face of high graduate unemployment, Fabamise insists that education remains the cornerstone of progress and emancipation.

"Education must never be undermined. It may not yield instant jobs, but when

opportunities arise, it's the educated who will be prepared to seize them. The idea that "education is a scam" is a dangerous lie peddled by those who benefit from widespread ignorance."

The Path Forward: Mass Civic Reawakening

To break this cycle, Professor Fabamise advocates for widespread political and civic education.

"We must educate our people—not only in classrooms but politically. Voters need to understand their rights and the long-term consequences of trading them for momentary gain. Until we do, the system will remain broken."

His comments come at a time when Nigeria faces severe criticism both domestically and internationally for deteriorating economic indicators, growing youth unemployment, insecurity, and a perceived erosion of democratic values.

As President Tinubu's administration presses ahead with legacy projects like the INEC buildings, voices like Professor Fabamise's are growing louder—calling for a realignment of government priorities with the actual needs of Nigeria's citizens.

Ibrahim Chatta shares how his first child died in hospital

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nollywood actor Ibrahim Chatta has opened up about a heartbreaking chapter in his life, the loss of his first child due to financial hardship.

In an emotional video recorded on a movie set, Chatta revealed that his daughter died at a hospital in Lagos because he could not afford the medical bills.

The actor, known for his roles in Yoruba-language films, shared the story during a candid moment with his colleagues while filming. The video was later uploaded on YouTube by Abiola Orisile Events & Parties and has since drawn emotional reactions from fans and colleagues.

Struggles with poverty

Chatta explained that his first child, a baby girl, was admitted to a hospital in the Iddo area of Lagos State. At the time, he was struggling to make ends meet. Despite his best efforts, he was unable to raise the necessary funds for her treatment.

"I tried everything I could to get money," he said. "I walked from Ijora Badia to Makoko, hoping to get help, but I didn't succeed. Nobody could lend me the money. I watched helplessly as my child passed away."

His words painted a vivid picture of the despair he faced as a young, broke actor in Lagos, navigating the difficult streets of the city in search of help that never came.

Laid to rest in a coke crate

The story became even more painful as Chatta described how he had to bury his baby girl in a makeshift coffin made from a wooden Coca-Cola crate.

"She was buried in the old wooden crate of Coke," he said softly. "That was all I could find. I had nothing. No money. No support. Just pain."

The revelation moved many of those on set to tears, highlighting the struggles often hidden behind the fame and



success that many entertainers later achieve.

Malik is not my first child – Ibrahim Chatta

During the video, Chatta also clarified a common misconception about his family. He noted that Malik, his widely known son, is not his first child.

"People think Malik is my firstborn, but he is not," he explained. "My first child was a girl. I lost her because I couldn't pay for her hospital care."

The actor's honesty struck a chord with viewers, many of whom praised him for speaking openly about such a painful personal experience. Some commented that his story serves as a reminder of the challenges young people face while chasing their dreams, especially in a country where access to healthcare can depend heavily on financial status.

Reactions from fans and colleagues

Since the video surfaced online, social media has been flooded with messages of support for the actor. Fans commended him for his strength and for shedding light on the harsh reality many Nigerians face when it comes to affording basic healthcare.

One fan wrote, "Ibrahim Chatta is a

strong man. That story brought tears to my eyes. So many people are suffering in silence."

Another user commented, "This is the reality for many Nigerians. People are dying not because their sickness is incurable, but because they are poor."

Fellow actors and movie producers also reached out, some calling for better support systems for young creatives who are struggling to survive while trying to build their careers.

A painful memory, a lesson for society

Chatta's story is not just about personal loss. It's also a reflection of a broken system where healthcare is out of reach for many. By sharing this story, he has drawn attention to the urgent need for reforms in Nigeria's healthcare sector, especially when it comes to the lives of children and the poor.

Although he has now become one of the respected figures in the Yoruba movie industry, this painful chapter in his past continues to shape his perspective on life, success, and compassion.

In speaking out, Ibrahim Chatta has turned his grief into a call for awareness and perhaps a spark for change.

Tiwa Savage reacts to man who said she's not beautiful in real life

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular Nigerian singer Tiwa Savage has responded to an online critic who claimed that her appearance in real life does not match the way she looks in her photos.

The Afrobeat star, who recently posted a series of stunning images on Instagram, didn't hold back when addressing the negative comment.

Criticism over Instagram photos

Tiwa Savage, known for her powerful voice and bold fashion choices, shared new photos on Instagram earlier this week. The images quickly gained attention from her millions of followers, with many fans flooding the comments section with compliments.

However, amid the praise, one Instagram user with the handle 'nutefobayo' made a harsh comment about her appearance. He suggested that the singer looked good only in pictures but not in real life.

"Pictures dey make some people fine," he wrote. "Tiwa is not this beautiful in real life."

His comment appeared to question the authenticity of the singer's looks, hinting that her beauty might be a result of filters or makeup rather than her actual appearance.

Tiwa Savage's confident reply

The award-winning artist did not ignore the comment. Instead, she replied with confidence and a touch of humour.

"You wish," Tiwa Savage wrote. "I am even better in real life. Just say you wish to meet me in person, but shame go catch you, you no go fit talk."

Her response quickly went viral, with many fans praising her for standing up for herself. The statement also earned her admiration for handling the situation with grace while still defending her image.

Fans applaud Tiwa Savage's clapback. Following her response, Tiwa's fans rallied behind her in the comments section. Many praised her confidence and urged her to ignore negative remarks. Some even took the opportunity to share their encounters with the singer, insisting



that she is indeed beautiful both on and off the screen.

"She's more stunning in person," one user claimed. "I saw her at an event last year. Some people just hate seeing others shine."

Another fan wrote, "Haters always have something to say. Tiwa, you're a queen, keep winning!"

Celebrities and online criticism

This incident highlights a common experience for many celebrities, especially women in the public eye. Social media platforms, while useful for connecting with fans and promoting work, also open the door to constant scrutiny and unsolicited opinions.

For years, Tiwa Savage has been one of Nigeria's top music stars, breaking barriers and gaining international recognition. Her looks, music, and public appearances often become topics of conversation, sometimes positive, other times not.

Yet, she has consistently proven that she can handle the pressure that comes with fame. Whether it's criticism over her fashion, lifestyle, or appearance, Tiwa always finds a way to respond with elegance or simply rise above it.

Still reigning in the music scene

Beyond social media reactions, Tiwa

Savage continues to make waves in the music industry. She remains one of the most successful female artists in Africa, with multiple awards, hit songs, and international collaborations to her name.

Her recent performances and music releases have shown that she's not slowing down anytime soon. As she continues to build her legacy, Tiwa is also inspiring younger female artists to stand strong, be confident, and never let critics dim their shine.

Conclusion

Tiwa Savage's confident reply to the Instagram troll is a reminder that self-love and self-confidence are powerful tools against negativity. By turning a critical comment into a moment of empowerment, she sent a clear message: she knows her worth, and she's not afraid to show it.

In an age where online criticism comes easily and often unfairly, Tiwa Savage's poise and humour continue to set her apart.

Ul in pictures.

He wrote, "Pictures dey make some people fine. Tiwa is not this beautiful in real life," he said.

Tiwa responded to him by saying she is better in person and that he should acknowledge he wants to meet her.

Cubana Chief Priest files lawsuit against alleged baby mama Hellen

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular Nigerian socialite and businessman, Pascal Chibuike Okechukwu, widely known as Cubana Chief Priest, has filed a defamation lawsuit against a Kenyan woman, Hellen Ati, who claims to be his baby mama.

The lawsuit was filed in Kenya, where Hellen resides, and comes months after she publicly accused the celebrity barman of abandoning their alleged two-year-old son.

Background of the allegation

The controversy began six months ago when Hellen took to social media to accuse Cubana Chief Priest of fathering her child. In a video that quickly went viral, she claimed that a brief romantic affair with him in April 2022 resulted in her pregnancy. She further alleged that her attempts to contact him after the child's birth were unsuccessful.

According to Hellen, the businessman cut off all communication by blocking her on all platforms. She said she tried to reach him to discuss the child's welfare, but he never responded.

Cubana Chief Priest denies allegations

In response to the accusations, Cubana Chief Priest firmly denied having any relationship with Hellen. He stated that he had never met her and dismissed her claims as false and damaging to his reputation.

The businessman, known for his association with celebrities and nightlife events, maintained his innocence and refused to engage further with the claims.

Call for DNA test ignored

After his denial, Hellen publicly demanded a paternity test to confirm her claims. However, her request has so far been met with silence. The lack of response only intensified the online drama, with many social media users demanding clarity from both parties.

Hellen remained outspoken, frequently posting videos and statements on her



social media pages. She insisted that her only demand was a DNA test and that she had not intended to defame him.

Defamation suit filed in Kenya

On Tuesday, a Nigerian legal expert based in Kenya, known online as DPA Family Clinic, shared a Facebook post revealing that a defamation lawsuit had been filed against Hellen by Cubana Chief Priest. The lawyer published images of official court documents, confirming that legal proceedings had commenced.

The lawsuit accuses Hellen of spreading false and damaging statements that have harmed the reputation of the Nigerian businessman.

Hellen responds to lawsuit

Reacting to the suit, Hellen released another video on Instagram, strongly criticising the move. She said Cubana was trying to intimidate her with legal threats instead of proving his innocence through a DNA test.

"Pascal thinks he can sue, right?" she said. "You know deep down, you should be in jail by now. Yet you have the audacity to sue me? After all these years of asking you to clear your name with a paternity test?"

She went on to accuse the Nigerian justice

system of being influenced by money and warned that things would be different in Kenya.

"This is Kenya, my country. Not Nigeria, where you believe you can buy lawyers or pay hospitals to alter DNA results. I didn't defame you. All I've done is ask you to take a DNA test. You refused. I won't be silenced by this lawsuit. I will keep speaking out until you do the right thing," she added.

Public reaction and next steps

The case has continued to draw attention across social media platforms, with opinions divided. Some have criticised Hellen for going public without proof, while others have urged Cubana Chief Priest to agree to a DNA test to settle the matter.

Legal analysts in Kenya say the case could take time to resolve, especially as it involves a foreign national. They also note that a court could potentially order a DNA test if it becomes central to the defamation claim.

For now, both parties remain firm in their positions, Hellen demanding proof of paternity, and Cubana Chief Priest seeking justice through the courts.

'Britain must get Trump's approval to use new nuclear bombs'

By **Fatimah Idera**

Britain will require permission from the United States, potentially from Donald Trump if he wins the presidency again, before deploying any tactical nuclear weapons on its new American-made fighter jets.

The UK government has agreed to purchase 12 F-35A fighter jets from the United States, marking the first time since the Cold War that British aircraft will be equipped to carry nuclear warheads. However, the UK has no plans to develop its own independent tactical nuclear weapons. Instead, it will rely on US-supplied B61-12 thermonuclear bombs, which the F-35A jets are designed to carry.

Due to NATO's nuclear-sharing arrangements, all US nuclear weapons deployed in allied countries, including the B61S remain under American control. Any nuclear mission involving these weapons must be approved by NATO's Nuclear Planning Group, with final authorisation from both the US president and the British prime minister.

This dependence on Washington has raised concerns within the UK defence community. A senior RAF source questioned why Britain did not negotiate a more autonomous arrangement.

"This is good in terms of NATO cooperation, but there's a legitimate question about whether the UK should have a sovereign airborne nuclear capability. Why not negotiate a new deal with the Americans to explore that?"

It remains undecided where the US-supplied B61 bombs will be stored on



British soil. While Pentagon documents suggest that RAF Lakenheath, a US airbase in the UK, is being considered, another likely option is RAF Marham, a nearby British base. From the UK's perspective, housing the bombs at a British-controlled facility would align better with national oversight, despite the weapons technically remaining under US ownership and control.

The last British aircraft capable of delivering tactical nuclear bombs was Tornado, which carried the British-made WE177 bomb. That capability was retired in 1998 following the end of the Cold War. Earlier sovereign UK nuclear weapons included the Blue Danube, the first British-made nuclear bomb, carried by V-bombers. In 1956, a Vickers Valiant became the first RAF aircraft to drop a UK atomic bomb during a test in Australia.

Britain yet maintain any tactical nuclear weapons

Since 1998, Britain has not maintained any tactical nuclear weapons, in part due to its commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which advocates for the reduction of nuclear arsenals worldwide. The UK's only current nuclear deterrent is the Trident system: a fleet of four Vanguard-class submarines carrying strategic nuclear warheads. Unlike the new air-based capability, Trident operates independently of US control in its daily operations.

By contrast, France maintains its independent nuclear force estimated at 300 warheads across both air and sea platforms under its force de dissuasion programme, separate from NATO command.

The UK's move to reintroduce tactical nuclear capability via American jets has therefore reopened debates about sovereignty, dependency, and deterrence in an era of renewed global tensions.

China's Labubu doll becomes global soft power symbol

By **Damilola Olufemi**

With its scruffy fur, tiny frame, and mischievous grin, the Labubu monster doll by Chinese toymaker Pop Mart has taken the world by storm, from celebrity handbags to viral TikToks, the curious collectable is now one of China's most beloved cultural exports.

Once known more for low-cost goods than trendsetting design, Chinese consumer brands are beginning to shift perceptions abroad, and Labubu may be leading that quiet revolution.

"Now everything goes viral... because of social media. And yes, it's cool. It's different," said Lucy Shitova, an interior designer from a Pop Mart store in London. Demand for the toys in the UK has gotten so intense that the company had to suspend in-person sales over fears of unruly fan behaviour.

Produced in limited quantities and sold in "blind boxes", where buyers only discover the exact model after purchase, Labubus typically retail for around \$40, but some editions fetch far higher prices at resale or auction.

A limited edition "Labubu Pilot" recently went on display in Beijing ahead of an anticipated auction, adding to the collectable's mystique. The toy has even graced the arms of global stars like Rihanna and Cher.

A "cool" China?

Pop Mart's breakout success is part of a broader but still rare phenomenon: Chinese cultural products winning hearts abroad on their terms. While countries like South Korea and Japan have long exported fashion, K-pop, and gaming franchises with global reach, China has struggled to replicate that success due to the perception of its exports as generic or mass-produced.

"It has been hard for the world's consumers to perceive China as a brand-creating nation," said Fan Yang, a cultural studies scholar at the University of Maryland.

Yet Labubu bucks the trend. Its odd, imperfect appearance, described by fans



as "quirky and ugly but inclusive" — has helped it resonate with global youth eager for something authentic and offbeat. The toy's popularity has spawned imitations and in-depth YouTube tutorials for spotting fakes.

Other Chinese fashion and lifestyle brands like Shushu/Tong, Songmont, and Marchen are also gaining momentum abroad, reflecting a subtle shift.

"It might just be a matter of time before even more Chinese brands become globally recognisable," Yang added.

Social media's power boost of Labubu
Pop Mart's global success is in no small part thanks to TikTok, the ByteDance-owned video app that has introduced Labubu to younger audiences worldwide. TikTok, though banned in mainland China, has become a gateway for Chinese pop culture, hosting more than 1.7 million Labubu-related videos.

"All of this represents a soft-power shift where Chinese products are increasingly cool among young Westerners," said Allison Malmsten, a China consumer analyst at Daxue Consulting. She compared the trend to Japan's global cultural rise through brands like Nintendo and Pokémon.

Joshua Kurlantzick of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) echoed this view, saying TikTok likely helped

reshape consumer sentiment about Chinese products. However, he noted that such cultural wins do not necessarily translate to political influence.

"Cultural exports can improve the image of China as a place that produces desirable products... but that doesn't mean the Chinese state's image improves at the same pace."

A symbol of new aspirations

While Washington's global image has been rocked by internal political turmoil in recent years, Beijing's softer side, embodied by playful monsters like Labubu, is quietly becoming more appealing.

"There's this connection some make between the decline of US soft power and the idea of China rising," Fan Yang noted. "Even if the government remains controversial, the products offer a different narrative."

And for the next generation, Labubu is more than a toy; it's a reason to be curious about China.

"In our country, they love Labubu," said 11-year-old Maryam Hammadi from Qatar, snapping photos beside a giant Labubu figure at Pop Mart's Pop Land theme park in Beijing. "When they realise that Labubu came from China, they want to come here to see more."

US intel: Trump's Iran strikes damaged but didn't destroy nuclear sites

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



An initial classified assessment by the US Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) has found that recent strikes ordered by President Donald Trump on Iran's nuclear facilities did not destroy two key sites and are likely to have delayed Iran's nuclear ambitions by only a few months.

The preliminary findings, shared by two individuals familiar with the report, suggest that Iran's nuclear programme remains largely intact, despite Trump's public declaration that the enrichment sites were "completely obliterated."

According to the DIA report, based on a battle damage assessment conducted by US Central Command, critical infrastructure, including centrifuges, could be operational again within months. The agency also found that much of Iran's highly enriched uranium stockpile had been moved ahead of the strikes, possibly to undisclosed underground sites.

The report contradicts Trump's televised address following the operation last Saturday, in which he claimed the US had destroyed Iran's nuclear facilities at Natanz, Fordow, and Isfahan. "The strikes were a spectacular military success," he said. "Iran's key nuclear enrichment facilities have been completely obliterated."

However, sources familiar with the intelligence warn that Fordow, the most fortified of the sites, was not fully destroyed. The facility, built under up to 90 metres of bedrock in the Zagros mountains, has long been considered virtually impervious to conventional weapons.

Iran nuclear site completely destroyed

In an apparent response to media coverage of the DIA report, Trump took to Truth Social on Tuesday evening, posting in capital letters: "THE NUCLEAR SITES IN IRAN ARE COMPLETELY DESTROYED!" The White House echoed this sentiment, dismissing the assessment and accusing the press of trying to undermine the military.

"This alleged assessment is a clear attempt to demean President Trump and discredit the brave fighter pilots who conducted a perfectly executed mission," said press secretary Karoline Leavitt.

Nonetheless, Vice President JD Vance acknowledged gaps in US intelligence, stating on Sunday that Washington does not currently know the location of Iran's enriched uranium. "We are going to work in the coming weeks to ensure that we do something with that fuel," he said.

Rafael Grossi, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), confirmed on Monday that the agency could no longer account for Iran's 400kg stockpile of uranium enriched to 60% purity, just short of weapons-grade.

The Guardian previously revealed that senior Pentagon officials had been briefed in January, at the start of Trump's second term, that the GBU-57 "bunker buster" bombs intended for Fordow were unlikely to fully destroy the site. The Defence Threat Reduction Agency reportedly advised that only a tactical nuclear weapon would be sufficient to eliminate the deeply buried facility.

The US military operation involved B-2 bombers dropping 12 GBU-57 bombs on Fordow and two on Natanz, while a Navy submarine launched approximately 30 Tomahawk cruise missiles at Isfahan.

At a Sunday press conference, Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth reiterated Trump's claim that the sites were "obliterated." However, General Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and an overseer of the operation, offered a more cautious assessment, saying the facilities had suffered "severe damage and destruction" but that the final analysis was still pending.

Over 40 killed in Sudan hospital strike as WHO condemns attack

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



The head of the World Health Organisation (WHO), Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, has strongly condemned an attack on Al-Mujlad Hospital in West Kordofan, Sudan, that killed more than 40 civilians, including six children and five health workers.

The deadly strike occurred on Saturday near the frontline between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), as the country's brutal civil war continues to spiral into what global agencies now describe as the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

The WHO's local office confirmed dozens of additional injuries but stopped short of attributing blame for the incident. In a post on social media platform X (formerly Twitter), Dr. Tedros wrote, "We cannot say this louder: attacks on health must stop everywhere!"

The RSF, in a statement published on its website, accused the Sudanese military of launching the attack. It described the airstrike as a "barbaric aggression" and a "flagrant violation of international humanitarian law," referencing the Geneva Conventions that prohibit targeting healthcare facilities and personnel.

Local sources cited by the independent

news outlet Darfur 24 claimed the attack was an airstrike by a Sudanese military aircraft. Emergency Lawyers, a civil group documenting wartime abuses, added that a military drone was allegedly used in the strike.

However, Sudanese military spokesperson Nabil Abdallah denied responsibility, calling the accusations "false" and claiming the armed forces only target "legitimate militia strongholds." He described the reports as "lies and propaganda" and accused foreign actors of conspiring against Sudan.

UN reacts to Sudan attack

UN agencies and humanitarian organisations were quick to respond. UNICEF condemned the strike in a post on X, warning that such attacks "severely impede the communities' ability to receive life-saving services." The organisation urged all parties to respect international humanitarian law.

This is not the first time a medical facility has been criticised. In January, a strike on the only functioning hospital in El Fasher, North Darfur, claimed at least 70 lives. That attack was widely attributed to RSF forces.

Sudan has been engulfed in conflict since April 2023, when a political power

struggle between the military and the RSF exploded into full-blown warfare in the capital, Khartoum. Since then, tens of thousands have died, over 12 million people have been displaced, 4 million of them across borders, and more than 20 million are in urgent need of food aid. Several regions are already facing famine.

The RSF has since gained significant ground, particularly in Darfur, where the group's roots trace back to the Janjaweed militias, previously accused of genocide against non-Arab ethnic groups in 2004.

Earlier this month, an aid convoy headed to El Fasher was attacked, killing five people and further crippling humanitarian access to the besieged city. El Fasher has been under siege by the RSF for over a year.

Virginia Gamba, the UN Secretary General's Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, addressed the UN Human Rights Council on Monday, warning that the risk of genocide and crimes against humanity remains "very high." She confirmed that both the Sudanese Armed Forces and the RSF have committed serious human rights violations. Still, she noted that the RSF and allied militias continue to carry out ethnically motivated attacks on the Zaghawa, Masalit, and Fur communities.

Fighter jets: UK set to purchase 12 for NATO's airborne nuclear mission

By Fatimah Idera



The UK government is set to purchase 12 new F-35A fighter jets capable of carrying nuclear weapons, marking the biggest strengthening of the UK's nuclear posture in a generation.

The fighter jets, which can also carry conventional weapons, will enable the UK to participate in NATO's airborne nuclear mission. The decision will be officially announced by Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer at the NATO summit in the Netherlands this week.

The F-35A aircraft will be based at RAF Marham in Norfolk and will join a multinational fleet of dual-capable jets used by NATO allies such as the US, Germany, and Italy. These fighter jets can be equipped with American-made B61 nuclear bombs, which are pre-positioned across Europe by the United States. Although these bombs remain under US control, their potential deployment in conflict would require joint authorisation by NATO's Nuclear Planning Group, the US President, and the UK Prime Minister.

Defence Secretary John Healey said the investment would strengthen NATO's collective nuclear deterrence and support more than 20,000 UK jobs and over 100 companies across the defence supply

chain. He described the move as necessary given the evolving global threats identified in the UK's recent Strategic Defence Review.

Speaking ahead of the NATO summit in The Hague, Sir Keir Starmer said: "In an era of radical uncertainty, we can no longer take peace for granted, which is why my government is investing in our national security."

NATO welcomes purchase of fighter jets
NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte welcomed the announcement, calling it another robust British contribution to NATO.

The move also marks a strategic victory for the Royal Air Force, which had long advocated for the longer-range F-35A variant over the shorter-range F-35B currently in service. Unlike the F-35B, which was selected for its short take-off and vertical landing capability suited to aircraft carriers, the F-35A offers extended range and the capacity to carry a wider array of weapons.

This shift also reflects a historic return to airborne nuclear capability. The RAF last operated nuclear-armed aircraft in 1998, when the UK-made WE177 tactical bombs were retired. Since then, Britain's

nuclear deterrence has relied solely on its submarine-based Trident system, launched from Vanguard-class submarines.

Though the Trident delivery system is American-built, the warheads are UK-made and maintained, preserving what successive British governments have insisted is an independent deterrent.

Justin Bronk, a defence expert at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), noted that while the RAF will need time to reintegrate into NATO's nuclear mission, the acquisition of F-35As also significantly boosts the UK's conventional air strike capabilities.

The announcement aligns with the UK's new National Security Strategy, which warns of growing nuclear risks and urges preparedness for potential direct threats to the homeland. Sir Keir has committed to NATO's emerging defence spending goal of allocating 5% of GDP to national security by 2035, including 3.5% for core defence needs.

At this week's summit, NATO's 32 member states are expected to endorse the new spending target amid rising global tensions and increasing demands on collective security.

Ofsted inspector urges schools to decolonise special needs curriculum

By **Fatimah Idera**



An Ofsted inspector has called on special schools to decolonise their curriculum and move beyond a colour-blind approach to education.

Priya Bhagrath, who is also the head teacher of Bishopswood School, a special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) school near Reading, Berkshire, said that pupils in special education deserve an inclusive curriculum that reflects their identities and lived experiences.

Bhagrath highlighted that following the 2020 murder of George Floyd in the United States, many mainstream schools began to examine their role in systemic racism. However, she said the conversation largely excluded the SEND sector, despite many of its pupils belonging to the global majority, a term referring to ethnic groups other than white British and white Europeans.

“The sector that serves our most vulnerable pupils, many of them also the global majority, was excluded from the conversation altogether,” Bhagrath wrote.

Ofsted inspector outlines pillars to creating an anti-racist education within special schools. She outlined four key pillars she believes are essential to creating an anti-racist education within special schools, which are: Multicultural education, Increased representation, decolonising the curriculum and Anti-racist practices.

Bhagrath urged schools and educational leaders to take action, warning that students who are both from racialised communities and have special educational needs are being “failed by a system that was never designed with them in mind.”

“This is a call for collective action,” she said. “We do not need more evidence,

but we need resolve.”

She also criticised superficial diversity efforts, stating: “We cannot keep rolling out saris for sensory play and calling it multicultural inclusion. We cannot keep hiring diverse staff without creating real leadership pathways. And we cannot keep labelling families as ‘hard to reach’ when no meaningful effort has been made.”

Bhagrath concluded by urging anyone involved in education, whether as a teacher, policymaker, or parent, to place intersectionality at the centre of their efforts. “If you believe inclusion matters, then intersectionality must be at the heart of your work,” she wrote.

While Bhagrath carries out inspections for Ofsted, she is not a full-time Ofsted employee. Like many Ofsted Inspectors (Ois), she works in education and contributes to inspections alongside her primary role as a head teacher.

UK to begin yearly practice drills for potential enemy attack

By **Fatimah Idera**

The UK government has announced plans to hold annual national security exercises to prepare for potential attacks on British soil, following stark warnings from security chiefs that the homeland is at risk for the first time in many years.

The drills, part of a broader update to the UK's national security strategy released on Tuesday, aim to test whole-of-society preparedness for threats ranging from wartime scenarios to cyberattacks and infrastructure sabotage. The first major exercise, codenamed Pegasus, will take place this autumn and simulate a response to a new global pandemic. Future drills may include scenarios such as missile strikes, mass terror attacks, cyber disruptions, or high-profile assassinations.

The 55-page strategy document signals a fundamental shift in government planning, reviving Cold War-style public awareness campaigns and updating contingency plans to protect politicians, royals, and critical infrastructure in case of attack, particularly from Russia. It also includes new measures to defend power stations, transport hubs, undersea cables, and gas pipelines, which are essential to the UK's food and energy security.

Following a government-led China audit, British businesses and universities will receive new guidelines to guard against cyber threats linked to Beijing. While China is still described as an important partner on issues like economic growth, the strategy warns of growing concerns over espionage, democratic interference, and the undermining of UK economic security. The document vows to continue a threat-driven approach to China, reinforcing cyber defences and implementing stronger countermeasures.

As global tensions escalate, Prime



Minister Sir Keir Starmer is attending a NATO summit in the Netherlands, where allies are expected to back Donald Trump's call to raise defence funding to 5% of GDP.

The UK's broader interpretation of defence spending now includes areas such as food security, online safety, and public infrastructure, adding 1.5% of GDP in wider security spending to the traditional 3.5% military allocation.

For the first time, the UK government has classified harmful online content as a national security issue. The Online Safety Act, aimed at curbing terrorist and extremist content, is now central to the UK's response to tech-enabled threats. Officials are working with internet platforms and regulators like Ofcom to develop more effective enforcement tools.

The strategy emphasises the UK's commitment to working with allies to counter common threats. While the US remains Britain's closest security partner, the document highlights deepening cooperation with France, particularly on nuclear weapons and outlines plans for a new bilateral

defence treaty with Germany. Joint projects, such as developing long-range precision weapons, are already underway.

The review also notes increasing coordination among hostile nations, with North Korea supplying Russia with military components and Iran providing missiles and drones for the Ukraine war. The document warns of strategic and opportunistic partnerships among adversaries, presenting complex new challenges to Western security.

Pat McFadden, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, said the UK must now adopt a clear-eyed and hard-edged view of global threats. The government is invoking the Blitz spirit of the Second World War, urging citizens to unite around a national effort to bolster security and resilience.

"Our history shows we can come together to protect each other," the strategy concludes. "We must mobilise that spirit once again for our national security and the future of our country."

Kenyans to protest, honour anti-govt victims Wednesday

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Kenyans across the country are preparing for nationwide marches today to mark the first anniversary of the historic storming of parliament, honouring those killed and disappeared during last year's anti-government protests. While the planned events are being organised as peaceful demonstrations, there are growing fears that the day may descend into violence.

The protests of June 2024, sparked by a controversial finance bill proposing tax increases, claimed the lives of at least 60 people. Many others went missing or were later confirmed dead, fuelling a deeper national reckoning with state brutality and government accountability. Although the demonstrations began peacefully, they escalated after a heavy-handed police crackdown.

Kenya president scraps finance bill
President William Ruto ultimately scrapped the finance bill and reshuffled his cabinet to include opposition figures, pledging to build a "broad-based" government. Despite this, unrest simmered through to September, and public distrust has persisted ever since.

The upcoming anniversary march, described by opposition leaders as a "people's public holiday", has been driven by grassroots mobilisation online and on the ground. Young Kenyans and rights activists, many of whom led last year's protests, plan to hold peaceful processions, candlelit vigils, and digital campaigns using viral hashtags.

In Nairobi, demonstrators are expected to walk towards the parliament and the president's office, laying flowers and lighting candles in memory of those lost. However, recent events have reignited tensions. The death earlier this month of teacher Albert Ojwang in police custody, after allegedly criticising a senior officer on social media, has provoked fresh outrage. Just days later, another protest turned bloody when a police officer shot vendor Boniface Kariuki at close range.



These incidents have renewed public scrutiny of police brutality, an issue long central to protestors' demands. Alongside this, grievances over corruption, youth unemployment, rising living costs, and government excesses remain unresolved.

"The trust deficit between young people and the government has only widened," said political analyst Mikhail Nyamweya. "Despite promises of reform, the Kenyan youth view the state as unresponsive and quick to suppress dissent. Continued human rights violations have solidified the belief that little has changed."

Adding to protestors' concerns are allegations of hired goons infiltrating past demonstrations to intimidate, beat, and rob peaceful marchers. These tactics have heightened fears of violence during Wednesday's events.

Police have urged demonstrators to remain peaceful. "Let's restrict ourselves to what we call 'peaceful demonstrations'," said Nairobi regional police commander George Seda. "Let's not interfere with others who may not be part of the demonstrators."

However, some government allies have

taken a more threatening tone. David Ndii, chairperson of Ruto's Council of Economic Advisers, posted on X: "You allow yourself to be weaponised by self-seekers, there'll be casualties." When challenged, he warned another user to "say your goodbyes before you leave home."

Human rights groups have called for unity and caution. "Let's stand together as brothers and sisters tomorrow," said activist Hanifa Adan. "May the Lord shield us from violence, political interference, and most of all, from the brutality of bloodthirsty police."

In a joint statement on Tuesday, envoys from 12 countries, including the US and UK, reaffirmed the right of all Kenyans to peaceful assembly and expression. "We urge all parties to facilitate peaceful demonstrations and to refrain from violence," the statement read.

The Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops also weighed in, calling for non-violence and condemning the excessive force used during past protests. "A society that instils fear in its youth for simply speaking out is a society walking away from justice," said Nyeri Archbishop Anthony Muheria.

Ronaldo set to extend Al-Nassr stay despite exit rumours

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Cristiano Ronaldo is on the verge of extending his stay at Saudi Arabian club Al-Nassr, according to local sources who spoke to BBC Sport, despite earlier signs suggesting his time in Riyadh was drawing to a close.

The 40-year-old Portuguese icon, who joined Al-Nassr in January 2023 after a high-profile exit from Manchester United, had initially agreed to a deal running through June 2025. However, talks have progressed significantly over a new two-year extension that would keep him at the club until the summer of 2027.

Speculation around Ronaldo's future intensified last month when he posted cryptically on social media, stating "the chapter is over" following Al-Nassr's final game of the Saudi Pro League season. The message sparked rumours of a possible move abroad or even retirement, especially after Al-Nassr failed to qualify for the expanded FIFA Club World Cup set to be held in the United States next summer.

FIFA President Gianni Infantino added fuel to the speculation by suggesting that Ronaldo could still feature at the global tournament by joining one of the qualified teams. Ronaldo later confirmed he had received such offers but turned them down, reinforcing his commitment to his current club.

Despite the uncertainty, Ronaldo's influence on the pitch remains undisputed. Since arriving in the Middle East, he has netted an astonishing 99 goals in 111 appearances for Al-Nassr. His 35 goals in 41 matches during the most recent campaign earned him the Saudi Pro League Golden Boot, and he was widely credited with helping to elevate the club's profile on the global stage.

Off the field, the Portuguese captain is also said to be exploring sports



investment opportunities in the Gulf region, a move that would further embed his legacy in the country beyond his playing career. Sources close to the player have indicated that the decision to extend his contract is influenced not just by footballing ambitions but also a growing interest in contributing to the broader development of sport in Saudi Arabia.

Ronaldo recently added another international title to his illustrious career, helping Portugal lift the UEFA Nations League trophy two weeks ago, further solidifying his position as one of football's enduring figures even at age 40.

His decision to stay in Saudi Arabia also comes at a time of transition for Al-Nassr. The club parted ways with Italian manager Stefano Pioli earlier on Wednesday, less than a year after his appointment. Under Pioli's leadership, the team managed a third-place finish in the Saudi Pro League, ending the season 13 points behind champions Al-Ittihad.

Ronaldo acknowledged the manager's

departure with a message of thanks on social media, writing, "Thanks for everything," as Pioli is now reportedly set to return to former club Fiorentina.

Al-Nassr's decision to seek new leadership on the touchline and secure Ronaldo's services for the coming years signals a clear intent to build a competitive project centred around the legendary forward.

With talks reportedly nearing completion, an official announcement is expected soon. If confirmed, the extension would see Ronaldo continue to play professional football well into his forties, making him one of the oldest elite forwards still performing at a high level.

BBC Sport has reached out to Ronaldo's representatives for an official comment, but no response has yet been received.

As the world waits for final confirmation, one thing is clear: Cristiano Ronaldo's football journey is far from over — and Saudi Arabia is set to remain its central stage.

No African team advances at 2025 Club World Cup

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

The 2025 FIFA Club World Cup in the United States has ended in bitter disappointment for African football, as none of the four CAF representatives managed to progress beyond the group stage in the tournament's new 32-team format.

A Harsh Reality for African Giants

African champions Al Ahly, along with Esperance de Tunis, Mamelodi Sundowns, and Wydad Casablanca, all entered the competition with high hopes and reputations forged across the continent. But by the close of the group phase, the continent's campaign had been extinguished.

Each club faced a formidable group, and while there were moments of promise and passion, they ultimately failed to match the consistency and quality of their more resourced opponents from Europe, South America, and North America.

Al Ahly Falter Despite Fireworks

Egyptian giants Al Ahly, 11-time CAF Champions League winners, were arguably the most competitive African side. They played out a stunning 4–4 draw against Porto but failed to win either of their other matches, finishing third in a group that saw Inter Miami and Palmeiras advance.

The Cairo club showed attacking flair but were ultimately undone by defensive lapses and late-game collapses.

Esperance Overwhelmed in 'Group of Death'

Esperance were handed arguably the toughest assignment, drawn alongside Chelsea, Flamengo, and Club León. Despite solid preparation and tactical discipline, they were outclassed, failing to register a win in a group dominated by the Premier League and Brazilian heavyweights.

Their campaign ended quietly, with Chelsea securing a commanding win on the final matchday to seal Esperance's



fate.

Sundowns' Win Not Enough

South Africa's Mamelodi Sundowns did earn Africa's only victory of the tournament with a 1–0 triumph over Korea's Ulsan Hyundai—but defeats to Borussia Dortmund and draw against Fluminense sealed their exit. Though Sundowns impressed with their structured build-up play and energy, they lacked cutting edge in key moments.

Wydad Left Chasing Shadows

Wydad AC of Morocco never truly found their rhythm in a group with Manchester City, Juventus, and Al Ain. The 2022 African champions struggled to keep pace, finishing bottom without a win. Their inability to adapt tactically to European opposition was a key concern.

The Broader Picture

With 16 knockout places on offer, Africa's failure to fill even one is cause for concern. The Club World Cup's new format provided a grander stage—but also exposed the growing gulf in squad depth, investment, and infrastructure between African clubs and their global counterparts.

There's also a growing debate within African football circles: Should CAF clubs continue to rely on continental dominance as a benchmark, or is a structural shift needed to bridge the competitive gap internationally?

Lessons and Next Steps

African teams arrived in the US full of optimism and with large diasporic fan support. But the on-field results reveal hard truths. The gap in elite match tempo, tactical flexibility, and game management is still evident when facing top-level sides from Europe and South America.

CAF's long-standing ambition for global competitiveness may now require new strategies—better club funding, coaching exchange programs, and earlier exposure to international competition for players.

For now, though, the Club World Cup's knockout rounds continue without African representation.

And for the millions back home, 2025 will be remembered as a missed opportunity—a moment when African football stood at the world's top table but failed to take a seat.

Sir Gareth Southgate: A knight of modern English football

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Gareth Southgate has officially joined football's most elite ranks after being knighted at Windsor Castle on Wednesday. The former England manager, 54, was honoured for his services to football following his departure from the national team after Euro 2024.

The knighthood places Southgate among just six other football managers who have received the distinction: Sir Alf Ramsey, Sir Matt Busby, Sir Alex Ferguson, Sir Bobby Robson, Sir Kenny Dalglish, and Sir Walter Winterbottom. Remarkably, like Winterbottom, Southgate is one of the few knights not to have lifted a major trophy as a manager.

Despite never capturing international silverware, Southgate's influence on English football is undeniable. He took charge of the national team in 2016 during a turbulent period, following Sam Allardyce's abrupt departure. Over nearly eight years, he rebuilt the team's reputation, brought them to within touching distance of trophies, and rekindled national pride in the Three Lions.

Southgate's record includes a semi-final finish at the 2018 World Cup, a runner-up spot at Euro 2020 (delayed until 2021), and another final at Euro 2024, where England fell 2-1 to Spain. These close calls earned him the reputation of a "nearly manager," but they also highlighted England's consistent return to the upper echelons of international football.

Beyond results, Southgate's legacy is built on leadership, dignity, and diplomacy. He made the England shirt lighter, restoring joy and unity to the national side. His tenure was marked by the re-engagement of fans and a cultural reset within the team—a transformation as valuable as any silverware.

He was never afraid to make hard decisions, whether it was phasing out



Wayne Rooney early in his tenure, cutting Jack Grealish from the Euro 2024 squad, or standing firm on his principles in the face of political and social controversies.

Southgate's leadership extended beyond the pitch. He famously addressed racism head-on after England's 6-0 win over Bulgaria in 2019, when the match was twice halted due to racist abuse. He also acknowledged the disappointment felt by LGBTQ+ fans during the 2022 Qatar World Cup, after England abandoned plans to wear the 'OneLove' armband due to FIFA's disciplinary threat.

For all his politeness and poise, Southgate showed plenty of grit too. As a manager, he made bold tactical decisions, stuck by his convictions, and weathered both praise and criticism with the same composure. Though some critics labelled his tactics conservative, few could question his integrity or the long-term progress made under his watch.

However, not all moments were triumphant. Southgate's relationship with England fans soured during rough patches—most notably in 2022 when he

was booed at Molineux. The atmosphere turned tense again during Euro 2024, where dull performances led to jeers and beer cups thrown after a draw with Slovenia.

Still, Southgate marched on, leading England to another final, albeit in a campaign that lacked joy and inspiration. Following the narrow defeat to Spain, his resignation felt inevitable—a dignified end to a demanding era.

Now, Sir Gareth Southgate's name is etched into English football history—not merely as a manager of close calls, but as a transformative figure. His knighthood, awarded by the Prince of Wales, who once called him "an all-round class act," is a fitting tribute to a man who served his country with honour and humility.

As the curtain falls on his managerial tenure, Southgate leaves behind a legacy built not just on results, but on values. He made England believe again. He made the players dream again. And now, deservedly, he walks among the game's greatest.