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AfDB President Adesina bows out after ten years of reforms

By **Damilola Olufemi**

After a decade at the helm of the African Development Bank (AfDB), Akinwumi Adesina is preparing to exit the role with a record of significant growth and development.

Speaking yesterday during a media breakfast in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, he revealed that the Bank's capital base had expanded from \$93 billion in 2015 to \$325 billion – an extraordinary increase over his two-term tenure.

Adesina, the first Nigerian to serve as AfDB President, highlighted the far-reaching impact of the Bank's strategic priorities, known as the "High 5s", which have touched over half a billion lives across the continent.

These focus areas, improving energy access, boosting agriculture, industrialising economies, deepening regional integration, and enhancing living conditions, have yielded tangible benefits in healthcare, transport, electricity, water, and food security.

Reflecting on his time in office, Adesina said: "I'm proud that we've mobilised more resources than at any point in the Bank's history. Just yesterday, our Vice President of Finance confirmed our capital now stands at \$325 billion, up from \$318 billion due to exchange rate gains. That scale of funding has enabled the Bank to reshape Africa's development trajectory."

He also recalled the challenges and accomplishments that marked his presidency, noting the strain and determination involved.

"When I assumed office, I had no grey hair. A decade later, my hair tells the story of tireless commitment to transforming this institution into a globally respected player – one that has consistently stood up for Africa."

Among the milestones he cited was the largest-ever replenishment of the African Development Fund (ADF), which saw \$8.9 billion raised to support the continent's most vulnerable nations.

He also recounted the launch of the \$1.5 billion Emergency Food Production



Facility in response to the Russia-Ukraine war, which helped 13 million farmers in 29 countries access vital inputs and resulted in 44 million metric tonnes of food – far exceeding expectations.

Under Adesina's leadership, the Bank's work has led to major improvements across key sectors: 128 million people gained access to better healthcare, 121 million benefited from enhanced transport infrastructure, 104 million achieved food security, 63 million received access to safe water, 34 million accessed improved sanitation and 28 million now have electricity.

Looking ahead, Adesina urged his successor to remain firm in defending Africa's interests and avoid shallow development efforts.

"This role requires vision, courage, and conviction. It's not about popularity. It's about making tough choices that advance the continent. If you're not prepared to do that, this job isn't for you," he said.

His departure comes at a critical moment.

The Bank faces financial headwinds following proposed funding cuts by the US government, with reports suggesting up to \$555 million could be withdrawn from both the AfDB and its concessional arm, the ADF.

To be elected, a new president must secure a majority of votes from both African and non-African member states, 54 and 81 countries respectively.

The decision will be made on Thursday at the Bank's annual meetings in Abidjan, which draw top finance officials and heads of state from across the continent.

As the institution seeks to raise \$25 billion in its next ADF replenishment cycle this November, up from \$8.9 billion last time, the incoming leader will face the challenge of sourcing funds amid competing global demands.

Among the five contenders for the role are former officials from Senegal, South Africa, Zambia, Chad and Mauritania.

Notably, Senegal's Amadou Hott – a former AfDB Vice President for Power, Energy, Climate and Green Growth, has proposed harnessing domestic private capital to reduce Africa's dependence on external borrowing.

He noted the continent holds \$4.5 trillion in combined individual and institutional wealth that remains largely untapped.

"The real game-changer will be unlocking our own savings and investment potential," Hott said in an interview with Bloomberg.

He also supports the creation of an African credit rating agency to offer fairer assessments based on local data, arguing that African nations often face unjustifiably high borrowing costs compared to peers with similar credit ratings elsewhere.

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

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9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
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5X5	110,000.00
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8X6	179,368.00
8X5	143,500.00
8X4	93,500.00
8X3	82,434.50
7X4	111,173.50
6X4	82,434.50
6X3	59,250.00
6X2	40,000.00
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Children's Day: Tinubu takes firm stand against violence targeting children

By Friday Omosola



President Bola Tinubu has stated that his administration is taking firm and deliberate steps to prevent, detect, and respond to all forms of violence against children.

In his 2025 National Children's Day message, the President revealed that a comprehensive review of the Child Rights Act (2003) and the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (2015) is underway.

The aim, he said, is to broaden the scope of protection, strengthen legal provisions, address gaps in implementation, and ensure effective enforcement across the country.

Commenting on this year's theme, "Stand Up, Speak Up: Building a Bullying-Free Generation", Tinubu added that the government is also leveraging the Cybercrime Act, which is currently in full effect, to safeguard children from cyberbullying, exploitation, and online abuse.

"I am pleased to note that 36 states have domesticated the Child Rights Act, thus reflecting our collective resolve to protect and provide for the welfare of children. However, laws alone will not be sufficient to protect our children. We require a holistic approach where parents, teachers, caregivers, faith leaders, lawmakers, and citizens must take ownership.

"We are investing in other focused national systems for child protection, such as the Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS), which is being scaled up to track and respond to cases in real time. The Ministry of Women's Affairs is strengthening community-based child protection mechanisms, training frontline responders, and leading nationwide awareness campaigns to end harmful traditional practices", he said.

Furthermore, Tinubu affirmed his

commitment to implementing proactive measures aimed at strengthening existing initiatives that support families and communities.

He stated that this includes the development of a robust institutional framework dedicated solely to child protection and development, which, he noted, would ensure greater accountability in safeguarding the rights and well-being of every Nigerian child.

He revealed that his administration had introduced a National Policy on Safety, Security, and Violence-Free Schools, alongside the development of comprehensive guidelines for school administrators, among several other initiatives.

**Continue reading
on next page**

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The President also mentioned that social-emotional learning and child safeguarding had been incorporated into teacher training programmes.

Through the National Commission for Almajiri and Out-of-School Children, he said, inclusive learning pathways were being created to ensure that every child—regardless of background—has the opportunity to learn, thrive, and succeed.

He condemned the bullying of children, emphasising the importance of fostering a culture where every child feels safe, respected, and heard, both in physical environments and online spaces.

“To be clear,” he stated, “violence, bullying, and neglect have no place in today’s Nigeria.”

President Tinubu further highlighted that globally, more than one in three children experience bullying regularly.

In Nigeria, he added, research suggests that up to 65% of school-age children have suffered some form of physical, psychological, or social aggression.

He said, “This is unacceptable. A child who learns in fear cannot learn well. A child who grows in fear cannot grow right. My fellow Nigerians and our dear children, we prioritise child protection under the Renewed Hope Agenda. This includes the full implementation of Nigeria’s National Plan of Action on Ending Violence Against Children (2024–2030), which I recently

launched. The plan provides a comprehensive roadmap to prevent abuse, prosecute perpetrators, and support victims, backed by robust financing and multi-sectoral coordination.

“In the care economy, we are expanding access to primary healthcare and upscaling dedicated Mother and Child Hospitals and healthcare systems across all six geopolitical zones, offering integrated maternal and child services. We are working collaboratively with subnational governments to ensure the establishment of similar facilities across the States.

“We believe every child has the right to grow up in a loving and protective environment. To ensure that children who are unable to remain in their biological homes are given the care and protection they deserve, the Federal Ministry of Women’s Affairs has developed the National Guidelines for Alternative Care for Children. These guidelines would complement the recently launched National Plan of Action on Ending Violence Against Children (EVAC) and strengthen our child protection systems.

“Through the Nutrition 774 programme and our School Feeding Scheme, we work assiduously to improve child health and cognitive development. The Nutrition 774 project aims to ensure no child in Nigeria goes hungry. Through this project, we are reaching every community, guaranteeing that children receive the necessary nutrition to thrive in their academic pursuits, creative endeavours, and

overall health. A well-nourished child is well-equipped and ready to tackle the challenges of tomorrow.

“To institutionalise our commitment, the Federal Ministry of Women’s Affairs has recently established a dedicated Department of Nutrition to strengthen policy coherence, programme delivery, and coordination around child and maternal nutrition.

“We are investing in social protection tools such as the Universal Child Grant and finalising a national Child Wellbeing Index to measure progress, track gaps, and hold ourselves accountable.

“Our children’s safety cannot be solely anchored on government policies but on community vigilance. This is why I am launching a nationwide “See Something, Say Something, Do Something” campaign today, encouraging every Nigerian to become a child protection champion.

“To our beloved children: you matter. Your dreams matter. Your voices matter. No one has the right to hurt, silence, or diminish you. If you are bullied or harmed, speak up—you will be heard and protected. I call on all partners, stakeholders, and duty-bearers to sustain and deepen our collective efforts. We must embed child rights in all our budgets, plans, and policies. I commend states taking bold steps for our children’s welfare and urge those yet to act: now is the time. Our children are not just statistics—they are the heart of our nation.”

Army neutralizes scores of terrorists in Marte

By Alade Adisa



The Nigerian Army's Theatre Command, North East 'Operation, Hadin Kai', has killed scores of bandits and terrorists in a fierce combat in New Marte, Borno State.

The battle ensued as the terrorists attempted to take over the community in the early hours of Tuesday. The Theatre Commander, Major General Abdulsalam Abubakar has confirmed.

In a statement by the Acting Deputy Director of Army Public Relations, Headquarters Theatre Command 'Operation Hadin Kai', Captain Reuben Kuvangiya, the repelling of the insurgents was "In a well-coordinated operation by ground forces bolstered by the Air Component of Operation HADIN KAI (OPHK), scores of Boko Haram/ISWAP terrorists were neutralized in a foiled attack on their location in New Marte, Borno State.

The failed attack took place in the early

hours of May 27, 2025, when insurgents attempted to infiltrate the troops' location in New Marte.

"A fire fight ensued, and reinforcements from 24 Task Force Brigade Garrison and 134 Special Forces Battalion, swiftly mobilised to the location, engaging the terrorists with heavy gunfire.

"The Air Component provided immediate Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance, as well as offensive fire support, leading to the decimation of several fleeing terrorists. Regrettably, two soldiers paid the ultimate sacrifice.

"Significantly, troops during exploitation of the general area, recovered one of the Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device SUV abandoned by the terrorists during pursuit by troops, including several motorcycles conveying the terrorists destroyed by the precision air strikes of the Air Component of OPHK. Troops

also discovered lifeless bodies of the terrorists, with traces of blood on their withdrawal routes, further suggesting more casualties inflicted on the terrorists.

"In a related development, some terrorists also met their Waterloo, receiving a bloody nose from the gallant troops, when they made a daring attempt to attack the Forward Operating Base at Kumshe.

"Consequently, the resilient and determined troops have vowed to keep terrorists on the back foot and deny them freedom of action.

"The collaborative effort demonstrates the renewed jointness and team spirit in the fight against terrorism, geared towards bringing lasting peace to enable socio-economic activities thrive in the North East region, in line with the mandate of 'Operation Hadin Kai'.

Lagos shifts from linear waste disposal, signs major concession deal with private firm

By Friday Omosola

The Lagos State Government has signed a landmark concession agreement with ZoomLion Nigeria Limited to transition from its decades-old linear waste disposal system to a more sustainable, circular waste management model.

The deal will see the construction of two major waste processing facilities in Ikorodu and Badagry, alongside the decommissioning of the Olusosun and Solous III dumpsites.

Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu presided over the signing of the Waste Management and Processing Concession Agreement on Monday at the State House, Alausa, describing the initiative as ‘a turning point’ in Lagos’ environmental strategy.

The agreement, entered with ZoomLion Nigeria, a subsidiary of Ghana-based Josping Group of Companies, marks a significant step towards achieving environmental sustainability in the state.

Under the Public Private Partnership (PPP) deal, Lagos will construct a Material Recovery Facility (MRF) in Ikorodu to process 2,500 tonnes of waste daily and another in Badagry to handle 1,500 tonnes per day.

Transfer Loading Stations (TLS) will be established at both the Olusosun site in Ketu and the Solous III landfill in Igando, facilitating the closure and full decommissioning of both sites.

“This collaboration is a win-win for



Lagosians, the private sector, and the government,” Sanwo-Olu said.

“It will change the entire strategy and outcome of waste management in the state, enabling us to recycle materials—such as plastics, food waste, and glass—into usable products, while also opening opportunities in carbon credit, biodiversity, and biofuel.”

The new waste infrastructure is expected to be completed within 18 months and will support Lagos’ daily waste output of approximately 13,000 tonnes.

The project will also deploy self-tipping tricycles to improve waste collection in hard-to-reach areas across the metropolis.

Sanwo-Olu assured that the transition would not result in job losses but rather create over 5,000 direct and indirect employment opportunities, offering

“dignified, enduring and sustainable” work.

He further stated that the initiative would enhance the capacity of PSP (Private Sector Participation) operators by improving turnaround times in waste collection and disposal.

Commissioner for the Environment and Water Resources, Tokunbo Wahab, said the initiative marked a ‘watershed moment’ in Lagos’ history, enabling the state to generate wealth from waste.

He noted that the proposal underwent a thorough evaluation by the State Executive Council and House of Assembly before approval.

Joseph Agyepong, Chairman of Josping Group, emphasised the importance of African cooperation in achieving sustainable development, pledging that ZoomLion Nigeria would meet the project’s targets and timelines.

Tinubu writes NASS for \$21.5b foreign loan, N757.9b pension bond approval

By Damilola Olufemi

President Bola Tinubu has requested the backing of the National Assembly for a new round of borrowing aimed at stabilising Nigeria's economy and addressing key infrastructure and pension challenges.

The request, laid out in three separate letters read on the floor of the House of Representatives by Speaker Tajudeen Abbas, outlines plans for substantial foreign and domestic borrowing.

In one of the letters, the president proposed the establishment of a foreign currency-denominated issuance programme within Nigeria's local debt market. This initiative, which would be managed by the Debt Management Office (DMO), is expected to raise \$2 billion under the provisions of the Presidential Executive Order on Foreign Currency Denominated Financial Instruments, Local Issues Programme of 2023.

According to Tinubu, the aim is not merely to borrow but to create local opportunities for dollar-denominated investments, deepen the financial market, and stabilise the foreign exchange system. He stated that "the proceeds will be channelled into critical sectors of the economy capable of driving growth, enhancing infrastructure, creating employment, and boosting foreign exchange inflows."

The proposal includes a broader external borrowing plan that totals \$21.54 billion, €2.19 billion, and 15 billion Japanese Yen, along with a grant of €65 million. The president emphasised the urgent need for this facility in light of the economic strain caused by fuel subsidy removal and other fiscal adjustments.

"In light of the significant infrastructure deficit in the country and the paucity of financial resources needed to address this gap amid declining domestic demand, it



has become essential to pursue prudent economic borrowing to close the financial shortfall," he explained.

Tinubu assured the legislature that the funds would be used to deliver large-scale infrastructure projects, with a focus on transportation, healthcare, and other development programs in all 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. He added that "this initiative aims to generate employment, promote skill acquisition, foster entrepreneurship, reduce poverty, and enhance food security, as well as to improve the livelihoods of Nigerians."

While acknowledging the likely increase in the nation's public debt and the cost of servicing it, the president argued that the long-term benefits outweigh the risks.

In a separate letter, Tinubu also asked for approval to issue federal government bonds amounting to ₦757.98 billion to clear outstanding pension liabilities under the Contributory Pension Scheme as of December 2023.

'Meeting pension responsibilities' – Tinubu
Referring to the Pension Reform Act of 2014, Tinubu noted that the government has long struggled to meet pension

obligations due to revenue challenges. He argued that paying off the pension arrears would bring significant social and economic relief.

"Settling the outstanding liabilities would alleviate hardship for retirees, restore confidence in the pension system, boost morale among public servants, and stimulate economic growth by increasing liquidity," he said.

The bond issuance had earlier received Federal Executive Council approval in February 2025. Tinubu also flagged the cost implications, particularly the impact on public debt stock and servicing obligations, but assured lawmakers of his administration's dedication to transparency.

"While I look forward to the progression and timely approval of the House of Representatives, please accept, Your Honourable Speaker, the assurances of my high regards," he wrote in conclusion.

The proposals have been referred to the House Committees on National Planning and Economic Development and Pensions for further legislative consideration.

Aiyedatiwa inaugurates Ondo Children's Parliament, vows to protect their rights

By Friday Omosola

Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa of Ondo State has reaffirmed his administration's commitment to protecting the rights of children and creating an environment where they can thrive free from fear, bullying, or discrimination.

Speaking on Tuesday during the 2025 National Children's Day celebration held at the Gani Fawehinmi Freedom Arcade, Igbatoro Road, Akure, Aiyedatiwa said the state would continue to promote child-friendly policies aimed at empowering the younger generation.

The event, which drew hundreds of school children, teachers, parents and dignitaries, had as its theme, "Stand Up, Speak Up: Building a Bullying-Free Generation."

The governor described the theme as a patriotic call to action, urging stakeholders across society to unite against all forms of bullying and abuse, especially in schools and online spaces.

"Bullying—whether in schools, on playgrounds, or in digital spaces—is a threat to the emotional well-being of our children. It erodes their confidence and stifles their dreams," Aiyedatiwa said.

"But today and every day forward, Ondo State says: No more!"

He called for collaborative efforts from parents, teachers, traditional rulers, religious institutions, and community leaders in building a culture anchored on kindness, empathy, and mutual support.

Highlighting strides made by his administration in promoting children's welfare, the governor listed the payment of WAEC fees for secondary school students, ongoing renovation of public schools, and the recruitment of over



2,000 teachers across the state's primary and secondary schools.

A major highlight of the celebration was the formal inauguration of the 3rd Ondo State Children's Parliament, which the Governor described as a crucial platform to amplify children's voices and encourage leadership from a young age.

He also commended the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development and other stakeholders for their contributions to child protection and the success of this year's Children's Day celebration.

In her welcome address, the Special Adviser to the Governor on Women Affairs, Seun Osamaye, hailed Aiyedatiwa's inclusive governance approach and consistent support for women and children.

"This administration has consistently placed the needs of children at the centre of governance," she said.

"The 2025 celebration introduced new innovations, reflecting the Governor's

commitment to inclusiveness and gender equality."

Traditional ruler, the Olowo of Owo, Oba Ajibade Gbadegesin Ogunoye, praised the governor for prioritising education and managing the state's finances responsibly, adding that his achievements were evident in the "OUR EASE" Agenda.

In her remarks, Poroye Olamide, a representative of the Ondo State Children's Parliament, thanked the governor for giving children a platform to express themselves.

She called for continued collaboration to end all forms of abuse and harassment against children.

The event featured various entertaining and educational activities, including oratory and match-past competitions, cultural displays, and the KidsCon Raffle Draw.

Lucky winners in different categories received star prizes presented personally by the governor.

ECOWAS at 50: Tinubu to commission projects, celebrate milestone in Lagos

By **Fatimah Idera**



President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has departed Abuja for Lagos to lead the 50th anniversary celebration of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The event marks a continuation of the golden jubilee activities, which were officially flagged off last month in Accra, Ghana.

The disclosure was contained in a statement issued on Monday by the State House and signed by Special Adviser to the President on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga.

It stated that the President will participate in a series of commemorative events, including a symbolic reenactment of the 1975 founding declaration of ECOWAS at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) in Victoria Island, Lagos.

“President Bola Ahmed Tinubu will leave Abuja on Tuesday for Lagos to

celebrate, along with other leaders, the 50th anniversary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The ECOWAS golden jubilee was flagged off in Accra last month. “The Lagos events will include reenacting the 1975 declaration at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs in Victoria Island,” the statement read in part.

As Chairman of ECOWAS, President Tinubu will also address a high-level gathering at Eko Hotels and Suites, where he is expected to highlight the achievements and regional impact of the bloc over the past five decades.

The ceremony will feature remarks by Dr. Omar Touray, President of the ECOWAS Commission, and a keynote speech by Gen. Yakubu Gowon (Rtd), Nigeria’s former Head of State and the only surviving signatory of the original ECOWAS treaty. Prof. Bolaji Akinyemi, Chairman of the NIIA and former Minister of External Affairs,

will review the bloc’s journey, followed by a panel discussion.

Other Projects to be Commissioned are;

- Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway Section
- Lekki Deep Sea Port Tax Credit Concrete Road
- Section II of Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway
- 7th Axial Road
- Kano-Kanwar-Danja-Hadejiya Section II Road (virtual commissioning)
- Yakasai-Zalli Road (virtual commissioning)
- Kano Northern By-pass, Zaria-Hunkuyi-Dabai Section I (flag-off)
- Dabai-Kafur Malumfashi, Malumfashi-Dayi-Yashe-Gidan Mutum Daya Section III (flag-off)

After the celebrations, President Tinubu will observe the Eid-el-Kabir prayers at the State House, Dodan Barracks, before returning to Abuja.

PDP crisis deepens as national caucus meeting ends without consensus

By Damilola Olufemi

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) remains at a crossroads as its National Caucus meeting on Monday ended without a clear resolution. Key stakeholders, including the party's Governors' Forum, Board of Trustees (BoT), and a peace committee led by former Senate President Bukola Saraki, are expected to reconvene today (Tuesday) in an attempt to break the impasse preventing the 99th National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting from holding.

Acting National Chairman, Umar Damagum, addressed the media following nearly three hours of closed-door discussions in Abuja. "As you can see, we just adjourned our meeting for today (Monday) till tomorrow (today) 10 am," he said. "We just set up a small committee that would give us a report and tomorrow morning, we'll continue."

Asked whether the long-awaited NEC meeting will proceed as planned, Damagum said, "When you come tomorrow, we will answer this question after our meeting."

Monday's caucus meeting saw the absence of several prominent party figures, including former Vice Presidents Atiku Abubakar and Namadi Sambo, as well as ex-Senate President David Mark and former House Speaker Aminu Tambuwal. Their absence from a meeting meant to prepare for the NEC session originally slated for May 27 further underlined the divisions plaguing the party.

Sources at the meeting disclosed to The PUNCH that the adjournment was aimed at giving Saraki's panel time to consult with key party leaders on Monday night. "The panel will present its proposals on Tuesday morning (today). If accepted, they could pave the way for the NEC to meet. If not, another postponement is likely," the insider revealed.

PDP's unresolved grievances and mounting defections



Since the 2023 elections, the PDP has battled internal unrest, ranging from leadership disputes and regional factionalism to unresolved congress crises in zones like Rivers, North Central, and the South-South. A lingering standoff over the National Secretary's position has fractured the National Working Committee (NWC), while many BoT members' terms have expired without replacements, further weakening internal cohesion.

The tensions have been inflamed by recent actions from the Federal Capital Territory Minister, Nyesom Wike. On Sunday, Wike formally withdrew from prior reconciliation agreements, alleging that his allies were sidelined in key decisions. In his words, the party leadership's refusal to recognise his loyalists, including Sam Anyanwu, marked a breaking point.

By Monday afternoon, tensions escalated further when the FCTA task force, under Wike's jurisdiction, sealed the PDP National Secretariat in Abuja over unpaid ground rent. This forced the BoT meeting, initially scheduled for 3:00 p.m. at Wadata Plaza, to relocate to Legacy House in Maitama. However, that meeting also failed to hold, with no formal reason provided.

Party insiders say that recent decisions made by Governors Seyi Makinde (Oyo), Peter Mbah (Enugu), and Bala Mohammed (Bauchi) have further alienated Wike and his allies. These

moves were perceived as attempts to erode Wike's influence within the party.

Despite repeated interventions from the NWC, BoT, Governors' Forum, and Saraki's peace committee, the rift continues to deepen crippling party structures across several states and zones.

PDP Faces Growing Threats Ahead of 2027

The failure to reach consensus comes at a time when the PDP is grappling with major defections. The most significant blow came from Delta State, once a party stronghold, where former vice-presidential candidate Ifeanyi Okowa, sitting Governor Sheriff Oborevwori, and the entire state party structure defected to the All Progressives Congress (APC).

With Deputy Governor Monday Onyeme, commissioners, local government heads, and party operatives all shifting allegiance, the opposition warns that Nigeria risks sliding toward one-party dominance under the APC.

In December 2024, following pressure from the Governors' Forum led by Bauchi Governor Bala Mohammed, the NWC was directed to fix a date for the NEC meeting. A series of delays followed—from an initial February 2025 plan, to a March 13 proposal in Asaba, then to May 15, and finally to May 27. These repeated postponements reflect the party's inability to reconcile its divisions.

Adesina-led SDP denounces coalition moves to unseat Tinubu

By Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

The National Executive Committee (NEC) of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), led by Chief Wole Adesina, has issued a stern warning against what it describes as two unfolding threats to the party's integrity and national unity. In a strongly worded statement released on Monday, the faction's National Publicity Secretary, Alfa Mohammed, criticised a growing coalition of aggrieved politicians allegedly seeking to unseat President Bola Ahmed Tinubu without presenting any concrete alternative plan for Nigeria's development.

Mohammed said, "The influx of some aggrieved politicians in a desperate coalition to 'send President Bola Ahmed Tinubu back to Lagos' without showcasing any clear-cut alternative agenda for Nigeria's transformation is disturbing and must be rejected." He emphasised that the SDP was "not for sale or lease to any group" and would not participate in what he called "anti-government plots or coalitions" lacking vision or direction.

Party Integrity Under Threat

The Adesina-led SDP NEC voiced concern about the illegal removal of constitutionally recognised state executives within the party. According to the statement, this has been orchestrated by the coalition group, working in concert with a rival SDP faction. The committee described the action as unlawful and a clear violation of the party's constitution and democratic norms.

Mohammed drew parallels between the current crisis and the events of 2019, when former PDP members, led by Professor Jerry Gana, attempted to seize control of the party. That episode, he recalled, forced the resignation of then-National Chairman Olu Falae and left the SDP embroiled in lingering legal battles.



Support for Constructive Governance
While distancing the party from any moves to destabilise the federal government, the NEC under Chief Adesina pledged to maintain a constructive engagement with the Tinubu-led administration. Mohammed reiterated that the SDP would continue to hold the government accountable to the electorate but condemned any collaboration that might undermine the democratic mandate given to Tinubu during the 2023 general elections. "We are committed to holding the government accountable, but not at the expense of national unity or by aligning with opportunistic alliances that lack credible blueprints for Nigeria's future," he added.

Warning to Usurpers and Call for Calm
The NEC also sounded a clear warning to individuals attempting to "usurp leadership positions" across state chapters of the SDP. Mohammed urged state and local party leaders to report such incidents to law enforcement and relevant authorities, while encouraging them to stand firm in defence of legitimate leadership structures.

He also called on party members and the public to remain calm as the party

continues its legal and political efforts to reclaim full recognition from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

"We leave the doors of the SDP open to genuinely intentioned new members who share in our values and vision, but we reject those whose motives are rooted in personal vendetta or ambition," Mohammed concluded.

National Implications

The unfolding tensions within the SDP reflect broader uncertainties in Nigeria's post-2023 political climate, as rival factions, coalitions, and former power brokers jostle for influence ahead of the 2027 elections. While some see Tinubu's government as vulnerable due to economic and security challenges, others argue that undermining a sitting president without a solid plan could further destabilise Nigeria's fragile democratic gains.

For now, the Adesina-led SDP faction appears resolute in distancing itself from what it views as politically motivated opportunism disguised as opposition — insisting that credible governance demands not just critique but vision, policy, and integrity.

How safe is Garri? Nutrition experts break down facts

By **Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi**

For millions of Nigerians, few foods are as familiar—or as controversial—as garri, the starchy, grainy flour derived from cassava tubers. Affordable, versatile, and easy to store, garri is a cornerstone of West African cuisine. But with its popularity comes speculation: Is garri truly healthy? Or does overconsumption come at a hidden cost—perhaps even affecting eyesight?

In this exclusive New Daily Prime report, we explore both the nutritional benefits and health concerns of garri, based on expert interviews, cultural insight, and scientific context.



What is Garri?

Garri is a fermented, grated, and fried flour made from cassava root. Its appeal lies not just in taste but in convenience: it requires little preparation, stores well for up to a year, and can be served either hot (as eba, a staple swallow) or cold (soaked with water, sugar, milk, and groundnuts).

Across West Africa—from Nigeria, Ghana, and Togo to Liberia, Guinea, and Cameroon—garri is consumed daily. In Hausa, the most widely spoken indigenous language in West Africa, garri can refer to flour made from other staples too, such as maize (garin masara), guinea corn (garin dawa), and millet (garin gero). The term reflects its deep cultural integration across ethnic lines and culinary traditions.

Comparable to Brazil's farinha de mandioca, garri is a foundational food that continues to adapt and evolve with urban diets and modern food systems.

Nutritional Benefits of Garri

Contrary to some misconceptions, garri can be part of a healthy diet—especially

when consumed with other nutritious foods.

Dr Gabriel Adelaja, a registered dietitian, explains: “When consumed as part of a balanced diet, garri provides a wide range of nutritional advantages. The problem only arises when it becomes the sole or primary staple.”

Here are some of the health benefits associated with garri:

High Energy Source

Garri is rich in carbohydrates, making it a quick source of energy. It is especially beneficial for people with high physical activity or those who need energy-dense meals.

Low Fat Content – Naturally low in fat, garri is suitable for those managing their fat intake. However, Dr. Gabriel suggests pairing it with healthy fats such as groundnuts or oily fish to improve its nutritional profile.

Gluten-Free – Garri is naturally gluten-free, making it a safe choice for individuals with coeliac disease or

gluten intolerance.

Digestive Health Support- Minimally processed garri retains dietary fibre, aiding digestion and preventing constipation. It is particularly helpful for those with sluggish digestion or irregular bowel movements.

Fortification Potential – Commercial garri is often fortified with vitamins, particularly Vitamin A, to support micronutrient deficiencies. Fortified garri is a critical public health intervention in regions where nutritional access is limited.

Promotes Growth – Garri contains folate, a B-vitamin essential for cell regeneration, DNA synthesis, and tissue growth. Folate works alongside other micronutrients to convert carbohydrates into usable energy.

**Continue reading
on next page**

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Eye Health – While garri has been accused of impairing vision, the opposite may be true in some cases. Garri contains β -carotene (bakarotennya) and Vitamin A, which support corneal health and help prevent blindness—provided it is well-processed.

Common Misconceptions: Garri and Eye Health

A persistent belief among many Nigerians is that garri causes poor eyesight. But according to Dr Abdulmalik Ibrahim, a general practitioner at Gwarzo General Hospital in Kano, this is largely a matter of quality and quantity.

“Improperly processed garri—especially from bitter cassava—may retain small amounts of cyanide. When consumed in large quantities, this can lead to dizziness, vomiting, or long-term nerve damage.”

Dr. Abdulmalik emphasizes that these symptoms are typically tied to cyanide toxicity, not to garri itself. He adds that safe production—which includes proper soaking, fermenting, and drying—eliminates these risks.

The Risks of Overconsumption

While garri has notable nutritional strengths, excessive consumption, especially without dietary variety, can lead to deficiencies:

- **Low Protein Content:** Garri does not provide enough protein to sustain muscle health or immune function.

- **Micronutrient Deficiency:** It lacks iron, zinc, and calcium, which are essential for bone health, immune resilience, and mental clarity.

- **Overreliance on Carbohydrates:** When garri becomes the dominant part of a person’s diet, it may lead to blood sugar spikes, fatigue, and eventual malnutrition.

For vulnerable populations—such as children, pregnant women, or the elderly—a diet based heavily on garri can undermine long-term health goals.

Cultural Significance vs. Modern Diets

Garri has long been stigmatized as the “poor man’s food,” a view that overlooks its culinary versatility and economic importance. Nutrition experts are now advocating for a reframing of traditional foods like garri as valuable parts of Nigeria’s heritage and sustainable food security solutions.

“Garri is not the enemy. It’s how we prepare and combine it that matters,” says Dr Sulaiman.

By pairing garri with beans, vegetables, eggs, fish, or avocado, households can transform a humble bowl into a balanced, nutrient-dense

meal.

Best Practices for Safe Consumption

To maximise benefits and minimise health risks, consider the following:

- Buy from trusted sources with a reputation for clean and proper processing.

- Avoid relying solely on garri for your carbohydrate intake.

- Pair with protein and vitamin-rich sides (beans, spinach, mackerel).

- Consume in moderation, particularly if pregnant or managing a health condition.

- Seek fortified garri when possible, especially for children.

Final Word: A Staple Worth Celebrating—With Caution

Garri remains a deeply rooted element of West African diets, offering affordability, energy, and cultural continuity. It’s neither a superfood nor a danger on its own—it’s how we process, pair, and portion it that determines its impact on health.

With balanced meals, proper preparation, and informed consumption, garri can continue to nourish families across Nigeria for generations to come—without compromising health.

Children's Day: NACA calls for HIV-free generation for Nigerian teens

By Helen Okechukwu

National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA) has urged healthcare providers, caregivers, faith-based organizations, community members, and parents to work closely together to eliminate pediatric HIV and ensure an HIV-free generation for Nigerian children as the world marks Children's Day

As the call for a united national effort to eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV was made via a statement issued, the government organisation stressed that every Nigerian child deserves a healthy start in life.

Director-General of NACA, Dr. Temitope Ilori, acknowledged the notable progress Nigeria has made in responding to HIV but expressed deep concern over the continued birth of thousands of children with the virus each year.

She expressed optimism about the possibility of a preventable outcome and emphasised that the Children's Day celebration should remind Nigerians of the nation's duty to protect its future.

Central to this responsibility, according to her, is ensuring that every pregnant woman is tested early for HIV, and if found positive, is promptly placed on treatment and supported throughout pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding.

While applauding the recent expansion of Prevention of Mother-To-Child Transmission (PMTCT) services, Dr. Ilori noted that significant gaps remain.

She highlighted that stigma and discrimination still create barriers that



discourage many women from seeking care.

Niger unveils 20 PHCs, pledges 40 more health facilities

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

About 20 newly built and upgraded Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs) of Level Two have been commissioned across 16 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Niger State.

For quality and easy access to health facilities in the state, Governor Umaru Bago, at the commissioning ceremony held in Minna, Niger State, vowed to construct an additional 40 health facilities in the coming months.

Describing the project as a significant milestone initiated by his administration, Governor Bago said this initiative aims to transform the health sector and ensure rural areas, along with underserved communities, have access to quality healthcare.

According to the governor, the newly commissioned projects are part of the



first phase plan, targeting the establishment of 100 Level Two PHCs within the state.

Governor Bago said the new healthcare centres are funded by the state's Healthcare Development Fund.

To promote high standards, he announced a monthly N5 million award for centres with excellent maintenance and service.

National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) Executive Director, Muyi Aina, praised the initiative as a national model, noting it sets a new benchmark for Level Two primary healthcare.

Community and Social Development Agency (CSDA) General Manager, Aisha Abdulkadir, lauded the collaboration behind the project and revealed that the family of late Senator Idris Kuta will sponsor 100 vulnerable residents under the NiCARE scheme.

Also, the Commissioner of Health, Ibrahim Dangana, urged communities to take ownership of the centres.

Ondo, FG partner to reduce maternal, neonatal mortality by 30% in 2027

By Helen Okechukwu



In a bold move to tackle maternal and neonatal mortality, the Ondo State Government in collaboration with the Federal Government (FG) has launched a five-day co-creation workshop aimed at reducing maternal and newborn deaths by 30% by the year 2027.

The workshop, themed “Maternal and Newborn Mortality Reduction Innovation and Initiative (MAMMI),” brought together stakeholders in the health sector to develop a strategic template for the effective execution of interventions targeted at reducing mortality rates.

The initiative focuses on uncovering local barriers to maternal and neonatal survival through deep-dive community visits across priority Local Government Areas (LGAs).

Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa, represented by his Special Adviser on Health, Prof. Michael Odimayo, reaffirmed the state’s commitment to health sector reforms.

He noted that ongoing efforts such as the upgrading of 102 Primary Healthcare

Centres (PHC) are part of a broader strategy to improve access and quality of healthcare services across the state.

“We recognize that improving health outcomes requires deliberate and sustained investment, not only in infrastructure but also in the welfare and well-being of our health workforce and wider population,” the governor said.

Governor Aiyedatiwa commended the Federal Government for initiating MAMMI and emphasized that Ondo State’s active participation reflects its dedication to safeguarding the lives of women and children in every community.

Also speaking, Dr. Amina Muhammed, Director of the Child Health Division at the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, highlighted the urgency of the initiative.

She revealed that Nigeria ranks third globally in the number of preterm births, with an estimated 773,600 cases annually and over 274,000 related deaths recorded in 2022.

Dr. Muhammed stated that preterm birth complications are responsible for one in

three under-five deaths in Nigeria, also noted that the MAMMI programme is a strategic response to these alarming statistics.

She noted that 33 states and 171 LGAs have been identified as high-burden areas for maternal and newborn mortality in Nigeria, adding that the workshop marks the beginning of MAMMI’s implementation in Ondo State.

Permanent Secretary of the Ondo State Ministry of Health, Dr. Adeniran Ikuomola, recalled the state’s previous successes with the Abiye and Agbebiye programmes, which earned international recognition.

Ikuomola disclosed that the MAMMI intervention would initially be implemented in five LGAs: Ese-Odo, Akure South, Ifedore, Ondo West, and Owo.

Meanwhile, the Adapogun of Ipogun, Oba Raphael Oluwadare Ojo, appealed to the Federal Government to expand the programme to cover all LGAs in Ondo State, to ensure the total elimination of maternal and neonatal mortality across the state.

At trial former Combs employee alleges kidnapping, death threats

By New Daily Prime

A former assistant of Sean Combs testified on Tuesday that the music mogul often threatened and once kidnapped her in a jealous rage related to his ex-girlfriend Casandra Ventura.

The assistant, Capricorn Clark, was speaking to jurors on the stand in the federal trial of the once-famed rapper, producer and entrepreneur widely known as “Diddy,” who faces racketeering and sex trafficking charges that could put him in prison for life.

Clark said he arrived at her door early one morning in December 2011, having learned that Ventura was seeing the rapper Kid Cudi.

Combs had a gun and demanded Clark get dressed and come with him.

“We’re going to kill” Kid Cudi — whose real name is Scott Mescudi — she recalled Combs saying, referring to the rapper who testified last week in the high-profile criminal proceedings in Manhattan.

The alleged incident is core to government prosecutors’ case that Combs, once one of the music industry’s most powerful figures, was the kingpin of a criminal conspiracy ring that wielded its power including with arson, kidnapping and bribery.

Clark’s version of events corroborated accounts from Mescudi and Ventura.

Shortly after the chaotic series of events in December, in January 2012 Mescudi testified that his car was set aflame — an act Ventura said Combs had threatened.

— Threats, lie-detector test —

Clark is the highest-profile employee thus far to testify in the trial against her former boss.



She described rising through the ranks in Combs’s business empire, working as his personal assistant before assuming top roles at his fashion brand, Sean John.

Clark repeatedly shed tears on the stand, describing having herself received death threats from Combs, including when he insisted she help him evade police investigation over the incident connected to Mescudi.

She described a moment early in her career when she says she underwent a harrowing five-day long lie detector test after Combs suspected she had stolen diamond jewelry.

The defense sought to poke holes in her chronology of events as well as her credibility as an employee who continued to go back to work for Combs despite having experienced what she described as disturbing labor abuse.

Clark said that aside from one year when she worked at Jive Records before returning to work for Combs, she found it impossible to find employment elsewhere.

She said he made clear “that I would never work again,” Clark said. “That he would make me kill myself.”

Clark said her work for Combs was complicated: at times it was an inspiring “form of business school,” but was undergirded by threats and fear.

She described witnessing Combs beat and kick Ventura amid the Mescudi love triangle.

“Each kick she would crouch more and more into the fetal position,” Clark said.

Earlier in the trial, Ventura gave hours of testimony about incidents of alleged abuse. She alleged Combs flew into a violent rage after he learned of her romance with Mescudi, lunging at her with a wine corkscrew.

He allegedly threatened to make public sexually explicit footage of her, after she says he coerced her into filmed “freak-off” sex marathons with male prostitutes for years.

Jurors were shown a message from Ventura to Clark in which the former described that threat.

I miss the old music, most artistes no longer mean what they're saying in their songs

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian dancehall star Inetimi Odon, aka Timaya, shared the story of his rise—from the streets of Port Harcourt to becoming one of Africa's most recognisable music stars.

Timaya revealed it all in a fresh interview with Afrobeats Intelligence—throwing light on his journey from the trenches of Port Harcourt to stardom, while calling out the state of today's music scene. Nigerian home decor ideas

With a mix of humour and honesty, the singer, who began his solo career in 2005, takes a hard look at today's music scene, drawing clear lines between the industry now and the one he came up in.

Timaya expressed nostalgia for the authenticity of older music, saying today's songs often feel disconnected and commercially driven, with many artists relying on songwriters who prioritise trends over true expression.

"It's an entirely different era. I miss the old music, not even just from my own time. I'm talking about songs like Alex Zitto's Tickle Me- Put on Your Dancing Shoes—you know, those kinds of melodies. They came from the heart.

"These days, I don't believe most artistes really mean what they're saying in their songs. It just doesn't connect. There's a misinterpretation somewhere—probably because so many artistes now rely on songwriters. And these songwriters aren't necessarily giving you music that fits you; they're giving you what they think will sell. Then you're expected to 'body' the song and carry it like it's yours."

The 44-year-old singer reminisced about the discipline that defined old-school music-making.

"At that time, you had to get it right. It wasn't like now, where you can afford to do take after take. Once you entered the studio, you needed to be sure of what you



were doing because you were paying by the hour."

"Back in the day, studio time was precious. You had to rehearse, you had to get your lyrics right before stepping into the booth. Now, anyone can record from the comfort of their home. Your parents can buy you studio equipment and speakers, and you could go viral on TikTok the next day," the singer said.

Timaya's hustle started with grit, belief, and pure street wisdom. Recalling how he sold his first album, 'True Story,' for ₦500,000 after getting priced as low as ₦45,000 by other marketers, he said, "Some told me 45K, others said 25K. When one finally offered me 500K, everyone in the bus thought I was lying."

He revealed that he took the money and, with strategic savvy, pirated his own album to ensure wide circulation.

"Because this guy doesn't have the strength to push. But these other guys have the strength to push. So I paid ₦11,000 to pirate it myself. That was how the album blew."

Following that grassroots success, his second album, 'Gift and Grace,' released in 2008, fetched him an advance of ₦24 million from a new marketer.

"I told him I wanted 25. He said 18. We argued. He eventually paid 24 million. The next morning, he sent 11 million first. I had already finished the album.

"The same day, I went to the studio and recorded 'I don blow, Timaya has blown from Port Harcourt, I break into their Lagos.' That's how 'Timaya don blow' was born."

Promoting One Song Now Costs \$100K

Despite his nostalgia, Timaya says he has recognised the industry's new realities. In comparison, his old-school marketing involved grassroots strategies and hustle.

"To promote one song today, you need nothing less than \$100,000," he revealed. And you're not even certain it will blow. It's crazy.

"At the time, just to promote in Encomium magazine, you needed 750K for two pages. But if I cause chaos and drop a song, I'd get 23 pages for free."

Meanwhile, on 25 October 2024, Timaya expressed concern over the rising expenses involved in producing and promoting music videos, which he said now surpass ₦100 million.

Texas moves to enforce age checks on Apple, Google app stores

By **Fatimah Idera**



A bill requiring Apple and Alphabet's Google to verify the age of users of their app stores could become law in Texas.

The second-most-populous state in the U.S. is at the centre of a debate over regulating smartphone use among children and teenagers.

Senate Bill 2420 would require app store owners to verify user ages and obtain parental consent for users under 18 to download apps or make in-app purchases. Utah passed a similar law earlier this year, and U.S. lawmakers have introduced a federal bill.

The Texas bill awaits Governor Greg Abbott's signature after receiving supermajority approval from both houses of the Texas legislature.

Another bill, which hasn't passed yet, would restrict social media apps to users over 18. Age limits and parental consent

for social media apps have wide consensus in America, with 81% of Americans supporting parental consent for children to create social media accounts and 71% supporting age verification before using social media, according to a 2023 Pew Research poll.

The mental health impact of social media on children has become a growing global concern. Dozens of U.S. states are suing Meta platforms and the U.S. Surgeon General has issued an advisory calling for safeguards for children.

Recall, Australia banned social media for children under 16, and countries like Norway are considering new rules.

Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg believes parents shouldn't have to upload IDs or proof of parenthood for every app their children use, suggesting app stores themselves should handle age verification. Child online safety groups support app store age verification, saying it's the only way to give parents effective

control over children's technology use.

"The problem is that self-regulation in the digital marketplace has failed, where app stores have prioritised profit over safety and rights of children and families," says Casey Stefanski, executive director of the Digital Childhood Alliance.

Apple, Google oppose bill

Apple and Google oppose the bill, citing concerns over sharing age data with all apps, even uncontroversial ones. "If enacted, app marketplaces will be required to collect and keep sensitive personal identifying information for every Texan who wants to download an app," Apple said.

Meanwhile, both companies propose sharing age range data only with apps that require it. "We see a role for legislation here," Kareem Ghanem from Google said, emphasising the need for proper implementation and accountability.

Texas moves to enforce age checks on Apple, Google app stores

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Macron denies rift with wife after viral video sparks online frenzy

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

French President Emmanuel Macron has dismissed rumors of a spat with his wife, Brigitte Macron, after a video showing what appeared to be a playful shove went viral and was seized upon by Russian state media and far-right commentators.

The video, captured by an Associated Press cameraman, shows Macron stepping into view at the doorway of a plane during the presidential couple's arrival in Hanoi. As he moves forward, a hand—reportedly Brigitte's, briefly pushes his face, causing him to step back momentarily before smiling and waving. Her body is not visible in the frame.

Though Macron insisted the gesture was a joke, saying they were “joking around, as we do quite often,” the footage quickly became fodder for online conspiracies. Russia's foreign ministry spokesperson, Maria Zakharova, mocked the moment on Telegram, calling it a “right hook” and suggesting Brigitte had “miscalculated her strength” or was “adjusting his collar and hit his face instead.”

“Here's a hint,” she added sarcastically, “maybe it was the ‘hand of the Kremlin’.”

Russian outlet RT (Russia Today) and affiliated social media channels repeatedly aired the clip, amplifying speculation about alleged tensions between the Macrons. Far-right French accounts joined the chorus, further fueling the controversy.



Élysée Palace officials pushed back firmly. One called the moment “a scene of closeness” and another explained that the couple were simply “larking around” before the start of a formal state visit. “Macron loves playing jokes on his wife before official occasions, and she always responds like this,” the official said. “It wasn't even a slap.”

Macron addressed the situation directly, brushing off the uproar. “People have thought I shared a bag of cocaine, tussled with the Turkish president, and now that I'm having a domestic dispute with my wife... None of this is true. Everyone needs to calm down,” he said.

Earlier this month, Zakharova and American conspiracy theorist Alex Jones had falsely accused Macron, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer of using drugs on a train to Kyiv, based on footage of a crumpled tissue.

Macron linked the latest controversy to a coordinated effort between Russian propagandists and French extremist groups. “These internet accounts are familiar,” he said, noting that critics had jokingly dubbed his diplomacy style “that of a battered husband.”

Despite the distraction, the visit to Vietnam continued with significant diplomatic and economic developments. France and Vietnam signed deals worth €9 billion, including the purchase of 20 Airbus aircraft and cooperation on nuclear energy, defense, maritime transport, satellites, and vaccine production.

This marks the first formal visit by a French presidential couple to Vietnam in nearly a decade, reinforcing diplomatic and economic ties between the former colonial power and its Southeast Asian partner.

White House doubts Pentagon leak probe after false wiretap claim

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

The White House has distanced itself from a Pentagon leak investigation led by Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, after learning the probe was based on dubious claims, including an alleged illegal NSA wiretap. The investigation led to the abrupt firing of three top aides but has since become mired in controversy and confusion.

According to multiple sources familiar with the matter, Hegseth's personal attorney, Tim Parlatore, allegedly told Trump advisers that senior adviser Dan Caldwell had been exposed by a warrantless wiretap, an act that would have been unconstitutional and more explosive than the original leak itself. Alarmed, White House aides sought clarification, only for Parlatore to later deny ever making such a claim, saying he merely passed along information from Pentagon sources.

The leak in question involved a top secret document outlining military strategies for reclaiming the Panama Canal. Caldwell, along with Hegseth's deputy chief of staff Darin Selnick and the deputy defense secretary's chief of staff Colin Carroll, were fired last month after being linked to the leak. Caldwell has denied any wrongdoing.

The White House's confidence in the investigation began to unravel after aides questioned the validity of the wiretap claim and raised concerns about Parlatore's credibility, particularly given his past ties to Joe



Kasper, Hegseth's first chief of staff. Some Trump advisers now believe the investigation may have been politically motivated, targeting aides involved in prior office conflicts.

Further complicating the matter, rumours emerged that the Air Force Office of Special Investigations initially focused its efforts on other mid-level personnel, only turning its attention to Hegseth's aides after their termination. This timeline raised doubts about the integrity and focus of the probe.

Pentagon mum\

Although the Pentagon has not provided a comment, the investigation has since been transferred to Deputy Defence Secretary Stephen Feinberg's office. Despite this, Parlatore, a Navy Reserve officer commissioned by Hegseth, retains influence over the process and

remains a close advisor.

The fallout leaves Hegseth without a chief or deputy chief of staff as he prepares for a Senate hearing next month. His office, which steers the direction of a nearly \$1 trillion military budget, has been left in disarray. An effort to permanently install junior military aide Ricky Buria as chief of staff was blocked by the White House due to concerns over his experience and involvement in the internal drama.

Meanwhile, the three ousted aides continue to assert their innocence, and the investigation has yet to produce conclusive evidence or prompt an FBI referral. The White House has publicly backed Hegseth for now, with a spokesperson stating President Trump remains confident in the secretary's commitment to military excellence.

Equities fluctuated amid uncertainty over Trump's tariffs plans

By **Fatimah Idera**

Equities meandered Tuesday as investors awaited the latest developments on Donald Trump's trade war, while the yen rallied after the head of Japan's central bank flagged more interest rate hikes if the economy improved.

With Wall Street closed for a holiday, there were few major catalysts to drive business, though investors remain on their toes after the US president's threat of 50 per cent tariffs on European Union goods and subsequent delay reviving volatility.

Although, analysts said the uncertainty caused by Trump's capricious policy announcements, along with his plans to extend tax cuts, was hurting confidence in the US economy and pushing Treasury yields higher.

Stephen Innes at SPI Asset Management said, "Markets are once again dancing on hot coals, front-running White House mood swings while dodging macro landmines,"

"With yields dangling like anvils and tariff threats swinging like wrecking balls, the only thing certain is that the music won't stop until it does. Traders, keep your running shoes on."

According to a report by channels, Europe bounced on the news of the tariff delay, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's pledge to move swiftly on a trade deal with the White House.

But Asia swung between gains and losses. Hong Kong, Sydney, Singapore, Jakarta, Manila and Wellington rose, while Tokyo, Shanghai, Seoul and Taipei were slightly lower.



The yen rose against the dollar after BoJ boss Kazuo Ueda said he intended to keep raising borrowing costs if the economy performs as expected. He told a conference in Tokyo that "we will adjust the degree of monetary easing as needed". His remarks came after officials earlier this month cut their economic growth forecasts in light of Trump's tariffs blitz.

"In light of growing uncertainties, particularly those related to trade policy, we have recently revised down our economic and inflation outlook," Ueda said, but added that he still expected price rises to temper and fall back to the bank's two per cent target. The yen strengthened to 142.12 per dollar, with analysts saying the greenback is facing increasing pressure because of worries over US policy.

"In a way, all roads have led to a weaker dollar. Higher perceived US deficits have raised concerns about increased future

Treasury issuance, pushing up term premium and seeing people migrate away from the dollar," said Pepperstone's Chris Weston.

"Concerns of weaker US growth in the second half of 2025 see dollar sellers. Tariff risk resurfaces, the dollar trades lower, and when the tariff risk and the implementation date are subsequently pushed back, again we see the dollar lower."

Market Updates:

- S&P 500: 5,888.40, up 12.70, 0.22%
- Nasdaq: 21,262.60, up 39.70, 0.19%
- Dollar/Yen: 142.12 yen, down from 142.81 yen
- Euro/Dollar: \$1.1405, up from \$1.1382
- Pound/Dollar: \$1.3585, up from \$1.3563
- West Texas Intermediate: \$61.36 per barrel, down 0.3%
- Brent North Sea Crude: \$64.60 per barrel, down 0.2%

Lamine Yamal signs new Barcelona contract to 2031

By New Daily Prime



FC Barcelona's wonderkid Lamine Yamal signed a new contract until 2031 with the Catalan giants on Tuesday after a stellar season.

The 17-year-old winger is already one of the club's key players and helped them land a domestic treble of La Liga, the Copa del Rey and the Spanish Super Cup.

"Barcelona and Lamine Yamal have reached a deal to extend his contract to June 30, 2031," said the Catalan club in a statement.

"Lamine Yamal's renewal is a demonstration of the solidity of Barca's project. His emergence on to the world football scene is like few others, and it began with his debut on April 29, 2023, still at the age of 15."

Spanish media reported the new deal makes him one of Barcelona's best paid players.

After triumphing at Euro 2024 with Spain last summer, Yamal scored 18 goals and

provided 25 assists in 55 matches across all competitions during a sensational campaign.

Operating on the right flank and a prodigious dribbler, Yamal's skill and speed contributed greatly to Barca netting 102 league goals this season as they reclaimed the crown from rivals Real Madrid.

Yamal, who came through the club's famed La Masia youth academy and is often compared to all-time Barcelona great Lionel Messi, made his debut in 2023 under Xavi Hernandez at just 15.

By the end of the 2023-24 campaign he had emerged as the team's main attacking weapon, the bright spot in a poor campaign where Barca finished empty-handed.

Following his exploits at the Euros, Yamal fitted Flick's attacking style to perfection and adding more consistency, showed he has become one of the world's best players.

Yamal put in two brilliant Champions League semi-final performances against Inter Milan but his team were edged 7-6 on aggregate and must wait to end their European drought.

"I will keep my promise and I will bring (the Champions League trophy) to Barcelona, we will not stop until we get it," pledged Yamal after the game.

Despite his youth the winger has already played over 100 times for Barcelona.

Yamal, who turns 18 in July, follows team-mate Raphinha and coach Flick in signing contract extensions in the last few days.

Spanish media report his contract includes various bonuses for different achievements, including winning the Ballon d'Or, as well as a significant pay rise.

Yamal is a candidate to win the trophy for the world's best player this year.