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I'm still in APC, going nowhere - El-Rufai Pg 12



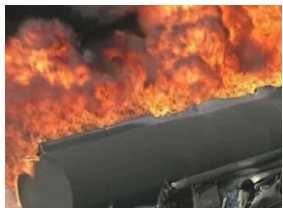
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Tinubu pledges affordable energy access for Nigerians by 2030 at Tanzania summit

By Friday Omosola

President Bola Tinubu has concluded his official visit to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where he participated in the Mission 300 Africa Energy Summit alongside other African leaders.

The summit, organised by the Tanzanian government in collaboration with the African Union, the African Development Bank (AfDB), and the World Bank, focused on addressing Africa's energy challenges and achieving electricity access for 300 million people by 2030.

The highlight of the two-day event was the adoption of the Dar es Salaam Declaration, which outlines strategies for improving energy access across the continent.

Leaders from 12 countries, including Nigeria, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, and Zambia, signed the Declaration, committing to provide electricity to their unelectrified populations through National Energy Compacts tailored to their specific needs.

In a speech delivered by Nigeria's Minister of Power, Adebayo Adedun, President Tinubu emphasised the importance of collective action to bridge Africa's energy gap.

He reiterated Nigeria's commitment to delivering reliable, affordable, and sustainable electricity to its citizens by 2030.

"This is an ambitious goal, but together we can achieve it," President Tinubu said. "Let us work to create a future where every African can access reliable and affordable energy, industries thrive, economies grow, and our people prosper."

President Tinubu highlighted significant progress in Nigeria's energy sector, attributing the achievements to partnerships with international



organizations.

He acknowledged AfDB's \$1.1 billion investment aimed at providing electricity to 5 million Nigerians by 2026, as well as a \$200 million investment under the Nigeria Electrification Project, set to benefit 500,000 people by 2025.

The President also announced future initiatives, including AfDB's planned \$700 million investment in Nigeria's Desert to Power programme and \$500 million for a Grid Battery Energy Storage System, expected to provide electricity to an additional 2 million people.

Furthermore, the World Bank's \$750 million project will expand distributed energy access, powering 16.2 million Nigerians through mini-grids and standalone solar systems.

Tinubu commended AfDB President Akinwunmi Adesina and World Bank President Ajay Banga for their transformative leadership.

He also acknowledged the support of the UN Sustainable Energy for All, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Global Energy Alliance for Development in addressing Africa's energy challenges.

The President detailed Nigeria's ongoing investments in renewable energy, particularly solar power, and the federal government's initiative to establish electric vehicle (EV) charging

infrastructure.

The first 100 electric buses have already arrived in the country, representing a milestone in the nation's shift toward cleaner energy solutions.

Tinubu noted that Nigeria attracted over \$6 billion in energy investments in 2024 and aims to build on this success in 2025.

He reaffirmed the government's commitment to incentivizing private sector investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Nigeria presented its National Energy Compact at the summit, outlining targets and reforms to expand power generation, improve transmission and distribution infrastructure, and embrace renewable energy solutions.

The plan requires \$23.2 billion in investments for last-mile electrification, with contributions from both public and private sectors.

The International Finance Corporation (IFC) announced \$70 million in private sector funding for five Nigerian Renewable Electricity Service Companies under the Nigeria Distributed Access Through Renewable Energy Scale-Up (DARES) programme.

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

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PRODUCT COLOUR

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SIZE	TOTAL RATE
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10X6	261,585.50
10X5	255,238.00
10X4	206,890.50
10X3	179,608.00
9X6	254,977.00
9X5	225,738.00
9X4	193,500.00
9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
5X3	66,875.00
5X2	42,916.50
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3X3	28,000.00
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EARPIECE INSIDE PAGE(1.5X2)	117,875.00
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PHOTO NEWS (4X4)	53,333.30	4,250.00	57,583.30
PRESS RELEASE (4X4)	30,000.00	2,250.00	32,250.00
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Tinubu returns to Abuja from Tanzania energy summit

By Dave Oludare Oso

President Bola Tinubu has returned to Abuja from Tanzania where he participated in the Africa Heads of State Energy Summit in Dar es Salaam, the Tanzanian capital city.

Tinubu left Nigeria for the East African country on Sunday for the two-day summit.

He arrived Nigeria aboard the presidential aircraft, which touched down at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport at approximately 7:40 PM.

The president was received by top government officials including the Minister of State for Defence, Bello Matawalle; National Security Adviser, Nuhu Ribadu; Chief of Staff to the President, Femi Gbajabamila among others.

The two-day summit is being hosted by the government of Tanzania, the African Union, the African Development Bank Group and the World Bank Group.



In Dar es Salaam, Tinubu delivered a national statement reaffirming Nigeria's commitment to achieving universal access to energy and its leadership role in Africa's energy sector.

On the second day of the summit, he joined other heads of state to endorse the Dar es Salaam Energy Declaration, outlining a unified roadmap for Africa's progress towards the Mission 300 objectives.

The President also delivered a

national statement reaffirming Nigeria's commitment to achieving universal access to energy and its leadership role in Africa's energy sector.

He was accompanied on the trip by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu; Minister of Power, Adebayo Adelabu; the Special Adviser to the President on Energy, Olu Verheijen and other senior government officials.

FG generates N2.4bn from marriage contracts in 2024

By Friday Omosola

The Federal Government (FG), through its marriage registry, generated N2.4 billion from marriage contracts in 2024.

The Minister of Interior, Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo said this during a media parley with heads of agencies under the ministry in Abuja on Tuesday.

The minister also highlighted plans to bolster border security to reduce the influx of irregular migrants.

He revealed that revenue from expatriate quota applications hit over



N3.2 billion in 2024, representing a 150 per cent increase in total revenue.

Additionally, the minister noted that in 2023, the ministry surpassed its projected revenue from marriage contracts, collecting over ₦892 million as of October 31, 2023.

Tunji-Ojo further emphasised the significant role expatriate quotas play in the ministry's revenue.

In 2023 alone, he said the ministry generated over M1 billion from expatriate quota permits, exceeding its ₦600 million target by more than N600 million.

'FG committed to strengthening democracy, good governance – Shettima

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Vice-President Kashim Shettima, while addressing the national conference on strengthening democracy in Nigeria, emphasized the current administration's dedication to addressing key challenges in the nation.

He assured Nigerians that President Bola Tinubu's administration would continue to uphold democratic values, including addressing economic weaknesses, securing communities, tackling corruption, and reinforcing the independence of the judiciary.

The conference, themed "Strengthening Nigeria's Democracy: Pathways to Good Governance and Political Integrity," was organized by the African Centre for Leadership, Strategy and Development, and was aimed at discussing how to improve the democratic process in Nigeria.

Shettima, represented by his Special Adviser on Political Issues, Hakeem Baba-Ahmed, acknowledged the imperfections of democracy but reiterated its superiority over other forms of government.

He stated, "We are acutely aware of many concerns over our direction and goals, particularly given the difficulties some of our policies inevitably generate. We are focused on correcting defects in our economy and approaches to securing the citizens."

He also pointed out that the transition from a challenging past to a hopeful future would come at a price, but the government is committed to ensuring



that the nation continues on a path of progress.

Shettima emphasised the importance of listening to the people, adjusting where necessary, and remaining transparent in governance. "Nigeria shall rise again," he said, "and our young will be active champions of a democratic system."

The Vice President further highlighted the administration's responsibility to improve democratic institutions and governance structures.

He underscored the need for leaders to prioritize transparency, the rule of law, and the welfare and security of citizens, while ensuring that democracy goes beyond just elections.

Echoing similar sentiments, Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, the former Vice President of Ghana, spoke at the event, stressing that despite democracy's flaws, it remains the best system of governance for protecting individual rights and liberties.

He also noted that elections should

never be viewed as "do or die" affairs, and emphasised the importance of institutions capable of safeguarding rights and holding power to account.

The Executive Director of the African Centre for Leadership, Strategy & Development, Dr. Otiye Igbuzor, also highlighted the purpose of the conference, which was to reignite hope in the democratic process and lay out a roadmap toward a more resilient and inclusive democracy.

He acknowledged the flaws in Nigeria's democratic journey, including electoral malpractices and weakened governance structures, but emphasized the need for integrity and accountability to rebuild public trust.

Overall, the conference served as a platform to reflect on Nigeria's democratic progress and chart a way forward to strengthen the nation's democratic practices, ensuring that they serve all citizens effectively.

Ministry of interior announces N6bn revenue for 2024

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Ministry of Interior has reported a significant revenue boost for 2024, generating ₦6 billion, a 50% increase compared to the previous year.

The announcement was made by the Minister of Interior, Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo, during a media briefing in Abuja on Tuesday.

The impressive revenue was generated from various activities, including ₦3.2 billion from expatriate quota applications, ₦2.4 billion from marriage registrations, ₦392 million from citizenship applications, and ₦12 million from places of worship.

Tunji-Ojo clarified that the funds collected from expatriate quotas stem from application fees, not approvals, addressing concerns over the possible influx of foreign nationals into the country.

“This is an application revenue as a product of requisition, not necessarily approval,” he explained.

The minister attributed the revenue increase to the ministry’s ongoing optimisation efforts and expressed confidence that the figure would be surpassed in 2025, with a focus on continuing to enhance efficiency.

“We have our targets for 2025, and with the optimisation of our solutions, we are certain that we will perform even better,” Tunji-Ojo remarked.

Tunji-Ojo also highlighted the role of reforms and technology in streamlining the ministry’s operations, emphasising that the ministry is committed to improving service delivery across its various departments.

He commended the work of key agencies, including the Nigerian Correctional Service (NCoS), Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), Federal Fire Service (FFS), and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), for their contributions to the revenue growth.



Looking ahead, the minister pointed out advancements in citizenship verification and business permit processes.

The ministry has implemented a new system for vetting foreign nationals applying for Nigerian citizenship, which integrates advanced technology and close collaboration with security agencies, ensuring a thorough process while reducing bureaucratic delays.

Additionally, the automated issuance of business permits and expatriate quotas has led to faster processing times and improved efficiency.

“Nigeria is now open for business,” Tunji-Ojo declared, underscoring the government’s commitment to fostering a business-friendly environment.

In terms of personnel matters, the Ministry of Interior has made significant strides in clearing promotion backlogs. In 2023, 32,640 officers were promoted, completing the promotion cycle within the same calendar year for the first time since 1986.

In 2024, a further 20,851 officers were promoted, eliminating a longstanding backlog. As of January 2025, there were no more promotion backlogs, signalling a shift towards timely and equitable personnel management.

The minister also addressed disciplinary

issues within the ministry, stating that 118 cases of indiscipline across the NCoS, FFS, and NSCDC were resolved in 2024.

He reaffirmed the ministry’s zero-tolerance policy for unethical behaviour, stressing that officers must adhere to high standards of conduct.

“This is about service. It’s about serving the people. It’s about being responsible and responsive to the people,” Tunji-Ojo stated.

The ministry has also made progress in modernising its operations, particularly within the NSCDC.

Significant investments have been made in operational vehicles, armed convoys, and cutting-edge technology to tackle issues such as oil theft.

Additionally, the ministry has taken a firm stance against non-compliant private security firms, with 450 cases prosecuted for failing to meet regulatory standards.

In the Federal Fire Service, upgrades to training facilities have positioned its academy as one of the leading institutions in Africa.

Efforts are also underway to amend the Fire Service Act of 1966, with plans to transform the agency into both a regulator and operator capable of meeting modern challenges.

Tunji-Ojo concluded by emphasising that these reforms are part of a broader effort to modernise the Ministry of Interior and ensure its agencies are better equipped to serve the evolving needs of Nigerians in the 21st century.

2027: Count me out of any power-grabbing coalition – Peter Obi

By Dave Oludare Oso

The presidential candidate of the Labour Party in the 2023 general elections, Peter Obi has said that he is not interested in any coalition with the sole aim of grabbing power from the ruling All Progressives Congress in the 2027 general elections.

The former Anambra State governor spoke when fielding questions from journalists at the sidelines of a two-day National Conference on "Strengthening Democracy in Nigeria" in Abuja on Monday.

The businessman-cum politician declared that his focus remains on addressing critical national issues rather than engaging in political power struggles.

His statement reads, "Mr. Chairman, one of the most important determinants of a flourishing democracy is the quality of institutions; institutions capable of guaranteeing rights, including property rights, and checking wanton abuse of power.

"These institutions include the Independent Election Management bodies, the Judiciary, the Ombudsman, the Police, other law enforcement agencies, and many others...

"Celebrated economists like Dani Rodrick, Daron Acemolgu, and others, have come to a firm conclusion that, when it comes to the determinants of growth, the quality of institutions towers above everything else.

"Unfortunately, whilst the culture of peacefully choosing leaders is being entrenched, these institutions are becoming weak and endangered."

The former presidential candidate equally expressed concern over growing poverty in the West African sub-region and by extension, the continent as a threat to democracy as he noted that the electorate are beginning to lose faith in



representative government.

He said: "Mr. Chairman, one of the biggest threats to democracy today is what I call the Next Meal. Before I make my point, I need to reecho the words of one of Africa's greatest sons, the distinguished Nelson Mandela, to wit, 'As long as poverty, injustice, and gross inequality exist in our world, none of us can truly rest.'

"Ladies and gentlemen, democracy must be a means to an end. The best democracy is the one that delivers public goods and services effectively and efficiently and creates opportunities for citizens whilst making conscious efforts to leave no one behind.

"For Sub-Saharan Africa, the data suggests that we do not have an option to do nothing. In 2024, the World Bank estimated that two-thirds of the world's population in extreme poverty live in Sub-Saharan Africa.

"Back home, the World Bank's 2024 review reveals that more than half of Nigerians live in multidimensional poverty.

"For Nigeria, and indeed much of Sub-Saharan Africa, our work is cut out for us. We need to take decisive actions to demonstrate that to govern is to advance the interest and welfare of the people.

"We need to reconfigure our economic systems, processes, and institutions in a manner that prioritizes the next meal for majority of our people. For far too long,

the focus has been on ticking the boxes on democratic institutions much to the neglect of what those institutions have been able to produce for the ordinary citizen.

"The person who is unable to afford the next 'Eba' meal is unlikely to appreciate any data on democratic progress.

"Ladies and gentlemen, there is growing apprehension among the citizenry about the relevance and usefulness of government institutions, with many people losing faith in these institutions.

"This is concerning and portends a bleak future for democratic sustenance if we do not rise to the occasion, and quickly too.

"For our democracy to remain relevant and sustainable, actors need to ensure that citizens have confidence in the democratic system to address their needs and concerns, particularly basic needs, which I call the next meal principle."

Professor Jibrin Ibrahim, in his paper, "Democracy in Nigeria: Challenges, Prospects and the 2027 Elections" bemoaned the absence of ideologically based parties, leaving an indifferent and confused electorate at the mercy of political platforms which he claimed are run by drug barons and warlords.

He said, "The most serious threat is the way the party system has developed.

"The key characteristics is that parties don't have members but barons, warlords who impose their interests. The political parties that we have had lost their identities in terms of their manifestoes and what they stand for.

"The moment people can't identify what parties stand for, it becomes impossible to have democratic commitment.

"A situation where they (political parties) have no commitment to ideals of democracy."

Atiku says judiciary biggest threat to Nigeria's democracy

By Dave Oludare Oso

The presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2023 general elections, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar has stated that the judiciary is the biggest threat to Nigeria's democracy.

The former vice president spoke as a panellist at a national conference on strengthening democracy in Nigeria, organised by the African Centre for Leadership, Strategy and Development (Centre LSD), the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), the Peering Advocacy and Advancement Centre in Africa (PAACA), and the National Peace Committee (NPC) in Abuja on Monday.

Atiku was among the discussants in the paper titled "Party Politics and Political Integrity: The Role of Political Parties and Opposition in Democracy" presented by Prof. Bayo Olukoshi.

The former VP said the reforms to curb judicial recklessness have yielded no result.

He said, "That must change. The same judiciary that affirmed the primacy of parties in choosing their candidates and leaders now sanctions and indeed promotes the destruction of parties by a few, and in some cases, a single individual with a personal agenda.

"The judiciary also seems to have replaced the voters in choosing our leaders. The involvement of the judiciary in electoral disputes was intended to affirm the choice of voters.

"But the judiciary, even at the highest levels, twists and contorts to find technicalities to deny voters their choice rather than affirming the voters' choices.



"I know enough of history to understand that when democracy dies, the judiciary and its leadership do not necessarily survive intact.

"The judiciary survived the implosion or death of our First Republic democracy mainly due to the presence of strong independent justices. It wasn't for want of trying.

"However, as the corruption of every facet of our society deepened, the judiciary soon followed. And it is, perhaps, the most dangerous because there is nowhere else for the aggrieved to turn to."

He alleged that there was no one to check the excesses of the other branches of government.

"If the rot in our judiciary persists without severe consequence for the perpetrators, our parties and our democracy are unlikely to survive."

The former vice president argued that Nigeria's democracy is at a crossroads, saying, "Put simply, it is at the risk of eroding completely. And it is not caused by one single person or one single

administration.

"In fact, a number of us have been warning over the years that we may come to this pass if we lose our vigilance and fail to take corrective actions to protect and deepen our democracy."

He alleged that no other leader has been at the forefront of promoting democracy as much as he does.

He said "At the risk of sounding modest, I doubt that there are many contemporary senior political leaders who have spoken out and done more to promote democratic governance in our country than me. In addition to public statements and presentations, I brought some actions to our courts which produced landmark judicial decisions intended to uphold democratic principles and practices.

"Some of that effort was thrust upon me by circumstances of political struggles. But much of my effort was because of two things: my participation among other leaders in the struggles to ease the military out of power; and my deep and enduring belief that democracy is the best route to development and unity for our diverse country and peoples."

Sowore opts for detention as counsel, Falana insists bail conditions illegal

By Friday Omosola

Human rights activist and presidential candidate of the African Action Congress (AAC), Omoyele Sowore, has been detained by the Nigerian police in Abuja.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported that Sowore, on Monday, rejected his bail conditions, which required him to surrender his international passport and present a Level 17 civil servant as surety after his interrogation.

The Ondo-born politician further announced on his X account that a team assigned to his case had informed him of a reevaluation of the bail conditions by the DIG of FID, Dasuki Galandachi.

The updated conditions demanded the production of a Level 16 civil servant and the surrender of his international passport.

Sowore reiterated his refusal to comply with the conditions, stating that he would not participate in any arrangement that undermined his personal integrity.

As a result of his rejection of the bail terms, Sowore remains detained at the Abattoir Police Station in Guzape, Abuja—a



facility previously used by the now-defunct Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), notorious for the human rights abuses perpetrated by its officers.

Falana condemns conditions

Meanwhile, Sowore's lawyer, Femi Falana, highlighted that such bail conditions were declared illegal by the Court of Appeal in the case of *Dasuki v. Director-General, S.S.S.* [2020] 10 NWLR Pt. 1731, pp. 136–143.

In that case, Adah JCA (now JSC) ruled as follows: “Let me quickly say that of concern it is to us that as a court we must be ready and sensitive enough not to allow or do anything that will run foul of the law. The issue of involving civil servants or Public Officers in the Public Service of the Federation

and the State in bail of people accused of criminal offences has never been the practice in Nigeria or any part of the civilized world.

“It was an oversight on our part to allow it in. Our Civil and Public Service Rules do not have any room for it. Expecting a Level 16 Servant to own property worth N100,000,000, will be running counter to the Public Service Rules and by extension the war against corruption.

“It is in this respect that I will act *ex debito justitiae* to ensure that the aspect of involving serving Public Servant below the status of Level 16 Officer in either the state or Public Service of the Federation or any of its agencies be removed and I so order.”

World Bank, AfDB pledge \$40bn to tackle energy gap in Nigeria, others

By Dave Oludare Oso

The African Development Bank (AfDB), in partnership with the World Bank Group, pledged \$40 billion on Tuesday to achieve the “Mission 300” initiative.

The Mission 300 initiative, projected for 2030, is a collaborative effort between the AfDB and the World Bank to address the global energy accessibility gap, where nearly 600 million people lack electricity.

The World Bank emphasized that the mission’s success depends solely on private sector investment.

Speaking at the 2025 Africa Energy Summit in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, AfDB President, Akinwumi Adesina noted that 45.2 per cent of the financial commitment, totaling \$18.2bn, would come from AfDB.

This, he noted, will be supported by \$22bn (55.8 per cent) in funding from the Washington-based World Bank.

“Together, let us decisively use Mission 300 to provide 300 million people in Africa with electricity by 2030,” Adesina said.

Adesina explained that the lack of electricity, which stunts Africa’s Gross Domestic Product by 2 per cent to 4 per cent, would be addressed through Mission 300.

He added that significant pledges from the Islamic Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment



Bank, and the OPEC Fund have already been recorded.

He also highlighted the AfDB’s Desert to Power initiative, which aims to deliver 10,000 megawatts of solar power to 11 countries, bringing electricity to an additional 250 million people.

Through the AfDB’s New Deal on Energy for Africa, the share of the African population with access to electricity has increased from 39 per cent in 2015 to 52 per cent in 2024, giving 25 million people access to power.

However, Adesina warned that significant challenges remain, with 571 million Africans, an 83 per cent of the global population without electricity and still living in the dark.

“Mission 300 has grown into a global movement. Together, we are creating a brighter future for millions of Africans. This coalition represents

an unprecedented alliance of financial and technical resources,” Adesina said.

World Bank President Ajay Banga also linked the initiative’s success to private sector partnerships. He noted that \$30bn to \$40bn would be directed toward Mission 300 over the next six years.

“No one can do this alone. Governments cannot do it alone. Businesses cannot do it alone. Development banks cannot do it alone. But together, we can,” he said.

Banga further warned that, over the next decade, 360 million young people in Africa will enter the workforce, yet the current system will only create jobs for 150 million of them, leaving three out of every five young people unemployed.

“Forecasts are not destiny; together, we can change this reality,” Banga stated.

APC to Obasa: drop speakership bid, focus on duties

By Agency Reporter

A prominent chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Fouad Oki, has called on the impeached Speaker of the Lagos State House of Assembly, Mudashiru Obasa, to focus on his legislative responsibilities and move on from his bid to reclaim the speakership position.

Obasa, who was removed from his role last Monday, continues to assert that he remains the rightful Speaker of the Lagos Assembly. However, Oki has urged the lawmaker representing Agege Constituency to abandon his efforts to return to the leadership seat and instead dedicate himself to his duties as an active member of the legislature.

Speaking during an appearance on Channels Television's Politics yesterday on Monday, Oki emphasized



the importance of stability and progress within the legislative body. "I believe Hon. Obasa should let go of the speakership position and focus on his responsibilities as a legislator. The Assembly's work is vital for the people of Lagos, and distractions such as this must be avoided," he stated.

The APC chieftain's remarks come amidst ongoing tensions within the Lagos Assembly following Obasa's impeachment over allegations of misconduct and financial misappropriation. The former Speaker has publicly denied these allegations and has insisted that due process was not followed in his removal.

While the political atmosphere remains charged, Oki's advice underscores the need for lawmakers to prioritize legislative duties over personal ambitions, particularly at a time when the Assembly is expected to address pressing issues affecting Lagos residents. Whether Obasa heeds this advice or continues his pursuit of the speakership remains to be seen.

LASU launches innovative e-Conference app, "LASU Talkspace"

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Lagos State University (LASU) has launched a new cutting-edge application, LASU Talkspace, aimed at transforming the way the university community and the general public engage in virtual meetings, conferences, and seminars.

Developed by the university's Directorate of Information and Communication Technology (DICT), under the leadership of Prof. Toyin Enikuomihin, the platform is set to provide a secure, efficient, and reliable alternative to popular virtual meeting tools like Zoom, Teams, and Google Meet.

According to a statement from DICT, the app has received approval from the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Ibiyemi Olatunji-Bello, and is now accessible to both LASU staff and the general public. Staff members can use LASU Talkspace free



of charge with their official LASU staff email addresses.

For the wider public, a subscription model has been introduced, with fees varying based on the type of service required.

The introduction of LASU Talkspace is part of the university's ongoing

commitment to embracing technological advancements and fostering a more connected, collaborative environment within and outside its community.

The app's development comes at a time when virtual platforms are playing an increasingly vital role in academic and professional engagements.

By providing a platform tailored to the needs of its users, LASU aims to enhance the quality and security of online interactions, ensuring that both internal and external stakeholders can engage seamlessly in a variety of virtual events.

The university's proactive approach reflects its vision of leveraging technology to promote educational growth and connectivity, aligning with global trends in the digital transformation of learning and communication.

I'm still in APC, going nowhere

— El-Rufai

By Dave Oludare Oso

Immediate past governor of Kaduna State, Nasir El-Rufai, has denied rumours suggesting that he is planning to decamp from the All Progressives Congress (APC).

The former Federal Capital Territory (FCT) minister spoke at the recently concluded National Conference in Abuja on Tuesday.

Dismissing the speculation, El-Rufai emphasized his commitment to the party, explaining that his criticisms of the APC were aimed at pushing for accountability and ensuring the party remains on the right path.

"I am not leaving the APC. I don't have such plans," he said.

Asked further why he was hard on the party, he said: "No, no, no, I want them to change."

The former governor was reported on Monday to have taken a swipe at his party, APC, accusing it of abandoning its founding principles and fostering poor leadership.

El-Rufai lamented the alleged lack of internal democracy and active party structures within the APC, saying, "I no longer recognise the APC. No party organ has met in two years—no caucus, no NEC, nothing. You don't even know if it is a one-man show; it's a zero-man show."

Meanwhile, to strengthen democracy in Nigeria, the conference recommended that all opposition parties should unite and form a strong, viable coalition against the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) ahead of the 2027 general election.

The conference also submitted that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should allow the

registration of new political parties as enshrined in the constitution.

The two-day National Conference was organised by a coalition of civil society organisations which include African Centre for Leadership, Strategy & Development (Centre LSD), Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WfD), Peering Advocacy and Advancement Centre in Africa (PAACA) and National Peace Committee.



Reading the communique on behalf of the organisers, one of the conveners, Ezenwa Nwagwu, said the 25 years of democracy in Nigeria has not translated into the deepening of democratic values or institutions, instead, systemic issues such as electoral malpractice, political party inefficiencies, weak governance structures, and endemic corruption have eroded public trust in the democratic process.

Ezenwa said the conference agreed that political parties should adopt innovative strategies for raising funds to support their operations, ensuring financial independence and sustainability to minimise state capture and corrupt tendencies.

"Opposition Political parties must unite

to form a strong, viable coalition that ensures checks and balances, promotes accountability, and fosters healthy political discourse to protect the integrity of the democratic process.

"INEC should undertake a review of its internal processes to incorporate ward-level collation of results and ensure strict adherence to the electoral guidelines as mandated.

"Technology should be integrated into the electoral process to enhance accountability and transparency, aligning with global best practices and ensuring the credibility of the election outcomes.

"INEC should live up to its billing of strengthening political parties through its regulatory function to ensure internal democracy is entrenched in political parties," he said.

Ezenwa noted that the conference urged the legislature to actively fulfil its oversight, lawmaking, and representation responsibilities, as a functional legislature is essential for a thriving democracy.

"The proposals before the National Assembly seeking to reform the electoral process should be prioritised by the 10th Assembly. This should include other structural reforms of the electoral system including the "winner-takes-all" system.

"Considering the limited timeframe to the next general elections, the National Assembly should prioritise the review of the Electoral Act," he said.

The conveners said it was agreed that electoral offenders should be prosecuted under the law, as this would serve as a strong deterrent to others.

Alleged libel: Nnamdi Kanu sues police spokesperson, Adejobi for N20bn

By Dave Oludare Oso

Detained leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Nnamdi Kanu has sued the Force Public Relations Officer (FPRO) of the Nigeria Police Force, ACP Olumuyiwa Adejobi for N20 billion over allegations of libel.

Kanu's lead counsel, Aloy Ejimakor filed the suit on behalf of the IPOB leader at the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) on Tuesday.

According to the suit, Kanu accused the police image maker of defaming and portraying him as a terrorist leader following media publications of a press statement issued by Adejobi on January 25 where he described IPOB as "a proscribed terrorist organisation."

The viral publication titled, "Imo: Police neutralise six IPOB/ESN terrorists, recover arms: further read: Operatives of the Imo Police Command's tactical unit have neutralised three notorious kingpins of the Eastern Security Network (ESN), an armed wing of the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).

A copy of the suit sighted by NEW DAILY PRIME further read: "The Force Public Relations Officer, Force Headquarters, Abuja, ACP Olumuyiwa Adejobi, disclosed in a statement made available to newsmen on Saturday in Owerri.

"Adejobi said following credible intelligence, the police operatives located and launched a coordinated operation on the terrorists' hideout in a forest within Ihube in Okigwe Local Government Area of the state on January 24."

"The Force PRO said five AK-47 rifles, 552 rounds of live ammunition, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), several communication equipment, along eight operational motorcycles used by the group, were recovered from the scene.



"According to him, prior investigations had revealed the involvement of the group in several high-profile crimes, including the attack on the Owerri Correctional Centre on April 5, 2021.

An Assistant Commissioner of Police, Adejobi further hinted that the neutralised terrorists were involved in the killing of five policemen in Umunna, Okigwe, on December 2022, and the burning of Arondizuogu Police Station on February 8, 2022."

Meanwhile, Kanu in his suit, averred that "the defamatory statements read by his brother and circle of friends in Abuja and Nigeria at large were false and constitute a grave libel on his person, as the words in their natural and ordinary meaning portrayed" him "as a leader of a violent and terrorist group."

The IPOB leader further claimed that the statement also portrayed him in the following light: "as an associate of violent criminals and terrorists who allegedly engaged in terrorist acts in Imo State; an irresponsible and violent person that has no regard for the sanctity of human lives; and a person who does not deserve justice in his cases pending in court, bordering on whether the IPOB is a terrorist group or not.

Kanu further claimed that: "The said

words in their natural and ordinary meaning were meant and were understood to mean that the Claimant is a leader of a terrorist movement that is to be vicariously blamed for alleged acts of terrorism in Imo State."

Other claims by the IPOB leader include: "That the words were meant to call into question the Claimant's honesty, personal integrity and reputation; that the Claimant states that these defamatory and libellous statements go far beyond fair comment and are malicious and are designed specifically to impugn his person and character and they were made in bad faith."

The suit further read: "That the Defendant's libellous publications and utterances were circulated and read by millions of people around the world, particularly in Abuja and Nigeria where the Claimant has many friends, family, colleagues, admirers, mentees, well-wishers and millions of followers and cases pending in court in which terrorism is at issue.

It also read: "That the Defendant's libellous publications and utterances have seriously injured the Claimant's character, credit, reputation and integrity; and resulted in significant prejudice against the Claimant regarding his cases pending in Court in Abuja and

Nigerian extradited to US for alleged sextortion of teen who committed suicide

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A Nigerian man was extradited to the U.S. after he was indicted in connection with the sextortion of a South Carolina teen who died by suicide, the Justice Department said Monday.

Hassanbunhussein Abolore Lawal, 24, allegedly posed as a young woman on social media and got 17-year-old Gavin Guffey to send him “compromising photos,” the Justice Department said. Lawal then allegedly threatened to ruin Guffey’s reputation by leaking the photos unless he sent Lawal money, the Justice Department said.

Guffey, the son of South Carolina state Rep. Brandon Guffey, died by suicide in 2022.

Lawal was indicted in October 2023



on charges of child exploitation resulting in death, distribution of child pornography, coercion and enticement of a minor to engage in sexual activity, cyberstalking resulting in death and attempted extortion.

“We will not allow predators who target our children to hide behind a keyboard or across the ocean. Today we honor Gavin’s life and continue our fight against sextortion by holding this defendant accountable,” U.S.

Attorney Adair Ford Boroughs for the District of South Carolina said in a statement.

Lawal faces up to life in prison and mandatory restitution, where the court may order him to pay for losses incurred by the family due to his scheme.

After Guffey’s death, Brandon Guffey sponsored a bill known as Gavin’s Law, which made sexual extortion “a felony offense and an aggravated felony if the victim is a minor, vulnerable adult, or if the victim suffers bodily injury or death directly related to the crime.” South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster signed the bill into law in August 2023.

Social media giant Meta warned in July that sexual extortion scams are on the rise, with criminals from Nigeria frequently targeting adult men in the U.S. Meta said it had removed about 63,000 accounts from Nigeria that had been attempting to target people with financial sextortion scams.



State Rep. Brandon Guffey of Rock Hill stands outside the federal courthouse in Columbia on Monday with a photo of his son, Gavin Guffey. The State

Stop scooping fuel from crashed tankers, FRSC warns Nigerians

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

Alarmed by the huge number of casualties in tanker fire incidents in the country of late, the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) has warned Nigerians to stop scooping fuel from crashed trucks loaded with petrol.

The FRSC Corps Marshal, Shehu Mohammed, gave this warning while addressing newsmen on Monday in Abuja on its recently concluded Operation Zero Tolerance.

He expressed sadness over the rising number of collisions and fatalities, especially the rate of deaths arising from the removal of petroleum products from crashed tankers.

Mohammed explained that fallen tankers were the reason for the rise in fatalities in 2024.

He said that the situation was worrisome, especially, in cases of fatalities as a result of scooping of petroleum products from crashed tankers in Niger and Jigawa states.

According to him, five land mark crashes defined the number of road traffic crashes, fatalities and injuries recorded between Dec. 15, 2024 and Jan. 15.

“These were Jing, Shendam in Plateau State on Dec. 20, 2024 that killed 11 people, Bende-Ohafia route in Abia State on Dec. 22, 2024 that also killed 11 people.

“Another one was Dec. 25, 2024 on the Kaduna-Abuja expressway that killed eight passengers and that of Jebba, Kwara State, on Dec. 26, 2024 which claimed 30 lives as well as that of Owo-Ikare route before Ose bridge on Dec. 28, 2024 that led to the



death of 13 passengers.

“These five land mark crashes were the most fatal crashes out of the 37 critical crashes that killed 3 persons or more; and, that accounted for seven per cent of the total crashes recorded during the period,” he said.

Mohammed said that the data indicated that those 37 crashes alone resulted in the death of 247 persons which constituted 39 per cent of the total deaths recorded within the period.

“The 2024 end of the year special patrol recorded fatalities is alarming and unacceptable. Therefore, it is obvious that the crashes were as a result of human errors,” he said.

The FRSC boss, however, maintained that the Corps was committed to achieving its mandate through compliance with the presidential directives.

He said the Corps would collaborate with the National Orientation Agency (NOA) to sensitise the public

on the dangers of scooping fuel from crashed tankers.

Mohammed stressed that the Corps would meet with stakeholders, particularly petroleum tanker unions, to proffer lasting solutions to the incessant crashes involving tanker drivers.

He, however, appealed to passengers to avoid boarding trailers and trucks meant for goods either during daytime or night trips due to the inherent dangers.

He said, “In this beginning year 2025, I wish to caution motorists and travelers to avoid excessive speed and overloading as much as possible.

“Management will also continue to motivate staff through enhanced welfare packages.

“It is also expected that our effort at capacity building would provide the required skills and professionalism needed for enhanced productivity.”

Judicial in Elections: APC tags Atiku ‘prolific electoral litigator’

By Friday Omosola

The All Progressives Congress (APC) has criticised former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, calling him Nigeria’s most prolific electoral litigator after he claimed that the nation’s democracy was at risk due to judicial involvement in electoral matters.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported that Atiku made the comments at a national conference on Strengthening Democracy in Nigeria held in Abuja on Monday, where he raised concerns over what he called the “imperilment” of democracy by judicial interference in elections.

He also accused President Bola Tinubu of paying opposition leaders a staggering 50 million Naira each to destabilize opposition parties in the country.

In a statement issued by APC’s Publicity Secretary, Felix Morka on Tuesday, the party dismissed Atiku’s remarks as an example of “petty politicking.”

APC expressed disbelief that someone with Atiku’s history of using the courts to challenge election results would now criticize judicial involvement in electoral matters.

“It was in those same years that Atiku’s former boss and then President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, infamously described the election as a “do or die affair” in a desperate attempt to annex Lagos”, the statement added.

The APC also took aim at Atiku’s allegations regarding President Tinubu’s supposed financial dealings



with opposition leaders, calling the claim “bogus and laughable.”

The party suggested that Atiku’s own political desperation was behind the disintegration of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) and the fragmentation of opposition parties in general.

The statement further accused Atiku of attempting to deflect attention from his party’s internal challenges by making baseless allegations.

The party also reminded Atiku of the historical context of the 2003 and 2007 elections during his time as Vice President, describing them as some of the most problematic in Nigeria’s political history.

APC noted that it was under Atiku’s tenure that the PDP, in conjunction with the then-President Olusegun Obasanjo, conducted controversial elections, including the contentious takeover of South-West states, all while Obasanjo famously described the election as a “do or die affair.”

“The rot in the PDP began under Atiku’s watch,” APC stated. “It is ironic that the man who presided over the worst elections in Nigeria’s history now claims to be concerned about democracy being undermined by the courts.”

APC also emphasised that the judiciary is an essential and constitutionally defined branch of government, with the power to adjudicate electoral disputes and ensure that elections remain free, fair, and credible.

The party argued that Atiku’s attempts to undermine the role of the judiciary could set a dangerous precedent for democracy in Nigeria.

“While elections are about winning, democracy is about respecting the will of the people,” the statement concluded. “It’s time for Atiku to step back, let the democratic process unfold, and focus on rebuilding his party rather than throwing baseless accusations.”

Diri emerges Chairman of South-South Governors Forum

By Friday Omosola

Governor Douye Diri of Bayelsa State has been appointed as the new chairman of the South-South Governors Forum.

The announcement came during the ongoing meeting of the Forum in Yenagoa, the capital of Bayelsa State.

A statement released on Tuesday after the meeting confirmed his appointment.

The communique stated, “The South-South Governors’ Forum convened on Tuesday, 28 January 2025, at Government House in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, to discuss pressing issues and strategies vital for the unity and development of the region,” the communique read.



“We the Governors representing the States that form the South-South of Nigeria, are committed to collaborative governance, ensuring the well-being of our people, and advancing sustainable development.”

The governors expressed their determination to work together in the best interests of their states and the region, emphasising unity, strengthened collaboration, and a shared pursuit of sustainable growth.

Present at the meeting were Governors Basse Otu (Cross River), Sheriff Oborewori (Delta), Siminalayi Fubara (Rivers), Umo Eno (Akwa Ibom), and the host, Governor Douye Diri (Bayelsa).

However, Governor Monday Okpebholo of Edo State was notably absent and did not send a representative, such as his deputy, Dennis Idahosa, to attend the gathering focused on regional development and cooperation.

Ibadan Stampede: Court adjourns trial of Ooni’s ex-queen, others

By Friday Omosola

Chief Magistrate Court in Ibadan, Oyo State, has adjourned the trial of Naomi Silekunola, the estranged wife of the Ooni of Ife; an Ibadan-based broadcaster and Chairman of a radio station, Agidigbo FM, Oriyomi Hamzat; and the Principal of Islamic High School, Basorun, Abdulahib Fasasi.

The defendants face charges of conspiracy, murder, manslaughter, and negligence related to the deaths of 35 children during a stampede at a Christmas funfair held in Ibadan, Oyo State, on December 18, 2024.

Initially arraigned on a holden charge—a temporary legal mechanism not recognised under Nigerian law—the defendants were



remanded in custody but were later granted bail by the High Court.

At Monday’s court session, which was scheduled for a mention, the Chief Magistrate adjourned the case to March 24, 2025 to allow proper legal proceedings to unfold.

Speaking after the court session, the defence counsel for Oriyomi, Dapo Akinosi, explained the current status

of the case.

Akinosi said: “The matter was slated for mention today because the defendants were initially arraigned on a holden charge, which is not recognised by law, leading to their remand in custody. We subsequently applied for bail at the High Court, which was granted.

“Legal advice has now been issued, and the proper charges have been filed against the defendants. However, they are yet to be served with the information. We requested a longer adjournment to allow for proper proceedings, including the plea-taking at the High Court before the Magistrate Court can conclude its role in the matter.”

PICTORIAL: Sanwo-Olu bags Arise, ThisDay Governor of the Year award

By Dave Oludare Oso

Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State @jidesanwoolu has bagged the "Governor of the Year" and the "Game Changer Award" organized by the @THISDAYLIVE Newspaper and @ARISEtv.

The award presentation was done during the 30th anniversary of ThisDay and 12th anniversary of Arise TV last night in Lagos on Monday.

Governor Sanwo-Olu thanked

the organizers for the award and promised to continue to work harder and better for Lagosians more than ever before.

Here are some photos from the event.



Lady fined N150k for skipping boyfriend visit after TP

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

In a unique case heard in Ilesa, Osun State, a Magistrate Court has directed Rhoda Adu to compensate her boyfriend, Olapitan Sola, with ₦150,000.

The ruling follows her failure to visit him after accepting ₦3,000 as transport fare.

How the case unfolded

The issue started when Sola, who resides in Ilesa, sent ₦3,000 to Rhoda to cover her travel expenses. She had agreed to visit him, but after receiving the money, she became unreachable. She reportedly turned off her phone and failed to fulfill the promise.

Frustrated and feeling deceived, Sola took the matter to the Ayeso Police Station, where he lodged a formal complaint. Authorities acted swiftly, leading to Rhoda's arrest. The case was then brought before Magistrate Akogun Oludare for legal review.

Evidence presented in court

During the court proceedings, Sola submitted crucial evidence to support his claims. He provided a copy of the mobile money transfer as proof of the ₦3,000 transaction. He also shared WhatsApp conversations between him and Rhoda, which showed their agreement and her promise to visit him.

The evidence was clear and convincing, leaving little room for doubt about what had transpired. Sola argued that her actions caused him emotional stress and financial loss.

Court's decision

After reviewing the evidence, Magistrate Akogun Oludare delivered a decisive ruling. The court ordered Rhoda to:

1. Refund the ₦3,000 transport fare she received.
2. Pay ₦100,000 as compensation for



breaching the agreement.

3. Pay an additional ₦50,000 as special damages for the emotional distress she caused Sola.

The total amount Rhoda is required to pay stands at ₦150,000. The court emphasized that the judgment serves as a warning to others who might consider engaging in similar deceitful behavior.

Significance of the ruling

This ruling underscores the importance of accountability in personal relationships and agreements. By taking legal action, Sola demonstrated that broken promises, especially those involving financial transactions, can have serious consequences.

Magistrate Oludare also noted the growing trend of individuals using digital platforms to defraud others. She stated that the court's decision should deter similar acts in the future and encourage fairness and honesty in all dealings.

Public reactions

The case has sparked discussions online and in the local community. While some have criticized Sola's decision to pursue legal action over ₦3,000, others commend him for standing up against what they see as fraudulent behavior.

Supporters argue that the court's ruling sends a strong message about the importance of trust and integrity. They

believe it will discourage individuals from taking advantage of others under false pretenses.

Broader implications

This case highlights the growing reliance on digital evidence in resolving disputes. From mobile money transactions to online conversations, technology is increasingly playing a central role in modern legal cases.

The judgment also raises questions about the boundaries of personal relationships and the legal remedies available when promises are broken. It serves as a reminder that agreements, even informal ones, carry weight and consequences.

Conclusion

The Magistrate Court in Ilesa has set a significant precedent with this ruling. By ordering Rhoda Adu to compensate Olapitan Sola for her actions, the court reinforced the principles of fairness and accountability.

As more people rely on digital platforms for communication and transactions, this case underscores the need to act with integrity and honor commitments.

For Sola, the judgment provides both justice and closure. For others, it serves as a cautionary tale about the consequences of breaching trust.

Concerns over child safety as Police uncover hundreds of child abuse cases in UK Hotels

By Helen Okechukwu

Police have recorded 504 cases of child sexual abuse in UK high street hotel chains in 2023, according to data shared exclusively with BBC News. Of these, 92% (464 cases) involved physical contact with a child, and 40% (203 cases) were classified as rape.

The data, provided by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), reveals that most incidents occurred in budget hotel chains, often located near transport hubs like train stations and motorways. These areas make it easier for perpetrators to meet victims.

While offences in hotels accounted for less than 1% of all recorded child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSAE) cases in England and Wales in 2023, police believe these crimes are significantly underreported, suggesting the real figures may be much higher.

The NPCC has partnered with hotels through Operation Makesafe, a program designed to train hotel staff to recognize signs of child sexual exploitation and report suspicious behavior to the police. Phil Ashford, from the NPCC child sexual exploitation taskforce, emphasized the seriousness of the offences, saying, "We're talking about some of the most serious contact offending imaginable—the rape and serious sexual abuse of children."

Assistant Chief Constable Becky Riggs added that Operation Makesafe highlights the proactive steps hotels are taking to combat this issue. She noted, "The impact of this partnership cannot be overestimated."

One female survivor of child sexual abuse, who was often taken to hotels by her abuser, told the BBC, "You can put a



'Do Not Disturb' sign on the door, and they can do whatever they want with nobody wondering what's going on. I can't even stay in a hotel now without thinking about what happened to me."

The privacy offered by hotel rooms, especially in budget chains with self-service kiosks instead of manned reception desks, allows offenders to check in unnoticed with young victims, police said.

Operation Makesafe encourages hotel staff to be vigilant for warning signs, such as:

- Guests insisting on paying in cash.
- Reluctance to provide identification.
- Requests for isolated or double rooms.
- Children who look unhappy, nervous, or defer to adults when asked questions.
- Adults who make it clear there are no familial links to the child.

Sergeant Ian Haselden of Greater Manchester Police described operations where officers pose as abusers with children to test hotel staff's ability to detect suspicious behavior. He emphasized, "If hotels are suspicious, the gold standard response is to call the police. This is an extremely serious crime, and we'd rather they be safe than sorry."

The data shows that most victims were aged 15 (26%), 16 (18%), or 17 (17%). Almost all perpetrators (92%) were men, with an average age of 28. Victims were predominantly female (84%). Just 4% (21 cases) were group-based offences involving two or more suspects.

Police also noted that while most incidents occurred in budget hotels, CSAE can happen anywhere, including luxury hotels.

Kate Nicholls, Chief Executive of UK Hospitality, said the industry is committed to tackling child exploitation. "We are working closely with the Home Office and police to support Operation Makesafe. We provide hospitality businesses with police guidance on recognizing the signs of exploitation, what to do if they suspect abuse, and measures hotels can implement to deter such incidents."

The NPCC and UK Hospitality remain committed to raising awareness and equipping hotels with the tools needed to prevent these crimes, ensuring that children are protected in all hospitality environments.

Why Bala Mohammed is tackling Tinubu administration – Investigation By Alade Adisa

...North planning what some PDP govts did in 2015 to Jonathan

While it is two years away, preparation for the presidential election in 2027 is already in top gear among political leaders as to who to vote for in the poll.

Checks by New Daily Prime showed that the recent attacks and counter attacks between the Bauchi State governor, Bala Mohammed and top shots in the All Progressives Congress, APC, as well as in the Bola Tinubu administration are connected to jostling for political relevance and giving indications of what to expect.

For instance, recently the governor took a swipe at the foreign policies of the Tinubu administration and gave the government a knock.

The development led to counter attacks from Nigeria's Foreign Affairs Minister, Ambassador Yusuf Maitama Tuggar, who is from the state.

The governor had earlier in an interview with BBC Hausa service accused the minister of not handling the country's diplomatic affairs effectively, advising him to correct his mistakes before attempting to correct someone else's. He added that it was disappointing that the minister "is our son."

He also faulted the federal government handling of military coups in some neighbouring countries and how it failed to appoint ambassadors to different countries.

The governor has been critical of the Bola Tinubu administration lately, especially in the ongoing debate on tax reform bills currently before the National Assembly.

But the minister, in an interview with BBC Hausa service countered saying, "Bauchi State has received over N8.8



billion in October, and N9 billion in November, but there is nothing to show on ground in the state."

It was gathered that the North is not comfortable with some policies of the Tinubu administration, including the Tax Reform Bills currently before the National Assembly.

The main objection for the region to the bill is in the area of applying derivation to the distribution of Value Added Tax.

Also, the region is complaining of marginalization in the appointments so far made by the President.

"It is not Bala Mohammed speaking for himself. I must say he is speaking for the North. Most of the leaders are not comfortable with some policies of the current government. Look at the manner the issue of the coup in Niger was handled. It was not until the leaders said any action against Niger is against the North that the President soft-pedalled.

"The Tax Reform Bills may eventually go the way of the Petroleum Industry Bill which took years to pass and had to be watered down. The North is already planning what to do in 2027. What

some Peoples Democratic Party governors did in 2015 when they worked against their party's candidate in the presidential poll may be in the offing.

Some APC governors are delighted in how Bauchi governor is confronting the Tinubu government. How many APC governors in the North have come out to openly rebuff Bala Mohammed for what he is saying? A source told our correspondent.

Relatedly, the permutations for the 2027 general elections have put a wedge between Oyo State Governor, Seyi Makinde and his erstwhile friend, Nyesom Wike, former Rivers State governor who is now the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory.

Makinde, who was among PDP governors that worked against Atiku Abubakar, their party's candidate in the 2023 elections with Wike being the Chief Organizer, is now eyeing the vice presidential ticket of the party.

Though he came out recently to declare his intention to contest the presidency in 2027, signs that the North would want to field a candidate and possibly vote him or her enbloc, has made him to have a rethink.

"Nobody can't take the APC ticket from Tinubu but from the look of things, the North would want to get the presidency back. To bridge the gap created by the death of Umar Yar Adua and also, they are not okay with the way Tinubu is going," a source said.

Makinde would finish his second term in office in 2027 and if the North gets a candidate in 2027, the deputy expected from the South could be from the Southwest and the governor fits the bill.

Elon Musk isn't trolling Britain...he's doing something much worse

By Louis Staples

In Britain, the summer of 2012 — when London hosted the Olympic Games with a stunning opening ceremony — is a beacon of nostalgia. In November of that year, Elon Musk visited the country on a business trip, where he rode a bike around the capital. “I met with many interesting people,” he later wrote on Twitter. “I really like Britain!”

His views, to put it mildly, have evolved. Since last summer, when the Labour Party won a landslide majority, ending 14 years of Conservative government, Mr. Musk has accused Britain of going “full Stalin,” being a “tyrannical police state” and sliding toward an “inevitable” civil war. He spent much of January posting, re-sharing and replying to hundreds of posts on X, the social media platform he bought in 2022 and subsequently renamed, that were critical of Britain. He accused senior government figures of covering up sexual abuse committed by grooming gangs and asked his followers whether “America should liberate the people of Britain” from their government.

Some might shrug this off as mere provocation, yet Mr. Musk’s interest in Britain goes beyond trolling. Not only is he clearly engaged with the country’s politics — he is a vociferous champion of the anti-immigration party Reform U.K. — but his fixation is also part of an emerging narrative on the American right that paints Britain as a boogeyman. Most important, it amounts to an aggressive pursuit of his own political agenda, extending his influence overseas. Mr. Musk’s obsession with Britain is really an obsession with his own power.

Mr. Musk’s attention most noticeably turned to the United Kingdom last August, when anti-immigrant riots broke out across England and Northern Ireland.



Rioters tried to burn down hotels where asylum seekers were housed and attacked mosques, migrant-owned businesses and police officers. The unrest was set off by misinformation online claiming that the teenager who murdered children at a Taylor Swift-themed dance party in northern England was a Muslim migrant. Central to this torrent of Islamophobic disinformation was X, where calls for violence were amplified.

Keir Starmer, the newly elected prime minister, appeared to call Mr. Musk out. “To large social media companies and those who run them,” Mr. Starmer said at the time, “violent disorder, clearly whipped up online, that is also a crime.” Mr. Musk took the bait. He branded the remarks “insane” and spent the following weeks spreading the nickname “two-tier Keir” — a reference to the conspiracy theory that there is a “two-tier” system of policing in Britain, in which white people are punished more harshly than minority groups. He even shared (then deleted) a fake headline that claimed Mr. Starmer’s government was building “emergency detention camps” for the rioters.

Since the summer, Mr. Musk’s

comments about the country have become even more extreme. In September, he falsely accused the Starmer government of “releasing convicted pedophiles from prison in order to put people in prison for Facebook posts.” He has repeatedly championed the cause of Tommy Robinson, a far-right, anti-Islam British activist with a slew of criminal convictions currently in jail for repeatedly breaking an injunction. During a posting spree at the start of January, Mr. Musk called for a government minister to be imprisoned, for new elections to oust the prime minister and for Mr. Starmer to be charged for complicity in the “rape of Britain.”

All of this could be an attempt to distract from X’s role in the summer riots, for which lawmakers plan to summon him to testify to Britain’s Parliament. Some have wondered whether it might be down to his sleeping habits: Data compiled by *The Economist* on his posting times suggests he sleeps for only a few hours a night — meaning he is awake and online when the British news cycle begins. The most compelling explanation, though, is ideological.

In his posts, Mr. Musk focuses relentlessly on immigration, free speech, regulation and crime. On these issues, Britain’s center-left government appears to be anathema. And not only for him. For those around Donald Trump, Britain is a “country that is being destroyed,” as Kari Lake put it, or the first “truly Islamist country” with nuclear weapons, as JD Vance bizarrely claimed. American conservatives have often used this type of apocalyptic language about countries such as Venezuela. But Mr. Musk is now spearheading an attempt to turn Britain — one of America’s closest allies — into their new adversary.

DeepSeek and the dollar are spoiling 'Trump trades'

By Katie Martin

Hours ahead of the reinauguration of Donald Trump as US president last week, Goldman Sachs hosted its annual investment summit in its London office, and one big so-called Trump trade kept on cropping up: the dollar.

The new US president's economic policy platform remains tough to parse or predict in any kind of detail. But investors, especially speculative hedge funds, have been pretty settled on the idea that Trump means a strong buck — the result of American exceptionalism, stubborn inflation, or both.

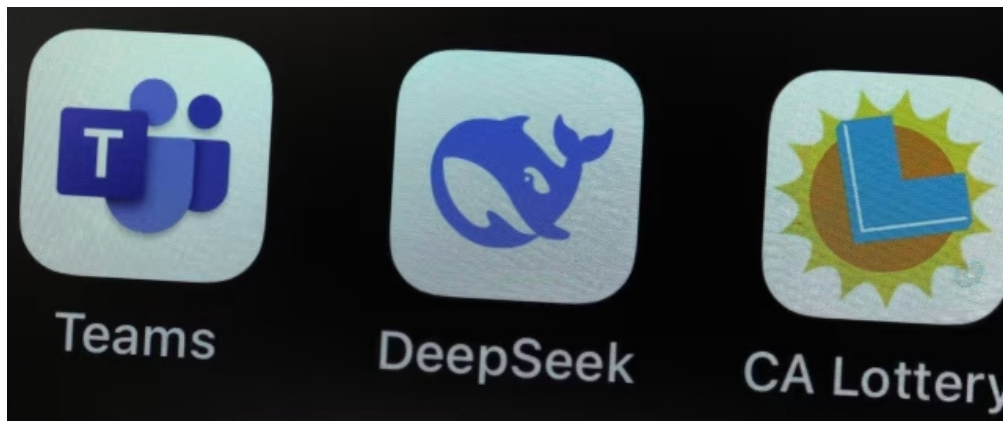
For many clients it is, as one of the bank's most senior traders outlined to the assembled fund managers, "the most obvious trade in the world", especially in relation to the Chinese renminbi.

Later that same day, Trump made his way back to the White House. On his way, at the inauguration ceremony, he returned to his precious topic of tariffs — one of the key policies that snagged him his historic election victory. This time, however, it came with one big problem for the "obvious" trade: Trump directed his toughest intentions at Mexico and Canada, not China, which he has previously suggested was the main target.

Cue a sizeable jump in the Chinese currency that has fuelled a drag on the dollar across the board. The euro, sterling and yen have all picked up from recent lows — an alarming development for dollar bulls.

This is far from the only supposedly slam-dunk strategy for the president's second stint in the White House that has run into early trouble.

The message in the run-up to the reinauguration of Donald Trump has been that his zeal for deregulation, low taxes and American goods for American consumers all add up to a strong positive case for buying and



holding US stocks in preference to the rest of the world. The icing on the cake is the artificial intelligence revolution, forged in the US and dominated by US-listed companies. Some investors see it as not just a commercial imperative but a strategic geopolitical imperative to stick as closely as possible to this theme.

Then came the latest market shock: the emergence of DeepSeek, a Chinese challenge to US hubris in artificial intelligence. This took a little while to really get on to investors' radar. But at the start of this week, it did so with a bang, sending US tech stocks sliding fast. The market value of Nvidia alone sank by more than \$600bn — an unprecedented daily drop for a single company. Remember: just seven AI-adjacent US stocks account for fully one-third of the entire S&P 500 benchmark index of US equities. If it turns out that the moat around them, and particularly around chipmaker Nvidia, is not as wide or as deep as investors had hoped, this whole fairytale starts to unravel.

French bank Société Générale points out that without Nvidia and its top four customers — Microsoft, Google, Amazon and Meta — the entire US benchmark index would be some 12 per cent below where it is today. With "American exceptionalism in full force", as Manish Kabra, head of US equity strategy at the bank put it, it is little wonder that broad US markets are feeling the pain. Tilting towards an equal-weighted S&P 500, rather than the standard version favouring

monster-size tech stocks, makes sense here, he added.

Ignoring markets outside the US is also unwise. The main stocks indices in Germany and the UK have struck new record highs since Trump took office. There is life in the rest of the world after all. But any challenge to US Big Tech has the power to be seriously destabilising for all markets.

A stumbling dollar and unusually wobbly US stocks are an ugly blow for anyone who expected this to be an easy ride, and a painful reminder that when it comes to managing money in the era of Trump 2.0, no one really knows anything. Whether you are a hedge fund manager or a have-a-go amateur investor, in this environment, you stick to your convictions at your peril.

US Big Tech, a powerful dollar and US dominance over puny overseas stock markets were all a nice, neat, satisfying story to accompany the new Trump era, and investors of all stripes embraced it with great vigour. "Other than the almighty, who has achieved more in seven days than [president] Trump?" fawned investor Bill Ackman in an X post over the weekend.

Such cringe-inducing hyperbole is tough to stomach, but it is a timely prompt to consider what the chosen one will do in the next seven days, and the seven days after that, and whether your portfolio of "obvious" Trump trades can handle the pain.

Adedimeji's film on Ekiti Parapo War gets govt support

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



Versatile Nollywood couple, Lateef and Adebimpe Adedimeji have secured the support of the Ekiti State Government for the production of a film on the historic Ekiti Parapo War.

The movie will chronicle the struggle and triumph of the Ekiti people against oppression, promising to deliver a world-class portrayal of the war's events.

The Special Adviser on Media to Governor Biodun Oyeibanji, Yinka Oyeboode, disclosed the development on Tuesday, noting that the governor approved the project during a meeting in Ado-

Ekiti on Monday.

The film will be a collaborative effort between the State Ministry of Arts, Culture, and Creative Economy and AL Notions Film Company, the production house owned by the Adedimejis.

According to Oyeboode, the project will be fully funded by the private sector and led by AL Notions, known for producing the critically acclaimed "Lisabi: The Uprising."

"They will be working with a team from the Ekiti State Ministry of Arts, Culture, and Creative Economy, led by

Honourable Commissioner Professor Rasaki Ojo Bakare, one of Africa's most accomplished Artistic Directors," Oyeboode stated.

Adebimpe Adedimeji, who hails from Ijero-Ekiti, expressed her excitement about spearheading the project alongside her husband. The couple pledged their dedication to ensuring the film receives the highest level of attention and quality.

The movie will feature Ekiti towns and villages as primary filming locations and will involve numerous talented artists, including those of Ekiti origin.

Speed Darlington ends partnership with lawyer Stan Alieke

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Stan Alieke, the lawyer representing embattled singer Speed Darlington, has officially severed ties with the artist, ending their professional relationship.

In a statement shared via Instagram, Alieke announced that his law firm, Law Capitol, would no longer represent the controversial musician.

Official statement from law capitol
The announcement came through Alieke's Instagram story, where he wrote:

"I and my law firm (Law Capitol) have officially withdrawn from legally representing Mr. Darlington Achakpo PKA Speed Darlington/Akpi and cease to act as his legal attorneys."

This decision follows the singer's recent release from Kuje Prison, where he spent over two months.

Speed Darlington's legal troubles

The singer's legal issues began with allegations of cyberstalking fellow musician Burna Boy. These accusations led to his arrest and prolonged detention, a situation that quickly gained public attention and fueled online debates.

During his time in detention, fans and critics were divided. While some defended Darlington's outspoken nature, others called for accountability for his alleged actions.

Allegations against Burna Boy

Alieke, while representing Darlington, accused Burna Boy of interfering in the case. The lawyer claimed that Burna Boy had allegedly paid law enforcement to ensure Darlington remained in detention. These serious allegations added another layer of controversy to an already complicated case.



Timing raises questions

Alieke's decision to withdraw from the case comes at a critical juncture. He was released from detention just a week before the announcement. While Alieke did not elaborate on the reasons for the split, speculation has grown about possible disagreements or the challenges of representing such a high-profile and polarizing figure.

Some observers believe the complexity of the case, along with its media attention, may have played a role in the lawyer's withdrawal.

Challenges ahead for Speed Darlington

The loss of his legal team presents a significant challenge for Speed Darlington. Known for his bold and controversial personality, the singer has faced mounting scrutiny over the case, which has overshadowed his career in recent months.

Without a legal team, he may struggle to address the allegations and rebuild his public image. However, his resilience and ability to court public

attention suggest he may still find ways to navigate these difficulties.

Broader implications

The case highlights the challenges lawyers face when representing clients involved in high-profile controversies. Alieke and Law Capitol, known for handling prominent cases, had to navigate a minefield of legal and public relations issues while representing him.

Although Alieke has stepped away, his earlier accusations against Burna Boy remain part of the public narrative, ensuring the case continues to draw attention.

What Lies ahead?

As the legal drama unfolds, fans and industry observers are left wondering what's next for Speed Darlington. Can the singer refocus on his music career, or will his ongoing legal troubles define his future?

One thing is certain—this saga is far from over, and the public will be watching closely.

My ex-manager made Lagos unsafe for me – Mercy Chinwo

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian gospel sensation Mercy Chinwo has accused her former manager, Ezekiel Onyedikachi, popularly known as EeZee Tee, of threatening her life.

The allegations were made public on Tuesday afternoon in a video shared on her Instagram page, sparking widespread reactions across social media.

This revelation follows a recent legal battle between the singer and EeZee Tee, who owns the record label EeZee Conceptz. Chinwo filed a lawsuit against her former manager, alleging the misappropriation of \$345,000 in royalties. The Lagos State Federal High Court responded by issuing a warrant to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to ensure EeZee Tee appears in court.

In response to the allegations, EeZee Tee took to Instagram, denying the claims and accusing Chinwo of spreading lies. He criticized her for what he described as inconsistent behavior, pointing out that her accusations contradicted the Christian values she promotes through her music.

Chinwo speaks out on Instagram

Breaking her silence, Chinwo shared her side of the story in a heartfelt video that has since gone viral. In it, she described her former manager as an oppressor and accused him of manipulating their professional relationship. According to her, EeZee Tee replaced their original contracts signed in 2017 and 2019 without her knowledge or consent.

“Hello, everyone,” she began. “It’s your girl, Mercy Chinwo. I never thought I would sit here and share my story, but for the sake of the body of Christ, I feel the need to clarify the lies and misleading news about my brand.”

She recounted how EeZee Tee allegedly told her, “I made you who you are, and I will destroy you,” leaving her fearful for her safety. She explained that the toxic environment created by her former manager forced her to leave Lagos and



relocate to Port Harcourt.

Allegations of bullying and manipulation

Chinwo detailed her experiences, accusing EeZee Tee of bullying, intimidation, and threats. She revealed that the situation escalated to the point where she felt unsafe continuing her work in Lagos.

“I have endured so much,” Chinwo said, her voice trembling with emotion. “The bullying, the threats—it was overwhelming. Whatever he’s posting on the internet now is nothing compared to what I went through in private. He took me to court but went online to tell the public that I sued him.”

Chinwo’s emotional video resonated with many fans and followers, who flooded the comment section with messages of support. Some expressed disbelief at the allegations, while others commended her courage in speaking out.

EeZee Tee responds

Meanwhile, EeZee Tee has maintained his innocence, claiming that Chinwo’s accusations are baseless. In his Instagram post, he called her actions a smear campaign and questioned her integrity. However, his response has done little to quell the growing controversy.

This high-profile feud has raised questions about the dynamics of artist-manager relationships in Nigeria’s music

industry. Many are calling for a closer look at contractual agreements and how they affect artists’ careers and well-being.

Industry reactions

The fallout between Chinwo and EeZee Tee has sparked conversations among gospel music enthusiasts and industry insiders. Some argue that such disputes tarnish the reputation of gospel music, while others see it as an opportunity to address systemic issues within the industry.

Fans and fellow artists have rallied around Chinwo, urging her to stay strong. “Your voice has inspired millions, and no one can take that away,” one fan commented.

What’s next?

As the legal proceedings unfold, all eyes are on the Lagos State Federal High Court to determine the outcome of this bitter dispute. For now, Mercy Chinwo’s decision to speak out has drawn attention to the challenges artists face behind the scenes, even as they project a polished image to the world.

This developing story underscores the importance of transparency, fairness, and respect in professional relationships—values that should align with the principles both parties represent. While the road ahead remains uncertain, one thing is clear: the gospel music community is watching closely.

Why Michael Jackson biopic might need to be reshot

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Michael Jackson's complex legacy was always going to be the subject of an ambitious biopic.

A recent story from Puck claims that the film, which stars Jaafar Jackson as his late uncle, has been rescheduled from its April release date to October due to screenplay issues.

Here is what we currently know about the project

With a book by three-time Oscar nominee, John Logan and a director by Antoine Fuqua ("Training Day," "The Equaliser"), "Michael" depicts the story of the late superstar, who passed away in 2009 at the age of 50 from severe propofol intoxication.

The film's producer, Graham King, has complimented the choice of Jackson's older brother, Jermaine Jackson's son, to portray the lead.

"Every look, every note, every dance move is Michael with Jaafar," King stated in a press release in February 2024. "He portrays Michael in a manner that no other performer could."

In the same press release, Fuqua compared it to magic.

The director stated, "We have put together an amazing crew of artists for this project—hair and makeup, costumes, cinematography, choreography, lighting, everything—and some who knew and worked with Michael are reuniting for this film."

Above all, though, Jaafar is the one who personifies Michael. It's more than just a physical similarity. Miraculously, Michael's spirit emerges. It must be experienced for you to believe it.

According to a report by Matthew Belloni of Puck last week, the \$150 million project has encountered a significant obstacle.



The 1993 inquiry into Jackson's alleged sexual assault by Jordan Chandler, then 13 years old, is reportedly included in the "Michael" script.

The creative team behind the film was unaware of the settlement's alleged ban against dramatising the Chandler family until after filming was finished, which necessitated a reworking of the picture, according to Puck.

Other people accused Michael Jackson of sexual abuse besides Chandler. When Jackson was alive, he rejected all of these accusations, and his relatives still do.

Jackson was accused of seven charges of committing a "lewd act upon a child" in 2003 after a boy with cancer who was invited to the celebrity's house made the accusations.

The youngster claimed Jackson fed him drinks and caressed him when he was thirteen. Jackson entered a not-guilty plea and was found not guilty of the charges.

A 2019 documentary called "Leaving

Neverland" by HBO (owned by CNN's parent company) explored James Safechuck and Wade Robson's unsettling allegations that Jackson sexually assaulted them as minors over several years.

Robson claimed that during his childhood, he spent multiple nights at Jackson's Neverland Ranch in California. As a child, Safechuck accompanied Jackson in a Pepsi commercial and claimed to have visited the singer's house frequently.

They both defended Jackson against claims of sexual assault, but they later sued the singer's estate with their abuse claims (Safechuck in 2014, Robson in 2013). The charges were refuted by Jackson's estate. Their lawyer claims that although their suits were first rejected on technical grounds, the battle is still going on.

In "Leaving Neverland," the Jackson family refuted the accusations, referring to the movie as a "public lynching" and implying that the accusers were driven by greed.

The current release date for "Michael" is October 3, 2025.

Trump stops HIV treatment support to Nigeria, others

By Dave Oludare Oso

The United States government has suspended funding for HIV treatment in Nigeria and other developing nations following an executive order by President Donald Trump.

the administration moved on Tuesday to stop the distribution of drugs for HIV, malaria and tuberculosis, as well as medical supplies for newborn babies, in countries supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The U.S. is the largest single donor of aid globally, disbursing \$72 billion in 2023.

The directive, which was signed on his first day in office, but took effect on Tuesday (today) instructed all government agencies managing foreign development aid programmes to immediately halt the disbursement of funds.

As a result, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) has ceased operations for at least 90 days, leaving global health funding temporarily frozen.

With an annual budget of \$6.5 billion, PEPFAR provides treatment for over 20.6 million people worldwide and has saved an estimated 26 million lives. However, the US State Department defended the decision, stating, "The United States is no longer



going to blindly dole out money with no return for the American people.”

Nigeria, home to about two million people living with HIV, is heavily dependent on PEPFAR for life-saving medications and healthcare support. Over the years, the initiative has contributed more than \$6 billion to Nigeria's national HIV/AIDS response.

Health experts warn that the suspension or potential termination of the programme will have devastating consequences, threatening access to treatment and hindering efforts to control the virus.

While there is speculation that Marco Rubio's appointment as Secretary of State could reinstate

PEPFAR due to his past support for the initiative, no exemption has been announced.

This development comes as President Trump's White House ordered a pause in all federal grants and loans starting on Tuesday, a sweeping decision that could disrupt education, health care and poverty programmes, housing assistance, disaster relief and a host of other initiatives that depend on trillions of federal dollars.

The freeze followed Trump's suspension of foreign aid last week, a move that began cutting off the supply of lifesaving medicines on Tuesday to countries around the world that depend on U.S. development assistance.

Caroline Kennedy calls RFK Jr. “predator” in letter to senators

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Caroline Kennedy, the cousin of Robert F. Kennedy Jr., sent a blistering letter to senators on Tuesday — a day before his confirmation hearings — that described him as a “predator” whose actions “have cost lives.”

In the letter to committee leaders, the former ambassador to Australia urged senators to reject his nomination as health and human services secretary, alleging that he “preys on the desperation of parents and sick children,” as well as his own family members.

“It’s no surprise that he keeps birds of prey as pets because he himself is a predator,” the two-page letter said. “His basement, his garage, and his dorm room were the centres of the action where drugs were available, and he enjoyed showing off how he put baby chickens and mice in the blender to feed his hawks. It was often a perverse scene of despair and violence.”

Family members who followed Robert F. Kennedy Jr. down the path of substance abuse, Caroline Kennedy wrote, “suffered addiction, illness and death, while Bobby has gone on to misrepresent, lie, and cheat his way through life.”

She also said that while her cousin has discouraged parents from vaccinating their children, he has vaccinated his own.



“Even before he fills this job, his constant denigration of our health care system and the conspiratorial half-truths he has told about vaccines, including in connection with Samoa’s deadly 2019 measles outbreak, have cost lives,” Caroline Kennedy wrote.

His “crusade against vaccination” serves to enrich him financially, she said. His financial disclosures showed RFK Jr. still intends to receive legal fees from Wisner Baum, a firm suing the maker of the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine Gardasil over its alleged failure to warn consumers about its risks.

She added that Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is “addicted to attention and power.”

President Trump’s controversial

pick is set to appear Wednesday before the Senate Committee on Finance, which will decide whether to advance his nomination. On Thursday, he is scheduled to testify before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. faces opposition from both sides of the aisle.

Conservative groups have expressed concern about his past statements in support of abortion rights, though he has reassured them that he would follow Trump’s promise to defer the issue to states. Democrats and vaccine experts have condemned him for spreading misleading claims on a range of vaccines, including the COVID-19 and polio shots.

Trump bans transgender troops from serving openly in military

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

President Donald Trump issued an executive order late on Tuesday night to ban transgender troops from serving openly in the military.

The move was no surprise. Trump spoke frequently on the campaign trail about his plans. “If you want to have a sex change or a social justice seminar, then you can do it somewhere else, but you’re not going to do it in the Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Air Force, Space Force, or the United States Marines — sorry,” Trump said at an August rally in North Carolina.

The order speaks of transgender identity in sweeping and dismissive terms, labeling it “radical gender ideology.”

“A man’s assertion that he is a woman, and his requirement that others honor this falsehood, is not consistent with the humility and selflessness required of a service member,” the order reads.

Secretary of Defence, Pete Hegseth has 30 days to submit a plan to implement the order; until then many of the details, particularly how it will affect people currently serving, remain unclear.

This order harkens back to a policy that started with a series of tweets from Trump in 2017 during his first term of office. The tweets surprised military brass at the time.

The policy that was ultimately developed took effect in 2019 and grandfathered in service members who were already receiving gender-affirming care. It was essentially a ban for anyone trying to enlist as trans or who wanted to begin to transition medically while serving. President Biden reversed the ban soon after he took office.

This order appears to go further than the policy from Trump’s first term. It may result in trans people with years of service, including combat tours of duty, being booted out of the military and losing their retirement benefits.

How many people could be affected



An estimated 15,000 military personnel are transgender. That number is based on a survey of active duty military and an estimate of those in the reserves and national guard.

The number of troops who will be affected by the ban is a portion of those overall numbers.

According to the Defence Health Agency, which operates the Department of Defence’s electronic health records, nearly 2,000 military personnel had a diagnosis of “gender dysphoria” as of 2021. That indicates they identify with a gender that’s different from the sex they were assigned at birth.

One argument for why a ban is needed has been that it would be expensive to provide gender-affirming care to troops.

“The use of public monies for transgender surgeries [...] should be ended,” wrote Trump’s former Acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller in Project 2025, a high-profile policy blueprint from the conservative Heritage Foundation.

The costs turn out to be very low. DHA’s data showed that the military spent \$15 million over five years on surgeries, hormones, and psychotherapy for transgender personnel, or about \$3 million per year.

This cost was considered to be “budget dust” by military leadership, according to former Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus. In contrast, the Department of Defence spent nearly \$300 million on erectile dysfunction medications, including Viagra, for military beneficiaries including retirees between 2011 and 2015.

Rationale for the policy

The new order makes a very broad argument against gender identity.

“Expressing a false ‘gender identity’ divergent from an individual’s sex cannot satisfy the rigorous standards necessary for military service,” the order reads.

“Beyond the hormonal and surgical medical interventions involved, adoption of a gender identity inconsistent with an individual’s sex conflicts with a soldier’s commitment to an honorable, truthful, and disciplined lifestyle, even in one’s personal life.”

“It’s dripping with animus,” says Sasha Buchert, a transgender veteran who is senior counsel with advocacy group Lambda Legal. “It sets the stage for rabid discrimination.”

Lambda Legal and the Human Rights Campaign have announced they will sue the federal government, and they argue that the ban described in the executive order is discriminatory. One lawsuit against the executive order was filed on Tuesday.

Current trans service members brace themselves

U.S. Navy Commander Emily Shilling

Mystery drones flying around Northeast US authorized by FAA – White House

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The mystery of the unexplained drone sightings over New Jersey and along the East Coast late last year has been solved, according to White House press secretary, Karoline Leavitt, who said she was relaying the update directly from President Trump in the Oval Office.

In her first White House press briefing Tuesday, Leavitt said, “After research and study, the drones that were flying over New Jersey in large numbers were authorized to be flown by the FAA for research and various other reasons.”

“Many of these drones were also hobbyists, recreational and private individuals that enjoy flying drones,” she added. “In time, it got worse due to curiosity. This was not the enemy.”

In December, mysterious drone sightings in New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and other East Coast states prompted a demand for officials to find the source of the flying objects, some of which were spotted near military installations.

The FBI was the lead agency investigating the sightings and said it received several thousand



tips. Local law enforcement agencies also investigated.

On social media, users shared theories that range from foreign interference to UFOs to hobbyist activity.

The FBI and Department of Homeland Security said there was no evidence” the reported drone sightings posed a threat to national security or public safety or had any foreign connection.

But state and local leaders were pushed to find more information and come up with a stronger response.

Authorities said many of the reported drone sightings could be aircraft or helicopters operating from the region’s numerous airports. New Jersey Sen. Andy

Kim said in posts on X that he “concluded that most of the possible drone sightings that were pointed out to me were almost certainly planes.”

As Leavitt said Tuesday, former White House national security spokesman John Kirby said in December that many reports were determined to be “a combination of lawful commercial drones, hobbyist drones and law enforcement drones.”

Some social media users had suggested they might shoot down the drones if they came too close to their homes, and in December, Trump also suggested shooting down the drones, though he did not clarify who should take such action.

Netanyahu to meet Trump in Washington amid Gaza ceasefire

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

U.S. President Donald Trump has said that he plans to speak to Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu and that Netanyahu would be traveling to Washington to meet with him.

Speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One on Monday, Trump did not give a date for the face-to-face meeting, but said it would take place “very soon.”

The meeting comes amid a fragile six-week ceasefire that has brought a temporary pause to 15 months of fighting between Israel and militant group Hamas in Gaza.

Trump also said he wants Egypt to take in Palestinians from Gaza, where much of the population has been displaced by Israel’s military response to Hamas’ Oct. 7, 2023 attack.

“I wish he would take some. We help them a lot, and I’m sure he can help us,” Trump said of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, whom he called a “friend.”

“I’d like to get them living in an area where they can live without disruption and revolution and violence,” Trump said of Palestinians in Gaza.

Trump’s comments come after he floated at the weekend the idea that Egypt and Jordan, which border Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories to the south and east, respectively, should take in Palestinians from Gaza because



“almost everything is demolished and people are dying there.”

The new U.S. president said he made the request in a phone call with Jordan’s King Abdullah on Saturday.

Jordan is already home to several million Palestinians, while tens of thousands live in Egypt. Both countries pushed back over the weekend after Trump said they should take in Palestinians from Gaza, where Israel’s military assault has caused a humanitarian crisis and killed tens of thousands.

The suggestion was also rejected by Hamas, the Palestinian militant group that runs Gaza, and Western-backed Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who exercises limited self-rule in some areas of the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Egypt, Jordan and other Arab countries oppose removing Palestinians from Gaza, in part because it is land that Palestinians want as part of a future Palestinian state.

The latest bloodshed in the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict was triggered on Oct. 7, 2023, when Palestinian Hamas militants attacked Israel, killing 1,200 and taking about 250 hostages, according to Israeli tallies.

Israel’s subsequent military assault on Gaza killed more than 47,000 Palestinians, according to the Gaza health ministry, and led to accusations of genocide and war crimes that Israel denies. The fighting has currently paused amid a fragile ceasefire.

Under the terms of the ceasefire, agreed this month with Egyptian and Qatari mediation and U.S. support, 33 hostages are due to be released during a six-week ceasefire, in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, many of them serving life sentences in Israeli jails.

Seven hostages and 290 prisoners have so far been exchanged.

Trump funding freeze: Democrats challenge 'unlawful' move; groups sue

...Say freeze will disrupt education, housing, disaster aid

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

President Donald Trump ordered a pause in all federal grants and loans starting on Tuesday, a sweeping decision that could disrupt education, health care and poverty programmes, housing assistance, disaster relief and a host of other initiatives that depend on trillions of federal dollars.

The freeze followed Trump's suspension of foreign aid last week, a move that began cutting off the supply of lifesaving medicines on Tuesday to countries around the world that depend on U.S. development assistance.

The Office of Management and Budget, which oversees the federal budget, said in a memo that grants and loans would be put on hold while the administration ensures they are aligned with the Republican president's priorities, including executive orders he signed ending diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.

The memo said Tuesday's freeze included any money intended "for foreign aid" and for "nongovernmental organizations," among other categories.

The White House said the pause would not impact Social Security or Medicare payments or "assistance provided directly to individuals." That means some food aid programs for the poor would not be affected, sources said.

It was not clear whether Medicaid would be affected. The health insurance programme for poor Americans cost \$618 billion in the last fiscal year, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, making it by far the government's largest grant programme.

Groups sue challenging funding freeze



Four groups representing nonprofits, public health professionals and small businesses filed a lawsuit on Tuesday challenging the directive, saying it "will have a devastating impact on hundreds of thousands of grant recipients."

Democratic state attorneys general also vowed to fight the order in court.

The OMB memo is the latest directive in the Trump administration's campaign to dramatically reshape the federal government, the nation's largest employer, since the Republican president took office on Jan. 20.

In a blizzard of executive actions, Trump has shuttered all diversity programs, imposed a hiring freeze, sent national security officials home and sought to strip away job protections from thousands of civil servants.

As part of last week's 90-day foreign aid suspension, the administration moved on Tuesday to stop the distribution of drugs for HIV, malaria and tuberculosis, as well as medical supplies for newborn babies, in countries supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The U.S. is the largest single donor of aid globally, disbursing \$72 billion in 2023.

The spending freeze ordered by OMB takes effect at 5 p.m. ET (2200 GMT) on Tuesday. Agencies have until Feb. 10 to submit detailed information on any programs subject to the suspension.

CHAOS, CONFUSION

The federal government provides money to a broad swath of nonprofits, which reacted with dismay and confusion.

"From pausing research on cures for childhood cancer to halting food assistance, safety from domestic violence, and closing suicide hotlines, the impact of even a short pause in funding could be devastating and cost lives," Diane Yentel, president and CEO of the National Council of Nonprofits, one of the four groups that sued on Tuesday, said in a statement.

A spokesperson for 'Meals on Wheels America', Jenny Young, said it was not clear whether the directive would impact their programmes delivering food to needy seniors.

The uncertainty is "creating chaos" for community entities providing meals, "which unfortunately means seniors may panic not knowing where their next meals will come from," she said.

56 bodies found in unmarked Mexico graves near US border

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

At least 56 bodies have been discovered in unmarked mass graves in northern Mexico, not far from the border with the United States, local prosecutors said Tuesday in a statement.

The remains included some bodies, some complete skeletons and other partial remains, as well as clothing and bullet casings. They were exhumed earlier this week in Chihuahua state — which lies along a drug and migrant trafficking route to the U.S. — in a military-aided operation that lasted several days, the statement said.

Prosecutors gave no details about the possible identities of the victims.

The remains have been sent to a forensics lab to determine the time and cause of death, with hopes that the victims can be identified, prosecutors said.

The bodies were exhumed in an area known as “El Willy,” controlled by a criminal organization called La Linea — one of the armed branches of the Juárez cartel active on the border, according to local media.

Mass graves are not uncommon throughout Mexico, especially in areas plagued by cartel violence. There are over 345,000 people in Mexico who have been reported missing, according to the country’s national registry.

Last month, Mexican authorities discovered 12 bodies buried in clandestine graves in Mexico’s northern Chihuahua state. Another 12 bodies were also found in several graves about two hours from Ciudad Juarez, which lies across the border from El Paso, Texas.

More than 450,000 people have been murdered countrywide since Mexico launched a major offensive against drug cartels in 2006.

One of the largest mass graves in Mexico was reported in 2017 when more than 250 skulls were found in what appears to be a drug cartel mass burial ground on the outskirts of the city of Veracruz



Super Eagles star Moses Simon welcomes baby boy

By **Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi**

Super Eagles and Nantes forward Moses Simon has announced the birth of his son, sharing the joyous news on his official X handle.

Simon posted heartfelt words of gratitude alongside photos of his wife during her pregnancy and their two daughters.

“I find no words strong enough to express my exact feelings, I’m sincerely grateful to GOD,” Simon wrote. “GOD has blessed my home with a baby boy. Thanks, my Queen, for this marvelous gift to our family,



you are indeed a strong woman and I am always proud of you ♥️.”

The football star, who has been in impressive form this season with five

goals and six assists in 17 Ligue 1 appearances, expressed pride and appreciation for his wife, calling her a “strong woman.”

Simon’s announcement has been met with widespread congratulations from fans, teammates, and football enthusiasts worldwide.

The birth of his son marks a joyous milestone for the 28-year-old winger, who continues to balance his thriving football career with family life.

Congratulations to the Simon family!

Injury-hit Neymar leaves Al-Hilal by mutual consent

By **Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi**

Brazilian star Neymar has parted ways with Saudi Pro League side Al-Hilal, with his contract terminated by mutual agreement.

The 32-year-old forward joined Al-Hilal in August 2023 for €90m (£77.6m) but managed only seven appearances for the club due to injuries, including a ruptured anterior cruciate ligament suffered during a World Cup qualifier against Uruguay in October 2023.

Al-Hilal released a statement thanking Neymar for his contributions, saying: “The club expresses its thanks and appreciation to Neymar for what he has provided throughout his career at Al-Hilal and wishes the player success in his career.”

Despite signing a two-year contract worth a reported €150m (£129.2m) annually, Neymar featured just twice this season, with his last appearance



coming as a substitute in November.

Neymar’s Legacy

Still the world’s most expensive player following his €222m (£200m) move to Paris Saint-Germain in 2017, Neymar has had a career marked by both brilliance and injuries.

After beginning his career at Santos,

where he scored 136 goals in 225 games, he moved to Barcelona in 2013. In four seasons with the Spanish giants, Neymar won two La Liga titles, the Champions League, and the Club World Cup.

At PSG, he claimed five league titles and surpassed Pelé to become Brazil’s all-time leading male goalscorer with 78 goals.

What’s Next?

With seven months remaining on his Al-Hilal contract, Neymar has been linked to a return to his boyhood club Santos in Brazil. Though he hasn’t played for Brazil since his 2023 knee injury, fans remain hopeful for a strong comeback.

As Neymar considers his next move, questions remain about whether he can reclaim the form that once made him one of football’s brightest stars.

Ex-Premier League Ref David Coote opens up on struggles

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

David Coote, a former Premier League referee who officiated over 100 top-flight matches, has spoken publicly about his sexuality and the immense pressures of his career. In a candid interview, Coote revealed he hid his identity as a gay man throughout his time in football, fearing the abuse and stigma it could bring.

The 42-year-old said the demands of his job, combined with personal struggles, led to behaviors that ultimately caused his dismissal from the Professional Game Match Officials Limited (PGMOL) in December 2024.

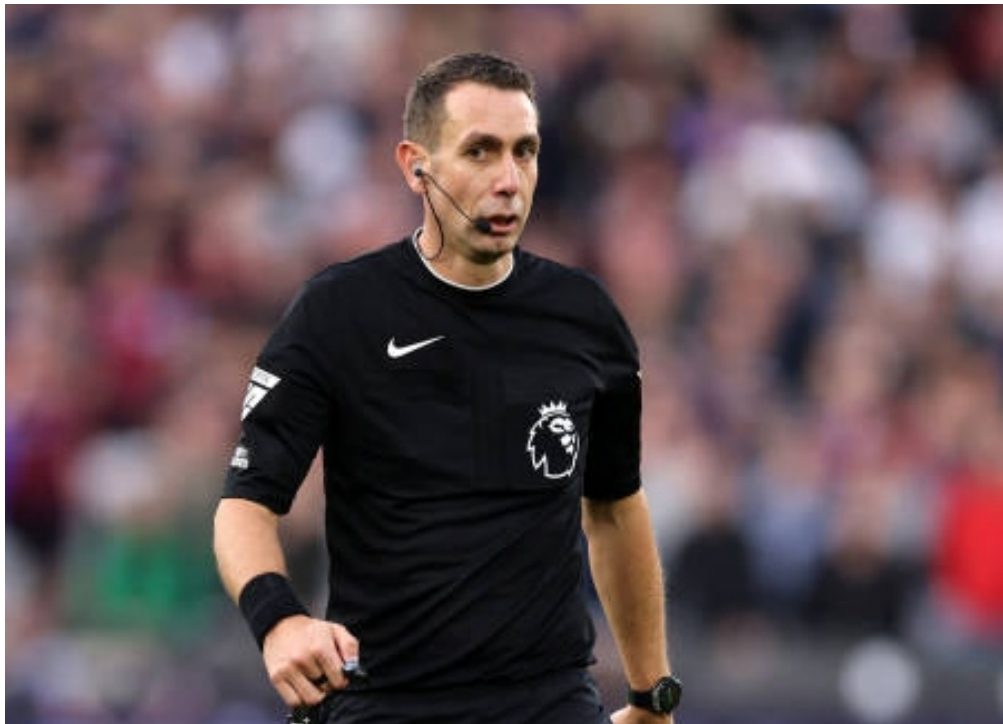
“A Deep Sense of Shame”

Speaking to The Sun, Coote described the emotional toll of hiding his sexuality, which he disclosed to his parents at 21 and friends at 25. “I’ve struggled with feeling proud of being ‘me’ over a long period of time,” he shared. “I received deeply unpleasant abuse during my career as a ref, and to add my sexuality to that would have been really difficult.”

He said this internal conflict contributed to behaviors that left him ashamed. “I hid my emotions as a young ref and my sexuality as well—a good quality as a referee but a terrible quality as a human being.”

Controversies and Misconduct

Coote’s career came under scrutiny after a video surfaced in November 2024, showing him making derogatory comments about Liverpool and former manager Jürgen Klopp. Days later, photos published during the European Championship appeared to show him using drugs. Coote apologized for his actions, explaining he was not sober in the video and was in a difficult place mentally.



“This has been one of the most challenging periods of my life,” Coote said in a separate statement. “I take full responsibility for my actions, which fell far below what was expected of me.”

The Football Association (FA) and UEFA have launched investigations into his conduct, while Coote maintains that the images do not reflect who he is today.

A Career Under Pressure

In addition to personal struggles, Coote cited the overwhelming demands of officiating as a factor in his actions. He officiated over 90 games globally in the 2023–24 season, including the European Championship and Olympics.

“The physical and psychological demands on match officials are really significant,” he said. “I didn’t recognize myself in the cocaine video. I can’t resonate with how I felt then, but that was me escaping the pressure.”

Coote also revealed that he faced death threats during his career, with some

directed at his late mother. His home was fitted with an accelerated response tag to ensure quick police access during emergencies.

A Message of Redemption

Having undergone therapy, Coote says he is now free of his drug habit and working to rebuild his life. He expressed deep regret for his actions and offered advice to others facing similar struggles.

“To anyone in my situation, I’d say seek help and talk to somebody. If you bottle it up like I have done, it has to come out in some way.”

Coote’s revelations come as the football world grapples with issues of abuse toward referees, with recent threats against referee Michael Oliver following Arsenal’s game against Wolves.

Despite his tumultuous journey, Coote remains hopeful about the future, focusing on personal growth and advocating for mental health awareness in sports.