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Tinubu commends N'Assembly for backing Rivers' state of emergency

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

President Bola Tinubu has heaped praises on the two chambers of the National Assembly for ratifying the proclamation of state of emergency in Rivers State.

Describing the move as a patriotic step towards restoring stability and safeguarding the national economy, the president, in a statement by his Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga issued on Thursday, praised the leadership of the Senate and House of Representatives for prioritising the security and welfare of Rivers State over partisan interests.

President Tinubu especially commended Senate President Godswill Akpabio, House Speaker Tajudeen Abbas, principal officers, and members for their dedication to national unity.

The statement read, "The crisis in Rivers State was at a perilous tipping point, threatening the security of vital oil and gas installations and undermining the national economy and the significant progress we have made in the reforms initiated since our administration commenced in May 2023."

He noted that the National Assembly's decision came after a thorough review of classified security briefings, which highlighted the urgent need to intervene to avert further escalation.



The president added, "As I detailed in my address to the nation on 18 March, the near-total collapse of governance, threats to federal economic assets, and the risk of widespread violence left no room for hesitation. This emergency measure is a lifeline to safeguard livelihoods, secure critical infrastructure, and restore democratic accountability."

President Tinubu, in a nationwide emergency broadcast on Tuesday, declared a state of emergency in Rivers State while also suspending the Governor, Sim Fubara, his deputy, and the members of the State House of Assembly for six months.

Tinubu also appointed a sole administrator to oversee the affairs of the state for the next six months.

"In the meantime, I hereby nominate Vice Admiral Ibok-Ete Ibas (retd) as Administrator to take charge of the affairs of the state in the interest of the good people of Rivers State."

The declaration comes just hours after an explosion was reported at an oil facility in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area.

The six-month state of emergency empowers the newly appointed sole administrator to stabilise Rivers State, address systemic breakdowns, and facilitate dialogue among conflicting parties.

The president reaffirmed his administration's commitment to working closely with the National Assembly to foster peace, economic resilience, and development across Nigeria.

"Today's decision exemplifies what our nation can achieve when unity of purpose and patriotism guide the actions of leaders. We remain steadfast in pursuing a safer, more prosperous Nigeria—one where every citizen's potential is safeguarded and nurtured," he said.

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

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PRODUCT COLOUR

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SIZE	TOTAL RATE
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10X5	255,238.00
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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	100,434.5
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
5X3	66,875.00
5X2	42,916.50
4X4	60,166.50
4X3	36,499.50
4X2	29,333.50
3X3	28,000.00
3X2	17,400.00
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10X3	171,000.00
9X6	232,500.00
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9X4	177,500.00
9X3	150,000.00
8X6	216,000.00
8X3	98,500.00
7X4	164,002.00
6X4	94,010.50
6X3	78,500.00
6X2	47,500.00
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5X3	57,819.00
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8X3	N/A
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FG reaffirms commitment to free speech, press freedom

By **Friday Omosola**

The Federal Government (FG) has reiterated its commitment to upholding free speech, fostering healthy opposition, and ensuring a thriving media environment as part of its efforts to strengthen Nigeria's democracy.

Minister of Information and National Orientation, Mohammed Idris, made this declaration on Thursday at the ongoing Ministerial Briefing Session in Abuja.

He emphasised that President Bola Tinubu remains dedicated to protecting constitutionally guaranteed rights and encouraging constructive criticism as a means of deepening democratic governance.

“President Tinubu, as a foremost democrat, is fully committed to protecting the constitutionally guaranteed rights of all Nigerians,” Idris stated.

“He also encourages constructive criticism and healthy opposition because of their essential role in reinforcing and deepening our democratic framework.”

Idris also reaffirmed the administration's commitment to press freedom, describing a free and responsible press as a crucial pillar of good governance, transparency, and national development.

“This administration believes that a free and responsible press is essential



for good governance, transparency, and national development,” he said.

The Minister took the opportunity to congratulate the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) on its 70th anniversary, calling it a milestone that underscores the union's dedication to press freedom and journalistic excellence.

The event featured briefings from Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Yusuf Tuggar, and Minister of Interior, Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo, as part of efforts to keep Nigerians informed about the policies and programmes of the Tinubu administration.

According to Idris, the Ministerial Briefing Session is a platform for government accountability and public engagement, allowing Nigerians direct insight into key policies, initiatives, and reforms.

“This session is a vital opportunity for Honourable Ministers to update

Nigerians on the progress and significant milestones achieved under their stewardship.

“Through this interactive forum, enhanced by multimedia channels, we reaffirm our commitment to transparency and public engagement,” he added.

Idris commended Ambassador Tuggar for his efforts in promoting Nigeria's global image through proactive diplomacy and strategic international engagements.

He also praised Tunji-Ojo for introducing innovative reforms to reposition the Ministry of Interior in line with the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Tinubu.

The Minister reaffirmed that the government will continue to support a conducive media environment while upholding democratic principles that allow for open discourse and critical engagement.

NYSC assures Corps members of N77,000 allowance payment in March

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), has assured corps members that their new monthly allowance of N77,000 will be credited to their accounts starting from March 2025.

The Corps' Director-General, Brig Gen Olakunle Oluseye Nafiu, who spoke during an interactive session with Corps members at the Wuse and Garki NYSC zonal offices in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, reaffirmed the commitment of both the Scheme and the Nigerian government to prioritising the welfare of corps members.

He emphasised that their well-being remains a top priority.

“The NYSC is good at record-keeping, and I can assure you that your money will be paid. The nation and the Scheme appreciate you,” he assured the corps members.

General Nafiu commended the



dedication and selfless service of Corps members, urging them to remain calm, disciplined, focused, and committed to national development.

He praised the founding vision of the Scheme, emphasising that NYSC serves as a bridge-building platform, fostering unity and exposing young graduates to diverse cultures across Nigeria.

Furthermore, he reiterated the NYSC Management's commitment to instilling virtues of patriotism, discipline, self-restraint, good morals,

leadership, and teamwork in corps members.

In response, a corps member, Zaka Deborah Alheri, speaking on behalf of her colleagues at the Garki Zone, expressed gratitude to the Director-General for his dedication to ensuring the prompt payment of the increased allowance.

The announcement has been met with enthusiasm among corps members, who view the increase as a significant step toward improving their welfare during the one-year mandatory service to the nation.

Senate approves Tinubu's request for emergency rule in Rivers

By Damilola Olufemi

The Senate has approved President Bola Tinubu's request for emergency rule in Rivers state.

The decision of the Senate was taken after a closed-door session on Thursday by the lawmakers. This comes a few hours after the House of Representatives approved the same request by the president.

New Daily Prime reported that the approval came on Thursday through a voice vote during plenary in the green chamber.

Recall that Tinubu declared a state of emergency in Rivers State following the protracted political crisis in the state on Tuesday, 18th March 2025.

The President proclaimed during a nationwide broadcast and suspended Governor Siminalayi Fubara; his deputy Ngozi Odu; and all the members of the House of Assembly for six months.

Tinubu also nominated retired Vice Admiral Ibokette Ibas as administrator to take charge of the affairs of the state for the first six months.



He cited Section 305 of the 1999 Constitution which interprets a state of emergency as a situation of national danger, disaster or terrorist attacks in which a government suspends normal constitutional procedures to regain control.

“By this declaration, the Governor of Rivers State, Mr Siminalayi Fubara, his deputy, Mrs Ngozi Odu and all elected members of the House of Assembly of Rivers State are hereby suspended for an initial period of six months.

“In the meantime, I hereby nominate Vice Admiral Ibokette Ibas (Rtd) as Administrator to take charge of the affairs of the state in the interest of the good people of Rivers State.

“For the avoidance of doubt, this declaration does not affect the judicial arm of Rivers State, which shall continue to function in accordance with their constitutional mandate.

“The Administrator will not make any new laws. He will, however, be free to formulate regulations as may be found necessary to do his job, but such regulations will need to be considered and approved by the Federal Executive Council and promulgated by the President for the state.

“This declaration has been published in the Federal Gazette, a copy of which has been forwarded to the National Assembly in accordance with the Constitution,” Tinubu said.

Two Chinese workers killed, 20 others burnt in Abuja explosion

By Dave Oludare Oso



The tragic tanker explosion near the Nyanya Bridge in Abuja has consumed the lives of two staff members of a Chinese construction company, named WE Construction.

According to reports, the explosion also left more than 20 other staff of the company with varying degrees of injuries.

The accident occurred around 6:58pm on Wednesday when a Dangote trailer, heavily loaded with cement, lost control while approaching Nyanya Bridge from AYA and crashed into stationary vehicles trapped in the traffic.

The impact ignited a massive inferno,

causing panic among bystanders and motorists.

It was learnt that one of the deceased staff members died at the Asokoro Hospital, while the other were being treated for their injuries at the National Hospital.

Confirming the incident on Thursday, representatives from WE Construction, stated that two of their workers had died and more than 20 others sustained varying degrees of injuries.

One of them said, “We lost two workers, and 20 others sustained injuries. As I speak to you now, I have been receiving calls about two

individuals I have not yet seen. They are not necessarily missing, but their families have informed me that they are injured. However, some of the injured have been taken to hospitals that may be out of my reach, making it difficult to track them.”

The representative added that he had been working tirelessly across Abuja since the incident to coordinate with hospitals and families of the affected staff.

“I have been working across almost the entire city of Abuja since the incident occurred,” he said.

Okpebholo rejects South-South govts' stance on Tinubu's Rivers emergency rule

By Friday Omosola



Edo State Governor, Monday Okpebholo, has distanced himself from the South-South Governors' Forum's condemnation of President Bola Tinubu's declaration of a state of emergency in Rivers State.

In a statement issued by his Chief Press Secretary, Fred Itua, Okpebholo clarified that the forum's position did not reflect his views, as he was neither consulted nor informed before the statement was released.

While acknowledging the right of other South-South governors to express their opinions, he firmly dissociated himself from

any stance opposing the emergency declaration.

According to him, he fully supports the measures taken by President Tinubu, believing they will bring lasting peace and stability to Rivers State and the South-South region.

Meanwhile, The New Daily Prime reported that the South-South Governors' Forum, through its chairman, Bayelsa State Governor Douye Diri, rejected the declaration, arguing that the current political situation in Rivers State does not meet the constitutional criteria for such an action.

The forum condemned Tinubu's decision, emphasising that a state of emergency should only be declared under extreme circumstances such as war, external aggression, or a total breakdown of public order—none of which, they argued, apply to Rivers State.

Additionally, the forum highlighted that the Nigerian Constitution outlines clear procedures for the removal of a governor and deputy governor, as well as the dissolution of a legislature.

They suggested that these procedures may not have been properly followed in this case.

Police arrest Mohbad's brother, friend in Lagos

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

Operatives of the Nigeria Police have arrested Adura Aloba, a younger brother of the late Nigerian singer, Ilerioluwa Aloba, popularly known as Mohbad.

Reports say Adura was arrested on the premises of the Magistrates' Court in Ogba, Lagos State.

Adura was said to have been detained on Wednesday alongside his associate, Ibrahim Koleosho, also known as King White.

The duo were picked up after attending a legal proceeding concerning a mobile phone transaction involving a buyer identified as Damola Ayinde.

This development comes months after Mohbad's mother, Abosede, had a heated exchange with Nollywood actor Yomi Fabiyi during a press briefing in January.

The clash stemmed from allegations against Adura, which were linked to a petition Fabiyi submitted on December 13, 2024.

In the petition, Fabiyi accused Adura of initiating an Instagram conversation in which he allegedly claimed to possess video evidence related to Mohbad's death.

Fabiyi in the petition he posted on his social media handles, alleged that the chat went on with Adura demanding the sum of N3 million to be paid in Bitcoin in exchange for the video evidence.

However, Adura denied the allegation, stating that the chat was from Ayinde



whom he had sold his phone to.

A forensic investigation has since been conducted while the court is still probing the case.

Reacting to the arrest, Abosede broke down in tears in a viral video monitored seen by NEW DAILY PRIME on Wednesday, pleading for help to locate her son.

In the viral video, she could be heard wailing inside a vehicle, claiming that actor Yomi Fabiyi and one Sam Jojo orchestrated the abduction.

Speaking in Yoruba, she said, "Please help me, Nigerians. Yomi Fabiyi and Sam Jojo have taken my son. I don't know where they have taken him to. He asked them to take my son away. My son did nothing to them. They must not lay a hand on him, he is sick. Demola, you've put me in trouble. Mohbad's spirit will fight you."

Adura had earlier in December demanded a public apology from Fabiyi, Ayinde, and others, alleging that they hacked his TikTok account to damage his reputation.

He had also filed an N1bn lawsuit against them for defamation, tampering with evidence, and fraudulent claims implicating him.

A member of the family who spoke to our correspondent on the condition of anonymity on Wednesday said the arrest was not unconnected to a heated exchange of words between Koleoso and Fabiyi.

"We don't know the whereabouts of Adura but I can confirm that his friend, Koleosho, was arrested after the court proceedings today. Everything just happened suddenly. We learnt there has been some exchange of words between Koleosho and Fabiyi over the issue relating to the phone and this may have led to the arrest. We don't know where the security men came from but we have been trying to locate their whereabouts." the family source disclosed.

Fabiyi did not respond to calls made to his phone, while a text message sent to him had yet to be replied to as of the time this report was filed.

Sole administrator Ibok-ete Ibas arrives in Rivers state to resume duties

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Vice Admiral Ibok-ete Ibas (retd.), the newly appointed Sole Administrator for Rivers State, has officially arrived in the state to begin his duties.

Ibas touched down at the Port Harcourt International Airport at approximately 11:25 am on Thursday, March 20, where he was warmly received by key state officials and security personnel.

Upon arrival, Ibas, accompanied by the state Commissioner of Police, Olugbenga Adepoju, and the Assistant Inspector General of Police for Zone 16, swiftly proceeded to the Government House in Port Harcourt.

His arrival marked the start of his mandate in overseeing the state's administration following the declaration of a state of emergency by President Bola Tinubu.

At the Government House, Ibas was given a tour of the facilities



and was introduced to various government officials.

He is now engaged in a closed-door meeting with senior security officers, a Federal Government delegation, and state government officials to discuss the immediate priorities and security concerns within the state.

Ibas was sworn in on Wednesday, March 19, by President Tinubu, following the recent suspension of Governor Sim Fubara and other state officials as part of the ongoing state of emergency.

The declaration came after a series of crises in the state,

including allegations of constitutional breaches, militant activities, and escalating security challenges. Ibas' primary role as the sole administrator is to stabilise the state, address ongoing governance issues, and restore law and order.

The people of Rivers State and political observers are watching closely to see how Ibas will navigate the complex political and security landscape in the coming months.

The outcome of his tenure could have far-reaching implications for the state's governance and the broader political environment.

Lagos govt reaffirms commitment to consumer rights, sustainable living

By Friday Omosola

The Lagos State Government has reiterated its commitment to safeguarding consumer rights and promoting sustainable living by ensuring residents are protected from substandard products while encouraging environmentally responsible consumption.

Governor Babajide Olusola Sanwo-Olu gave this assurance during the week at the 2025 World Consumer Rights Day celebration, organised by the Lagos State Consumer Protection Agency (LASCOPA) at the Marriott Hotel, GRA, Ikeja.

Represented by the Secretary to the State Government, Abimbola Salu-Hudeyin, the governor highlighted the crucial role consumers play in driving economic growth and reaffirmed his administration's dedication to upholding their rights under the T.H.E.M.E.S Plus development agenda.

Sanwo-Olu emphasised the need for greater awareness and policies that empower consumers to make informed, environmentally responsible choices without sacrificing quality or affordability.

He also noted that the Lagos State Carbon Registry had been established to monitor and reduce carbon



emissions across key industries.

Delivering the keynote address, the Honourable Commissioner for Commerce, Cooperatives, Trade, and Investment, Folashade Kaosarat Ambrose-Medebem, stressed the power of consumers in shaping markets and influencing businesses. She pointed out challenges such as limited access to sustainable products, unfair trade practices, and the rising cost of living.

Represented by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, Dr Olugbemiga Ayoola Aina, the Commissioner called for a collective effort from government, businesses, and civil society to ensure that the shift toward sustainability remains fair, inclusive, and beneficial to all.

In his remarks, the General Manager of LASCOPA, Afolabi Solebo, reaffirmed the agency's commitment to protecting consumer rights and promoting fair business practices.

He assured that under Governor Sanwo-Olu's leadership, the agency would continue advocating for greater consumer empowerment, ensuring equitable access to resources, and fostering responsible consumption that benefits both people and the environment.

"As the world faces pressing environmental, economic, and social challenges, consumer rights must align with policies that promote sustainable living and fair access to essential resources," Solebo stated.

House of Reps approves Tinubu's emergency rule in Rivers

By Damilola Olufemi



The House of Representatives has consented request for emergency rule in Rivers state by President Bola Tinubu.

The approval came on Thursday through a voice vote during plenary in the green chamber.

Recall that Tinubu has declared a state of emergency in Rivers State following the protracted political crisis in the state on Tuesday, 18th March, 2025.

The President proclaimed during a nationwide broadcast and suspended Governor Siminalayi Fubara; his deputy Ngozi Odu; and all the members of the House of Assembly for six months.

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administrator to take charge of the affairs of the state for the first six months.

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“The Administrator will not make any new laws. He will, however, be free to formulate regulations as may be found necessary to do his job, but such regulations will need to be considered and approved by the Federal Executive Council and promulgated by the President for the state.

“This declaration has been published in the Federal Gazette, a copy of which has been forwarded to the National Assembly in accordance with the Constitution,” Tinubu said.

Obi condemns Reps' voice vote approval of Tinubu's emergency rule in Rivers

By Friday Omosola

Peter Obi, the 2023 presidential candidate of the Labour Party (LP), has criticized the House of Representatives for approving President Bola Tinubu's declaration of a state of emergency in Rivers State through a voice vote.

The New Daily Prime earlier reported that Tinubu suspended Governor Sim Fubara, his deputy, and all elected members of the State Assembly for six months.

The House of Representatives endorsed the president's proclamation via a voice vote during Thursday's plenary session.

Reacting in a statement on his X page, Obi argued that the Constitution mandates an individual roll-call vote, requiring lawmakers to verbally express their stance by answering "yes" or "no."

The former Anambra State governor condemned the use of a voice vote, stating that it violates constitutional provisions and undermines public trust in the democratic process, as well as the transparency and integrity of the National Assembly.

READ ALSO: REPS passes bill to establish new Oyo State, rename existing Oyo State to Ibadan State

"While still agonizing over the ongoing deterioration of democracy in our nation, especially with the situation in Rivers State, and trying to reach out to our National Assembly members not to support and sustain the unconstitutionality and arbitrariness, I just heard that they have added salt to injury by using a voice vote to pass the illegality.

"You cannot determine a two-thirds majority by a voice vote. While a two-thirds majority is crucial, it does not justify bypassing proper procedures and undermining the principles of



transparency and accountability. Decisions of such magnitude must be made with integrity, following the letter and spirit of the law", he said.

Obi described the development as deeply disheartening, emphasizing that a decision as critical as approving an emergency proclamation—one with the potential to reshape the nation's trajectory—was handled with blatant disregard for constitutional procedures.

He reiterated that the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria (as amended) mandates such a proclamation to be approved by at least two-thirds of all members in both chambers—the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Obi further stressed that a mere voice vote of "Aye" or "Nay" is insufficient to determine this crucial threshold, arguing that when a supermajority is required, it necessitates a recorded vote—whether by division, roll call, or electronic means.

"This isn't just a technicality; it's a matter of law and legitimacy. The Senate Standing Orders and House Rules were

established to ensure that decisions of this magnitude are made transparently, with accountability. Ignoring these procedures is not just an oversight; it is a betrayal of the democratic process.

"A voice vote for such a critical matter is not just insufficient; it's a dangerous precedent. If we can bend the rules so easily, what stops us from undermining other pillars of democracy? Today, it's a voice vote on a state of emergency — tomorrow, it could be a voice vote on citizens' fundamental rights.

READ ALSO: BREAKING: House of Reps approves Tinubu's emergency rule in Rivers

"It is painful to think that members of the National Assembly, who swore to uphold the Constitution, could participate in a process that sidesteps the very essence of due process. We must ask ourselves: If the law no longer anchors our decisions, then what does? This is not just a flawed procedure; it is a warning signal. We cannot afford to keep gambling with the soul of our democracy."

PDP's 28-year ground rent arrears led to land revocation - Director

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Director of Lands for the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Chijioke Nwanwkoze, has clarified that the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has failed to pay ground rent for its national secretariat for 28 years, amounting to N7.6 million.

Nwanwkoze made this statement on Wednesday, March 19, in Abuja while addressing the press regarding the ongoing controversy surrounding the revocation of the PDP's land title for its national secretariat.

This follows a decision by the FCT Minister, Nyesom Wike, to revoke the land title for the PDP secretariat, which is located in the Central Area of Abuja.

The revocation was formalised in a letter dated March 13, 2025, titled "Notice of Revocation of Right of Occupancy with File No. MISC 81346 in respect of Plot No. 243 within Central Area (A00) District, Abuja."

In response to this move, the PDP National Publicity Secretary, Deborah Ologunagba, criticised the revocation of the land titles for the PDP's Wadata Plaza and its new property under construction.

However, Nwanwkoze explained that the revocation only concerned the property under construction in the Central Area. He further clarified that the Wadata Plaza building, which the PDP occupies as its national headquarters, was never owned by the party in the first place.

"The minister revoked 4,794 titles, and the PDP is just one of them, The property where they are occupying their national headquarters is not their property. It belongs to Samaila Maman Ofi, who purchased it from Wadata and had it registered via an assignment," Nwanwkoze said.

FCTA



Federal Capital Territory Administration

He went on to state that the PDP owed 28 years' worth of ground rent, amounting to N7,603,504.31, from 1998 to 2025.

Despite repeated notices to pay the arrears, the PDP had not settled the debt, prompting the minister to take action.

"We have given people notices to pay, or risk having their titles revoked. Since 2023, those notices have been out, but no payment has been made, The revocation applies to one property in the Central Area, not two," he continued.

Nwanwkoze also pointed out that the revocation notice for the Wadata Plaza property in Wuse Zone 5 had been served on the property's owner, who resides in Kaduna.

He explained that, by law, revocation notices are only served on title holders, not tenants or occupiers like the PDP.

"The revocation notice for the Wadata Plaza property has been served on the owner at his Kaduna address, We did not serve a revocation notice on the PDP because they are tenants, not the title

holders," Nwanwkoze said.

Addressing claims that the revocation exercise was specifically targeted at the PDP, Nwanwkoze assured the public that the exercise had impacted numerous government institutions, private organisations, and individuals who had also failed to pay ground rent for years.

"This exercise is not aimed at the PDP alone. There are 4,794 titles involved, and many of them belong to government bodies, private organisations, and individuals who have defaulted on their payments for over 40 years, We are talking about people who have owed for 43, 42, 41 years—almost half the lifetime of their grant," he clarified.

He further stressed the need for accountability, stating that it was unacceptable for people to go decades without paying the necessary ground rent.

"The grants are typically for 99 years. So, owing for almost half of that period is certainly not good enough," he concluded.

NYSC may spend N307.6bn on corps members' allowances in 2025

By **Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye**

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) is projected to spend up to N307.6 billion on mobilising and paying allowances to corps members in 2025, following an increase in the monthly stipend from N33,000 to N77,000.

This hike in allowances came after the signing of the new minimum wage bill into law in May 2024.

With an average of 333,000 corps members mobilised annually across three batches, each corps member will receive N77,000, amounting to N25.64 billion per batch.



Over the course of the year, this brings the total allocated for allowances to N307.6 billion.

In the 2025 budget proposal, the Federal Government allocated N430.7 billion to

the NYSC, with N372.9 billion, or 86.5%, set aside for corps members' allowances.

Despite the allocation, the implementation of the new N77,000 allowance has not yet occurred, with the NYSC citing the need for cash backing before payments can begin.

The NYSC has assured that payments will commence in March 2025, although the delay in disbursing the new allowance rate continues to be a matter of concern.

Nigerian arrested with cocaine, heroin worth N3.2bn in Ghana

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

Operatives of the Narcotics Control Commission (NACOC) have arrested a 56-year-old Nigerian, Uchechukwu Chima in Oyarifa, a suburb of Accra, Ghana, following an intelligence-led crackdown.

After NACOC operatives searched Chima's hideout, they uncovered substances suspected to be narcotic drugs and subsequent field tests confirmed the presence of cocaine and heroin.

The Nigerian national's arrest was announced in a statement signed by the Acting Director, Public Affairs and International Relations, Ministry of the Interior, Ghana, Francis Opoku Amoah.



NACOC stated, "The suspected narcotic substances, with a total weight of about 192kg of cocaine and 0.42kg of heroin, are estimated at a street value of Two Million, One Hundred and Twenty-one Thousand, Six Hundred and Sixty United States Dollars (US\$2.1 Million or N3.2 billion).

"The suspect, Uchechukwu Chima, who has been a target for NACOC for some time now, is noted to be the brain behind some seizures/arrests made by NACOC in the past."

NACOC said by the seizure and arrest, it has taken "this substantial quantity of drugs off the street, saving millions of lives of people who would have otherwise perished from abusing these hard drugs.

"NACOC remains committed to making Ghana an unprofitable destination for drug trafficking and thus protecting the safety and well-being of all Ghanaians and the international community."

Oyo govt drops charges against Naomi, Oriyomi Hamzat, School Principal over Ibadan Stampede

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye



The Oyo State Government has officially withdrawn criminal charges against Naomi Silekunola, the ex-wife of the Ooni of Ife; Alhaji Oriyomi Hamzat, owner of Agidigbo FM; and Abdullahi Fasasi, the principal of Islamic High School, Bashorun, Ibadan, in connection with the deadly stampede during a December 2024 event that resulted in the deaths of at least 35 children.

Appearing in court on Thursday, March 20, the three defendants appeared visibly relieved, exchanging pleasantries after the ruling.

Oyo State Attorney General, Abiodun Aikomo, later confirmed the decision, stating that while the incident was tragic, the prosecution acknowledged the defendants' empathy and their efforts to support the victims' families.

"In law, when unnatural deaths occur, the state must act. However, the goal of prosecution is justice, not persecution. Given the circumstances, we decided to discontinue the charges," Aikomo said in a live broadcast.

This decision follows weeks of legal proceedings, during which the Oyo State High Court in Ibadan had granted bail to the defendants.

Justice Kamorudeen Olawoyin had set Naomi's bail at N10 million with two sureties, while Hamzat and Fasasi were granted similar conditions.

The court also ordered them to surrender their passports and prohibited media interviews.

The case arose from the fatal stampede at Islamic High School, Ibadan, during a

children's event that turned chaotic, leading to the tragic loss of life.

The families of the victims and the public were left devastated by the incident.

Initially, the prosecution had opposed bail, citing the severity of the case, while the defense argued that the accused had fully cooperated with the authorities and posed no flight risk.

Oyo State Governor Seyi Makinde had previously vowed that those responsible would face trial but later expressed willingness to allow for bail.

With the charges now dropped, the case has taken an unexpected turn, though the painful memories of the tragedy remain fresh in the hearts of many.

Atiku rallies opposition to take on APC in 2027

By Friday Omosola

Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar has unveiled plans to unite opposition forces in a bid to unseat the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) in the 2027 elections.

Speaking at a press conference in Abuja on Thursday, Atiku emphasised the need for a strong coalition to counter the APC's grip on power.

The gathering, organised by concerned political figures and stakeholders, was a direct response to President Bola Tinubu's controversial declaration of a state of emergency in Rivers State.

The event brought together prominent politicians, including former Kaduna State Governor Nasir el-Rufai, former Imo State Governor Emeka Ihedioha, ex-APC National Working Committee (NWC) member Salihu Lukman, and former Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) Babachir Lawal.

When asked about the prospect of unified opposition, Atiku



confirmed the initiative, signalling a determined effort to consolidate political influence ahead of the next general elections.

He criticised Tinubu's handling of the Rivers crisis, accusing him of undermining democratic principles through partisan decision-making.

According to Atiku, the president's actions violate the core responsibilities of his office.

"Tinubu has abandoned the principles of fairness and justice, choosing instead to engage in political favouritism. This is a betrayal of the oath he took to serve all Nigerians without bias," he said.

Atiku also condemned Tinubu's

national address on March 18, 2025, describing it as a blatant display of partiality that further eroded public trust in the presidency.

Calling on Nigerians to reject the state of emergency, he warned that it posed a direct threat to the democratic structure of Rivers State.

He urged political leaders and citizens alike to resist what he called a "dangerous overreach" by the federal government.

As tensions mount over the unfolding political crisis and discontent grows among opposition figures, the proposed coalition could emerge as a formidable challenge to the APC's dominance in the lead-up to the 2027 elections.

Police Inspector, 12 Benue bandits killed in gun duel

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



1 2 bandits and a police officer, Inspector Terfa Anyiatse, have been killed in Buruku Local Government Area of Benue State, the Police authorities in the state have confirmed.

The spokesperson for the state command, Catherine Anene, in a statement issued late Wednesday, said the Operation Zenda Joint Task force members embarked on raids across the state when the encounter with the gunmen occurred.

The statement read, “On 19/3/2025

at about 0200hrs, while some of the operatives were on their way to a criminal hideout at Agwabi, Tombo ward, Buruku Local Government Area, they ran into an ambush laid by the bandits who engaged the police in a fierce gun duel.

“In response, the police countered the ambush with more superior firepower that subdued the gang.

“At the end of the crossfire, 12 bandits were neutralised while others escaped. The injured bandits were taken to the hospital where they were confirmed dead

and deposited at the hospital morgue.

“Items recovered from them include; three AK-47 rifles, six rounds of live ammunition, camouflage uniforms and assorted charms.”

The PPRO stated further, “Unfortunately, one of the police team members, Inspector Terfa Anyiatse, sustained a gunshot injury and was eventually confirmed dead by a doctor. His corpse has also been deposited at the morgue.”

Over 60,000 South Africans apply for Trump's asylum offer

By Dave Oludare Oso

Thousands of South Africans, particularly white farmers, have reportedly expressed interest in seeking asylum in the United States following President Trump's offer.

President Trump's offer of asylum to South African farmers has led to increased interest from thousands of South Africans

The initiative aims to provide a safe haven for farmers feeling threatened by land reform policies and violence in South Africa

The South African Chamber of Commerce in the USA reported that over 60,000 South Africans have expressed interest in moving to the U.S.

This development comes amid ongoing concerns over land reform policies, which have significantly impacted some South African farmers and, according to some, have led to unsafe living conditions—a situation that President Trump has previously criticised.

Trump's offer has sparked debates on both sides, with some viewing it as a humanitarian gesture, while others see it as politically motivated.

The growing interest in asylum underscores the deep-rooted tensions surrounding land ownership, economic challenges, and security issues in South Africa.

Over 60,000 South Africans apply

The BBC reports that the South African Chamber of Commerce in the USA (SACCUSA) says more than 60,000 South Africans have expressed interest in moving to the U.S. following Washington's offer to resettle members of the country's Afrikaner community.

SACCUSA stated that its website received tens of thousands of registrations from individuals seeking more information about President Donald Trump's asylum offer.

Trump's asylum offer sparks interest as thousands of South Africans apply
Trump's asylum offer sparks interest as thousands of South Africans apply



Relations between the US and South Africa have become increasingly strained leading to heightened tensions between Washington and Pretoria.

According to the organisation's president, Neil Diamond, the list of interested individuals—totaling approximately 67,042—mostly consisted of people with Afrikaner or English names.

This list has been handed over to the U.S. embassy in Pretoria.

An embassy official confirmed to the BBC that it had received the list. Additionally, SACCUSA revealed that most of those who expressed interest in migrating were between the ages of 25 and 45 and had between two and three dependents.

Trump's open offer for South African farmers

US President Donald Trump's asylum offer to distressed South African farmers has sparked significant attention.

The initiative aims to provide a safe haven for farmers who feel threatened by land reform policies and violence in South Africa. This development comes amid escalating tensions between South Africa and the US.

In January, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa signed a bill into law allowing the state to seize land without compensation if deemed in the "public interest."

This move followed years of calls for land reform, with activists and politicians advocating for the redistribution of farmland from the white minority.

Trump's asylum offer has been met with

mixed reactions, with some viewing it as a humanitarian gesture and others seeing it as a politically motivated move.

The situation highlights the complex and sensitive nature of land reform in South Africa, as well as the country's strained relations with the US.

US-South Africa relations on the brink

Relations between the US and South Africa have become increasingly strained since Trump became president in January.

The asylum offer to distressed South African farmers has also led to heightened tensions between Washington and Pretoria.

The move, which follows concerns over land reform policies and farm-related violence in South Africa, has been met with mixed reactions.

The South African government has criticised the offer, viewing it as interference in domestic affairs and a misrepresentation of the country's land policies.

Meanwhile, Trump's initiative has fueled debates on international relations, race, and economic stability, further complicating diplomatic ties between the two nations.

In response to the strained relationship, the U.S. has imposed strict sanctions on South Africa, adding another layer of tension to an already fragile diplomatic situation.

The sanctions are expected to impact trade and economic cooperation between the two countries, deepening the fallout from Trump's controversial policy.

Bet on Nigerian recovery draws investors seeking to dodge trade wars

By New Daily Prime

Africa's most populous country among former crisis-hit economies attracting foreign inflows

Foreign investors have flocked to Nigeria's markets in recent months, as the threat of a US trade war with larger developing economies has sent portfolio managers looking for cover in former crisis-hit frontier markets now on the rebound.

The Nigerian naira is among the world's top-performing currencies since November's US election with a rise of more than 7 per cent against the dollar, as a turnaround in the continent's most populous nation — and the lure of yields of 20 per cent to 25 per cent — trigger a rally in the local bond market following a massive devaluation.

The rally in Nigerian assets reflects how "idiosyncratic" trades, or specific bets on countries coming out of currency crises or defaults, are in favour as investors are finding it increasingly hard to read how US President Donald Trump's threats of tariffs will affect emerging markets as a whole.

"Even though everyone is doing a rethink with Trump's policies and the inflation impact, if at all, of tariffs, investors are looking for potential places to invest that might be able to be resilient to all of that going on in the background," said Razia Khan, Standard Chartered's head of research for Africa and the Middle East.

Commodity-exporting frontier economies such as Nigeria are less integrated into the US economy than richer emerging markets that produce higher-value goods such as automobiles or electrical goods. That insulates the former group from wider tariff-driven sell-offs, said Alexis de Mones, debt portfolio manager at Ashmore, the emerging markets asset manager.

"They don't have high trade surpluses with the US [and] they are not as exposed to the noise from tariffs in general," he said.

Many of these countries are also coming off very difficult periods after high global interest rates in recent years led foreign investors to pull their money out, which exposed weak currencies and sent governments either to the



IMF for help or forced drastic self-help economic policies.

Egypt, Turkey and other countries that were hit by capital flight have enticed investors back in the past year with tough economic medicine to raise interest rates. Dropping unsustainable pegs to the dollar has helped drive double-digit returns on local currency bonds. Nigerian local currency government bonds have also performed well, especially in the past month.

Many emerging market hedge funds produced their best returns in years by chasing these opportunities last year, and similar moves in dollar bonds of countries such as Argentina and Ecuador.

"Foreign portfolio investors are thinking Nigeria could be the next Turkey," said Charlie Robertson, head of macro strategy at FIM Partners. "There's been proper change in the fundamentals of the Nigerian economy . . . two years ago, you had a currency that was uninvestable."

Nigeria's stock market has gained about 4 per cent in dollar terms this year, better than many bigger markets. Nigeria had fallen off the radar for many international investors in recent years as controls on the naira made it difficult to extricate profits.

Since President Bola Tinubu took office nearly two years ago, his government has removed fuel subsidies that had burned up foreign reserves, while the central bank removed a peg that propped up the value of the naira and increased rates to 27.5 per cent.

The currency lost 70 per cent of its value against the dollar after two devaluations, but it has stabilised since November and is currently trading at what many observers believe is closer to its fair value, at 1,541 to the dollar.

"There has been a series of economic reforms that have really made a difference in the tradability of Nigeria from a local currency assets point of view," de Mones said. "Under the previous administration, the naira was kept at an artificially high level," he said. "If you had invested in a prior period and you had to get dollars out, you had to get in the queue."

Despite the inflows of dollars from bonds bought by foreign investors, and a recovery in oil production to a four-year high last month, Nigeria's gross reserves have fallen so far this year, to \$38.5bn from \$40bn.

Investors said the drop was likely to reflect the central bank paying down debts that inflated the gross reserves measure. This would improve net reserves, but these are not published. Policymakers also appear to be targeting stability or slight appreciation in the naira, investors added.

"I think they're intervening to make sure the naira doesn't come under a speculative attack," said Bismarck Rewane, chief executive of Lagos-based consultancy Financial Derivatives. "My personal worry is that if oil prices drop or there's a real reversal in gains from foreign portfolio inflows, the currency could be at real risk."

Inflation is also elevated at 23 per cent as of February, with higher food prices driving the high cost of living. "For the second leg of the trade, you need to see disinflation kick in," said de Mones.

StanChart's Khan said: "We shouldn't underplay the very real pain that ordinary Nigerians have felt through this liberalisation experience. The pain that people took may mean it takes a while longer before the benefits of all this are realised."

While the naira still appears cheap and insulated from trade risks versus other emerging markets, "it has become a more populated trade for foreign investors", one manager said. "The more interest there is in these trades, the less idiosyncratic it is in terms of risk."

Naira appreciates slightly amid speculation, experts cite forex system evolution

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

According to data from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), the naira appreciated by 0.16 percent to 1530.52/\$ at the close of trading on Wednesday, March 19, from 1532.93/\$ in the previous session.

The naira traded as high as 1545/\$ and reached a low of 1500/\$, which was lower than Tuesday's figures.

In the parallel market, CardinalStone Research reported that the naira remained unchanged at 1,585.00/\$, causing the spread for speculative traders to widen.

Analysts noted that the gap between official and parallel market rates had narrowed to about 3.07 per cent from 3.40 per cent earlier in the week.

While the naira experienced a slight depreciation, analysts suggested that the market is stabilising, thanks to structural reforms and an increase in forex inflows.

Tilewa Adebajo, the Chief Executive Officer of CFG Advisory, shared her thoughts, highlighting the importance of adjusting the public's mindset towards exchange rates.

She explained, "The reason we are seeing some stability is because there is a new system where everyone uses one portal to buy and sell their dollars or any other currency."

Adebajo noted that most Nigerians abroad now use apps to transfer money to Nigeria, which automatically provides the official rate for transactions, leading to smoother processes.



She pointed out that parallel market operators have yet to adapt to this new system, and once they do, the country will move towards "price discovery."

She added, "CBN is not the major supplier of dollars to the market anymore, and that is good. Our foreign exchange system has evolved, and many people have not yet understood this change."

In an investor note, Comercio Partners also praised the naira's recent stability.

"The naira's relative stability deserves some credit here, holding steady in the N1,450-1,550 range against the dollar, which has helped curb import costs that were previously spiralling out of control," the investment house said.

However, the note cautioned that sustained stability would rely on consistent policies and steady forex inflows.

"Nigeria's long-term stability hinges entirely on sustained forex inflows, competitive market dynamics, and the Central Bank staying vigilant. A single policy misstep could send us right back to square one," the report concluded.

Similarly, analysts at CardinalStone Research echoed these sentiments on Wednesday, noting that the FX rate had remained relatively stable since the beginning of the year, bolstered by the CBN's efforts, a positive current account position, and increased foreign inflows.

Nevertheless, they warned of a key risk to the outlook—expectations of weaker global crude oil prices, which could undermine Nigeria's forex stability and stoke inflationary concerns.

Brent crude prices have declined by 5.5 per cent year-to-date, driven by expectations of rising global supply, policy shifts, and weakening demand.

Furthermore, the U.S. has ramped up efforts to boost oil production, leading the Energy Information Administration to revise its 2025 crude production forecast to 13.61 mbpd, up from 13.55 mbpd, while OPEC+ has also reaffirmed its decision to gradually unwind 2.20 mbpd in voluntary production cuts starting in April 2025.

These moves could increase supply and put additional downward pressure on oil prices.

Nigeria's healthcare sector gets 32.8bn boost

By Damilola Olufemi

The Ministerial Oversight Committee (MOC) of the Basic Health Care Provision Fund (BHCPF) has approved the disbursement of ₦32,880,443,906.25 for the first quarter of 2025 to boost healthcare.

The approval was made during the 10th MOC meeting held yesterday, March 19, 2025, in Abuja and chaired by the Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Prof. Ali Pate.

The MOC also reaffirmed its commitment to advancing BHCPF reforms through the Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp), in line with Nigeria's Health Sector Renewal Initiative and President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's endorsement of the SWAp.

The committee approved and recommended the adoption of the BHCPF 2.0 Guideline to enhance the administration, disbursement, and monitoring of the Fund.

The guideline, which was developed to improve the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of the BHCPF, will be implemented across the four gateways: National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA), National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA), National Emergency Medical and Ambulance System (NEMSAS), and National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC).

The MOC also recognized the dedicated service of Dr Mukhtar, Secretary of the Committee, following his appointment as a Permanent Secretary-designate.



Speaking during the meeting, Prof. Pate commended the committee for its efforts in advancing the BHCPF reforms. He emphasized the importance of the SWAp in achieving universal health coverage in Nigeria.

“We have to ensure health security by preventing outbreaks, detecting them, and being able to respond to them. That is the approval. The second approval was that of the revised guideline for the BHCPF, which is provided for by law.

“While we're waiting for a legal opinion from the Attorney General of the Federation, the MOC agreed with the thrust of the changes that were made in the guidelines, and those are very good steps forward, which has brought in the lens of equity, has also increased the resources going to primary health care centres.

“The reality is that the BHCPF

facilities all over Nigeria now are clearly functioning at much higher levels and better levels compared to non-BHCPF facilities. So, the reforms that we have undertaken over the last 18 months are working, and we appreciate the President for his leadership in ensuring that we get the resources to be able to do that,” he said.

The BHCPF is a critical component of Nigeria's healthcare system, providing funding for basic healthcare services to vulnerable populations.

The approved disbursement of ₦32.8 billion is expected to be released in April 2025 and will be allocated to the four gateways to support the provision of healthcare services across the country.

The MOC's approval of the disbursement and the adoption of the BHCPF 2.0 Guideline are significant steps towards achieving universal health coverage in Nigeria.

Global cities honoured for public health initiatives

By Helen Okechukwu

With determination to ensure a healthy life for its citizens, three global cities have been awarded for preventing noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and injuries.

The World Health Organization (WHO) made this known on Thursday during the annual Partnership for Healthy Cities Summit in Paris.

The summit aims to tackle public health issues and employ effective strategies for saving lives and building healthier communities at the local level.

The summit assembles Bloomberg Philanthropies, the co-host, the World Health Organization (WHO), Vital Strategies, and the City of Paris, convening mayors and officials from 61 cities.

The three cities honored include Córdoba (Argentina), Fortaleza (Brazil), and Greater Manchester (United Kingdom).

These cities, part of the Partnership's Policy Accelerator program, have implemented impactful policies to improve public health.

WHO noted that Córdoba, Argentina, has introduced a policy



banning sugary drinks and ultra-processed foods in schools, benefiting 15,000 students so far.

While highlighting the achievements of Fortaleza, Brazil, WHO stated that the city established its first air quality monitoring framework, ensuring better data collection and policy-making.

Meanwhile, Greater Manchester, UK, expanded outdoor smoke-free areas, including a 6.5-acre smoke-free park, and developed a toolkit to support more smoke-free spaces.

Michael R. Bloomberg, WHO Global Ambassador for NCDs, praised the cities for their leadership, stating, "Cities are leading the way in implementing

policies that are protecting public health and saving lives. This year's winning cities are proving that progress is possible with strong leadership and political will, and we look forward to seeing the results of their efforts."

WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus reaffirmed WHO's commitment to supporting urban health initiatives globally.

The Partnership for Healthy Cities, supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies, WHO, and Vital Strategies, connects 74 cities worldwide to promote health-focused policies.

Since its launch in 2017, the Partnership for Healthy Cities has helped improve the lives of over 300 million people.

Why do most modern houses have white-painted interiors?

By Eyitayo Jemimah Ajayi



Gone are the days when bright colors like yellow and green dominated interior design. With the discovery of white's allure, returning to those colors became difficult. One can hardly browse modern interior design magazines or home inspiration feeds online without noticing a recurring trend—the white theme. The foundation of many modern interiors is a crisp, clean white. A large number of contemporary buildings feature white interiors for various reasons, and I will be sharing a few of them below.

White, as a monochromatic color, has the unique ability to reflect light. This makes it a significant factor, especially in smaller apartments with limited natural

light. White walls can dramatically brighten up a space, creating a cooler ambiance and giving the room a greater sense of depth and openness. If your space feels small or lacks sufficient light, opting for white interior paint can be an excellent choice.

A white background enhances all other colors within a space, making them stand out. This allows furniture, art pieces, and picture frames to become the focal points of any room. If you love displaying artwork or picture frames, a white interior can be an excellent choice. White serves as a neutral backdrop, providing versatility in decoration. Any style of furniture, artwork, or decor will complement white walls effortlessly.

I
If you're ever worried about

running out of style, white will never fail you. It is a classic color that never goes out of fashion, providing a clean and modern look. White promotes a sense of calm in any space where it is used. It also evokes purity and cleanliness, creating a cozy and inviting atmosphere in apartments.

While the dominance of white interiors might seem like a modern trend, especially in contemporary housing developments, it is rooted in a combination of practical benefits and aesthetic preferences. White offers a bright, spacious, and calming backdrop for modern living, allowing homeowners to create a space that reflects their individual style while embracing its timeless appeal.

Nigeria's image under scrutiny over Natasha-Akpabio case, says ex-ambassador

By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

A former Nigerian career diplomat, Ibrahim Mohammed Bashir, Officer of the Order of the Federal Republic (OFR), has stated that the alleged sexual harassment case involving Senate President Godswill Akpabio and Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan has put Nigeria's image to the test.

Senator Godswill Akpabio and Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan

This follows the report filed by the embattled senator at the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

Natasha, who was suspended by the Senate, has continued to fight against what she describes as "injustice", following her suspension from the National Assembly.

After her report at the IPU meeting, many Nigerians criticized her move, arguing that it was tarnishing the country's image.

In an exclusive interview with The New Daily Prime, Bashir remarked that Nigeria was already under international scrutiny, especially from Western nations, due to the ongoing crisis in the National Assembly.

He further noted that the embattled senator was acting out of frustration, which is why she decided to escalate the matter to the IPU meeting.

"Nigeria's reputation is under scrutiny because of such a serious allegation of sexual harassment. Even before she took her case to the IPU, the UN Human Rights Commission and diplomatic missions in Nigeria were already closely monitoring developments and reporting their assessments to their respective governments," he stated.

Bashir emphasized that while the IPU is not part of the United Nations, it holds



permanent observer status with the UN General Assembly, allowing it to participate in global discussions and activities.

"Senator Natasha was pushed to the wall and had to resort to the IPU to be heard because her right to a fair hearing was denied. In today's interconnected world, she took her case before a global body to ensure her voice was heard and to seek redress," he added.

Federal Government's Response to the Crisis

Bashir advised that the federal government must handle the matter professionally, especially when addressing it on an international platform.

"The government of Nigeria, through its diplomatic representatives at the IPU, should not dismiss the matter as trivial or a mere domestic affair. A well-structured and convincing response should be provided sooner rather than later."

He also highlighted the legal implications of sexual harassment allegations, stressing that if proven, such misconduct carries serious legal consequences under

Nigeria's Criminal Code, Penal Code, and the Constitution.

Bashir argued that the issue could have been resolved internally within the Senate, without escalating it to the international stage.

"This was fundamentally a parliamentary dispute over seat allocation that should have been resolved within the Senate chamber. With effective leadership, this matter would not have escalated to this level."

He further explained that all 109 senators are equal representatives, and leadership roles, including that of the Senate President, should not create a hierarchical power imbalance.

"Her suspension was handed down without giving her the opportunity to present her defence, violating parliamentary ethics and a High Court order in the process."

What remains clear is that the case has exposed deep flaws in Nigeria's parliamentary governance and has placed the country's commitment to justice, fairness, and democracy under global scrutiny.

Nigerian Idol returns for landmark 10th Season in April

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigeria's beloved singing competition, Nigerian Idol, is set to return for its highly anticipated 10th season on April 20, 2025.

The announcement was made by MultiChoice Nigeria, the show's producers, at a press briefing held in Lagos on Thursday, March 20, 2025.

Dr. Busola Tejumola, Executive Head of Content and West Africa Channels at MultiChoice, revealed that this milestone season promises to be bigger and more exciting. She assured fans that while some elements remain the same, the upcoming edition will stand out from previous seasons.

"Nigerian Idol Season 10 is a decade with a difference. Every season is unique, but what remains constant is the judging panel and the audition process," Tejumola stated.

She emphasized that this season will celebrate both the 10-year legacy of the franchise in Nigeria and five years of MultiChoice's production. The goal, she said, is to entertain fans while creating lasting impact in the Nigerian music industry.

Surprises Await Viewers

Tejumola hinted that the production team has special surprises lined up for this landmark season. She also revealed that when the dedicated Nigerian Idol channel goes live, it will showcase the journey of the show from its inception to the present day.

Fans can expect an electrifying finale on Sunday, July 13, 2025, where the next Nigerian Idol will be crowned.



Familiar faces and a new judge

The new season will see the return of IK Osakioduwa as host for the fifth time, bringing his signature energy and humor to the stage.

On the judging panel, Ric Hassani and Omawumi will reprise their roles, while Iyanya will join them as a new judge. Iyanya, who rose to fame after winning Project Fame in 2008, brings valuable industry experience and firsthand knowledge of music competitions.

Why open auditions were scrapped

In a significant change, open call auditions have been discontinued. Tejumola explained that the decision was made to eliminate geographical restrictions and allow more aspiring singers to participate.

"The traditional open auditions limited many talented individuals due to location and logistical challenges. Now, the first phase will be held online, making it easier for people to submit their entries from

anywhere. After that, selected contestants will be invited for physical screenings and auditions," she said.

The new process, she noted, ensures that more gifted singers get a fair shot at showcasing their talent.

A decade of musical excellence

Since its debut, Nigerian Idol has served as a launchpad for some of the country's biggest music stars. Over the years, it has provided a platform for aspiring artists to break into the highly competitive entertainment industry.

As the countdown to Season 10 begins, fans can look forward to incredible performances, emotional moments, and intense competition. With a decade of history behind it, Nigerian Idol is set to deliver yet another unforgettable season.

Stay tuned as the journey to discovering the next music superstar unfolds!

'Stop comparing me with your faves for clout' – Timini Egbuson

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular Nollywood actor Timini Egbuson has issued a strong warning to fans and promoters who use his name to gain attention for their favorite celebrities.

He called out the growing trend of dragging him into social media conversations for publicity stunts.

Taking to his X (formerly Twitter) handle, Egbuson made it clear that he knows these tactics. He accused some individuals of using his name to boost their "faves" and promote their clients. The actor expressed frustration over the situation, urging fans to support their idols without involving him.

Egbuson calls out PR stunts

In his post, Egbuson stated that he can easily recognise when someone is running a publicity campaign. He pointed out that he has been in the entertainment industry for 15 years and has built a loyal fanbase. He reassured his supporters that their love and dedication keep him going, regardless of online distractions.

"I can smell a PR campaign from a mile away, and to be honest, it's getting boring," he wrote. "Push your fave in peace and leave my name out of the conversations. I've found my tribe, and they love my work. 15 years strong."

Social media reactions

His statement sparked reactions across social media. Many of his fans praised him for standing his ground. Some agreed that unnecessary comparisons between actors are unfair and often used to create drama. Others pointed out that the industry should focus on talent rather than social media battles.

However, some users questioned Egbuson's post, suggesting that comparisons are natural in the



entertainment world. They argued that actors should expect their names to be mentioned alongside others as fans express their opinions.

The rising trend of celebrity comparisons. Celebrity comparisons have become common on social media. Fans often engage in debates about who is more talented, successful, or stylish. While some discussions are harmless, others escalate into heated arguments.

In Nollywood, these comparisons sometimes turn into social media feuds. Publicists and managers also take advantage of such trends to promote their clients. Some intentionally create controversies to keep their stars in the spotlight.

Egbuson's response suggests that he has had enough of this trend. His message was a clear call for promoters to respect his career and stop using his name for publicity.

A strong career built over time
Timini Egbuson is not new to the

entertainment industry. Over the past 15 years, he has worked hard to establish himself as one of Nollywood's top actors. He has featured in several hit movies and TV shows, earning praise for his talent and dedication.

His journey in the industry has not been without challenges, but he has remained focused. Egbuson's fanbase continues to grow, proving that his work speaks for itself.

Final thoughts

Egbuson's message serves as a reminder that actors deserve to be recognized for their work, not just as part of online comparisons. His statement highlights the importance of respecting individual careers rather than using them for clout.

As the entertainment industry continues to evolve, social media debates are unlikely to stop. However, Egbuson's firm stance shows that not every actor is willing to be a part of the game. Fans and promoters may now think twice before dragging his name into their campaigns.

Konga accuses Burna Boy of stealing his rhythm, demands compensation

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Veteran Nigerian singer Konga has publicly accused Grammy-winning artist Burna Boy of borrowing his lyrics and rhythm without credit.

In a video shared on his TikTok page, Konga called out Burna Boy for allegedly using his lines in multiple songs, including *Sungba Remix* and *Update*. He also made a direct appeal for compensation—requesting a verse from Burna Boy and fellow artist Tiwa Savage on the remix of his song *Kabakaba*.

Konga calls out Burna Boy

Konga did not hold back in his message. He claimed that Burna Boy name-dropped him in *Sungba Remix*, a collaboration with Asake, and also used elements of his flow and rhythm in *Update*. According to Konga, this was not a one-time occurrence but a pattern that he has noticed in Burna Boy's music.

In the video, he stated, "Burna Boy, this message is for you. You mentioned my name in your song with Asake, *Sungba Remix*, and now I hear my lines and rhythm in your new release. It's clear that you like my style and have been using parts of my flow."

Despite his accusations, Konga maintained a respectful tone. He acknowledged Burna Boy's success and influence while insisting that he deserved recognition for his contributions.

A demand for collaboration

Rather than taking legal action or issuing threats, Konga took a different approach. He offered a way for Burna Boy to make amends—by featuring



on the remix of *Kabakaba* alongside Tiwa Savage.

He explained his reasoning, saying, "I appreciate that you're inspired by my craft. I love the fact that my work influences you, but I want you and Tiwa Savage on *Kabakaba Remix*."

Konga made it clear that he was not looking for conflict. Instead, he framed his request as a peaceful call for recognition and collaboration. "I will be expecting your feedback. I call you out in peace," he concluded.

Will Burna Boy respond?

Burna Boy has not yet addressed Konga's claims. However, given his reputation for confidence and boldness, fans are eager to see if he will respond. Some social media users have speculated that Burna Boy might ignore the call-out, while others believe he could surprise fans by accepting Konga's offer.

Meanwhile, the discussion around the ownership of lyrics and rhythms in the Nigerian music industry continues. Artists often draw inspiration from older styles, but the question of proper credit and compensation remains a hot topic.

A growing trend in the industry

This is not the first time a Nigerian artist has accused another of borrowing elements of their music. Over the years, many musicians have clashed over similarities in lyrics, melodies, and beats. In an industry that thrives on reinvention and sampling, disputes like this one are becoming more common.

For now, fans will have to wait and see how Burna Boy reacts. Will he collaborate with Konga as requested, or will this turn into a larger controversy? Either way, the conversation around creativity, influence, and originality in Afrobeats is far from over.

You pressured me to propose, Oluwadolarz slams Ifeluv over break-up

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian comedian and skit maker Oluwadolarz has revealed that his former fiancée, Ifeluv, pressured him into proposing, sparking widespread reactions online.

His statement comes amid their highly publicised breakup, which has sparked intense debate on social media.

Social media clash

The drama began when Ifeluv publicly questioned why Oluwadolarz proposed despite knowing he wasn't ready for marriage. In response, the comedian took to social media to set the record straight.

"You pressured me to propose," he wrote, directly addressing Ifeluv's claims. His statement quickly gained attention, fueling online discussions and drawing mixed reactions from fans.

Oluwadolarz speaks out

In a follow-up post, Oluwadolarz expressed frustration over how the situation was being portrayed. He thanked his colleagues for supporting him but criticized those who were quick to judge.

"I appreciate those who checked on me to make sure I don't overreact or feel bad," he wrote. "Some rushed to conclusions, while others stayed neutral."

He admitted the breakup did not go as he had hoped. However, he emphasized that his priority now is his son's future.



"My son will grow up, and we all know the internet never forgets," he said. "This isn't just about a breakup anymore—it's about controlling the narrative and avoiding being painted as the villain."

Accusations and denials

Before Oluwadolarz's revelation, Ifeluv accused him of cheating and financial irresponsibility. She questioned why he proposed, suggesting he had not changed his behavior.

"Why did you propose when you knew you weren't ready?" she asked.

Oluwadolarz defended himself, insisting he only proposed because Ifeluv pressured him constantly.

"You pushed me every day to propose, and now you're asking why I did it?" he said.

Family involvement

As the controversy escalated, Oluwadolarz's mother, Mama Dolarz,

stepped in. During a TikTok live session, she pleaded with Ifeluv to forgive her son for his alleged infidelity.

Despite her intervention, tensions remained high. Shortly after, he made a cryptic post hinting that financial struggles played a role in their breakup. He suggested that Ifeluv left him because he was facing financial difficulties.

Public reactions

The breakup has divided opinions online. Some fans sympathize with Ifeluv, while others believe he is being unfairly blamed. Many argue that relationships are complicated, and outsiders may never know the full story.

For now, neither side has shown interest in reconciliation. As the social media debate rages on, both Oluwadolarz and Ifeluv remain in the public eye, with their past relationship under intense scrutiny.

'Big for nothing' - Portable slams Saheed Osupa for taking down his song

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Portable criticizes Fuji star Saheed Osupa for removing his song from streaming platforms over alleged copyright infringement, sparking controversy.

In a viral Instagram video on Wednesday, Portable expressed outrage after his track was removed from platforms like Spotify and Apple Music. The takedown followed a copyright complaint from Osupa and his music distributors.

Copyright dispute sparks online feud
The controversy began when Portable incorporated a line from one of Osupa's songs into his own track. This move led Osupa to file a complaint, resulting in the song's removal. Portable, known for his outspoken nature, did not hold back his frustration.

In his video, the singer accused Osupa of stifling his career instead of offering support. He lashed out at the Fuji icon, calling him a "big for nothing fellow." Portable argued that musicians often borrow lyrics and that Osupa's actions were unnecessary.

"Saheed Osupa, you are big for nothing," Portable said in the video. "If you can't support me, then stay away. You sing Fuji, and I sing hip-hop. I only used one line from your song, but you went ahead to report me."

Comparing Pasuma's response
Portable also compared Osupa's actions to those of another Fuji legend, Pasuma. According to him, he had previously used three verses from Pasuma's songs, yet the musician never complained or took legal action.



"The same way I used a line from your song is the same way I took three verses from Pasuma," he stated. "But Pasuma never reported me. Instead, he treated me like his own child."

Portable praised Pasuma for being more accommodating and urged Osupa to follow his example. Despite his criticism, he ended his rant with a mixed message, saying, "Osupa is a good man."

The bigger picture

This latest clash highlights the growing issue of copyright disputes in Nigeria's music industry. Many artists incorporate lines or melodies from older songs, sometimes without proper clearance. While some musicians see this as a tribute, others take legal action to protect their work.

Portable's reaction reflects broader frustrations among younger artists who feel restricted by older musicians. However, copyright laws exist to protect original works, ensuring that artists receive credit and royalties for their creations.

Fans and industry reactions

Following his outburst, fans took to social media to share their opinions. Some supported his stance, arguing that established artists should encourage younger talents. Others defended Osupa, stating that he had every right to protect his intellectual property.

Industry experts emphasize the importance of proper licensing and clear agreements between artists. They advise young musicians to seek permission before using another artist's work to avoid legal complications.

What's next?

As of now, Osupa has not publicly responded to his accusations. It remains unclear if the issue will escalate or be resolved privately. Meanwhile, Portable continues to express his frustration online, showing no signs of backing down.

This dispute serves as a reminder of the delicate balance between artistic inspiration and copyright protection in Nigeria's evolving music scene.

Wizkid praises Super Eagles' energy ahead of World Cup qualifier

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Wizkid praises Super Eagles' prep for their crucial 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifier against Rwanda, expressing excitement about the team's energy.

The match is set to take place at Amahoro Stadium in Kigali on Friday, March 21, at 5 PM Nigerian time.

New coach, new era

The Nigerian national team recently welcomed a new head coach, Eric Chelle, who led his first training session on Tuesday afternoon. Chelle, a former Mali international, has been tasked with revamping the squad and improving their chances of securing a World Cup spot.

During the training session, the team focused on strategy, ball movement, and fitness. Chelle emphasized discipline and teamwork, hoping to build a squad that can dominate opponents. His appointment comes at a crucial time when Nigeria needs strong leadership to navigate the qualification rounds.

Wizkid applauds the team's energy

On Wednesday, Wizkid took to his X (formerly Twitter) account to share his excitement about the team. He praised the fresh energy within the squad under Chelle's leadership.

"New Super Eagles team! [I] love the energy," he tweeted.

His post quickly gained attention, with fans appreciating his support for the



national team. Wizkid, known for his love of football, has often shown interest in Nigeria's sporting achievements. His endorsement adds to the growing optimism surrounding the team.

Super Eagles face crucial matches

Nigeria's road to the 2026 FIFA World Cup remains challenging. The match against Rwanda is just the beginning of a crucial stretch. After facing Rwanda in Kigali, the Super Eagles will return home to Uyo, where they will host Zimbabwe on Tuesday, March 26.

These two games are must-wins for Nigeria. Dropping points could hurt their chances of qualifying for the World Cup. The team must stay focused, deliver strong performances, and secure maximum points from both matches.

Fans expect a strong performance

Supporters are eager to see how the team performs under Chelle's leadership. Many believe his fresh

approach could bring the best out of the players. Analysts have pointed out that Nigeria has the talent needed to qualify, but consistency and teamwork will be key.

Fans are also looking forward to seeing star players step up. The squad includes experienced internationals and young talents hungry to make their mark. A strong showing in these games will boost confidence and set the tone for the rest of the qualifiers.

The road ahead

With the 2026 FIFA World Cup in sight, every match counts. The Super Eagles must seize this opportunity and prove they belong on the world stage. The journey will not be easy, but with the right mindset and determination, they can overcome the challenges ahead.

As the team prepares for Friday's match, excitement continues to build. Players, coaches, and fans are united in their goal—to see Nigeria shine on the global football stage once again.

‘I’m no preacher’ – Kannywood actor rejects morality debate

By **Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi**

Renowned Kannywood actor Sadiq Sani Sadiq has clarified that his main goal in the film industry is to earn a living, not to educate people or promote moral values.

Speaking in an interview with Freedom Radio, the popular actor dismissed the notion that filmmakers have a duty to instill morals in their audience.

“I never claimed to be educating people,” he stated firmly. “I, Sadiq Sani Sadiq, never said I am spreading awareness. I am not here to teach morals. That responsibility belongs to parents at home and religious scholars in society. My job is to act and earn money.”

Films reflect the filmmaker’s vision

The actor also addressed the debate on whether movies influence moral values. He argued that films do not have a specific religion or language. Instead, he believes a movie’s impact depends entirely on how a filmmaker presents their work.

“If your child watches my film and loses their morals, that is not my fault—it’s yours,” he said. “Even if they don’t watch Hausa films, they will still have access to Indian movies or Western music videos, which often contain romantic scenes. Blaming filmmakers for society’s moral decline is unfair.”

Sadiq’s statement has sparked discussions within Kannywood and beyond. While some people support his stance, others argue that films do shape



public behavior, especially among young viewers.

The debate over actors’ earnings

During the interview, Sadiq also addressed a common claim in Kannywood—that women earn more than men in the industry. While acknowledging that some actresses do make higher earnings, he pointed out that wealth is private and not always visible.

“Some women indeed earn more than some men,” he admitted. “But wealth is personal. Just because someone owns luxury cars or wears expensive jewelry doesn’t mean they are the richest.”

His remarks highlight an ongoing conversation about gender and income in Kannywood. Many believe that actresses often receive higher pay due to brand endorsements and social media influence. Others argue that male actors still dominate leading roles in major productions.

Reactions from fans and industry insiders

Sadiq’s statements have drawn mixed reactions. Some fans praised his honesty, saying that actors should not be pressured to serve as moral guides. Others criticized his views, insisting that filmmakers should consider the influence they have on audiences.

Industry insiders have also weighed in. Some producers support Sadiq’s perspective, stating that movies are meant for entertainment, not moral lessons. Meanwhile, others argue that responsible storytelling should be part of filmmaking.

Regardless of differing opinions, one thing is clear—Sadiq Sani Sadiq is not afraid to speak his mind. His bold statements continue to fuel debates about the role of actors in shaping society.

What do you think? Should filmmakers focus only on entertainment, or do they have a duty to educate the public?

UK passport fees to rise by nearly 7%, Home Office confirms

By **Fatimah Idera**

The Home Office has announced that passport fees will rise by nearly 7% on April 10. The cost of an online adult passport application will increase from £88.50 to £94.50, while child passport fees will go up from £57.50 to £61.50.

Additionally, the fee for a one-day premium service will rise from £207.50 to £222 for adults. Similar increases will apply to postal applications and those made from overseas.

This follows a similar fee hike in April



2024, bringing the total increase to nearly 15% in just over a year.

A Home Office spokesperson stated:

“The new fees will help the Home Office

continue moving towards a system that funds itself through user fees, reducing reliance on general taxation. The Government does not make a profit from passport applications. These fees contribute to processing applications, providing consular support for lost or stolen passports, and managing UK border operations.”

The revised fees will take effect from April 10, 2025. Travelers applying for passports are advised to do so before the changes take place.

Gospel singer, Nikki Laoye bears 1st child on wedding anniversary

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

In what turned out as a double celebration, gospel singer, Nikki Laoye and her husband, Soul Snatcha are counting their blessing as they welcome their first child on their third wedding anniversary.

Taking to Instagram to share the joyful news with her fans and well-wishers, the excited singer expressed gratitude for the extraordinary coincidence that has made their special day even more memorable.

Sharing the wonderful news with her fans and well-wishers, she posted a series of breathtaking maternity photos that captured her radiant glow and growing baby bump on Instagram.

Nikki expressed her overwhelming happiness and appreciation for this divine blessing.

In her heartfelt message, she described the birth of their daughter as a true



manifestation of God’s love, faithfulness, and mercy.

She reflected on the significance of the timing, calling it a powerful testament to God’s perfect plan and a symbol of new beginnings for their growing family.

Nikki Laoye’s announcement has been met with an outpouring of love and

congratulatory messages from fans, friends, and fellow celebrities.

Many have joined her in celebrating this double dose of joy, praising the divine orchestration of such a beautiful moment.

As the couple embarks on this new chapter of parenthood, they remain grateful for the love and support surrounding them. This special milestone will undoubtedly be cherished as a reminder of God’s unwavering goodness and the blessings that continue to unfold in their lives.

On one of the photos, she captioned: “Look at Go 💎,💎 Our Princess arrived on our 3rd year wedding anniversary. Only God could have planned this Yes o, #GodDonDoAmAgain. A perfect display of God’s love, goodness and mercy towards us..one we can never forget. Happy 3rd anniversary to us baby @soulsnatcha @meetthesnatchas.

Kemi brings little cheer to toxic Tories bracing for tough local elections

By New Daily Prime

Party leader lowers members' expectations as far as she dares at election warmup event in the shires

It's more than likely you have given little or no thought to the local elections taking place on 1 May. After all, more than half the population will pay no attention to them on the day itself. If so, then the Tory party will be delighted. Long may it stay that way.

The Conservatives find themselves backed into a corner – desperate for an outbreak of national amnesia about the local elections but aware that they have to do something to mark the beginning of the campaign. Otherwise, it will just look as if they are running scared. Heads in the sand.

No one has done more to rehabilitate Rishi Sunak's reputation than Kemi Badenoch

Which, of course they are. The only upside for the Tories is that some of the elections have been postponed due to local government reorganisation. For the rest of the seats, only disaster remains.

The last time these seats were contested was at the height of Boris Johnson's popularity in 2021. That didn't end so well and the Conservatives are, if anything, more toxic than they were at the general election last year. No one has done more to rehabilitate Rishi Sunak's reputation than Kemi Badenoch.

So, on Wednesday, Conservative campaign headquarters sent out an email to lobby journalists, saying Kemi would be doing a local election campaign launch in Buckinghamshire – worded in a way that they hoped would automatically be forwarded to people's spam. They were literally begging reporters to stay away. It's going to be really boring, they said. Just local stuff. Not worth your time. You definitely won't get a question. And no refreshments. Transport links next to impossible. You get the picture.

For those who were not so easily put off, CCHQ had some other suggestions. Perhaps you might like to go to the movies instead. How about we offer you tickets to see Macbeth at the Bridge? The show has been sold out for months.

Or, if that didn't excite you, then what about a day trip to Nice? All flights paid. Lunch on the beach thrown in. The Med is gorgeous in the spring. Anything. Anything you like. Just please, please don't show up in Buckinghamshire.

Unfortunately, the message didn't seem to have got through to the broadcasters. There is no political event too meta – one that exists only because someone has decided there ought to be one to mark the occasion as one of no importance – that doesn't end up on the rolling news channels. Pointlessness is now worn as a badge of honour by all TV stations. If it moves, it's news. So, much to Kemi's and CCHQ's disappointment, the event they wanted to be a



non-event became an event after all.

After brief introductions from Kevin Hollinrake and Nigel Huddleston – has any party leader had less inspiring warmup acts? – Badenoch took to the makeshift stage in front of a couple of dozen Tory councillors. Most of them shortly to be ex-councillors. Desperation was etched in their eyes alongside the fixed grins.

Her key-opening message was that the situation was hopeless. No one liked the Tories.

Kemi herself looked as if she was starring in her own hostage video. Everything about her demeanour shouted: "Get me out of here." Even for a woman who gives the impression of hating her job, this was a new career low.

Neither is she very good at disguising her feelings. She knows her stay as Tory leader is almost certainly time limited – most of her MPs and party members are already expressing buyer's remorse – and she reckons she's got better things to do than this. It was only one step up from handing out raffle prizes at a Tory fundraiser.

Some might call it pragmatism. Realism, even. More likely, with KemiKaze is that she just no longer gives a shit. Most party leaders might have tried to soft-soap their audience. Give the councillors and party activists a reason to hope. A reason to get up in the morning and go out canvassing. Trying to secure a handful more votes.

That's not the Kemi way. She basically just looked everyone in the eye and told them they were dead men – and women – walking. There was no point to anything. We might as well kill ourselves now.

Her key opening message was that the situation was hopeless. No one liked the Tories. The brand was kryptonite. There was no way they weren't toast. They were on course to lose every council in the country that they had held.

Kemi shrugged as some in the audience burst into tears. Others reached into their pockets for the Valium. OK, she conceded, maybe we can hang on to one council. But only if we are very, very lucky. And the voters are more stupid – sorry, forgiving – than the polls suggest.

Having lowered everyone's expectations as far as she dared, Kemi quickly rattled through the rest of her speech. Only the Tories could be trusted to keep council taxes low, she said. Lying through her teeth. On average, Tory-run councils have increased local taxes by 23% over the past five years. But by now Badenoch wasn't much concerned with telling the truth. Just about getting to the end and getting the hell out of Buckinghamshire as soon as possible.

"Labour has no understanding of rural areas," she went on. Pots and kettles. One of the reasons Kemi has become so unpopular with Tory members is that she is perceived as having no interest in the countryside. She doesn't feel safe unless she is inside the M25.

She ended with a swipe at Reform. All celebrity hot air. No delivery. Hmm. It's not entirely clear the Tories have delivered that much in the past 10 years. Other than a broken economy and a failing NHS.

Reluctantly, Kemi took a few desultory questions from broadcasters who were also going through the motions. More out of politeness than genuine interest. What was the difference between the Tories and Reform? Other than Reform are increasing in popularity and the Tories are declining. Er ... "We have a plan," she said. And what was that plan? The plan was to have no plan until such time as a plan was needed.

Would that do? It would have to. Kemi had done her bit. Now she could escape back to London. A member of the audience suggested she take a selfie with them all. She duly obliged. Be nice to have a memento of the last time they were all in a job.

UK Universities face bankruptcy over decline in Int'l students

By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

The financial stability of UK universities is at risk, with mounting concerns over potential bankruptcies, staff layoffs, and declining global competitiveness. According to the Office for Students (OfS), a major UK higher education provider could collapse as institutions struggle with plummeting international student enrollments, rising operational costs, and years of frozen tuition fees.

With over 10,000 jobs at risk, experts warn that the crisis could weaken the UK's reputation as a global leader in education unless urgent action is taken.

In a report published on Wednesday, the OfS highlighted a significant deterioration in university finances, stating that the sector is now at "the most pessimistic end" of its economic forecasts. Many universities are already making drastic cost-cutting measures, including staff redundancies and course cancellations. The declining number of international students, combined with high inflation and increased staff costs, has created what academics describe as a financial doom loop.

According to the OfS, almost three-quarters of UK universities are expected to be in deficit in the next academic year, starting September 2025.

A key factor in the financial strain on UK universities is a sharp decline in international student enrollment, largely driven by stricter immigration policies. Recent government policies have restricted student visas, increased financial requirements, and limited post-study work opportunities, making the UK less attractive to international students.

This shift has directly impacted university revenues, as international students typically pay two to three times the tuition fees of domestic students. Over 150 universities failed to meet their international recruitment targets last year, further worsening financial shortfalls.

Declining tuition revenue due to fewer international students has left



universities with significant budget deficits. Many graduate and Ph.D. students contribute to university research, and their decline reduces grants and innovation opportunities. A reduction in student diversity lowers university rankings, making it harder to attract talent and corporate funding. International students also contribute significantly to local economies through housing, transport, and retail spending, and their decline impacts both universities and surrounding communities. Policies limiting post-study work visas discourage skilled graduates from staying in the UK, affecting industries reliant on global talent.

Academic leaders, university unions, and education policy experts have urged the government to intervene. Jo Grady, General Secretary of the University and College Union (UCU), warned that without emergency financial support, universities face mass layoffs, course closures, and reputational damage.

"If the Prime Minister continues to do nothing, over 10,000 jobs that will be lost, courses will be canceled, and one of the UK's last truly world-leading sectors will collapse," she stated.

Education expert Professor Glen O'Hara from Oxford Brookes University described the crisis as self-perpetuating, arguing that years of frozen domestic fees and immigration restrictions have placed universities in a precarious financial situation.

The Department for Education (DfE) has defended its policies, stating that it has taken "tough but necessary decisions" to stabilize university finances. In November, the government announced that tuition fees for 2025-26 will increase with inflation, marking the first planned rise since 2017. However, education leaders argue that this increase alone is not enough to offset losses from declining international enrollments.

The OfS has increased its oversight of struggling universities, stating that while it does not expect widespread closures in the short term, it is actively monitoring institutions at risk of financial collapse.

The combination of restrictive immigration policies, rising costs, and insufficient government support has created an existential threat to UK universities. Without urgent intervention, the sector risks losing its global standing as a top higher education destination, significant job losses impacting faculty, researchers, and university staff, reduced research output weakening innovation and industrial partnerships, and lower investment from international students, further exacerbating financial difficulties.

As pressure mounts on the Labour government to step in, all eyes are now on policymakers to prevent the collapse of one of the UK's most valuable sectors.

UK's Starmer hints of military plans for Ukraine

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

UK Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer has insisted his "coalition of the willing" should turn political momentum into "military plans" ahead of a meeting on Ukraine today (Thursday).

Speaking to Sky News, he said: "We've seen important talks between the US and Russia just a few days ago, more talks on Sunday.

"That's why it's important today that we're turning the political momentum that we had at the weekend in the meeting that I convened of nearly 30 political leaders... into military plans.

"Those plans are focusing on keeping the skies safe, the seas safe, the borders safe and secure in Ukraine.

"We're working at pace because we don't know if there will be a deal, I certainly hope there will be.

"But if there's a deal, that we're able to react straight away."

He says he wants to turn "political intention into reality" and "concepts into plans" in regard to how the UK and its allies can aid Ukraine following any potential peace deal.

"None of this is taken as a given," he adds. "We hope there will be a deal. But what I do know is that if there is a deal, that the time for planning is now. It's not after a deal is reached.

Starmer says he is clear that any deal "will only leave Ukraine secure and sovereign if there are security arrangements."

"What's happening here is turning that political intention into reality, the concept into plans."

He added: "It is vitally important we do that work because we know one thing for certain, which is a deal without anything behind it is something that Putin will breach.

"We know that because it happened before. I'm absolutely clear in my mind it will happen again".

For context: Starmer is at the forefront of a group of countries known as the "coalition of the willing" which could provide boots on the ground in Ukraine in the event of a ceasefire.

Military leaders are discussing the idea in the UK today, as plans move to what Starmer calls an "operational phase."

What is Starmer's 'coalition of the willing'?

Led by the UK and France, Sir Keir Starmer's "coalition of the willing" could provide boots on the ground in Ukraine in the event of a ceasefire.

The prime minister has said the UK, France



and Ukraine will work together on a peace deal that could be presented to the US.

Countries in the coalition could end up sending soldiers to act as peacekeepers in Ukraine in the event of a ceasefire.

This approach would allow NATO members to act as a group but not under the NATO umbrella, avoiding vetoes from member states who don't approve or don't wish to be involved.

Starmer's choice of the term "coalition of the willing" is perhaps meant to remind an American audience of a previous use of the same phrase: when the UK, Poland and other countries joined the US invasion of Iraq.

Which countries might be in?

The initiative is being led by the UK and France, so it seems a safe bet that both countries would be involved in the coalition.

Both have powerful militaries and the two nations are also the only countries in Europe with nuclear weapons.

The Baltic states – Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia – are also likely to be involved. All four countries are in NATO and share borders with Russia.

Finland will "definitely" be part of the coalition, the country's foreign minister said on 12 March.

Turkey, which has the second-largest army in NATO, is ready to send troops to Ukraine if necessary, according to a Turkish military source.

Despite fierce opposition from its government's allies, Spain will take part in a European military mission to Ukraine, El Pais reported.

Not in Europe but a NATO member, Canada

seems another potential contributor to the coalition of the willing, and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has said he is "open" to sending troops too.

Who's out?

Poland and Germany are among those not expected to send troops.

Poland has one of the strongest militaries in Europe and aims to spend 4.7% of its GDP on defence this year, well above the NATO target.

But it also has a long border with Ukraine and Belarus and is concerned about its own security.

As for Germany, a new government has not yet been formed after last month's elections.

Outgoing Chancellor Olaf Scholz previously ruled out sending troops.

Italy is not sending troops at this stage, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said on 16 March following the virtual call with European leaders.

What about America?

The elephant in the room is the biggest contributor to NATO: the US.

The hope seems to be that the coalition of the willing initiative would persuade the US as the world's most powerful military to pledge support as a backstop, to underwrite the peace deal.

It's unclear so far what Washington's response will be.

Starmer: 'Absolutely clear' Putin will breach peace deal if no security guarantees included

Meanwhile, Sir Keir Starmer has warned Vladimir Putin will breach any peace deal "without anything behind it" in Ukraine.

The PM was speaking during a visit to a military base in Greater London where he said the work being done by Ukraine's allies to secure peace is "vitally important".

"Last weekend and two weekends before that, we had groupings of international political leaders coming together to provide the political alignment and the collective agreement that we need to work together to ensure that any deal that is put in place is defended," he said.

Trump berates Federal Reserve, urges lower interest rates

By Dave Oludare Oso

President Donald Trump has criticised the Federal Reserve, urging the central bank to reduce interest rates, hours after it chose to leave borrowing rates unchanged.

The move marked the latest example of Trump exerting pressure on the Federal Reserve, despite a longstanding norm of political independence at the central bank.

Trump said Thursday that lower rates would best prepare the economy for tariffs that are set to escalate over the coming weeks.

“The Fed would be MUCH better off CUTTING RATES as U.S. Tariffs start to transition (ease!) their way into the economy,” Trump said in a post on Truth Social on Wednesday, adding “Do the right thing.”

The president did not provide further explanation but as recently as January, Trump advocated for interest-rate cuts in response to what he described as the prospect of lower oil prices.

Speaking in Washington, D.C. on Wednesday afternoon, Fed Chair Jerome Powell faulted Trump’s tariffs for a “good part” of recent inflation, advocating for a wait-and-see approach as the new administration’s policy changes take hold.

Even as the Fed left its main policy lever unchanged, the central bank predicted weaker year-end economic growth and higher inflation than it had in a December forecast.

Uncertainty clouds the economic outlook, Powell said, pointing to the Trump administration’s potentially “significant policy changes” in areas like trade, immigration and regulation.

“Uncertainty around the changes and their effects on the economic outlook is high,” Powell said. “We are focused on



parsing the signal from the noise.”

If the central bank raises rates as a means of protecting against tariff-induced inflation, the Fed risks stifling borrowing and slowing the economy, experts previously told ABC News.

On the other hand, experts said, if the Fed lowers rates to stimulate the economy in the face of a potential slowdown, it threatens to boost spending and drive up inflation.

Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell delivers remarks at a news conference following a Federal Open Market Committee meeting at the Federal Reserve, Mar. 19, 2025 in Washington. Kevin Dietsch/Getty Images

The rare rebuke of the central bank by Trump came weeks after his tariffs touched off a global trade war that sent stocks reeling and triggered concern about a possible recession.

By some key measures, however, the economy remains in solid shape. A recent jobs report showed steady hiring last month and a historically low unemployment rate.

Inflation stands well below a peak attained in 2022, though price increases register nearly a percentage point higher than the Fed’s goal of 2%.

In January, Trump also made a call for lower rates, days before the Fed opted to hold interest rates steady.

Speaking at a press conference in Washington, D.C. after that rate announcement, Powell declined to comment about Trump’s call for lower interest rates, saying it would be “inappropriate” to respond.

“The public should be confident that we’ll continue to do our work as we always have,” Powell said, adding that the Fed would continue to “use our tools to achieve our goals.”

After the rate decision on Wednesday, a reporter again asked Powell whether Trump may interfere with the Fed. In a brief response, Powell affirmed his previous comments.

“I think I did answer that question in this very room some time ago,” Powell said. “And I have no desire to change that answer, and have nothing new for you on that today.”

US, Israel approach African countries to resettle Gazans

By New Daily Prime

dea of displacing Palestinian population has been widely opposed, including by countries being approached

The US and Israel have approached countries in east Africa about taking in Palestinians from Gaza, as part of President Donald Trump's plan to evict residents from the war-torn enclave and build a "Riviera of the Middle East", said three people familiar with the matter.

Israeli officials led by strategic affairs minister Ron Dermer have sounded out the governments of Somalia and Sudan, countries wracked by civil war, while US diplomats have been in contact with the breakaway province of Somaliland, the people said.

One said Israel was "in conversations" with countries around the world, including in Africa, about taking in Gazans, although they cautioned that the talks "are not that advanced at the moment".

A US official briefed on Washington's initial contacts with Somaliland's presidency said discussions had begun about a possible deal to recognise the de facto state in return for the establishment of a military base near the port of Berbera on the Red Sea coast.

The person, who described the contacts as "the beginnings of a conversation", said Washington had raised the possibility of relocating refugees from the US and Gaza, although this was not the most important part of the talks.

They said the Trump administration's Africa team was not yet fully in place. "Until it is, these are very tentative, initial contacts," the person said.

The Associated Press first reported on the contacts with the three east African territories, all of which are mired in their own civil conflicts and face high levels of poverty. That and widespread global opposition make the relocation of large numbers of Palestinians extremely unlikely.

The Israeli prime minister's office declined to comment. The US state department pointed to past comments by Trump's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff, who said: "We're



actually engaging in a productive conversation around what is best for Gaza, and how we can make people's lives better."

The idea of transferring the majority of Gaza's 2mn people out of the shattered territory was first raised by Trump last month, as part of his plan to take over the territory after 17 months of conflict between Hamas and Israel.

The overall vision, widely condemned across the world, has changed repeatedly in the intervening weeks. The US leader has been inconsistent on whether Palestinians would be allowed to return at all to their homes in Gaza and whether he would deploy American troops.

At one point he shared an AI-generated video on social media depicting the enclave as a gilded tourist hub replete with casinos and beach clubs.

Arab states, European powers and Palestinian leaders have all vehemently rejected any move to displace Palestinians. Sudan and Somalia are members of the Arab League, which has also rejected any displacement.

A Somali official told the Financial Times: "Gaza belongs to Palestinians and it will remain for Palestinians. Somalia's position on this is well recorded."

Trump on Wednesday appeared to backtrack further, telling reporters at the White House

that "nobody's expelling any Palestinians".

Arab states saw the plan as a direct threat to their national security and a violation of international law. That view was especially strongly held by Egypt and Jordan, which were first broached by the US as potential resettlement locations for Palestinians.

Yet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu quickly seized on the Trump plan, calling it "revolutionary" and "bold", and has vowed to implement it.

Israel's defence ministry last month set up a directorate to encourage the "voluntary emigration" of Gazans via land, air and sea, but a person familiar with the matter said no significant steps had been taken because of a failure to find a country willing to take people in.

According to local health authorities, nearly 50,000 people have been killed in Gaza by Israel's ferocious military offensive after Hamas's October 7 2023 attack on Israel. Much of the territory has been reduced to rubble.

A fragile six-week ceasefire between Israel and Hamas ended this month, with international mediators led by the US now seeking to extend the truce and secure the release of nearly 60 remaining Israeli hostages.

Buffon's son chooses Czech Republic over Italy

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Louis Buffon, son of legendary Italian goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon, has pledged his international future to the Czech Republic rather than Italy.

The 17-year-old Pisa winger, who qualifies for the Czech team through his mother, model Alena Sereдова, has been called up to the Czech U-18 squad for upcoming matches against England, France, and Portugal.

Buffon made his professional debut for Pisa in Serie B earlier this month and believes representing the Czech Republic is the best choice for his development.

"I talked to my family, and we decided this was the best path for my career," he said in an interview with the Czech Football Association.

His father, a 2006 World Cup winner with Italy, fully supports the decision. "My dad was excited for me and advised me to play for the Czech Republic because it's the



best way for me to grow as a player," Buffon added.

Despite his deep ties to Italy, Louis remains focused on his own journey. "I was born and raised in Italy, but as a professional, I must treat every game the

same, whether against Italy or any other team."

His decision has drawn worldwide attention, but the young winger remains unfazed, ready to make his mark on the international stage.

Rwanda's Kwizera: Home advantage key against Nigeria

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Rwanda midfielder Jojea Kwizera believes playing at home will be a huge advantage for his team when they face Nigeria in Friday's 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifier.

The Amavubi will host the Super Eagles at the 45,508-capacity Amahoro Stadium in Kigali for their Group C matchday 5 clash. Rwanda, currently leading the group with seven points, are four points ahead of Nigeria, who are yet to win in the qualifiers.

In a video shared by the Rwanda Football Association, Kwizera urged fans to show full support.



"We have a really big advantage playing at home. I invite everyone to come support us," he said.

Rwanda, unbeaten against Nigeria on

home soil, will aim to extend their strong record and secure a crucial victory.

Victory over Rwanda non-negotiable – Troost-Ekong

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Super Eagles vice-captain William Troost-Ekong has dismissed concerns over Nigeria's poor away record against Rwanda, insisting that victory is a must in their 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifier.

The Super Eagles have never beaten the Amavubi on away soil in three previous attempts, but Troost-Ekong is confident they can change that this time.

“We’ve read about our record, but we are not bothered. I was part of the last game in Kigali that ended goalless, but we know a draw is not an option this time,” he told thenff.com.



“Our goal is to secure three points and boost our qualification campaign. We are not focused on history—our priority is the World Cup.”

The crucial qualifier will take place on Friday at the Amahoro Stadium in Kigali, as Nigeria looks to get their campaign back on track.

Kayode Bankole thrilled with maiden Super Eagles call-up

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Remo Stars goalkeeper Kayode Bankole has expressed his excitement after receiving his first-ever invitation to the Super Eagles for Nigeria's 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers against Rwanda and Zimbabwe.

Speaking to the Super Eagles media team, Bankole described the experience as “amazing” and shared his joy at training alongside Nigeria's top stars.

“It has been great. Being in the midst of the big boys, the superstars, is an incredible feeling,” he said.

Bankole, who has consistently been one of the standout goalkeepers in the Nigeria Premier Football League



(NPFL), remained confident that his hard work would eventually earn him a national team call-up.

“For two seasons, I won the NPFL Best Goalkeeper award but didn't get a call-up. I kept working hard, believing my time would come. Now that it has, I'm

very glad,” he added.

The shot-stopper's inclusion in the squad is a testament to his impressive performances at club level, and he will now hope to make his mark on the international stage.