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Nigeria, Japan strengthen ties in crackdown on cybercrime

By Helen Okechukwu



The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and the National Police Agency of Japan (NPA) have deepened their collaboration to tackle cybercrime, leading to the recent arrest of 11 suspects involved in online fraud.

According to the NPF National Cybercrime Centre (NPF-NCCC), a joint investigation between Nigeria and Japan uncovered a criminal network that targeted Japanese citizens through identity theft, romance scams, and financial fraud.

This development was made known during a press briefing held on Monday.

The suspects reportedly used

social media, particularly Instagram, to deceive victims into sending money, which was then converted into cryptocurrency and transferred to digital wallets in Nigeria.

The operation began on April 3, 2024, when Nigerian authorities received reports linking 13 individuals to cybercrime cases affecting Japanese victims.

Read Also: Police launches NPF insurance to boost personnel welfare

Intensive investigations led to the arrest of 11 suspects and the recovery of \$33,320, with efforts ongoing to trace more funds and dismantle the network.

The Nigeria Police Force has reaffirmed its commitment to protecting citizens both locally and internationally, emphasizing the use of modern technology to track and combat cybercrime.

Security agencies in both countries have pledged to continue working together to prevent further attacks and bring offenders to justice.

Force Public Relations Officer, Olumuyiwa Adejobi stated that the NPF remains determined to curb online fraud and ensure a safer digital space for all. He urged the public to remain vigilant and report suspicious activities to the authorities.

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

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9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
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Despite Tinubu, GAC's intervention, Lagos Assembly leadership crisis deepens

By Friday Omosola

Since January 13, 2025, the Lagos State House of Assembly has been embroiled in intense drama, beginning with the abrupt removal of Speaker Mudashiru Obasa.

Political analysts speculated that the removal was linked to Obasa's ambition to succeed Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, though this remains unconfirmed.

Despite the uncertainties surrounding the reasons for his ouster, Obasa's removal while he was away has dramatically reshaped Lagos' political landscape, sparking widespread debates on governance, accountability, and security.

As each new development unfolds, the situation continues to captivate the attention of both the public and political analysts, shedding light on the evolving power dynamics within the state.

Obasa, who had served as Speaker for over a decade and represented Agege Constituency 1, was replaced by Mojisola Meranda, who made history as the first female speaker of the Lagos House of Assembly.

However, since Meranda, representing Apapa Constituency 1, assumed office, Obasa has refused to step down, continuing to address himself as the legitimate Speaker.

The New Daily Prime learned that Obasa's long tenure was largely due to his strong backing from President Bola Tinubu. His loyalty to the president and his role in holding governors accountable were key to his continued leadership.

However, the political landscape shifted when it became clear that President Tinubu, reportedly dissatisfied with Obasa and unwilling to meet with him,



gave the signal to the Lagos leadership to move forward with his removal—though this decision appears to have been a miscalculation.

During Tinubu's visit to Lagos over the Christmas holidays, the Governors' Advisory Council (GAC) presented several complaints about Obasa.

Reports indicate that the leadership of the Governance Advisory Council (GAC) of the Lagos APC was unable to meet with President Tinubu in person, as he was occupied with state matters, including preparations for an official visit to France.

According to sources, the lawmakers did not seek the President's approval before proceeding with Obasa's removal.

Insiders revealed that Tinubu was caught off guard by the decision, finding it surprising that such a major political move was made without his involvement and that several GAC members backed it.

However, it was reported that some members of the Assembly went to Abuja to meet with President Tinubu over the leadership crisis at the assembly.

Although it remains unclear whether the GAC eventually met with Tinubu, it's gathered that on February 3, members of the GAC and the Lagos State House of Assembly convened at Lagos House Marina to deliberate on Assembly-related matters.

The meeting had in attendance Lagos State Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, Deputy Governor Kadri Hamzat, GAC leader Tajudeen Olusi, and other key members.

While the official agenda was not disclosed, discussions likely included developments surrounding Obasa's removal.

While some members of the GAC viewed Obasa's removal as illegal, he maintained that his removal was unlawful, claiming that a fake mace was used to install Meranda as Speaker.

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Following his impeachment, Meranda and her loyal lawmakers met with members of the GAC. After their meeting at the Lagos House in Marina, Meranda expressed her desire for the council's approval and blessings for her new role, signaling the continued influence of the GAC in the state's political affairs.

However, Obasa alleged that police intimidation played a part in his ousting, which he argued is a common tactic in Nigerian politics.

Although he has not gone to court to stop his self-proclamation as Speaker, he has openly challenged the legality of the process and vowed to continue fighting, citing similar acts of defiance against court orders in the past.

Upon his return to Lagos after being away during the impeachment, Obasa addressed a crowd of supporters at his official residence in GRA, Ikeja, declaring his removal null and void.

He maintained that the removal had not followed due process. His declaration was met with strong opposition from lawmakers, who urged residents to ignore his claims and warned him not to escalate tensions further.

Obasa continues to assert that a fake mace was used in his removal, alleging that hundreds of policemen invaded the Assembly on the day of his ousting to intimidate his supporters.

He further claimed that the police also invaded his official residence, preventing his family from leaving the house. Obasa pointed out that in previous instances, speaker removals were conducted in the presence of the Speaker without police interference.

Despite the opposition, Obasa has vowed to return as Speaker and challenge his removal in court, leaving the question of who the legitimate Speaker is still

unresolved.

Bid to return

In his bid to return as Speaker, Mudashiru Obasa has dragged the Lagos State House of Assembly and Speaker Mojisola Meranda to the Lagos State High Court in Ikeja, challenging the legality of his impeachment.

The lawsuit, filed on February 12, 2025, is yet to be assigned to a judge, but it demands that the court declare his removal unlawful, arguing that his colleagues acted improperly by impeaching him while the Assembly was on recess.

Obasa, who was out of the country at the time of his removal, insists that the removal violated his rights. Through his lawyer, Afolabi Fashanu, Obasa has requested that the court expedite the hearing of the case and set a swift date for the proceedings.

He also called for a reduction in the time allowed for the defendants to file counter-affidavits or written addresses to seven days after the hearing, with a three-day deadline for the plaintiff to respond on points of law.

The application, which raises nine key points, focuses on interpreting various sections of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended), and the Rules and Standing Orders of the State House of Assembly.

Obasa is challenging the constitutionality of the Assembly's actions during its recess, arguing that the House should not have conducted proceedings without the Speaker's authorization or delegation of authority.

The former Speaker emphasised that public interest requires a quick resolution of the case to avoid disruptions in the state's legislative activities.

He argued that the court must urgently rule on the legality of the Assembly's current leadership, claiming that the ongoing leadership violates both constitutional and legislative rules. Obasa further believes that the court has the inherent power to grant expedited hearings and impose time limits on the proceedings.

Just two days after filing the lawsuit, and with the court date yet to be set, the situation took a new turn on Monday, intensifying the already volatile political atmosphere surrounding the House of Assembly.

Drama

The events on Monday unfolded like a political thriller, as the Department of State Services (DSS) stormed the Lagos State House of Assembly complex, attempting to seal off the entire building, including the office of Speaker Mojisola Meranda.

However, Assembly workers and lawmakers quickly intervened, preventing the DSS officers from carrying out their orders. In a viral video obtained by this newspaper, some lawmakers stood their ground against the DSS, which struggled to gain entrance into the Assembly.

Eventually, they accessed the Assembly and passed a vote of confidence in the Speaker.

Sources have revealed that the DSS intervention stemmed from a leadership crisis within the Assembly. On February 14, 2025, the acting Clerk of the House, Abubakar Ottun, issued a letter warning that Obasa's potential return to office could pose a significant security threat to the Assembly and its members.

In response to mounting criticism of the DSS invasion, the agency clarified that the House had requested the Department's intervention to bolster security around the Assembly complex in anticipation of February 18, 2025.

Tinubu advocates for stronger maritime security in Gulf of Guinea

By Friday Omosola

At the 38th Ordinary Session of the African Union (AU) Heads of State and Government, President Bola Tinubu urged the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) to prioritise the establishment of a Combined Maritime Task Force to strengthen security in the Gulf of Guinea.

Speaking yesterday, President Tinubu, represented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Yusuf Tuggar, expressed Nigeria's readiness to host the headquarters of the task force in Lagos.

He emphasised the need for a coordinated regional approach to combat security threats in Africa's maritime domain.

"The time has come for the African Union Peace and Security Council to prioritize the creation of a Combined Maritime Task Force for the Gulf of Guinea. I wish to announce that Nigeria would like to host the headquarters of the task force in Lagos," Tinubu stated.

His call for a maritime task force coincided with the country's signing of an agreement with the AU to provide Strategic Sea Lift Services for AU peace support operations, humanitarian efforts, and disaster response.

The agreement, signed by Nigeria's Minister of Defence, Badaru Abubakar, mandates the Nigerian Navy to deploy a vessel for these operations on a cost-recovery basis.

The signing ceremony was attended by Nigeria's Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, Prince Lateef Fagbemi; Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Yusuf Tuggar; Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Emmanuel Ikechukwu Ogalla; and Director-



General of the Nigerian Intelligence Agency, Ambassador Muhammed Muhammed.

Others are Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace, and Security, signed on behalf of the AU.

President Tinubu welcomed the AUPSC's decision to adopt the outcomes of a high-level meeting, including upgrading Nigeria's National Counter-Terrorism Centre to a Regional Counter-Terrorism Centre.

He also commended the renewal of the mandate of the Multinational Joint Task Force, which continues to combat terrorism and violent extremism in the Lake Chad region.

Addressing security challenges in North Africa, President Tinubu expressed concern over Libya's instability, noting its adverse effects on the Sahel region.

He called on AU leaders to support initiatives aimed at restoring stability in Libya, warning that, "The Sahel cannot enjoy peace as long as Libya does not."

He also highlighted the growing security threats faced by Sudan, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, South Sudan, and Gabon, emphasising the need for AU-backed measures to support democratic transitions in these nations.

"It would not be out of place to explore the possibility of extending the inherent benefits of UN Security Council Resolution 2719 to support AU Peace Support Operations," he added.

He cautioned against the increasing involvement of extra-continental forces and private military companies in Africa's security affairs.

President Tinubu reaffirmed Nigeria's support for the African Standby Force and urged AU member states to adopt the draft Memorandum of Understanding for its operationalization.

President Tinubu backed the creation of an African-led Credit Rating Agency (ACRA), arguing that it would ensure fairer assessments of African economies compared to existing global rating agencies.

Tinubu upgrades YABATECH to university

By Agency Reporter

President Bola Tinubu has approved the upgrade of Yaba College of Technology (YABATECH) to a university.

The announcement was made on Friday by the Minister of Education, Dr. Tunji Alausa, during a working visit to the college in Yaba, Lagos.

After inspecting and commissioning several projects at the institution, Dr. Alausa shared the long-awaited news in an interactive session with the management, staff, and students.

“The Rector mentioned earlier that the staff, students, and management of this college have been praying and fasting for it to be converted into a university. Somehow, you have ambushed me with this question, but I must let you know that when I discussed the issue with President Bola Tinubu, he did not hesitate in giving his approval. I am now waiting for the official memo and other necessary protocols from the appropriate quarters,” Alausa stated.

The Minister emphasized YABATECH’s legacy and academic strength, noting that with over 200 doctorate degree holders among its staff, the institution is more than ready to transition into a university.

“All credit goes to President Tinubu, who prioritizes education and is committed to providing the best opportunities for the youth, who are the future leaders of this country,” he added.

Commitment to Technical Education and Economic Growth

Dr. Alausa commended the college’s maintenance culture, which has kept its facilities in good condition despite their age.

“I commend your pursuit of excellence.



We need innovation and investment in technology for national development, and I assure you that the federal government will support you,” he affirmed.

He also highlighted that one of the key focuses of the Tinubu administration is technical and vocational education, with an added emphasis on entrepreneurship to curb the Japa Syndrome—a term used to describe the mass migration of Nigerians abroad in search of better opportunities.

“We are taking Artificial Intelligence, robotics, coding, and other technological advancements seriously. If our youths become proficient in these areas, they can work for global firms while residing in Nigeria and earning foreign exchange. This will help reduce the trend where people leave the country for menial jobs abroad,” he stated.

Dr. Alausa acknowledged that for over three decades, Nigeria shifted its focus away from technical and vocational education (TVET) and instead prioritized producing graduates who primarily sought white-collar jobs. However, he assured that this focus has

now changed.

“Countries in Europe and other parts of the world have successfully incorporated TVET as a core part of their education systems, and that is the direction we are heading. We need an education system that supports manufacturing, technological innovations, and entrepreneurship, which will, in turn, lead to a stronger private sector and overall national development,” he explained.

YABATECH’s Readiness for University Status

Earlier in the event, Rector Dr. Ibrahim Abdul reaffirmed that with over 200 PhD holders, YABATECH is fully prepared to become a university.

“While we pray for this transition, we don’t want to become just another university. We aim to be a university of Technical and Vocational Education, driving innovation, problem-solving, and societal advancement. We have the manpower, and we only need the government’s support to achieve this vision,” Dr. Abdul stated.

Nigeria opposes AU departmental split, supports reform efforts

By Friday Omosola

Nigeria has expressed strong opposition to a proposed restructuring of the African Union's (AU) Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), arguing that such a move would be unnecessary and financially burdensome.

Bayo Onanuga, President Bola Tinubu's Special Adviser on Information & Strategy, in a statement, said his stance was conveyed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Yusuf Tuggar, during deliberations on AU reforms.

While backing broader efforts to make the continental body more effective, Nigeria rejected the proposal to carve out a new department from PAPS, currently headed by Nigerian diplomat Ambassador Bankole Adeoye.

"We do not support the proposal to reconfigure the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security," President Tinubu stated.

"Such restructuring would lead to



unnecessary expenditures and could destabilise the AU's political and security processes."

President Tinubu, however, commended Rwandan President Paul Kagame and Kenyan President William Ruto for their reform proposals, which aim to enhance the AU's efficiency.

He endorsed the plan to establish a Heads

of State and Government Oversight Committee under President Ruto's leadership to guide the reform process.

Additionally, he supported the recommendation that future AU Summits focus on no more than three strategic agenda items to ensure effective decision-making and implementation.

On the broader issue of AU reforms, President Tinubu stressed the need for a phased approach rather than a wholesale transformation.

"Instead of seeking consensus on all fronts at once, we should focus on areas where agreement has already been reached. Reform should be transparent, inclusive, and not destabilise the status quo," he emphasised.

He reaffirmed his commitment to supporting reforms that strengthen the AU while ensuring that decisions are made with the full participation of member states.

Shettima pays tribute to Adebajo, hails him as advocate for progressive Nigeria

By Friday Omosola

Vice President Kashim Shettima has expressed deep sorrow over the passing of Pa Ayo Adebajo, a prominent leader of Afenifere.

The New Daily Prime earlier that Adebajo died on Friday at the age of 96.

The Vice President in his tribute described Adebajo as a steadfast advocate for a more equitable and progressive Nigeria.

Reflecting on Adebajo's immense contributions to Nigeria's democratic journey, he highlighted his role as Organizing Secretary of the Action Group and his leadership in the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO)



during the military era.

The Vice President emphasised that Adebajo's life was marked by his unwavering commitment to the nation's progress.

"Pa Adebajo was a living bridge that connected us to the foundational struggles of our democracy.

"His voice remained resolute and principled until his final days, always advocating for a more equitable and progressive Nigeria," Shettima stated.

Shettima further honoured Adebajo as one of the greatest titans in Nigeria's political history, noting that his passing marks the end of a vital chapter in the country's political evolution.

"In African tradition, when such an elder transitions, a significant part of our history departs with them. Pa Adebajo was one of those great titans," he said.

Osun LG crisis: Adeleke asks residents to stay away from secretariats

By Friday Omosola

Osun State Governor Ademola Adeleke has directed residents, including politicians across political divides, to stay away from the local government secretariats to protect public properties and avoid further bloodshed.

On Monday, The New Daily Prime gathered that Remi Abass, the allegedly reinstated Chairman of Irewole Local Government in Osun State, was reportedly murdered by armed thugs believed to be loyal to the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) after they took control of the council's secretariat in Ikire.

This follows a dispute between the two major political parties over control of the local government, with the All Progressives Congress (APC) asserting that a recent Court of Appeal ruling had reinstated the previously dismissed council officials, while the State Government contends that the Federal High Court in Osogbo had annulled the election.

Abbas was said to have, accompanied by other former council officials, attempted to seize the secretariat per the court's ruling.

However, their efforts were met with a violent confrontation when thugs,



reportedly associated with the PDP, arrived and attacked them.

Sources reported that gunfire ensued during the clash, resulting in Abass's death and injuries to several others.

Meanwhile, other assailants also disrupted traffic on the nearby highway, firing shots into the air and causing widespread panic, forcing motorists to divert their routes to avoid being caught in the crossfire.

In response to what the governor called an illegal APC takeover bid of local governments, as stated by Olawale Rasheed, his spokesperson, he affirmed that, since local government workers were on strike, only security agencies should be permitted to oversee the secretariats.

"I therefore direct all law-abiding

Osun residents to stay away from the council secretariats, especially as they are expected to be under lock and key.

"I equally condole families of victims of the APC illegal takeover bid and chaos unleashed across the state by the APC and their hired thugs. PDP lost five members with several others wounded. Two of those members are from Iragbiji, Boriye local government. Another two were killed at Ola Oluwa Local government. Another one was lost at Ikire. We must stop the bloodshed", the governor said.

He assured residents of their safety and the protection of lives and property, affirming that he had directed security agencies to take charge of all local government secretariats.

Court allows Alison-Madueke to amend suit against forfeiture order

By Friday Omosola

A Federal High Court in Abuja has granted former Petroleum Minister Diezani Alison-Madueke permission to amend her legal challenge against the final forfeiture of her assets.

The New Daily Prime reported that Alison-Madueke was previously ordered by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

Justice Inyang Ekwo approved the request on Monday after Alison-Madueke's lawyer, Godwin Inyinbor, moved the motion, which was unopposed by EFCC's counsel, Divine Oguru.

During the hearing, Inyinbor informed the court that they had already submitted the amendment request and duly served the defendant.

With no objection from the EFCC, Justice Ekwo ruled in favor of the application.

The judge directed Alison-Madueke to submit and serve the revised legal documents within five days, while the EFCC was given 14 days from the date of service to respond. The case was adjourned to March 17 for further proceedings.

Earlier on November 21, 2024, Justice Ekwo had set this date to consider the motion for amending the suit.

Alison-Madueke, represented by Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) Chief Mike Ozekhome, filed the case against the EFCC, seeking an extension of time to apply for an order nullifying the agency's public notice for the sale of her assets.

In a motion filed on January 6, 2023, she argued that the forfeiture orders were issued without proper jurisdiction and should be overturned.

She also claimed she had been denied a fair hearing in the legal process leading to the confiscation.



"The various court orders issued in favour of the respondent and upon which the respondent issued the public notice were issued in breach of the applicant's right to fair hearing as guaranteed by Section 36 (1) of the 1999 Constitution, as altered, and other similar constitutional provisions," she said.

She contended that she had never received the charge sheet, proof of evidence, or any summons related to the criminal allegations before the court.

Additionally, she claimed that the courts were deceived into issuing multiple final forfeiture orders on her

"The several applications upon which the courts made the final order of forfeiture against the applicant were obtained upon gross misstatements, misrepresentations, non-disclosure, concealment and suppression of material facts.

"The court has the power to set aside same ex debito justitiae, as a void order is as good as if it was never made at all.

"The orders were made without recourse to the constitutional right to fair hearing and right to property accorded the applicant by the constitution.

"The applicant was never served with the processes of court in all the proceedings that led to the order of final forfeiture," she said, among other grounds given.

EFCC in a counter-affidavit sworn to by its investigator Rufai Zaki, requested the court to reject her application.

Zaki, who was part of the team that examined allegations of criminal conspiracy, corruption, and money laundering involving the former minister and others, stated that the findings established her involvement in unlawful activities.

As a result, he said, Alison-Madueke was arraigned under charge number FHC/ABJ/CR/208/2018.

"We rely on charge FHC/ABJ/CR/208/2018, dated November 14, 2018, which was filed in this honorable court and is also included as Exhibit C in the applicant's affidavit," he stated.

The EFCC official refuted many of the claims in Alison-Madueke's lawsuit, arguing that her affidavit misrepresented facts.

Contrary to her assertions, he explained that the cases leading to the forfeiture of the disputed properties were legal actions in rem, properly adjudicated by the court.

He further stated that the court had directed the commission to publish notices in newspapers, inviting any interested parties to challenge the forfeiture before issuing a final ruling.

Zaki mentioned that a lawyer named Nnamdi Awa Kalu had represented the former minister in response to one of the forfeiture proceedings.

"We rely on the ruling delivered by Hon. Justice I.L.N. Oweibo on September 10, 2019, as reflected in Exhibit C of the applicant's affidavit," he said.

Lagos Assembly crisis: How zoning controversy is splitting Lagos politics

By Alade Adisa

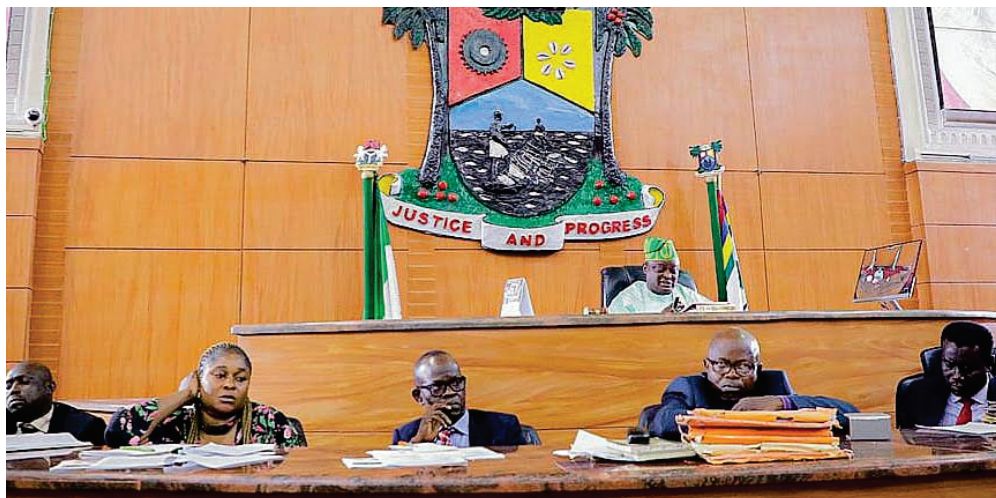
The ongoing leadership crisis rocking the Lagos State House of Assembly may create friction between Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu and President Bola Tinubu, an investigation by New Daily Prime has revealed.

Sources informed our correspondent that while Tinubu, a former governor of Lagos State, is not entirely opposed to lawmakers selecting their leaders, the main issue lies in the zoning of the new Speaker's position.

“Sanwo-Olu is from Lagos Central Senatorial District, just like the new Speaker. This disrupts the internal power-sharing arrangement among the three Senatorial Districts. Now, Lagos West, where Tinubu hails from, has no representation in the top leadership positions—Governor, Deputy Governor, or Speaker,” a source said.

“When lawmakers removed Mudashiru Obasa as Speaker, they could have selected a replacement from Lagos West. However, surprisingly, some lawmakers from the district who could have filled the gap refused and instead supported Meranda, who was Obasa's deputy,” the source added.

The source explained that these behind-



the-scenes maneuvers have fuelled rumours that Tinubu has asked Meranda to resign. This situation is already causing tension between the governor and the president.

“Both men want lawmakers to have the freedom to choose their leaders, but zoning remains a critical issue. You can see that the Assembly has now adjourned indefinitely, and nobody knows when they will reconvene,” he stated.

The source also blamed Obasa for his leadership style, which may have contributed to his downfall.

“He allowed power and authority to get

into his head. He did not foster good relations with his fellow lawmakers and acted as if he was superior to them. He also did not treat the Assembly workers well. You could see their jubilation when he was removed and their open solidarity with the new Speaker,” he added.

Meanwhile, reports indicate that the new Speaker and her supporters were responsible for inviting the Department of State Services (DSS) to the Assembly Complex on Monday.

Lagos Assembly: 36 lawmakers pass confidence vote on Meranda

By Alade Adisa

Thirty-six members, out of the 40 members of the Lagos State House of Assembly on Monday passed a vote of confidence on the new Speaker, Rt Hon. Moyosola Meranda, for her to continue to lead the Assembly.

Moving the motion on the floor of the House, the lawmaker representing Oshodi/Isolo 2, Hon. Oladipo Ajomale, said the Speaker has been elected by the lawmakers and that they are confident that she is the perfect leader that the House needs at this time.



Hon. Aro Moshood, after which the remaining 34 lawmakers supported the motion and then passed a vote of confidence on the Speaker, Mojisola Meranda.

Interestingly, all staff of the Assembly also showed their solidarity support for the Speaker.

The House however adjourned sitting till further notice.

The vote of confidence was seconded by

Gunshots fired as PDP, APC clash at LG secretariat

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Violence erupted at the Osogbo Central Local Government Area in Oke Baale on Monday, February 17, as members of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC) clashed while attempting to enter the council secretariat.

The incident, which involved gunshots and street violence, caused chaos in the vicinity.

Eyewitnesses reported hearing gunfire near the entrance to the secretariat, while a bloody altercation between two men, believed to be associated with one of the political factions, was observed.

A source close to the scene indicated that one of the men was badly injured. The fight took place in the midst of ongoing gunshots, which sent locals fleeing and left Osogbo/Ibokun Road, which runs past the secretariat, deserted.

Armed police officers were quickly deployed to the area, with a visible presence at the entrance to the local government offices. However, the gunmen, identified as suspected political thugs, continued firing sporadically, creating panic among residents.

Further incidents unfolded across Osun State, with other local government secretariats also experiencing tensions.

At the Atakumosa West Local Government Secretariat, a former member of the Osun State House of Assembly, Festus Komolafe, led elected APC members into the premises. However, the group soon left after a brief appearance.

Meanwhile, at the Egbedore Local Government Secretariat in Awo, PDP members were seen wielding canes, singing and chanting at the entrance,



openly daring APC members to challenge them.

Tensions were similarly high in Ayedaade Local Government Area, where APC members arrived at the Gbongan secretariat early in the morning.

In another development, APC officials who had been elected during the 15 October 2022 local government elections in Osun State resumed office at the Boripe Local Government Secretariat in Iragbiji without incident. However, attempts by APC members to seize control of the Olorunda Local Government Secretariat in Igbona, Osogbo, were met with strong resistance from PDP supporters.

At around 9:20 am, when our correspondent arrived at the Olorunda LGA secretariat, police and security operatives, including officers from the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps and the Amotekun Corps, had established a barricade at the junction leading to the premises. The gate to the secretariat was locked, and no one was permitted to enter.

Tensions continued to rise as PDP members, angered by the attempted APC takeover, gathered outside the gates.

In a dramatic escalation, two individuals

who had been recording the unfolding events from a nearby building were reportedly attacked by thugs, their phones smashed, and the victims assaulted.

Some of the assailants were said to be armed with charms, further stoking fear in the area.

The situation prompted intervention from Osun State's Commissioner for Rural Development, Mr. Gani Olaoluwa, who addressed the PDP members gathered at the scene.

"We thank you for heeding our call. We won't allow any illegal takeover here. No court judgement restored them," Olaoluwa told the crowd, urging calm and promising that the authorities would not permit unlawful actions.

Despite the intervention, the situation remains tense, with the security forces maintaining a strong presence across key locations in Osogbo and other parts of Osun State.

This series of clashes comes amid ongoing political tensions following the controversial local government elections of 2022.

DSS reveals why it took over Lagos Assembly Complex!

By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

The Department of State Services (DSS) has justified its presence at the Lagos State House of Assembly, stating that it was mobilized in response to a request from lawmakers to prevent a possible forceful reinstatement of the impeached Speaker by unauthorized groups.

In light of escalating tensions surrounding the security takeover of the Assembly, which included the sealing of offices belonging to the Speaker and his Deputy, the DSS clarified that its deployment was not an invasion but a necessary measure to uphold order and safety at the legislative complex.

In a statement released on Monday, the DSS explained that the request for security reinforcements was made via an official letter from the Lagos State House of Assembly, dated February 14, 2025. The letter specifically called for heightened security due to credible intelligence reports suggesting an attempt to reinstate the impeached Speaker on February 18, 2025, which could compromise the safety of Assembly members and disrupt legislative activities.

The DSS statement included an excerpt from the letter signed by the Acting Clerk of the Assembly, Mr. A.T.B. Ottun, which was addressed to the DSS Director in Lagos and other security agencies. The letter



read:

“The impeached Speaker of the Lagos State House of Assembly plans to resume office on the 18th of February, 2025, posing a potential security threat to the Assembly and its members. In light of this situation, we kindly request that you take necessary measures to fortify the security of the Assembly premises with effect from Sunday, 16th February, 2025, by increasing the presence of your personnel and implementing strict access control within and around the Assembly premises until further notice.”

The DSS reiterated that its presence at the Assembly was strictly in response to the lawmakers’ request and was aimed at preventing any breach of peace or unlawful takeover. It urged the public to disregard any speculation suggesting that the agency had forcefully occupied the premises.

Meanwhile, the impeached Speaker, Mudashiru Obasa, has taken legal action challenging his removal. On February 12, 2025, he filed a lawsuit contesting the legitimacy of his impeachment, which took place on January 13, 2025. Obasa claims that his impeachment was unconstitutional, as it was conducted during the Assembly’s recess without proper authorization.

The lawsuit lists the current Speaker, Mojisola Meranda, and the Lagos State House of Assembly as defendants. Obasa is seeking immediate reinstatement, asserting that due process was not followed in his removal. As of now, no date has been set for the hearing.

The situation remains tense, with security operatives maintaining their presence at the Assembly complex as legal and political developments unfold.

Matawalle responds to Babachir Lawal's comments on Tinubu's 2027 bid

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Minister of State for Defence, Dr. Bello Matawalle, has expressed disapproval over recent comments made by Dr. Babachir Lawal, the former Secretary to the Government of the Federation, regarding President Bola Tinubu's presidential ambitions for 2027.

In a statement released by the Director of Information and Public Relations of the Ministry of Defence, Mr. Henshaw Ogubike, on Monday in Abuja, Matawalle stated that Lawal's remarks about the president's re-election bid were misplaced and unfounded.

He argued that Tinubu has made significant strides in governance, and that the president would enjoy overwhelming support from the North.

Matawalle highlighted that President Tinubu had introduced key reforms across various sectors, including security, the economy, infrastructure, and governance, all of which have positively impacted the nation.

He pointed to the president's successful efforts in improving security in the country, with the security forces neutralising over 8,000 terrorists and bandits, arresting 11,600 criminals, and recovering more than 10,000 weapons in 2024 alone.

These actions have significantly improved safety across the Northern region, Matawalle said, adding that the rescue of about 8,000 kidnap victims further underscores the administration's commitment to securing the nation's citizens.



Additionally, the establishment of the Multi-Agency Anti-Kidnap Fusion Cell (MAAKFC) in collaboration with the UK's National Crime Agency in December 2024 has strengthened the nation's capacity to tackle kidnapping.

READ ALSO: Northern Nigeria will vote for Tinubu in 2027 elections – Yobe Gov's Aide

From an economic perspective, Matawalle pointed to the creation of the Ministry of Livestock Development, which is focused on tapping into the North's agricultural potential.

He said the initiative aims to boost economic growth and empower millions, particularly women and youth in the region, with a focus on food security.

The recent decline in grain prices was also cited as evidence of the effectiveness of the government's agricultural policies.

In terms of infrastructure, Matawalle highlighted several key projects in the North, including road construction and the improvement of transportation networks, which are essential to economic growth.

He also commended the decentralisation of power through local government autonomy, which has ensured more effective governance and accountability at the grassroots level.

Matawalle made it clear that despite being in office for only 19 months, President Tinubu had already made significant contributions across all regions of Nigeria, including the North, and would continue to enjoy the unwavering support of the people in the region.

"The North remains steadfast in its support for President Tinubu, any attempt to suggest otherwise is a deliberate move to sow discord and destabilise our national security. We must assess the tangible benefits of the president's efforts and support him as he strives for a more prosperous and secure Nigeria." Matawalle stated.

Matawalle concluded by calling on critics to evaluate Tinubu's record objectively and to unite in their support for the president's vision for the nation.

"Our support for President Tinubu is unwavering and unshakeable, We stand firmly behind his efforts to build a prosperous and secure Nigeria." he said.

Lagos moves to curb illegal waste recycling, warns property owners

By Helen Okechukwu

The Lagos Waste Management Authority (LAWMA) has intensified efforts to tackle illegal waste recycling and scavenging across the state, warning property owners against allowing such activities on their premises.

LAWMA's Managing Director, Dr. Muyiwa Gbadegesin, stated that the agency had noticed a rise in unregulated sorting, dumping, and trading of recyclables, which not only defaces the city but also poses environmental hazards.

Read Also: Lagos reaffirms commitment to youth development

"LAWMA has observed a rising trend of indiscriminate waste sorting, dumping, and trading of recyclables in unauthorised locations. These activities violate the Lagos State Environmental Management and Protection Law, 2017 and will not be tolerated. Any individual or entity



engaging in illegal recycling or scavenging will face strict enforcement measures and penalties as prescribed by law," he said.

He stressed that property owners permitting illegal recycling or scavenging risk losing their property rights and facing legal consequences. He encouraged

residents to work with licensed recycling facilities and registered waste collectors for proper waste disposal.

To reinforce compliance, a joint enforcement team, including LAWMA's Monitoring and Compliance Department and the Lagos State Environmental Sanitation Corps, recently cleared illegal recyclers and squatters from the Ijora-Olopa underbridge.

"We remain committed to achieving a cleaner and more sustainable Lagos, but we need the cooperation of all residents. We urge everyone to comply with waste management laws of the state and contribute to a healthier environment," Gbadegesin added.

LAWMA urged all residents to embrace proper waste management practices to improve the city's cleanliness and ensure a healthier environment.

Police rescue 10 children from traffickers in Anambra, arrest three suspects

By Helen Okechukwu

Anambra State Police Command has uncovered a child trafficking ring in an apartment located at Inland Town, Onitsha, arresting three suspects, including a fake medical doctor.

The operation led to the rescuing of ten malnourished children aged between 5 and 8-year-old.

Commissioner of Police (CP) Ikioye Orutugu, made this known during a press briefing on Monday.

According to him, officers from the 3-3 Divisional Headquarters acted on intelligence and arrested Odinakachukwu Okorie (male), Ifunanya Ogbonna (female), and Daniel Ikebuilo (male), a fake doctor, in the apartment.

The police had been monitoring Odinakachukwu following a report of a missing 6-year-old boy on 28 July, 2024.



Further investigations led to his arrest on 13 February, 2025, after another 5-year-old girl was reported missing in the same area.

During interrogation, Odinakachukwu implicated Ifunanya as an accomplice. The two later confessed to planning to take the 5-year-old girl to Abuja.

Ifunanya also admitted to selling the child for one million naira (₦1,000,000) to Daniel Ikebuilo. Acting on further intelligence, the police rescued eight additional children from an apartment in Inland Town, Onitsha.

The State Police Command has sought assistance from the Ministry of Women's Affairs to provide custody, medical care, and rehabilitation for the rescued children.

The police also urged families searching for missing children to visit the command for identification and possible reunification.

CP Orutugu praised community members for their cooperation and emphasized the importance of public vigilance in fighting child trafficking. He assured that the suspects would be prosecuted according to the law.

Lagos, SOMLPforR moves to improve reproductive health policy

By Helen Okechukwu



The Lagos State Government, in partnership with the Saving One Million Lives Programme for Results (SOMLPforR), is adapting the National Reproductive Health Policy (NRHP) to meet local needs.

This initiative, led by the Ministry of Health, aims to improve maternal and child healthcare.

The state government noted on their Facebook page on Monday that the workshop held recently saw experts from various sectors to refine the policy.

Dr. Mazeedat Erinosh, SOMLPforR Programme Manager, emphasized its role in enhancing family planning, safe

motherhood, and adolescent reproductive health.

Erinosh stressed the need for training and regulating Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) to reduce complications.

Dr. Kelvin Oduba, Safe Motherhood Programme Manager, highlighted tailoring the policy to Lagos' unique healthcare challenges, including maternal mortality reduction, family planning, and gender-based violence response.

Dr. Oduba noted reproductive health extends beyond pregnancy care.

Also, Dr. Olayinka Atobatele, a public health consultant, described the initiative as transformative.

The updated policy aims to expand maternal and child healthcare access, benefiting teenage and older mothers alike.

Stakeholders refined policy details in technical sessions. Mrs. Ruth Badejo, Director of Nursing Services, stressed bridging healthcare gaps and fostering collaboration between modern and traditional practitioners to ensure safer deliveries.

The finalised policy will undergo validation, public awareness campaigns, and implementation in state healthcare facilities.

To this end, experts see Lagos as a model for other Nigerian states in reproductive health policy development.

\$150m alleged bribe: Verbal war rages between Binance's Gambaryan, Nigeria's lawmakers

By Damilola Olufemi

For the past week, there have been verbal altercations between a cryptocurrency firm, Binance's boss, Gambaryan and some members of the House of Representatives over the former's claims that the lawmakers demanded a \$150million bribe to give him a soft landing in the case of a fraud allegedly committed by the firm.

However, the named lawmakers have fired back, affirming that Gambaryan's allegation is a tale of falsehood and sheer blackmail.

In this report, Damilola Olufemi, traces the genesis of the crisis and the underlying issues in the whole bribery saga

It is an understatement to say that the mere mention of the name Tigran Gambaryan evokes in many minds, the feeling of a man at the centre of a storm.

Gambaryan is a top executive of Binance, a cryptocurrency firm arrested by the Nigerian government in 2024 over alleged fraud.

Gambaryan's arrest and detention took a while before he was released on health grounds.

However, a few months after his release, he revealed how three Nigerian lawmakers requested a bribe from him.

Genesis of the crisis

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) had declared on June 9, 2023, that the operations of Binance Nigeria Limited, a subsidiary of Binance, were illegal. Eight months later, precisely, on February 26, 2024, it was reported that top executives of Binance had been detained after their passports were seized by the Office of the National Security Adviser (NSA) upon their arrival to



Nigeria.

Gambaryan, a citizen of the United States of America and Binance's head of Financial crime compliance, and Nadeem Anjarwalla, a British-Kenyan who is Binance's regional manager for Africa, flew to Nigeria following the plan of the Nigerian government to ban Binance and several other cryptocurrency trading websites.

Earlier, the federal government had ordered its telecommunications firms to restrict access to the websites of cryptocurrency firms such as Binance, OctaFX, Coinbase and others, months after its Central Bank issued a guideline to govern digital asset operators' activities.

The Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Olayemi Cardoso, had on February 27, 2024, said the sum of \$26 billion was channelled through Binance Nigeria from unidentified sources in one year. Cardoso added that the CBN was working with the Security and Exchange Commission to ensure there is no manipulation in the FX market.

Probe lingers, family decries prolonged detainment

Following the apprehension of the Binance executives, the Office of the NSA on March 1, 2024, announced that the probing operations of Binance were continuing.

Zakari Mijinyawa, the Head of Strategic Communication, at the Office of the NSA, disclosed the agency's further scrutiny of the operations of the cryptocurrency company.

He said, "The office is leading and coordinating an interagency process by law enforcement officers – this includes ongoing investigations into the operations of Binance.

Outcomes from this interagency investigation will be made available in due course."

Two weeks later, the federal government prayed an Abuja Magistrate court to extend the detention of the two Binance executives after an initial warrant used to hold them lapsed.

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on next page**

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According to Reuters, the documents seen showed that the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), was earlier granted an order to detain the two for 14 days to facilitate probing of the matter. However, upon expiration of the order, the Binance executives were not released, because the EFCC has asked a chief magistrate's court in Abuja to extend their detention while investigations continue, said a person involved in the case but not authorised to speak to the press.

Anjarwalla's wife, Elahe, informed Reuters that the two men were being kept in a guarded house in Abuja and she could only speak to her husband on the phone at least once a day in the presence of a guard.

A few days after, the executives of the cryptocurrency company appeared in court for the first time at the Federal High Court Abuja but were not charged with any crime. However, their detention was extended by two more weeks. The court and lawyers representing Gambaryan and Anjarwalla declined to comment on the matter.

Lawyers from EFCC prayed to the court to grant a new detention order after the initial one expired on March 12.

The Binance executives opposed the EFCC's fresh detention prayers. However, the judge did not rule on EFCC's request.

The families of the two detained executives said in a statement "At the court hearing in Abuja today, which was attended by Tigran and Nadeem, the court ruled that after hearing arguments from both parties, they would resume the session on April 5th."

Charges with tax evasion

Determined to press on its charges against Binance and its executives, the federal government through the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) on March 25,

2024, filed a lawsuit in Abuja charging Binance with four counts of tax evasion. The charges include non-payment of Value-Added Tax (VAT), company income tax, failure to file tax returns, and complicity in helping customers evade taxes through its platform.

The office of the NSA also disclosed it was working with Interpol after Anjarwalla escaped from detention. However, Binance said it was aware of Anjarwalla's escape and was working with authorities to resolve the issue.

The two Binance executives, on March 28, 2024, sued the NSA and the EFCC for violating their fundamental rights and asked the court to set them free.

The duo claimed they were not notified of any offences committed. Their requests to the court include: an order to release them and return their passports, a public apology, and a restraining order from further detention.

The court case between the Binance executives and the EFCC lingered for a couple of months with the intervention of the USA lawmakers, urging its embassy in Nigeria to seek the humanitarian release of the apprehended executive of Binance.

Charges against Gambaryan dropped

On October 23, 2024, the money laundering case against 40-year-old Gambaryan was dropped by the EFCC to allow him to get proper medical treatment abroad.

Earlier, a High Court judge denied him bail twice, noting he was a potential flight risk. The new order followed the escape of Anjarwalla from custody.

According to the EFCC lawyer, Ekele Ihenacho, "We have withdrawn the money laundering charges against Tigran Gambaryan to allow him to get medical treatment outside the country."

Ihenacho further disclosed that diplomatic arrangements had also helped in securing Gambaryan's release without elaborating.

New Daily Prime had earlier reported that former USA President Joe Biden, in a phone conversation, appreciated Tinubu for the release of Gambaryan.

\$150m bribery allegation against Nigerian lawmakers

In a dramatic and shocking twist three months after his release, Gambaryan, on Friday, February 14, 2025, alleged that three House of Representatives members, namely Philip Agbese, Ginger Onwusibe and Peter Akpanke, demanded a \$150m bribe from him to forestall his arrest and prosecution over money laundering allegations.

"The DSS was involved in the House of Representatives matter. We met with them at their office on Friday, January 5, 2024, as a prerequisite to our meeting with the House of Representatives. They alluded to the fact that we had to comply with whatever the House members instructed us to do.

"At the House meeting, there were three members present. Two of them were Peter Akpanke and Philip Agbese, both working under the leadership of Ginger Obinna Onwusibe. There was a third house member, but I can't recall his name.

"They set up fake cameras and media to make the meeting appear official, but the cameras weren't even plugged in. As you may already know, this ended with them asking for a \$150m bribe, paid in cryptocurrency into their personal wallets. A Micky Mouse operation at its best," he said.

Standing on his claims, Gambaryan went on X to affirm that the lawmakers demanded a bribe from him.

Osun LG crisis: Davido tackles CP Mohammed Umar Abbar to respect law

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian musician Davido has taken a bold stand, calling out a local commissioner and demanding respect for the rule of law.

The post, which quickly circulated across multiple platforms, shows Davido fiercely challenging the commissioner's actions and sending a strong message: no one, not even a government official, is above the law.

A defiant message

He wrote: "Mr. Commissioner, respect the rule of law!!! You are not madder or crazier than us!! Make we all kuku mad!! MEN MOUNT WALAI TO KRF!!! I will post you every day, everywhere Mr. Man!!! Try me, fucker," Davido's post boldly declared.

The message, filled with emotion and defiance, has caused a stir among both his fans and critics. It marks another moment in the artist's long history of using his platform to voice his opinions on issues that matter to him and his followers.

Political tensions spark the outburst

The confrontation stems from a previous post made by Davido's uncle, Governor Ademola Adeleke of Osun State.

In that post, the governor had aimed former Governor Rauf Aregbesola and his successor, Adegboyega Oyetola, accusing them of threatening his administration.

It seems the tensions surrounding local politics and governance have now spilt over, drawing Davido into the fray with his sharp words against the commissioner.

The timing of the two posts suggests that the matter is deeply personal, with Davido stepping into the spotlight to



defend his uncle and assert his position on legal and political matters in the region.

Fans and followers react

The post has sparked a wave of conversation online, with fans and social media users speculating about the reasons behind Davido's fiery reaction.

Many are questioning the commissioner's actions or decisions that could have provoked such a strong outburst from the artist.

Was it a personal vendetta or a broader disagreement about the handling of local government affairs? The mystery behind Davido's anger has fueled widespread discussion, drawing attention from both supporters and critics.

Davido's reputation for outspokenness

Davido is well-known for his outspoken nature and his willingness to confront controversial issues head-on.

Throughout his career, the artist has used his massive social media following to speak out on political and social matters, often stirring debates and challenging

authority. His latest post is no different.

By using his platform to call for accountability and respect for the rule of law, Davido has sent a clear message to the commissioner and anyone in power: they must be held accountable for their actions.

Support and criticism

The public's response to Davido's post has been mixed, though a significant number of fans have shown their support. Many are applauding the artist for standing up for what he believes in and using his influence to hold those in power accountable.

On the other hand, some are questioning the effectiveness of such a public outburst and wondering whether this approach will lead to meaningful change or just more division. Nonetheless, the debate surrounding the post shows just how influential Davido has become in the political and social landscape of Nigeria.

The commissioner's silence

The commissioner, meanwhile, has yet to respond publicly to the accusations leveled against him by the artist.

Burna Boy, Drake to perform at Uk's Wireless Festival 2025

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi



Grammy-winning Nigerian superstar Burna Boy has been confirmed to join US rapper Drake as a headliner at the highly anticipated Wireless Festival in the United Kingdom this July.

Rapper Drake was earlier announced as the headliner for all three nights of this year's Wireless festival.

It will be the Canadian rapper's first UK performance in six years, with the One Dance hitmaker due to play a bespoke set on each night.

The festival, renowned as the UK's premier urban music event, will take place at Finsbury Park, London, from July 11 to 13, celebrating its 20th anniversary.

Drake will perform across all three

days, making history as the first artist to headline a festival for three consecutive nights with unique setlists each evening.

Nigerian music icon Burna Boy is slated to take the stage as a special guest on Sunday, July 13, alongside dancehall icon Vybz Kartel.

Other artists on the lineup include Summer Walker, PARTYNEXTDOOR, and The Mandem, with more acts to be announced soon.

This marks Burna Boy's second appearance at Wireless, having previously performed in 2020 and was set to appear in 2022 but withdrew due to personal reasons.

The festival promises an

unforgettable experience for fans of urban music, with general ticket sales starting on February 19 at noon GMT.

Born Damini Ogulu, Burna Boy gained fame after releasing 'Like to Party', the lead single from his debut album 'L.I.F.E' (2013).

Since then, he has released seven albums: 'L.I.F.E' (2013), 'On a Spaceship' (2015), 'Outside' (2018), 'African Giant' (2019), 'Twice As Tall' (2020), 'Love, Damini' (2022) and 'ITold Them' (2023).

He has also won several awards. In 2021, the Afro-fusion artiste won the 'Best World Music Album' category at the Grammy Awards for his fifth album 'Twice As Tall'.

Senator Nwoko denies marriage rumours

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Reports claim Senator Ned Nwoko plans to marry actress Chika Ike as his seventh wife and that she is pregnant, but his office dismisses the rumours as false.

However, his office has strongly denied these claims, dismissing them as baseless and misleading.

Senator's office calls rumors false

In an official statement released by the Senator on his X handle, the Director of Communications for Senator Nwoko labeled the rumours as "malicious speculation."

The statement clarified that there is no truth to the claims of a new marriage or a pregnancy involving the actress.

The senator's team urged the public to disregard the false reports, stressing that they were designed to mislead and create unnecessary controversy.

No comments on Tuface or polygamy

The statement also refuted allegations that Senator Nwoko made remarks about Nigerian musician Tuface Idibia and the subject of polygamy. His office firmly denied that he has commented on such matters, calling any reports suggesting otherwise a fabrication.

The senator's team explained that, as a well-known public figure, Nwoko is often targeted by baseless rumors. His wife, Regina Daniels, is a Nollywood actress, making their family an easy target for media speculation. However, the office condemned the spread of false information and urged journalists and bloggers to verify their sources before publishing unconfirmed reports.



Senator Nwoko focused on his duties

At the moment, Senator Nwoko is fully engaged in his national duties. He remains committed to fulfilling his promises to the people who elected him. His office emphasized that he is focused on his role as a lawmaker and has no time for distractions.

The statement also highlighted the growing issue of misinformation in the media. It reminded journalists and online platforms of the dangers of spreading unverified news. The senator's office urged media professionals to prioritize accuracy and integrity in their reporting.

A call for responsible journalism

The senator's team called on media organizations to seek clarification from official sources before publishing stories that could mislead the public. They stressed that fake news damages reputations and creates unnecessary tension. Readers were also advised to be cautious and to rely on official statements rather than unverified online reports.

Official statement from the director of communications

"Our attention has been drawn to recent false reports claiming that Senator Prince Ned Munir Nwoko is preparing to marry Nollywood actress Chika Ike as his seventh wife and that she is expecting his child.

We categorically state that these allegations are entirely baseless and a product of malicious speculation. Similarly, reports suggesting that the senator commented on Tuface Idibia and polygamy are completely false.

As a public figure, Senator Nwoko is frequently the subject of unfounded rumors, particularly due to his wife's status as an actress. However, he is currently on a national assignment, fully focused on fulfilling his political mandate. He has no time for distractions.

We urge journalists and bloggers to verify their sources before publishing misleading information. The spread of false news has serious consequences, and media practitioners must uphold their responsibility to report only the truth.

The public is advised to ignore these rumors and rely solely on statements from the senator's office."

Signed,
Director of Communications
Office of Senator Prince Ned Munir Nwoko

The statement reinforces Senator Nwoko's dedication to his duties while firmly rejecting the rumours.

DJ Kaycee marks 20 years of thrilling Houston crowds

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Renowned DJ Fagbe John Oluwafemi, known as DJ Kaycee, marks 20 years of electrifying performances, captivating audiences with his energy and signature style.

Over the past two decades, he has built a reputation as one of the most dynamic DJs in the industry, captivating fans with his electrifying mixes and vibrant stage presence.

A night to remember in Houston

To celebrate this achievement, DJ Kaycee hosted a special Valentine's Day event in Houston, Texas. The highly anticipated celebration, held on February 14, brought together music lovers, industry colleagues, and longtime fans for an unforgettable night of entertainment.

DJ Kaycee delivered a signature performance filled with pulsating beats, infectious energy, and seamless transitions between genres. His ability to blend Afrobeat, Amapiano, and hip-hop kept the crowd on their feet, dancing nonstop throughout the night.

A legacy of passion and dedication

Since his debut, DJ Kaycee has built a name for himself through relentless hard work, passion, and a deep love for music. His career has taken him across the globe, performing at high-profile events and collaborating with some of the biggest



names in the industry.

From local club gigs to international music festivals, DJ Kaycee's influence has only grown stronger. His unique sound, innovative mixing techniques, and ability to read a crowd have earned him a loyal fan base. He has set himself apart as not just a DJ, but a musical storyteller who creates unforgettable experiences.

Star-studded guest lineup

The anniversary event was not just about DJ Kaycee—it was also a gathering of music lovers and fellow artists who came to honor his incredible journey. The night featured special guest performances, surprise appearances, and heartfelt tributes from industry peers.

Fans enjoyed a carefully curated setlist that spanned DJ Kaycee's 20-year career, showcasing the evolution of his sound and the tracks that have defined his journey. The energy in the room was electric as

attendees celebrated a man who has left an undeniable mark on the music scene.

Gratitude and looking ahead

Speaking at the event, DJ Kaycee expressed deep appreciation for the support he has received throughout his career.

"I'm overwhelmed with gratitude and joy as I celebrate this milestone," he said. "The love and support from my fans have been the driving force behind my success. Here's to many more years of making unforgettable memories together!"

As he looks to the future, DJ Kaycee has no plans of slowing down. Fans can expect more exciting performances, fresh music releases, and innovative projects that showcase his creativity. With 20 years behind him and many more ahead, DJ Kaycee continues to set the stage for even greater achievements.

Singer Shakira hospitalised in Peru

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Colombian pop icon Shakira has been hospitalised in Peru due to a stomach-related health issue. She is receiving treatment and is being closely monitored.

The sudden illness forced her to cancel a highly anticipated concert scheduled for Sunday in Lima.

The singer shared the news on social media, apologizing to fans for the unexpected setback.

“I’m sorry to let you all know that last night I had to go to the emergency room for an abdominal issue, and I’m currently hospitalized,” she wrote. “The doctors taking care of me have told me that I’m not well enough to perform tonight.”

Fans disappointed as Shakira misses first Peru show in over a decade

Shakira arrived in Lima on Saturday, marking her first visit to the Peruvian capital in more than ten years. Excited fans gathered at the airport to welcome the global superstar. Videos posted online showed crowds cheering as she stepped off the plane.

Her scheduled Sunday performance was a key stop on her latest tour, which began in Brazil last week. However, her sudden



illness left thousands of fans disappointed, with many expressing concern for her health on social media.

Shakira hopes for quick recovery

Despite the hospitalization, the “Hips Don’t Lie” singer remains hopeful about resuming her tour. In her statement, she reassured fans that she is eager to recover quickly.

“I hope to be better by tomorrow and that they release me from the hospital as soon as possible, so I can put on the show I’ve prepared for you all,” she wrote.

Shakira, known for her energetic performances and signature dance moves, has been a major force in Latin and global pop music. Hits like La Tortura with Alejandro Sanz and her viral 2023 diss track against ex-partner Gerard Piqué have solidified her status as a crossover icon.

Her 2006 hit Hips Don’t Lie, featuring Wyclef Jean, remains one of the most successful Latin pop songs of all time.

Uncertainty surrounds Lima’s next show

Shakira’s next concert in Lima is scheduled for Monday, but it remains unclear whether she will be able to perform. Medical professionals will determine whether she is fit to return to the stage.

Fans eagerly await updates, hoping the singer will recover in time. Many have flooded her social media pages with messages of support and well-wishes.

For now, Shakira’s health remains the top priority. More details about her condition and upcoming performances are expected soon.

South Korean Actress Kim Sae-ron dies at 24

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

South Korean actress Kim Sae-ron was found dead in her Seongsu-dong, Seoul apartment on Sunday at the age of 24. Authorities are investigating the cause.

Authorities confirmed her death after a friend discovered her unresponsive at approximately 4:55 PM local time (07:55 GMT).

Police stated that there were no signs of foul play. An investigation is underway to determine the cause of death.

A promising start in film

Kim, a former child star, was widely regarded as one of South Korea's most promising young actresses.

She first gained international recognition in 2009 when she starred in *A Brand New Life*. The film premiered at the Cannes Film Festival, bringing her into the global spotlight at just nine years old.

Her breakthrough continued with *The Man from Nowhere* (2010), a critically acclaimed thriller that became South Korea's highest-grossing film of the year. Kim's performance earned praise for its emotional depth and maturity. She went on to star in several notable films, including *The Neighbour* (2012), which brought her further award recognition.

A career marked by acclaimed roles



Kim's career flourished as she took on complex and challenging roles. In 2014, she starred in *A Girl at My Door*, a drama that tackled social issues and was screened at major film festivals. Two years later, she appeared in the historical fantasy drama *Mirror of the Witch*, solidifying her status as a rising talent in the industry.

Legal troubles and public fallout

However, her career faced a significant setback in 2022 following a drunk driving incident. Kim was caught driving under the influence in Seoul and later admitted responsibility. The court fined her 20 million won (£11,000) in April 2023. The controversy led to her withdrawal from public life and damaged her once-bright reputation.

Her last known acting role was in Netflix's 2023 Korean drama *Bloodhounds*. However, reports suggest that most of her scenes were removed due to the backlash from her

legal troubles.

Fans and colleagues mourn her loss. Despite her absence from the industry, Kim remained a well-known figure in South Korea's entertainment world. Her sudden death has shocked fans and colleagues, many of whom remember her as a talented actress with immense potential.

As authorities continue their investigation, tributes are pouring in from fans and industry professionals. Many have taken to social media to express their grief and share memories of Kim's work.

Investigation ongoing

The circumstances surrounding her death remain unclear, but her passing marks a tragic end to a career that once held great promise. More details are expected as the investigation unfolds.

US govt to deport 201 Nigerians amid immigration crackdown

By Friday Omosola

The United States (US) has finalized plans to repatriate 201 Nigerians, including individuals with criminal records and those residing in the country without proper documentation.

This move is part of a broader immigration enforcement effort under President Donald Trump's administration.

The US government cited violations of immigration laws and criminal records as reasons for the deportation.

During a meeting with US Ambassador Richard Mills at Tafawa Balewa House in Abuja, Nigeria's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu, addressed concerns over the impending deportation.

The minister stated that those being repatriated would be dropped off in Lagos, emphasising that there was no room for debate on whether they should be sent to Port Harcourt or Abuja instead.

She added that the first group to be deported would consist of convicted criminals currently serving prison sentences in the US.



According to her, some of the deportees had clearly violated US immigration laws, appealed their cases, but were denied and remained in the country unlawfully.

In a statement issued on Sunday by Magnus Eze, the minister's media aide, both officials discussed concerns about the deportation process, with Odumegwu-Ojukwu advocating for a dignified repatriation of the affected Nigerians.

The statement partly read: "They have committed immigration crimes, people who have been ordered to leave. With the new administration in the US, we want a situation where there will be commitments. If there will be repatriation, we want a dignified return.

"At the moment, we're told that about 201 Nigerian nationals are in US immigration camps, and about 85 have been cleared for deportation."

"Will there be any way of ameliorating their pains? This has been of great concern to not just Nigerian nationals in the US but family members in Nigeria who depend on them for survival, children whose school fees are paid for by these diasporans.

"We are asking as a country whether they will be given ample time to handle their assets or will they just be bundled into planes and repatriated? It will really be traumatic especially for those who had not committed any violent crime."

Trump administration turns to supreme court to dismiss agency head **By Olamilekan Botti**

President Donald Trump's administration has formally requested the U.S. Supreme Court to intervene in its efforts to dismiss the head of an independent agency dedicated to protecting government whistleblowers. This marks the administration's first legal confrontation involving Trump's authority since he took office in January, spotlighting the ongoing tensions between the executive branch and judicial oversight.

The Justice Department's appeal seeks to overturn a federal judge's order issued on February 12, which temporarily blocked Trump's attempt to remove Hampton Dellinger from his position as the head of the Office of Special Counsel (OSC). This agency plays a critical role in safeguarding whistleblowers from retaliation, ensuring that those who report misconduct within the government can do so without fear of repercussions. The request for the Supreme Court's intervention was revealed through a filing that has been reviewed by Reuters.

As of now, the case has not been officially docketed by the Supreme Court, but its implications could be far-reaching. Legal experts suggest that this case may provide insight into how the Supreme Court, with its current 6-3 conservative majority, will interpret Trump's assertive efforts to reshape the federal government, particularly in terms of removing leaders of independent agencies. Notably, three justices on the Court were appointed by Trump during his first term, potentially influencing their perspectives on executive authority.

In the filing, Acting Solicitor General Sarah Harris characterized the lower court's ruling as an "unprecedented assault on the separation of powers." She emphasized that such judicial interventions threaten the autonomy of



the executive branch. "This court should not allow lower courts to seize executive power by dictating to the President how long he must continue employing an agency head against his will," Harris articulated, underscoring the administration's stance that the President should have the authority to appoint and remove agency heads without external interference.

The ongoing legal battle highlights the broader context of Trump's administration, which has consistently sought to assert control over federal agencies that it views as obstructive to its agenda. The OSC, in particular, has been a point of contention, as its role in protecting whistleblowers can sometimes conflict with the administration's goals, especially regarding transparency and accountability in government.

This case is poised to draw significant attention not only for its immediate ramifications but also for its potential to set precedents regarding executive power and the relationship between the branches of government. Legal analysts are closely watching how the Supreme Court will navigate these complex issues, especially in a politically charged environment where the balance

of power is a central theme.

As the legal proceedings unfold, the implications for government whistleblowers and the protections afforded to them remain a critical concern. Advocates for transparency and accountability in government fear that the administration's actions may undermine these vital protections, leading to a chilling effect on individuals who might otherwise come forward to expose wrongdoing.

In conclusion, the Trump administration's request for Supreme Court intervention represents a pivotal moment in its ongoing efforts to reshape the federal landscape. As the Court prepares to consider this case, the outcome may have lasting effects on the balance of power within the U.S. government and the protections available to whistleblowers who play an essential role in maintaining integrity and accountability in public service. The nation now awaits the Court's decision, which could redefine the limits of executive authority in the years to come.

Secret deal: U.S. bid for 50% control of Ukraine's resources

By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

The U.S. and Ukraine should form a joint investment fund” – A key point in the proposed deal to control Ukraine's resources

U.S. President Donald Trump has demanded repayment for the military aid and financial assistance the United States has provided to Ukraine since the start of the war with Russia. Trump insists that Ukraine should compensate the U.S. with \$500 billion worth of rare earth minerals to cover the cost of American support.

The US president also claimed that Ukraine had already agreed to grant the U.S. access to its natural resources, amounting to \$500 billion. Experts argue that the American demand represents a greater share of Ukraine's GDP than the reparations imposed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. However, the conditions under which Ukraine would accept the U.S. request remain unclear.

A draft agreement that recently surfaced reportedly landed at President Volodymyr Zelensky's office a week ago. Analysts believe that its terms amount to an economic takeover of Ukraine by the U.S. However, implementing such a demand may prove impractical and difficult to achieve. The request has caused significant concern and panic in Kyiv.

According to The UK Telegraph, which claims to have accessed the draft contract dated February 7, 2025, the agreement proposes that the U.S. and Ukraine establish a joint investment fund. The fund's purpose would be to prevent hostile actors from benefiting from Ukraine's reconstruction efforts.

The contract encompasses the economic value of Ukraine's resources, including minerals, oil, gas, ports, and infrastructure, leaving room for additional assets to be included. It further states that “this agreement shall be governed by New York law, without regard to conflict of laws principles.”

Under the terms of the agreement, the U.S. would receive 50% of Ukraine's recurring revenues from resource extraction and



50% of the financial value of all new licenses issued to third parties for resource monetization. A lien would be placed on these revenues in favor of the U.S. “That clause means ‘pay us first, and then feed your children,’ said one source familiar with the negotiations.

Additionally, the agreement grants the U.S. the right of first refusal for purchasing Ukraine's exportable minerals. It also gives Washington near-total control over Ukraine's resource economy, with sovereign immunity and exclusive rights to determine the terms of all future resource-related licenses and projects. Some sources speculate that private legal firms, rather than U.S. government agencies, drafted the agreement.

The origins of the deal trace back to Zelensky's visit to Trump Tower in September, during which he proposed allowing the U.S. a direct stake in Ukraine's rare earth elements and critical minerals. Zelensky believed this would encourage American companies to establish operations in Ukraine, creating a political safeguard against further Russian aggression.

Some of Ukraine's most valuable mineral deposits lie near the frontlines or in Russian-occupied territories. Zelensky has emphasized the risks of allowing strategic reserves of titanium, tungsten, uranium, graphite, and rare earth minerals to fall into

Russian hands. “If we are talking about a deal, then let's do a deal; we are open to it,” he stated.

However, the stringent conditions imposed by the draft agreement resemble punitive measures typically reserved for defeated nations. Experts argue that the terms are even harsher than the reparations imposed on Germany and Japan after World War II. Notably, both countries eventually became net recipients of funds from their former adversaries.

If accepted, Trump's demands would require Ukraine to relinquish a greater portion of its GDP than Germany did under the Treaty of Versailles, which was later adjusted by the London Conference in 1921 and the Dawes Plan in 1924. Ironically, Trump appears willing to let Russia off the hook entirely.

In an interview with Fox News, Trump asserted that Ukraine had “essentially agreed” to the \$500 billion repayment plan, stating: “They have tremendously valuable land in terms of rare earths, oil, and gas, among other things.” He warned that rejecting the deal could leave Ukraine vulnerable to Russian control. “They may make a deal. They may not make a deal. They may be Russian someday, or they may not be Russian someday. But I want this money back,” he added.

Trump also claimed that the U.S. has

U.S. supports Israel's objective to eradicate Hamas in Gaza

By Olamilekan Botti

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio expressed strong support for Israel's aim to "eradicate" Hamas in Gaza. This declaration raises questions about Washington's dedication to a tenuous ceasefire agreement that it facilitated last month.

Rubio emphasized the urgency of releasing the remaining Israeli hostages held in Gaza, asserting that the Palestinian militant organization can no longer maintain control over the devastated territory. His remarks reflect a hardline stance, potentially shifting the dynamics of ongoing negotiations and peace efforts in the region.

Hamas "cannot continue as a military or government force" in Gaza, insisting they "must be eliminated" during a press conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem. His comments cast doubt on Washington's commitment to a fragile ceasefire agreement brokered last month.

Rubio also referenced President Donald Trump's recent remarks regarding the potential removal of a significant portion of Gaza's population to facilitate redevelopment. He described this perspective as a "bold" vision for the territory's future, warning that without such drastic measures, the "same cycle will repeat over and over again."

The proposed plan, which suggests relocating Palestinians to countries like Egypt and Jordan, has faced widespread rejection from Arab leaders. Many are reluctant to appear complicit in the forced displacement of Palestinians, fearing it could destabilize the region and jeopardize their own security.

The United States, along with Egypt



and Qatar, played a crucial role in mediating a 42-day truce in the ongoing Gaza conflict. To date, 19 Israelis and five Thai foreign workers taken hostage during Hamas's October 7, 2023, attack have been released, alongside hundreds of Palestinian prisoners. The ceasefire is now nearing its fifth week.

Currently, over 70 Israelis remain in captivity, with 14 expected to be released in the next two weeks per the ceasefire terms. However, both Israeli and U.S. officials are urging that this timeline be expedited. "We're not in favor of waiting weeks and weeks," Rubio stated in an interview with CBS News, emphasizing the urgency of securing the release of hostages "as soon as possible."

Negotiations for the second phase of the truce have yet to commence and are already two weeks behind schedule, with both sides exchanging accusations over alleged violations. This next phase is anticipated to entail a permanent cessation of hostilities, complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, and the release of all remaining hostages.

Steve Witkoff, Trump's Middle East

envoy, announced on Fox News that discussions would take place over the coming week at an undisclosed location, aiming to successfully navigate the second phase.

Following a call from Witkoff, Netanyahu's office confirmed that the Israeli Prime Minister would convene his security cabinet on Monday to deliberate on the next steps. Netanyahu has consistently called for nothing less than "total victory" over Hamas.

Alongside Rubio, Netanyahu reaffirmed Israel's commitment to its objectives in Gaza, which include "eliminating" Hamas's military capabilities and political authority while securing the return of all hostages. "President Trump and I are working in full cooperation and coordination," he stated. "We have a common strategy, though we cannot always disclose the details to the public — including when the gates of hell on Hamas will be opened, as they surely will if all our hostages are not released."

Netanyahu concluded by emphasizing Trump's "bold vision for Gaza," expressing optimism that the two nations would collaborate to make this

New 96% accurate prostate cancer test endorsed by Chris Hoy

By Olamilekan Botti

A groundbreaking prostate cancer test, boasting an impressive 96% accuracy rate, has been developed by scientists and is supported by Olympic cycling champion Sir Chris Hoy. This innovative test is hailed as “truly game-changing,” capable of not only diagnosing prostate cancer with remarkable precision but also identifying the disease’s aggression and sub-type.

The Cambridge-based digital diagnostic firm, EDX Medical, is behind this initiative, which has been found to be more accurate than the existing prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test currently offered by the NHS. In light of Sir Chris’ personal campaign for improved access to screening following his own terminal diagnosis, the NHS is set to reevaluate its guidance on prostate cancer testing, which has been criticized as “dangerously outdated.”

EDX Medical explains that the new test requires simple blood and urine samples, which are sent to a laboratory for analysis by both scientists and an advanced AI algorithm. This comprehensive approach combines PSA positivity with a range of other metrics to enhance its accuracy.

Sir Chris Hoy, a six-time Olympic gold medalist, has been vocal about the need for better prostate cancer screening following his diagnosis. He expressed his support for the new test, stating, “I now know there is a need for better and more accurate prostate cancer screening tests, and I wholeheartedly welcome this initiative.”

Professor Sir Chris Evans, the founder and chief scientific officer of EDX Medical, emphasized the potential impact of the test, calling it “truly game-changing.” He stated, “Every indication thus far shows it will be the most accurate and sensitive screening test available,



transforming the landscape of prostate cancer detection for men who may be unaware of their condition.” The test is designed to facilitate earlier detection and more precise risk assessment based on genetic factors, enabling more personalized treatment plans.

This pioneering test is the first of its kind to evaluate over 100 biomarkers, providing not only a cancer diagnosis but also insights into risk levels, sub-types, and aggressiveness of the disease. A trial led by Imperial College London, supported by Prostate Cancer UK, is currently assessing various prostate cancer screening tests to determine the most effective option for the NHS moving forward.

While EDX Medical is confident in its findings, it has yet to disclose the cost of the test and analysis. The company anticipates achieving a cancer detection accuracy rate of 96 to 99%, based on clinical trials involving relevant biomarkers, though the product itself has not been independently tested.

Regulatory approval is expected to be sought this year in both the UK and the

US, with plans to roll out the test privately by early 2026. Following this, an application will be made for NHS utilization.

The analysis examines specific proteins in the samples, alongside RNA and DNA composition, and detects any mutations. By aggregating this data and leveraging AI for analysis, the test aims to identify prostate cancer in individuals who may not exhibit any symptoms, significantly improving early diagnosis rates.

Former footballer Rio Ferdinand, who has experienced the devastating impact of cancer through the loss of loved ones, emphasized the importance of such advancements in reducing health disparities. He noted that black men are at greater risk for prostate cancer and highlighted the need for improved testing methods.

“Those of us who have lost a loved one to cancer know full well the necessity for better and earlier testing across a range of cancers,” he remarked. “If caught early, many men can be effectively treated, yet too many are dying unnecessarily.”

Freed hostages share insights on life in Gaza tunnels

By Olamilekan Botti

For the first time in over a year, families of Israeli hostages in Gaza have received reassuring signs of life from their loved ones, thanks to recent releases of captives during a ceasefire agreement with Hamas. In the past few weeks, the messages have come from some of the 19 Israeli hostages freed since the ceasefire took effect on January 19, bringing renewed hope and anxiety to their loved ones.

These messages have not only rekindled hope for families longing to reunite with their relatives but have also heightened their fears regarding the harsh realities faced by the hostages. Reports detailing the dire conditions experienced in captivity have surfaced, particularly concerning the physical state of the hostages. The emaciated appearance of three individuals released on February 8 has deepened the families' concerns for their wellbeing.

So far, signs of life have been reported from at least ten hostages among the 251 who were kidnapped during Hamas's October 7 attack on southern Israel, an event that ignited the ongoing Gaza conflict. One of the hostages, Elkana Bohbut, 35, was abducted from the Nova music festival. A harrowing video showing him bound and bloodied circulated on social media shortly after his kidnapping.

Almost 500 days later, through a liberated hostage who had also been held in a Gaza tunnel, Elkana managed to send a poignant message to his wife, Rivka. He asked her to listen daily to an Israeli pop song titled "Warrior" as a source of strength. "500 terrible days have passed, and this week, thank God, we received a sign of life. Elkana is alive but suffering in inhuman conditions," Rivka Bohbut stated, her voice filled with emotion.

During a recent weekly hostage rally in Tel Aviv, Rivka shared her resolve, promising Elkana, "I promise you that we



will not stop until you come back. We will never give up on you. Don't break, my beloved. Soon you will be home. Soon the nightmare will be over." Her heartfelt declaration resonated with many, underscoring the enduring hope and determination of families grappling with the uncertainty of their loved ones' fates in Gaza.

As the situation continues to unfold, the families remain steadfast in their pursuit of answers and reunification, drawing strength from the signs of life that have emerged amidst the darkness.

Freed Hostages Offer Glimpse into Captivity, Spark Hope and Fear

Recent releases of Israeli hostages held in Gaza have provided families with the first signs of life from their loved ones in over a year, delivering a mix of hope and dread. The messages, relayed by the 19 hostages freed since the January 19 ceasefire with Hamas, paint a picture of harsh conditions endured within the depths of Gaza's tunnel network.

The news has ignited a renewed sense of urgency and determination among families desperate for reunification. However, the emaciated condition of

some released hostages, particularly the three freed on February 8, has amplified anxieties about the well-being of those still captive.

To date, signs of life have emerged from at least 10 of the 251 individuals abducted during the Hamas-led October 7 attack on southern Israel, the event that precipitated the ongoing Gaza conflict.

One such case is that of Elkana Bohbut, a 35-year-old seized from the Nova music festival. A disturbing video of him, bound and bloodied, circulated online shortly after his abduction, becoming a stark symbol of the day's brutality.

Nearly 500 days later, a freed hostage who shared a Gaza tunnel with Elkana carried a message to his wife, Rivka. Elkana requested that she listen daily to the Israeli pop song "Warrior," drawing strength from its lyrics.

"500 terrible days have passed, and this week, thank God, we received a sign of life. Elkana is alive but suffering in inhuman conditions," Rivka Bohbut shared, her voice thick with emotion. Speaking at a weekly hostage rally in Tel Aviv, she addressed her husband directly, quoting the song back to him.

Israel keeps troops in five locations in Lebanon after deadline

By Olamilekan Botti



On Monday, a military spokesperson announced that Israel will retain troops at several posts in southern Lebanon beyond the February 18 deadline for withdrawal.

This decision comes as Israeli leaders aim to reassure residents in the northern regions that it is safe for them to return home.

The initial withdrawal timeline was established under a truce agreement brokered by Washington in November, which granted Israeli forces 60 days to withdraw from southern Lebanon.

This area has been the focal point of a ground offensive against Hezbollah, the armed group based in Lebanon, which began in early October.

Although the deadline was extended to February 18, both Israeli and Lebanese officials, along with foreign diplomats, had anticipated that some Israeli troops would remain stationed on the Lebanese side of the border.

Military spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Nadav Shoshani emphasized the necessity of maintaining a military presence at these strategic points to protect Israeli citizens.

“We need to remain at those points at the moment to defend Israeli citizens, to ensure this process is complete, and ultimately to hand over responsibilities to the Lebanese armed forces,”

Shoshani explained during a briefing with reporters. He clarified that this decision aligns with the mechanisms

outlined in the ceasefire agreement.

The ongoing situation highlights the complexities of security in the region, where tensions remain high.

As Israeli troops continue to monitor the border, the implications for both national security and regional stability remain significant.

The Israeli government’s commitment to safeguard its citizens while navigating international agreements underscores the challenges faced in the volatile landscape of southern Lebanon.

As developments unfold, the international community will be closely watching the situation, particularly the potential impacts on Lebanese security forces and the broader dynamics in the region.

European leaders urgently seek a unified response to Ukraine crisis

By Olamilekan Botti

Europe's leaders find themselves in a state of urgency, as evidenced by their emergency security summit held in Paris on Monday. This convening underscores the continent's growing alarm, particularly in light of the recent exclusion from U.S. led discussions with Russia regarding the future of Ukraine. U.S. President Donald Trump announced that he may soon meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin, further intensifying the pressure on European nations to respond effectively.

The critical question now is whether Europe can set aside political divisions and pressing domestic economic issues to present a cohesive strategy on security spending and Ukraine's future. The possibility of deploying troops to assert their presence and ensure a place at the negotiating table is a topic of serious consideration. On Monday morning, UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer emphasized Britain's readiness to commit troops if necessary, signaling the UK's willingness to take a proactive stance in the crisis.

The summit in Paris follows the Munich Security Conference, where US declarations caused discord among European leaders

Starmer's remarks come at a time when the UK is grappling with its own political challenges, including the ongoing ramifications of Brexit and internal governance issues. Nevertheless, Starmer's assertion reflects a broader sentiment among European leaders that the time has come to unite against external threats. The urgency of the situation is palpable, as any lack of a coordinated response could leave Europe sidelined in critical negotiations regarding Ukraine.

Germany, traditionally cautious in its military engagements, is also weighing its options. Ahead of a contentious election, the foreign policy spokesman



for the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the party expected to secure the most seats, indicated that Germany would be prepared to contribute troops as part of an international coalition. This represents a notable shift in Germany's approach, driven by the recognition that its security is deeply intertwined with the stability of its Eastern neighbors.

Moreover, discussions at the summit included considerations for increasing defense budgets across the continent. Many leaders are advocating for a significant boost in military spending to enhance Europe's independent capabilities. The growing consensus is that a robust military presence is essential not only for deterrence but also for maintaining influence in critical diplomatic discussions.

However, the Trump administration's stance on Ukraine remains ambiguous, with a series of mixed messages emerging over the weekend. While Trump has expressed a desire for dialogue with Russia, the specifics of U.S. policy regarding military support for Ukraine and European allies remain unclear. This uncertainty complicates Europe's efforts to formulate a unified

response, as leaders grapple with the implications of U.S. decisions on their own security policies.

Since Russia launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022, Ukrainian towns and cities have suffered heavy bombardment

The ramifications of this situation extend beyond immediate military concerns. A failure to present a united front could embolden adversaries and jeopardize Europe's security architecture. As such, the urgency for European nations to come together has never been more critical. The stakes are high, not only for Ukraine but for the broader geopolitical stability of Europe.

As the crisis unfolds, Europe's leaders are acutely aware that their choices now will shape the future of the continent. The need for a coherent strategy that prioritizes collective security and regional stability has never been more pressing. The outcome of this summit and the subsequent actions taken by European leaders will be closely monitored, as they navigate the delicate balance between diplomacy and defense in a rapidly changing world.

Lewandowski goal seals Rayo Vallecano win as Barcelona top LaLiga table

By Oluwatosin Ologun

Barcelona returned to the top of the Spanish league on goal difference after Robert Lewandowski's first-half penalty secured a 1-0 win over Rayo Vallecano.

The Catalan club took advantage of weekend slip-ups by Real Madrid and Atlético Madrid to move on to 51 points on Monday, the same as Madrid and a point clear of Atlético.

Madrid drew 1-1 at Osasuna on Saturday, and Atletico was held by the same score at home by Celta Vigo.

"We shouldn't fall into the trap of looking too much at what's happening in the table," Barcelona keeper Wojciech Szczesny told Barca One after the match.

"We were also, at one point, nine points ahead of everyone else. You could see that when you get too excited or too relaxed, things can change very quickly. So, we have to be at our very best in the next match and then the game after that.

"We still have three trophies to



fight for. We have the chance to do something very special this season."

Barcelona took the lead after 27 minutes when Pathe Ciss brought down Inigo Martínez in the box, and a penalty was awarded after a video review. Lewandowski sent the keeper the wrong way from the spot.

Both sides had chances to score after that.

Augusto Batalla saved well from Lamine Yamal, who was playing the 100th game of his career, while at the other end, Jorge De Frutos had the ball in the net for Rayo, only to see it ruled out for offside.

De Frutos was always dangerous

for Rayo, but as the game went on, the home side took control and extended its unbeaten run to 12 matches.

"I said that we would fight until the end, and that's what we are doing. It's not finished," Barcelona manager Hansi Flick said.

"We are now in a good situation – it's good for the club and for the confidence for the players, and, of course, for the fans. For the whole club, it's a big thing. But it's not the end. So we have a long long way to go."

The defeat ended Rayo's nine-game unbeaten streak that stretched back to December 7.