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# Calabar PDP Zonal Congress final, Wike declares

By Dave Oludare Oso



The Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike has declared that the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) would not hold any other South-South zonal congress after the one held in Calabar, Cross River State on Saturday.

During his speech at the event, the former Rivers State governor dismissed any objections to the congress, stating that no congress or convention has ever recorded

full delegate participation.

While urging party members to elect officials who will protect and strengthen the PDP, he said, “The South-South Zone is the strongest zone of the PDP in Nigeria. There is no part of the constitution that says a congress should be postponed because of a wedding or travel plans.”

Wike further said, “I want to assure you that this is the final zonal congress of the South-South Zone. After today’s

election, no other zonal congress will hold.”

The minister also emphasized the need for unity within the party, warning against intimidation and urging members to remain vigilant in selecting their leaders.

However, the National Working Committee (NWC) of the leading opposition party has distanced itself from the congress, further exacerbating the crisis rocking the once-dominant party.

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#### CONTACT US

Correspondent Address:  
Real Group Plaza, No.1 Junaid Dosumu  
Street, CBD, Alausa, Ikeja, Lagos  
Call the Editor on: 07025014298, 09014323792

E-mail Address:  
[info@newdailyprime.news](mailto:info@newdailyprime.news)  
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# Tinubu pledges support for Fintech growth

By Friday Omosola

President Bola Tinubu has reaffirmed his administration's commitment to supporting financial technology companies in Nigeria, particularly those that enhance payment infrastructure services across Africa.

The President made this pledge yesterday when he received the leadership of Flutterwave and Alami Capital at the State House in Abuja.

The delegation, led by Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun, included key stakeholders from the fintech and technology development sectors.

Flutterwave, a Lagos-headquartered fintech giant operating in over 30 African countries, is seeking to list on the Nigerian Exchange.

Its CEO, Olugbenga Agboola, alongside co-founder Adeleke Adekoya, and executives Oluwabankole Falade and Mitesh Popat, met with President Tinubu to discuss the company's expansion plans.

Ms Oluseun Olufemi-White, CEO of Alami Capital, also attended.

President Tinubu emphasised Nigeria's openness to business and his administration's resolve to eliminate barriers hindering the growth of enterprises.

He commended Flutterwave's role in the digital economy, highlighting



its impact on job creation, financial inclusion, and Nigeria's economic diversification.

"The leadership Flutterwave provides in the digital world is what Nigeria needs to grow its economy and make life easier for its people. I am honoured to lead a country with such a youthful and resourceful population," President Tinubu stated.

Edun acknowledged Flutterwave's contributions to Nigeria's fintech ecosystem, noting its progress over the past decade.

"Flutterwave has created jobs and contributed to economic diversification through innovative digital payment solutions," Edun said.

Flutterwave's CEO, Agboola, revealed that the company, valued at over \$3 billion, enables Nigerians to make payments for global services in Naira and facilitates remittances from the diaspora.

He expressed the company's ambition to be listed on the Nigerian Exchange and sought the President's support for the move.

Armstrong Ume Takang, Managing Director of the Ministry of Finance Incorporated (MOFI), stressed the need for Nigeria to leverage its economic strength by strategically positioning indigenous companies like Flutterwave.

He pointed out that significant funds spent on hosting services by Nigerian tech firms currently benefit foreign countries.

To address this, he suggested bolstering Galaxy Backbone's hosting capabilities to retain such expenditures within Nigeria.

The meeting, which also had in attendance Inuwa Kashifu Abdullahi, Director-General of the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), underscored the government's intent to create a more conducive environment for fintech growth and innovation.

# IBB reveals details of foiled coup by childhood friend

By Olamilekan Botti

Former Head of State, General Ibrahim Babangida (retd.), has offered a deeply personal and revealing account of the 1985 foiled coup allegedly masterminded by his childhood friend, General Mamman Vatsa. In his autobiography, *A Journey of Service*, launched on February 20, 2025, Babangida grapples with the agonizing dilemma he faced: choosing between a lifelong friendship and safeguarding the stability of the Nigerian nation. The book provides a rare glimpse into the inner workings of military leadership and the heavy burdens of command.

Chapter 10, aptly titled “The Challenges of Leadership,” delves into the intricate web of events leading up to the arrests and subsequent trial of Vatsa and his co-conspirators. Babangida recounts how initial whispers of Vatsa’s alleged plot reached him as “a series of rumors,” dismissed at first as mere envy fueled by their close relationship, nurtured since their formative years. However, the persistent nature of the rumors and the potential ramifications for national security compelled him to act.

Driven by a sense of duty, Babangida consulted with trusted military colleagues, including Generals Nasko, Garba Duba, and Wushishi, seeking their counsel and insights. These consultations underscored the gravity of the situation and the need for a thorough investigation. Covert inquiries were initiated by military and intelligence agencies to ascertain the veracity of the claims.



The investigations, according to Babangida, unearthed “incontrovertible evidence” indicating that Vatsa had indeed provided financial incentives to officers to facilitate the coup operation. This revelation was a profound shock to Babangida, who struggled to reconcile the image of his lifelong friend with the alleged act of treason.

Babangida writes, “With our experience in the few months in government and the benefit of hindsight based on previous rumors, I determined that the best way to tackle the rumors about a possible Vatsa coup was by confronting the principal suspects.” He confronted Vatsa directly, relaying the rumors and seeking clarification. General Nasko also intervened, attempting to elicit the truth from Vatsa, who vehemently denied any involvement in the alleged plot.

Despite Vatsa’s denials, the covert investigations continued relentlessly. The evidence mounted, painting a

damning picture of Vatsa’s alleged involvement. Babangida reveals that Vatsa had allegedly disbursed funds to several officers to support the coup attempt. One such officer, Lt-Col. Musa Bitiyong, reportedly received N50,000 for his participation.

The unfolding events presented Babangida with an excruciating moral and professional dilemma. He was forced to weigh the bonds of friendship against his sworn duty to protect the nation. Ultimately, he concluded that the evidence against Vatsa was overwhelming and that decisive action was necessary to prevent further destabilization. The decision to proceed with the arrests and trial of Vatsa and his co-conspirators was one of the most difficult of his career, a decision that would forever shape his legacy.

The autobiography promises to shed further light on the complexities of this pivotal moment in Nigerian history, offering a nuanced perspective on the events that transpired and the motivations behind the key players involved.

# Makinde warns Osun APC against instability as Adeleke swears in new LG chairmen

By Friday Omosola



**T**he Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Governors Forum has issued a stern warning to the All Progressives Congress (APC), urging them to avoid turning Osun State into a zone of lawlessness.

The forum emphasised adherence to the rule of law and discouraged any form of self-help in political matters.

Speaking in Osogbo on behalf of the forum, Oyo State Governor Seyi Makinde, accompanied by PDP Governors Forum Chairman and Bauchi State Governor Bala

Mohammed, called for calm and lawful engagement over electoral disputes.

Both governors were present in solidarity with Governor Ademola Adeleke at the swearing-in ceremony of newly elected council chairmen.

Governor Makinde reminded those instigating unrest in Osun to learn from history, warning against actions that could destabilize the state.

He urged the APC to allow peace to prevail, insisting that any

grievances should be settled through the judiciary rather than resorting to illegal means.

“The PDP and its governors are focused on delivering the dividends of democracy to our people. My brother, Governor Adeleke, is fulfilling his promises to the people of Osun State,” Makinde stated.

“If anyone has a court judgment, there are legal procedures for enforcement. Resorting to self-help is both unlawful and unacceptable,” he added.

# Gov. Abiodun reaffirms strong support for armed forces

By Olamilekan Botti

**G**overnor Dapo Abiodun praised the invaluable contributions and sacrifices made by the Nigerian Armed Forces in defending the nation.

Speaking at a civic reception in honor of Rear Admiral Kolawole Oguntuga, newly promoted Fleet Commander of the Eastern Fleet of the Nigerian Navy, Abiodun emphasized that his administration is committed to recognizing and appreciating the sacrificial roles played by military personnel in safeguarding the country.

Ogun State Governor, Dapo Abiodun The governor's remarks were delivered by his Deputy, Noimot Salako-Oyedele, during a celebration organized by the Ijebu Ife Community in the Ijebu East Local Government Area.

The event marked not only Oguntuga's recent promotion to Rear Admiral but also his birthday. The reception took place at the Palace of the Ajalorun of Ijebu Ife, Oba Adesesan Oguntayo, and drew a notable crowd, including dignitaries such as the Soun of Ogbomoso, Oba Olaoye Ghandi, former Minister of Health Dr. Olorunimbe Mamora, Ogun State Secretary Tokunbo Talabi, and Chief Bisi Akande, the former governor of Osun State.

In his address, Governor Abiodun expressed profound appreciation for the armed forces, stating, "In Ogun State, we recognize the invaluable sacrifices of our armed forces in securing our lives, our properties, and the nation's territorial integrity.

Their commitment to duty has been pivotal in ensuring peace and stability across the nation."

Highlighting Rear Admiral Oguntuga's



remarkable career, the governor referred to him as a "gallant, responsible, and diligent Naval officer" whose achievements have brought pride to Ogun State and the nation at large.

"Rear Admiral Kolawole Oguntuga has been instrumental in making our country safer and more stable. As a government, we pledge to continue our support for our Armed Forces, enabling them to excel in their constitutionally mandated roles," Abiodun affirmed.

The event served as a platform not only to celebrate Oguntuga's accomplishments but also to foster a sense of community and solidarity among attendees.

Oba Adesesan Oguntayo, the host and traditional ruler, echoed the governor's sentiments, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and honoring individuals who serve the nation with dedication.

The gathering also provided an opportunity for community members to engage with their leaders, reinforcing the bond between the government and the citizens of Ogun State.

As various speakers took to the podium, they lauded Oguntuga not only for his professional achievements but also for his commitment to service and leadership within the Nigerian Navy.

In a time when security challenges are prevalent, the governor's statements resonated deeply with the audience, reminding them of the crucial role that the armed forces play in maintaining peace and security.

The celebration underscored a collective acknowledgment of the sacrifices made by service members and their families.

As Ogun State continues to support its military personnel, the commitment to fostering a safe and secure environment remains a priority for Governor Dapo Abiodun and his administration.

The event concluded with a renewed sense of purpose, as attendees left inspired by the stories of bravery and sacrifice shared throughout the evening, reinforcing the notion that together, they can contribute to a stronger, safer Nigeria.

# Aiyedatiwa acknowledges divine favour at inauguration thanksgiving service **By Friday Omosola**

Ondo State Governor, Lucky Aiyedatiwa, who's set to be inaugurated on Monday, has attributed his emergence as the state's leader to divine providence.

Speaking at the Inauguration Church Thanksgiving Service held at the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Jesus House, Oke Ijebu, Akure, on Sunday, he expressed deep gratitude to God for making his journey possible against all odds.

Governor Aiyedatiwa emphasized that his political success was not by human effort but by God's grace.

Quoting Psalm 124:1, he remarked, "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, what would our Israel be saying this day?"

The governor also thanked the people of Ondo State for their overwhelming support, particularly during the last gubernatorial and local government elections.

He assured them of his administration's commitment to integrity, transparency, and accountability as he prepares to officially assume office.

"As we prepare to take the oath of office tomorrow, we pledge to serve with integrity, transparency, and accountability. We shall work tirelessly to create opportunities, foster growth, and ensure our state remains a beacon of hope and prosperity," Aiyedatiwa stated.



Reaffirming his administration's commitment to the Seven-Point Developmental Agenda (OUR EASE), the governor pledged to focus on socioeconomic advancement in education, healthcare, agriculture, infrastructure, commerce, and industry.

He also reassured citizens of his dedication to maintaining Ondo State's reputation as one of the safest and most peaceful states in Nigeria.

Governor Aiyedatiwa further called for unity and reconciliation, urging all citizens to collaborate in building a prosperous future for the state.

He highlighted the vital role of the church in societal development and pledged to strengthen partnerships that promote education, healthcare, and economic empowerment.

Delivering a sermon titled "Appreciating God for His Favour," Pastor Elijah Olujimi Olubade, the Regional Pastor of Zone 22, referenced Psalm 44:1-8, emphasizing that true victories come by God's grace.

He also cited Romans 13:1, reminding the congregation that all authority is ordained by God and that leaders should govern with humility and gratitude.

The Thanksgiving event featured a special session led by the governor, joined by his wife, Esther Oluwaseun Aiyedatiwa, their family, the Deputy Governor and his family, and top government officials.

The occasion also included the ceremonial cutting of the inauguration cake, symbolizing the beginning of a new era for Ondo State.

# 1966 coup: Ohanaeze seeks N10trn compensation, apology from FG

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

Socio-cultural Igbo organisation, Ohanaeze Ndigbo, on Sunday demanded an apology and N10 trillion as compensation from President Bola Tinubu to the Igbo after the revelation by former military President, retired Gen. Ibrahim Babangida (IBB) during the launch of his book “A Journey in Service” that the 1966 coup was not an Igbo coup as alleged.

59 years after the 1966 coup, IBB absolved the Igbo ethnic group from any blame for the events that led to the military mutiny that ousted then civilian administration led by Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa.

Apart from Balewa, others killed by the coupists include then-Premier of Northern Region, Alhaji Ahmadu Bello; then-Premier of Western Region, Chief Ladoke Akintola and several top military officers from the North.

Meanwhile, the fact that then-Head of State, Major General Aguiyi Ironsi, among top Igbo politicians and military officers, was not killed made many believe that it was an Igbo-inspired mutiny. Additionally, most of the coup planners were Igbo.

However, contrary to the narratives linking the coup to ethnic sentiments, IBB, in his book clarified that the coup was not driven by ethnic motivations.

He highlighted the role of Major John Obienu, an Igbo officer, who played a key role in quelling the coup, revealing that many senior Igbo officers were also tragically killed during the uprising.

Excerpts from the book read: “It was a terrible time for the Nigerian military. As I have said elsewhere, as a young officer who saw all of this from a distance, probably, ethnic sentiments did not drive the original objective of the coup plotters.

“For instance, the head of the plotters, Major Kaduna Nzeogwu was only ‘Igbo’ in name. Born and raised in Kaduna, his immigrant parents were from Okpanam in today’s Delta State, which, in 1966, was in the old mid-western region. Nzeogwu spoke fluent Hausa and was as ‘Hausa’ as any! He and his original team



probably thought, even if naively, that they could turn things around for the better in the country.

“That said, it was heinously callous for Nzeogwu to have murdered Sir Ahmadu Bello and his wife, Hafsatu, because not only were they eminently adored by many but also because they were said not to have put up a fight. From that moment, the putsch was infiltrated by ‘outsiders’ to its supposed original intention, and it took on an unmistakably ethnic colouration, compounded by the fact that there were no related coup activities in the Eastern region.

“It should, however, be borne in mind that some senior officers of Igbo extraction were also victims of the January coup. For instance, my erstwhile Commander at the Reconnaissance Squadron in Kaduna, Lt-Col. Arthur Chinyelu Unegbe, was brutally gunned down by his own ‘brother,’ Major Chris Anuforo, in the presence of his pregnant wife, at his 7 Point Road residence in Apapa, for merely being ‘a threat to the revolution’.

“As a disciplined and strict officer who, as the Quartermaster-General of the Army, was also in charge of ammunition, weapons, equipment, vehicles, and other vital items for the Army, the coup plotters feared that he might not cooperate with them.

“It should also be remembered that some non-Igbo officers, like Major Adewale

Ademoyega, Captain Ganiyu Adeleke, Lts Fola Oyewole, and Olafimihan, took part in the failed coup. Another officer of Igbo extraction, Major John Obienu, crushed the coup.

“Those who argue that the original intention of the coup plotters was anything but ethnic refer to the fact that the initial purpose of the plotters was to release Chief Obafemi Awolowo from prison immediately after the coup and make him the executive provisional President of Nigeria.”

However, after the IBB’s clarification, Ohanaeze Ndigbo has now demanded an apology and N10 trillion as compensation from President Bola Tinubu to the Igbo.

The group noted that the coup unleashed disastrous repercussions on the Igbo people, among other factors, which ultimately led to the cataclysmic horrors of the Biafra War.

In a statement issued by the Deputy National President of the Ohanaeze faction, Okechukwu Isiguzoro, noted that the apology and compensation had become necessary due to the staggering loss of life, with approximately three million Igbo—predominantly innocent women and children—slaughtered during the conflict, an event that continues to reverberate through the collective consciousness of the Igbo people.

# Bauchi chief judge laments rising cases of witchcraft

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Chief Judge of Bauchi State, Justice Rabi Talatu Umar, has raised concerns over the increasing number of witchcraft-related cases, describing them as a persistent challenge in legal jurisprudence.

She made this known while reviewing cases of awaiting trial inmates at Jama'are Maximum Correctional Centre during a two-day quarterly visit by the Administration of Justice Committee, which she chairs.

Justice Rabi stated, "If you are not a witch, you cannot identify one. It is an issue that is difficult to prove unless the accused confesses."

The Administration of Justice Committee includes key legal and security officials such as the State Controller of Custodial Centres, the State Grand Khadi, the Commissioner of Police, the Director of Public Prosecution, and the Chairman of the Nigerian Bar Association in Bauchi.

During the visit, the Chief Judge cautioned judges and magistrates against imposing excessive compensation on convicts, especially in cases where fines are an option, noting that high compensation fees often prolong convicts' stay in correctional facilities.

"Moving forward, any judge who imposes unreasonable compensation on a convict will be required to pay or settle it themselves," she warned.



She criticised the imposition of hefty compensation amounts such as N100,000, N200,000, or even N300,000, arguing that such practices could encourage criminal behaviour.

The CJ urged judges to ensure that compensation remains fair while maintaining a balance between justice and mercy.

"I am troubled by the trend of excessive compensation imposed by judges. Where do you expect a convict to get such large sums? If they cannot pay, they may resort to crime again upon release just to meet the court's demands," she explained.

She emphasised the need for reasonability in determining compensation, adding that it is nearly impossible for victims to fully recover stolen or lost property.

"When sentencing a convict, consider the punishment they have already served. If they have been

imprisoned for two or three years, requiring them to repay the full value of stolen items could be unfair. The other party may have to forfeit something as well," she added.

During the review exercise, she ordered the release of 18 inmates awaiting trial—seven from Jama'are Maximum Correctional Centre, seven from Bauchi Custodial Centre, three from Ningi Correctional Centre, and one from Misau Correctional Centre.

Addressing those released, she remarked, "You have been in custody for too long without being charged or taken to court. Even if convicted, your sentence would not have exceeded the time already spent here. That is why this committee has decided to release you unconditionally."

She urged them to learn from their experience, reintegrate into society as responsible individuals, and acquire skills for self-reliance.

# Police annual conference begins in Abeokuta on Monday

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Nigeria Police Force Fifth Annual Conference and Retreat for Senior Officers will be held from Monday, February 24, to Thursday, February 27, in Abeokuta, Ogun State.

The Force Public Relations Officer (FPRO), Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Olumuyiwa Adejobi disclosed this in a statement issued in Abuja.

The statement said the event, themed “Improving Nigeria’s Internal Security and Economic Prosperity Through Inclusive Policing,” aligns with the Force’s commitment to enhancing leadership capacity and fostering professional development.

According to the statement, the conference will feature intensive



during this event will further enhance the Force’s capacity to serve and protect Nigeria. This conference and retreat underscore the Force’s commitment to excellence,” it added.

workshops, strategic discussions, and team-building exercises, with over 170 senior officers expected to participate.

The statement described the retreat as a crucial platform for sharing best practices and strengthening the Force’s effectiveness.

“The insights and strategies developed

Dignitaries expected at the event include President Bola Tinubu, who will serve as the Special Guest of Honour, as well as state governors, members of the National Assembly, ministers, service chiefs, top government officials, industry leaders, and other key stakeholders.

# Police begins rescue as two clerics abducted in Adamawa

By Helen Okechukwu

The Adamawa State Police Command has begun rescue search for armed criminals responsible for the abduction of two Catholic priests in the early hours of Saturday.

A report noted that Reverend Father Mathew David Dusami of Yola Diocese and Reverend Father Abraham Samman of Jalingo Diocese were taken from their residence in Gwaida Malam, Numan Local Government Area.

The Police Public Relations Officer, Suleiman Yahaya Nguroje, stated that the assailants invaded the house around 4:00 a.m. and forcibly removed the priests, transporting them to an unknown location.

Condemning the incident, Commissioner of Police Dankombo Morris described it



as an unprovoked attack against religious figures who actively promote peace and stability.

He reassured the public that law enforcement is making every effort to track the kidnappers and secure the priests’ release as they are determined to

bring perpetrators to face the law.

“The Adamawa State Police Command is making concerted efforts to apprehend the perpetrators and bring them to justice. We remain committed to safeguarding lives and resisting all forms of violent crime in the state,” CP Morris affirmed.

In response, tactical teams and specialized operational units have been mobilized to locate the perpetrators. Authorities are appealing to residents to remain calm and provide any valuable information that might assist the investigation.

To facilitate public assistance, the police have shared a dedicated hotline—08065604764—for anyone with information relevant to the rescue operation.

# SERAP files suit to halt CBN's ATM fee hike

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) has filed a lawsuit against the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) over its decision to increase Automated Teller Machine (ATM) transaction fees.

SERAP, in suit number FHC/L/CS/344/2025, filed at the Federal High Court in Lagos, argued that the move was unlawful, unfair, and detrimental to consumers.

The New Daily Prime reported that the CBN recently introduced a new policy imposing a charge of N100 per N20,000 withdrawn from ATMs located outside bank branches.

Additionally, ATM withdrawals at shopping centres, airports, and standalone cash points will now attract a fee of N100 plus a surcharge of up to N500 per N20,000 transaction.

SERAP is challenging the legality of this decision, citing its inconsistency with the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Act (FCCPA) of 2018.

The organisation contends that the fee hike is arbitrary and discriminates against economically disadvantaged Nigerians who may struggle to afford the additional costs.

SERAP, represented by lawyers Kolawole Oluwadare and Andrew Nwankwo, asserts that the policy contradicts sections 1(c) and (d), 104, 105, and 127(1) of the FCCPA, which mandate the protection of consumer rights and the prohibition of unfair business practices.

The organisation argued that the increase in ATM fees effectively creates a financial system that disadvantages the poor while favouring banks, which continue to report significant profits.

SERAP further stated that the decision violates Nigeria's constitutional provisions, the CBN Act, and international human rights obligations.

The organisation emphasises that the burden of additional fees is unjustly placed on vulnerable citizens, exacerbating economic hardship and social inequality.



In its suit, SERAP seeks several declarations and orders, including a declaration that the CBN's decision to increase ATM fees is arbitrary, unfair, and in violation of the FCCPA.

It also seeks a declaration that the CBN cannot unilaterally raise ATM fees without the approval of the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC).

Additionally, SERAP requests an order setting aside the CBN circular dated February 10, 2025, which announced the fee increase, as well as an injunction restraining the CBN, its representatives, and financial institutions from implementing or enforcing the new fees.

The statement partly read: "CBN policies should not be skewed against poor Nigerians and heavily in favour of banks that continue to declare trillions of naira in profits mostly at the expense of their customers. The increase in ATM transaction fees would inflict misery on poor Nigerians and contribute to human rights abuses.

"Imposing exorbitant ATM transaction fees on socially and economically vulnerable Nigerians at a time several Nigerian banks are declaring trillions of naira in profits yearly is manifestly unfair, unreasonable and unjust.

"The CBN, through a Circular to all banks and other financial institutions dated February 10 2025, stated that it has reviewed and increased the ATM transaction fees prescribed in section

10(7) of the CBN Guide to Charges by Bank, Other Financial and Non-Bank Financial Institutions 2020.

"Section 1(c)(d) of the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Act, 2018 provides that the objectives of the Act are to 'protect and promote the interests and welfare of consumers' and 'prohibit restrictive or unfair business practices' such as the exorbitant and unreasonable increase in ATM transaction fees by the CBN.

"The provisions of the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Act are directly binding on the CBN, as the provisions constrain the exercise of the statutory powers and functions of the institution.

"Section 2(1) of the Act provides that its provisions 'apply to all undertakings [such as the CBN] and scope of application to all commercial activities within Nigeria.

"Section 2(2) provides that: 'This Act is binding upon- (a) a body corporate or agency of the Government; (b) a body corporate; (c) all commercial activities aimed at making profit and geared towards the satisfaction of demand from the public.'

"According to section 70(1) of the Act, 'For the purpose of this Act, an undertaking [such as the CBN] is considered to be in a dominant position if it can act without taking account of the reaction of its customers or consumers.'

"The Act prohibits abuse of dominant position by the CBN including charging excessive ATM transaction fees to the detriment of consumers. Section 104 of the of the Act asserts the supremacy of the Act over 'the provisions of any other law', such as the CBN Act. The only exception to the provision is the Nigerian Constitution 1999 [as amended]."

"Section 127(1) of the Act also prohibits the CBN from making any policy or providing "any services at a price that is manifestly unfair, unreasonable or unjust."

As of press time, no date has been fixed for the hearing of the interim application and the substantive suit.

# ATCON warns diesel shortage may cause nationwide telecom shutdown

By Dave Oludare Oso

The diesel supply crisis caused by the ongoing strike by the Petroleum Tanker Drivers (PTD), a branch of the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) may trigger a nationwide telecom shutdown if not urgently addressed, the Association of Telecommunications Companies of Nigeria (ATCON) has warned.

In a statement he posted online on Sunday, ATCON President, Mr. Tony Emoekpere, disclosed that the fuel supply disruption is critically affecting telecom base stations, pushing them to the brink of a shutdown and threatening millions of mobile and internet users in the region.

Emoekpere stated, “This strike, which stems from the persistent harassment of tanker and petroleum product drivers by police officers in Lagos State, has effectively halted all truck loading operations and fuel movements.”

He explained that diesel supply to telecom infrastructure has been severely impacted, leaving critical sites with dangerously low fuel levels.



According to him, if urgent measures are not taken, the situation could escalate into a full-blown network blackout, disrupting essential services including mobile and internet access, business operations, emergency response systems, and daily communications.

ATCON has called on the governors of Lagos and Ogun states to intervene immediately by facilitating the release of diesel from depots to telecom operators to prevent further deterioration of the situation.

“This is not just a telecom issue—it is a national emergency

that could cripple economic activities and compromise public safety,” Emoekpere stressed.

The association also appealed to security agencies and petroleum unions to resolve the crisis swiftly to safeguard Nigeria’s connectivity and economic stability.

ATCON emphasised that a prolonged disruption in fuel supply to telecom infrastructure could have far-reaching consequences for both businesses and individuals who rely on stable communication networks for daily operations.

# Jailed Nigerian militant, Henry Okah gets new appeal lifeline in S' Africa

By Dave Oludare Oso

Success appears on the horizon for the imprisoned leader of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Henry Okah, as South Africa's Constitutional Court, on February 18, 2025, issued two orders that open the door for him to submit fresh applications challenging his imprisonment.

These applications are expected to receive urgent consideration.

According to a statement from Okah's legal team released on Saturday, the February 18 orders followed a decision by South Africa's Judicial Conduct Committee on February 12, which approved a judicial inquiry into Okah's allegations of sabotage against former Chief Justice Raymond Zondo.

Okah sought to overturn previous court orders, alleging in case numbers CCT 239/23 and CCT 273/23 that the registrar's office had unlawfully altered the contents of his primary applications, aiming to undermine their success.

It said, "Given the ruling of the Judicial Conduct Committee, a Coram of the court's justices comprising Maya., C.J, Kollapen J, Mathopo J, Mhlantla J, Rogers J, Theron J, and Tshiqi J., disregarded Okah's grounds for seeking the rescission of both prior orders.

"Granting those would have implied acceptance of his allegations against Chief Justice Zondo as fact without conducting an enquiry as directed by the Judicial Conduct Committee.

"Overall, the latest order dismissing both applications entitles Okah to challenge anew the lawfulness of his 'detention'.



"Okah's legal position is that the order of the Constitutional Court in S V Okah (2018) ZACC 3, on which basis he is detained, is a nullity because the South African State had omitted to comply with section 15 of South Africa's domestic anti-terrorism law, which provision confers extraterritorial jurisdiction on a South African court.

"On this argument, his arrest and trial were unlawful, and all courts in South Africa, including the Constitutional Court, lacked the jurisdiction to hear the criminal matter and appeals arising therefrom."

His legal team said Okah's challenge to his conviction and imprisonment has presented a unique test case for South Africa's justice system and its application in the conflict between Nigeria and its oil multinational partners on one hand, and the impoverished people of the oil-rich Niger Delta, on the other hand.

Okah, 59, was given a 24-year jail sentence by a South African court in 2013 as the leader of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) that took responsibility for an October 1, 2010 car bombing in the

Nigerian capital, Abuja, that left several people dead. He was a resident of South Africa at the time of his arrest.

The attack, which targeted Nigeria's Independence Day celebrations, resulted in several deaths and injuries. MEND, an armed militant group fighting for the rights of the Niger Delta's oil-producing communities, claimed responsibility for the bombing.

At the time of the attack, Okah was residing in South Africa, where he was subsequently arrested under the country's anti-terrorism laws, which allow for the prosecution of terrorist acts committed outside South African borders.

In 2013, he was convicted and sentenced to 24 years in prison for terrorism-related charges, including masterminding the Abuja bombing.

Though MEND, which he headed claimed responsibility for the bombing, Okah has consistently denied involvement, maintaining that his trial was politically-motivated due to his activism against the Nigerian government and its dealings with international oil companies.

# Rivers CJ expands ADR services to speed up justice delivery

By Helen Okechukwu

In a renewed effort to combat Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) in Lagos, the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (DSVA) has engaged 60 Magistrates in discussions on addressing the issue effectively.

The initiative aims to enhance the role of the judiciary in ensuring justice for survivors and holding perpetrators accountable.

This was made know via a post shared on the government Facebook page on Sunday.

Speaking at the event held in Ikeja, the Executive Secretary of DSVA, Mrs. Titilola Vivour-Adeniyi, emphasized the state's commitment to reducing SGBV to the lowest level possible.

She highlighted that SGBV is a widespread human rights violation that affects individuals regardless of age, gender, or socio-economic background, often leaving lasting physical and emotional trauma.

Read Also: 16 Days of Activism: Prejudice against women ungodly, anti-social – Adesina

Mrs. Vivour-Adeniyi reiterated that the Lagos State Government, under the leadership of Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, remains resolute in tackling the menace.



The creation of DSVA, she noted, is a reflection of the government's dedication to providing a coordinated response to domestic and sexual violence cases. Through this initiative, survivors are assured of support, while offenders are brought to justice.

Addressing the role of the judiciary, she pointed out that Magistrates serve as the first point of contact for many survivors seeking justice.

Their decisions, sensitivity, and commitment to fairness are crucial in shaping the outcomes of SGBV cases. She called on the judiciary to ensure that justice is not only served but also perceived as fair and effective.

The engagement provided an opportunity for Magistrates to

discuss challenges in prosecuting SGBV cases, exchange insights, and explore best practices for handling such matters.

The initiative also focused on fostering collaboration between the judiciary and the Agency to enhance legal responses, strengthen case handling, and create a justice system that prioritizes the welfare of survivors while deterring future occurrences of SGBV.

Magistrates were encouraged to adopt innovative approaches that improve efficiency in delivering justice.

The Agency reaffirmed its commitment to working closely with the judiciary to build a Lagos where every individual can live free from violence and fear.

# Lagos engages magistrates in fight against SGBV

By Helen Okechukwu

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# NDLEA arrests 24-year-old Thai lady for illicit drug smuggling

By Helen Okechukwu

**N**igerian authorities have intercepted a 24-year-old Thai lady, Ms. Pattaphi Wimonnat, for attempting to smuggle 43 parcels of Canadian Loud, a synthetic strain of cannabis, into the country.

The consignments weighing 46.60 kilograms were concealed in her boxes.

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) arrested Wimonnat on 20 February at Murtala Muhammed International Airport (MMIA) Ikeja Lagos during an inward clearance of a Qatar Airways flight from Thailand via Doha.

She confessed to being hired by a drug cartel (name withheld) who promised to pay her \$3,000 after the drug has been delivered successfully.

On 21 February, the effort of the drug syndicate to transport 68 parcels of Ghanaian Loud with a total weight of 42.2 kg to London, UK, through the export shed of the Lagos airport was also thwarted.

The consignments were hidden in the walls of crated cartons.

In connection to the discovered drugs, three suspects, including a freight agent and two dispatch



riders, were initially arrested and one Samuel Bitris was apprehended for being the mastermind of the shipment after being traced to his Exodus Estate, Ajah, Lagos home.

In a similar vein, on 20 February, 49 cartons containing 49,000 pills of Tamol, a brand of tramadol 225 mg in a 40 ft container, were intercepted at Port Harcourt Port Complex, Onne, Rivers State, during a joint examination by the NDLEA officers, customs service officers, and other security agencies.

Femi Babafemi, Director, Media & Advocacy, further disclosed that on 22 February, in Nasarawa State, the anti-drug agency nabbed two suspects, Bello Adamu, 40, and Pius Azuka, 42, at Kokona/Keffi carrying 517 kg of skunk.

Also, along Sabon Asibiti Road, Kontagora, Niger State, two other suspects, Usman Ruwa, 43, and Yunusa Haruna, 45, on 20 February were intercepted while conveying 62.7 kilograms of skunk in a Toyota Corolla car.

In continuation of the War Against Drug Abuse (WADA) and sensitisation exercise nationwide, NDLEA underscored their efforts previously following visitation to schools, worship centres, and workplaces, among others.

Chief Executive Officer of NDLEA, Brig. Gen. Mohamed Marwa, commended and appreciated the officers of MMIA, PHPC, Niger, and Nasarawa Commands of the Agency for their successful operations, efforts, and approaches employed in tackling drug trafficking across the country.

# I'm a feminist, but don't support a woman disrespecting her husband - Funke Akindele

By Oluwatosin Ologun

**F**unke Akindele, Nigerian actress and producer has declared that she is not in support of women disrespecting their husbands and other men, even though she is a feminist.

The Nigeria box office queen made the declaration during a conversation with Esther Olamide, wife of skit maker Kamo State.

In the video, which was shared on social media, the actress admonished women to do what is right. She insists that she does not support women disrespecting their husbands.

She also had some words for men, urging them to treat women "specially" as she told them not to hold the notion that the place of a woman is in the kitchen.

The actress furthermore highlighted the importance of a woman's economic power in the home, saying that it puts



them in a position to support her husband.

She said, "I'm a feminist, but I don't support a woman disrespecting her husband. Make sure you do what is right.

"I believe that we are not the weaker gender. Men are supposed to treat women, especially with respect. Also, men should not feel that a woman belongs in the kitchen and is talked to anyhow.

"We women are strong and bold. Our economic power is very important, that is why we should make sure we have the

power and protect the power so we can support our husbands."

Funke Akindele's comment about feminism and women respecting men comes as some Nigerians are positing that Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan disrespected Senate President Godswill Akpabio during the drama that unfolded on the Senate floor last week over the sitting arrangement in the chamber.

However, it cannot be established whether the actress made the comment in light of the drama at the Senate and the reactions that followed.

# Kamala Harris receives prestigious Chairman's prize at NAACP Image Awards

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Former Vice President Kamala Harris stepped on the NAACP Image Awards stage Saturday night with a sobering message, calling the civil rights organization a pillar of the Black community and urging people to stay resilient and hold onto their faith during the tenure of President Donald Trump.

"While we have no illusions about what we are up against in this chapter in our American story, this chapter will be written not simply by whoever occupies the oval office nor by the wealthiest among us," Harris said after receiving the NAACP's Chairman's Award. "The American story will be written by you. Written by us. By we the people."

The 56th annual Image Awards kicked off Saturday at the Pasadena Civic Auditorium in the Los Angeles area.

Harris, defeated by Trump in last year's presidential election, was the first woman and the first person of color to serve as vice president. She had previously been a U.S. senator from California and the state's attorney general.

In her first major public appearance since leaving office, Harris did not reference her election loss or Trump's actions since entering the Oval Office, although Trump mocked her earlier in the day at the Conservative Political Action Conference.

Harris spoke about eternal vigilance, the price of liberty, staying alert, seeking the truth and America's future.

"Some see the flames on our horizons, the rising waters in our cities, the shadows gathering over our democracy and ask 'What do we do now?'" Harris said.

"But we know exactly what to do, because we have done it before. And we



will do it again. We use our power. We organize, mobilize. We educate. We advocate. Our power has never come from having an easy path."

Other winners of the Chairman's prize have included former President Barack Obama, the late Rep. John Lewis and the late actor Ruby Dee.

NAACP Hall of Fame

Harris was honored during the ceremony along with the Wayans family. The family was inducted into the NAACP Image Awards Hall of Fame in recognition of pioneering contributions to film, TV, sketch and stand-up comedy that have shaped Hollywood for decades.

Keenen Ivory Wayans, Damon Wayans Sr., Marlon Wayans, Shawn Wayans, Kim Wayans and Damon Wayans Jr. each were recognized.

Marlon Wayans, whose guest appearance on Peacock's "Bel-Air" was up for an NAACP award, shared how Keenen Ivory Wayans sparked the family's rise.

"He raised us all like Jedis," he said. "We

wouldn't be here if it wasn't for our big brother."

Marlon Wayans joked that when his brother told their mom he was leaving college for comedy, she said, "Boy, I've known you your whole life, and you ain't never said nothing funny. That's the funniest thing you've said."

The crowd erupted in laughter, a fitting tribute to a family that has kept audiences laughing for more than three decades.

The family has a long list of credits. Keenen Ivory Wayans created the sketch comedy series "In Living Color" in 1990 and directed the 2000 slasher spoof "Scary Movie," which was written by Marlon Wayans and Shawn Wayans, who also wrote and starred in "White Chicks" in 2004.

Damon Wayan's had a starring role in the 1995 comedy "Major Payne," and currently co-stars with son Damon Wayans Jr. in the CBS sitcom "Poppa's House," which was nominated for an NAACP Award. The pair also were nominated for their acting on the show.

Damon Wayans Jr. has acted in two of the most critically acclaimed comedies in recent years: "Happy Endings" and "New Girl." Kim Wayans, a comedian, actor and director, also received praise for her work in the 2011 drama "Pariah."

Entertainer of the year

Keke Palmer expressed her surprise after her name was called as winner of the coveted entertainer of the year.

"Oh my gosh. Guys, I didn't think I was going to win," said Palmer, who paid homage to fellow nominee Cynthia Erivo's Oscar-nominated performance in "Wicked."

# Zelenskyy ready to resign for peace in Ukraine, NATO membership

By Dave Oludare Oso

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said at a press conference in Kyiv on Sunday he would be willing to resign from his post in exchange for peace in Ukraine or NATO membership.

“If it is peace for Ukraine, and if you really want me to leave my post, I’m ready,” Zelenskyy said in Ukrainian. “Alternatively, I can trade this for NATO membership, if such conditions exist, immediately, so we don’t have lengthy discussions. I’m focusing on Ukraine’s security today, not in 20 years. And I don’t intend to stay in power for decades.”



Zelenskyy’s offer is a major concession amid an ongoing public dispute with President Donald Trump, which escalated last week when Trump suggested that the Ukrainian president was responsible for starting the war. In reality, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, initiating the current land war.

In response, the Ukrainian president accused Trump of living in a “disinformation bubble” and pushing Kremlin talking points. The U.S. president then went on to call Zelenskyy a “dictator” and a “modestly successful comedian.”

When asked about Trump on Sunday, Zelenskyy told reporters in Ukrainian, “We are partners and I want him on our side.”

Asked directly about some of the things Trump has said about him over the past

week, Zelenskyy said, “There is no space for emotions. I have pragmatic position. I can’t name these words a compliment, but what can I do?”

“I am the elected president by 73% of Ukrainian people. After the martial law, there will be elections. Perhaps he will say something good about me. It is more important what Ukrainians think about me,” the Ukrainian president added.

The feud comes as the U.S. and Russia have resumed high-level talks and several senior Trump administration officials, including Secretary of State Marco Rubio, met with Russian officials in Saudi Arabia.

Trump has pledged to begin peace talks to end the war in Ukraine, saying on Friday that it’s not important for Zelenskyy to attend peace negotiations because “he’s been at meetings for

three years and nothing got done.”

“I don’t think he’s very important to be at meetings, to be honest with you,” Trump told Fox News Radio’s Brian Kilmeade. “He’s been there for three years. He makes it very hard to make deals. But look what’s happened to his country, it’s been demolished.”

Earlier this month, during an interview with NBC News’ “Meet the Press” on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference, Zelenskyy told moderator Kristen Welker that he would not accept a peace deal without Ukraine at the negotiating table.

“I will never accept any decisions between the United States and Russia about Ukraine, never,” he said in English in that interview. “This is the war in Ukraine, against us, and it’s our human losses.”

# Trump appoints son of Ugandan immigrant FBI director

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Republican-controlled U.S. Senate has confirmed Kash Patel, President Donald Trump's pick for FBI director, putting a Trump loyalist atop the nation's most prominent law enforcement agency at a time of growing upheaval.

Patel was confirmed by a 51-49 vote. Two moderate Republicans, Senators Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, joined all Democrats in opposing Patel, but it was not enough to overcome broad Republican support.

Collins and Murkowski, in opposing Patel, expressed concern about his past political advocacy for Trump and its potential effect on the FBI's law enforcement activities.

Republican supporters argued he would reform an agency that has been hampered by a decline in public trust.

Democrats had forcefully opposed Patel's nomination, saying his past calls for retribution against Trump's critics made him unfit to lead the FBI.

"Mr. Patel will be a political and national security disaster," Senator Dick Durbin, the top Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, said in a statement.

Patel takes charge as Trump-backed officials seek to put their stamp on the FBI and its parent agency, the Justice Department, challenging decades-old traditions of independence and reorienting its mission toward Trump's core priorities.

Born to Ugandan immigrants of Indian descent, Patel's family fled the country during the 1970s amid Idi Amin's regime, seeking refuge in the US.

At least 75 career Justice Department lawyers and FBI officials, who normally keep their roles from administration to administration, have either resigned, been



fired or stripped of their posts in the first month of the Trump administration.

Justice Department leadership has ordered broad policy changes, demanded loyalty to Trump's agenda and sought to drop a corruption case against New York Mayor Eric Adams, a Democrat who courted Trump, citing his cooperation on immigration enforcement.

"Donald Trump himself and those around him have been very clear that they do believe that the president should affect prosecutorial decisions and prosecutorial outcomes," said Noah Bookbinder, a former federal prosecutor and head of the ethics group Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington.

"They were offended by the efforts to prosecute Donald Trump and those close to him, and they see it as part of their mission to exact vengeance."

Trump-appointed officials have said many early moves are aimed at pursuing the administration's policy goals and ending what they have described as abuses against Trump and his supporters.

Trump and his allies planned during his campaign to install loyalists in the department and weaken the autonomy of a career workforce that they have long

viewed with suspicion.

Trump has been ensnared in Justice Department investigations dating back to his first campaign in 2016 and faced two federal criminal cases during his years out of power which were dropped after he won the election before reaching trials.

"This DOJ will return to its core function of prosecuting dangerous criminals, not pursuing politically motivated witch hunts," a senior official, Chad Mizelle, said in a statement last week. Department officials did not respond to a request for comment.

Prosecutors working on Trump cases repeatedly denied any political influence over those prosecutions.

## TRADITION OF INDEPENDENCE

The Trump administration's efforts have collided with a deeply ingrained tradition of independence in federal criminal investigations, dating back to reforms that followed the Watergate scandal that toppled President Richard Nixon in 1974.

The move by the acting deputy attorney general, Emil Bove, to drop the Adams case caused particular tumult. The top federal prosecutor in Manhattan, where the case was brought, and at least seven other prosecutors in New York and Washington resigned in protest, with some accusing the Trump administration of improper motives.

A top Justice Department official accused the prosecutors of having disordered priorities.

Trump-appointed officials also fired more than a dozen lawyers who were involved in the two criminal cases against Trump and about 18 prosecutors who handled cases arising from the Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol by Trump supporters.

# Document your work by Monday or resign, Musk tells federal workers

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Trump administration sent emails to U.S. federal government employees on Saturday evening telling them to detail their work accomplishments from the previous week by Monday night or risk losing their jobs.

The emails came shortly after Elon Musk, the billionaire head of the Trump administration's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) posted on the social media site X that not responding to the email request would be viewed as a resignation.

"All federal employees will shortly receive an email requesting to understand what they got done last week," Musk posted on X. "Failure to respond will be taken as a resignation."

Musk issued his post just hours after President Donald Trump posted on his own social media network, Truth Social, that DOGE should get more aggressive in its attempts to downsize and reshape the 2.3 million-strong federal workforce.

As of Saturday evening, emails were sent to employees across federal agencies, including the Securities and Exchange Commission, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and others with the subject line, "What did you do last week?"

The email, seen by Reuters, asks employees to reply with five bullet points summarizing "what you accomplished at work last week," and to copy their managers.

It was sent from a human resources address



from the Office of Personnel Management, and gives employees until 11:59 p.m. EST on Monday to respond.

It is unclear what legal basis Musk has to terminate federal workers if they fail to respond to his request and what would happen to employees that cannot detail confidential work.

Some federal judiciary employees received the email on Saturday from OPM, even though the court system is not part of the executive branch, people familiar with the matter said. The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, the judiciary's administrative arm, did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Workers at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau also received the email, according to people with knowledge of the matter. However, most agency staff had been ordered not to perform any tasks since early this month, creating a conundrum. The agency is also under temporary court order not to resume mass firings pending the outcome of legal proceedings.

A spokesperson for DOGE did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

## UNION PROMISES FIGHT

The AFGE, the union representing federal employees, said in a statement it will challenge any "unlawful terminations."

"Once again, Elon Musk and the Trump administration have shown their utter disdain for federal employees and the critical services they provide to the American people," said Everett Kelley, the AFGE's president.

The Trump administration's fast-paced and controversial process to reduce government spending by shrinking the federal workforce spearheaded by Musk and his young aides at the cost-cutting DOGE has led to haphazard firings that resulted in numerous mistakes and forced several agencies to quickly rehire vital employees, such as those working on nuclear safety, defence and power generation.

# NYC man rapes 7-yr-old boy, posts video to dark web

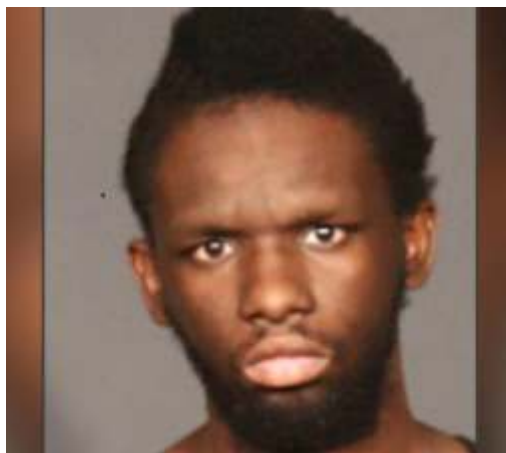
By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A Brooklyn man allegedly raped a 7-year-old boy he was babysitting, filmed the vile abuse and posted it on the dark web — and authorities fear there may be other victims.

Ramel “Menah” Warner lived with the victim’s family in Brooklyn for two years and frequently babysat the 7-year-old victim, federal prosecutors said in court papers. Warner, 23, allegedly made six different videos of the abuse, investigators said.

He was charged Jan. 29 in federal court with acting in a manner injurious to a child, forcible touching, and sexual abuse of an individual under the age of 11.

Warner’s distinct tattoos are visible in the recordings, which he’s accused of uploading to the dark web, authorities said.



Both the FBI and the NYPD asked other possible victims to come forward with their claims against Warner.

The victim told his mother about the alleged abuse in November 2022.

At that time, Warner was arrested by the NYPD and charged in an 11-count indictment soon after — a still pending criminal case.

“Not only did the defendant have access to children before his arrest, but even after his arrest for raping a child, he continued to participate in a children’s dance group that met at a middle school,” authorities said in the indictment.

“The defendant’s relentless efforts to associate with children even after his arrest for a serious crime against a child show that he cannot be trusted to stay away from children if released.”

The filings fail to mention the schools Warner had an association with. Federal and city officials refused to disclose the names of the schools.

Warner remains in custody, and it was unclear Friday if he has an attorney, and who that might be.

# After 21 years in Israeli jail, freed Palestinian dies in rooftop fall

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Just a week after regaining his freedom, Nael Salama Obeid’s life came to a sudden and tragic end when he fell from the rooftop of his home in Issawiya, East Jerusalem, on Saturday.

Obeid, 46, had spent 21 years behind Israeli prison walls, serving seven life sentences plus 30 additional years for his involvement with Hamas’s military wing, the Qassam Brigades, and his alleged role in planning militant operations.

His release was part of the sixth round of a prisoner exchange tied to the Gaza ceasefire — a moment of joy now overshadowed by loss.



According to witnesses, Obeid suffered critical injuries from the fall and was rushed to Hadassah Hospital, where doctors were unable to save him.

His sudden death has left family and friends in shock, turning his brief taste of freedom into heartbreak.

For over two decades, Obeid endured harsh prison conditions, periods of solitary confinement, and hunger strikes in protest. His dream of returning home was finally realised, only to be tragically cut short.

Adding to the family’s grief, Obeid’s death coincided with the scheduled release of his cousin, Ahmad Obeid, who was set to be freed in a separate phase of the prisoner exchange.

# Connecticut 'Cannibal Killer' freed decade after eating victim's eye, brain

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A confessed killer institutionalized after murdering a homeless man and eating parts of his body in a Connecticut cemetery could soon be walking among us once again — and local politicians are none too happy about it.

Tyree Smith, dubbed the “Cannibal Killer” by local journalists, was granted a “conditional release” Friday by the Nutmeg State’s Psychiatric Security Review Board — meaning he’ll be allowed to leave Connecticut Valley Hospital in Middletown for supervised jaunts, WFSB reported.

The decision was made after doctors who’ve been treating Smith said he’s been fully rehabilitated, thanks to medications that quelled the voices in his head.

“To quote the director there, he is a joy. He is considered a support to the other people there,” forensic psychiatrist Dr. Caren Teitelbaum said.

“Once he was stable, he was a really calming presence for other patients.”

However, Republican state Sen. Paul Cicarella said he doesn’t buy it — and that Smith should not be allowed out into the community.

“Murder and cannibalism and release in the same sentence ... that’s a problem,” he said in a statement to



WFSB. “That’s concerning to me.”

In 2013, Smith was committed to Connecticut Valley Hospital for 60 years, after a three-judge panel found him not guilty by reason of insanity in the 2011 killing and cannibalization of Angel Gonzalez, 43.

Smith admitted to killing Gonzalez (pictured) — who was homeless — with an ax inside an abandoned home in Bridgeport before removing parts of his brain, one of his eyeballs and several organs.

He then consumed the body parts at Lakeview Cemetery, washing them down with sake.

Gonzalez’s sister-in-law, Talitha Frazier, spoke during Friday’s hearing and urged the board to keep Smith inside the hospital.

“How do we really know he’s not going to do this again?” Frazier

asked, according to CTPost. “He had no remorse for killing Angel.”

Smith, who is a diagnosed schizophrenic, will first receive day passes but will be confined to the hospital’s grounds. As he continues to make progress, he’ll receive more privileges, like supervised off-site visits.

Connecticut politicians, like Cicarella and State Sens. Henry Martin, Heather Somers, and Stephen Harding said they fear Smith could pose a public threat should he stop taking his medications.

“This terrible decision puts public safety in jeopardy and is yet another terrible message to send to CT violent crime victims and their families. This person should never be out,” they said in a statement.

“We are dumbfounded at this injustice. In what universe is this OK?”

# Israel fails to release Palestinians after 6 Gaza hostages freed

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Sunday that freeing Palestinian prisoners under the Gaza ceasefire deal will be delayed until Hamas ends its “humiliating ceremonies” while releasing Israeli hostages.

Since the ceasefire came into effect on January 19, Hamas has released 25 Israeli hostages in well-rehearsed handovers, with masked militants parading the captives on stage and forcing them to wave at Gazans gathered to watch.

In their seventh scheduled prisoner-hostage swap, Hamas released six Israeli captives on Saturday while Israel delayed releasing Palestinian prisoners. The Palestinian militant group called the move a “blatant violation” of the truce deal.

Israel was expected to release more than 600 Palestinian prisoners.

“In light of Hamas’ repeated violations — including the disgraceful ceremonies that dishonour our hostages and the cynical use of hostages for propaganda — it has been decided to delay the release of terrorists that was planned for yesterday (Saturday) until the release of the next hostages is ensured, without the humiliating ceremonies”, Netanyahu’s office said in a statement on Sunday.

From Washington, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio warned that Hamas would be “destroyed” if it did not release all the remaining hostages.

In the Israeli-occupied West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, families had waited for hours on Saturday for their loved ones to be released from Israeli custody in exchange for the six Israelis returned home.



“Waiting is very difficult,” said Shireen al-Hamamreh, whose brother was due for release.

“We are patient and we will remain stronger than the occupier, God willing,” she told AFP in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

A ‘blatant violation’

The Palestinian Prisoners’ Club advocacy group had said Israel would free 620 inmates on Saturday, most of them Gazans taken into custody during the war.

Before Netanyahu’s announcement, Hamas spokesperson Abdel Latif al-Qanou said Israel’s “failure to comply with the release... at the agreed-upon time constitutes a blatant violation of the agreement”.

Qanou called on the truce mediators to pressure Israel to “implement its provisions without delay or obstruction”.

The delayed release comes after an emotional few days in Israel, where the remains of hostage Shiri Bibas were

identified after the initial handover of a different body.

Netanyahu has said Hamas will pay “the full price” for what he termed a violation of the truce deal over Bibas’s return.

Bibas and her two young sons, among dozens taken captive during Hamas’s October 7, 2023 attack on Israel that triggered the war, had become symbols of the ordeal suffered by the Israeli hostages.

Forensics expert Chen Kugel said an autopsy conducted on their remains found “no evidence of injuries caused by a bombing”.

Hamas militants had claimed that all three were killed in an Israeli air strike.

‘Coming back home’

The six Israelis released Saturday were the last group of living hostages set to be freed under the truce’s first phase.

The deal, which has so far enabled the release of 30 captives, is due to expire in early March.

# Lookman bags brace as Atalanta thrash Empoli 5-0

By Dave Oludare Oso

Super Eagles forward Ademola Lookman delivered an outstanding performance as Atalanta cruised to a 5-0 victory over Empoli at the Stadio Carlo Castellani on Sunday.

The Bergamo-based side struck three times in the first half and added two more after the break, with Lookman bagging a brace to cap off a dominant display.

The Nigerian star found the net in the 43rd minute with a clinical finish, extending Atalanta's lead after an own goal by Emmanuel Gyasi and a strike from Mateo Retegui.

Lookman's relentless attacking presence kept Empoli's defence under constant pressure throughout the match.

Beyond his goal, Lookman's movement and creativity kept Empoli's defenders on edge, as he linked up effectively with his teammates and played a crucial role in Atalanta's attacking flow.

Atalanta entered the match eager to rebound from their recent Champions League exit against Club Brugge.

The team showcased their intent early on, dominating possession and creating multiple scoring opportunities.

This performance comes after his



recent Champions League disappointment, where Lookman had a penalty saved in Atalanta's 3-1 defeat to Club Brugge.

However, he has responded in style, proving his quality and determination in Serie A action.

With the second half approaching, Lookman will look to add to his tally and continue leading Atalanta's charge as they aim to secure a crucial three points.

The Eagles, via its X account, celebrated the forward.

## Key Moments

27th Minute: Atalanta broke the deadlock when Davide Zappacosta's cross deflected off Empoli's Emmanuel Gyasi, resulting in an own goal that gave the visitors the lead.

34th Minute: Capitalizing on their

momentum, Atalanta extended their advantage. A well-executed corner saw Ademola Lookman's cross flicked on by Berat Djimsiti, allowing Mateo Retegui to finish clinically at the back post.

43rd Minute: Lookman added his name to the scoresheet with a display of individual brilliance. Receiving a through ball from Retegui, he deftly maneuvered past goalkeeper Marco Silvestri and calmly slotted the ball into the net.

55th Minute: Lookman secured his brace, showcasing his versatility. He timed his run perfectly to beat the offside trap, then used a step-over to evade defender Liberato Cacace before finishing with his left foot.

74th Minute: Davide Zappacosta capped off the scoring with a precise low drive into the bottom corner, following a skillful cut inside from the edge of the area.

# De Bruyne done? Captain Fantastico leads Man City flops in Liverpool loss

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Belgian looked a shadow of his former self while Josko Gvardiol was helpless to stop the electric Mohamed Salah in a disheartening defeat

Manchester City used to relish those top-of-the-table clashes at home to Liverpool, but this was all about enduring a 90 minutes in which they knew they were miles apart from Arne Slot's slick winning machine, who edged closer to the Premier League title with a 2-0 win over the champions.

Mohamed Salah scored the first and set up the second for Dominik Szoboszlai in a manner reminiscent of the way Kylian Mbappe ravaged City and dumped them out of the Champions League in midweek.

It was not a virtuoso display like the Frenchman's, but it was befitting of the way Salah has dominated this season, and City had no one who could stop him or compete with him, not least Kevin De Bruyne, who looked utterly out of place in a fixture of this level.

The writing was on the wall from the moment the starting XIs landed, with Erling Haaland not in the squad due to injury and Ruben Dias, Bernardo Silva and Ilkay



Gundogan confined to the bench.

The crowd were still up for the occasion, and Jeremy Doku's twisting runs down the left and Savinho's pace on the other flank gave them hope, but they were let down by their propensity to give the ball away too often, with the woeful De Bruyne the biggest culprit in that respect.

Mohammed Salah (in red) contending with City's Josko Gvardiol

City were undone by Liverpool's quick-thinking as no one expected Alexis Mac Allister to find Szoboszlai with a floor pass from the corner and for the Hungarian to flick the ball to Salah, whose shot was deflected past Ederson by Nathan Ake.

More criticism could be made of how they let in the second, Josko Gvardiol failing to cut out the pass towards Salah or stop the Egyptian from teeing up Szoboszlai, who was picked up by no one as he wrong-footed Ederson to score.

In between both goals, City did have the ball in the net from Omar Marmoush, but the Egyptian was clearly offside.

Liverpool had the ball in the net again from Curtis Jones in the second half, but City were spared by a marginal offside spotted by VAR. The decision was greeted by the biggest roar of the afternoon from the home fans, who were stunned into silence by their own team's impotence against the champions elect.

# LSSC seeks synergy for school sports development

By Friday Omosola

The Lagos State Sports Commission (LSSC) has reiterated the importance of school sports as the foundation for sustainable sports development, calling for stronger collaboration with the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education to enhance opportunities for young athletes.

The Director-General of LSSC, Lekan Fatodu, emphasised the role of school sports in talent identification and development.

He stated that a well-managed and coordinated school environment serves as the ideal platform for nurturing future sports stars.

“There is no better incubation ground, sports identification, and recognition platform than a well-managed and coordinated school environment. We understand the importance of these extracurricular activities in shaping students’ future and making them well-rounded individuals,” Fatodu said.

During a courtesy visit to the Honourable Commissioner for Basic and Secondary Education, Jamiu Ali-Balogun, at the Secretariat, Alausa, Ikeja, Fatodu



stressed the need for synergy between the LSSC and the Ministry to facilitate knowledge-sharing and unlock more opportunities for student-athletes.

He highlighted that sports and education can progress hand in hand, allowing students to acquire relevant skills while pursuing their academic goals.

He further noted that leveraging key elements within the sports ecosystem would create pathways for young talents to excel in both academics and athletics.

Fatodu underscored the importance of restoring the glory days of school sports, describing it as a strategic intervention that would not only develop future sports champions but also provide

students with diverse career prospects.

In response, Commissioner Jamiu Ali-Balogun acknowledged the potential of sports as a viable career option for students.

Ali-Balogun emphasised that collaboration between the Ministry and the Sports Commission is crucial for accelerating sustainable development through co-curricular activities.

“Sports provide students with better opportunities for future success, and to effectively nurture talent in schools, there must be a strong partnership between our Ministry and the Lagos State Sports Commission,” Ali-Balogun stated.