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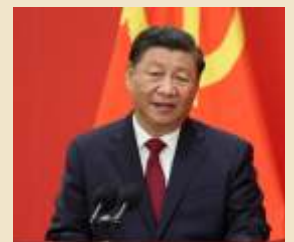
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# Natasha Akpoti: My Senate ordeal began after I rejected Akpabio's sexual advances

By Friday Omosola

Senator Natasha Akpoti of Kogi Central has alleged that Senate President Godswill Akpabio has been victimizing her for rejecting his sexual advances.

Speaking on Arise Television's Morning Show on Friday, Akpoti claimed that she has faced harassment, denial of privileges, and political obstruction due to her refusal to engage in a personal relationship with Akpabio.

According to her, the Senate President deliberately blocked a motion she sponsored as part of a broader pattern of retaliation.

"For standing my ground, I have been maligned, victimized, and sidelined in Senate proceedings," she stated.

The rift between the two lawmakers has been increasingly visible, with a recent altercation over seating arrangements on the Senate floor adding to the tension.

Akpoti's allegations come amid growing scrutiny of internal Senate dynamics, raising concerns about power abuse and gender discrimination in Nigeria's legislative body.

Senator Akpoti criticised the Senate President for denying her the opportunity to speak under Order 10, despite the rule allowing senators to raise concerns about their privileges at any time.

She explained that once a senator invokes Order 10, they must be heard, even if they are physically restrained on the Senate floor.

According to her, the Senate President should have either referred her complaint to the Ethics and Privileges Committee or overruled it, instead of ordering her removal from the chamber and preparing for her suspension.

Akpoti stated that she has endured



humiliation and victimization in the Senate, and this latest incident was simply the tipping point.

She revealed that her ordeal began on December 8, 2023, during a visit to Akwa Ibom, where the Senate President allegedly held her hand and suggested they spend time together in his house.

She narrated: "Once I invoked Order 10, the Senate President ought to have allowed me to speak. He could have exercised his discretion by referring the complaint to the Ethics and Privileges Committee or by overruling it, but he failed to do so. Instead, he ordered the Sergeant-at-Arms to remove me from the chamber and prepare for my suspension.

"I have previously mentioned that I have been dehumanized and maligned in the Senate. I believe this situation was simply the last straw. Many people are unaware of what I am about to reveal, and I am going to speak my truth while allowing the Senate President to respond if he chooses.

"It all began on December 8, 2023, a day before both my birthday and his. We were in Akwa Ibom when he held my hand and told me he wanted to show me around his house. My husband was walking behind us.

"I noticed that he quickened his pace while still holding my hand. When we reached a particular sitting room, he asked, 'Do you like my house?' I responded, 'Of course, sir, every room is beautiful.' He then said, 'Now that you are a senator, I will create time for us to come here and spend quality moments together—you will enjoy it.'

"As I turned to check if my husband had heard the remark, the Senate President also turned and said, 'Let me show you my chapel as well.'

"That evening, we left his house around 11 PM. My husband later asked me what the Senate President had told me. I debated whether to tell him about the Senate President's comment about 'having a good time' or to let it go, knowing how much my husband admired him.

"In February, I attempted to move a motion for an investigation into anti-corruption practices at Ajaokuta Steel Company. I submitted the motion five times, but it was only approved on the sixth attempt. Many senators can confirm this. Each time it was listed, the Senate President would say, 'Senator Natasha, we can't take this motion because it is not in the best interest of the Senate.'

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## PUBLIC NOTICE COLOUR

## PRODUCT COLOUR

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10X4	206,890.50
10X3	179,608.00
9X6	254,977.00
9X5	225,738.00
9X4	193,500.00
9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
5X3	66,875.00
5X2	42,916.50
4X4	60,166.50
4X3	36,499.50
4X2	29,333.50
3X3	28,000.00
3X2	17,400.00
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SIZE	TOTAL RATE
FULL PAGE	329,868.50
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14X2	109,500.00
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9X5	206,000.00
9X4	177,500.00
9X3	150,000.00
8X6	216,000.00
8X3	98,500.00
7X4	164,002.00
6X4	94,010.50
6X3	78,500.00
6X2	47,500.00
5X5	100,000.00
5X4	61,500.00
5X3	57,819.00
5X2	40,379.50
4X4	55,000.00
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3X2	17,260.00
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10X4	142,787.50
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2X2	10,877.00
2X1	5,588.50
1X1	2,795.50

### PUBLIC NOTICE BLACK & WHITE

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9X6	201,600.00
9X5	169,050.00
9X4	137,875.00
9X3	112,875.00
8X6	179,368.00
8X5	143,500.00
8X4	93,500.00
8X3	82,434.50
7X4	111,173.50
6X4	82,434.50
6X3	59,250.00
6X2	40,000.00
5X6	98,749.50
5X4	65,833.00
5X3	49,375.00
5X2	32,916.50
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9X5	168,191.50
9X4	N/A
8X6	N/A
8X3	N/A
7X4	72,676.00
6X4	65,000.00
6X3	41,124.50
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5X6	71,378.00
5X4	42,825.00
5X3	29,858.00
5X2	22,841.00
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4X3	N/A
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# Tinubu signs N54.99trn 2025 budget into law

By Dave Oludare Oso

President Bola Tinubu has signed the N54.99 trillion 2025 Appropriation Bill into law, marking the commencement of the 2025 fiscal year.

The president signed the budget in the presence of principal officers of the National Assembly and other top government officials in a small ceremony in his office at the State House, Abuja on Friday.

The bill was passed by the two chambers of the National Assembly on Thursday, February 13, after Tinubu asked for an increase from the proposed N49.7 trillion.

The National Assembly approved a N54.99 trillion (\$36.6bn) budget for the fiscal year, surpassing President Bola Tinubu's initial proposal of N54.2tn.

This increase reflects additional anticipated revenues from agencies such as the Federal Inland Revenue Service and the Nigeria Customs Service.

The budget aims to address key areas, including security, infrastructure, education, and health, with an allocation of \$200 million to mitigate the impact of recent U.S. health aid reductions.

The 2025 budget is based on ambitious economic assumptions, including a crude oil production target of 2.06 million barrels per day at a benchmark price of \$75 per



barrel.

Additionally, the Federal Government projects an exchange rate of N1,500 to the U.S. dollar and aims to reduce inflation from 34.8 per cent to 15 per cent within the year.

A significant component of the fiscal strategy involves tax reforms, which Tinubu says, are designed to enhance revenue generation and economic stability.

The 2025 Appropriation Act represents a 99.96% increase from the 2024 budget of N27.5 trillion.

2025 Budget breakdown:

Total Expenditure: N54.99 trillion

Statutory Transfers: N3.65 trillion

Recurrent (Non-Debt) Expenditure: N13.64 trillion

Capital Expenditure: N23.96 trillion

Debt Servicing: N14.32 trillion

Deficit-to-GDP Ratio: 1.52%

This budget marks a significant fiscal expansion, with increased allocations for capital projects and debt servicing.

The proposed tax overhaul includes increasing the value-added tax to 12.5 per cent by 2026 while exempting essential goods such as food and medicine to alleviate the burden on households.

The reform also proposes reallocating VAT revenues to favour states that generate more, a move that has sparked debate regarding regional economic disparities.

The 2025 Appropriation Act represents a 99.96 per cent increase from the 2024 Budget of N27.5 trillion.

# Sultan announces today as first day of Ramadan

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



**T**he Sultan of Sokoto, Sa'ad Abubakar, has declared Saturday, March 1, 2025, as the first day of Ramadan in Nigeria.

He said the declaration was based on the sighting of the moon in almost every part of the country earlier on Friday, which is the 29th day of the Month of Shaban and thereby signifies March 1 as the first day of Ramadan 1446.

He said, “We got the information

from Muslim leaders across the country and we accept the sighting of the moon accordingly.”

Abubakar called on the entire Muslim community in the country to start the Ramadan fast on Monday following the teachings of Islam.

He called on all Muslims to pray during the month of Ramadan for the leaders to discharge their duties with the fear of God.

He further advised all Muslims in the country and beyond to observe

the fast with the ultimate fear of God, while urging the wealthy to assist the less privileged with food during the Holy month of Ramadan.

Earlier today, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia announced the sighting of the lunar month of Ramadan, which will pave the way for the beginning of the Islamic lengthy fasting.

The Kingdom announced via its X platform, @Haramaininfo, on Friday.

# Wike: Supreme Court's verdict restores order in Rivers

By Friday Omosola



**T**he Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, has praised the Supreme Court's decision on Friday, which nullified the recent local government elections in Rivers State and affirmed the legitimacy of the 27-member Assembly led by Martin Amaewhule.

The New Daily Prime reported Justice Jamilu Tukur ruled that Rivers State Independent Electoral Commission, RSIEC, failed to adhere to due process, including continuing voter

registration even after announcing the election date.

The court deemed the entire process invalid due to substantial non-compliance with electoral guidelines.

Addressing journalists in Abuja after the ruling, Wike stated that the judgment had put an end to what he described as lawlessness in the state.

The former Rivers governor also criticized former Vice President Atiku Abubakar and Bauchi State Governor Bala Mohammed, who leads the Peoples Democratic

Party (PDP) Governors' Forum, accusing them of backing illegality in Rivers.

Wike maintained that Governor Siminalayi Fubara must adhere to the Supreme Court's decision, emphasising that it is the highest legal authority on the matter.

This ruling represents a significant shift in the state's ongoing political turmoil, solidifying the standing of the Amaewhule-led Assembly while overturning the disputed local government polls.

# Ex-Abia governor, son, 3 others arraigned for N60.85bn fraud

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) on Friday arraigned a former governor of Abia State, Theodore Orji, his son, Chinedum Orji, and three others before Justice Lilian Abai of the Federal High Court sitting in Umuahia, Abia State on a 16-count charge bordering on conspiracy, official corruption, stealing and diversion of public funds to the tune of N60.85 billion.

Arraigned alongside Governor Orji and his son, who was also a former Speaker of the Abia House of Assembly on Friday were Nto Onwumene, King Obioma and Romanus K. Madu.

The anti-graft agency accused former governor Orji, and the other four of fraudulently converting N22 billion allocation for security votes and N12 billion funds due to Abia State from the Paris Club for their own use, among other allegations.

The EFCC said the offence contravenes Section 516 and 516(a) of the Criminal Code, Law of Abia State and punishable under the same Section of the same Act.

One of the count charges reads:

”That you Chief Theodore Ahamefule Orji, ENGR. Chinedum Orji, Dr. Phillip Nto, Onwumene King Obioma and Romanus K. Madu, sometime between 2011 and 2015 in Umuahia, Abia State within the jurisdiction of this Honourable Court stole and converted a sum of N22,500,000,000.00 (Twenty-Two Billion, Five Hundred Million Naira Only) being the allocation to the Abia State Government as security votes and thereby committed an offence contrary to the provision of Section 390 (5) of the Criminal Code Law of Abia State.”



Another count reads:

That you Chief Theodore Ahamefule Orji, ENGR. Chinedum Orji, Dr. Phillip Nto, Onwumene King Obioma and Romanus K. Madu, sometime between 2010 and 2011 in Umuahia, Abia State within the jurisdiction of this Honourable Court conspired among yourselves to commit unlawful acts to wit, stealing and conversion of the sum of N12,000,000,000.00 (Twelve Billion Naira Only) being the funds due to Abia State from the Paris Club Refund and thereby committed an offence contrary to the provisions of Sections 516 and 516(a) of the Criminal Code Law of Abia State.

All the defendants pleaded “not guilty” to all the charges when they were read to them, following which prosecution counsel, Dr. Pinheiro SAN, prayed the court to fix a date for commencement of trial.

Counsel to 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th defendant, Bode Olanipekun, SAN, Chika Osolu Ojukwu, SAN, K.I Odeh, Oke Amaechi, SAN and Isaac Anya informed the court of their respective

applications for the bail of the defendants.

Counsel to 1st defendant, Bode Olanipekun prayed the court to grant his client bail to enable him to stand trial. All other defence counsels made the same pleas before the court.

Justice Obai in her ruling, granted the defendants bail in the sum of Fifty Million Naira (N50,000,000.00) each, one surety in like sum, surety must have a landed property in Umuahia and must show evidence of Certificate of Occupancy

Additionally, surety must depose an affidavit of means and deposit two recent passport photographs with the court.

Defendants must also deposit their international passports with the court registrar.

The judge adjourned the matter to June 18 and 19, 2025 for commencement of trial.

February 28, 2025.

# Akpabio's wife defends husband's integrity, threatens Natasha with lawsuit

By Dave Oludare Oso



Finally reacting to the ongoing drama involving her husband, Godswill Akpabio and Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, wife of the Senate President, Mrs. Ekaette Akpabio, has dismissed allegations of sexual harassment leveled against her husband by the Kogi Central senator, describing them as false and unfounded.

Mrs. Akpabio, who spoke to journalists on Friday, defended her husband's character, stating that he is a disciplined and jovial man who respects women.

Earlier, Akpoti-Uduaghan had alleged that her ordeal in the Senate began after she rejected Akpabio's sexual advances, a claim the wife of the senate president now controvert.

In a response to the claim, Mrs. Akpabio recounted the cordial relationship between both families, dismissing the allegations as a figment of Natasha's wild imagination.

The wife of the senate numero uno man also pointed out that she was present at their family residence on December 8, 2023, the alleged date of the incident while emphasising

that their families have maintained a long-standing relationship, even before Senator Natasha's marriage.

Further praising her husband's discipline, highlighting his track record of supporting women's inclusion in government, even before becoming Senate President, the Akpabio matriarch advised women to desist from making false accusations.

Consequently, the woman vowed to seek legal redress on the matter.

# Lagos Assembly: Lawmakers describe Obasa's actions as a criminal act

By Alade Adisa

No fewer than 35 members of the Lagos State House of Assembly opposed to former Speaker Mudashiru Obasa arrived at the Lagos State High Court in Ikeja as the court began hearing the suit filed by Obasa to challenge his removal from office.

Meanwhile, the lawmakers have described Obasa's purported resumption of office and duties on Thursday afternoon as null and void, calling it a purely criminal act.

Obasa filed the lawsuit to contest his removal by 36 of his colleagues on January 13, 2025. The Lagos State House of Assembly has 40 members.

## Obasa Challenges Removal in Court

In an application dated February 12, 2025, filed by his lawyer, Chief Afolabi Fashanu (SAN), Obasa argued that he was removed from his position while he was out of the country.

The defense team includes:

Prof. Tayo Oyetibo (SAN) – representing Speaker Mojisola Meranda, Mr. Olu Daramola (SAN), Mr. Femi Falana (SAN), Dr. Muiz Banire (SAN), Mrs. Abimbola Akeredolu (SAN), Dr. Dada Awosika (SAN), Prof. Dayo Amokaye (SAN), Mr. Mofe Oyetibo (SAN), and Mr. Olumide Oyewole.

The Lagos State House of Assembly, in a statement from the media office of Speaker Mojisola Meranda, strongly condemned Obasa's attempt to convene a plenary session alongside three members.

"For the avoidance of doubt, the rules governing plenary sessions of the House are clear. A valid sitting requires:



A formal notice to all members, The presence of a quorum, An approved agenda, and The mace—an essential symbol of legislative authority. None of these procedural requirements were met during the purported session, with only five out of 40 members present, rendering it unconstitutional and without legislative effect," the House stated in a press release on Friday, signed by its spokesman, Hon. Steve Ogundipe.

"As an institution dedicated to the progress and development of Lagos State, we shall continue to act within the confines of the law to protect and preserve democratic governance," the statement added.

## Meranda Retains Speaker Position, Dismisses Resignation Rumors

The Assembly reaffirmed its unwavering support for Speaker Mojisola Meranda, stating that she continues to demonstrate dedication to the service of Lagosians.

"Any speculation suggesting her resignation is entirely unfounded. She

remains firmly in office and enjoys the confidence and support of 36 colleagues," the statement concluded.

Addressing journalists after today's hearing, Speaker Mojisola Meranda reaffirmed that she is the legitimate Speaker of the Lagos State House of Assembly.

She accused Obasa of forcefully breaking into her office and confirmed that her security personnel have not been fully reinstated.

"I remain the Speaker of the Lagos State House of Assembly, and my colleagues have reaffirmed their confidence in my leadership. It is unfortunate that Obasa resorted to forcefully entering my office, which is unacceptable in a democratic institution," she said.

She further stated that she expects a full restoration of her security details, emphasizing the need for order and respect for the rule of law in the legislative arm of government.

# Court voids Rivers LG election, issues restriction on state funds

By Friday Omosola

The Supreme Court has nullified the local government elections conducted by the Rivers State Independent Electoral Commission (RSIEC) on October 5, 2024, citing grave violations of the Electoral Act.

Delivering the judgment, Justice Jamilu Tukur ruled that RSIEC failed to adhere to due process, including continuing voter registration even after announcing the election date.

The court deemed the entire process invalid due to substantial non-compliance with electoral guidelines.

Furthermore, the court determined that the election procedures were significantly compromised, contravening Section 150 of the Electoral Act, which outlines the legal framework for local government polls.

In a separate ruling on Friday, the Supreme Court placed restrictions on the release of funds to the Rivers State Government, barring the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), the Accountant General of the Federation, and other financial institutions from disbursing money to the state.

The court stated that the restriction would remain in place until the Rivers government complies with previous



court orders.

Justice Emmanuel Akomaye, delivering a unanimous verdict from the five-member panel, also dismissed a cross-appeal by Governor Siminalayi Fubara, which challenged the legitimacy of the Rivers State House of Assembly under the leadership of Speaker Martin Amaewhule.

The court reaffirmed Amaewhule's position and directed him to resume legislative duties alongside other elected members.

Additionally, the Supreme Court condemned Governor Fubara's decision to present the state's 2024 appropriation bill before a four-member assembly, ruling that such an act deprived twenty-eight

constituencies of proper representation.

The justices described the move as a blatant disregard for judicial directives, emphasizing that the governor was required to re-submit the budget to the properly constituted legislature led by Amaewhule.

The court also criticised Fubara's handling of the alleged defection of twenty-eight lawmakers, labelling it as an authoritarian attempt to suppress the functioning of the legislature.

Moreover, the justices denounced the demolition of the Rivers State House of Assembly Complex, attributing it to executive overreach and an effort to obstruct the assembly's operations.

# Advocacy group tackles Akpabio over Natasha's seat row saga, asks first lady to weigh in

By Adeniyi Yusuf

An advocacy movement, Ojo Women Action for Political Actualisation has canvassed support for Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan representing Kogi Central Senatorial District, condemning the Senate President, Godswill Akpabio's action.

The group also urged First Lady Senator Oluremi Tinubu to intervene in the matter.

This followed the recent disagreement between Akpabio and the female Kogi lawmaker last week over the relocation of her seat.

While, the lawmaker representing the Federal Capital Territory in the Senate, Ireti Kingibe, berated Natasha, over her outburst over the seating reassignment in the Senate.

Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar called for a thorough and transparent investigation into the allegations of "sexual harassment, intimidation, and mistreatment" levelled against Senate President Godswill Akpabio by Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan.

In response, the group campaigned at the constituency office of the Lagos-West Senatorial District, Iba, Lagos.

In a conversation with The New Daily Prime, the convener, Oluyomi Coker, said Akpabio should be reminded that he is a son of a woman, a brother to a woman, a husband to a woman, and possibly a father to a woman, and should



therefore be sensitive and just while dealing with female gender.

"Sometime last year, another female senator (Senator Ireti Heebah Kingibe) was publicly assaulted by Minister of F.C.T. (Honourable Wike) It is high time all such harassments and ambiguities be laid to rest. All such activities are untoward, obnoxious, anomalous, segregatory, preposterous, unacceptable, unconstitutional and utterly condemnable," he explained.

Coker called on the first lady, Senator Oluremi Tinubu to rise up and speak against all these anti-female excesses.

He said, "Senator Godswill Akpabio stop forthwith any further plan to persecute Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan in particular and of course, all women in general. Our male-politicians should respect, treat justly and allow our women amongst them to breathe. No woman

should be a victim of any political vendetta or the like.

"All our female Speakers (Houses of Assembly, and anywhere else.) should be left to function without acrimony against their gender. For instance, we urge concerned political leaders to give peace a chance and allow the Lagos State Assembly Speaker, Hon Mojisola Lasbat Meranda carry out her functions without undemocratic and unconstitutional interference or embarrassment from any quarters.

"The 35% female affirmation function be upheld across board in the upcoming election seasons. Women are not to be seen as tools but as personnel in the project of nation building. We call on all women to rise and take their rightful positions at all levels as we join hands with our male counterparts toward having a virile community and nation. Peace upon our fatherland."

# Atiku condemns Lagos speakership crisis, calls it 'betrayal of democracy'

By Friday Omosola

Former Vice President Atiku Abubakar has condemned the ongoing crisis in the Lagos State House of Assembly, describing it as a dangerous erosion of democratic principles and a throwback to military dictatorship.

In a statement issued by Paul Ibe, his spokesperson yesterday, Atiku decried the political turmoil surrounding the removal of former Speaker Mudashiru Obasa and the appointment of Mojisola Meranda as the first female Speaker of the Lagos Assembly.

He accused state-backed forces of attempting to subvert the legislature's decision through coercive tactics.

"The events of the past few weeks have exposed the dangerous erosion of democracy in Nigeria's commercial capital," Atiku stated.

"Rather than respecting the overwhelming decision of the Assembly members, there has been a calculated effort to impose a preferred candidate through backdoor tactics and the deployment of security operatives."

The crisis took a dramatic turn two weeks ago when reports emerged that security operatives had stormed the House to enforce a leadership



reversal that would reinstate Obasa as Speaker.

Atiku likened this to the dark days of military rule, calling it a direct attack on democratic governance in Lagos State.

He also criticised President Bola Tinubu's silence on the matter, arguing that it signalled tacit approval of undemocratic manoeuvres.

"Despite his undisputed influence over Lagos politics, President Tinubu has remained conspicuously silent. His refusal to address the crisis suggests an endorsement of these anti-democratic tactics," he said.

Atiku referenced a recent statement by former Kaduna State Governor Nasir el-Rufai, who accused Tinubu

of practising selective machine politics.

He echoed concerns that Lagos politics had become a battleground between the noble values of Omoluabi—rooted in integrity and fairness—and strong-arm tactics aimed at retaining power through coercion.

He called on Tinubu to publicly denounce any attempt to undermine the democratic process and urged Nigerians to remain vigilant in defending the country's democratic institutions.

"What happened at the Lagos Assembly is nothing short of an assault on democracy. We urge all well-meaning Nigerians to stand firm in upholding the sanctity of our democratic system," he said.

# Many feared killed in Kwara fuel tanker explosion

By Friday Omosola

Multiple passengers were feared killed after a fuel tanker exploded in Ilorin, the Kwara State capital on Friday morning.

According to SaharaReporters, a live video posted by a Facebook user, Orioye Chanter Ijobaibile, showed the raging fire at Iyemanja community, along the expressway in Okolowo axis, Ilorin.

In the video, Orioye narrated the horrifying scene, saying, "People are inside the cars, and it is burning. What is even worrisome is that many other trucks that always carry fuel are passing near the fire. That is risky. They may also catch fire. We are just waiting for security operatives to show up so that they can stop them. People are getting burned inside the fire."

As of the time of filing this report, emergency responders had yet to arrive at the scene, while the fire continued to spread, posing a threat to other vehicles and properties in the area.

This explosion comes just weeks after a similar incident in Niger State, where several people were burnt to death when a fuel tanker exploded on a busy highway.

In January, a tragic fuel tanker



explosion occurred near Suleja in Niger State, Nigeria, resulting in at least 98 fatalities and numerous injuries.

The incident took place when individuals attempted to transfer gasoline from a crashed tanker using a generator, leading to a catastrophic explosion.

In October 2024, a devastating fuel tanker explosion occurred in Majiya, Jigawa State.

The incident resulted in a significant loss of life, with reported fatalities varying between sources. Initial reports indicated at least 94 deaths, while subsequent updates reported higher numbers, with some sources citing over 140 fatalities.

The explosion also caused numerous injuries and extensive property

damage.

The tragedy occurred when a fuel tanker overturned, leading local residents to gather and collect the spilling fuel.

Unfortunately, the tanker exploded during this process, resulting in the high casualty count. This incident highlights the dangers associated with siphoning fuel from compromised tankers, a practice that has led to multiple tragedies in the region.

Fuel tanker explosions have become a recurring nightmare in Nigeria, often attributed to poor road conditions, reckless driving, and a lack of strict safety regulations for fuel transportation. Despite repeated tragedies, authorities have struggled to implement measures to prevent such disasters.

# Lamborghini: Sophia Egbueje accuses Burna Boy of broken promise

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**N**igerian socialite Sophia Egbueje accuses Burna Boy of breaking a promise after an alleged intimate encounter, claiming he failed to buy her a Lamborghini.

She claims the musician assured her he would buy her a Lamborghini but never followed through.

How it started: Burna Boy's alleged invitation

In a leaked audio conversation with a friend, Sophia detailed how she met the singer. According to her, Burna Boy first contacted her through a club owner and arranged a meeting. However, she said their initial plans were postponed for undisclosed reasons.

Later, Burna Boy allegedly reached out again, and Sophia's friend, Ama Reginald, encouraged her to meet with him. Believing the singer's promises, she agreed to the encounter.

Accusations of betrayal and broken promises

Sophia now accuses Ama Reginald of betrayal, suggesting her friend may have had personal dealings with Burna



Boy as well.

She also expressed frustration over the singer's repeated excuses. "Burna Boy keeps giving excuses, so I blocked him and paid for the Lamborghini myself," she stated.

Mixed reactions from the public

The allegations have sparked mixed reactions on social media. Some users sympathized with Sophia, while others questioned her expectations from the artist.

Burna Boy has not yet responded to the claims.

A pattern of controversy?

This incident adds to a series of public disputes involving Burna

Boy in recent years. Known for his bold personality, the singer has faced multiple high-profile feuds and scandals.

Will Burna Boy respond?

As the news spreads, many wonder if Burna Boy will address the allegations or remain silent. Meanwhile, Sophia stands by her claims, insisting that she was misled by both the singer and her friend.

With social media buzzing, this unfolding drama continues to spark discussions about celebrity promises, relationships, and accountability.

# Timaya, Brooke Bailey dismiss breakup rumours

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**N**igerian singer Timaya and his American girlfriend, Brooke Bailey, have shut down breakup rumours, reassuring fans that their relationship remains strong.

The couple took to Instagram to address the speculation, making it clear that they are still together.

Social media sparks speculation  
Rumours of a split began circulating after fans noticed changes on social media. Brooke Bailey unfollowed him on Instagram and removed all pictures of him from her page.

Timaya, in turn, had no photos of Bailey on his profile and was not following anyone on the platform. These actions fueled speculation that their relationship had ended.

Couple responds to breakup claims

In response to the rumours, both Timaya and Bailey used their Instagram Stories to share a cosy photo of themselves. This move reassured fans that they were still together and dismissed the breakup claims. The couple did not add any captions, letting the picture speak for itself.

Relationship timeline

Timaya and Brooke Bailey first sparked dating rumors in December 2024. They were spotted holding hands while boarding a private jet,



which led to widespread speculation about their relationship. Their public appearances continued in early 2025, confirming that they were indeed a couple.

In January 2025, Bailey travelled to Bayelsa, Nigeria, to support him during his homecoming concert. She openly expressed her love for him, further solidifying their bond. Over the following weeks, the couple shared photos and videos of themselves, showing affection and enjoying time together.

Fans react to the clarification

Following their Instagram post, fans reacted with excitement. Many were relieved to see that the couple had not broken up. Some social media users speculated that the unfollowing and photo deletions were either a misunderstanding or a private matter that had since been resolved. Others suggested that Bailey and Timaya might have

chosen to keep their relationship more private going forward.

Celebrities and public scrutiny

Timaya and Bailey's experience highlights the challenges of being in a public relationship. Celebrities often face intense scrutiny, with fans analyzing every social media move. Unfollowing someone or deleting photos can quickly lead to speculation, even when no breakup has occurred.

Moving forward

With the rumours now addressed, Timaya and Brooke Bailey seem focused on their relationship. While they have not publicly spoken about their reasons for the social media changes, their latest post confirms that they are still together.

For now, fans can expect the couple to continue sharing glimpses of their love story—on their terms.

# BBNaija's Leo Dasilva reveals plans for his death

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Former Big Brother Naija star Leo Dasilva has shared his plan to prepare his children for his eventual death once they reach a certain level of understanding.

In a post shared on the social media platform X on Thursday, Leo told fans about his decision. He explained that once his children reach a certain level of understanding, he will begin the process.

“As soon as my kids get to a certain level of understanding, I will start preparing them for my death,” he wrote.

Although he did not share further details, his statement sparked reactions online. Many social media users praised his foresight, while others questioned whether such a conversation is necessary.

## Fans react to Leo's announcement

Leo's post quickly gained attention, with some fans supporting his approach. They argued that discussing mortality with children can help them cope better in the future. Others, however, felt it might create unnecessary fear and anxiety.

One user wrote, “This is deep, but I respect his decision. It's important to prepare children for life's realities.”

Another disagreed, saying, “Kids should be allowed to enjoy their childhood without worrying about death.”

Despite the mixed reactions, Leo has always been vocal about serious topics.



His willingness to discuss death openly is not surprising to those who follow him.

## Leo Dasilva's journey to fame

Leo first gained public attention when he appeared on Big Brother Naija Season 3 in 2018. His intelligence and calm personality made him a fan favorite. After the show, he ventured into business and public speaking.

Over the years, he has used his platform to share insights on life, family, and personal growth. His latest statement is just another example of his thought-provoking views.

## The importance of discussing mortality

Experts suggest that talking about death with children can be beneficial. Psychologists believe it helps kids develop emotional resilience. However,

they advise parents to approach the topic carefully, using simple language and reassuring tones.

Leo's decision aligns with a growing trend where parents introduce difficult conversations early. While opinions on the matter differ, his stance has certainly sparked an important discussion.

## Conclusion

Leo Dasilva's recent statement has opened up a conversation about how parents can prepare their children for life's toughest realities. Whether people agree with him or not, his words have left a lasting impact on social media.

As the debate continues, one thing is clear—Leo is not afraid to address sensitive topics, even when they challenge conventional thinking.

# Burna Boy reacts to alleged “sex-for-Lamborghini” claims

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Grammy-winning singer Burna Boy responds to claims he broke a promise after allegedly spending the night with socialite Sophia Egbueje.

In a leaked audio conversation that went viral on social media, Sophia accused Burna Boy, whose real name is Damini Ogulu, of having a one-night stand with her and then failing to buy her a Lamborghini as promised. The recording, which captured a conversation between Sophia and her friend, quickly gained attention and sparked debates across Nigeria’s online community.

Burna Boy responds with freestyle

On Friday afternoon, Burna Boy addressed the allegations through a freestyle video posted on his Instagram story. In the short clip, he mocked Sophia’s reaction, implying that her anger was unnecessary.

Singing in a laid-back tone, he said:

“No do no do, no do no do. If you no get me, forget about it. I no buy Lambo, is that why you are shouting? Where dem dey? I no dey see dem at all.”

His response, laced with sarcasm, appeared to downplay the allegations, suggesting that the situation was being blown out of



proportion.

Mixed reactions on social media

The allegations stirred mixed reactions, with some social media users criticizing Burna Boy, while others questioned Sophia’s claims. Many debated whether the singer had actually made such a promise or if the accusations were merely an attempt to gain attention.

Some fans sided with Burna Boy, arguing that no one is obligated to buy expensive gifts after a brief encounter. Others took Sophia’s side, insisting that if he made a promise, he should have kept it. The debate continued to spread across social media platforms, with people sharing their opinions on the controversy.

More controversy surrounding the singer

Burna Boy’s reaction fueled even more online discussions. While some fans defended him, saying he

was not obligated to buy anyone a Lamborghini, others criticized his response, calling it dismissive and insensitive.

As of now, Sophia has not issued any further statement regarding the matter. Meanwhile, Burna Boy continues to engage with fans on social media, showing no signs of concern over the controversy.

This is not the first time Burna Boy has faced public scrutiny. As one of Nigeria’s biggest music stars, he has often found himself in the spotlight, whether for his chart-topping hits or personal controversies. Despite the latest allegations, his loyal fan base remains strong, and his influence in the music industry remains undeniable.

With the story still trending, it remains to be seen if either party will provide more details or if the drama will fade as quickly as it surfaced.

# You're gambling with World War III, Trump tells Zelenskyy as meeting ends in fiasco

By Dave Oludare Oso

A White House meeting intended to kick off negotiations over a deal over Ukraine's rare earth minerals devolved Friday afternoon into a remarkable confrontation.

President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance chastised Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and told him he wasn't grateful enough to the United States.

After the meeting, Trump said in a statement on his Truth Social website that Zelenskyy "is not ready" for peace and that he "disrespected" the U.S.

"He disrespected the United States of America in its cherished Oval Office," Trump said. "He can come back when he is ready for peace."

Minutes later, reporters were notified that a planned joint press conference with the two leaders had been called off.

The hostile exchange underscored the tension that has emerged between the United States and Ukraine — along with many of its European allies — over the tougher line that Trump has taken toward the country since coming into office. He has called Zelenskyy a "dictator" and falsely said that Ukraine, not Russia, started the war.

The tension in the Oval Office Friday began after Vance said that the path to peace between Russia and Ukraine is diplomacy. Zelenskyy disagreed, noting that Russia had broken agreements with his government in the past.

"He killed our people, and he didn't exchange prisoners," Zelenskyy said about Russian President Vladimir Putin. "What kind of diplomacy, JD, are you speaking about? What do you mean?" Zelenskyy said.

"I'm talking about the kind of diplomacy that's going to end the destruction of your country," Vance shot back, adding, "I think it's disrespectful for you to come into the Oval Office to try to litigate this in



front of the American media right now."

President Donald Trump and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy meet in the Oval Office on Friday, Feb. 28, 2025. Saul Loeb / AFP — Getty Images

When Vance told Zelenskyy that Ukraine has "manpower problems" in recruiting troops, Zelenskyy challenged Vance, noting he had never even been to his country.

"I've actually watched and seen the stories," Vance responded. "And I know what happens is you bring people, you bring them on a propaganda tour, Mr. President."

"Do you think that it's respectful to come to the Oval Office of the United States of America and attack the administration that is trying to prevent the destruction of your country?" he added.

Zelenskyy said that everyone has "problems" during the war and suggested that the U.S. doesn't feel the effects of the war because of the "nice ocean" between the two countries. He said the U.S. may not feel the effects now, but added, "You will feel it in the future."

"Don't tell us what we're going to feel

because you're in no position to dictate that," Trump said, raising his voice and pointing his finger at Zelenskyy. "You're not in a good position."

"You're gambling with World War III," Trump said. "And what you're doing is very disrespectful to the country — this country."

"I've empowered you to be a tough guy," Trump said. "And I don't think you'd be a tough guy without the United States. And your people are very brave, but you're either going to make a deal or we're out, and if we're out, you'll fight it out."

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I., was part of a bipartisan group of senators who met with Zelenskyy on Friday morning. Asked about the clash in the Oval Office between Trump, Vance and Zelenskyy, Whitehouse said, "That's what you get for letting Vance in the room."

Zelenskyy's visit had been expected to focus in large part on a potential deal for the U.S. to access Ukraine's rare-earth minerals, which are used to make a variety of tech products.

# S'Korean police summon Japanese woman who kissed musician without his consent

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Police in South Korea have summoned a Japanese woman for questioning over allegations that she kissed Jin, a member of the K-pop boy band BTS, without his permission at an event last year.

A police official overseeing the case at the Songpa police station in Seoul, the South Korean capital, told NBC News by phone Friday that the woman was being asked to appear for questioning on a sexual harassment allegation “now that we have specified the suspect.”

Police launched the investigation after receiving an online complaint, the official said. He declined to disclose the woman’s name, citing privacy laws, and said he could not provide further details while the investigation was underway.

The incident happened last June as Jin, 32, was celebrating the end of his mandatory 18-month military service, as well as the band’s 11-year anniversary, by offering free hugs to fans at an event in Seoul that was reportedly attended by about 1,000 people.



BTS member, Jin as he leaves South Korean army after national service

During the event, the Yonhap news agency reported, a woman in her 50s suddenly kissed Jin on his cheek. The BTS star appeared uncomfortable in video footage that was widely shared online.

“My lips touched his neck. His skin was so soft,” the woman later wrote in a blog post, according to Yonhap.

Yonhap reported that the woman was identified with assistance from the Japanese police and that she had so far refused to appear for questioning.

The seven-member supergroup BTS debuted in 2013 and has since soared to global stardom. Its fans are known as the “BTS Army.”

As the oldest member of BTS, Jin was the first to be discharged from military duty, after its members were allowed to delay their enlistment until age 30.

Another member, J-Hope, completed his service in October, while the five remaining members — V, RM, Jimin, Jungkook and Suga — are still serving.

The date for the band’s highly anticipated reunion remains unclear.

# China vows retaliation as Trump threatens another 10% tariff hike

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

China has vowed to take all necessary countermeasures after President Donald Trump announced a fresh 10 percent tariff hike on Chinese imports.

According to CNBC, this latest escalation in the ongoing trade dispute between the world's two largest economies has raised concerns over global market stability and potential economic ramifications.

The Chinese Ministry of Commerce, in a statement released on Friday, expressed firm opposition to the U.S. decision, warning of potential retaliatory measures.

"If the U.S. insists on its own way, China will take all necessary countermeasures to defend its legitimate rights and interests," the Ministry stated, according to a CNBC translation.

The statement further urged Washington to reconsider its approach, emphasizing the importance of resolving conflicts through dialogue based on equality.

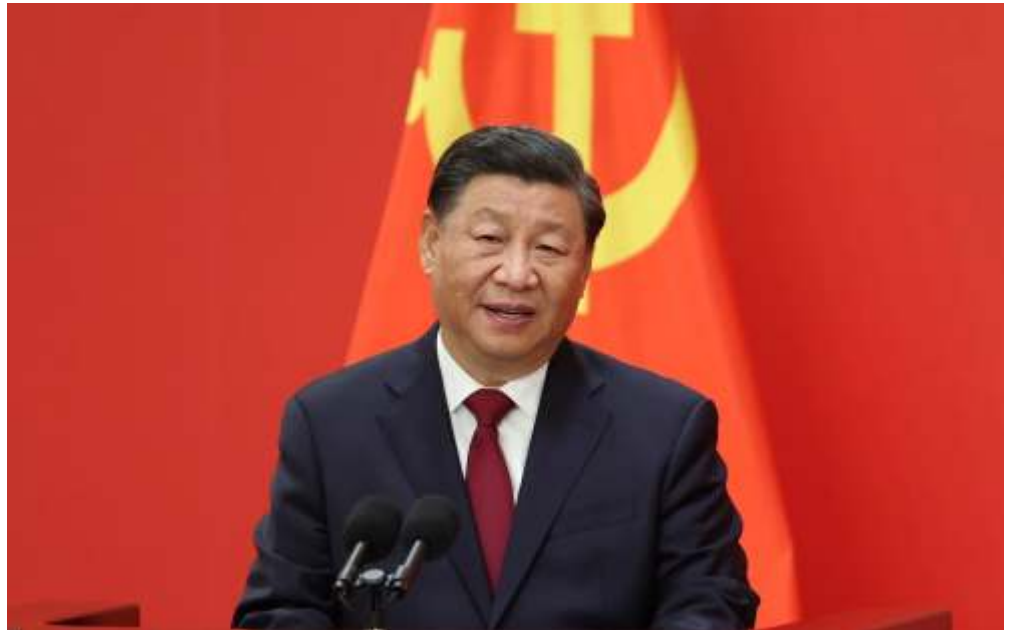
"We urge the U.S. side to not repeat its own mistakes, and to return as soon as possible to the right track of properly resolving conflicts through dialogue on equal footing."

## Timing and Implications

The new tariffs, set to take effect on March 4, will coincide with the start of China's annual parliamentary meetings, a period of heightened economic and political discussions in Beijing.

These additional duties follow an earlier 10% tariff imposed by Trump on February 4, bringing the total tariff increase to 20% within a month.

Trump justified the decision by citing China's alleged role in the fentanyl crisis. The synthetic opioid, whose precursors are largely produced in China and Mexico, has been responsible for tens of



thousands of overdose deaths in the U.S. annually.

## Potential Chinese Retaliation

Economic analysts predict that China's response will include higher tariffs on select U.S. imports, placing more American firms on its unreliable entity list, and possibly tightening export controls on critical minerals, a sector where Beijing holds significant leverage.

Neil Thomas, a fellow on Chinese politics at the Asia Society, noted that while Beijing's reaction may be measured, it is expected to target strategic sectors.

"In the short term, China's response will likely include raising tariffs on select U.S. imports, adding more American firms to its unreliable entity list, and potentially further tightening export controls on critical minerals," Thomas said.

Alfredo Montufar-Helu, head of the China Center at The Conference Board, added that China's response could be strategically designed to impact industries that are important to Trump's voter base, keeping the door open for further negotiations.

He said China would prefer to leave some

room for further negotiations as it hopes to avoid even higher import tariffs and other 'corrective' measures by Washington.

## Previous Retaliatory Measures

China has a track record of targeting U.S. industries in retaliation to tariff hikes. Following the February 4 tariffs, Beijing responded by increasing duties on certain U.S. energy imports and placing two American firms on its unreliable entity list, limiting their ability to conduct business in China.

Additionally, China has increased restrictions on exports of critical minerals essential for U.S. industries, a move that could severely impact supply chains.

Stephen Olson, a visiting senior fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies and a former U.S. trade negotiator, highlighted the significance of China's control over essential raw materials.

"The sharpest arrow that China has in its quiver would be to restrict U.S. access to critical minerals that can't readily be sourced elsewhere," Olson remarked.

# Macron says French-Algerian author under 'arbitrary detention' in Algeria

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The French president, Emmanuel Macron, has said he is concerned about the “arbitrary detention” and health of Boualem Sansal, days after the French-Algerian author began a hunger strike over his imprisonment in Algeria.

On Tuesday, Pen America issued a statement calling for the immediate release of 75-year-old Sansal, noting that “his hunger strike adds to grave concerns for his wellbeing.”

In November, the writer was arrested on national security charges and subsequently hospitalised. A group of prominent writers including Salman Rushdie, Annie Ernaux, Wole Soyinka and Leïla Slimani signed a statement calling for his release.

Macron has spoken out about Sansal’s detention before, telling French ambassadors in January that Algeria was “dishonouring itself” by holding the writer.

His latest comments came on Friday during a speech in Porto, Portugal, in which he said that Sansal’s imprisonment was among the issues that needed settling before confidence between France and Algeria could be fully restored, according to Reuters.

Relations between France and its



former colony have become increasingly hostile in recent months over immigration and a sovereignty dispute over Western Sahara, which Algeria has long said should be independent. Last summer, Macron sparked anger in Algiers when he backed Morocco’s plan for the territory to come under Moroccan control.

Sansal’s arrest was linked to comments the writer had made to the far-right French outlet *Frontières* in which he backed the argument that Morocco’s land was truncated by colonial France in the 19th century to the benefit of what would become Algeria.

Sansal was once an Algerian civil servant, but was driven to become a writer during the Algerian civil war of the 1990s. His books include *An Unfinished Business*,

his first to be translated into English, and *2084*, for which he won the Grand Prix du Roman.

Sansal has in recent years become popular with rightwing figures for his position on Islam, with Marine Le Pen calling him a “courageous opponent of Islamism” after his arrest. Sandrine Rousseau – a member of the green party *Europe Écologie Les Verts*, denounced his imprisonment, but called his views a “form of supremacism.”

“Writers like Boualem Sansal do not belong behind bars,” said Karin Karlekar, Pen America’s director of Writers at Risk, on Tuesday. “Algeria must honour its international obligations, uphold his human rights, and the rights of all detained writers in the country.”

# Trump planning to make English U.S official language

By Dave Oludare Oso



**P**resident Donald Trump is planning to sign an executive order making English the official language of the United States, multiple White House sources tell CBS News.

English is already the most commonly used language in the country, but the U.S. has never had an official language at the federal level.

The Wall Street Journal first reported the president's plan to sign the executive order.

The English language executive order will rescind a federal

mandate that requires agencies and other recipients of federal funding to provide language assistance to non-English speakers, a mandate issued by former President Bill Clinton.

Agencies, however, will still be able to provide documents and services in other languages.

The Trump administration says its goal is to “promote unity, establish efficiency in the government, and provide a pathway to civic engagement.”

Republican members of Congress have tried unsuccessfully to pass legislation declaring English the

official language. Many states have designated English as their official language.

On the campaign trail last year, Trump decried other languages entering the U.S.

“We have languages coming into our country,” Trump said at CPAC, the Conservative Political Action Conference, outside Washington, D.C., last year. “...These are languages — it’s the craziest thing — they have languages that nobody in this country has ever heard of. It’s a very horrible thing.”

# 40 workers missing as avalanche sweeps away India's construction site

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

**M**ore than 40 construction workers were missing after an avalanche in India's Himalayan state of Uttarakhand on Friday following heavy snowfall, officials said.

Rescue teams dug for hours through heavy snow, Ridhim Agarwal of the state disaster relief force said in a statement, adding: "So far, 15 workers are safe while 42 are missing."

The avalanche hit a construction camp in Chamoli district, burying the workers under snow and debris.

As soon as the weather conditions improve, high-altitude rescue teams will be deployed by helicopter to the scene, Agarwal added.

Deepam Seth, the state's top police officer, said bad weather was hampering the rescue operations.

A still image provided by the Indian Army shows a rescue and recovery operation by soldiers during heavy snowfall, after an avalanche struck a construction workers' camp near Mana village, in the Garhwal Sector, Uttarakhand state, India, Feb. 28, 2025. Indian Army/Handout via REUTERS

"It has been snowing with strong



winds... The roads are completely blocked. We have deployed snow cutters to open the road," he told broadcaster NDTV.

Uttarakhand chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said he was "saddened" by the incident and was monitoring the rescue operations.

Avalanches and landslides are common in the upper reaches of the Himalayas, especially during the winter season.

Scientists have warned, however, that climate change spurred by human burning of fossil fuels is making extreme weather events more severe and less predictable, as winter snow and ice melts faster and storm systems are supercharged over the Earth's warmer oceans.

After a year of record emissions, the United Nations warned in 2024 that there was just a decade left to

dramatically change policies around the world to prevent the worst impacts of climate change.

In a report published in October, the U.N. said it was "climate crunch time" as greenhouse gases — which trap heat in the atmosphere and fuel more extreme weather events — had hit "unprecedented levels."

The increased pace of development in the fragile Himalayan regions has also heightened fears about the fallout from deforestation and construction.

In 2021, nearly 100 people died in Uttarakhand after a huge glacier chunk fell into a river, triggering flash floods, and devastating monsoon floods and landslides in 2013 killed 6,000 people and led to calls for a review of development projects in the state.

# US bank mistakenly transfers \$81trn to customer's account instead of \$280

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

An American multinational investment bank, Citigroup has mistakenly credited \$81 trillion to a customer's account instead of \$280 before reversing the transaction hours later.

According to an internal account and two people familiar with the matter, a third employee caught the error one-and-a-half hours after the payment was processed and the transaction was ultimately reversed several hours later, FT said.

No funds left Citi, which disclosed the near miss – when a bank processes the wrong amount but is able to recover the funds – to the Federal Reserve and the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC), the report said.

Citi told Reuters in an emailed statement its “detective controls” promptly identified the inputting error between two ledger accounts and that it



reversed the entry, adding the incident had no impact on the bank or the client.

There were 10 near misses of \$1 billion or more at Citi in 2024, down from 13 the year before, according to an internal report seen by the FT. Citi declined to comment to FT on this report.

Last month, Citi CFO Mark Mason said the bank is investing more to address its compliance issues, referring to regulatory penalties for risk management and data governance.

“We saw the need to invest more in the transformation on data, on technology, on improving the quality of the

information coming out of our regulatory reporting,” Mason said.

Last July, Citi was fined \$136 million for insufficient progress in tackling those issues and in 2020, it was fined \$400 million for some risk and data failures.

Citi said in a statement that its systems prevented the transfer from actually being made. “Despite the fact that a payment of this size could not actually have been executed, our detective controls promptly identified the inputting error between two Citi ledger accounts and we reversed the entry,” the company said.

# Microsoft shutting down Skype after over two decades

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

Skype will ring for the last time on 5 May as owner Microsoft retires the two-decade-old internet calling service that redefined how people connect across borders.

Shutting down Skype will help Microsoft focus on its homegrown Teams service by simplifying its communication offerings, the office software giant said on Friday.

Founded in 2003, Skype quickly disrupted the landline industry in the early 2000s with its audio and video calls, making the company a household name boasting hundreds of millions of users at its peak.

But the platform has struggled to keep up with easier-to-use and more reliable rivals such as Zoom and Salesforce's Slack in recent years, in part because Skype's underlying technology grew less suited for the smartphone era.

When the pandemic and work from home fueled the need for online business calls, Microsoft batted for Teams by aggressively integrating it with other Office apps to tap corporate users, once a major base for Skype.

Online video communication was once the near exclusive purview of Skype before the likes of FaceTime, Zoom and Google Hangouts took over. Skype was an early example of a tech product that was so ubiquitous it was used as a verb. Users would "Skype" someone in



much the same way they would Google something.

When Microsoft bought Skype in 2011 for \$8.5bn after outbidding Google and Facebook, its largest deal at the time, the service had about 150 million monthly users; by 2020, that number had fallen to roughly 23 million, despite a brief resurgence during the pandemic.

Over the years, Microsoft struggled to integrate Skype into its suite of tools and could not meet the moment when the company began seeing competition from Apple's FaceTime and Google's various communications app attempts. And when Microsoft launched its collaboration product Teams in 2017 that quickly took priority.

"We are honored to have been part of the journey," Microsoft said on Friday. "Skype has been an integral part of shaping modern communications."

To ease the transition from the platform, its users will be able to log into Teams for free on any supported device using their existing credentials, with chats and contacts migrating automatically.

For some, it may come as a surprise that Skype was still in operation given the company's own years-long deprioritization of the platform. Launching successful communication tools has been a challenge for many of the big tech firms including Google. Now Skype will be laid to rest in the graveyard of communication tools alongside Duo and AOL Instant Messenger.

Microsoft declined to share the latest user figures for Skype and said there would be no job cuts due to the move. It added that Teams had about 320 million monthly active users.

# Illinois man convicted for stabbing 6-yr-old Palestinian-American 26 times

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

An Illinois man was found guilty Friday in the fatal stabbing of a 6-year-old Palestinian American boy and the wounding of his mother, an attack that prosecutors said was motivated by anti-Muslim hate and a response to the Israel-Hamas War.

Joseph Czuba was convicted of first-degree murder, attempted murder, aggravated battery and hate crimes in the Oct. 14, 2023, killing of Wadee Alfayoumi, who was stabbed 26 times, and in the wounding of his mother, Hanan Shaheen, who was stabbed more than a dozen times in suburban Chicago.

The jury deliberated for just over an hour.

The mother and son rented two rooms from Czuba and his then-wife in Plainfield Township, about 40 miles southwest of downtown Chicago, where the attack took place.

Shaheen, 33, testified that Czuba, 73, turned on her shortly after Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, 2023.

She said he and his then-wife were aware that she is Muslim and of Palestinian descent before they agreed to rent the rooms to her, and that she didn't previously have any issues in the two years she rented from them. She was the prosecution's first witness.

Shaheen and Czuba's ex-wife, Mary Connor, who also testified for the prosecution, said that in the week leading up to the stabbings, Czuba was outraged about the war between Israel and Hamas.

Shaheen said he began speaking hatefully about Muslims. Shaheen testified that Czuba told her "your people" are killing Jewish people and babies in Israel, that Muslims were not welcome in his home and that she needed to move out.

"I told him, 'Pray for peace,'" Shaheen testified.

Days later, Shaheen said, Czuba forced his way into her room, held her down, stabbed her with a knife and tried to break her teeth, as her son, Wadee, watched in fear from a corner of



the room. At one point, she said, she was able to get ahold of the knife and stab Czuba with it before he seized it from her.

She said that when she went into a bathroom to call 911, Czuba moved on to Wadee, who had just celebrated his birthday.

She said she could hear him shouting, "Oh no, stop!" A knife was still lodged in Wadee's body when first responders arrived at the home. A knife with a 7-inch blade, which prosecutors held up to show jurors multiple times during closing arguments, was removed from his body. Shaheen was hospitalized and received 19 stitches on her face, as well as staples on the back of her head.

The killing of Wadee and attack on Shaheen drew international attention and left many people in Illinois' large Muslim and Palestinian communities frightened. Some in those communities criticized the rhetoric from public officials and some in the media which they said had demeaned Muslims and Palestinians.

Czuba did not testify at his trial.

In court documents, prosecutors said he became obsessed with the war in the Middle East.

"This happened because this defendant was afraid that a war that had started on Oct. 7,

2023, a half a world away in the Middle East, was going to come to his doorstep," prosecutor Michael Fitzgerald, a Will County assistant state's attorney, told jurors in his opening statement. "This happened because Hanan and Wadee were Muslim."

Connor, 64, testified that he had become paranoid about his personal safety and believed that their lives might be in danger because of Shaheen.

She said that they both had a good relationship with Shaheen, whom she said she considered a friend and good tenant. Czuba tried to make the home enjoyable and would sometimes bring home toys for Wadee, she said. Days after the war, she said, Czuba became withdrawn and told her that he wanted Shaheen to move out of their home.

"Hanan needs to move because her friends could come and do us harm," Connor testified Czuba had told her.

But Connor, who was married to Czuba for 30 years, said she disagreed. She believed they should adhere to the terms of Shaheen's lease, and give her 30 days notice to move, and told Czuba that Shaheen had never had a guest in the home.

"I was angry," Connor testified. "In my mind, there was no reason for her to move."

# UEFA fines Real Madrid for homophobic Guardiola chants

By Dave Oludare Oso



**U**nion of European Football Associations (UEFA) has fined Real Madrid after some of their fans directed homophobic chants towards Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola.

The Spanish side have been ordered to pay 30,000 euros (£24,800) by

European football's governing body.

Real have also been given a suspended partial stadium closure and must shut off at least 500 adjacent seats during their next European match at the Bernabeu.

However, the partial closure has been suspended for two years.

The chanting occurred in Real Madrid's 3-1 win over Guardiola's City in the second leg of their Champions League play-off at the Bernabeu earlier this month.

The victory meant Carlo Ancelotti's side qualified for the last 16 with a 6-3 win on aggregate and will next face Atletico Madrid.

# Mourinho sues Galatasaray after 'racist statements' accusation

By Dave Oludare Oso

Fenerbahce manager, Jose Mourinho has filed a lawsuit against Galatasaray after the club accused him of making racist statements.

The Fenerbahce manager was accused by Galatasaray of making racist statements after Monday's Istanbul derby and, on Tuesday, the Portuguese's Turkish club released a statement saying his comments had been taken "completely taken out of context".

On Friday, Fenerbahce said Mourinho was filing a 1,907,000 Turkish Lira lawsuit, through the club's lawyers, against Galatasaray "due to the attack on the personal rights" of the Portuguese coach.

The amount – which is worth around £41,000 – is symbolic as 1907 is the year Fenerbahce Sports Club was founded.

Speaking in the news conference after Monday's 0-0 draw, Mourinho said the home bench had been "jumping like monkeys" and also repeated his criticism of Turkish referees, saying it would have been a "disaster" to use an



official from the country.

The match was refereed by Slovenian Slavko Vincic after both clubs requested a foreign official take charge of the fixture.

On Thursday, Mourinho was banned for four games and fined a total of £35,194 by the Turkish Football Federation for two separate disciplinary matters.

The TFF said it was penalising him for "his derogatory and offensive statements towards the Turkish referee" and because he "accused Turkish football of chaos and disorder with insulting and offensive statements towards both the Turkish football community

and all Turkish referees".

His comments included him saying that "after the big dive in the first minute and their bench jumping like monkeys on the top of the kid... with a Turkish referee you would have a yellow card after one minute and after five minutes I would have to change [substitute] him".

The TFF said "the statements used towards the members of the opposing team were contrary to the ethics of sports and the concept of fair play, contained expressions that could encourage violence and disorder in sports, were divisive and separatist in society and could cause fan incidents".