



**Stop lying, you annulled June 12 election, Abacha's family tells IBB** **Pg 2**



**Resign or be impeached, APC faction tells Fubara** **Pg 9**

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# Stop lying, you annulled June 12 election, Abacha's family tells IBB

By Dave Oludare Oso

**L**ate Head of State, Gen. Sani Abacha's family has rejected claims by former military President, Gen. Ibrahim Babangida (IBB), that their late father was largely responsible for the annulment of June 12, 1993 presidential election.

Scion of the Abacha clan, Mohammed, in a statement, yesterday, argued that Babangida, in his autobiography titled "A Journey in Service" missed the opportunity to make history by giving a truthful and objective account of what happened in the past.

In the statement, Mohammed said, "honesty, sincerity, and integrity" are virtues not commonly associated with Babangida, arguing that Abacha was neither the Head of State nor the Commander-in-Chief at the time the June 12 election was annulled.

The family asserted that the decision to annul the election was made under the administration of General Ibrahim Babangida, who, as the then Head of State, held absolute executive powers and was solely responsible for the actions of his government.

They contended that the attempt to shift the blame to Abacha, who was a very senior military officer in the regime, was a deliberate distortion of historical facts.



The family urged Nigerians to be wary of revisionist narratives that sought to manipulate public perception for personal or political reasons.

"The memory of our late father and leader, General Sani Abacha must not be tarnished by baseless accusations meant to absolve those who were truly responsible.

"Furthermore, we wish to emphasise that despite this unfortunate attempt to shift blame, General Sani Abacha remained a true and loyal friend to General Ibrahim Babangida up to the time of his death. He was a man of unwavering commitment to his comrades.

"We also find it necessary to state that at the time General Babangida's life was under threat, it was General

Abacha who came to his rescue, ensuring his safety," the family stated.

The statement added: "We take this opportunity to express our heartfelt appreciation to many Nigerians, who have risen in defence of General Sani Abacha to set the record straight. Your unwavering commitment to truth and historical accuracy is deeply appreciated, and we acknowledge the outpouring of support from those, who refuse to allow history to be distorted.

"As we reflect on Nigeria's history, we acknowledge General Sani Abacha's time in leadership and the role he played in the nation's development. His contributions, like those of past leaders, remain part of our country's history. We believe that history is best judged with fairness and objectivity."

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# Tinubu urges govs, political leaders to prioritise the poor, vulnerable

By Oluwatosin Ologun

President Bola Tinubu, on Monday night in Abuja, called on governors, ministers, and other political leaders in the country to channel more resources toward catering to the needs of society's poor and vulnerable.

Tinubu appealed while hosting governors, members of the Federal Executive Council, Service Chiefs and heads of select ministries, departments, and agencies to an Iftar dinner at the State House in Abuja.

"I thank you all for responding to this invitation. You honoured it out of respect, not because you don't have enough to eat or share", Tinubu was quoted to have said in a statement by his spokesperson, Bayo Onanuga.

Tinubu also urged leaders to be selfless and work for the people's benefit.

President Tinubu noted that political leaders' efforts are crucial in meeting citizens' expectations.

He commended the people-oriented policies that have started yielding positive results in improved human development indexes and economic indicators.

The President attributed the success of economic reforms to the collective effort of members of the Federal Executive Council (FEC) and the collaboration of leaders at the subnational levels.

"I recall in our first FEC meeting, I said



we were going to work hard to fetch water from a dry well. We are still working hard to ensure that there is water to drink and that we spend money, not the people.

"You, the leaders at the subnational levels, are also doing all you can to spend money, not the people," he noted.

President Tinubu urged political leaders to work for posterity so that history will remember them for good.

"Look at yourselves as navigators that will bring the country to the promised land. Standing here as President is a great honour, and you can't trade it.

"Continue doing what you are doing. And do more for the people," he added. President Tinubu said leaders must see the entire country as one big family in a house where people live in

different rooms.

The Chairman of the Nigeria Governors Forum and Governor of Kwara State, Abdulrahman Abdulrazaq, thanked the President for the bold and decisive reform of the Nigerian economy.

The governor of Benue State, Hyacinth Alia, who led the Christian prayers, said, "It is no coincidence that Muslims and Christians are fasting at the same time."

The Minister of Justice and Attorney General of the Federation, Lateef Fagbemi, noted that the prices of goods and foodstuffs were steadily dropping.

The minister said the reforms had also improved livelihoods while commending the President for his courage.

# FG reaffirms commitment to disburse CVFF

By **Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye**

The Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun, has reaffirmed the commitment of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration to the disbursement of the Cabotage Vessel Financing Fund (CVFF), a critical initiative aimed at boosting Nigeria's maritime sector.

This disclosure was made by Edun during a meeting with the Director-General of the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), Dr. Dayo Mobereola, who led a delegation to his office.

The CVFF was established under the Coastal and Inland Shipping (Cabotage) Act of 2003, designed to develop indigenous ship acquisition capacity and provide financial assistance to Nigerian operators in the domestic coastal shipping business.

In his statement, Edun stressed that the disbursement of the CVFF remains a priority for the government, as it is expected to drive growth, create employment opportunities, and strengthen Nigeria's position as a major maritime hub in Africa.

Dr. Mobereola, on his part, highlighted that the Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy has identified the CVFF disbursement as



a key performance indicator (KPI) for 2025, underscoring the urgency to expedite the process.

The Minister of Finance further revealed that the funds have been lodged with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) since the implementation of the Treasury Single Account (TSA), and efforts are underway to fast-track their disbursement.

In a bid to streamline the process, Edun approved the inclusion of a representative from the Ministry of Finance in NIMASA's in-house committee overseeing the CVFF disbursement, which will operate under the supervision of the Ministry of Marine and Blue Economy.

Dr. Mobereola added that the Honourable Minister of Marine and Blue Economy, Adegboyega

Oyetola, has directed the agency to engage with the Ministry of Finance to resolve all technicalities and establish clear modalities for accelerating the disbursement process.

The Minister of Finance also emphasised the importance of regular updates and transparency in the utilisation of the fund, ensuring that all contributors and stakeholders benefit efficiently.

This approach, according to Edun, would ensure sustainable growth for Nigeria's maritime industry and unlock its full potential.

With these commitments, the government aims to position Nigeria as a major player in the maritime sector, creating opportunities for economic growth and employment.

# Court hears Natasha's suit against Senate probe March 25

By Dave Oludare Oso



The suit filed by the Senator representing Kogi Central Senatorial District, Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan against a senate probe has been adjourned to March 25, 2025.

The Federal High Court in Abuja fixed the March 25 date on Monday.

The adjournment followed a submission by the respondents, who informed the court that they have not been served with the necessary documents.

The Kogi Central senator (Akpoti-Uduaghan) had approached the Federal High Court, seeking an order restraining the Senate Committee on Ethics and

Privileges from investigating her.

Delivering a ruling on the application on March 5, 2025, the trial judge, Justice Obiora Egwuatu, barred the committee from proceeding with the probe.

The Court subsequently grant the order last week but the Senate on Thursday suspended the Senator for six months after it considered the report of the Committee.

At the day's proceeding, counsels for the first, Second and third defendants told the court that they had not been served.

Counsel for Natasha, Michael Numa, (SAN), informed the court that all parties had been served,

adding that affidavits of service were before the court.

After going through the affidavits of service before court, Justice Egwuatu confirmed service of all processes on all defendants.

At this point, counsel for the third defendant, Senate President Godswill Akpabio, Kehinde Ogunwumiju, prayed the court for an adjournment for all processes to be harmonised.

Other counsels supported the move, stressing that this will facilitate accelerated hearing at the next adjourned date.

# I removed fuel subsidy to protect the youth, future – Tinubu

By Oluwatosin Ologun

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on Monday said every decision he has taken so far, including the fuel subsidy removal is all about Nigerian youths and their future.

President Tinubu stated this at the inauguration of the National Youth Congress Planning Committee at the Council Chambers, Presidential Villa, Abuja.

Tinubu said: “I’ve listened to you carefully, today is not for long speeches, I just want to reassure you that you are the hope of the country. Everything hangs on your future, every decision that I’ve taken is all about tomorrow.”

He assured that the ongoing economic reforms were designed to strengthen the economy for the prosperity of Nigerian youths, who constitute more than 60 per cent of the population.

“I want to reassure you that you are the hope of this country, and everything hangs on you. Every decision that I have taken is about you. It’s about the future. When we removed the fuel subsidy, it was because we wanted to protect your future. We have cleared the path for you to have a great future,” Tinubu said was quoted to have said in a statement released by his spokesperson, Bayo Onanuga.

“When you listen to most professionals leaving Nigeria, there’s a cause. If you grow prosperity back home and empower people, they will not bother leaving. They will stay home.”

The President told the 44-member planning committee that the government would implement the outcomes of their deliberations and framework for the national conference.

“This is your opportunity to develop the



nation and make it prosperous. The government of today is all about you. You can be critical of politicians and abuse them all the way you can, but politics is about development and the future of generations. You are the heartbeat of our nation, and I hope you take this responsibility seriously.

“I am glad you are here as a committee to inspire today, tomorrow and hereafter. I am with you,” he said.

The President noted that the economic reforms had repositioned the economy for greater prosperity and empowerment. Most indicators showed a steady fall in the prices of goods, especially foodstuffs, and a stabilisation of the exchange rate.

“When we started, it looked so foggy, dicey and hopeless. We worked hard, and it was like drawing water out of a dry well. But today, the economy has turned the corner; prices are falling, confidence in our economy is improving, investors are looking this way, and technology is advancing.

“You have a great opportunity, and I am ready to listen to you. I have heard your spokesperson’s remarks. You have a great chance of advancing the development of

this country. It is all in your hands.

“My position is to help navigate, push, and lift the heavy weight of problems so that I can clear the way for you. You have a great future before you, which is in your hands.

“Just look me in the face and tell me whatever you think is wrong and the way forward. Be frank. We will implement your suggestions so long as they are for the country’s prosperity,” the President added.

Minister of Youth Development, Ayodele Olawande, thanked the President for giving the youths a voice and assured that the committee represented various stakeholders fairly.

“We want to thank you for the futuristic ideas; more than 260,000 students have already benefited from the administration’s student loan schemes. We appreciate the renovation of the Third Mainland Bridge for us to use and clearing the passport backlog,” the minister added.

The minister also thanked the President for historic infrastructural developments that will last through generations.

# 7 oil firms to repay \$37.4m debt before August – Reps

By Friday Omosola

The House of Representatives has announced that seven oil firms have committed to clearing their \$37.4 million debt to the Federation Account before August 2025.

In a statement yesterday, the House spokesperson, Akin Rotimi, revealed that the companies made this commitment amid an ongoing investigation by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC).

“This agreement follows a detailed review of financial records from the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), which uncovered significant irregularities in royalty payments and reconciliation processes within the sector,” Rotimi stated.

He noted that the pledged repayments are part of a N9 trillion outstanding liability flagged in the Auditor General’s 2021 report submitted to the National Assembly.

“The accumulated debts, some spanning over four years, point to deep-rooted revenue leakages in the oil and gas industry,” he added.

Beyond the seven firms that have agreed to settle their debts, the Committee’s findings indicate that 45 oil and gas companies owe a combined \$1.7 billion (N2.5 trillion) in unpaid royalties as of December 31, 2024.

The following companies have acknowledged their debts and assured the House that payments will be completed by August 2025: Belema Oil, Panocean Oil Nigeria Ltd, Newcross Exploration & Production Ltd, Dubri Oil Company Ltd, Chorus Energy, Amni International and Network Exploration.

Rotimi also disclosed that nine companies, collectively owing \$429.2 million, have disputed their outstanding balances.



They have requested a reconciliation process with NUPRC to verify their actual liabilities.

These firms include: Aradel/Niger Delta, Chevron, STAR DEEP, Shore Line, Seplat Producing Unlimited, Esso Erha, Esso Usan, Eroton Exploration and Seplat Energy.

The Committee has instructed that the reconciliation process be completed within two weeks, after which the firms must settle their verified debts without further delay.

Meanwhile, 28 companies, with a combined debt of \$1.23 billion, have failed to respond to public notices or appear before the Committee.

These include: Addax Petroleum Exploration Nigeria Ltd, AITEO Group, All Grace Energy, Amalgamated Oil Company Nigeria Limited, Total E&P Nigeria (OML 100, 102, 52 & 99), Bilton Energy Limited, Enageed Resources Limited, Waltersmith Petroman Limited, Conoil Plc and Continental Oil & Gas Company Ltd.

Others are, Energia Limited, First E&P Ltd, Frontier Oil Limited, General Hydrocarbons Limited, Green Energy International Ltd, Nigeria Agip Exploration Ltd (NAE), Neconde Energy Limited, Nigeria Petroleum

Development Company (NPDC) – OML 60, 61 & 63, Lekoil Oil and Gas Investments Limited, and Midwestern Oil and Gas Limited.

Millennium Oil and Gas Company Limited, Oando Oil Ltd (OML 60, 61 & 62), Heirs Holding, Pillar Oil Limited, Platform Petroleum Limited, Universal Energy Limited / Sinpec, Sahara Field Production Limited and Oriental Energy Resources Limited are other companies.

The Committee granted these companies an additional one-week grace period to provide relevant documentation regarding their statutory obligations and appear before the panel.

“Failure to comply within this timeframe will attract firm legislative and regulatory sanctions aimed at enforcing accountability,” Rotimi warned.

The House of Representatives also confirmed that only two oil firms have fully met their royalty obligations: Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) and Shell Nigeria Exploration & Production

The legislative body reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring transparency and enforcing compliance across the oil and gas sector.

# Resign or be impeached, APC faction tells Fubara

By Dave Oludare Oso

The faction of the All Progressives Congress (APC) led by Tony Okocha in Rivers State has told the state governor, Siminalayi Fubara to either resign or be impeached by the State House of Assembly.

The APC factional leader, Okocha, who gave the ultimatum during a press briefing in Port Harcourt, the state capital on Monday, accused the governor of gross maladministration and plunging the state into needless and avoidable crisis.

According to Okocha, the governor has only two options – resignation or impeachment, alleging that the Fubara-led government has led the state into numerous problems that have earned the



state a tag of infamy in the comity of states and in the estimation of Nigerians.

He further claimed that the Supreme Court, in its verdict, indicated that there is no functional government in Rivers State, citing multiple infractions by the

governor, which he described as impeachable offences.

Okocha also asserted that Fubara has lost the authority to summon Assembly members for discussions.

# El-Rufai dumps APC, joins SDP

By Dave Oludare Oso

Immediate past governor of Kaduna State, Nasir Ahmad El-Rufai has dumped the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) for the Social Democratic Party (SDP).

El-Rufai disclosed this in a press statement released on Monday, March 10, 2025.

The former minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), cited a ‘growing misalignment’ between his personal values and the current direction of the APC as the primary reason for his decision.

He expressed his disappointment with the APC’s leadership, accusing the party of straying from the progressive ideals of its founding members.

The former governor noted that he had raised concerns about the party’s trajectory both privately and publicly over the past two years but found no



willingness among the current leadership to address the issues.

The statement reads, “Developments in the last two years confirm that there is no desire on the part of those who currently control and run the APC to acknowledge, much less address, the unhealthy situation of the party.”

“At this point in my political journey, I

have come to the conclusion that I must seek another political platform for the pursuit of the progressive values I cherish.”

The former governor, had of late, criticised the leadership of the government and of the ruling party over some decisions made, which he felt were not to the benefit of the majority of Nigerians.

He had also been seen hobnobbing with leaders of opposition parties, especially former vice president Atiku Abubakar and chieftains of SDP.

Only this past weekend, the former minister visited Atiku, former Osun State governor and ex-Minister of Interior, Raul Aregbesola and Pastor Tunde Bakare, at Lagos and Adamawa states.

# Speak out against internet fraud, EFCC to students

By Friday Omosola

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has called on students across Nigeria to raise their voices against internet fraud, emphasizing their crucial role in combating the menace.

The EFCC Chairman, Ola Olukoyede, made the appeal during a sensitization and re-engagement visit to Doveland International School, Abuja.

The event, held in the school's assembly hall, aimed to educate students on the dangers of internet fraud and corruption.

Speaking on behalf of the Olukoyede, the Head of the EFCC's Enlightenment and Reorientation Unit, Assistant Commander of the EFCC (ACEII) Aisha Mohammed, reiterated the Commission's commitment to engaging young people in the fight against corruption.

She urged students to take a stand, as their voices could influence both fraudsters and the older generation.

"The future belongs to you. That's why we are here, urging you to join this fight and secure a better future. The older generations are phasing out, and without proper guidance, the mess will keep recycling.

"Your voices matter. You matter. Please join us in this crusade and make Nigeria a better place for us all. Shun Yahoo Yahoo, exam malpractice, bullying, drugs, and other social vices," she said.

The Head of the Creative Communications Unit, Chris Oluka, also encouraged students to be good ambassadors of Nigeria and take an active role in rebuilding the country's reputation.

He highlighted the damage internet fraudsters have done to Nigeria's image and called for collective action.



"We are here today to let you know that you can be good ambassadors, foot soldiers, and take the front seat in this crusade to champion the fight against other social vices," he stated.

Oluka further urged students to lead by example and even educate their parents on the effects of corruption, which he blamed for Nigeria's infrastructural decay.

He recalled his own school days when public school students enjoyed free education, including bursaries, uniforms, books, and food—benefits now eroded by corruption.

"Why don't we have those things now? It's because of corruption. Corruption is the reason we have bad roads, dilapidated hospitals and schools, lack of potable drinking water, unstable power supply, brain drain, poor working environments, and inadequate educational facilities.

"I'm saying enough is enough; let's drive this fight together now and safeguard your future," he added.

Eniola Kayode, from the EFCC's Cybercrime Section, warned students about the dangers of interacting with strangers online.

She cautioned that such engagements could make them easy targets for

sextortion and other cybercrimes.

She also advised them to avoid clicking on suspicious links sent to their devices, as hackers could gain access to their sensitive information and use it for blackmail.

To prevent such risks, she urged students not to store nude pictures on their phones.

"When hackers gain access to your devices, they can start holding you to ransom. When this happens, report immediately to the EFCC, the police, your parents, or a trusted adult and ignore the threats from criminals," she advised.

As part of the event, a quiz competition was held, with students Nifemi Odeseye and Yosola Ogunsola emerging as winners.

They were rewarded with brand-new mobile phones and appointed as EFCC Ambassadors to further spread the anti-corruption message among their peers.

The visit to Doveland International School is part of the EFCC's ongoing efforts to engage young Nigerians and promote integrity, discipline, and patriotism in the fight against corruption.

# Over 2m candidates registered for 2025 UTME, setting new record

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) has announced that a record-breaking 2,030,627 candidates have registered for this year's Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), marking the highest number of applications the board has ever received in its history.

This milestone was revealed in JAMB's weekly bulletin, released on Monday in Abuja. The board noted that registration for the examination closed on March 8, 2025.

The number of registrations this year surpasses the previous record set in 2024, where over 1.9 million candidates applied for the UTME. JAMB clarified that this total does not



include candidates who registered for foreign centres.

In addition, 200,115 candidates have opted to participate in the optional

mock UTME, which is scheduled to take place on April 5, 2025.

JAMB also highlighted the implementation of several innovative measures aimed at preventing cheating and ensuring the integrity of the examination process.

These new measures have already led to multiple arrests of candidates attempting to use forged A-level results for admission, demonstrating the effectiveness of the updated system designed to detect fraud.

The board urged all candidates to adhere to the rules and regulations of the examination and avoid any dishonest practices during the UTME.

# El-Rufai's defection triggers strategic moves within APC

By Damilola Olufemi

In a move seen as a strategic manoeuvre to bolster his chances in the 2027 presidential election, President Bola Tinubu and the All Progressives Congress (APC) have begun poaching key politicians from the Northern region of the country in a bid to expand their influence in the region.

A source in the presidency disclosed that Tinubu is targeting influential figures who can deliver crucial votes in the upcoming election.

This comes after the former governor of Kaduna State, Nasir Ahmad El-Rufai, left the ruling APC for the Social Democratic Party (SDP). El-Rufai disclosed this in a press statement released on Monday, March 10, 2025.

He said, "At this point in my political journey, I have concluded that I must seek another political platform to pursue the progressive values I cherish."



The former minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) cited a 'growing misalignment' between his personal values and the current direction of the APC as the primary reason for his decision.

"We are building a formidable team that will guarantee victory for our party in 2027, particularly in the North, especially following El-Rufai's defection from the party," said the source who spoke on condition of

anonymity.

The APC is also expected to expand its efforts in the South-East and South-South, where Tinubu received low votes in the 2023 election.

In the South-East and South-South, Tinubu's team is said to be in talks with several high-profile politicians, including governors and senators.

"Our leader is leaving no stone unturned in his quest to assemble a diverse coalition of supporters from across the country," the source added.

Former governor El-Rufai had criticised the leadership of the government and the ruling party over some decisions, which he felt did not benefit the majority of Nigerians.

He was also seen hobnobbing with leaders of opposition parties, especially former Vice President Atiku Abubakar and chieftains of the SDP.

# 'I won't be distracted from good governance' – Adeleke

Osun State Governor, Ademola Adeleke, has reaffirmed his commitment to delivering good governance despite attempts by detractors to derail his administration.

Speaking at a State Executive Council meeting in Osogbo, Governor Adeleke reflected on recent political challenges in the state, vowing that his administration would remain steadfast in its service to the people.

"Last month was a very busy and turbulent one. We were confronted with a misuse of federal power, from security services to judicial interpretation.

"A vicious, anti-democratic campaign was launched against our government, and Osun was placed under siege in a manner nobody ever envisaged."

Despite these challenges, the governor declared that his administration had successfully resisted efforts to destabilize the state.

"We survived the evil and offensive



onslaught. We overcame forces of darkness that sought to impose anarchy. Our adversaries failed in their bid to plunge Osun into chaos," he stated.

Adeleke highlighted key achievements, including the successful conduct of the local government elections and the swearing-in of democratically elected officials.

He also noted ongoing legal efforts to remove what he described as "illegal invaders" of local government offices.

The governor further disclosed that his administration has taken significant steps to hold accountable officials of the

**By Friday Omosola**

previous government, citing widespread reports of procurement corruption and financial infractions.

He urged members of his cabinet to remain vigilant and continue prioritizing due process.

"The desperate opposition forces are still lurking in the dark. We must never succumb to their plots. Instead, we should focus on delivering the five-point agenda of this administration, completing all ongoing projects, and launching new ones to spread democratic dividends across the state," he emphasised.

Governor Adeleke announced that he would unveil the state's 2025 Infrastructure Project Implementation Plan the following day, setting clear timelines for statewide inspections and project commissioning.

"We have the upper hand, and we must forge ahead without any weakness," he said.

# Fayemi denies dumping APC

**By Friday Omosola**

The immediate past governor of Ekiti State, Kayode Fayemi, has dismissed rumours of his defection from the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

In a statement on his X page Monday night, Fayemi reaffirmed his commitment to the party, stating that he has always been a foundational, card-carrying member of the APC and that his position remains unchanged.

He said: "My attention has been drawn to a story circulating on several online platforms regarding my defection from the All Progressives Congress (APC).

"While I have been at the vanguard of



demand for greater internal democracy and inclusion in the ruling party, I believe it is still not too late for our party to change course and move towards greater inclusion and internal democracy."

The New Daily Prime reported that former Kaduna State Governor, Nasir El-Rufai, resigned from the APC on Monday and joined the Social Democratic Party (SDP).

El-Rufai attributed his defection to a growing misalignment between his personal values and the APC's current trajectory.

In a press statement shared on his X handle, he expressed disappointment with the party's leadership, accusing it of abandoning the progressive ideals upon which it was founded

# Kwara gov swears in new commissioners, reshuffles cabinet

By Friday Omosola

**K**wara State Governor, AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq, has inaugurated two new commissioners, Lawal Olohungbebe and Maryam Nnafatima Imam, urging them to be team players and align with his administration's developmental agenda.

Their swearing-in, which took place on Monday, came with a reshuffling of cabinet positions.

Olohungbebe has been assigned to the Ministry of Education and Human Capital Development, while Nnafatima will now oversee the Ministry of Social Development.

In other changes, Hajia Sa'adatu Modibbo Kawu has been moved to the Ministry of Tertiary Education, while Mary Arinde now heads the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development.

Lafia Aliyu Kora Sabi has been appointed as the Commissioner for the newly created Ministry of Transportation.

Additionally, Olohuntoyosi Thomas Adebayo, formerly the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, will now lead the Ministry of Livestock Development.



His former role has been taken over by Afeez Abolore. Meanwhile, Abosede Olaitan Buraimoh, previously in charge of the Ministry of Social Development, will now oversee the Ministry of Solid Minerals.

Speaking after the inauguration, Governor AbdulRazaq described the appointments as a “deserving elevation” for the new commissioners, who had previously served as Senior Special Assistants.

“This marks not just a new chapter for the commissioners but a renewed commitment to serving the people of Kwara State with dedication, integrity, and vision,” the governor said.

He emphasised the importance of teamwork in governance and urged the new appointees to embrace creativity and prudent decision-making in their respective ministries.

“Our government has made significant progress in education, healthcare, infrastructure, and social protection. As you assume your new roles, I urge you to stay connected with the people, think outside the box, and apply prudence in decision-making,” he added.

Governor AbdulRazaq congratulated the new commissioners and wished them success in their service to the state.

# Take charge of this week with this 9-5 work tips

By Eytayo Jemimah Ajayi

**W**ell, I know you found work frustrating last week and this is the last thing you need on your plate this morning. But if that job serves your needs, you have to hear me out.

Doing a 9-5 job has its pros, but sometimes, its cons outweigh its pros. You've got to show up to work every day, think about what to wear, and smile at coworkers on Monday morning even when nothing is actually funny.

The corporate world is not sweet until you climb up the food chain. Getting up the food chain takes strategic efforts and time. You can start being intentional about your job practice by doing some things right this week.

## Try to make your work boss happy with you

Not like you're a people pleaser but 60% of the frustration that comes with work is because your boss isn't happy with you. By pleasing your boss, I imply that you do your job ethically and try your best with your designated tasks. Remember, this tip concerns you doing everything ethical in making your boss happy.

## Avoid arriving at your workplace late

Starting your day at work by coming in late can be to your disadvantage. You start working on a disorganized note trying to meet up for the time you might have wasted. In this case, it takes a while for you to feel psychologically stable because you have the notion that you need to catch up on something.



## Dress confidently to work

Dressing confidently boosts your morale to work well. Dress like a boss man or a boss woman. Don't allow your dressing to impede you from working well or doing your best. It also makes you stand out from other workers who dress without sparkle.

## Keep your workplace tidy

Avoid having jumbled files on your desk. Tidy up your tasks to unclog your mind from taking on burdens. You can decorate your desk with motivational quotes, a flower vase, your family picture, stress balls, or whatever you see fit to be on your desk.

## Have a shock absorber for criticisms at work

In the workplace, you'll be criticized to do better. Your ideas, opinions, or tasks might receive strong criticism. Some of these might be spewed unprofessionally but you have to learn not to let this get you and not affect your work rate. As a mature worker, to navigate the corporate world, you cannot spend time crying in the

restroom because your manager rejected your report. However, if the comments or criticisms get personal rather than professional, you might have to report this to the Human Resources department

## Be a versatile willing worker

Be willing to take on new tasks that will improve your skill set. When you make yourself ready to do work, it exposes your skills to your workers who can recommend you for a promotion later on.

## Maintain a good rapport with your workmates

Avoid being at loggerheads with your workmates. However, you might slow down on the relationship. Make it casual and not too deep because before you know it, you might spend more time at work chatting and gossiping away time. In addition, remember to stay hydrated and mind your business.

These tips are practical tips that can make your week in your workplace delightful and improve your productivity.

# Antiretroviral Drugs in Nigeria Remain Free - NACA

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA) says that antiretroviral drugs in Nigeria remain free at government-approved health facilities, describing circulated claims as false and misleading.

This statement came following widespread speculation that antiretroviral drug subsidies had been withdrawn.

According to Voice of Nigeria (VON), a statement shared on Sunday, the Director-General of NACA, Dr. Temitope Ilori, refuted the claim that ARV medication would cost N250,000 per dose, with a total monthly payment of N500,000.

While appreciating the support of donor agencies, including the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the Global Fund, in ensuring quality and free access to treatment in Nigeria, the government agency assured the public of the continued commitment of the US



government, USAID, and the World Health Organization (WHO).

NACA also reiterated its commitment to ensuring uninterrupted access to HIV treatment across the country.

NACA's representative, Ilori, urged the public to disregard misinformation that could cause unnecessary panic and disrupt ongoing efforts to combat HIV/AIDS.

She emphasized the dangers of spreading unverified reports, warning that misleading claims could negatively impact the

fight against the disease.

“We encourage Nigerians to rely on verified sources for health-related information. NACA remains committed to ensuring that no person living with HIV is denied access to life-saving treatment due to misinformation or fear,” Ilori stated.

She further advised the public to stay informed by visiting NACA's official website or following its verified social media platforms for accurate and up-to-date information on HIV treatment and prevention.

# Davido made me love Pidgin English – King Charles III reveals

By **Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi**

**K**ing Charles III has expressed his admiration for Nigerian singer Davido, revealing that the artist's music made him fall in love with Pidgin English.

The British monarch shared his enthusiasm during the debut episode of *The King's Music Room*, a new Apple Music show that premiered on Monday.

Davido's music leaves a lasting impression

During the program, King Charles spoke about his diverse taste in music. He specifically mentioned Davido's song *Kante*, featuring Fave, as one of his favorites. The track, a blend of Afrobeats and soulful melodies, left a strong impression on him.

"Davido has made me love Pidgin," the monarch said. "I would like to speak it the next time I visit Nigeria. Thanks to Afrobeats, it's becoming more popular around the world."

Afrobeats' global influence grows

His comments highlighted the global influence of Afrobeats, a genre that has captivated audiences far beyond Africa. The music's infectious rhythms and rich storytelling have propelled it to mainstream recognition, attracting fans from different cultures.

King Charles' statement also reflects his appreciation for Nigeria's vibrant culture. Pidgin English, widely spoken across West Africa, blends English with local dialects, making it an informal but powerful mode of communication. By expressing his



interest in the language, the monarch signaled a deeper connection to Nigeria and its people.

Davido responds to royal recognition

Davido, one of Africa's biggest music stars, responded quickly. He shared a clip of the King's remarks on his Instagram story, adding a shout-out to the royal family. His fans celebrated the moment, praising the singer for his continued global impact.

This recognition from King Charles adds to Davido's growing list of international acknowledgments. Over the years, he has collaborated with global artists, performed on prestigious stages, and represented African music on a worldwide scale. His influence has helped push Afrobeats into mainstream markets, where it continues to thrive.

Music as a cultural bridge

The King's comments also reinforce the soft power of music. Beyond entertainment, it serves as a bridge

between cultures. By embracing a Nigerian artist and showing interest in Pidgin English, King Charles has demonstrated the unifying power of music. His words may encourage more people to explore the genre and appreciate the cultural richness behind it.

A promise to speak pidgin in Nigeria

As Afrobeats continues to gain ground, moments like these validate its impact. The genre has not only entertained but also fostered connections across borders. King Charles' acknowledgment of Davido is another testament to its growing significance.

For now, fans will be eager to see if the British monarch keeps his promise. If he does speak Pidgin on his next visit to Nigeria, it would mark a historic and heartwarming moment—one that further strengthens cultural ties between the United Kingdom and Africa.

# I will snub Gov Sanwo-Olu again and again – Mr Macaroni

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Comedian and activist Mr Macaroni vows never to acknowledge Lagos Governor Sanwo-Olu again, reaffirming his stance against political pressure.

He made this bold statement on X, formerly known as Twitter, following criticism for refusing to greet the governor in public.

Past encounters with Sanwo-Olu

Mr Macaroni has a history of avoiding Governor Sanwo-Olu at public events. On previous occasions, cameras have captured him steering clear of the governor. At one such event, he was pressured into greeting Sanwo-Olu against his will. However, the comedian has now made it clear that he will not allow that to happen again.

A firm stand on X

Taking to social media, Mr Macaroni expressed his frustration with those criticizing him for his stance. He insisted that his refusal to greet the governor is a personal choice and that no amount of public pressure will change his mind.

“This is the last time I will address this matter. It is not worth my peace of mind,” he wrote.



“Since you people won’t stop attacking me because I didn’t greet Governor Sanwo-Olu, next time I see him, I still won’t greet him. And this time, even if he calls me, I won’t answer. You people will cry today, tomorrow, and forever!”

The possible reason for his grudge

Mr Macaroni’s strained relationship with Governor Sanwo-Olu likely stems from his experience during the 2021 #EndSARS protests. The comedian was among those arrested at the Lekki Toll Gate while protesting against police brutality. His arrest and alleged mistreatment by security forces left a lasting impact on him. Since then, he has remained a vocal critic of the Lagos State government, often using his platform to speak out against perceived injustices.

Mixed reactions from the public

His recent comments have sparked widespread debate online. Supporters have praised him for standing his ground and refusing to bow to political pressure. They see his actions as a symbol of resistance against oppression. However, critics argue that his stance is unnecessary and disrespectful, insisting that greeting the governor is simply a matter of courtesy.

Despite the controversy, Mr Macaroni remains firm in his decision. He has built a reputation for speaking truth to power, and his latest declaration reinforces his commitment to his principles. For now, it seems unlikely that any reconciliation between him and Governor Sanwo-Olu will happen soon.

# My children are benefitting from my good deeds – Iyabo Ojo

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**N**ollywood actress Iyabo Ojo has expressed deep gratitude for how her kindness and hard work have positively influenced her children.

She believes that the good she has done in life is now benefiting them, shaping their future for the better.

In a recent interview with media personality Seun Oloketuyi, Iyabo spoke openly about her journey, the importance of self-reliance, and how her daughter, Priscilla, played a crucial role in helping her tap into new opportunities.

**Hard work and kindness pay off**  
Iyabo firmly believes that good deeds never go unnoticed. She stated that the rewards she and her children enjoy today are the results of the positive actions she has taken over the years. The actress stressed the importance of staying true to one's values, working hard, and helping others, as these qualities eventually bring success.

“When you do good, it comes back to you,” she said. “I see it in my children. They are reaping the benefits of the sacrifices I made.”

She also highlighted the necessity of self-sufficiency, urging people to take responsibility for their lives.

**The importance of self-reliance**  
Iyabo emphasized that individuals must learn to rely on themselves rather than expecting others to solve their problems. She pointed out that, at the end of the day, everyone must take care of their own needs.

“When I am hungry, no one can give me their stomach to fill mine,” she



said. “No matter how much someone loves you, you have to figure things out on your own.”

She encouraged young people to embrace independence, work hard, and build a life that does not depend on others.

**Priscilla's role in Iyabo's TikTok success**

Iyabo also shared how her daughter, Priscilla, helped her discover a new source of income—TikTok. According to the actress, she initially had no interest in the platform, but Priscilla convinced her to give it a try. The decision turned out to be a profitable one.

“Priscilla talked me into using TikTok,” Iyabo revealed. “If she wasn't in my life, I probably wouldn't have made so much money from it.”

She expressed gratitude for having a daughter who not only supports her but also helps her navigate the digital world.

**Staying young at heart**

The actress also spoke about how having children at a young age has helped her feel youthful. She believes that being surrounded by her children keeps her energy levels high and her mind open to new experiences.

“When you have kids early, you don't want to grow old,” she said. “Your children will always make you feel young.”

Her words serve as an inspiration to many parents, showing that family support and adaptability can lead to unexpected opportunities.

**A lesson in resilience**

Iyabo Ojo's story is one of resilience, hard work, and the rewards of kindness. She continues to inspire many with her determination and willingness to embrace new challenges. From building a successful career in Nollywood to finding financial success on social media, she proves that adaptability and self-reliance are key to staying relevant in an ever-changing world.

# Comedian AY Makun caught flaunting fake Hermès Bag

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

A popular luxury fashion page on Instagram, T20Luxury, has accused renowned Nigerian comedian AY Makun of showcasing a counterfeit Hermès bag.

The controversy erupted after the comedian shared a photo of himself with the designer accessory on his Instagram page in February.

On Sunday, T20Luxury reacted to the post, calling out AY Makun for allegedly promoting fake luxury fashion. The Instagram page, known for reviewing high-end brands and exposing counterfeit products, shared a side-by-side comparison of the comedian's bag and an authentic Hermès version.

## T20Luxury calls for authenticity

In its statement, T20Luxury urged him to refrain from supporting counterfeit fashion. The post read:

“Dear AY, as a key stakeholder in the entertainment industry and a beneficiary of genuine creativity, it's more honorable to refrain from supporting the counterfeit fashion industry. Upholding authenticity is important to preserving our reputation as leaders within the Black community.”

The luxury page emphasized the importance of promoting original products, urging celebrities and influencers to set the right example for their followers.

## Mixed reactions from the public

The accusation has sparked widespread debate online. While some social media



users criticized AY Makun, others defended him, suggesting he may have unknowingly purchased a fake item.

One Instagram user, @mr\_jakan05, commented:

“Nigerian celebrities and their fake lifestyles are not helping us Nigerians, both home and abroad.”

Another user, @matete4real, speculated that AY Makun might have been misled by a personal shopper. @mr.charleswealth joked about the situation, saying:

“It's the same bag, but AY's own was rushed. Nobody's gonna know.”

Not everyone saw an issue with the situation. @cindy\_official1111 stated: “I love original items too, but it's his choice.”

A user, @segun122, shared a piece of financial advice, arguing that people should avoid fakes and instead opt for second-hand original items or more affordable authentic brands. He wrote:

“Back in my university days, I told my friend—why buy a fake designer brand-

new item when you can get an Akube (used original) or a brand-new ZARA outfit and wear it with pride?”

## Ethical debate over counterfeit fashion

While some online users find the issue trivial, others believe that promoting fake luxury brands can harm the fashion industry. One comment by @gabzy.001 compared the situation to piracy in the entertainment industry. He wrote:

“I don't support calling him out online, but for those defending him just because he's famous, I hope he won't complain when people start pirating his movies.”

The debate has reignited discussions about the impact of counterfeit fashion on the global market. Many argue that celebrities should be more mindful of the brands they promote. Others believe it is unfair to publicly shame someone who may not have known the item was fake.

As of now, he has not responded to the allegations. It remains unclear whether he knowingly purchased a counterfeit Hermès bag or was misled by a third party.

# Gov. Sanwo-Olu launches makemation project

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**G**overnor Sanwo-Olu reaffirms commitment to Nigeria's creative industry with the launch of the MAKEMATION Film Project in Lagos.

The unveiling at Lagos House in Marina on Sunday, March 9, 2025, gathered key stakeholders from the film, technology, and tourism sectors.

## A star-studded unveiling

The event attracted prominent figures, including First Lady Dr. Ibijoke Sanwo-Olu and Nigerian Film Corporation Director-General Ali Nuhu. Also in attendance were Commissioner for Tourism, Arts, and Culture Toke Benson-Awoyinka, Commissioner for Innovation, Science, and Technology Olatunbosun Alake, and Commissioner for Information and Strategy Gbenga Omotoso.

Film industry icons graced the occasion, including Nollywood legends Jide Kosoko and Segun Arinze. Media mogul Mo Abudu, CEO of EbonyLife Group, and MAKEMATION's Executive Producer Toyosi Akerele-Ogunsiji were also present.

## Lagos backs creative innovation

In his speech, Governor Sanwo-Olu emphasized the importance of the creative industry as a major driver of the Lagos economy. He described the sector as a crucial source of employment for young Nigerians and reaffirmed his administration's commitment to supporting projects that push the industry forward.

"The creative industry plays a vital role in our economy, generating jobs, empowering young people, and putting Nigeria on the global map," he said. "We are excited to support initiatives like MAKEMATION, which blend technology with storytelling to expand the frontiers of filmmaking. This project will empower our filmmakers, actors, and creatives to tell authentic Nigerian stories using cutting-edge techniques."

**MAKEMATION: A game-changer for Nollywood**  
MAKEMATION is an ambitious project designed to revolutionize Nigerian cinema. It combines animation, digital tools, and advanced storytelling methods to create



world-class films. The initiative aims to equip emerging filmmakers with the skills and resources needed to compete on the global stage.

According to Executive Producer Toyosi Akerele-Ogunsiji, MAKEMATION is more than just a film project—it is a movement to redefine storytelling in Nollywood.

"We are merging creativity and technology to take Nigerian filmmaking to the next level," she explained. "MAKEMATION will introduce digital effects, animation, and modern cinematography to enhance the quality of our films. This initiative will bridge the gap between traditional storytelling and the future of filmmaking."

The project will provide hands-on training, funding opportunities, and collaborations between filmmakers and technology experts. By focusing on innovation, it aims to strengthen Nollywood's competitive edge in the international market.

## Industry leaders applaud the initiative

The launch received praise from Nollywood veterans and government officials. Jide Kosoko lauded the initiative, stating that it would create new opportunities for young filmmakers.

"This is a remarkable step forward for Nollywood. Nigeria is home to some of the most talented creatives, and projects like MAKEMATION will refine our craft and help us produce world-class content," Kosoko said.

Segun Arinze echoed his sentiments, emphasizing the need for training and technological advancement in the industry.

"Innovation is the key to growth. With MAKEMATION, we are equipping the next generation of filmmakers with the skills needed to compete globally," he said.

Lagos State's continued support for the arts The Lagos State government has been a strong advocate for the creative economy. Commissioner for Tourism, Arts, and Culture Toke Benson-Awoyinka reiterated the government's dedication to supporting filmmakers.

"We recognize the enormous economic potential of the film industry. Our administration is committed to creating an enabling environment where filmmakers can thrive. MAKEMATION is a perfect example of how partnerships between the government and the private sector can drive innovation and job creation," she said.

Commissioner for Innovation, Science, and Technology Olatunbosun Alake highlighted the role of digital transformation in filmmaking.

"Film and technology are merging to create exciting opportunities. By embracing digital tools, we can elevate our creative industry and increase Nigeria's global recognition," he noted.

# Starmer to cut welfare to fund security amid Ukraine-Russia war

By Friday Omosola

**S**ir Keir Starmer is facing the most significant rebellion of his premiership as around 80 Labour MPs push back against plans for sweeping welfare cuts. The cuts, expected to be announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves in the Spring Statement, are intended to help fund increased defense spending amid rising global tensions.

In response to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and aggressive moves by nations such as Russia, the Labour government has prioritized national security funding. However, the decision to slash billions from the welfare budget has sparked outrage among MPs who argue the cuts will disproportionately affect vulnerable citizens.

Labour backbenchers have expressed mounting frustration, with reports indicating that a letter of complaint will be sent to the Treasury and the Prime Minister ahead of the Spring Statement. Many MPs are warning that the government's approach to welfare reform risks alienating core Labour voters.

While Labour MPs initially welcomed the commitment to increased defense spending, concerns have arisen over the government's decision to also divert funds from the foreign aid budget to finance it. Additionally, the possibility of the UK funding a peacekeeping force in Ukraine, as U.S. President Donald Trump threatens to withdraw American support from Europe, has further intensified the debate over financial priorities.

## 'Won't Tolerate' Welfare Cuts

According to UK The Telegraph, approximately a fifth of the parliamentary Labour Party is refusing to accept the scale of the welfare reductions.

"This is a step too far," said one Labour MP. "Colleagues who rarely speak out are saying they've had enough. They need to show their constituents that they have independent voices."



Chancellor Rachel Reeves is expected to announce a £6 billion welfare cut as part of a broader strategy to reduce government spending. Reeves has defended the reforms, arguing they are necessary to ensure taxpayers receive value for money and to encourage people reliant on benefits to return to work.

However, MPs on both the left and center of the Labour Party have criticized what they describe as "politically painful" measures. Many feel Starmer's approach to welfare reform, coupled with previous controversial decisions on the two-child benefit cap, winter fuel payments, overseas aid, and Waspi women compensation, is moving the party in the wrong direction.

Despite the growing unrest, the lack of new legislation means MPs have limited options to formally oppose the cuts. Still, some are determined to make their objections known.

One left-wing Labour MP remarked: "There have been too many missteps and poor decisions. This is where we draw the line."

Another MP warned that the so-called "Ukraine bounce," which helped justify the rise in defense spending, will not last indefinitely. They cautioned that disillusioned voters could shift their support to Reform UK or the Green Party in the next general election.

A second Labour MP emphasized that dissent extends beyond the usual critics, stating, "You can shield MPs inside Westminster, but you can't insulate them from the concerns of their constituents."

A third MP predicted that discontented colleagues would formally express their opposition. "This isn't what we came into Labour politics to do," they said.

Rachael Maskell, MP for York Central, has already broken ranks to voice her concerns. "Many of my constituents are deeply worried about losing their benefits," she said. "Using a sledgehammer to dismantle welfare support is not the right approach."

Veteran MP Diane Abbott also warned against the proposed cuts, stating, "Many of us are extremely concerned that these reductions will disproportionately impact the disabled and most vulnerable members of society."

With tensions rising and opposition mounting, the weeks ahead could prove pivotal for Starmer's leadership as he attempts to balance economic priorities with growing unrest within his party.

# Panama releases dozens of detained deportees from US into limbo

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

After weeks of lawsuits and human rights criticism, Panama on Sunday released dozens of migrants who were held for weeks in a remote camp after being deported from the United States, telling them they have 30 days to leave the Central American nation.

It thrust many like Hayatullah Omagh, a 29-year-old who fled Afghanistan in 2022 after the Taliban took control, into a legal limbo, scrambling to find a path forward.

“We are refugees. We do not have money. We cannot pay for a hotel in Panama City, we do not have relatives,” Omagh told the Associated Press in an interview. “I can’t go back to Afghanistan under any circumstances ... It is under the control of the Taliban, and they want to kill me. How can I go back?”

Authorities have said deportees will have the option of extending their stay by 60 days if they need it, but after that many like Omagh don’t know what they will do.

Omagh climbed off a bus in Panama City alongside 65 migrants from China, Russia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Nepal and other nations after spending weeks detained in poor conditions by the Panamanian government, which has said it wants to work with the Trump administration “to send a signal of deterrence” to people hoping to migrate.

Human rights groups and lawyers advocating for the migrants were waiting at the bus terminal, and scrambled to find the released migrants shelter and other resources.

Dozens of other people remained in the camp.

Among those getting off buses were migrants fleeing violence and repression in Pakistan and Iran, and 27-year-old Nikita Gaponov, who fled Russia due to repression



for being part of the LGBTQ+ community and who said he was detained at the U.S. border but not allowed to make an asylum claim.

“Once I get off the bus, I’ll be sleeping on the ground tonight,” Gaponov said.

Others turned their eyes north once again, saying that even though they had already been deported, they had no other option than to continue after crossing the world to reach the U.S.

The deportees, largely from Asian countries, were part of a deal struck between the Trump administration and Panama and Costa Rica as the U.S. government attempts to speed up deportations.

The administration sent hundreds of people, many families with children, to the two Central American countries as a stopover while authorities organize a way to send them back to their countries of origin.

Critics described it as a way for the U.S. to export its deportation process.

The agreement fueled human rights concerns when hundreds of deportees detained in a hotel in Panama City held up notes to their windows pleading for help

and saying they were scared to return to their own countries.

Under international refugee law, people have the right to apply for asylum when they are fleeing conflict or persecution.

Those that refused to return home were later sent to a remote camp near Panama’s border with Colombia, where they spent weeks in poor conditions, were stripped of their phones, unable to access legal council and were not told where they were going next.

Lawyers and human rights defenders warned that Panama and Costa Rica were turning into “black holes” for deportees, and said their release was a way for Panamanian authorities to wash their hands of the deportees amid mounting human rights criticism.

Upon being released Sunday night, human rights lawyers identified at least three people who required medical attention. One has been vomiting for over a week, another deportee had diabetes and hadn’t had access to insulin in the camp and another person had HIV and also didn’t have access to medicine in detention.

# Iran, Russia, China to hold joint military exercises

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The navies of Iran, Russia and China will hold military drills off the coast of Iran this week in a bid to boost cooperation, Iranian media reported Monday.

The three countries, which share a common desire to counter what they characterize as American hegemony, have held similar exercises in the region in recent years.

The drills “will begin on Tuesday in the port of Chabahar,” located in southeast Iran on the Gulf of Oman, the Tasnim news agency said, without specifying their duration.

“Warships and combat and support vessels of the Chinese and Russian naval forces, as well as the warships of Iran’s naval forces of the army and the Revolutionary Guards,” the ideological arm of Iran’s military, are expected to



participate, according to Tasnim.

The exercises will take place “in the northern Indian Ocean” and aim to “strengthen security in the region, and expand multilateral cooperation between participating countries,” Tasnim said.

Azerbaijan, South Africa, Oman, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Qatar, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates and Sri Lanka will

attend as observers.

China will deploy “a destroyer and a supply ship,” Beijing’s defense ministry said on the WeChat social media network.

The Iranian army conducted drills in the same area in February to “strengthen defense capabilities against any threat.”

# Secret Service shoots man near White House

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Police in Washington are investigating the shooting of a man Sunday by U.S. Secret Service personnel near the White House.

A Secret Service spokesperson said a day before the shooting, police had shared information about “a suicidal individual” who may have been traveling to Washington from the state of Indiana.

Secret Service personnel spotted the person’s car near the White House and someone matching the person’s description walking in the area.

The spokesperson said the person brandished a firearm as officers



approached, and that Secret Service personnel fired shots during “an armed confrontation.”

Police tape remains at the scene of an overnight shooting on a street bordering the White House complex,

after Secret Service say they shot a man brandishing a firearm in Washington, March 9, 2025.

Police tape remains at the scene of an overnight shooting on a street bordering the White House complex, after Secret Service say they shot a man brandishing a firearm in Washington, March 9, 2025.

Authorities have not identified the person who was taken to a local hospital after being shot.

No Secret Service personnel were injured, the agency said.

President Donald Trump was in Florida at the time of the shooting.

# Elon Musk says X hit by major cyberattack

By Oluwatosin Ologun

Elon Musk said X (formerly Twitter) was hit Monday by a major cyberattack, raising questions as to whether the politically divisive billionaire is being targeted or his decision to gut staff at what was once Twitter is haunting the social network.

According to several foreign media outlets, including Reuters, NY Post, and the BBC, Musk also added that he was working to trace the source of the alleged cyberattacks.

Social media platform X went down intermittently on Monday, with owner Elon Musk blaming an unusually powerful cyberattack.

“We get attacked every day, but this was done with a lot of resources. Either a large, coordinated group and/or a country is involved,” Musk said in a post on X earlier Monday.

“There was (still is) a massive cyberattack against X,” Musk added in a post on the platform, which was working sporadically as the day wore on.

He did not clarify exactly what he meant by “a lot of resources” and his comments drew scepticism from cybersecurity specialists, who pointed out that attacks of this nature — called denials of service — have repeatedly been executed by small groups or individuals.

X faced intermittent outages,



according to DownteDetector, restricting 39,021 users in the US from accessing the platform at its peak at 10am ET. By 5pm, there were reports of the service being down for roughly 1,500 users.

A source in the internet infrastructure industry said X had been hit by several waves of denial of service beginning around 9.45 UTC. The source spoke on the condition of anonymity as the person was not authorised to speak publicly on the matter.

Denial of service works by overwhelming targeted websites with rogue traffic. Such attacks are not necessarily sophisticated but they can cause significant disruption.

Musk later said in an interview with Fox Business Network’s Larry Kudlow the cyberattack came from IP addresses originating in the Ukraine area.

The industry source disputed Musk’s account, saying that large chunks of the rogue traffic bombarding X could be traced back to IP addresses in the US, Vietnam, Brazil and other countries, and that the amount of rogue traffic coming directly from Ukraine was “insignificant.”

In any case, denial-of-service attacks are notoriously hard to trace back to their authors and the IP addresses involved rarely provide any meaningful insight into who was behind them.

Musk has joined US President Donald Trump, whom he serves as an adviser, in criticising Ukraine’s continued efforts to fight off a Russian invasion. Musk said on Sunday that Ukraine’s front line “would collapse” without his Starlink satellite communications service, though he said he would not cut off Ukraine’s access to it.

# What US military aid suspension means for Ukraine's soldiers

By Jack Watling

The Trump administration's decision to halt US military-technical assistance and the uncertainty around continued intelligence sharing with Kyiv will have consequences that take time to be fully felt. The measures will not cause a rapid deterioration of Ukraine's ability to resist, but will incur a cost in the lives of Ukrainian soldiers and civilians. They also do nothing to shift the strategic calculus for Kyiv, whose reluctance to accept an American deal on any terms reflects the existential stakes for which President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is negotiating.

The US has been the biggest single military donor to Ukraine. Over the course of the war, US support has expanded to encompass a broad range of capabilities. America made geospatial imagery available to Kyiv early on in the conflict. The loss of this will significantly reduce the tempo of long-range strikes against the Russian military and the accuracy and effectiveness of strikes against both military and strategic targets. The reduced attrition on Russian forces and infrastructure will not have an immediate impact, but it will allow Russia to accumulate more systems to attack Ukraine nearer its borders over time.

The US has also routinely provided Ukraine with electromagnetic surveys of the battlefield. These are vital for planning medium and long-range drone operations, helping Ukraine to understand the areas and frequencies affected by Russian jamming of navigation and control frequencies. This may have a more immediate impact than the loss of satellite imagery because Ukrainian forces have been using drones to compensate for their disadvantages in artillery and air power. The loss of this data is likely to impinge upon their efficiency.

Another category of assistance that could have been lost so long as intelligence sharing is severed is early warning of Russian long-range strikes. This will reduce the time available for Ukraine to



bring its air defences up to readiness. As a result, a higher proportion of Russia's long-range strikes will reach their targets and Ukraine will expend more air defence interceptors — already in short supply — on trying to defeat its missiles.

The loss of military-technical assistance will also have several results. The US provides a significant proportion of Ukraine's artillery ammunition and other weapons. The loss of these will not be immediately felt because Ukraine will first draw on reserves. Over time, however, the Ukrainian armed forces will need to ration their rate of fire to reflect whatever volume of supply can be assured by European partners. This will allow Russia to close in on Ukraine's defences and cause an increase in Ukrainian casualties as well as loss of ground.

A very serious loss will be that of access to maintenance for US weapons. Large portions of Ukraine's military equipment, from M777 howitzers to armoured vehicles such as the MaxxPro MRAPs, are manufactured by US companies and have spare parts that only they can provide. If Ukraine is cut off from such support — it is not yet clear whether the US will allow Europe to procure spares — the result will be the progressive de-mechanisation of Ukraine's forces. This would have a major impact by the summer.

The suspension of US assistance comes at the cost of Ukrainian lives. Ukraine's

army has some ability to adjust and, in collaboration with European partners, compensate for deficiencies. The issue for Kyiv is that while little-to-no American support will make the protraction of the conflict more painful, accepting a US deal without any longer-term guarantees risks the eventual subjugation of the country by Russia. Fighting while talking is vital for Ukraine, and US coercion does not change that fact.

Given that Ukraine will keep fighting — potentially in defiance of the US — the risk is that the Trump administration continues to apply leverage. They could next shut down Elon Musk's satellite-powered internet provider Starlink, seriously disrupting Ukrainian command and control.

The challenge for both Ukraine and its European allies is that it is not clear whether the US president cares about the collapse of the Ukrainian frontline. The Trump administration has made it clear that it wants Europe to manage European security — if the fall of Ukraine brings about this shift, then the US may well see it as a strategic success. The White House may prefer to win plaudits for achieving a peace — albeit on unnecessarily unfavourable terms to Kyiv — but it is equally possible that the US will settle for a Ukrainian defeat, which it will squarely blame on Zelenskyy.

# Argentina flood: 16 dead, several missing, govt declares national mourning

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Argentine government announced three days of national mourning late Sunday, after the death toll from recent flash flooding rose to 16, with more still missing.

The deadly floods reportedly struck Friday when a year's worth of rain fell in a matter of hours in and around Bahia Blanca, a major port city located in the south of Buenos Aires province, with entire neighborhoods inundated by the fast-rising waters.

Argentines have been particularly shaken by tragic reports of two girls, aged one and five being swept away in the torrent.

Divers were doing yeoman's job as they continue to search the area, where more than a meter of water remained, the Radio Mitre outlet reported.

According to Bahia Blanca mayor, Federico Susbielles in a press conference, the flooding had caused \$400 million in infrastructure damage.



Susbielles later in a post on X, said there were 16 confirmed deaths, stating that there were likely to be more as search efforts continue.

The government has authorized emergency reconstruction aid of 10 billion pesos (\$9.2 million at the official exchange rate).

Meanwhile, Argentine football superstar

Lionel Messi offered his condolences on Instagram to the victims' families

"Much strength to all those who are having a rough time in this difficult moment," he wrote.

Bahia Blanca is said to have suffered past weather-related disasters, including a storm that claimed 13 lives in December 2023.

# UK's Travis Perkins CEO steps down after 6 Months Tenure

By Fatimah Idera

The British building materials supplier Travis Perkins revealed on Monday that its CEO Pete Redfern had stepped down due to ill health, as it sent the shares of the company down to 4.4% which is their lowest since March 2020.

Geoff Drabble, the chair, will work with the management team to ensure business stability while the company begins searching for Redfern's successor.

Recall that Redfern, the former boss of home builder Taylor Wimpey, became the CEO of Travis Perkins in September 2024.



In October, after the company lowered its annual profit outlook for the second time in three months, Redfern said among his immediate priorities were

ensuring that the group turns and faces the anticipated recovery in the UK construction market.

He added that the group has allowed itself to become distracted and overly internally focused, which has led to underperformance in recent periods.

Travis Perkins is scheduled to report full-year results on March 18.

# Poland to acquire nuclear weapons as Tusk warns of security threats

By New Daily Prime

In a bold declaration to Parliament, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk emphasized the need for Poland to explore nuclear capabilities as the country confronts mounting security threats from Russia and potential shifts in U.S. foreign policy.

Speaking on Friday, Tusk underscored that Poland must pursue the latest advancements in military technology, including unconventional and nuclear weaponry, to adapt to a rapidly changing global security landscape.

“I say this with full responsibility—it is not enough to purchase conventional weapons,” Tusk told lawmakers. “The battlefield is evolving before our eyes, month by month.”

Tusk’s remarks come amid heightened anxiety over U.S. foreign policy, particularly President Donald Trump’s stance on NATO and European security. Trump’s recent threats to reduce U.S. military support for European allies, coupled with his decision to halt aid to Ukraine as a pressure tactic for peace negotiations with Russia, have sparked concerns across European capitals.

The uncertainty surrounding Washington’s long-term military commitment has led European leaders to ramp up their own defense strategies. French President Emmanuel Macron recently proposed a strategic debate on how France’s nuclear deterrence could serve Europe, an idea that has garnered interest from Poland and other NATO members like Lithuania and Latvia.

Tusk confirmed that Warsaw is in serious discussions with France regarding a potential nuclear umbrella over Europe. “We are talking seriously with the French about their proposal,” he said.



## A Shift in Poland’s Defense Strategy

Currently, NATO’s nuclear sharing program places U.S. warheads in select European countries, including Germany and Italy. While France’s nuclear arsenal is significantly smaller than that of the U.S., its doctrine includes a European dimension. The extent to which France’s nuclear capabilities could protect broader European interests remains a key discussion point.

Beyond nuclear deterrence, Tusk emphasized Poland’s need to modernize its military technology. “We must look boldly into the future in terms of arms technology,” he said. “Using our own resources, experience, and lessons from Ukraine, Poland must assess its ability to develop the most advanced weapons.”

Tusk also proposed an ambitious expansion of Poland’s armed forces, suggesting an increase to 500,000 troops. Additionally, he called for the establishment of a compulsory military training program for all adult men by the end of the year.

However, following his speech, he later clarified that military training would not be mandatory but would include incentives to encourage voluntary participation. “It will not be compulsory, but we will introduce incentives so that men opt for annual training. And it won’t be symbolic or superficial,” he said.

Poland currently spends an estimated 4.7% of its GDP on defense—the highest level within NATO. Tusk suggested that increasing this to 5%, as previously demanded by Trump, is becoming a necessity given the evolving security threats.

“I deeply believe that we will rise to this challenge,” Tusk concluded. “Poland will be safe, and as we have always dreamed throughout our history, Poland will also be invincible.”

As Poland reassesses its defense strategy, the country stands at a pivotal moment—balancing national security imperatives with its broader NATO commitments and European alliances.

# Some Man Utd players 'not good enough' and 'overpaid', says co-owner Ratcliffe

By Oluwatosin Ologun

Some Manchester United players are “not good enough” and some are “overpaid”, the club’s co-owner Sir Jim Ratcliffe says.

Midfielder Casemiro, striker Rasmus Hojlund, goalkeeper Andre Onana, and wingers Antony and Jadon Sancho – who are on loan at other clubs – were namechecked by the billionaire in an interview with BBC Sport as players his regime had “inherited”.

Ratcliffe, a lifelong Manchester United fan, is the chairman of petrochemicals company Ineos, which has a strong sports investment arm.

The 72-year-old last year spent £1.3bn for a 28.94% stake in the club in a deal which saw Ineos take control of football operations.

In a wide-ranging interview, Ratcliffe addressed the side’s recent struggles on the pitch – they are 14th in the Premier League table – and repeated a pledge to deliver silverware by 2028.

And talking just a day after fans protested against United’s ownership, he also spoke of the club’s financial difficulties, saying it was set to run out of money by the end of the year without taking actions he admitted were “unpopular”.

Ratcliffe lamented the fact the club still had payments owed on players signed before he took control, citing what he said was a £17m payment still to be made for Sancho this summer.

The England winger was a £73m



signing from Borussia Dortmund in 2021 but returned to the German club on loan after falling out with then-United boss Ten Hag and was loaned to Chelsea at the start of the current season.

“If you look at the players we are buying this summer, that we didn’t buy, we’re buying Antony, we’re buying Casemiro, we’re buying Onana, we’re buying Hojlund, we’re buying Sancho. These are all things from the past, whether we like it or not, we’ve inherited those things and have to sort that out.

“For Sancho, who now plays for Chelsea and we pay half his wages, we’re paying £17m to buy him in the summer.”

Brazil winger Antony is another on loan, at Spanish club Real Betis, after struggling at Old Trafford following an £81.5m move from Ajax.

Compatriot Casemiro arrived in 2022 in a £70m deal, while Denmark striker Hojlund arrived the following year for £72m.

Cameroon international Onana joined the club in the same summer for £47.2m.

All those players have drawn criticism during their time at the club.

“It takes time for us to move away from the past into a new place in the future,” Ratcliffe said.

When asked whether he was suggesting those players were not good enough for Manchester United, he said: “Some are not good enough and some probably are overpaid, but for us to mould the squad that we are fully responsible for, and accountable for, will take time.

“We’ve got this period of transformation where we move from the past to the future.

“There are some great players in the squad as we know, the captain is a fabulous footballer. We definitely need Bruno, he’s a fantastic footballer.”

# Nottingham Forest lose appeal against £750,000 fine for social media post

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Nottingham Forest have failed in their appeal against a £750,000 (\$968,000) fine imposed for a social media post last season that criticised Premier League match official Stuart Attwell.

The post, published in April 2024 after a 2-0 defeat to Everton, accused Attwell, the video assistant referee for the match, of favouring Forest's relegation rivals, Luton.

The club felt they had been denied three clear penalties during the game and expressed frustration with the refereeing decisions, stating, "Our patience has been tested multiple times."

In response to the post, the Professional Game Match Officials Limited (PGMOL), the referees' governing body, was mentioned in the statement. The club claimed that Attwell was a fan of Luton and suggested a bias in his officiating.

In October 2024, a regulatory commission imposed the £750,000 fine on the club, prompting Forest to appeal.



The club argued that the fine was disproportionate. However, the Football Association (FA) described the post as an "egregious, direct and public attack" on Attwell and referees in general. The FA further criticised the scale of the attack, calling it unparalleled.

On Monday, the FA confirmed that the appeal board had upheld the original sanction, ordering the post to be taken down.

While the link to the post on social media, X, was not working on Monday, the club did not immediately confirm

whether it had been removed.

The appeal board's written reasons stated that the original commission was justified in placing considerable weight on the need for deterrence, noting that Forest had no mitigation for the post's content.

Forest managed to avoid relegation last season, while Luton were relegated to the Championship. This season, Forest are performing well in the Premier League, sitting third in the table and challenging for a Champions League place.