



**Tinubu to Catholic Bishops: We must endure reforms to secure Nigeria's future** Pg 2

**Appeal Court stops Sanusi's reinstatement as Kano Emir** Pg 8



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## US, Putin talks about Ukraine 'very good, productive' - Trump

● **Trump urges Putin to spare Ukrainian troops** Pg 25



**Hamas agrees to release last living American hostage, Edan Alexander** Pg 32



**Wall Street declines over escalating US-EU trade war** Pg 26



**UK boosts weapons exports with £2 billion credit expansion** Pg 30

### WORLD

Pg 28

**YouTuber stabbed to death as she livestreamed on Tokyo street**



### SPORTS

**Rashford, Henderson in Tuchel's first England squad** Pg 35



**Lady jumps off Third Mainland Bridge into Lagos lagoon, dies** Pg 17



# Tinubu to Catholic Bishops: We must endure reforms to secure Nigeria's future

By Friday Omosola

President Bola Tinubu has reassured Nigerians that while current economic reforms are challenging, they are necessary to build a resilient nation and secure the future of the next generation.

The President made this statement on Friday at the State House in Abuja when he received a delegation from the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), led by Most Reverend Lucius Iwejuru Ugorji, the Archbishop of Owerri and CBCN President.

Addressing the bishops, President Tinubu emphasised the importance of national investment and unity in tackling poverty, stating that economic hardship knows no religious boundaries.

"Yes, removing the fuel subsidy was a hard decision, but it was necessary. We cannot bankrupt our country. We were spending the investment meant for our children's future. Poverty has no religious colour; it affects everyone, and we must fight it together," he said.

He highlighted the tax reform initiative as an opportunity for Nigerians to contribute to national development and expressed his administration's commitment to ensuring economic stability.

Responding to requests from the bishops regarding mission schools previously taken over by the government, the President clarified that such schools fall under the jurisdiction of state governments, not the federal government.

However, he cited his tenure as Governor of Lagos State, where he facilitated the return of mission schools, as an example



of his commitment to education.

President Tinubu also acknowledged the role of religious institutions in education and healthcare.

He reassured the bishops that the Nigerian Education Loan Fund (NELFUND) was established to prevent students from dropping out due to financial constraints and promised to explore support options for students in private institutions.

On security, he stressed that the government's efforts were yielding positive results, noting improvements in national security.

"Insecurity affects everyone—Christians and Muslims alike. I have no religious bias, and I will never be a bigot. My wife is a pastor of the Redeemed Christian Church, yet we must think of our country first. This nation must rise above religious divisions," Tinubu said.

Archbishop Ugorji congratulated the President on his electoral victory and commended his administration's efforts

to reposition the country.

He acknowledged the economic difficulties caused by subsidy removal but praised the tax reform initiative as a long-term solution for national prosperity.

He also recognised security improvements but urged the government to do more to restore public confidence.

"Your government's mantra is Renewed Hope. Interestingly, Pope Francis has declared this year as the Jubilee Year of Hope. We share this vision and came to present the final fruits of our deliberations with you," the CBCN President stated.

The bishops also called for a clear national vision that upholds religious tolerance, ensuring that faith fosters unity rather than division.

They advised the government to withdraw from funding religious pilgrimages, arguing that public funds should be redirected toward urgent national needs.

# THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

## PUBLIC NOTICE COLOUR

## PRODUCT COLOUR

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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
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9X4	177,500.00
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8X3	98,500.00
7X4	164,002.00
6X4	94,010.50
6X3	78,500.00
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9X5	168,191.50
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8X6	N/A
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5X2	22,841.00
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# Nigeria to partner UK Bio-Tech firm to combat desertification

By Friday Omosola

Vice President Kashim Shettima has announced that Nigeria is set to collaborate with the United Kingdom's Zander Corporation to restore degraded lands and transform agricultural practices in vulnerable ecological zones.

During a meeting yesterday at the Presidential Villa, Abuja, with Zander Corporation's management team led by Lord Raymond Benedict Asquith, the 3rd Earl of Oxford and Asquith OBE, Shettima reaffirmed the federal government's commitment to afforestation as a key strategy for combating desertification, promoting sustainable land use, and boosting agricultural productivity.

"There is a critical intersection between innovative technology and efforts at combating desertification and agricultural transformation in this country," Shettima stated.

"As a nation committed to afforestation and sustainable land use, we recognize the value of partnerships that introduce cutting-edge technologies like those from Zander Corporation."

As part of the collaboration, Zander Corporation has donated £250,000 worth of afforestation technology products to Nigeria.

The Vice President emphasised the importance of maximizing the five-hectare pilot project and suggested diversifying into vegetable production and high-demand tree crops like cashews.



"We are in a unique position to take advantage of this opportunity. Sokoto State has already demonstrated commitment, and I believe that Borno and Katsina governments will also embrace this initiative," he added.

Shettima also acknowledged Lord Oxford's commitment to training Nigerian agronomists, stressing the link between ecology and the economy in northern Nigeria.

"This innovative technology by Zander Corporation can be our saving grace," he said.

Lord Oxford reaffirmed Zander Corporation's dedication to Nigeria's agricultural transformation, noting that the company has operated in the country for over 12 years.

"We have made a donation of our products to Nigeria for deployment in several northern states to demonstrate our capabilities and the remarkable results that can be achieved in agricultural and environmental projects," he said.

Citing the company's successes in desert regions like Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Libya, and Southern Spain,

Lord Oxford highlighted how their technology has significantly reduced irrigation costs and established sustainable vegetation in arid soils.

He also expressed interest in manufacturing products locally to reduce costs and create jobs.

"Nigeria's vast land resources make it an ideal location for this kind of investment. We are excited about the potential of this partnership to transform the landscape and the economy," he added.

Director-General of the National Agency for the Great Green Wall, Saleh Abubakar, confirmed the agency's commitment to implementing Zander Corporation's technology, stating that a committee had been established to oversee the process.

"We are piloting this project in Katsina, Borno, and Sokoto states, with five hectares of land already prepared for deployment. We are committed to ensuring that the initiative directly benefits the communities affected by desertification," Abubakar said.

# Obasanjo slams Buhari, warns Tinubu's govt may surpass corruption record

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

**F**ormer President Olusegun Obasanjo has delivered a harsh critique of his successor, Muhammadu Buhari's administration, calling it the worst in Nigeria's democratic history.

He has also expressed concern that the current government under President Bola Tinubu is following a similar path of misgovernance and corruption, potentially surpassing Buhari's record.

Obasanjo's comments were made in the first chapter of his newly released book, "Nigeria: Past and Future."

The book, which Obasanjo unveiled last week to mark his 88th birthday, provides an in-depth analysis of Nigeria's leadership history, offering sharp criticisms of past and present administrations.

In the book, Obasanjo specifically condemned several projects and decisions taken by the Buhari administration, including the controversial N15.6tn Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway project, which he labelled as wasteful and corrupt.

He also took aim at the N21bn spent on the construction of a new official residence for Vice President Kashim Shettima, calling it a misplaced priority given the country's economic struggles.

Obasanjo was especially critical of Buhari's tenure, highlighting what he described as the "atrocious waste" and entrenchment of corruption. He accused Buhari's Attorney General, Abubakar Malami, of playing a pivotal role in enabling corruption during the Buhari administration.

Obasanjo said, "The most atrocious



waste, enthronement of corruption and discouragement of officials fighting corruption took place under the watch of President Buhari and the devil's workshop, his Attorney General, Abubakar Malami."

However, Obasanjo's warning to President Tinubu was equally strong. He suggested that Tinubu's administration, still in its early years, is already showing signs of repeating the same mistakes, especially with the rising sense of transactional politics.

"Given about two years of President Tinubu in office, it appears that the game of short-changing the over 230 million Nigerians continues because everything is said to be transactional and the slogan is 'It is my turn to chop,'" Obasanjo remarked.

The former president also referred to the contradictions between Buhari's military regime in 1983, when he condemned corruption and mismanagement of public funds, and his failure to curb these issues when he later became a civilian president.

Obasanjo noted that despite Buhari's strong anti-corruption rhetoric in 1983, his presidency from 2015 to 2023 was marked by a failure to live up to those

ideals.

Meanwhile, the presidency has vigorously defended the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway project, calling it a visionary legacy project with immense economic potential.

President Tinubu's aides, including Special Adviser on Media and Public Communications Sunday Dare, and Senior Special Assistant on Media and Publicity Temitope Ajayi, countered Obasanjo's criticisms, stressing that the project would significantly benefit the country's infrastructure and economic growth.

The Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway project, they argued, is not wasteful but rather a long-term investment in Nigeria's economic future, drawing parallels to the success of the Lekki-Epe corridor in Lagos, which saw massive real estate growth and industrial developments, including the Dangote refinery and Lagos Free Trade Zone.

Additionally, Obasanjo's criticism extended beyond Buhari's administration to a number of former officials, including ex-aviation minister Hadi Sirika, whom Obasanjo accused of wasting billions on the Nigeria Air project.

# SENATE: Apologise and be forgiven, Akpabio tells Natasha

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Senate President, Godswill Akpabio, has told the Senator representing Kogi Central, Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, to apologise to the Senate, adding that by so doing, her six-month suspension might be reconsidered.

The senate president, who spoke on Thursday during a plenary session, stated that the Senate remains open to reconciliation but warned that the senator's approach to the issue could discourage political leaders from appointing women to top positions in the future.

Additionally, Akpabio noted that her public actions, including speaking about the matter on media platforms, had misrepresented the facts.

He also expressed concern that Akpoti-Uduaghan had taken the issue beyond the Senate by seeking intervention from international bodies.

According to him, the matter could have been handled internally within the Senate or through the judiciary, where she had already taken legal action.

Akpabio reassured that the Senate



remains committed to supporting women in leadership roles.

He pointed out that all four female senators in the 10th Assembly currently serve as committee chairpersons, which he described as a deliberate effort to ensure women's representation in the legislature.

He further stated that the Senate operates under the laws of Nigeria and has internal mechanisms to address disputes among lawmakers.

He urged Akpoti-Uduaghan to reconsider her approach and take advantage of the opportunity to resolve the issue within the Senate.

"We are still open to making sure that we remain in peace. We left

room for her to recognise that what she is doing may even frighten a lot of men in future from even appointing or selecting female deputy governors.

"You can imagine if somebody like Kamala Harris, the immediate past vice president of the United States, were to go on CNN to say that President Joe Biden sexually assaulted her by shaking her hand or by holding her hand to show her the office of the president. That automatically means that nobody will pick another woman as vice president.

"But I have four daughters, so I want to plead with politicians to still give my four children a chance. Do not take the action of one person and punish others," he said.

# Reps approve Tax Reform Bills, okay 7.5% VAT

By Dave Oludare Oso

The House of Representatives has adopted the report of its committee on finance on the tax reform bills after five months of negotiations and a three-day public hearing on the much-debated bills.

However, many amendments were made to accommodate all concerns as the bills were approved without any dissenting voice.

Most notable among the amendments include the retention of value added tax (VAT) at 7.5 percent, redefinition of the inheritance tax, and distribution of value added tax.

The lawmakers also approved the proposal for the military to be exempted from personal income tax.

“All the 36 states, including the Federal Capital Territory have their representatives in the sub-committee.

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Tajudeen Abbas said on Thursday, “This is the first time such a report is getting hundred per cent



approval by almost all members.”

Also, following the consideration of the bills, the Chairman of the House of Representatives Committee on Finance James Faleke said, “These bills underwent three full days of public hearings, with input from over 80 key stakeholders. Afterward, we held an eight-day retreat to debate each clause.

“I am glad that House members recognised our thorough work and approved all our recommendations.”

With the adoption, the House is now poised to pass the bills.

The adoption is coming after President Bola Tinubu in October 2024 asked the National Assembly to pass the tax reform bills.

These bills include the NRS bill, the Nigeria tax bill, the Tax administration bill, and the joint revenue board establishment bill.

Some clauses in the bills had generated concerns in some sections of the country with many calling for their withdrawal.

However, President Tinubu insisted on the bills, arguing that Nigeria needs them to make progress.

# 'I'm in APC' - Buhari dismisses defection rumours

By Friday Omosola

Former President Muhammadu Buhari has reaffirmed his membership and unwavering loyalty to the All Progressives Congress (APC), dismissing speculations suggesting otherwise.

In a statement signed by his spokesperson, Garba Shehu yesterday, Buhari made it clear that he remains a committed APC member and wants to be recognized as such.

Without referencing any individuals or ongoing discussions within the party, he emphasised his dedication to the APC, which gave him the platform to serve two terms as Nigeria's president.

"I am an APC member, and I like to be addressed as such. I will try to popularize the party by all means," Buhari stated.



Expressing gratitude for the support he received from the party before and during his presidency, Buhari noted that he considers his time in office the highest honour and has no further demands.

He also acknowledged the efforts of the party's founding fathers in establishing a

strong political structure to uphold democracy and the constitution, stressing that such sacrifices should be valued and preserved.

The former president's statement comes amid ongoing debates within the APC, as party leaders deliberate on key issues affecting its future.

# Appeal Court stops Sanusi's reinstatement as Kano Emir

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Court of Appeal sitting in Abuja has stopped the reinstatement of Muhammadu Sanusi II as the 16th Emir of Kano.

This comes as the appellate court halted the enforcement of its January 10 judgment, which upheld the Kano State government's repeal of the 2019 Emirates Council Law, pending the Supreme Court's determination of an appeal on the same matter.

The ruling was delivered on Friday by a three-member panel led by Justice Okon Abang.

The court granted a stay of execution, effectively maintaining the status quo in the ongoing legal tussle over the Kano Emirate dispute.

The appellate court had earlier set aside a June 20, 2024, ruling by Justice



Abubakar Liman of the Federal High Court in Kano, which nullified the Kano State government's dissolution of five emirates in the state and the subsequent reinstatement of Muhammadu Sanusi II as the 16th Emir of Kano.

The Court of Appeal then ruled that the lower court lacked jurisdiction over the case.

Dissatisfied with the ruling, an injunction request was filed by Alhaji Aminu Babba Dan Agundi (Sarkin Dawaki Babba) against the Kano State Government, the Speaker of the State Assembly, the

Inspector General of Police, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, and other security agencies.

Dan Agundi sought to restrain the respondents from enforcing the appellate court's judgment while awaiting the apex court's decision.

However, in its unanimous decision, the Court of Appeal agreed that the application had merit and granted the injunction.

Justice Abang stated, "The law is settled. The court is enjoined to exercise its discretion judiciously and in the interest of justice."

The ruling ordered that all parties must maintain the "status quo ante bellum," preserving the situation as it was before the Federal High Court's judgment on June 13, 2024.

# We're fixing Nigeria's economic crisis – Tinubu

By Friday Omosola

President Bola Tinubu has defended his administration's economic reforms, stating that they are necessary to safeguard the interests of future generations.

Speaking at the State House in Abuja yesterday while receiving a delegation of his former National Assembly colleagues from the aborted Third Republic, President Tinubu lamented Nigeria's past financial practices, which, he said, jeopardized the nation's future.

"For 50 years, Nigeria was spending the money of generations yet unborn and servicing the West Coast of our subregion with fuel. It was getting difficult to plan for our children's future," he said.

The President acknowledged the economic and social challenges his government faced upon assuming office but expressed confidence in the reforms implemented so far.

"We faced serious headwinds when I took over—very challenging times. Nigeria would have been bankrupt if we had not taken the actions that we took, and we had to prevent the economy's collapse," he stated.

President Tinubu assured Nigerians that his administration had successfully laid a solid foundation for economic recovery.

"Today, we are sitting pretty on a good foundation. We have reversed the



problem; the exchange rate is stabilizing, and food prices are coming down, especially during Ramadan. We will have light at the end of the tunnel," he added.

Reaffirming his commitment to democracy, he emphasised that adherence to democratic principles remains the best path to economic, social, and political progress.

"I am happy that you are holding on to your belief in democracy. I thank you for keeping faith and remembering how we started. Some leadership failed, but we kept faith in democracy, freedom, and the right to aspire to the highest office in the land. I am benefiting from it," Tinubu said.

Speaking on behalf of the delegation, Senator Emmanuel Chiedoziem Nwaka commended the Tinubu administration for initiatives such as the Nigerian Education Loan Fund (NELFUND) and the Nigerian

Consumer Credit Corporation (CREDICORP), highlighting their positive impact on Nigerians.

"I appreciate what you are doing for students because the student population is the largest demographic in the country. Many of them have benefited from it," Nwaka noted.

He also praised CREDICORP as a significant tool in fighting corruption.

"You see a young man coming out of school who wants to buy a car or a house. Before now, they had to put down cash. But with CREDICORP, they can access credit and get things done. We are following their activities and are delighted," he added.

The delegation also included Senator Bako Aufara Musa, Terwase Orbunde, Wasiu Logun, Amina Aliyu, High Chief Obi Anoliefo, and Eze Nwauwa.

# Niger Republic appeals to Nigeria for emergency fuel supply

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

**N**iger Republic has approached Nigeria to bail it out of a severe fuel scarcity crisis that has almost brought the country to a standstill.

It was gathered that Niger had quietly sent a delegation to Abuja, appealing for an emergency fuel supply.

According to reports, Niger has been grappling with a crippling fuel shortage for weeks, leading to long queues at petrol stations, skyrocketing black-market prices, and widespread economic disruption.

A manager of a petrol station on the capital's outskirts, Mohammed said, "Our tanks have been dry for three days. No-one can say when we'll be resupplied."

"You see that taxi over there? The driver went around town and finally ran out of fuel here," the manager, who did not want to give his full name told AFP.

Hard-bitten Nigeriens can often be seen under the blazing sun pushing their motorbikes or walking through the streets carrying empty cans.

Ironically, Niger, a country that produces oil but refines only a small amount of it, has suffered fuel shortages in the past but not to the current extent.

According to reporters, the Soraz refinery in Zinder is the only one in the country.

The state-owned Nigerien Company for Oil Products (Sonidep) said on Saturday that it "can no longer satisfy domestic demand", which has surged for more than a year now.

The shortage hit some of Niger's towns first before reaching the capital, Niamey, where many petrol stations now have nothing to sell.

At the few garages in the city centre that



still had fuel on Sunday, motorists and motorbike riders waited patiently and the roads were quieter than normal.

"I'm hoping to get two litres of petrol to do some very urgent shopping," Moussa Saidou said.

Sitting astride his motorbike, Mason Issa Mahamadou made no attempt to hide his anger. "I want to visit my work sites but I've no more fuel," he fumed.

With the decline in the black market "all the country's (fuel) consumption now rests on domestic production," Sonidep's Oumani Aboubacar said.

A counter insurgency expert, Zagazola Makama, said Niger's fuel crisis didn't happen overnight. It said it was the direct consequence of a disastrous confrontation between the ruling junta and Chinese oil companies, which have long dominated Niger's petroleum sector.

The trouble began in March 2024, when China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) granted the Nigerien government a \$400 million advance, using future crude oil deliveries as collateral. This deal was meant to help Niger cope with the crippling economic sanctions imposed by ECOWAS following the July 2023 coup. However, when it came time to repay the debt, the junta found itself strapped for

cash.

Rather than negotiating, the military rulers decided to strong-arm China. In a move that stunned industry insiders, they slapped an \$80 billion tax demand on SORAZ (Zinder Refinery Company) despite the state-owned Sonidep already owing SORAZ a staggering \$250 billion.

When China refused to provide additional loans, the junta retaliated by expelling Chinese oil executives from the country and seizing SORAZ's bank accounts.

Zagazola further said that his reckless decision backfired almost immediately. Niger's entire petroleum sector which is heavily reliant on Chinese expertise and investment began to collapse.

The SORAZ refinery, the lifeline of Niger's fuel supply, ground to a halt, and fuel shortages spread like wildfire.

This crisis could not have come at a worse time. The Niger-Benin oil pipeline, a project designed to boost Niger's crude exports to 100,000 barrels per day by 2025, was also at risk.

With Chinese engineers gone and no viable alternative in place, the junta's decision plunged the country into economic uncertainty.

# Senator Ibrahim rejects Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan's IPU petition

By **Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye**

Senator Jimoh Ibrahim, Chairman of the Senate Interparliamentary Committee, has strongly criticised the suspended Senator representing Kogi Central, Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, dismissing her petition to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) as “dead on arrival.”

In a statement issued in Abuja on Thursday, March 13, Ibrahim responded to Akpoti-Uduaghan's escalation of her dispute with Senate President Godswill Akpabio, which she had taken to the international stage at a UN forum hosted by the IPU.

Akpoti-Uduaghan had accused Akpabio of political victimisation, following her suspension on March 6 after a public altercation over a seating arrangement in the Senate, which she claimed was intended to undermine her.

Tensions between the two escalated further when Akpoti-Uduaghan appeared on national television, accusing Akpabio of attempting to punish her for rejecting alleged sexual advances.

At the Women in Parliament session during the IPU meeting at the United Nations in New York, Akpoti-



Uduaghan called for international intervention to hold the Nigerian Senate accountable for what she described as politically motivated actions.

However, Senator Ibrahim swiftly refuted her claims, arguing that her petition was unfounded and that she lacked the standing to bring such a case.

He pointed out that IPU membership was granted to countries, not individuals, and as a result, Akpoti-Uduaghan, a suspended senator, was not a member of the Union.

“I can categorically state that a petition can only be lodged against another member state by a member state. This means that the IPU cannot entertain petitions from individuals who are not members. While Nigeria is a member of the IPU, Senator

Natasha is not,” Ibrahim explained.

The senator also clarified that Akpoti-Uduaghan did not have the approval of the Nigerian Senate to attend the IPU session or represent the country at the United Nations.

“As Chairman of the Interparliamentary Committee, I did not authorise or approve Natasha's attendance at the IPU on behalf of Nigeria. During my time as interim president of the IPU in Geneva in 2023, I became very familiar with how the Union operates, and it's clear that her actions cannot be considered under the IPU's rules.” he added.

Ibrahim's remarks underscore the growing tensions within the Nigerian Senate and highlight the complexity of Akpoti-Uduaghan's ongoing dispute with the Senate leadership.

# TETFund: Tinubu approves N700bn disbursements to varsities

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

President Bola Tinubu has approved the disbursement of over N700 billion to Nigeria's tertiary institutions through the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) in 2025, with universities set to receive N2.8 billion each.

The approval was announced by the Executive Secretary of TETFund, Sonny Echono, during the 2025 Strategic Planning Meeting with heads of tertiary institutions in Abuja on Thursday, March 13.

Echono detailed the allocation structure, confirming that 91.08% of the funds would be distributed directly to institutions. Of this, 48.90% is earmarked for annual direct disbursements, while 42.18% is designated for special direct disbursements.

Additionally, 8.72% is set aside for designated projects, and 0.20% will be allocated to stabilisation funds.

According to Echono, the distribution will benefit a range of educational institutions: "Each university will receive N2.8 billion, polytechnics N1.9 billion, and colleges of education N2.1 billion as part of the annual direct disbursement," he said.

The allocation comes as part of the Tinubu administration's expanded intervention activities, which align with national priorities outlined in the Education Sector Road Map.

The plan, led by the Minister of Education, Dr. Tunji Alausa, focuses on improving educational



infrastructure and strengthening the sector's foundations.

In his address, Echono also emphasised the government's focus on infrastructure development in 2025.

The government has prioritised the upgrading, rehabilitation, and renovation of dilapidated facilities across beneficiary institutions. Institutions are encouraged to consult widely and plan projects ahead of time, with the government stressing the need for early implementation.

"Beneficiaries are advised to utilise their consultancy and physical planning units in preparing projects under the current disbursement cycle," Echono said.

The Executive Secretary also highlighted a significant increase in allocations for research and innovation, academic staff training, and the development of manuscripts

and books.

Furthermore, more institutions will benefit from special and designated projects, ensuring a broader reach for the funding.

Echono urged heads of institutions to begin implementing their allocations promptly, advising them to consult with their communities and ensure timely payments to contractors and vendors.

He also called for the swift utilisation of previous allocations from 2024, ensuring that institutions expedite the procurement process to access the newly approved funds.

The move is part of a broader effort by the Tinubu administration to boost the country's educational standards and infrastructure, in line with the administration's commitment to enhancing national development through a robust educational sector.

# Nekede Polytechnic suspends lecturer for assaulting student

By Helen Okechukwu

The authorities of Federal Polytechnic Nekede have issued a suspension letter to a lecturer, Mr. Okoroafor Ifeanyichukwu, who assaulted a male student, Mr Chidera for not adhering to his instructions.

This action followed the widespread reactions from netizens after a video of the incident went viral, prompting calls for disciplinary action against the lecturer.

The management has withdrawn Mr. Ifeanyichukwu from his role as a facilitator at the Technical and Entrepreneurship Development Centre.

The incident occurred on Thursday while students were queuing to enter a hall for an entrepreneurship training session.

## Video description

In the video, the lecturer was seen pursuing the male student before slapping him and delivering a kick, which caused the student to fall backward onto the concrete ground.

After the lecturer left the student on the ground, he was heard saying, "Why don't you stay there and tell me since I said nobody should enter?" Meanwhile, other students around the assaulted student were repeatedly pleading, "Sorry sir, sorry sir, sorry sir."

A statement signed by the Director of TEDC, Dr. Okoye P.C., read, "You are hereby suspended from duty as a facilitator in the Technical and Entrepreneurship Development Centre pending the outcome of the investigation



into the incident that occurred yesterday, 13th March 2025, at the site of your entrepreneurship training."

Meanwhile, according to Punch publication, the lecturer has apologized to the student.

## Lecturer's Apology Letter

"Dear Chidera, LETTER OF APOLOGY TO MR CHIDERA. I am writing to offer my sincerest apologies for my behavior towards you. I am deeply sorry for the way I treated you, and I realize that my actions were unacceptable and hurtful. As your teacher, I should have provided a safe and supportive learning environment, but instead, I bullied and intimidated you.

"My behavior was not only unprofessional, but it also caused you harm and distress. I want you to know that I take full responsibility for my actions, and I am truly sorry for the pain and suffering I caused you. I understand that

my apology cannot erase the past, but I hope it can be a step towards healing and moving forward.

"Please know that I am committed to changing my behavior and ensuring that all my students feel safe, respected, and supported in the classroom. I will do everything in my power to prevent similar incidents from happening in the future. If you are willing, I would like to meet with you to discuss how I can make amends and support you in any way possible. Please let me know if this is something you would be open to, and we can arrange a time and place that works for you. Once again, I offer my sincerest apologies for my behavior. You deserved better from me, and I hope you can find it in your heart to forgive me. Sincerely, Ifeanyichukwu."

Netizens shared the suspension letter on social media, commending the institution's swift action, though some questioned the lack of a fair hearing.

# Again, Fubara writes Rivers Assembly, to re-present budget March 19

By Dave Oludare Oso

**G**overnor Siminalayi Fubara of Rivers State has written to the state House of Assembly again, informing the lawmakers of his intention to re-present the 2025 budget to the House for consideration and approval on Wednesday, March 19, 2025.

The governor, in a letter addressed to the Speaker of the Assembly, Rt. Hon. Martin Amaewhule, recalled his earlier attempt to present the budget on March 12, which was unsuccessful after he was disallowed from entering into the Assembly premises.

Fubara noted that despite prior delivery of a soft copy notice and efforts to submit a hard copy through the clerk, he and his entourage were locked out.

The governor emphasized that his attempt was in compliance with a Supreme Court judgment, which he noted had also mandated the Assembly to carry out its functions within constitutional boundaries.

He also reminded the Speaker that the House had previously issued a 48-hour ultimatum for the presentation of the budget, even before he was served with a certified true copy of the judgment and enrolled orders.



Governor Fubara reaffirmed his commitment to governance despite the political crisis in the state, appealing to all arms of government to exercise their duties within legal and constitutional frameworks for the good of the people.

He had said, “No matter the depth of our differences, we believe the interests of the state and our people should take priority over political conflicts.”

The letter formally notified the Speaker of his intention to present the budget on March 19 at 11:00 a.m. or at any other time deemed convenient by the House, expressing the hope that the Assembly would consider his request favourably.

There have been a back and forth between the Fubara and the

lawmakers following the Supreme Court judgement ordering the governor to present the 2025 budget to the State Assembly led by Amaewhule.

It took a dramatic turn at the Rivers State House of Assembly Quarters on Wednesday when Governor Siminalayi Fubara arrived at the venue but the entrance gate locked.

The security personnel at the quarters locked the gates when the governor’s convoy arrived.

The action of the security personnel was hinged on the position that there was no official communication between the governor and the Assembly. However, the governor insisted that he informed the lawmakers that he coming.

# FG determined to build healthier nation – Prof Pate

By Helen Okechukwu

The Nigerian Government has pledged commitment to supporting local manufacturers in the healthcare sector so as to build a healthier and more prosperous nation.

The Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Prof. Mohammad Ali Pate, made the pledge at the inauguration of O-Care Disposable Syringes factory by Transgreen Nig. Ltd., on Thursday at Amuwo-Odofin, Lagos, says News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) report.

Pate was represented by Dr Abdul-Rukun Tan, the National Coordinator of the Presidential Initiative for Unlocking the Health Care Value Chain.

He said that the government was committed to building a healthier and more prosperous nation by ensuring that Nigerians had access to quality healthcare services.

He said that the facility marked a significant milestone in the country's efforts to enhance healthcare and promote self-reliance in the production of essential medical supplies.

Pate commended the visionary leadership and entrepreneurial spirit of Mr Cyprian Orakpo, the Managing Director of Transgreen Nig. Ltd.

He reiterated that the government would continue to create an enabling environment for businesses to thrive, especially in the health sector.

“Orakpo’s journey is a testament to unwavering dedication and resilience. His ability to adapt and innovate, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, has been remarkable. The O-Care disposable syringes produced in this facility, represent a significant advancement in Nigeria’s healthcare system, ensuring access to high-quality, locally-manufactured medical supplies.



“This development aligns perfectly with the mission of the Private Sector Health Alliance of Nigeria to strengthen Nigeria’s healthcare infrastructure,” the minister said.

He thanked Gov. Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos for his dedication to the development of the state.

“The launch of O-Care disposable syringes not only brings job opportunities and economic growth. It also reinforces Nigeria’s commitment to building a healthier and more prosperous nation.

“Let us continue to walk together, hand-in-hand, toward a brighter, healthier and more self-reliant Nigeria,” Pate said.

Prof. Mojisola Adeyeye, the Director-General, National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), reaffirmed the agency’s commitment to protecting public health by supporting local manufacturers.

Adeyeye was represented by Mrs Khadijah Ade-Abolade, Director, Vaccines, Biologics and Medical Devices Registration and Regulatory Affairs Directorate, NAFDAC.

“Our role is to protect public health, and we will continue to work hand-in-hand with indigenous companies like Transgreen Nig. Ltd.,” she said.

She gave the assurance that the agency would provide the necessary regulatory oversight to ensure safety of all Nigerians relying on the products.

She said that the agency remained committed at ensuring that all locally-manufactured medical devices would meet the highest standards of quality and safety.

“The O-Care Disposable Syringes factory is a significant milestone in Nigeria’s journey toward self-sufficiency in healthcare.

“The factory, which has the capacity to produce high-quality, affordable syringes, will enhance the country’s healthcare system and reduce its dependence on imported medical supplies,” Adeyeye said.

She commended Lagos State Government for support for local manufacturing initiatives, particularly in the healthcare sector.

# Sexual Harassment: I'll lead fight for Natasha – Ireti Kingibe

By Friday Omosola

Ireti Kingibe, the senator representing the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), has assured Nigerians that she will take the lead in championing the sexual harassment case involving Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan when the investigation reaches the red chamber.

Earlier, The New Daily Prime reported that Mrs Akpoti-Uduaghan representing Kogi Central accused Senate President Godswill Akpabio of sexual harassment during her appearance on Arise Television.

The allegation sparked controversy, with many calling for a thorough investigation and demanding that Mr Akpabio step aside as Senate President pending the outcome.

Reacting in a statement on her X page on Friday, Mrs Kingibe acknowledged the ongoing discourse and sought to set the record straight.

She clarified that her stance was not intended to undermine Mrs Akpoti-Uduaghan's claims.

She stated that she was previously unaware of the harassment allegation but reaffirmed her commitment to the fight against all forms of violence against women and girls.

“As the Senator Representing the Federal Capital Territory, FCT in the 10th Senate, and the Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Women Affairs, I would like to state to all Nigerians that I am aware of the public dismay and I would like to address a few things officially.

“As a sitting Senator, I will always



defend the truth and fight to right all wrongs. Over the years, sexual harassment and assault have become commonplace in our homes and workplaces. Every Nigerian, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, or religion, should be committed to the struggle to end it as it affects all genders”, she said.

According to her, once an accusation of sexual harassment is formally presented to the Senate, the body must determine the gravity of the matter and ensure a thorough investigation through the appropriate institutional mechanisms.

She stated that the Office of the Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Women Affairs, which she leads, serves as a pillar of hope and a milestone for equality, equity, inclusivity, and opportunity.

Mrs Kingibe further emphasised that the office provides Nigerian women with recourse, refuge, and the right to dignity and social justice.

“It's in this capacity that I am demanding

an open, transparent and fair investigation into the allegations of sexual harassment. Justice, fairness and equity must be provided for everyone regardless of gender, position or social class.

“I affirm my commitment to protecting the rights of girls and women across Nigeria. I align with the global community in advocating for increased gender equality in political representation and across all sectors of our society”, said the senator.

According to her, she is focused on advancing the 35% Gender Inclusion Bill and advocating for the establishment of special seats for women to enhance their participation in governance.

She stated that the Gender Equity Bill 2025 (SB 743), which she is championing, has passed its first reading and is now awaiting the second reading.

Mrs Kingibe reaffirmed her unwavering commitment to serving the Nigerian people, undeterred by falsehoods, and dedicated to fostering a democracy built on justice, fairness, and equity.

She assured Nigerians, particularly women, that she remains steadfast in her pursuit of good governance, undaunted by challenges, and determined to see a new Nigeria emerge.

“Any disinformation trying to purport that I am sympathetic to sexual harassment of any kind, whether in the Senate or elsewhere, should be disregarded. As a leader and Senator, I will never do anything to undermine your valuable trust”.

# Lady jumps off Third Mainland Bridge into Lagos lagoon, dies

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A yet-to-be-identified young lady was reported to have jumped off the Third Mainland Bridge into the lagoon near the University of Lagos (UNILAG) waterfront in Lagos State, resulting in her death despite rescue efforts.

According to eyewitnesses, the incident occurred around 4 p.m. on Thursday, and despite efforts of marine police officers stationed in the area who swiftly responded to the emergency, and undertook a fervent rescue operation, she unfortunately died.

SaharaReporters said Lagos State Police Command Public Relations Officer, Benjamin Hundeyin, confirmed the report on Friday.

The Police spokesman stated that despite



the marine police officers' efforts to save her, medical personnel from the University of Lagos confirmed her death upon arrival.

The PPRO stated that the deceased's body has since been evacuated to the Infectious

Disease Hospital (IDH) Mortuary in Yaba for preservation.

Hundeyin said, "Today, March 13, 2025, at about 1600 hours, an unidentified woman reportedly jumped from the Third Mainland Bridge into the lagoon near the UNILAG waterfront at approximately 1500 hours.

"She was recovered at the University of Lagos shore slipway by a team of marine police officers stationed in the area. Despite their efforts, she was confirmed dead by a team of UNILAG medical doctors in the presence of officers from the Sabo Police Division."

"Her body has been evacuated to the Infectious Disease Hospital (IDH) Mortuary in Yaba, Lagos, for preservation," Hundeyin added.

# 40 Nigerians deported from Algeria, others go into hiding

By Dave Oludare Oso

Following the immigration crackdown that led to the deportation of 40 Nigerians from Algeria, other undocumented Nigerians in the north African country have gone into hiding.

According to reports, the deported Nigerians were hammered for overstaying and illegal documents.

An official bulletin dated February 4, 2025, and sighted by NEW DAILY PRIME disclosed that the deportees, consisting of 37 men and three women, arrived in Abuja on February 4, 2025, at 8.10 pm via Turkish Airlines flight TK623.

One official said Nigerians in Algeria "are in hiding to avoid being arrested and deported."

NEW DAILY PRIME learnt that some of those affected include Ibrahim Abdullahi from Kano State, Sani Adamu from Katsina State and Barau Muazu from Kano State.

Algeria has intensified its efforts to address



illegal immigration, leading to the deportation of numerous sub-Saharan African migrants, including Nigerians.

Human rights organisations have raised concerns about these actions, highlighting issues such as racial profiling and the humanitarian conditions faced by deportees.

In recent years, Algeria has conducted mass deportations of sub-Saharan migrants. For instance, in 2017, Amnesty International reported that over 2,000 sub-Saharan migrants were expelled within a three-week period, with allegations of mass racial profiling during arrests.

More recently, in 2024, the NGO, Alarme Phone Sahara estimated that more than 30,000 migrants were deported by Algeria to Niger, reflecting a significant increase in such actions.

These deportations have raised serious human rights concerns.

Reports indicate that migrants are often abandoned in desert areas near the Niger border, facing harsh conditions and lacking basic necessities.

The Rosa Luxemburg Foundation described Algeria's expulsion practices as "ruthless and illegal," emphasising the unprecedented numbers and the dire humanitarian situation in northern Niger.

While specific data on the number of Nigerians affected is limited, it is evident that Nigerians are among the sub-Saharan migrants impacted by Algeria's crackdown on illegal immigration.

# Asake's father accuses singer of neglect, cries out for help

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**F**atai Odunsi, father of Nigerian music star Asake, has made a public plea for financial assistance after suffering a stroke and struggling with his health.

In a viral video on social media, he alleged that his son has abandoned him since his illness began in March 2022.

Speaking with a weak voice, Odunsi explained that he has been battling a partial stroke, which has affected his ability to move and care for himself. He stated that despite multiple attempts to contact Asake, the singer has not answered his calls.

“The last time I saw my son was in March 2022 when my sickness started,” he said. “If I call Asake, he won’t pick up. Please help me, I need your assistance.”

## Social media reactions

The video has sparked mixed reactions online. Many Nigerians have expressed concern over Odunsi’s condition, with some urging Asake to support his father.

One social media user commented, “No matter what happened between father and son, Asake should not abandon his dad in such a condition.”

Another user wrote, “We don’t know the full story. People are quick to judge, but there may be more to this than we see.”



Some fans have defended the singer, suggesting that family disputes can be complicated. Others, however, believe that Odunsi’s health should come first and have called on Asake to intervene.

## Asake yet to respond

Asake has not yet addressed the allegations. The singer, known for hit songs like Joha and Lonely at the Top, has built a reputation for his lavish lifestyle. He often shares photos and videos of his success, including luxury cars, designer outfits, and international tours.

This is not the first time a Nigerian celebrity has been accused of neglecting family members. In the past, similar accusations have sparked debates about the responsibilities of wealthy public figures toward their families.

## A struggle for medical care

Odunsi’s condition highlights the difficulties faced by elderly individuals dealing with serious health challenges. Stroke treatment and rehabilitation require ongoing medical attention, which can be expensive without financial support.

For now, Nigerians are waiting to see if Asake will respond to his father’s plea. Meanwhile, concerned individuals continue to rally around Odunsi, offering whatever assistance they can.

## What happens next?

As this situation unfolds, many are left wondering whether Asake will step up to help his father or if the rift between them will deepen. While the full story remains unclear, one thing is certain—Odunsi needs urgent medical care, and time is running out.

# VeryDarkMan reacts after court orders arrest for alleged defamation

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

An Abuja court has issued a bench warrant for the arrest of controversial social media critic Martins Vincent Otse, aka VeryDarkMan (VDM).

The warrant was issued after he failed to appear in court over a case of alleged criminal defamation involving popular gospel singer Mercy Chinwo.

Court orders arrest over defamation case

Magistrate Emmanuel Iyanna of the Wuse Zone 6 Magistrate Court signed the arrest order on Thursday, March 13, 2025. This decision came after VDM ignored an earlier court summons dated March 5, 2025, which required him to appear before the court.

The legal action stems from allegations that VDM made defamatory statements about Mercy Chinwo. The nature of these statements has not been fully disclosed, but the case has drawn significant public attention due to the critic's history of controversial remarks on social media.

VDM responds from abroad

Shortly after the court's ruling, VDM reacted via an Instagram story. In his post, he dismissed the arrest warrant and challenged law enforcement agencies to detain him upon his return to Nigeria.

Speaking in Pidgin English, he wrote, "I dey come Naija very soon, make una ready to arrest me for airport. Arrest no be new thing for the Ratel na."



His statement suggests he is unbothered by the legal action and even expects to be arrested when he arrives.

A history of controversy

VeryDarkMan is known for his outspoken and often confrontational approach to social issues. His online content frequently criticizes public figures, celebrities, and government institutions. While his supporters see him as a fearless truth-teller, his critics accuse him of spreading misinformation and attacking reputations without solid evidence.

This is not the first time he has faced legal trouble. In the past, he has been detained multiple times over allegations of defamation and cyber harassment. However, each time, he has maintained his innocence and insisted that his statements are based on facts.

What happens next?

With the bench warrant in place, Nigerian security agencies are now authorized to arrest VDM at any time. If taken into custody, he will likely be presented before the magistrate to face the defamation charges.

Legal experts say that defamation cases can lead to serious consequences, including fines and imprisonment. However, the enforcement of such warrants depends on the authorities' ability to locate and detain the accused.

Meanwhile, Mercy Chinwo has not publicly commented on the case. The gospel singer, known for her hit songs and strong Christian following, has built a reputation for avoiding public controversy.

As the situation unfolds, many Nigerians are watching closely to see how the legal battle between VeryDarkMan and Mercy Chinwo will play out.

# Wumi Toriola slams Chef T for ignoring collaboration request

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**N**igerian actress Wumi Toriola has publicly criticized celebrity food blogger Chef T, also known as the face behind Diary of a Kitchen Lover.

The actress accused Chef T of ignoring her request for a collaboration, sharing proof of their conversation in a viral Instagram post.

Actress shares screenshot of ignored message

Toriola did not hold back in expressing her disappointment. She posted a screenshot of a message she had sent to Chef T back in August 2024, which allegedly went unanswered. In her caption, she called out the popular chef, implying that she had become too successful to acknowledge others.

“@diaryofakitchenlover feels like she does not need anyone again. Na only she grow her grow. She na December me sef come out?” Toriola wrote, mixing English and Nigerian Pidgin to emphasize her frustration.

Chef T faces backlash from celebrities This controversy erupted just hours after another well-known actress, Funke Akindele, reportedly unfollowed Chef T on Instagram. Speculation suggests Akindele’s decision was linked to Chef T’s alleged failure to promote her latest movie.

With two major actresses now distancing themselves from the food blogger, fans are questioning if Chef



T’s relationships in the entertainment industry are beginning to strain. Some social media users have expressed support for Toriola and Akindele, while others argue that Chef T has the right to choose who she collaborates with.

Social media reactions pour in

Toriola’s post quickly gained attention, drawing mixed reactions from fans and industry insiders. Some commenters sided with the actress, accusing Chef T of forgetting those who supported her rise to fame. Others defended the food blogger, stating that she has the right to prioritize her collaborations.

“Wumi is right! Some people forget where they started from,” one Instagram user commented.

Another countered, writing, “Chef T has built her brand. She can’t say yes to everyone.”

The ongoing debate over celebrity support

This situation has sparked a broader conversation about support and collaboration in Nigeria’s entertainment industry. Many fans believe influencers and celebrities should uplift one another, especially those who once benefited from industry connections.

Neither Chef T nor her team has publicly responded to Toriola’s accusations. However, as the debate continues online, many are watching to see if the popular food blogger will break her silence.

For now, this latest celebrity clash highlights the ongoing tensions that can arise in an industry where visibility and partnerships play a major role in success.

# True Muslim must believe in Jesus – Naira Marley

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular Nigerian singer Abdulazeez Fashola, known as Naira Marley, has ignited discussions online with his recent statement about Jesus.

Taking to his X handle, the artist expressed his belief that a Muslim who does not believe in Jesus is not truly a Muslim. “No Muslim is a Muslim if he does not believe in Jesus (Peace be upon him),” he wrote.

Ramadan posts stir conversations

Since the beginning of Ramadan, Naira Marley has been sharing thoughts on religion. His latest post, however, sparked a heated debate among Christians and Muslims. Many engaged in discussions about their respective views on Jesus, leading to a mix of support, criticism, and theological debate.

Christian and muslim views on Jesus

Christians and Muslims hold different beliefs about Jesus. For Christians, Jesus is either God or the Son of God, central to their faith and salvation. Meanwhile,



Muslims regard Jesus (known as Isa in Islam) as a prophet and messenger sent to the Children of Israel with the Gospel. Islam teaches that he performed miracles but was not divine.

Mixed reactions from the public

Many of Naira Marley’s followers praised him for promoting religious understanding. Some Muslims supported his statement, emphasizing that belief in Jesus as a prophet is part of Islamic teachings. However, others felt his wording could cause confusion about Islamic doctrine.

Christians also weighed in, with some appreciating his

acknowledgment of Jesus in Islam. Others, however, stressed the significant theological differences between the two religions. Some users urged unity and respect, arguing that open discussions like this can bridge religious gaps.

Debate continues online

So far, Naira Marley has not responded to the ongoing debate. However, his post continues to generate thousands of reactions and comments. As discussions unfold, his statement has once again brought attention to the deep connections and distinctions between Christianity and Islam.

# Peller bows to pressure apologises for calling Runtown 'Up-and-coming artiste'

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular TikTok personality, Peller, has publicly apologised for dismissing Nigerian Afrobeats star Runtown as an “up-and-coming artist.”

His initial remark, made during a livestream, sparked widespread criticism on social media.

Controversial statement sparks backlash

During a recent livestream, Peller rejected a suggestion from a co-streamer to feature Runtown. He implied that the singer was not well-known or successful. This comment did not sit well with Afrobeats fans, who quickly took to social media to express their outrage. Many criticized Peller for being ignorant of Runtown's achievements and contributions to the music industry.

Runtown, whose real name is Douglas Jack Agu, is a well-respected artist in Nigeria. He gained fame with hits like Mad Over You, For Life, and Energy. His music has received international recognition, making him a household name in the Afrobeats scene. Fans felt Peller's remark was not only inaccurate but also disrespectful.

Peller bows to pressure

Following the intense backlash, Peller decided to address the controversy. He admitted that he was fully aware of who Runtown was and offered a public apology. Speaking during another livestream, he explained that his lack of exposure to Runtown's earlier songs was due to his age.



“When I was hearing Runtown's music back then, I was too young to even use a phone,” he said.

He further tried to lighten the situation by making a playful remark. “Peller never come town when Runtown dey Runtown,” he added, blending humor with his apology. He then pleaded with fans to forgive him.

“Please, forgive the poor boy. Let him breathe. God won't shame us. I'm sorry, my brothers and sisters,” he said.

Fans react to his apology

Peller's apology received mixed reactions. Some fans appreciated his honesty and humor, choosing to move past the incident. Others, however, remained critical, accusing him of making excuses for his earlier statement.

“At least he apologized. That's what matters,” one user commented on social media.

“Being young is not an excuse for

ignorance. Runtown is a legend,” another fan wrote.

Despite the controversy, the incident highlights the generational gap in music appreciation. While older fans remember Runtown's dominance in Afrobeats, younger audiences may not be as familiar with his past successes.

Lessons from the controversy

This episode serves as a reminder that words carry weight, especially on social media. Influencers and content creators must be mindful of their statements to avoid spreading misinformation.

It also underscores the importance of knowing the history of the entertainment industry. Runtown has made significant contributions to Afrobeats, and dismissing his impact only fuels unnecessary debates.

For now, Peller's apology stands, but whether fans will completely forgive him remains to be seen.

# Asake responds to father's allegations

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular Nigerian singer Asake has responded to allegations from his father, who accused him of neglect and abandonment despite struggling with health issues.

The father, Fatai Odunsi who says he is battling a stroke, alleged that his son has not visited or supported him in any way. He also claimed that the last time he saw Asake was in March 2022 and has not had any contact with him since.

The accusations have sparked widespread reactions, with many people debating whether Asake has truly neglected his father or if there is more to the story.

Asake's father appeals for help

In a heartfelt plea, Asake's father reached out to Nigerians, asking for support as he struggles with his health and financial difficulties. His public statement quickly went viral, triggering mixed opinions online.

Some social media users criticized Asake, accusing him of turning his back on his father despite his success in the music industry. Others, however, defended the singer, arguing that personal family matters should not be judged without understanding the full context.

Asake's response: A cryptic song

Instead of issuing a direct statement, Asake took to TikTok to share his response through music. In a video, he sang a song that appeared to address the controversy without mentioning his father explicitly. His lyrics conveyed a message of resilience and faith, suggesting that he remains unshaken by external criticism.



His lyrics included:

“You can't satisfy people, keep doing everything you are doing for God. And remember the day we will be buried, don't you see how it is going my brother? Even my father wants to cajole me. But I stand fit, and you cannot off my light. I give financially with one heart, my life doesn't want problem, and I am close to God—it's God that is carrying me.”

These words imply that Asake believes he has been generous with financial support but feels pressured by those around him, including his father. He also emphasized his faith, suggesting that he is focused on his spirituality rather than public opinion.

Social media reacts

As expected, the situation has divided fans and the general public. Some criticised him for not addressing his father's health concerns directly and for responding with a song rather than a clear statement. They argued that his father's condition is serious and deserves more than a vague musical response.

Others, however, supported the singer, insisting that family matters should remain private. Some pointed out that it is

not uncommon for celebrities to face public criticism from relatives who feel entitled to financial support.

A Twitter user commented, “Asake's father calling out his own son in public is not the best way to handle things. He should have settled it privately.”

Another added, “If Asake is really neglecting his father, then he should do better. Family comes first, no matter what.”

However, some fans defended Asake, suggesting that the situation may be more complicated than it appears. One person wrote, “Sometimes, parents can be the toxic ones. We don't know what happened between them.”

Celebrity-family conflicts: A common trend

This is not the first time a celebrity has been accused of neglecting family members after achieving success. Many artists and public figures have faced similar allegations, often leading to public debates about responsibility and family obligations.

# Comedian IGoSave reacts to porn site ban in Nigeria

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

The House of Representatives has directed the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) to block access to all pornographic websites nationwide.

Lawmakers argue that the ban is necessary to protect moral values and prevent minors from accessing explicit content.

However, the decision has sparked controversy, with many questioning the government's priorities. Some believe more pressing issues, such as economic hardship, security concerns, and unemployment, deserve urgent attention.

IGoSave speaks out against the ban

Nigerian stand-up comedian IGoSave has openly criticized the directive. He believes the ban will negatively impact many citizens and questions whether the government should dictate what people can or cannot watch.

Taking to Instagram, he wrote in Pidgin English:

“This porn site ban go affect many Nigerians o!”

He then asked his followers if they should organize a protest against the restriction, stating,

“Should we help dem protest? Cos they are true Nigerians too.”

His statement quickly gained attention,



with many Nigerians reacting both in support and opposition.

Rapper Blaqbonez joins the debate

Popular rapper Blaqbonez also weighed in on the issue. He criticized the ban, suggesting that it reflected misplaced priorities.

He argued that adult films help some Nigerians cope with stress and difficult times. Like IGoSave, he questioned why the government was focusing on internet censorship instead of addressing more critical national problems.

Read Also: Blaqbonez responds to Reps' order to shut down porn sites

Mixed reactions from Nigerians

The ban has triggered widespread debate on social media. Some Nigerians support the restriction, arguing that pornography promotes addiction, affects mental health, and exposes minors to inappropriate content.

Others, however, believe the government should not interfere in people's personal choices. Many critics see the move as an attempt to control citizens rather than solve urgent national issues.

Social media has been flooded with memes, jokes, and serious discussions about censorship, freedom, and personal liberty. The topic remains a trending issue, with both celebrities and ordinary Nigerians sharing their opinions.

What's next?

As the debate continues, the Nigerian Communications Commission has yet to provide details on how or when the ban will be enforced. Many Nigerians are waiting to see if the government will reconsider its decision or move forward despite public opposition.

For now, the controversy rages on, highlighting the ongoing struggle between government policies and personal freedoms in Nigeria.

# US, Putin talks about Ukraine 'very good, productive' – Trump

By Dave Oludare Oso

President Donald Trump has said the US had “very good and productive discussions” with Vladimir Putin and that “thousands of Ukrainian troops” were surrounded by the Russian army, a claim refuted by the Ukrainian military and independent analysts.

In a post on Truth Social on Friday, Trump said there was a “very good chance” the war between Russia and Ukraine could “finally come to an end.”

The US president made his comments after Steve Witkoff, Trump’s close ally and special envoy to the Middle East, held late-night talks with Putin on Thursday to discuss the US proposal for an immediate 30-day ceasefire.

The White House clarified that Witkoff, not Trump, spoke to Putin on Thursday.

Kyiv has already accepted the proposal, while Putin on Thursday set out a series of sweeping conditions that would need to be met before Russia would agree to the truce, which includes the condition that Ukraine should neither rearm nor mobilise during the 30-day truce.

Trump appeared to repeat claims made by Putin a day earlier that Russian forces had encircled a large number of Ukrainian troops in the Kursk region, where Moscow is on the verge of expelling the Ukrainian army from the land it captured last year.

Trump wrote that there “were thousands of Ukrainian troops completely surrounded by the Russian military, and in a very bad and vulnerable position.”

“I have strongly requested to President



Putin that their lives be spared. This would be a horrible massacre, one not seen since World War II. God bless them all!!!” Trump added.

However, the Ukrainian military was quick to dismiss claims that its forces were encircled in the Kursk region.

“Reports of the alleged ‘encirclement’ of Ukrainian units by the enemy in the Kursk region are false and fabricated by the Russians for political manipulation and to exert pressure on Ukraine and its partners,” Ukraine’s general staff wrote in a statement published on its media channels.

“Units of the Defence Forces of Ukraine have successfully regrouped, withdrawn to more advantageous defensive positions, and are executing their assigned tasks within the Kursk region ... There is no threat of encirclement of our units.”

Ukrainian security sources, independent military analysts, and even pro-Russian Telegram channels have disputed the encirclement claims by Putin and Trump.

Ukrainian authorities have not officially announced a full withdrawal from the Kursk region, but soldiers fighting in the region say a staged withdrawal has been under way for two weeks, and that while many soldiers have faced a dangerous and challenging route to withdraw, they do not believe there is a mass encirclement of troops.

“After seven months, we simply withdrew. There was no encirclement,” one senior security official told the Guardian on Thursday.

Artem Kariakin, a Ukrainian soldier who was previously involved in the Kursk offensive, said: “Trump’s words about the Kursk region have nothing to do with reality.”

Michael Kofman, a military analyst at Carnegie Endowment, described the claims of a mass encirclement as “fiction.”

Some influential Russian pro-war military bloggers have cast doubt in recent days of the encirclement claims by Russian officials, saying none of the signs of such an action have been visible.

# Wall Street declines over escalating US-EU trade war

By **Fatimah Idera**

**U**S stock markets fell today on Wall Street as Donald Trump threatened to impose 200% tariffs on French wine, cognac, and alcoholic drinks imported from Europe.

The S&P 500 lost 1.4%, while the tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite closed down 2% after resuming its decline from the heavy losses suffered earlier this week.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average closed down 1.3% as concerns grew that the US tariff war could lead to an economic downturn.

Mike Dickson, head of research at Horizon Investments, said, “There are new tariff headlines every day, and that’s weighing on things as sentiment remains terrible.”

“You’re seeing it most acutely in some of the more sensitive areas of the market, like the fairly inflated Magnificent 7,” Mr. Dickson added, referring to a group of major technology firms, including Microsoft and Amazon. “It doesn’t feel great out there right now.”

The S&P 500 closed 10.1% below its February 19 record high, confirming that America’s leading index has been in an official market correction since then.

The stock market decline came as the US president threatened to impose a 200% tariff on French wine and champagne in retaliation for the EU’s decision to introduce a “nasty” levy on American whiskey.

The US president stated that he would introduce the tariff on all wines, champagnes, and alcoholic beverages from France and the EU unless Brussels



removed its levy “immediately.”

Trump’s threat came in response to the European Union’s plan to impose tariffs on American whiskey and other products next month—measures taken in retaliation for Trump’s 25% tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, which took effect on Wednesday. The European Commission had no immediate comment on the move.

Trump has threatened to impose a variety of trade penalties since returning to the White House in January, though he has postponed action on many of them. At an Oval Office meeting with NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte on Thursday, he reaffirmed his commitment to imposing reciprocal tariffs on all trading partners starting April 2.

The EU and Canada announced retaliatory tariffs on US goods, including bourbon whiskey, as “countermeasures” to Washington’s 25% duties on steel and aluminum, which took effect on Wednesday.

In a post on Truth Social, Mr. Trump, who is teetotal, said: “The European Union, one of the most hostile and abusive taxing and tariffing authorities in the world—which was formed for the sole

purpose of taking advantage of the United States—has just put a nasty 50% tariff on whiskey.

“If this tariff is not removed immediately, the US will shortly place a 200% tariff on all wines, champagnes, and alcoholic products coming out of France and other EU-represented countries. This will be great for the wine and champagne businesses in the US.”

Mr. Trump’s son, Eric, is among those who could potentially benefit, as he owns Trump Winery in Charlottesville, Virginia.

The EU and Canada announced retaliatory tariffs on US goods, including bourbon whiskey, in response to Washington’s 25% steel and aluminum duties that took effect on Wednesday.

Announcing the tariffs, which will take effect on April 13, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said: “We deeply regret this measure... tariffs are bad for business and worse for consumers.

“The European Union must act to protect consumers and businesses. The countermeasures we take today are strong but proportionate.”

# Mark Carney sworn in as Canada's PM, succeeds Trudeau

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

**M**ark Carney has been sworn in as Canada's prime minister, succeeding Justin Trudeau, as the country faces questions about its sovereignty from US President Donald Trump and a trade war with Canada's largest trading partner, the United States.

Carney, a former central banker who has never held public office in Canada, is stepping in to confront numerous challenges facing the country, including leading the Liberal Party into an election to be held later this year.

In a press conference after his swearing in, Carney addressed Canada's growing tensions with its southern neighbor head-on, saying: "We will never, ever, in any way, shape or form, be part of the United States. America is not Canada."

Since taking office earlier this year, Trump has repeatedly suggested that Canada become the 51st US state.

Carney also said that he currently does not have plans to visit the US, though he said he will have "discussions" with the leaders of the United Kingdom and France.

Speaking to the country's most immediate crises, Carney said that his two biggest priorities are "protecting Canadian workers and their families in the face of unjustified foreign trade actions, and second, growing this great country by putting more money in Canadians' pockets, by ensuring that government spends less so Canada can invest more by building millions of homes."

Carney, a former governor of the Bank of Canada and the Bank of England, was elected Liberal Party leader in a landslide on March 9. During his decades-long



career in finance, Carney steered governments through major global crises and periods of upheaval — experience he's hoping to now leverage.

The Liberals have been courting Carney for more than a decade, and he advised Trudeau on Canada's economic recovery from Covid-19.

But the banker-turned-politician did not make his official entrance until Trudeau announced his resignation in January. All of his competitors were sitting politicians: Carney is in the unusual situation of becoming Canada's prime minister without holding a seat in parliament.

Carney, who must call an election before October 20, joked that Canadians "should expect to go to the polls before November" but did not give a date for when the election might be.

**A new cabinet**

Ministers of Carney's new cabinet, including Chrystia Freeland and Dominic LeBlanc, also took their oaths of office on Thursday in English and French in Rideau Hall in Ottawa, Ontario.

Carney and his cabinet swore allegiance to King Charles III in their oaths. Canada, like some other Commonwealth countries, recognizes the monarch as its head of state.

The first to be sworn in was LeBlanc as Minister for Trade and Intergovernmental Affairs. LeBlanc, who served as Minister of Finance in former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government, has been a key interlocutor in the ongoing trade dispute with the United States, and traveled to Washington yesterday for a meeting with US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick.

François-Phillippe Champagne, who succeeded LeBlanc as Minister of Finance, also attended yesterday's meeting in Washington.

Other cabinet members will stay on in their roles they held in Trudeau's cabinet, such as Mélanie Joly, who will be sworn in later as foreign minister.

Freeland — a former deputy prime minister who resigned from Trudeau's cabinet and lost the Liberal Party leader's race to Carney — joins Carney's cabinet as minister of transport and internal trade.

# YouTuber stabbed to death as she livestreamed on Tokyo street

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

Police in Japan said Friday that they had arrested a suspect in the fatal stabbing of a YouTuber while she was livestreaming on a downtown Tokyo street.

Tokyo metropolitan police said they had arrested Kenji Takano, 42, on the spot on suspicion of attempted murder Tuesday. He has since been sent to the prosecutors but has not been charged yet.

The victim, Airi Sato, 22, was rushed to a hospital with critical injuries after the attacker stabbed her repeatedly in her upper body, police said, and was later pronounced dead.

Witnesses and livestream viewers said that they heard her screaming for help, and the stream suddenly went black.

Kyodo News reported that a witness said she saw a man wearing a black hat and mask attacking woman at the scene, and after she fell down, he held a smartphone toward her.

The New York Times reported that following the attack, Sato's followers posted messages, including "Where did she go?" and "Someone help!"

The suspect told police that he got to know Sato through her livestreaming and had seen her in person a number of times, and that they had a financial



dispute, according to media reports, including the Asahi newspaper.

## Japan Stabbing

Japanese police investigators work near the scene of a stabbing of a woman in the Shinjuku district of Tokyo, Tuesday, March 11, 2025.

Kyodo News, citing police, reported that it is believed that he began lending her money around 2022.

According to Kyodo News, Sato was attacked while livestreaming on an app called WhoWatch and walking alone near the Takadanobaba train station in Shinjuku Ward.

Broadcast NHK reported that Takano had lent Sato a large sum of money and that she did not pay him

back despite a court order to do so.

Takano traveled from the Oyama city, about 60 miles north of Tokyo, to carry out the attack after Sato announced the livestream and tracked down her location by watching the footage, media reports said, quoting police.

He told police he did not intend to kill her.

Violent crimes are still rare in Japan, where gun control is extremely strict, but there have been a number of high profile knife attacks and others using handmade guns in recent years amid a bleak wage and employment outlook.

# Putin praises Trump for 'doing everything' to improve US-Russia relations

By Dave Oludare Oso

Vladimir Putin has praised Donald Trump for “doing everything” to improve relations between Moscow and Washington, after Trump said the US has had “very good and productive discussions” with Putin in recent days.

Putin told a meeting of his security chiefs that improved relations with the US were now on the agenda.

“We know that the new administration headed by President Trump is doing everything to restore at least something of what was basically destroyed by the previous US administration,” he said.

Putin also responded to an appeal by Trump to save the lives of “thousands” of surrounded Ukrainian soldiers, and said he would heed it as long as the soldiers surrendered. But no evidence has emerged to back up Putin and Trump’s claims that there is a large-scale encirclement of Ukrainian troops, a claim explicitly denied by military chiefs in Kyiv.

The exchange of warm words between Trump and Putin is likely to cause further alarm in Kyiv and European capitals, already spooked by signs of the new US administration cosyng up to Moscow while exerting pressure on Ukraine.

The remarks came after Steve Witkoff, Trump’s close ally and special envoy to the Middle East, held late-night talks with Putin on Thursday to discuss the US proposal for an immediate 30-day ceasefire in the war on Ukraine.

Kyiv has already accepted the proposal, while Putin on Thursday set out a series of sweeping conditions that would need to be met before Russia would agree to the



truce, which includes the condition that Ukraine should neither rearm nor mobilise during the 30-day truce.

In a post on Truth Social on Friday, however, Trump said there was a “very good chance” the war between Russia and Ukraine could “finally come to an end.”

Trump also said he had appealed to Putin to save the lives of “thousands of Ukrainian troops” supposedly surrounded by the Russian army. Putin first made the claim earlier in the week when he said Ukrainian troops had been surrounded during a retreat from Russia’s Kursk region, and had the choice to “surrender or die.”

Trump repeated Putin’s claim, writing that thousands of troops had been “completely surrounded” during the retreat. He wrote “I have strongly requested to President Putin that their lives be spared. This would be a horrible massacre, one not seen since World War II. God bless them all.”

Putin told his security council that he had heard Trump’s appeal, and said the lives of Ukrainian troops would be spared if they surrendered. The Ukrainian military and

independent analysts, however, denied there was an encirclement of troops.

Ukrainian general staff wrote in a statement published on their media channels: “Reports of the alleged ‘encirclement’ of Ukrainian units by the enemy in the Kursk region are false and fabricated by the Russians for political manipulation and to exert pressure on Ukraine and its partners. There is no threat of encirclement of our units.”

Ukrainian security sources, independent military analysts and even pro-Russian Telegram channels disputed the encirclement claims by Putin and Trump.

Soldiers fighting in the region say a staged withdrawal has been under way for two weeks, and while many soldiers have faced a dangerous and challenging route to withdraw, they do not believe there is a mass encirclement of troops. “After seven months, we simply withdrew. There was no encirclement,” one senior security official told the Guardian on Thursday.

Michael Kofman, a military analyst at Carnegie Endowment, described the claims of a mass encirclement as “fiction”.

# UK boosts weapons exports with £2 billion credit expansion

By **Fatimah Idera**

The finance ministry revealed that the government will expand the credit agency UK Export Finance's (UKEF) direct lending capacity by £2 billion (\$2.6 billion), bringing the total to £10 billion.

The additional funding is expected to unlock billions of pounds for UK defence companies that export overseas, driving economic growth and creating jobs across the UK.

This boost comes just weeks after Britain pledged to increase defence spending to 2.5% of GDP by 2027, citing the need for greater security amid global instability and the ongoing war in Ukraine.

"The world is changing, and we must bring about a new era of security and renewal that protects working people and keeps our



country safe," said Finance Minister Rachel Reeves.

"This increase to UKEF's lending capability is our Industrial Strategy in action—bolstering our defence industry and supply chains, creating jobs, and driving

growth across the UK."

Reeves is set to officially announce the increase later Friday during a visit to a defence company in Scotland.

Previously, the UK Export Finance agency had a lending capacity of £8 billion specifically for government clients of defence contractors. With this new increase, the total capacity now stands at £10 billion.

Like other European nations, Britain is rushing to enhance its military production capabilities in response to: Russia's expansionist policies, mounting pressure on European NATO members to increase defence spending, and uncertainty over President Donald Trump's commitment to protecting Europe under the US-led NATO alliance.

# China, Iran, Russia open nuclear talks in Beijing

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

Senior diplomats from Iran, Russia and China gathered in Beijing on Friday for talks on Tehran's nuclear issues, Chinese state broadcaster CCTV reported, days after Tehran rejected U.S. "orders" to resume dialogue over the Iranian nuclear programme.

In 2015, Iran reached a deal with the United States, Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany and agreed to curb its nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of international sanctions. But in 2018, Donald Trump, a year into his first term as U.S. president, pulled out of the pact.

Last week, Trump said he had sent a letter to Iranian Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei proposing nuclear talks, adding that "there are two ways Iran can



be handled: militarily, or you make a deal".

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian responded that he would not negotiate with the U.S. while being "threatened", and Iran would not bow to U.S. "orders" to talk.

Iran was further enraged after six of the United Nations Security Council's 15 members – the U.S., France, Greece, Panama, South Korea and Britain – held a

closed-door meeting this week to discuss its nuclear program. Tehran said the meeting was a "misuse" of the U.N. Security Council.

In the run-up to the Beijing talks on Friday – attended by the vice foreign ministers of China, Russia and Iran – China said it hoped the trilateral meeting would help create "conditions" for the early resumption of dialogue and negotiations.

Iran has long denied that it is working on developing a nuclear weapon. But the International Atomic Energy Agency warned last month that Tehran was "dramatically" accelerating enrichment of uranium to near the roughly 90% weapons-grade level.

# Trump asks Supreme Court to curb judges' power to block policies nationwide

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

President Donald Trump is asking the Supreme Court to eliminate a key tool that lower courts have used to block various aspects of his agenda.

In an emergency appeal Thursday, Trump asked the justices to rein in or shelve three nationwide injunctions lower-court judges have issued against his bid to end birthright citizenship. But his request could have repercussions far beyond the debate over the controversial citizenship plan.

Judges have used nationwide injunctions to hobble many of Trump's early moves, from his bid to end "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion" programmes to his cuts to federal medical research.

But Trump's acting solicitor general, Sarah Harris, argued to the Supreme Court that federal district judges have no authority to issue sweeping orders that block policies nationwide.

Instead, Harris suggested, an injunction should apply only in the geographic district where the judge is located — or only to the specific individuals or groups that sued.

"Years of experience have shown that the Executive Branch cannot properly perform its functions if any judge anywhere can enjoin every presidential action everywhere," Harris wrote, contending that while administrations of both parties have lamented the practice, it has reached "epidemic proportions" during Trump's current term.

Lower-court judges issued 15 nationwide blocks of Trump administration actions in February, Harris asserted, although in



some instances the same policy was blocked by multiple judges.

That one-month total outstrips the 14 nationwide injunctions issued against the federal government in the first three years of President Joe Biden's term, she wrote, citing a law review study.

## Lawsuits over birthright citizenship

The injunctions that triggered Trump's emergency appeal were issued against his Day 1 executive order attempting to end birthright citizenship. That order seeks to deny U.S. citizenship to children born on American soil to parents who are undocumented immigrants or in the country on short-term visas.

Judges in Maryland, Massachusetts and Washington state separately blocked the order from taking effect nationwide.

They said it blatantly violates the 14th Amendment, which guarantees citizenship to "all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof."

Trump is not yet asking the Supreme

Court to assess the executive order's constitutionality. Rather, he wants the high court to narrow two of the injunctions and to lift the third entirely — a request Harris called "modest."

"This Court should declare that enough is enough before district courts' burgeoning reliance on universal injunctions becomes further entrenched," Harris wrote.

The practice of individual federal judges issuing injunctions that completely halt a federal policy has drawn extensive and increasing criticism in recent years. Some legal academics have questioned them, and both Democratic and Republican administrations have fought them. Two Supreme Court justices — Clarence Thomas and Neil Gorsuch — have openly doubted their constitutionality.

Critics say nationwide injunctions give district judges too much power and encourage administration opponents to file lawsuits in specific districts or even direct them to specific judges they think will be sympathetic.

But liberal and conservative groups who challenge federal policies say such

# Hamas agrees to release last living American hostage, Edan Alexander

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

**H**amas said Friday it would be releasing Edan Alexander, the last living American hostage held in Gaza.

The 21-year-old New Jersey native will be the only living hostage in the next release, which will include the bodies of four dual nationals who died in captivity, the terror group said, as negotiations forged ahead on the second phase of a cease-fire deal with Israel.

Edan Alexander, a 21-year-old Israeli-American, will be released along with the bodies of four other hostages.

It wasn't immediately clear when the transfer would take place, or which parties participated in negotiating the deal.

Trump with the Alexander family on Oct. 7, 2024.

President Trump with the Alexander family on Oct. 7, 2024. Stephen Yang  
Hamas didn't release any further details. There was no immediate comment from Israel.

Alexander, an American-Israeli who enlisted with the Israeli military, was 19 when he was taken from his base in southern Israel during the Oct. 7, 2023, terror attack that sparked the war.

The Trump administration has been pushing for his release as a "top priority."

"Edan Alexander is very important to



us — as all the hostages are — but Edan Alexander is an American, and he's injured, so he's a top priority for us," Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff said just last week.

Meetings between Hamas leaders and US hostage negotiator Adam Boehler in recent days had been focused on securing his freedom.

It comes after the White House made a surprise announcement last week, saying that American officials had been engaging in "ongoing talks and discussions" with Hamas officials — stepping away from a long-held US policy of not directly engaging with terrorists.

It wasn't immediately clear, though, if those talks were in any way linked to Hamas' announcement about Alexander's release.

Still, Hamas' Friday announcement

comes as talks continued in Qatar to try to broker the next stage of the cease-fire.

The US, Qatar and Egypt have been trying to bridge differences between the terror group and Israel to restart negotiations in order to release the remaining hostages held in Gaza and facilitate the entry of aid into the war-torn enclave.

Israel had blocked the entry of aid trucks into Gaza on March 2 as a standoff over the truce escalated — with Hamas calling on mediators to intervene.

Fighting in Gaza, meanwhile, has been on pause since Jan. 19 under the first phase of the three-part cease-fire deal.

So far, Hamas has exchanged 33 Israeli hostages and five Thais for some 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and detainees.

# 12 injured as American Airline catches fire after diverting to Denver

By **Helen Okechukwu**

**T**welve passengers who sustained minor injuries from the American Airlines flight engulfed in flames have been transported to the hospital following the evacuation of all passengers and crew members through the slide.

Denver International Airport confirmed this in a post shared on their social media platform X.

“DEN emergency crews responded to an aircraft incident earlier this evening at gate C38. All passengers were safely evacuated from the plane. 12 people were transported to local hospitals with minor injuries. DEN operations are normal. Refer to @AmericanAir for further details,” Denver shared.

The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration



(FAA) said the American Airlines Boeing jet was engulfed in flames after landing at Denver International Airport in Colorado on Thursday.

The FAA statement added that Flight 1006, which was heading to Dallas Fort Worth from Colorado Springs Airport,

was later diverted to Denver after the crew observed engine vibrations.

Read Also: Motor accident claims one, injured six in Ogun

Local reports noted that 172 passengers and six crew members were led to the terminal.

“After landing and while taxiing to the gate, an engine caught fire, and passengers evacuated the aircraft using the slides,” the FAA said in a statement.

An airport spokesperson disclosed to a media outlet that firefighters had attended to the situation, according to a report.

Following the incident, the FAA said an investigation would be launched.

# Elon Musk's DOGE claims to have saved \$115bn

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

**T**he Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) being headed by billionaire businessman, Elon Musk has announced that it has saved approximately \$115bn through various cuts.

The recently created DOGE posted on its website the receipts of \$17.9 billion from contract cuts, over \$16.6 billion from grant cuts, and at least \$489.2 million from real estate cuts.

According to the data, DOGE has so far issued 13,640 receipts totaling



around \$35 billion.

Reports revealed that the General Services Administration suffered the most significant cuts from the department followed by the Department of Education, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Labour, and Office of Personnel Management.

Meanwhile, a federal judge had mandated Musk and DOGE to submit their downsizing plans and records detailing identities of those employed at the department and their strategies for reducing federal government spending and programmes.

The order came after 14 Democratic state attorneys general filed a lawsuit against President Trump, Musk, and DOGE, claiming that DOGE's actions are unconstitutional.

# Over 50 US universities being investigated for racial discrimination

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

**M**ore than 50 universities are being investigated for alleged racial discrimination as part of President Donald Trump's campaign to end diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programmes that his officials say exclude white and Asian American students.

The Education Department announced the new investigations Friday, one month after issuing a memo warning America's schools and colleges that they could lose federal money over "race-based preferences" in admissions, scholarships or any aspect of student life.

"Students must be assessed according to merit and accomplishment, not prejudged by the color of their skin," Education Secretary Linda McMahon said in a statement. "We will not yield on this commitment."

Most of the new inquiries are focused on colleges' partnerships with the PhD Project, a nonprofit that helps students from underrepresented groups get degrees in business with the goal of diversifying the business world.

Department officials said that the group limits eligibility based on race and that colleges that partner with it are "engaging in race-exclusionary practices in their graduate programmes."

The group of 45 colleges facing scrutiny over ties to the PhD Project include major public universities such as Arizona State, Ohio State and Rutgers, along with prestigious



private schools like Yale, Cornell, Duke and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

A message sent to the PhD Project was not immediately returned.

Six other colleges are being investigated for awarding "impermissible race-based scholarships," the department said, and another is accused of running a programme that segregates students on the basis of race.

Those seven are: Grand Valley State University, Ithaca College, the New England College of Optometry, the University of Alabama, the University of Minnesota, the University of South Florida and the University of Tulsa School of Medicine.

The department did not say which of the seven was being investigated for allegations of segregation.

The Feb. 14 memo from Trump's

Republican administration was a sweeping expansion of a 2023 Supreme Court decision that barred colleges from using race as a factor in admissions.

That decision focused on admissions policies at Harvard and the University of North Carolina, but the Education Department said it will interpret the decision to forbid race-based policies in any aspect of education, both in K-12 schools and higher education.

In the memo, Craig Trainor, acting assistant secretary for civil rights, had said schools' and colleges' diversity, equity and inclusion efforts have been "smuggling racial stereotypes and explicit race-consciousness into everyday training, programming and discipline."

The memo is being challenged in federal lawsuits from the nation's two largest teachers' unions. The suits say the memo is too vague and violates the free speech rights of educators.

# Rashford, Henderson in Tuchel's first England squad

By Dave Oludare Oso

Thomas Tuchel has named Marcus Rashford in his first England squad, bringing the Aston Villa forward in from the international wilderness to complete a stunning turnaround in his fortunes.

There is also a surprise return for Jordan Henderson, who is at Ajax and last played for England in November 2023, and Tuchel has given first call-ups to Dan Burn and Myles Lewis-Skelly. Jarell Quansah, Reece James and Kyle Walker are also included along with Rashford's Villa teammates Morgan Rogers and Ezri Konsa.

England squad:

Notable absentees are Manchester City's Jack Grealish and Rico Lewis, together with James Maddison, Conor Gallagher, Morgan Gibbs-White and Angel Gomes. Also on the outside are Adam Wharton, who has been regaining fitness after a groin injury, and Ben White.

Tuchel said White was not ready having made his first start in four months only this week but that the Arsenal defender had made himself available to return. There is also no place for Jarrad Branthwaite.

Rashford has shown flashes of his old self since his loan move to Villa from Manchester United in the winter transfer window, even though he has not scored and has started only once in the Premier League. The 27-year-old has supplied four assists in all competitions for Villa.

Tuchel, who confirmed Harry Kane would continue as the captain, has seen enough and he pointed to Rashford's work off the



ball at Villa as he prepares for the World Cup qualifiers at Wembley against Albania next Friday and Latvia the following Monday.

"He had a huge impact lately in the matches of Aston Villa," Tuchel said in an FA video. "I was delighted to see his effort [without] the ball, his effort to be the best teammate possible, his consistent energy in defence with Aston Villa. There is no doubt about his talent, about his quality, but to see him be so decisive, to be so physically involved, gave me the impression that it is the right moment to call him up and give him the extra push that he stays on that level."

Thomas Tuchel at the press conference following the announcement of his first England squad. Photograph: Andrew Boyers/Action Images/Reuters

Rashford won the most recent of his 60 England caps in the 1-0 friendly loss to Brazil at Wembley last March when he

came on as a 75th-minute substitute and struggled sorely – a performance of a piece with his toils last season when his form nose-dived under Erik ten Hag at United.

Rashford had enjoyed the most productive season of his career in 2022-23, scoring 30 goals in all competitions, but the situation became untenable for him at United under Ruben Amorim over the first half of this campaign. The United manager repeatedly questioned his attitude and at one point, even said that he would rather name the 63-year-old goalkeeper coach, Jorge Vital, as a substitute than Rashford.

Henderson fell out of favour under Gareth Southgate after a disastrous move from Liverpool to Saudi Arabia in the summer of 2023, and a subsequent transfer to Ajax in January 2024 was not enough to earn him a recall. Tuchel talked up the energy that Henderson will bring to the squad as he explained the inclusion.