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US President Donald Trump



Mrs Tinubu

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Buhari

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# Buhari's loyalists, CPC bloc in APC plot defection to SDP

By Dave Oludare Oso

Some former ministers of the immediate past president, Muhammadu Buhari, and other Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) chieftains in the All Progressives Congress (APC) are reportedly finalising plans to dump the ruling party for the Social Democratic Party (SDP).

According to Saturday PUNCH, a senator in the ninth Assembly, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said at least 10 former members in the Buhari cabinet are among those moving to the SDP.

The source had reportedly said. "What they're waiting for is the finalisation of the party structure in their respective states."

Also, the report stated that leading Buhari's loyalists in the planned defections are the former National Chairman of the APC, Abdullahi Adamu; ex-Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami; and former Senate President, Ahmed Lawan.

Already one of the henchmen in the former administration, Nasir El-Rufai, on Monday, officially defected to the SDP, citing a growing misalignment between his personal values and the current direction of the APC as the primary reason for his decision.

El-Rufai was a former governor of Kaduna State, and a Buhari loyalist to the core.

Announcing his defection, he said, "Developments in the last two years confirm that those who currently control and run the APC do not desire to acknowledge, much less address the party's unhealthy situation.

"I have raised concerns in private and, more recently, in public regarding the party's capricious trajectory. Therefore, at this point in my political journey, I have come to the conclusion that I must seek another political platform to pursue the progressive values I cherish."

The former minister of the Federal



Capital Territory (FCT), who is a vocal critic of President Bola Tinubu's administration, disclosed on Wednesday that he sought Buhari's approval before leaving the APC.

Speaking to the BBC Hausa service in an interview, El-Rufai said, "I left the APC with his (Buhari's) full knowledge. I visited him on a Friday and informed him of my decision to leave the party because I involve and consult with him on all my matters.

"I have those I consult with in everything I do. I inform them of anything I intend to do, and when they demand that I keep off, I do. My first godfather is Muhammadu Buhari.

"For the rest, I will not mention them because if I do, they'll be pressured."

The defection of the former Kaduna chief helmsman and Buhari's purported approval have opened a floodgate of defections as some other members of the APC in the North, especially those of Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) extraction have also been dumping the party.

Former President Buhari, El-Rufai, Malami, and Lawan were CPC leaders until the party joined the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), a part of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), and members of the New Peoples Democratic Party (nPDP) to form the APC in 2013.

The former Kaduna governor's statement also revealed the long-talked-about coalition involving some aggrieved leaders of the APC.

Following El-Rufai's defection, a chieftain of the APC, Ahmad Kaita, who is a former senator, and member of the House of Representatives from Katsina, also joined the SDP.

Kaita is also a former member of the CPC.

Similarly, former Kaduna State commissioners for Agriculture, Ibrahim Hussaini; Justice, Aisha Dikko; Health, Amina Baloni; and Education, Halima Lawal; as well as former Head of Service, Hajiya Bari'atu Mohammed, also dumped the APC for the SDP.

In a like manner, the Campaign Secretary of the APC in Gombe State during the 2015 general elections, Adamu Modibbo, has left the party. Modibbo is now the chairman of the SDP in the state.

A former Publicity Secretary of the APC in Borno State, Abdulaziz Galadima, while confirming his defection to the SDP to our correspondent, said he left the party because it deviated from the principles and ideology on which it was founded.

Galadima also confirmed that many original CPC members would leave the APC for "SDP or another party."

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9X6	254,977.00
9X5	225,738.00
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9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
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5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
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# Tinubu unbothered by 2027 elections – Presidency

By Friday Omosola

The Presidency has stated that President Bola Tinubu is not preoccupied with the 2027 elections, emphasising that his primary focus remains economic recovery and national development.

Sunday Dare, Tinubu's Special Adviser on Media and Public Communications in a statement shared on X yesterday, said the President is committed to implementing reforms rather than engaging in political maneuvering.

Dare highlighted notable improvements in key economic indicators, including rising foreign reserves, declining inflation, an expanding trade surplus, and new



investments exceeding \$50 billion.

not really in his view right now.

“We are seeing prices dropping. We have clear data, and you have a President who is clearly in the driver's seat, and he has stayed the course of the decisions he has taken. And I think that the next election is

“It's how to make sure that at the end of his first term, he can sit back and say, look, “I have impacted the lives of Nigerians. I have turned this economy around”.

# NAF airstrikes kill over 20 bandits, destroy hideouts in Katsina

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Air strikes from the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) have killed over 20 bandits, and destroyed notorious criminal hideouts in Unguwar Goga Hillforest, Ruwan Godiya Ward, the Faskari Local Government Area of Katsina State.

According to the NAF, the operation, carried out by the Air Component of Operation Fansan Yamma in the early hours of Thursday, targeted the fortified camps of two notorious bandit kingpins, Gero (Alhaji) and Alhaji Riga.

The Deputy Director of Public Relations and Information, Nigerian Air Force, Group Captain Kabiru Ali, in a statement on Friday night, said the airstrikes successfully neutralised over 20 bandits, with additional casualties reported in the surrounding rocky hills.

The statement read, “The Nigerian Air



Force has delivered a devastating blow to banditry in Katsina State, as the Air Component of Operation Fansan Yamma executed a precision airstrike in early hours of 13 March 2025, decimating notorious bandit hideouts in Unguwar Goga Hillforest, Ruwan Godiya Ward, Faskari Local Government Area.

“The airstrikes, which preceded careful and actionable intelligence advancing

purposeful lethality, destroyed the fortified camps of notorious bandit kingpins, Gero (Alhaji) and Alhaji Riga, neutralising over 20 criminals, with additional casualties reported in the surrounding rocky hills.

“The airstrike had a decisive impact on the criminals, assessment of the full extent of the damage is ongoing.”

Ali said Riga and Gero were key enablers of banditry in the region, providing shelter for terrorist elements responsible for deadly ambushes along the Funtua-Gusau Road, particularly between Yankara and Sheme villages.

He added that their elimination is seen as a major breakthrough in the ongoing military campaign to restore peace in the North-West.

# Shettima: FG committed to Plateau's stability, economic growth

By Friday Omosola

Vice President Kashim Shettima has reaffirmed the Federal Government's (FG) commitment to ensuring lasting peace, stability, and economic development in Plateau State and across Nigeria.

Speaking in Jos on Saturday during a condolence visit to Sheikh Sani Yahaya Jingir, the National Chairman of the Council of Ulama, Jama'atu Izalatul Bid'ah Wa'Ikamatis Sunnah (JIBWIS), Shettima conveyed President Bola Tinubu's condolences over the passing of Sheikh Saidu Hassan Jingir.

"President Bola Ahmed Tinubu specifically directed me to assure the people of Plateau that this administration places a high premium on the peace and economic prosperity of this strategic state," Shettima said.

"We recognize the critical role Plateau plays in our national cohesion and development agenda."

The Vice President commended the state government for its peace-building efforts, emphasising that the FG will continue to support initiatives aimed at maintaining stability.

"We must acknowledge and applaud the tireless efforts of the state government in maintaining the peace we now enjoy in Plateau. Without peace, there can be no meaningful development," he stated.

While offering prayers for the late Sheikh Saidu Hassan Jingir, who served as the Deputy National Chairman of the Ulama Council of



JIBWIS, Shettima also expressed optimism about Nigeria's future.

"I want to assure all Nigerians that better days lie ahead. The economic reforms being implemented by President Tinubu are designed with the long-term prosperity of our nation in mind. We are already seeing early positive indicators, and we ask for your continued patience and support," he added.

However, Jingir expressed gratitude to the Federal Government for its show of compassion during this difficult period.

"This visit demonstrates the human side of governance that often goes unnoticed. We are deeply touched by this gesture," Jingir said.

He also praised the administration's responsiveness to infrastructure needs, citing the recent approval of N33 billion for the reconstruction of the Jos-Saminaka-Kaduna road as a sign of a

government that listens and acts.

"The economic and agricultural initiatives of this government have begun yielding tangible results. We are witnessing a gradual but steady reduction in the prices of essential commodities, particularly foodstuffs. This offers hope to ordinary Nigerians and validates the direction of your policies," he added.

On security, Jingir highlighted the growing unity among Plateau residents, stating that people of different faiths are embracing peaceful coexistence.

"This unity was clearly demonstrated during the funeral of our departed brother, Sheikh Saidu Hassan Jingir, where people from diverse religious backgrounds came together in unprecedented numbers to pay their respects. This is the Plateau we want to see and build upon," he noted.

# Christians not targetted for killings in Nigeria - FG

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Federal Government has dismissed recent reports alleging the targeted killing of Christians in Nigeria, describing them as part of a misleading campaign aimed at pressuring foreign governments to classify the country as a “Country of Particular Concern.”

The Federal Government, in a statement issued on Friday by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’s Acting Spokesperson, Kimiebi Ebienna, rejected the allegations, asserting that they misrepresent the security situation in Nigeria.

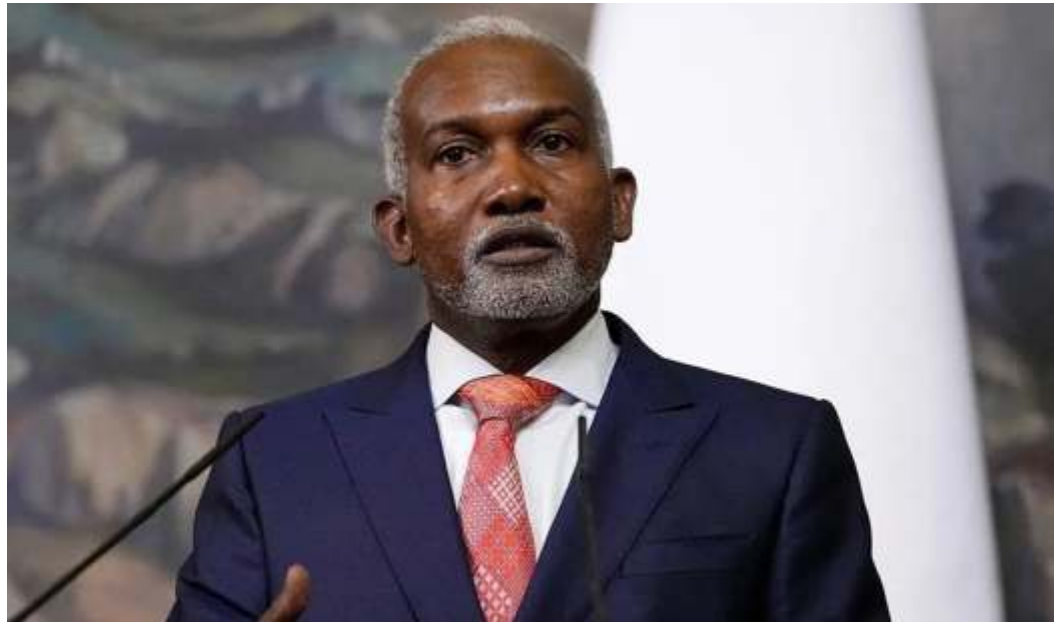
The development came following reports that the United States House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa has authorised President Donald Trump to impose sanctions on Nigeria over alleged widespread attacks on Christians and escalating religious violence.

During a congressional hearing on Wednesday, the US lawmakers criticised Nigeria’s perceived failure to safeguard Christian communities from attacks.

However, the Nigerian government has reiterated its commitment to ensuring the safety of all citizens, regardless of religious affiliation, and urged the international community to avoid being swayed by misinformation.

A report by the Observatory for Religious Freedom in Africa, cited during the hearing, revealed that Nigeria accounted for 90 percent of all Christians killed globally each year. Between October 2019 and September 2023, over 55,000 people were killed, and an additional 21,000 were abducted by terrorist groups.

However, the ministry acknowledged the



country’s security challenges but stressed that such incidents are not motivated by religious bias. It said that the majority of violence in the predominantly Muslim northern region stems from criminality, insurgency, and banditry, not religious persecution.

The statement read in part, “The Ministry of Foreign Affairs wishes to express strong concern over the recent wave of misinformation and misleading reports regarding the supposed targeted killings of Christians in Nigeria.

“The unfortunate development is intended to influence foreign governments, especially the United States Government, to designate Nigeria a Country of Particular Concern, due to the violence against Christians.

“While the Federal Government acknowledges the security challenges confronting the nation, it is imperative to clarify that these negative activities are not driven by religious bias, nor targeted against any particular religious group.

“It should be noted that the majority of incidents relating to insurgency and banditry that occur in the predominantly Muslim northern part of Nigeria are not targeted at followers of a particular faith or religion. Any narrative that seeks to

give such incidents a colouration of religious persecution is erroneous and misleading.”

According to the statement, the ministry emphasised that Nigeria is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious nation, and the government remains committed to protecting all citizens, regardless of faith or ethnicity.

The ministry highlighted the government’s ongoing efforts to combat security threats, including military actions against insurgents and bandits, and efforts to address communal clashes, such as those between farmers and herders.

“The government of Nigeria, under the leadership of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, has taken significant steps to address these security concerns, including the deployment of security forces, intelligence gathering and community engagement initiatives.

“Indeed, the military has recorded substantial gains in curtailing the activities of bandits and insurgents. “To bring an end to such security challenges, both the federal and state authorities have embarked on kinetic and non-kinetic methods and expedited the implementation of the national livestock

# INEC prepares for 2027 general election with new election project plan

By **Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye**

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has begun the process of formulating its Election Project Plan (EPP) ahead of Nigeria's 2027 general election. A senior official within the commission disclosed this

This proactive step is part of INEC's effort to refine and improve its election processes, with lessons learned from the 2023 general election being applied to the planning of the upcoming poll.

The official revealed that the commission is updating its election templates in anticipation of the 2027 election cycle, with an emphasis on improving the efficiency and reliability of its operations.

"The formulation also includes the production of the 2027–2031 Strategic Plan, which will replace the current 2022–2026 plan set to end in December 2026. An important aspect of this initiative is the preparation of a key document that will bridge the gap between the current strategic plan and the election year, which the existing 2022–2026 plan does not cover. This document will lay the groundwork for the 2027 EPP," the official explained.

While the 2022–2026 Strategic Plan primarily focused on institutionalising the commission's processes to ensure smooth delivery of its mandate, the EPP will specifically target the logistics and operations of the general election.

The earlier plan concentrated on areas such as capacity building, professional development, and optimising resource



management across a four-year cycle. In contrast, the new EPP will be a comprehensive framework focused solely on the challenges and requirements of a general election.

The EPP concept was first introduced for the 2015 general election and has been used in subsequent elections, including the 2019 and 2023 general elections. With each new cycle, INEC has adapted and evolved the plan to address emerging challenges.

Following the difficulties faced during the 2023 elections, the commission is making concerted efforts to fine-tune its processes to ensure smoother operations in future elections.

One of the key challenges in 2023 was managing a massive voter base of 93,469,008 registered voters across 176,846 polling units. The election involved the deployment of over 1.5 million personnel, including polling

staff, supervisors, and security officers, as well as 182,491 vehicles to cover Nigeria's vast and diverse terrain.

However, technical glitches in uploading presidential election results to the INEC Result Viewing (IREV) portal were one of the major issues that marred the election. While the system worked effectively for National Assembly results, the presidential results faced delays due to a configuration error.

The problem arose from difficulties in mapping the nationwide presidential results to the system, which was designed to handle state-specific election data.

This issue was eventually addressed through software updates, and the first presidential election result was successfully uploaded later on election day.

# Malami denies Obasanjo's corruption allegations, defends role in Presidential pardons

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The former Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami, SAN, has vehemently denied corruption allegations levelled against him by former President Olusegun Obasanjo.

In his recently released book, *Nigeria: Past and Future*, Obasanjo accused Malami of playing a central role in the "enthronement of corruption" during the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari.

Obasanjo's scathing criticism asserts that corruption was rampant under Buhari's government, with Malami allegedly facilitating practices that undermined efforts to combat graft.

Describing Malami as a "devil's workshop," Obasanjo claimed that his actions were among the most significant examples of waste and corruption during the former president's tenure.

The allegations are primarily linked to the controversial pardons granted to two former governors, Joshua Dariye of Plateau State and Jolly Nyame of Taraba State.

Both governors, who had been convicted of embezzling large sums of state funds, were granted presidential pardons in April 2022 by the Council of State, which was presided over by Buhari.

Dariye was serving a 10-year sentence for embezzling N1.126 billion, while Nyame was serving a 12-year sentence for misappropriating N1.64 billion.

Both were released from Kuje Correctional Facility in August 2022, just months after receiving their pardons, which were based on claims of age and ill-health.

Obasanjo alleged that the pardons were strongly influenced by Malami and were riddled with corruption. He further claimed that the health issues of the former governors were later found to be exaggerated, casting doubt on the legitimacy of the pardons.



"It was all part of Malami's financial shenanigans, and he played many of such to his advantage. His principal concurred, condoned, turned a blind eye and a deaf ear, and paid lip service to fighting corruption while cohabitating comfortably with corruption in multifarious ways," Obasanjo wrote.

In response, Malami dismissed the allegations in an exclusive interview, emphasising that the process of granting pardons is governed by law, not by the Attorney General. He explained that it is a legal matter managed by a committee on the prerogative of mercy, and not an individual official.

"The issue of pardon is a legal matter regulated by law and prevailing applicable legislation, where a committee on prerogative of mercy, and not the Attorney General, is responsible," Malami stated.

He further clarified that his role was limited to presenting the committee's report to the Council of State, and that the responsibility for any action or inaction concerning the pardons lay with the committee, not with him.

Malami also addressed the broader issue of corruption allegations in Nigerian politics, which he claimed are often

unsubstantiated and reckless.

He criticised the frequent nature of such accusations, both in Nigeria and internationally, and called for a more evidence-based approach.

"Our system and polity are characterised by wild and unsubstantiated allegations of corruption as it relates to official acts of governance. We are living witnesses to unguarded allegations even against our well-respected presidents during international media engagements. The Hard Talk interview of President Obasanjo was a relevant case in point," Malami remarked.

The former Minister of Justice concluded by emphasising that for any corruption or bribery allegation to be credible, it must be backed by specific details, including amounts, facilitators, and the methods of bribery. Without such particulars, Malami argued, such allegations remain baseless, mischievous, and unsuitable for legal pursuit.

# Nigeria on path to transformation, says Tinubu's wife

By Friday Omosola

The wife of President Bola Tinubu, Oluremi, has described Nigeria as a work in progress, asserting that the country is on course for significant transformation under her husband's administration, especially with critical internal and external support.

She made this remark while receiving Spouses of Heads of Missions to Nigeria in her office.

Mrs Tinubu noted that the nation has been experiencing gradual yet steady progress, which she believes will be sustained to achieve greater impact.

She also highlighted her efforts through the 'Renewed Hope Initiative (RHI)', aimed at improving education for Nigerian children, enhancing healthcare, and uplifting the livelihoods of the average citizen.

Addressing the issue of Almajiri children, she reiterated that the challenge is not insurmountable and requires collective action for a lasting solution.

She said: "When you said you would like to educate all of us, that would be great. Nigeria is the most populous nation in Africa, and that is a huge number. We have about 18.5 million of this group not having any formal education at all; these are children looking for Islamic education; we are still looking at that, and the weight alone is something else.

"As you said, taking one day at a time matters; we cannot say that just because the challenges are huge does not mean that they cannot be surmountable. The type of school we are planning and proposing for them is like a boarding school because



these children are the ones you see outside begging with plates in their hands begging for food, but they are not beggars. They just came for the master's knowledge and did not have food to eat.

"Anybody that is God fearing will shun crime; some of these children were molested. Therefore, we are looking at what we can do, and we are quite hopeful and taking huge steps as well to help them. Talking about the out-of-school children, the challenge is quite daunting, but we are doing whatever we can, and we are also looking for assistance wherever we can get one, and it looks promising".

She thanked the visiting group for their continuous support of Nigerian women and children, emphasizing that women form the foundation of great nations.

The wife of the Israeli Ambassador to Nigeria, Sigalit Freeman, who led two other members of the Association of Spouses of Heads of Mission—the wives of the Guinea-Bissau and Canadian ambassadors—commended Senator Oluremi Tinubu for her dedication, not only as Nigeria's First Lady but also in her previous roles as a legislator and the wife of a governor.

Mrs Freeman noted that the group's visit was in recognition of Mrs Tinubu's commitment to improving the well-being of vulnerable groups in the country and exploring opportunities for collaboration.

She further explained that one of the group's key objectives is to ensure that all Nigerians, especially women and children, have access to education.

"Every year, we have become more active and trying to fulfil the purpose of the mission, and in our group, we are working with different organisations like widows organisation, schools with kids, the hospitals here in Abuja and together, we are trying to do the best for the people that are admitted in the hospitals.

"For this year, we decided to choose an NGO that is focusing on education, and we hope that together with you, the First Lady, we can fulfil our mission in our group".

"We are trying to do our best to bring education to the kids in Nigeria; this is what we want; it may take up to three to five years; we are following you; we are seeing what you are doing for your people in education for kids and women in Nigeria".

# 2027 Polls: El-Rufai calls on Atiku, Obi, Aregbesola to join SDP

By Friday Omosola

Former Kaduna State Governor, Nasir El-Rufai, has ruled out the possibility of a political merger and instead called on former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, ex-Labour Party presidential candidate Peter Obi, Rauf Aregbesola and other opposition figures to align with the Social Democratic Party (SDP) for the 2027 elections.

El-Rufai's appeal comes shortly after he resigned from the All Progressives Congress (APC), citing irreconcilable differences with the party's current direction.

In an interview with BBC Hausa, he urged opposition leaders to unite under SDP to challenge President Bola Tinubu in the next general election.

Meanwhile, the Presidency has downplayed concerns over the 2027 elections, insisting that Tinubu's priority remains economic recovery and national development.

A statement shared on X by Tinubu's Special Adviser on Media and Public Communications, Sunday Dare, emphasised that the President is focused on delivering reforms rather than engaging in



political manoeuvring.

The Presidency highlighted improvements in key economic indicators, including rising foreign reserves, declining inflation, increased trade surplus, and new investments exceeding \$50 billion.

However, El-Rufai remains unconvinced by Tinubu's administration's performance.

During his BBC interview, he reiterated his belief that the opposition must rally around the SDP to mount a formidable challenge in 2027.

"My hope and prayer are that Atiku Abubakar, Peter Obi, Rotimi Amaechi, Rauf Aregbesola, and other opposition leaders will join SDP—not to form a merger or create a new party, but to build a strong alternative," he stated.

Reflecting on his past support for

Tinubu, El-Rufai admitted disappointment in the administration's performance.

"We supported this government with the hope that Tinubu would replicate his achievements in Lagos at the national level. Despite knowing his controversies in Chicago, we believed he could deliver. Unfortunately, he has failed," he said.

On his potential presidential ambition in 2027, El-Rufai remained noncommittal, stating that the decision would be left to the party and the people.

"It is not my decision to make. It is up to the party and the electorate. Even when I ran for governor, it was people who approached and convinced (Muhammadu) Buhari, who then urged me to contest," he explained.

# Wike: I won't interfere with Rivers Assembly's duties

By Friday Omosola

The Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike, has declared that he has no intention of preventing the Rivers State House of Assembly from carrying out its constitutional responsibilities.

Speaking at a Thanksgiving/Civic Reception in Abalama, Asari-Toru Local Government Area, on Saturday.

Wike said he had anticipated the ongoing political turmoil in the state and had advised Governor Siminalayi Fubara on how to handle it.

However, according to him, the governor chose to ignore his counsel and instead surrounded himself with individuals he described as "ungrateful."

He criticised Fubara for allegedly withholding the salaries and allowances of the 27 lawmakers led by Martin Amaewhule, believing that those advising him had assured him that there would be no consequences.

Wike, who governed Rivers State before Fubara, stated that his only offence was urging the governor to take care of those who had supported his election rather than abandoning them after assuming office.

Recalling the events leading up to the state's governorship primaries, Wike claimed that Fubara had initially declined to contest and instead suggested former Commissioner of Finance Isaac Kamalu for the position.

"All the local government chairmen, assembly members, and National



Assembly representatives worked hard to get you elected. I only advised you not to neglect them. Was that a crime?" Wike questioned.

He dismissed accusations that he was demanding financial favours from the governor, stating, "They claim I'm always asking for money. What money? Has the money come?"

Wike further accused Fubara's allies of exploiting state resources while contributing nothing meaningful.

He warned the governor that those advising him had misled him into thinking that power and money were enough to navigate the crisis.

Reflecting on the state's ongoing development projects, he asserted that many, including the Ring Road project, were conceived during his administration and handed over to Fubara.

He challenged the governor to name any initiative he had personally introduced.

"You can insult me all you want; it doesn't bother me. Insults don't kill. What matters is the outcome. Who is suffering

from high blood pressure now? Certainly not me," Wike quipped.

He criticized the decision to withhold lawmakers' salaries for over a year, arguing that it left them unable to support their families.

He noted that Fubara's supporters had reassured him that no repercussions would follow, yet the situation had now escalated.

Emphasising the independence of the legislature, Wike insisted that the House of Assembly must be allowed to operate freely.

"The Assembly must be allowed to perform its constitutional functions. Those who genuinely seek peace do not resort to threats," he stated.

Meanwhile, the Assembly recently adjourned its sittings indefinitely, just days before Governor Fubara was scheduled to present the 2025 Appropriation Bill on March 19.

# 19,000 Natasha supporters demand Akpabio's resignation

By Adeniyi Yusuf

No fewer than 19,221 supporters of Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, the lawmaker representing Kogi Central Senatorial District, have called on Senate President Godswill Akpabio to step down for investigation following the senator's suspension.

Senator Natasha was suspended based on a recommendation by the Senate Committee on Ethics, Privileges, and Public Petitions, which proposed a six-month suspension over allegations of sexual harassment involving the Senate President.

As part of the suspension, her security details, aides, and salary have been revoked for the duration, and she has been instructed to cease performing any senatorial duties.

The Chairman of the Committee, Senator Neda Imasuen, presented the panel's report at the plenary, stating that Natasha was guilty of all allegations against her and that she had failed to submit herself for review by the legislative committee regarding her conduct.

The Kogi Central Senator has announced her intention to challenge the six-month suspension in court, following a dispute with Senate President Godswill Akpabio over seating arrangements in the red chamber.

Meanwhile, Natasha's supporters are demanding justice, calling for a thorough investigation into the matter.

A petition with 19,221 signatures was launched on Change.org, calling for justice.

The petition, initiated by the Purple Women Foundation, founded by Ireti



Bakare-Yusuf, demands justice for Natasha and urges the Senate President to step down for an investigation under the title:

“Demand Justice for Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan!”

The petition reads:

“We, the Purple Women Foundation, demand that Senate President Godswill Akpabio STEP DOWN immediately to allow for a fair and unbiased investigation into the sexual harassment allegations made by Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan! We demand the immediate resignation of Senate President Godswill Akpabio, a transparent and impartial investigation, and justice for survivors of sexual harassment. Let's come together to demand justice and create a safe and respectful environment for all.”

In a recent development, Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan filed a contempt suit against Akpabio and others over her six-month suspension without pay from the Senate.

The Form 48 contempt charge, filed before the Federal High Court in Abuja and reviewed on Thursday, names the Clerk of the National Assembly and the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Ethics, Privileges, and Code of Conduct, Senator Neda Imasuen, as co-defendants.

On March 4, Justice Obiora Egwuatu of the Federal High Court in Abuja issued a ruling on an ex parte motion filed by Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan's legal team, led by Michael Numa (SAN). The court ordered the Senate Committee on Ethics, Privileges, and Code of Conduct to halt any investigation into the senator regarding alleged misconduct during the February 20, 2025 plenary session and the subsequent referral on February 25, 2025. The court ruled that the order would remain in effect until the hearing and determination of a motion for an interlocutory injunction.

The court also directed the defendants to explain why an interlocutory injunction should not be granted to prevent them from proceeding with the investigation. Additionally, the court declared that any actions taken while the suit was pending would be considered null, void, and of no effect.

However, just two days after the court's ruling, the Senate proceeded with its decision to suspend Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan for six months.

# Adebayo predicts Tinubu's defeat in 2027, vows to run for Presidency again

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Adewole Adebayo, the 2023 presidential candidate for the Social Democratic Party (SDP), has confidently predicted that President Bola Tinubu will be ousted in the 2027 general election.

Adebayo also boldly claimed that his party would produce the next Nigerian President.

Appearing on Arise Television's The Morning Show on Friday, March 14, Adebayo expressed certainty about Tinubu's defeat, asserting, "Tinubu is going to be removed from power, that one is sure, and there would be an SDP president."

He added that the SDP's chances of victory in 2027 were assured, signalling that his party was poised to lead the country in the next election cycle.

Adebayo, who is a prominent figure within the SDP, further revealed his ambition to contest the presidency again in 2027. He made it clear that he would be the party's candidate, irrespective of any high-profile defections to the SDP in the coming years.

"Let us understand something. I don't worry about that; everybody who is coming in knows I will run in 2027," Adebayo stated, unfazed by the political manoeuvrings of other party



members.

"Any coward who will feel threatened by people coming to his party cannot be president," he added, implying that only the confident and unshakeable could lead the nation.

His comments come in the wake of the high-profile defection of former Kaduna State Governor Nasir El-Rufai to the SDP.

Since El-Rufai's shift to the party earlier this week, there has been increased speculation about his political future, with reports suggesting that he may play a key role in the party's preparations for 2027.

Despite the political weight of El-Rufai's defection, Adebayo remained undeterred, describing the former governor as a hardworking and patriotic Nigerian.

He acknowledged El-Rufai's effectiveness in areas where government performance has been lacking.

"The reason why I welcome El-Rufai to my party is that I see him as a patriotic Nigerian, hardworking, very effective in an area where we don't have effective people in government," Adebayo said.

El-Rufai's defection to the SDP has prompted discussions about the potential reshaping of the political landscape ahead of the 2027 elections.

The former governor, known for his controversial yet influential leadership, is expected to make significant political moves to recruit more politicians to the SDP, further positioning the party as a formidable contender in the race for the presidency.

# INEC sets up committee for 2027 election planning

By Friday Omosola

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has established a dedicated Election Project Plan Committee (EPPC) to coordinate the strategic framework for the 2027 general elections.

The committee held its inaugural meeting this week in Abuja, marking the beginning of its mandate to design a structured and efficient electoral roadmap.

Chaired by Prof Rhoda H. Gumus, the committee is responsible for outlining a clear work plan, forming sub-committees, creating an Elections Project Plan (EPP) Template, and setting deadlines for submission of key planning documents.

Key INEC National Commissioners serving on the committee include: Kenneth Ukeagu as Chair, Tenders Board, Baba Bila as Chair, EOLC—Sam



Olumekunas Chair, EPMC and Abdullahi Abdu Zuru as Chair, BEI

During the meeting, Gumus stressed the need for meticulous planning to enhance the credibility and efficiency of Nigeria's electoral system.

She encouraged committee members to approach their responsibilities with diligence, ensuring that the electoral process remains transparent and well-structured.

# Fresh concerns as Rivers assembly adjourns indefinitely

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Rivers State House of Assembly on Friday, suspended its sittings indefinitely following a plenary session presided over by the Speaker, Martin Amaewhule at the assembly complex in Port Harcourt.

This development comes shortly after the state governor, Siminalayi Fubara officially informed the Speaker of his intention to re-present the 2025 budget for legislative consideration and approval.

The governor, had, in a letter dated March 13, 2025, and addressed to Amaewhule, proposed March 19 as the fresh date for the budget presentation or any other date within the month that the Assembly finds suitable.

Noting that his decision aligns with a Supreme Court ruling and follows the



lawmakers' request for him to re-present the budget, the governor also recalled his previous attempt to present the budget at the Assembly Quarters, where lawmakers had been holding their sessions but was denied access to the complex.

The Assembly's decision to adjourn legislative sittings raises fresh concerns about the lawmakers' implementation of the Supreme Court's ruling.

On February 28, the apex court directed the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and the Attorney General of the Federation to withhold funds meant for Rivers State until a duly constituted House of Assembly, comprising all elected members, is in place.

The budget presentation is crucial to the release of these funds. As of Friday, March 14, 2025, local government workers in the state had yet to receive their February salaries following the Supreme Court's judgment, which led to the removal of the 23 local government chairmen.

Similarly, civil servants in Rivers State have expressed concerns over salary payments for March, as the budget has not yet been presented in line with the court's directive.

# WICKED! Jigawa teacher beheads teenage student, removes his genitals

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

**A** 45-year-old teacher, Musa Wada, has been arrested by the Jigawa State Police Command over the gruesome murder of his 14-year-old Almajiri student, Bashir Adamu.

According to the state Police Command, the suspect allegedly beheaded the teenager and mutilated his genitals in a bid to mislead the public into believing the killing was a ritual attack.

Police spokesperson, SP Lawan Shiisu, who confirmed the arrest in a statement on Saturday, said detectives apprehended Wada following a tip-off.

Shiisu noted that during interrogation, the suspect admitted that Bashir Adamu died while being punished for absenteeism from school.

In an attempt to cover up the incident, he decided to behead the victim and cut off his genitals.

“The suspect confessed that the deceased collapsed and died while serving punishment. To divert attention, he mutilated the body to create the impression that it was a ritual killing,” SP Shiisu stated.

The statement further read, “On 13/03/2025 at about 1530hrs, one Mal. Musa Wada ‘m’ age 45yrs of Jikas-Dabaja village, Gwaram LGA,



was arrested in connection with the gruesome killing of his pupil (Almajiri), one Bashir Adamu.

“Following a tip-off, detectives attached to the Gwaram Division successfully arrested the suspect.

“On interrogation at the State Criminal Investigation Department Dutse, the suspect confessed that, the late Bashir Adamu was his student but refused to come to school; when he questioned him about the reason for his absence, he failed to provide a satisfactory response; as a result, he decided to punish him.”

Shiisu explained that in the process, Bashir lost consciousness and passed away.

While attempting to deceive the public into believing that ritualists had killed Bashir, he decided to cut

off his head and genital organs.

“He added that the removed head and genital organs were buried in his farmland.

“Recall that, on 12/03/2025 at about 2200hrs, information from Divisional Police Headquarters Gwaram, noted that, beheaded body with no genital organs was sighted by the roadside along Jikas-Dabaja village, Gwaram LGA which already started decomposing.”

He said that the corpse was later identified as Bashir Adamu, a student (Almajiri) of one Mal Musa Wada.

“Upon completion of investigation, the suspect will be arraigned before the court to face the full wrath of the law,” Shiisu added.

# LASG cracks down on illegal buildings in Ikoyi-Obalende, Lekki

By Friday Omosola

The Lagos State Government has sealed multiple illegal buildings in Obalende, Ikoyi, and Lekki as part of its ongoing efforts to enforce physical planning laws and curb unauthorized developments.

Leading the enforcement exercise on Thursday, the Commissioner for Physical Planning and Urban Development, Oluyinka Olumide, emphasised the government's commitment to creating a safe and sustainable built environment for all residents.

He expressed concern over the widespread disregard for planning regulations, citing cases of construction without government-approved plans and unauthorized renovations.

Olumide warned that illegal developments undermine Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu's T.H.E.M.E.S Plus Agenda, particularly its goal of making Lagos a 21st-century economy.



"I implore all property owners and developers in the state, especially those planning construction or renovation, to obtain the necessary approvals from the Lagos State Physical Planning Permit Authority (LASPPPA). Unpermitted developments and renovations will no longer be tolerated," he stated.

During the enforcement exercise, officials sealed multiple sites for lacking required permits.

Affected locations included Rummens

Road and Bourdillon Road in Ikoyi, Wole Olateju Crescent, Ogbunike Street, and Hilary Onikogu Crescent in Lekki Phase I, as well as various sites in Obalende.

The Commissioner urged residents to report physical planning violations early to help the government take swift action in sustaining Lagos's urban development agenda.

Also present during the exercise was the General Manager of the Lagos State Planning and Environmental Monitoring Agency (LASPEMA), Daisi Oso, who led the sealing of illegal developments in informal spaces.

The operation was further supported by officials from the Monitoring and Compliance Unit of LASPPPA.

The government reiterated its zero-tolerance stance on illegal buildings, warning that enforcement actions would continue across the state.

# Tears as varsity student drowns in River Benue

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A 24-year-old student of Benue State University (BSU), Makurdi, Mr. Abel Agaba, has reportedly drowned while swimming in River Benue.

A source close to the family, said the 200-level Chemistry student, had gone missing on Thursday night after heading to the river to cool off due to intense heat.

However, after he was not heard off afterwards, a search party recovered his remains on Friday morning.

A family friend, who spoke on condition of anonymity, revealed that Agaba, who lived with relatives around Awe Street in the Wurukum area of Makurdi, had earlier watched a football match at a local viewing centre with his friends.



The source said after the game, at approximately 11:45 p.m., he decided to take a swim in the nearby river, an outing that tragically ended in his untimely death.

His disappearance sparked concern, leading to a search effort that culminated in the discovery of his body the following morning.

He said, "We learnt that after watching

the European football matches that finished at about 11.45pm, he said he was hot and wanted to swim in River Benue to cool his body.

"Though those with him advised him against going to the River as it was already too late, he insisted and went since it was the usual practice around the area for people to go swimming at night whenever there is intense heat as we have now.

"He went alone and nobody bothered to check on him till Friday morning when a fisherman in the neighbourhood went to the River to check his fishing net for fishes and discovered Agaba's lifeless body attached to his fishing net.

"The man raised the alarm and people went and recovered his body which was

# Nigerian Nurse to leave UK over alleged exam malpractice

By Helen Okechukwu

Several Nigerian nurses in the United Kingdom are facing deportation following an ongoing investigation into alleged exam malpractice linked to a test center in Ibadan, Nigeria.

The UK Home Office has revoked their visas, instructing them to leave the country despite pending appeals.

The probe, initiated by the UK's Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), focuses on suspected fraud at Yunnik Technologies Test Centre, says The Hope Newspaper.

In 2023, the NMC detected irregularities in the computer-based test (CBT) results, a mandatory exam for foreign-trained nurses seeking UK registration.



The council subsequently declared all results from the center invalid.

According to NMC findings, 48 registered nurses and 669 applicants may have obtained fraudulent results.

As a result, independent panels were set up to review each case.

Read Also: Ondo Govt to Nurses: No basis for striking

However, in February 2025, about 50 affected nurses filed a pre-action protocol letter against the NMC, accusing it of delaying hearings and urging collaboration with the Home Office to allow them to stay in the UK while their cases were reviewed.

Despite these legal efforts, the Home Office has issued removal orders, requiring the nurses to leave the UK starting next week.

The decision raises concerns about the future of Nigerian healthcare workers seeking career opportunities abroad and the potential impact on the UK's already strained healthcare system.

# Kaduna to strengthen PHC workforce through task-shifting policy

By Helen Okechukwu

Kaduna State is set to enhance its Primary Healthcare (PHC) system by reinforcing the implementation of its Task-Shifting and Task-Sharing (TSTS) policy.

It is a strategy designed to address workforce shortages and improve service delivery at grassroots levels.

Dr. Aisha Abubakar-Sadiq, Permanent Secretary of the Kaduna State Ministry of Health, made this known during a stakeholders' meeting on the TSTS policy implementation.

She reiterated the state's commitment to optimizing its human resources for health (HRH) before initiating new recruitments.

She highlighted that before health sector can be cleared for recruitment, its focus is to enhance the capacity of our existing workforce while sharing responsibilities strategically to boost efficiency in healthcare delivery.

The meeting, supported by a new



investment from the Gates Foundation to Pathfinder International and its consortium partner, Impact Catalyst, aimed to gather expert input and ensure the policy aligns with Kaduna's healthcare priorities.

It also sought to strengthen collaboration between government agencies, implementing partners, and professional associations.

Read Also: FG commission 20-bed PHC in Lagos, Plans for expansion

Dr. Jonathan Gajere, Director of Medical Services, highlighted that Kaduna State,

like other states in Nigeria, has recognized the pressing need to expand healthcare access, especially in rural and underserved areas.

One of the major focuses has been empowering Community Health Extension Workers (CHEWs) to provide contraceptive implants and conducting research to evaluate TSTS feasibility at the community level.

Ensuring quality service delivery particularly in rural area, Gajere said, "The strategies involved redistributing tasks among different healthcare workers to maximise efficiency and improve access to quality healthcare."

He further noted that Kaduna had domesticated the national TSTS policy in 2017 to optimize the existing workforce and improve efficiency in healthcare services.

The policy framework addresses HRH needs by allowing trained personnel to handle expanded responsibilities under supervision, says VON report.

# Why Nigerian democracy is failing: Untold story of political godfathers

By **Damilola Olufemi**

The Fubara-Wike saga is the latest episode in Nigeria's long-running drama of godfather-godson conflicts. This phenomenon has played out in various states, including Enugu, Borno, Anambra, Osun, Abia, Kano, Edo, Sokoto, Cross River, Benue, and Taraba, shaping the country's political landscape.

At the core of these conflicts is the struggle for power and control. Godfathers, often former governors, attempt to maintain influence over their successors, who may resist the arrangement in a bid for independence. This unfortunate reality is currently unfolding in Rivers State, where Governor Siminalayi Fubara and former Governor Nyesom Wike have become entangled in a fierce political standoff.

The disagreement reportedly began when Wike submitted a list of commissioners and special advisers to Fubara without his input. This unilateral move sparked a power tussle, with Fubara later challenging some of the appointments and policies imposed by Wike. The situation escalated dramatically, leading to 27 lawmakers defecting from the People's Democratic Party (PDP) to the All Progressives Congress (APC). President Bola Tinubu intervened, proposing an eight-point peace agreement, yet the implementation remains a subject of intense political contention.



This is not an isolated case. Similar conflicts have emerged across Nigeria, with former godfathers and their protégés falling out, resulting in political instability and governance disruptions. In Kano State, former Governor Musa Kwankwaso clashed with his erstwhile protégé, Umar Ganduje, further exemplifying the deep-rooted nature of political power struggles in the country. These disputes frequently lead to legislative deadlocks, judicial battles, and, in extreme cases, violence that disrupts governance and weakens democratic institutions.

The history of godfatherism in Nigerian politics is littered with cases of bitter rivalries. In Oyo State, Lamidi Adedibu, the "strongman of Ibadan politics," played a crucial role in Rashidi Ladoja's rise to power in 2003. However, their relationship soon soured due to disagreements over

governance and the distribution of political appointments. The feud resulted in a gross violation of constitutional norms, culminating in Ladoja's impeachment by 18 out of 32 House of Assembly members and the deaths of at least eight people.

In Kwara State, Olusola Saraki supported Mohammed Lawal's gubernatorial bid in 1999, but tensions escalated when Lawal sought autonomy from Saraki's influence. This led to violent confrontations between their supporters, plunging the state into turmoil. The assassination of Ahmed Pategi, the PDP chairman, further intensified the crisis, along with a bomb explosion at the National Pilot newspaper office, owned by Bukola Saraki, which injured five people and spread panic across the state.

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on next page

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In Enugu State, Jim Nwobodo played a key role in Chimaroke Nnamani's rise to power in 1999, yet their relationship collapsed over governance disputes. The Enugu State House of Assembly became a battleground for political factions, resulting in attempted impeachments, legislative paralysis, and physical confrontations.

These recurring crises highlight a fundamental flaw in Nigeria's democratic process. The influence of political godfathers, who expect unwavering loyalty from their successors, undermines democracy by prioritizing personal interests over governance. These power struggles disrupt governance, divert attention from developmental projects, and create instability that weakens institutions.

To break this cycle, Nigeria must strengthen its political institutions, promote transparency and accountability, and encourage genuine democratic participation. Elected officials should be accountable to the people rather than political benefactors who expect political patronage in return for their support. Electoral reform is crucial to reducing the financial burden of campaigns, thereby limiting the dependence on godfathers. The cost of running for office remains high, forcing many politicians to seek financial backing from powerful sponsors, ultimately leading to compromised governance.

The lack of internal democracy in political parties further fuels this crisis. When party leaders impose candidates instead of allowing

transparent primaries, those candidates often become indebted to their benefactors rather than the electorate. This creates a political system where loyalty to a godfather outweighs commitment to good governance. Strengthening internal democracy within political parties and ensuring merit-based selection of candidates is essential for Nigeria's democratic progress.

The media and civil society also have a critical role to play. By exposing the manipulations of godfathers and holding politicians accountable, the media can help inform citizens and encourage greater democratic participation. Civil society organizations should advocate for transparency, electoral reforms, and stronger institutions to minimize the influence of money and patronage in politics.

The Fubara-Wike conflict serves as a stark reminder that power struggles remain an enduring feature of Nigerian politics. However, the deeper issue lies in the entrenched system of political godfatherism, which undermines democracy and fosters corruption

and impunity. Addressing this issue requires a collective effort from the government, civil society, the media, and the international community. Only through a sustained commitment to reform can Nigeria build a more stable, prosperous, and truly democratic future.

The battle between political godfathers and their successors is not just about individual ambitions; it reflects a systemic failure in Nigeria's political culture. Without urgent reforms, these conflicts will continue to hinder governance, erode public trust in democracy, and limit the country's ability to achieve meaningful progress.

Nigeria's democracy must evolve beyond personal power struggles and political patronage. Until the focus shifts to service delivery, institution building, and true democratic values, the nation will remain trapped in a cycle of political instability fueled by the ambitions of a few at the expense of the many. The responsibility to change this trajectory lies with leaders, institutions, and, most importantly, the Nigerian people.



# How Mohbad died after I treated him, nurse opens up in court

By **Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi**

The auxiliary nurse who treated the late singer Ilerioluwa Aloba, popularly known as Mohbad, has revealed shocking details about his last moments.

Testifying before Justice C.A. Shotobi at the Coroner's Court in Ikorodu, Lagos, on Friday, the nurse, Feyisayo Ogedengbe, said the rapper reacted to a tetanus injection, began vomiting, and later convulsed before being rushed to the hospital, where he was declared dead on arrival.

## Medical treatment and initial reaction

On September 12, 2024, Ogedengbe was contacted by Ayobami Sodiq, also known as Spending, to treat Mohbad at his Lekki home. She arrived at around 2:30 p.m. and noticed a swollen wound on his right hand. To prevent infection, she administered a tetanus injection to his upper arm.

Knowing that Mohbad had an ulcer, she avoided giving him diclofenac, a pain reliever that could worsen ulcers. Instead, she injected him with 4ml of paracetamol diluted with 1ml of water. She also administered a slow 10ml dose of ceftriaxone, an antibiotic used to treat bacterial infections.

Shortly after receiving the injection, Mohbad became restless. He stood up, rushed to the toilet, and vomited.

"When he returned, he sat on the floor, and I noticed goosebumps on his skin," Ogedengbe said. She immediately pointed it out to his wife, Omowunmi, who responded that it was a normal reaction for him after taking injections.

## Emergency response and hospital rush

At the time, four people were in the room—Mohbad, his wife, Ogedengbe, and Ayobami. Ogedengbe asked



Omowunmi why she had not mentioned his history of reacting to injections.

Shortly after, Omowunmi took Mohbad to the bathroom and poured water on his head to cool him down.

Realizing the situation was getting worse, Ogedengbe and Ayobami rushed to a pharmacy to buy medication for an allergic reaction. However, they faced delays at the first pharmacy.

After visiting another pharmacy, they obtained hydrocortisone, a steroid used for allergic reactions, along with normal saline infusion. But when they returned, they found Mohbad outside the house, struggling. Preparations were already underway to take him to the hospital.

Due to heavy traffic and a lack of available vehicles, he was transported on a motorcycle. Sadly, he was declared dead on arrival at the hospital.

Confusion at the hospital and police involvement

Ogedengbe recalled that when they arrived at the hospital, medical personnel hesitated before attending to Mohbad,

causing confusion.

His body was later taken back home at around 8 p.m. That night, they went to Orchid Lekki Police Station to obtain a death certificate. Officers then directed them to Ajiwe Police Station in Ajah for further inquiries.

## Legal proceedings and next steps

Following cross-examinations by lawyers representing Mohbad's family, his wife, and the Lagos State government, the court adjourned the case to Friday, March 21, 2024, for further hearings.

In February 2025, the Lagos State Director of Public Prosecutions announced that Ogedengbe and Ayobami Sodiq would face legal charges for reckless and negligent acts under Section 251 (e) of the Criminal Law of Lagos State, 2015.

Meanwhile, the court acquitted musician Abdulazeez Fashola, known as Naira Marley, music promoter Samson Balogun, also called Sam Larry, Owodunni Ibrahim (Primeboy), and Mohbad's former manager, Opere Babatunde.

# 'You wasted my time' — Chloe Bailey sparks break up rumour with Burna Boy

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

American singer Chloe Bailey has set social media abuzz with speculation about a possible split from Nigerian music star Burna Boy.

The rumors began after Chloe shared a soulful cover of a song on Instagram, seemingly aimed at her alleged ex.

The lyrics were filled with themes of heartbreak and regret, leading fans to believe she was addressing her relationship with Burna Boy. This comes shortly after Burna Boy was entangled in a controversy involving Nigerian socialite Sophia Egbueje.

Burna Boy's alleged promise gone wrong

New Daily Prime previously reported that Sophia Egbueje publicly accused Burna Boy of failing to keep a promise. She claimed the Grammy-winning artist had pledged to buy her a Lamborghini in exchange for a one-night stand. However, according to Sophia, he never followed through.

The allegations quickly went viral, sparking heated discussions online. Many fans criticized Burna Boy for the alleged deal, while others questioned Sophia's motives for going public with the claim. Amid the controversy, Burna Boy remained silent, refusing to comment on the matter.

Chloe Bailey unfollows Burna Boy

Following the uproar, Chloe Bailey took a noticeable step—she unfollowed Burna Boy on Instagram. This move did not go unnoticed by fans, who took it as a strong hint that their rumored relationship had hit a rough patch.

As speculation grew, Chloe's Instagram post drew even more attention. In the song cover, she sang about betrayal and wasted time in a relationship, leading many to believe she was taking a direct



shot at Burna Boy.

Chloe's emotional lyrics add fuel to the fire

In the emotionally charged lyrics, Chloe seemingly expressed disappointment over being misled. She sang:

"Don't know about the other girls you used to deal with, but I do not need to buy a man to give me love to lay with, no.

"You are not even worth it, got me out here looking crazy. I should not have ignored all the signs. You wasted all my time. I know you are gonna miss all of the times we shared. There is only one Chloe in the world, and no other woman can compare."

Fans quickly connected the lyrics to Burna Boy's recent scandal. Many flooded the comments section with messages speculating that Chloe was referencing their rumored romance.

A look back at their alleged relationship

Though neither Chloe nor Burna Boy ever officially confirmed their relationship, rumors swirled for months. The speculation intensified after the two were spotted together at a romantic dinner in Lagos, Nigeria, on February 6, 2025.

At the time, sources claimed the pair had been growing close, with Burna Boy allegedly treating Chloe to a lavish night out. Their chemistry fueled dating rumors, but both artists remained tight-lipped about the nature of their relationship.

Now, with Chloe's cryptic song cover and her decision to unfollow Burna Boy, many believe their alleged romance has come to an end.

Fans react to the drama

Social media users have been divided over the situation. Some sided with Chloe, praising her for moving on and refusing to tolerate disrespect. Others defended Burna Boy, arguing that his involvement with Sophia Egbueje did not necessarily mean he wronged Chloe.

While neither artist has made an official statement, the unfolding drama has kept fans on edge. Many are waiting to see if Burna Boy will respond to Chloe's apparent message or if the controversy will fade away without further comment.

For now, the only certainty is that the internet remains captivated by the latest twist in this high-profile rumor.

# Asake's family seeks financial help, requests DNA test for alleged daughter

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

The family of Nigerian singer Asake has once again turned to social media, making a heartfelt plea for financial assistance to support his ailing father.

This latest appeal comes after an earlier request for assistance in treating his father's chronic stroke.

This time, a woman speaking on behalf of the family is urging Asake to step up and support not only his ailing father but also an alleged 11-year-old daughter and her mother.

## Emotional plea to Asake

In a now-viral video, the woman passionately called on the singer to take responsibility. She emphasized that no amount of public donations could replace the impact of Asake's personal contribution.

"Asake, always remember that your father will always be your father," she said. "Come and take care of your father, your 11-year-old daughter, and your baby mama. Even if the whole of Nigeria donates N1 billion to Asake's father, the N1 million Asake donates will make Papa Asake feel much better."

She also urged him to build a house for his father, arguing that it would provide a steady income through rent collection.

"Asake, come and build a house for your father so he can be collecting rent," she added.

## DNA test considered

Beyond financial support, the woman



revealed that the family was considering a DNA test to determine whether Asake is truly the father of the alleged child. The claim of paternity has added another layer of controversy to the situation.

While the identity of the woman making the plea remains unclear, her message has sparked intense discussion online. Many are questioning whether her demands are justified, while others believe personal family matters should not be aired publicly.

## Public reaction and debate

The renewed appeal has divided public opinion. Some social media users sympathize with the family, arguing that Asake, as a successful musician, should take responsibility for his father's well-being. Others believe the situation should be handled privately, rather than through repeated online appeals.

One camp insists that Asake has a moral duty to care for his sick father, especially given his financial success. They argue

that traditional values place a strong emphasis on children supporting their parents in times of need.

On the other hand, some believe that public pressure is unfair. They question why the singer is being put in a position where his personal responsibilities are turned into public debates. Others doubt the claims being made, especially regarding the alleged child, emphasizing the importance of verifying paternity before making demands.

## Asake remains silent

As of now, Asake has not responded to the latest appeal. The singer, known for his hit songs and rising international success, has not publicly addressed his family's claims or financial expectations.

With the story continuing to trend online, fans and critics alike are watching closely to see if he will break his silence or take any action regarding his father's health, the alleged child, and the ongoing controversy.

# Rema addresses Nigeria's struggles, Grammy disappointment

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Afrobeats star Rema has spoken about Nigeria's struggles, revealing that many citizens have lost hope but emphasizing his commitment to staying optimistic.

Despite the challenges, he remains optimistic and committed to making a difference.

In a recent interview with Rolling Stone, Rema expressed his concerns about the frustration many Nigerians feel. He noted that people are angry and discouraged, but he refuses to let negativity define his outlook. "A lot of people are giving up in Nigeria. A lot of people are angry at Nigeria. But I keep hope," he said.

The singer also spoke about his role as an artist. He believes carrying Afrobeats and Nigerian culture is a responsibility, not just a career. While some may see him as overly passionate, he remains focused on his mission. "There's not a lot of people who would carry Afrobeats like this so much, carry culture," he explained. "It makes me look like a blabber. It makes me look like I talk too much or care too much. Or like I'm trying to be a f\*\*ing messiah. I don't want to do much. I just want to do what I need to do."

Rema on his Grammy loss



He also shared his experience at the 2025 Grammy Awards, where he was nominated for Best Global Music Album but did not win. Instead of dwelling on the loss, he accepted the outcome with grace.

He described his emotions during the event. While watching other artists take the stage, he hoped for his moment as well. "I was celebrating people walking up that stage. I had my fingers crossed that I'd walk up the stage too," he said. "And when it didn't happen ... it happens. It's not the first award that I got nominated for and didn't get."

Rather than seeing it as a setback, Rema views the loss as part of his journey. He has faced similar moments before, and they have never stopped him. His focus remains on his music and future opportunities.

A voice for change

Rema's words reflect the struggles of many Nigerians. Economic instability, political challenges, and limited opportunities have left many feeling hopeless. Young people, in particular, are searching for better prospects abroad, believing their future lies outside the country.

Despite this, he chooses to stay hopeful. He believes in Nigeria's potential and wants to use his influence to inspire change. His music carries messages of resilience and cultural pride, reminding Nigerians that their voices matter.

As one of Afrobeats' biggest stars, Rema understands his influence extends beyond entertainment. He is not just making hits—he is making a statement. Through his words and actions, he hopes to encourage Nigerians to hold onto hope, no matter how difficult the circumstances.

# Diddy stuns court with bold makeover, pleads 'not guilty' to forced labour charges

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**H**ip-hop mogul Sean “Diddy” Combs made a dramatic courtroom appearance on Friday, revealing a striking transformation as he faced new legal troubles.

The 54-year-old music icon arrived at Manhattan’s federal court with an all-white beard and matching hair, a sharp contrast to his usual jet-black style.

Diddy, dressed in a tan prison-issue uniform, looked visibly older and had gained noticeable weight since his last public appearance. His new look drew attention as he stepped into the courtroom, just over a month before his highly anticipated trial.

The Bad Boy Records founder stood before Judge Arun Subramanian as prosecutors read out an updated indictment that included fresh allegations of forced labour. With a confident tone, he firmly entered a plea of “not guilty.”

## A dramatic courtroom presence

Despite the serious nature of the hearing, he appeared composed. He smiled and waved at his son Christian “King” Combs and daughter Chance Combs, who were in attendance for support. His demeanour remained upbeat, even as prosecutors detailed the latest



charges against him.

The judge asked if Diddy had reviewed the new indictment. Standing tall, he responded, “Yes, I have, sir.” When given the option to have the charges read aloud, he declined.

## A case gaining momentum

The legal battle surrounding him has intensified in recent weeks. Initially charged with multiple offences, he now faces allegations related to forced labour, adding to an already complex case. Prosecutors argue that new evidence strengthens their claims, while his defence team insists he is innocent.

The courtroom drama follows months of speculation about the mogul’s legal troubles. Once a dominant figure in the music industry, Diddy now finds himself

fighting to clear his name. His decision to stop dyeing his hair and embrace his natural look has sparked speculation about whether it’s a strategic move or a reflection of the stress surrounding his case.

## What’s next?

With the trial date approaching, legal experts say the stakes couldn’t be higher. If convicted, Diddy could face significant penalties that may impact both his career and legacy.

For now, he remains in custody, awaiting his day in court. His next hearing is expected to shed more light on the prosecution’s case and the defence’s strategy.

As the world watches, one thing is clear—Diddy’s courtroom transformation has only added another layer of intrigue to an already high-profile legal battle.

# Trump planning new travel ban on 43 countries

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Trump administration is considering issuing travel restrictions for the citizens of dozens of countries as part of a new ban, according to sources familiar with the matter and an internal memo seen by Reuters.

The memo lists a total of 41 countries divided into three separate groups. The first group of 10 countries, including Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Cuba and North Korea, among others, would be set for a full visa suspension.

In the second group, five countries – Eritrea, Haiti, Laos, Myanmar and South Sudan – would face partial suspensions that would affect tourist and student visas as well as other immigrant visas, with some exceptions.

In the third group, a total of 26 countries including Belarus, Pakistan and Turkmenistan, among others, would be considered for a partial suspension of US visa issuance if their governments “do not make efforts to address deficiencies within 60 days,” the memo said.

The list has yet to be approved by the administration, including the US secretary of state, Marco Rubio, and could be amended, officials told the outlet.

The memo follows an executive order issued on 20 January that requires intensified security vetting of any foreigners seeking admission to the US to detect national security threats, and directed several cabinet members to submit a list of countries for partial or full suspension because their “vetting and screening information is so deficient.”

During the first Trump administration, in



2017, a partial ban imposed on travelers from predominantly Muslim-population nations was labeled a “Muslim ban” by Trump and his aides.

Fourteen months earlier, after an Islamic State-inspired mass shooting in San Bernardino, California, Trump had called for “a total and complete” shutdown of Muslims entering the US “until our country’s representatives can figure out what the hell is going on.”

A new set of restrictions, outlined in the memo, would follow pledges by the president to institute an immigration crackdown. In October 2023, Trump pledged to restrict people from the Gaza Strip, Libya, Somalia, Syria, Yemen and “anywhere else that threatens our security.”

Any move to ban or restrict immigration from the list of 43 countries would come in tandem with Department of Homeland Security efforts to deport undocumented migrants affiliated with newly identified terrorist crime networks, including Venezuela’s Tren de Aragua, El Salvador’s MS-13 and the Mexican-American 18th St.

At the same time, the Trump administration is moving to cancel immigration status and deport several

foreign-born university graduates, including Columbia University graduate, Mahmoud Khalil, who led campus protests against Israel’s war in Gaza last year.

A second student who took part in protests around the university last year was arrested by federal immigration agents last week. Leqaa Kordia was arrested by officers from the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement office in Newark. Authorities said she had overstayed a terminated visa.

The administration also revoked the visa of Ranjani Srinivasan, an Indian citizen and doctoral student at Columbia. Srinivasan opted to “self-deport” after officials said she was “involved in activities supporting Hamas.”

In a statement on Friday, the homeland security secretary, Kristi Noem said it’s a “privilege to be granted a visa to live and study in the United States of America.”

“When you advocate for violence and terrorism, that privilege should be revoked, and you should not be in this country,” Noem added.

# The democrats have a leadership vacuum, two very familiar figures are looking to fill it

By Agency Reporter

*In different ways, new podcast hosts Gavin Newsom and Michelle Obama are picking up where Kamala Harris left off*

The current condition of the Democratic Party is nothing if not uncertain. Paralysing anxiety and insecurity are clearly its present state, but glimpses into its possible future are beginning to appear, albeit not from among the party's troubled leadership in Congress.

Case in point, recent machinations from both former first lady Michelle Obama and California governor Gavin Newsom – each of whom has recently launched a podcast. The themes of their respective efforts – Newsom's is politics-focused, Obama's celebrity and lifestyle-themed – are almost inconsequential. What matters is the political and cultural fascination that both are managing to attract. True, Mrs Obama is the more iconic personality of the two. But she and Newsom are sending equally unignorable messages that they may be exploring respective runs for the White House.

America has been down this road before; barely a year ago, in fact – when Joe Biden's frailty became impossible to ignore. Both Obama and Newsom were touted as possible successors, before the force-fields around Kamala Harris permanently closed. She, of course, secured the nomination but lost the nation – paving the way for the "who's next?" conversations now arriving more quickly than perhaps expected.

What's interesting about Obama and Newsom is how much they overlap. Both with Harris and each other. Newsom, like Kamala, is a child of Northern California and its insular, incestuous political machine. Obama and Harris, meanwhile, are both trained lawyers who have race and gender in common. In other words, Newsom and Mrs Obama could each pick up where Harris left off, albeit in different ways: the former in cosplaying as a progressive-turned-centrist, the latter as a candidate who has a legitimate chance of becoming America's first black, female



president.

Both also have something to prove. Newsom that he can adjust to America's new political mood, which demanded that he suck up to Trump after the new president arrived to inspect wildfire damage. Weeks later, on his podcast debut, Newsom furthered his shift to the centre when he suggested to his guest, Right-wing activist Charlie Kirk, that he no longer supports trans athletes competing in female sports.

In Mrs Obama's case, the former first lady needs to convince America that she can escape from her husband's orbit. She needs distance from Barack – but calculated and finely-crafted distance. Sharing her podcast with her brother, Craig Robinson, was a clever bit of co-branding. Could even the revival of rumours about the state of the Obamas' marriage be helpful in keeping her in voters' minds?

Newsom's behaviour is equally interesting. Armed with his own fortune and Ken-doll persona, Newsom must now realise that he's the most presidential-looking of a decidedly sorry cast of viable Democratic notables. Compared to foul-mouthed Jasmine Crockett or a dour-yet-radical AOC, he is even beginning to look middle-of-the-road and old-fashioned, despite his liberal record in California. Rich, white, straight and male, he's the

antithesis of the diversity that progressives fought for decades to impose. But diversity – in both 2016 and eight years later – failed to convince the electorate.

Another failure was Kamala Harris's avoidance of new media forms – particularly podcasts, which Trump cannily exploited during the election and which both Newsom and Obama are wise to explore now. Low-tech and low-obligation, they are the perfect platform for Democrats in recovery mode from November's shellacking. Voters can "try on" candidates for an episode or three, with no demands for loyalty nor promises of commitment. This may also be why Newsom and, especially, Mrs Obama are tiptoeing into the spotlight via podcast; each can easily pull the plug, with minimal hits to either their legacies – or bottom lines.

Of course it may turn out that neither Gavin Newsom or Michelle Obama actually wants to run for president – but I'd be highly surprised if they don't. Newsom has no higher office to which to aspire, while Obama may finally accept that, if she truly wants America to have a black female president, she'll have to become it herself. After all, "becoming" is something Mrs Obama knows all too well. It was the name of the first book she wrote after leaving the White House.

# China to limit social media time for youths

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Officials of the Chinese government are planning to limit social media and screen time for youths, citing concerns about harmful online content.

While some youth in China admit to spending an excessive amount of time on the internet, many are skeptical about new government proposals aimed at regulating the time young Chinese spend online and on social media sites.

In conversations at China's annual political meetings that wrapped up in Beijing this week, retired international basketball star Yao Ming, called for some limits on internet access for young people in China.

Yao was advocating for a plan that would mandate children turn off all electronics for one full day every academic semester and get outside and exercise.

Officials also called for tighter controls of online gaming and cited concerns about harmful online content, warning that excessive internet use is hurting the physical health and academic performance of Chinese minors under the age of 18.

China already has some of the world's tightest internet controls, with tens of thousands of websites, foreign social media sites and content blocked. It also has a massive online population.

On social media in China some commenters praised the efforts, but many expressed frustrations with what they viewed to be an inherent contradiction within the policies.

Some noted that children are already in school most of the day and rely on internet resources to complete assignments.

"Schools should assign less homework that requires phone check-ins and online research," wrote one user from northern Hebei Province.

"Minors get home around 9 p.m. or 10



p.m. at night, so when do they even have time to use social media?" wrote another user from Beijing.

A college student in Beijing, who spoke with VOA on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the topic, said she agreed with officials' concerns, but added that policies like the one suggested by Yao are likely to have a limited impact.

"Chinese teenagers and young people are absolutely addicted to the internet. You can find people walking on the streets looking at their phones everywhere and all the time. We use the internet to do almost everything," the student told VOA.

"I don't really think proposals to limit internet accessibility for young people would be effective. The addiction is always hard to get rid of, so how can a 'limit day' alleviate the excessive internet use?" the student said, using the word "addiction" to describe the excessive use of the internet.

According to the "2024 China Game Industry Minor Protection Report" released by the Game Working Committee of the China Audio-Video and Digital Publishing Association, as of December 2023, the number of internet users in China under the age of 18 reached 196 million, with the percentage of minors who are on the internet and can access it reaching 97.3%.

Will Wang, a Chinese student attending college in the United States, said when he returns home in Beijing during school break his impression is that the internet is used heavily in everyday life, and that teenagers are very active on social media platforms.

"There's definitely a significant increase in screen and internet usage across all ages in China...many Chinese teenagers are deeply engaged with TikTok, RedNote, Bilibili, and many internet platforms," Wang said in a written response to VOA.

Amid the busy academic and personal lives of young Chinese, the internet provides them with a rare space for privacy, which Wang said is fueling high levels of internet use.

"Most Chinese teenagers don't have a lot of private space for themselves at home or at school so [the] internet is the only option, especially with their busy schedules—nearly every kid has to attend some sort of classes or studying-related activities outside of school," Wang said.

"For teenagers, if anything, [the] internet makes them more connected with their friends and the world."

Xu Quan, a media commentator based in Hong Kong, said online spaces can have a positive effect on children, who are often overwhelmed with parental and educational expectations.

# Californian wins \$50m in lawsuit over burns from Starbucks tea

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

A delivery driver has won \$50 million in a lawsuit after being seriously burned when a Starbucks drink spilled in his lap at a California drive-through, court records show.

A Los Angeles County jury found Friday for Michael Garcia, who underwent skin grafts and other procedures on his genitals after a venti-sized tea drink spilled instantly after he collected it on Feb. 8, 2020. He has suffered permanent and life-changing disfigurement, according to his attorneys.

Garcia's negligence lawsuit blamed his injuries on Starbucks, saying that an employee didn't wedge the scalding-hot tea firmly enough into a takeout tray.

"This jury verdict is a critical step in holding Starbucks accountable for flagrant disregard for customer safety and failure to accept responsibility," one of



Garcia's attorneys, Nick Rowley, said in a statement.

Starbucks said it sympathized with Garcia but planned to appeal.

"We disagree with the jury's decision that

we were at fault for this incident and believe the damages awarded to be excessive," the Seattle-based coffee giant said in a statement, adding that it was "committed to the highest safety standards" in handling hot drinks.

# Trump signs order to gut Voice of America, other agencies

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

President Donald Trump signed an executive order aimed at gutting the parent of U.S. government-funded media outlet, Voice of America and six other federal agencies, his administration's latest step to shrink bureaucracy on Friday.

The order instructs the agencies — largely little-known entities including one that provides funding for museums and libraries and one tackling homelessness — to reduce their operations to the bare minimum mandated by the law.

"This order continues the reduction in the elements of the Federal bureaucracy that the President has determined are unnecessary," the order, disclosed late on Friday, says.



Trump, who clashed with the Voice of America during his first term, picked former news anchor Kari Lake to be its director for his second. Lake, a staunch ally of the president, has often accused mainstream media of harboring anti-Trump bias.

VOA, an international media broadcaster that operates in more than 40 languages online and on radio and television, is overseen by the U.S. Agency for Global

Media. The agency also funds Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Radio Free Asia.

In addition to the Agency for Global Media, Trump's order also targets the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund, and the Minority Business Development Agency for cuts.

The order says those agencies should eliminate all operations not codified in statute as well as "reduce the performance of their statutory functions and associated personnel to the minimum presence and function required by law."

# STORMY WEEKEND: 17 dead as massive storm sweeps across US

By Dave Oludare Oso

At least 17 people have been killed across the US as a storm system unleashed multiple tornadoes that struck across several states in the south and midwest, officials said.

On Saturday, the Missouri state highway patrol reported three deaths in Ozark county, one death in Butler county, six deaths in Wayne county and one death in Jefferson county.

“We urge residents to stay away from debris-filled areas, watch for downed power lines and follow regional emergency services for localized updates,” the state’s highway patrol warned.

In Arkansas, three storm-related deaths have been confirmed in Independence county with an additional 29 people injured in eight counties, according to the Arkansas division of emergency management on Saturday morning.

Three people were killed on Friday in car crashes during a dust storm in Amarillo county in the Texas panhandle, according to Sgt Cindy Barkley of the state’s department of public safety. One pileup involved an estimated 38 cars.

“It’s the worst I’ve ever seen,” Barkley said, calling the near-zero visibility a nightmare. “We couldn’t tell that they were all together until the dust kind of settled.”

In Mississippi, Governor Tate Reeves announced on Saturday morning that at least three people have been injured and were hospitalized in Grenada county, adding that the number is expected to increase.

Six counties have reported damage including Calhoun, Carroll, Grenada, Humphreys, Leflore and Montgomery. Grenada county has been hit the hardest, Reeves said. A shelter has opened up in the Grenada City auditorium for those in search of refuge.

At least 26 tornadoes were reported but not confirmed to have touched down late on Friday night and early on Saturday as a



low pressure system drove powerful thunderstorms across parts of Arkansas, Illinois, Mississippi and Missouri, said David Roth, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service’s Weather Prediction Center.

“Today there is a high risk for more tornadoes across Alabama and Mississippi, the chance is 30%,” he said. “That’s pretty significant.”

As the storms regain strength, the highest possible risk of tornadoes and severe thunderstorms was on Saturday night, forecasters said.

The National Weather Service issued multiple tornado and severe thunderstorm warnings early on Saturday morning for areas in Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, Illinois, Indiana and Texas.

The agency has warned residents not to seek refuge in vehicles outside or under overpasses, as well as not to seek shelter under trees. Instead, it urged residents to get off the road and drive to a designated shelter, basement or safe room. The next best option for shelter is a small, windowless room or hallway on the lowest floor of a sturdy building, according to the agency.

Evacuations were ordered in some Oklahoma communities as more than 130 fires were reported across the state. The state patrol said winds were so strong that

they toppled several tractor-trailers.

“This is terrible out here,” said Charles Daniel, a truck driver hauling a 48-foot trailer along Interstate 40 in western Oklahoma. “There’s a lot of sand and dirt in the air. I’m not pushing it over 55mph. I’m scared it will blow over if I do.”

On Saturday morning, the National Weather Service in Norman, Oklahoma, warned that drier air is expected to move into the area today, which, with winds at 15-20mph and gusts up to 30mph, will contribute “critical fire weather conditions expected across parts of the area this afternoon.”

Forecasters said the severe storm threat would continue into the weekend with a high chance of tornadoes and damaging winds on Saturday in Mississippi and Alabama. Heavy rain could bring flash flooding to some parts of the east coast on Sunday.

Experts say it’s not unusual to see such weather extremes in March.

“What’s unique about this one is its large size and intensity,” said Bill Bunting of the National Weather Service’s Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Oklahoma.

“And so what that is doing is producing really substantial impacts over a very large area.”

# Accept ceasefire or face further sanctions, G7 tells Russia

By Dave Oludare Oso

Top diplomats from the Group of Seven (G7) leading democracies urged Russia on Friday to accept a U.S.-proposed ceasefire in the Russia-Ukraine war or face the possibility of additional sanctions.

“We called for Russia to reciprocate by agreeing to a ceasefire on equal terms and implementing it fully,” the diplomats said in a joint statement from the site of their talks talks in Canada.

“We discussed imposing further costs on Russia in case such a ceasefire is not agreed, including through further sanctions, caps on oil prices, as well as additional support for Ukraine, and other means.”

The statement said the G7 countries affirmed their “unwavering support for Ukraine in defending its territorial integrity and right to exist, and its freedom, sovereignty and independence.”

The statement comes as the Kremlin said that much remains to be done on a Ukraine ceasefire deal, signaling its reluctance to fully endorse the U.S. proposal.

The White House said U.S. President Donald Trump’s special envoy, Steve Witkoff, spoke with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday.

On Friday, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters that U.S. officials would convene this weekend after Witkoff returns to Washington to closely examine Russia’s position and determine the next steps.

“Suffice to say, I think there is reason to be cautiously optimistic. But by the same token, we continue to recognize a difficult and complex situation,” Rubio told reporters following his meetings with counterparts.



On Friday, Canadian Foreign Minister Malie Joly said, “All G7 foreign ministers agree with the U.S. proposal of a ceasefire that is supported by Ukrainians,” and the focus now is on Russia’s response.

She added, “The ball is now in Russia’s court when it comes to Ukraine.”

British foreign minister David Lammy echoed this sentiment during interviews with the media, saying, “there is unity that now is the time for a ceasefire with no conditions. Ukraine has set their position out. It is now for Russia to accept it.”

Lammy also noted that a “coalition of the willing” is forming to provide Ukraine with the necessary “security architecture” and monitoring mechanisms to support the ceasefire.

The G7 joint statement comes as the Kremlin said that much remains to be done on a Ukraine ceasefire deal, signaling its reluctance to fully endorse the U.S. proposal.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said that Putin still awaits answers after raising several questions about the ceasefire’s implementation.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy dismissed Putin’s response as “deliberately” setting conditions that complicate and “drag out the process.”

“An unconditional 30-day interim ceasefire is the first crucial step that could bring us significantly closer to a just and lasting peace,” Zelenskyy wrote Wednesday in a post on the social media platform X.

The G7 talks in Charlevoix, Quebec, brought together ministers from Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States.

### Position on China

Beyond Ukraine, G7 foreign ministers also discussed China’s role in global security, stability for the Indian and Pacific Ocean regions, and maritime security behind closed doors.

On Friday, G7 foreign ministers held a session focused on strategic challenges posed by China, North Korea, Iran and Russia.

# German army struggles to get Gen Z recruits 'ready for war'

By Financial Times

As a podcaster and freelance journalist, Ole Nymoen admits he enjoys freedom of expression and other democratic rights in his home country of Germany.

But he would not want to die for them.

In a book published this week, *Why I Would Never Fight for My Country*, the 27-year-old argues ordinary people should not be sent into battle on behalf of nation states and their rulers — even to fend off an invasion. Occupation by a foreign power might lead to a “shitty” life, he told the *Financial Times*. “But I’d rather be occupied than dead.”

Nymoen, a self-described Marxist, does not claim to be representative of Generation Z in Germany. But his stance — and his striking honesty about it — taps into a wider questions facing Europe as it re-arms on a scale not seen since the end of the cold war.

Berlin has poured close to €100bn into new equipment for the Bundeswehr, the German armed forces, since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Chancellor-in-waiting Friedrich Merz has announced plans to allow unlimited borrowing to fund defence spending as he promised to do “whatever it takes” to protect freedom and peace in Europe.

But, while those funds are helping to plug gaps in arms and equipment, one of the biggest remaining issues is manpower.

Germany’s armed forces commissioner, Eva Högl, this week warned the country was not closer to its goal of having 203,000 active troops by 2031, as the overall size of the armed forces slightly declined last year, partly because of a high number of dropouts. A quarter of the 18,810 men and women who signed up in 2023 left the armed forces within six months.

“This development must be stopped and reversed as a matter of urgency,” Högl said.

A Bundeswehr spokesperson told the FT the military had taken steps to try to stem the outflow of young recruits, including a notice period to avoid “last-minute, emotional” decisions.

But one senior army commander said members of Generation Z — renowned in the business world for their efforts to reshape corporate culture — were also going into the armed forces with different ideas and outlooks. “People are vulnerable, they cry easily,” he said. “They talk about work-life balance.”

“I understand that,” the commander added. “They grew up in a different time. It’s not a bad perspective. But it doesn’t match that



well with a wartime situation.”

Germany’s armed forces commissioner, Eva Högl, has said the country was not closer to its goal of having 203,000 active troops by 2031 © David Hecker/Getty Images

As Europe has again reckoned with the fear of an aggressive Russia, the continent’s political and military leaders have dramatically stepped up their language about what they expect from the public.

A senior UK general, Sir Patrick Sanders, last year told the British people they were part of a “prewar generation” that may have to prepare itself to enter combat. In Germany, whose 1949 constitution includes a commitment to promoting global peace, defence minister Boris Pistorius last year caused shock by declaring the nation had to be “ready for war”.

The warnings have escalated since Donald Trump returned to the White House in January and began pushing Ukraine to agree to a ceasefire as well as threatening to withdraw long-standing US security guarantees for Europe. Donald Tusk, prime minister of Poland, last week said his country was preparing “large-scale military training for every adult male”.

Germany has not gone that far. Top officials from the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats, the two parties likely to form the next government, have ruled out a revival of traditional conscription. Merz favours a year of national service that would offer military and non-military options.

People hold up a banner that says ‘Make peace without weapons’ during an anti-war demonstration in Berlin in 2023 © Paul-Louis Godier/AFP/Getty Images

Still, the question remains to what extent populations in Europe are willing to accept the calls to join up for the armed forces in much larger numbers.

Sophia Besch, senior fellow at the Washington-based Carnegie Endowment for International, said that although the threat perception among the European public was changing rapidly, “the next step [that governments are asking citizens to make] is a huge one — I want to fight for my country and I want my children to fight for my country.”

Besch said nations including Germany lacked that deep trust and the shared understanding of threat between citizens and government that had been forged in places such as Finland, which is famed for its decades-long focus on preparedness for an attack from Russia.

Moreover, she added, in the worst-case scenario, young Germans would most likely not be asked to fight for their own country but for Latvia or another frontline nation. “We have to ask ourselves what young Germans would be willing to fight for today. Is it Germany? Is it the European project?”

Since Russia’s full-scale Ukraine invasion, Germany has had a steep rise in the number of conscientious objectors (including both regular soldiers and part-time reservists). The figure reached 2,998 last year — up from 200 in 2021.

Klaus Pfisterer, of the German Peace Society — United War Resisters, a campaign group, said many of them did military service years ago, before conscription was abolished in 2011, and had then been assigned as reservists. In previous years that had not seemed like a difficult commitment. But today, against the current global backdrop, “they see this decision in a completely different light”, he said.

Christian Mölling, Europe director at the Bertelsmann Foundation, estimates that German troop numbers need to rise from 181,000 today to 270,000 in the years ahead in order to reach Nato targets — and fill gaps left if American forces stationed in Europe withdraw.

That excludes reserve forces, which currently stand at 60,000 but defence officials have said it must rise to 260,000.

Mölling said the Bundeswehr needed to drastically improve its recruitment campaigns to compete in a tight and competitive labour market, as well as doing more to modernise the military and make it an appealing employer.

“It can’t be mimicry, where you pretend you’re a modern army,” he said. “You have to do it.”

# U17WCQ: Nigeria's Flamingos defeat South Africa, move to next round

By Oluwatosin Ologun



**N**igeria took a giant step to qualification for the 2025 U-17 Women's World Cup on Saturday, beating South Africa 2-0 at the Remo Stars Stadium, Ikenne, Ogun State.

The Flamingos had last week defeated the Bantwana 3-1 in the first leg of the clash, meaning they soared to the next phase of the qualification race with a whopping 5-1 aggregate victory.

The game produced no goal after the early exchanges. But two-goal heroine in the first leg, Harmony Chidi coolly nodded home from

an acute angle in the 37th minute on Saturday, to compound the fixture for the visitors.

Shakirat Moshood, who scored a goal in the first leg, was the provider from a well-taken free kick on the right. She turned provider again 11 minutes into the second half when she found Aishat Animashaun, who lifted the ball over and above Samekelise Mthembu into the net for Nigeria's second.

The Flamingos were drawn bye into the second round of the World Cup qualification battle owing to

their impressive outing at the last edition of the tournament in which they ended third.

Nigeria will square off against the winner between Botswana and Algeria in the final round of qualification.

Four countries from the final round of qualifiers will team up with the host nation Morocco as Africa's flagbearers at the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup.

The competition is billed to take place from 17 October to 5 November 2025.

# EPL: Man City stumble against Brighton, Nottingham Forest soar over Ipswich

By Oluwatosin Ologun

**M**anchester City suffered another defeat after twice blowing the lead to draw 2-2 against Brighton, while third-placed Nottingham Forest thrashed Ipswich 4-2 on Saturday.

Erling Haaland and Omar Marmoush put City in front, but high-flying Brighton extended their unbeaten run to seven games thanks to Pervis Estupinan's free-kick and an Abdukodir Khusanov own goal.

City boss Pep Guardiola said on Friday that just reaching the Champions League next season would be a "big success" after a difficult season for a side used to lifting the league title.

The English champions' early exit from Europe's top competition to Real Madrid had at least ensured a full week's preparation for Guardiola's men to bounce back from last weekend's dismal 1-0 defeat at Forest.

Marmoush was restored to the starting line-up and proved to be City's brightest spark going forward.

The Egyptian won the penalty from which Haaland opened the scoring with his 29th goal of the season.

City's lead lasted only 10 minutes as Estupinan curled a free-kick in off the post past the leaden-footed Stefan Ortega in the City goal.

Marmoush blasted City back in front from long range before half-time.

Brighton, though, took just three minutes into the second half to level again when Jack Hinshelwood's shot was turned into his own net by Khusanov.



Nico Gonzalez hit the post as City pushed in vain for a winner.

A top-five Premier League finish will almost certainly secure a Champions League place this season thanks to English clubs' strong performances in European competition.

A point leaves City still in fifth, just one point ahead of Brighton in seventh.

## Forest close on Champions League

Forest's charge towards Europe's top club competition for the first time since 1980 continued with a dominant display at Portman Road.

The visitors struck three times in six first-half minutes to close to within one point of second-placed Arsenal and six clear of City.

Nikola Milenkovic controlled a loose ball inside the area and blasted in on off

the underside of the bar to open the floodgates.

Anthony Elanga then drilled in his first goal since Boxing Day at the end of a blistering Forest counter-attack.

Two minutes later Elanga took advantage of dreadful Ipswich defending to sprint clear and slot in his second of the afternoon.

Jens Cajuste and George Hirst scored late consolation goals for Kieran McKenna's men either side of Jota Silva's fourth for Forest.

Ipswich's uphill task to beat the drop suffered another blow as Wolves pulled nine points clear of the bottom three with a 2-1 victory at Southampton.

Jorgen Strand Larsen took on the goalscoring burden for Wolves in the absence of the suspended Matheus Cunha by powering in a header on 19 minutes from Jean-Ricner Bellegarde's cross.

# La Liga: Kylian Mbappe double at Villarreal, Real Madrid tops table

By Oluwatosin Ologun

**K**ylian Mbappe's brace helped Real Madrid climb top of La Liga with a 2-1 win at Villarreal on Saturday despite coach Carlo Ancelotti's complaints that his team was "exhausted".

Los Blancos moved three points clear of rivals Barcelona, having played two extra games, with the Catalans visiting third place Atletico Madrid on Sunday in a key clash in the Spanish title race.

Madrid were unhappy the game was taking place fewer than 72 hours after their Champions League win on penalties against Atletico on Wednesday.

"The team has something special, character, commitment," Ancelotti told reporters, insisting Madrid would refuse to play without "72 hours of rest" between matches as recommended by world football governing body FIFA.

However despite their complaints they had enough in the tank to beat their opponents, fifth, at the Estadio de la Ceramica.

"We kept going on a physical level, above all in the second half, the team ended up exhausted, but that was to be expected," said Ancelotti.

"It's a win that says a lot about this team and the ability this squad has."

Ancelotti began with Vinicius Junior on the bench after the draining victory against Atletico in the last 16.

Villarreal started strongly and Thibaut Courtois got down well to his right to tip Ayoze Perez's shot around the post.



From the resulting corner, Villarreal took the lead, with the ball rebounding to Juan Foyth, who smashed home from close range.

Ancelotti's side hit back quickly, with Mbappe levelling after 17 minutes.

Brahim Diaz's attempted lob was saved by Diego Conde, but the French striker dispatched the rebound with minimal fuss.

Soon Mbappe had his second, helping to spread the ball to the right and then finishing with aplomb after Lucas Vazquez found him in the middle of the box.

It was Mbappe's 20th league goal of the season, putting him one behind the top scorer, Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski.

Content with their lead Madrid soaked up Villarreal pressure in the rest of the first half, with Courtois saving well from Nicolas Pepe.

Villarreal coach Marcelino Garcia Toral sent on Thierno Barry for Pepe at the break, as the Yellow Submarine looked to avoid a first home defeat in La Liga by Madrid since 2017.

Foyth might have levelled early in the second half but volleyed over the bar when well placed.

## 'A football fan'

Ancelotti sent on Vinicius and Luka Modric to try and help Madrid put the game to bed and they regained some control from the enterprising hosts.

Conde saved from Fede Valverde and at the other end Perez came close with a sharp turn and powerful effort which flew just over Courtois' crossbar, which was as close as his side came to a leveller.

"The start wasn't the best but that's normal with little rest that it's hard on the legs, but then we came back quickly, we defended well, we were very tired but the commitment we showed was important," Courtois told Real Madrid TV.