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# RIVERS: Allegations against me untrue, Fubara fires back at Tinubu

By Dave Oludare Oso

**S**uspended governor of Rivers State, Siminalayi Fubara has broken his silence and debunked allegations by the Federal Government that he teleguided attacks on oil installations by suspected militant groups in the state.

...Beleaguered gov blames Wike for attack on oil installations

The governor, in a statement issued in Port Harcourt by his Chief Press Secretary, Nelson Chukwudi on Thursday, also said claims that he did nothing to rebuild the bombed state House of Assembly after he ordered the demolition of the facility were untrue.

Fubara, who noted that it was important to put the records straight, said he acted on expert advice before demolishing the Assembly complex, which was said to have integrity issues.

Recall that President Bola Tinubu in his speech while declaring a state of emergency in Rivers berated Fubara for doing nothing to prevent the attack on oil pipelines.

Tinubu also described Fubara as a despot, echoing the Supreme Court, while alluding to the demolition of the state House of Assembly complex, thereby, denying lawmakers a place to hold plenary.

But the suspended governor insisted that the allegations were untrue, saying the attacks were ignited by the comments of the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike who during his media chat allegedly disparaged the Ijaw nation.

Fubara said Wike was adamant even when Ijaw leaders and groups demanded his apologies.

Fubara's statement read: "Our attention has been drawn to a number of allegations claiming that Governor of Rivers State, His Excellency, Sir Siminalayi Fubara, did nothing to dissuade criminal groups and militants from making good their threats to attack oil installations in the



state.

"There was also another claim that after demolishing the hallowed chamber of the state House of Assembly on Moscow Road in Port Harcourt, the governor did nothing to rebuild the facility.

"Ordinarily, we would have ignored the statements as mere results of lack of adequate information to the Presidency by those tasked with the responsibility of providing same to guide decision-making, but it has become imperative to set the records straight and correct the erroneous impression such narratives are creating in the minds of the Nigerian people.

"First, it is important to clarify that Governor Fubara has nothing to do with the threats by militants and also did not, in any way 'telegraph' the reported attacks on any oil facility in the state.

"It is on record that the reaction of stakeholders in the Niger Delta, especially elders, chiefs, women, Ijaw National Congress, its youth wing, IYC, as well as militants, among others, was triggered by remarks by the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Chief Nyesom Wike, in a live media chat, during which he dismissed Ijaws as a minority of the minorities and powerless in the Nigerian polity, saying that Ijaws are not the only ones that are militants and can blow up pipelines; that Ogonis, Ikwerres, and others are also militants and can as well blow up pipelines.

"Most of the Ijaw groups and leaders even demanded an apology from the FCT Minister, which he rebuffed."

The governor continued, "Available public records show that Governor Fubara, on several occasions and at every forum, including all the project commissioning events as well as the handover of the AW139 Helicopter to the Nigerian Air Force, between March 3 and 13, 2025, made it clear that his administration was committed to the peace, security, and safety of oil facilities in the state.

"He often recalled his pivotal role as a member of the Presidential Committee on the Protection of Oil Installations in the region, and repeatedly emphasised the need to protect oil pipelines and other facilities in the state, urging his supporters and the people of the state to avoid acts capable of destabilising the state or sabotaging the nation's economy.

"Since inception as the Chief Executive of Rivers State, Governor Fubara has prioritised investment in upscaling the welfare and operational equipment of all personnel and arms of the Armed Forces and security agencies in the state by building livable office and residential accommodation for officers and men and donating vehicles, gunboats, helicopters, and other critical needs of the formations to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in the performance of their duties.

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9X5	225,738.00
9X4	193,500.00
9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
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8X3	70,390.00
7X4	58,666.50
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9X3	112,875.00
8X6	179,368.00
8X5	143,500.00
8X4	93,500.00
8X3	82,434.50
7X4	111,173.50
6X4	82,434.50
6X3	59,250.00
6X2	40,000.00
5X6	98,749.50
5X4	65,833.00
5X3	49,375.00
5X2	32,916.50
4X4	52,666.50
4X3	39,499.50
4X2	26,333.50
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10X5	162,222.445
10X4	103,963.00
10X3	N/A
9X6	162,222.445
9X5	168,191.50
9X4	N/A
8X6	N/A
8X3	N/A
7X4	72,676.00
6X4	65,000.00
6X3	41,124.50
6X2	29,858.00
5X6	71,378.00
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5X3	29,858.00
5X2	22,841.00
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#### CONTACT US

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

E-mail Address:  
[info@newdailyprime.news](mailto:info@newdailyprime.news)  
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# Shettima welcomes Visa Inc.'s plan to establish data centre in Nigeria

By Friday Omosola

Vice President Kashim Shettima has welcomed Visa Inc.'s plan to establish a data centre in Nigeria, a move aimed at strengthening the country's digital economy.

Visa Inc., a leading American multinational payment services corporation, disclosed its commitment during a courtesy visit to the Vice President at the Presidential Villa in Abuja.

The delegation was led by Andrew Torre, Visa's Regional President for Central & Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Africa (CEMEA).

Mr Torre highlighted Visa's ongoing investments in Nigeria, which exceed \$1 billion, including a \$200 million stake in Interswitch, a major partnership with MoniePoint to enhance digital payments, and collaboration with ThriveAgric to support smallholder farmers and improve food security.

He emphasised that the planned data centre would introduce new technologies to Nigeria, benefiting partners like Hugo and Samsung, who rely on Visa's payment solutions for mobile transactions.



In response, Shettima assured Visa of the Nigerian government's full support, noting that the partnership would continue to thrive.

He commended Visa's investment in ThriveAgric, aligning it with President Bola Tinubu's administration's focus on modernizing the agricultural sector, which is a key pillar of the government's 8-point agenda.

"Nigeria is where the action is. Of the ten leading fintechs in Africa, about eight are in Nigeria, with MoniePoint as the newest addition.

"Agriculture is critical to our agenda, and President Tinubu is

determined to reposition the sector through technology and modernization," Shettima stated.

The Vice President also encouraged Visa to invest in the Outsource to Nigeria Initiative, a federal government program aimed at providing financial support for the creative sector to boost Nigeria's digital and creative economy.

Accompanying Mr Torre on the Visa delegation were Andrew Uaboi, Senior Vice President and Head of Western and Central Africa, and Chidozie Arinze, Vice President and Head of West Africa for Visa Nigeria.

# Rivers emergency rule: Tinubu, FG dragged to ECOWAS court

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

The President Bola Tinubu-led Federal Government has been dragged before the Community Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Court in Abuja over the declaration of a state of emergency and the suspension of democratically elected authorities in Rivers State.

This was contained in a suit dated March 20, 2025, and marked ECW/CCJ/APP/18/25, and sighted by journalists on Friday, March 21.

Recall that on Tuesday, March 18, President Tinubu declared a state of emergency in Rivers State.

The applicants, Harry Ibiso and 11 others, on their behalf and the Eastern Zone of the Ijaw Youth Council are seeking an order of the court to set aside and/or quash the suspension of elected officials and removal of the democratic structures and institutions in Rivers State as an imperative for the enthronement of a full-fledged democratic order.

The plaintiffs also want an order of court setting aside all decisions, actions, policies, and directives given or issued by the Sole Administrator, retired Vice Admiral Ibokette Ibas, appointed by the respondent's president on March 18.

In the application brought pursuant to Articles III and IV of the supplementary protocol amending ECOWAS Court's protocol, Article



II of the Protocol of the court, and Article 33 of the Rules of the court, the applicants averred that the respondent's president (President Bola Tinubu), elected into political office, lacked the powers to remove or suspend the governor of a state, who was also elected into the office.

They held that by removing the governor, Siminalayi Fubara; his deputy, Ngozi Odu; and members of the Rivers State House of Assembly, the fundamental rights of the applicants and the people of Rivers State have been violated.

“By so doing, the defendant has unlawfully taken away the democratic rights of the applicants and that of the population of Rivers State, both individually and collectively.

“The implication therefore is that the applicants and the people of Rivers State have lost their existence and dignity as human beings, having been politically emasculated by the

loss of the values that accompany democratic governance and deprived of leaders duly elected by them in the democratic space.

“A state of emergency cannot be a guise or subterfuge for the usurpation of the executive functions of the governor or the exercise of the lawmaking powers of the legislature,” the applicants held.

The affidavit was disposed of by a constitutional lawyer, Festus Ogwuche, and others.

Meanwhile, the court is yet to fix a date for a hearing in the matter.

On Thursday, the National Assembly approved Tinubu's state of declaration in Rivers State despite uproar from opposition leaders.

The sole administrator, retired Vice Admiral Ete-Ibas, has since resumed office on Thursday.

# FG pursues Binance lawsuit, maintains Crypto openness

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Federal Government of Nigeria has reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining an open stance towards cryptocurrency companies, despite filing a lawsuit worth \$80 billion against Binance, the world's largest crypto exchange.

The legal action, initiated last month, accuses Binance of causing significant economic losses due to its operations in the country.

The lawsuit follows an earlier incident in which Nigerian authorities detained Tigran Gambaryan, a US-based staff member of Binance, as part of an investigation into alleged money laundering activities.

Gambaryan was held for eight months before being released, with the charges later dropped. Binance, which ceased all transactions in Nigeria in March 2024, has denied the allegations.

In an interview on Friday, March 21, Mohammed Idris, the Minister of Information and National Orientation, clarified that the lawsuit was not aimed at targeting cryptocurrency companies, but rather part of the government's broader effort to strengthen regulatory oversight in the sector.



“We are ensuring that no one comes and operates without regulation,” Idris explained, emphasising that the lawsuit against Binance was a part of a wider regulatory effort, not an isolated attack on one company.

He pointed out that other cryptocurrency businesses in Nigeria continue to operate without facing legal challenges, indicating that the government's approach is not to stifle the industry but to ensure compliance with national laws.

“There are other companies operating in the crypto sector in Nigeria, and you don't see them facing charges,” Idris noted.

The Minister also expressed

concerns over the potential misuse of cryptocurrency for illicit activities, such as terrorism financing, money laundering, and tax evasion.

He stressed that the issue of illicit financial flows is a global concern, and international cooperation is essential to ensure that cryptocurrency transactions comply with established financial regulations.

“It is not just Nigeria. Internationally, it's also important to address illicit financial flows, You can't have a huge amount of transactions that do not meet the operations of financial dealers,” Idris said.

# FG says releasing over 4,000 inmates has saved it N1 billion

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Federal Government has released over 4,000 inmates from correctional facilities as part of efforts to decongest the system, saving the government N1 billion in feeding costs.

This was disclosed by the Minister of Interior Dr. Olubunmi Tunji-Ojo on Thursday, March 20 while speaking at the 5th Ministerial Press Briefing in Abuja.

He said, “We decongested our correctional centres by five per cent last year,” Tunji-Ojo explained.

“Last year, just over 4,000 inmates were released in one day. All we did was conduct a detailed analysis and found that many inmates were there due to petty fines. This project allowed us to release over 4,082 inmates, saving the government N1bn a year in feeding costs.”

Tunji-Ojo explains release of inmates as part of decongestion efforts

Tunji-Ojo explained that the initiative aimed to identify inmates who had been incarcerated for minor offences, leading to their swift release.

He stated that this decongestion



effort reduced the population of correctional centres by 5% last year.

In addition to the correctional facilities’ efforts, the minister also highlighted significant strides made by the Commandant General’s Special Intelligence Squad in tackling illegal refineries and oil dumps.

Tunji-Ojo reported that the squad destroyed over 2,125 such illegal operations across the country in 2024.

He further revealed that nearly 205 trucks carrying illegally refined petroleum products were seized,

and over 700 suspects were arrested. The squad also secured 345 convictions, with 187 cases still pending in court.

“In 2024, the Commandant General’s Special Intelligence Squad destroyed over 2,125 illegal refineries and oil dumps. Close to 205 trucks conveying illegally refined petroleum products have been impounded while more than 700 suspects and accomplices have been arrested.

“Notably, the corps have secured over 345 convictions while about 187 cases are still ongoing in the law court,” Tunji-Ojo said.

# NEF rejects Tinubu's emergency rule in Rivers, calls it unconstitutional

By Adeniyi Yusuf

The Northern Elders Forum (NEF) has called on President Bola Tinubu to reverse the emergency rule declared in Rivers State.

Meanwhile, the Sole Administrator of Rivers State, Vice-Admiral Ibok-Ete Ibas (retd.), has announced the release of withheld local government allocations.

Recall that President Tinubu declared a state of emergency in Rivers State, suspending Governor Siminalayi Fubara, his deputy, Ngozi Odu, and members of the State House of Assembly for a period of six months.

Also, the President appointed Vice Admiral Ibok-ete Ibas (retd) as the Sole Administrator for the state.

Reacting to the situation that unfolded over the week, the NEF expressed its displeasure over the recent political developments in Rivers State, which resulted in the suspension of Governor Siminalayi Fubara and members of the State House of Assembly by President Bola Tinubu.

The forum noted the implications of the suspension and the broader impact on the state's governance and democratic processes.

In a statement obtained by The New Daily Prime, Professor Abubakar Jiddere, spokesperson of NEF, urged the President to immediately reinstate the governor and his deputy.

The Northern Elders Forum (NEF) noted that while President Tinubu is empowered under Section 305 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution (as amended) to declare a state of emergency in the Federation or any part of it, they believe the situation in Rivers State did not justify such a declaration.



NEF said that the issue in the state did not meet required laws for emergency rule.

“The president may by instrument published in the official Gazette of the Government of the Federation issue a proclamation of a state of emergency in the Federation or any part thereof. However, the president can only do so, if and only if, any the conditions stated in subsection 3 of Section 305 actually occurs which includes war, imminent invasion, breakdown of public order, clear and present danger, disaster or natural calamity, other public danger, or a request from the Governor of the State.

“It is a public knowledge and indisputable fact that none of these conditions actually happened in Rivers State. Except perhaps for personal vendetta in alliance with the President's serving Federal Minister of the FCT and the immediate past Governor of Rivers State who has been in personal conflict with the suspended Governor for selfish interests rather than public good.

“The Federal government and the President in particular must find a viable and permanent solution to the political crisis in Rivers State, and also immediately lift the suspension of the Governor, Deputy Governor and State Assembly to restore the spirit of

democracy, justice and public order.”

Citing the case in Kano State where there is a standoff and power struggle within the traditional institution of the Kano Emirate, NEF admonished the federal government to prevent the escalation of political disputes in other states.

The forum stressed the importance of addressing such tensions with caution to avoid further instability in the region.

Meanwhile, in a new development, Vice Admiral Ibok-ete Ibas (retd) met with the Heads of Local Government Administrators on Friday in Port Harcourt. During the meeting, Ibas assured that necessary steps would be taken to promptly address the payment of workers' salaries.

He also expressed concern over the delays in salary payments across various local government areas, acknowledging the hardships faced by affected workers.

“I feel the pain of the workers,” he said, assuring them that the withheld allocations had been released and that his administration would ensure that salaries were paid without delay.

# Court stops INEC from receiving petition to recall Natasha

By New Daily Prime

The Federal High Court, located in Lokoja, Kogi State, has given a verdict stopping the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) from accepting or acting on petitions to recall Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan.

The senator representing Kogi Central was suspended from the senate on March 6 for “gross misconduct” after a seating arrangement saga with Senate President Godswill Akpabio.

Natasha had also accused Akpabio of sexual harassment.

The court approved the interim injunction on Thursday after an ex-parte application for an interim injunction, supported by an “affidavit of extreme urgency”.

Videos showing constituents signing documents as part of the recall process surfaced online on Wednesday.

The court application was filed by Anebe Jacob Ogirima and four other registered voters from Kogi central, who were represented by Smart Nwachimere of West-Idahosa, SAN & Co, TheCable reports.

The court order stops the apex electoral body and its representatives from accepting or acting on petitions



linked to the recall, which the applicants claim contain fictitious signatures.

Also, the order prevents INEC from conducting a referendum on the matter until the substantive case is resolved.

Part of the order read, “That an interim injunction is granted restraining the defendant, staff, agents, privies or assigns from receiving, accepting or acting in any way whatsoever on any purported petitions submitted to the defendant by any person or persons whatsoever, containing fictitious signatures and names of purported members of the said district and conducting any referendum to initiate a recall process of Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan as senator pending the determination of the motion.

The order of the court and the motion on notice are to be served on the INEC as the defendant.

New Daily Prime had reported earlier that the Federal High Court in Abuja has reversed its earlier order nullifying the Senate’s suspension of Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan.

Reversing the court’s March 4 order, which had declared any action taken against Natasha during the suit’s pendency null and void, Justice Obiora Ekwuatu ruled in favour of the Senate’s application.

Justice Ekwuatu initially granted Natasha’s five reliefs, including Order Number Four, rendering any Senate actions against her ineffective.

# Rivers electorates sue Tinubu, Akpabio, others over emergency rule

By Dave Oludare Oso

Rivers State electorates have dragged President Bola Tinubu to court over the removal of Governor Siminalayi Fubara, the Deputy Governor, and the entire members of the State House of Assembly.

In the suit, marked FHC/CS/550/2025, filed at the Federal High Court in Abuja on March 20, 2025, the President of the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and the Attorney General of the Federation are listed as 2nd to 5th defendants.

The suit was filed on behalf of the electorates by a lawyer, Daniel Wariboko, the sole plaintiff. He is suing for himself and other registered voters in Rivers State, in the suit which commenced through an Originating Summons.

He wants the court to determine whether, under Section 305 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), a dispute between a governor and a state House of Assembly is grounds for declaring a state of emergency.

Other reliefs the Plaintiff sought for determination of the court are: "Whether by the provisions of Section 305 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the 1st defendant has the power to suspend a democratically elected Executive and Legislative arm of the Government of a State of the Federation.

"Whether the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria can nominate or appoint a sole administrator to run the affairs of a state in Nigeria when there is an elected Governor, Deputy Governor and members of the House of Assembly.

"Whether the declaration/ proclamation by the 1st defendant of a state of emergency in Rivers State on the 18th of March 2025 is not unconstitutional, null and void.

"Whether the declaration/ proclamation by the 1st defendant of a state of emergency and suspension of the democratically elected executive and



legislative arms of government of Rivers State is not a violation of the rights of the citizens of Rivers State to participate in the governance of their state contained in Article 13 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Right (Ratification and Enforcement) Act.

"Whether the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Respondents have the powers to ratify the suspension of the Executive and legislative arm of government in Rivers State proclaimed by the 1st defendant on the 18th of March 2025."

In the event that the answer to the six formulated questions are in the affirmative, the Plaintiff wants the court to declare that the declaration/proclamation by the President of a State of Emergency in Rivers State on the 18th day of March 2025 is unconstitutional, null and void.

The Plaintiff also sought among others: "A declaration that the Suspension of the Governor, Deputy Governor and Legislators of the Rivers State on the 18th of March 2025 by the 1st defendant is unconstitutional, null and void.

"A declaration that the suspension by the 1st defendant of the democratically elected arm of government of Rivers State is a breach of Article 13 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Right (Ratification and Enforcement) Act and Section 5 (b) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (As Amended).

"A Declaration that the nomination and appointment of a Sole administrator for

Rivers State by the 1st defendant is unconstitutional, null and void.

"A Declaration that the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Defendants do not have the powers to ratify the suspension of the executive and legislative arm of Government in Rivers State as proclaimed by the 1st Defendant on the 18th day of March 2025.

"An Injunction restraining the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Defendants from ratifying the declaration/ proclamation of the 1st defendant made on the 18th day of March 2025 suspending executive and legislative arm of Government in Rivers State.

"An Order of this Honourable Court restoring democracy in Rivers State and reinstating the Executive and Legislative arm of Government of Rivers State sworn in on the 29th of May 2023 and the 10th day of June 2023 respectively.

"An Order of Perpetual Injunction restraining the 1st defendant and his successors-in-title from suspending democratically elected governors or legislators of Rivers State or any other state of the Federal Republic of Nigeria."

The suit, filed through Wariboko's lawyer, Fidel Bassey, Esq., of Transafrican Legal Practice, is dated March 19, 2025.

In a 29-paragraph affidavit in support of the suit, Wariboko maintains that it is in the interest of justice for the court to rule in his favour, emphasising the need for court intervention to restore democracy in Rivers State.

# DHQ to court martial soldiers who invaded Ikeja Electric office

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Defence Headquarters (DHQ) has rejected reports alleging that the two recent attacks on Ikeja Electricity Distribution Company (IkejaElectric) by military personnel were overlooked by the military authorities, suggesting impunity.

The officers were twice captured on video vandalising the office and beating up staff when they visited the premises in anger over unpaid bills of millions of naira.

A statement issued by the Director of Defence Information, Brigadier General Tukur Gusau said DHQ and the Services do not condone misconduct of personnel, citing standing court martials for the trial of erring ones and that Military Police officers are doing their job.

The statement, titled “Attack on DisCos: Nigerian Military Not Above the Law”, reads: “The attention of the Defence Headquarters has been drawn to the verdict of guilt placed on the entire Armed Forces of Nigeria (AFN), by the editorial of a certain popular newspaper, Wednesday, March 19, 2025.

“Given the esteem and critical roles of the journalism profession to the development of our dear country, it would have been more appropriate and in compliance with the professional ethics to fact check from the military hierarchy to confirm actions taken as regard the unfortunate incident before placing guilt judgement on the Armed Forces of Nigeria.

“Gleaning through the editorial, the conspicuous attempt to vilify or cast aspersion on the person of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Christopher Gwabin Musa, and the Service Chiefs as giving tacit support to what the editorial described as growing impunity amounts to being economical with the truth.

“We also believed that the editorial is



not been fair to the AFN.

“Although the guiding ethics laid emphasis on the need to fact-check and balance report, the said newspaper editorial, however, falls short of adherence to the basic roles of the profession.

“That the military has continued to ride roughshod on civilians and private enterprises, to say the least, amounts to drawing hyperbole on the superlative side.

“This is premised on the fact that we have 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria. Those isolated cases reported happened in Lagos.

“Therefore, to paint the picture to the general public as if this is a daily occurrence across the nation is not fair enough.

“The editorial also asserted that past incidences recorded were treated with levity and false conciliation devoid of punitive measures against erring personnel.

“This assertion is also worrisome. In the practice of journalism, comment is said to be free, but facts are sacred.

“Besides, stating the facts in editorial, there should be no room for personal opinion, to avoid being lopsided in judgement.

“The editorial column supposedly, is perceived by some readers as an objective opinion on national matters.

“This calls for caution in the commentary on sensitive and particularly, security issues.

“Therefore, it is not the newspaper that will now be recommending independent oversight mechanism, to ensure the military is accountable.

“In all the 3 Services including the Defence Headquarters, we have military police and Intelligence Corps, saddled with the task of thorough investigation and disciplining erring military personnel, these they have been doing with all due diligence, while having the overall national interest as guiding compass.

“The AFN in its resolve to ensure zero tolerance to indiscipline, has standby Court Martials in all its formations to try erring personnel.

“This has helped to strengthen the respect for citizens’ fundamental human rights.

“The AFN under the able leadership of General Christopher Musa will continue to remain focused, committed and submissive to the tenets of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.”

# NAFDAC issues alert on fake oxycontin 80mg

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) has issued a public alert regarding counterfeit Oxycontin 80mg (oxycodone hydrochloride) detected in an unregulated market in Switzerland.

The alert, numbered No. 07/2025, was posted on NAFDAC's website on Thursday, March 20.

READ ALSO: IPOB slams NAFDAC for midnight raid on Onitsha drug market

The issue of the falsified product was reported to the World Health Organisation (WHO) by the legitimate manufacturer, MUNDIPHARMA, in February.

Laboratory tests reveal counterfeit tablets contain synthetic opioid, not oxycodone

NAFDAC explained that the counterfeit product resembled the genuine Oxycontin 80mg authorised for sale in Poland. The authentic Oxycontin, a semi-synthetic opioid, is used for managing moderate to severe pain.

Laboratory testing conducted by the Drug Information Centre in Zurich, Switzerland, confirmed that the falsified tablets did not contain oxycodone. Instead, they contained a synthetic opioid, likely a nitazene compound.

Nitazene derivatives, such as metonitazene, isotonitazene, and fluonitazene, are potent opioids primarily used in research due to their high addiction potential and severe side effects.

NAFDAC warned that nitazene compounds could be hundreds of times stronger than oxycodone, posing a significant risk of overdose.

The agency highlighted the limited information available on the toxicity, side effects, and long-term consequences of these substances.



NAFDAC identifies discrepancies in counterfeit oxycontin

The counterfeit product, NAFDAC confirmed, was deliberately misrepresented, imitating Oxycontin 80mg manufactured by MUNDIPHARMA for the Polish market. The company confirmed that the product was not produced by them.

The falsified tablets were found to contain undeclared nitazene compounds, which can cause severe adverse effects, even in small doses. NAFDAC pointed out that nitazene derivatives produce similar effects to other opioids but carry a high overdose risk.

Mixing them with depressants such as alcohol or benzodiazepines could lead to dangerous outcomes, including respiratory depression, low blood pressure, coma, and death.

The agency also noted that the falsified product posed a particular danger to individuals with substance use disorders, who might mistakenly perceive it as a safe and genuine medicine.

Several discrepancies were identified in the falsified product, including the incorrect placement of batch and expiry dates.

On the counterfeit blister strip, the batch

number appeared on the right, and the expiry date on the left, whereas the genuine Oxycontin had the batch number on the left and the expiry date on the right.

Additionally, the batch and expiry dates on the falsified product were printed on the front side of the blister strip, unlike the genuine product, where they appear on the back.

NAFDAC encourages reporting of adverse events

NAFDAC reportedly instructed all zonal directors and state coordinators to conduct surveillance and remove any falsified Oxycontin found within their zones and states in Nigeria.

Importers, distributors, retailers, healthcare professionals, and consumers have been urged to exercise caution and vigilance to prevent the importation, distribution, sale, and use of counterfeit tablets.

The agency emphasised the importance of obtaining medical products and devices only from authorised and licensed suppliers.

Healthcare professionals and consumers were also advised to report any suspicions of substandard or falsified products to NAFDAC through its website, customer service hotline, or email.

# Many killed in fresh Osun communal clash; gov imposes curfew

By Dave Oludare Oso

The never-ending communal clash in Osun State got even worse on Friday with about 30 residents getting shot and several killed in the renewed land dispute between Ifon in Orolu local government and Ilobu in Irepodun council area of the state.

According to reports, hundreds of people, especially children and women, were displaced in the ongoing land dispute.

This is as Osun State governor, Ademola Adeleke has imposed a fresh curfew on the two warring local governments.

This was contained in a statement issued on Friday by Oluomo Kolapo Alimi, the State's Commissioner for Information and Public Enlightenment.

According to the statement, the curfew which takes effect with immediate effect will be from 6 PM to 6 AM daily until lasting peace is restored.

Reports said several houses and shops were also razed in the attack which started in the early hours of Friday.

The Spokesperson to Olufon of Ifon, Mr. Akeeb Adekunle, alleged that the crisis has been brewing since last week following a series of attacks on Indigenes of Ifon by Ilobu, which were reported at the police station without any succour.

His words, "The incident escalated last night with hoodlums from Ilobu invading some of the disputed areas, especially Apenponroro burning a Primary Health Centre and residential buildings.

"An old woman was killed in the community and her body burnt in her house. Our people are running for their safety presently."

Also, Chief Adegoke Ogunsola alleged that hoodlums from Ifon had been terrorizing Ilobu indigenes in the area and attempted to kidnap a victim before some people rescued him after crying for help.

"We have reported several attacks in the Apenponroro area in Ilobu by Ifon hoodlums to the Police, but we have not received any help. But Yesterday night,



the hoodlums invaded the Ilobu community, shooting sporadically into the air and burning houses till this morning.

"We urge security operatives to come to our aide soonest to avoid carnage in the community," he said.

## GOV IMPOSES CURFEW

Meanwhile, the Osun State Governor, Ademola Adeleke has directed immediate security operations to restore peace between Ifon and Ilobu communities, urging the peace committee to revive the peace deal.

In the statement, Adeleke enjoined the joint security task force to step in immediately and stop the clashes.

The governor, who decried the politicization of the crisis tasked the task force to go after the ring leaders and ensure they face the full wrath of the law.

He further urged the peace committee to ensure immediate cessation of hostility to preserve lives and properties.

The governor, who lamented the repeated breach of peace deals among the warring communities warned that his administration will take stringent action on the buffer zone between the two communities unless hostility stopped immediately.

The governor's statement reads; "His Excellency, Governor Ademola Adeleke, has expressed unhappiness and

dissatisfaction with the breakout of fresh communal crises in Ilobu and Ifon.

"To this end, the Governor has directed that the initial 10PM to 4AM curfew now be extended to 6PM to 6AM, effective today, Friday, 21st March 2025, until further notice.

"Mr. Governor has equally directed that the joint security team comprising the Nigerian Army, Nigerian Police, and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps continue to maintain their usual 24-hour surveillance to ensure zero tolerance for any act of lawlessness."

In addition, the Governor has directed that an immediate stakeholders' meeting, including the Olufon of Ifon, HRM Oba Peter Oluwole Akinyooye, HRM Oba Ashiru Olatoye Olaniyan, the Olobu of Ilobu, and other stakeholders from both communities, be held tomorrow, Saturday, 22nd March 2025, to discuss further resolutions of the conflict.

Finally, His Excellency urges all sons and daughters of the two communities, as well as their traditional rulers, to follow the path of peace and harmonious co-existence. Anyone or group of persons found aiding and abetting the pogrom will be dealt with accordingly.

# Oyebanji says Ekiti invests billions in power reconnection

By Friday Omosola

**E**kiti State Governor, Biodun Oyebanji, has revealed that his administration has invested billions of naira in reconnecting urban and rural communities previously cut off from the national grid.

Despite these efforts, he expressed dissatisfaction with the poor coordination of power generation and distribution, which has hindered the full benefits of the state's investment.

Governor Oyebanji made these remarks while receiving a delegation from the Presidential Metering Initiative (PMI), Abuja, led by its Technical Director, Engr. Lawal Lawal.

He lamented that despite the state's financial commitment to purchasing transformers, wiring communities, and reconnecting them to the grid, the power supply remains insufficient, and many residents struggle to obtain prepaid meters.

"Since we did not get help from anyone, we decided to help ourselves, and we are making an impact. The only reason we are reaching out to you is that we cannot produce meters.

"I don't know if the commissioner has told you how much we have invested in rural and urban electricity. We have connected communities, bought transformers, and done wiring, spending billions of naira," Oyebanji



stated.

He further highlighted the challenge of limited electricity supply to the state, stressing that even those who have paid for meters are unable to receive them due to their unavailability.

"This is discouraging for us as a government. There is a need to be proactive in ensuring that people have access to both electricity and proper metering," he added.

Commending President Bola Tinubu's commitment to improving power generation and distribution, Governor Oyebanji noted that while the federal government's initiatives are commendable, the lack of proper metering remains a significant issue.

He also pointed out that despite connecting agricultural clusters to the grid, the expected electricity supply has yet to materialize.

In response, Lawal Lawal emphasised

that the Presidential Metering Initiative is a direct effort by President Tinubu to bridge Nigeria's electricity metering gap.

He noted that the signing of the Nigerian Electricity Act 2023 has opened opportunities for enhanced electricity infrastructure nationwide.

He revealed that the President had given a directive to urgently address the seven million-meter deficit in the country, adding that states have played a crucial role in supporting the initiative.

Lawal commended Governor Oyebanji for his administration's financial and logistical contributions, which have significantly aided the project's implementation.

The PMI aims to deploy seven million end-use meters across Nigeria's 774 local government areas under the country's 12 electricity distribution companies (DISCOs).

# Uzodimma: Emergency rule 'stability measure' in Rivers

By Friday Omosola

Imo State Governor and Chairman of the Progressive Governors' Forum, Hope Uzodimma, has commended President Bola Tinubu's declaration of a state of emergency in Rivers State, describing it as a necessary step toward stability and the protection of citizens.

In a statement posted on his Facebook page yesterday, Uzodimma praised the move as a proactive measure demonstrating Tinubu's deep commitment to the security and well-being of Rivers State residents.

The 66-year-old lauded the President's decisiveness, emphasising that the declaration was aimed at preventing further unrest in the oil-rich state.

The governor also commended the National Assembly for swiftly ratifying



Tinubu's proclamation, stating that it reaffirmed Nigeria's collective commitment to democracy and good governance.

According to him, the action reflects the nation's desire for peace, stability, and responsible leadership, especially in times of crisis.

Uzodimma further described the

appointment of Vice Admiral Ibok-Ete Ekwe Ibas (retd.) as the sole administrator as a strategic move, expressing confidence that it would create the necessary conditions for peace and order to be restored.

"His wealth of experience and disciplined leadership will undoubtedly facilitate the return of normalcy, ensuring that governance and development continue unhindered.

"As stakeholders in Nigeria's democratic stability, my colleagues and I fully support Mr. President's timely intervention. The Progressive Governors' Forum remains committed to providing any necessary assistance to ensure that peace, order, and progress are restored in Rivers State", he said.

# Gunmen hijack 18-seater bus, abduct several passengers in Kogi

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Kogi State Police Command has announced that it has deployed a tactical team to rescue kidnapped passengers of an 18-seater bus along Obajana-Kabba highway in the state.

The Command also said that it deployed additional operational assets to carry out bush combing operations to deny criminal elements safe haven along the route.

The command's Public Relations Officer, (PPRO), SP William Ovyo Aya, who disclosed this in a statement, said the directive was given when the Assistant Inspector General of Police, Zone 8, Command Lokoja, AIG Abubakar Zubairu and the Commissioner of Police, Kogi State Command, CP Miller G. Dantawaye, visited the scene of the attack.

According to the statement, "the AIG further engaged with the Divisional Police Officers and other key stakeholders to adopt strategies for proactive crime prevention



and control management."

He urged residents to remain calm, assuring them that the Command was working with critical stakeholders in security management to secure the release of the abducted passengers.

Also speaking, the Kogi State Commissioner of Police, Dantawaye reiterated the Command's unwavering commitment in synergizing with other

security agencies to sustain the ongoing onslaught against criminality in the state, the statement stressed.

He further stated that the Divisional Police Officers have been directed to carry out a comprehensive crime prevention patrol, as well as intelligence-driven operations, to safeguard travelers and residents along highways in the State.

The Commissioner of Police commended the vital role of community-led security efforts in preventing and responding to criminal activities and further stressed the importance of intelligence sharing, noting that law enforcement agencies require public cooperation to effectively combat crime.

While acknowledging manpower challenges, Dantawaye assured that training and collaboration efforts would be intensified to enhance security operations.

# Rivers administrator urges monarchs to focus on peace, not politics

By Friday Omosola

The Sole Administrator of Rivers State, Ibok-Ete Ibas, has urged traditional rulers to maintain neutrality in political matters, emphasising their critical role in fostering unity and stability across the state.

During a meeting with the monarchs at Government House, Port Harcourt, Ibas, a retired Vice Admiral and former Chief of Naval Staff, expressed his deep concern over the state's persistent instability.

“As someone who has dedicated years to safeguarding lives, I find it troubling to witness the unrest in Rivers State,” he stated. “Restoring peace is not just a mandate—it is a necessity.”

He reassured the traditional leaders that his administration was committed to rebuilding trust and ensuring Rivers State reclaims its position as a beacon of progress.

However, he warned against divisive actions that could further destabilize the state, calling for cooperation in maintaining order.

Highlighting the traditional



rulers' influence within their communities, Ibas urged them to remain apolitical, both in speech and conduct, and to distance themselves from cult activities and acts of vandalism.

He stressed that their leadership should focus on conflict resolution and grassroots security.

“Security is a collective responsibility, not just that of the government. Traditional rulers must be at the forefront of ensuring peace within their communities,” he asserted.

In response, the Chairman of the Rivers State Council of Traditional Rulers, HRM Chike Worlu-Wodo, pledged the council's full support for the administrator's peace-building

efforts.

He described Ibas' appointment as a strategic move for the state and affirmed the traditional rulers' commitment to fostering harmony within their respective domains.

“As custodians of culture and tradition, our primary duty is to uphold peace in our communities,” Worlu-Wodo said.

“We trust in your leadership and believe you have what it takes to restore stability.”

The monarch further encouraged Ibas to view his role as that of a mediator, guiding the state toward reconciliation and progress.

# Cross River backs Rivers emergency rule, disowns S'South gov's stance

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

**T**he acting governor of Cross River, Peter Odey, has said that the state does not align with the position of the south-south governors' forum on the state of emergency in Rivers State.

Odey has been standing in for Bassey Otu, the Cross River governor, who is on an annual leave.

On Thursday, the forum asked President Bola Tinubu to reverse the emergency rule declared in Rivers.

Tinubu proclaimed a state of emergency in the south-south state, citing the prolonged political crisis and vandalism of oil installations.

The president suspended Siminalayi Fubara, governor of the state; Ngozi Odu, his deputy; and all house of assembly members; for six months.

Tinubu also appointed Ibok-Ete Ibas, a retired vice-admiral, as the sole administrator for Rivers.

On Thursday, the senate and the house of representatives controversially approved Tinubu's request for the emergency rule.

Meanwhile, governor of Edo State, Monday Okpebholo had dissociated himself from the position of the south-south



governors, saying Tinubu's decision would bring lasting peace to Rivers.

In his reaction, acting governor Odey, in a statement issued on Friday by Fred Abua, his press secretary, said the forum did not seek his opinion before taking a position.

"As such, the position of the forum does not reflect the views of the Government of Cross River State," the statement reads.

The governor said he "fully aligns" with Tinubu's decision which was taken in the "best interest of national security, peace, and stability.

"Every responsible government must prioritize the protection of lives and property, and where

circumstances necessitate decisive action, such measures should be supported for the greater good of our democracy and national unity," he said.

The governor added that Cross River remains committed to upholding constitutional governance and will continue to collaborate with the federal government in ensuring peace, security, and stability across the country.

The governors of Cross River and Edo are members of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC). The other south-south states — Akwa Ibom, Delta, Rivers and Bayelsa — are governed by the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

# Sudan army recaptures presidential palace after two-year war

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Sudanese army says it has recaptured the presidential palace in the capital Khartoum from the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) after almost two years of fighting.

Reclaiming the east African country's seat of power marks a major victory for the army, which has been making significant advances against the RSF in recent months.

But it is still a long way from ending the war entirely, with large parts of the country still under the RSF's control.

It is also unclear whether the battle for Khartoum is over: an RSF statement said its fighters were still in the area.

"Our valiant forces are still present in the vicinity of the area," read an RSF statement issued on the messaging service Telegram.

RSF said a drone strike it launched on the palace complex left numerous dead – including a team of journalists from Sudan's state TV station and two of the army's senior media liaison officers.

Bloody clashes are also expected to carry on as the army tries to corner remaining fighters, who occupy swathes of territory to the south of the palace.

They also control parts of the nearby airport.

However, the capture of the palace – which came after fierce battles in the centre of the city – was marked with joyful posts by soldiers on social media. Posts showed jubilant soldiers cheering and kneeling to pray at the entrance.



Nabil Abdallah, the army spokesperson, said on state TV that the military had taken control of the palace and ministry buildings on Friday morning.

"Our forces completely destroyed the enemy's fighters and equipment, and seized large quantities of equipment and weapons," Abdallah added.

People in the capital – where some of the biggest battles of the last two years have been fought – are still reeling from life under the RSF soldiers, who have been accused of widespread looting and human rights abuses.

Residents say they feel relieved and safe now that the territory has been taken back by the army.

Some have been saying that they would finally be able to sleep at night.

The conflict, which began in April 2023, has taken a huge toll on civilians, with 12 million people forced from their homes and millions facing famine.

The capital is not the only place the Sudanese Armed Forces have been making gains: the army has also taken parts of central Sudan in recent weeks.

But this does not represent an end to the war as the RSF still controls large areas of the country, particularly in the western Darfur region.

In a video recording on Saturday, RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti, had vowed to defend the presidential palace and surrounding areas that are under the control of his paramilitary group.

He also threatened further attacks in several northern cities.

Several peace efforts have collapsed as the rival forces pledge to continue fighting to control strategic areas.

As well as causing the world's largest humanitarian crisis, according to the UN, both the RSF and the army have been accused of widespread human rights abuses.

# I was defrauded, slipped into debt - Mr Macaroni reveals fraud, debt struggles

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**A**ctor and content creator Mr Macaroni revealed he faced financial struggles in 2021 after falling victim to a scam and a failed investment.

As a result, he lost all his savings and had to borrow money to meet his financial obligations. At one point, his debt reached N500 million.

### Admitting financial mistakes

The entertainer acknowledged that his generosity and reckless financial habits played a role in his financial instability. He admitted that he often spent without caution and helped others even when his finances were unstable.

### A secret battle with debt

In a heartfelt post shared on his X handle on Thursday, Mr Macaroni opened up about his challenges. He wrote, "Sometime around 2021/2022, I was a victim of a scam and, at the same time, suffered a failed investment. I lost everything I had saved. It shook me deeply, but I told no one about it."

### Keeping his struggles private

The actor explained that he prefers to keep his struggles hidden. "If you



know me well, you will know I don't like sharing my struggles. I could be facing the worst situations, yet I would still help others solve their problems. But I would never talk about mine," he wrote.

### Continuing his career despite challenges

Even with financial difficulties, Mr Macaroni remained active in his career. He continued creating content, acting, and engaging in social advocacy. Many of his fans were unaware of his struggles because he maintained his usual public persona.

### Fans and celebrities react

His revelation sparked reactions from fans and fellow celebrities. Many praised his resilience, while others expressed shock at his ordeal. Some encouraged him to adopt

better financial management strategies to avoid similar setbacks in the future.

### A lesson on financial caution

Mr Macaroni's story sheds light on the hidden struggles of public figures. While many assume that celebrities enjoy financial security, his experience serves as a reminder that financial mismanagement, scams, and failed investments can affect anyone.

### Moving forward with optimism

Despite past mistakes, Mr Macaroni remains hopeful about the future. His journey highlights the importance of financial caution, resilience, and seeking help when needed. His story may serve as a lesson for others facing similar financial challenges.

# 'My greatest regret is disappointing Tope Alabi' – Actor Olaiya Igwe

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**N**ollywood veteran Olaiya Igwe has expressed deep regret over an incident that took place years ago, involving popular gospel singer Tope Alabi.

The actor admitted that he failed to keep a promise he made to the singer on one of the most important days of her life—her wedding day.

Speaking in a recent interview with Baba Ibe TV, Igwe recounted how the situation unfolded. At the time, he had just purchased a luxury car after the success of his hit movie *Ololade Mr Money*. The car, a Mercedes-Benz V-Boot, carried a personalized inscription, “*Ololade Mr Money 1.*”

Tope Alabi’s request and Igwe’s initial agreement

According to Igwe, Tope Alabi and her husband, Soji, visited him while preparing for their wedding. They asked if they could borrow his new car for the occasion. Igwe agreed without hesitation, assuring them they could use it as their official wedding ride. However, when the wedding day arrived, he failed to keep his word.

Fear and last-minute doubts

He revealed that the decision to disappoint them was not made lightly. After giving his word, he suddenly had



doubts. He feared that armed robbers might attack the couple and steal the vehicle. This fear led him to ignore their calls the night before the wedding. Instead of explaining his concerns, he simply refused to hand over the car.

“I disappointed Tope Alabi,” he admitted with remorse. “She and her husband trusted me, but I failed them. I ignored her calls because I was scared of what could happen. But that was wrong of me. I should have at least informed them.”

Lingering guilt despite forgiveness

Looking back, Igwe acknowledges that his actions hurt the gospel singer. Even though he later apologized, he still feels guilty about it. He noted that despite

everything, Tope Alabi has been blessed with multiple luxury cars—many of which he himself cannot afford.

“Today, she owns countless luxury cars. Meanwhile, I still regret what I did,” he confessed. “I once sought her forgiveness during a professional meeting in Ogun State. But the pain still lingers. My biggest regret is disappointing Tope Alabi.”

Lessons from a painful regret

The veteran actor’s confession highlights the weight of broken promises, especially when they affect relationships with loved ones. Even though time has passed, Igwe still carries the burden of his past mistake.

# Kanye West accuses Kim Kardashian of sex trafficking

By **Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi**

Rapper Kanye West has accused his ex-wife, Kim Kardashian, and her family of sex trafficking, claiming they exploit Black children they “strategically produce.”

In a series of social media posts, he claimed the Kardashians exploit Black children they “strategically produce.” His statements surfaced amid an ongoing custody dispute with Kim over their four children.

### West’s explosive claims

The 47-year-old rapper took to his X (formerly Twitter) account to express his outrage. He accused Kim of preventing their daughter, North West, from visiting him. According to TMZ, Kim canceled the visit after learning that controversial figures Andrew and Tristan Tate were heading to the location. Security guards reportedly informed her about the situation, prompting her decision.

This move angered West, who launched into a heated social media rant. He wrote, “Kim Kardashian is a sex trafficker. I don’t like that Twigs has my daughter in her video, dressed all grown. I would have expected more from Twigs. It’s f\*\*\* all you n\*\*\*as.”

He continued, “My soul is Black. And watch, y’all won’t believe me and will just call me crazy. The Kardashians are sex workers, and they sex traffic all the Black children they strategically produce.”

### Kardashians remain silent

Despite the serious accusations, Kim Kardashian and her family have not responded. They have faced public scrutiny before, but this is one of the most shocking claims made against them.

West’s comments have sparked debate



online. Some supporters defend him, saying he is trying to protect his children. Others believe his statements are baseless and fueled by personal conflict with Kim.

### A history of controversy

This is not the first time West has made bold claims about his ex-wife. Since their divorce, he has repeatedly criticized Kim’s parenting decisions. In the past, he voiced concerns about their daughter North using social media and participating in entertainment projects.

He has also been outspoken about Hollywood, accusing the industry of corruption and exploitation. His latest remarks add to his history of controversial statements that divide public opinion.

### Custody battle continues

The custody battle between Kanye and Kim remains ongoing. The former couple shares four children—North, Saint, Chicago, and Psalm. While they initially agreed on co-parenting, conflicts over their children’s upbringing have caused tensions.

Kim has largely avoided public spats with West. Instead, she has focused on raising their children and expanding her business empire. However, West’s latest accusations could put more strain on their

already difficult co-parenting relationship.

### Public reaction

The internet has reacted strongly to West’s claims. Fans and critics have taken to social media to discuss the allegations. Some argue that his words should not be dismissed, while others view them as another outburst from the rapper.

Legal experts say accusations like these, if untrue, could harm West’s custody case. If Kim decides to respond legally, it could escalate the battle even further.

### What happens next?

As of now, Kim Kardashian and her family have remained silent. Whether they will respond remains to be seen. Meanwhile, Kanye West continues to make headlines with his controversial remarks.

With the custody fight still ongoing, the drama between Kanye and Kim is far from over.

# Skales credits ex-label boss Banky W for sponsoring his education

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**N**igerian singer Skales thanked his former label boss, Banky W, for sponsoring his university tuition, showing gratitude years after graduating.

On Thursday, the “Shake Body” hitmaker took to his X account to express his gratitude. His appreciation post came after he finally received his long-awaited university certificate.

Skales shared a photo of his Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration and reflected on his academic journey. He revealed that although he graduated years ago, he only just got his official certificate.

He dedicated the achievement to his late mother and acknowledged Banky W’s support in funding his education.

“Aye, my BSc showed up after many years of graduation!” he wrote. “This is for my mother, and thank you to @BankyW for sponsoring the boy through school.”

## A history of support

Skales began his music career under the guidance of Banky W. In 2009, he signed a record deal with Empire Mates Entertainment (E.M.E), the record label founded by the singer-turned-politician.

During his time at E.M.E, the label was home to other rising stars, including Wizkid. Reports suggest that Banky W enrolled both Skales and Wizkid at Lead City University to further their education while they pursued their music careers.

However, Wizkid later dropped out to



focus entirely on music. Skales, on the other hand, managed to complete his studies.

His contract with E.M.E ended in 2014, leading him to continue his career as an independent artist. Despite parting ways with the label, his recent message shows that he remains grateful for the support Banky W provided in his early years.

## Fans react to Skales’ post

Following his post, fans flooded the comments with congratulatory messages. Many praised him for acknowledging Banky W’s role in his education. Others reflected on how E.M.E played a crucial part in shaping the careers of several Nigerian artists.

Some fans also used the opportunity to call for more support for young artists trying to balance education and music. They pointed out that while not every musician completes their degree, having financial backing can make a difference.

Banky W’s legacy in Nigerian music

Banky W has built a reputation for mentoring young talents in the Nigerian music industry. Under E.M.E, he helped launch the careers of artists like Skales, Wizkid, and Niyola. His influence extends beyond music, as he has also ventured into politics and philanthropy.

His decision to invest in his artists’ education highlights his commitment to their long-term success. Many in the industry have praised him for prioritizing their growth, not just as musicians but as individuals.

Skales’ heartfelt message serves as a reminder of how a helping hand can shape a young artist’s future. His journey, from a budding musician to a graduate and successful artist, showcases the impact of mentorship and support.

As he celebrates this milestone, fans and industry colleagues continue to applaud both Skales and Banky W for their contributions to Nigerian music and education.

# 'Things getting out of hand' - BBNaija's Phyna decries surging living costs

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Reality TV star and actress Phyna has sounded the alarm on Nigeria's growing hunger crisis, blaming rising living costs for pushing many into extreme hardship.

She blames rising living costs for pushing many citizens into extreme hardship.

In a passionate video message shared on social media, Phyna described hunger as more than just empty plates. She said it is also about lost hope and broken dreams. Many Nigerians, she noted, struggle daily to survive but remain silent instead of demanding change.

## Hunger beyond empty plates

Phyna stressed that hunger is not just about missing meals. It is about children dropping out of school to search for food. It is about parents going to bed hungry, unsure of where the next meal will come from. She painted a grim picture of inequality, stating that the gap between the rich and the poor has never been wider.

"For many, hunger is not just about food scarcity," she said. "It is about dignity, survival, and humanity itself."

She questioned why, despite the worsening crisis, many Nigerians choose to suffer in silence. She called for a unified voice to demand change



and ensure no one is left behind.

## A nation divided

Phyna lamented that Nigerians remain divided by personal struggles, ideologies, and self-interest. She urged citizens to set aside their differences and work toward a common goal—ensuring the well-being of all.

"We must unite as one nation," she said. "Hunger is not a distant problem. It is here, in our homes, our communities, and in the heartbeat of every Nigerian."

She emphasized that the fight against hunger cannot be an individual effort. Instead, it requires collective action and accountability from leaders. She urged Nigerians to demand real solutions, not just empty promises.

## A shared responsibility

Phyna also made it clear that solving the hunger crisis is not solely the government's responsibility. Citizens, she said, must also play a role. She encouraged community-driven solutions and stronger support networks to help those in need.

Ensuring food security, she noted, requires long-term commitment from both the government and the people. By working together, she believes Nigeria can overcome this crisis and build a future where no one goes hungry.

Phyna's message is a call to action. As the cost of living continues to rise, Nigerians must speak out, demand change, and support one another in the fight against hunger.

# Trump, Pentagon deny Elon Musk got China war plan briefing

By Dave Oludare Oso

Elon Musk visited the Pentagon on Friday for a briefing that President Donald Trump insists was focused on the tech mogul's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) efforts, disputing a New York Times report that the meeting would include a discussion of plans for any potential war with China.

"He's there for DOGE, not there for China, and if you ever mentioned China, I think he'd walk out of the room," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office later in the morning when asked about Musk's meeting.

The Times was first to report Musk's Pentagon briefing. Citing two U.S. officials, the news outlet also reported that the meeting would focus on what the military might do if any war were to break out with China. Trump and his defence secretary, Pete Hegseth, repeatedly denied the report.

"We welcomed him today to the Pentagon to talk about DOGE, to talk about efficiencies, to talk about innovations," Hegseth told reporters at the Oval Office after he and Trump had announced the production of a next-generation fighter jet.

"It was a great, informal conversation. The rest of that reporting was fake. There was no war plans, there was no Chinese war plans. There was no secret plans."

Hegseth, who had met with Musk in the morning at the Pentagon, did not say whether the discussion completely excluded talk about China more generally.

Musk arrived at the Pentagon at a little before 9 a.m. ET and his visit lasted a little over an hour. When asked afterward how the meeting went, he told reporters as he was walking with Hegseth, "It's always a great meeting."

"I've been here before, you know," Musk added as the two men joined in a laugh.

Three defence officials had confirmed to NBC News earlier Friday that Musk had been scheduled to have a briefing at the



Pentagon, and one of the topics would be China. But the officials could not confirm that the meeting would focus specifically on plans for any potential war, known as the operational plan, or O plan. Two of the officials also said the briefing would be unclassified.

The decision to brief Musk on military plans for China would mark a notable evolution of his involvement in the Trump administration and, potentially, his access to U.S. secrets. Musk, whom the president has charged with overseeing a government cost-cutting initiative known as the Department of Government Efficiency, could also have conflicts of interest, as Musk's own products and businesses are used by the federal government, including Starlink and SpaceX, which contracts with the Defense Department.

Musk also has deep financial interests in China — his electric vehicle maker Tesla has two facilities in Shanghai, and China is the company's second-largest market.

Late Thursday night, Trump denied the Times' article, saying in a post to his Truth Social platform that the news outlet had reported "incorrectly, that Elon Musk is going to the Pentagon tomorrow to be briefed on any potential 'war with China.' How ridiculous? China will not even be mentioned or discussed. How disgraceful it is that the discredited media can make up such lies. Anyway, the story is completely

untrue!!!"

Asked for comment about Musk's visit to the Pentagon, the White House referred to the president's Truth Social post.

Hegseth also denied the Times report, saying in a post on X "this is NOT a meeting about 'top secret China war plans.' It's an informal meeting about innovation, efficiencies & smarter production."

Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell called the Times' reporting "100% Fake News" in a post on X. "Just brazenly & maliciously wrong. Elon Musk is a patriot. We are proud to have him at the Pentagon."

Asked Friday in the Oval Office why he wouldn't want to show potential plans for a war with China to Musk, Trump said, "I don't want to show that to anybody, but certainly you wouldn't show it to a businessman who is helping us so much. He's a great patriot," referring to Musk's spearheading of the administration's efforts to slash the size of government.

"He's finding tremendous waste, fraud and abuse," Trump said. "But I certainly wouldn't want, you know Elon has businesses in China, and he would be susceptible, perhaps, to that, but it was such a fake story."

# Germany seizes Russian 'shadow fleet' ship

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Germany seized a tanker believed to be part of Russia's shadow fleet off its Baltic coast following a string of sabotage attacks and illegal shipping.

The Panama-flagged ship, called Eventin, was secured by German maritime authorities after being found off the island of Rügen.

The confiscation order means the vessel and its cargo of around 100,000 metric tons of oil, worth some 40 million euros (\$43.33 million), now become German property, German newspaper Spiegel reported.

The Kremlin said it had no information about the ship and no knowledge about its owner, according to Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov.

Russia's 'shadow fleet' refers to a growing armada of ageing, uninsured vessels used by Russia to move oil, arms and grains around in violation of sanctions, helping to feed its war machine.

The tanker, which had been travelling from Russia to Egypt, also sparked environmental concerns over a potential oil spill.

Eventin was included in the EU's 16th package of sanctions targeting Russia for invasion of Ukraine and trying to



put extra pressure on its ghost fleet.

In recent months, Russian ships have been accused of carrying out sabotage operations in the Baltic Sea, including severing undersea cables.

This week, it emerged that a ship linked to Russia's shadow fleet was seen dropping an anchor close to an undersea cable in Irish waters earlier this year. It is not clear if the ship was intentionally targeting the cable before it was ordered to leave the area.

Moscow's ships have also increasingly been spotted in the English Channel.

Earlier this week, one of the largest convoys of Russian warships entered British and French territorial waters since the start of the Ukraine war.

Two Royal Navy warships shadowed

the Russian destroyer RFN Severomorsk, landing ship RFN Alexander Shabalin and two transport ships, through the English Channel and North Sea.

Type 23 frigate HMS Somerset and minehunter HMS Cattistock, supported by RFA Tidesurge and naval helicopters, were involved in the operation to follow the vessels as they returned from Syria.

"Russia should be in no doubt that the UK will defend our waters," Luke Pollard, the defence minister, said on Wednesday.

The operation was the third time in six weeks that the Royal Navy has shadowed Russian task groups returning from Syria.

# Prince William rides in tank on NATO's front line

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Prince of Wales donned army fatigues to take part in a trench warfare training exercise alongside British troops in Estonia, riding in two tanks amid heavy machine gun fire and grenade smoke.

Prince William joined soldiers from the Mercian Regiment at Tapa Camp, on the front line of Nato's defence against Russia, during his second and final day in the country.

The base is 80 miles from the Russian border and home to 900 UK service personnel, the Army's largest deployment overseas.

In temperatures hovering above 0C, the Prince clambered into a Challenger 2 tank to be briefed on the exercise, later admitting that the vehicle "packs quite a punch."

He then switched to a Warrior infantry fighting vehicle to travel out into the field, seated in the commander's turret to get an "eagle-eye view" of the unfolding drama.

On arrival, he joined soldiers trying to spot and break into an enemy trench before capturing "high-value target" enemy troops.

The Prince, who is Colonel in Chief of the Mercian Regiment, had the scene explained to him by Major James McNeil as gunfire sounded and smoke occasionally blocked the view of the troops.

The Prince said he had been speaking to the "Challenger 2 boys" and asking questions about the weaponry used in the demonstration.

White smoke grenades were thrown into the trench to obstruct the enemy's view, while yellow smoke grenades were used to indicate the front-line position of the



allied troops. A drone was sent up overhead to give the troops a better view of the battle scene.

The Prince told some of the other soldiers later: "I've probably churned up quite a lot of the mud here in the Challenger 2 and the Warrior, I made a bit more of a mess."

Following the demonstration, the Prince drove an Archer – a mobile howitzer carrying a 155mm field gun – before heading to the welfare department to hear about the emotional and mental health support available to soldiers on the base.

He promised to supply a fridge after hearing that one was needed. He also asked if they had a toastie machine, noting how much he "loved cheese toasties".

As he chatted to four soldiers who had recently arrived in Estonia, he acknowledged that the heightened political tensions with Russia would make a difference to their general outlook.

He said: "It must focus the mind a little bit coming out here, knowing what's going on in the rest of the world, the context.

"And in fact, the Russian border is only a

few hundred miles from here... it does feel like it's a bit more of an operational environment rather than just training."

The Prince posed with soldiers as he prepared to join troops in a trench-clearing exercise

The Prince posed with soldiers as he prepared to join troops in a trench-clearing exercise Credit: Victoria Jones/PA

He added: "We were saying, it's quite a useful exercise in itself, just viewing what's gone on in Ukraine, seeing all the kinds of terrain they're operating in and understanding the pros and cons of what's gone on before.

"It's quite a lot of things to be thinking about while you're operating out here and does focus the mind a little bit... what the challenges are coming up."

The Prince's last stop was the Navy, Army and Air Force Institute's canteen, where he played table football and pool with some of the soldiers.

# Elon Musk's X sues India in new censorship battle

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

India's IT ministry has unlawfully expanded censorship powers to allow the easier removal of online content and empowered "countless" government officials to execute such orders, Elon Musk's X has alleged in a new lawsuit against New Delhi on Friday.

The lawsuit and the allegations mark an escalation in an ongoing legal dispute between X and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government over how New Delhi orders content to be taken down. It also comes as Musk is getting closer to launching his other key ventures Starlink and Tesla in India.

In the new court filing dated March 5, X argues India's IT Ministry is asking other departments to use a government website launched by the Ministry of Home Affairs last year to issue content blocking orders and mandate social media companies to join the website too.



This mechanism, X says, does not contain the stringent Indian legal safeguards on content removal that required such orders to be issued in cases such as harm to sovereignty or public order, and came with strict oversight of top officials.

India's IT ministry redirected a Reuters' request for comment to the home affairs ministry, which did not respond.

The website creates "an impermissible parallel mechanism" that causes "unrestrained censorship of information

in India," X said, adding it is seeking to quash the directive.

X's court papers are not public and were reported for the first time by media on Friday.

The case was briefly heard earlier this week by a judge in the High Court of southern Karnataka state but no final decision was reached. It will now be heard on March 27.

In 2021, X, formerly called Twitter, was locked in a stand-off with the Indian government over non-compliance of legal orders to block certain tweets related to a farmers' protest against government policies.

X later complied following public criticism by officials, but its legal challenge to the decision is continuing in Indian courts.

# AJW Group appoints Donal Boylan to lead Asia Pacific market

By Fatimah Idera

AJW Group, a leader in aviation asset management, has announced the appointment of Donal Boylan as President – Asia Pacific. With over 35 years of experience in aerospace and defence, Boylan brings extensive engineering, commercial strategy, and corporate leadership expertise to the role.

In his new role Boylan will focus on enhancing the company's brand, strengthening relationships with customers, and driving growth within the Asia Pacific market. The appointment signals the company's commitment to expanding its presence and advancing its strategic initiatives in the region.

Throughout his career, Boylan has held significant positions in the aviation sector, including serving as a founding



partner at BCAP, Vice Chairman of Vietjet Air JSC, and CEO of Bohai Leasing (Hong Kong), the parent company of Avolon. Boylan has been instrumental in guiding aircraft leasing companies through major expansions and public listings, and was a co-founder of RBS Aviation Capital, which is now known as SMBC Aviation Capital.

Christopher Whiteside, Chairman of

AJW Group, commented on the appointment, stating, "We are delighted to welcome Donal to our Singapore office as President – Asia Pacific. His deep industry expertise and proven leadership will be key to driving our regional growth and maintaining our commitment to excellence in aviation asset management."

Boylan will drive strategic initiatives to bolster the AJW Group brand, strengthen customer relationships, and accelerate growth throughout the Asia Pacific market.

AJW Group continues to prioritize innovation and industry leadership. The appointment of Donal Boylan is seen as a strategic move to further solidify the company's position in the competitive aviation sector.

# Heathrow Airport closed over power outage caused by fire

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Tens of thousands of passengers have been left stranded and more than 1,300 flights disrupted as a massive fire at an electricity substation near Heathrow Airport in London led to a total shutdown of one of the world's busiest travel hubs.

The London Fire Brigade said the blaze would be a "prolonged incident," with nearby residents facing increasing disruptions, CNN reports.

Heathrow Airport has warned of "significant disruption" over the coming days, advising passengers, "Do not travel to the airport under any circumstances until the airport reopens."

The cause of the fire remains under investigation.

Flight analytics firm Cirium estimated that "upwards of 145,000" passengers could be impacted, with flights from cities such as Singapore, Seoul, and Perth among those affected. Cirium spokesperson Mike Arnot noted,

"Each aircraft on the long-haul routes will have some 250-400 passengers on the outbound flight, along with a similar number waiting to return.

"Accordingly, it can take several days to accommodate all of the passengers."

New York's John F. Kennedy Airport had the highest number of scheduled departures to Heathrow on Friday, with 21 flights affected. Many flights already in the air were forced to divert to alternative airports across Europe



and North America. Some were even turned back to their original departure points.

One affected passenger, Kim Mikkel Skibrek, was three hours into his Delta Air Lines flight to London when the crew announced they had to return to Minneapolis due to the fire.

"Everything is fine. People were frustrated with the flight returning after over three hours but now it seems everyone is calmer," Skibrek said. He had been travelling to Oslo to see his father, who has cancer.

Another passenger, Abby Hertz, was en route to a wedding in London with her husband and two young children when her flight was forced to turn around.

"The couple's son had leukemia and is now in remission, so they are finally getting married," she said.

Delta later rebooked her family on a flight scheduled to leave Friday night. "We just might make the wedding after all!" she added.

Firefighters continue battling the substation blaze, which has caused massive travel disruption and left thousands of homes without power. London Fire Brigade station commander Paul Morgan stated,

"The substation is currently still ablaze. Firefighters are working to isolate the electricity, which will then allow them to tackle the blaze with firefighting foam."

Aviation expert Geoffrey Thomas criticised Heathrow's lack of backup power.

"You are our major hub to the world. You are incredibly important to the economy of the United Kingdom.

"There has to be a plan B," he said.

Thomas added that the shutdown could lead to wider operational issues as flights get diverted to already full airports such as Gatwick, Birmingham, and Manchester.

# China executes four Canadians, triggering international outrage

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

**M**elanie Joly, Canada's foreign minister, told reporters in Ottawa on Friday that China had defied pleas for leniency.

"We strongly condemn the executions that did happen against Canadians in China," Joly said.

She said she was unable to discuss details as the victims' families had requested privacy.

However, Beijing suggested on Friday the Canadians had been convicted over narcotics offences.

China has said it acted "in accordance with the law" over the execution of four Canadian citizens in recent weeks.

"Combating drug crimes is the common responsibility of all countries," Mao Ning, foreign ministry spokesman, said.

"China protects the legitimate rights of the parties concerned as well as the consular rights of the Canadian side, in accordance with the law."

Beijing also defended the executions to Canada's *Globe and Mail* newspaper.

"Drug-related crime is a severe crime recognised worldwide as extremely harmful to society," its embassy said.



"China always imposes severe penalties on drug-related crimes and maintains a 'zero tolerance' attitude towards the drug problem."

Statistics a state secret

Joly said she and Justin Trudeau, the former prime minister who left office last week, had asked China for leniency.

China classifies death penalty statistics as a state secret, although rights groups including Amnesty International believe thousands of people are executed in the country every year.

Beijing said this week a former Chinese engineer had recently been sentenced to death for leaking state secrets to a foreign power.

The arrest of a senior Chinese telecoms executive on a US warrant in Vancouver in December 2018 and Beijing's retaliatory detention of two Canadians on espionage charges plunged relations into a deep freeze.

Ties were strained further over allegations of Chinese interference in Canadian elections in 2019 and 2021.

In 2023, Joly expelled a Chinese diplomat who had been accused of targeting a Canadian opposition politician who criticised the ruling Communist Party, as well as his family.

Ottawa has also criticised a security crackdown in Hong Kong and China's treatment of its Uyghur Muslim minority.

# Judge blocks DOGE from accessing sensitive Social Security records

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE's) approach to identifying fraud at the Social Security Administration "is tantamount to hitting a fly with a sledgehammer," a federal judge said Thursday, blocking DOGE's unlimited access to sensitive agency data.

In a 137-page ruling, U.S. District Judge Ellen Lipton Hollander wrote the Trump administration never justified the need to access the data — which they argued was vital to identifying alleged fraud — and likely violated multiple federal laws in doing so.

"The DOGE Team is essentially engaged in a fishing expedition at SSA, in search of a fraud epidemic, based on little more than suspicion. It has launched a search for the proverbial needle in the haystack, without any concrete knowledge that the needle is actually in the haystack," she wrote.

Elon Musk looks on during the day of a meeting with House Republicans to discuss the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) on Capitol Hill in Washington, Mar. 5, 2025. Kent Nishimura/Reuters

The judge's order blocks the agency from granting DOGE access to systems containing personally identifiable information and orders DOGE members to destroy any data in their possession that identifies individual taxpayers.

However, the judge's decision allows DOGE to continue to allow access anonymized data from the agency.

According to Hollander, the decision to give DOGE "unlimited access to SSA's entire record system" endangered the sensitive and private information of millions of Americans, risking information including Social Security numbers, credit card information, medical and mental health records, hospitalization records, marriage and birth certificates, and bank information.



"The government has not even attempted to explain why a more tailored, measured, titrated approach is not suitable to the task," she wrote. "Instead, the government simply repeats its incantation of a need to modernise the system and uncover fraud. Its method of doing so is tantamount to hitting a fly with a sledgehammer."

Two people enter a Social Security Administration office in suburban Detroit, March 7, 2025. Jim West/UCG/Universal Images Group via Getty Images

The lawsuit challenging DOGE's access was filed last month by two national unions and an advocacy group who argued DOGE's access violated privacy laws and the Administrative Procedures Act.

In a statement to ABC News, the president of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees celebrated the decision as a "major win for working people and retirees across the country."

"The court saw that Elon Musk and his unqualified lackeys present a grave danger to Social Security and have illegally accessed the data of millions of Americans," AFSCME President Lee Saunders said in a statement.

In her decision, the judge also pointed out

the irony that DOGE has accessed the sensitive information of millions of Americans while the identities of the DOGE employees working in the SSA have been concealed for privacy reasons.

"The defence does not appear to share a privacy concern for the millions of Americans whose SSA records were made available to the DOGE affiliates, without their consent," she wrote.... Says it's 'Hitting a fly with a sledgehammer'

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# Osimhen scores twice to revive Nigeria's World Cup dream

By Dave Oludare Oso



Pooja La Photos  
Credit: Sulaiman Adebayo

Free-scoring Super Eagles striker, Victor Osimhen scored twice on Friday to revive Nigeria's hopes of qualifying for the 2026 FIFA World Cup in the USA, Canada, and Mexico with a crucial victory over Rwanda's Amavubi.

Desperate for a win to salvage their qualification hopes in Group C, Nigeria finally secured their first victory after five matches, climbing to six points and moving up to fourth on the table.

Despite the presence of Rwandan President Paul Kagame in the stands, the Super Eagles silenced the home crowd early.

Osimhen struck in the 11th minute,

capitalising on a perfect assist from Ademola Lookman to give Nigeria the lead.

His goal made history—he became the first Super Eagles striker to score in Rwanda in nearly two decades.

Moses Simon nearly doubled the lead before halftime, forcing a brilliant save from Rwanda's goalkeeper.

Moments later, a last-ditch clearance from the hosts denied Osimhen a second, but the Eagles kept piling on the pressure.

Then, just before the halftime whistle, the Galatasaray striker delivered again. A well-placed header from Samuel Chukwueze found Osimhen, who expertly flicked the ball over the

advancing goalkeeper to seal his brace and put Nigeria in firm control.

Rwanda fought back fiercely in the second half, bombarding the Nigerian defence, but goalkeeper Stanley Nwabali stood tall to deny their best efforts.

The home side thought they had pulled one back in the 88th minute, but their goal was ruled out for offside.

Elsewhere in Group C, South Africa now sit atop the standings with 10 points after a 2-0 win over Lesotho, while Benin climbed to second with eight points following a 2-2 draw against Zimbabwe. Rwanda, with seven points, dropped to third.

# Thomas Tuchel starts England tenure with 2-0 win over Albania

By Oluwatosin Ologun

Thomas Tuchel recorded a winning start as England manager, with the Three Lions taking care of business against Albania to begin the qualifying process for the 2026 World Cup.

Goals came courtesy of debutant Miles Lewis-Skelly and all-time leading goalscorer Harry Kane, as England dominated possession 75-25 and restricted the visitors to just three shots (none on target). Not exactly scintillating stuff, but effective enough.

Lewis-Skelly, who found the net just 20 minutes into his senior debut, became England's youngest ever goalscorer in the process, at just 18 years and 176 days of age (33 days younger than previous record-holder Marcus Rashford). He was replaced by Reece James for the final few minutes of the game for the Chelsea captain's first national team appearance in nearly two (very injury-hit) years.

Levi Colwill went an unused



substitute. Chelsea loanee Armando Broja played about 30 minutes off the bench for Albania.

Elsewhere in World Cup qualifying, Moisés Caicedo played the full-90 in Ecuador's 2-1 win over Venezuela while Enzo Fernández did the same in Argentina's 1-0 win over Uruguay. Kendry Páez was an unused substitute

by Ecuador while Estêvão was the same for Brazil in their 2-1 win over Colombia.

Defending champions Argentina are now all but assured of a spot at the 2026 edition, while Ecuador and Brazil are not far behind in the CONMEBOL qualification standings.

# Højlund's late strike seals Denmark's win over Portugal

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Rasmus Højlund came off the bench to fire Denmark to a 1-0 victory over Portugal in the first leg of their UEFA Nations League quarter-final at Parken Stadium.

The Manchester United striker netted the decisive goal in the 78th minute, calmly finishing Andreas Skov Olsen's cross. Højlund marked his goal with Cristiano Ronaldo's signature 'Siu' celebration but insisted it was a tribute, not mockery.

"It was not to mock him. He has been a great inspiration in my football career," Højlund told Danish

broadcaster TV2.

Denmark had earlier missed a golden opportunity to take the lead when Christian Eriksen's penalty was saved by Diogo Costa after Renato Veiga handled in the box.

Portugal, led by Ronaldo, struggled to create chances, with the veteran forward's best effort—a header—sailing wide.

Denmark, under new coach Brian Riemeer, dominated and will head to Lisbon for Sunday's second leg full of confidence as they seek a semi-final



spot.

The loser of the tie will move into Scotland's World Cup qualifying group, alongside Greece and Belarus.