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Lagos Assembly: Meranda resigns, Obasa reinstated as Speaker

By Friday Omosola



Mojisola Meranda, a lawmaker representing the Apapa I constituency since June 2015, has stepped down from her role as Speaker of the Lagos State House of Assembly.

Reading her resignation letter aloud during a special plenary session on Monday afternoon, the 44-year-old, announced, “This is a notice of resignation as Speaker of the Lagos State House of Assembly.”

Meranda took over the position on January 13, 2025, following the ousting of former Speaker Mudashiru Obasa.

During the plenary session, which began at about 2:20 p.m., Aro Moshood initiated the praise session, describing Meranda’s tenure as “positively life-transforming.”

Kehinde Joseph, representing

Alimosho II, added, “You have made history with your resilience and humility. Your time may be short, but you have written your name in gold.”

Despite her short time in office, lawmakers commended her leadership and contributions to the Assembly’s progress.

She resigned alongside all principal officers who assumed office with her.

Meanwhile, Obasa has been reinstated as Speaker.

His reinstatement comes after Meranda resigned from the role with immediate effect.

Obasa was reappointed during the House’s plenary session on Monday.

Earlier in January, lawmakers removed him from office, citing various fraud allegations.

Speaking during the plenary session, he thanked the lawmaker while calling for unity and love.

He said, “We want to assure Lagosians that we have resolved and determined to serve their interest and protect their interest always.

“Our major responsibility is to represent them and; that’s what we have been doing.

“What is happening here today shows that the Lagos State House of Assembly is capable and is a House of integrity. It is a house that has an internal mechanism to resolve issues in the interest of the institution and our party.

“Today is not the day for speech making but to celebrate my colleagues and thank them for all they have been doing. I am sure we will continue to work together in peace, love and harmony.”

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Ramadan: Tinubu calls for prayers, national unity

By Friday Omosola

President Bola Tinubu has urged Nigerians to offer prayers for the nation's leaders and work collectively towards peace, stability, and progress.

Speaking in the spirit of Ramadan, the President emphasised that this period of fasting and reflection should be used to foster compassion, kindness, and national unity.

The President's message was delivered on Monday at the State House Mosque during the opening Tafseer for the holy month.

Vice President Kashim Shettima, who represented President Tinubu, highlighted the importance of praying for those in leadership.

He stated that the country stands at a defining moment that requires collective effort in nation-building.

"Above all, let us lift our voices in prayer for our leader, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. May Almighty Allah continue to guide him, bless him, and grant him wisdom, strength, and foresight to pilot the affairs of our great nation," Shettima conveyed on the President's behalf.



The President stressed that Ramadan is not just about fasting but a journey of self-reflection, patience, and service to humanity.

He encouraged Nigerians to go beyond personal piety and embrace acts of kindness, charity, and social justice.

"Ramadan is a time for deep reflection, self-purification, and embracing the true essence of Islam—peace, patience, sacrifice, and service to humanity.

"This is the month that calls for collective compassion, the kind that softens hearts, mends broken bonds, and strengthens the fabric of our nation," he said.

President Tinubu also called on citizens to reject forces that seek to divide the country, emphasising that national unity is key to addressing Nigeria's challenges.

He urged Nigerians to not only pray for peace but also actively work for justice and fairness in society.

Recognizing the role of religious leaders, the President expressed gratitude for their moral and spiritual guidance, acknowledging their efforts in shaping the ethical foundation of the nation.

He encouraged Nigerians to approach the days of fasting with goodwill and a spirit of brotherhood, reinforcing the values of charity, kindness, and justice.

NLC vows to resist telecoms, electricity tariff hikes

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Nigeria Labour Congress has notified its affiliates to prepare for nationwide protests if the Federal Government implements the telecommunication services charge contrary to the terms agreed by the 10-man committee.

The National Executive Council of the NLC took the decision during a meeting in Yola, Adamawa State, where the congress inaugurated its Compressed Natural Gas-driven Mass Transit Buses for the North East Zone and discussed the economic challenges facing Nigerian workers.

Disclosing the protest notice in a statement released on Sunday, the NLC warned that any further increase in electricity tariffs would be met with strong resistance.

It also called on all industrial unions and progressive allies to prepare for decisive mass action against anti-people policies.

The statement read, "Having extensively discussed these existential threats to the working class and the broader Nigerian masses, NEC-in-session resolves as follows: on the 35 percent tariff hike in telecommunication services: NEC acknowledges the agreement reached on February 21, 2025, between the Nigeria Labour Congress and the Federal Government through the Joint 10-man committee, which reduced the initially proposed telecommunication tariff hike from 50 percent to 35 percent.

"However, congress remains vigilant, recognising the long history of infidelity. NEC categorically warns that should the implementation of the agreement on March 1, 2025, not be as agreed, the



National Administrative Council is mandated to immediately deploy all necessary instruments to enforce compliance in line with the February 10th, 2025 Central Working Committee directive,"

The NLC and the Federal Government have been in a series of meetings over the recent hike in telecommunications tariffs by telecom companies in the country.

On the migration of electricity consumers aimed at increasing tariffs, the communiqué stated, "NEC unequivocally rejects the ongoing sham reclassification of electricity consumers by the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission, which seeks to forcefully migrate consumers from lower bands to Band A under the guise of service improvement while, in reality, imposing unjustified extortion on the masses.

"This systematic exploitation, sanctioned by the Ministry of Power, is nothing short of economic violence against the working class and the broader Nigerian populace.

"It is evident that the ruling elite, acting as enforcers of global monopoly capital, are determined to further deepen the misery of the Nigerian people through incessant tariff hikes, increased taxation, and relentless economic strangulation.

"Whereas inflation has soared, wages remain stagnant, and the cost of living has become unbearable, the ruling class continues to transfer the burden of their fiscal irresponsibility onto the already impoverished working masses.

"NEC-in-session warns that any attempt to announce further electricity tariff increases will be met with mass resistance. Consequently, the congress resolved to immediately mobilise for a nationwide protest should the Ministry of Power and NERC proceed with their exploitative plan to further hike electricity tariffs under any guise.

"The NLC shall not stand idly by while the Nigerian people are subjected to the unholy machinations of capitalist profiteers and their state collaborators."

Tinubu appoints Brig.-Gen. Nafiu Olakunle as new NYSC boss

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

President Bola Tinubu has sacked Brig. Gen. Y. D. Ahmed as the Director-General of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and appointed Brigadier General Kunle Nafiu as his replacement.

Until his appointment, Brig. Gen. Nafiu was the Chief of Staff to the Chief of Army Staff, Lt. General Olufemi Oluyede, having also served in the same capacity with the late Chief of Army Staff, Lt. General Taoreed Lagbaja.

A member of 47 Regular Course, Nafiu is an Artillery Officer who graduated from the Armed Forces Command and Staff College and the US Army War College.

Before he was appointed Chief of Staff to the COAS, he was a Directing Staff at the Army War College, Nigeria.

The new NYSC DG hails from Ileogbo, Aiyedire Local Government Area of Osun State.

Nafiu, whose appointment is immediately effective, replaces Brigadier General Yushau Ahmed.

Y.D Ahmed was appointed by ex-President Muhammadu Buhari in January 2023, after following the sacking of Brig. Gen. Mohammed Fadah over alleged incompetence and poor performance.

Meanwhile, the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) has called for the leadership of NYSC to be investigated over the non-payment of the approved N77,000 monthly allowance for serving corps members.

NANS expressed dismay that NYSC is yet to implement the payment of the new allowance to the corps members months after approval by the federal government.

Recall that the government had approved an increase in the corps members' monthly allowance from N33,000 to N77,000, effective July 2024.

The approval for the increase of the allowance from N33,000 to N77,000 was contained in a letter from the National Salaries, Incomes and Wages Commission, dated September 25, 2024



and signed by the Chairman, Mr. Ekpo Nta in line with the enactment of the National Minimum Wage (Amendment) Act 2024.

The government had, at that time, said the increase in the corps members allowance was with effect from July 2024.

The Director-General of the NYSC, Brigadier-General Yushau Ahmed, on January 30, this year, announced that corps members would begin to receive ₦77,000 as their monthly allowance from February 2025.

However, corps members have expressed disappointment that they still received N33,000 as allowance in February.

They described the N33,000 allowance as insufficient for their basic needs in the face of the high cost of living in the country.

Reacting, NANS in a statement by its National Vice President, Inter-Campus Affairs, Akinbodunse Sileola Felicia, on Monday, justified the call for the probe of the NYSC for failure to commence payment of the new corps monthly allowance by the end of February as promised by the Director-General of the Corps.

She wondered what delayed the payment after the official announcement by Brig. Ahmed Yushua that corps members would start receiving the N77,000 in

February 2025.

“Findings by my office revealed that corps members received only N33,000 for their February allowance last Friday, against N70,000 promised by the NYSC DG.

” This is even as we note that the federal and many state governments have since begun to pay their workers the new minimum wage of N70,000.

“The NYSC has no justification to withhold the payment of the new approved allowance to corps members whatsoever.

” It would amount to gross injustice on the part of corps members to still be receiving old allowance months after

approval and implementation by the federal government,” NANS said.

While calling on the NYSC to give reasons behind the failure to implement the payment of the N77,000 corps monthly allowance, she insisted that the federal government should investigate the matter to determine the cause of otherwise of the delay.

She added that the failure to pay the new allowance to corps members could dampen their morale, especially in the face of the economic situation in the country.

Obasanjo hosts Jonathan, Atiku, Saraki, others at Lagos dinner

By Dave Oludare Oso



Former President Olusegun Obasanjo yesterday hosted a distinguished gathering that included his predecessor, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, former Sierra Leonean President Ernest Bai Koroma, former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, and ex-Senate President Bukola Saraki, who attended with his wife, Toyin.

The Ooni of Ile-Ife, Oba Adeyeye Ogunwusi was also present at the event, which took

place at The Delborough Hotel on Victoria Island, Lagos.

Atiku, who served as Obasanjo's vice president from 1999 to 2007, confirmed the meeting in a post on his X handle.

He wrote, "I joined others at the dinner hosted by my former boss, former President Olusegun Obasanjo at The Delborough Hotel, Victoria Island, in Lagos."

Saraki also shared details of the event on his X handle, revealing that the dinner was in honor of Obasanjo ahead of his 88th birthday, which will be celebrated on Wednesday.

The former senate president wrote, "Toyin and I have just arrived at The Delborough in Lagos for a dinner celebrating His Excellency, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, our dear former president and founder of the Olusegun Obasanjo Foundation."

Tinubu felicitates Pastor Adeboye at 83

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

President Bola Tinubu has felicitated the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Pastor Enoch Adeboye, on his 83rd birthday.

The president commended his unwavering faith, humility, and dedication to humanitarian service.

In a statement shared on social media, Tinubu described Pastor Adeboye as a beacon of wisdom and spiritual guidance whose selfless commitment to the gospel continues to inspire millions in Nigeria and beyond.

The statement stated, "Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye exemplifies deep faith, wisdom,



and humility, demonstrating a remarkable dedication to the gospel and selfless service. His impactful work continues to inspire millions."

The president lauded Adeboye's leadership as a model of conviction and steadfast devotion to uplifting others, praying for his continued strength, good health, and divine grace.

"As he marks his 83rd birthday, I pray for his continued strength,

good health, and divine grace to keep guiding and inspiring generations to come. Happy Birthday, Daddy GO," Tinubu concluded.

Pastor Adeboye, widely regarded as one of Nigeria's most influential religious leaders, has led RCCG to global prominence, touching lives through his teachings and philanthropic initiatives.

FAAN closes Murtala Muhammed Airport runway for rehabilitation

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) has closed Runway 18R/36L at the Murtala Muhammed Airport, Ikeja for rehabilitation.

The closure started at 3.00 a.m. on Monday. It will end at 11.59 p.m. on Tuesday.

This is contained in a statement signed by the Director, Public Affairs and Consumer Protection, FAAN, Mrs Obiageli Orah.



She said that it was part of ongoing efforts to ensure that the runway would remain in optimal condition.

"There will be no disruption to flight operations during this period as all flights will be redirected to the alternative runway, 18L/36R," she said.

According to Orah, the closure is due to ongoing rehabilitation work (asphalt phase) at the A2 Taxiwaylink of the runway.

She emphasised FAAN's commitment to the safety, security and comfort of airport users.

Pro-Wike lawmakers give Fubara 48-hour deadline to present 2025 budget

By Dave Oludare Oso



The Rivers State House of Assembly members loyal to Federal Capital Territory minister, Nyesom Wike have issued a 48-hour deadline to Governor Siminalayi Fubara, demanding that he present the 2025 appropriation bill.

The Martin Amaewhule-led faction issued the ultimatum during the faction's plenary session on Monday.

Rivers State's legislature has been deeply divided due to the ongoing political rift between Governor Fubara and Nyesom Wike, the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The Amaewhule-led faction of the assembly remains loyal to Wike.

In January 2025, Fubara had already signed the 2025 appropriation bill into law after it was passed by the rival faction of the house led by Victor Oko-Jumbo. However, the Amaewhule group

is now insisting that the governor formally present the budget before them.

The demand further highlights the deepening power struggle within the state's legislature and the broader political tension between the governor and his predecessor.

Vanguard had reported how Fubara had announced that the Rivers State Independent Electoral Commission (RSIEC) would conduct fresh elections for local government councils following recent Supreme Court judgments on the state's lingering political crisis.

In a statewide broadcast on Sunday, Governor Fubara stated that while his administration disagrees with the court rulings, it remains committed to upholding the rule of law. He assured that once the certified true copies of the

judgments are obtained—expected by Friday, March 7, 2025—his government will study and implement them accordingly.

As an interim measure, Fubara ordered the Heads of Local Government Administration to immediately take over the governance of the 23 LGAs, pending fresh elections. He also directed the outgoing local government chairmen to hand over power by Monday, March 3, 2025.

Fubara stated, “Given the outlawing of caretaker arrangements in the local government system, I hereby direct the Heads of Local Government Administration to immediately take over the administration of the 23 local government councils pending the conduct of fresh elections by RSIEC.”

UK, Nigeria strengthen trade with new quality policy

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The United Kingdom and Nigeria have reaffirmed their commitment to boosting trade relations and fostering economic growth through the implementation of Nigeria's National Quality Policy under the Standards Partnership Programme (SPP) – Phase II.

This initiative, aimed at eliminating technical trade barriers and improving regulatory compliance, was announced in a statement from the British Deputy High Commission in Lagos on Monday, March 3.

Launched in June 2024, the SPP – Phase II seeks to enhance the competitiveness of Nigerian exports and facilitate trade between the two nations by strengthening quality infrastructure.

The programme is a joint effort between the British Standards Institution (BSI) and Nigeria's National Quality Council, with backing from the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).

Key areas of focus for the programme include improving standardisation, accreditation, conformity assessment, inspection, testing, and metrology services, all of which are essential for increasing trade capacity, attracting investment, and aligning with global standards.

A pivotal event in this initiative was the National Quality Policy Matrix Implementation Training-of-Trainers Workshop, held in Lagos and Abuja last week.

The workshop brought together stakeholders from both the public and



private sectors to discuss capacity building for quality compliance, with a particular focus on the critical role of metrology in ensuring accurate measurements, calibrations, and certifications of goods.

In his keynote address at the Abuja event, the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Senator George Akume, emphasised the importance of a robust National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) in Nigeria's economic diversification.

He noted that improving systems related to standards, metrology, and accreditation would play a crucial role in boosting non-oil exports, creating jobs, and strengthening the value of the naira.

"A strong National Quality Infrastructure is essential for Nigeria's economic diversification agenda, Improving our standards, metrology, and accreditation systems can boost non-oil exports, create jobs, and strengthen the naira. This partnership with the UK is a major step forward in achieving these goals." said Akume.

Osita Aboloma, the Chairman of the National Quality Council, also welcomed the initiative.

He emphasised the need for collaboration between stakeholders to meet Nigeria's quality and trade objectives. Aboloma highlighted that an effective quality infrastructure would not only support the government's economic agenda but also improve Nigeria's competitiveness in global markets.

"An effective quality infrastructure will not only support the Federal Government's economic agenda but also enhance the competitiveness of Nigerian products and services in global markets," Aboloma said.

The workshop also focused on the vital role of data-driven quality policy implementation.

Discussions centred on the importance of metrology, accreditation, and conformity assessments in ensuring that Nigerian exports meet international standards,

Afenifere demands senate probe of Akpabio's harassment allegation

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The pan-Yoruba socio-political organisation, Afenifere, has called on the Senate to investigate the sexual harassment allegation made against Senate President, Godswill Akpabio, by Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan.

The allegation, which has recently dominated media discussions, came after a feud between Akpoti-Uduaghan, who represents Kogi Central Senatorial District, and Akpabio.

Akpoti-Uduaghan accused Akpabio of sexual harassment, an accusation which Afenifere has urged the Senate to thoroughly investigate.

In a statement released on Monday, March 3, by the National Organising Secretary of Afenifere, Abagun Kole Omololu, the group emphasised the need for an



independent investigation.

They noted that the Senate President should not be sacrificed based on unverified accusations, stressing that the matter should be looked into by a Senate committee.

Afenifere recognised Akpabio's leadership in fostering political stability and praised his role in creating a positive Executive/Legislative synergy.

They also expressed concerns that the allegations may stem from personal animosity

following Akpabio's disciplinary action against Akpoti-Uduaghan.

While not passing judgment on the accuser, Afenifere extended its support to Akpabio, commending him for his contributions to President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, particularly during Nigeria's ongoing political and economic reforms.

The group's statement concludes by urging caution in assessing the allegations and calls for a fair and thorough investigation.

Ramadan: Sanwo-Olu calls for unity, sacrifice, compassion

By Friday Omosola

Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, has extended warm greetings to the Muslim community as they begin the sacred month of Ramadan.

Describing Ramadan as a time for spiritual renewal, self-discipline, and acts of kindness, the Governor urged Lagosians and Nigerians at large to embrace generosity and support one another throughout the fasting period.

Sanwo-Olu highlighted the unique coincidence of Ramadan beginning on March 1, aligning closely with the Christian Lenten season, which starts on March 5.

He called on both Muslims and Christians to uphold the values of peace, harmony, and mutual respect, reinforcing Lagos as a place where diverse faiths coexist in unity.

“Ramadan Mubarak to all our Muslim brothers and sisters. This holy month is an opportunity for deep reflection, spiritual growth, and acts of charity. May this period bring peace, prosperity, and divine blessings to all,” Sanwo-Olu



said.

“Let us use this season to foster compassion, extend kindness to the less privileged, and strengthen the bonds of unity.

“Lagos is home to people of all faiths, and in this period of devotion, we pray for continued progress and harmony across our state and beyond.”

The governor delivered this message at a Special Ramadan Prayer held at the Lagos House Mosque Ground in Ikeja and encouraged Lagosians to let the essence of Ramadan shape their daily interactions and relationships.

He emphasised that the season is a time for seeking divine guidance and upholding moral values.

“This season reminds us of the importance of faith, patience, and righteousness. It is a time for self-examination, strengthening our connection with God, and promoting peace in our communities,” he said.

Sanwo-Olu also noted the significance of March 1 marking both the start of a new month and the beginning of Ramadan, urging people of all faiths to coexist in peace and understanding.

“As both Muslims and Christians embark on their respective fasting periods, let this season inspire love, compassion, and unity. Let it reflect in how we treat one another, ensuring that Lagos remains a beacon of peace and progress.”

Ex-Lagos guber candidate, Jandor dumps PDP

By Dave Oludare Oso

Former Lagos State governorship candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2023 election, Abdulazeez Adediran, popularly known as Jandor, has resigned his membership of the party.

Jandor, who disclosed the development when addressing journalists in Lagos on Monday, said his decision came after months of reflection and consultations with his family, political associates, and supporters.

The ex-PDP governorship candidate, who was accompanied by a large group of supporters, revealed that the decision to part ways with the PDP stemmed from actions taken by some of the party's leaders, including the former Deputy National Chairman, Chief Olabode George.

According to Jandor, these leaders actively worked against the PDP in the 2023 elections.

He stated, "We will consult widely with everybody and then take the decision to



collapse our structure to another platform. What is majority on the ground now is that we have left the Peoples Democratic Party."

Jandor said the level of betrayal was further confirmed when Lagos State Deputy Governor, Obafemi Hamzat, publicly stated that several PDP leaders had secretly worked against their own party's candidate.

Despite these revelations, he lamented that the party took no disciplinary action against those involved. Instead, Chief Olabode George was later appointed as Vice Chairman of the PDP's Disciplinary Committee—a move Jandor described as an insult to loyal party members.

Having lost confidence in the party's leadership and its commitment to internal democracy, Jandor said he could no longer remain in a system that rewards disloyalty.

He assured his supporters that his political journey was far from over and that he remained committed to advocating for a better Lagos. While he did not disclose his next political move, he promised to continue engaging with stakeholders to determine the best path forward.

"This is not the end," he said. "It is the beginning of a new chapter—one driven by sincerity, progress, and true service to the people."

Pastor kills 16-yr-old daughter after accusing her of being witch who changes into snake

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A pastor identified as Apostle Ubong Bassey has murdered his 16-year-old daughter, Deborah, a Down Syndrome patient over alleged witchcraft in Calabar, the capital city of Cross River State.

This shocking incident was brought to light in a viral post circulating on the popular social media platform, X, formerly known as Twitter.

It was reported that occurrence took place at No. 7 Jacob Street, off Eyo Edem, in the Calabar South Local Government Area.

Deborah's younger brother, Bassey, said their father gathered the family and announced her death after the incident.

Bassey recalled opening the door to help Deborah dispose of her faeces when their father intervened, insisting she handle it herself. She complied but fell while returning to her room.

Bassey said he alerted their father, who then entered the



room and told the others to leave while he attended to Deborah. After a long time, Apostle Ubong called his children in and announced Deborah's passing.

The individual who shared the post, identified as @EduEle5, via the X page, revealed that the police have been notified and the pastor is currently on the run

Police authorities have launched a manhunt and are also appealing to the public for assistance in locating and apprehending him.

The post read, "Apostle Ubong Bassey Etim murdered his 16-

year-old daughter in Calabar after accusing her of being a witch who could transform into a snake. The young girl, who had Down syndrome, was brutally killed on February 15, 2025, in Calabar, Cross River State.

"The suspect's estranged wife disclosed that the pastor had a history of domestic violence, which forced her to flee their home. Despite this, she continued fighting for her children's safety. She is now calling on Nigerians to help ensure her daughter gets justice."

Aiyedatiwa approves recruitment of over 1,000 secondary school teachers

By Friday Omosola



Ondo State Governor, Lucky Aiyedatiwa, has approved the employment of 1,010 new secondary school teachers as part of his administration's efforts to address the persistent shortage of educators in public schools.

The Teaching Service Commission (TESCOM), which conducted the recruitment exercise last year, has published the list of successful candidates.

The list is now available online and will also be displayed at TESCOM headquarters and zonal offices across the state starting Tuesday.

The newly recruited teachers are expected to commence their documentation process immediately.

Governor Aiyedatiwa had previously approved the hiring of 1,000 secondary school teachers and 1,000 primary school teachers, a move that kickstarted the recruitment process by TESCOM and the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB).

While the final list for secondary school teachers has now been approved, the selection process for primary school teachers is still being finalized.

The governor emphasised the need to address staffing shortages in public schools, particularly in rural areas.

He directed that the recruitment be tailored to meet the specific needs of

understaffed schools across the state.

This initiative is part of broader efforts by the Aiyedatiwa administration to revamp the education sector in Ondo State.

Just last Friday, the governor approved a sum of ₦633 million for the registration of students for the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE).

Additionally, the administration recently approved the upgrade and conversion of Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, into a University of Agriculture and Agribusiness, further demonstrating its commitment to improving education in the state.

Troops kill top Boko Haram Commander, recovers arms in Sambisa

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Troops of the 21 Armoured Brigade, in collaboration with the 199 Special Forces Battalion of the Nigerian Army have eliminated a top Boko Haram commander, Abba Alai, also known as the Amirul Khahid of Alafa, in a coordinated military operation in Garin Fallujah and Gwoza, Borno State.

The development was contained in a post by security analyst Zagazola Makama on his official X handle on Monday.

According to him, troops of the 21 Armoured Brigade, in collaboration with the 199 Special Forces Battalion and the Civilian Joint Task Force, launched the clearance operation based on credible intelligence that insurgents were regrouping to launch attacks.

According to Makama a military source confirmed that, "Our troops conducted a well-planned assault on the terrorist stronghold, engaging them in a fierce gun battle.

Overpowered by superior firepower, the insurgents attempted to flee but suffered heavy



casualties, including their commander, Abba Alai."

During the operation, security forces recovered a cache of weapons, including one AK-47 rifle, a DSHK heavy machine gun barrel, 23 rounds of 7.62mm special ammunition, a radio set, a motorcycle, and assorted medical supplies.

In a separate operation in Gwoza Local Government Area, troops blocked an escape route from Sambisa Forest and engaged Boko Haram fighters in Gobara village.

The encounter forced the terrorists into a chaotic retreat, leading to the recovery of additional weapons, including 57 rounds of 12.7mm ammunition, three AK-47 rifle

magazines, and two prototype firearms suspected to be used for terrorist training.

During the operation, troops also rescued an elderly woman who had been held hostage by the terrorists for 10 years.

The Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Olufemi Oluyede, commended the troops for their bravery and reaffirmed the military's commitment to eliminating insurgency in Nigeria.

"Our forces remain resolute in the fight against terrorism. We will continue to hunt down these criminal elements and restore lasting peace to the region," Oluyede stated.

Dangote refinery offsets N16bn fuel loss, offers N65/litre refund to marketers

By Friday Omosola

Dangote Petroleum Refinery & Petrochemicals has announced that it will absorb a N16 billion loss by reimbursing marketers N65 per litre to ensure Nigerians benefit from lower fuel prices.

In a statement released over the weekend, the refinery assured that marketers who purchased Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) at a higher rate than its newly adjusted price can claim refunds.

This applies to fuel bought from its official distributors, including AP (Arдова Plc), Heyden, and MRS, across Nigeria.

This decision follows a recent price adjustment, reducing the refinery's gantry rate from N890 per litre to N825 per litre.

The company emphasised that this initiative aligns with its commitment to making fuel more affordable for Nigerians and supports President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, aimed at boosting economic stability.

The refinery confirmed that a N65 per litre refund will be issued on over 200,000 metric tonnes of PMS previously sold at the old price of N890 per litre, ensuring that marketers are compensated for the price reduction.

"The step, effective February 27, 2025, guarantees that none of our valued business partners will experience a loss due to the price change.

"More importantly, it ensures that the new, lower rate takes immediate effect nationwide for the benefit of the Nigerian people," the statement said.

The refinery highlighted that this initiative is not limited to MRS Holdings, Arдова Plc (AP), and Heyden alone.

It called on all marketers obtaining supplies from its facility to ensure that consumers at the retail level benefit from



the revised pricing, fostering a shared responsibility for making quality products more affordable.

Additionally, Dangote denounced any attempts to take undue advantage of the new pricing system.

"It is both unpatriotic and detrimental to the welfare of Nigerians for any party to purchase at a rate of N825 per litre and then sell to consumers at N945 or more per litre. This constitutes excessive profiteering, further burdening Nigerians for personal gain," the statement added.

"Dangote Refinery in its effort to ensure good quality and affordable fuel for Nigerians, is working with its partners to make this price accessible.

"Consumers who purchase fuel above the advertised rate at any of its key partners – AP (Arдова Plc), Heyden, or MRS – anywhere in Nigeria, are encouraged to report to Dangote Refinery with their receipts for a full refund of the excess amount.

The newly approved pump prices per litre are as follows: MRS, N860 in Lagos, N870 in the South-West, N880 in the North, and N890 in the South-South and South-East.

Heyden and AP will retail at N865 in

Lagos, N875 in the South-West, N885 in the North, and N895 in the South-South and South-East.

With the ex-depot price now fixed at N825 per litre, Dangote Refinery has assured that no Nigerian, regardless of location or fuel station, will pay more than N900 per litre for petrol.

The refinery reaffirmed its commitment to delivering top-quality, environmentally friendly fuel, which enhances vehicle efficiency while promoting public health.

"Our mission aligns with President Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, which prioritizes national self-sufficiency in key sectors like energy. We remain focused on driving Nigeria's economic development while ensuring that all citizens have access to affordable and high-standard energy solutions," the refinery stated.

Dangote Refinery further emphasised, "This is just one of the many ways Dangote Petroleum Refinery & Petrochemicals continues to contribute to Nigeria's progress and sustainability.

"As we advance toward energy security, we remain steadfast in our commitment to providing long-term solutions and fostering a more prosperous future for all Nigerians."

Six communities declare open defecation-free status as Kwara Govt partners with LG chairmen

By Helen Okechukwu

In a significant step toward prioritizing public health, six communities in Kwara State have achieved open defecation-free status following a partnership between the state government and Local Government Chairmen.

The achievement was recorded in Oke Ero Local Government Area of the state.

A statement shared on the state government's Facebook page on Monday noted that the State Commissioner for Water Resources, Usman Yinusa, announced this during a Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) Stakeholders' Engagement meeting themed "Eradication of Open Defecation in Kwara State."

Represented by Permanent Secretary Mrs. Christiana Omolola Ashonibare, he highlighted the government's sensitization efforts and commitment to public health.

RUWASSA General Manager, Mr. Olorunfemi Adewumi Oladipo, commended Governor AbdulRahman



AbdulRazaq for prioritizing public health.

He noted that RUWASSA has made progress in eliminating open defecation through partnerships with the Federal Ministry of Water Resources and development agencies.

Initiatives include Community-Led Total Sanitation, smart toilets, and expanded WASH facilities.

Kwara State Commissioner for Health, Dr. Amina Ahmed El-Imam, represented by Pharmacist Barakat Olanrewaju, stressed the severe health and environmental impacts of open defecation.

She, however, urged the creation of WASH departments at the local government level to enforce compliance.

Professor Henry Olawale Sawyerr praised Kwara's progress, citing UNICEF rankings.

UNICEF reports that 120 million people in West and Central Africa engage in open defecation, with Nigeria ranking second globally at 47 million cases.

The state's efforts mark significant progress toward achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

NDLEA Nabs 59-year-old drug kingpin after 17-year chase

By Helen Okechukwu

After 17 years of trafficking illicit drugs worth billions, 59-year-old Ogbonnaya Jeff has been arrested by the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) at his hideout in Ojo, Lagos.

NDLEA Chairman, Brig. Gen. Mohamed Buba Marwa (Rtd), announced the arrest on March 3, 2025, in Abuja.

He revealed that Ogbonnaya had been on INTERPOL's wanted list between 2023 and 2024 and was tracked with intelligence from South Korea's National Intelligence Service.

Marwa described Ogbonnaya as the leader of an international drug syndicate, recruiting young Nigerians as couriers to smuggle drugs into South Korea.

He was arrested on February 12, 2025, at his residence on LASU Road, Lagos. A search uncovered multiple Nigerian passports with Korean visas and illicit substances in his warehouse.

Ogbonnaya, who previously served a one-year sentence in South Korea in 2007 before being deported in 2008, continued his illegal activities.



He operated across multiple countries, including Cameroon, Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Liberia.

Investigations linked him to a shipment of over 6kg of drugs to South Korea, hidden in dried chilies and jujube, and drug consignments worth N1.4 billion smuggled between December 2023 and April 2024.

His network included a courier known as "Asa" and supply manager Okori Emmanuel, based in South Korea.

The Seoul Central District Court issued two arrest warrants for Ogbonnaya in

2024, charging him under South Korea's Narcotics Control Act, which carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

Marwa reiterated NDLEA's commitment to dismantling drug syndicates, emphasizing that Nigeria will not be a safe zone for traffickers. "The arrest of Ogbonnaya is therefore an affirmation of our resolve to work with our international partners to ensure no drug baron finds Nigeria a comfort zone to distribute illicit substances within the country or traffic them to other countries.

Group calls on FG to expand NAFDAC laboratories for drug examination

By Helen Okechukwu

To prevent mortality and enable real-time testing of drug and beverage authentication, a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), Southern Nigeria People's Mandate (SNPM), has urged the Federal Government (FG) to establish modern laboratories for the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC).

The call aims to identify illicit drug producers and tackle traffickers across the country.

In a statement released in Enugu State recently, according to a Voice of Nigeria report, the NGO also demanded that the FG should employ more personnel and equip the anti-drug agency with logistics and technology.

Amid rising concerns over the increasing circulation of fake drugs and substandard beverages in Nigeria, the National President, Chief Augustine Chukwudum, and Secretary General, Mr. Segun Diya, highlighted the dangers posed by what they described as "merchants of death."

They warned that counterfeit pharmaceutical products and unregulated beverages were putting public health at serious risk.



The SNPM urged the federal government, led by President Bola Tinubu, to strengthen security measures to prevent the entry of fake drugs and beverages into the market.

Read Also: NAFDAC probes suspected fake Amoxicillin capsules

The group emphasized that some locally manufactured products did not meet health and safety standards, making stricter regulations and monitoring essential.

Additionally, the organization stressed the need for accountability, ensuring that individuals involved—both distributors and their accomplices—face legal consequences.

While advocating for tougher measures against counterfeit drug syndicates, SNPM cautioned against blanket market closures, citing the economic impact on over two million Nigerians who rely on these markets for their livelihoods.

Instead, they urged the government to adopt a more strategic approach that prioritizes public safety while safeguarding economic interests.

The group reaffirmed its commitment to working with relevant authorities to combat the proliferation of fake drugs and ensure consumer protection.

Sex-for-Lambo scandal staged to deny Burna Boy's gay rumours – Speed Darlington

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Speed Darlington claims Burna Boy and Sophia Egbueje staged their scandal to disprove rumors about the Grammy winner's sexual orientation.

He believes the incident was orchestrated to dismiss rumours about Burna Boy's sexual orientation.

The controversy erupted last week when leaked audio surfaced online. In the recording, Sophia accused Burna Boy of having an affair with her and failing to buy her a Lamborghini as promised. The allegations quickly went viral, dominating social media discussions.

Speed Darlington's accusations

Speed Darlington, known for his outspoken nature, added a new twist to the story. He alleged that Burna Boy and Sophia planned the entire scandal to mislead the public. According to him, the singer wanted to create the impression that he is attracted to women.

The rapper made these claims in a video posted on his Instagram page. He mocked Burna Boy, accusing him of trying too hard to prove he is not gay. "You're running up and down, trying to convince people," he said.

Darlington further alleged that Burna Boy paid Sophia to be part of the scheme. "I know this will damage your reputation, but I will give you



some money to act like a call girl so people will believe I like women," he said, imitating how the arrangement might have been planned.

Previous allegations against Burna Boy

This is not the first time Speed Darlington has made controversial accusations against Burna Boy. He previously claimed that Burna Boy's Grammy win was linked to an inappropriate relationship with American music mogul Sean Combs, also known as Diddy. However, he provided no evidence to support his claim.

Mixed reactions from the public

Burna Boy has not publicly responded to Darlington's allegations. Meanwhile, social media users remain divided. Some believe the rapper's claims, while others dismiss them as baseless.

The scandal adds to Burna Boy's growing list of controversies. Despite his global success, the singer has faced criticism over past incidents, including feuds with fellow artists and accusations of arrogance.

The bigger picture

The entertainment industry is no stranger to rumors and scandals. Celebrities often face scrutiny, and their personal lives frequently become public debates. Whether Speed Darlington's claims hold any truth or not, they have once again placed Burna Boy at the center of media attention.

As fans await a response, the controversy continues to generate discussions. Some argue that Burna Boy does not need to prove his sexuality, while others question the motives behind the leaked audio. The debate is far from over, and more developments may unfold in the coming days.

Funke Akindele fumes as fan asks when she will buy Lamborghini

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular Nigerian actress and filmmaker Funke Akindele has fired back at a fan who asked when she planned to buy a Lamborghini.

The question came amid the ongoing controversy surrounding singer Burna Boy and his alleged promise to purchase a Lamborghini for socialite Sophia Egbueje.

The drama began when Egbueje publicly accused Burna Boy of failing to fulfill his promise of gifting her the luxury car in exchange for a romantic relationship. The claim quickly went viral, sparking debates across social media.

Celebrities weigh in on the issue

Several public figures, including media personality Daddy Freeze, actress Angela Okorie, and singer Portable, have commented on the issue. Some criticized Burna Boy, while others dismissed the allegations as attention-seeking.

Amid the buzz, former Big Brother Naija star Mercy Eke further fueled discussions by flaunting her newly purchased Lamborghini. Her post led to comparisons between her success and the controversy surrounding Burna Boy's unfulfilled promise.

Funke Akindele reacts to fan's question



During a live Snapchat session, Funke Akindele engaged with her followers when a fan, identified as @Adekunle, asked, "When are you buying a Lamborghini?"

The question irritated the actress, prompting her to respond sharply. In a video that has since gone viral, she said, "Is everything funny to you people? I will block you. You guys want to use everything to trend and drag others into controversy."

Social media pressure on celebrities

Akindele's response highlights the frustration many celebrities feel about the constant pressure from fans to display wealth. While some stars openly showcase their luxury lifestyles, others, like Akindele, prefer to focus on their careers rather than extravagant purchases.

The incident has sparked mixed reactions online. Some fans support Akindele's response, arguing that celebrities should not be forced to meet public expectations of luxury. Others believe she overreacted and could have simply ignored the question.

Ongoing debate on celebrity spending
The Lamborghini controversy has kept social media buzzing, with discussions about how celebrities handle fame and financial expectations. While some believe showing off wealth is part of the entertainment industry, others argue that stars should focus on their craft rather than material possessions.

As Burna Boy's scandal continues to unfold, more reactions from the entertainment industry are expected in the coming days.

Alleged N1.38bn fraud: Jude Okoye granted bail of N100m

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

The Federal High Court in Lagos has granted Jude Okoye, the former manager of the now-defunct music duo P-Square, bail for ₦100 million.

This comes ahead of his trial on charges of alleged money laundering involving ₦1.38 billion, \$1 million, and £34,537.59.

Okoye, who was arrested by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), was arraigned before the court last Friday. Following the hearing, he was remanded at Ikoyi Correctional Center until his bail application was reviewed. On Monday, March 3, 2025, the court ruled in his favor, setting strict conditions for his release.

Bail conditions and restrictions

The court ordered Okoye to provide two sureties, each required to own landed properties worth ₦100 million in Lagos. Additionally, he is barred from leaving Nigeria without official permission from the court. These conditions aim to ensure that he remains available for trial.

Okoye's legal troubles stem from allegations of financial misconduct. The EFCC claims that he engaged in unlawful transactions, moving large sums of money through undisclosed



channels. Authorities are now preparing to present evidence in court.

Legal proceedings and next steps

With bail secured, Okoye will remain free under strict supervision while awaiting trial. The court has set April 14, 2025, as the official start date for proceedings.

The case has drawn public attention due to his past association with P-Square, a music group that dominated Nigeria's entertainment scene for years. Many fans and industry observers are closely watching the unfolding legal battle.

Meanwhile, EFCC officials have assured the public that due process will be followed. Prosecutors say

they are committed to presenting a strong case against him. His legal team, on the other hand, maintains his innocence, stating that they will fight to clear his name in court.

Public Reaction

The case has sparked mixed reactions. Some supporters believe Okoye is being unfairly targeted, while others argue that financial crimes must be addressed regardless of an individual's status. Social media discussions continue to grow as Nigerians weigh in on the matter.

For now, he remains free under the court's conditions. The coming weeks will determine how his legal battle unfolds.

Trump freezes military aid to Ukraine, pressures Zelensky to surrender

By New Daily Prime

Trump has paused all current military aid to Ukraine until President Volodymyr Zelensky demonstrates a commitment to peace, according to a senior Defence Department official speaking to Bloomberg.

The decision affects all U.S. military equipment not yet in Ukraine, including weapons currently in transit or waiting to be shipped from Poland. This marks a significant shift in U.S. policy, raising concerns about the impact on Ukraine's war effort against Russia.

Trump Warns Zelensky: 'Won't Be Around Very Long'

Trump's decision comes after he issued a stern warning to Zelensky on Monday, stating that the Ukrainian leader "won't be around very long" if he does not end the war soon.

The US president further criticized Zelensky, saying:

"If somebody doesn't want to make a deal, I think that person won't be around very long. That person will not be listened to very long. Because I believe that Russia wants to make a deal."

This statement highlights a deepening rift between the two leaders, as Trump insists that a peace deal "should not be that hard to make", while Zelensky has repeatedly stated that a resolution with Russia is still "very, very far away."

US Demands Immediate Ceasefire, Blames Zelensky for Prolonging War

Sources within the Trump



administration indicate that the United States is now pressuring Ukraine to agree to an immediate ceasefire.

Hardliners in Trump's camp, including business magnate Elon Musk, have reportedly blamed Zelensky for prolonging the war rather than negotiating peace.

The military aid suspension follows a high-level meeting on Monday between Trump and key administration figures, including Marco Rubio and Pete Hegseth, where the decision was finalized.

Impact on Ukraine's War Effort

The pause in military aid is expected to significantly impact Ukraine's battlefield capabilities, as the country relies heavily on U.S. weaponry, intelligence, and financial support in its ongoing resistance against Russian forces.

With weapons in transit now frozen, analysts warn that Ukraine could face major logistical and strategic setbacks in the coming months.

The move also sends a strong message to NATO allies about a possible shift in U.S. foreign policy under Trump, should he return to office.

Trump's hardline stance on Ukraine signals a potential turning point in U.S. involvement in the conflict. With military aid now on hold, Zelensky faces increasing pressure to negotiate with Russia, while uncertainty looms over Ukraine's ability to sustain its defence efforts without continued American support.

As tensions escalate, the international community will be watching closely to see whether Zelensky concedes to U.S. demands for a ceasefire or continues to resist Russian aggression without guaranteed American backing.

UK probes TikTok, Reddit over children's data practices **By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

The United Kingdom's data protection watchdog has launched investigations into three social media networks, including TikTok and Reddit, over their use of children's personal data.

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) said in a statement on Monday that growing concerns that young people could be sent inappropriate or harmful content from social media apps prompted the probes.

Also, Information Commissioner John Edwards said, "The responsibility to keep children safe online lies firmly at the door of the companies offering these services and my office is steadfast in its commitment to hold them to account."

The ICO will look into how Chinese-owned TikTok uses the personal



information of 13- to 17-year-olds to make recommendations and deliver content to their social media feeds.

Online forum site, Reddit and image-sharing site Imgur are under investigation over their age assurance measures as well as personal information use.

"We're deeply committed to ensuring a positive experience for young people on TikTok," a company spokesperson said in a statement to AFP.

TikTok has "comprehensive measures that protect the privacy and safety of teens, including industry-leading safety features and robust restrictions on the content allowed in teens' feeds", the firm added.

The other two platforms had yet to respond.

In 2023, the ICO fined popular video-sharing app, TikTok several million pounds for failing to obtain consent of parents or guardians to use children's data, after they had set up accounts despite being too young.

Killer NJ mom who fatally drugged daughters commits suicide in Arizona prison **By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

A New Jersey mother serving a pair of life sentences in Arizona for the murder of her two young daughters was found dead in her prison cell last week.

Retta Cruse committed suicide Feb. 21 at the Arizona State Prison Complex in Perryville, a suburb of Phoenix, officials from the Arizona Department of Corrections said in a statement.

Cruse — who fatally drugged her children — hanged herself and was unable to be revived, authorities said.

Cruse, 38, admitted killing her kids, Aleyah McIntyre, 9, and Royal McIntyre, 4, shortly after moving from Pleasantville, New Jersey, to



Arizona in 2021.

The girl's father found the bodies of Royal and Aleyah lying on a bed, facing each other, in the family's Phoenix home, on Sept. 9, 2021.

A GoFundMe campaign set up to

cover the girls' burials noted the family had moved to Arizona for "spiritual reasons."

Cruse pleaded guilty to the murders, and was sentenced in 2022, reported AZCentral.

Speaker Mike Johnson rips Zelensky, affirms Putin is aggressor

By Dave Oludare Oso

House Speaker, Mike Johnson on Monday admonished Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's behaviour toward President Donald Trump on Friday while also warning that Russian tyrant Vladimir Putin can't be trusted.

Johnson (R-La.) — saying he was aghast at the cringe-worthy public Oval Office spat between Trump, Zelensky and Veep JD Vance — left open the possibility that “someone else needs to lead” Ukraine if its leader doesn't “come to his senses” and apologize to the commander in chief.

“I have participated in a lot of bilateral meetings in my time with heads of state and other dignitaries,” Johnson, 53, told NBC's “Meet the Press” on Monday. “I've never seen anything like President Zelensky's behaviour there.

“He berated and interrupted his host instead of expressing gratitude for the extraordinary help that the US has provided his country, and effectively helped him stay alive and stay in power,” the Republican speaker. “The way that that went down was very disappointing.”

On Friday, Zelensky, 47, got into a heated back-and-forth with Trump, 78, in front of the cameras after pushing back against key aspects of the president's plan to end the war between Ukraine and Russia.

The heated confrontation took place after Zelensky questioned Vance's insistence that Ukraine conduct diplomacy with Russia despite Putin's lengthy track record of violating agreements.

Trump later booted Zelensky from the White House, and the two sides declined to sign the mineral rights agreement that they had been expected to during that visit.

Johnson has a mixed record on supporting Ukraine, having voted against tranches of aid to it in the past, then last year putting his speakership at risk by bringing up a



roughly \$60.8 billion Ukraine aid package for a vote on the House floor.

Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-Ga.) forged ahead with a motion to oust him from his leadership position in response, something that Democrats ultimately helped shoot down.

As for negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, “President Trump is the only figure on the entire globe who is powerful enough to bring both of these parties to the table,” Johnson said. “But President Zelensky went in and blew it up. And it is such a great disappointment for everyone.

“We need to get him back to the table, we need to get Ukraine to express gratitude, of course, for all that we've done for them,” the House leader said.

Johnson was adamant that GOPers have been tough on Putin, too, calling it “absurd” for anyone to suggest that Trump or Republicans are on the Kremlin's side and reiterating that Russia “provoked the war.”

On CNN's “State of the Union” on Sunday, Johnson blasted Putin as an “old-

school communist” and a “former KGB agent” who is “not to be trusted.

“We have to bring about an end to this war in Ukraine. Putin is the aggressor,” Johnson said. “It is an unjust war. We have been crystal clear about that.

“The way I view this is that China, Russia, Iran and North Korea are engaged in a new axis powers, and they are not on America's side,” he said. “Let's be crystal clear about that. You have to walk circumspectly in these perilous times on the world stage.”

In a stark departure from the Biden administration's policies, Trump has maneuvered to position himself as a more neutral intermediary between the two warring countries rather than strictly backing Ukraine.

“President Trump said very clearly, ‘Trust but verify,’” Johnson noted, referring to talks between the US and Russia to end the war. “He is trying to be the change agent to broker a peace and an end to this conflict.”

Trump invites freed Israeli hostage, Eli Sharabi to White House

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Divers in Poland discovered more than 220 pounds of cocaine on the bottom of the Baltic Sea, the nation's border guard said on Tuesday, marking the latest unusual location that drugs have been found in Europe.

Officers with the Border Guard Maritime Unit located the cocaine on the seabed in the Gulf of Gdansk in northern Poland, officials said in a news release. Seven people were detained and the border guard said it had "dismantled an organized crime group involved in smuggling significant amounts of drugs."

Authorities released several images of the operation and said the seized drugs had an estimated street value of \$15 million. A video released by the border guard shows divers finding the alleged drugs on the seabed as well footage of armed officers making multiple arrests at various locations.

Officials said tracking down the suspects led to the discovery of another large quantity of drugs. The seven people detained face up to 20 years in prison if convicted, authorities said.

The discovery stemmed from a joint operation by the Polish border guard, Europol and the DEA to protect critical underwater infrastructure in the region, authorities said. In December, NATO announced that it would boost patrols in the Baltic Sea after



several reported incidents of underwater sabotage.

Authorities discovered a haul of cocaine worth \$15 million at the bottom of the Baltic Sea, the Poland's border guard said on Tuesday, Feb. 18, 2025. Poland Border Guard

Cocaine is routinely seized at sea, but usually from drug trafficking vessels like "narco subs" in the Pacific and Caribbean.

The operation in Poland marks the latest discovery by European authorities of cocaine in unusual places in recent months. Just last week, authorities in Luxembourg seized almost a ton of cocaine hidden in a stone crusher.

In December, authorities in Spain released video showing the discovery of seven tons of cocaine buried underneath a farm. A few

weeks before that, police in Spain seized a record haul of cocaine that was concealed in a shipment of bananas from Ecuador.

Across the globe, would-be drug smugglers have hidden cocaine in everything from car mufflers and surfboards to sugar and jalapeno peppers.

Cocaine has been found in the ocean and along coastlines many times before — especially in Florida. Last August, Hurricane Debby blew 25 packages of cocaine onto a beach in the Florida Keys. A few weeks later, 16 bricks of suspected cocaine were found by tourists on a beach in the same region.

In June 2024, boaters off the coast of Florida found 65 pounds of cocaine floating in the ocean, and earlier that month, divers found 25 kilograms of cocaine about 100 feet underwater off Key West.

Ukraine's Zelensky meets King Charles III in London

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has met with King Charles following an emergency summit with European leaders in London, where he was urged to repair his relationship with President Trump.

The Ukrainian leader, wearing all black, was pictured shaking hands with a beaming king outside of his Sandringham country estate after traveling from the British capital by helicopter.

Zelensky was “warmly received” by the king, although the exact details of what the pair discussed were not revealed, as per royal policy on such meetings, a Buckingham Palace official said.

The meeting came just 48 hours after his disastrous White House meeting with Trump and Vice President JD Vance, in which he was scolded by the American leaders for not being grateful enough for the support for Ukraine and for not agreeing to Trump’s terms to begin peace negotiations with Russia.

King Charles III and Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky in the Saloon at Sandringham House on March 2, 2025. POOL/AFP via Getty Images

Locals had gathered outside the state in the Norfolk countryside to try and catch a glimpse of President Zelensky, with some waving blue and yellow Ukrainian flags.

Charles has previously spoken out in support of Zelensky and Ukraine, saying the country had suffered “indescribable aggression,” following what he called Russia’s “unprovoked attack on their land.”

Ukraine’s people have shown “truly remarkable courage and resilience in the



face of such human tragedy,” the king said last year.

Zelensky has looked to bolster his relationship with his European allies two days after his planned talks with President Trump ended in a furious shouting match.

For the most part, he received a hero’s reception, with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer telling other world leaders the success of Ukraine was “vital to the security of every nation here and many others too.”

However, Italian PM Giorgio Meloni — who has courted close ties with Trump — was among those calling on Zelensky to mend fences with the US or risk a “West divided” over the Ukraine war with Russia, now into its fourth year.

“It’s very, very important that we avoid the risk that the West divides over Ukraine,” said Meloni, per a translation.

Meloni, the sole European leader to attend Trump’s inauguration, spoke with Trump on the phone ahead of the London security summit and publicly called for an emergency meeting with the US to smooth things over.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy attend a meeting with fellow leaders during a summit on Ukraine at Lancaster House in London, Britain, March 2, 2025. via REUTERS

“It is important to maintain unity around Ukraine and strengthen our country’s position in cooperation with our allies — the countries of Europe and the United States,” Zelensky said following his meeting with Meloni.

“Ukraine needs peace backed by robust security guarantees.”

Following Sunday’s summit, a proposal for a one-month truce between Ukraine and Russia put together by Britain and France was announced.

The ceasefire would not cover ground fighting at first, but would see an end to combat “in the air, at sea,” France’s President Emmanuel Macron told the French newspaper, Le Figaro.

But with such a vast front line, the potential ceasefire would be incredibly difficult to enforce, he admitted.

Starmer's plan for peace in Ukraine: key takeaways from London summit

By Dave Oludare Oso

UK prime minister, Keir Starmer and a host of leaders, including Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Emmanuel Macron met in London to discuss ending the Russia-Ukraine war.

Europe is “at a crossroads in history”, said Keir Starmer as he hosted 18 leaders at a Lancaster House summit in London to discuss a new plan for peace in Ukraine.

The UK, France and others will work with Ukraine on a plan to stop the fighting, and discuss that plan with the US, “and take it forward together”, the prime minister said.

Addressing the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who was sitting alongside him, Starmer added: “I hope you know that we are all with you and the people of Ukraine for as long as it takes. Everyone around this table.”

Among those in attendance were the French president, Emmanuel Macron; the German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, the Canadian prime minister, Justin Trudeau; the Spanish prime minister, Pedro Sánchez, the Italian prime minister, Giorgia Meloni; and Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission.

Here are some key takeaways:

Ukraine must be put in strongest position for future negotiations

Starmer added another £1.6 billion in UK export finance for Ukraine to “buy more than 5,000 air defence missiles, which will be made in Belfast”, on top of the £2.2 billion loan he had announced on Saturday.

This would be vital for protecting critical infrastructure now, and strengthen Ukraine in securing the peace, when it comes, he said.

There will be a ‘coalition of the willing’

Any deal must be backed by strength so



Russia cannot breach it, Starmer said.

“Not every nation will feel able to contribute but that can’t mean that we sit back,” the UK prime minister said.

“The UK is prepared to back this with boots on the ground and planes in the air together with others, Europe must do the heavy lifting,” Starmer added.

The plan must have strong US backing

While Europe would do the “heavy lifting”, backing from the US was needed. “We are working with the US on this point after my meeting with President Trump last week,” Starmer said.

“We agree with the president on the urgent need for a durable peace, now we need to deliver together.”

The US was not an “unreliable” ally, Starmer said when asked. It was a “strong and reliable ally” to the UK, adding that he had spoken with Trump on Saturday night.

“The discussions we have had today, particularly on the coalition of the willing is on the basis that this is a plan that we will work on with the US. That is the purpose of the

plan.”

Leaders agreed to keep military aid to Ukraine flowing

Starmer said they agreed that any lasting peace must ensure Ukraine’s sovereignty and security “and Ukraine must be at the table.”

He added: “In the event of peace deal we will keep boosting Ukraine’s own defensive capabilities to deter any future invasions.”

Leaders will meet again very soon

Starmer said: “We are at a crossroads in history today, this is not a moment for more talk, it’s time to act, time to step up and lead. And united around a new plan for a just and enduring peace.”

NATO chief says talks were ‘really positive’
The NATO chief, Mark Rutte, said that “more European countries will ramp up defence spending” but did not go into specifics. He described increased defence spending as “very good news” and reiterated the need for “more of a fair balance” with the US.

He told reporters the first step was to make sure there is a peace deal before there are discussions about how to guarantee it.

Prolific blood donor who saved 2.4 million babies dies at 88

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

James Harrison of Australia, whose blood had a rare antibody, donated 1,173 times over six decades, potentially saving millions of lives. He said he hoped someone would break his record.

An Australian man credited with saving more than two million babies through decades of regular blood and plasma donations has died at age 88.

James Harrison, whose blood contained a rare antibody, died in his sleep February 17 at a nursing home in the Australian state of New South Wales, according to the Australian Red Cross Blood Service, also known as Lifeblood.

The antibody in Harrison's blood was used to make the medication, anti-D, which is given to pregnant women whose blood might attack their unborn babies. Without it, babies may develop hemolytic disease of the fetus and newborn (HDFN), a blood disorder that can be fatal.

Despite an aversion to needles, Harrison began donating in 1954 at age 18, keeping a promise he made at 14 when he received life-saving blood transfusions as part of a major surgery. A decade later, it was found that his blood contained an antibody essential for producing anti-D injections.

Known as the "man with the golden arm," Harrison donated his blood and plasma 1,173 times, never missing an appointment for more than 60 years until he retired in 2018 at the age of 81.



"I hope it's a record that somebody breaks, because it will mean they are dedicated to the cause," Harrison said at the time.

In total, over three million doses of anti-D with Harrison's blood have been given to two million mothers in Australia since 1967. In 1999, he received the Medal of the Order of Australia in recognition of his support for Lifeblood and the anti-D programme.

His daughter, Tracey Mellowship, who also received anti-D, said Harrison was a "humanitarian at heart," adding that her family "may not have existed without his precious donations."

"He was also very proud to have saved so many lives, without any cost or pain. It made him happy to hear about the many families like ours, who existed because of his kindness," Mellowship said.

"He always said it does not hurt, and the life you save could be your own," she continued.

Australia has some 200 anti-D donors helping around 45,000 mothers and their babies annually, Lifeblood says.

Though HDFN currently can be prevented only through blood donation, researchers are using blood from Harrison and other donors to produce a lab-grown version of the anti-D antibody in the hope that it can help prevent the disease in pregnant women in Australia and around the world.

Lifeblood Chief Executive Officer, Stephen Cornelissen said Harrison had left behind an "incredible" legacy.

"On behalf of Lifeblood, and the entire Australian community, we thank James for the incredible life-saving contribution he made and the millions of lives he saved," he said.

UK, France suggest partial one-month truce between Russia, Ukraine

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

France and the UK are proposing a partial one-month truce between Russia and Ukraine, Emmanuel Macron and his foreign minister have said, as European efforts to bolster support for Kyiv accelerate in the face of uncertain US backing.

On Monday, a day after European leaders rallied around Ukraine at a summit in London, Jean-Noël Barrot said: “Such a truce – on air, sea and energy infrastructure – would allow us to determine whether Vladimir Putin is acting in good faith” and gauge his attitude to “real peace negotiations.”

The French foreign minister continued: “Never has the risk of a war in Europe, in the European Union been so high ... The threat keeps getting closer to us, the frontline keeps getting closer to us.”

Barrot’s comments picked up on those of the French president, who suggested Paris and London had agreed on a plan for a short-term partial ceasefire that would not cover ground fighting, with troops to be deployed to Ukraine in a second phase.

Macron told Le Figaro newspaper on Sunday: “There will be no European troops on Ukrainian soil in the coming weeks. The question is how we use this time to try to obtain a truce, with negotiations that will take several weeks.”

But the UK armed forces minister, Luke Pollard, on Monday declined to confirm the idea, saying it was “not a plan we currently recognise”. Various options were on the table and it was “probably not right for me at the moment to comment.”

He said: “No agreement has been made on



what a truce looks like. But we are working together with France and our European allies to look at what is the path to how ... we create a lasting and durable peace in Ukraine.”

The remarks came after European leaders, the head of Nato, Mark Rutte, and Canadian officials met in London on Sunday after an acrimonious exchange between Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Donald Trump in Washington on Friday.

The British prime minister, Keir Starmer, who convened the London talks, said afterwards that the leaders had agreed to draw up a Ukraine peace plan that would be presented to the Trump administration, but no details have so far emerged.

The Kremlin, which has rejected the idea of any western troops in Ukraine, said on Monday the results of the summit would allow “the continuation of hostilities”, adding that Zelenskyy must be forced to change his stance and seek peace.

Dmitry Peskov, the Kremlin spokesperson, said Friday’s Oval Office

clash showed how difficult it would be to reach a settlement on the conflict, and that Russia would continue to negotiate with the US on normalising the countries’ bilateral ties.

Peskov claimed Zelenskyy was responsible for the heated exchanges, describing them as “quite an unprecedented event”. He said the Ukrainian president had “demonstrated a complete lack of diplomatic abilities, to put it mildly.”

Zelenskyy said on Monday he would work with Europe on the terms for a possible peace deal to present to the US, amid growing fears that Trump intends to force Kyiv into a peace deal that gives Russia what it wants.

The Ukrainian president said on Telegram: “In the near future, all of us in Europe will shape our common positions – the lines we must achieve and the lines we cannot compromise on. These positions will be presented to our partners in the United States.”

South Carolina declares emergency amid wildfire crisis

By Olamilekan Botti

South Carolina is in the midst of a serious crisis as wildfires spread across the state. A state of emergency has been declared, with 175 wildfires currently burning. These fires have consumed over 4,200 acres, threatening homes, businesses, and natural resources. Authorities have issued urgent evacuation orders for residents in affected areas.

South Carolina is in the midst of a serious crisis as wildfires spread across the state. Dry conditions and high winds have fueled these wildfires, creating a dangerous situation. Firefighters and emergency services are working hard to contain the blazes, but the scale of the fires poses significant challenges. The South Carolina Forestry Commission is mobilizing resources and personnel to combat the flames. Firefighters from neighboring states have also joined the efforts, providing crucial assistance.

Governor Henry McMaster addressed the public, stressing the seriousness of the situation. He said, "We are facing a significant threat to our communities, and we must act swiftly to protect our citizens and our environment." His remarks highlight the urgency as officials coordinate to manage the wildfires effectively.

Several communities have received evacuation orders. Residents are urged to leave their homes as a precaution. Shelters are being set up for those displaced by the fires. Emergency management officials are working diligently to keep the public informed, providing regular updates on the fires and safety measures. Reports show that some homes have already been lost, and the full extent of the damage is still being



assessed.

The wildfires have raised concerns about air quality. Smoke is spreading across the region, posing health risks, especially for vulnerable populations like the elderly and those with respiratory issues. Local authorities monitor air quality closely and advise residents to take precautions.

These wildfires also threaten local wildlife and ecosystems. The South Carolina Forestry Commission is working with environmental agencies to assess the impact on habitats. Conservationists warn that the effects could linger for years, impacting the region's flora and fauna. Immediate action is needed to mitigate long-term damage to the environment.

As the situation unfolds, residents must stay informed and prepared. Emergency services recommend having an evacuation plan and following guidance from local officials. Social media and official government channels are being used to share information quickly. This ensures that residents receive timely

updates.

The economic implications of the wildfires are significant. South Carolina's tourism industry, which relies on its natural landscapes and parks, may face challenges as wildfires threaten these attractions. Local businesses could see a downturn as visitors reconsider their travel plans during this crisis.

After the fires, recovery efforts will be crucial. Both state and federal resources will likely support affected communities, help rebuild infrastructure, and restore the environment. The resilience of South Carolinians will be tested as they face these challenges.

South Carolina is at a critical point as wildfires continue to cause destruction. The declaration of a state of emergency reflects the seriousness of the situation and the urgent need for action. As authorities work to manage the crisis, the safety and well-being of residents remain the top priority.

The coming days will be vital as the battle

Barcelona give Neymar goal target for sensational return to Camp Nou

By Dave Oludare Oso



Neymar has been told he must score 15 goals for Santos if Barcelona are to mull a potentially sensational return to Camp Nou, per a new report.

- Neymar has returned to Santos
- Reports Barca are considering re-signing him
- Target has been set for Brazil star

·WHAT HAPPENED?

Per Sport, Barca are monitoring Neymar's situation ahead of a potentially sensational return to Camp Nou for the 33-year-old. He moved to Santos from Al-Hilal in January, but there is already said to be a plan afoot to spirit him back to Barcelona.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

Per the report, Barcelona have made it clear to Neymar that he must score 15 goals for Santos this season if they are to consider a move to bring him back to Spain. His deal with Santos only runs until June. The Catalan want the 33-year-old to prove he can get back to his pre-injury best before they will entertain the idea of adding him to Hansi Flick's team.

·DID YOU KNOW?

The 33-year-old won the Champions League with Barcelona in 2015 but departed in 2017 to join Paris Saint-Germain. He did not manage to win the Champions League again, but he may well have another chance if he is able to return to Europe.

Neymar is reportedly eager to make the return to the Catalan club, where he enjoyed the happiest days of his

career.

WHAT NEXT?

Santos play Vasco da Gama at the end of the month, in what could be Neymar's next outing for the Brazilian club.

Neymar formed a very prolific attacking trio with eight times Ballon D'Or winner Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez, winning the La Liga and Champions League trophies, among other before departing for a world record fee to PSG in France in 2017.

He journeyed from PSG to Al Hilal in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, from where he returned to his boyhood club, Santos in his native Brazil last month after an injury-plagued time at Saudi Arabia.

Fulham condemn 'abhorrent' Basseyy abuse

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

Fulham have condemned the “abhorrent” racist and homophobic online abuse directed at defender Calvin Basseyy following Sunday’s FA Cup penalty shootout win at Manchester United.

Nigeria defender Basseyy, who scored the opening goal at Old Trafford, shared some examples of the unsavoury abuse he had received on social media.

“We strongly condemn this abhorrent behaviour which has no place in football or society,” Fulham said in a statement.

“Such actions are entirely unacceptable, and we stand in full support of Calvin Basseyy, who will continue to receive our full backing.

“We will do everything in our power to work with the relevant authorities in identifying the perpetrators of these vile messages and taking the strongest form of action against them.”

In a statement, the Premier League said that it is “appalled by the abuse” and that it will offer “our full support to Calvin and the club”.

It added: “We work with social media companies and authorities to help ensure any individuals found guilty of discrimination face the



strongest possible consequences.”

Basseyy’s online abuse follows recent cases involving Everton midfielder Abdoulaye Doucoure, England defender Kyle Walker, Newcastle United’s Joe Willock and Manchester City’s Khadija Shaw.

In a recent interview with BBC Sport, Samuel Okafor, chief executive of anti-discrimination body Kick It Out (KIO), said the

level of abuse in English football had “reached crisis point”.

Basseyy’s goal was cancelled out in the second half by Bruno Fernandes, with the game staying level at 1-1 at the end of 90 minutes and extra time.

Victor Lindelof and Joshua Zirkzee missed for United in the shootout to send the Cottagers into the quarter-finals, where they will host Crystal Palace at Craven Cottage.