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White House press secretary, Karoline Leavitt

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DEAD ON ARRIVAL: Senate throws out Natasha's sexual harassment petition

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Senate Committee on Ethics, Code of Conduct, and Public Petitions has dismissed a sexual harassment petition filed by Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan against the Senate President, Dr. Godswill Akpabio.

Senator Neda Imasuen, the Chairman of the Committee, stated this on Wednesday during a probe hearing against Akpoti-Uduaghan at the National Assembly.

The Edo South Senator stated that the petition was “dead on arrival,” citing a breach of Order 40 of the Senate Standing Order.

According to Imasuen, the Senator representing Kogi Central, Akpoti-Uduaghan signed the petition herself instead of having it endorsed by another individual, rendering it procedurally invalid.

The Edo lawmaker noted that the issues raised in the petition were already in court, making them subjudice.

“The petition that she (Natasha) presented today is actually dead on arrival; it runs contrary to Order 40, Subsection 4, which states that no



senator may present to the Senate a petition signed by him or herself. Since that petition was signed by her, it will not be entertained by this committee,” he said.

It is worthy to note that despite the committee’s scheduled sitting, Akpoti-Uduaghan failed to appear before the probe panel.

The session, which was scheduled for 2 pm, did not commence until 2:58 pm when the committee’s chairman arrived after waiting for both Akpoti-Uduaghan and the Senate spokesman, Yemi Adaramodu.

While Adaramodu eventually arrived at 2:50 pm, Akpoti-

Uduaghan was absent from the hearing.

The Nigerian Senate earlier on Wednesday received a petition from the Kogi Senator, accusing Akpabio of sexual harassment.

The allegation was raised during the Wednesday plenary, but Akpabio swiftly denied the claims, dismissing them as baseless.

The senate president said, “At no time did I ever harass any woman. I was raised very well by my late single mother, and I have always upheld respect for women. I was even awarded the most gender-friendly governor in Nigeria.”

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9X4	193,500.00
9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
5X3	66,875.00
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Tinubu: We're building globally competitive economy

By: Friday Omosola

President Bola Tinubu has reaffirmed his administration's commitment to creating a sustainable and globally competitive economic system, positioning Nigerian financial institutions for growth and expansion beyond the country's borders.

Speaking at the groundbreaking ceremony for First Bank of Nigeria's new headquarters at Eko Atlantic City, Lagos, President Tinubu—represented by Vice President Kashim Shettima—stressed that banking institutions thrive when the economy flourishes.

He said that his government is implementing bold economic policies to stabilize and transform Nigeria's financial landscape.

The President acknowledged that his administration took office at a critical time that required difficult but necessary decisions to stabilize both the fiscal and monetary landscape.

However, he assured financial institutions and businesses of government support in fostering an environment where they can thrive.

“We are committed to creating an enabling environment for businesses to flourish. Our expectation is for our banks to excel, expand beyond our shores, and rank among the world's most viable financial institutions,” he said.

President Tinubu praised First Bank's resilience, adaptability, and innovation, noting that its 130-year legacy demonstrates the ability to reinvent and remain relevant despite industry disruptions.

Congratulating First Bank's board and management on investing in a state-of-the-art headquarters, Tinubu emphasised that the new structure reassures



customers, shareholders, and the government that Nigeria's oldest financial institution is continually evolving.

Tinubu

“This groundbreaking ceremony is more than laying the foundation for a new edifice; it testifies to First Bank's commitment to reinvention, adapting to modern realities while staying true to its heritage,” he added.

However, the Chairman of First Bank Holdings, Femi Otedola, expressed gratitude to the President, Vice President, Lagos State Government, and First Bank's customers and regulators, particularly the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, for their support in stabilizing the banking sector.

Furthermore, Lagos State Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu commended President Tinubu's vision for Eko Atlantic City, recalling that he was part of the administration that initiated the project despite initial scepticism.

He reaffirmed Lagos' ambition to become Africa's financial hub.

“We want Lagos to be the centrepiece of

finance and commerce, not just in Nigeria but across Africa. We are building a secure and thriving mega-city ready to lead in the financial sector,” Sanwo-Olu stated.

Ogun State Governor Dapo Abiodun described First Bank's new headquarters as a bold and audacious move, reinforcing the bank's trailblazing status in Nigeria's financial sector.

Business magnate Aliko Dangote lauded First Bank's continued leadership, joking that while he plans to rest after completing his refinery project, he might soon join First Bank in Eko Atlantic City.

Meanwhile, First Bank's Managing Director/CEO, Olusegun Alebiosu, highlighted the institution's role in shaping Nigeria's financial landscape for over 130 years, pledging continued transparency, accountability, and innovation in service delivery.

With the groundbreaking of its new headquarters, First Bank aims to further solidify its position as a dominant player in Nigeria's financial ecosystem, reinforcing its commitment to growth, resilience, and customer-centric banking.

Shettima, Dangote, Sanwo-Olu present as FirstBank flags off 40-storey head office

By: Dave Oludare Oso

The premier bank in West Africa and a leading financial inclusion service provider, FirstBank has held a groundbreaking ceremony for its new green-certified iconic Head Office building in Eko Atlantic City, Lagos.

The flag-off of the 40-storey building project, set to be the tallest building in Nigeria, was held on Wednesday, March 5, 2025.

The event had in attendance VIPs led by President Bola Tinubu, represented by his Vice, Kashim Shettima; Lagos State governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu; Ogun State governor, Dapo Abiodun; Ondo State governor, Lucky Aiyedatiwa; Africa's richest man, Aliko Dangote; Former Senate President, Bukola Saraki; Olufemi Otedola, Chairman – FirstHoldCo (host), among others.

During the ceremony, Governor Sanwo-Olu presented a certificate of approval to FirstBank Group to commence construction of its eco-friendly headquarters in Eko Atlantic City.

He said, "FirstBank, as always, has taken the lead. I want to thank the visionaries who have created a new city that will serve as Africa's model city — one we will all be proud of. Mr Femi Otedola, well done. Well done to your board and



well done to your management. CBN Governor, thank you for the approval. We hope you extend similar approvals to other financial institutions, as there is space for them too.

"I am now handing over a certificate of approval for them to commence work immediately."

Speaking earlier on the project, Olusegun Alebiosu, CEO, FirstBank Group said, "We are proud to mark this significant milestone in our journey towards excellence. Our new Head Office is envisioned as a world-class structure that represents our dedication to innovation, customer satisfaction, and sustainability. We believe that this development will play a crucial role in fostering economic growth

and development across Africa, creating long-term value for all our stakeholders."

With a legacy spanning over 130 years, FirstBank has consistently demonstrated its commitment to innovation, customer-centricity, and sustainable business practices. The Bank has a robust international presence, operating subsidiaries in nine countries across three continents.

Femi Otedola, Chairman, FirstHoldCo, added, "Today's gathering highlights the importance of collaboration and support from various sectors in bringing our ambitious plans for the new headquarters to life. We appreciate the unrelenting support from our customers and stakeholders as we work together to turn this vision into reality."

Tinubu greets Obasanjo at 88, hails his legacy of leadership

By Friday Omosola

President Bola Tinubu has paid tribute to former President Olusegun Obasanjo on his 88th birthday, describing him as an ‘extraordinary leader and statesman’.

Tinubu, in a statement on Tuesday, noted that Obasanjo’s life and contributions are deeply intertwined with Nigeria’s history.

President Tinubu highlighted Obasanjo’s role at pivotal moments in the nation’s past, from his military service to his leadership as both a military head of state and a civilian president.

“Providence has constantly thrust General Obasanjo to the forefront at critical junctures in Nigeria’s story,” Tinubu noted, recalling Obasanjo’s role in ending the Nigerian Civil War by receiving the instrument of surrender from Biafran commander Col. Philip Effiong in 1970.

He also commended Obasanjo’s leadership following the assassination of General Murtala Mohammed in 1976, during which



he oversaw Nigeria’s transition to civilian rule in 1979.

Two decades later, Obasanjo returned as a democratically elected president in 1999, playing a key role in stabilizing the country’s democracy, which has now endured for 25 years.

President Tinubu acknowledged Obasanjo’s significant policy reforms and dedication to national unity, peace, and progress during his time in office.

He also recognised his post-presidency influence as a global statesman, highlighting his work in conflict resolution, governance advocacy, and Pan-African

diplomacy.

“Sometimes controversial, former President Obasanjo’s regular interventions in national affairs have helped shape public policies and acted as a check on leadership,” Tinubu remarked.

He expressed gratitude for Obasanjo’s contributions to Nigeria and prayed for his continued health and longevity.

“At 88, the former president is still gaining strength. I pray that God Almighty will grant him the grace and strength to live for more years so the nation and Africa can continue to benefit from his wisdom and knowledge,” Tinubu stated.

'I've never sexually harassed any woman' — Akpabio speaks on Natasha Akpoti's allegation

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Senate President Godswill Akpabio has vehemently denied allegations of sexual harassment made against him by Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan of Kogi Central. Akpabio addressed the Senate on Wednesday, March 5, following the formal submission of Akpoti-Uduaghan's sexual harassment petition during plenary.

The former governor of Akwa Ibom state dismissed the allegations as false, asserting that he had never engaged in any inappropriate behaviour towards Akpoti-Uduaghan or any other woman.

"At no time did I ever attempt any sexual harassment on the said distinguished Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan or any other woman for that matter," Akpabio stated.

He went on to emphasise the values instilled in him by his late mother, describing how he and his siblings were raised through difficult circumstances with the utmost respect for women.

"I have four beautiful daughters. At no time would I ever harass any woman, and I have never done so. Even as a state governor, I won several awards, including the most gender-friendly governor in Nigeria." Akpabio added.



Akpabio thanked his colleagues and fellow Nigerians for their messages of support and solidarity, expressing confidence that he would be vindicated.

He urged the media and social media users to await the decision of the courts before drawing any conclusions.

"I urge all Nigerians, particularly the media, and members of the social media, to await the court's decision. Please, do not jump to conclusions on matters of mere allegation. The Almighty God will step in to vindicate the just," he said.

The allegations came to the fore after a heated confrontation between Akpabio and Akpoti-Uduaghan on

February 20 over seating arrangements in the Senate.

The incident led to Akpoti-Uduaghan being referred to the Senate's disciplinary committee.

On February 25, Akpoti-Uduaghan filed a N100 billion defamation lawsuit against the Senate President.

Additionally, a Federal High Court in Abuja issued an order restraining the Senate from commencing disciplinary hearings against the Kogi lawmaker until further notice.

As the legal battle continues, both sides are bracing for a lengthy and high-profile dispute that could have significant implications for the National Assembly.

Wike in Italy, to parley with Lombardy President, investors

By Dave Oludare Oso



The Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Minister, Nyesom Wike, arrived Milan, Italy on Wednesday ahead of series of official engagements, particularly meeting with the President of Lombardy Region, Attilio Fontana.

The Minister's Senior Special Assistant on Public Communications and Social Media, Lere Olayinka, said in a statement in Milan, on Wednesday that Wike departed Abuja on Tuesday night, and arrived in Milan at about 4:30am on Wednesday, and was received by the Charge d'Affairs of the Embassy of Nigeria in Italy, Ambassador Mustapha Mohammed.

He said "while in Milan, the FCT Minister will hold a meeting with the President of Lombardy Region on Thursday, and also meet agribusiness investors."

Lombardy is adjudged as the first region of Italy in terms of economic importance, with population of about 10 million people. It is the second most populous region of the European Union (EU) and the second region of the European Union by nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

"The FCT Minister's meeting with the Attilio Fontana will center on seeking collaboration and evaluating possible prospects in the areas of Agriculture and Vocational Education, as well as strategic

development partners with the Lombardy Region.

"Subsequently, Wike will meet investors in agribusiness and experts in vocational training, with a view to unlock new opportunities.

"The FCT Mandate Secretaries for Education, Dr. Danlami Hayyo and Mandate Secretary for Agriculture and Rural Development, Lawan Geidam, as well as Senior Special Assistant on Administration, Dr. Udo Samuel Atang and Senior Special Assistant on Legal and Multi-Lateral Cooperation, Barrister Benedict Daudu, accompanied the Minister on the trip."

INEC denies setting voter registration date

By Friday Omosola

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has debunked reports claiming that the Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) and replacement of lost Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) will resume on May 27, 2025.

In a statement released on Tuesday, Rotimi Oyekanmi, Chief Press Secretary to the INEC Chairman, described the report as misleading and false.



He clarified that the Commission has not announced any date for the resumption of voter registration.

“We appeal to the public to disregard the false narrative,” the statement read.

The clarification comes amid growing anticipation for the reopening of voter registration ahead of upcoming elections.

However, the Commission urged Nigerians to rely only on official sources for accurate information regarding the electoral process.

PSC appoints new Police Commissioners for Enugu, Oyo

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Police Service Commission (PSC) has appointed two new Commissioners of Police for Oyo and Enugu states.

While Mamman Bitrus Giwa, formerly the Deputy Commissioner of Operations in Kaduna and Imo states, will now oversee the Enugu State Command, Ademola Johnson, who previously served as the Principal Staff Officer to the Inspector General of Police, has been assigned to Oyo State.

Also, the commission approved the appointment of six new Deputy Inspectors General of Police (DIGs).

The newly appointed DIGs include Sadiq Abubakar, Commandant of the Police Academy, Kano; Benjamin Okolo, Head of the Information Communication Technology Department at Force Headquarters, Abuja; and Williams Adebowale, Commandant of the Police



Staff College, Jos.

Others are Bzigu Bali, in charge of the Force Criminal Investigation Department (FCID) Annex, Enugu; Idegwu Basil Ukuoma, overseeing Zone 14, Katsina; and Adebola Ayinde Hamzat, leading Zone 16, Yenagoa.

In addition to these appointments, the commission has promoted Kanayo Uzuegbu, the Commissioner of Police for Enugu State, to the rank of Assistant Inspector General of Police.

Uzuegbu has held various leadership roles, including Area Commander in Owerri and Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration in Edo State.

Furthermore, the commission has promoted eight Chief Superintendents of Police (CSP) to the rank of Assistant Commissioners of Police (ACP).

Those promoted include Abdullahi Kamba Usman, Sani Abdu, Ifeanyi Owo, Vincent Orole, Elisha Atikinkpan, Margaret Okonkwo, Alhasan Aliyu Guga, and Imo Owinizi Ezekiel. These officers underwent written examinations and oral interviews before their promotions were confirmed.

PSC Chairman, retired DIG Hashimu Argungu, called on the newly appointed officers to work closely with the Inspector General of Police to strengthen the Nigeria Police Force and improve security across the country.

FCCPC drags Multichoice to court over subscription fees hike

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC) has filed a lawsuit against MultiChoice Nigeria Ltd. and its Chief Executive Officer, Mr. John Ugbe, for defying regulatory directives and obstructing an ongoing inquiry.

In a statement issued on Wednesday in Abuja, the FCCPC's Director of Corporate Affairs, Mr. Ondaje Ijagwu, said the company had ignored the commission's instructions and proceeded with a price hike despite clear directives to maintain its existing subscription rates for DSTv and Gotv.

The commission had directed MultiChoice Nigeria on February 27 to halt any price adjustments pending the conclusion of an inquiry into its proposed increase.

However, the company went ahead with the hike on March 1, openly violating the order

The FCCPC stated that the disregard for regulatory oversight prompted it to file charges against MultiChoice Nigeria and its CEO at the Federal High Court, Lagos Judicial Division.

The charges include willfully obstructing the commission's



MULTI CHOICE NIGERIA

inquiry by implementing the price hike against directives, impeding an ongoing investigation by ignoring instructions to suspend the increase, and attempting to mislead the commission by proceeding with the hike without addressing objections.

According to the FCCPC, MultiChoice's actions amount to a deliberate attempt to undermine regulatory authority, distort market fairness, and deny consumers the protections granted under the law.

The commission described the company's conduct as a direct affront to regulatory processes, emphasizing that it demonstrated a

pattern of behavior that disregards consumer rights and fair competition.

Beyond the lawsuit, the FCCPC said it is reviewing additional enforcement measures, including sanctions, penalties, and regulatory interventions, to ensure compliance and accountability.

It reaffirmed its commitment to protecting consumers from exploitative business practices and ensuring that dominant industry players adhere to fair market principles and legal requirements.

Natasha submits sexual harassment petition against Akpabio

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan of Kogi Central has formally submitted a sexual harassment petition against Senate President Godswill Akpabio on the floor of the National Assembly.

The petition was tendered during the resumption of Senate plenary on Tuesday, March 4, morning, shortly after the upper legislative chamber reconvened.

This move follows earlier claims made by Akpoti-Uduaghan, but the Senate had previously stated it would not investigate the allegations until a formal petition was presented.

Akpoti-Uduaghan was seen arriving at

the Assembly complex with her husband on Tuesday, just hours before submitting the petition.

The submission marks a significant development in the ongoing controversy between the two lawmakers.

This petition comes amid growing protests in Abuja, with demonstrators calling for Akpabio's resignation over the allegations.

The protests, led by various civil society groups, have intensified as the situation



continues to unfold.

Further details on the proceedings and the petition's impact will be provided as the situation develops.

CBN appoints 16 new directors to key departments

By Dave Oludare Oso

In a bid to bolster its operations, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has appointed 16 directors effective March 3.

According to reports, the appointments were said to have been made to bolster the apex bank's operations in a number of policy-driven, regulatory and supervisory capacities.

The CBN named the directors as: Abdullahi Hamisu, director of the banking services department; Jide-Samuel Avbasowamen, director of the information technology department; Ojumu Adenike, director of the medical services department; and Makinde Olanrewaju, head of the procurement and support services department.

In the financial department, CBN appointed Sike Ijeoma as director of the



CENTRAL BANK OF NIGERIA

financial policy and regulation department; Isa-Olatinwo Aisha, director of consumer protection department; and Oboh Victor Ugbem, director of monetary policy department.

Also, Nakorji Musa will head the trade and exchange department; Yusuf Rakiya will lead the payments system supervision department; Vincent Modesola was appointed to oversee the

strategy management and innovation department; Farouk Muhammad is to lead the reserve management department; and Akinwunmi Olubukola Akinniyi takes charge of the banking supervision department.

Furthermore, Solaja Mohammed-Jamiu will be in charge of the other financial institutions'

supervision department (OFISD); Hassan Umar will lead the development and finance institutions supervision department; and Adedeji Adetona will steer the currency operations and branch management department.

Lastly, Okpanachi Moses will serve as the head of the statistics department.

We won't comply with 48-hour budget ultimatum - Fubara

By Dave Oludare Oso

Governor Siminalaye Fubara of Rivers State has said his government will not comply with the ultimatum issued by the State House of Assembly to re-present the 2025 Appropriation Bill.

Rivers State House of Assembly led by Speaker Martins Amaewhule had on Monday issued a 48-hour ultimatum to the government to re-present the bill.

The ultimatum followed a ruling of the Supreme Court that reinstated the lawmakers.

However, in a statement on Wednesday, the Secretary to the Rivers State Government, Dr Tammy Danagogo, maintained that the governor has yet to receive the letter, saying the state government heard of the purported on social media.

The statement reads, "I hereby refer to a letter dated 3rd March 2025 on the above subject, which we came across on social media and notify you that, as at the



close of work on Tuesday 4th March, 2025, we are yet to receive the said letter. Neither the office of the Governor, nor the Deputy Governor's office, nor the office of the Accountant-General of the state has received the said letter"

Dr Danagogo also stated that the state government had yet to receive a copy of the Supreme Court judgement to enable it to respond appropriately.

He said, "We have since been in contact with our lawyers who are still awaiting the certified true copy of the judgments of the Supreme Court, and hereby reassure you and all the good people of Rivers State that as soon as His Excellency receives

the judgments, he will strive to implement same timeously in the best interest of our people."

However, the SSG assured the people of the state of the governor's commitment to abiding by the rule of law, as he had noted earlier in his statewide broadcast.

He added, "Please, recall that His Excellency, Siminalayi Fubara, had in a State Broadcast on Sunday 2nd March, 2025, stated clearly that notwithstanding his personal opinion on the Supreme Court Judgments, he will, as a law-abiding Nigerians, obey and implement their decisions in accordance with the rule of law and the best interest of the people of Rivers State."

Protests erupt over Natasha's allegations against Akpabio

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Tensions escalated outside the National Assembly in Abuja on Wednesday as supporters of Kogi Central Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan clashed with rival groups backing Senate President Godswill Akpabio.

The confrontation followed serious allegations from Akpoti-Uduaghan, who accused the Senate President of sexual harassment.

The protests began earlier in the day when Akpoti-Uduaghan's supporters gathered at the entrance to the National Assembly, demanding Akpabio's resignation and a full investigation into the claims.

As the senator arrived at the scene near the Mopol gate, the crowd erupted into cheers, holding placards with slogans such as "Akpabio must go" and "We stand with Senator Natasha."

Among the protesters were members of civil society groups who were calling for a thorough probe into the allegations of sexual harassment.

They expressed strong support for Akpoti-Uduaghan, urging authorities to ensure justice was served.

Meanwhile, tensions mounted as a rival group, identifying themselves as



United Women for Good Governance, staged a counter-protest in support of Akpabio.

The group held banners that read "Apologise to the Senate President" and "We say no to Natasha's serial blackmailing", among others.

They insisted that Akpabio had always treated Akpoti-Uduaghan as a daughter and a friend, and demanded that she retract her allegations.

In an attempt to disperse the protesters, police operatives used tear gas to break up the demonstration outside the National Assembly Arcade.

The action forced many of Akpoti-Uduaghan's supporters to retreat, but they regrouped later at the Unity Fountain to continue their protest.

Akpoti-Uduaghan's allegations against Akpabio have taken centre

stage in the Nigerian political discourse, with growing calls for a formal investigation. She filed a sexual harassment petition against the Senate President during plenary earlier this week, which has since been met with mixed reactions from lawmakers.

The incident comes amid heightened tensions within the National Assembly, as political factions continue to grapple for influence.

The Senate President, Akpabio, who has not yet publicly commented on the accusations, faces mounting pressure as the controversy unfolds.

As the protests continue, it remains unclear how the political landscape will evolve. What is certain, however, is that the fallout from these allegations will be closely watched by both the Nigerian public and international observers.

Lagos Assembly: We won't force Obasa to resign - Lagos APC

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Lagos State chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in a statement on Tuesday, said the resignation of the reinstated Speaker of the Lagos State House of Assembly, Mudashiru Obasa, was not included in the terms of settlement reached on the leadership crisis of the House.

This development comes as Obasa, yesterday, held a peace parley to reconcile with his aggrieved colleagues barely 24 hours after his re-election.

Furthermore, the speaker has promised to withdraw the lawsuit challenging his previous removal.

NEW DAILY PRIME reported that the legislators re-elected Obasa after Mrs Mosisili Meranda stepped down as Speaker on Monday.

The Governor's Advisory Council (GAC), led by its chairman, Pa Tajudeen Olusi; APC chairman, Pastor Cornelius Ojelabi; the Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice in Lagos State, Mr Lawal Pedro, SAN, as well as other leaders of the party, on Monday, met with the anti-Obasa lawmakers to resolve the crisis.

It was, however, speculated that all the parties agreed that while Meranda would resign and Obasa returned as Speaker, the latter, after 48 hours, would also step down as Speaker.

This, according to the source will pave the way for a new Speaker from Lagos West as demanded by the 34



aggrieved lawmakers.

Multiple sources disclosed that the negotiation is expected to be followed by a letter as the anti-Obasa lawmakers are insisting that the arrangement is followed up.

Reacting to the speculations making the rounds on Obasa's expected resignation, the APC spokesman in Lagos, Seye Oladejo, dismissed the claim that the Speaker would resign, noting that there was no such arrangement in the terms of settlement during the negotiation period by the party.

According to Vanguard, Oladejo said: "To the best of my knowledge, there was no time the arrangement for Obasa to resign came up in the terms of settlement of the crisis."

When asked if Obasa will drop the lawsuit against his colleagues, Oladejo said: "I'm aware that any moment from now, Obasa will

withdraw the law suit in the interest of renewed peace and progress of the House in particular and the party in general."

Meanwhile, Obasa held a closed-door reconciliation meeting with 39 lawmakers at the assembly complex, yesterday.

The meeting, which had in attendance the deputy Speaker, Mrs Meranda, started at about 2:10 pm.

The meeting, which was aimed at calming frayed nerves and woo the aggrieved lawmakers for a new course, lasted late into the evening.

A credible source, however, hinted that Obasa is expected to drop the lawsuit against the House of Assembly and 33 lawmakers at Ikeja Court.

The source also disclosed that the House has been mandated to resume tomorrow.

Peter Obi prevented me from defeating Sanwo-Olu - Jandor

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

The Lagos State Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) governorship candidate in the 2023 election, Olajide Adediran, popularly known as Jandor, has claimed that if not for the “Peter Obi effect,” he would have defeated Babajide Sanwo-Olu in the poll.

During an appearance on Channels Television’s Politics Today programme on Tuesday, Adediran argued that the unexpected surge of support for the Labour Party (LP) in Lagos shifted the political landscape, making it difficult for the PDP to compete effectively.

“The 2023 election came with this tsunami that nobody ever expected, and it was there for everybody to see,” Jandor said.

The former PDP governorship candidate explained that after Peter Obi of the Labour Party (LP) won the February 2023 presidential election in Lagos, the dynamics of the governorship poll, held weeks later, drastically changed against the PDP.

Recall the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) declared Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu of the All Progressives Congress (APC) as the winner of the governorship election with 762,134 votes. Labour Party’s Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour finished second with 312,329 votes, while Jandor came third with 62,449 votes.

Jandor insisted that before the presidential election, PDP was in a strong position and actively



challenging the ruling APC.

“Before the general election, we were on the streets of Lagos, and the ruling party was nowhere to be found. We had several debates, and he (Sanwo-Olu) didn’t show up; he even said he didn’t want to share a stage with me,” Jandor recalled.

“The 2023 election had its own dynamics. It was a two-horse race until the presidential election. If you look at what happened, Peter Obi came first in Lagos, Asiwaju came second, and Atiku came third.

“The moment that happened, there was this belief that if we do this, we can get this state off XYZ. So, we were victims of that political wave.

“Each time I address my people, I tell them: look, we did everything, but that wave came and swallowed the whole thing; nobody saw that coming.”

Despite his disappointment, Jandor expressed confidence that, without



the “Obi effect,” he might have won the governorship election. However, he acknowledged that “it wasn’t God’s time yet” for him to become governor.

His political career began in the APC, where he led the Lagos4Lagos Movement before defecting to the PDP in 2022. He emerged as the party’s governorship candidate but recently left the PDP, citing internal sabotage.

“We were waiting to see if the party at the national level, governed by its constitution, would take action against those engaged in anti-party activities. We waited patiently for two years, but instead of enforcing sanctions, the same person was appointed Vice Chairman of the Disciplinary Committee,” he said.

Looking ahead, Jandor revealed that he is open to joining another political party to pursue his 2027 governorship ambition.

Adeleke meets Akande amidst ongoing LG dispute in Osun state

By **Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye**

Osun State Governor, Ademola Adeleke, held a crucial meeting on Tuesday, March 4, with former interim National Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Chief Bisi Akande, at Akande's Ibadan residence.

The talks centred on the ongoing and increasingly violent dispute over control of local government areas in the state.

Governor Adeleke was joined by top state officials, including the Secretary to the State Government, Teslim Igbalaye; Chief of Staff, Kazeem Akinleye; Speaker of the Osun State House of Assembly, Adewale Egbedun; Commissioner for Commerce, Bunmi Jenyo; and the Commissioner for Information and Public Enlightenment, Kolapo Alimi.

The local government crisis in Osun State, which pits the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) against the opposition APC, has escalated into violent clashes, with reports indicating that at least six people have been killed.

The tensions have primarily arisen from a dispute over the reinstatement of local government chairmen and councillors, with both parties accusing each other of fomenting unrest.

After an initial meeting with his delegation, Governor Adeleke and Chief Akande retreated for a private discussion that lasted approximately two hours.

Photos from the meeting quickly went viral on social media, sparking diverse reactions, with many interpreting the gathering as an effort towards finding a



political resolution to the ongoing crisis.

In a statement, Kolapo Alimi, the Commissioner for Information, explained that the governor sought Akande's counsel to brief him on the legal complexities surrounding the dispute.

According to Alimi, Adeleke emphasised that as a peace-loving leader, he expected the APC to pursue legal avenues to resolve the issue, rather than resorting to violence which could exacerbate the already tense situation.

"The governor deemed it necessary to inform Baba Akande about the developments in the state, particularly the judicial rulings and their interpretations. He made it clear that the APC should seek legal redress, as self-help and violence would only lead to more deaths," Alimi stated.

The Governor's spokesperson, Olawale Rasheed, echoed this sentiment, reiterating that the Adeleke administration remains committed to the rule of law and called on all stakeholders to avoid any actions that could escalate the conflict.

APC condemns the meeting, accuses governor of seeking "soft landing"

However, the APC quickly condemned Adeleke's visit. A statement issued by APC spokesman Kola Olabisi claimed that the governor was attempting to secure a "soft landing" for the reinstated local government officials, who the party argues were illegally removed by the state government.

The APC further criticised Adeleke for allegedly not addressing the violence that has plagued the state, pointing to the killing of one of their local government chairmen, Hon. Remi Abass, in Ikire, and several other party members across Osun.

The party contended that the visit to Akande was politically motivated and suggested that the governor was attempting to negotiate with the elder statesman to stabilise his position.

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“It is shocking that Governor Adeleke would visit Chief Akande after PDP-backed thugs, under his administration’s watch, killed one of our reinstated local government chairmen, Hon. Remi Abass, in Ikire, We are confident that Pa Akande, as a seasoned democrat, will not compromise the interests of his party.” the APC statement read.

The APC also rejected the idea of political negotiations, stressing that the Supreme Court was the correct forum to address grievances following the February 10, 2025 ruling by the Akure Court of Appeal.

PDP defends the governor, accuses APC of fomenting chaos

In contrast, the PDP has lauded Governor Adeleke for taking the initiative to engage in peaceful

consultations. The party dismissed the APC’s criticisms, claiming that the opposition party was dismayed by the failure of its efforts to destabilise the state.

According to Sunday Bisi, the Chairman of Osun PDP, the governor’s decision to pursue peace rather than revenge in the face of violent provocations speaks to his political maturity and commitment to the welfare of the people.

He also condemned the APC for allegedly encouraging the illegal occupation of local government offices by reinstated officials, which he said only fuelled instability in the state.

“Governor Adeleke lost six of his party members to violence instigated by APC thugs. Yet, he

has chosen to prioritise peace and consultation rather than revenge, This is a testament to his leadership and responsibility. The PDP believes in the rule of law and peaceful governance, unlike the APC, which thrives on chaos.” Bisi said in a statement.

As the dispute over the control of local government areas in Osun State continues, attention is focused on both political and legal developments. While the PDP calls for continued dialogue, the APC insists that legal avenues, particularly the Supreme Court, should be pursued to resolve the matter.

With tensions high and violence still a concern, both the state government and the judiciary will play crucial roles in determining the outcome of the ongoing crisis.

Court stops Senate from sanctioning Natasha over Akpabio spat

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Federal High Court in Abuja has stopped the Senate Committee on Ethics, Privileges, and Public Petitions from conducting disciplinary proceedings against Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan.

The presiding judge, Obiora Egwuatu, gave the order on Tuesday following an ex parte application filed by counsels to Akpoti-Uduaghan, the senator representing Kogi central.

Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan had been invited to appear before the senate's disciplinary committee following an altercation with Senate President Godswill Akpabio on February 20.

The senator had disrupted the plenary by rejecting her assigned seat, defying Akpabio's order and repeatedly raising a point of order despite being overruled.

Subsequently, the senate referred Akpoti-Uduaghan to the committee on ethics, privileges, and public petitions for disciplinary review.

On February 28, in an interview on Arise TV, the Kogi senator alleged that her trouble in the senate began after she rejected sexual advances from the senate president.

Subsequent events include the senator dragging the Senate President to court and the wife of the senate primus inter pares, Unoma Akpabio slamming N350 billion defamation and infringement of fundamental human rights suits against the Kogi Central senator, in what many are viewing as a 'roforofu' fight.

Various groups, individuals have taken sides with the characters involved in the sexual harassment saga, with the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Pan Niger Delta Forum (PANDEF) being the latest to throw their hats into the ring.

The two bodies are opposing the calls for



the senate leader's resignation after a prominent Northern group, Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) joined the 'Akpabio must go' gang.

While CAN described the dispute as "shameful and unfortunate" and called for national elders to mediate to protect the integrity of the National Assembly, PANDEF has accused the ACF of exploiting the allegations to advance a political agenda aimed at discrediting Southern leaders and restoring power to Northern Nigeria in 2027.

During a media engagement in Kaduna, CAN, speaking through its chairman for the 19 Northern states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Rev. Joseph Hayab, said, "There is a need for elders to step in. Akpabio and Natasha have people they respect and highly regard. Members of the National Assembly must take responsibility in handling this matter."

The religious body strongly opposed demands for Akpabio's resignation, labeling them premature and unjustified, as no concrete evidence had been established against him.

"Any group calling for Akpabio's resignation should desist, as no one has been proven guilty in this matter. Taking sides will only escalate tensions. Allegations of sexual harassment must be

treated with seriousness, but also with fairness and sobriety," CAN added.

Meanwhile, PANDEF National Publicity Secretary, Dr. Obiuwevbi Ominimini, In a statement on Tuesday, alleged that the ACF's claims of bias against Northern senators were an attempt to incite regional tensions and undermine President Bola Tinubu's administration.

"The press release by the ACF is nothing but a political attack on Southern Nigeria. For the ACF to suggest that only northerners are being suspended and to call on northern senators to rally around their own is a direct threat to national unity," Ominimini said.

He further recalled that in the 8th Assembly, a southern senator was suspended under a northern Senate President, yet PANDEF did not interfere in the affairs of the National Assembly.

"The Senate is governed by rules and regulations. Suspensions and disciplinary actions have always been part of legislative proceedings. Anyone who feels aggrieved can seek legal redress. What ACF has done is an open call for division and a threat to the stability of Nigeria," PANDEF stated.

Legal expert seeks fair probe in Natasha, Akpabio sexual harassment allegation

By Friday Omosola

By Friday Omosola and Helen Okechuckwu

It has been days now since senator representing Kogi Central, Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, and Senate President Godswill Akpabio dominated the news over allegations of sexual harassment.

Mrs Akpoti-Uduaghan, a member of the opposition Social Democratic Party (PDP), alleged during an interview on Arise Television that Akpabio sexually harassed her.

During the interview, she recounted an incident on December 8, 2023, when she and her husband visited Mr Akpabio's residence in Uyo, the capital of Akwa Ibom State capital.

She claimed that the Senate President held her hand, showed her around his house, and made inappropriate advances toward her, even in her husband's presence.

The allegation has sparked widespread mixed reactions from many Nigerians. While some commentators have called for Mr Akpabio's prosecution, others believe Natasha's claims lacked merit.

Speaking exclusively to The New Daily Prime, a legal expert, Ridwan Oke, Principal Partner at Iris Attorneys LP, emphasised the need for a thorough investigation.

He noted that no stone must be left unturned in the matter, noting that the allegation must be examined on its merits, regardless of Mr Akpabio's and Mrs Akpoti-Uduaghan's status.

Akpabio

"Anyone found culpable must be relieved of their positions, tried in a court, convicted and punished under our law. There should be a policy to protect whistleblowers and most importantly, victims should be adequately supported," he said.

Mr Oke added that any allegations presented before the court would be examined based on evidence.



He noted that if found to be false, the accuser would be prosecuted and held accountable under the law.

"Each case must be treated individually as it arises," Mr Oke stated, emphasising that while the defence may present various arguments, what ultimately matters is whether the prosecution has established an offence based on the evidence before the court.

He added, "Character evidence is admissible in Nigerian courts but is highly regulated. Sections 78- 82 of the Evidence Act regulates the admissibility of character evidence and it is generally inadmissible unless relevant to the case in issue."

Furthermore, he emphasised the consequences of false accusations, noting that victims have the right to file defamation suits and pursue perjury charges, which carry a penalty of up to 14 years in prison under Nigerian law.

"Sexual harassment: Section 34 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria protects the dignity of the human person, sections 281 and 285 of the penal code and section 46 of the Violence

Against Persons Prohibition Act which prohibits sexual harassment in Nigeria

"The senator alleged that she was unable to fulfil her duties as a senator as the Senate president was hindering her bills and motions. Hence, she couldn't represent her consistency as expected. This is against the spirit of the constitution

"It puts into check the effectiveness of our institution in taming sexual harassment. Allegations should be handled. Every institution in Nigeria should have a sexual harassment policy and an open door policy to encourage people to make reports."

According to him, allegations impact both parties, but under Nigeria's current system, the accuser has more to lose.

"This is because we have not yet fully implemented our laws to ensure their protection."

Mr Oke noted that politicians who are wrongly accused should seek legal redress to deter others from making false allegations.

EFCC arrests ex-Akwa Ibom gov, Emmanuel over alleged N700bn fraud

By Dave Oludare Oso

Immediate past governor of Akwa Ibom State, Udom Emmanuel has been arrested by operatives of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) over allegations of misappropriating public funds totalling approximately N700 billion.

The former governor, who reigned from 2015 to 2023, was invited to the EFCC's headquarters in Abuja on Tuesday at around 12:30 p.m. to answer questions concerning suspected money laundering, fund diversion, and related financial improprieties.

According to sources, the summons followed a formal petition lodged by a civil society group, Network Against Corruption and Trafficking.

The petitioner contended that over the course of eight years, Emmanuel received a staggering N3 trillion from the Federation Account.

It was further alleged that, rather than being utilised appropriately,



these funds left a legacy of financial discrepancies – including an outstanding debt of N500 billion alongside uncompleted projects valued at N300 billion.

In addition, investigations have brought to light that a single account, labelled “Office of the Governor” witnessed cash withdrawals totalling N31 billion between 2019 and 2023.

Such findings have amplified concerns regarding the handling of public funds during his administration.

Efforts to reach the EFCC's Head

of Media and Publicity, Dele Oyewale, for further comment were unsuccessful as his contact remained out of service.

The commission's action against the former governor marks a significant step in Nigeria's ongoing drive to tackle corruption and restore accountability within public office.

As the investigation unfolds, further details are awaited regarding the full scope of the alleged financial mismanagement and the subsequent legal proceedings that may follow.

Court directs police to serve amended N400m fraud charge on Andy Uba

By Friday Omosola

The Federal High Court in Abuja has ordered the Nigerian Police to serve an amended charge on former Senator Andy Uba and other defendants in a case involving an alleged N400 million fraud.

Presiding over the matter, Justice Inyang Ekwo adjourned proceedings until March 17 to allow time for service of the fresh charge, which was filed by the police on March 4 but had yet to be delivered to the defendants.

The case, initiated by the Inspector General of Police (IGP), names former governor Anambra State, along with Crystal and Benjamin Etu, as defendants.

At the resumed hearing, Lukeman Anthony appeared for the prosecution, while C.F. Odiniru represented the defendants.

During the session, Anthony informed the court that the matter was scheduled for arraignment and that the charge had been amended.

However, upon inquiry from Justice Ekwo, the prosecution confirmed that the amended charge had not yet been served on the defendants.

The judge then asked how much time was required to complete service, to



which the prosecution requested seven days.

Justice Ekwo subsequently directed that the amended charge be served on the first and second defendants before the next hearing.

Count one of the amended charge reads, "That you Andy Uba, Benjamin Etu and Hajiya Fatima now at large sometimes between the year 2022, within the jurisdiction of the Court did conspire amongst yourselves to commit an offence to wit: obtaining by false pretences by making a presentation to George Uboh, you have perfected way to an appointment of the Managing Directorship of NDDC Niger Delta Development Commission to any interested person who can afford the sum of N400,000,000, a presentation which you know is not true and thereby committed an offence contrary to section 8 and punishable under

section 1 (3) of the Advance Fee Fraud and other Fraud Related offences Act 2006.

Count two, "That you Andy Uba, Benjamin Etu and Hajiya Fatima, now at large, sometimes between the year 2022 within the jurisdiction of this Court did conspire amongst yourselves with intention to defraud did induce George Uboh by making a presentation to him that you have perfected way to give an appointment of the post of Managing Directorship of (NDDC) Niger Delta Development Commission to any interested person who can afford the sum of N400,000,000, a presentation which you know is not true, you collected the money and thereby committed an offence contrary to section 1 (2) and punishable under section 1 (3) of the Advance Fee Fraud and other Fraud Related offences Act, 2006."

GRUESOME! Anambra community leader beheaded amid court case

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Umudioka village in Awka, Anambra State, was thrown into confusion and grief following the gruesome murder of a respected community leader, Chief Michael Nwobu.

The 83-year-old was attacked and killed in his residence at 27 Okolobu Street by unidentified assailants.

Reports indicate that the tragic incident occurred last Sunday when the perpetrators took advantage of the absence of his family, who had gone to church, to gain access to his home.

The circumstances surrounding the killing remain unclear, and the community has been left in shock as investigations continue.

According to his first son, Mr Nnaemeka Nwobu, who is based in South Korea, "I got a call on Sunday that my father, Chief Michael Nwobu was murdered Sunday.



"My father was supposed to go as a witness in the High Court Awka on the 5th of March 2025 over the land dispute between Mr. Patrick Nwobu and Mr Nnamdi Nnaemeka but he was killed on March 2. I was told he was stabbed several times.

"I suspect that they hired some cultists to kill my father. The killers almost cut off his head. The Nigeria police command in Awka is still investigating the circumstances surrounding his murder. They have not said anything for now.

"I am not happy about the killing of my father, the way he died and I can't imagine how he was trying to survive, struggling to stay alive

when they were killing him. I want justice from the police and the government over the killing of this innocent man. My late father, Chief Michael Chinweze Nnaemeka Nwobu was a man of justice. May God help us."

Another statement by the victim's other son, Nnaemeka Kene Joseph to the police read: "I strongly suspect some of our family members because of the case they have in court with him.

"There was a threat to overthrow his leadership of the family before he was killed and that is all I have to say. I am also suspecting some of the tenants who were present in the house at the time of the incident."

CAN urges national unity, reflection amid economic, security struggles

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The President of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Archbishop Daniel Okoh, has called on Nigerians to embrace the spirit of reflection, sacrifice, and unity as the country grapples with economic and security challenges.

In a statement released on Wednesday, Archbishop Okoh extended his prayers and goodwill to Nigerians of all faiths, noting that the Lenten season offers an opportunity for national renewal and collective healing.

“Lent is a 40-day journey of sacrifice, prayer, and charity, echoing the time Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, spent fasting in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-2). For us in Nigeria, this season arrives amid challenges—rising living costs, insecurity, and daily struggles to put food on the table,” the statement read.

Acknowledging the hardships many Nigerians face, Okoh highlighted that Lent offers a time for reflection on what truly matters and encourages a collective spirit of hope.

He added, “Lent calls us to hope,



urging us to look beyond our hardships and draw strength from faith and community.”

He likened the sacrifices made during Lent to the everyday resilience of Nigerian families—mothers stretching meals, fathers working tirelessly, and children praying for a better future.

While encouraging Christians to approach the season with sincerity, Archbishop Okoh also urged Nigerians of all religious backgrounds to embrace the spirit of renewal during this time.

“Let us use these 40 days to deepen our love for one another, pray for peace in our land, and work together for a Nigeria where justice and dignity prevail,” he said.

The CAN President also called for prayers for leaders to govern with wisdom, for the youth to find purpose and opportunity, and for unity to rise above divisions.

He concluded his message with a hopeful prayer: “May this Ash Wednesday mark the beginning of a transformative journey for us all. May God bless you and our dear country, Nigeria.”

Rivers attack: Police arrest one, recover arms as manhunt continues

By Helen Okechukwu

The Rivers State Police Command has announced the arrest of a suspect involved in the shooting attack that occurred in the early hours of Wednesday at Elele Roundabout, located in Ikwerre Local Government Area (LGA) of the state.

This development follows a widely circulated video on Facebook showing about five persons attend to at Madonna Hospital, which sparked widespread reactions from netizens.

Grace Iringe-Koko, the spokesperson for the command, stated in a document shared with Journalists on Wednesday revealed that four persons were injured in the attack.

Iringe-Koko said the arrest was made following credible intelligence led by the Divisional Police Officer (DPO), along with his patrol team from Elele Division.

“During an attempt to address the crowd, an unidentified assailant, hiding within the vicinity, opened fire, resulting in multiple injuries. As



of press time, the number of those injured stood at four,” she said. complex

“The armed hoodlums fled the scene immediately, but one of them was apprehended, and a single-barrel gun was recovered from him.”

The spokesperson noted that the victims had been moved to various hospitals within Elele for immediate medical attention.

Moreover, in an effort to apprehend the fleeing suspects, Iringe-Koko said a manhunt has been initiated, as some of them have been identified as members of a local vigilante group known as OSPAC.

“The arrested suspect, along with the recovered firearm, will be transferred to the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) for further investigation,” Iringe-Koko affirmed.

The command, however, assured the public that the perpetrators of the attack would be brought to justice.

While reaffirming their commitment to ensuring a safe environment for residents, the Rivers State Commissioner of Police, CP Olugbenga Adepoju, urged residents to remain calm and provide any useful information to assist in the ongoing investigation.

Ijaw groups warn of crisis over Fubara impeachment threat

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The political situation in Rivers State has intensified, with major ethnic groups like the Ijaw National Congress (INC) and the Ijaw Youths Council (IYC) voicing strong opposition against any move to impeach Governor Siminalayi Fubara.

Their concerns are rooted in the broader political dynamics of the Niger Delta, particularly the role of the Ijaw people in the region's governance and the implications for the oil-rich state.

The dispute centers around a series of legal and political challenges, including the expiration of an ultimatum by the Rivers State House of Assembly for Fubara to resubmit the 2025 budget.

This follows the Supreme Court's ruling in late February 2025 that confirmed the legitimacy of the assembly while nullifying the October 2024 local government elections.

The political standoff has escalated tensions, especially with the INC and IYC warning that any impeachment attempt would have dire consequences for the region, potentially destabilizing the Niger Delta and affecting oil production.

A key point of contention is the involvement of Nyesom Wike, Fubara's predecessor and the current Minister of the Federal Capital Territory.

The INC has accused political elites from the Ikwerre ethnic group, which Wike belongs to, of trying to undermine Fubara's leadership. This has led to a series of tense exchanges between different factions within the state.

The Ijaw groups have threatened to take drastic action if Fubara is removed, arguing that such a move would be seen as a direct affront to the will of the Rivers people.

They also emphasised that their opposition to the ongoing political maneuvering was not just a defense of



Fubara, but a defense of the Ijaw people's long-standing contributions to the state and the country.

They vowed to resist any attempt to destabilize the state, warning that this could lead to economic repercussions, particularly in the oil industry, which is a critical contributor to Nigeria's economy.

The Supreme Court's ruling, which nullified the October 2024 local government elections, has further complicated the situation.

The INC and IYC have criticized the judgment, calling it "provocative" and claiming that it was politically motivated. The groups have even called for the review of the decision, especially as it pertains to the exclusion of Ijaw interests in the region.

Moreover, the potential for renewed violence looms large. The IYC has expressed concerns about plans to disrupt the state's peace and economy, particularly as they believe the 48-hour ultimatum to Fubara is part of a broader plot to remove him.

The Ijaw leadership is rallying its members to ensure that Fubara's mandate is respected.

In response to the growing tension, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has called for peaceful engagement rather than violent agitations.

However, local leaders, such as the Olu of Igbokoda in Ondo State, have dismissed these peacebuilding efforts as insufficient without addressing the deeper issues of political exclusion, marginalization, and neglect of the Niger Delta people by the federal government.

These issues—political, ethnic, and economic—are now at the forefront of Rivers State's political crisis.

The INC, IYC, and other regional leaders are looking to President Bola Tinubu for intervention, stressing that any destabilization in Rivers could ripple across the entire country, impacting everything from governance to national oil production.

The unfolding drama suggests a critical moment for Nigeria's leadership to find a resolution that addresses both the political and economic dimensions of the crisis.

Christians begin 40-day Lent fasting with Ash Wednesday

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Christians in Nigeria and around the world have started Lent, one of the most significant periods in the Christian liturgical calendar, today, March 5, 2025, with the observance of Ash Wednesday.

This 40-day season, excluding Sundays, is dedicated to penance, fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, leading up to the celebration of Easter on April 20.

The duration of Lent reflects the 40 days Jesus Christ spent fasting in the desert, a period marked by reflection, sacrifice, and spiritual preparation.

On Ash Wednesday, millions of Christians worldwide attend church services to receive ashes on their foreheads in the shape of a cross.

The ashes, made from the burnt palms of the previous year's Palm Sunday, serve as a solemn reminder of human mortality and the need for repentance.

As the ashes are applied, the clergy often recite, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust, you shall return," emphasizing the themes of humility and reflection that define the Lenten season, Catholic.com reports

Key Dates in Lent 2025:

1. Ash Wednesday: March 5
2. Palm Sunday: April 13
3. Maundy Thursday: April 17
4. Good Friday: April 18
5. Easter Sunday: April 20

The timing of Lent changes each year based on the date of Easter, which is determined by the lunar calendar.

In 2025, Easter falls unusually late, making Lent and its associated observances later than in most years.



This shift has not dampened the fervour with which Christians worldwide embrace the season's disciplines of fasting and prayer, Michigan Thumb reports.

Significance of Lenten Practices

Fasting during Lent typically involves abstaining from meat on Ash Wednesday and all Fridays until Easter.

There are reports that many Christians also choose to give up certain luxuries or habits, such as sweets, social media, or other personal comforts, as a form of sacrifice and self-discipline.

In addition to fasting, prayer and almsgiving — acts of charity towards those in need — are emphasized as vital practices to renew one's faith and commitment to God's teachings.

In 2024, in Rome, Pope Francis, during his Ash Wednesday homily at the Basilica of Santa Sabina, urged the faithful to use this period to detach from worldly distractions, particularly the overuse of social media, and to

focus on spiritual growth.

"Life is not a performance," the Pope remarked, encouraging believers to seek quiet reflection and authenticity in their faith.

Meanwhile, Christians worldwide have been called to embrace the season's disciplines with sincerity and devotion, preparing their hearts for the profound joy of Easter's resurrection message.

On Sunday, the Catholic Archbishop Emeritus of Abuja, John Cardinal Onaiyekan, emphasised the shared values of both Christianity and Islam, particularly the belief in one merciful, all-powerful God.

He highlighted how both faiths held similar core principles, especially during times of fasting and prayer (2025 Ramadan and Lenten seasons).

"Whether you are Christian or Muslim, we all believe in one God who is Almighty and merciful," he said.

Ghanaian woman wins UK residency despite proxy marriage controversy

By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

Proxy marriages are recognized under Ghanaian law and registration was not a legal requirement.

A Ghanaian woman has been granted the right to remain in the UK after an immigration tribunal ruled in favor of her proxy marriage, which took place 12 days before the Brexit deadline, despite her and her husband's absence from the ceremony.

The tribunal was told that Elizabeth Owusu claimed to have married Tamba Dumbar Matrui, an EU citizen in the UK, on December 19, 2020, just days before the UK officially left the European Union. Under immigration rules, individuals who can prove they were legally married to an EU national before Brexit are entitled to apply for UK residency.

Ms. Owusu informed the tribunal that her marriage was conducted via proxy in Ghana, meaning neither she nor her husband attended the ceremony in person. However, the marriage was not legally registered until May 7, 2021, more than four months after Brexit had taken effect.

Lower Tribunal Blocks Residency, Upper Tribunal Overturns Ruling
Initially, a lower-tier tribunal ruled that Ms. Owusu was not entitled to remain in the UK, citing the fact that she had not obtained a registration certificate before the Brexit deadline and had not lived in a "relationship akin to marriage" with her husband before December 31, 2020.

However, an upper tribunal overturned the decision, ruling that proxy marriages are recognized under Ghanaian law and that immediate registration was not a legal requirement.

Tribunal Judges Sarah Pinder and Jessica Smeaton ruled in favor of Ms. Owusu, granting her the right to remain in the UK on humanitarian protection



and human rights grounds.

A Growing Trend in Immigration Rulings?

The case adds to a growing list of controversial immigration rulings, where foreign nationals have successfully challenged deportation orders on human rights grounds.

Recent cases include:

An Albanian criminal who avoided deportation after claiming his son had an aversion to foreign chicken nuggets.

A Pakistani pedophile, convicted of child sex offenses, who won the right to stay in the UK because deportation was ruled "unduly harsh" on his children.

According to government reports, there are currently 34,169 outstanding immigration appeals, with many citing human rights violations. These cases pose a significant challenge to the UK government's efforts to fast-track the deportation of illegal migrants.

Shadow Home Secretary Chris Philp criticized the ruling, arguing that sham marriages should not be used to bypass immigration laws.

"If this is a sham marriage concocted for

immigration purposes, it should certainly not be allowed to enable this person to stay. All too often, immigration judges make decisions that defy common sense on the most tenuous of grounds. This may be another such case."

The ruling follows a similar case last month, in which a Ghanaian tourist was granted UK residency after organizing a proxy wedding in December 2018.

Because the marriage lasted for three years, she was eligible to claim settled status under the Brexit deal's EU settlement scheme. This was possible because her husband, a German national, qualified for EU settled status, making her eligible for the same residency rights.

The ruling has raised serious questions about the effectiveness of UK immigration laws, particularly concerning marriage-based residency claims.

As the government moves to tighten loopholes, cases like Ms. Owusu's continue to spark debate over whether immigration courts are prioritizing human rights over legal integrity.

Nigerian arrested in S' Africa for illegal possession of precious metals

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation, also known as the Hawks, has arrested a Nigerian, Benjamin Stanley Okwudili for possession of precious metals.

Gauteng spokesperson for the Hawks, Lieutenant Colonel Lloyd Ramovha, who confirmed this in a statement on Wednesday, March 5, 2025, said Okwudili was arrested at Linbro Park, Sandton, after being found in possession of suspected precious metals estimated at R50 million.

Ramovha said the Hawks' Johannesburg Serious Organised Crime Investigation (SOCI) conducted a "diligent" intelligence-driven operation regarding contravention of the Precious Metals Act on February 27, resulting in the arrest.

"The operation was executed following critical information about palladium unlawfully stored at a residence on 1st Road, Linbro Park. Acting promptly, the team proceeded to the identified location. Upon arrival, they encountered a Nigerian male, Mr. Benjamin Stanley Okwudili," said Ramovha.

The officers introduced themselves and requested permission to search the premises, which the Hawks say was granted.

"Despite finding no illegal items within the house, a thorough search of the garage revealed a gold suitcase wrapped



in clear cling wrap. Upon inspection, the suitcase was discovered to contain approximately 90 kg of silver stones, suspected to be palladium, with an estimated value of R50 million," said Ramovha.

Palladium is a silver-white metal that resembles platinum. It is used in many types of manufacturing processes, particularly for electronics and industrial products.

When questioned about the suitcase, the Hawks said Okwudili stated he had received it from the Congo and was expecting a buyer to collect it.

"However, he failed to produce any documentation authorising his possession of such minerals," said Ramovha.

Consequently, the SA Police Service's

Local Criminal Record Centre was summoned to the scene for further processing.

Okwudili, 55, was then arrested. He was detained at Sandringham police station after being charged.

The Nigerian national appeared before the Johannesburg Magistrate's Court on Monday, where the case was postponed to March 10 for confirmation of Okwudili's status in South Africa.

Meanwhile, Gauteng provincial head of the Hawks, Major General Ebrahim Kadwa has welcomed Okwudili's arrest.

"This operation serves as a stern warning to all dealers in precious metals: adherence to the law is non-negotiable. Authorities will take decisive action against any individuals or entities found in violation of the Precious Metals Act," he said.

NAFDAC seizes 50 truckloads of fake drugs in Onitsha market

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

In continuation of its nationwide crackdown on substandard and counterfeit medicines, the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) has said it has evacuated about 50 truckloads of illicit drugs from Onitsha.

The agency also said it recovered dangerous weapons from the Bridge Head Drug Market in Onitsha, Anambra State.

NAFDAC noted that during the ongoing operation, which began on February 10, its security team discovered two rifles, live cartridges, machetes, and other weapons hidden within the market.

Describing the discovery of the weapons as alarming, the Director-General of NAFDAC, Prof Mojisola Adeyeye said that it may have been an assassination attempt on the agency's South-East Zonal Director, Dr. Martins Iliyomade, who routinely holds debriefing sessions at the location.

Adeyeye, who spoke through Iliyomade, revealed that security personnel thwarted two separate attempts by hoodlums to break into storage facilities where the agency



had kept seized drugs.

The NAFDAC boss said that two suspects were arrested and are currently assisting with investigations.

Despite resistance from criminal elements, Adeyeye reassured the public that the operation would continue as a national mission to protect public health.

“With the swift intervention of our security team, we recovered daggers, machetes, two rifles, and other weapons. We have also arrested individuals attempting to breach our storage facilities. They are in custody and providing useful information,” she stated.

The NAFDAC boss commended market leaders for their cooperation throughout the exercise and confirmed that some sections of the market would reopen this week.

She also emphasised that the seized counterfeit drugs had been relocated to a secure facility for further action.

The crackdown is part of a nationwide effort to eliminate substandard and falsified medicines from circulation, ensuring that only genuine pharmaceutical products reach consumers.

Ondo govt, FG commission eye care centre in Idanre

By **Helen Okechukwu**

The Ondo State Government, in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Health and OneSight Essilor Luxottica Foundation, has commissioned an eye care centre at General Hospital, Idanre.

The newly commissioned eye care centre aims to complement the Millennium Eye Care Centre in Akure.

A post shared on their Facebook page on Wednesday revealed that the development will enhance quality affordable and accessible eye care services to the people of the state.

The initiative aligns with the commitment to tackling preventable sight loss for over 1.1 billion people globally by 2030.

The National Coordinator for the National Eye Health Programme, Dr. Oteri Okolo, during the launch of the health centre, explained that the presidential initiative was approved in December 2023, marking the second beneficiary state in Nigeria.

Okolo emphasized the importance of vision, not only as a health concern but also as a socio-economic development issue.

She noted that good vision enables individuals to work efficiently, helps children learn better, and ensures that the elderly can live independently without the risk of falls or dependency.

She further stated that the vision centre would provide services at an affordable cost, in line with the President's vision of ensuring clear sight for all.



Okolo urged the host community to collaborate with the eye care centre to maximize its efficiency and impact.

The Permanent Secretary of the Ondo State Ministry of Health, Dr. Adeniran Ikuomola, expressed the state's gratitude to the President and the National Eye Health Programme for their support in establishing and equipping the facility.

Represented by the Director of Public Health, Dr. Stephen Fagbemi, Ikuomola described the initiative as one of the core health programs of Governor Lucky Orimisan Aiyedatiwa's administration, aimed at prioritizing the well-being of the state's residents.

Highlighting Ondo State's dedication to eye health, Ikuomola stated that the state was among the few to have launched a specialized eye care hospital in previous years.

"The initiative has been having tremendous successes and challenges, and today, this is the testament to the fact that we are expanding through this new facility in Idanre," he said.

"We are also delighted with the staff of this hospital. We are certain that traffic will be at this center soon. We urge you to provide subsidized and quality service to the good people of the state."

While assuring that her team would visit the hospital every Thursday for consultations, Dr. Stella Adegbehin, Consultant Ophthalmologist and Chairman of the Eye Health Committee for Ondo State, applauded the initiative.

High Chief Neren Akinnawolu, who represented the Owa of Idanre, expressed appreciation to both the federal and state governments for establishing the eye care centre in their community. He pledged the community's unwavering support to ensure the success of the facility.

Ibrahim Chatta is the reason I'm still in Nollywood - Apa

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian actor Sanusi Izihag, known as Apa, opens up about his struggles in Nollywood and why he stayed despite multiple attempts to quit.

Apa, who began his career as a Continuity Manager before transitioning into acting, shared his experiences during an interview on the Talk to B podcast with actress Biola Bayo. He credited fellow actor Ibrahim Chatta for playing a crucial role in keeping him from leaving the industry.

A Director's unexpected hostility

Recalling a particularly tough period, Apa revealed that an influential director, whom he had never worked with, vowed to make his career difficult. The unexpected hostility left him confused and frustrated.

"I had never met this director before, but he had already made up his mind about me," Apa said. "I was eager to work with him, but instead, he wanted to make things hard for me. It was shocking and painful."

Struggling in a toxic work environment

The pressure in the industry became overwhelming at times, Apa admitted. He found himself in situations where the negativity around him became too much to handle.

"I despised the toxic atmosphere," he shared. "It affected me so much that I became emotional and started crying."

During these low moments,



Ibrahim Chatta stepped in. Apa revealed that Chatta found him in tears on more than one occasion and took the time to listen and offer support.

Ibrahim Chatta's role in Apa's journey

"There were at least two or three times when Ibrahim saw me crying," Apa recalled. "Each time, he asked what was wrong. I told him I wanted to quit the industry, but he never allowed me to give up."

Apa admitted that he had tried to leave Nollywood multiple times. However, Chatta would always step in, offering him roles in his projects to keep him engaged and motivated.

"I walked away from filmmaking about three different times," he confessed. "Each time, Ibrahim called me back and gave me work just to make sure I didn't leave."

Grateful for a strong support system

Apa expressed deep gratitude for Chatta's support. Without him, he

believes he might not have remained in Nollywood.

"Ibrahim Chatta believed in me when I was ready to walk away," Apa said. "He kept pushing me forward, and for that, I will always be thankful."

His story sheds light on the challenges many actors face in Nollywood, especially those still finding their footing. From difficult directors to toxic work environments, the industry can be tough. However, Apa's experience proves that mentorship and encouragement from established figures can make a big difference.

Moving forward with determination

Despite the struggles, Apa remains committed to his craft. He continues to feature in Nollywood productions, proving that resilience and the right guidance can help actors succeed even in the face of adversity.

Lamborghini isn't asset but I'm open to receiving one as gift - Tolanibaj

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Former Big Brother Naija star Tolanibaj has sparked a debate on wealth and luxury, arguing that exotic cars are liabilities and real assets offer true financial security.

She believes exotic cars, including high-end models like Lamborghinis, are “liabilities” rather than valuable investments. Instead of holding onto such vehicles, she says she would rather trade them for real assets.

Tolanibaj shared her thoughts in a video posted on Snapchat. In the clip, she made it clear that while she would accept a Lamborghini as a gift, she would not keep it. She explained that selling the car and using the money for better investments is a smarter financial move.

“If you give me a Lambo, I will sell it,” she stated. “I want assets. I want properties. I want lands. I want a penthouse in Pinnock. I want a big house in Ikoyi. Not a liability. But you can gift me a Lamborghini, I will sell it.”

Linked to the “Sex-for-Lambo” Controversy

Her statement comes amid ongoing discussions about wealth, luxury, and financial responsibility. Recently, social media has been buzzing about a controversy involving Grammy-winning singer Burna Boy and socialite Sophia Egbueje. The issue, widely referred to as the “sex-for-Lambo” saga, has raised debates about the value of



luxury cars and their place in financial planning.

Tolanibaj’s stance adds another layer to the conversation. She argues that while luxury cars may symbolize wealth, they do not offer long-term financial stability. According to her, investing in real estate and other appreciating assets is a wiser choice.

Mixed Reactions from the Public

Her opinion has received mixed reactions. Some people agree with her financial strategy, saying that properties and investments provide security and stability. Others, however, believe luxury cars are more than just vehicles. To some, they represent success, status, and personal achievement.

Despite differing opinions, Tolanibaj remains firm in her belief. She emphasizes that financial decisions should be practical, not just emotional. She encourages people to think beyond appearances

and focus on building wealth that lasts.

The Debate on Celebrity Spending Her comments have also sparked discussions about the financial habits of celebrities. Many public figures spend millions on flashy cars, designer clothes, and extravagant lifestyles. However, not all of them prioritize long-term investments. Tolanibaj’s view suggests that even in the world of fame and fortune, financial wisdom matters.

Luxury vs. Long-Term Investments

As the conversation continues, one thing is clear: the debate between luxury and long-term investments is not going away anytime soon. While some see high-end cars as essential status symbols, others, like Tolanibaj, believe true wealth lies in assets that grow in value over time.

Seun Kuti blasts celebrities, feminists for not supporting Natasha

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Afrobeat star Seun Kuti backs Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan in her sexual harassment claims against Senate President Godswill Akpabio.

Kuti criticized Nigerian celebrities and feminists for remaining silent on the matter.

Allegations against senate president

Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan, who represents Kogi Central, accused Akpabio of rejecting her motion on the Ajaokuta Steel Complex because she refused his alleged sexual advances. She made the claims during a televised interview, sparking controversy.

Since her statement, she has faced harsh criticism, particularly from female colleagues in the Senate. Many have dismissed her claims, while others have remained silent. Despite the seriousness of the allegation, there has been little public outcry.

Kuti calls out celebrities and activists

During a live session on Instagram, Seun Kuti voiced his strong support for Akpoti-Uduaghan. He expressed disappointment in Nigerian celebrities and women's rights activists for not rallying behind her. He compared their silence to their vocal support for Annie Idibia during her marital issues with singer 2Baba (2Face Idibia).

Kuti said, "I stand 100 percent with Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan. She isn't even the first to accuse the Senate President of such actions. It's shocking that these so-called women's rights activists are silent."



He went further, pointing out that many celebrities were quick to comment on Burna Boy's alleged unfulfilled promise to model Sophia Egbueje but ignored serious political and social issues.

"They talk about Burna Boy and Sophia Egbueje, but when it comes to serious matters, they remain silent," Kuti said.

Government influence over celebrities

The musician accused Nollywood actors and actresses of being unwilling to challenge the government. He suggested that many entertainers benefit from fraudulent government grants, making them reluctant to speak against political leaders.

"Many celebrities, especially Nollywood stars, benefit from the government through shady grants. They won't dare to speak out," Kuti alleged.

He acknowledged that he could not

personally organize protests for Akpoti-Uduaghan, but he urged Nigerian women to stand with her.

"I can't openly protest, but I call on Nigerian women to support her," he stated.

Public reactions and ongoing controversy

Kuti's remarks have stirred conversations online. Some Nigerians praise him for standing with Akpoti-Uduaghan, while others criticize him for attacking celebrities. The Senate President has yet to respond directly to the accusations, and no official investigation has been launched.

Meanwhile, Akpoti-Uduaghan remains under pressure. Critics argue that her allegations are politically motivated, while supporters insist that she deserves a fair hearing.

As the debate continues, many Nigerians are watching closely to see if the allegations will lead to further scrutiny of sexual harassment in political circles.

Why I left Moses Bliss' record label – Ebuka Songs

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Gospel singer Ebuka Songs has finally broken his silence on why he left Moses Bliss' record label, Spotlite Nation, after just 11 months under contract.

His exit sparked speculation, but he remained silent—until now.

Ebuka had signed a three-year contract with Spotlite Nation. However, after just 11 months, he left the label. His sudden exit left many wondering about the reason behind his decision.

In December 2024, Moses Bliss addressed the situation. He stated that Ebuka left to pursue his music career independently. Despite Bliss' clarification, fans still had questions.

Now, Ebuka has shared his side of the story for the first time. Speaking on the Open Up podcast, he revealed why he made the tough decision to leave.

A call to focus on ministry

Ebuka expressed deep gratitude for Moses Bliss' impact on his career. He acknowledged that when he joined Spotlite Nation, he had talent and anointing but lacked industry experience.

“I will always be grateful for Moses Bliss' role in my life,” he said. “At that time, I had the anointing and gift, but I didn't know how to go about it professionally.”

Despite his appreciation, he explained that he had to move in a different direction. He felt a strong calling to focus on his ministry. According to him, this was the next



step in his spiritual and musical journey.

“I am grateful for the journey I have been through,” he continued. “But now, the next level is to focus on my ministry. And we are in a good space.”

Why he chose silence

Many had wondered why Ebuka did not speak about his exit earlier. He addressed this question directly.

“The reason I kept quiet about my departure was to avoid unnecessary conversations,” he explained. “We all reach a point where we just want to focus on the next phase of our lives. For me, it was about God's assignment for my life.”

Ebuka made it clear that his decision was not based on any conflict. Instead, it was a personal choice driven by his faith and calling.

A smooth transition

Despite leaving the label, Ebuka

emphasized that there is no bad blood between him and Moses Bliss. He reassured fans that they remain on good terms.

His focus now is on growing his ministry while continuing his music independently. He believes this transition will help him fulfill his purpose and reach more people with his message.

Looking ahead

Ebuka's departure from Spotlite Nation marks the beginning of a new chapter. With his strong faith and dedication, he remains confident about the future.

Fans can expect more gospel music from him, now under his own direction. While his time with the label was brief, he sees it as an essential part of his growth.

As he embarks on this journey, one thing is certain—Ebuka Songs is determined to make an impact, both in music and ministry.

US holds direct talks with Hamas breaking from decades-old precedent

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The White House press secretary, Karoline Leavitt confirms talks but declines to provide details

The White House is holding direct talks with Hamas over the return of the Israeli hostages held since 7 October, breaking decades of precedent by engaging with the militant group without intermediaries.

Karoline Leavitt, the White House press secretary, said on Wednesday that officials had held “ongoing talks and discussions” with Hamas officials, as the Trump administration has vowed to return all of the Israeli hostages held in Gaza amid a shaky ceasefire deal.

Leavitt told reporters that Israel had been consulted on the talks and that the US special envoy Adam Boehler “does have the authority to talk to anyone” when “American lives are at stake.”

Hamas members confirmed the reports, saying there had been two direct meetings between US officials and Hamas in Doha, the Qatari capital, in recent days.

“Several communications took place between Hamas and various American communication channels, the latest being with a US envoy and discussed the issue of Israeli prisoners who hold American citizenship, both the living and the deceased,” a Hamas official told AFP.

Israel said it had conveyed its position on direct talks with Hamas, Benjamin Netanyahu’s office said late on Wednesday, offering no further details.

“Israel has expressed to the United States its position regarding direct talks with Hamas,” the statement from the prime minister’s office said.

“Dialogue and talking to people around the world to do the best interests of the American people is something that the president has proven, is what he believes is good-faith effort to do what’s right for the American people,” Leavitt said.

Axios first reported the “secret talks” with Hamas, citing two sources with direct knowledge of meetings held in Doha, Qatar, in recent weeks.



The outlet called the talks “unprecedented”, noting that the US had never before engaged with Hamas and that it had declared the group a terrorist organisation in 1997.

Fifty-nine hostages are still held by Hamas, though Israeli intelligence believes that only 22 are still alive.

Five Americans are believed to still be held by Hamas, one of whom, 21-year-old Edan Alexander, is believed to still be alive.

Under the terms of the hostages-for-cessfire deal, which went into effect on 19 January, Hamas was expected to release hostages weekly in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails.

After six weeks, Israel and Hamas were expected to enter a second stage of the negotiations, which would make the ceasefire permanent and secure the release of the remaining hostages.

But those talks have not progressed and the White House’s decision to engage directly with Hamas appears to be targeted to meet Trump’s goals of securing the release of all hostages held in Gaza.

Trump has warned that unless they are released, there will be “hell to pay” in the

region, in what appeared to be a threat directed specifically at Hamas.

But Trump’s envoy Steve Witkoff has also pressured Netanyahu to push forward with the negotiations, and was crucial in convincing the Israeli prime minister to sign the original ceasefire deal that went into effect in January.

Boehler is tasked with securing the release of Americans who have been “wrongfully detained” by governments or other groups around the world. But it remains unclear whether he is discussing the release of these hostages as part of a longer-term truce, which would mark a significant increase in his authority and indicate that the US could be going around Israel to negotiate an end to the war.

Witkoff, the Trump envoy who negotiated the earlier ceasefire and has now been tasked with negotiations with Russia as well, was set to travel to Doha earlier this week to meet the Qatari prime minister about the ceasefire negotiations but “canceled the trip on Tuesday night after he saw there was no progress from Hamas’ side”, a US official told Axios.

Trump has broken with Biden administration strategies for resolving the war in Gaza, giving increasing military backing to Israel and suggesting that millions of Palestinians should be forcibly deported to other countries because the Israeli onslaught has made it unsafe to live there.

Arab leaders endorse \$53bn counterproposal to Trump's Gaza plan

By Dave Oludare Oso

Proposal focuses on emergency relief and long-term economic development under Palestinian Authority administration

Arab leaders have endorsed a \$53bn (£42bn) plan to rebuild Gaza under the future administration of the Palestinian Authority (PA), in a rushed attempt to present an alternative to US President Donald Trump's idea for a property development-style plan.

Trump's suggestion involved a relocation of the Palestinian population that has been widely criticised as effectively endorsing ethnic cleansing.

The prospect of the PA governing Gaza remains far from certain, however, with Israel having ruled out any future role for the body, and Trump having closed the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) liaison office in Washington during his first term while stepping up support for Israel.

In response, the Israeli foreign ministry said the reconstruction plan "failed to address" the realities of the situation following Hamas' 7 October attack, adding that it did not mention the killing and kidnapping of Israelis during the attack or criticise Hamas.

Hamas, however, called for provision of the means to ensure the plan's success and considered the summit a "step forward" for Arab and Islamic support behind the Palestinian cause.

The new proposal, presented at an Arab League summit in Cairo, focused on emergency relief, rebuilding shattered infrastructure and long-term economic development.

The Egyptian president, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, said in opening remarks at the summit that his government's reconstruction plan would ensure Palestinians can "remain on their land". Later, the UN secretary general, António Guterres, said the world body stood ready to "fully cooperate."

In a final communique, the summit announced the adoption of a "comprehensive Arab plan", urging the international community to offer its support.

It said that "all these efforts are proceeding in parallel with the launch of a political track" towards Palestinian statehood, which Israeli leaders have opposed.

The summit called on Palestinian representation to be unified under the PLO, an umbrella group that is the dominant political force within the PA – and which excludes Hamas.

In a 112-page document, the Egyptian government presented colourful AI-



generated images of housing developments, gardens and community centres, with plans for a commercial harbour, a technology hub, beach hotels and an airport.

What the Egyptian proposal did not fully address was who would run the devastated territory, with a draft communique only mentioning what it called support for a Palestinian administrative committee.

Critically, it has also not received backing from Gaza's occupying power: Israel. Previous economic plans for Gaza failed after they were stifled by Israel, which has blockaded and bombed the strip for years. Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has said he wants permanent, overarching control over all land in the Palestinian territories.

Meanwhile, inside the coastal strip, the Hamas group has been battered by 16 months of war but remains a political force, and is unlikely to agree to a process that excludes it.

Senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri said the group rejected any attempt to impose projects on Palestinians.

"We are keen for the success of the summit, and we hope that there will be a call to reject the displacement and to protect the right of our people in resisting the occupation and governing itself away from any custodianship and intervention," he added.

Hamas also released a statement on Tuesday calling for the Arab League summit in Cairo to "thwart" the relocation of Palestinians from Gaza.

"We look forward to an effective Arab role that ends the humanitarian tragedy created by the occupation in the Gaza Strip... and thwarts the [Israeli] occupation's plans to displace [Palestinians]," it said.

The Egyptian plan did acknowledge the challenge posed by armed factions in Gaza

but said the issue could be resolved through a "credible political process" that restores Palestinian rights and offers a clear path forward.

The military regime in Cairo and many other Arab states are outspoken on Israel's violence but consider Islamist Hamas a threat. Cairo has long maintained a blockade on Gaza in coordination with Israel.

The Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, who runs the western-backed Palestinian Authority in the occupied West Bank, attended the summit, although he has limited influence in Gaza.

Egypt's plan also garnered backing from the United Nations secretary general, Guterres, who had previously warned of ethnic cleansing after Trump released his "Riveria of the Middle East" plan.

"I welcome and strongly endorse the Arab-led initiative to mobilise support for Gaza's reconstruction, clearly expressed in this summit," Guterres said at the summit. "The UN stands ready to fully cooperate in this endeavour."

Guterres also called for the resumption "without delay" of negotiations on continuing a fragile ceasefire in Gaza. Israel has killed nearly 50,000 people while Hamas, which killed approximately 1,200 people during an attack that sparked the latest war, still holds Israeli hostages.

While the ceasefire remains in place, Arab states have rushed to present an alternative to Trump's plan, which they fear would destabilise the entire region, especially if Palestinians in Gaza are forcibly ejected.

Trump has called for the US to effectively colonise Gaza and for its population to be displaced to neighbouring countries, including Jordan and Egypt, while the territory is "developed."

"The US will take over the Gaza Strip and we will do a job with it too," he said. "We'll own it."

Nine students found dismembered on Mexico highway

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The bodies of nine students who went missing on vacation in southern Mexico last month have been found dismembered by the side of a local highway — with a bag of hands nearby.

The group's gruesome remains were discovered in the trunk of an abandoned vehicle and underneath a blood-covered tarp in San Jose Miahuatlan on the border of the Mexican states of Puebla and Oaxaca.

Four of the bodies were in the trunk, while the other five corpses were left under the tarp.

The bodies of 9 students who were reported missing in Oaxaca last week were found in Puebla, Mexico.

A bag with eight pairs of hands was also found at the scene, with two more hands left in the trunk, reported Periodico Central.

The bodies of the four women and five men, ages 19 to 30, all had bullet wounds and signs of torture, according to El Financiero.

The group, which was from Tlaxcala, was reported missing Feb. 27 when they traveled to the beaches in Oaxaca for a vacation.

A dark gray Volkswagen Vento with license plates registered in neighboring Tlaxcala was discovered Sunday afternoon around 150 miles southeast of Mexico City, said Periodico Central.

Ruben Antonio was one of the victims.



Periodico Central reported that eight pairs of hands were found at the scene.

Most of the victims have been identified: Angie Lizeth, Leslie, Brenda Mariel, Jacqueline Ailet, Noemi Yamileth, Raul Emmanuel, Ruben Antonio, and Rolando Armando.

The ninth victim has yet to be identified.

El Financiero reported that all the bodies had bullet wounds and signs of torture.

The group from Tlaxcala was reported missing on Feb. 27 when they traveled to the beaches in Oaxaca for a vacation.

No suspects have yet been named, and the Attorney General's Office in Puebla said it is collaborating with its colleagues in Tlaxcala and Oaxaca to try and track down the killers.

Video surveillance footage taken Feb. 24 shows the vehicle driving along the Atlixcayotl highway near

the town of Atlixco about 90 miles west of where the students' remains were found, Periodico Central said.

“So far I cannot offer information. There are lines of investigation, but I cannot reveal them due to confidentiality,” the head of Puebla's State Attorney General's Office, Idamis Pastor Betancourt, said at a press conference Monday.

The ninth victim hasn't been identified.

“All relevant investigations are being carried out. When we have a response and the investigation is complete, we will be in a position to provide more information,” the official added.

Mexico saw 30,000 murders in 2023, the most recent figures, making it the most violent year in the country's recent history, according to Semafor.

Many of the slayings were tied to the drug trade.

CIA Director says US has paused intelligence support to Ukraine

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

The director of an agency of the US government, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), John Ratcliffe said Wednesday that the US has paused intelligence support and weapons shipments to Ukraine following the clash in the Oval Office between President Volodymyr Zelensky and President Donald Trump last Friday.

“President Trump had a real question about whether President Zelensky was committed to the peace process, and he said ‘let’s pause’,” Ratcliffe told Fox Business’ Maria Bartiromo in an interview on Wednesday.

“I want to give a chance to think about that and you saw the response that President Zelensky put out,” Ratcliffe added, “So I think on the military front and the intelligence front, the pause that allowed that to happen, I think will go away.”

Ratcliffe expressed hope that the



pause will soon be lifted and emphasized his commitment to working with Ukraine towards achieving peace, following a letter from the Ukrainian president to Trump.

“And I think we’ll work shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine as we have to push back on the aggression that’s there, put the world in a better place for these peace negotiations to move forward,” the CIA director added.

A senior US military official said the US has already curtailed some intelligence sharing, including

carrying out fewer intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance flights that could impact both offensive and defensive operations including air defense, since Ukraine depends on US intelligence for overwatch.

In the lead-up to Trump’s inauguration, Ratcliffe and the Trump transition team were told of the value of intelligence sharing with Ukraine by US officials who stressed that it was a hallmark of their achievements on the battlefield, according to a source familiar with the discussions.

Europe must be prepared for Trump to walk away

By New Daily Prime

Ukkraine's non-American allies have to be ready to replace US military support

The hugs of European leaders for Volodymyr Zelenskyy at a London summit this weekend could not have contrasted more sharply with the Ukrainian president's dressing down in the White House on Friday. One upside of the Oval Office showdown is that it seems to have served as a galvanising moment — though there had been plenty already — in persuading Europe it must act. An outline strategy, if not yet a fleshed-out plan, has begun to take shape. But even greater speed and urgency is needed. However much they may hope to keep the US on board, European leaders and Canada must prepare for the real possibility that Donald Trump could cut off military support to Ukraine, leaving Kyiv and its non-US allies on their own.

The first step should be to accelerate European military support and funding as rapidly as possible, to strengthen Ukraine's negotiating hand and ability to deter any future Russian aggression. More can still be done through joint European procurement to fill gaps in Ukraine's armoury. European capitals should be ready, too, to dig even deeper into their own dwindling stockpiles; the front line of Europe's security today runs through Ukraine.

In parallel, they should expand the model pioneered by Denmark of financing production by Ukraine's arms industry, which has transformed its capabilities since 2022. That could enable a big boost in production of drones and missiles — helping to turn Ukraine into what the EU's Ursula von der Leyen called an indigestible “steel porcupine”.

The second prong of the European approach being developed by the UK's



Sir Keir Starmer and France's Emmanuel Macron is to elaborate plans for a multinational stabilisation force for postwar Ukraine, and cajole partners to sign up. Though many west European militaries are badly depleted and some are reluctant to commit troops, a coalition of the willing ought to be able to assemble a force of sufficient size.

Kyiv's non-US allies are rightly working, too, on their own blueprint for a long-term peace deal that would better guarantee Ukraine's, and Europe's, security. European capitals have leverage with Moscow via hefty sanctions that Vladimir Putin wants to see lifted. The bulk of Russia's \$300bn frozen foreign exchange reserves are held in Europe, too. Though leaders have shied away from seizing the capital, the arguments are shifting in favour of doing so to help fund Ukraine's defence.

Armed with solid commitments to bear much more of the defence burden of themselves and Kyiv, European leaders should engage in concerted efforts to persuade the Trump administration to join a joint peace effort — and to provide at least logistical support and a US “backstop” to security

arrangements in Ukraine. They should make clear they fully share the US president's desire to end the war, differing only in how to achieve this and make it lasting. Some in the Trump universe suggest the president is cunningly trying to peel Russia away from its partnership with China, in a reverse of Richard Nixon's cold war manoeuvre. But the logic of this is undermined if it causes a rift with America's erstwhile biggest economic and military ally — Europe — and leaves it bogged down in defending itself against a revanchist Kremlin.

Concerted European diplomacy with the Trump administration is still worth undertaking, even if there is no certainty that the US president will heed the entreaties. Ukrainians are already under no illusion that they may soon confront a choice between accepting a US-imposed deal that is a quasi-capitulation, or to fight on without America. Kyiv's non-US allies would then face heavy moral and strategic pressure to step in and replace US military aid as far as they could. They can delay no longer in preparing for all such outcomes.

China says it is 'ready for war' with America

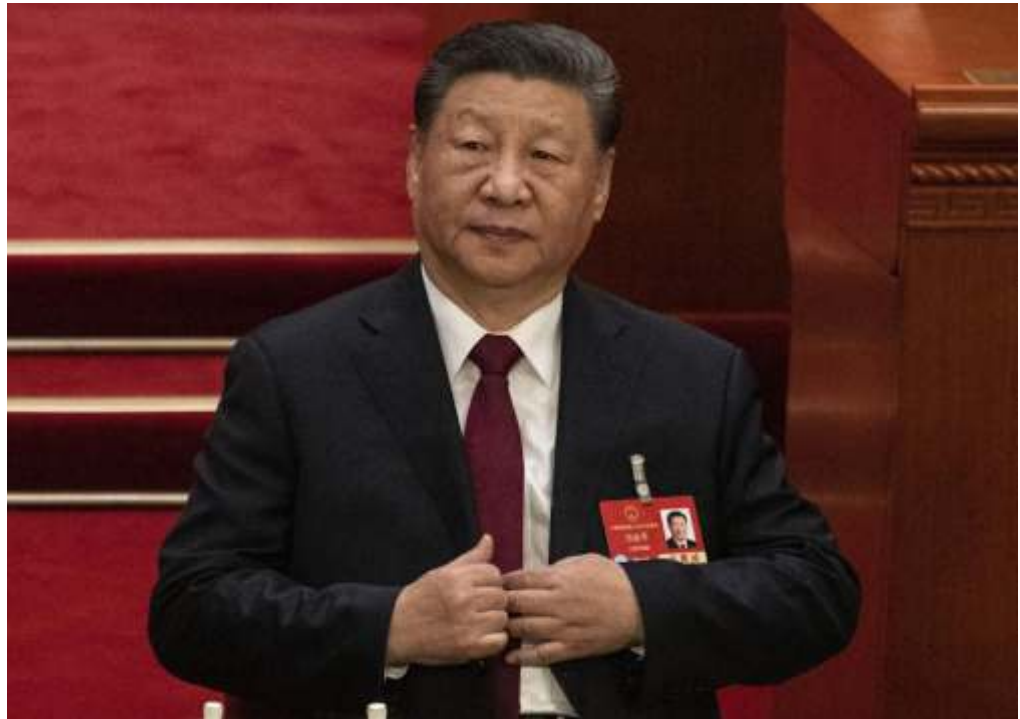
By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

Global security concerns escalated today as Beijing declared that it is “ready for war” with the United States, responding to heightened trade tensions and economic sanctions imposed by the Trump administration.

The world’s two largest economies—the United States (GDP: \$27.4 trillion in 2024) and China (GDP: \$17.8 trillion)—are now locked in a fierce economic and military standoff, with Washington’s dominance in technology and finance clashing against Beijing’s industrial and export-driven strength.

In a move that has further strained relations, President Donald Trump has ramped up economic pressure on China, increasing tariffs on Chinese imports from 10% to 20%. In retaliation, China imposed a 15% tariff on U.S. agricultural products such as chicken, wheat, corn, and cotton, alongside a 10% tariff on soybeans, pork, beef, seafood, and dairy products, effective March 10, 2025.

Adding to the volatility, U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth stated that the U.S. is prepared to go to war with China over tariff disputes, highlighting the importance of military strength and national security preparedness. In response, Beijing vowed to retaliate “by any means necessary”, with state-run



media reinforcing the message that China “will fight until the end” if provoked.

Military delegates arrive for the annual political gathering in Beijing on Wednesday Credit: Kevin Frayer/Getty Images/Financial Times

Reacting to growing tensions, China announced a 7.2% increase in defense spending, setting its annual economic growth target at around 5% for 2025.

Premier Li Qiang, China’s second-highest-ranking official after President Xi Jinping, reaffirmed the need for military expansion, combat readiness, and modernization. Addressing China’s top legislative body during the annual Two Sessions meeting, he emphasized the country’s commitment to strengthening its economic resilience and military capabilities amid foreign

pressure.

“We will step up military training and combat preparedness to firmly safeguard China’s sovereignty, security, and development interests,” Li Qiang declared.

China Boosts Defense Spending and Military Readiness

China has intensified military drills in Asia and the Pacific, raising alarms among neighboring countries. Beijing’s recent live-fire exercises off the Australian coast, naval drills near Taiwan and Vietnam, and confrontations with Philippine coast guard forces in the South China Sea have escalated concerns.

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The unveiling of a new nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, designed to rival the U.S. Navy's fleet, signals China's ambition to expand its global military reach. Despite this, China's military budget remains significantly lower than that of the United States.

While the U.S. has allocated \$850 billion for defense in 2025, China's official defense budget stands at 1.78 trillion yuan (£190 billion or \$250 billion). However, U.S. intelligence agencies estimate that China's actual defense spending could be as high as \$450 billion, due to undisclosed military expenditures across different budget categories.

Beyond military posturing, Beijing has lodged formal complaints with the World Trade Organization (WTO) over the new U.S. tariffs. Additionally, China has imposed fresh export restrictions on key American industries, further deepening the trade rift.

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs dismissed Trump's justification for the tariffs—linking them to the fentanyl crisis—as a “flimsy excuse.” In a statement on X (formerly Twitter), the ministry wrote:

“The fentanyl issue is just an excuse to justify raising tariffs on Chinese imports. Our countermeasures to

defend our rights and interests are fully legitimate and necessary. Intimidation does not scare us. Bullying does not work on us.”

Trump's tariffs on Canada, China, Mexico draw quick retaliation

Experts Weigh In: A War of Words or a Real Threat?

According to the Financial Times, Beijing's rhetoric has been notably aggressive. However, analysts believe that China is not actively preparing for war but is instead responding to Trump's economic and strategic provocations.

Financial Times also documented that Prof. James Char Tze Siang, an expert in Chinese foreign policy at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, likened the situation to China's “Wolf Warrior” diplomacy, stating:

“It is usual for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to talk tough against what it perceives as foreign attempts to weaken its rise or influence its policies. This is just another episode in the fluctuating U.S.-China relationship since their rapprochement in 1972.”

Similarly, Philip Shetler-Jones, a senior research fellow at the Royal United Services Institute, noted:

“The language is not that new, but the context is. In this instance, the rhetoric is being used in response to tariffs rather than military confrontations, so I don't find it particularly alarming.”

However, Shetler-Jones warned that China might be deeply concerned about Trump's diplomatic approach, particularly his warming relations with Russia. He suggested that China fears the U.S. is laying the groundwork for a focused geopolitical struggle against Beijing, rather than maintaining a multi-front global strategy.

With trade restrictions tightening, military posturing escalating, and diplomatic ties worsening, the world is watching to see how far the U.S.-China conflict will go. While economic battles have been the main point of contention, the risk of military confrontation in the Pacific remains a growing concern.

Both superpowers have entered a new phase of their strategic rivalry, and the coming months will determine whether diplomacy prevails or tensions spiral into a deeper crisis.

Stay tuned to New Daily Prime for the latest updates on the U.S.-China standoff.

Sen. Elissa Slotkin warns Trump's policies 'could walk us right into a recession'

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Sen. Elissa Slotkin of Michigan also had harsh words for Elon Musk and warned that Trump's policies "could walk us right into a recession."

Sen. Elissa Slotkin, D-Mich., lit into President Donald Trump on Tuesday night, suggesting that President Ronald Reagan — whose "peace through strength" mantra Trump has adopted — would be appalled by his approach to Russia's war against Ukraine.

"After the spectacle that just took place in the Oval Office last week, Reagan must be rolling in his grave," Slotkin, referring to Trump's unexpectedly contentious meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy last week, said in her response to the joint address to Congress.

"As a Cold War kid, I'm thankful it was Reagan and not Trump in office in the 1980s," she added. "Trump would have lost us the Cold War."

Responsible governing over reckless leadership

Slotkin, who addressed the nation from Wyandotte, Michigan, framed her speech as a pitch for "responsible" governing over "reckless" leadership, arguing that Trump's agenda could spell economic doom for the country.

"If he's not careful," she said, "he could walk us right into a recession."

Slotkin posited that Trump's policies, as well as the sweeping cuts he has empowered billionaire tech mogul Elon Musk to oversee as part of a government efficiency initiative, would be destructive to most Americans.

"The president talked a big game on the economy, but it's always important to read the fine print," she said. "So do his plans actually help Americans get ahead? Not even close. President Trump is trying to deliver an unprecedented giveaway to his billionaire friends.

Policies empower only wealthiest in America

"He's on the hunt to find trillions of dollars to pass along to the wealthiest in America, and to do that, he's going to make you pay in every part of your life. Grocery and home prices are

going up, not down, and he hasn't laid out a credible plan to deal with either of those. His tariffs on allies like Canada will raise prices on energy, lumber and cars and start a trade war that will hurt manufacturing and farmers."

Slotkin also had harsh words for Musk.

Taking Musk to the cleaners

"Is there anyone in America," she asked, "who is comfortable with him and his gang of 20-year-olds using their own computer servers to poke through your tax returns, your health information and your bank accounts?"

"We need a more efficient government," she added. "You want to cut waste? I'll help you do it. But change doesn't need to be chaotic or make us less safe."

Slotkin was one of the Democratic Party's few bright spots last year — a successful candidate for an open Senate seat in Michigan who outperformed Vice President Kamala Harris in the battleground state.

A former House member who positioned herself as a more moderate voice in a party tilting left on cultural issues, Slotkin narrowly beat former Rep. Mike Rogers. Her victory has been held up in some corners of the party as a template for Democrats.

"President Trump and I both won here in November," Slotkin said of Wyandotte. "It might not seem like it, but plenty of places like this still exist across the United States, places where people believe that if you work hard and play by the rules, you should do well and your kids should do better. It reminds me of how I grew up. My dad was a lifelong Republican, my mom a lifelong Democrat, but it was never a big deal because we had shared values that were bigger than any one party."

Slotkin also has emerged as one of the sharpest critics of Democratic messaging, telling



reporters after last fall's election that Democrats would be wise to focus more on "issues that keep people up at night," like their bank accounts.

"It's not rocket science, but talking about those issues plainly, not from the faculty lounge but from the assembly line, is, I think, a very important message," Slotkin said then. "It's not just what you're saying but from what place you are talking about those issues. ... I personally think that identity politics needs to go the way of the dodo."

American democracy "at risk when..."

On Tuesday night, Slotkin warned of an American democracy "at risk when the president pits Americans against each other, when he demonizes those who are different and tells certain people they shouldn't be included."

A call to action

She closed her speech with a call to action.

"First: Don't tune out. It's easy to be exhausted, but America needs you now more than ever," Slotkin said.

"Second: Hold your elected officials, including me, accountable. Watch how they're voting. Go to town halls and demand and take action. That's as American as apple pie.

"Third: Organize. Pick just one issue you're passionate about and engage, and doomscrolling doesn't count," she added. "Join a group that cares about your issue and act."

WCQ: Six new boys debut in 39-man Super Eagles' squad

By Dave Oludare Oso

Super Eagles head coach, Éric Chelle, has released a 39-man provisional squad for Nigeria's upcoming 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers against Rwanda and Zimbabwe.

The squad includes top stars like Victor Osimhen, Ademola Lookman, William Troost-Ekong, and Ahmed Musa.

Goalkeeper Stanley Nwabali and winger Moses Simon also made the list.

Other notable selections include Maduka Okoye, Bruno Onyemaechi, Zaidu Sanusi, Frank Onyeka, and Fisayo Dele-Bashiru.

Defenders Igoh Ogbu and Ifeanyi Onyebuchi, midfielders Anthony Dennis and Papa Daniel Mustapha, as well as forwards Tolu Arokodare and Jerome Akor Adams, received their first national team call-ups.

Nigeria currently sits fifth in Group C of the qualifiers, trailing Rwanda, South Africa, Benin Republic, and Lesotho.

The Super Eagles will face group leaders Rwanda in Kigali on March 21, 2025, before hosting Zimbabwe in Uyo on March 25.





WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS PROVISIONAL LIST

<p><u>GOALKEEPERS</u></p> <p>STANLEY NWABALI MADUKA OKOYE AMAS OBASOGIE ADELEYE ADEBAYO KAYODE BANKOLE</p> <p><u>DEFENDERS</u></p> <p>WILLIAM EKONG BRIGHT OSAYI-SAMUEL BRUNO ONYEMAECHI GABRIEL OSHO CALVIN BASSEY OLAOLUWA AINA Zaidu SANUSI IGOH OGBU JORDAN TORUNARIGHA IFEANYI ONYEBUCHI</p>	<p><u>MIDFIELDERS</u></p> <p>WILFRED NIDI RAPHAEL ONYEDIKA ALHASSAN YUSUF ABDULLAHI FISAYO DELE-BASHIRU FRANK ONYEKA ALEX IWObI JOSEPH AYODELE-ARIBO ANTHONY DENNIS CHRISANTUS UCHE PAPA DANIEL MUSTAPHA</p> <p><u>FORWARDS</u></p> <p>SAMUEL CHUKWUEZE VICTOR OSIMHEN ADEMOLA LOOKMAN KELECHI IHEANACHO VICTOR BONIFACE SIMON MOSES SADIQ UMAR NATHAN TELLA CYRIEL DESSERS TOLU AROKODARE CHIDERA EJUKE PAUL ONUACHU AHMED MUSA AKOR ADAMS</p>
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RWANDA V NIGERIA
21 MARCH 2025 - 17:00



NIGERIA V ZIMBABWE
25 MARCH 2025 - 17:00



LeBron James makes history, scores record NBA 50,000 career points

By Dave Oludare Oso

LeBron James has made history once again, becoming the first player in NBA history to surpass 50,000 career points.

The Los Angeles Lakers superstar reached the milestone on Tuesday during a matchup against the New Orleans Pelicans, further solidifying his status as the league's all-time leading scorer.

Heading into the game, the 40-year-old icon needed just one point to reach the historic mark, having amassed 49,999 career points following a 17-point performance in Sunday's win over the Los Angeles Clippers.

It didn't take long for James to achieve the feat, as he received a pass from Luka Dončić and effortlessly drained a 25-foot three-pointer. The shot sent the Crypto.com Arena crowd into a frenzy, as they witnessed yet another incredible achievement in James' legendary career.

Now in his 22nd season, LeBron James continues to defy expectations with his exceptional form and longevity.

James had passed Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's previous all-time regular-



season scoring record of 38,387 points in 2023 — itself a record that had stood for 39 years. James is now nearly 6,000 points clear of Abdul-Jabbar's total career points tally of 44,149, with Karl Malone third (41,689 points) and the late Kobe Bryant fourth with 39,283 points. Michael Jordan is fifth on the all-time scoring list with 38,279.

Among active NBA players, only Kevin Durant with just over 35,000 points — roughly 15,000 points behind James — makes the top 10.

Lakers legend Earvin Magic Johnson led the tributes to James' achievement.

“Congratulations to the King LeBron James for becoming the only player in NBA history to score 50,000 regular season and playoff points!,” Johnson

wrote on X.

James' scoring milestone on Tuesday came hours after he clinched another NBA record after being named as Western Conference Player of the Month for February — making him the oldest player to win a player of the month award.

James was instrumental in leading the Lakers to a 10-2 record in February, averaging 29.3 points, 10.5 rebounds and 6.9 assists.

James' form has propelled the Lakers on a six-game winning streak, with the team climbing into second place in the Western Conference standings as they chase a first NBA championship since the pandemic-disrupted 2020 season.