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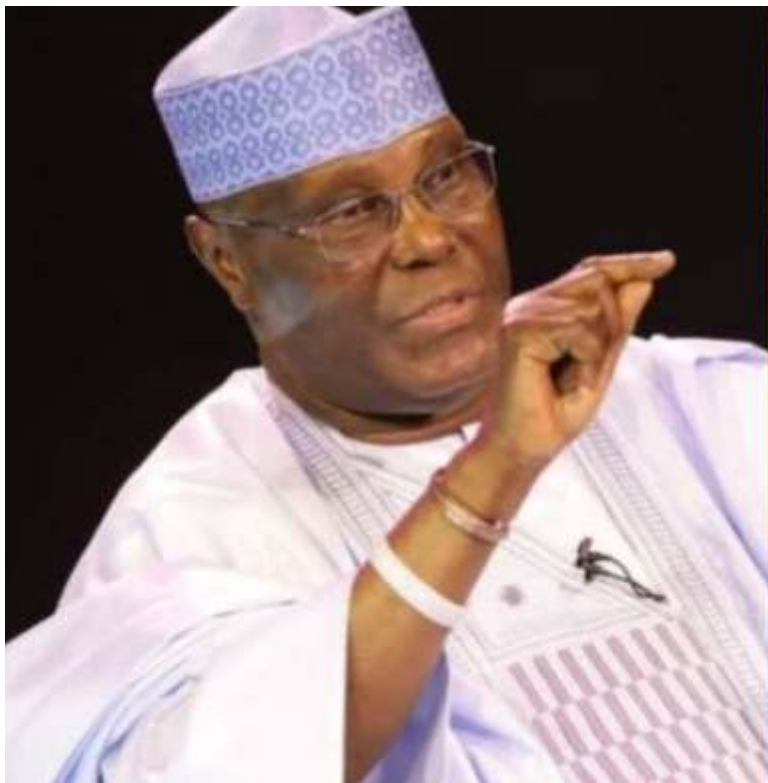
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**Carlo Ancelotti set to leave Madrid at end of April**



# Atiku urges Tinubu to declare state of emergency on 'disastrous presidency'

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye



**F**ormer presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Atiku Abubakar, has launched a scathing criticism of President Bola Tinubu, calling on him to declare a state of emergency over what he describes as the President's "own disastrous presidency."

In a statement issued by his spokesperson, Paul Ibe, Atiku lambasted Tinubu for leaving Nigeria amid escalating violence and insecurity, particularly in Plateau and Benue States, while embarking on what the Presidency labelled a "working visit" to France.

"Atiku said Nigeria is in a full-blown state of emergency," the statement reads, adding that the President's absence during a time of national crisis was a dereliction of duty of catastrophic proportions.

According to the former Vice President, over 100 lives have been lost

in Plateau State due to relentless attacks, while Benue continues to grapple with widespread violence. Atiku also cited Boko Haram's resurgence and deepening poverty as evidence of Nigeria's dire state under Tinubu's leadership.

"On April 2, 2025, President Bola Tinubu flew out to France. Had this absurd announcement come just a day earlier, Nigerians would have dismissed it as an April Fool's joke. But sadly, it's no prank — just another insult to a nation pushed to the brink by a presidency that treats its citizens like fools," the statement read.

Ibe further accused the Tinubu administration of squandering public funds on what he described as "vanity trips," stating that the President has now spent a total of 59 days in France since assuming office less than a year ago.

"See Paris and die? No — see Paris and

abandon your country," the statement mocked.

Atiku condemned what he characterised as Tinubu's lack of empathy, urging him to return home and face the crises engulfing the country. He criticised Tinubu for declaring a state of emergency in Rivers State for "partisan gain" while allegedly ignoring the real emergency Nigeria is facing as a nation.

"There is absolutely nothing Tinubu is doing in France that he couldn't do in Lagos, or even in Iragbiji. This so-called 'working visit' is nothing more than a vacation cloaked in official jargon," the statement added.

The Presidency has yet to respond formally to Atiku's remarks, but aides have continued to insist that the President's trip is in the national interest.

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9X3	166,223.50
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8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
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8X5	143,500.00
8X4	93,500.00
8X3	82,434.50
7X4	111,173.50
6X4	82,434.50
6X3	59,250.00
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# Tinubu fully engaged in governance from Europe, to return after Easter – Presidency

By Oluwatosin Ologun



**T**he Presidency has assured Nigerians that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu remains actively involved in the nation's affairs despite his temporary stay in Europe.

The President's spokesperson, Bayo Onanuga, said in a statement on Thursday that his absence remains temporary and in line with the communicated timeframe.

The Presidency emphasised that Tinubu has continued to discharge his duties while abroad, maintaining constant communication with top government officials and issuing

directives on critical national matters.

"President Bola Ahmed Tinubu remains fully engaged in Nigeria's governance even though he is away in Europe. His absence remains temporary and in line with the communicated timeframe of approximately two weeks", the statement read.

Onanuga noted that the President left Paris for London at the weekend and has maintained constant communication with key government officials, overseeing critical national matters, including directives to security chiefs to address

emerging threats in some parts of the country.

"The President's commitment to his duties remains unwavering, and his administration continues to function effectively under his leadership.

The Presidency further confirmed that President Tinubu would return to Abuja and resumption of physical duties at the Aso Villa will follow the conclusion of the Easter holiday.

"We appreciate the public's concern and assure all Nigerians that governance proceeds without interruption", the statement said.

# Shettima calls for interagency synergy to drive business reforms

By Friday Omosola



**V**ice President Kashim Shettima has called on Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC) to intensify collaboration to create a more robust and investor-friendly business environment in Nigeria.

Shettima spoke in Abuja yesterday at the close of the PEBEC Retreat for heads of MDAs and MDA Reform Champions.

He stressed that President Bola Tinubu's administration remains steadfast in its commitment to the Renewed Hope agenda, which prioritises economic reforms and ease of doing business.

"The business of the government is too complex to be solved in silos," Shettima said.

"We cannot afford the luxury of working in isolation while the problems we are tasked to solve are increasingly

intertwined."

Highlighting PEBEC's achievements in harmonising government processes, the Vice President said that the retreat was not only to review reform progress but also to strengthen interagency synergy.

He charged participants to transform their resolutions into measurable improvements in service delivery.

"The era of buck-passing on mandates of government is over," Shettima declared, urging an end to bureaucratic turf wars.

"Nigeria's economic and social future depends on what we, the stewards of public institutions, choose to do today."

He noted that citizens and investors are watching closely, adding that the shift from 'policy to performance' and from 'silos to synergy' is essential for impactful governance.

Shettima emphasised the need for joint planning, data sharing, and common performance indicators among MDAs, as well as the establishment of interagency task teams to tackle critical reforms.

"Our people deserve efficient, transparent, and responsive public institutions," he said.

"We must collectively simplify processes, eliminate duplication, and leverage technology to improve transparency and turnaround times.

Shettima urged public officials to build a culture of collaboration, accountability, and innovation in the interest of national development.

The retreat, organised by PEBEC, aimed to foster deeper engagement among MDAs towards improving Nigeria's business environment.

# Teen who gained fame in Obi's picture freed after spending months in prison

By Helen Okechukwu



**S**eventeen-year-old teenager, Quadri Alabi, who gained wide attention by standing in front of Peter Obi's convoy during the 2023 general election, has finally regained freedom after spending several months in Nigeria's Medium Security Custodial Centre, Kirikiri, Lagos.

Alabi was discharged after Magistrate Olorunfemi confirmed that the legal advice issued by Dr. Babajide Martins, the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) at the Lagos State Ministry of Justice, showed that there was no evidence to substantiate the allegation of armed robbery against him.

Inibehe Effiong, Alabi's lawyer, in a signed document shared on X on Thursday, announced Alabi's freedom while demanding that the Nigeria Police Force should apologise and pay his client the sum of N100 million as compensation after being unlawfully detained.

Effiong narrated that while his client was

heading home from work in January, Lege and Baba Waris, "two notorious boys" known for their street lifestyle in Alabi's area of Amukoko, abducted him and dumped him at the Amukoko Divisional Police Headquarters (Pako Police Station).

He added further that since Alabi gained recognition in 2023, the duo had been harassing and threatening him to give them 'their share' of donations gifted to him during the last election period.

Also, he shared that the young lad's family told him the Baale of the community equally pressured them to buy a cow and rice and cook for the community to appease the area boys.

"The abductors initially told the officers at Amukoko Police Station that our client was involved in street fighting," he stated in the post. "To the consternation of Quadri and his family, the police on 26th January, 2025, took Quadri before a Magistrate in Apapa, and obtained an order remanding him at the Medium Security Custodial Centre,

Kirikiri, on a trumped-up charge of armed robbery."

"The police fraudulently joined Quadri with four strange adults who had no form of connection or relationship whatsoever with him and claimed that the four strange men were his case mates."

Additionally, he wrote, "As part of the diabolical frame-up of our client, the officers at Amukoko Police Station also misrepresented his age to be 18, knowing that disclosing his actual age would likely raise eyebrows.

"We demand that the Commissioner of Police, Lagos State Command, and the Inspector General of Police should, as a matter of urgency, remove the DPO of Amukoko Divisional Headquarters and subject him to orderly room trial along with the IPO, one Inspector Odigbe Samuel, and other officers who participated in this evil, sinister, oppressive, and corrupt scheme of framing up a teenager for armed robbery at the behest of rogue area boys."

# FG inaugurate committee on food security to cut import by 50%

By Oluwatosin Ologun

The Federal Government has inaugurated an Interministerial Committee on Research and Innovation to ensure food security in Nigeria, energy security, and curtail the nation's dependence on imports.

Vice President Kashim Shettima inaugurated the committee at the State House, Abuja, with a charge to them to work towards cutting down Nigeria's import bills by 50 per cent.

He said the committee is part of ongoing efforts by the administration of President Bola Tinubu to pool intellectual and financial capital to "create the cockpit from which Nigeria's innovation economy will be piloted."

According to Shettima, the mission is to build Nigeria into a trillion-dollar economy within 10 years.

"We are here to breathe life not into this Committee, but into a bold mission: to build Nigeria into an innovation-driven, trillion-dollar economy within a decade. The future we desire is not something we inherit. It is something we build," he declared.

On the committee's terms of reference, VP Shettima said the committee is to coordinate action in five strategic sectors with the power to transform society.

He listed the committee to include "Agriculture and Climate Resilience, where research innovation must feed our people and protect our planet; Manufacturing Excellence, where we break our dependency on imports and build proudly Nigerian supply chains; Healthcare Innovation, where we shift from importing medicines to exporting medical breakthroughs; Natural Resource Optimisation, where we stop selling raw materials and start exporting ingenuity; and Energy Security, where we power our economy and secure our future."

The Vice President explained that a major target for setting up the committee is to reduce Nigeria's food import bill by 50 per cent, maintaining that "in each of these areas, we will pursue missions, not just metrics.



"We will not be content with data for dashboards—we want deliverables that change lives. What will it take to reduce our food import bill by 50%? How do we triple local pharmaceutical production? Let us align policy, research, and investment to answer these questions and achieve measurable, meaningful outcomes," he added.

Senator Shettima disclosed that the committee is a prelude to a Presidential Plenary on Innovation approved by President Tinubu, saying the high-level plenary, which will be held annually, will be presided over by the President himself.

"This Committee is only the beginning. His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, has approved a Presidential Plenary on Innovation—an annual high-level forum that will bring together academia, research institutes, industry, civil society, and the Nigerian people to align our national innovation priorities.

"This Plenary will be addressed by Mr President himself, because innovation is a presidential area of priority. It is central to his vision for a new Nigeria," the VP explained.

Earlier, Minister of Innovation, Science, and Technology, Uche Nnaji, who commended the leadership provided by

the Vice President and the commitment of the relevant ministries, departments and agencies, noted that collaboration was critical in the renewed vigour to prioritise research and innovation.

The minister said the inter-ministerial committee would help the country save scarce resources and move faster in the right direction, by harmonising efforts, human and material resources for the purpose of enhancing research and innovation across critical sectors of the economy.

"The keyword here is collaboration. We have been spending a lot of money on our various ministries, duplicating our functions. I believe that with this collaboration and this committee here, we will save a lot of money for the government and reduce duplication," the Minister said.

Also present at the inauguration were the ministers of Agriculture and Food Security, Sen. Abubakar Kyari; Communications, Innovation, and Digital Economy, Bosun Tijani; Alhaji Balarabe Lawal; Alhaji Idi Mukhtar and representatives of the Ministers of Education, Budget and Economic Planning, and Foreign Affairs, among other members of the committee.

# Senator Natasha's family home attacked by armed hoodlums in Kogi state

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye



**T**he family residence of Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, representing Kogi Central Senatorial District, came under attack in the early hours of Tuesday, 16 April, when unidentified hoodlums reportedly stormed the property wielding cutlasses and firearms.

The incident occurred around 1:00 a.m. in the Obeiba-Ihima community, located in the Okehi Local Government Area of Kogi State. Intelligence sources confirmed to Zagazola Makama that at least three armed assailants were involved in the

attack, which left parts of the building vandalised, including several windows smashed.

The senator's Chief Security Officer, Yakubu Ovanja, promptly reported the incident to the relevant security authorities. A distress call led to a swift response from operatives of the Okehi Police Division, who arrived at the scene shortly after the attack and assessed the damage.

No casualties were reported, and no arrests have been made as of the time of this report. The motive behind the attack remains

unknown, though police have launched a preliminary investigation to uncover the circumstances and identify the perpetrators.

"This appears to have been a targeted act of intimidation, but we are still gathering evidence," a police source said, speaking on condition of anonymity due to the ongoing nature of the investigation.

Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan has yet to issue a public statement concerning the incident.

# NNPC GCEO pledges strategic collaboration to deliver Tinubu's mandate

By Friday Omosola

**T**he Group Chief Executive Officer (GCEO) of Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Ltd.), Bayo Ojulari, has reiterated his commitment to forging strong and effective partnerships.

He said the partnerships with key stakeholders will ensure the successful delivery of the strategic mandate entrusted to him by President Bola Tinubu.

Ojulari made this statement during a courtesy visit to the Minister of Petroleum Resources (Oil), Heineken Lokpobiri.

He emphasised a shared vision of progress and performance for Nigeria's oil and gas industry.

Speaking at the meeting, the GCEO highlighted the collaborative approach that he and his executive leadership team are bringing to their new roles.

He explained that the success of NNPC Ltd. will rely heavily on effective cooperation with the Ministry of Petroleum, the Ministry of Finance, and other



relevant institutions.

Ojulari stressed the importance of breaking through bureaucratic barriers and achieving results more swiftly.

“We are here with a mindset of partnership; partnership with the Ministry of Petroleum Resources, with the Ministry of Finance, and with all other critical stakeholders.

“Our goal is to bridge gaps, foster alignment, and move forward with a united front. Antagonism benefits no one; collaboration is how we win,” Ojulari stated.

Reacting, Lokpobiri expressed strong confidence in the new leadership of NNPC Ltd., noting his long-standing relationship with many of the management team

members and praising their professional capabilities.

“This is arguably the strongest leadership team NNPC Ltd. has ever assembled,” said the Minister.

“Now is the time to translate that reputation into measurable results, especially in increasing crude oil production and ensuring the sector delivers optimal value to the Nigerian people.”

The Minister assured Ojulari of his unwavering support and strategic guidance, adding that his office would work closely with the GCEO to provide the necessary environment for NNPC Ltd. to thrive and meet its national objectives.

# “If I were him, I’d be begging right now” – FCT Minister’s aide slams Gov Fubara’s handling of rivers crisis

By Dr. Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

*In the midst of the political crisis in Rivers State, fingers have pointed at former Governor and current FCT Minister Nyesom Wike, accusing him of influencing the instability. In this exclusive interview, the Publicity Secretary to the FCT Minister, Lere Olayinka, speaks with Dr. Vincent Ajayi of The New Daily Prime to address these accusations and clarify the Minister’s role in recent developments.*

**Q1: Many believe Wike’s influence in Rivers State is a major factor in the ongoing political crisis. Would you say Wike is guilty as accused, or is Governor Fubara to blame?**

Wike is not the Governor of Rivers State. He is not responsible for the issues in the state. Was he the one who demolished the House of Assembly complex? Was he also the one using just three members out of 32 to approve budgets or appoint commissioners?

The constitution says one-third of the entire House of Assembly—not just one-third of those available—shall form a quorum to sit. In a House of 32 members, you need 21 members to form a quorum. Two-thirds must be present to approve a budget.

So, was it the Minister who made those decisions? When a lower court gave judgment recognizing a particular group as the House of Assembly and asked the governor to present his budget to them for approval, was it the Minister who refused to obey?

The President saw this political danger and called the parties involved to resolve the matter. When the President intervened, all sides—including the governor—signed a resolution document. The National Security Adviser signed on behalf of the President. Both the governor’s camp and the Minister’s camp signed it.

Then the Supreme Court gave a declarative judgment. Was it the Minister who issued the judgment, or was it the governor who failed to obey it? In the United States, when a court gives judgment, it is obeyed and implemented



immediately. Do we need someone to interpret it before acting?

Was it Wike who stopped the governor from implementing the Supreme Court judgment? Why didn’t the governor comply with President Tinubu’s intervention?

**Q2: Many Nigerians have condemned the declaration of a state of emergency in Rivers State. Do you think the appointment of a Sole Administrator was unconstitutional?**

I don’t want to question decisions already taken by the President and confirmed by the National Assembly, as prescribed by Nigerian law.

Once the President declares a state of emergency and the National Assembly approves it, the only lawful option for anyone displeased is to go to court and seek a judicial review.

Whatever we say outside the legal process doesn’t really matter. The issue is: an action has been taken. The President mentioned specific reasons. He said the governor demolished the House of Assembly. Why would he do that?

**Continue reading  
on next page**

## Cont from page 10

We have three arms of government. The governor heads the executive arm. He has no business interfering with the legislative arm. The governor showed no regard for the legislature.

Instead of writing directly to the House of Assembly to present the budget, he used the Secretary to the State Government (SSG) to send a letter. At the national level, the Secretary to the Government of the Federation doesn't write to the National Assembly—it's the President who does. Similarly, in a state, the governor writes to the State Assembly, not the SSG.

He withheld salaries and allowances of Assembly members for over a year. He made them and their families suffer. Their case went to the Supreme Court—and he lost.

When you go to war and lose, you lose the right to dictate terms. You can't sit at the negotiation table unless you're invited. You do what the victors say—and that's the governor's current position. He lost at the Supreme Court. He lost the political battle.

If I were him, I would immediately start reaching out—finding those I could appeal to, persuade, or even beg. That's what the governor should have done.

Instead, he used the Secretary of State to write to the Assembly Speaker, asking to meet at his house. If you were a House of Assembly member, would you go?

**Q3: After the emergency rule, do you think Nyesom Wike will still play an active role in Rivers politics?**

Why wouldn't he? He's from Rivers State. He has a political family there, and Governor Fubara used to be part of that family.

He cannot abandon them. He must continue to provide leadership. Fubara didn't become governor on his own strength. He got there because of the support and recommendation of that political family.

As Rivers State remains in the spotlight of national politics, Lere Olayinka maintains that Nyesom Wike's role has been exaggerated and misinterpreted. He argues that responsibility lies with Governor Fubara and insists that the rule of law, not political speculation, should guide the way forward.



# Atiku's coalition, PDP govts 'fight dirty' over undermining opposition unity

By Damilola Olufemi

The decision by governors elected on the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to shun a proposed opposition coalition has drawn sharp criticism from the camp of former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, who is leading the effort to unite opposition forces ahead of the 2027 general election.

Atiku's coalition has accused the PDP governors of acting as spoilers for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and sabotaging attempts to rebuild a credible opposition. The coalition also alleged that the governors are usurping party structures and weakening internal democracy within the PDP.

The criticism follows a resolution by the PDP Governors' Forum at its April 14 meeting, where it declared it would not join any coalition involving opposition political parties or groups.

Responding to this stance, spokesperson for the coalition, Salihu Moh. Lukman argued that the coalition represents a viable alternative to the All Progressives Congress (APC) and President Tinubu, and a critical step toward rescuing Nigeria's democracy.

"For more than 10 years that the PDP had been out of power, Nigerians had waited for the party to dust itself up and provide the viable opposition that Nigeria needs," Lukman said. "Instead, the party went into suspended animation until the rampaging Tinubu-led APC found a willing undertaker to finally put it to rest. The governors know that the



virus that afflicts the PDP has no cure. They are only grandstanding. They know that Nigerians cannot accept this PDP as the alternative because it is clear to all discerning Nigerians that the ruling party has hijacked its soul."

He also took a swipe at Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike, stating: "Nyesom Wike is the untouchable super minister in Asiwaju's government not because of the sterling job he is doing in the FCT, but because he has done a great job of ensuring that the PDP is not able to present a presidential candidate to challenge Tinubu for power in 2027."

Lukman added that the coalition's purpose has now evolved, alleging a new strategy by PDP governors to revive the party, only to counter the opposition coalition.

"The new agenda is to revive the PDP to stand as a counterforce to the coalition and present a candidate that would split the vote in 2027. This PDP Governors' Forum is wittingly or unwittingly

playing Asiwaju's spoiler game and they expect Nigerians to take them seriously," he said.

He further stated that rebuilding public trust in democracy is at the core of the coalition's mission and that the failure of institutions like the PDP only underscores the need for a broader opposition movement.

"The mere fact that the NEC meeting of the party has not been held for two years and no Nigerian can confidently tell who is really in charge of the party, is evidence of this collapse. This should be the concern of leaders of the party, including its governors," Lukman said.

He accused the governors of sidelining the party's internal organs and warned that without change, they will continue to weaken Nigeria's democratic institutions.

**Continue reading  
on next page**

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“As it is, all patriotic Nigerians who are committed to rescuing Nigerian democracy should recognise that the challenge facing us as a nation is beyond the romantic affiliation to so-called political parties such as the PDP, with many of its leaders operating as Trojan horses to the APC and President Tinubu’s government. It makes no sense to invest energy and resources in a party whose leaders are either appointees of the APC Government or undercover supporters,” he said.

Lukman clarified that the coalition’s mission is not merely political but transformational.

“For the avoidance of doubt, the coalition is fundamentally about rebuilding Nigerian democracy. Leaders of the coalition recognise this and, more importantly, recognise all the challenges ahead,” he said. “Resolving these challenges and building the confidence of Nigerians is about restoring the value of political negotiations as critical and fundamental to guaranteeing the survival of democracy.”

He said discussions are ongoing, and the coalition will soon unveil its structure and agenda, urging all political actors, including PDP leaders, to join in rescuing Nigeria.

“This has not happened. However,

even as the PDP governors and some leaders of PDP express opposition to joining the coalition, we extend hands of fellowship to all political actors in the country to join us to rescue Nigerian democracy,” he said.

**We’ll Ride Any Vehicle That Guarantees Good Governance — Atiku**

Speaking in a related development, former Vice President Atiku Abubakar reaffirmed that the opposition coalition he is championing will use any platform that can deliver good governance and defeat President Tinubu in 2027.

Atiku made the remarks on Tuesday during a meeting with a delegation of National Opinion Leaders. A video of the meeting was later shared on his X (formerly Twitter) handle.

“The coalition train has left the station and would have multiple stops to bring on board Nigerians of all shades,” Atiku said.

He urged the youth-led delegation to stay focused and reject short-term inducements that could derail long-term goals.

“Don’t be disrupted by people giving you pennies or kobos here

and there, and nairas here and there, and then abandon your future, and the future of your children,” he said.

“Now, because of that, that’s why a number of us leaders from the parties I have mentioned—APC, PDP, Labour, and others—have come together to say we are going to have what I call in Hausa Sabuwar tafiya, which in English means a new path, a new pathway to a new Nigeria.”

He added that mobilisation is underway and called on Nigerians to support the initiative.

“Whatever vehicle that will give us good governance in the future of our children and grandchildren, that is the vehicle we are going to ride on,” he said.

**PDP Governors Fire Back, Call Coalition Delusional**

In a sharp rebuttal, the PDP Governors’ Forum dismissed the coalition’s accusations, labelling its promoters as delusional.

Speaking on behalf of the forum, Director-General of the PDPGF, Dr. Agbo Emmanuel, said: “The PDP governors cannot dignify such over the bloated image of some self-delusional characters with an unbridled sense of entitlement with any response.”

# CSOs demand probe into \$1.5b Port Harcourt refinery spending, alleged crude oil misallocation

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

A coalition of civil society organisations (CSOs) under the banner of The National Transparency Network has called for an immediate and comprehensive investigation into the financial dealings of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) under the leadership of former Group Chief Executive Officer, Mele Kyari.

Addressing a press conference in Abuja on Thursday, April 17, the CSOs, led by their National Coordinator, Dr Fabian Opialu, expressed grave concerns over what they described as “reckless expenditure” and “lack of accountability” surrounding the controversial \$1.5 billion allegedly spent on the rehabilitation of the Port Harcourt Refinery.

## A national emergency

Dr Opialu stated that the refinery project, which was originally intended to cover the overhaul of two facilities, was inexplicably scaled down to one — with no functional output to show for it.

“Not only were these funds entirely expended on just one refinery, but the said refinery turned out to be non-functional, failing to meet even the most basic industrial standards expected of such an investment,” Opialu said.

He went on to describe the situation as “a national emergency” and called for a Special Commission of Inquiry to be constituted to investigate the entire process, from fund allocation to project execution.

Forensic audit and prosecutions demanded



The group is also demanding:

A comprehensive forensic audit of all NNPCL financial transactions from the past five years.

Publication of the names of those allegedly involved in the misallocation of 89 million barrels of crude oil to non-state actors.

Clarification on a reported \$400 million investment by Matrix Oil in the refinery, which the CSOs allege lacks transparency.

Prosecution of Mele Kyari and other former or serving NNPCL executives if found culpable.

“Such fiscal mismanagement should have been the subject of a rigorous criminal investigation involving all national and international parties implicated in this debacle,” the group declared.

## Allegations of economic sabotage

The CSOs were particularly scathing about the crude oil scandal, calling the reported misallocation of 89 million

barrels of crude oil an act of “economic sabotage of the highest order.”

“It is an undeniable fact that Nigerians deserve to know who authorised such transfers, who the beneficiaries are, and why no arrests have been made to date,” the statement read.

## Tinubu urged to act

While commending President Bola Tinubu for his initial reforms in the oil and gas sector, the CSOs urged him to go further by ensuring transparency, accountability, and swift punitive action against all those responsible.

“Nigerians will not tolerate another phase of misappropriation and concealment... This refinery debacle is not just a case of wasted funds; it is a national emergency that demands immediate and thorough redress,” the group stated.

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the National Assembly, and the Presidency were all called upon to act “swiftly and without delay.”

# Osun, Oyo launch peace initiative to resolve boundary disputes

By Friday Omosola



In a bid to quell ongoing boundary clashes between Lagelu and Iwo local governments of Osun and Oyo states, the governors of both states, have initiated peace talks.

Ademola Adeleke of Osun and Seyi Makinde of Oyo directed their respective deputy governors to engage with the warring communities.

The two leaders met earlier this week to discuss the persistent conflicts and have agreed on immediate measures to address the tensions.

Key to the resolution is a directive for the Deputy Governors of Osun and Oyo to visit the affected areas in Lagelu and Iwo, engaging local leaders to foster dialogue and peace.

The peace talks, held at Makinde's residence in Ibadan, focused on finding lasting solutions to the boundary dispute, with both governors urging restraint

from further territorial raids and emphasizing the need for adherence to due process and the rule of law.

In addition to the Lagelu-Iwo dispute, the deputy governors have also been tasked with addressing other related boundary conflicts, including the ongoing issues between Orolu local government in Osun and the Ogbomoso region of Oyo state.

The National Boundary Commission (NBC) has conducted a series of mediation visits to the disputed areas, gathering documentary and oral evidence to determine the correct boundaries.

However, the release of the final report has been delayed, leaving a void that has been exploited by aggrieved groups involved in the clashes.

Recent weeks have seen several villages in Iwo local government attacked, while Lagelu communities have also reported

incidents of violence.

Both sides have blamed each other for these attacks, further escalating tensions in the region.

Governor Adeleke, during the meeting, stressed the historical ties between the two states, stating, "Our people are one, and we must peacefully resolve any outstanding issues."

He also commended Governor Makinde for his proactive approach to the conflict, pledging that the deputy governors would act swiftly on the matter.

The peace move between the two governors signals a strong commitment to resolving the boundary disputes amicably, with hopes that the ongoing engagements will prevent further violence and foster unity between the communities.

# Gokana stakeholders urge police, Ibas on development, asset protection

By Helen Okechukwu

**G**okana stakeholders have appealed to the Rivers State Police Command and Sole Administrator, Vice Admiral Ibok-Ete Ekwe Ibas (Rtd), to enable sustainable development and protect key national infrastructure within the LGA.

The stakeholders made this call on Wednesday during an interactive session with the Commissioner of Police (CP) Olugbenga Adepoju and service chiefs, following a directive from Ibas.

Gbere Kpakol, the youth leader, attributed the issue of pipeline vandalism to the lack of youth engagement and called for collaboration between paramount rulers and operating companies.

He noted that despite Gokana hosting the largest manifold in the state, the majority of the youth are left out during job employment enrollment.

“He noted that Gokana hosts the largest manifold in the state and appealed to the government to consider awarding contracts to the local community as well,” Grace Iringe-Koko, the police spokesperson, noted this in a statement shared on Thursday to journalists.

**Read Also: Police arrest Portable over alleged defamation, threat to life**

“Another attendee drew attention to the presence of a well-equipped computer-based testing (CBT) centre in Gokana. He called on the state government to liaise with the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) to accredit the centre, allowing local students to sit for their examinations within Gokana, rather than travelling to Port Harcourt.”

“Secondus Menemu, a representative of persons living with disabilities, stated that the government should allocate a greater employment quota to this group, noting that they have long been marginalised.”



Adepoju highlighted that the protection of federal assets is a shared responsibility, considering recent threats to national infrastructure. He reiterated the unified stance of all security agencies towards ensuring sustained peace and security in Rivers State.

While speaking to stakeholders, he called for collaboration among communities, urging them to defend and protect their assets against vandalism by providing credible intelligence to security agencies, citing previous attempts by evildoers.

The aim of the engagement was to listen to the grievances of the people, evaluate the extent to which community efforts align with ongoing security operations, and ensure that the concerns raised are effectively communicated to the appropriate authorities.

He highlighted that security formations remain crucial in achieving long-term

stability.

Attendees at the meeting included the Deputy Director representing the Director of the Department of State Services (DSS), the Garrison Commander, 6 Division, Nigerian Army, the Commander, 115 Special Operations Group, Nigerian Air Force, among other security agencies.

While appreciating the security operatives for their teamwork, Prof. Gospel Kpee, Sole Administrator of Gokana LGA, described the engagement as timely and necessary to reinforce trust, cooperation, and security consciousness among the people.

“The Rivers State Police Command and sister agencies reaffirmed their commitment to promoting dialogue, strengthening community-based security mechanisms, and protecting all critical assets within the state,” Iringe-Koko added.

# Police condemn officers caught receiving cash from Chinese national

By Damilola Olufemi

The Nigeria Police Force has condemned the actions of officers captured in a viral video receiving money from a Chinese national, describing their conduct as unprofessional and unethical.

The incident, which triggered widespread outrage on social media, led the Force Headquarters to promptly identify the officers involved and initiate disciplinary proceedings.

In a statement released on Wednesday and signed by Force Public Relations Officer, ACP Olumuyiwa Adejobi, the police reaffirmed their commitment to professionalism and public trust.

“The Nigeria Police Force has taken cognisance of a disturbing video making rounds in the media space, showing police officers receiving money from a Chinese national,” the statement read.

“The Force has strongly condemned the conduct exhibited by the police officers in the video, describing it as unprofessional and unethical.”

Adejobi emphasised that the behaviour displayed is in clear violation of the ethics, standards, and core values of the Nigeria Police Force.

“The actions of the officers do not represent the established ethics, standards, and core values of the Nigeria Police Force. The Force has zero tolerance for such unprofessional behaviour and other forms of



misconduct, which undermine public trust and confidence,” he said.

## Officers Identified and Under Disciplinary Review

The officers involved have been identified and are currently undergoing disciplinary processes. While the specifics of the sanctions were not disclosed, Adejobi assured the public that appropriate action would be taken.

## Warning to Escorts and Service Users

In addition to addressing the misconduct, the Force issued a warning to individuals and organisations that make use of police escorts and guards. Adejobi cautioned against any behavior that could undermine the integrity of officers or damage the reputation of the Force.

“The Nigeria Police Force hereby cautions individuals and organisations privileged to the

services of police personnel, particularly as escorts and guards or other specialised services, to desist from any act capable of degrading the integrity of its officers and bringing the Force to disrepute,” he stated.

## Pledge to Reform and Restore Public Confidence

This development comes amid the Force’s ongoing efforts to rebuild public confidence and enforce accountability within its ranks. Adejobi called on the public to continue supporting the police’s reform agenda.

“We remain resolute in our commitment to discipline and service in line with international best practices,” he said.

The disciplinary action is expected to serve as a deterrent to other officers and reinforce the message that unethical conduct will not be tolerated in the Nigeria Police Force.

# Gunmen attack student bus along Benin-Ore Expressway

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

**T**ragedy struck along the notorious Benin-Ore Expressway on Wednesday as gunmen ambushed a bus carrying students from Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The students, who were en route to Babcock University in Ogun State for their annual Easter convention, were attacked in what sources have described as a horrifying ordeal.

The victims, all members of the National Association of Adventist Students (NAAS), a campus fellowship of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, were caught off guard when armed assailants opened fire on their bus. According to eyewitness reports, the attack triggered chaos, with students fleeing into the surrounding bush to escape the hail of bullets.

Two students were shot during the attack. One, who sustained a gunshot wound to the back, underwent emergency surgery and is currently in critical condition. The other victim's condition remains undisclosed.

As of press time, at least ten students are confirmed to have been abducted by the assailants. Some of the fleeing students are still reportedly lost in the bush,



their whereabouts unknown. Families of the kidnapped students have been contacted by the attackers, who are demanding a ransom of ₦15 million for their release.

A source close to the victims, visibly shaken, expressed frustration and sorrow over the incident. "These students turned out to be my fellowship students, and some are my undergraduate friends and relatives. This is deeply personal," the source said.

In a particularly alarming twist, suspicion has been cast on the bus driver, who reportedly escaped the scene unharmed. "How did the driver manage to get away without a scratch while the students were left behind?" the source asked, echoing a growing concern among relatives and students.

This latest incident underscores the persistent insecurity along the Benin-Ore highway, a corridor that has gained infamy for repeated cases of banditry and kidnapping. Despite numerous pleas from commuters and civil society groups for increased security along the route, abductions continue unabated.

Attempts to reach the Ondo State Police Command for a statement were unsuccessful. Calls to the Command Spokesperson, Odunlami Ibukun, went unanswered, and a follow-up message has yet to receive a response.

As families wait anxiously for news, the nation is once again reminded of the urgent need for stronger security measures on Nigeria's highways, particularly those frequented by students and other vulnerable groups.

# Tinubu's wife to distribute 10,000 health kits to South-West region

By Helen Okechukwu

**N**igeria's First Lady, Oluremi Tinubu, has unveiled plans to distribute 10,000 health kits, including scrubs, to aid nurses and midwives across the South-West region as part of her Renewed Hope Initiative (RHI).

Tinubu's wife, Oluremi, on Thursday announced this during her visit to Akure, the state capital of Ondo State.

While addressing the Ondo State Council of Obas, Mrs. Tinubu sought their collaboration to end key health problems such as genital mutilation, Hepatitis B, among other health issues affecting Nigerian women.

She urged the royal fathers to support her advocacy in circulating the initiatives across their localities to end mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS, syphilis, tuberculosis, among others.

"Ending female genital mutilation is also one of our key priorities. It is a harmful and outdated tradition built on myths," she said. "It does not stop promiscuity, as some believe. Instead, it destroys the lives of young girls."

Flagging off the South-West phase of the project, she said the new menstrual hygiene campaign, tagged "Flow with Confidence," targets the distribution of 10,000 sanitary pads to young girls in each state, focusing on rural areas.



Mrs. Tinubu revealed that the Young Farmers' Club and Women's Gardening Initiative secured a N400 billion intervention fund from the Ministry of Agriculture.

As part of the effort, each state's first lady received N68.9 million to support women farmers.

She also mentioned a scholarship programme, offering both local and international education opportunities, including placements in Belarus.

In addition, the Alternative High School for Girls, already active in Osun State and soon launching in Ondo, provides education and childcare support for teenage mothers.

Ondo State Governor, Lucky Aiyedatiwa, commended the distribution of 10,000 professional

kits to nurses and midwives across the South-West.

He noted that the initiative would boost morale, improve maternal and child health, and contribute to the state's development goals.

Governor Aiyedatiwa praised the First Lady's commitment to empowering women, saying it would strengthen economic growth and sustainable development.

Speaking on behalf of the Council of Obas, the Deji of Akure, Oba Aladetoyinbo Aladelusi, applauded Mrs. Tinubu's programmes and pledged the traditional rulers' continued prayers for the success of President Tinubu's administration.

He expressed confidence that Nigerians would support the president for a second term.

# NAFDAC alerts Nigerians on fake “Aflotin 20/120” drug

By Helen Okechukwu



To curb the effect of fake drugs among patients, the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) has issued a public alert over the circulation of counterfeit Artemether/Lumefantrine tablets branded as Aflotin 20/120 in Nigerian markets.

The agency issued a warning that the fake drug poses a serious threat to public health and could result in treatment failure, prolonged illness or death.

In a statement released on its website recently, NAFDAC disclosed that the counterfeit product was identified and reported by Ajanta Pharma Limited, the main manufacturer based in Mumbai, India.

According to the agency, the batch in question — Batch No: PA2128L — was originally manufactured in December 2018 for Combisunate 20 / 120 (Artemether 20mg/Lumefantrine 120mg tablets) with an expiry date of November 2020.

However, counterfeiters have manipulated the batch details and are now marketing the fake drug as Aflotin 20/120mg in a different packaging format.

Ajanta Pharma confirmed that the overprinting style of the counterfeit product does not match its standard production methods, leading to the conclusion that Aflotin 20/120mg with Batch No: PA2128L circulating in Nigeria is falsified.

NAFDAC emphasized that counterfeit

medicines endanger lives because they fail to meet safety, quality, and efficacy standards.

The agency has directed all its zonal directors and state coordinators to intensify surveillance and remove any counterfeit Aflotin 20/120mg products from circulation.

Distributors, healthcare professionals, retailers, and caregivers have also been advised to exercise extreme caution and ensure that all medicines are sourced from authorized and licensed suppliers.

NAFDAC urged members of the public to report any suspicious drug products and reiterated its commitment to safeguarding public health through strict regulatory enforcement.

# PJ2025: Iyabo Ojo's daughter, Priscilla ties knot with Tanzania music star Juma Jux in Lagos

By Oluwatosin Ologun



**P**risilla Ojo, daughter of Nollywood actress and filmmaker Iyabo Ojo, has officially tied the knot with her Tanzanian heartthrob, Juma Jux, in a grand traditional wedding ceremony.

The much-anticipated union, held on Thursday, was attended by several top names in the Nigerian entertainment industry, drawing both admiration and online buzz.

The Lagos ceremony follows Priscilla Ojo and Juma Jux's intimate customary wedding held in Tanzania earlier in February.

The event was graced by numerous Nollywood stars, including Mercy Aigbe, Destiny Etiko and Toyin Abraham, who were spotted assisting with the event and dancing joyfully

with the guests.

One notable appearance was that of 83-year-old legendary Juju musician Chief Commander Ebenezer Obey, whose presence thrilled attendees.

For their Nigerian traditional celebration, the couple dazzled in vibrant ensembles of purple, orange and pink. Priscilla wore a long-sleeved, asooke blouse paired with a dramatic, layered skirt adorned with sequins and stones. She completed the regal look with a purple gele and matching ipele.

The Tanzanian singer complemented his bride in a striking agbada made from matching purple asooke, featuring orange and gold embellishments. His royal blue cap with orange accents and a purple

staff, topped with a carved map of Africa, added symbolic depth to the ensemble.

The bridal party added extra colour to the occasion, with the groomsmen sporting pink agbadas and the bridesmaids dressed in stylish pink traditional attire with gele headwraps.

Several clips circulating online captured the couple performing their traditional marriage rites. The decorated hall had a dreamy and heavenly ambience.

Before Thursday's wedding, videos also showed Jux's family in numbers flying down to Nigeria for the occasion.

# Portable vows legal action against defamation following recent arrest

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye



**C**ontroversial Nigerian singer Habib Okikiola Badmus, popularly known as Portable, has vowed to pursue legal action against anyone who defames him, following his recent arrest and remand over an alleged criminal defamation case involving veteran fuji musician Akorede Saheed, widely known as Saheed Osupa.

In a now-viral video circulating on social media, the self-styled “Zazu” crooner issued a stern warning to his critics, declaring that he would no longer tolerate any defamatory remarks made against him.

“Whoever talks bad about me or defames me will be arrested, They have done it to me, and I will do it to anybody too. There is no mercy,” Portable stated.

Portable’s comments come in the wake of his detention at the Oke Kura Correctional Centre in Ilorin, the capital of Kwara State. He was remanded by an Upper Area Court after failing to meet what were described as stringent bail conditions.

The charges were reportedly linked to defamatory comments made against Saheed Osupa.

However, following the veteran musician’s decision to withdraw the petition, Portable was subsequently granted bail and released from custody.

The incident has sparked conversations online, with fans and critics alike weighing in on the singer’s controversial remarks and legal entanglement.

Portable, known for his brash style and frequent online outbursts, appears undeterred by the backlash, insisting that he will now take full advantage of the law to protect his image.

# Trump may shut down US embassies in Africa, others

By **Fatimah Idera**

**T**he Donald Trump administration could shut down nearly 30 United States embassies and consulates across the world, including some in Africa, as part of its reforms to cut costs and reduce the country's diplomatic foreign presence.

A CNN report on Wednesday reveals, citing an internal US State Department document, that the embassies in the Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Lesotho, and South Sudan are among those proposed for closure, the Punch had reported.

A US consulate in South Africa may also be shut down.

"The document recommends closing 10 embassies and 17 consulates. Many of the posts are in Europe and Africa, though they also include locations in Asia and the Caribbean. These include embassies in Malta, Luxembourg, Lesotho, the Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, and South Sudan.

According to the report, "the list also includes five consulates in France, two in Germany, two in Bosnia and Herzegovina, one in the United Kingdom, one in South Africa, and one in South Korea."

The proposal is part of a broader effort by the Trump-led government, reportedly influenced by the Elon Musk-backed Department of



Government Efficiency to drastically reduce the size and spending of federal agencies, including the State Department.

The internal document also suggests reducing the US presence in countries such as Somalia and Iraq, which have been central to America's counterterrorism efforts.

There has been no official confirmation that Secretary of State Marco Rubio has approved the proposal, and a spokesperson for the department declined to comment on the leaked document.

Earlier, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security said Harvard University will lose its ability to enrol foreign students if it does not meet demands from the Trump administration to share information on some visa holders, marking the government's latest escalation

against the educational institution.

Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem also announced on Wednesday the termination of two DHS grants totalling more than \$2.7 million to Harvard.

Noem said she wrote a letter to Harvard demanding records on what she called the "illegal and violent activities" of Harvard's foreign student visa holders by April 30.

"And if Harvard cannot verify it is in full compliance with its reporting requirements, the university will lose the privilege of enrolling foreign students," Noem said in a statement.

A Harvard spokesperson said the university was aware of Noem's letter "regarding grant cancellations and scrutiny of foreign student visas."

# No plans to allow any aid into Gaza, says Israeli minister

By Fatimah Idera

Israel will not allow any humanitarian aid to enter Gaza to pressure Hamas, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said on Wednesday as negotiations around an Israeli proposal for a Gaza ceasefire continued.

Israel has said it will keep blocking humanitarian aid from entering Gaza, as it vowed to force Hamas into releasing the remaining hostages from the 7 October attacks.

Aid supplies, including food, fuel, water and medicine, have been blocked by Israel from entering Gaza since 2 March, more than two weeks before the collapse of the ceasefire between Israel and the Palestinian militant group, with a return to air and ground attacks on the territory.

The medical charity Médecins Sans Frontières said on Wednesday that Gaza was becoming a mass grave for Palestinians.

The Israeli military, meanwhile, said it had converted 30 per cent of Gaza into a buffer zone and that it had achieved full operational control over several key areas and routes throughout the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli defence minister, Israel Katz, said: "Israel's policy is clear: no humanitarian aid will enter Gaza, and blocking this aid is one of the main pressure levers preventing Hamas from using it as a tool with the population."

"No one is currently planning to allow any humanitarian aid into Gaza, and there are no preparations to enable such aid," said Katz, who vowed to escalate the conflict with tremendous force if Hamas did not return the hostages.

Amnesty International is among the aid agencies that have described Israel's blockade on all supplies going into Gaza as a crime against humanity and a violation of international humanitarian law. Israel has denied any violations.



More than 51,000 Palestinians have died in Gaza since the conflict began, including more than 1,600 since Israel resumed airstrikes and ground operations on 18 March. The Gaza health ministry does not distinguish between combatants and civilians but has said more than half of those dead were women and children.

Another 13 people were killed in airstrikes overnight, with a well-known photographer, Fatema Hassouna, among those reported dead in the northern area of the strip.

Doctors and aid groups on the ground said the humanitarian situation in Gaza was becoming worse by the day. "The situation is the worst it has been in 18 months in terms of being deprived of your necessities and the resumption of hostilities and attacks against Palestinians in all of Gaza," said Mahmoud Shalabi, a director at Medical Aid for Palestinians.

The resumption of aid to Gaza has become a highly inflammatory political issue in Israel. There are 58 hostages still in Gaza, who were taken captive after the Hamas attacks on southern Israel on 7 October 2023, with 24 believed to still be alive. Far-right figures in Benjamin.

Netanyahu government have said no aid should be restored to the civilians of Gaza

until Hamas agrees to the hostages' release.

Also, the national security minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir, said on Wednesday that "As long as our hostages are languishing in the tunnels, there is no reason for a single gram of food or any aid to enter Gaza."

Katz said Israel intended to eventually set up its own "civilian-based distribution infrastructure" for aid in Gaza, to prevent supplies falling into the hands of Hamas militants, but he gave no timelines or details of how it would be established.

Reports have suggested this could involve the Israel Defence Forces setting up and running logistics centres for aid, and vetted aid agencies being tasked with distributing it. However, the plan remains unclear and the UN is said to have so far refused to hand over the names of employees.

Efforts by mediators from Egypt, Qatar and the US to restore the collapsed ceasefire in Gaza and return the hostages have continued to hit stumbling blocks.

Katz said that no matter what deal was agreed, Israeli troops would remain in the buffer zones it had occupied in Gaza, as well as in neighbouring Syria and Lebanon.

# Google illegally dominates two markets for online advertising technology – US Judge

By Fatimah Idera



**G**oogle illegally dominated two markets for online advertising technology, a federal judge said on Thursday, dealing another blow to the tech titan in an antitrust case brought by the U.S.

U.S. District Judge Leonie Brinkema in Alexandria, Virginia, ruled that Google unlawfully monopolised markets for publishers and servers and the market for exchanges, which sit between buyers and sellers. Antitrust enforcers failed to show the company had a monopoly in advertising ad networks, she wrote.

The ruling could allow prosecutors to argue for a breakup of Google's advertising products. The U.S.

Department of Justice has said that Google should have to sell off at least its Google Ad Manager, which includes the company's publisher ad server and its ad exchange.

Google will now face the possibility of two different U.S. courts ordering it to sell assets or change its business practices. A judge in Washington will hold a trial next week on the DOJ's request to make Google sell its Chrome browser and take other measures to end its dominance in online search.

It has previously explored selling off its ad exchange to appease European antitrust regulators, Reuters reported in September.

Brinkema oversaw a three-week trial

last year on claims brought by the DOJ and a coalition of states.

The platform used classic monopoly-building tactics of eliminating competitors through acquisitions, locking customers into using its products, and controlling how transactions occurred in the online ad market, prosecutors said at trial.

It argued that the case focused on the past, when the company was still working on making its tools able to connect to competitors' products. Prosecutors also ignored competition from technology companies, including Amazon.com and Comcast, as digital ad spending shifted to apps and streaming video, Google's lawyer said.

# WhatsApp will stop working on these phones from May 5, 2025

By **Damilola Olufemi**

Millions of WhatsApp users in Nigeria and across the globe may soon lose access to the messaging platform as Meta, the app's parent company, prepares to phase out support for older smartphones.

Starting May 5, 2025, WhatsApp will no longer function on certain outdated devices that fail to meet the app's latest security and performance requirements. The update affects both individual users and small businesses that rely on WhatsApp Business for communication.

Meta explained that the decision is part of its ongoing efforts to enhance data security, maintain app stability, and align with the evolving capabilities of modern operating systems.

"As technology advances, phasing out support for older hardware is necessary to maintain app functionality and security," the company said in a statement.

Among the devices affected are iPhones running iOS versions earlier than 15.1. This includes:

iPhone 5s  
iPhone 6  
iPhone 6 Plus

These models are unable to upgrade beyond iOS 12.5.7, making them incompatible with the upcoming changes.

The policy shift also extends to older Android devices. Earlier this year,



WhatsApp announced it would stop supporting Android 4.4 (KitKat) as of January 1, 2025. Devices that fall under this category include:

Samsung

Galaxy S3  
Note 2  
Ace 3  
S4 Mini  
Motorola

Moto G (1st Gen)  
Moto E (2014)  
Razr HD  
HTC

One X+  
Desire 500  
Desire 601  
LG

Optimus G  
L90

Users of these devices are advised to

upgrade to newer models or operating systems to continue accessing WhatsApp beyond the deadline.

About WhatsApp

The service was created by WhatsApp Inc. of Mountain View, California, which was acquired by Facebook in February 2014 for approximately 19 billion US dollars.

It became the world's most popular messaging application by 2015 and had more than 2 billion users worldwide by February 2020, confirmed four years later by 200 million new registrations per month.

By 2016, it had become the primary means of Internet communication in regions including the Americas, the Indian subcontinent, and large parts of Europe and Africa.

# Harvard may lose ability to enrol foreign students, Trump threatens

By Fatimah Idera

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security said Harvard University will lose its ability to enrol foreign students if it does not meet demands from the Trump administration to share information on some visa holders, marking the government's latest escalation against the educational institution.

Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem also announced on Wednesday the termination of two DHS grants totalling more than \$2.7 million to Harvard.

Noem said she wrote a letter to Harvard demanding records on what she called the "illegal and violent activities" of Harvard's foreign student visa holders by April 30.

"And if Harvard cannot verify it is in full compliance with its reporting requirements, the university will lose the privilege of enrolling foreign students," Noem said in a statement.

A Harvard spokesperson said the university was aware of Noem's letter "regarding grant cancellations and scrutiny of foreign student visas."

The spokesperson said the university stood by its statement earlier in the week to "not surrender its independence or relinquish its constitutional rights" while saying it will comply with the law.

President Donald Trump's administration has threatened universities with federal funding cuts over pro-Palestinian campus protests against the U.S. ally Israel's devastating military assault on Gaza after a deadly October 2023 attack by Palestinian Hamas militants.

Trump casts the protesters as foreign policy threats who are antisemitic and



sympathetic to Hamas. Protesters, including some Jewish groups, say the Trump administration wrongly conflates their advocacy for Palestinian rights and criticism of Israel's actions in Gaza with support for extremism and antisemitism.

The Trump administration is also attempting to deport some foreign protesters and has revoked hundreds of visas across the country.

"With a \$53.2 billion endowment, Harvard can fund its chaos – DHS won't," Noem said, adding an "anti-American, pro-Hamas ideology" existed at Harvard.

Harvard has previously said it worked to fight antisemitism and other prejudice on its campus while preserving academic freedoms and the right to protest.

## TRUMP'S CRACKDOWN

The Trump administration said late last month it was reviewing \$9 billion in federal contracts and grants to Harvard and later called for restrictions, including a mask ban and removal of diversity, equity and inclusion programs, to be put in place for the university to continue receiving federal money.

Harvard, on Monday, rejected numerous demands that it said would cede control to the government. The Trump

administration subsequently said it was freezing \$2.3 billion in funding.

Trump also threatened on Tuesday to strip Harvard of its tax-exempt status. CNN reported on Wednesday that the U.S. Internal Revenue Service was making plans to rescind the tax-exempt status of Harvard and that a final decision was expected soon.

Harvard said there was no legal basis to rescind its tax-exempt status, saying such an action would be unprecedented, would diminish its financial aid for students, and would lead to abandonment of some critical medical research programs.

Human rights advocates have raised free speech and academic freedom concerns over the crackdown by the government.

The Trump administration has frozen or cancelled some funding for universities like Columbia, Princeton, Brown, Cornell, and Northwestern as well.

It has also threatened to withhold funding over culture war issues such as DEI programs and transgender policies.

Rights advocates have also raised concerns about Islamophobia and anti-Arab bias during the Israel-Gaza war. The Trump administration has not announced steps in response.

# Scientists find strongest evidence yet of life on an alien planet

By **Fatimah Idera**

**A**n ocean world teeming with alien life may exist 124 light years away from Earth, a study by Cambridge University has hinted.

The exoplanet K2-18b, which exists in the constellation Leo, appears to have an atmosphere containing huge quantities of dimethyl sulfide, a chemical only produced by living organisms such as marine phytoplankton.

Quantities of the chemical are so great that they represent 20 times the biological activity of Earth. The molecule vanishes fairly quickly, suggesting something is continuing to produce it.

Astrophysicists at Cambridge University have described the findings as a “huge, transformational moment” and the strongest hint yet that life exists elsewhere in the universe.

Prof Nikku Madhusudhan, from Cambridge’s Institute of Astronomy, said: “There is no mechanism that can explain what we are seeing without life.

“Given everything we know about this planet, a world with an ocean that is teeming with life is the scenario that best fits the data we have.

He added: “What we are seeing right now are the first hints of an alien world that is possibly inhabited, and this is a revolutionary moment.”

K2-18b is about 2.6 times the size of Earth and exists in the so-called Goldilocks Zone of its star, where conditions are neither too hot nor too cold for life.

It is believed to be a Hycean world, with



a huge liquid water ocean under a hydrogen-rich atmosphere, with a temperature slightly warmer than Earth.

Earlier observations had identified methane and carbon dioxide in the atmosphere of K2-18b, which can also be signs of life, but both chemicals are also produced by natural processes, such as volcanic activity.

Scientists asked for the James Webb Space Telescope to be trained on the planet, specifically looking for biomarkers.

They said they were “shocked” when the chemical signal appeared and have spent the last year trying to disprove the finding and “make the signal go away”. The chemical could also be dimethyl disulfide, also a sign of life, which looks similar.

Prof Madhusudhan added: “We have spent an enormous amount of time... trying all sorts of things to kill the signal.

He added: “To be very frank, it was

astounding. It’s a shock to the system. I don’t want to be too bullish, but I think frankly this is the closest we have come to a feature that we can attribute to life.”

Subhajit Sarkar, of Cardiff University, a co-author of the study, said: “The inference of these biosignature molecules poses profound questions concerning the processes that might be producing them.”

Prof Madhusudhan said: “This could be the tipping point, where suddenly the fundamental question of whether we’re alone in the universe is one we’re capable of answering.”

Dr Ian Whittaker, a space physics specialist from Nottingham Trent University, said: “This study is rigorous... however, just because these molecules are present and the exoplanet might be ‘Hycean’, i.e. having the conditions for liquid water and a hydrogen atmosphere, does not necessarily mean life has or can form on the planet.”

# America is turning away China's goods, Where will they go instead?

By New Daily Prime

**D**onald Trump's sky-high tariffs are not a ban on trade with China, but they come close. Although it is hard to estimate quite how sharp the decline in business between the two countries will be, since firms will find new routes and Mr Trump keeps changing the scope of the levies, a vertiginous drop is assured.

Once turned away, where will China's exports to America go instead? As supply chains adjust, firms will expand abroad to qualify for lower tariffs, as many did in Mr Trump's first trade war. Less scrupulous types may try to dupe American customs officials. But rerouting, legal or otherwise, is unlikely to offset a steep drop in demand from the world's biggest goods importer. The rest of the world will make up much of the difference, whether it wants to or not.

By the end of Mr Trump's first term American tariffs covered two-thirds of imports from China at an average rate of 19%, up from 3% before. However, newly incentivised tariff-dodgers found workarounds. They undervalued shipments, relabelled goods, forged paperwork and rerouted goods via third countries. Goldman Sachs estimates that Chinese exports worth around \$120bn bypassed tariffs in 2023.

This time it will be much harder to avoid border levies. One reason is that Mr Trump has introduced prohibitive tariffs on all Chinese goods—bar, for the time being, certain electronics and pharmaceuticals—rather than a subset, meaning exporters have less to gain from relabelling products. Rerouting hubs including Mexico and Vietnam have become wary of Chinese firms using them to dodge tariffs, owing to threats of American retaliation against their own export industries. Claudia Sheinbaum, Mexico's president, has announced her willingness to work with Mr Trump on transshipment, including with new tariffs aimed at Chinese goods and raids on Chinese-owned stores.

There is a reason for her obsequiousness. Mr



Trump's fixation on bilateral trade balances observes little distinction between dubious rerouting and supply chains legally adjusting to tariffs. At risk are countries such as Cambodia, India, Mexico, Thailand and Vietnam, which all now supply more of America's imports than before Mr Trump's first trade war. Thai negotiators have offered a crackdown on "counterfeiting from third countries"; Vietnamese officials promise to stamp out "trade fraud" and tighten rules of origin.

## Building barriers

Chinese goods that cannot be sold to America will head elsewhere. This comes at a time when neighbours are already concerned by Chinese industrial production. In response to weak economic growth, the country's policymakers are funnelling cash and loans to manufacturers, leading output to surge. Chinese firms have cut export prices by 20% since 2023, and the country's manufacturing trade surpluses with Asian and Latin American countries have grown much more quickly than those with America or Europe. Last year 198 complaints were filed against China at the WTO, a record, including 37 from India.

Although a flood of cheap goods would be a boon for consumers, politicians worry it will put domestic manufacturers out of business. Take Thailand, where industrial production has shrunk by a tenth since 2019, at the same

time as the country's trade deficit with China has doubled in size. Computer and electronics firms have suffered most of all, with their output falling by 40%, despite hopes that Thailand could fashion itself into a production centre for laptops. China last year exported portable computers worth \$33bn to America, which will have to find a new home.

This could bite even in countries that benefited from the first trade war. One example is the toy market in Vietnam, worth \$1bn a year, in which firms such as Bandai Namco and Lego have invested. The industry now faces competition from cut-price Chinese goods that would have gone to America. Another is textiles, where America imported \$29bn-worth of goods from China last year. Mr Trump has scrapped "de minimis" rules, which let packages under \$800 into America duty-free, aiding Chinese firms including Temu and Shein. Trade deflection could hurt manufacturers in Bangladesh and India.

More protectionist countries will not hesitate to hit back against China. India and Indonesia were fast to do so last time round. Others were more cautious, however. Malaysia and Thailand have largely refrained from counter-measures, for instance, fearful of angering their imposing neighbour. The pressure on their leaders will only grow in the months to come.

# Carlo Ancelotti set to leave Real Madrid at end of April

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

**R**eal Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti is reportedly set to part ways with the Spanish giants at the end of this month, with his final match in charge expected to be the Copa del Rey final on 26 April.

According to Sky Sports, Ancelotti will oversee Los Blancos for the last time when they face arch-rivals Barcelona in Seville, bringing an end to his second stint at the helm of the LaLiga club.

The news comes in the wake of Real Madrid's crushing Champions League exit at the hands of Arsenal.

The LaLiga champions were beaten 2-1 at home on Wednesday night, resulting in a 5-1 aggregate defeat to Mikel Arteta's side.



Ancelotti, 65, is set to remain in charge until the domestic cup final but is not expected to lead the team for the next El Clasico, scheduled for 11 May at the Camp Nou.

Despite being four points behind

Barcelona in the league with seven matches remaining, Real Madrid are still in the hunt for a domestic double.

However, speculation over Ancelotti's future has intensified, with the Brazilian national team reportedly eyeing the former Everton and Chelsea boss as their next head coach.

If appointed, Ancelotti could assume the Brazil role before the conclusion of the Spanish domestic season, signalling a new chapter in an already illustrious managerial career.

Real Madrid have yet to officially confirm the departure, but sources close to the club suggest preparations for a managerial transition are already underway.

# Gabonese forward Aaron Boupendza dies aged 28 in China

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

**A**aron Boupendza, a promising forward for Gabon, tragically passed away at the age of 28 after reportedly falling from a building in China. The football world is in mourning following the announcement of his death by Gabon's football federation (Fegafoot) on 16 April 2025. Boupendza had recently joined Chinese club Zhejiang FC, based in Hangzhou, from Romania's Rapid Bucharest in January.

Boupendza, known for his speed and skill, represented Gabon in 35 international caps, making a notable impact during the 2021 Africa Cup of Nations (Afcon) in Cameroon, where he



scored the winner against Comoros. Despite his team's exit in the round of 16, his performance left a lasting impression on the tournament.

The forward's career spanned multiple countries, with stints in France, Portugal, Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United States, before moving to China. He began his professional journey with CF Mounana in his home country, Gabon.

Gabon's president-elect, Gen Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema, joined many others in paying tribute, describing Boupendza as a "talented centre-forward" who brought pride to Gabonese football. The football community has expressed deep condolences to his family, remembering him as a respected and beloved figure both on and off the pitch.

Fegafoot also expressed their sorrow, writing, "Boupendza is remembered as a great striker who made his mark during Afcon." Fans and players worldwide have shared their tributes to the young star whose life and career were tragically cut short.