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Cyber slavery on rise: FG issues fresh warning to Nigerians

By Friday Omosola

The Federal Government (FG) has sounded the alarm over an escalating wave of cyber slavery affecting parts of West Africa.

This warning follows revelations by the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) that nearly \$65 million was lost over the past two years to financially motivated sextortion schemes, reportedly involving Nigerian nationals.

In a statement released by Kimiebi Ebienfa, spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the government warned that these scams primarily target Nigerian citizens, with vulnerable young people being the main victims.

The statement detailed how numerous Nigerian youths, including minors, are being enticed to leave the country under the guise of high-paying job opportunities abroad, particularly in the cryptocurrency sector.

The ministry said upon arrival, victims are trafficked into organised scam operations and forced to work in so-called 'call centres,' or '419 cyber-scam factories'.

"There, they are forced under coercive and inhumane conditions to send thousands of fraudulent emails, text messages, and calls aimed at defrauding victims worldwide," it added.

The ministry expressed concern over a recent case in Accra, Ghana, where Nigeria's Economic and Organised



Crimes Office (EOCO) rescued several Nigerian nationals who had been subjected to degrading cybercrime activities.

"This incident highlights the severe exploitation and abuse associated with cybercrime operations," the ministry stated.

Describing the situation as deeply troubling, the government emphasised the urgent need for reinforced action against the multibillion-dollar criminal networks orchestrating these schemes, as well as the protection of vulnerable Nigerians from falling prey to them.

To this end, the ministry assured the public that the FG is intensifying collaboration with regional partners, international organisations, and security agencies to disrupt these networks, rescue victims, and ensure that the perpetrators face justice.

Reaffirming its commitment to the safety and welfare of Nigerians both at home and abroad, the ministry pledged to continue educating the public on emerging dangers to their rights and dignity.

It urged Nigerians — especially youths and their parents — to exercise extreme caution when offered employment opportunities, particularly those promising quick wealth, foreign travel, or work related to cryptocurrencies.

"Nigerians are therefore advised to verify all employment offers through official channels and report suspicious cases to relevant authorities for necessary investigation and action to curtail the activities of the perpetrators," said the ministry.

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

PUBLIC NOTICE COLOUR

PRODUCT COLOUR

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SIZE	TOTAL RATE
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10X4	206,890.50
10X3	179,608.00
9X6	254,977.00
9X5	225,738.00
9X4	193,500.00
9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
5X3	66,875.00
5X2	42,916.50
4X4	60,166.50
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3X3	28,000.00
3X2	17,400.00
2X2	13,000.00
2X1	8,600.00
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14X2	109,500.00
10X6	242,500.00
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10X5	192,305.50
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PUBLIC NOTICE BLACK & WHITE

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9X3	112,875.00
8X6	179,368.00
8X5	143,500.00
8X4	93,500.00
8X3	82,434.50
7X4	111,173.50
6X4	82,434.50
6X3	59,250.00
6X2	40,000.00
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1X1	3,292.00

PRODUCT BLACK & WHITE

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10X4	103,963.00
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9X5	168,191.50
9X4	N/A
8X6	N/A
8X3	N/A
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6X4	65,000.00
6X3	41,124.50
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3X2	14,923.00
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ALLURE RATE

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CENTRESPREAD		967,500.00
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PHOTO NEWS (4X4)	53,333.30	4,250.00	57,583.30
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CBN gov cites inflation as Nigeria's greatest economic challenge

By Damilola Olufemi

The Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Olayemi Cardoso, has identified inflation as the greatest threat to the economic well-being of Nigerians, pledging that the CBN is committed to reducing inflation to single digits over the medium term.

He said this after the 2025 IMF and World Bank Spring Meetings in Washington, D.C., Cardoso stressed the urgency of bringing inflation under control to stabilise household incomes and improve living standards nationwide.

"Inflation remains the most disruptive force against the economic welfare of Nigerians. Our focus is to bring it down to single digits over the medium term," Cardoso said.

In March 2025, Nigeria's headline inflation rate climbed to 24.23%, up from 23.18% in February, according to data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). The surge highlights continued pressures on food prices, essential goods, and the general cost of living, worsening economic challenges for millions.

The NBS attributes the inflationary trend to rising costs across food and non-food categories, underscoring the urgent need for sustainable monetary interventions.

The IMF, meanwhile, projects Nigeria's inflation rate to average 26.5% in 2025 following the recent rebasing of the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Although this is a moderation from 33.2% in 2024, inflation is expected to rise again to 37.0% by 2026, reflecting Nigeria's ongoing economic volatility.

CBN gov speaks further

Despite these inflationary challenges, Cardoso pointed to growing investor confidence in Nigeria's reform agenda. He referenced Nigeria's recent high-level



investment forum at the Nasdaq Market Site in New York, where the country's reforms were showcased and attracted significant global investor interest, including from the diaspora.

Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Wale Edun, echoed Cardoso's remarks, stressing the government's commitment to economic growth and job creation. Speaking during the same IMF and World Bank meetings, Edun outlined the Federal Government's goal of achieving 7% economic growth, supported by critical infrastructure investments such as digital connectivity, data access, and expanded fibre optic networks.

"By stabilising the economy and driving private sector participation, we are creating sustainable jobs for young Nigerians and fostering inclusive growth," Edun stated.

He also emphasised the administration's commitment to fiscal discipline, noting that Nigeria's comprehensive reform agenda—spanning fiscal, monetary, and structural measures—has gained international recognition.

"Despite global uncertainty, Nigeria is poised for resilient, inclusive growth," Edun added.

Discussing fiscal strategy, Edun highlighted the need for adaptable budgeting, saying, "A budget is a statement of intent; it must be continually recalibrated to reflect on-ground realities and available resources." This pragmatic approach reflects the government's effort to adjust to dynamic economic conditions while pursuing stable growth.

As Nigeria navigates persistent economic pressures, the combined efforts of the CBN, the Federal Government, and international partners are focused on curbing inflation, boosting investment, and steering the economy toward sustainable prosperity.

In January 2025, the NBS updated the CPI base year from 2009 to 2024 to better reflect current household spending habits. As a result, inflation figures were recalibrated, with the January rate easing to 24.48% from 34.80% in December 2024. After falling to 23.18% in February, inflation inched back up to 24.23% in March, reflecting ongoing cost-of-living pressures.

'Poverty rose under you as Anambra gov, yet you bash Nigeria abroad', Sanwo-Olu to Obi

By Friday Omosola

Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State has responded to recent comments made by former Anambra State Governor and Labour Party 2023 presidential candidate, Peter Obi, at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, United States.

During his address, Obi criticised not only the current Nigerian government but also the country itself, describing rising poverty levels and expressing concern over the administration's economic policies.

Reacting, Sanwo-Olu in a statement on his X page on Monday described Obi's remarks as 'disparaging'.

He stressed that while Nigerians abroad need not defend any government, they have a patriotic duty to present Nigeria positively on the global stage.

"True patriotism demands that prominent Nigerians project our country in a positive light internationally, irrespective of their political leanings," Sanwo-Olu said.

Focusing on the issue of poverty raised by Obi, the governor questioned his moral authority to criticise the federal government's efforts, highlighting Obi's record during his time as governor.



Sanwo-Olu pointed out that, during Obi's eight-year tenure, no standalone schools or hospitals were built, and sustainable credit facilities were not provided for citizens.

Sanwo-Olu said President Bola Tinubu built over 200 schools as Lagos State governor as a president, introduced student loan programmes benefiting more than 200,000 undergraduates, and provided over half a billion dollars in credit facilities to small and medium-scale enterprises.

Drawing comparisons, the governor noted that while Tinubu reduced poverty in Lagos by more than 46% during his 1999–2007 governorship, Anambra under Obi experienced an increase in poverty.

According to Sanwo-Olu, the poverty rate in Anambra rose from 41.4% in 2007 to 53.7% two years into Obi's administration.

He further stated that it was only after Obi's tenure that his successor, Governor Willie Obiano, reduced Anambra's poverty rate to 14.8%.

"Mr Obi talks a good game," Sanwo-Olu said, "but the facts show that during his time as governor, poverty in Anambra increased, whereas President Tinubu, during and after his time as governor of Lagos lifted millions out of poverty."

Governor Sanwo-Olu questioned Obi's credibility in criticising Nigeria's current leadership on the issue of poverty, suggesting that his own record weakens his arguments.

Democracy thrives in Nigeria, Presidency dismisses opposition concerns

By Friday Omosola

The Presidency has dismissed claims that democracy is under threat in Nigeria, describing recent concerns by opposition parties, figures and human rights advocates as baseless and alarmist.

Presidency denied the claim in a statement issued by Bayo Onanuga, Special Adviser to President Bola Tinubu on Information and Strategy.

The Presidency criticised what it called ‘disgruntled opposition figures’ and ‘partisan human rights crusaders’ for raising false alarms over recent defections of key opposition leaders to the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

Presidency highlighted the ‘seismic shift’ in political alliances following the recent moves by Akwa Ibom State Governor, Umo Eno, Delta State Governor, Sheriff Oborevwori, and former Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) vice-presidential candidate, Ifeanyi Okowa, towards President Tinubu and the APC.

It also noted the alignment of major political actors in Delta and Rivers States with the ruling party, suggesting the developments had unsettled the opposition.

While acknowledging the opposition’s dismay over the breakdown of efforts to form a ‘grand coalition’ against the APC, the



Presidency rejected accusations that the administration was promoting a one-party state or engaging in acts of blackmail and coercion.

“No policy, official action, or directive from the Presidency seeks to dismantle democracy or weaken the opposition”, said the Presidency.

It added that allegations of bribery and weaponisation of state institutions ‘only exist in the idle minds of politicians and their agents.’

The Presidency argued that the political shifts were a reflection of the freedom of association enshrined in democracy, insisting that citizens and politicians had the right to align with parties of their choice without being accused of undermining the democratic order.

“It is hypocrisy writ: for opposition politicians to cheer the formation of

anti-Tinubu coalitions while condemning defections to the APC as a threat to democracy.”

Highlighting President Tinubu’s longstanding record in strengthening opposition movements, particularly in the coalition that defeated an incumbent president in 2015, the Presidency maintained that Tinubu remained a committed democrat and a firm believer in a thriving multiparty system.

“Democracy is not threatened simply because politicians are exercising their freedom of association. Under President Tinubu, democracy is strong and the multiparty system will continue to flourish unhindered.”

The Presidency called on Nigerians to ‘protect democracy by respecting political choices’ and to ‘give alarmists, who draw their narratives from fiction, a wide berth.’

Senator Natasha issues sarcastic 'erection' apology to Akpabio

By Damilola Olufemi

The suspended Chairman of the Senate Committee on Diaspora and NGOs, Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan (PDP, Kogi Central), has issued a satirical apology to Senate President Godswill Akpabio, intensifying ongoing discussions about gender dynamics and power struggles within Nigeria's legislative chambers.

In a letter laced with biting irony, Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan offered a profuse "apology" for what she described as the "grievous crime" of maintaining her dignity and self-respect in Akpabio's presence.

Mockingly addressing expectations of submission, she wrote: "How remiss of me not to understand that my refusal to indulge your... 'requests' was not merely a personal choice but a constitutional violation of certain men's entitlement."

Confronting systemic sexism, she continued: "Please find it in your magnanimous heart — somewhere buried deep beneath layers of entitlement — to forgive this stubborn woman who mistakenly believed that her seat in the Senate was earned through elections, not erections."

Natasha's letter

The letter read in part:

"Dear Distinguished Senate President Godswill Akpabio,

It is with the deepest sarcasm and utmost theatrical regret that I tender this apology for the grievous crime of possessing dignity and self-respect in your most exalted presence. I have reflected extensively on my unforgivable failure to recognise that legislative success in certain quarters is apparently not earned through merit, but through the ancient art of compliance — of the very personal kind.

How remiss of me not to understand that my refusal to indulge your... 'requests'



was not merely a personal choice but a constitutional violation of the unwritten laws of certain men's entitlement. Truly, I must apologize for prioritising competence over capitulation, vision over vanity, and the people's mandate over private dinners behind closed doors.

I now realise the catastrophic consequences of my actions: legislation delayed, tempers flared, and the tragic bruising of egos so large they require their own postcodes. For this disruption to the natural order of 'quid pro quo,' I bow my head in fictional shame.

Please find it in your magnanimous heart — somewhere buried deep beneath layers of entitlement — to forgive this stubborn woman who mistakenly believed that her seat in the Senate was earned through elections, not erections.

I remain,

Yours in eternal resistance,

Senator Natasha H. Akpoti-Uduaghan
Unafraid, Unbought, and Unbroken."

Tensions between Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan and Senate President Akpabio first became public in July 2024 after Akpabio rebuked her during a plenary session, saying, "We are not in a nightclub," when she attempted to speak

without formal recognition. The remark was widely criticised as sexist, sparking nationwide outrage.

Although Akpabio later issued a statement saying no offence was intended and reaffirming his respect for women, the relationship between the two further deteriorated. In February 2025, Akpoti-Uduaghan accused him of sexual harassment, citing inappropriate comments and advances, but her petition was dismissed by Senate leadership on procedural grounds.

Her later suspension from the Senate for six months, over what was officially described as unrelated misconduct, was seen by many Nigerians as a retaliatory move to silence her. The suspension triggered nationwide protests under the slogan "We are all Natasha," with activists and women's rights groups rallying in her defence and condemning systemic discrimination in Nigerian politics.

Akpabio has continued to deny all allegations, describing Akpoti-Uduaghan's claims as "baseless" and "malicious," and has threatened legal action for defamation.

Tinubu has lost my support, won't achieve much before 2027 – Ex-APC vice chair

By Friday Omosola

A former National Vice Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Salihu Lukman, has declared that he no longer has confidence in President Bola Tinubu's leadership.

Speaking yesterday during an appearance on 'Inside Sources' with Laolu Akande, a socio-political programme aired on Channels Television, he said he does not believe Tinubu will achieve anything meaningful before the end of his term in May 2027.

Lukman reflected on his earlier support for Tinubu and admitted he had realised that the President was not the progressive leader he once believed him to be.

He also noted that Tinubu is governing Nigeria in a completely different manner compared to how he led Lagos State between 1999 and 2007.

"For you to even expect something very wonderful to happen before May 2027, I will say you are a dreamer. I wish you luck in your dream, but if it happens, it will be a pleasant surprise," Lukman said.

He added: "For me, I have reached the conclusion that I don't think anything good is going to come out, which is why we have to start organising. I have said so — this



country can be fixed in our lifetime, and I pray to God to give us the strength and courage to engage our leaders."

Lukman explained that he withheld his withdrawal of support until July 2024, noting that Tinubu had since insulated himself from the party and the people, making it nearly impossible for anyone, including APC members, to access him.

The former APC chieftain said he had initially hoped that Tinubu would correct the mistakes of his predecessor, Muhammadu Buhari.

However, according to him, Tinubu's shortcomings have ironically made Buhari appear like a hero by comparison.

Lukman also stressed the



importance of building a strong and principled foundation for the new coalition currently being formed, warning that a repeat of the APC's mistakes must be avoided.

"If having gone through the APC and failed, we now organise another coalition that becomes business as usual, then we have failed Nigerians again. That is why, during this initial negotiation, we are taking time to engage properly. We owe it to Nigerians, and I am telling Nigerians that it is possible to fix this country in our lifetime," he said.

Lukman stated that the APC's failure stemmed from sacrificing the party's ideals, an error he insisted must not be repeated in the emerging political coalition.

FG launches Empower Academy to boost local drug, medical device production

By Helen Okechukwu



The Federal Government (FG) has announced plans to set up Empower Academy Nigeria, a specialized hub aimed at strengthening local pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturing.

Prof. Muhammad Pate, the coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, announced the initiative on Sunday, calling it a major step under President Bola Tinubu's healthcare industrialization agenda.

The academy, developed through a partnership with Empower School of Health, Geneva, aims to help Nigeria produce at least 70% of its pharmaceuticals and a significant share of its vaccines locally by 2030.

It will also close critical workforce gaps in advanced manufacturing, regulatory

sciences, and quality assurance.

Empower Academy will train thousands annually, offer certifications with global bodies like World Health Organisation (WHO) and Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the International Federation of Pharmacists, and support the setup of new manufacturing platforms.

“With a mandate and capacity to train and upskill thousands of professionals annually, underpinned by cutting-edge equipment and world-class facilities, Empower Academy in Nigeria will advance best practices in process engineering, regulatory compliance, quality control, environmental monitoring, business management, entrepreneurship, supply chain and

distribution, as well as customer support.”

“The Academy will serve as a regional hub for pharmaceutical manufacturing training and is expected to address a critical workforce gap of between 5,000 and 7,000 skilled professionals in the country,” Prof Pate said.

Backed by financing from the European Investment Bank and AFREXIMBANK, the academy will promote balanced development nationwide through mobile training programmes.

Pate highlighted that the initiative is part of broader efforts to double Nigeria's pharmaceutical market share in Africa to at least 15%, attract major investments, and expand the life sciences workforce significantly.

Ganduje: More opposition governors to join APC

By Friday Omosola



The National Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Abdullahi Ganduje, has expressed confidence that more opposition governors will soon defect to the ruling All Progressives Congress, APC.

Ganduje made this statement on Monday during the official welcome ceremony held in Asaba for Delta State Governor Sheriff Oborevwori and his predecessor, Ifeanyi Okowa, both of whom recently left the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) for the APC.

The defection of Oborevwori and Okowa, along with other major political stakeholders in Delta State, effectively ended the PDP's nearly 26-year dominance in the state.

The two leaders were instrumental in transferring the PDP's political

structure to the APC.

Speaking at the event, Ganduje thanked the APC governors who attended the ceremony and stated that the party's ranks would soon swell further with the defection of more opposition figures.

While presenting the APC flag to Oborevwori, Ganduje said, "I must thank our 21 executive governors — and now, with the addition of our 22nd governor, I am even more grateful to them for their steadfast support. Let me tell you: keep your ears and eyes open. Very soon, more and more will join us."

Meanwhile, Okowa explained that their decision to defect was driven by the need to strengthen Delta State's connection to the federal government.

"When the news broke on Wednesday that we had decided to change our path, people wondered why. But one thing is very important in a people's history: there is always a time to change their path for the common good of the people," Okowa said.

He added, "As I told people that day, it was not about me, it was not about the governor, but about the need for us to connect to Abuja — to that goodwill that is in Abuja, to the resources that are in Abuja, of which Delta State is a major contributor. There was a need to connect to it."

Okowa described the defection as both patriotic and strategic, admitting that the state lost considerable opportunities during his tenure because it remained in opposition.

Senator Nwoko urges Oborevwoiri to abandon PDP habits following APC defection

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Senator Ned Nwoko, representing Delta North, has called on Governor Sheriff Oborevwoiri to leave behind what he described as the “old habits” of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), following the governor’s recent defection to the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

In a statement issued after Oborevwoiri’s move, Senator Nwoko welcomed the decision but emphasised that genuine transformation must accompany the shift in political allegiance.

He urged the governor to abandon the political practices that, according to him, contributed to the PDP’s decline in Delta State.

“Leave behind the politics of survival and step into the politics of legacy. No one pours new wine into old wineskins. Old habits, old politics, and the old deals that



led to the gradual decline of the PDP in Delta must be left behind,” Nwoko stated.

Highlighting the APC’s ongoing efforts towards constitutional reform, the senator noted that proposals for the creation of Anioma and New Delta states were already under discussion within the party.



“Let me remind you, this agenda was declared a done deal by the party leadership long before your defection, a testament to the APC’s commitment to correcting historical imbalances and ending regional marginalisation,” he said.

Governor Idris denies defection rumours, reaffirms loyalty to APC

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Governor Nasir Idris of Kebbi State has categorically denied rumours suggesting he is planning to defect from the All Progressives Congress (APC), reaffirming his unwavering loyalty to the ruling party.

In a statement released on Sunday by his Chief Press Secretary, Ahmed Idris, the governor described the speculation as “ridiculously malicious” and attributed it to “uninteresting political comedians” intent on causing political instability.

Reacting to reports linking him with a proposed coalition allegedly spearheaded by former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, Governor Idris stated: “I am made in APC, by APC, and for APC.”

“For the avoidance of doubt, I am not a



political prostitute. I will be the last person to leave my formidable and reliable party for any coalition, no matter who the architects are,” he added.

Idris, widely known as Kauran Gwandu,

stressed that his priorities remain focused on delivering effective governance in Kebbi State and supporting President Bola Ahmed Tinubu’s national development agenda.

“If they tell you again that Kaura is likely to leave his APC, tell them I will be the last man standing,” he declared.

The governor went on to dismiss the defection claims as baseless and likened them to “the dance of mad fellows in the marketplace.” He reassured the public that Kebbi State remains firmly aligned with the APC and committed to its ideals.

“I remain steadfast with the people of Kebbi State, and together, we will consolidate on the successes of the APC to deliver the dividends of democracy,” he concluded.

APC South-South chapter demands apology from VeryDarkMan over remarks on Akpabio

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The South-South zonal chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC) has given controversial social media influencer Martins Vincent Otse, also known as VeryDarkMan (VDM), one week to apologise to the President of the Senate, Senator Godswill Akpabio, following disparaging comments made in his recent video.

The APC issued this demand in a statement by the Zonal Organising Secretary, Blessing Agbomhere, which was released on Sunday, April 27.

The statement followed a viral three-minute video in which VDM criticised Akpabio for representing Nigeria at the funeral of Pope Francis in the Vatican on 20 April 2025.

In the video, VDM called Akpabio's presence at the Pope's funeral "shameful," suggesting that the Senate President should have been in Nigeria visiting states such as Benue, Plateau, Kwara, Ogun, and Enugu, which are grappling with violent crises.

Agbomhere condemned VDM's remarks, accusing him of blackmail, slander, and character assassination under the guise of activism.

He stated, "VeryDarkMan is becoming notorious for blackmail, slander, and character assassination while pretending to be an advocate for the masses and a social crusader.



The unwarranted verbal attack on the number-three citizen of Nigeria, who was duly nominated by the President to represent Nigeria at such a significant event, is unjustified."

The APC official also clarified that Akpabio's participation in the Pope's funeral was at the discretion of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, who chose the Senate President as a worthy representative due to his impeccable character and devout Catholic faith.

"Being a devout Catholic and a family man with unblemished character, President Tinubu saw in Akpabio a worthy ambassador of Nigeria to such an event as the Pope's funeral and wasted no time in entrusting him with that responsibility. What is wrong with that?" Agbomhere asked.

The APC has issued an ultimatum to VeryDarkMan, demanding that he issue an unreserved apology to

Akpabio and refrain from further discrediting the administration of President Tinubu.

Agbomhere also urged Nigerians to disregard VDM's "uninformed ranting" and reiterated that the current administration is actively addressing the widespread insecurity in the country, which it inherited from previous governments.

He noted that President Tinubu, upon returning from France and the UK, had met with security chiefs and given them clear directives to adopt a new approach in tackling insecurity.

"Does this sound like a man who is not serious about protecting Nigerians?" Agbomhere asked, emphasising that while security challenges are complex and cannot be resolved overnight, the Tinubu administration remains committed to ensuring the safety and security of all Nigerians.

High-profile lawyers join Kanu's team ahead of accelerated hearing

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye



Four additional Senior Advocates of Nigeria (SANs) have joined the legal defence team of Nnamdi Kanu, leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), ahead of the resumption of his trial at the Federal High Court in Abuja.

The trial is scheduled to resume before Justice James Omotosho on Monday, 29 April.

The newly appointed legal practitioners include Prof Onyechi Ikpeazu (SAN), Emeka Etiaba (SAN), Mela Audu Nunghe (SAN), and Dr Joseph Akubo (SAN). Their inclusion was disclosed by Kanu's Special Counsel, Aloy Ejimakor, in a formal notice to the court, as well as to Kanu's family and supporters.

“UPDATE: In addition to Chief Kanu Agabi, SAN & Uchenna Njoku, SAN, 4 more SANs have joined MAZI NNAMDI KANU's legal team. They're: Prof Onyechi Ikpeazu, SAN, Emeka Etiaba, SAN, Mela Audu Nunghe, SAN & Dr. Joseph Akubo, SAN. They will all be in Court on 29th April, 2nd & 6th May,” the notice read.

Justice Omotosho had previously granted an accelerated hearing of the seven-count terrorism charge against Kanu, citing the protracted duration of the case, which has spanned nearly a decade.

Kanu was first arrested on 14 October 2015 after returning from the United Kingdom.

He was granted bail on health grounds in 2017 but subsequently left Nigeria. He was re-arrested in Kenya in 2021 and extradited to continue facing trial.

Despite several court rulings discharging and acquitting him, the Federal Government has refused to release Kanu, insisting that proceedings must continue.

The case was reassigned to Justice Omotosho after the previous judge, Justice Binta Nyako, stepped down following Kanu's public request for her recusal, citing a lack of confidence in her neutrality.

The trial is set to continue on 29 April, with further sittings expected on 2 and 6 May.

Fitch upgrades Lagos, 3 other states to stable outlook

By Friday Omosola

Lagos State has received a significant boost to its economic reputation, as Fitch Ratings upgraded its Long-Term Foreign and Local-Currency Issuer Default Ratings (IDRs) from 'B-' to 'B'.

In a statement released on the state government's Facebook page on Monday, three other states – Kaduna, Kogi, and Oyo – also benefitted from the upgrade.

According to the statement, the internationally renowned rating agency announced that the outlook for all four states remains stable, in line with the recent upgrade of Nigeria's sovereign rating from 'B-' to 'B' on 11 April 2025.

According to Fitch, the improved sovereign rating reflects greater macroeconomic stability and progress in policy reforms.

Per its criteria, Fitch mirrored the sovereign upgrade in the affected states, noting the predominant role of the federal government in Nigeria's intergovernmental fiscal system.

This development is a major endorsement of Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu's T.H.E.M.E.S Plus Agenda — the six-pillar economic plan of his administration — and is expected to further bolster investor confidence in Lagos.

The announcement comes just two days after Governor Babajide Sanwo-



Olu addressed a group of Harvard students, where he highlighted Lagos's strong investment potential.

In its statement, Fitch said: "We consider the Federal Government's role predominant in intergovernmental relations, as it controls the equalisation mechanism enacted through a system of transfers to states.

"Therefore, the upgrade of sovereign IDRs is mirrored in the upgrade of those of Lagos, Kaduna, Kogi, and Oyo, as their Standalone Credit Profiles (SCPs) align with or are above the ratings of Nigeria."

Fitch further observed that by the end of 2023, 50 per cent of the state's direct debt was denominated in foreign currencies, exposing it to currency fluctuation risks.

Nevertheless, the agency projects that Lagos's payback ratio will remain strong, at around five times, by the end

of 2028.

The report also highlighted Lagos's fiscal resilience, underpinned by its exceptional Internally Generated Revenue (IGR), which accounts for 75 per cent of its total operating revenue — far exceeding the national average of 25 per cent.

Fitch expects the state to record a budget surplus in 2024.

The upgraded rating underscored Lagos's strong capacity to meet its financial obligations, driven by robust operating performance and a resilient revenue base, distinguishing it as an outlier within Nigeria's fiscal landscape.

Reacting to the news, Sanwo-Olu said: "It is a good verdict on our performance — in terms of policy decisions and project execution. It is also a call for us to be more active; we will be in every sector. I thank Lagosians for their support."

LNSC nabs father for abusing 16-year-old daughter over phone possession

By Helen Okechukwu



The Lagos Neighborhood Safety Corps (LNSC) has apprehended Oseni Sulaimon, 49, for allegedly abusing his 16-year-old daughter, Rashidat Oseni, over phone possession.

The assault was said to have occurred at Apple Street, Magbon, Imeke, Lagos State.

Following a distress call received by Corps Superintendent of LNSC, Olorunda Command, at 06:54 hrs on Saturday from residents, a team of officers arrived at the scene.

Upon arrival, Rashidat's father had fled the scene to evade arrest.

The 16-year-old victim, who sustained injuries as a result of the physical abuse, was immediately transported to Ebute Olofin Primary Health Centre for urgent

medical attention after providing her statement.

After an intense search, the victim's father was apprehended and taken in for questioning.

Her father, during interrogation, admitted to the crime and revealed that his violent reaction stemmed from Rashidat's inability to account for how a mobile phone was in her possession and even went as far as selling the phone without explanation.

LNSC said the case was later transferred to the Badagry Police Station for further investigation and appropriate legal action.

Dr Ifalade Oyekan, the General Manager of LNSC, urged parents and guardians to exercise restraint and moderation when

disciplining their children.

He further highlighted the difference between correction and abuse, which is often narrow and must be approached with caution, and described the situation as "unacceptable and detrimental to the wellbeing of the youth."

"The general manager condemned instances where adults channel their personal frustrations onto their children and wards," the statement noted.

Ondo: Doctor, two others remanded to prison for procuring abortion, raping minor

By Helen Okechukwu

Ondo State doctor along with two men, Adebowale Adegboye and Idowu Akinseye, has been remanded to prison for allegedly procuring an abortion and raping a 10-year-old girl (name withheld).

Mrs Grace Alphonso, who presides over the Ondo State Magistrate Court in Akure, on Sunday gave the order pending legal advice from the state Director of Public Prosecution.

Adegboye, the father of the minor, while Akinseye is her stepfather, was said to have had carnal knowledge with the 10-year-old girl at Akure on several occasions, which led to her pregnancy and their apprehension. Both of them were charged with five counts relating to incest, abortion and indecent assault.

Israel Ojo, the medical doctor who allegedly aborted the 10-year-old girl's pregnancy, was charged with committing an abortion and is punishable under Section 230 of the Criminal Code Cap 37 Vol. 1 Laws of Ondo State of Nigeria.

Read Also: Doctors urge action on poverty, Victorian diseases

The charge read to the victim's father and doctor read, "That you, Adebowale Adegboye and Israel Oluwafemi Ojo, on the same date, time and place at the aforementioned Magisterial district, did unlawfully procure an abortion for the victim and thereby committed an offence contrary to and punishable under Section 230 of the Criminal Code Cap 37 Vol.1 Laws of Ondo State of Nigeria."

Other charges read include, "That you, Adebowale Adegboye 'm', on December 15, 2024, at about noon in Akure, within the jurisdiction of this



honourable court, did commit incest by unlawfully having carnal knowledge of your biological daughter (name withheld) and thereby committed an offence contrary to and punishable under Section 25 (a) of the Ondo State Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Law 2021.

"That you, Adebowale Adegboye 'm' on December 15, 2024, on the same day, time and place in Akure, within the jurisdiction of the honourable court, did have unlawful carnal knowledge of your daughter and thereby committed an offence contrary to and punishable under Section 221 of the Criminal Code Cap 37 Vol. 1 Laws of Ondo State of Nigeria 2006.

Additionally, the court noted, "That you Adegboye Adebowale, Ayoola Ogunkolade and Israel Oluwafemi Ojo, on January 20, 2025, at about noon in Akure within the jurisdiction of this honourable Court, did conspire to commit a felony, to wit: procurement of abortion, and thereby committed an offence contrary to and punishable under Section 516 of the Criminal Code Cap 37 Vol. 1 Laws of

Ondo State of Nigeria 2006.

While reading the charge to the minor's stepfather, Akinseye, it was noted that in 2019, Akinseye, caressing the victim's body, inserted his left finger in the victim's vagina and unlawfully had carnal knowledge with her.

"That you, Idowu Akinseye 'm', sometime in the year 2019 at several times at Alade Idanre Magisterial District, did unlawfully and indecently deal with your stepdaughter, aged 10 years, as at the time the offence was committed, by caressing her body and inserting your left finger in her vagina without her consent, after which you unlawfully had carnal knowledge of her and thereby committed an offence contrary to and punishable under Section 222 of the Criminal Code Cap 37 Vol. 1 Laws of Ondo State of Nigeria, 2006."

Meanwhile, the magistrate adjourned the case to May 22, 2025, for further hearing.

Late Gospel singer Osinachi's husband to die by hanging

By **Damilola Olufemi**

Peter Nwachukwu, the widower of renowned gospel artist Osinachi Nwachukwu, has been sentenced to death by hanging by the Federal Capital Territory High Court in Abuja's Wuse Zone 2.

Justice Njideka Nwosu-Iheme handed down the verdict on Monday, after overruling Nwachukwu's plea that he had no case to answer.

The court found him responsible for the death of his wife, which occurred on April 8, 2022, convicting him of culpable homicide.

On June 3, 2022, the Office of the Attorney-General of the Federation (OAGF), on behalf of the Federal Government, charged Peter Nwachukwu with 23 counts, including culpable homicide, in the death of his wife, gospel singer Osinachi Nwachukwu.

During the trial, the prosecution presented 17 witnesses — including two of Nwachukwu's children — and submitted 25 documentary exhibits. Nwachukwu, who pleaded not guilty, testified in his own defense, called four witnesses, and submitted four exhibits. While his lawyer appealed for leniency, the prosecution urged the court to ensure justice was served.

Delivering judgment, Justice



Nwosu-Iheme sentenced Nwachukwu to death by hanging on one count, while imposing various prison terms ranging from six months to three years, and fines between N200,000 and N500,000, on other counts.

Osinachi's case in court

The Federal Capital Territory High Court in Abuja had previously ruled in October 2023 that Nwachukwu had a case to answer, dismissing his no-case submission. The judge ruled that the prosecution had established a prima facie case against him.

The case was filed on May 20, 2022, by the Head of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence at the Department of Public Prosecutions of the Federation, Federal Ministry of Justice, Yewande Gbola-Awopetun.

Nwachukwu was arrested shortly after his wife's death and detained at the Lugbe Divisional Police

Headquarters in Abuja. Family members had alleged that Osinachi suffered years of domestic abuse, leading to her death after days at an undisclosed hospital.

However, an autopsy conducted at the National Hospital in Abuja revealed no signs of physical violence. Instead, the report identified multiple medical conditions contributing to her death, including generalised organ pallor, bilateral leg swelling, fluid accumulation around the heart and lungs, tumour deposits in vital organs, and a massively enlarged heart.

Despite the autopsy findings, the prosecution pressed forward with the homicide case. Following the unsuccessful no-case submission by Nwachukwu's lawyer, I.A. Aliyu, the court proceeded to full trial, culminating in Nwachukwu's conviction and sentencing.

Drama as Cubana Chief Priest denied Headies entry

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular entrepreneur and socialite Cubana Chief Priest faced a public embarrassment on Sunday night after being denied entry into the 17th Headies Awards.

The event, held at the Landmark Event Centre in Lagos on April 27, 2025, saw the influential figure turned away at the entrance because he did not have an invitation card.

Viral video shows heated exchange

A viral video, shared by RommiRoyal TV on TikTok, captured the heated moment. In the clip, Cubana Chief Priest is seen arguing with security guards as he tries to convince them to let him in. Despite his celebrity status and close ties to major Nigerian artists like Davido, the bouncers stood their ground. The rules were clear no invitation, no entry.

Mixed reactions flood social media

The incident quickly spread across social media, drawing mixed reactions from fans and commentators. Many praised the organisers and security team for enforcing strict protocols, even against well-known figures. Others, however, questioned how someone of Cubana Chief Priest's stature could be left off the guest list of such a major event.

Star-studded night at the landmark

The Headies Awards, known as one of Nigeria's biggest nights in music, attracted many prominent guests this year. Among them were Lagos State Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, Tanzanian singer Juma Jux, popular actress and host Nancy Isime, and reality TV star Bamike Olawunmi-Adenibuyan, known to fans as Bam Bam.

Throughout the evening, the Landmark Event Centre buzzed with excitement. The crowd cheered as the awards rolled out, celebrating some of the biggest



names in African music. Winners included rapper Odumodublvck, who took home major honours, and the late Mohbad, who was honoured posthumously. Davido, Tems, and Rema also received awards, solidifying their status as leaders in the music industry.

Fans debate who was at fault

Despite the glittering success inside the venue, much of the online chatter after the event centred around Cubana Chief Priest's experience. Some social media users criticised him for not preparing properly for such an important night. Others pointed fingers at the event organisers, asking whether the Headies had overlooked a major personality or if there had been a mix-up.

Interestingly, many also praised the security team's professionalism. "Rules are rules," one Twitter user wrote. "Even if you are a superstar, you have to follow them."

A new era of event protocols

This incident highlights a growing trend in major Nigerian events. Organisers are placing a stronger emphasis on security, planning, and structure, even when dealing with celebrities. In the past, famous faces often received special

treatment at concerts, award shows, and high-profile parties. Now, it seems, things are changing.

For Cubana Chief Priest, known for his flamboyant lifestyle, business ventures, and wide network of celebrity friends, the denial was a rare public setback. Yet, his handling of the situation, at least based on the video, showed a man trying to reason rather than cause a bigger scene.

No one above the rules

As conversations continue online, many fans are left wondering: Was it a simple mistake, or a sign that the Headies are raising the bar for event professionalism?

Either way, the story added an unexpected twist to what was otherwise a night of celebration for Nigerian music. For Cubana Chief Priest and many watching, the message was clear in today's entertainment world: no one is above the rules.

As the dust settles, the 17th Headies Awards will be remembered not just for its winners and performances, but also for a reminder that proper planning remains key, even for the biggest names in town.

Moses Bliss breaks silence on rumoured rift with Ebuka Songs

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Gospel musician Moses Bliss has finally addressed the swirling rumours about a fallout with his former protégé, Ebuka Songs.

For weeks, social media buzzed with claims that Ebuka's departure from Bliss's record label was fueled by personal tension. Fans of both artists have been divided, with many speculating about the true nature of their relationship.

Bliss denies conflict during interview

However, during the first-ever live edition of the popular podcast WithChude, Moses Bliss set the record straight. In a heartfelt interview, he dismissed the rumours as completely false and urged fans to focus on the bigger picture.

Bliss, known for his calm demeanour and uplifting songs, described Ebuka Songs as a "great guy" and praised his growth. He emphasised that there is no bad blood between them, despite what many people might think.

"We are humans, and it is normal to feel some type of way when people misunderstand your intentions," Bliss said. "But at the end of the day, what matters most to me is pleasing God. My heart is pure, and everything I do comes from a place of love."

Praise for Ebuka's growing career

Bliss went on to express his pride in Ebuka's journey so far. He said he firmly believes that Ebuka's best days are still ahead of him.

"I feel like the world has not yet seen the greatness in Ebuka," Bliss said. "With the right guidance and mentorship, he is going to do even greater things. He is already doing amazing work for the kingdom of God and touching many lives. Seeing that alone fills my heart with joy."

The Too Faithful singer made it clear that he is not concerned about public opinions or criticisms surrounding the situation.



"I don't care what anybody thinks," he added. "I'm rejoicing and rooting for him. I'm happy to see him grow and succeed."

Ebuka's exit: A peaceful decision

Bliss's comments come nearly two months after Ebuka Songs publicly explained his decision to leave the label. In an earlier interview, Ebuka shared that his move was based on personal growth and a desire to explore new opportunities. He emphasised that there was no animosity between him and Bliss, but that did little to stop the rumour mill from spinning.

Many fans had speculated that Ebuka's sudden exit pointed to a deeper conflict. Some even suggested that there was professional jealousy or disagreements behind the scenes. These rumours gained traction online, with many followers of the two musicians taking sides.

However, Moses Bliss's recent interview seems to put those rumours to rest. His words reflect a spirit of humility, forgiveness, and genuine support, qualities that he has long preached in his music and ministry.

Moving forward with love and respect

Industry insiders say that both Bliss and Ebuka Songs have continued to thrive since the split. Ebuka recently announced

new projects and collaborations, while Bliss has remained active in both his music career and mentorship programs for young gospel artists.

Their paths may have diverged, but their shared goal remains the same: using music to spread hope, faith, and love.

As the dust settles, many fans are now shifting their focus back to the music. Supporters of both artists have taken to social media to express relief and excitement over their future endeavours.

"Maturity and understanding are what we need in the industry," one fan wrote on Twitter. "Happy to see Moses Bliss speaking with so much grace."

Another commented, "This is what true leadership looks like. Wishing both of them the best!"

For Moses Bliss, it seems the matter is already behind him. His message is clear: it's not about the rumours or the noise—it's about staying true to the mission and celebrating every soul that is touched through their songs.

Both Moses Bliss and Ebuka Songs have proven that growth sometimes means taking different paths, but love and respect don't have to be lost along the way.

Reactions as Mohbad's wife, son accept posthumous award at the 2025 Headies

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

The 2025 Headies Awards night was filled with emotions as Omowunmi, widow of the late singer Mohbad, and their son, Liam, took the stage to accept his posthumous honours.

New Daily Prime reports that the late singer was recognised with two major awards: Best Street-Hop Artiste of the Year for his hit track Ask About Me, and the Viewers' Choice Award for his collaboration with Chike on Egwu.

The awards ceremony, which marked the 17th edition of the Headies, was held on Sunday in Lagos.

A tribute dedicated to their son

Stepping onto the stage with her young son in her arms, Omowunmi dedicated the awards to Liam. Fighting back tears, she said the honours were not just for Mohbad but for their child and for everyone who believed in the late star's dream.

Later, in a now-viral video circulating on social media, Omowunmi explained why the moment meant so much to her.

She said, "Although Mohbad isn't here with us anymore, he lives on. I don't like calling him my late husband because he lives forever, especially through our son, Liam. Liam may be too young to understand the greatness of his father today, but one day, he will. Thank you so much, Headies, for shining a light on my husband, for honouring his memory and his legacy. It means so much to me, to his son, and the entire Imolenization family."

Omowunmi was accompanied on stage by Adura, Mohbad's younger



brother, who stood quietly beside her during the emotional tribute.

Online reactions stir controversy

Their appearance triggered a wave of reactions online, with many fans expressing a range of emotions—from anger to sadness, and from support to criticism.

Fans mourn what could have been

The reactions reveal a broader tension between honouring artists posthumously and the call for more recognition while they are alive. Many fans have continued to express regret that Mohbad did not receive such high-profile acknowledgements during his lifetime.

Mohbad, whose real name was Ilerioluwa Aloba, passed away in September 2023 under controversial circumstances, sparking massive public outcry and calls for justice. Known for his powerful voice, street-hop anthems, and deep connection with the youth, Mohbad built a loyal fanbase that proudly called themselves "Imolenization," after his nickname, Imole, meaning "light" in Yoruba.



Keeping his light alive

The Headies organizers, in their speech, said they wanted to honor Mohbad's impact on Nigerian music and to ensure that his contributions would never be forgotten. However, the awards ceremony has also reopened old wounds for fans still mourning his untimely death.

As the night ended, Omowunmi's words continued to echo across social media: a reminder that even though Mohbad is no longer here, his legacy, through his music and his son, lives on.

The tribute was a powerful moment in an event designed to celebrate the future of Nigerian music, but ended up shining a light once again on a painful loss the industry and fans have yet to fully recover from.

However, Pope Francis faced occasional criticism from Russia, particularly over his position on the Russia-Ukraine war, where his calls for peace were seen by some as lacking direct condemnation of aggressors.

Grandpa Robbers' face trial over Kim Kardashian's Paris heist

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Ten men nicknamed the “grandpa robbers” are standing trial in Paris over the multimillion-euro robbery of American reality TV star Kim Kardashian during Paris Fashion Week in 2016.

The suspects, aged between 35 and 78, appeared in court on Monday afternoon as the month-long trial began. Kardashian, 44, is expected to testify on May 13.

In one of France's biggest robberies targeting an individual in the past two decades, Kardashian was tied up and held hostage at gunpoint inside her luxury suite in the early hours of 3 October 2016. The attackers, disguised as police officers, fled with an estimated €10 million in jewellery.

The celebrity entrepreneur later recounted on her reality TV show that she feared she would be raped and murdered during the ordeal. She described the traumatic event in detail during a 2020 appearance on *My Next Guest Needs No Introduction* with David Letterman.

The defendants include men with lengthy criminal records and underworld nicknames such as Old Omar and Blue Eyes, reminiscent of characters from classic French film noir. Prosecutors allege they carefully planned the heist, holding meetings at a Paris bar in the weeks beforehand.

At the time of the robbery, Kardashian was alone in her suite at a so-called “no address” private residence popular among celebrities. Her bodyguard had accompanied her sister, Kourtney Kardashian, to a nightclub.



Kardashian's habit of posting real-time updates about her location and flaunting her jewellery, including an 18.88-carat diamond engagement ring from her then-husband Kanye West, may have made her an easy target.

Five armed men, reportedly all over the age of 60, arrived at the residence by bicycle or on foot around 2 a.m. They allegedly threatened the concierge at gunpoint, forced him to open Kardashian's suite, and restrained her inside. Speaking later to police, Kardashian said one of the robbers, with a strong French accent, repeatedly demanded, “The ring, the ring.”

The robbers escaped in under 10 minutes.

Twelve people were initially charged after a lengthy investigation, aided by DNA evidence found at the scene. One suspect has since died and another will be tried separately due to ill health.

The remaining 10 face charges including armed robbery, membership of a criminal gang, and kidnapping, referencing Kardashian's forced captivity at

gunpoint. Eight deny involvement.

Among those admitting some role is Yunice Abbas, 71, who told TF1 TV (TF1 Info) that he stood guard downstairs during the heist. “We were all grandads,” he said, admitting the temptation of a “last big job.” Abbas expressed regret, telling Associated Press: “I will apologise. I mean it sincerely”

Aomar Ait Khedache, known as Old Omar, also admitted involvement but denies he orchestrated the crime.

Another defendant, Gary Madar, brother of Kardashian's long-serving Paris driver, is accused of providing information about her movements. He denies any wrongdoing.

Kardashian's lawyer, Michael Rhodes, stated that she expects the trial “to proceed in an orderly fashion, in accordance with French law and with respect for all parties.”

The trial, which has already drawn significant media attention, will continue until May 23.

Vatican announces May 7 conclave to elect new Pope

By Olamilekan Botti

In a significant development for the Roman Catholic Church, the Vatican has announced that a conclave to elect a new pope will commence on May 7.

The announcement comes after the late Pope Francis, the first Latin American catholic leader who led the church for 12 years, was buried on Friday, five days after he died.

The New Daily Prime reported that Francis died on April 21 at the age of 88.

The decision was made during a private meeting of the cardinals held at the Vatican on Monday.

The upcoming conclave is set to be a pivotal moment for the Church, with a total of 135 cardinals from around the world eligible to participate in the secret voting process.

These cardinals, all under the age of 80, will gather to determine the next leader of the 1.4 billion-member global Catholic community.

The Vatican has already taken steps to prepare for this important event, having closed the Sistine Chapel, the traditional venue for the conclave, to facilitate necessary arrangements.

Pope: The voting process

This year's conclave marks an increase in participation compared to previous electoral gatherings. Notably, only 115 cardinals participated in the conclaves of 2005 and 2013, which elected Popes Benedict XVI and Francis, respectively.

The current composition of electors reflects Pope Francis's efforts to enhance global representation within the Church. Approximately 80 per cent of the cardinals eligible to vote were appointed by Francis during his papacy, indicating a significant influence on the direction in



which the Church may head.

Geographically, the distribution of the voting cardinals reveals a diverse representation. Europe continues to hold the largest voting bloc, with 53 electors.

Following Europe are Asia and Oceania, contributing 27 cardinals, while South and Central America provide 21. Africa is represented by 18 electors, and North America has 16.

This broad geographical diversity among the electors is expected to impact the selection of the new pope, as different cultural perspectives and priorities come into play.

The conclave represents not only a transition in leadership but also a time for reflection within the Church. Pope Francis's legacy, known for his progressive views and emphasis on social justice, will undoubtedly shape the discussions and decisions made during this period.

The new pope will inherit a Church facing numerous challenges, including issues of secularism, sexual abuse scandals, and the need for greater inclusivity.

As the world watches closely, the upcoming conclave will be scrutinised not only for its outcome but also for the process itself.

The secrecy of the voting and the rituals involved in the conclave have long fascinated the public, providing a glimpse into the inner workings of one of the oldest institutions in the world.

The cardinals will deliberate and vote in a process that may take several days, with the potential for multiple rounds of voting before a successor to Pope Francis is chosen.

The Vatican is poised for a momentous conclave that will shape the future of the Catholic Church. As the date approaches, anticipation builds among the faithful and observers alike.

The selection of a new pope is not merely a change in leadership but a reflection of the Church's evolving mission in the modern world.

The decisions made in the coming days will resonate far beyond the Vatican, impacting millions of Catholics and the broader global community.

University student rescued twice from Mount Fuji in one week

A 27 year old university student was rescued twice from the slopes of Mount Fuji within a week, after returning to retrieve his lost mobile phone, Japanese authorities confirmed on Monday.

The climber, a Chinese national living in Japan, was first airlifted from the 3,776-metre (12,388-foot) peak last week during an off-season ascent. Just four days later, he returned to the mountain, hoping to recover his phone and other belongings left behind during the initial rescue, according to Japanese media reports.

On Saturday, another climber found the man at an altitude of over 3,000 metres (9,800 feet), showing signs of altitude sickness. He was promptly taken to a hospital, police said.



Authorities soon realized he was the same individual rescued earlier in the week, the broadcaster TBS reported. It remains unclear whether he successfully retrieved his lost phone.

The incident highlights the risks posed by Mount Fuji's steep and often treacherous slopes, especially for inexperienced climbers attempting off-season hikes.

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**

Officials routinely warn against ascending the mountain outside the official climbing season, when snow and rapidly changing weather conditions can make the trails dangerous.

Mount Fuji, an active volcano that last erupted in 1707, is typically accessible to hikers only between early July and early September. During this period, thousands of tourists and locals climb the mountain, many aiming to witness the sunrise from the summit.

To manage the influx of visitors, local authorities introduced a cap on daily hikers along the most popular trail last year. Starting this summer, climbers on Fuji's four main trails will also be required to pay a 4,000 yen (\$28/£21) fee to help preserve the environment and ensure safety.

Again, Australia's ruling party to hike student visa fees in pre-election pledge

Australia's ruling Labor Party said on Monday it would raise visa fees for international students to A\$2,000 (\$1,279) if reelected, the latest measure aimed at the lucrative education sector that has been a major source of immigration.

The visa fee hike, from A\$1,600 currently, will bring in A\$760 million over the next four years, Australia's Treasurer Jim Chalmers and finance minister Katy Gallagher said in a statement on Labor's policy costings for Saturday's federal election.

"We think that's a sensible measure that really prizes, I think, the value of studying here in Australia," Gallagher told a news conference.

The government more than doubled the



fee for international student visas in July last year to A\$1,600 from A\$710.

Australia's conservative opposition has already pledged to raise the visa fee to a minimum of A\$2,500, and A\$5,000 for applicants to the country's top universities, known as the Group of Eight.

By **Fatimah Idera**

International students are a major source of revenue for Australian universities, but are also in part responsible for a rise in net migration that has driven up housing costs.

Almost 200,000 international students arrived in Australia in February 2025, government statistics show, an increase of 12.1% over the previous year and 7.3% higher than pre-COVID levels in February 2019.

Labor has promised to cap international student commencements at 270,000 in 2025, while the opposition favours a lower figure of 240,000.

There were more than a million international students enrolled in Australia in 2024, while 572,000 students commenced their studies.

35 dead after U.S strikes in Yemen, Houthis claim

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Houthi-controlled media in Yemen reported Monday that U.S. airstrikes targeted a migrant detention centre in Saada, killing at least 35 people. The U.S. military has been carrying out near-daily airstrikes since March 15 under Operation Rough Rider, aimed at ending the threat the Iran-backed Houthis pose to vessels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

For more than a year, the Houthis have launched strikes against Israel and Western vessels, including U.S. warships, claiming solidarity with Palestinians since Hamas initiated war in Gaza with its unprecedented attack on Israel in October 2023.

The U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) said Sunday that it has struck more than 800 targets in Yemen since mid-March, killing hundreds of Houthi fighters, including several leaders.

On Monday, the Houthi-controlled Al-Masirah TV network claimed that U.S. strikes hit a detention centre housing African migrants, with 35 bodies recovered from the rubble. "Civil defence



teams and the Red Crescent are continuing their efforts at the scene of the American crime," the network reported.

AFP was unable to independently verify the Houthi claim and has contacted the U.S. military for comment. The Houthis' interior ministry stated that the facility housed 115 African migrants. Al-Masirah aired footage showing bodies under debris and rescuers at the site.

The Houthis, like Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, are heavily supported by Iran, Israel's arch-rival.

Since late 2023, Houthi attacks have severely disrupted shipping through the Suez Canal, a critical route for global trade, forcing vessels to reroute around southern Africa at great cost.

In its statement, CENTCOM highlighted that Operation Rough Rider has successfully destroyed command-and-control facilities, air defence systems, advanced weapons manufacturing sites, and storage locations.

Despite the offensive, Houthi forces, who control large parts of Yemen and have been at war with a Saudi-led coalition since 2015, have continued to claim attacks on U.S. vessels and Israel.

CENTCOM reported that ballistic missile launches by the Houthis have decreased by 69%, and drone attacks by 55%.

"Iran undoubtedly continues to provide support to the Houthis," CENTCOM said, vowing continued military pressure "until the objective is met, the restoration of freedom of navigation and American deterrence in the region."

Allow US ships travel through Panama, Suez canals - Trump

By Fatimah Idera

U.S. President Donald Trump said that American military and commercial ships should be allowed to travel through the Panama Canal and Suez Canal free of charge.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump said that "I've asked Secretary of State Marco Rubio to immediately take care of, and memorialise, this situation."

The Panama Canal crosses the

narrowest part of the isthmus between North and South America, allowing ships to move more quickly between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. It carries about 40% of U.S. container traffic each year.

The U.S. completed construction of the canal in the early 20th century but gave control of the strategically important waterway to Panama in 1999.

Trump has said repeatedly that he wants to "take back" the canal.



Before taking office in January, he told reporters that he would not rule out using economic or military force to regain control over the canal.

US might walk away from Russia peace efforts if...

By **Fatimah Idera**

President Donald Trump urged Russia on Sunday to stop its attacks in Ukraine while his top diplomat said the United States might walk away from peace efforts if it does not see progress.

Speaking to reporters in New Jersey, Trump said he was disappointed that Russia has continued to attack Ukraine, and said his one-on-one meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy at the Vatican on Saturday had gone well.

"I see him as calmer. I think he understands the picture, and I think he wants to make a deal," Trump said of Zelenskiy.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, meanwhile, said the Trump administration might abandon its attempts to broker a deal if Russia and Ukraine do not make headway.

"It needs to happen soon," Rubio told the NBC program "Meet the Press." "We cannot continue to dedicate time and resources to this effort if it's not going to come to fruition."

Trump and Zelenskiy, in Rome for the funeral of Pope Francis, met in a Vatican basilica on Saturday to try to revive faltering efforts to end the war in Ukraine. The meeting was the first between the two leaders since an angry encounter in the White House Oval Office in February and comes at a critical time in negotiations aimed at bringing an end to the conflict.

Trump rebuked

President Vladimir Putin after that meeting, saying on social media that there is "no reason" for Russia to shoot missiles into civilian areas.

In a pre-taped interview that aired on the



CBS program "Face the Nation" on Sunday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Russia would continue to target sites used by Ukraine's military. When asked about a Russian strike on Kyiv last week that killed civilians, Lavrov said that "the target attacked was not something absolutely civilian" and that Russia targets only "sites which are used by the military."

Zelenskiy wrote on the messaging app Telegram that his top military commander reported that Russia had already conducted nearly 70 attacks on Sunday.

The situation at the front and the real activity of the Russian army prove that there is currently insufficient pressure on Russia from the world to end this war," Zelenskiy said.

DIFFERING PROPOSALS

Ukrainian and European officials pushed back last week against some U.S. proposals on how to end the war, making counterproposals on issues from territory to sanctions.

American proposals called for U.S. recognition of Russia's control over Crimea, the Ukrainian peninsula that Moscow seized and annexed in 2014, as

well as de facto recognition of Russia's hold on other parts of Ukraine.

In contrast, the European and Ukrainian proposal defers detailed discussion about territory until after a ceasefire is concluded.

German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius said on Sunday that Ukraine should not agree to the American proposal, saying it went too far in ceding swathes of territory in return for a ceasefire.

Mike Waltz, Trump's national security adviser, said the U.S. president has "expressed his frustration" at both Putin and Zelenskiy but remains determined to help negotiate an agreement. Waltz also said the United States and Ukraine would eventually reach an agreement over rare earth minerals.

Chuck Schumer, the top U.S. Senate Democrat, said on Sunday that he is concerned Trump will "cave in to Putin."

"To just abandon Ukraine, after all the sacrifice that they made, after so much loss of life, and with the rallying of the whole West against Putin, it would just be a moral tragedy," Schumer said on CNN's "State of the Union" program.

US military to limit disclosing details on strikes in Yemen

By **Fatimah Idera**

The U.S. military said Sunday it will not reveal specific details about its military strikes in Yemen, citing what it called the need to preserve operational security, while also saying the strikes had “lethal effects” on Houthi rebels.

Republican President Donald Trump ordered the intensification of U.S. strikes on Yemen last month, with his administration saying it will continue assaulting Iran-backed Houthi rebels until they stop attacking Red Sea shipping.

Recent U.S. strikes have killed dozens, including 74 at an oil terminal in mid-April in what was the deadliest strike in Yemen under Trump so far, according to the Houthi-run health ministry.

Rights advocates have raised concerns about civilian killings, and three Democratic senators, including Senator Chris Van Hollen, wrote to Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth on Thursday, demanding an accounting for the loss of civilian lives. Hegseth has also come under fire for using the unclassified messaging system Signal to discuss Yemen attack plans.

Read also: What U.S military aid suspension means for Ukrainian soldiers

“To preserve operational security, we have intentionally limited



disclosing details of our ongoing or future operations. We are very deliberate in our operational approach, but will not reveal specifics about what we’ve done or what we will do,” the U.S. Central Command said in a statement.

The military said it has struck over 800 targets since mid-March that it says killed hundreds of Houthi fighters and numerous Houthi leaders as well as destroyed the militant group’s facilities.

The military statement said the strikes “have destroyed multiple command-and-control facilities, air defence systems, advanced weapons manufacturing facilities, and advanced weapons storage locations.”

Washington says the strikes aim to cut off Houthi military and economic capabilities while minimising civilian harm.

It said on Thursday that an April 20 blast near a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Yemen’s capital,

Sanaa, was caused by a Houthi missile and not an American airstrike. The Houthis said a dozen people were killed in that incident and dismissed the U.S. denial.

The Houthis have taken control of swathes of Yemen over the past decade.

Since November 2023, they have launched attacks on vessels in the Red Sea, saying they were targeting ships linked to Israel.

They say they are acting in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza, where Israel’s war has killed over 51,000, according to Gaza’s health ministry, and led to genocide and war crimes accusations that Israel denies.

The latest bloodshed in the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict was triggered in October 2023, when Hamas militants attacked Israel, killing 1,200 and taking about 250 hostages, according to Israel.

Boat collision near Clearwater Beach leaves 1 dead, several injured

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



Tragedy struck near Clearwater Beach on Sunday night when a private recreational boat collided with a Clearwater Ferry, leaving at least one person dead and several others injured.

The Police Department reported that the ferry, which was carrying 45 people, including two crew members, was struck by a smaller boat that fled the scene immediately after the crash.

Authorities said six individuals were categorised as “trauma alerts,” indicating serious injuries. Two of the most critically hurt were airlifted by helicopter to local hospitals. The exact number

of total injuries has not yet been released.

Officials react to Clearwater incident

According to officials, the ferry ultimately came to rest on a sandbar just south of the Clearwater Memorial Causeway bridge, a vital link between Clearwater and Clearwater Beach. Rescue operations were swift, and all passengers, including those who were injured, were safely evacuated from the vessel.

The U.S. Coast Guard confirmed that the private boat, carrying six people at the time of the collision, has been identified. Investigations into the crash are ongoing, and

officials have not yet released information regarding potential charges or further actions against the operator of the fleeing vessel.

City officials and the Clearwater Fire Department praised the rapid response of first responders and vowed to keep the public informed as more details emerge.

“This was a tragic and chaotic event,” a city spokesperson said late Sunday night. “Our hearts go out to the victims and their families.”

The Clearwater community remains in shock as authorities continue piecing together the full scope of the incident.

Prosecutors charge Vancouver man with murder for attack on Filipino festival

By **Fatimah Idera**

Canadian prosecutors have charged a 30-year-old Vancouver resident with murder for killing at least 11 people aged between 5 and 65 and injuring dozens after he rammed an SUV through a crowd at a Filipino community festival in the western Canadian city, police said on Sunday.

According to a post on X by the Vancouver Police, the man, Kai-Ji Adam Lo, was charged with eight counts of second-degree murder by prosecutors in British Columbia and further charges are anticipated.

Lo appeared in court on Sunday, hours after police arrested him at the scene of the incident on Saturday evening.

Authorities described Lo as having had a significant history of interactions with authorities involving mental health. They said there was no evidence of terrorism.

This is the darkest day in our city's history, Vancouver Interim Chief Constable Steve Rai told reporters at a Sunday press conference.

Police said two dozen people were injured, some critically, and warned that the death toll could rise in coming days and weeks. As of Sunday afternoon, Rai said he did not believe there were any ongoing threats to the community.

More than 100 police officers joined the investigation, as local officials worked with provincial and federal authorities to provide support services. Messages of condolence and support came from across the globe.

"The community will feel this for a long time," RJ Aquino, chair of the community advocacy group Filipino BC, told reporters. "We want to tell everybody that we're grieving. We want to tell everybody that we see and hear the support from around the world at this point."

The attack on Saturday evening took



place two days before Canada's federal election on Monday.

Canadian PM travels to Vancouver
Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney interrupted his campaigning and travelled to Vancouver on Sunday, where he knelt in front of candles and flowers laid at the scene of the car ramming to pay his respects to the victims. He also attended a church where he lit a candle and observed a moment of silence.

Carney earlier released a statement in which he expressed his condolences to the country's Filipino community.

"Last night, families lost a sister, a brother, a mother, a father, a son or a daughter. Those families are living every family's nightmare," he told reporters in Hamilton, Ontario.

"I join all Canadians in mourning with you. I know that Canadians are united with you," he said.

British Columbia Premier David Eby said at a press conference near the site of the attack on Sunday afternoon that it was hard not to feel rage towards the man who "murdered innocent people" for reasons that were not yet known.

"I want to turn the rage that I feel into

ensuring that we stand with the Filipino community, that we deliver what they need, that we stand with those families who have lost loved ones," he told reporters.

"I know it's hard to believe it in this moment, but I know we will come back stronger."

More than 12 hours after the incident, police still did not have a motive for the attack at the festival, which took place without a dedicated police presence or heavy vehicle barriers.

"There were no known threats to the event or the Filipino community," Rai said.

Read also: At least nine killed in Vancouver after vehicle ploughs into Filipino festival

The suspect was initially chased down and held by festival-goers until police arrived, witnesses said. The injured were taken to multiple hospitals, police said.

The incident happened shortly after 8 p.m. (0300 GMT) in Vancouver's Sunset neighbourhood, an area known for its large Asian population, where the Lapu-Lapu Day Block Party, celebrating a Philippine national hero, was taking place.

Rashford likely to miss rest of season

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi



The extent of the problem, which kept Rashford out of the FA Cup semi-final defeat by Crystal Palace on Saturday, is still being assessed.

It is not completely out of the question that the 27-year-old, who is on loan from Manchester United, could return before the end of the Premier League campaign.

However, it is more likely he will focus on recovering in time for England's matches in June – a World Cup qualifier against

Andorra and a friendly against Senegal.

If he does return before then, Rashford's final league appearance of the season would be against Tottenham on 18 May because he is not eligible to play in Villa's final match of the campaign against United on 25 May.

Rashford was at Saturday's high-profile boxing fight between Chris Eubank Jr and Conor Benn at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium.

He has already decided not to speak to any clubs about his future until later in the summer.

Rashford's contract at United runs to 2028 but he does not expect to play for the club again while Ruben Amorim is manager.

He was recalled by England in Thomas Tuchel's first squad as manager in March, having been omitted from the Euro 2024 squad.

Salah's iconic selfie: A celebration to remember at Anfield

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi

Mohamed Salah once again etched his name into Liverpool folklore with a moment that blended joy, spontaneity, and a touch of modernity. During Liverpool's Premier League title-clinching 5-1 victory over Tottenham Hotspur on Sunday, the Egyptian star celebrated his goal in a way that has since become iconic: a selfie in front of a roaring Anfield crowd.

After netting Liverpool's fourth goal of the evening, Salah borrowed a mobile phone from a staff member positioned behind the advertising hoardings at the Kop end. Smiling broadly, he turned the camera on himself, capturing a jubilant selfie with thousands of Liverpool fans in the background.

The image quickly went viral, garnering millions of likes and views across social media. Yet, amid the celebrations, questions arose: was this a heartfelt moment or a clever marketing ploy? The phone Salah used was a Google Pixel — notably, Google is an official sponsor of Liverpool FC.

Addressing the speculation, Salah explained to BBC Sport that the idea was rooted in his long-standing tradition. "At the beginning of the season I always take selfies with players [who score], so for this one I said 'OK, I have to think of something special because it's a picture that's going to be there forever,'" Salah said.

Throughout the season, Salah has often posted selfies with teammates after significant wins, and his recent contract extension announcement also



featured a self-taken photo. Therefore, Sunday's moment felt like a natural extension of his personality rather than a staged advertisement.

Initially, many thought Salah had grabbed the phone from a supporter. However, it was later clarified that it belonged to a Liverpool staff member stationed near the pitch. Despite the marketing speculation, many pointed out that there was no way to guarantee Salah would score — though, given it was his 33rd goal of the season, perhaps it wasn't too far-fetched.

Interestingly, Salah wasn't the only player drawing attention for his goal celebration. Earlier in the match, Cody Gakpo received a yellow card after revealing an undershirt that read "I belong to Jesus" following his goal. Salah, however, escaped punishment from referee Thomas Bramall, who opted not to book him for delaying the restart.

The Football Association (FA) has been approached for comment, but there appear to be no rules directly addressing marketing during goal celebrations. FA guidelines mainly cover advertising on kits and regulations concerning betting companies, suggesting Salah's selfie — marketing-related or not — falls into a grey area.

Salah's celebration is not without precedent. Football legend Francesco Totti famously took a selfie after scoring in the 2015 Rome derby, and Mario Balotelli filmed his celebration with teammates while playing for Marseille in 2019.

Regardless of the marketing debate, Salah's selfie has instantly become one of the defining images of Liverpool's triumphant season — a blend of footballing excellence and a nod to the selfie-obsessed digital age.