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# Wike defends N39bn renovation, renaming of Conference Centre

By Damilola Olufemi

Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike, has defended the N39 billion spent on renovating the International Conference Centre in Abuja, describing the project as both “necessary” and “comprehensive.”

Speaking at the commissioning of the newly completed Left-Hand Service Carriageway on Friday, Wike stated that aside from the structure’s blockwork, everything within the centre was replaced.

“Everything in that Bola Ahmed Tinubu International Conference Centre was changed,” Wike said.

Originally built in 1991 for N240 million during the Babangida regime, the conference centre was recently refurbished and renamed after President Bola Tinubu, who inaugurated the facility on 10 June 2025.

Wike dismissed criticism from opposition figures including former



Senator Shehu Sani who argued the centre should have been named after Ibrahim Babangida, and questioned the renovation’s cost.

“Those criticising the amount spent don’t have good taste,” Wike said, noting inflation and currency devaluation since 1991.

He also pushed back against claims the money could have been better spent

elsewhere.

“Nobody who loves this country would criticise the International Conference Centre,” he asserted, insisting the investment reflects Nigeria’s status as the “Giant of Africa.”

Wike concluded by affirming his loyalty to President Tinubu, saying he would “defend his boss without regret.”

# Falae claims He, not Obasanjo, won 1999 Presidential election

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Chief Olu Falae, former Secretary to the Government of the Federation and 1999 presidential candidate, has claimed he was the true winner of the election that marked Nigeria’s return to civilian rule—not General Olusegun Obasanjo.

Speaking on Arise TV’s Morning Show during a special Democracy Day broadcast, Falae alleged the 1999 election results were manipulated in favour of Obasanjo.

Quoting the findings of his late legal counsel, Chief J.O.K. Ajayi, Falae said:

“I was told by my lawyer... that I won the election by over a million votes after a



meticulous assessment of the figures declared.”

Despite the alleged irregularities, Falae said he chose not to contest the outcome in court, prioritising national stability after years of military dictatorship.

“We made sacrifices for democracy to return... I accepted it in good faith then, but the truth must be told: I won that election.”

The elder statesman’s remarks reignite debate over the legitimacy of Nigeria’s 1999 transition, seen by many as a compromise designed to calm tensions after the annulled June 12, 1993 election won by MKO Abiola.

Falae also lamented the continued failure to conduct truly credible elections in Nigeria, even decades after the return to civilian governance.

# THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

## PUBLIC NOTICE COLOUR

## PRODUCT COLOUR

## EFFECTIVE FROM DECEMBER 1, 2024

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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9X5	206,000.00
9X4	177,500.00
9X3	150,000.00
8X6	216,000.00
8X3	98,500.00
7X4	164,002.00
6X4	94,010.50
6X3	78,500.00
6X2	47,500.00
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9X4	137,875.00
9X3	112,875.00
8X6	179,368.00
8X5	143,500.00
8X4	93,500.00
8X3	82,434.50
7X4	111,173.50
6X4	82,434.50
6X3	59,250.00
6X2	40,000.00
5X6	98,749.50
5X4	65,833.00
5X3	49,375.00
5X2	32,916.50
4X4	52,666.50
4X3	39,499.50
4X2	26,333.50
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10X5	162,222.445
10X4	103,963.00
10X3	N/A
9X6	162,222.445
9X5	168,191.50
9X4	N/A
8X6	N/A
8X3	N/A
7X4	72,676.00
6X4	65,000.00
6X3	41,124.50
6X2	29,858.00
5X6	71,378.00
5X4	42,825.00
5X3	29,858.00
5X2	22,841.00
4x4	N/A
4X3	N/A
4X2	17,737.50
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3X2	14,923.00
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# Jamiu Abiola: Nigeria missed economic growth by denying MKO Presidency

By **Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye**



**J**amiu Abiola, son of late democracy icon Chief MKO Abiola, has said that Nigeria would have achieved far greater economic progress had his father been allowed to assume the presidency following his victory in the annulled 1993 general election.

Speaking on Thursday during a special June 12 Democracy Day broadcast on Channels Television, Jamiu lamented what he described as a lost opportunity for national advancement during a period of global economic prosperity.

“Nigeria would have been better because, at that time, it was a very special time in global times; that 1993 period was a time when the world itself was having an international economic boom.

“So, we could have tapped into that. But what did we get in return? We got a Kleptomaniac as head of state. I am not going to talk about (Sani) Abacha because he has his problems wherever he has found

himself,” he said.

The event, titled “Nigeria’s Democratic Journey: An Inter-Generational Conversation on Building a Better Nation”, marked 26 years of unbroken democratic rule in the country.

Jamiu Abiola, who currently serves as the Senior Special Adviser to President Bola Tinubu on Linguistics and Foreign Affairs, also accused certain figures of attempting to erase his father’s legacy from Nigeria’s political history.

“I wrote a book in 2015 because I came to realise that my father’s name was becoming like a memory that was becoming distant and people were hellbent on rewriting the history of Nigeria without him,” he said.

Jamiu, who is Senior Special Adviser to President Bola Tinubu on Linguistics and Foreign Affairs, expressed the belief that some people were hellbent on erasing his

father’s name from Nigeria’s history.

According to him, international dignitaries would often refer to other former Nigerian leaders while ignoring his father’s name.

“Some people wanted to bury his name. Like my father would say: they wanted to shave his head in his absence,” he added.

Jamiu’s 2015 book, *The President Who Never Ruled*, was written to ensure that Chief MKO Abiola’s name remained prominent in the annals of Nigerian history.

It will be recalled that in 2018, former President Muhammadu Buhari posthumously awarded MKO Abiola the Grand Commander of the Order of the Federal Republic (GCFR) Nigeria’s highest national honour and formally designated 12 June as Democracy Day, a move widely seen as long overdue recognition of Abiola’s sacrifice.

# I only tested it, this time I'm running - Al-Mustapha confirms 2027 Presidential bid

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye



**R**etired Major Hamza Al-Mustapha has formally declared his intention to contest in Nigeria's 2027 general elections, saying this time his ambition is "serious and unwavering."

Speaking during an interview with the BBC Hausa Service, Al-Mustapha who once served as Chief Security Officer to the late Head of State, General Sani Abacha spoke extensively on issues of democracy, security, and governance in Nigeria.

"God willing, I only tested it, but this time I'm serious about running," he said, in a clear departure from previous campaigns

in 2019 and 2023 where he failed to secure victory.

Al-Mustapha noted that preparations are already underway, including discussions with international observers about ensuring greater transparency in the electoral process.

"We have discussed with foreign countries, asking them to closely monitor Nigeria, especially regarding the elections, because election results are usually written," he said, expressing concern over alleged electoral malpractice in past polls.

He ruled out aligning with existing political blocs or alliances,

particularly those whose ideologies clash with his personal values.

"If their ideology is different from ours, then I don't want to be part of something shameful that would bring dishonor to the country with my involvement," he stated firmly.

When asked if he might throw his weight behind other prominent politicians like former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, Al-Mustapha dismissed the possibility altogether: "There is no possibility of our paths crossing politically, so there's no need for that question."

Al-Mustapha previously contested in the 2019 and 2023 elections but did not succeed.

# Aiyedatiwa flags off FG's N1.2bn conditional cash transfer scheme

By Friday Omosola

Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa of Ondo State on Friday launched the second phase of the Federal Government's Conditional Cash Transfer scheme, disbursing ₦75,000 each to 16,255 vulnerable residents across the state's eighteen local government areas.

The official flag-off ceremony, held at the Akure South Local Government Secretariat, marked the distribution of Renewed Hope Debit Cards to thousands of beneficiaries under the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP), implemented in partnership with the National Social Investment Programme Agency (NSIPA) and the Ondo State Government.

Mr Aiyedatiwa reiterated his administration's commitment to social inclusion and economic empowerment, describing the initiative as a bold step towards realising President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope agenda.

"Today, we take yet another bold step in our ongoing commitment to improving the welfare of our people, ensuring social inclusion, and fulfilling the promise of Renewed Hope for all," the governor declared.

He disclosed that each of the 16,255 beneficiaries would receive a total of ₦75,000, paid in monthly instalments of ₦25,000 over three months directly through personalised debit cards.

The total sum injected into this phase of the scheme stands at ₦1,219,125,000.

Mr Aiyedatiwa recalled that the first phase, launched in November 2024, saw the distribution of 8,637 debit cards, with a total disbursement of ₦647,775,000.

He described the current phase as a significant expansion of the state's social



safety net.

"We understand the economic challenges that many of our people face, and this programme is a clear demonstration that the government stands with you," he added, assuring that efforts were underway to expand the state's social register to include more vulnerable households.

The governor thanked Mr Tinubu and the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development for sustaining the programme, urging beneficiaries to use the funds wisely.

"I encourage you to invest in your families, support your businesses, and ensure that this opportunity translates to meaningful progress in your lives," he said.

Also speaking, the Senior Special Assistant to the governor on Social Investment, Alonge Kolawole, described the scheme as aligned with the governor's "Our Ease" agenda, focused on improving living conditions for women and persons with disabilities.

He emphasised the transparency of the selection process, which relied on

Community-Based Targeting Enumeration.

In his goodwill message, the State Director of the National Orientation Agency (NOA), James Adekunle, commended Ondo's proactive implementation of the Renewed Hope agenda, noting the state's pioneering role in adopting federal social intervention programmes.

The Chairman of Akure South Local Government, Gbenga Fasua, and the Deji of Akure, Oba Aladetoyinbo Ogunlade Aladelusi, also lauded the governor for his people-centred leadership and effective alignment with national development goals.

Delivering the vote of thanks, the Senior Special Assistant to the governor on Youth Empowerment and Entrepreneurship, Gbayisemore Orioye, praised Aiyedatiwa's support, noting that Ondo had become the third state in the country to implement the scheme.

One of the beneficiaries, Falaye Emmanuel, expressed his gratitude for the financial support, describing the cash transfer as timely and a welcome relief to his household.

# Tinubu greets Vanguard Publisher Sam Amuka at 90

By Friday Omosola



**P**resident Bola Tinubu has paid glowing tribute to Sam Amuka-Pemu, known as Uncle Sam, on the occasion of his 90th birthday, describing him as an ‘eminent statesman and journalism icon.’

In a statement issued from the State House, Mr Tinubu hailed the Vanguard newspaper publisher for his unwavering dedication to journalism, resilience through decades of media challenges, and for shaping Nigeria’s media landscape with integrity and vision.

“Today, I celebrate Prince Sam Amuka-Pemu, iconic journalist and publisher of Vanguard newspaper, on his 90th birthday”, he said.

Mr Amuka-Pemu began his journalism career at the Daily Times before co-founding The Punch

newspaper with the late Chief Olu Aboderin.

He later established Vanguard in 1984, which rose under his leadership to become one of Nigeria’s most influential newspapers.

Mr Tinubu acknowledged Amuka-Pemu’s managerial acumen, noting that Vanguard has survived and thrived for 41 years despite the many crises that have rocked the media industry.

“Uncle Sam remains a shining example of dedication, resilience and integrity within the media industry. Today, he is not just a leader of the profession; he is a doyen,” Mr Tinubu said.

Beyond journalism, he also recognised Mr Amuka-Pemu’s

stature as a respected leader in Delta State and the South-South region, underscoring his contributions as an elder statesman.

Mr Tinubu recalled bestowing on Mr Amuka-Pemu the national honour of Commander of the Order of the Niger (CON) during this year’s Democracy Day celebrations, in recognition of his contributions to the country and exemplary leadership in journalism.

He urged young journalists to emulate Uncle Sam’s professional legacy and commitment to excellence.

“I wish Uncle Sam continued God’s grace and more years of impact. Our country is deeply grateful for his invaluable contributions to journalism and his enduring legacy,” he said.

# Fubara meets Wike again amid Rivers crisis

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye



**S**uspended Rivers State Governor, Siminalayi Fubara, has reportedly held another meeting with Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike, in Abuja.

According to sources quoted by New Daily Prime, the meeting took place at Wike's residence on Monday, despite viral photos circulating online being described as "old images." One insider confirmed:

"The photograph is an old image, but I can inform you that he (Fubara) came to see the Minister this week Monday."

The meeting is understood to be

part of Fubara's ongoing attempts to reconcile with Wike and other key stakeholders in Rivers State following months of political unrest.

Fubara, who succeeded Wike as governor in 2023, fell out with his predecessor over control of the state's political machinery a dispute that later escalated into a full-blown crisis involving a divided House of Assembly.

On 18 March 2025, President Bola Tinubu suspended Fubara and declared a six-month state of emergency in Rivers.

The move came after threats from Niger Delta militants to target oil

infrastructure, prompting the appointment of Vice Admiral Ibok-Ete Ibas as Sole Administrator.

Since his suspension, Fubara has met with President Tinubu in London and Lagos and has made repeated efforts to reconcile with Wike, who referred to him as "my son" and urged broader consultation with political figures in the state.

However, nearly three months into the suspension, there is still no public record of Fubara meeting other key stakeholders in Rivers, raising questions about the progress of the reconciliation process.

# Fayemi: Nigeria has civilian rule but not full democracy

By Friday Omosola



**F**ormer Ekiti State Governor and ex-minister, Kayode Fayemi, has said that although Nigeria transitioned to civilian rule in 1999, the country has yet to fully attain genuine democracy.

He spoke during a special Channels Television programme titled 'Nigeria's Democratic Journey: An Inter-Generational Conversation on Building a Better Nation' in commemoration of Democracy Day.

Mr Fayemi stressed that electoral participation alone does not equate to democratic maturity.

He noted, "What we achieved in 1999 was restoration of our right to vote for leaders, but that's not the same as real democracy. We have civilian governance—a form of semi-democracy—but we're still working toward full democratic practice."

Mr Fayemi urged Nigerians to continue building on the efforts of past and present leaders, including President Bola Tinubu, in deepening democratic values and institutions.

Reflecting on his own role in the pro-democracy movement, he recounted how he and other activists ran Radio Kudirat during the Abacha regime to counter military propaganda and promote democratic ideals.

Mr Fayemi admitted that while their activism was driven by conviction, they did not fully grasp the scale of danger they faced.

"We weren't fearless—we were just committed to doing what we believed was right," he recalled. "I personally transported Radio Kudirat's transmitters on an Air France flight that diverted to Lagos during the height of the crisis. If I had been caught, that could have been the end of my story."

He added that many of their colleagues were not as fortunate, with several losing their lives or facing serious threats during that period.

He emphasised that the sacrifices made by those who paid the ultimate price were not made out of recklessness, but out of deeply held beliefs.

"I don't want to create the illusion that we were untouchable. Some of us simply survived because of luck. The bravery of those who didn't make it should never be dismissed."

Mr Fayemi commended Mr Tinubu for honouring several democracy icons with national awards during the Democracy Day celebration.

However, he also appealed for wider recognition of unsung heroes, including those involved in the operation of Radio Kudirat.

# Airline group condemns Oshiomhole's conduct as Keyamo orders investigation

By Friday Omosola

The Airline Operators of Nigeria (AON) on Friday criticised the behaviour of Senator Adams Oshiomhole, a former governor of Edo State, during an incident at Lagos' Murtala Muhammed Airport.

AON described it as inappropriate and reflective of a broader pattern of rising passenger misconduct on local flights.

On Wednesday, Air Peace and Oshiomhole engaged in a war of words following an incident at Murtala Muhammed Airport Terminal 1, Zulu Hall.

Air Peace accused Mr Oshiomhole, of instigating violence and causing disruption to one of its flights.

In response, Mr Oshiomhole rejected the allegation, claiming the airline barred him and several other passengers from boarding despite having completed online check-in procedures.

He went further to accuse Air Peace of engaging in extortion and other unethical practices.

The airline, however, dismissed Mr Oshiomhole's claims, firmly denying any wrongdoing.

Professor Obiora Okonkwo, who serves as the spokesperson for the group, voiced concern that two days after the event, the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) had yet to issue a clear account of what transpired.

He made these remarks in Lagos during a press briefing at an event where United Nigeria Airlines announced its inclusion in the SIBAS Global Distribution System (GDS).

According to Mr Okonkwo, while passengers are entitled to certain rights, those rights are governed by standards set by the International Civil Aviation



Organisation (ICAO) and other industry guidelines.

He stressed that frustration does not justify taking matters into one's own hands.

"What happened was a textbook case of disruptive passenger behaviour. It simply cannot be excused," he said.

"Air Peace is a major player in our domestic aviation space, responsible for transporting between 40 and 50% of Nigeria's local air travellers. It deserves to be treated with fairness and respect. Criticising the airline in this way goes beyond addressing the real issues.

"We've reviewed the senator's claims and found no merit in them. No airline willingly delays or offloads passengers. Operators work under enormous pressure to meet customer expectations."

In response to the controversy, Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development Festus Keyamo took to his official X (formerly Twitter) handle to confirm that he had instructed aviation authorities to conduct a full investigation into the matter.

Keyamo disclosed that he had spoken with both parties involved shortly after the incident occurred.

He cautioned aviation officials against making hasty judgments and emphasised the importance of hearing all perspectives before drawing conclusions.

Keyamo wrote: "In the wake of the incident at the Lagos Airport last Wednesday involving Air Peace Airline and Senator Adams Oshiomhole. I have been in direct contact with both parties since that morning. I also directed the aviation agencies to exercise restraint in jumping to conclusions in line with the time-honoured legal principle of 'hear all sides' before reaching judgment.

"Whilst appealing to both sides to halt the public accusations and counter-accusations, I am further directing the relevant aviation agencies to thoroughly look into the issue, collect all available evidence and revert to my office so we can deal with the issue in such a way as to guide future conducts in similar situations."

# Aiyedatiwa nominates 12 commissioners for confirmation

By Friday Omosola

Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa of Ondo State has nominated twelve individuals for appointment as commissioners in the Ondo State Executive Council.

This was disclosed in a statement by the governor's Chief Press Secretary, Ebenezer Adeniyi, on Friday.

Mr Aiyedatiwa has forwarded their names to the state House of Assembly for confirmation.

The governor made this request in an official letter addressed to the Speaker of the House of Assembly, Olamide Oladiji.

In the letter, Mr Aiyedatiwa stated that



the nominations were made in accordance with the powers conferred on him by Section 192 (1 & 2) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended).

The list of nominees includes Professor Igbekele Ajibefun, Engineer Aycrinde Abiola Olawoye, Honourable Ayodele Akande, Engineer Alabi Johnson, Alhaji Amidu Takuro, Otunba Adewale Akinlosotu, Mr Idowu Ajanaku, Dr Oluwaseun Abosede Osamaye, Dr Tob Loko, Mr Olaolu Akindolire, Honourable Sunday Olajide, and Mr Omoyofunmi Segun Henry.

Mr Aiyedatiwa appealed to the House of Assembly to consider and confirm the nominees as soon as possible.

He emphasised that swift confirmation would serve the overall interest of the state.

# Oyetola pledges leadership to reclaim Osun for APC in 2026

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Minister of Marine and Blue Economy and former Osun State Governor, Adegboyega Oyetola, has reaffirmed his commitment to lead the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Osun and return the party to power in the 2026 governorship election.

Speaking through Mr Richard Tinubu, former Director-General of the State Bureau of Social Services, at an event organised by the APC-affiliated Iron Ladies Group in Osogbo, Oyetola called for unity within the party ahead of the crucial poll scheduled for 8 August 2026.

"I will provide leadership for APC and work hard to return the party to power in 2026," he said.



The incumbent governor, Ademola Adeleke of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), is widely expected to seek re-election.

Oyetola also urged party members to intensify grassroots mobilisation and to support President Bola

Tinubu's economic reform efforts.

Earlier, the group's state coordinator, Adesola Ayangbile, said Iron Ladies was founded to empower women in politics and promote social welfare.

She announced the group's endorsement of Mr Bola Oyebamiji, Managing Director of the National Inland Waterways Authority, as their preferred aspirant for the APC ticket in 2026.

Receiving an award on Oyebamiji's behalf, Dr Shekinat Oyebamiji expressed gratitude for the group's support and assured them of her husband's commitment to their expectations if elected.

# Bello El-Rufai apologises for past criticism of Goodluck Jonathan

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

**B**ello El-Rufai, a member of the House of Representatives representing Kaduna North, has publicly expressed regret for his past criticism of former President Goodluck Jonathan, admitting that he was naive at the time.

The Kaduna lawmaker noted that he failed to realise that Nigeria had a good governance under Jonathan due to his naivety.

Speaking on Channels Television's Politics Today on Thursday, Bello, son of former Kaduna State governor Nasir El-Rufai, said he has since gained a deeper understanding of governance and now recognises the value of Jonathan's leadership.

Bello said his naivety came to the fore when he saw his father preparing to visit



Jonathan for political consultation.

He recalled paying his father a visit and noticed that he was going out. He asked where he was going.

He recounted a moment of personal reflection when he learned that his father was going to visit Jonathan for political consultation.

"I said, 'please, when you see him, tell him I am very sorry, I am wiser now'," Bello told his father.

He also praised Jonathan's democratic credentials, saying, "It takes a lot, particularly in Africa, to lose an election and leave. He did that."

El-Rufai initially had a good relationship with Jonathan and he even urged him to contest the 2011 presidential election.

Reports said after Namadi Sambo's emergence as Vice President, El-Rufai and his family members heavily criticized Jonathan's administration.

# Appeal court dismisses APC bid to relist Osun LG election appeal

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

**T**he Court of Appeal sitting in Akure has reportedly dismissed an application by the All Progressives Congress (APC) seeking to relist its appeal against a Federal High Court judgment that nullified the October 15, 2022, local government elections in Osun State.

According to New Daily Prime, the Federal High Court in Osogbo had earlier declared the controversial elections through which APC chairmen were elected null and void.

Although the APC has claimed that a subsequent Appeal Court ruling reinstated the sacked chairmen, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has consistently refuted this interpretation.

Delivering the lead judgement on Friday, Justice Peter Obiorah, speaking for a unanimous panel, strongly criticised the APC for misrepresenting the court's earlier ruling of 10 February 2025.

He clarified that the appellate court had never ordered the reinstatement of the



dismissed APC council officials.

"The judiciary must not be treated as an extension of any political organisation," the judge stated, warning against the distortion of court rulings for partisan advantage.

The court emphasised that the APC's attempt to revive its appeal lacked merit, noting that the party failed to prosecute the case within the prescribed legal

timeframe.

"Equity aids the vigilant, not the indolent," the court held, describing the APC's predicament as "a self-inflicted injury."

Justice Obiorah noted that despite knowing their tenure was limited to three years, the APC failed to act promptly and neglected to compile the necessary records. He questioned the party's sincerity, highlighting inconsistencies in their efforts to revive the appeal long after its dismissal on 13 January 2025.

"The sudden attempt to resurrect this appeal... will only lead to confusion," he said, firmly rejecting what he called an attempt to draw the court into sitting on a matter already adjudicated.

The judges concluded that no good cause had been shown to justify the application and accordingly dismissed it.

As of the time of reporting, the Certified True Copy of the judgment had yet to be released.

# Judicial activities halted in Ondo as court workers begin indefinite strike

By Friday Omosola

Courtrooms across Ondo State were shut down on Friday as members of the Judiciary Staff Union of Nigeria (JUSUN), Ondo chapter, embarked on an indefinite strike, crippling legal proceedings throughout the state.

From early morning, court gates—including those of the State High Court and Magistrates' Court in Akure, were securely locked, barring judges, lawyers, and litigants from entering and effectively halting all judicial operations.

Confirming the industrial action, the state JUSUN chairman, Oluwafemi Afolabi, told journalists that the union had issued a seven-day warning to the state government, which expired without a resolution.

"All members have been instructed to withdraw from their duties beginning today, June 13, 2025, and comply fully with the strike protocol until further notice," Afolabi stated.

He explained that the strike action covers every court within the state's 18 local government areas and was triggered by the government's failure to honour sections of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that guarantee financial independence for the judiciary.

"The government has not implemented the agreed terms related to judiciary funding autonomy. As a result, all courts in the state are now closed," he



added.

JUSUN had earlier demanded that Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa take urgent steps to implement the MoU, warning that failure to do so would lead to the shutdown of courts statewide.

In a statement signed by JUSUN Secretary, Kehinde Alade, the union expressed disappointment over what it described as the government's persistent failure to implement key aspects of the MOU.

"Regrettably, the state government has reneged on certain parts of the agreements outlined in the MOU.

"This continuous refusal by the state government to honour these agreements has had adverse effects on our members.

"Having waited aimlessly since 2015, we hereby issue a 7-calendar-day ultimatum to the government to honour the reneged parts of the agreements in the MOU within 7 calendar days upon receipt of a letter," the statement reads.

As of press time, the Commissioner for Justice and Attorney General, Kayode Ajulo, were unsuccessful.

However, a source close to Ajulo confirmed that a recent meeting held on Wednesday between government representatives and union leaders ended without any resolution.

"The meeting ended in a deadlock because both the state government and the union could not come to a better agreement," he said.

# ‘Al-Jannah’ inspired by my personal losses, Kizz Daniel reveals

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular Afrobeat star and songwriter, Oluwatobiloba Daniel Anidugbe, better known as Kizz Daniel, has opened up about the close relationship he had with his late father.

In a recent podcast interview, the music star revealed that the loss of his father had a lasting impact on him and directly inspired his emotional new song, Al-Jannah.

During the interview, Kizz Daniel described his father as his “best friend” and reflected on how deeply his passing affected him. He said the death of his father in 2015 changed his perspective on life, relationships, and how he expresses emotions through music.

‘My dad was my best friend’

“When my dad was alive, he was my best friend,” the singer stated, his voice filled with emotion. According to Kizz Daniel, the bond he shared with his father went beyond the usual father-son relationship. It was a deep friendship that shaped much of who he is today.

His father, a lecturer and disciplinarian, passed away on May 9, 2015, just a few days after the singer celebrated his 21st birthday. That loss, Kizz Daniel said, was one of the hardest moments of his life.

The meaning behind ‘Al-Jannah’

The track Al-Jannah, which means “paradise” in Arabic, is a heartfelt tribute not only to his father but to other loved ones he and his wife have lost over the years. The singer explained that the idea behind the song was to create something that speaks to everyone who has lost someone dear.

“We’ve lost people in the past. We lost our son in 2021. I lost my dad in 2015. My wife lost her mum in 2024. I also lost my step-mum,” he shared.

Kizz Daniel said the song was born from the pain of multiple losses and the desire to honour all the departed souls in a



meaningful way. Rather than focus on just one person, he wanted Al-Jannah to serve as a song of comfort for everyone going through grief.

A song for everyone

“I wanted to make a song for everyone, not just one person. It’s about the loved ones we have lost in this journey of life,” the singer explained. He added that he aimed to bring healing and comfort to listeners who might be experiencing similar pain.

Kizz Daniel revealed that one of the most emotional elements of the song is the word “friend,” which he uses to represent the people who meant the most to him. “I think I was able to accomplish that by using the word ‘friend’ in the song,” he noted.

Fans react to emotional track

Since its release, Al-Jannah has touched the hearts of many fans across the world. On social media, fans have praised Kizz Daniel for his openness and the depth of emotion in the song. Many say the track helped them process their own grief and

reminded them of the loved ones they have lost.

Music critics also note that the song marks a mature turn in Kizz Daniel’s artistic journey, showing a different side of him, one that is vulnerable, reflective, and emotionally aware.

A personal chapter in his career

The Buga crooner is known for his catchy tunes and upbeat sound, but Al-Jannah offers something more personal. It shows a man who is not afraid to talk about pain, loss, and the people who shaped him.

By drawing from personal experiences, Kizz Daniel continues to grow not only as an artist but also as a storyteller. Al-Jannah is more than just a song; it is a message of love, memory, and healing.

With this emotional tribute, the singer has once again connected with his audience, reminding them that even in sorrow, music can be a source of strength.

# 'How car accident changed my parents to support my music career', says Victony

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**N**igerian singer Anthony Ebuka Victor, widely known as Victony, has shared how a tragic event became the key turning point in his life and career.

In a recent interview, he revealed that his 2021 car accident not only changed his outlook but also shifted his parents' stance on his music journey.

The tragic car accident that sparked change

In April 2021, Victony was involved in a devastating car accident. The incident left one person dead and three others, including the singer, badly injured. It was a dark period that pushed him into the public spotlight, not just for his music, but also for the outpouring of support that followed.

Before the accident, Victony's parents had serious doubts about his career path. They were not fully supportive of his decision to pursue music. According to the 'Soweto' crooner, they had other plans for him.

Parents wanted a different future

Speaking on the Behind The Prestige podcast, Victony opened up about the struggles he faced at home while trying to build his career. He said his parents hoped he would complete his university education and become an engineer, not a musician.

"My parents were not cool with me doing music from the jump," he said during the interview. "They didn't tell me to stop, but they weren't 100% supportive of it. They hoped I'd finish school and become an engineer."

Public support opened their eyes



The car accident, however, changed everything. While he was recovering, social media was flooded with messages of support, prayers, and encouragement from fans and fellow artists alike. His parents saw this reaction and began to understand the influence he had through his music.

"But when I had my accident in 2021 and they saw how much impact I had on people, how people on social media were posting things like 'pray for Victony,' they realised my music career meant a lot to me," he explained. "They just let me do what I wanted."

A career built on resilience

Victony's rise in the Nigerian music scene has been nothing short of remarkable. He gained major recognition after collaborating with singer Mayorkun on the hit song Holy Father. The track became an instant success and cemented his place in the industry.

He is currently signed to Mainland Block Party, a Nigerian record label founded by music executive Tobi Mohammed. Since joining the label, Victony has continued to release chart-topping singles and build a loyal fan base.

The accident was 'a blessing in disguise'

Looking back, Victony now describes the car crash as a "blessing in disguise." In 2023, he publicly reflected on the incident, saying that while it was a painful experience, it brought about unexpected growth and acceptance, not just in his career, but also in his family.

"It was one of the hardest times of my life," he said. "But it also showed me the kind of love and support I had. It made my parents believe in me."

Ongoing health challenges

Despite his success, Victony has faced ongoing health struggles. Since the 2021 crash, he has undergone four different surgeries. These challenges have not stopped him from performing or creating music. Instead, they have strengthened his resolve and deepened his connection with his audience.

From doubt to support

Victony's story is one of resilience, growth, and unexpected transformation. What began as a personal tragedy turned into a moment of awakening, not just for him, but for his family as well. Today, he continues to thrive in the music industry, with the full support of those who once doubted his path.

# 'I can't sleep', Mary Njoku shares her struggles

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular Nollywood actress and filmmaker, Mary Njoku, has spoken candidly about her current struggles with uncertainty and emotional stress.

In a heartfelt Instagram post shared in the early hours of Friday, the actress revealed she is going through a confusing phase in her life that has left her feeling stuck and mentally exhausted.

"I don't know what to do", Mary confesses

Mary Njoku did not hold back as she poured out her thoughts and emotions. According to the actress, she finds herself at a difficult crossroads, unsure of her next step and overwhelmed by self-doubt.

"I'm at a point in my life where I truly don't know what to do," she wrote. "It feels like I'm stuck. I'm at a crossroads, uncertain and confused."

The actress, known for her usually confident and assertive persona, admitted that her situation has become so intense that it has begun to affect her sleep and peace of mind.

"I'm used to having answers. I'm used to having direction and clarity. But right now, I have none. My mind is overwhelmed. I can't sleep," she added.

Emotional turmoil and broken trust

In the emotional post, Njoku touched on how her perception of people around her has recently changed. She said some realizations have made her question how well she truly knows those she trusts.

"The people you think you know, you come to realize, maybe you don't know them at all. And that shakes you," she shared.

The post gave fans a rare glimpse into the vulnerable side of the actress, who is often seen smiling and thriving on screen



and social media. Her words resonated with many of her followers, some of whom took to the comment section to offer support and encouragement.

A moment of honesty

Njoku's message stands out in a world where celebrities often mask their personal challenges behind glamour and success.

Her honesty about her emotional state has sparked conversations about the pressure many women, especially in high-profile roles, silently endure.

Although she did not go into details about what triggered her current state of mind, the actress made it clear that it is more than just a passing feeling. She admitted it's an ongoing internal struggle that has deeply affected her mental state.

Reflecting on recent public comments

The actress's emotional post comes barely a month after she made headlines for addressing the importance of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) in the Nigerian educational system.

At the time, she emphasized the role of proper academic testing in ensuring qualified candidates secure admission into universities.

Her recent post, however, shifts focus from public discourse to personal pain. It suggests that while she has continued to

contribute to public debates and offer career insights, she has also been fighting silent battles behind the scenes.

Fans show support

Shortly after her post, fans and fellow celebrities filled her comment section with words of encouragement. Many praised her for being brave enough to speak about what many go through in silence. Others urged her to take things one step at a time and reminded her that uncertainty is part of life's journey.

Some fans even shared their own stories of confusion and emotional difficulty, showing that Njoku's words had struck a chord with a wide audience.

Looking ahead

Though Mary Njoku did not outline specific plans for addressing her current challenges, her openness may be the first step toward healing. By speaking up, she not only acknowledged her personal truth but also gave others the courage to do the same.

As one of Nollywood's most respected voices, Njoku's transparency serves as a reminder that even the strongest public figures are human and can struggle just like everyone else.

For now, fans can only hope that the actress finds clarity and peace in the days ahead.

# I started struggling at young age, Jarvis reveals

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**P**opular Nigerian content creator and TikToker, Amadou Elizabeth Aminata, widely known as Jarvis, has opened up about the harsh realities of her early life.

In a recent TikTok livestream, the Edo-born star shared emotional stories from her childhood, revealing how she was forced into adulthood too early.

Jarvis, who has gained online fame through her relatable videos and vibrant personality, explained that she had to take on menial jobs at a young age to survive.

According to her, these early struggles shaped her into the person she is today and may have contributed to the difficulty she experiences embracing her femininity.

**Forced to grow up fast**

Speaking during her livestream, Jarvis said, "At a young age, I became a man. Maybe that is why it's so difficult for me to act like a lady. I was forced to start working early, taking on responsibilities no child should have. I have suffered."

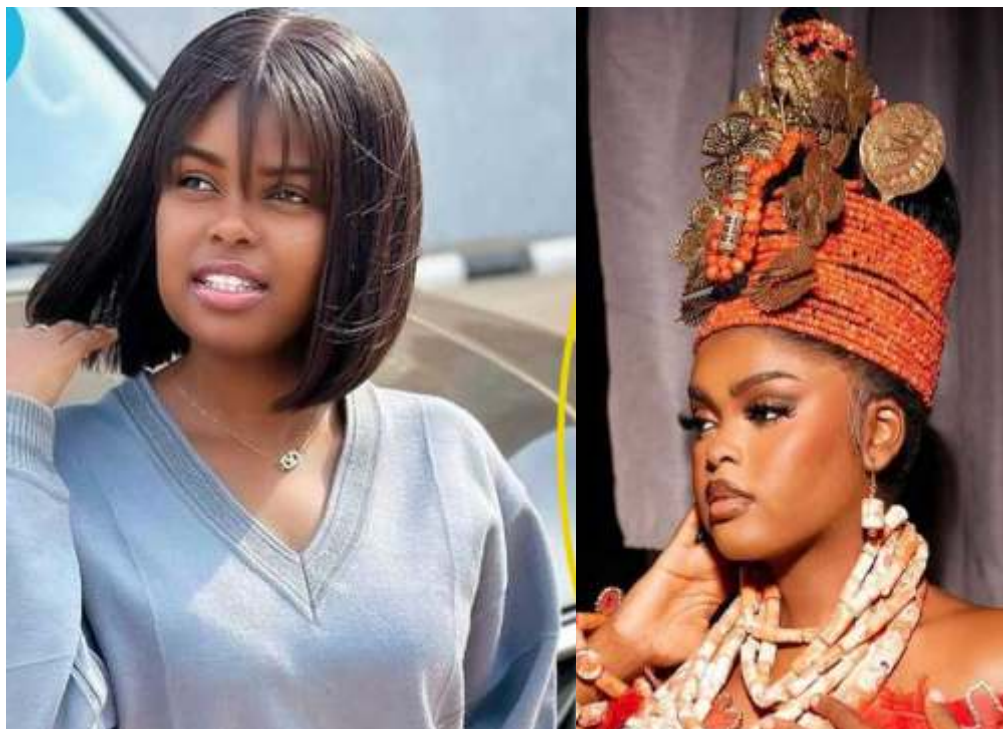
She recounted how she worked under various shop owners as a salesgirl, taking on long hours and heavy tasks typically assigned to adults. Despite her young age, Jarvis said she was determined to be responsible, hardworking, and dependable.

"I did salesgirl for several people," she said. "I'm sure my bosses would be proud to see who I have become."

**The day everything went wrong**

Jarvis also shared a painful memory from one of her jobs, where her attempt to be responsible ended in heartbreak. She narrated how one of her bosses had left her in charge of the store while travelling. During that period, tragedy struck.

"There was a day my madam travelled and left the store in my care," she said. "I was desperate to impress her and make good sales. But sadly, I was robbed that day."



Jarvis explained that the robbery took a toll on her emotionally. When her boss returned, she expected to be scolded or punished. However, with the help of concerned neighbours who intervened, her boss chose to show kindness.

"She forgave me after the neighbours spoke up for me," Jarvis recounted. "She said she would deduct the money for the stolen goods from my salary. I can't remember if she eventually did. But I was surprised by how she comforted me instead of lashing out. She told me not to cry too much and advised me to be more cautious in the future."

**Embracing the past**

Despite the trauma of her early years, Jarvis said those experiences helped shape her resilience and build her character. She said the struggles taught her the importance of strength, survival, and independence.

Jarvis noted that because of how early she was made to work and act like an adult, it can sometimes feel unnatural for her to show softness or behave in ways traditionally seen as feminine.

"People just see me and feel a natural sympathy," she said. "They love me

without me asking. Maybe it's because they can sense that I've been through a lot."

**Rising above it all**

Now a celebrated online personality, Jarvis has managed to turn her pain into power. Her journey from a struggling girl in Edo to a well-known TikToker continues to inspire her followers. By sharing her story, she hopes to show others, especially young people facing difficult circumstances, that they are not alone and that better days can come.

Though she still reflects on those painful memories, Jarvis said she carries no bitterness. She expressed love and gratitude toward the people who were part of her journey, including the boss who once had to deduct money from her salary.

"I still love her," she said warmly. "She was kind to me, even when things went wrong. And today, I'm proud of who I've become."

Jarvis's story is a powerful reminder of how resilience, grit, and compassion can help people rise above even the toughest beginnings.

# VeryDarkMan slams Burna Boy, Davido, Wizkid over lavish car purchases amid Economic hardship

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**P**opular and controversial social media personality, VeryDarkMan, has publicly criticised Nigerian music superstars Burna Boy, Davido, and Wizkid for purchasing luxury cars worth billions of naira at a time when many Nigerians are battling severe economic hardship.

His remarks came shortly after reports emerged that Burna Boy had splashed a staggering ₦3.5 billion on a brand-new McLaren Sienna. According to online sources, Burna Boy is the first African to own this particular model, making headlines across the continent.

Not long after Burna Boy's acquisition, Davido reportedly joined the big spenders' list by purchasing a 2026 Mercedes-Maybach SL 680. The vehicle is said to be worth about ₦1.2 billion. Earlier this year, Wizkid also made waves when he reportedly bought a luxury car for ₦1.7 billion.

'Read the room,' VeryDarkMan tells music stars

In reaction, VeryDarkMan took to Instagram to share a video where he expressed his disappointment in the music icons. He called them out for what he described as a lack of empathy for ordinary Nigerians and accused them of ignoring the harsh realities facing their fellow citizens.

"Yesterday, I saw the news that Burna Boy bought a ₦3.5 billion car," he said. "The same day, Davido bought a car for over ₦1 billion. They have been doing these kinds of things back-to-back."

He questioned whether the trio truly understood the struggles of everyday Nigerians and urged them to "read the room." According to him, while the musicians are not elected officials, their influence and wealth come largely from their fans, most of whom are facing real financial struggles.

"You guys are not the government," he



noted, "but you benefit from this country and from the fans who made you."

Focus on Davido's roots in Osun

VeryDarkMan, who is known to be an associate of Davido, focused most of his criticism on the singer, questioning his contribution to his home state, Osun.

"Let me start with Davido because you are my guy," he said. "What can you beat your chest and say you have done for Osun State, the place you come from?"

He continued, "The last time I saw you in Osun was during your uncle's campaign for governor. You helped him win votes. But after that, what have you done that truly benefits the youth in that state?"

He urged Davido to reflect on what legacy he's building and what real change he has brought to his community, given the massive support he enjoys from fans.

'What have your fans gained?'

In his video, VeryDarkMan posed a thought-provoking question to all three artists: What can your fans say they have gained from supporting you?

He stressed that while it's not wrong to enjoy wealth or buy luxury items, it is important for public figures to balance personal enjoyment with a sense of

responsibility.

"There's nothing wrong with being successful," he said. "But you need to give back to the people who helped you get there. The fans buy your music, stream your videos, attend your shows, and celebrate you. What are they getting in return?"

Mixed reactions online

The video has since gone viral and sparked a debate online. While some netizens supported VeryDarkMan's view and praised him for speaking out, others defended the artists, arguing that they have a right to enjoy their wealth.

Some commenters pointed out that Davido has previously supported charitable causes, including scholarships, donations, and hospital bills. Others said Burna Boy and Wizkid have also made philanthropic efforts, though these are not always publicised.

Still, the overall sentiment was divided, with many users urging celebrities to show more compassion and awareness, especially in tough times.

As the debate continues, the video has reignited a larger conversation about fame, wealth, and social responsibility in Nigeria's entertainment industry.

# 'I've never been on stage without taking alcohol', Singer Victony opens up

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**N**igerian music sensation, Anthony Ebuka Victor, better known as Victony, has made a surprising confession.

The fast-rising Afrobeats artist revealed that he has always taken alcohol before stepping on stage. According to him, drinking helps him get into the performance mood and manage the pressures of live shows.

Victony, known for hit songs like Soweto, shared this during a recent chat with Behind The Prestige. He explained that alcohol has been a long-standing part of his stage routine until now.

**Determined to break the habit**

Now on his Stubborn tour, Victony said he is determined to change that habit. He wants to perform without the influence of alcohol and fully embrace the experience with his fans. He described this new approach as both a challenge and a personal goal.

"I'm trying to do this tour, so wow. It's a big challenge," he said. "I have never been on stage without taking alcohol. But for this tour, I'm trying to see my fans clearly and truly connect with them. I just want to try."

His words reflect a shift in mindset. While many fans know Victony as a confident performer, his comment gives insight into the personal struggles he faces behind the scenes.

**Seeking a realer experience**

Victony emphasized his desire to form a deeper connection with his audience. By removing alcohol from his pre-show routine, he believes he can deliver a more genuine and powerful performance. He wants to be fully present and emotionally in tune with his supporters.

The singer explained that facing the crowd with a clear mind will allow



him to grow as an artist. He said the experience of connecting directly with fans, without any distractions, is something he looks forward to.

**A tour of growth and self-discovery**

Victony's Stubborn tour marks more than just a musical journey. It's also a personal one. Taking this step to perform sober is a sign of growth, maturity, and commitment to his craft.

He admitted that this decision isn't easy. Performing live can be stressful, and alcohol often helps artists ease their nerves. But Victony believes it's time to take a different approach and face the stage as his true self.

By doing so, he hopes to build a stronger bond with his fans, who continue to support him through his evolving career.

**Fans react to Victony's candid revelation**

Fans have responded to his honesty with praise. Many see his decision as bold and inspiring. On social media,

supporters have been quick to encourage him, with some calling it a sign of strength and courage.

In a music industry where artists often face pressure to appear perfect, Victony's openness has struck a chord. His willingness to speak up about his journey not only makes him more relatable but also sheds light on the hidden struggles behind the spotlight.

**Looking ahead with clear vision**

As the Stubborn tour continues, all eyes will be on Victony to see how this new chapter unfolds. His fans, both old and new, are excited to witness a different side of him, one that's raw, real, and fully present.

Whether or not the decision to perform sober becomes permanent, Victony has already made a strong statement: growth begins with honesty, and sometimes, the biggest step forward comes from within.

With his talent, courage, and determination, Victony is poised to reach new heights on his own terms."

# British man describes how he escaped Air India plane wreckage

By Oluwatosin Ologun

**T**he lone survivor of 242 people aboard Air India plane that crashed in Ahmedabad on Friday has explained how he miraculously walked out alive from the fireball explosion.

The New Daily Prime reported that the Air India Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner plane, which was full of fuel as it took off for a long-haul flight to London, exploded into a burst of orange flame on Thursday afternoon just after taking off.

"Everything happened in front of me, and even I couldn't believe how I managed to come out alive from that," British citizen Vishwash Kumar Ramesh said from his hospital bed on Friday, speaking in Hindi to national broadcaster, DD News.

Ramesh — who was in seat 11A according to media reports — was the only one aboard the plane not to be killed, with at least 24 others killed on the ground.

Air India said all other passengers and crew were killed - including 169 Indian nationals and 52 British nationals. More than 200 bodies have been recovered so far, though it is unclear how many were passengers and how many were from the ground.

Speaking from his hospital bed, Mr Ramesh said the lights inside the aircraft "started flickering" moments after take off.

Within five to 10 seconds, it felt like



the plane was "stuck in the air", he said.

"The lights started flickering green and white...suddenly slammed into a building and exploded."

The Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner crashed into a building used as accommodation for doctors at the Byramjee Jeejeebhoy Medical College and Civil Hospital.

But Mr Ramesh, a businessman from Leicester who has a wife and four-year-old son, said the section he was sitting in landed near the ground and did not make contact with the building.

"When the door broke and I saw there was some space, I tried to get out of there and I did.

"No one could have got out from the opposite side, which was towards the wall, because it crashed there."

The cause of the crash is not yet known. Officials say one black box has been recovered from the crash site, according to news agencies, which will be able to provide further information for investigators.

Video shared on social media showed Mr Ramesh walking towards an ambulance with smoke billowing in the background.

He told the Indian broadcaster he could not believe that he came out of the wreckage alive.

"I saw people dying in front of my eyes - the air hostesses, and two people I saw near me," he said.

"For a moment, I felt like I was going to die too, but when I opened my eyes and looked around, I realised I was alive.

"I still can't believe how I survived. I walked out of the rubble."

# Appeal Court permits Trump to maintain national guard presence in L.A., marines expected to join

By **Fatimah Idera**

A United States of America Appeal Court on Thursday granted President Donald Trump order to maintain his deployment of national guard troops in Los Angeles, temporarily pausing a lower court order that blocked the mobilization amid growing protests over intensified immigration enforcement.

The decision by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeal does not resolve the legal challenge but allows Trump to retain control over the Guard, at least for now.

The panel comprising two Trump-appointed judges and one appointed by President Joe Biden said it would hear arguments on the matter next Tuesday.

Earlier the same day, U.S. District Judge Charles Breyer ruled the deployment unlawful, ordering the National Guard to return to the control of California Governor Gavin Newsom.

The ruling cited concerns that the federal mobilisation inflamed tensions and diverted state resources needed for other priorities such as wildfire response and border security.

Breyer's 36-page opinion emphasized that the presence of federal troops in a largely peaceful protest environment was escalatory, echoing similar concerns from Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass.

However, Breyer's order was placed on hold just two and a half hours later, pending further review.

Governor Newsom, while noting the temporary nature of the pause, expressed confidence that the judge's ruling would ultimately be upheld. "On the basis of the review of the 36 pages, absolutely it will stand," he said.

The court's administrative stay provides more time for the appeals judges to weigh the Trump administration's request to block Breyer's decision while the lawsuit continues.



The dispute began after Trump dispatched National Guard troops to Los Angeles on Saturday in response to protests over immigration raids. By Monday, he ordered 700 U.S. Marines to join the Guard in support of federal operations. The Marines are expected to arrive on Friday, marking an extraordinary deployment of military forces for domestic law enforcement support.

The troops are stationed around a federal detention center in downtown Los Angeles, the epicenter of recent demonstrations. Though mostly peaceful, the protests have included isolated incidents of violence and have prompted a local curfew. The Guard has also accompanied ICE agents on operations targeting undocumented immigrants.

Judge Breyer's ruling stated that the protests did not meet the constitutional threshold of a rebellion that would justify federal military intervention. "The Court is troubled by the implication inherent in Defendants' argument that protest against the federal government, a core civil liberty protected by the First Amendment, can justify a finding of rebellion," Breyer wrote.

Mayor Bass, who has called for an end to the raids, warned that fear among immigrants was disrupting local schools and businesses. "Peace begins with ICE

leaving Los Angeles," she said during a press conference.

That same event was abruptly disrupted when federal agents forcibly removed U.S. Senator Alex Padilla from the room, handcuffed him, and led him out an incident that further fueled tensions between local leaders and the Trump administration.

Meanwhile, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem vowed to liberate Los Angeles, using language that critics say mirrors Trump's combative rhetoric.

The legal and political standoff highlights the deep national divide over Trump's aggressive immigration policies and his use of presidential powers.

The Trump administration has defended the move as necessary to restore order and fulfill campaign promises. Officials argued that Breyer's ruling constituted "an extraordinary intrusion on the President's constitutional authority as Commander in Chief."

As the legal battle continues, California officials say they will continue to prepare for a potential return of Guard control to the state, prioritizing tasks such as disaster response and anti-smuggling operations.

# Harvard Russian scientist accused of smuggling frog embryos freed after 4 months

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



A Russian researcher at Harvard Medical School was released from federal custody Thursday after spending nearly four months behind bars on a biological smuggling charge.

Kseniia Petrova, a scientist at Harvard's Kirschner Lab, was arrested in February at Boston's Logan International Airport after U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents allegedly discovered undeclared frog embryos and other embryonic samples in her luggage upon arrival from Paris.

The Justice Department said Petrova initially denied possessing any biological materials but later admitted to carrying the samples. Prosecutors cited text messages from a colleague suggesting she had been advised to declare the materials before entry, contradicting her claim

of ignorance.

Petrova's attorney, Gregory Romanovsky, argued in court filings that the materials were "non-hazardous, noninfectious, and non-toxic," and that Petrova, with no prior experience handling international transport of biological materials, did not fully understand U.S. customs requirements. The samples, he said, were brought in at the request of a Harvard research group leader.

After the discovery, Petrova's visa was revoked, and she was taken into ICE custody, initially detained in Vermont and later transferred to Louisiana. Though she was released from ICE in May, she remained in the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service until her bail hearing this week in Boston.

Colleagues from Harvard testified in her defense, praising her contributions to cell and developmental biology research, particularly in cancer studies.

"It remains difficult to understand why someone like Kseniia had to spend four months in jail. She poses no danger and has deep ties to her community," Romanovsky said in a statement to CBS News. "Her work has the potential to improve lives around the globe, including here in the United States."

Petrova's immigration case is ongoing, and she has not yet decided whether she will remain in the U.S. if allowed.

A probable cause hearing is scheduled for June 18.

# Meta hires 28-year-old scale AI CEO after investing billions in startup

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



**M**eta has taken a bold step to reshape its artificial intelligence ambitions by acquiring a 49% stake in Scale AI, valuing the data-labeling startup at \$29 billion.

As part of the deal, Scale's 28-year-old co-founder and CEO, Alexandr Wang, will join Meta to spearhead its new superintelligence initiative.

While Meta did not disclose financial terms in its official statement, two sources familiar with the matter confirmed the \$14.3 billion cash investment. The primary motivation behind the deal, according to insiders, was to bring Wang into Meta's leadership fold to reinvigorate its AI strategy.

"We will deepen the work we do together producing data for AI models, and Alexandr Wang will join Meta to work on our superintelligence efforts," Meta said in a statement.

Wang, a high-profile Silicon Valley entrepreneur who dropped out of MIT to launch Scale AI, has gained attention for his rapid rise. Born in Los Alamos, New

Mexico, to physicist parents, Wang built Scale into a multibillion-dollar firm serving both private and government clients, including major contracts with the U.S. federal government. His close ties with key industry figures like OpenAI CEO Sam Altman and his testimony before Congress have further solidified his status as a powerful figure in AI and tech policy circles.

Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, has faced recent struggles in the AI race, falling behind rivals like OpenAI, Google, and DeepSeek. Internal departures and delays in releasing new open-source models have raised concerns about its competitiveness. CEO Mark Zuckerberg's decision to bring in Wang, a business-driven leader rather than a research-focused one, signals a strategic pivot toward commercially grounded AI leadership, echoing the style Altman at OpenAI.

Although Wang does not have a traditional research background, he has built Scale into a core infrastructure provider for AI training data. Meta is hoping his entrepreneurial experience and business acumen can breathe new life

into its superintelligence efforts.

Jason Droege, Scale's chief strategy officer, will take over as interim CEO. Wang will remain on the board of Scale, which employs roughly 1,500 people. A small group of scale employees will also transition to Meta alongside him.

Meta has clarified that it does not intend to take a board seat at Scale, helping the company maintain operational independence. This investment marks Meta's second-largest ever, following its \$19 billion acquisition of WhatsApp in 2014.

While it's not yet clear whether the transaction will attract regulatory scrutiny, Meta is already facing legal challenges from the U.S. Federal Trade Commission over alleged anticompetitive behaviour tied to its acquisitions of Instagram and WhatsApp.

This high-stakes move signals Meta's intent to reassert itself in the global AI race by betting on the leadership of one of the field's most influential young entrepreneurs.

# Stocks slide, oil prices surge following Israeli strike on Iran

By Fatimah Idera

**G**lobal financial markets fell sharply on Friday after Israel launched a large-scale military strike on Iran, targeting what it said were nuclear facilities, missile factories, and key military figures.

The attack triggered a dramatic response in global markets, with investors fleeing risk assets in favor of traditional safe havens like gold, the U.S. dollar, and the Swiss franc.

Oil prices surged amid fears of prolonged instability in the Middle East, a region central to global energy supply. Crude briefly spiked by as much as 14% to nearly \$79 per barrel, before easing slightly to around \$74—still up over 5% for the day and on track for its biggest single-day gain since 2022. U.S. oil futures also jumped more than \$5 to trade at \$73.14.

Gold, a classic safe haven, soared to \$3,416 per ounce just shy of its April record high of \$3,500.05 as investors sought security amid rising geopolitical uncertainty.

Stock markets around the world responded with steep losses. U.S. futures dropped more than 1.5%, while European indexes opened down roughly 1%. In Asia, major markets in Japan, South Korea, and Hong Kong also fell over 1%.

“The market has got its stocks down, oil and gold up,” said Chris Scicluna, head of economic research at Daiwa Capital Markets in London. “The big question now is how far this escalation will go.”

The Israeli offensive came in response to a recent drone attack by Iran, which reportedly launched around 100 drones toward Israeli territory. Israel said it was intercepting the drones and beginning what could be a prolonged military operation aimed at preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.



The U.S. has stated it was not involved in the Israeli operation.

The flare-up in the Middle East adds yet another layer of uncertainty to already fragile global markets, which are also navigating volatile U.S. trade and economic policies under President Donald Trump.

“The geopolitical escalation adds another layer of uncertainty to already fragile sentiment,” said Charu Chanana, chief investment strategist at Saxo. She noted that if tensions continue to rise, crude oil prices and safe-haven assets will likely keep climbing.

The impact of the conflict extended beyond commodities and equities. Israel’s currency, the shekel, slid nearly 2%, and long-dated dollar-denominated bonds from Israel, Egypt, and Pakistan also dropped.

In the bond market, demand for safer U.S. Treasuries pushed yields lower. The 10-year Treasury yield fell to a one-month low of 4.31%. Germany’s 10-year bond yield also dropped to its lowest point since early March, at 2.42%.

Analysts warned that if oil prices remain elevated, central banks may delay or reconsider expected interest rate cuts. “The bond market’s response will ultimately hinge on how severe the rise in energy costs turns out to be,” Scicluna added.

Currency markets saw the dollar regain ground, with the dollar index climbing 0.6% to 98.277, recovering most of Thursday’s losses. The Swiss franc briefly hit its strongest level against the dollar since April before easing slightly, while the Japanese yen gave up earlier gains to trade 0.2% lower at 143.79 per dollar.

The euro slipped 0.4% to \$1.1534, pulling back from its highest level since October 2021. The British pound also dropped 0.4% to \$1.3556 after briefly reaching its strongest level since February 2022 earlier in the day.

“Traders are now on edge over the prospects of a full-blown Middle East conflict,” said Matt Simpson, senior market analyst at City Index. “That will keep uncertainty high and volatility elevated in the days ahead.”

# Netanyahu calls on Iranians to unite against 'evil and oppressive regime'

By New Daily Prime



**I**sraeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called on Iranians Friday to unite against what he described as an “evil and oppressive regime”, telling them Israel was engaged in “one of the greatest military operations in history”.

“The time has come for the Iranian people to unite around its flag and its historic legacy, by standing up for your freedom from the evil and oppressive regime,” Netanyahu said in a video statement after Israel struck over 200 military and nuclear sites in the Islamic republic.

“We are in the midst of one of the greatest military operations in history, Operation Rising Lion,” he added.

“As we achieve our objective, we are also clearing the path for you to achieve your freedom,” he said, referring to Israeli strikes that hit targets across Iran, including nuclear sites, killing several top military commanders and nuclear scientists.

“The regime does not know what hit them, or what will hit them. It has never been weaker,” Netanyahu said in his video published shortly after a salvo of Iranian missiles reached Israel.

“Our fight is against the murderous Islamic regime that oppresses and impoverishes you,” he said, adding: “This is your opportunity to stand up and let your voices be heard.”

Netanyahu also promised that “more is on the way”, having said earlier that Israel’s attack on Iran would “continue for as many days as it takes”.

Iran called the attack “a declaration of war” and threatened to retaliate by opening “the gates of hell” on Israel.

It first sent about 100 drones towards Israel, many of which were intercepted before reaching the country.

The drones were followed by dozens of missiles, some of which caused physical damage in Israeli cities, and injured at least seven people, according to first responders.

# FULL LIST: Ballon d'Or 2025 nominees revealed

By Damilola Olufemi

The excitement around this year's Ballon d'Or is officially building, as France Football has announced that the full list of nominees for both the men's and women's categories will be revealed on August 7, 2025.

Following the announcement, weeks of debate and speculation will lead up to the grand awards ceremony scheduled for September 22 at the renowned Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris, where football's most prestigious individual honours will be handed out.

The format remains unchanged this year, giving equal spotlight to both male and female footballers. Alongside the main Ballon d'Or trophies, France Football will also unveil nominees for the Yashin Trophy (best goalkeeper), Kopa Trophy (best young player), and the Gerd Müller Trophy (season's highest goal scorer).

As in previous editions, voting will be conducted by an international panel of journalists. Each voter will submit their top 10 choices, with points allocated based on ranking. For the men's award, journalists from the top 100 FIFA-ranked nations will cast their votes, while those from the top 50 nations will select the women's winner. The player with the highest points total will take home the coveted golden ball.

While it's still early to call, some frontrunners have already emerged, with Barcelona's teenage sensation Lamine Yamal and Paris Saint-Germain's Ousmane Dembele attracting much of the attention following standout campaigns.

Last year's winner, Rodri, remains in contention after his exceptional year with Manchester City and Spain, but stiff competition from other global stars means nothing is guaranteed.

Yamal's astonishing breakthrough season, where he registered 21 goals and 26 assists while guiding Barcelona to domestic success, has turned him into one of the brightest young stars in football. "At just 17, he's already dictating games at the top level," one analyst remarked.



Dembele, meanwhile, is widely seen as the current leader in the race after his most dominant season yet. His role in guiding PSG to an unprecedented Champions League title, alongside Ligue 1 and Coupe de France triumphs, has earned him widespread praise. "Dembele's complete performance this year, both domestically and in Europe, puts him in pole position," said a French football pundit.

But they aren't the only names generating buzz. Real Madrid's new signing Kylian Mbappe, Liverpool's talisman Mohamed Salah, and Barcelona's Raphinha are also firmly in the mix. Each has had stellar campaigns, adding further intrigue to what promises to be one of the most competitive Ballon d'Or races in recent years.

Major tournaments like Euro 2024 and the Champions League have already played a key role in shaping public and expert opinions heading into the voting period.

## 5. Kylian Mbappe (Real Madrid)

45 goals, 7 assists  
Trophies: UEFA Super Cup, Intercontinental Cup  
Although Mbappé's numbers remain exceptional, Real Madrid's late-season stumble has somewhat weakened his Ballon d'Or bid.

## 4. Mohamed Salah (Liverpool)

36 goals, 24 assists  
Trophies: Premier League

Salah inspired Liverpool to another league title, but the team's struggles in Europe have dented his overall case.

## 3. Raphinha (Barcelona)

39 goals, 25 assists  
Trophies: La Liga, Copa del Rey, Supercopa  
The Brazilian played a key role in Barcelona's domestic treble and has been one of their most reliable performers throughout the season.

## 2. Lamine Yamal (Barcelona)

21 goals, 26 assists  
Trophies: La Liga, Copa del Rey, Supercopa  
At just 17 years old, Yamal's phenomenal rise continues to capture global attention. His Nations League final loss has had a slight impact on his standing, but his overall brilliance keeps him in strong contention.

## 1. Ousmane Dembele (PSG)

35 goals, 15 assists  
Trophies: Champions League, Ligue 1, Coupe de France, Trophée des Champions  
Dembele's career-best season, capped by leading PSG to European glory, makes him the current favourite for the 2025 Ballon d'Or.

As the countdown begins, fans across the globe will be eagerly awaiting August 7 to see who makes the shortlist and who ultimately walks away with the game's highest individual honour in September.

# Cazorla's left-footed magic sends Oviedo to final

By Timi-Zacchaeus Oluwaferanmi



**S**anti Cazorla, at 40 years old and nearly a decade after being told he might never walk again, delivered a fairytale moment for Real Oviedo on Wednesday night, scoring a stunning free-kick to send his boyhood club into the La Liga play-off final.

Trailing 1-0 to Almeria in the second leg of the play-off semi-final—and 2-2 on aggregate—Oviedo needed a hero. Cazorla, once a maestro for Arsenal and the Spanish national team, came off the bench at half-time to provide just that. Within four minutes, he curled a sublime left-footed free-kick—his supposed weaker foot—into the net, putting Oviedo 3-2 ahead on aggregate.

The match ended 1-1, but it was enough to secure Oviedo's place in the final, where they will face either Mirandés or Racing Santander for a chance to return to La Liga for the first time since 2001.

After the game, Cazorla was reflective yet joyful. "I'm just trying to enjoy what's left of my career, knowing that the end is closer," he said. "I try to enjoy myself, which is the most important thing. I was sad not to start the game, but I knew this match was important. I'm happy I was

able to help the team."

This moment would have seemed impossible just a few years ago. In October 2016, while still at Arsenal, Cazorla suffered a severe Achilles injury that led to 11 operations. One of the surgeries resulted in gangrene, with doctors warning him that he would be fortunate to walk again—let alone play football. His right ankle required reconstructive surgery using a skin graft from his left arm, which still bears a partially missing tattoo as a reminder of the ordeal.

After leaving Arsenal in 2018, he spent two rejuvenated years at Villarreal, followed by a three-year stint in Qatar. Then, in 2023, Cazorla returned to his roots—Real Oviedo—on a minimum salary, motivated not by money but by love for the club where he began his career.

His return to Oviedo was not just symbolic. It was a declaration of intent—to help lift the club back to Spain's top flight after more than two decades of absence. His impact, both on and off the pitch, has been immense. And now, thanks to his brilliance, Oviedo are

one step away from that dream.

Cazorla's legacy in Spanish football is already secure. A two-time European champion with Spain, he earned 81 caps and dazzled fans with his vision and technique. At Arsenal, he was a fan favourite—making 180 appearances and winning two FA Cups, despite his later years being blighted by injuries.

But what he has achieved with Oviedo at this stage of his career adds a unique chapter to an already extraordinary story. Not many footballers come back from the brink of retirement at 40 to deliver promotion dreams with moments of pure quality.

Real Oviedo's journey continues, and with Cazorla leading the way—both as a symbol of resilience and a source of magic—they may just finish their long-awaited return to La Liga in style.

As the final approaches, fans dare to dream. And if there's one thing Santi Cazorla has shown throughout his career, it's that dreams—no matter how unlikely—can come true.