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The New Daily Prime

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Saraki to chair PDP gov's' seven-member reconciliation committee ahead of NEC meeting

By New Daily Prime

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) has set up a committee headed by a former Senate president, Bukola Saraki, to reconcile aggrieved members ahead of its National Executive Council Meeting.

This was disclosed at the end of a meeting held at the Abuja lodge of the Chairman of the PDP Governors' Forum and Governor of Bauchi State, Bala Mohammed, on Sunday night.

The meeting also had the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike, in attendance. He, however, did not speak to journalists.

Some of the governors present at the meeting included Ademola Adeleke (Osun), Caleb Mutfwang (Plateau), Ahmadu Fintiri (Adamawa), Seyi Makinde (Oyo), and Peter Mbah (Enugu).

Others were former governors of Cross River, Liyel Imoke, Achike Udenwa of Imo, Olagunsoye Oyinlola of Osun, Okezie Ikpeazu of Abia, and Seriake Dickson of Bayelsa.

The PDP Acting National Chairman, Umar Damagun, a former Caretaker Committee Chairman, Ahmed Markafi, and some other members of the party's National Working Committee also attended the meeting.

Briefing journalists, the Bauchi governor said the meeting was convened ahead of the party's scheduled NEC, which has been slated for the end of May.



According to him, the invitation of the former governors was done to tap from their experiences, so they could resolve some of the internal challenges and prepare the ground for a rancour-free NEC meeting and a national convention later in the year.

Asked about the recent defection of PDP members, the Bauchi state governor said the development would rather make them stronger.

He, however, disclosed that the party was strategising to ensure that some of the states where the party had governors were reclaimed.

There have been concerns over the defection of the Delta State Governor, Sheriff Oborevwori, and his cabinet to the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

The opposition party has been battling internal crises since the 2023 general elections.

The situation worsened with the

conflict between a former governor of Rivers State and his successor, Sim Fubara.

Several attempts by the party's leadership, including the National Working Committee, Board of Trustees, National Executive Committee, and the PDP Governors' Forum, to mediate have not resolved the crisis.

On April 23, Oborevwori, a former governor of Delta, Ifeanyi Okowa, and other officials from the state joined the APC.

At the National Assembly, three Kebbi lawmakers, Senators Adamu Aliero (Kebbi Central), Yahaya Abdullahi (Kebbi North), and Garba Maidoki (Kebbi South), joined the ruling party after a meeting with President Bola Tinubu.

Many opposition leaders saw the development as a plot to turn the country into a one-party state.

THE NEW DAILY PRIME RATE CARD

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8X5	143,500.00
8X4	93,500.00
8X3	82,434.50
7X4	111,173.50
6X4	82,434.50
6X3	59,250.00
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SERAP urges CBN to disclose LG allocations, clarify Rivers disbursements

By Friday Omosola

The Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) has called on Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Governor Olayemi Cardoso to confirm whether the apex bank has begun transferring funds directly to Nigeria's 774 local government councils from the Federation Account.

In a Freedom of Information (FOI) request dated 10 May 2025 and signed by its deputy director, Kolawole Oluwadare.

The rights group urged the CBN to not only disclose any such transactions but also publish the specific amounts disbursed to each local council.

SERAP further demanded that the CBN clarify whether any direct allocations have been made to local government councils in Rivers State and explain the justification behind such payments, if any.

The request follows a July 2024 Supreme Court ruling, which affirmed that only democratically elected local councils have the right to receive funds directly from the Federation Account.

The court held that state governors or other institutions have no legal authority to control or withhold these allocations.

SERAP argued that the CBN has both constitutional and legal obligations to safeguard the integrity of the Federation Account and ensure that funds are distributed transparently to all tiers of government in line with



constitutional provisions.

The organisation maintained that allowing funds to be handled by unelected or unauthorised entities violates the Nigerian Constitution and undermines democratic governance at the grassroots level.

The letter read in part: "State governors are starving local governments of funds and putting them in peril, despite the Supreme Court's binding orders. State governors' blatant disregard for the Supreme Court's orders undermines the integrity of the court and poses a direct challenge to the rule of law.

"The CBN should be facilitating compliance with the Supreme Court's orders. If state governors get away with ignoring the court, it will undermine the ability of the bank to credibly perform its constitutional and statutory duties.

"Ensuring that all restrictions against direct disbursement of allocations

from the Federation Account to the 774 councils will comply with the orders by the Supreme Court and stop states and the Federal Capital Territory from tampering with the allocations ahead of the 2027 general elections.

"We would be grateful if the recommended measures are taken within 7 days of the receipt and/or publication of this letter. If we have not heard from you by then, SERAP shall take all appropriate legal actions to compel you and the CBN to comply with our request in the public interest.

"SERAP is concerned that states and the FCT have continued to undermine and endanger the existence of local governments and their ability to effectively function as the third tier of government as envisioned under the Nigerian Constitution 1999 [as amended].

**Continue reading
on next page**

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“The CBN also has the constitutional and statutory duty to protect any tier of the federal governance structure from going extinct or being destroyed. Local government councils are legitimate owners of their allocations from the Federation Account.

“States and the FCT no longer have the right to retain the allocations for local governments in the Federation Account as they have persistently failed to use the allocations for the benefit of the local government councils and Nigerians.

“The disbursement of the allocations meant for the 774 councils to states would be at the expense of poor Nigerians and continue to undermine the rights and well-being of those at the bottom of the economy and exacerbate the growing poverty in the country.

“The CBN could play an important role in revitalising the 774 councils in the country and improving opportunities for Nigerians who reside in those councils. The CBN should not allow states to act in breach of the Supreme Court judgment and do whatever they like with the public funds meant for local government councils.

“The CBN has a responsibility to comply with the Nigerian Constitution and the country’s international human rights and anticorruption obligations in the exercise of its statutory powers and functions.

“Local government councils are entitled to a direct payment from the

Federation Account of the amount standing to its credit in the said Federation Account. States should not be collecting, receiving, spending or tampering with the local government council funds from the Federation Account meant for the benefit of the councils.

“SERAP notes that the Supreme Court, in a groundbreaking judgment, declared that the Freedom of Information Act ‘is applicable and applies to the public records in the Federation’, including those kept by the CBN.

“By the combined reading of the provisions of the Constitution of Nigeria, the Freedom of Information Act 2011 and the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, applicable throughout Nigeria, there are transparency obligations imposed on the CBN to widely disclose the information sought by SERAP.

“The Nigerian Constitution, Freedom of Information Act, and the country’s anti-corruption and human rights obligations rest on the principle that citizens should have access to information regarding their public institutions’ activities.

“According to our information, Nigeria’s Supreme Court in a landmark judgment declared unconstitutional and unlawful the retaining and using by the 36 state governors and FCT minister of allocations in the Federation Account meant for the 774 local governments in the country.

“According to the Court, no governor or other agencies have the power to keep, control, or disburse in any manner the allocations from the Federation Account to local government councils. Any direct disbursement of such allocations must be paid to democratically elected local government councils.

“Following the judgment, the 774 local governments have reportedly opened dedicated accounts with CBN for the direct disbursement of allocations to them from the Federation Account.

“SERAP notes that former president Muhammadu Buhari had in December 2022 stated that, ‘If the money from the Federation Account to the State is about N100m, N50m will be sent to the chairman but he will sign that he received N100m. The chairman will pocket the balance and share it with whoever he wants to share it with.

“According to Buhari, ‘If the money from the Federation Account to the State is about N100 million, N50 million will be sent to the chairman but he will sign that he received N100 million. The chairman will pocket the balance and share it with whoever he wants to share it with.’

“According to reports, the Federation Account Allocation Committee (FAAC) shared a total of N1.578 trillion among the three tiers of government as revenue generated in March 2025.”

Northern govs meet in Kaduna, prioritise security, infrastructural development

By Helen Okechukwu

Governors from Nigeria's northern states, including Plateau State Governor Caleb Mutfwang met in a meeting focused on tackling worsening security issues and infrastructural gaps in the region.

The nineteen governors, as well as leaders of the region's traditional institutions, gathered in Kaduna at the government house.

The Forum, chaired by Gombe State Governor Muhammadu Yahaya, acknowledged the gravity of insecurity plaguing the region and commended President Bola Tinubu for his continued efforts to address the crisis and boost infrastructure.

The forum agreed on the need for increased collaboration among governors, regardless of party affiliations, and resolved to strengthen cooperation with the Nigeria Governors' Forum to scale up support for federal security agencies.

Northern governors

To tackle cross-border threats, the governors resolved to establish inter-state surveillance platforms.



They also renewed their call for the creation of state police, urging the National Assembly to fast-track the necessary constitutional amendments to actualise it.

Kaduna State Governor Uba Sani, who welcomed participants to the meeting, called for a coordinated and holistic approach to combating poverty and insecurity.

He described Northern Nigeria as bearing the heaviest burden of violence and economic decline and said piecemeal interventions would no longer suffice.

“Despite our past reputation for agricultural wealth and resilience, the region now finds itself overwhelmed by displacement,

hardship, and violence,” Sani said.

In his remarks, the Sultan of Sokoto and Chairman of the Northern Traditional Rulers Council, His Eminence Muhammadu Saad Abubakar, said the situation in Benue, Plateau, Niger, and Sokoto states had become dire and unacceptable.

He pledged the unwavering support of traditional leaders to efforts aimed at restoring peace and security.

The Sultan praised the governors for their commitment and urged them to form a united northern front to confront the region's shared challenges.

Deputy governor's brother, others emerge as APC candidates for Lagos LG polls

By Friday Omosola

The All Progressives Congress (APC) in Lagos State has selected 55 candidates to represent the party in the upcoming local government elections scheduled for 12 July.

Following a lengthy and highly competitive primary election held at the APC Secretariat on Acme Road, Ikeja, the ruling party produced chairmanship flag bearers for all 20 Local Government Areas (LGAs) and 37 Local Council Development Areas (LCDAs).

Voting lasted around five hours and took place under tight security coordinated by Lagos State Commissioner of Police, Moshood Jimoh.

Among the notable winners are Usman Hamzat, a brother of Lagos Deputy Governor Femi Hamzat, and Moyosore Ogunlewe, son of former Minister of Works, Adeseye Ogunlewe.

Both individuals emerged victorious alongside several returning and first-time candidates.

While four LCDAs—namely Iba, Oto-Awori, Ijede and Lekki—settled on candidates through consensus, the rest underwent full delegate elections.

The consensus candidates include Isa



Abiola Jubril (Iba LCDA), Azeez Kareem (Oto-Awori LCDA), Tunrayo Gbadebo (Ijede LCDA), and Rasak Kasali (Lekki LCDA).

The party had earlier screened and cleared 432 aspirants out of the 470 who submitted forms to contest for chairmanship positions.

Councillorship primaries also took place simultaneously across the state's 337 wards.

Accreditation began around 10 a.m., with voting commencing shortly after midday.

The Lagos State Independent Electoral Commission (LASIEC) oversaw the process.

Addressing delegates before voting began, Hamzat called for discipline and urged party members to

cooperate with the electoral committee for a smooth exercise.

Chairman of the APC Electoral Committee, Babatunde Ogala, led the process and later announced the results as votes were sorted and counted.

However, not all LGAs participated. Delegates from Lagos Mainland and Yaba LCDA abstained from the process due to unresolved internal disputes.

The decision by Yaba LCDA followed public protests by a youth group opposing the alleged imposition of a candidate.

As of press time, the final list of winners is being collated and expected to be formally released by the party.

2025 Hajj: First batch of Kwara pilgrims to be airlifted on Monday

By Friday Omosola



The Kwara State Government has announced that the state Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board has concluded arrangements for the airlift of the first batch of intending pilgrims for the 2025 Hajj.

Jumoke Jimoh, Press Secretary, Kwara State Muslim Pilgrims Welfare Board, in a statement, said the pilgrims will depart on 12 May from the Ilorin International Airport to Saudi Arabia.

The Executive Secretary of the Board, Abdulsalam Abdulkadir, disclosed this during an enlightenment programme held at the board's premises in Ilorin.

He confirmed that all necessary

preparations, including vaccination, and the distribution of uniforms and travel bags, had been completed.

According to Abdulkadir, the state has been allocated four flights for this year's Hajj, each conveying 550 pilgrims, making a total of 2,174 intending pilgrims from Kwara.

He further explained that the scheduled flights would take off on 12, 14, 16, and 17 May respectively.

Speaking at the event, the Chairman of the board, Mashood Mahmud-Jimba, urged pilgrims to refrain from abusive language before, during, and after their stay on the plain of Arafat to uphold the sanctity of the pilgrimage.

In his lecture, the Grand Khadi of the

Shariah Court of Appeal, Justice Abdullateef Kamaldeen, advised pilgrims to approach the Hajj with fear of Allah and remain patient throughout their stay in the Holy Land.

Officials from the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), NAFDAC, NDLEA, Nigerian Customs Service, and FOMWAN also addressed the gathering, encouraging pilgrims to obey all regulations and conduct themselves as good ambassadors of Kwara State and Nigeria.

The programme featured a practical demonstration of Hajj rites, guiding the pilgrims through the steps and procedures required during the pilgrimage in

2 allegedly killed in Rivers during suspected cult clash

By **Helen Okechukwu**



Tragedy struck a community in Rivers State as two individuals were reportedly killed in a suspected cult clash.

The clash, between the Lamidian and Virus factions of the Deygbam cult group, allegedly arose from a supremacy battle and occurred in the Mile 1 and Mile 3 Diobu areas of the state capital on Saturday.

According to sources, in the early hours of Saturday, a suspected cultist was ambushed and killed at the Odunezea Lane axis of Mile 3 Diobu by unknown gunmen believed to be members of a rival

cult group.

In a separate attack later the same day at noon, in what appeared to be a retaliatory move, members of the gang whose associate was allegedly murdered at the Odunezea Lane axis reinforced and moved to the Sagana/Railway axis of Mile 1 Diobu.

There, they reportedly killed Ishi, a rival cultist and one of the suspected killers of their deceased member.

It was gathered that Ishi died from injuries inflicted on him with a machete.

Out of fear of being caught in the violence, business owners and traders hurriedly shut their shops and returned to their homes.

As of the time of this report, the spokesperson for the Rivers State Police Command, Grace Iringe-Koko, was yet to comment on the incident.

It is worth noting that in the past two months, another person was reportedly killed in a similar supremacy battle involving suspected cult groups.

NDLEA arrests woman concealing 2.5kg of cocaine in private parts, handbag

By Helen Okechukwu



The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has arrested a woman, Ihensekhien Miracle Obehi, at the Port Harcourt International Airport of Rivers State while trying to smuggle 2.5kg of cocaine to Iran.

She was caught on Sunday, 3 May, disguised in a hijab to avoid detection.

According to NDLEA release on Sunday, Obehi had concealed three wraps of cocaine in her private part, two large parcels in her handbag, and swallowed 67 pellets of the drug.

She claimed she was supposed to swallow 70 pellets but couldn't ingest the last three and decided to hide them in her body.

She was placed under observation and later excreted all the swallowed pellets.

In a separate case, NDLEA officers at Lagos airport arrested 22-year-old British national Campell Kaizra Kofi Johannes Slifer on May 9 with 37.6kg of Loud cannabis in two suitcases.

Slifer, a repeat offender, confessed to being recruited in London to transport the drugs from Thailand to Nigeria.

In Niger State, NDLEA intercepted a fuel truck and three other vehicles loaded with 3,047kg of cannabis along the Suleja-Kaduna road. Four suspects were arrested.

More arrests followed across the country. In Lagos, NDLEA seized over 109,000 pills of tramadol and other drugs.

In Kaduna, two suspects were caught with 52.5kg of skunk, and in Kwara, 45,400 tramadol pills were recovered.

Bauchi officers seized 505kg of cannabis in a Toyota Tundra, while in Kano, 775 litres of codeine syrup were recovered during a raid.

A 1.1kg consignment of Loud hidden in a pillow was also intercepted at a Lagos courier company.

Meanwhile, NDLEA continued its drug abuse awareness campaign in schools and religious centers nationwide.

NDLEA Chairman, Brig. Gen. Buba Marwa (Rtd), commended the agency's officers for their efforts in drug supply control and public education.

Poor UTME results: Matters arising

By Alade Adisa

Teachers, parents and even student leaders have commented on the recent poor performance of candidates in the 2025 Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination, UTME, blaming the government, the candidates, parents and even the society at large for the situation.

Reactions have continued to trail the poor performance of candidates in this year's Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination, UTME, conducted by the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board, JAMB, in which about 75 percent of the candidates scored less than 200 out of the possible 400 marks.

Parents, under the aegis of the National Parent Teacher Association of Nigeria, NAPTAN, the Academic Staff Union of Universities, ASUU, the National Association of Nigerian Students NANS among others, attributed the dismal performance to a number of factors including lack of adequate preparations on the part of the candidates, lack of facilities, timing of the examination among others.

Parents, under the auspices of the National Parent Teacher Association of Nigeria, NAPTAN, said the government, teachers, learners and even the government for the rot in the education system that led to the poor performance.

The National President of NAPTAN, Alhaji Haruna Danjuma, said learners no longer take studying serious,



government not providing the necessary facilities, teachers are not motivated and parents not doing their responsibilities.

The Executive Director of Africa Brands Review, Joseph Ayodele, said the progressive decline in the performance of candidates in the UTME over the years is an indication of a looming generational divide in Nigerian education.

“The recently released 2025 Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) results have once again ignited discussions about the state of Nigerian education. However, beyond the raw scores, a more profound issue is at play: the widening gap between the digital native generations entering our schools and the analog-rooted systems meant to nurture them,” he opined.

Giving a classification of the

percentage of candidates that passed the exam in the last few years, he said in 2007 (66%), 2008 (63%), 2010 (41%), 2015 (30%), 2019 (24%), 2023 (23%) and 2025 (22%).

“Mark Crindle’s generational classification paints a clear picture: Baby-boomers (1946-1964) largely occupy leadership positions as Principals and Directors of Education, while Generation X (1965-1980) predominantly holds sway as Commissioners and Ministers of Education.

Meanwhile, the students writing JAMB in 2025 predominantly belong to Generation Z (1997-2012), closely followed by the burgeoning Alpha Generation (2012-2025).

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These are the internet generations, immersed from birth in a global village offering both unparalleled learning opportunities and potential distractions.

“This digital immersion has significant implications for learning within our schools. To truly engage and focus these students, the effective integration of internet and digital learning tools is not a luxury but a necessity.

“Yet, the fundamental question remains: is Nigeria truly ready for this educational paradigm shift? We cannot earnestly discuss e-learning when the very foundation of the cognitive environment in our schools is shaky,” he stated.

Ayodele gave some of the factors militating against qualitative education that would bring satisfactory results to include: Crippling student-to-teacher ratios, broken promises of teacher remuneration, the current push for e-examinations appearing to be a leapfrog over the essential groundwork of establishing robust e-learning ecosystems etc.

“Finally, the stark decline in the percentage of candidates scoring 200 and above in JAMB over the past decade serves as a sobering indicator. This downward trend directly correlates with the last significant wave of teacher recruitment in Nigeria, over 15

years ago. While initiatives like state-level teacher corps schemes and the proposed federal NCE graduate corps acknowledge the staffing crisis, their long-term impact hinges on genuine commitment and sustained investment in the teaching profession.”

A supervisor during the exam, who wishes to remain anonymous, gave a brief of his observations as thus – most candidates don’t know how to use the computer well.

Some of the complaints candidates made to him were: I don’t know how to use capital letters- that is the two alphabet at the end of their registration number.

I made mistake and I don’t know how to delete the number.

I don’t know the key to use and choose the answer.

I don’t know how to get to the next question.

I don’t know how to change to the next subject.

I don’t know how to submit and end the exams.

So many don’t know how to use the mouse and the keyboard.

I don’t know where I can find calculator on the screen and many

more.

“It was so frustrating that even when you direct them to press this key or click on the mouse the person will ask you, please, where is it. And they will do as if it will bite them.

I felt for one when I discovered that he answered only three questions out of 180 and he told me that he answered all the questions. I showed him on the screen.

I discovered that he was not clicking on the right bullet that is why his questions were on red. The only three he had was the one I showed him where to click earlier since he was always raising his hands.

“Most students are ignorant that any question answered will automatically turn from red to green. My suggestion is that the students should be sensitized in all the schools especially those in the remote villages that have no access to computers. Even those in the town. In each session of the exams only 10% seems to know what to do and submitted on time. Many were logged out at the end of the exams with so many unanswered questions. From this experience I think there is no exaggeration in the JAMB result as announced.”

ID Cabasa refutes Akon's claim of creating Afrobeats

By New Daily Prime



Veteran Nigerian record producer and music executive, ID Cabasa, has debunked Senegalese-American singer and executive, Akon's claim that he was instrumental in the creation of the Afrobeats genre.

Recall that Akon had claimed in a recent interview that his collaborations and partnerships with Nigerian artists and music executives in the late 2000s to 2010s gave birth to what is now known as Afrobeats.

Reacting during an interview with Wazobia FM, ID Cabasa stated that Akon has no right to claim credits for the origin of Afrobeats.

He admitted that Akon collaborated and partnered with some Nigerian artists and music executives in the late 2000s to 2010s, when Afrobeats was

yet to gain mainstream popularity in the Western world.

He argued that, although Akon was involved in the Afrobeats scene, it does not justify his claim of credit for its creation.

He pointed out that artists like 2Face, 9ice, and Timaya were already gaining recognition long before Akon came to Nigeria to collaborate with Wizkid, P-Square and other Afrobeats artists.

The record producer also debunked Akon's claim that Wizkid was just a local musician before he signed him to his record label in 2008 and groomed him.

He noted that it was Banky W who discovered Wizkid's talent and signed him to his record label, Empire Mates Entertainment, which later partnered

with Akon's label.

Speaking in Pidgin, Cabasa said, "Akon for also tok say na he still discovered the likes of 2Face, Timaya, 9ice and Co. Na the people wey he roll with when he come Nigeria, wey tell am say, 'I'm the biggest person around this place.' So, he properly feels he pioneered business and branding sides of Afrobeats.

"Even the way wey he take dey tok about Wizkid, no be wettin the story be be that. We all know say na Banky W dem sign Wizkid.

"Yes, we collaborate with Akon in terms of distribution but e no mean say he go tok say na he create Afrobeats. Because Afrobeats no be wettin wey one person create, na culture."

Pope Leo XIV appeals for 'no more war' in first Sunday message

By Oluwatosin Ologun

Pope Leo XIV appealed for “no more war” in a message to world powers during his first Sunday address at St. Peter’s Square at noon.

The new pontiff, elected on May 8 as the first American Pope, called for an “authentic and lasting peace” in Ukraine, a ceasefire in Gaza, and the release of all Israeli hostages held by militant group Hamas and welcomed Saturday’s agreement to end recent hostilities between India and Pakistan.

He noted that it had been almost 80 years to the day since the “immense tragedy” of World War II had ended. He quoted Pope Francis, his predecessor, who often referred to the current global wave of violence as “a third world war in pieces.”

The Pope also recited the Regina Caeli prayer, in honour of the Virgin Mary, to the crowd in St Peter’s Square.

Pope Leo was chosen as the new leader of the Catholic Church on Thursday following the death of his predecessor, Pope Francis, and a two-day conclave in Vatican City.

On Saturday, he visited a shrine outside Rome before praying at Francis’ tomb inside the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore.

Pope Leo will be formally inaugurated at a Mass in St Peter’s Square next week on 18 May.

Three years ago, as Bishop Robert Prevost, he denounced Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine as an imperialist war and condemned crimes against humanity he said were being committed there..

“I would also like to address the powerful people of the world, repeating the always current call: ‘no more war’,” he told the crowd from the central balcony of St Peter’s Basilica.

“The immense tragedy of the Second World War ended 80 years ago...now we’re facing the tragedy of a third world



war in pieces.”

The pontiff continued: “I carry in my heart the suffering of the beloved Ukrainian people.

“May whatever is possible be done to reach an authentic, true and lasting peace as quickly as possible. May all the prisoners be freed. May children return to their families.

“And I am deeply hurt by what is happening in the Gaza Strip.

“May a ceasefire immediately come into effect. May humanitarian aid be allowed into the civilian population and may all hostages be freed.”

He added: “I was happy to hear on the other hand that there was a ceasefire between India and Pakistan, and I hope that through the coming negotiations we might soon come to a lasting accord.”

His remarks came as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin set out competing plans for a peace process to bring the three-year invasion of Ukraine to an end.

In the Middle East, Israel has cut off all humanitarian aid entering Gaza and

resumed its military offensive in the Palestinian territory following the collapse of a two-month ceasefire and hostage exchange agreement.

Meanwhile, India and Pakistan agreed to a tentative ceasefire on Saturday after days of cross-border military strikes that followed an attack on tourists in Indian-administered Kashmir on 22 April.

It has been a busy week for the pontiff, who held his first Mass as Pope in the Sistine chapel on Friday before speaking to cardinals on Saturday.

During this meeting, he described himself as an unworthy choice for Pope, and vowed to continue the “precious legacy” of his predecessor.

He highlighted the importance of missionary work and discussion, as well as care for those he called the “least and the rejected”.

He explained he had chosen the name Leo after a 19th-century Pope known for his teaching on social justice.

The new Pope also suggested the development of artificial intelligence and other advances meant the church was necessary today for the defence of human dignity and justice.

Putin proposes peace talk with Ukraine after three years of war

By **Fatimah Idera**

Russian President Vladimir Putin had proposed direct talks with Ukraine aimed at ending the war.

This idea was also welcomed by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, who said Kyiv was willing to talk, but Moscow must agree to a ceasefire.

Recall that Putin sent thousands of troops into Ukraine in February 2022, unleashing a war that has killed hundreds of thousands of soldiers and triggered the gravest confrontation between Russia and the West since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.

With Russian forces grinding forward, the Kremlin chief has offered few, if any, concessions so far but has proposed talks with Ukraine in the Turkish city of Istanbul that he said would be held without preconditions and aimed at a durable peace.

“We are proposing that Kyiv resume direct negotiations without any preconditions,” Putin said in a televised statement.

“We offer the Kyiv authorities to resume negotiations already on Thursday, in Istanbul.”

Zelenskiy said in a statement on social media website X it was “a positive sign that the Russians have finally begun to consider ending the war” but “the very first step in truly ending any war is a ceasefire.”

“We expect Russia to confirm a ceasefire – full, lasting, and reliable – starting tomorrow, May 12th, and Ukraine is ready to meet,” he said.

U.S. President Donald Trump, who says he wants to be remembered as a peacemaker and has repeatedly promised to end the war, said a great day was dawning for Russia and Ukraine if the



“bloodbath” of the war could be ended.

“A potentially great day for Russia and Ukraine!” Trump said on Truth Social. “Think of the hundreds of thousands of lives that will be saved as this never ending ‘bloodbath’ hopefully comes to an end.”

Putin’s proposal for direct talks with Ukraine came hours after major European powers demanded on Saturday in Kyiv that Putin agree to an unconditional 30-day ceasefire or face massive new sanctions.

Putin dismissed what he said was the attempt by some European powers to lay down ultimatums.

Putin said that he does not rule out that during his proposed talks in Turkey both sides will agree on some new truces, a new ceasefire, but one that would be the first step towards a sustainable peace.

French President Emmanuel Macron said that Putin’s proposal for direct peace talks between Moscow and Kyiv showed that the Russian leader is looking for a way forward but he’s also trying to buy time.

“It’s a first step but it’s not enough,” Macron told reporters on his way back from Ukraine early on Sunday. “An unconditional ceasefire is not preceded by negotiations.”

Russia, Putin said, had proposed several ceasefires, including a moratorium on striking energy facilities, an Easter ceasefire and most recently the 72-hour truce during the celebrations marking 80 years since victory in World War Two.

Putin said that during the May ceasefire Ukraine had attacked Russia with 524 aerial drones, 45 sea drones, a number of Western missiles and Russia had repelled five attacks on Russian regions. Ukraine accused Russia of violating the temporary truces, including the May 8-10 ceasefire.

Despite Putin’s call for peace talks, Russia on Sunday launched a drone attack on Kyiv and other parts of Ukraine, injuring one person in the region surrounding the Ukrainian capital and damaging several private homes, Ukrainian officials said.

Putin said that talks should address the root causes of the war and he would speak to Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan later on Sunday about facilitating the talks, which he said could lead to a ceasefire.

“Our proposal, as they say, is on the table. The decision is now up to the Ukrainian authorities and their curators, who are guided, it seems, by their personal political ambitions, and not by the interests of their peoples.”

IT problems ground flights at London Stansted Airport

By Fatimah Idera



London's Stansted Airport was hit by IT problems on Sunday that left hundreds of passengers stuck in long queues outside and inside the terminal building and caused delays to flights.

The technical problems, which affected check-in, baggage and security operations, were later resolved, but flights continued to run behind schedule, the airport said in a statement.

Images posted on social media showed people queuing outside the airport had missed their flight.

Stansted is the capital's third-biggest airport by passenger numbers.

London's Heathrow Airport, the busiest in Europe, also shut down for almost a day in March due to a fire at an electricity substation.

On Friday, Manchester Airport in northwest England was hit by a power supply problem which caused

delays to arriving passengers at immigration control.



Albania election: PM Rama seeks fourth term

By **Fatimah Idera**



The prime minister of Albania, Edi Rama seeks an unprecedented fourth term in office during a campaign dominated by promises to join the European Union and accusations of widespread graft.

Albanian elections began as Albanians started voting in parliamentary elections on Sunday.

Polling stations opened at 7 a.m. (0500 GMT) and will close at 7 p.m as results were expected to be released on Monday.

Rama, in power as head of the Socialist Party since 2013, is favourite to win against his old rival, former prime minister Sali Berisha of the Democratic Party, bolstered in part by an influential network built over 12 years in power, a recent period of healthy economic growth and a largely popular image abroad.

But opposition to Rama has intensified in the past year over a perceived crackdown on the opposition, including Berisha, while Rama weathered a series of scandals of his own. These include the arrest of his ally, the mayor of Tirana Erion Veliaj, this year on allegations of corruption and money laundering.

Campaign

Rama has spent the last week reiterating his promise to join the EU by the end of the decade, although some experts doubt that timeline will be possible given the reforms required to join the bloc, including eradicating graft.

“We will get our fourth mandate, and we will not lose a single day for Albania 2030 in the EU,” he said at his final campaign rally on Friday.

Many young voters especially are tired of the likes of Berisha and Rama who have run the country in various roles since the fall of communism in 1990.

They point to Albania’s stark income inequality that sees many people drive expensive Range Rovers around the capital Tirana while others live in cramped Soviet-era housing.

Polls show Rama winning more than 40% of the vote, a commanding lead over Berisha, who has been weakened by graft charges. But he may need help from smaller parties to maintain a slim four-seat majority in the 140-seat house.

By some measures, Rama has done well. Annual economic growth above 4% for 2022-2024, driven by trade with the EU and a tourism boom, outstripped other Balkan countries, the World Bank says.

Barcelona edge closer to title with thrilling 4-3 win over Real Madrid

By Oluwatosin Ologun



Barcelona mounted a spectacular comeback to beat Real Madrid 4-3 on Sunday and move to the brink of the LaLiga title.

Kylian Mbappe scored a hat-trick for Los Blancos but Raphinha's double and goals from Lamine Yamal, Eric Garcia and Fermin Lopez gave Barcelona a seven-point lead on reigning champions Madrid with three matches remaining.

Hansi Flick's side were knocked out of the Champions League in the semifinals by Inter Milan on Tuesday and risked their season collapsing if Madrid beat them, but they resisted after Mbappe's early brace.

Barcelona battled back to claim a fourth Clasico victory from four meetings this season, showing their dominance over Carlo Ancelotti's

side.

Real Madrid had made the perfect start to what is expected to be the Italian coach's final Clásico at the helm.

Mbappe earned a penalty when he was scythed down by Barcelona goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny, although the Catalans complained in vein the French forward was offside in the build-up.

The striker beat Szczesny, who dived the right way and got his fingers to it, but could not keep it out.

In the 14th minute Mbappe doubled Madrid's advantage with a lethal finish after Vinicius Junior played him through, with Barcelona complaining again about a perceived foul on Yamal earlier in the move.

It was his 26th LaLiga strike, taking him past Barcelona's Robert

Lewandowski on 25 at the top of the scoring charts, and his 38th of the season across all competitions, beating Ivan Zamorano's club record of 37 in a first season with Los Blancos.

Just as they have done on so many occasions this season, Flick's spirited young Barcelona fought their way back in front with a stirring comeback.

Thibaut Courtois tipped Gerard Martin's drive over, and from the corner Eric Garcia headed home Ferran Torres' flick-on.

Torres flicked wide from close range with an improvised effort and Fede Valverde was booked for a crunching tackle on whirlwind teenager Yamal.

Madrid could not stop the 17-year-old star from levelling with a cultured bending effort beyond Courtois after Torres laid the ball off to him in the box.