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# Reps reaffirm commitment to women's rights, inclusion

By Damilola Olufemi

The House of Representatives has reiterated its commitment to promoting policies and reforms that support the rights, inclusion and welfare of women and girls across Nigeria.

This was contained in a statement issued on Sunday by the spokesman of the House, Akin Rotimi, to commemorate the 2026 edition of International Women's Day.

Observed globally every March 8, the day celebrates the achievements, resilience and leadership of women while also highlighting the continued need to address gender inequality.

Rotimi said the lower chamber joined Nigerians and the international community in marking the occasion and acknowledging the contributions of Nigerian women at home and abroad, whose efforts continue to shape the country's development.

"This year's theme, 'Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls,' highlights the need to move beyond recognition toward concrete measures that advance gender equality.

"Despite notable progress in many areas, women and girls still face structural inequalities and systemic barriers that limit opportunity and undermine justice. Addressing these challenges requires sustained reforms, stronger institutions, and collective commitment," he said.

The House spokesman also noted that the global campaign "Give to Gain" underscores the importance of investing in women and girls through education, mentorship, leadership opportunities and economic empowerment.

According to him, expanding opportunities for women is not only a matter of fairness but also essential for sustainable national development.

"As the People's House, the House of Representatives affirms that promoting the rights and well-being of women and girls is a shared responsibility requiring the commitment of governments, institutions, communities and citizens



alike," Rotimi said.

He added that inclusive governance and equitable legal frameworks are critical to strengthening democratic institutions and enabling all Nigerians to contribute meaningfully to national progress.

Rotimi explained that, in line with Agenda 6 of the House's legislative agenda — which focuses on inclusion and open parliament — lawmakers have intensified oversight of institutions to ensure adherence to the National Gender Policy while advancing legislation that supports women's participation and protection.

Among the proposals currently under consideration are bills aimed at ensuring gender-sensitive recruitment into security agencies, including plans to guarantee at least 15 percent female representation in recruitment into the Nigeria Police Force and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps.

He further disclosed that several constitutional amendment bills are also before the parliament, including proposals to create dedicated seats for women in the National Assembly and state houses of assembly.

Other proposals seek to allow independent candidates to contest presidential, governorship and

legislative elections, promote greater inclusion of women in governance, grant citizenship rights to spouses, and replace the death penalty with life imprisonment for pregnant women convicted of capital offences.

Rotimi said these legislative initiatives reflect the House's determination to dismantle structural barriers and expand opportunities for women within Nigeria's democratic system.

He also commended Nigerian women for their contributions across sectors such as governance, business, education, healthcare, public service and community leadership.

The lawmaker noted that the 17 female members of the 10th House of Representatives have continued to play key roles in legislative debates, policymaking and constituency representation.

"When women and girls thrive, communities prosper, and nations grow stronger," Rotimi said.

He called on government institutions, civil society organisations, the private sector and citizens to work together in building a society where the rights, dignity and potential of every Nigerian woman and girl are fully realised.

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6X3	82,750.00
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5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
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# IWD: Tinubu celebrates Nigerian women, promises enabling environment

By News Daily Prime



President Bola Tinubu has praised the contributions of Nigerian women, promising that his government will create more opportunities for them to do more for the country.

“Today, on International Women’s Day, I celebrate the women of Nigeria, at home and abroad,” Tinubu said in a statement to mark the 2026 International Women’s Day.

“Our duty as a government and as a society is to continue creating the conditions where every Nigerian girl can learn, every woman can thrive economically, and every voice can contribute to our national development,” the president said on Sunday.

The former Lagos State governor said across homes, markets, offices, and halls of leadership, Nigerian women continue to demonstrate strength, courage, and determination that help hold the nation together.

“They are mothers who nurture, entrepreneurs who build, professionals who lead, and citizens who continue to shape the destiny of our country with resilience and dignity,” he wrote.

“Nigeria’s progress has always carried the imprint of women who refused to accept limits placed before them. From those who fought for our democracy to the millions who labour daily to support their families and communities, their contributions to nation-building are profound.”

President Tinubu, while extolling the strength, sacrifices, and enduring role of women in the country’s story, said, “When Nigerian women rise, Nigeria rises.”

Govs Celebrate Women

Meanwhile, governors have also celebrated Nigerian women on the

occasion, hailing them for their efforts in shaping society.

In separate messages, the governors said the contributions of women are instrumental to the progress of Nigeria.

“Our administration continues to expand opportunities for women across governance, enterprise, and community development,” said Governor Uba Sani of Kaduna State.

On his part, Governor Bassey Otu of Cross River State said, “Our women embody courage, creativity, and remarkable endurance.

“Across our farms, markets, schools, industries, and public institutions, Cross River women continue to shape the destiny of our state with diligence, intelligence, and an unwavering commitment to progress.”

# IGP announces Placid as Police spokesman

By Yunusa Umar



The Inspector-General of Police, Olatunji Rilwan Disu, has approved the appointment of Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Anthony Okon Placid as the new Force Public Relations Officer (FPRO).

The appointment was announced on Sunday in a statement issued by the outgoing FPRO, Acting Assistant Commissioner of Police Benjamin Hundeyin, at the Force Headquarters in Abuja.

Hundeyin said the appointment followed the approval of the Inspector-General of Police.

“The Inspector-General of Police, IGP Olatunji Rilwan Disu, has approved the appointment of DCP Anthony Okon Placid as the new Force Public Relations Officer,” the statement said.

He described Placid as a seasoned officer with extensive experience in administration, operations, intelligence, training and international peacekeeping.

“DCP Placid is a seasoned officer of the Nigeria Police Force with extensive experience in administration, operations, intelligence, training and international peacekeeping,” Hundeyin said.

Placid was born on December 2, 1970, in

Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, and hails from Mbiokporo Nsit in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area of the state.

He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Geography and Regional Planning from the University of Uyo and a Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy from the University of Jos. He also studied law at the National Open University of Nigeria.

According to the statement, Placid joined the Nigeria Police Force as a Cadet Assistant Superintendent of Police at the Police Academy in Kano in 1996 and was commissioned in August 1998.

Hundeyin noted that the new FPRO has attended several professional and international courses, including the United Nations Peace Operations Specialised Training (POST), where he obtained certifications in police studies, military studies, gender awareness, international humanitarian law, human rights and civilian protection.

He also completed the UNITAR Senior Leadership and Peacebuilding course in Kenya.

The statement added that Placid has served in several strategic capacities within and outside Nigeria, including Police Public Relations Officer in Adamawa State and at the Police Staff College in Jos.

He also served as Chief of Training in the African Union Mission in Sudan and Head of Training and Development in the United Nations Mission in Darfur.

Other positions he held include Divisional Police Officer in Federal Housing, Calabar; Bakassi; Uruan; and Gembu, as well as Officer-in-Charge of the Anti-Robbery Unit in Kaduna State.

He also served as African Union Election Security Adviser, Assistant Commissioner of Police (Operations) in Akwa Ibom and Kogi states, Assistant Commissioner of Police in the Intelligence Department in Abia State, and Deputy in charge of Administration and Finance at the Zone 3 Headquarters in Yola.

Hundeyin further noted that Placid is a member of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and a Commonwealth Human Rights Trainer as well as a trainer on International Humanitarian Law with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Placid is also a graduate of the Senior Executive Course (SEC 47) of the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Kuru, where he was inducted as a Member of the National Institute on December 13, 2025.

# Wike confirms appointment of 1,659 FCTA workers

By Damilola Olufemi

The Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, has approved the confirmation of appointment for 1,659 staff of the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA).

The confirmed staff were among 2,281 candidates who sat for the confirmation examination conducted by the FCT Civil Service Commission on February 28, 2026.

In a statement on Sunday, the Senior Special Assistant to the Minister on Public Communications and Social Media, Lere Olayinka, quoted the Chairman of the FCT Civil Service Commission, Emeka Ezeh, as saying that some of the workers had been employed as far back as 2016 and 2019.

“2,512 candidates were invited to present themselves for the confirmation examination, but only 2,281 turned up. A total of 224 officers were absent, fuelling suspicion that they could be ghost workers.



“Some of the workers who sat for the confirmation were employed as far back as 2016 and 2019, while others were employed shortly before Wike assumed office in August 2023,” Ezeh said.

The FCT Civil Service Commission has also concluded plans to conduct both the 2025 and 2026 promotions, as approved by the minister.

# Encouraging certificate forgery will be APC's lasting legacy — ADC

By Yunusa Umar

The African Democratic Congress (ADC) has condemned Senate President Godswill Akpabio over his recent dismissal of opposition complaints regarding the Electoral Act 2026, describing the law as a threat to Nigeria's democracy and ethical standards.

Speaking at a reception for the wife of the President, Remi Tinubu, in Uyo, Akpabio said he was excited that opposition parties were complaining, insisting that it proved he had done the right thing.

But the ADC disagreed. In a statement by its National Publicity Secretary, Mallam Bolaji Abdullahi, the party said that the opposition's objections were not baseless, but stemmed from concerns that the new law was designed to “cripple other political parties, undermine the nation's democracy, and lower the country's standing in the eyes of the world.”

“The Senate President should expect the harsh judgment of history for his role in



foisting the 2026 Electoral Act on Nigerians,” the statement read, “especially the aspect that removes certificate forgery as grounds for challenging election results. This will remain the enduring legacy of the ruling party.”

The ADC criticized the law for contradicting constitutional provisions,

noting that Sections 66, 107, 137, and 182 clearly disqualify anyone presenting a forged certificate from holding public office.

“How can any self-respecting person be happy presiding over a law that effectively says certificate forgery should no longer have serious consequences?” the statement asked.

The party also accused the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) of lowering the nation's ethical standards and sending a harmful message to young Nigerians about corruption.

“If Senator Akpabio wishes to concern himself with the activities of the opposition, that is his choice,” Abdullahi said. “But Nigerians will ultimately judge leaders not by their ridicule of the opposition, but by their record. And as it stands, the legacy of this National Assembly will be that of the most spineless and compromised legislature in Nigeria's democratic history.”

# Obi officially registers with ADC, says 2027 poll will be Nigerians against bad leadership

By New Daily Prime



The presidential candidate of the Labour Party in the 2023 election, Peter Obi, has emphasised the importance of the 2027 general elections, saying they will pit Nigerians against bad leadership.

Obi made the remarks in Anambra State, where he officially registered as a member of the African Democratic Congress (ADC) on Saturday.

The former governor of Anambra State, who has vowed to challenge President Bola Tinubu in the 2027 election, also called on Nigerians to participate in the ongoing online registration of the ADC.

“With the agreement of all national leaders, some of whom are here where we are flagging off today, I am urging everybody that you go and ensure that you register, obtain your card. And go online; we want to register as many Nigerians as possible.

“The election in 2027 will be Nigerians against bad leadership. I assure you, the election of 2027 will be Nigerians fighting for justice,” Obi said.

He stressed that the South-East geopolitical zone deserves the presidency, saying no zone can claim to be more Nigerian than the South-East.

“Some people will say, ‘South-East wants this or that’. South-East is part of Nigeria; South-East wants to serve. No other zone will claim to be more Nigerian than the South-East because everywhere you go in Nigeria, you see someone from the South-East who has built a house and is living there.

“They didn’t go there for transactions alone; they live there and do their businesses there. And we in the South-East are saying we want a new Nigeria — a Nigeria where a child of nobody can succeed without knowing anybody,” he said.

The presidential hopeful also emphasised the need to lift Nigerians out of poverty, noting that doing so would help reduce insecurity in the country.

“A Nigeria where we must lift Nigerians out of poverty because insecurity today can be reduced if we

pull people out of poverty. The more you pull people out of poverty, the more you reduce criminality.”

Obi charged party faithful to embark on massive recruitment of Nigerians into the ADC, saying, “So, our exercise today is very simple, go and become fishers of men.”

Senator representing Anambra Central Senatorial District, Victor Umeh, and former lawmaker and presidential aide, Ben Obi, also completed their registration with the ADC on Saturday.

The party leaders had earlier gathered in Awka to launch the registration exercise, urging members to return to their respective wards to enrol and mobilise new members into the party.

Obi registered at Agulu Ward 2 in Anaocha Local Government Area, while Umeh was registered by his ward chairman at Aguluzigbo Ward 1 in the same local government area. Ben Obi, on the other hand, registered in Agulu Awka, Awka South Local Government Area, all in Anambra State.

# PDP chieftain Showunmi slams Mehdi of 'hostility' in Bwala interview

By Damilola Olufemi

**A**chieftain of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Segun Showunmi, has criticised Al Jazeera journalist Mehdi Hasan over his conduct during a recent "Head to Head" interview with presidential aide Daniel Bwala.

Bwala, who serves as special adviser to President Bola Tinubu on media and policy communication, appeared on the programme on Thursday to discuss the administration's policies and his previous remarks about the president.

During the interview, Hasan confronted Bwala with several past statements and video clips from when he was aligned with the presidential campaign of former vice-president Atiku Abubakar.

The journalist also referenced comments critical of Tinubu and questioned the administration's anti-corruption credentials, citing the appointment of Abubakar Bagudu as minister of budget and economic planning, whom he said had previously been indicted by the US Department of Justice for corruption.

The interview quickly gained traction online, with clips circulating widely across social media platforms and sparking mixed reactions.

Responding to the debate earlier, Bwala defended his performance, stating that his previous criticisms of Tinubu were made when he was in the opposition and should be understood within that context.

He also faulted Hasan's approach to the interview, alleging that some quotes attributed to organisations and groups during the exchange were inaccurate.

**'Hostility is not journalism'**

Reacting to the development in a statement on Sunday, Showunmi said the interview crossed the line between rigorous journalism and hostility.

"There is a clear difference between tough journalism and outright hostility. One serves the public interest. The other serves the ego of the interviewer. Unfortunately, the recent exchange between @mehdirhasan and presidential spokesperson @BwalaDaniel fell squarely into the latter category," he said.

The PDP chieftain described the encounter as less of an interview and more of an ambush.



"Questions were framed less as inquiries into governance and more as prosecutorial traps. Responses were repeatedly interrupted before they could develop. Clarifications were brushed aside.

"The atmosphere was unmistakable: this was not a conversation designed to inform viewers but a spectacle designed to embarrass the guest," he added.

Showunmi argued that professional interviewing requires discipline, balance and the willingness to allow guests explain their positions even when difficult questions are asked.

"It requires intellectual confidence strong enough to permit disagreement without descending into open hostility. Above all, it requires a commitment to substance over theatrics. That commitment was glaringly absent," he said.

According to him, given Nigeria's current economic challenges, governance reforms and national security concerns, the interviewer should have focused more on the government's policies and strategies.

"Instead, viewers were treated to an exercise in selective outrage and repetitive interruption. But the deeper problem in the interview was tone," Showunmi said.

Showunmi further stated that attempts by journalists to humiliate or ridicule interviewees undermine the core objective of journalism.

"The role of the interviewer is to hold power accountable, not to behave like a

courtroom prosecutor seeking a viral 'gotcha' moment," he said.

"When the pursuit of humiliation replaces the pursuit of insight, journalism loses its credibility. Audiences deserve better than that. They deserve interviews that illuminate policy, probe governance, and help citizens understand how leaders intend to confront the pressing challenges of the day. What they do not need is a theatrical performance in which hostility is mistaken for intellectual rigor."

He maintained that strong questioning does not require aggression or contempt, adding that respectful engagement strengthens the credibility of journalism.

"If global media wishes to retain its claim to moral authority as a watchdog of democracy, it must remember a basic principle: the goal of journalism is to inform the public, not to stage spectacles at the expense of civility and substance," he said.

Showunmi also urged the public not to treat political realignments as unusual, noting that alliances often shift in democratic politics.

"Former opponents become partners when national circumstances demand cooperation. It is neither shocking nor dishonorable, but the defining characteristic of democratic political life," he said.

"History provides countless examples where leaders worldwide have entered alliances with former adversaries to meet governance needs. To pretend otherwise is either intellectual dishonesty or a deliberate attempt to create sensationalism where none exists."

# 2027: Niger gov Bago directs political appointees seeking office to resign by March 23

By Yunusa Umar

The Niger State Government has directed all political appointees and public office holders intending to contest elective positions in the 2027 general elections to resign their appointments on or before March 23, 2026.

The directive was contained in a statement issued on Sunday by the Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Alhaji Abubakar Usman, following the release of the revised timetable for the 2027 general elections by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

According to the timetable released by the electoral body, elections for the President and members of the National Assembly will be held on January 16, 2027, while elections for state governors and members of state Houses of Assembly are scheduled for February 6, 2027.

INEC also indicated that political parties will begin their primaries on April 23,



2026, as part of preparations for the elections.

Usman said the directive became necessary to ensure strict compliance with electoral laws guiding participation in elective offices.

“I am to draw the attention of all Political Appointees and other Government Officials who desire to contest for elective positions that the conduct of party primaries is expected to commence from April 23, 2026,” the SSG said.

He explained that the law requires public office holders seeking elective positions to resign at least one month before the commencement of party primaries.

“In line with this development, all such Appointees and Officials are advised to resign their appointments by March 23, 2026, in order to meet the one-month requirement for resignation before seeking elective positions,” Usman added.

The SSG reiterated the state government’s commitment to upholding the rule of law and ensuring that political activities in the state strictly comply with constitutional and electoral provisions.

# Abducted NYSC member denies death rumored

By Yunusa Umar

An abducted National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) member, Musa Usman known as Abba, has appeared in a new video released by his captors, debunking earlier reports by his family that he had been killed.

The video, which was posted by Zagalola Makama, a counterinsurgency expert based in LakeChad, on Sunday, showed the corps member alive and speaking from a kidnapper’s den.

In the footage, Abba stated that the recording was made on the 19th day of Ramadan, contradicting earlier claims by his family that he might have been killed after communication with the abductors stopped.



The family had earlier announced that they feared the corps member was dead after paying a ransom of N10 million to the kidnappers without receiving further communication from them.

They had also held a funeral prayer in absentia (Janaza Gha’ib) in accordance with Islamic rites following the prolonged silence from the abductors.



However, the newly released video indicates that the corps member is still alive in captivity.

Sources familiar with the development said the abductors were still making fresh demands, including the provision of two motorcycles, for his release.

# PDP factions signal willingness to reconcile amid prolonged leadership crisis

By Gbenga Olaleye



Two rival factions within the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) have expressed readiness to reconcile following months of internal leadership disputes, although both sides continue to trade accusations over the origins of the crisis.

The factions loyal to the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike, and the Governor of Oyo State, Seyi Makinde, disclosed in separate interviews that they were open to dialogue aimed at resolving the party's lingering conflict.

The latest development comes after the Court of Appeal sitting in Ibadan advised both factions to settle their differences amicably for the sake of the party's stability.

The appellate court, presided over by Justice Biobele Georgewill, made the recommendation during the hearing of an appeal filed by one of the factions. The court subsequently adjourned the matter until 11 March.

The dispute stems from conflicting judgments issued by the Federal High Court in Ibadan and the Oyo State High Court concerning the legitimacy of the party's convention held in Ibadan.

At the centre of the crisis is the leadership

of the party's National Working Committee. Both factions have laid claim to control of the party and are seeking recognition from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

The Wike-backed faction, led by National Caretaker Chairman Mohammed Abdulrahman, secured a judgment from the Federal High Court on 25 November 2025 nullifying the outcome of the PDP convention held on 15 and 16 November 2025. That convention produced a National Working Committee headed by Tanimu Turaki.

However, in a separate ruling delivered on 25 February, Justice Ladiran Akintola of the Oyo State High Court held that the convention complied with the provisions of the party's constitution and the Electoral Act, affirming Turaki as the duly elected National Chairman.

Following the conflicting decisions, both sides approached appellate courts in Abuja and Ibadan seeking to overturn the opposing rulings.

Speaking on the possibility of reconciliation, acting National Secretary of the caretaker committee, Samuel Anyanwu, said his faction was open to dialogue and that some party stakeholders were already attempting to mediate between the groups.

"For the benefit of doubt, nobody is against reconciliation. We are the ones who have been asking these people to come back so that we can rebuild our party," he said.

However, Anyanwu accused members of the rival faction of prolonging the crisis for personal interests and alleged that Makinde was attempting to dominate the party's structure.

He also dismissed claims that Wike was responsible for the internal divisions within the PDP.

On the other hand, the National Publicity Secretary of the Turaki-led faction, Ini Ememobong, confirmed that his group was equally willing to pursue reconciliation but insisted that any agreement must be based on principles that would strengthen the party.

Ememobong clarified that the Court of Appeal had not issued a final ruling but only encouraged both sides to explore an internal settlement.

"We are not averse to reconciliation, but it must be based on principle. We want reconciliation that will build the party, ensure its survival and position it to win elections," he said.

# Obi vows to challenge electoral act 2026 in court

By **Damilola Olufemi**

The 2023 presidential candidate of the Labour Party, Peter Obi, has formally registered as a member of the African Democratic Congress (ADC).

Obi completed his registration on Saturday in his hometown of Agulu in Anaocha Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Speaking during the exercise, the former governor of Anambra said he plans to challenge the recently enacted Electoral Act 2026 in court, alleging that some of its provisions could undermine the credibility of the 2027 general elections.

He claimed that aspects of the law appear designed to manipulate the electoral process and benefit the ruling party.

Obi also criticised the role of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), accusing the electoral body of attempting to interfere in the internal affairs of political parties.

According to him, the commission should focus on conducting credible elections rather than dictating how political parties organise their candidate selection processes.

“I am going to challenge the decision in court; INEC has no reason to assume processes in how political parties elect their candidates. Its responsibility is to conduct elections.

“You don’t tell a team how to prepare its players before a match. As a referee, INEC’s role is to officiate, not to determine which players a team should field,” he said.

The former presidential candidate further alleged that the rush to pass new electoral laws is aimed at influencing the outcome of the 2027 polls.

“All the laws being hurriedly created are simply aimed at enabling the ruling party to snatch the 2027 presidential election and run away with it,” he said.

Obi urged supporters and party members to intensify grassroots mobilisation ahead of the next general elections, particularly in Anambra.



“We have about 2.8 million registered voters in Anambra, and I urge everyone to go to the grassroots and mobilise people to register and be ready to vote,” he added.

He also emphasised the importance of cooperation among opposition parties, saying the South-East is already engaging other regions in discussions aimed at building a stronger political alliance before the next elections.

“In this journey of 2027, we in the South-East are working as a family and discussing with other regions.

“The goal is to unite the opposition and create a new Nigeria. The South-East is part of Nigeria and no region is more Nigerian than the South-East,” he said.

Obi also criticised Nigeria’s economic condition, saying the country’s poverty levels are unacceptable given its natural resources.

“We cannot continue in an era where Nigeria has become one of the worst five countries in the world and the poverty capital of the world,” he said.

“We are committed to building a Nigeria where the child of a nobody can become somebody without knowing anybody.”

Also speaking at the event, Chinedu Idigo, national organising secretary of the

ADC, said the party’s membership registration will be conducted both online and physically.

He encouraged prospective members to complete their registration online before visiting designated centres to obtain their membership cards.

Idigo also disclosed that the party plans to adopt a direct primary system in selecting candidates for future elections and has already distributed about 50,000 membership cards to Anambra, with more expected.

Meanwhile, John Nwosu, the ADC candidate in the November 8, 2025 Anambra governorship election, described Obi’s registration as a major boost for the party.

“This is a day of joy. The journey of Obi to the presidency begins today,” Nwosu said.

He urged party members to remain united and avoid internal conflicts as preparations begin for future elections.

Reflecting on the 2023 elections, Nwosu noted that challenges such as vote buying, voter apathy, and inadequate polling agents affected the party’s performance, adding that measures are being put in place to address those issues ahead of the next polls.

# One killed, five abducted in Sokoto bandit attack

By **Damilola Olufemi**

The Nigeria Police Force in Sokoto State has confirmed that one person lost his life while five others were abducted during a bandit attack on Mallamawar Yari village in Gawakuke Ward of Rabah Local Government Area.

The attack occurred on Saturday night when armed men stormed the community, sending residents into panic as they carried out the assault.

Earlier reports circulating on social media had alleged that the attackers disguised themselves in women's hijabs to evade suspicion before launching the attack. However, the police dismissed the claim.

The spokesperson for the Sokoto State Police Command, Ahmed Rufai, confirmed the incident but clarified that the attackers did not disguise themselves.

"The attack is true, but they didn't disguise. Five people were kidnapped, and one person was killed," Rufai said.

According to the police spokesperson, those abducted include three women and



two men. He added that security agencies have begun efforts to locate the suspects and secure the safe release of the victims.

Rufai noted that security operatives have intensified operations in the area following the attack while investigations are ongoing.

The incident highlights ongoing security challenges in several communities across Sokoto State, where residents continue to grapple with cases of banditry and kidnapping.

In recent months, armed groups have repeatedly targeted rural communities, particularly in border local government areas, forcing many villagers to abandon their homes and raising concerns about safety in the region.

Authorities have urged residents to remain vigilant and promptly report suspicious movements to security agencies as efforts continue to tackle insecurity in the state.

# OPL 245 deal may unlock 150,000bpd for Nigeria's oil output — Ojulari

By **Damilola Olufemi**

The Group Chief Executive Officer of Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited, Bayo Ojulari, has said the resolution of the dispute surrounding oil prospecting lease (OPL) 245 will enable the development of the Zabazaba–Etan deepwater project.

In a statement issued on Saturday, Ojulari noted that advancing the project could increase Nigeria's crude oil output by about 150,000 barrels per day (bpd).

On March 5, the Presidency of Nigeria announced that a settlement agreement had been successfully concluded between the Federal Government, Eni, and Nigerian Agip Exploration Limited (NAEL).

According to the presidency, the agreement ended the protracted dispute over OPL 245 and created the opportunity to move forward with the development of one of Nigeria's most important deepwater resources.



Commenting on the development, Ojulari described the resolution as a major milestone for both the country and NNPC as efforts continue to promote responsible development of Nigeria's strategic energy assets.

"We are honoured that President Bola

Ahmed Tinubu GCFR entrusted NNPC Limited with the responsibility of supporting the resolution of the long-standing OPL 245 dispute involving the Federal Government of Nigeria, ENI, and Nigerian Agip Exploration Limited (NAEL)," he said.

"As noted by the President, this resolution clears the path for the development of one of Nigeria's most strategic deepwater assets — the Zabazaba–Etan project.

"Progressing this development could add approximately 150,000 barrels per day to Nigeria's oil production, representing a significant step toward strengthening our national energy security and economic resilience."

Ojulari further said the achievement demonstrates the value of collaboration, persistence, and a shared determination to utilise Nigeria's vast energy resources for the country's benefit.

# SDP urges PDP to avoid violence after Oyo congress clash

By **Damilola Olufemi**



The Social Democratic Party (SDP) in Oyo State has urged the state chapter of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to prevent further violence following clashes that occurred during the party's congress in Ibadan on Saturday.

State chairman of the SDP, Michael Okunlade, made the appeal in a statement issued on Sunday, stressing the need to maintain the peaceful reputation of Oyo, popularly known as the Pace-Setter State.

Okunlade said preserving peace in the state is crucial, particularly as the country approaches the 2027 general elections.

According to reports, suspected political thugs disrupted local government congresses organised by a faction of the PDP believed to be loyal to the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike.

The PDP in the state is currently divided into two camps — one aligned with Wike and the other with the state

governor, Seyi Makinde.

The congresses organised by the Wike-backed faction across the state were reportedly marred by violence, with several vehicles vandalised by hoodlums whose identities remain unknown.

Okunlade said the SDP became aware of the disturbances through reports circulating on radio stations and social media platforms.

“We learned about the violence during the PDP congress via radio and social media yesterday (Saturday). As the 2027 elections draw near, we appeal to all political parties within the state to concentrate their campaigns on substantive issues,” he said.

“Furthermore, we caution the PDP against turning the state into a battleground in the run-up to the 2027 elections. The party should coordinate its activities in the best interest of residents,” he added.

The SDP chairman also called on the

Nigeria Police Force in the state to caution political leaders against using their influence to instigate unrest.

“This also constitutes a call to the state police to caution major political figures against misusing their influence for personal advantage and inciting chaos.

“We implore law enforcement authorities to diligently monitor the activities of all political actors as the 2027 elections approach,” he said.

Okunlade further reaffirmed the SDP's commitment to maintaining peace and unity among its members as political activities intensify ahead of the next general elections.

“The SDP remains steadfast in its commitment to uphold peace and unity among supporters. I urge all SDP members to remain loyal and dedicated as we prepare to assume leadership in 2027. No form of indiscipline among members will be tolerated,” he concluded.

# Nigerian Army mourns soldiers killed in terror attacks in Borno, Katsina

By Gbenga Olaleye

The Nigerian Army has mourned the deaths of several soldiers killed during separate clashes with terrorists in Borno State and Katsina State, describing the fallen personnel as brave patriots who paid the ultimate price in service to the nation.

Military sources disclosed that scores of soldiers, including a Lieutenant Colonel and a Captain, lost their lives in the attacks, while troops also killed more than 45 terrorists during operations carried out across the two states.

According to the sources, the slain colonel served as the commanding officer of one of the battalions operating in Borno State.

In Katsina, an encounter between troops and armed bandits led to the death of Paul Hassan, a Captain in the army, alongside two other soldiers.

The terrorists had reportedly launched multiple attacks on military positions across Borno in recent days, leading to casualties on both sides.

Confirming the development in a statement on Saturday, the Media Information Officer of the Joint Task Force North-East Operation Hadin Kai, Sanni Uba, said some of the fallen officers had already been laid to rest.

Uba stated that the soldiers demonstrated courage, loyalty and dedication while defending the country.

“The Nigerian Army described the slain soldiers as brave, loyal and courageous patriots whose sacrifices will never be forgotten,” he said.

The statement followed earlier reports of a terrorist attack on a military base in Ngoshe, where soldiers and civilians were killed and more than 300 residents were abducted.

Additional attacks were also recorded in several parts of Borno, including Konduga, Marte, Jakana and Mainok, where insurgents attempted to overrun military formations.

Uba said the attacks occurred between



approximately 2230 hours on Thursday and 0300 hours on Friday, adding that troops successfully repelled the assaults and eliminated several terrorists.

The Theatre Commander of Operation Hadin Kai, Abdulsalam Abubakar, described the loss of the soldiers as a painful reminder of the sacrifices required in military service.

“In the profession of arms, there are moments of victory that fill us with pride and affirm the strength, courage and unity that define our service,” he said.

“Yet there are also solemn moments that weigh heavily on our hearts and remind us of the true cost of service.”

He added that the fallen troops demonstrated selflessness and unwavering dedication to duty, noting that their sacrifices were a loss to their families, the army, the Armed Forces of Nigeria and the nation.

Abubakar assured that all entitlements due to the deceased soldiers would be processed promptly to support their families.

Meanwhile, the Governor of Borno State,

Babagana Zulum, through the Executive Secretary of the State Security Trust Fund, Mustapha Yabe, expressed condolences to the Armed Forces and praised the bravery of the troops.

In Katsina, authorities confirmed that at least 45 bandits were killed during a fierce gun battle in Danmusa Local Government Area.

The Commissioner for Internal Security and Home Affairs, Nasir Mua’zu, said those killed included Iti, the nephew and second-in-command to the notorious bandit leader Adamu Alieru, as well as another bandit leader known as Damale.

He added that the confrontation began after bandits launched an attack on Alhazawa village in Musawa Local Government Area on 5 March, attempting to steal cattle.

While the military succeeded in neutralising the attackers, the operation resulted in the loss of three soldiers, including Captain Hassan.

Officials in Katsina praised the troops for their bravery, stating that their actions saved lives and disrupted the operations of criminal groups in the region.

# Sarah Martins reacts, apologises after Lagos roadside cooking warning

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nollywood actress Sarah Martins has clarified the circumstances surrounding her recent street cooking activity in Lagos, explaining that it was an emotional gesture aimed at reconnecting with vulnerable children rather than a deliberate violation of environmental laws.

Her clarification followed a caution issued by Tokunbo Wahab, who warned that cooking or distributing food on public roads contravenes environmental and public order regulations in Lagos.

In response, Martins released an open letter explaining that the cooking activity did not take place on a walkway or a busy road as suggested.

“I would like to respectfully clarify that I did not cook on the walkway or on the main street,” she said.

According to the actress, the meal was prepared in front of a palace within the area and was supervised by security personnel to ensure that the activity did not disrupt public movement or create any form of nuisance.

“The meal was prepared in front of the King’s Palace under the supervision of security personnel, and the activity took place very far from the main road, ensuring that it did not obstruct movement or create any public nuisance,” she wrote.

Martins further explained that the moment was largely emotional, driven by her desire to reconnect with the children she has supported over time. She said she had missed the bond she shares with vulnerable street children in the area.

“The visit was simply born out of an emotional moment. I had deeply missed the bond I share with the vulnerable street children in that area,” she explained.

The actress revealed that whenever she drives past the area, the children often call out to her and ask her to return and cook with them, as she used to. She said that on that particular day, she decided to stop by and spend time with them.

“As I occasionally drive past that axis, the



children often plead with me to come back and cook with them like I used to. On this particular day, I decided to spend some time with them and prepare a meal, purely to reconnect and create memories with the kids who have always shown me genuine love,” she added.

Despite her explanation, Martins apologised for any misunderstanding or perceived violation of the law, stressing that she respects the environmental and sanitation regulations of Lagos State.

“My brief return to that location was never intended to create any form of public nuisance, but simply to share a heartfelt moment with children who have continued to ask for my presence,” she said.

“However, if my actions were perceived as inappropriate in any way, I sincerely apologise. I hold the laws and environmental standards of Lagos State in the highest regard,” she added.

Looking ahead, the actress promised that all future charitable cooking activities would be conducted strictly within approved facilities.

She said her foundation, the Sarah Martins Golden Heart Foundation, has a dedicated charity kitchen where feeding programmes are expected to take place.

“Going forward, I will ensure that all cooking activities are carried out strictly within the charity kitchen provided for the foundation,” she stated.

Martins also expressed appreciation to Seyi Tinubu for supporting her foundation with a proper kitchen facility to help organise its feeding programmes.

“I would also like to emphasize that Mr. Seyi Tinubu generously empowered my foundation with a charity kitchen specifically to ensure that our feeding programs are conducted in a proper and organized environment,” she said.

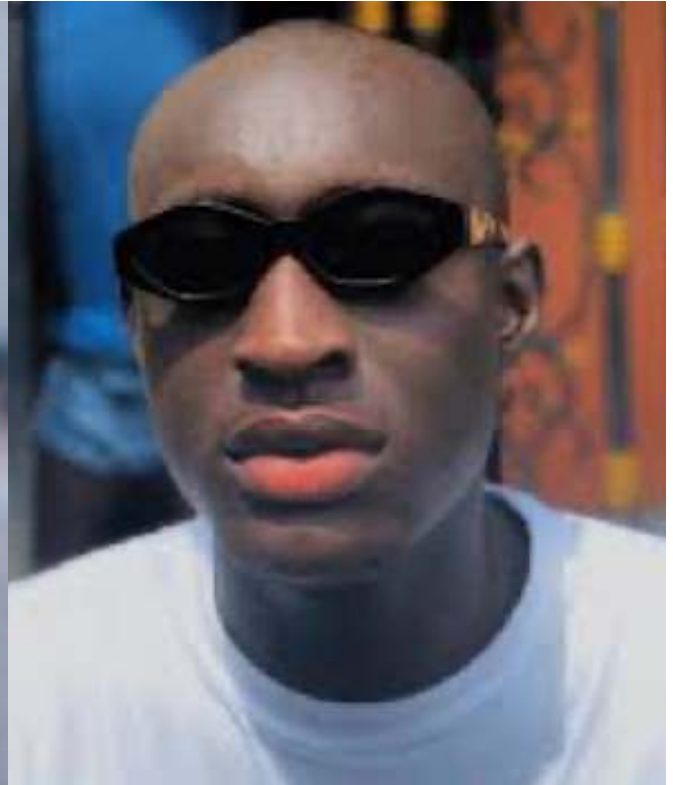
She added that the foundation remains committed to using the facility to ensure its programmes are carried out in an orderly and lawful manner.

The clarification comes months after Martins was reportedly arrested in October 2025 by officials of the Kick Against Indiscipline (KAI) while cooking on a road median in the Lekki area, during which some of her equipment was seized.

At the time, the Lagos State Government defended the action, citing environmental and sanitation regulations aimed at maintaining order and safety in public spaces.

# Nasboi knocks Carterefe for saying skit-making 'is dead'

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi



Nigerian skit maker Nasir Lawal, popularly known as Nasboi, has criticised fellow skit maker-turned-streamer Odahohwo Joseph Efe, also known as Carterefe, for allegedly downplaying the relevance of skit-making.

The reaction follows Carterefe's controversial remarks during a recent appearance on The Honest Bunch Podcast, where he claimed that skit-making is no longer as viable as it once was.

According to him, the skit industry is "dead," a statement that quickly sparked debate among content creators and fans.

Carterefe explained during the interview that he began feeling depressed at one point because he believed the skit-making space was gradually dying.

He added that his outlook changed after he transitioned into streaming, which he said gave him a new sense of direction in the digital entertainment space.

However, Nasboi strongly disagreed with the statement, calling it unfair to the industry that helped many creators,

including Carterefe, gain recognition.

Speaking during a recent interview with Naija FM Lagos, Nasboi said evolving as a content creator is not a bad thing, but dismissing the industry that helped build one's career is inappropriate.

"Evolving is not a bad idea but talking down on the industry that made you is a crime in my books," Nasboi said.

He also revealed that despite the criticism, he still maintains a friendly relationship with Carterefe, noting that they communicate regularly.

According to him, Carterefe sometimes makes statements that can be easily misunderstood.

"Carterefe is my friend, we speak every time. But he is a loose talker," he added.

Nasboi further emphasised that skit-making remains a thriving industry, especially on social media platforms where new creators continue to gain popularity and build careers through short-form comedy content.

"You can't say skit-making is dead.

People are blowing up every day with skit-making," he said.

The comedian explained that the evolution of content creators into other areas, such as streaming, music, or filmmaking, does not mean the original industry they came from has become irrelevant.

Instead, he believes it reflects the natural growth and diversification of digital creators.

"The fact that people evolved doesn't mean that the industries they are leaving are dead," Nasboi stated.

In recent years, Nigeria's skit-making industry has grown rapidly, with many creators building large audiences on social media platforms and turning their online popularity into opportunities in music, film, brand partnerships, and live performances.

Nasboi's remarks highlight the ongoing conversation among digital creators about the future of online comedy and the importance of acknowledging the platforms and industries that helped launch their careers.

# Lagos govt faults Sarah Martins' roadside cooking

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

The Lagos State Government has cautioned Nollywood actress Sarah Martins against cooking and distributing food on public roads in the state, stating that the activity violates environmental and public order regulations.

The warning was issued by Tokunbo Wahab, who made the statement in a post on his official X (formerly Twitter) account on Saturday evening.

According to Wahab, the government became aware of the actress's recent activity of preparing and sharing food with people directly on the streets of Lagos.

While acknowledging the charitable intention behind the gesture, he stressed that such actions must still comply with existing environmental and public safety regulations.

"My attention has been drawn to your recent activity of cooking and distributing food on the streets of Lagos," Wahab wrote.

He added that although the government appreciates acts of compassion and charity, using public infrastructure such as roads, walkways, or medians for cooking and food distribution is not permitted under Lagos environmental laws.

"While we acknowledge and appreciate the spirit of charity and compassion behind what you are trying to do, carrying out such activities on public roads, walkways or medians is not permitted under Lagos environmental and public order regulations," the commissioner stated.

Wahab further explained that cooking or trading on public roads can create multiple concerns, including safety hazards, sanitation issues, and traffic disruptions.

According to him, such activities may expose both the volunteers and the beneficiaries to unnecessary risks while also affecting public order.



"Cooking or trading on public infrastructure poses safety, sanitation and traffic concerns," he added.

The commissioner also revealed that this was not the first time the actress had been warned about the activity. He disclosed that she had previously been cautioned last year when a similar situation occurred.

However, at the time, authorities reportedly allowed her to continue because of the philanthropic intention behind the initiative and the appeals made on her behalf.

"You were previously cautioned about this same issue last year due to the understanding of its philanthropic intention and pleas," Wahab said.

Despite acknowledging her good intentions, the commissioner advised Martins to immediately stop conducting such activities in public spaces to avoid possible legal consequences.

"I would strongly advise that you desist

from carrying out street cooking or similar activities in public spaces in Lagos in order to avoid apprehension and prosecution," he warned.

Wahab also encouraged the actress to continue her charitable efforts, but through proper channels and approved locations. He explained that this would ensure that assistance reaches vulnerable residents without violating environmental regulations or creating public disturbances.

"If you wish to continue your charitable outreach, it should be done through proper channels and in approved locations so that your efforts can support vulnerable people without violating existing laws and constituting environmental nuisance," he said.

The commissioner concluded by stressing that all residents and public figures in Lagos are expected to obey the law and follow established regulations, just as they would in any well-regulated city around the world.

# Trump declares Iran loser of the Middle East

By Clement Abayomi

President Donald Trump has declared on Truth Social that Iran is now the “loser of the Middle East” after Iran’s apology to its neighbours and promise to stop its attacks.

Trump said that the country has surrendered, following intense military pressure. This points to what he called Iran’s first major defeat in “thousands of years”.

According to Trump’s statement, Tehran has personally reached out to Gulf nations to apologise for its past actions. He claimed that the Iranian government promised these countries it would never attack them again.

Trump also noted that leaders in the region have reached out to thank him personally for stopping Tehran’s aggressive goals.



Trump wrote, “Iran, which is being beat to hell, has apologized and surrendered.”

He emphasised that this development is a historic turning point, suggesting that Iran is currently in a position of weakness. This shows that the country is now facing a level of failure it has not seen in ancient or modern history.

Trump still warned that the situation is not over, despite the claim of Iran’s surrender. He mentioned that the United States is currently reviewing new targets inside Iran.

He stated that further military strikes are possible if the country continues what he described as “bad behavior”.

Iran has been considered a defeated nation, with the region remaining tense. Both the U.S. and Israel are continuing their operations, as Trump insists that the era of Iranian dominance in the region has come to an end.

# Thousands march for women’s rights and against Mideast War

By New Daily Prime

President Donald Trump has declared on Truth Social that Iran is now the “loser of the Middle East” after Iran’s apology to its neighbours and promise to stop its attacks.

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# IWD: UN calls for women's empowerment

By Jeremiah Aminu



The United Nations (UN) has released a video message to mark the celebration of International Women's Day which advocates women's rights and empowerment across different societal spheres.

In his address, António Guterres, the UN Secretary-General, emphasised the importance of investing in women's rights:

"Women's rights are human rights. And investing in women and girls is one of the surest ways to make the world a better place", he said.

Several UN executives, advocates, and ambassadors captured in the video also highlighted the significance tied to the involvement of women in key sectors in society.

Michelle Yeoh, a UNDP Goodwill Ambassador, noted the essentiality of women in peace negotiations. She commented that, "When women are

involved in negotiating peace, agreements last longer".

Muniba Mazari, a UN SDG Advocate, commended women's efforts in contributing to the inclusivity of digital tools within the tech terrain.

Dia Mizra, a UN SDG Advocate and UNEP Goodwill Ambassador, noted women's input in policy making as they are much "more likely to pass climate-friendly policies", she stated.

Amina Mohammed, the UN Deputy Secretary-General, stressed women's cruciality to the growth of national economies when they are given access to "decent jobs and fairer workplaces".

Muzoon Almellehan, a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, underscored the significance of education in developing the critical thinking skills and capabilities of girls which can, in turn, unlock "the brain power" that is needed to solve global challenges.

Also speaking in the video, Angélique Kidjo, a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, underscored the limitless potentials that the girl child possesses and the need for them to be given the chance to maximize such potentials.

"Girls can do anything, and they deserve the chance", she remarked.

Other UN leaders, ambassadors, advocates, and executives such as Sima Bahous, Marta Vieira da Silva, Rosemary DiCarlo, Maj. Nesrine Somai, Frida Amani, Dia Mirza, and Kaliya collectively advocated for the protection of women's rights and the empowerment of women across different societal spheres some of which include sports, politics, science, media, and healthcare.

Guterres, then, concluded the message with "a call to action", remarking that:

"Women and girls are changing the world. It's time to change the world for women and girls".

# Iran names Khamenei's son as new supreme leader

By New Daily Prime

Iran's ruling clerics on Sunday appointed the slain leader's son, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, as the country's new supreme leader, defying threats from the United States and Israel to oppose him.

Nine days after US-Israeli strikes killed the elder Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and plunged the Middle East into war, the clerical government's Assembly of Experts convened to choose their next leader.

Mojtaba Khamenei, 56, "is appointed and introduced as the third leader of the sacred system of the Islamic Republic of Iran, based on the decisive vote of the respected representatives of the Assembly of Experts", the clerical body said in a statement.

It said that the clerical body "did not hesitate for a minute" in choosing a new leader, despite "the brutal aggression of the criminal America and the evil Zionist regime".

US President Donald Trump has previously dismissed the younger Khamenei as a "lightweight" and insisted again on Sunday that he should have a say in the new leader's appointment.

"If he doesn't get approval from us, he's not going to last long," he told ABC News before the announcement was made.

US President Donald Trump speaks during a press conference in the Brady Press Briefing Room of the White House in Washington, DC, on February 20, 2026.

But Tehran's top diplomat said Sunday that the decision was Iran's alone, adding it would "allow nobody to interfere in our domestic affairs".

Speaking on NBC's "Meet the Press", Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi went on to demand Trump "apologise to people of the region" for starting the war.

The younger Khamenei is regarded as a



conservative figure, notably because of his ties with the Revolutionary Guards, the ideological arm of the Islamic republic's military.

Israel's military had previously warned any successor that "we will not hesitate to target you".

Air 'Unbreathable'

Overnight, Israel struck five oil facilities in and around Tehran, killing at least four people and sparking blazes that left the skies filled with acrid smoke.

Tehran's governor told the IRNA news agency that fuel distribution had been "temporarily interrupted" in the capital.

A dark haze hung over the city of 10 million people, blocking out the sun, and the smell of burning fuel lingered in the air.

Authorities warned the fumes could be toxic and urged citizens to stay indoors, but many windows were blown out by the force of the blasts.

"The blaze has been burning for more than 12 hours; the air has become unbreathable. I can't even go out to do the daily shopping," said one 35-year-old from Tehran.

"At first, I supported this war. After Khamenei's death, I celebrated with my friends: we drank wine and we danced.

"But since yesterday... people say there's not even any gasoline left at the gas stations," she said, in a text message to contacts in Europe.

As the war extended into its ninth day, Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they had enough supplies to continue their drone and missile war over the Middle East for up to six months.

Several blasts were heard over Israel's commercial hub Tel Aviv after the Israeli military said it had detected a salvo of missiles from Iran. The Magen David Adom emergency services said six people were wounded in central Israel.

# Iran's next supreme leader must win US approval to survive — Trump

By Damilola Olufemi

President of the United States, Donald Trump, has warned that whoever emerges as the next supreme leader of Iran may struggle to remain in power without the approval of Washington.

Trump made the comment during a Sunday interview with ABC News as the Islamic Republic moves closer to announcing a successor to its late supreme leader, Ali Khamenei.

Khamenei was reportedly killed last Saturday in strikes carried out by the United States in collaboration with Israel.

Addressing the issue of Iran's leadership succession, Trump suggested that the next supreme leader would need acceptance from the US to remain in office.

"He's going to have to get approval from us," Trump said.

"If he doesn't get approval from us, he's not going to last long. We want to make sure that we don't have to go back every 10 years, when you don't have a president like me that's not going to do it.

"I don't want people to have to go back in five years and have to do the same thing again or worse let them have a nuclear weapon."

Reports indicate that the council responsible for selecting Iran's supreme leader has already conducted a vote and may soon announce the chosen candidate.

When asked whether he would consider approving a successor linked to the previous political structure, Trump indicated that such an option remained possible if the individual met the criteria.

"I would, in order to choose a good leader, I would, yeah, I would. There are numerous people that could qualify," he said.

The US president has on several occasions expressed interest in having a role in the process of determining Iran's



next leader.

However, officials in Tehran have rejected the suggestion.

Last week, the Iranian Ambassador to Nigeria, Mahdavi Raja, dismissed Trump's ambition as a "joke."

Air 'Unbreathable'

Israel's reach was underlined by two new operations overnight — strikes against fuel dumps in and around Tehran, and an attack on a hotel in the heart of Lebanon's capital Beirut that targeted suspected Iranian commanders.

Warplanes hit five oil facilities around the Iranian capital, killing at least four people, according to a state oil executive, and blanketing the city in acrid smoke.

Tehran's governor told the IRNA news agency that fuel distribution had been "temporarily interrupted" in the capital.

A dark haze hung over the city of 10 million people, blocking out the sun, while the smell of burning fuel lingered in the air.

Authorities warned the fumes could be toxic and urged citizens to stay indoors, but many windows were blown out by the force of the blasts.

"The blaze has been burning for more than 12 hours, the air has become unbreathable. I can't even go out to do the daily shopping," said a 35-year-old from Tehran.

"At first, I supported this war. After Khamenei's death, I celebrated with my friends: we drank wine and we danced.

"But since yesterday... people say there's not even any gasoline left at the gas stations," she said in a text message to Europe.

As the war ground on, Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they had enough supplies to continue their drone and missile war over the Middle East for up to six months.

Several blasts were heard over Israel's commercial hub of Tel Aviv after the Israeli military said it had detected a salvo of missiles from Iran. The Magen David Adom emergency services said six people were wounded in central Israel.

# Pope prays 'roar of the bombs' in middle east will cease

By New Daily Prime

Pope Leo XIV on Sunday prayed the "roar of bombs" in the Middle East will cease, as the war triggered by US-Israeli air strikes on Iran extended into its ninth day.

News from the region "continues to arouse deep dismay", the US-born pope said at the end of the Angelus prayer.

"Added to the episodes of violence and devastation and the widespread climate of hatred and fear, is the fear that the conflict will spread, and that other countries in the region, including beloved Lebanon, may once again sink into instability," he said.

On Sunday, Iran was preparing to reveal its new supreme leader, after US-Israeli air strikes destroyed fuel dumps and triggered fires that choked much of Tehran in a thick blanket of smoke.

Iranian missile-and-drone retaliation has targeted many Gulf countries and further



afield in the Middle East.

US President Donald Trump has refused to rule out sending American ground troops into Iran, but continues to insist that the war is progressing speedily.

Leo said he prayed "that the roar of the bombs may cease, the weapons may fall silent, and a space for dialogue may open in which the voices of the peoples may be heard".

AFP

# US, Israel hit five oil sites in and near Tehran

By New Daily Prime

The United States and Israel hit five oil facilities with overnight strikes in and near the Iranian capital that killed four people, an official told state TV on Sunday.

"Last night, four oil depots and a petroleum products transport centre in Tehran and the Alborz were attacked by enemy aircraft," the CEO of the National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company, Keramat Veyskarami, told state TV.

"Four of our personnel, including two oil tanker drivers, were killed in the incident," he added, saying facilities "were damaged" but the "fire was brought under control".

Smoke from fires overnight hung over the capital, casting a dark haze across the city as morning broke.



Residents reported the smell of burning lingered in the air.

Veyskarami said Iran's oil depots have "sufficient gasoline reserves".

On February 28, the US and Israel

launched strikes on Iran that killed its supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and triggered a war in the Middle East.

Iran responded with drone and missile strikes targeting Israel as well as US interests across the region.

# Late Stewart penalty sends Southampton past Fulham into FA cup Q-finals

By **Damilola Olufemi**

**S**outhampton FC booked their place in the quarter-finals of the FA Cup after securing a dramatic 1-0 victory over Fulham FC at Craven Cottage on Sunday.

The Championship side sealed the fifth-round upset deep into stoppage time when striker Ross Stewart calmly converted a penalty to silence the home crowd.

It proved a disappointing afternoon for Fulham manager Marco Silva, whose decision to rotate his squad heavily did not pay off. The Portuguese coach made nine changes to the side that had suffered a 1-0 defeat against West Ham United in the Premier League earlier in the week.

The decisive moment came in the first minute of added time when Southampton midfielder Finn Azaz was brought down inside the penalty area by Fulham defender Joachim Andersen. Stewart stepped up and fired his spot-kick past goalkeeper Benjamin Lecomte to secure the win.

Relegated from the Premier League last season, Southampton have now reached the FA Cup quarter-finals for the first time since 2022.



The victory also carried symbolic meaning for the club, whose players wore a special yellow kit to commemorate the 50th anniversary of their historic 1976 FA Cup triumph. On that occasion, Bobby Stokes scored the decisive goal as second-tier Southampton stunned Manchester United at Wembley Stadium.

While the current squad still has a long way to go to match the achievements of the team managed by Lawrie McMenemy, the side coached by Tonda Eckert is enjoying strong form. The victory extended Southampton's

unbeaten run to 10 matches in all competitions as they continue their push for FA Cup success and a place in the Championship play-offs.

Elsewhere in the competition, Sunderland AFC travel to face Port Vale FC, while Leeds United host Norwich City. West Ham United will take on Brentford FC on Monday.

Meanwhile, Arsenal FC, Chelsea FC, Manchester City FC and Liverpool FC have already secured their spots in the quarter-finals.

